

P-05-716 Free School Transport for all Children in Wales – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 20.10.16

Free Train Transport for School pupils

Although it was Arriva Trains Wales' choice to start the free transport so they can end it on their own terms they haven't really looked at the problems this causes for pupils especially of Treorchy Comprehensive school, due to the buses being limited to the catchment area the train is the only option for pupils and as stated within the learner travel wales measure of 2008 free transport should be provided for pupils 3 miles away from their school. The pupils that catch these trains are usually within this 3 mile allowance therefore it is mandatory that their transport is made free. Alongside the travel cost there are many health and safety implications that this charging of trains has caused, as Arriva separate pupils that have pre paid passes and those who do not which causes overcrowding between these tight barriers and the pupils that have to buy tickets often end up missing the train due to the long queues at the ticket office. Treorchy Comprehensive School is one of the best secondary schools in Wales so many pupils join and attend the school each year and majority of them travel on the train services provided, however even though Arriva Trains Wales are aware of the large volumes of pupils that travel to school on the train they still provide two carriage trains on a weekly basis which adds even more of a health and safety risk, many pupils have to stand up and are crushed due to the limited carriages which seems rather absurd considering pupils are paying £60 or more per term for these passes. The other safety implications that these barriers cause is that the pupils that have paid for these passes are closer to the platform edge which contradicts Arriva's decision for the free transport to be reversed as they stated, "the volumes of school pupils near the very edge of the platform, potentially unaware of the risks to themselves by approaching trains, had to be addressed." Even though Arriva has made this statement the safety on the trains has not improved since the train passes have been enforced, If anything the safety on the train and platform has gotten worse more pupils are having to stand up on the train journey which causes the train to become very warm and claustrophobic as stated above mainly due to the two carriages provided, even though Arriva are provided with more money due to the price of the passes and the amount of pupils that travel to school it would seem logical that, that money would have been spent

on improving safety which the company has repeatedly stated was going to happen which it evidently has not been the case.

In relation to the prices for these passes provided by Arriva they work out to be very costly especially for parents with more than one child these costs could see parents spending £120 per term for two children to travel to school to get their education, which is impossible for some families such as a single income family as even though Arriva are giving a 55% discount it is still very costly. As stated in my petition "For some parents with more than one child this can work out to be very costly and, because these passes are provided through Arriva Trains Wales, the school is unable to help parents with this funding." Many families rely on the Train transport in order for their children to travel to school and back to school safely and stress free.