

Government Response to the Youth Select Committee Report: Transport and Young People

The Youth Select Committee published its report on Transport and Young People on 5 November. The Government welcomes the work of the Committee and recognises the importance of safe, affordable and accessible public transport for young people. The report makes a number of recommendations for the Department for Transport, the Department for Education and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Having carefully considered these recommendations the Government's response is as follows:

RECOMMENDATION 1

We think the age at which a young person should start paying adult fares for public transport should be 18, when the compulsory requirement to be in education or training ends. This principle should be applied consistently across the country and across different transport modes and operators. The Government should provide a clear lead to transport operators by defining when adult fares should be applicable. We recommend that the DfT and DfE produce a clear statement outlining this principle. The Department for Transport should take the initiative in encouraging transport operators to reduce the variability in the age at which a young person pays an adult fare by producing clear guidance for public transport operators on this matter. [Paragraph 9]

RECOMMENDATION 3

There should be a national concessionary scheme to provide discounted bus travel to young people, similar to that already provided for rail and to the Transport Scotland concessionary scheme. We support the idea of a young person's bus card. We would like the Minister to work with the British Youth Council to consult with young people through its networks and programmes on this matter so it can make sure that concessions meet the needs of young people. We also recommend that the Government publish any plans for its concessionary scheme so that young people can be involved in scrutinising it. [Paragraph 13]

RESPONSE

1. The Government appreciates that the fares offer for young people using buses varies significantly across the country. In many cases this is the result of bus operators responding to their local market but the Government agrees that a reduction in the extent of variation would be desirable and also that in some areas bus operators could be doing more in the way of discounted fares for young people. This could make the bus

the mode of choice at an early age, lock in patronage for the future and therefore reduce car travel. Government will be asking the industry to consider offering travel discounts to all those aged 18 and under, not just to those in education because those who have decided to leave education and enter the world of work for the first time, for example in an Apprenticeship or as part of a Traineeship, may also find the cost of bus fares a constraint. In addition, a discount based on age only is far easier to administer than one which relies on proof of education.

2. On the national rail network discounted fares for young people are available through the 16-25 Railcard. It costs £28 and saves around one third on a wide range of tickets including all Standard and First Class Advance fares. It is also available to those older than 25 who are in full-time education. There are some travel restrictions, with a minimum fare on weekday mornings. The scheme is run by the Association of Train Operating Companies and all the train operators are required by the Department for Transport to participate.
3. Legislation which regulates the bus industry is different to the franchise agreements which regulate the rail industry. Legislation does not require bus operators to set fares for young people. Bus fares are set at a commercial level by the operators. By custom, operators generally offer free travel to under fives and a reduced fare to those up to age 15 or 16, although this varies from one operator to another. A survey carried out by the Department for Transport in 2012 indicated that in the travel concession authorities which responded around 40% of operators offered commercially discounted fares up to age 15 and a further 30% offered discounted fares up to age 18. Of those operators offering concessions, the survey showed that about 30% of operators offered commercial concessions for young people at broadly half the adult single fare, and a further 45% of operators gave one third off the price of an adult fare. Around 20% of operators gave a discount of one quarter of the adult fare. A minority had a flat fare discount structure.
4. Bus operators agreeing specific fare levels for young people could be deemed anti-competitive. However, in principle there does not appear to be any bar to multiple operators offering discounts to young people, for example as a percentage of the adult commercial fare. Such an informal arrangement is in place in Norfolk as a voluntary agreement between several bus operators.
5. Post-16 education is quite different to pre-16, and the range of options available to students will mean that they travel to more diverse locations, and across a wider area. We expect local authorities to make reasonable decisions about what support should be available based on the needs of their population, local transport infrastructure and the resources they have available. In the forthcoming Door-to-Door Strategy, the Government will be reminding local authorities to consider the transport needs of their young residents when considering their priorities. Section 93 of the Transport Act 1985 makes provision for local authorities which are travel concession authorities to set up travel concession schemes in their areas, or jointly with another authority area, if they choose to do so.

For young people's travel the Act states that such a scheme may offer travel concessions to persons whose age does not exceed 16 years and persons aged between 16 and 18 in full time education.

6. Local authorities have a legal duty to publish a transport policy statement, by the end of May each year, that sets out the travel arrangements they consider it necessary to make to support young people of sixth form age to attend post-16 education. In areas where the cost of post-16 transport provision presents a barrier to participation in further education or training, providers may offset transport costs for young people through payments from the 16-19 Bursary Fund.
7. The Government is increasing the age to which all young people in England must continue in education or training, requiring them to continue until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 from 2013 and until their 18th birthday from 2015. We believe that the range of approaches already available to young people is sufficient to ensure that no young person is prevented from attending education post-16 because of a lack of transport, or support for it.
8. The Government does not plan to enforce an age limit for charging an adult fare or legislate to create a national concessionary travel scheme for young people in England. Local authorities would be obliged to reimburse bus operators for any revenue forgone, thus imposing a further financial burden on local authorities which would need to be funded. In these times of austerity, putting additional pressure on already stretched local authority budgets is not the right thing to do. However, we will be asking the bus industry to take the lead on considering consistent discounted fares offers for young people, via a simple proof of eligibility.
9. Concessionary travel is a devolved policy so each administration may have different approaches to schemes for young people, different budgets to manage and different weight applied to priorities.
10. Take-up of the national *Young Scot* concession is low - around 30% of 16-18 year olds have a card. (Source – Transport Research Series, *Evaluation of National Concessionary Travel in Scotland Final Report*, February 2009 which can be found at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/272719/0081408.pdf>. Wales ran a pilot half-fare on local buses in 2006 but decided not to roll it out nationally.

RECOMMENDATION 2

We recommend that the DfT issues best practice guidance to local authorities and transport providers on providing concessionary fares for under 18s, aimed at ensuring that consistent standards apply nationwide, and that minimum requirements are met. [Paragraph 12]

RESPONSE

11. The Department held a Bus Partnership Forum on 18 January 2012 at which Norman Baker met the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT), major bus operators, local authority representatives, Passenger Focus and Bus Users UK. The Forum agreed that it would develop proposals to tackle transport issues for young people.
12. There are no plans to legislate for a mandatory travel concession for young people. Rather, the Department's emphasis is to encourage the bus industry to offer widespread and uniform discounted price travel on a commercial basis. The Minister took the opportunity at the UK Bus Awards in November 2012 to invite the bus industry to be innovative about the fare deals and the discounts on offer to young people, giving an example of best practice. He invited the industry to make bus travel easy and attractive for young people by building on initiatives like the CPT's *Busforus* interactive travel information website
13. In September 2012 the body which represents the Passenger Transport Executives (PTEG) produced the report *Moving On*. The report looked at how important bus travel is to young people and how important young people are for growing the market for bus travel. The aim of the report is to encourage dialogue between young people and transport authorities about the transport options available to young people. The report recognises that transport authorities will increasingly be held to account by young people to explain why various decisions are made. It states that young people need to be involved in transport decision-making that affects their lives and that by involving young people from the outset the authorities can help them to understand the reasoning behind decision-making and work together to develop initiatives that meet their needs, but which are also informed by an understanding of the restricted spending environment. The report also shows case studies where local authority concessionary schemes for young people have been well received.
14. Considering that PTEG has recently published this helpful and comprehensive local authority guidance and are better placed than central government to do so, the Department has no plans to publish further guidance to local authorities on providing concessionary fares for under 18s at this time.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Young people need to have better access to information about the reduced fares that may be available to them. We welcome the

beginning of Government action on this by encouraging bus operators to develop online resources for passenger information. We would like the Government to publish its plans for developing online passenger information resources alongside a timeline for completion. We recommend that the Department for Transport makes additional efforts to include youth representatives in discussions on this matter to make sure that the new resource will meet the needs of young people. [Paragraph 15]

RESPONSE

15. An online web-portal *BusforUs*, which can be found at, <http://www.busforus.co.uk/>, was launched by Norman Baker at the EuroBus Expo in Birmingham on 6 November. Around 100 of the UK's bus operators have now signed up to *BusforUs*, equivalent to around 90% of the bus market. Membership remains open to all other bus operators. *BusforUs* was produced by the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (CPT UK) on behalf of the UK bus industry, setting out the various services, facilities and tickets types available from bus operators across the country. The site – available on PC, smartphone and tablet – also uses sophisticated mapping tools to locate and direct users to their nearest bus stops. The needs of young people were considered at focus groups in the design stage of the *BusforUs* product.
16. The Department will continue to liaise with CPT regarding the on-going development and maintenance of *BusforUs*.
17. In 2011 the DfT-led Transport for Children and Young People Group considered transport issues which affected young people. The Group represented a range of transport and young people's organisations, including the Passenger Transport Executive Group (PTEG), Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT), the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP), British Youth Council (BYC) and the National Children's Bureau (NCB). Following its work the Department endorsed the publication of two guides for young people on using buses: 'How to make buses better – a guide for young people' and 'Working with young people to make buses better – a guide for the bus sector'. The guides showcase a range of principles and solutions, centred around the involvement of young people in developing local solutions with transport providers. Both guides can be found at <http://www.pteg.net/PolicyCentre/Bus/research>.

RECOMMENDATION 5

We are concerned that the loss of education maintenance allowance (EMA) funding may prevent young people from fully engaging in education or training opportunities. The Department for Education says it is reviewing how discretionary funds are being used as a replacement for EMA. We welcome this review. We recommend that this study includes a focus on whether these funds are being made readily available for transport. The Department for Education should also review the extent to which unaffordable transport due to losing

EMA funding prevents young people from accessing education or training. [Paragraph 19]

RESPONSE

18. The Government is fully committed to ensuring that all young people can participate in further education and training after they leave school. The Department for Education discontinued the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), which cost £560 million a year, because it was poorly targeted and an ineffective use of public funding. About 45% of young people in further education received EMA but only around one in ten of all EMA recipients said that they would not have stayed on without it. With this in mind, in the prevailing economic conditions we could not justify spending over half a billion pounds every year on EMA.
19. Research on EMA shows that financial support can make a real difference for the most disadvantaged young people, who want to continue in education or training post-16, but who find it difficult to afford essentials like a meal at lunchtime, books and equipment, or transport from their home to school or college. This is why we introduced the 16-19 Bursary Fund, which targets financial support towards the young people who need it most – those who would not be able to participate in further education or training without financial assistance.
20. The Government recognises that for many young people, particularly those who live in rural areas, getting to school and college can be a barrier to participation. Where this is the case, we expect education and training providers to work with local authorities, to ensure that young people are not prevented from attending further education or training as a result of the cost or availability of transport to school or college.
21. Local authorities have a legal duty to set out arrangements they consider necessary to enable young people to attend post-16 education. The provision need not be free to all students, but local authorities must consider, as part of their arrangements, what financial assistance may be necessary to help meet reasonable travel expenses. We expect local authorities to make reasonable decisions about what support should be available based on the needs of their population, local transport infrastructure and the resources they have available.
22. Many local authorities have responded to this challenge by providing free or subsidised transport for young people, and by working with local transport operators to open up new bus routes to schools and colleges. Education providers can now also help, by using the 16-19 Bursary Fund to, for example, buy transport passes for their most disadvantaged students. There are examples of this in the good practice guide to the Bursary Fund, which can be found at the following link: <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/1/16%2019%20bursary%20ofund%20examples%20of%20good%20practice.pdf>

23. The Government will include further examples in the updated guide which will be published by the Department for Education in March 2013 and this will be informed by a review with providers of how the arrangements have worked during 2011/12. Together, the local authority transport duty and the 16-19 Bursary Fund will continue to help disadvantaged young people travel to their school, college or training provider.
24. There is so far no clear evidence that the move from EMA to the 16-19 Bursary Fund has resulted in fewer young people participating in education or training nationally. In fact, during 2011/12, which was a transitional year in which some students received EMA and others bursaries, the most recent official data shows that at the end of 2011, participation at 16 was unchanged at 95.5% compared with the previous year when all eligible students received EMA.
25. However, the effect of financial support on participation remains an important question. The Department for Education has therefore commissioned an independent three-year evaluation of the 16-19 Bursary Fund, which will conclude at the end of 2014. We note that the Select Committee welcomes this evaluation. It will explore the operation of the Bursary Fund – including, for example, the provision of travel passes to help students with transport costs. It will also consider the impact on post-16 participation of the replacement of EMA with the 16-19 Bursary Fund. The evaluation will include qualitative and quantitative studies drawing on surveys, interviews, official statistics and other management information. The outcomes from this evaluation, along with outcomes from other research and management information will continue to inform the development of financial support policy including the Bursary Guidance, Q&A and Good Practice Guide.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The sentiments expressed in the Government’s Positive for Youth initiative were welcome. We believe that young people should be included in the decisions that affect them. We support the establishment of effective structures to engage young people in a dialogue with policymakers that can influence the decision processes concerning transport. Every Passenger Transport Executive should have a youth forum. We recommend that such structures are established across the country and that the Department for Education addresses this issue to ensure that local authorities give young people the chance to be heard. [Paragraph 23]

RESPONSE

26. We want young people to have a say over the services they receive in their communities – that is why the Department for Education has funded the British Youth Council to support young people in participating at both the local and national levels, and to provide support to councils in putting arrangements for participation by young people in place. In the revised guidance we published earlier this year, we make clear that involving young people should result in improved services.

27. The Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) already do engage with young people and involve them when making decisions about transport. For example:

- a. Nexus (Tyne and Wear PTE) has established a Youth Transport Forum over the past year. It is made up of members from each of the five district's Youth Councils and meets every 3 months. The Forum has been particularly involved in looking at options for delivery of a Local Sustainable Transport Fund bid funding.
- b. TfGM (Greater Manchester) worked with the North West Regional Youth Work Unit to establish a Greater Manchester Young Persons Transport Panel. The Panel was involved in evaluating and designing the annual Youth Strategy Action Plan as well as in the development of the IGO Travel Pass for young people.
- c. Metro (West Yorkshire) has run a Youth Forum in the past and will consider repeating this. However, they did experience difficulties in finding a time that suited the forum members across the 5 districts to physically meet. As suggested by the young people who have been part of the Forum, Metro is looking into running online consultations complemented with an annual meeting.
- d. Centro (West Midlands) is developing a Youth Action Plan which will include the organisation of an Annual Youth Transport Conference in 2013.
- e. Merseytravel is exploring how to get more young people involved in their Customer Forums, for example by making meeting times more convenient to young people. Merseytravel representatives attend local Youth Parliaments.
- f. SYPTE (South Yorkshire) seeks to involve young people in a range of ways, including through engagement with all youth councils in South Yorkshire.

28. Youth Forums are one way to engage with young people. The PTEs also engage through:

- a. extensive work in schools (including with School Councils),
- b. travel training,
- c. attending young people's groups such as local Youth Parliaments,
- d. working with young people to develop materials for promoting public transport,
- e. developing websites and journey planning tools specifically aimed at young people,
- f. online consultations.

RECOMMENDATION 7

We were pleased that the DfT undertook to make sure that young disabled people would be included in future discussions about access to public transport. We would like to make sure this is followed through. We recommend that the Department for Transport outlines future meetings on this matter so that young disabled people can share their experiences with policymakers. [Paragraph 27]

RECOMMENDATION 8

We recommend that the Government should involve young disabled people in the work mentioned by Mr Baker to develop better online information about local transport provision to make sure this resource meets their needs. We ask the Department for Transport to take reasonable measures to ensure that adequate passenger information systems are provided for young disabled people. [Paragraph 30]

RECOMMENDATION 9

We note continuing concerns that not all transport staff have sufficient awareness of the needs of young people with disabilities and the assistance they may require. We would like to see transport operators engage with young people with disabilities, such as those who gave evidence to our inquiry, to improve training for their staff. We recommend that the Department for Transport sets out what steps it is taking to ensure this training is adequate. [Paragraph 33]

RESPONSE

29. The Department for Transport will continue to engage with young disabled people on the important issue of improving the accessibility of public transport. We no longer host the Young People's Transport Group as a regular forum, mainly due to lack of resources both in the Department and within the organisations that were members. However, the regular Bus Partnership Forum, led by Norman Baker, provides an opportunity for young people to engage directly with the Department and operators – the UK Youth Parliament and East Sussex Youth Cabinet attended forum meetings in 2012 and we will be inviting young people's groups to future forum meetings. Also, DfT will be holding a stakeholder round table in the early part of 2013 on the DfT Equality Action Plan and, while it does not refer to disability (that is covered in the Accessibility Action Plan) we will invite the BYC to attend to discuss transport issues as they concern young people generally.

30. 'Trailblazers', the national network of more than 400 young disabled people who work to highlight and address the issues that affect young people living with muscle disease or a related condition attended the Department's Disability Workshop on 1 May 2012, which discussed issues around accessible public transport. In addition, Trailblazers were also invited to attend the Department's recent summit on improving door to door journeys for disabled people on 13 September 2012. This

provided them with the opportunity to contribute to the Department's draft Accessibility Action Plan.

31. EU Regulation 181/2011 concerning the rights of bus and coach passengers comes into force from 1 March 2013 and requires that all bus and coach operators and terminal managing bodies provide passengers with adequate information throughout their travel. Where feasible, this information shall be provided in accessible formats upon request. The Department for Transport will look to the designated national enforcement body (Traffic Commissioners) to ensure that this requirement is enforced strictly.
32. In June, the Department for Transport hosted a summit on how best to improve door to door journeys for disabled people, attended by Guide Dogs and other important stakeholders. As a result of this, and as part of the Government's Olympic and Paralympic legacy, we are currently looking at a number of ways of improving the accessibility of public transport. The outcome of this work is included in the Department's Accessibility Action Plan, which was published in December 2012.
33. Although the Department does not at this point intend to legislate to make audio visual systems on buses mandatory, we understand the social benefits of having such systems on buses for all bus users. Norman Baker MP has written to bus operators to encourage them to work in partnership with their local authorities, to see if the uptake of these systems can be increased on a voluntary basis.
34. As well as owning a valid driving licence, since September 2008 all professional bus and coach drivers have been required to hold a Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) as a requirement of the EU Directive 2003/59. In order to keep their Driver CPC, drivers are required to carry out 35 hours of periodic training every five years. The EU Directive does not stipulate that there should be any compulsory aspect to periodic training and that it is up to operators to decide exactly what kind of training is appropriate. However, Disability Awareness Training is available as part of the periodic CPC training syllabus and the training materials can be obtained free of charge from the Go Skills website. These training materials have been developed to reflect the content and best practice set out in the Disability Equality and Awareness Training Framework for Transport Staff developed by the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee.
35. The Confederation of Passenger Transport has estimated that across the whole bus and coach industry, approximately 75 per cent of drivers have already completed some form of disability awareness training through the Driver CPC and this figure continues to rise each year. We recommend that, where possible, transport operators involve disabled people themselves in developing the training.
36. It should be noted that from March 2013, disability awareness training for personnel of bus operators and terminal managing bodies who deal directly with the travelling public (other than drivers) will become

mandatory, as detailed in the EU Regulation 181/2011 on Bus and Coach Passenger Rights.

37. The Government recognises that policy making for disabled children and young people or those with special educational needs is better, and more effective, where it directly involves young people themselves. The ambitious vision for reforms to the Special Educational Needs (SEN) system as set out in the Green Paper *Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability* (published on 11 March 2011), includes wide ranging proposals to improve outcomes for children and young people who are disabled or have SEN, minimise the adversarial nature of the system for families and maximise value for money. Within this, there was a clear commitment to engage with disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs.
38. EPIC (Equality, Participation, Influence, Change), formerly the Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG), made up of 16 disabled children and young people and those with SEN between the ages 14-25, was set up by the Department for Education to meet this commitment. It is very important to the Government that changes we make to the SEN system are beneficial for all children and young people who are disabled or who have a special educational need.
39. EPIC will enable young people to directly influence decision makers within the Department for Education. It will allow the Department to hear directly from the voices of children and young people who are most affected by the reforms, and understand what services they need to access high quality education, and what works best to make sure that they are prepared for adulthood; from independent living to securing valuable and fulfilling employment. These services may very well include current issues surrounding the transport policy.
40. Members of the group will have the opportunity to:
- i. share their experiences for the current SEN system, and provide advice on the development of the reforms,
 - ii. share their expertise and networks to contribute to the development of the programme, highlighting and helping to tackle the challenges involved in implementing many of the reforms,
 - iii. work directly with officials to ensure that the reforms reflect the experience and expertise of disabled young people.
41. One of the main principles of EPIC is that the young people decide for themselves which issues are a priority. We will ask them how they would like to engage with the issues set out above, and how they can support the Department for Transport in engaging more widely with disabled children.

RECOMMENDATION 10

We note that rural isolation combined with lack of access to either private or public transport presents a barrier to education, training, work and leisure activities. We recommend that the DfT conduct a review on the current transport provision for young people living in rural areas. We would like to emphasise the need for consultation during this review and that local government and communities take a role in this process. [Paragraph 38]

RESPONSE

42. The Government notes the recommendation for a review of the current transport provision for young people living in rural areas, and welcomes the attention drawn to the particular mobility issues rural young people face. We also note the work commissioned by the Government from the Community Transport Association (CTA) and produced in its State of the Sector Report in September 2012, which reviewed and provided a useful benchmark for rural transport provision.
43. We propose therefore that the Department for Transport and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs should jointly convene a meeting with local authorities, relevant public transport operator bodies, and groups already working with Government at a local level to provide community-based sustainable transport solutions, such as the CTA, the Wheels to Work Association, and Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE). This meeting and any subsequent activity decided upon will consider the transport issues faced by young people in rural areas with the aim of suggesting ways in which to improve the current provision.