



Home to School/College Transport Policy

Consultation Report

July 2020



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1. Background and Introduction

The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 states that all local authorities have a duty to transport learners to their nearest suitable school if they meet the qualifying distance criteria. The Council's current Home to School Transport Policy was approved in 2018, however since its implementation in September 2019, it has become apparent that there is a need to further review the policy to reduce ambiguity in order to ensure that the policy can be applied consistently.

The revised policy has been streamlined in terms of its content and presentation, but the new substantive changes are:

- Clarity about the duty to promote Welsh medium provision.
- Removal of the practice of reimbursing 16 – 19 aged learners who travel out of county to study.
- Removal of the practice of providing transport following a change of ordinary place of residence for learners in years 10,11,12 and 13.
- Clarified the appeal process to make it clearer.

On the 9th June 2020, the Council's Cabinet approved carrying out consultation on the draft policy. The consultation ended on the 27th July 2020.

Following the consultation, a Consultation Report will be prepared summarising the issues raised during the consultation period and the Policy will be updated as needed. The Consultation Report and the post-consultation version of the policy will be considered by the Cabinet in September 2020.

It is intended that the updated policy will be implemented from September 2021.

1.1 Methodology

The consultation period started on the 15th June 2020 and ended on the 27th July 2020. A questionnaire was prepared which asked respondents for their views on the draft Home to School/College Transport policy. This questionnaire was available online on the Council's website throughout the consultation period.

As well as responding via the questionnaire, respondents could submit written responses, either by e-mail or by post.

The consultation was publicised via social media and the Council's webpage, as well as direct targeting to all schools for dissemination to parents, pupils, Governors and staff. It was also circulated to an additional 75 stakeholders including Town and Community Councils, the Police and Crime Commissioner and various equalities groups.

1.2 Responses Received

A total of 333 individuals completed the consultation questionnaire.

In addition, 10 written responses were received to the consultation exercise.

2 Online Questionnaire

This section provides a summary of the responses received to the online questionnaire which was available during the consultation period.

2.1 Summary of Responses – Introduction

Respondents were asked to indicate how they are associated with the provision of Home to School Transport in Powys. 333 online questionnaires were completed, however 391 individual responses were received to this question. This is higher than the number of questionnaires completed as some respondents indicated more than one association.

The responses received are as outlined in the table below. Two percentage figures are provided in this table, the first of these gives the percentage based on the total responses received to this question, the second of these gives the percentage based on the total number of responses received to the questionnaire.

Association with education in Powys	Number of responses	% of responses to this question	% of total responses to questionnaire
Pupil	10	2.56%	3.00%
Member of staff	27	6.91%	8.11%
Prospective parent, carer or guardian	26	6.65%	7.81%
Governor	33	8.44%	9.91%
Parent, carer or guardian	235	60.10%	70.57%
Member of the community	41	10.49%	12.31%
No association	5	1.28%	1.50%
Other	14	3.58%	4.20%
Total	391	100.0%	100.0%

Respondents were asked to provide their postcode. 325 respondents gave their postcode. The postcodes provided were as follows:

Postcode	Area	Number of responses	%
CF44	Aberdare, Hirwaun, Penywaun, Rhigos, Penderyn, RCT	1	0.3%
HR3	West Hereford, Hay on Wye	7	2.2%
HR5	Kington, Hereford	2	0.6%
LD1	Llandrindod Wells	43	13.2%
LD2	Builth Wells, Llandrindod Wells	7	2.2%
LD3	Brecon, Talgarth, Llandrindod Wells	48	14.8%
LD4	Llangammarch Wells, Llandrindod Wells	3	0.9%
LD5	Llanwrtyd Wells, Llandrindod Wells	3	0.9%
LD6	Rhayader, Llandrindod Wells	9	2.8%
LD7	Knighton, Llandrindod Wells	12	3.7%
LD8	Presteigne, Llandrindod Wells	15	4.6%

NP7	Abergavenny, Monmouthshire	1	0.3%
NP8	Crickhowell	5	1.5%
SA10	Aberdulais, NPT	3	0.9%
SA11	Blaengwrach, NPT	1	0.3%
SA18	Ammanford, Carmarthenshire	1	0.3%
SA9	Cwmtwrch, Lower Cwmtwrch, Ystradgynlais, NPT	10	3.1%
SY1	Shrewsbury Town Centre, Shropshire	1	0.3%
SY10	Oswestry, Shropshire	14	4.3%
SY15	Montgomery, Powys	12	3.7%
SY16	Newtown, Powys	16	4.9%
SY17	Caersws, Llandinam, Powys	5	1.5%
SY18	Llanidloes, Powys	9	2.8%
SY19	Llanbrynmair, Powys	1	0.3%
SY20	Machynlleth, Powys	6	1.8%
SY21	Welshpool, Powys	43	13.2%
SY22	Llanfechain, Llanfyllin, Llansantffraid, Llanymynech, Meifod, Powys	44	13.5%
SY23	Aberystwyth, Llanon, Llanrhytud, Ceredigion	1	0.3%
SY5	Pontesbury, Westbury, Shropshire	2	0.6%
Total		325	100.0%

2.2 Summary of Responses to Consultation Exercise

Respondents were asked to give their views on the draft Home to School/College Transport policy.

A summary of the responses received to each question is provided below.

Question 3 - Overall, to what extent do you agree that the new draft home to school transport policy is appropriate?

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that the new draft Home to School/College Transport policy is appropriate.

333 respondents answered this question. Their responses were as follows:

Overall, to what extent do you agree that the new draft home to school transport policy is appropriate?	Number of responses	%
Strongly agree	32	9.6%
Agree	67	20.1%
Neither agree nor disagree	44	13.2%
Disagree	91	27.3%
Strongly disagree	99	29.7%
Total	333	100.0%

Overall **29.7%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the new draft policy is appropriate. **57.1%** stated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed. The remaining **13.2%** of stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed.

Question 4 – To what extent do you agree with the proposals in the draft policy to continue to provide transport to the nearest suitable school or catchment school?

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree with the proposals in the draft policy to continue to provide transport to the nearest suitable school, or catchment school.

333 respondents answered this question. Their responses were as follows:

To what extent do you agree with the proposals in the draft policy to continue to provide transport to the nearest suitable school or catchment school?	Number of responses	%
Strongly agree	84	25.2%
Agree	100	30.0%
Neither agree nor disagree	36	10.8%
Disagree	60	18.0%
Strongly disagree	53	15.9%
Total	333	100.0%

Overall **55.3%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposals to continue to provide transport to the nearest suitable school or catchment school. **33.9%** of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, with the remaining **10.8%** stating that they neither agreed nor disagreed.

Respondents were asked to provide any further comments on this aspect of the policy:

Comments were received from 144 respondents. These are summarised below:

i) Queries regarding the definition of ‘suitable school’

- Who decides what is suitable? – what criteria is used?
- What does suitable school mean for the pupil or the county
- The key word here is ‘suitable’ school – however suitability is a subjective matter
- Language of choice should be a criteria in determining suitability
- Welsh medium schools are not ‘suitable’ for non Welsh speakers, and vice versa
- Nearest suitable school should be regardless of language
- Transport must only be provided to the nearest school that has the ability to teach the pupil. Using terms such as ‘suitable school’ are vague and open to being interpreted in different ways

- Don't agree that the policy is proposing to provide transport to the nearest suitable school – this will only be for those children who attend a Welsh speaking school

ii) Queries regarding the definition of 'nearest school'

- The nearest school can no longer be judged on direct route to school via GPS – it has to be on the safest possible routes that are used by that mode of transport – not using country lanes which the buses cannot access
- A child should have free transport to their nearest school providing education in the language of their choice

iii) Reference to catchments

- You have failed to give a definition of a catchment school – the policy is ambiguous, it clarifies nothing without catchment school details
- Needs to be clarification regarding which primary catchment schools feed into a high school
- There is a huge difference between 'catchment school' and 'suitable school'
- Where a child has been accepted to a primary school, their high school choice should be permitted to enable them to stay with their friends

iv) Choice should be provided

- The policy should provide choice – not all schools are suitable for all children
- One size doesn't fit all – should allow for choice
- Pupils/parents should be able to choose the most suitable provision for them
- It should be the parents choice of school based on Estyn reports and which school can offer the best education
- You are giving parents no choice of school yet some schools aren't up to standard
- Pupils have different needs and should have the choice to choose which school suits them and their learning style best
- Just because a school is nearest to a child doesn't mean it is the right school for them
- If there is a strong argument against the nearest school in relation to the emotional well-being of the pupils, this should be taken into account
- Students should be able to choose the best educational facility whether it is in or out of the county
- The proposed policy significantly restricts choice, especially in relation to the language of delivery
- Should be some leeway for children who live just across the borders

v) Reference to Welsh-medium

- Removing free transport to the appropriate medium school forces parents to choose schools based on area not educational needs

- What happens is a child's nearest primary school is a different language medium to their nearest comprehensive school?
- Don't think the 'duty to promote' the Welsh language justifies a proposal to discriminate against those families that wish to choose an English medium education
- Forcing a child to go to a WM school is tantamount to indoctrination
- You cannot have a policy that is different for Welsh speaking or English speaking students – you cannot have a situation where children are supported with transport to Welsh medium schools yet are not supported with transport to English medium schools. This would be in breach of the Equality Act 2010
- Welsh-medium provision is not available at all in some areas – this further diminishes parental choice

vi) Reference to Post-16

- Access to high quality 6th form provision is not available locally and this proposal means that for those of us that can't afford to pay for transport, our children will be disadvantaged
- Concern that learners won't be able to access the subjects they want to study

Question 5 – To what extent do you agree with the proposal to remove the practice of reimbursing 16-19 aged learners who travel out of county to study?

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree with the proposals in the draft policy to remove the current practice of reimbursing 16-19 learners who travel out of Powys to study at Post-16.

333 respondents answered this question. Their responses were as follows:

To what extent do you agree with the proposal to remove the practice of reimbursing 16-19 aged learners who travel out of county to study?	Number of responses	%
Strongly agree	47	14.1%
Agree	55	16.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	25	7.5%
Disagree	53	15.9%
Strongly disagree	153	45.9%
Total	333	100.0%

Overall **30.6%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposals to remove the practice of reimbursing 16-19 year learners who travel out of county to study. **61.9%** of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, with the remaining **7.5%** stating that they neither agreed nor disagreed.

Respondents were asked to provide any further comments on this aspect of the policy.

Comments were received from 198 respondents. These are summarised below:

i) Need to improve the provision in Powys

- If the education in Powys for 16-19 year olds was up to standard, I would agree that transport should not be reimbursed
- If the local college was any good, 16-19 aged learners wouldn't need to travel.
- At the current time, the local college facility is in dire need of improvement and learners are dependent on seeking further education elsewhere – therefore they should be supported financially to travel there
- If there was better educational provision in Powys these young people wouldn't need to go outside of their communities for their education.
- High school and further education in Powys is lacking compared to primary education
- Let's improve the provision in Powys so that learners don't have to travel to study
- If the schools cannot offer the range of courses needed, I'm not surprised learners choose to travel out of county
- Pupils don't currently have any choice other than to travel out of county to study their chosen subject
- Improved sixth form provision in Powys and improved outcomes for learners will stop out of county travel
- Out of county providers offer much more than Powys sixth form provision, and enables learners to compete on a level playing field with the rest of the county
- My experience of post-16 provision in Powys has been poor – I want the best for my children, Powys should want the same
- Small secondary schools do not/cannot offer an appropriate choice/range of subjects. Many schools offers are traditional/academic – pupils in rural communities are disadvantaged re choice/opportunities
- Whilst the Council has started the journey to transform education in Powys, the most significant reforms of post 16 education will not realistically be seen for about 5 years
- We understand the plan is to increase subject choice across Powys but this has not yet been achieved

ii) Lack of subject choice/quality in Powys

- Choices about education are extremely limited within the county. The removal of travel reimbursement would adversely affect children's choices.
- If you wish 16-19 year olds to study in Powys you should provide a full range of subjects for them, without them having to spend half a day on the road travelling between 6th form facilities.
- Improving sixth form provision and outcomes for learners will stop out of county travel.
- In many cases the right provision for 16-19 aged learners does not exist in county so they do not have a choice except to travel out of county.

- The 16+ provision in Powys is not of a good standard and going to Hereford/Merthyr college to study A levels needs to be an option, so our children have a better variety of subjects and choices.
- There are far more options in neighbouring authorities – youngsters should be encouraged to explore and expand their horizons

iii) Should continue to provide transport if the course isn't available in Powys

- I agree with this, but if the course isn't available in Powys I don't.
- Need to consider whether or not the course is available in Powys
- If the course is available in Powys pupils should be advised to go there. If only available over the border, they should be supported to get there
- If Powys are unable to provide the suitable course, they should pay for that child to study outside the county or start offering suitable courses in Powys

iv) Concern about the impact on pupil choices

- Why would you look at limiting a young person's ability to grow and flourish?
- It's difficult to support this as it reduces the opportunities for our learners
- Concern that pupils will choose not to access post-16 education, impacting on their future prospects
- This will restrict pupil choices in a rural community where their choices of further education and careers are already restricted
- Local providers don't always offer the courses students need to gain the skills they need for their future employment – would be disappointing if these students were penalised whilst trying to realise their hopes and dreams
- Concern about the impact on pupil choices, particularly as young people will already be carrying the Covid-19 burden through high youth unemployment and lack of opportunities
- PCC should actively support children to achieve the most suitable academic outcomes – to implement the policy will damage our children's ability to achieve
- Removing travel reimbursement would adversely affect children's choices
- Would be concerned if the cost of travelling outside Powys prevented my child studying the subject they wanted to study.
- A level study does not suit every student and by removing funding for out of county transport could be penalizing their future.

v) Reference to the cost of transport / the impact on low income families

- Some learners may not be able to afford transport costs if not funded by county – PCC would then be denying that young person the opportunity to attend further education, which I don't think is right
- This would discriminate against pupils who can't afford to go out of county if they want to.
- Poor students may not attend the course that is best for their futures due to cost – this is unacceptable

- By removing the travel reimbursement you will disadvantage children from lower income families
- We live in a rural area so discretion should be applied – we should encourage students to look locally and further afield for the best options for them without putting travel costs as a barrier
- Removing financial support for travel costs could mean the difference between choosing further education or the workplace and shouldn't be a reason for making such a choice, nor should choice of course which may affect a future career be constrained by this
- Poorer families will be left with no choice – a limited range of subjects. You are creating a class system!
- Those families that can afford transport will find ways of paying, those who cannot will not receive the education of their choice
- PCC will create inequality in the young generation in some areas of Wales compared to their peers in England
- Will further limit the options of children in low income families, who already have limited options
- We need to give students from less wealthy families the opportunity to travel for the most suitable course
- Families who cannot afford the cost of travel will be forced to look at other courses which may not meet their long term goals
- This will widen the poverty gap and make good post 16 education out of reach for disadvantaged families
- This will impact most on pupils from poorer backgrounds and will limit choice
- This will vastly affect disadvantaged children from poorer backgrounds
- This is a cut that will impact on the poorest in our society

vi) Need to consider pupils home location

- Some learners live closer to Shropshire Colleges than Powys ones
- For some learners, the closest post-16 provision is out of county – only providing transport to in county provision risks discouraging children from continuing their education or causing excess tiredness from the travel
- I don't agree this is appropriate where 'out of county' may be closer to the family home than the nearest Powys provision
- For pupils living on the border, a long way from Powys post-16 provision, it would be unfair to penalise them by removing help with travel costs.
- Pupils in some areas of Powys (e.g. John Beddoes) have no viable option for post-16 provision other than to access provision out of Powys
- Students should be given free transport to their nearest college regardless of whether it is in Powys or not
- Has the council done the sums – has the possibility that providing transport to a school in Wales might be costlier than subsidising transport to a school in England been investigated?

vii) Reference to financial savings

- This is just another attempt by the Council to save money

- The council are looking at a short term economic saving rather than a longer-term economic benefit.
- This is all about saving money, not how pupils benefit from the education
- I'm sure you can save £75k on something less important than young people's futures
- Powys should look at the practice of transporting sixth form students between high schools, as this is surely losing the county far more money

viii) The Council should do more to promote the Powys offer

- Fund out of county learners to travel to Powys sixth forms – should be more proactive in cross border recruitment
- Families opting for outside provisions is down to the 'fantastic reputations' these provisions have, perhaps PCC doesn't promote their provisions well enough.

ix) Support for the proposed change to the policy

- In these times when budgets are under strain I would support this, given that the provision may well be available in the county anyway
- Continuing in education beyond 16 is a choice, not compulsory. People making that choice should be prepared to pay for the associated practicalities, including logistics
- If someone makes the choice to study out of county, that is their choice – PCC should not be funding this
- Parents have a choice but can't expect the county to pay for transport to another county
- Powys should only pay for transport to Powys schools. If you want your child educated out of county, you should pay for it, or move closer
- Spend money on making our local 16-19 provision the best, not on transporting pupils out.
- Agree on the condition that the learners can access post-16 Welsh-medium provision within the county
- Agree that the county shouldn't be paying for this, and also punishing itself by losing money for provision within the county. It would be better to use this money to improve the provision in the county, to keep pupils here
- This would mean that the money could be invested in Powys – there is a desperate need for investment in Welsh-medium education to ensure Welsh-medium choices for pupils
- This would mean that all post 16 learners would be support in the Powys communities
- Powys should be supporting colleges and sixth forms within the county of Powys
- There is good provision in Powys, learners who choose to access provision out of county / out of Wales should bear the cost, not council tax payers
- Use the money saved to boost sixth forms
- We can't sustain local education if we give all our business to English institutions

Question 6 – To what extent do you agree with the proposal to change the arrangements for transport appeals, so that these are no longer considered by Elected Members?

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree with the proposals in the draft policy to remove the current practice of elected members considering transport appeals.

333 respondents answered this question. Their responses were as follows:

To what extent do you agree with the proposal to change the arrangements for transport appeals, so that these are no longer considered by Elected Members?	Number of responses	%
Strongly agree	54	16.2%
Agree	65	19.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	130	39.0%
Disagree	41	12.3%
Strongly disagree	43	12.9%
Total	333	100.0%

Overall **35.7%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the suggestions for what education in Powys could look like in the future. **25.2%** of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, with the remaining **39.0%** stating that they neither agreed nor disagreed.

Respondents were asked to provide any further comments on this aspect of the policy:

Comments were received from 82 respondents. These are summarised below:

i) Elected members should decide

- As at any level of government, decisions should be made by people who are elected to that responsibility and can thus be held accountable for the consequences of their decisions.
- Appeals would be dealt with more fairly by elected members
- Elected members are more likely to know the circumstances of individual pupils
- Elected members may have a better understanding of the situations than those sat in County Hall unwilling to think about the situations and circumstances of others.
- Elected members represent the view of the public, and have a responsibility to look at each case individually.
- Elected members should continue to review appeals, not Council staff who are paid by you and will obviously have an agenda to save the council money, not act in a learner's best interests
- Elected county councillors should be involved. This is a political matter, elected politicians should have a voice in it
- Elected members understand local matters affecting people that live in different parts of this enormous county – their local knowledge is essential

- Members are often also governors of the schools and will have knowledge and understanding of the schools they support
- Members should still have an active part in this process
- The Council places far too much reliance on its officials. When these have been parachuted in from some other council, they may have inadequate knowledge of local conditions
- Councillors are ultimately responsible for running the county
- Appeals need to be heard by elected members in order to be fair and unbiased
- The decision making of the council must involve democratically elected officials as the councillors are elected by the people for the purpose of local governance. To deny this democracy is one step towards dictatorship.
- If elected members are not making these decisions, what on earth is happening to democracy?
- We voted for these elected members to represent our views. They should be able to support our requests (and should). It's their job!

ii) General concern about the proposed change

- There could be an opportunity for bias
- Good to have efficiency, but I'm not sure this sits well
- I am worried about the appeals being considered by an official whose only interest is transport, and who would not take into account the educational needs of the student
- Needs consistency and transparency

iii) Support for the proposed change

- An elected member may be pressured into giving extra consideration for a particular pupil in their ward, whereas an anonymous/unnamed group of staff would not be under any pressure
- As long as a suitable, fair and impartial appeal process replaces it, there should not be an issue
- As long as the appeals process remains transparent, fair and is justifiable on the basis of evidence, it is unimportant who deals with the appeal
- As long as the person is impartial and ensure they do the best for the student not the council's bottom line
- As long as the person assessing the appeals can be considerate and compassionate to the appeal, it shouldn't be a problem
- Councillors who have a vested interest in a school e.g. governor should not be allowed to make decisions at appeal
- Elected members could be swayed by cases, whereas there should be a clear set of parameters and a financial based decision
- Would give greater clarity / transparency and impartiality
- Leave with officers
- Much fairer and consistent
- This would mean that it will be done on a factual basis rather than based on who you know

iv) Other suggestions

- Appeals should be heard by members of the public who have no connection with transport, or schools, who can be unbiased
- Please ensure that those taking decisions understand the history of bad decisions and their long term consequences
- Whoever sits in the panel should be impartial to the schools involved
- Appeals should have a selection of elected and non elected persons, including members of the public
- A committee of people from schools and services should do this. Elected members will be biased to preserve their budget.
- Like school admissions, it should be considered by an independent panel
- I would prefer appeals to be decided by a larger group
- Should be run by officers and approved by members, like planning decisions

v) Reference to the draft policy document

- In the draft document, you do not state the timescale that the hearing will be held within for a Stage 2 appeal.
- The draft document is inconsistent in the use of parent and parent/guardian
- In respect to a Stage Two appeal, it is unclear if a Parent/Guardian can be accompanied by a friend / legal representative in the appeal hearing

vi) Other comments

- Any appeals process must be independent and all facts taken into account
- More impartiality is needed
- Must be objective
- The appeals process needs to be clear and fair for all – anybody with a conflict of interest should not be part of a group that hears appeals
- The process should have clear rules and guidance
- There have always been too many people involved in these processes that have conflicting opinions
- There should be no sole member involvement as it leaves the system open to abuse

Question 7 – To what extent do you agree with the proposals in the draft policy relating to providing transport to Welsh-medium provision?

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree with the proposals in the draft policy to provide transport to Welsh-medium provision.

333 respondents answered this question. Their responses were as follows:

To what extent do you agree with the proposals in the draft policy relating to providing transport to Welsh-medium provision?	Number of responses	%
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Strongly agree	53	15.9%
Agree	44	13.2%
Neither agree nor disagree	107	32.1%
Disagree	59	17.7%
Strongly disagree	70	21.0%
Total	333	100.0%

Overall **29.1%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the suggestions for what education in Powys could look like in the future. **38.7%** of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, with the remaining **32.1%** stating that they neither agreed nor disagreed.

Respondents were asked to provide any further comments on this aspect of the policy:

Comments were received from 126 respondents. These are summarised below:

i) References to discrimination / inequality

- The proposed policy is discrimination against English speaking people
- Discrimination against those that choose the English stream because they don't speak Welsh
- This is totally racist and unequivocally discriminatory and unfair to any English students
- You cannot have a situation where children are supported with transport to Welsh medium schools yet are not supported with transport to English medium schools. Either you support children to schools with their choice of language or nearest school in catchment area. Failure to do otherwise would be a breach of the Equality Act 2010. If this policy proposal goes ahead then it will be a racist policy
- Why should Welsh-medium always have priority – this is discrimination
- A fine way to cause a rift within communities – the policy should be inclusive of all Powys residents
- You should be allowed transport to the closest school providing your language of choice – you cannot discriminate.
- All children should be treated equally whether they choose Welsh or English-medium education
- This is attempting to create a rule for one group of society and not another. Its unacceptable and you run the risk of a legal challenge here
- Not providing transport to the nearest English-medium school if there is a nearer Welsh-medium school seems unfair to those parents who want their children to learn in English. How many other Councils follow this practice?
- The proposal will change the policy in this area back to the policy that applied prior to 2008. The decision to change the policy to provide transport to the closest school providing education through the language of choice, English or Welsh, was made on the grounds of ensuring equality. As we do not believe there has been a change in the wording within the Welsh Governments guidance in respect to this matter, we would be interested in the reasons for the change of mind in relation to this matter and would this view also apply to the provision of preferential transport arrangements to Church Schools, which

was changed at the same time and for the same reason as the change made to the provision in respect to choice of language.

- You're penalising non-Welsh speakers by forcing English speaking students to attend Welsh-medium schools, or pay privately for their own transport. Not all parents can afford that, and public transport doesn't usually meet the needs of the school day. This policy will cause distress, disruption and hardship to learners and their families

ii) The proposed policy is forcing the Welsh language on pupils

- You are forcing the Welsh language on some that may not want it
- We should not be made to go to a Welsh school just because we live close to it
- Enforcing education through one particular language is divisive
- Forcing children to attend a Welsh-medium school is not only unethical and unconstitutional (by removing freedom of choice) but also counter-productive and likely to turn people against the Welsh language rather than promoting it
- Pupils shouldn't be forced to attend Welsh-medium schools – if this was law then all schools would be Welsh-medium
- You are removing choice
- Forcing pupils to attend Welsh-medium provision will be detrimental to the student and family concerned.

iii) Transport should also be provided to English-medium education

- Learners should be transported to a school of their chosen language
- Should also apply if the parent wishes their child to attend an English speaking school
- Parents and children should decide what medium they want to learn, and the Council should provide transport to the nearest provision in the chosen language
- Transport should be provided on an equal basis to support family choice of either Welsh or English medium education
- There should be no difference in the policy for Welsh or English medium schools. The nearest appropriate school is what should be provided for.
- The amendment to only provide transport to the nearest Welsh-medium school will disadvantage English-medium schools. This may well lead to school closures.
- Wales is bilingual not Welsh speaking. Most of Powys is English speaking and therefore it is ridiculous to not provide free transport to both English and Welsh medium schools as appropriate

iv) Transport should not be provided to Welsh-medium education at all

- Children should only be transported for free to their nearest school – every school in Wales teaches Welsh, if a parent wishes first language Welsh education, they should transport their children themselves
- The recent pandemic has highlighted problems with the home learning of Welsh stream pupils who don't have family who speak Welsh at home – yet

another money pit where the parents are asking for help. If parents choose for their children to go to the Welsh stream but they don't speak Welsh, they should pay the costs for additional help

- Where we live there is no Welsh medium education so it would cost a fortune to transport pupils each day
- Disagree that more money is spent on Welsh-medium pupils, especially as most of them don't have parents or family that speak Welsh at home

v) Concern about the impact on pupils

- If a student does not speak Welsh, sending them to a Welsh speaking school because it is nearer could well impair the child's education, particularly in the case of older students
- Nervous of the impact on families moving into the area where a child at 14 has no experience of the Welsh language at all and is left with parents having to pay to get them the most appropriate education
- If a child is in an English school now then transport must continue until the end of their education

vi) Support for the proposed policy

- It's about time this change happened
- The current policy undermines the efforts to create a bilingual Wales and contributes to the deterioration of the Welsh language in its strongholds. With the new policy, more children would have a true choice of which language to use. This is an important contribution to the viability of bilingual schools
- I agree with supporting a push towards more Welsh medium education, as it is shown that bilingual children consistently perform better in all subjects
- Agree that children should attend their local Powys based Welsh medium school
- I agree that if the Welsh-medium school is the only one available in the area, children should attend that one.
- This is essential to strengthen Welsh-medium education and to contribute to the Government's target to have a million Welsh speakers by 2050.
- Essential to develop a skilled workforce for the future, to ensure that the skills needed by organisations such as the Council, the health board etc are available locally
- Under section 10 of the Learner Travel Wales Measure 2008, the Council is required to promote access to education and training through the medium of Welsh.
- The proposed policy would help ensure that parents don't travel past a Welsh-medium or dual stream school to receive their education in an English-medium school
- Disagree with the current policy, which provides free transport to English-medium schools from bilingual catchments
- The Welsh language has so many barriers to it already, it's fantastic to promote the language of our country

- Transport must only be provided to the nearest school that has the ability to teach the pupil. If this is through Welsh then if the school has the ability to do this then transport must only be provided to this nearest school.

vii) General support for the principle of providing transport to Welsh-medium education

- Transport should be provided for Welsh-medium education if it is not the closest school
- We need to ensure that Welsh-medium education is accessible to all families, transport and cost should not be a barrier
- All children across Powys must have the opportunity to receive their education through the medium of Welsh if they desire. The fact that less Welsh-medium provision exists means that there is a need to provide transport to that provision
- If pupils want to go to Welsh schools they should be able to
- It's important that pupils and families have the best possible opportunity to attend Welsh-medium schools. As Powys develops the education system over the coming years, hopefully it will be possible to achieve this
- Powys CC needs to promote access to full Welsh-medium provision and ensuring that a full curriculum is provided
- PCC need to support families to choose to school their children at a Welsh medium only school, not dual stream

viii) General comments about the Welsh language

- Children here on the border don't speak Welsh only in Welsh classes
- Living in a Welsh community, I understand that it would be nice if everyone spoke Welsh or studied the subject, however it would appear that the majority of people living in Wales now do not or cannot speak a word of Welsh

ix) Other

- Transport should be provided to support Powys provision not out of county provision
- I'm concerned about the quality of Welsh-medium education and the extent to which the learning environment will be fully Welsh speaking. Students learning through the medium of Welsh benefit from being in an environment where they hear Welsh all the time. The policy doesn't say enough to reassure me that this will be the case.

Respondents were asked whether they had any concerns or evidence to suggest that the Council is treating/using the Welsh language less favourably than English in the policy.

333 respondents answered this question. Their responses were as follows:

Do you have any concerns or evidence to suggest that the Council is treating/using the Welsh language less favourably than English in the document?	Number of responses	%
Yes	38	11.4%
No	83	24.9%
I don't know	212	63.7%
Total	333	100.0%

Respondents who answered 'yes' were asked to provide details.

Comments were received from 64 respondents. These are summarised below:

- At present children are carried out of the areas they live as they do not want a Welsh primary education – this is ridiculous and no way should they be able to have free transport
- Free transport to English medium schools when there is a Welsh-medium school in the catchment
- Current policy of providing funding for parents to send their children out of Powys to access Welsh-medium education
- Because there are too few opportunities for children to be taught through the medium of Welsh, so they have to travel long distances
- Longer journeys to Welsh-medium provision mean that parents don't send their children to Welsh-medium education
- PCC considers bilingual education (i.e. mainly Welsh-medium education) in a dual stream school to be appropriate provision, but all professionals in the field know that the experience of pupils in dual stream schools is very different to the experience of pupils in fully bilingual schools. PCC should provide transport to the nearest fully bilingual school.
- Learners/ families have lost out on Appeals on transport after being informed that another school provided a Welsh language provision. However they have later learnt that the curriculum is not a full delivery and subsequently have had to access English medium courses.
- The current policy treats Welsh less favourably. Unless the Welsh language is favoured, it will always be treated unfavourably as the two languages are not equal. The revised policy gives a fair advantage to the Welsh language which reflects the aims and aspiration of the WESP and the Welsh Government's targets.
- Present policy has reduced the number of pupils who are fluent in both languages at the end of KS2
- The English speaking pupils are the ones being discriminated against not the Welsh speaking pupils

Question 8 – Are there any changes that could be made to the policy so as to have a more positive effect on the Welsh language?

Respondents were asked to suggest any changes that could be made to the policy so as to have a more positive effect on the Welsh language.

Comments were received from 60 respondents, these are summarised below:

- Free transport shouldn't be offered from bilingual school catchments to English medium settings – pupils from bilingual (i.e. Welsh-medium) primaries are fluent in both English and Welsh at the end of Key Stage 2
- Drivers who speak Welsh should be provided for children at Welsh-medium schools
- Improve the Welsh-medium provision in Powys so that pupils don't have to travel out of county
- Identify schools that offer a truly Welsh-medium provision and monitor this
- Need a designated Welsh-medium secondary
- Need to improve teaching and provision in secondary schools – it's very limited in some schools
- More help and education courses offered for parents that have moved across the border so that they can learn and in turn help their children.
- Ensure that transport is provided if someone wants to study at a Welsh school
- In some cases, current transport arrangements undermine the provision in Powys e.g. the Welsh-medium stream at Brecon High School
- More positive wording towards Welsh-medium provisions in Powys
- More promotion of the availability of transport to Welsh-medium provision in Powys in areas where there is no Welsh-medium provision
- Don't offer free transport to English-medium education in Wales. If parents don't want Welsh-medium education, they should pay for transport or move to a different area
- All children to get a place in their nearest Welsh-medium school
- Ensure there is sufficient space on school transport to accommodate all learners
- Train and recruit competent and effective, enthusiastic Welsh teachers to Mid Wales
- Provide more opportunities for learners to access Welsh-medium education locally
- In the secondary sector, learners in Powys are unable to access the full curriculum in Welsh – the authority should consider providing transport to the closest Welsh-medium secondary school
- Adopt an education policy like Gwynedd's
- An energetic and proactive campaign to sell the benefits of Welsh-medium education to parents and prospective parents as the only way to create bilingual or multi-lingual citizens
- Provide transport to Cylchoedd Meithrin where there is demand

Question 9 – Other Comments

Respondents were asked to provide other comments on the draft policy which the Council should take into consideration.

Additional comments were received from 101 respondents. These are summarised below:

i) Comments on the proposal to remove discretionary transport for students who move from their ordinary address

- A move to a new address may sometimes not be a choice of the family.

- Do not assume that families move house “by choice” – those who cannot afford to buy are in the hands of landlord, there is no guarantee that a new rental property would be found in the same catchment if a landlord wants to sell/serve notice
- I am concerned about the risk to the education of children preparing for exams where parents move house. In discussion it has been stated that this is a choice of the family and in some cases it is, but there are many places where it isn't.
- The removal of paid for transport if a pupil moves their ordinary place of residence seems deeply unfair. You state it is a parent's 'choice' if they move or not. I disagree that this is always the case.

ii) Comments on the draft policy

- I don't understand the section on transport to Welsh-medium school – the statement doesn't read very well
- The policy is very confusing and hasn't been made very clear
- Under safeguarding, there should be consideration of the impact of Covid-19 on transport provision
- The policy should take into account the safest route to school, not the shortest / cheapest
- The Council agreed in 2018 to consider whether it should continue to provide free transport for 16-18 year olds. The proposed changes make no mention of this
- There is no information about the cost implications of the proposed changes – changes should not be considered without full knowledge of the financial implications
- The policy does not include transport arrangements for young children who attend on a part time basis in pre school assessment centres. These arrangements need to be included in the policy

iii) Comments on the consultation response form

- The questions are not clear and so I don't feel totally confident my answers reflect my actual view. The misleading nature of this consultation should be addressed.
- Question 4 is misleading – PCC are not proposing to continue to transport learners to their nearest suitable school if that learner wishes to study in English.
- You haven't asked about removing transport where there is a change of ordinary residence in years 10-13.
- The questions are unclear and confusing, I believe the people that take part may well give the opposite answer to what they wanted to give
- I'm not sure all the questions about me are relevant to the consultation

iv) General comments on the consultation exercise

- The consultation is unclear and very difficult to understand as it is contradictory
- Came across this consultation document almost by accident – all parents of children who might be affected by any decisions made should have been made more aware of this.
- The timing of the consultation is bad and will probably result in many parents not filling it as it's the end of term and post pandemic
- The end date of the consultation should be extended
- When shared on Facebook etc the part of the policy relating to only transporting learners to their nearest school regardless of language was not mentioned at all – unless parents clicked on the whole policy they would not have been aware of how this policy could affect them post 2021
- Has the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 been considered?

v) Other suggestions relating to the provision of Home to School/College Transport

- Due to the current economic position facing the Council, it should consider if a charge should be introduced to make charges for non-statutory Home to School / College Transport – this would provide some equality to those learners who are travelling out of county to access courses not available in Powys
- Empty seats should still be offered if a parent is prepared to pay
- I would like the Council to have catchment areas set out for Welsh language schools
- Would like to see active safe cycling routes to schools – more needs to be done to encourage children to walk or cycle to or from school
- Need to be clear if those under 2 miles get transport if on a dangerous road with no footpath – there is inconsistency in application in these scenarios
- Transport distances to closest school should be considered from your closest access point to school transport, not the home address
- There is a need to liaise with other counties

vi) References to financial savings

- This is another attempt to save money
- Stop penny pinching on areas that are for the future generation
- The council is always saying it needs to save money but council tax regularly goes up.
- The whole policy is obviously designed as a crude cost saving measure that offers no benefits to families in Powys.
- The transport policy suggested is based solely on cost savings with no consideration for the needs of the children

vii) Other suggestions

- PCC should be focused on driving economic initiatives to generate employment and opportunities for the indigenous community in Powys, for those emerging from education

- Stop wasting money sending paperwork in Welsh and English – it would be more cost effective to e-mail asking for preference of language
- Start checking people's property council tax bands – this may help generate more revenue

Draft

3 Other Written Responses

3.1 Overview of responses

10 other written responses were received, either via e-mail or in the post.

The issues raised in the written responses are summarised below.

3.2 Summary of comments

3.2.1 Comments on the draft Home to School/College Transport Policy

i) Comments relating to Welsh Medium

- This is blatant discrimination - Do pupils who wish to learn through the language of English not have the same rights as those wishing to learn through the medium of Welsh?
- Learners that meet the free transport criteria should be treated the same whether accessing English or Welsh Medium schools and both be transported free of charge to make the policy fair for all at Primary school level.
- The part of the new policy that will only transport learners to their nearest school regardless of language unless that learner is accessing a Welsh Medium school is totally unfair, disadvantages and is discriminatory against learners wishing to access their nearest English Medium school and is not made clear in plain language in the policy.
- Agree with the proposal provided that the policy is not changed in future to transport only to a Welsh medium or dual language school.
- Agree with the proposal provided that the nearest school, if Welsh medium or dual medium, is able to cope with non-Welsh speaking pupil without detriment to the pupil's education, and as long as it applies only to new starters at the age of 5 years
- As there is no access to full Welsh-medium education in Welsh-medium secondary schools in Powys, the proposed amendments in the Home to School Transport Policy will be another failure for Powys
- Establishing a network of designated Welsh-medium schools is the only way Powys can show that it wants to seriously promote Welsh-medium provision
- Whilst dual stream schools exist there will be no growth in Welsh-medium education, but removing parental choice will upset parents

ii) Comments relating to border

- We are so close to the border here if English Medium learners are disadvantaged further it is highly likely a proportion of these affected children will cross the border and the money will go out of Powys completely.

iii) Comments relating to 16-19 transport

- Strong objections to transport not being provided to learners who wish to access courses of their choice out of County where they are not provided within Powys.

This policy will create a significant cost barrier for many families and risks children discontinuing education prematurely.

- However, many pupils choose to continue studying post-16 education at Gwernyfed High School and the wording of the policy suggests that transport to Gwernyfed will not be provided for their final two years.
- Objection to the changes in the policy whereby students will only be offered transport to the geographically nearest suitable school/college. This means all sixth form students in Llangors Village, Llanfihangel Talyllyn, Talyllyn, Pennorth etc. would only qualify for transport to Brecon High School or F.E. College.
- Object to transport not being provided to learners who wish to access out of County establishments at this age, when subjects they wish to study are not offered at a Powys site (in either Welsh or English).
- The policy threatens to deprive a large number of learners of affordable access to courses that are either not available in Powys or, if they are, are delivered in settings a greater distance from learners' homes than the out-of-county settings. Imposing a 'blanket' policy to only provide transport to Powys-based settings will mean, for example, a learner in Ystradgynlais wishing to pursue a BTEC Level 3 in Engineering will not receive a transport voucher to attend Neath College to pursue a course that is only available in Powys in Newtown.
- As written the policy will remove transport for 16-19 learners wishing to continue their learning through the medium of Welsh in settings out of county that are closer to their home than settings in Powys. Again, this is both inequitable and discriminatory, as well as being illogical.
- Powys County Council's post-16 learner travel policy needs to acknowledge that Powys is a huge county, neighbouring a number of local authority areas, across whose boundaries a great many Powys residents are accustomed out of necessity to travel on a day-to-day basis. Learner travel policy should also reflect this reality.
- While the provision available across Powys's secondary schools may meet the minimum requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008, to claim that it provides a 'relevant and adequate range' of provision is open to challenge, even with the proposed expansion of Esgol (distance) learning provision. Powys schools do not provide a wide range of non-AS or A Level courses and the Council should be assessing the adequacy of 16-19 provision across all subjects and settings, not just in-school provision, while formulating its 16-19 learner travel policy. Meeting the minimum level of provision required by the Learner Travel Measure is no justification for restricting Powys learners' access to a wide range of further education opportunities.
- It is understandable that PCC would not wish to spend money allocated to education in the county on students that choose to go to another country or county. However, it should be taken into account the reason for the student's choice. It may be that the course is not offered in Wales or in PCC or the distance travelled to get to the place of education or the provision of appropriate facilities for those with disabilities or SENs. Therefore, there should be some way of acknowledging where extenuating circumstances occur.
- It is recognised that the local authority has no obligation to provide post-16 transport. It agrees with the proposal on the basis that the current practice of assisting those travelling out of county for learning available in Powys reduces

the funding for Powys Schools, and that the proposed practice does not apply if the learning is unavailable in a nearer Powys school.

- This proposal might adversely affect students from other border communities.
- The reason for the student's choice should be taken into consideration – there should be some way of acknowledging where extenuating circumstances occur

iv) Comments relating to primary school transport – exemption to the 2 mile rule

- Llangors Primary School pupils have benefited from an exemption from the 2 mile rule owing to the lack of a safe pedestrian route between Llangors and Llanfihangel Talylyn. The highway between the settlements (C96) has been assessed previously to enable children to be collected from Llanfihangel Talylyn.

v) Comments relating to catchment schools

- The policy appears to confirm that transport will be provided to the catchment or nearest suitable school, but without the catchment area maps it was unclear exactly what the policy is saying.
- The policy is amended to include the catchment school as well, not just the nearest school for the purposes of 16-19 transport.

vi) Comments relating to the removal of transport for pupils who change their place of residence

- This Section should be retained as it is, particularly given the extreme economic uncertainties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which may threaten the stability of families' residential arrangements and the continuity of young people's education
- Where extenuating circumstances dictate a more considered approach. It is not in the interests of PCC to appear in the press as having no heart or flexibility when this is the purpose of local government.

vii) Comments relating to elected members and appeals

- Agrees that once appeals policy is decided, that it is an officer decision to implement without further Member involvement.
- Never a bad thing to make things clearer and more accessible and inclusive
- However, other relevant departments should be involved in the appeal if other factors, such as social care or special needs are involved in the need for transport.

3.2.2 Comments on the consultation

i) Publicising the consultation

- The Powys County Council news page does not mention the change in relation to providing transport to Welsh / English schools.

- When the policy was shared on Facebook initially, the post featured a summary, which gave no indication of the part of the policy that aims to promote the Welsh language and not transport learners to their nearest suitable school without the choice of language.
- The summary was misleading and unless the reader clicked on the main link would be unaware of how the proposed changes could affect them.

ii) Ambiguity regarding the phrasing of the consultation questions

- The questions are worded awkwardly.
- Questions worded in a misleading manner
- The questions in the consultation are difficult to understand, misleading and therefore difficult to answer. When answered, an individual feels unsure they have answered them and given the impression they wished to.

iii) Equalities / personal questions

- The number of equalities questions vs the number of questions relating to the policy give more weight to the equalities of the survey, as opposed to the policy changes.
- Why collect so much personal data about an individual? How is that used?

iv) Timing of the policy / consultation

- The timing of the consultation in the last few weeks of a busy term.
- The timing is bad as parents and carers and others affected parties are busy with the end of the school term and have had limited contact with school due to the pandemic.

Appendix A – Equalities Information

Respondents that completed the online survey were also to respond to a number of equalities questions. The responses provided are outlined below. This includes the responses provided by all respondents.

What is your gender	Number of responses	%
Male	57	17.1%
Female	248	74.5%
Gender Fluid/Non-binary/Gender neutral	2	0.6%
Prefer not to say	18	5.4%
Not Answered	8	2.4%
Total	333	100.0%

Is your gender the same now as when assigned at birth?	Number of responses	%
Yes	305	91.6%
No	0	0.0%
Prefer not to say	17	5.1%
Not Answered	11	3.3%
Total	333	100.0%

How old are you?	Number of responses	%
Under 16	1	0.3%
16-24	7	2.1%
25-34	22	6.6%
35-44	104	31.2%
45-54	128	38.4%
55-64	31	9.3%
65-74	11	3.3%
75-84	4	1.2%
85 +	0	0.0%
Prefer not to say	18	5.4%
Not Answered	7	2.1%
Total	333	100.0%

Do you have a substantial and long term physical or mental health condition or illness that reduces your ability to carry out normal day to day activities?	Number of responses	%
Yes	13	3.9%
No	281	84.4%
Prefer not to say	29	8.7%
Not Answered	10	3.0%
Total	333	100.0%

If you answered 'Yes' please indicate all that apply to you:	Number of responses	% of responses to this question
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Hearing Impairment	3	8.8%
Visual Impairment	1	2.9%
Speech Impairment	0	0.0%
Learning Disability or difficulty	2	5.9%
Mental Health Issues	3	8.8%
Physical/Mobility Impairment	8	23.5%
Other	2	5.9%
Prefer not to say	15	44.1%
Not Answered	0	0.0%
Total	34	100.0%

How would you describe your national identity?	Number of responses	%
Welsh	162	48.6%
English	37	11.1%
Scottish	1	0.3%
Northern Irish	1	0.3%
British	100	30.0%
Irish	1	0.3%
Other	5	1.5%
Prefer not to say	17	5.1%
Not Answered	9	2.7%
Total	333	100.0%

What is your ethnic group?	Number of responses	%
White	300	90.1%
Bangladeshi	0	0.0%
Black Caribbean	0	0.0%
Black Other	0	0.0%
Chinese	0	0.0%
Mixed Ethnicity	2	0.6%
Gypsy/Traveller	0	0.0%
Irish Traveller	0	0.0%
Indian	0	0.0%
Pakistani	0	0.0%
Any Other ethnic group	1	0.3%
Prefer not to say	21	6.3%
Not Answered	9	2.7%
Total	333	100.0%

What is your preferred language?	Number of responses	%
Welsh	29	8.7%
English	278	83.5%
BSL - British Sign Language	0	0.0%
Other	0	0.0%
Prefer not to say	14	4.2%
Not Answered	12	3.6%

Total	333	100.0%
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Can you....?	Yes	%	No	%	N/A¹	%
Understand spoken Welsh	156	32.0%	157	21.0%	22	20.2%
Speak Welsh	118	24.2%	189	25.3%	29	26.6%
Read Welsh	123	25.3%	187	25.0%	26	23.9%
Write Welsh	90	18.5%	214	28.6%	32	29.4%
Total	487	100.0%	747	100.0%	109	100.0%

What is your religion?	Number of responses	%
Christian (all denominations)	158	47.4%
Buddhist	1	0.3%
Hindu	0	0.0%
Muslim	0	0.0%
Sikh	0	0.0%
Jewish	1	0.3%
Atheist	8	2.4%
No religion	97	29.1%
Other	8	2.4%
Prefer not to say	44	13.2%
Not Answered	16	4.8%
Total	333	100.0%

Are you?	Number of responses	%
Working full time	177	53.2%
Working part time	77	23.1%
Unemployed	3	0.9%
Still in education	9	2.7%
Volunteering	5	1.5%
Retired	22	6.6%
Other	14	4.2%
Prefer not to say	23	6.9%
Not Answered	3	0.9%
Total	333	100.0%

Which of the following best describes how you think of yourself?	Number of responses	%
Heterosexual/Straight	271	81.4%
Gay Man	1	0.3%
Gay Woman/Lesbian	1	0.3%
Bisexual	8	2.4%
Other	1	0.3%
Prefer not to say	35	10.5%
Not Answered	16	4.8%
Total	333	100.0%

¹ Not answered

Which of the following best describes your partnership status?	Number of responses	%
Single	32	9.6%
Married	187	56.2%
Co-habiting	35	10.5%
Separated	8	2.4%
Divorced	15	4.5%
Widowed	7	2.1%
Civil Partnership	2	0.6%
Other	2	0.6%
Prefer not to say	33	9.9%
Not Answered	12	3.6%
Total	333	100.0%

Do you have dependants, or caring responsibilities for family members or other persons?	Number of responses	%
Yes	257	77.2%
No	62	18.6%
Not Answered	14	4.2%
Total	333	100.0%

If yes, are your dependants or the people your look after...?	Number of responses	% of responses to this question
A child or children	246	88.2%
A disabled person or persons	15	5.4%
An elderly person or persons	18	6.5%
Total	279	100.0%