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Y Gweinidog Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Minister for Local Government and Communities



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Thank you for your letter of 23 January to Leighton Andrews AM regarding the petition for free bus passes for students aged under 25 and in full-time education. I am replying as learner transport issues fall within my Ministerial portfolio.

Section 2 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 requires local authorities to assess the travel needs of all learners up to the age of, and including, 19. However, there is no legal requirement on local authorities to provide transport for students in post-16 education. Such arrangements are discretionary matters for local authorities and they are required to publish details of their policies on the provision of any post-16 transport arrangements.

Some students would be eligible for a concessionary bus pass if they meet the disability criteria set out in the Local Transport Act 2000. This allows free travel on all local bus services throughout the day.

In addition, many local authorities, colleges and commercial operators have worked together to put in place local concessionary travel schemes for students to assist with the cost of using public transport to and from college, for example :-

- Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire provide discounted bus services to post 16 learners who reside 3 miles or further from Llandrillo College. Students currently fund 20% of the overall transport costs entailed in providing this service, with local authorities covering the remaining cost;

- Flintshire Council offer a discounted travel pass for young people who are aged 16-22;
- National Rail's '16-25 Railcard' provides student card holders with one third off the cost of standard priced rail tickets through the UK; and,
- Arriva's 'Student Saver' scheme provides students with at least 30% discounts on bus tickets compared with normal fares.

The Welsh Government is committed to assisting students from low-income families with the costs associated with study. We are aware that students may experience financial pressures which can distract them from their studies. In addition to the Assembly Learning Grant and the Education Maintenance Allowance, the Welsh Government provides support for those students facing hardship through the Financial Contingency Fund (FCF), which is distributed to further and higher education institutions in Wales. Each year a significant number of students in further education benefit from the support provided by the FCF.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) also provides additional financial support for learners (who are in receipt of benefits) who are undertaking training courses, which have been organised and/ or endorsed by DWP to assist the learner back into employment.

The Welsh Government is not able to take forward a national scheme that would provide concessionary travel for students and learners between 16 – 25 years of age. Such a scheme would be unaffordable in the face of the very tight spending constraints we face.



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