



Transport Strategy Division
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Transport Strategy Consultation

Children in Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Transport Strategy Consultation paper. Transport underpins the ability of children, young people and their families to access services essential to their healthy development and childhood, such as care, schooling, health, play and leisure facilities, and employment. We welcome the importance given to tackling the issue of geographical and economic inclusion, as well as sustainability and better timetabling of services. However, we think that the impact of transport policy upon children and young people's lives has not been given sufficient priority or focus.

As an overarching principle, we would emphasise the need for transport service providers to be encouraged to consult and involve children and young people and their families in developing local services. Children and young people are service users and have a specific experience of, and need for, public transport that should be given due weight in the development of services. This is particularly relevant in relation to better timetabling and establishing the most useful routes for transport.

In recent research conducted by Children in Scotland, transport (or the ability to get around more easily) was the second highest priority for young people in Dumfries and Galloway. 88% of the young people with this concern requested improvements in the public transport services, particularly the bus service. A large number of respondents wanted to see more frequent bus services on existing routes, particularly during young people's peak times, i.e., during the evenings and at weekends. In addition, many respondents complained about the complete lack of bus services in certain areas, requesting both new routes and more stops on existing routes. For example, one respondent said, "I live on a farm and no buses go anywhere near it, so you have to drive in a car to get to the bus"¹.

¹ Children in Scotland (2006). Not The Same Old Story: young people's views on what should change in Dumfries & Galloway.

Children in Scotland welcomes the fact that this Consultation recognises the transport difficulties faced by communities in remote and rural areas. However, we think that there are specific service issues that merit highlighting, along with noting the general problem. For example, transport to schools, pre-school and childcare services were not even mentioned, although this is of the utmost importance to families who often have to drive considerable distances both to their own work and to their children's schools (and/or early years and childcare providers)². The cumulative financial burden can be significant and, of course, it is disproportionately more burdensome upon the families least able to afford this expense.

Currently, within remote and rural areas, school going children and young people who live outwith a certain distance are provided with free school transport. This service needs to be sustainable in order to ensure that children and young people receive their right to an education. However, we also feel that this service should be available to under 5's who attend pre-school services³. The importance of early years education has been recognised by both the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament⁴ and transport to these services should be a priority, especially for those families eligible for free places. This problem has been recognised in the Shetlands, where a preschool transport fund has been set up to help those families in the area who face social and financial hardship. However, this should be addressed directly within the National Transport Strategy.

Other specific examples of the crucial connection (or, more accurately, *disconnection*) between transport and rural children's services can be seen in the areas of additional support for learning and in specialised health treatment. All children in Scotland, not just those located in cities and towns, have a legal right to whatever additional support for learning they need to succeed in school. However, for those children in remote and rural areas who require specialist education services and assistance, the inadequacy (or absence) of accessible, affordable transport too often remains a serious obstacle. This unfortunate situation is mirrored in the case of children and young people with chronic medical problems or the need for specialist health services. For them, too, inadequate transport too often translates into inadequate care and compromised health status.

Young people have particular problems with transport to school, training and employment in the transitional period of ages 16-18. Young people in Dumfries and Galloway, for instance, articulated a contradiction between transport discounts and driving eligibility. They noted that, whereas the under-16s benefit from reduced fares, this does not extend to those over 16, even if they are still in full-time education. Young people legally cannot learn to drive until 17, and so, stopping reduced fares at 16 causes them and their families on-going difficulties.⁵

² 'The long and winding road – Transport and childcare in rural Scotland' Children in Scotland 2000

³ 'All aboard – implementing the integrated early years strategy in rural Scotland' Children in Scotland July 2004

⁴ Education Committee Early Years Report 2006

⁵ Children in Scotland (2006). Not The Same Old Story: young people's views on what should change in Dumfries & Galloway.

These same issues are relevant in relation to play and leisure services, which have been recognised as having a significant role to play in the emotional, social and physical development of children and young people⁶. Again, one way in which the Shetlands have addressed this issue is through the provision of a play van. However, children should not have to rely upon this as a source of play. They need to be able to safely travel to local services and play groups, while young people need to be able to get to local leisure facilities easily and regularly .

Finally, even in the cities, towns and other urban areas, transport issues facing children and young people are exacerbated when they have recognised Additional Support Needs. The transport strategy needs to reflect the legal requirements already guaranteed under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act (Scotland)2004 and the Disability Equality Duty (2006). Provision for transport appropriate for people with disabilities must consider the unique needs of children and young people, as distinct from those of adults with a disability.

If you need any more information on the points raised, then please don't hesitate to contact Children in Scotland

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About Children in Scotland

Children in Scotland is Scotland's national agency for organisations and professionals working with and for children, young people and their families. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that policies, services and other provisions are of the highest possible quality and are able to meet the needs of a diverse society. Children in Scotland represents over 450 members, including all major voluntary, statutory and private children's agencies, professionals organisations, as well as many other smaller community groups and children's services.

The work of Children in Scotland encompasses extensive information, policy, research and practice development programmes. The agency works closely with MSPs, the Scottish Executive, local authorities and practitioners. It also services a number of groups such as: the Cross Party Group on Children and Young People; the National Children's Voluntary Forum; the National Early Years Forum and the Additional Support Needs Network. Children in Scotland also hosts Enquire, the advice service for additional support for learning.

⁴ Gill and Cole-Hamilton. Making the Case for Play. National Children's Bureau. 2002.