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# Consultation

**Free bus travel for people  
resident in Scotland aged  
under 19**

## Contents

<b>About this consultation and the consultation process</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Responding to this consultation .....	3
Handling your response .....	4
Next steps in the process .....	4
Comments and complaints .....	4
Scottish Government consultation process.....	4
<b>Free bus travel for people resident in Scotland aged under 19: our proposal ...</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Objectives of the scheme</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Eligible people</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Eligible services</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Delivery options</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Reimbursement</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>COVID-19 implications</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Assessing impact</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Other considerations</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Consultation questions</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM</b> .....	<b>14</b>

## About this consultation and the consultation process

The Scottish Government intends to launch a new statutory national concessionary travel scheme providing free bus travel for young people resident in Scotland up to their 19th birthday (referred to as 'under 19s' or 'under 19' throughout the rest of this consultation). We anticipate that legislation to underpin the scheme would be required to be laid in Parliament in early 2021 and the scheme would come into effect later in 2021.

The purpose of this consultation is to set out the proposed arrangements for the new scheme and options for how the scheme operates. By providing us with your views, we can establish the most appropriate way to provide free travel for young people to meet their needs and requirements.

We hope that as many members of the public as possible will respond to this consultation. In particular we would like to hear the views of people who will be impacted by these proposals including children and young people, their parents and carers and people who work with children in a paid or voluntary capacity. We appreciate that some of the consultation questions are technical but their application to free bus travel could have direct impacts on numerous individuals and organisations. As such, we would encourage everyone to respond to any or all of those areas where you feel you have a contribution to make.

This consultation is not about the design or implementation of any other concessionary travel schemes. We are running a separate engagement with young people on the future of transport more broadly, seeking their views on how we tackle transport inequalities and move us towards a more sustainable and inclusive Scottish transport network.

## Responding to this consultation

The consultation will run for six weeks and we are inviting responses by Monday 7 December.

Please respond to this consultation using the Scottish Government's consultation hub, Citizen Space (<http://consult.gov.scot>). Access and respond to this consultation online at <https://consult.gov.scot/transport-scotland/consultation-free-bus-travel-for-people-under19>. You can save and return to your responses while the consultation is still open. Please ensure that consultation responses are submitted before the closing date of Monday 7 December.

If you are unable to respond using our consultation hub, please complete the Respondent Information Form and return to:

Email: [Under19Consultation@transport.gov.scot](mailto:Under19Consultation@transport.gov.scot)

Post: Under 19 Consultation

Bus, Accessibility and Active Travel

Transport Scotland

Buchanan House

58 Port Dundas Road  
Glasgow G4 0HF

## **Handling your response**

If you respond using the consultation hub, you will be directed to the 'About You' page before submitting your response. Please indicate how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are content for your response to be published. If you ask for your response not to be published, we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise.

If you are unable to respond via Citizen Space, please complete and return the Respondent Information Form included at the end of this document.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy:  
<https://beta.gov.scot/privacy/>

## **Next steps in the process**

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public, and after we have checked that they contain no potentially defamatory material, responses will be made available to the public at <http://consult.gov.scot>. If you use the consultation hub to respond, you can receive a copy of your response via email.

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help us prepare the free bus travel scheme for people resident in Scotland aged under 19. Responses will be published where we have been given permission to do so. An analysis report will also be made available.

## **Comments and complaints**

If you have any comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to the contact address above or  
[Under19Consultation@transport.gov.scot](mailto:Under19Consultation@transport.gov.scot).

## **Scottish Government consultation process**

Consultation is an essential part of the policymaking process. It gives us the opportunity to consider your opinion and expertise on a proposed area of work.

You can find all our consultations online: <http://consult.gov.scot>. Each consultation details the issues under consideration, as well as a way for you to give us your views, either online, or by email or post.

Responses will be analysed and used as part of the decision making process, along with a range of other available information and evidence. We will publish a report of

this analysis for every consultation. Depending on the nature of the consultation exercise the responses received may:

- indicate the need for policy development or review
- inform the development of a particular policy
- help decisions to be made between alternative policy proposals
- be used to finalise legislation before it is implemented

While details of particular circumstances described in a response to a consultation exercise may usefully inform the policy process, consultation exercises cannot address individual concerns and comments, which should be directed to the relevant public body.

## Free bus travel for people resident in Scotland aged under 19: our proposal

The Scottish Government's National Transport Strategy, published in February 2020, set out our vision for a transport system that:

- reduces inequalities and advances equality of opportunity and outcome
- takes climate action to minimise the long-term impacts of transport on our climate
- delivers sustainable and inclusive economic growth
- enables a healthy, active and fit nation

The Scottish Government aims to make travel as accessible and affordable as possible. To this end, we offer a range of concessionary travel schemes for young Scots, over 60s and eligible disabled people. Further details on these national schemes are available on the Transport Scotland website (<https://www.transport.gov.scot/concessionary-travel/>).

We now intend to extend this provision by offering free bus travel to people resident in Scotland aged under 19, delivering on our commitment in the 2020 Programme for Government. This policy will be integral to realising the National Transport Strategy vision. Free bus travel will help under 19s access education, employment and leisure, particularly for low income families. It will also increase young peoples' independence and encourages a greater, long term shift to more sustainable travel by embedding the use of public transport in people's behaviour from an early age.

Extending free bus travel to all people resident in Scotland aged under 19 – approximately 770,000 young people – may also encourage families to use cars less for a range of activities such as travel to school and transport to leisure activities. This mode shift to low-emission and lower carbon public transport is central to tackling the climate emergency and likely to improve air quality in our towns and cities by reducing the number of car journeys.

To minimise additional burdens on bus operators, Local Authorities and other key stakeholders we intend to base the under 19 free bus travel scheme on the administrative processes that underpin the current National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Older and Disabled Persons. The details of this scheme can be found at: <https://www.transport.gov.scot/concessionary-travel/60plus-or-disabled/#37404>. The new scheme would replace for under 19s the bus element of the current non-statutory Young People's Scheme. That scheme would continue to operate for full time volunteers aged between 19 and 25 who volunteer for more than 30 hours a week, and to provide discounted rail and, as appropriate, ferry travel for those who qualify for it.

There are still choices about how such a scheme is designed and rolled out to ensure it is as effective and accessible as possible. We provide further information on these areas in this consultation, the options available in implementing free bus travel for under 19s and how we can mitigate any risks.

## Objectives of the scheme

A national travel concession scheme provides travel concessions to certain people travelling on eligible services and such schemes are enabled through section 40 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005. We intend to provide free travel on bus services to all residents in Scotland aged under 19.

The scheme is intended to:

- open up social, educational, employment or leisure opportunities in line with our National Transport Strategy (NTS) priorities to improve our health and wellbeing and deliver inclusive economic growth
- reduce household outgoings to aid children, particularly those living in poverty, in line with our NTS priority to reduce inequalities

By providing free bus travel to persons aged under 19, we are seeking to improve their access to education, training and employment and to embed positive sustainable travel behaviours.

Most people aged under 19 are in full time education, working or in training and need transport to travel to their school, college or place of work. Providing free bus travel widens opportunities for this group and will have a particular impact on people from lower income households who are more likely to take the bus: according to the Poverty and Inequality Commission's report *Transport and Poverty in Scotland*, 44% of people with an income of less than £10,000 travel by bus once a week or more compared to 16% of those with an income over £40,000.

## Eligible people

There are approximately 770,000 people under 19 resident in Scotland who would be eligible. Most people aged under 19 are in full time education, working or in training.

Children under five are already eligible for free bus travel as a widespread practice across the bus industry. Children and young people between five and 19 (and full time volunteers aged between 19 and 25 who volunteer for more than 30 hours a week) can travel by bus at a discounted price of two thirds of the adult single fare using the Young Scot card.

Our intention is that everyone can travel for free on eligible bus services until their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday as those under five generally do under existing commercial arrangements.

## Eligible services

Our intention is that eligible bus services would be the same as those services eligible for the existing NCTS for those aged over 60 or with a disability. The eligible services for that scheme are bus services which operate wholly within Scotland (or a service travelling from Scotland to Berwick-upon-Tweed and Carlisle or vice versa) that are:

- a local registered service in terms of section 2 of the Transport Act 1985 or

- a scheduled bus or coach service which runs at least once a week and is available and advertised to the general public

Further details on which services are eligible in the existing scheme can be found in the relevant legislation, details available here:

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/concessionary-travel/60plus-or-disabled/#37404>

### Question 1

Do you think extending national concessionary travel to include free bus travel for under 19s in Scotland will contribute towards our objectives to increase opportunities and reduce inequalities?

- Yes
- No
- Please Explain

### Question 2

Do you think there are any disadvantages to introducing free bus travel for under 19s in Scotland?

- Yes
- No
- If yes, please explain

## Delivery options

In line with our existing National Concessionary Travel Scheme we intend to facilitate access to free travel by providing smart cards to all eligible people aged between five and 18. Children under five would be able to travel free without identification, in line with current general commercial practice. Eligible people would be able to board and travel for free on eligible bus services on presentation of a valid travel card.

We have considered various options around how to establish the scheme, including whether to establish a scheme with or without cards (for example where some or all 5-18 year olds could board without needing to present a card). However, a card-based scheme would be more effective in managing payments, including minimising fraud, by allowing us to monitor anonymised card usage data. It would also allow us to analyse journey patterns and usage to evaluate the impact of the scheme on our objectives and adjust it in the future.

The existing concessionary travel privacy policy is available to read here:

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/concessionary-travel/60plus-or-disabled/#55520>. This details how we currently use, store and share (for example with the National



Entitlement Card Programme Office, local authorities and, in limited circumstances, with the police) personal information that we hold in connection with our national concessionary travel schemes. We will review the safeguards and data privacy arrangements in the existing NCTS to see which arrangements may be appropriate for the new scheme.

Providing nationwide free bus travel to people under 19 requires us to carefully consider the implications for child safety. We are considering setting an age below which access to the scheme would have to be authorised by parents or guardians. For example, Transport for London's Zip Oyster scheme for children under 16 requires parents to create an online account and apply for the card on their child's behalf.

### Question 3

Should a smart card, such as the widely used Young Scot card, be used to establish eligibility for free bus access?

- Yes
- No
- Please explain

### Question 4

Should children under a certain age need to have their application for a travel card approved by a parent or guardian?

- Yes
- No
- Please explain

### Question 5

If you answered 'yes' to question 4, at what age should parental or guardian approval be required?

## Reimbursement

Bus operators will be reimbursed for carrying passengers under this scheme. We envisage that this will be done in a similar way to that in which operators are reimbursed for journeys made in the existing NCTS. This could involve calculation on the basis of an adult single fare for each eligible journey, weighted to take account of a range of factors specific to the anticipated travel patterns of under 19s using the scheme and the fares which they would pay were the scheme not in place.

We will engage with key stakeholders on how to set reimbursement rates and what levels those would be. We intend that the reimbursement rate is subject to a similar 'no better, no worse off' aim as exists in the scheme for over 60s and eligible disabled people and that we would reimburse only for journeys undertaken by 5-18 year olds (inclusive) since, as set out earlier, children under five already generally receive free travel without reimbursement.

We intend to review the impact of the scheme and usage after the first year.

## COVID-19 implications

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound effect on travel patterns and bus usage with demand considerably reduced during lockdown and capacity constrained since then by physical distancing requirements.

It is difficult to predict the status of the pandemic and the context for public transport at the point this scheme is introduced in 2021. Our intention is to implement free bus travel for under 19s in 2021 notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic. The course of the pandemic may have consequences for the way in which we roll out the scheme and we may need to adjust some elements of implementation when we have a clearer view of the circumstances at that time.

## Assessing impact

We are committed to assessing the impact of our new under 19s free bus travel proposals on a wide range of stakeholder groups across Scotland and local communities. This consultation will help us assess the impact of the scheme including in relation to equalities, business and regulation, child rights and wellbeing. For example your views will inform us about the likely impact of our policy on our duty to advance equality, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations for people who share certain protected characteristics such as:

- age
- disability
- sex
- gender reassignment
- sexual orientation
- race and religion or belief
- pregnancy and maternity

We will take a robust evidence based approach to the development of our impact assessments and will work in close consultation with key stakeholders and representatives of particular groups that are likely to be impacted.

### **Question 6**

Are there any likely impacts the proposals contained within this Consultation may have on particular groups of people, with reference to the 'protected characteristics' listed above? Please be as specific as possible.

### **Question 7**

Do you think the proposals contained within this Consultation may have any additional implications on the rights, wellbeing and safety of children and young people that is not picked up above?

### **Question 8**

Do you think the proposals contained in this Consultation are likely to increase or reduce the costs and burdens for bus companies, public bodies, third sector organisations or businesses? Please be as specific as possible.

## **Other considerations**

That is the end of our questions but we invite comments on any other issues not raised elsewhere in this consultation.

### **Question 9**

Are there any other issues you wish to raise which are not covered in the points or questions above?

## Consultation questions

Number	Consultation question
1	<p>Do you think extending national concessionary travel to include free bus travel for under 19s in Scotland will contribute towards our objectives to increase opportunities and reduce inequalities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> <li>• Please Explain</li> </ul>
2	<p>Do you think there are any disadvantages to introducing free bus travel for under 19s in Scotland?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> <li>• If yes, please explain</li> </ul>
3	<p>Should a smart card, such as the widely used Young Scot card, be used to establish eligibility for free bus access?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> <li>• Please explain</li> </ul>
4	<p>Should children under a certain age need to have their application for a travel card approved by a parent or guardian?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> <li>• Please explain</li> </ul>
5	<p>If you answered 'yes' to question 4, at what age should parental or guardian approval be required?</p>
6	<p>Are there any likely impacts the proposals contained within this Consultation may have on particular groups of people, with reference to the 'protected characteristics' listed above? Please be as specific as possible.</p>
7	<p>Do you think the proposals contained within this Consultation may have any additional implications on the</p>

Number	Consultation question
	rights, wellbeing and safety of children and young people that is not picked up above?
8	Do you think the proposals contained in this Consultation are likely to increase or reduce the costs and burdens for bus companies, public bodies, third sector organisations or businesses? Please be as specific as possible.
9	Are there any other issues you wish to raise which are not covered in the points or questions above?

## Free bus travel for people resident in Scotland aged under 19

### RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

**Please note this form must be completed and returned with your response.** To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy: <https://beta.gov.scot/privacy/>

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
- Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

Phone number

Address

Postcode

Email

We would like to hear the views of people who will be impacted by these proposals including children and young people, their parents and carers and people who work with children in a paid or voluntary capacity. To help us understand more about you, are you:

- Under 19 years old
- The parent or carer of someone under 19 years old
- Working or volunteering with people under age 19 (for example as a teacher, educator or social worker)

- None of the above

We would also like to know how often you normally use buses (i.e. prior to the pandemic):

- I regularly use buses (daily or weekly)
- I sometimes use buses (for example once a month)
- I very occasionally use buses (for example once or twice a year)
- I never use buses

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference.

- Publish response with name
- Publish response only (without name)
- Do not publish response

Information for organisations: The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published. If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- Yes
- No



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