Transport Provision and Partnership Review – Good Practice Guide

April 2009

Of interest to Local Authorities, local Learning and Skills Councils, Further Education Colleges (FECs), Schools with sixth forms, Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) offering Further Education provision, Transport Authorities, any organisation providing guidance to existing or prospective learners and any other interested party.
For information
Contents

Introduction 1
Providing a comprehensive description of education and training providers 17
Covering the full range of transport services available 26
Describing the financial support available 42
Providing for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities 58
Ensuring transport is not a major barrier to participation and choice 75
Consulting with partners 83
Other aspects of good practice 90
Concluding thoughts on good practice 95
Overview

This Good Practice Guide is a product of the 2008 Transport Provision and Partnership Review commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The Review as a whole provides an assessment of the extent to which the Transport Policy Statements produced by Local Authorities (with their Post-16 Transport Partnerships) meet the requirements set out in legislation.

The purpose of the Good Practice Guide is to illustrate how this statutory duty is being met and exceeded in practice. The intention is to highlight effective approaches so that they may be adopted more widely, to the benefit of learners, transport providers and funders.

The information from this guide comes largely from interviews with Local Authorities across England. Good practices were selected from wider survey work conducted during the Review and from those Local Authorities that put themselves forward as exemplars. Our sincere thanks go to the many who contributed to our surveys. Responsibility for the selection of examples and how they are presented rests with the authors alone.

Context

The good practice that exists, and the selection that has been made for this guide, needs to be understood in the context of the funding, legislation and LSC guidance to Local Authorities that lies behind it.

The Post-16 Transport Partnership Fund

Much of the practice described here is funded wholly or in part by the Local Authority Post-16 Transport Partnership Fund, administered by the LSC. The Fund exists to support Post-16 Transport Partnerships in testing strategic and innovative transport solutions for learners of sixth form age. A small proportion of the funding may be spent on running the Partnership, but the significant majority of funding is meant to support activity that will directly benefit learners. The Post-16 Transport Partnership Fund can also be used to support travel training for learners in Years 10 and 11 upwards.

The legislative duty

Given the focus of the 2008 Review on compliance with the statutory duty on Local Authorities to provide transport services and support to learners, this Good Practice Guide is similarly focussed on how the letter and spirit of the law is being met. The legislation requires that transport support for sixth form learners is provided and specified in a Transport Policy Statement. It reads:

The statement shall specify the arrangements for the provision of transport or otherwise that the authority consider it necessary to make for facilitating the attendance of persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.

It does not however dictate what type or level of support should be made available, although clearly improved provision is the ultimate goal. The Guide therefore includes examples of innovative or particularly effective practices that address both the:

- process of preparing a Transport Policy Statement, or
- the actual provision that meets the demand of learners in an effective, efficient or innovative way.

A more specific description of aspects covered by the legislative duty and the types of good practice sought are in the table opposite.

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1 The Full Review was completed for LSC in January 2009.
2 Section 509 of the 1996 Education Act and subsequent amendments.
3 LA Transport support guidance 2008/09 (LSC).
4 Section 509AA: 2002 Education Act.
### Types of good practice sought

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of the legislative duty</th>
<th>Types of good practice sought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Coverage of the full range of education and training providers to which the statutory duty on</td>
<td>Transport Policy Statements and provision that explicitly include the full range of relevant institutions – schools, colleges and (where appropriate) LSC-funded provision in HE institutions and other providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learner transport services and travel support applies, for learners of sixth form age</td>
<td>Signposting to additional provision as part of a comprehensive approach (i.e. additional to the free or subsidised provision offered by the Local Authority)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Coverage of a range of transport services for</td>
<td>Transport Policy Statements that describe the full range of transport services available to learners, so they would easily understand what is available at the institutions of their choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learners of sixth form age travelling from home to</td>
<td>Innovative/successful methods of communicating the full range of transport services available to learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>places of education and training (excluding learners with learning difficulties and disabilities</td>
<td>Exemplars of how a full ‘package’ of transport services has been made available to learners, either through comprehensive core public transport arrangements, or innovative and joined-up special provision by learning institutions, or a combination of these</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[LLDD])</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Coverage of a range travel support, in the form of concessions or financial assistance</td>
<td>Transport Policy Statements that describe the full range of travel support available to learners, so they would easily understand what is available at the institutions of their choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>towards travelling expenses, that are available for learners of sixth form age (excluding</td>
<td>Examples of innovative and/or particularly effective practice where additional financial resources have been used to reduce travelling expenses for learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLDD)</td>
<td>Examples of innovative and/or particularly effective practice which has resulted in commercial transport providers offering travel concessions to learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Provision for facilitating the attendance of</td>
<td>Transport Policy Statements that have found a particularly clear and effective means of developing and communicating provision for LLDD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LLDD)</td>
<td>Examples of innovative and/or particularly effective forms of provision for LLDD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Arrangements that are no less favourable for</td>
<td>Transport Policy Statements and actual provision that explicitly aim for an equitable level of support for learners, regardless of their choice of place of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learners with LLDD attending different institutions within the Local Authority area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Having regard to the needs of learners so that transport is not a major barrier to their</td>
<td>Effective appeals and complaints processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participation in education or their choice of a place of learning (excluding LLDD)</td>
<td>Transport Policy Statements that deal clearly and effectively with the issue of travel time and distance for learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transport Policy Statements and provision that effectively deal with cross-boundary travel support covering more than one Local Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examples of where the requirements for learners to travel has been reduced; e.g. through timetabling arrangements or residential provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Policy and provision that is informed by</td>
<td>Examples of particularly effective or innovative Local Authority Post-16 Transport Partnerships and partnership working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consultation with the Local Authority’s partners</td>
<td>Particularly effective/innovative use of the LSC-provided Post-16 Transport Partnership Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effective examples of learning institutions working together</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 1: Guide to the type of good practice sought

A. Coverage of the full range of education and training providers to which the statutory duty on learner transport services and travel support applies, for learners of sixth form age.

B. Coverage of a range of transport services for learners of sixth form age travelling from home to places of education and training (excluding learners with learning difficulties and disabilities [LLDD]).

C. Coverage of a range travel support, in the form of concessions or financial assistance towards travelling expenses, that are available for learners of sixth form age (excluding LLDD).

D. Provision for facilitating the attendance of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LLDD).

E. Arrangements that are no less favourable for learners with LLDD attending different institutions within the Local Authority area.

F. Having regard to the needs of learners so that transport is not a major barrier to their participation in education or their choice of a place of learning (excluding LLDD).

G. Policy and provision that is informed by consultation with the Local Authority’s partners.
LSC guidance to Local Authorities

The LSC issues guidance to Local Authorities pursuant to its power under section 509AB(5) of the Education Act 1996. Local Authorities are required to have regard to this guidance in preparing their Transport Policy Statements under section 509AA of the Act. The guidance summarises the statutory provision. It sets out what the format of the Policy Statement should be and the matters to which the Local Authority should have regard in preparing its statement. It also sets out a number of factors which the Policy Statement should take into account. The purpose of the Guidance is not to give Local Authorities a legal interpretation of the statutory requirements set out in the legislation.

In this context, good practice not only meets but will also often exceed the legislative duty. It involves the provision of information, advice and guidance for learners, and the development of imaginative and innovative solutions that address identified transport needs, but which don’t depend upon the direct funding of transport provision.

Review findings

Through the wider review, Local Authorities and partners identify some clear challenges and priorities for improvement. The selection of practices in the guide favours those which reflect these priorities:

Greater consistency

The support available to learners varies considerably from area to area and even from institution to institution, creating a ‘postcode lottery’ and unequal opportunities to access learning.

In particular, the process of assessing learners with LLDD and the level of support offered are thought to differ greatly across different local areas. Solutions to this are thought to lie mainly with a clearer explanation or interpretation of the legal requirement, and the development of more consistent standards of actual provision from place-to-place. Individually, Local Authorities have addressed this by encouraging standard frameworks for transport provision and collectively, the notion of a ‘national minimum standard’ has been promoted by the Rural 14–19 Access to Learning Group of Local Authorities.

Better communication of provision to learners through improved Transport Policy Statements

There is concern about the way in which Transport Policy Statements are prepared and presented and hence their effectiveness in communicating provision and entitlements to learners (this is linked to a concern about the adequacy of the underlying legislation, and hence the LSC guidance, for establishing standards of provision). This guide includes examples of how Local Authorities have used their partnerships to coordinate information, and how they have employed websites, publications and technologies such as mobile phones to inform learners of what is available.

Responding positively to the 14–19 reforms

The impending 14–19 reforms are seen as introducing major new strains on current transport provision. The present arrangements, although just about able to cope with current demands, will be strained to the limits by an expected increase in the level and complexity of learner travel, and changes to the funding regimes. Some Local Authorities and Post-16 Transport Partnerships are anticipating these reforms, including by reviewing transport routes and timetabling and by encouraging new site-to-site shuttle services.

Improving the quality or level of actual provision

Particularly with the greater challenges posed by impending reforms, the contributors to the wider review highlighted the importance of developing solutions that reduce the demand for travel or provide more efficient and innovative ways of meeting this demand. There is also an interest in nurturing good practice that demonstrates how the needs of particular groups especially post-18 learners with and without special needs, and also young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) are being met effectively. There are abundant examples of how Independent Travel Training has been used to reduce the need for special (and very expensive) provision and there are also some emerging examples of how learner transport, in general, is being brought more within mainstream transport planning and provision.

Layout of the Guide

In keeping with the focus on the legislative duty, the following sections give a guide to the types of good practice occurring under various aspects of the law. Given that Local Authorities are often able to demonstrate good work under several aspects, the text is a blend of examples from numerous parts of the country. In addition, cases that give a particularly strong illustration of key points are included in boxes within the text.

5 For the sake of clarity, this wording is provided by the LSC. Further to this the LSC adds that “It would not be appropriate for the LSC to attempt to provide Local Authorities with legal advice as to whether their Transport Policy Statements meet their obligations under the legislation. It is a matter for a Local Authority to take their own legal advice to ensure it complies with its statutory duties. The LSC is also mindful of the fact that it has powers under the Learning and Skills Council for England (Supplementary Functions) Order 2007 in relation to investigating and resolving complaints about Local Authorities’ exercise of their functions in respect of the provision of transport for post-16 learners. Provision of legal advice to Local Authorities could compromise the independence of the LSC in the exercise of these powers”

6 The work of the group is described in the 2007 publication Rural Transport – Long Distance Learners? Transport for Teenage learners in Rural Areas.
Providing a comprehensive description of education and training providers

17 Ideally, the Transport Policy Statement should provide a comprehensive account of all the learning and training centres in the authority area where learner travel is supported, so that a learner will find information on whichever institution they are interested in. In the main, Local Authorities endeavour to give as much information as possible and to describe different transport policies at schools and FE colleges in their Transport Policy Statement. However, a balance needs to be struck between comprehensiveness and not making the Transport Policy Statement too unwieldy. Other means of communicating the detailed arrangements for transport support are therefore employed.

Signposting

18 The majority of Transport Policy Statements tend to signpost readers to the relevant website or other sources of information from individual institutions. This is particularly effective in situations where the arrangements are decentralised and there is a greater complexity of provision than can sensibly be captured in a single document.

19 The main barrier encountered by authorities attempting a comprehensive description is obtaining accurate and timely information from education providers. The effectiveness of the Post-16 Transport Partnership or other arrangements for effective communication between the Local Authority and learning centres is important in this respect (see later section on consultation). Local Authorities clearly have a coordinating role here and some have gone beyond that to offer, for example, funding for colleges to produce travel plans.

20 Websites with web-links to education and transport providers are an effective way of providing up-to-date information and this practice is much in evidence. For example, Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council developed a Student Travel Website as a joint project. This has the added advantage of accessibility for a wider audience, including learners with learning difficulties and disabilities living in other areas. The website includes information on Independent Travel Training programmes, various videos and recordings. During the design of the website, teachers, parents and learners were all consulted to ensure the information available on the website was appropriate and helpful.

21 Some authorities have gone beyond this, sending out information leaflets to post-16 learners. To use Leicestershire as an example again, Leicestershire County Council sends out a leaflet to all learners in Year 11, contained within a Connexions pack. This is an example of where joint working makes it cost-effective and possible to raise awareness of transport support as the costs are shared. In the leaflet, learners are given information on transport support and contacts. They are made fully aware from an early stage that post-16 transport for learners is not free and they can therefore start thinking about arrangements to attend the most suitable college. This has helped to reduce the number of parental and learner complaints at the start of each academic year regarding transport costs.

Bringing institutions together

22 Hampshire provides an example of how a fairly complex array of education providers can be included within the Transport Policy Statement. Hampshire covers a large area, including both urban and rural parts and also borders with a number of different authorities. Therefore it is appropriate for the colleges to arrange their own transport provision with guidance and coordination from the Local Authority. The arrangements for each institution are clearly set out in the Transport Policy Statement, including for some providers the travel times and distances and associated fares.

23 In Hampshire, all colleges sit on the partnership which encourages a good working relationship between the authority and the learning providers. There are regular meetings every term with FE providers, including higher education, schools with sixth forms, and LSC and Connexions representatives to discuss transport issues. Transport services have been outsourced from the Local Authority to a private contractor, the Local Authority delegates funding to each college dependent on the numbers of learners on roll. This model of decentralised transport provision and support is felt to be appropriate in a unitary authority of Hampshire’s size and there is good input and engagement from the learning providers. The process works well because there is a virtual group where best practice is shared, issues and ideas discussed. The Local Authority is responsible for writing the Transport Policy Statement and dividing up the funding which takes the administrative burden away from learning providers, whilst leaving the support of individual learners to the schools and colleges who have the best understanding of learner needs.
Standardising travel support arrangements across institutions

24 Standard arrangements across places of learning obviously make the process of communicating these arrangements through a Transport Policy Statement easier. One example of this is the London Boroughs, where the free travel provided to learners by Transport for London obviates the need for detailed descriptions. Such areas tend to regard transport provision as self-evident and do not therefore attempt to set out the arrangements for each place of learning.

But other authorities, without free travel schemes, have also tried to present streamlined arrangements to learners by encouraging a standard approach. The work of Dorset in this respect is highlighted here as a boxed example.

Dorset: Introducing a standard travel framework across learning providers

Dorset, as part of the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Collaborative Transport to Learning Partnership, provides an example of coverage of a range of education and training providers. Dorset have developed a pro forma which is issued to all institutions in order to group the various transport and learner support policies under common themes to ensure the information presented is transparent. They are working towards a standard framework which will draw all education and training institutions into a common system for provision.

Source: SQW; best practice interviews
Covering the full range of transport services available

Transport Policy Statements are meant to set out a comprehensive account of the transport support available, as well as giving a full account of relevant places of learning. Each Local Authority is required to achieve this in similar ways to those described above for specifying local transport policy.

- A standard approach makes it easier to give a full account of the transport support available to learners.
- Areas with decentralised and complex arrangements have to work harder to set out provision fully, and are doing so by signposting web pages and web-links in the Transport Policy Statement.
- Imaginative use is being made of a variety of media and technologies for getting information out to learners.

**Dedicated websites**

Websites are a common means of providing a greater and more responsive form of information than through the Transport Policy Statement alone. Some of these provide a highly sophisticated service to learners. **South Tyneside** has set up a website which is run by the Passenger Transport Authority (NEXUS) and is called how2get2. The website is well used by learners and providers and is user-friendly, providing information on the cost of tickets and concessionary fares which are available to learners, and a journey planner. Further information on the services and concessionary fare schemes available from other transport providers in the region can be obtained via web-links. **Surrey** provides another good example, presented in the following box:

**Surrey: Communicating transport support to young people**

The Surrey Student Post-16 Transport Partnership launched a website in October 2004 dedicated to providing information on transport support and provision for post-16 learners living in Surrey. The website contains information on travel discounts and concessionary fares, timetables and transport providers, as well as information on the various support funds that are in operation (Education Maintenance Allowance, Student Fare Cards discretionary support funds, and SEN). The website also includes details of other transport schemes run through the partnership e.g. the Wheel 2 Learn Scheme and Independent Travel Training.

The website has been successful in making local transport policy more accessible to young people. Legislation contained within the Transport Policy Statement is presented to learners in a user-friendly and easy to digest way. Learners, Connexions, the LSC and other organisations were consulted in the early stages to decide upon useful content and appropriate presentation of information for the target group.

The website is well used by learners and parents alike, due in part to the extensive promotional activities that have taken place through individual colleges and local events, such as those run by Connexions. User surveys have been undertaken and feedback from these has been largely positive and has shown that learners using the website are well informed about transport support available to them.

Source: SQW, best practice interviews

**Complementing the Transport Policy Statement with other information sources**

Despite the higher costs and perhaps greater challenge in remaining up-to-date, some authorities find it valuable to publish and distribute transport information.

In **Staffordshire** for example, the Transport Policy Statement is converted into a booklet for learners. It is designed with their feedback and through consultation with other partners. Recent booklets feature photos of local learners and venues, done at minimal costs. This year there will be a post-16 media design coursework project to design the information booklet and to improve the website. By making learner-designed booklets, the partnership can ensure the information is presented in a user-friendly and appealing way. The booklets are distributed at college open days, and are also sent directly to learners. They are also made available in schools and colleges. Other forms of publicity include posters in libraries, schools and colleges, and even placed alongside exam results, where learners will be gathering and thinking about their future choices.

The **Stockton on Tees** Post-16 Transport Partnership is currently setting up a mobile phone information service. The transport department is leading on developing this service, with the intention that timetable information will be available by text. Extra funding was required but the necessary software and extra top-up funding from the Post-16 Transport Partnership Fund was secured for this purpose. The mobile phone service is also expected to help with Independent Travel Training and LLDD will be able to phone or text when in difficulty or to get timetable information.

**Getting out to learners and parents**

**Calderdale** also provides a booklet and a website to complement the information available in the Transport Policy Statement. Their Post-16 booklet provides information on transport arrangements as well as Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), financial assistance, and transport and it is made available at colleges and sixth forms. In addition, members of the Calderdale Post-16 Transport Partnership attend Year 11 parents’ evenings to raise awareness of transport provision and options.
Developing public transport to suit learners

32 There are numerous examples of Local Authorities working effectively with public transport operators to develop travel options particularly suited to learners.

33 Essex has brought about changes to bus timetables and the creation of new bus stops. They work in partnership with the Essex bus network to effect changes where problems with buses are identified. The resulting schemes are publicised through a website 'Get on the Move', which contains news about the partnership and is maintained by the council. There is also a dedicated travel training website.

34 In Torbay the bus operator has agreed to expand their network for learners coming into the college from outside the Torbay area as well and these routes are now part of the core public transport service. This is said to have resulted in an improved and more inclusive approach to transport. The Council did consider other transport services but due to the rural nature of the area, buses are really the only option, especially as the main college (which accounts for 65% of all post-16 enrolments) was moved from the city centre to the outskirts meaning a lot of learners could no longer walk to college.

35 When the main college in Torbay relocated to the outskirts of one of the town centres, it was necessary for the Local Authority to review the transport arrangements for 11-16 and post-16 learners. Walking to college was no longer a viable option for many learners due to the new out of town location. The Local Authority worked with the public bus operator to negotiate an expansion of the public bus network in order to serve the new college site because there were no existing bus routes in the immediate vicinity. These additional services are now part of the public transport network and are also accessed by learners from outside of the Local Authority area. As part of the new arrangements, Torbay Council negotiated a 'Bronzerider Bus Pass' that enables all learners aged 11-18 to travel anywhere on the Stagecoach bus network all day (see the boxed text 'Torbay: Bronzerider Bus Pass Scheme' further on for details).

36 In North Lincolnshire the majority of learners travel to college on the public service bus network, mostly on commercial services run by local operators. Some services are subsidised by the council in order to provide access to college that would otherwise not be available. The authority has a close working relationship with operators to ensure that a cost effective service is delivered. There are some remote rural areas in North Lincolnshire that have no public transport, The authority provides link services to the network for learners from some such areas, where possible using vehicles that are then used in the home to school transport service.

Beyond the bus: provision in less accessible areas

37 Especially in the more rural parts of England, where public transport infrastructure is less developed, Local Authorities are coordinating, encouraging and providing a range of other options for learners.

38 In Northumberland for example, the public bus network serves only a very small area of the county. The Post-16 Transport Partnership has therefore worked to provide its own designated bus routes as well as put in place options for taxis and trains. Learners are able to access these services for free providing that they are attending their closest institution and that they are travelling more than three miles from their home. Learners can find out about the transport services and transport support available from the schools admissions teams, the council website, from an information book sent to all parents, and from Connexions.

Bespoke transport solutions

39 The practice of setting up independent transport services (usually buses) just for learners is much in evidence in rural areas, although the results are mixed. The provision clearly meets a need that is not catered for by commercial bus routes, but there appears to be a common pattern whereby use of the service is high at the start of the year, but then drops considerably as learners get cars or make other arrangements. Flexible and efficient provision become paramount and to this end smaller vehicles have been used (e.g. in Stockton on Tees), but this remains a difficult solution to achieve cost effectively.

40 The use of taxis is also evident (see later section on provision for LLDD) although this is regarded as a practice of last resort, in order to meet very specific needs. The good practice available on this topic is more about how partnerships are avoiding the need to use taxis, through travel training schemes for example.

41 There are interesting examples of transport provision beyond the conventional means of travel. A moped-loan scheme has been set up in one area, and in another, learners have been linked into an existing Wheels-to-Work initiative. Sutton has been involved in the Gear Up Cycling scheme which was introduced in 2008-09 to encourage greater use of bikes by learners. It provides cycling training sessions for all abilities, including LLDD. This is funded through the Post-16 Transport Partnership Fund and works with sixth forms and one of the colleges for learners aged 16-19 (or up to 25 if the learner started their course prior to age 19).
Describing the financial support available

42 Transport Policy Statements should make it clear to learners what they will need to pay for travel and what forms of financial assistance are available. Outside of the London Boroughs with a free-travel scheme, most learners have to pay something towards their travel and so the practices highlighted here tend to be about how this is organised and communicated. Typically, extra support is available for learners on particularly low incomes so this provides another area where developing practices are evident.

Reduced fare permits (concessionary pass)

43 A fairly common solution is to offer learners a (usually free) permit or pass which entitles them to reduced fares on public transport.

Discounted travel passes

44 Also common is the use of travel passes which learners may purchase, which then entitles them to travel on public transport without paying a fare.

In Cheshire for example, all learners need to provide some contribution to transport – generally a subsidised fee of £400. This provides learners with a transport pass that can be used for buses and trains, and for travel to their closest institution depending on the course. The pass does not cover travel between institutions. The local arrangement is that inter-site transport is the responsibility of the colleges, however Cheshire recognise that the introduction of 14-19 diplomas may require a change in this policy.

Providing choice and flexibility with round-the-clock learner transport support

48 Rather than providing support for a single journey between home and learning, at set times, authorities have been increasingly adopting a more flexible approach, providing a form of transport support that applies at any time. This suits the way in which learners currently study and live and the increasingly varied travel patterns that will result from the 14-19 reforms.

49 In Calderdale for example, school cards were previously used for post-16 learners, but it was decided this was not suitable as it was too restrictive. In order to promote choice the School Plus Metro card was introduced. This offers travel seven days a week anywhere in West Yorkshire. Other solutions are available for those going further afield.

50 Slough offers a concessionary bus fare for learners aged between 16-18, resident in Slough and in full-time education. The pass is not restricted to the college timetable and can be used 24 hours, seven days a week, thereby encouraging flexible use. The actual bus pass is free and is not means-tested. Learners can apply for the bus pass by downloading the form from the Council website, or picking it up from their learning institution. Due to restricted funds, there is a finite number of passes available and applications are dealt with on a first-come-first-served basis. The bus pass has been extended to trains but currently only for certain journeys due to the more complicated fare policies.

The Torbay ‘Bronzerider Bus Pass’ allows learners to travel anywhere on the Stagecoach bus network all day, evenings, weekends and school holidays. Before this scheme, the Local Authority put on their own contract buses but these were too costly and did not meet the needs of the learners. The Local Authority already had good working relationships with the transport operator and it therefore made sense to build on the existing public bus network and for the Local Authority to subsidise routes by providing bus passes at a £300 charge to the learner.

The Local Authority is developing solutions for the 14-19 agenda and the requirement to move learners between institutions. At present, 14-19 diploma learners are required to travel to a different institution on Tuesdays and Thursdays only. Given the BronzeRider bus pass was already in place, the Local Authority quickly agreed with Stagecoach to provide restricted bus passes for these particular days to learners at a subsidised cost.

Source: SQW, best practice interviews
Overcoming the technical challenges

The introduction of travel passes in an area with multiple transport operators requires careful negotiation but it also presents technical difficulties. Devon offers an example of an authority that has overcome these difficulties to introduce a smart card system. The Local Authority invested funding into ticketing machines that have enabled Devon as part of a bigger sustainability agenda to direct County Council funding and leverage funds into infrastructure improvements. This has not only set up a system that will benefit post-16 learners, but also school children and travel to work initiatives. The scheme was established through a competitive bidding process.

Additional support for low income families

Northamptonshire provide reduced travel expenses for post-16 learners. Across all providers in the area, transport is free for low income families. Low income is measured by Free School Meals (FSM) criteria and the transport team work closely with FSM colleagues to promote greater entitlement to transport rights. At the moment, the maximum working tax credits criterion is not used for post-16 transport (but is for pre-16) which can cause some problems for learners moving into post-16 learning.

Distance criteria

Previous examples illustrate how subsidised travel schemes are usually only available to those beyond a certain distance from their place of learning: typically over three miles.

Involving learners

In some cases, Local Authorities have directly involved learners in planning transport arrangements. Redcar and Cleveland for example invited learners onto the partnership, who then suggested a number of ways to improve transport provision and support, including the extension of times for which the half fare bus pass could be used as some courses were not finishing until late in the evening. Through the partnership, the colleges got in touch with transport providers and allowed a special permit to be given to learners as an extension of their bus pass, for use after 6.30pm.
Independent Travel Training

Independent Travel Training (ITT) schemes dominate the body of good practice that has been developed to provide transport support to learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LLDD).

Travel buddy schemes

Working in partnership with North Devon College, the Local Authority in Devon has put in place an ITT scheme incorporating a buddy system. This links LLDD with other learners, to help the former travel from home to college independently. The effect has been to reduce expenditure on taxis, previously the default option for transporting LLDD from home to college, and it has developed transferable life skills in both LLDD and mainstream learners.

The Ealing ITT scheme also runs a travel buddy scheme which, following a successful pilot, will be expanded in 2009. The scheme employs learners engaged in social care courses (or similar) who are paid the minimum wage to travel with LLDD so they will also benefit from the experience. Ealing used Post-16 Transport Partnership Funding to commission an ITT service from Mencap to support LLDD travel from home to place of learning. Mencap is a well known UK charity providing support to people with a learning disability and their families, and consequently the organisation has well-established links with learning providers and is better placed than the Local Authority to build good rapport with family carers.

Early intervention: independent travel training in preparation for further education

In Devon, the Local Authority’s approach is to train LLDD early, in Years 10 and 11, thus preparing individuals for the transition from special school to further education. The partnership also funds training for LLDD over the age of 16 who are under the care of adult services to assist these learners in independent travel.

Gloucestershire has developed an ITT scheme called LIFT which has expanded over recent years. They are now in the process of piloting a spin-off programme – LIFT Off – which aims to help learners in Year 11 to become confident travelling on public transport so need less support when they progress onto further education and will be ready to use a bus pass. The scheme is run by one of the local colleges and currently relies on Local Authority funding; however, the partnership is investigating ways to mainstream this scheme.

As a small authority, North Lincolnshire work very closely with their partners, including the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Coordinators at the schools in the district. As learners approach the end of compulsory education, the Local Authority will contact the Coordinators and request information on these individuals and their plans for transport. This individualised and early intervention allows for the most appropriate transport support to be organised well before these learners move onto further education.

London Boroughs

Since the introduction of free travel passes by Transport for London, much of the transport support offered to post-16 learners in London Boroughs is focused on special schools and assisting LLDD to become more independent through travel training. Haringey for example runs recognised courses for ITT and trains staff in order to run the scheme effectively.
More generally in supporting LLDD with transport provision, there is a move away from taxis and contract buses. In Sutton for example, there is a move towards other solutions such as pick-up points (i.e. dedicated routes which involve learners walking to pick-up points and accessing shared transport there). There is currently a limit as to what cost-savings can be made through ITT because of the remaining need to transport some learners who are not able or are not suitable to access independent travel training.

In Hillingdon, ITT is the main recipient of the Post-16 Transport Partnership Funding and is regarded as a great success locally. Travel training had previously been offered and the process towards a new scheme began through consultation with other Local Authorities including presentations of progress and best practice in other areas. It was decided by the Post-16 Transport Partnership that ITT was the greatest need in the local area and Post-16 Transport Partnership funding was directed to this purpose.

Mainstreaming and sustainability

In order to make the Post-16 Transport Partnership funding more sustainable and long term, the Post-16 Transport Partnership in Leicester decided to fund teacher training for independent travel. The ITT programme in Leicester has been very successful and there has been a good success rate in helping a number of LLDD become independent bus users. The scheme has resulted in increased confidence amongst learners and helping families understand the importance of independent travel. Providing information and support to families is one area that requires a long term strategy in order to ensure continued engagement and commitment from family carers.

In Newham, all of the Post-16 Transport Partnership Funding is used for ITT. There has been extra funding from elsewhere in the Local Authority which was drawn on to help expand the scheme but this was a one-off contribution and will not be continued. The long-term future of the scheme is tied up with transport plans for the whole authority. If partnership funding is to be discontinued they may be able to maintain the scheme in its existing form but would not be able to take new learners. Newham has appointed a management consultancy to organise transport services more effectively and ITT needs to remain a critical part of this. If the necessary cost-savings can be made then Newham will expand to meet the needs of all LLDD because ultimately, in the long run, increased independent travel will save the Local Authority high additional transport costs.

The ITT scheme in Plymouth has been running for three years and the Post-16 Transport Partnership are currently putting in place measures to mainstream the scheme, funded through the council rather than relying on partnership funding.

Sunderland: Working in Partnership to Support Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities

In Tyne and Wear, the five local Post-16 Transport Partnerships came together to unite as one partnership to improve transport support for LLDD. Sunderland and the other partnerships saw partnership working as the best way to improve services and achieve value for money. Partnership funding is now pooled and expenditure is focused on the development of a sustainable Independent Travel Training Scheme (PITT) that helps achieve the Every Child Matters outcomes. The PITT scheme currently employs a manager, area co-ordinator and three travel trainers. All staff members are supported by intensive training programmes, booklets and a DVD that is also being extended for parental use. A dedicated travel training area is located within schools and is used by travel trainers to train on Static Bus Stops; Pelican, Puffin and Zebra crossings; Belicia Beacons; pavement settings and shortly to a Metro Platform and Ticket Machine (Tyne and Wear’s Light railway system). Enhancements to the scheme currently in progress are a website (to be available shortly) and new/updated DVD and, finance permitting, a second travel training area may be established.

Given the potential for funding cuts in the future, the partnership has developed a consultancy package to support the sustainability of the scheme. Travel advisers charge to undertake audits of transport provision in other Local Authorities and identify suitability for independent travel training schemes. This consultancy has been taken up by an individual school and a local authority area.
The sustainability of the scheme was considered early on and the individual authorities ring fenced any savings made from young people travelling independently back into the partnership and scheme. Since neither the scheme nor the partnership could be deemed a legal entity in their own right, at this stage the lead Local Authority of Tyneside has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with a school that is able to support the scheme. Funding is predominantly sourced from the Post-16 Transport Partnership Fund although NEXUS (the local PTE) does contribute some funding and together with consultancy revenues, works to ensure that the scheme operates on the 'not for profit' margins.

Source: SQW, good practice interviews

**Equal opportunities**

**73**

The legislative duty insists that Local Authorities provide a level of support for LLDD that is no less favourable than that provided to others. The steps taken by the Post-16 Transport Partnership in North Lincolnshire to meet this requirement are highlighted in the following box. Providing another example, Essex offers flexible independent travel schemes to meet the needs of LLDD. For example, there is a day-care centre in a rural area that the council have connected with the Community Link team, meaning learners can use their bus to help with hard parts of the journey, and travel independently for parts of the journey.

**North Lincolnshire: Equitable Provision**

North Lincolnshire provides an example of equitable provision for LLDD regardless of their choice of place of learning. The transport policy has emphasised the notion of one standard for all. The Local Authority contributes a large sum towards subsidising learner travel in the area. Most learners are eligible for subsidised travel over three years, providing they are on full-time courses. The same travel fees are charged to all learners (including LLDD) to ensure there are equal opportunities for all learners in North Lincolnshire.

As a small authority, North Lincolnshire works very closely with its partners, including the SEN coordinators at the schools in the district. As learners near the end of compulsory education, the Local Authority will contact the coordinators and request information on SEN individuals and their transport requirements. This individualised early intervention allows time to put the most appropriate transport support in place in advance. As such, the arrangements for LLDD are both tailored to the needs of the individual and equitable.

Source: SQW, good practice interviews

**74**

The Tower Hamlets ITT scheme was designed to address an underlying need among SEN learners for independence, and to reduce bills for the Local Authority in the face of rising taxi/chaperone costs. As the scheme developed there were two independent travel trainers. Other sources of help were also identified, for example it was found that bus drivers could be a valuable source of assistance to learners. It is intended that learners should leave the scheme with the ability to travel independently and to mark this achievement; Tower Hamlets operates a certification scheme, featuring a 'celebrity' award ceremony. The Post-16 Transport Partnership led on developing the ITT scheme and it won an award in 2007. Both parents and learners were involved in developing the ITT package, through group work and helping to memorise routes for example. The scheme is described as a source of pride to both parents and learners.
Ensuring transport is not a major barrier to participation and choice

Supporting learners attending distant institutions

75  The core policy in most areas is that learners must attend the nearest relevant course to qualify for assistance, and that concessionary fares or other forms of support apply only within the Local Authority boundaries. However, many authorities allow exceptions to this.

76  In Torbay post-16 learners may attend an education provider outside the authority if they can demonstrate it is required for their future studies and if they cannot study the same course within Torbay. In Dorset, transport is dealt with on a sub-regional basis. The travel to learn patterns for the sub-region, with the bordering Unitary Authorities of Poole and Bath, and importance of colleges in Somerset and Wiltshire, means there is significant cross-border movement. A sub-regional approach has therefore been important to take account of the differing arrangements depending on where learners are travelling from and to.

77  In Northumberland, for those who do not qualify for free transport, or who wish to travel to an institution which is not their closest, the council does their best to look for a compromise and have been working with commercial operators to try and introduce concessionary fares for these learners.

78  In Greenwich, a decision was taken this year to help post-16 learners going to FE colleges who might otherwise be NEET and some of these learners wanted to travel to institutions outside the borough to Kent. This was a challenge as the cross-boundary provision within London was covered by the Transport for London free travel scheme, but cross-boundary travel outside of London was not. Trains were the only option for those wishing to attend particular courses but as these journeys are not subsidised there was a need for assistance in some cases. Eligible individuals were identified through Connexions and it was also possible for individuals to apply directly.

Making travel more attractive

79  Devon has incorporated the views on transport of its Youth Parliament into the post-16 transport policy and a code of conduct for buses (to reduce bullying and improve behaviour) came out of a consultation with young people. Antisocial behaviour was a problem and a serious discouragement to the use of public transport by learners. However, young people who misbehave on school buses cannot simply be banned because there is a statutory duty to ensure learners get to school or college. A code was therefore set up to minimise the problem and this involved setting up bus company fora to garner the views of bus drivers and to develop the code. The project has been supported by bus operators with training for drivers and the imminent introduction of a bus prefect system. Bus drivers have been trained to deal with incidents and the code of conduct has been incorporated into their initial training.

80  In Havering, learners complained about the attitude of the drivers. One initiative to counteract this was a vox pop with learners talking about their experiences with drivers. These were then fed back into garages and drivers were invited into schools. Post-16 Transport Partnership Funds were used to commission a drama- ‘Driven to Distraction’ - which is being performed around the borough by a theatre company. This will be used in schools as part of an educational project to promote mutual understanding between bus drivers and learners.

Commitment to meeting special needs

81  Greenwich Local Authority provides an example of the considerable efforts and costs to which some authorities are willing to go in order to ensure that LLDD are not denied access to education. ITT was explored but was not applicable to the people helped in Greenwich as LLDD represent a small minority unable to travel with other learners. The Post-16 Transport Partnership Fund has been used for individual taxi provision, often escorted. The budget pays for around six cases a year. Sometimes the budget is used for over 18s and sometimes Social Services fund 50% of the costs. The cost of taxi provision for one year can be around £12,000 for one learner.

82  Another example of serious commitment to supporting learners, and their parents, is provided by the Isles of Scilly. Although a unique case, the level of commitment to learners’ support and the ways in which it has been provided are inspirational to all.
The Isles of Scilly: going the extra mile

With no post-16 education provision on the island and a small young population (around 30 Year 11 learners in a given year), the response of the Isles of Scilly to the transport challenges posed provides a good example of adaptation to the needs of learners.

In order to ensure learners are informed early about education options and the associated transport considerations, the Local Authority visits every Year 11 child through a ‘careers convention’. Representatives from all the relevant colleges from the mainland visit the islands to meet the learners and discuss the courses they offer. To assist learners in making FE choices, the council offers a grant of around £150 to cover the transport costs associated with mainland site visits. The council encourages learners to visit more than one college per trip in order to reduce the need to travel. There are also combined parents’ evenings for Year 11 learners and parents, where travel grant options are explained. The authorities visit children not in attendance at these meetings through a youth support officer to make sure everyone is adequately informed before making choices. These services supplement the policy statement and ensure awareness about travel time and distances.

Cross-boundary travel is a given for post-16 learners due to the absence of provision on the islands. All post-16 learners receive a travel grant of up to £100 six times per year to help with the costs of travel to mainland institutions. The LA has successfully negotiated learner discounts with providers. For example, there is a helicopter ticket discount and a boat discount. Whilst the grant covers the cheapest available transport option, timings are also taken into consideration, and occasionally more expensive modes will be necessary to avoid learners travelling at night.

Due to the longer journey time, measures to reduce the need for learners to travel are necessary, so post-16 learners reside on the mainland during term time, either at residential institutions or at digs. There is an accommodation grant of £720 per term to assist with the cost of digs or residential courses. However it should be noted that residential fees are £1400 at the nearest state school, so cost is still an issue affecting choice despite the grant. There are also some options to further reduce the need to travel, such as capacity on the islands to facilitate distance learning, however there has been no uptake of these as yet.

Source: SQW, good practice interviews
Partnership work is an important component of post-16 transport planning. The legislation itself states that Local Authorities should consult with neighbouring authorities and with others when preparing their Transport Policy Statements, as they consider appropriate. The LSC guidance to Local Authorities adds further encouragement to partnership working supported by the Post-16 Transport Partnership Fund. The good practice examples already described suggest that Partnerships play an important role in planning, providing and communicating transport for learners.

Developing policy

**Redcar and Cleveland** provide a good example of the Post-16 Transport Partnership informing policy development. In order to develop a new transport policy, the adult and children’s services team brought together members of the integrated transport unit and set up a working group for post-16 transport. The group sought input from other organisations, including the local colleges, Connexions, the lifelong partnership, transport providers, and learners. Through the partnership, the colleges got in touch with transport providers and enabled a special permit to be given to learners as an extension of their bus pass, for use after 6.30pm.

In another example, the **North Lincolnshire Post-16 Transport Partnership** and the Children and Young People and Highways and Transport Services departments consult on transport policy, addressing issues such as use of the Post-16 Transport Partnership Funding, identifying gaps in provision and new developments such as the 14-19 reforms.

The planning process can be informed by feedback from partners to ensure provision is tailored to meet the needs of learners. For example in **Haringey**, where transport provision is covered by the Transport for London Oyster card scheme, the Post-16 Transport Partnership has been particularly beneficial in identifying learner transport needs in the borough. The schools, in particular, were able to communicate and identify where independent travel training should be targeted and also to avoid any duplication in applications for assistance. There was a similar experience in **Newham**, where after consulting with a wide range of providers it was decided that the best possible use of the Post-16 Transport Partnership Funding was to design and deliver an ITT scheme.

The Local Authority is moving from institution-specific approaches to transport, to addressing broader area needs. To this end, Nottinghamshire allocates Post-16 Transport Partnership Funding through the use of an Innovation Fund. Only joint applications signed by all institutions can be made for resources through the fund. This fosters partnership between institutions. The creation of area-stretching groups further encourages institutions to work together and provide equitable support for all learners. The application process has been made as simple and non-bureaucratic as possible. To ensure effectiveness, bidders must clearly identify an intended outcome and then review the progress towards the outcome when the grant is given.

Partnership has also been used to reduce the problems associated with cross-boundary coverage, through collaboration between the city and county council. The City Council is a full contributing member to the County Council post-16 strategy. This means they contribute to the county pot so the money is pooled between city and county, which removes the problems caused by institutions straddling boundaries. As part of this initiative, Nottinghamshire has appointed area strategy group coordinators to make county-wide bids into the innovation fund.

Source: SQW, good practice interviews
Joining up across boundaries

One of the recurring benefits of Post-16 Transport Partnerships identified by Local Authorities was their contribution to joining-up coverage and tackling cross-boundary travel, especially in rural areas. There are several examples of the effective use of regional partnerships. For example Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council have now amalgamated the city and county Post-16 Transport Partnerships, which avoided duplication and resulted in more joint working. Each Local Authority does still hold area specific sub-meetings to sort out authority business but in the main partnership business is discussed at joint partnership meetings. Joint working has made projects such as the Bus Confidence website possible, whereas they would be too large an undertaking for a single authority.

In South Yorkshire all four districts have their own partnerships. However, representatives from the Local Authorities also meet regularly at the Education Transport Officers’ Group. This group existed before the Post-16 Transport Partnership was created and it works in conjunction with the local colleges and the PTE, but at a much higher level. Whereas the Post-16 Transport Partnership is operational the Education Transport Officers’ Group is much more strategic and works across South Yorkshire.

Pooling resources

Within Tyne and Wear, the five Local Partnerships agreed to unite to achieve better value with the funding they receive. The pooled funding amounted to around £250,000 and the majority of this has been spent on developing an ITT scheme in the area. The Partnership consists of the five Local Authorities, five colleges, NEXUS (the local PTE), Connexions and Work Based Learning Providers. Any funding remaining after the allocations spent on ITT is subject to a bidding procedure to the partnership.
Responding to the 14-19 agenda

The 14-19 educations reforms are expected to result in a greater demand for travel by learners, and a greater complexity of travel needs as journeys between sites and journeys at various times of the day become more common.

The legislation is just for home-to-institution (and return) travel, and the LSC guidance to Local Authorities, Post-16 Transport Partnerships and associated funding have a clear remit focused on post-16 learners. However, it is evident that some Post-16 Transport Partnerships are beginning to put in place arrangements to support learners who will choose to undertake a 14-19 diploma.

In Essex, 14-19 diplomas are being considered by the Post-16 Transport Partnership and it is planned that some funding will be used to help learners to access diplomas; through better timetabling and public bus ticket provision. In rural areas bus companies have been putting on additional journeys, and measures such as cancelling existing contracts and rescheduling for more daytime service have been explored. Circular bus routes around clusters of schools are being negotiated for September 2009 and schools are being encouraged to use their own minibuses for 14-19 diploma provision. In addition, the partnership is encouraging providers to develop virtual learning environments to enable distance learning.

Gloucestershire is exploring transport support and services to enable learners to access 14-19 diplomas. One possibility is for a consortium of colleges in the authority to get together and arrange transport between their sites. Currently, the Local Authority only provides transport support to one learning institution. Therefore it may be necessary for colleges themselves to fund inter-institution transport, as they already do in a small number of cases.

Placing learning transport in the mainstream

Devon has introduced a sustainable school transport strategy to identify highways improvements required to make routes to school safer. The Local Authority has been mapping routes to school on a Geographical Information System and the partnership is particularly supportive of this work. Investments such as cycle paths and large capital expenditure are planned to reduce expensive learner transport arrangements and to bypass unsafe routes. This is beneficial to the environment, child health as well as public finance in the long term.

Other aspects of good practice
Concluding thoughts on good practice

Achieving consistency

It emerges strongly through the practices illustrated here that Local Authorities and partnerships are striving towards a more consistent offer to learners. Free transport for all learners remains the ideal but only a minority of areas actually provide this. Most are in the position of having to work imaginatively to achieve a sufficiently generous and consistent level of support. Thus a variety of concessionary schemes are in place, as are attempts to establish standard travel costs or passes across a variety of transport providers and modes.

Adapting to new policy and funding arrangements

Reviewing the practices of Local Authorities and the ways in which they have supported learner travel, it is clear that resources have been used creatively to support learners. Partnerships have pooled various sources of funding to plan provision and to provide support directly to learners. As the wider review reveals, there is concern about the availability of future funds and about tighter controls over how authorities use them, but nonetheless there are good examples of authorities who are thinking pro-actively about the current reforms.

Communicating available services and support to learners

It is clear that the actual Transport Policy Statements are only the beginning of strenuous effort by many Local Authorities to inform learners of what their travel options are and what support is on offer. Some authorities are employing a barrage of communications methods, from websites, to leaflets and booklets, to poster campaigns and face to face contact with post-16 learners and those about to enter into the system. Innovative use is being made of technologies such as mobile phones to provide travel information.

Learning from one another

Overall, the work of producing this guidance demonstrates that there is a rich pool of practices, knowledge and experience that Local Authorities and others may share. It is hoped that this guidance will encourage that process.

Mainstreaming learner transport support

Partly in anticipation of new funding arrangements, and in the expectation of generally greater demand for learners’ travel as a result of the 14-19 reforms, Local Authorities are exploring ways in which learner travel can be brought into mainstream transport planning and provision. This is evident in examples where Post-16 Transport Partnerships have succeeded in having learner transport considered as part of general transport infrastructure development, or where mainstream social service and transport funding has stepped in to carry forward initiatives started by Post-16 Transport Partnerships.

If there is one particularly noticeable topic where good practices appear to be lacking, it is the reduction of the need to travel. Examples of residential learning centres and even distance learning options exist, but they are not to the fore and the emphasis has clearly been on using Partnership Funds and other resources to provide rather than avoid the need to provide. This is understandable, although the expected increase in learner travel may well force thinking towards options for reducing the need to travel.