moving ahead

Spring 2004

Groundbreaking LEA initiatives in the Transport Pathfinder Scheme

Inside:
- Pathfinder projects
- Case studies from across the UK
- Full list of contacts
Foreword by Charles Clarke
Secretary of State for Education and Skills

Young people need access to available and affordable transport to enable them to benefit from further education. The responsibility for arranging this rests with local education authorities and their partners, including the LSC and colleges. They arrange local transport services and support to ensure that all young people can access and pursue further education. In developing their policies, the partnerships take account of the needs of those living in rural areas, those with disabilities and the disadvantaged. In urban areas transport services tend to be better but because of their cost, some students cannot afford to use them without support.

In order to improve access to learning, our 14-19 strategy includes proposals for an improved package of financial support for young people through the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and the Learner Support Fund. The EMA will ensure that most young people can afford reasonable transport costs from either family income or their EMA. Where they face high costs because of their special needs or circumstances, transport partnerships and individual institutions can use learner support and transport funds to offer additional support.

To help partnerships to prepare and develop local policies the Government provided £9m to 70 LEAs so that they could run transport ‘Pathfinders’ to develop and test different approaches to providing transport services and support. This catalogue sets out the different initiatives that were tried and provides feedback on the resulting benefits. A number of these pilots have already proved extremely successful and have been adopted more widely. The pathfinders included research, consultancy, independence and mobility training as well as testing new and improved bus routes. I am pleased to draw your attention to the examples of successful pathfinders in the attached catalogue. This complements the Travelling to School proposals and our desire to increase sustainable travel on the journey to school and college, on foot, by bicycle and public transport.

I would like to thank all the LEAs and their partners involved in this initiative for their time and commitment. I am sure that the lessons learnt will prove useful to other partnerships as they plan effective transport support and services for students in their area.

Charles Clarke
SoS for Education and Skills
April 2004
16 - 19 Pathfinder Background

Under the Education Act 2002, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) are required to work in partnership with local organisations including colleges, local Learning and Skills Councils and the Connexions Service to develop and implement transport policies for Further Education students who are aged 16 to 19 when they start a course.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) made £9 million of “Pathfinder” funding available to help the partnerships test and develop new approaches to transport support and services and make improvements to existing arrangements. Some LEAs received funding to generate case studies that the partnerships could use as models to develop and implement their own policies.

**LEA Selection Criteria:** £9 million was not enough to produce meaningful results if offered to all 150 LEAs. The DfES therefore invited half the LEAs (76) to bid for funding of initially up to £50 000 each. These LEAs were selected on three criteria:

- high local levels of deprivation as calculated by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister;
- low education and training participation rates for 16-17 year olds;
- a balance of rural/urban and Education Maintenance Allowance pilot areas.

Initially, 58 Pathfinders were awarded funding. This allowed the DfES to invite a further 24 LEAs to bid to run shorter Pathfinders later in the year. In total, 70 Pathfinders made up the Pathfinder programme. In London 12 LEAs took part and as a result, a transport policy was developed and agreed for all 33 London LEAs (see page 18). A Transport Co-ordinator was appointed to help take this forward.
Pathfinder Projects targeted the following four areas:

- Research and Development: up to £35 000 to carry out surveys, investigate travel patterns etc.
- Support for Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities: up to £35 000 to look at independence and mobility training, provision of specialist vehicles etc.
- Transport Support for Students: up to £50 000 to introduce financial support mechanisms, such as concessionary fare schemes.
- Filling Gaps in Services: up to £50 000 to create new bus routes to schools and colleges.
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<th>Pathfinder / LEA</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Telephone No.</th>
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<td>Special Educational Needs</td>
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<td>Student Support</td>
<td>• New scheme created</td>
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<td>Special Educational Needs</td>
<td>• Use of loan vehicle for travel training</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Identification of Year 11 Students</td>
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<td>Gaps in Services</td>
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<td>Consultancy</td>
<td>• Development of website</td>
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<td>Gaps in Services</td>
<td>• Rural nature of area</td>
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<td>• Small student numbers</td>
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<td>• Inter-site movement</td>
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<td>• Use of non specialist drivers</td>
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<td>Special Educational Needs</td>
<td>• Partnership working with schools</td>
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<td>• Creation of teaching pack</td>
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<td>• Linking into GCSE syllabus</td>
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<td>• Use of audio visual teaching methods</td>
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<td>• Poor quality of buses</td>
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### Pathfinder Contact List

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<tr>
<th>Pathfinder / LEA</th>
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Please note that some transport contacts have changed and therefore the names above vary from those quoted in the text.
| Project            | Characteristics                                                                 |}
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Policy             | • DFES employed London Co-ordinator  
                     • Good access  
                     • High costs  
                     • Work done by the LEAs  
                     • TfL + Mayor of London involvement  
                     • Long term vision  
                     • Monitoring work                                      |
| Consultancy        | • Area wide review  
                     • PTE perspective  
                     • LSC involvement                                      |
| Student Support    | • Links with private business  
                     • Use of cashless cards  
                     • Flexibility of transport use  
                     • Cycling trainers and training for Sept 2003  
                     • Logistic software for distance eligibility criteria |
| Policy             | • Rural and small county  
                     • Lack of transport in the area  
                     • Lack of FE institutions in the area  
                     • Out of county transport policy                          |
| Special Educational Needs | • Use of bus buddies                                                      |
| Policy             | • Use of Fleet vehicles  
                     • Use of Education Transport Unit linking with other Directorates  
                     • Support from Treasury for fleet vehicles  
                     • EMA (T) experience  
                     • Best Value Review                                      |
| Student Support    | • Cross boundary policy  
                     • Post 18 eligibility of concessionary fare                         |
Blackpool borrows a bus to support mobility

After commissioning research and audit, and by listening to feedback from schools, colleges and students, Blackpool identified a need to train and encourage students with learning difficulties and disabilities to use bus transport.

“We identified a gap in training provision, partly as a result of a formal audit, and partly through simply liaising with schools” explains Michael Dearnley, Principal Policy Planning and Transportation Officer with Blackpool Borough Council. Park School - for children with moderate learning difficulties - had already initiated mobility training for Year 11 students, and the Council saw an opportunity to use that experience as a springboard for its wider application. Head teachers and special educational needs co-ordinators of all eight High Schools in the area were contacted about the programme and delivery details agreed. A spokesperson at Palatine High School says: “I feel that the Mobility programme organised by the Borough Council will have a huge impact on the lives of some of our students. Many need assistance in using public transport, but this training will give them independence and make them more confident.”

Incentives to take up training
Timing proved crucial, particularly during June when many students technically had ‘finished’ school. Attracting them back to school for extra training called for innovative thinking. The incentive was to offer a mobile phone to those who didn’t already have one, and to offer a £50 top up card for those who already had a phone.
The scheme began to take off, drawing on the knowledge of staff who had already delivered mobility training at the Park School. Practical training was taken out of the classroom environment by involving the local football club, much to the enjoyment of the students. The use of the Blackpool FC ground as the venue for the training overcame any barriers students might have had about going to a ‘special’ school to take part in the course. The response from the football club was very favourable and reduced rates for the hire of the ground were negotiated.

**Bus on loan**

The local bus company, Blackpool Transport, was brought on board. “Over the years we have seen a lot of children who struggle with our buses, but now that this project is in place, we hope that our transport can be accessed with greater ease” they comment. The LEA augmented the company’s route information, designing bigger maps and timetables, and used new pictures of the routes taken by a specially commissioned photographer.

The programme ran four days a week, with three courses spanning three weeks. The second day of each course involved using the bus to board, pay the driver, sit properly, practice evacuation procedures, alight, and so on. On the third day, pupils used the bus to practice specific routes to and from Blackpool and Fylde College, where most students would be attending, while on the final day the students made their own way to and from the College, supervised as necessary. This gave them an additional opportunity to see the college, spend some time there, and meet staff. On their return, opinions were canvassed from all involved. The local Road Safety Officer took part too, covering pedestrian road safety issues and cycle training.

The programme was very successful in building students’ all-round confidence. Michael Dearnley says: “At the end of each module, the student was given a certificate to say they had completed the module successfully. At the end of the week, having finished the course, they went to the town hall, received the certificate, had tea with the mayor and were photographed, which went down very well.”

**Training takes off**

After the initial programme, “things just grew” according to Stuart Bradford, Senior Teacher at Park School. There were offshoots which included an abbreviated course for those less needy, but who still required mobility guidance and training in bicycle safety. Bicycles were purchased for the students, and in practice, providing bicycles, protective gear, and cycle training with an approved trainer worked out significantly less expensive than providing bus passes.

The response from parents and students has been enthusiastic. One parent says: “I would like to thank Blackpool Borough Council for taking my son on this course. It has made a huge difference to him. He is already using buses on his own and is able to make his way to college.” A student is equally supportive: “I thought going on a real bus was brilliant. I can now use buses on my own and get all over Blackpool!” There are hopes that the training given now will grow into a preference for ‘greener’ transport in adult life.
Confidence building by bus

Amy Capel, 16, is one of the pupils who took part in Blackpool’s programme of independent travel training for young people with disabilities and learning difficulties. In the past, she had travelled by bus accompanied by her mother, but lacked the confidence to make a bus journey by herself. With the prospect of Further Education on the horizon, travel to college would have been a major obstacle had it not been for the bus training.

Amy attended Palatine High School, and heard about the training from teachers there. She and her friends discussed it, and she decided she would like to take part. “I decided I wanted to go. I hadn’t gone on a bus on my own before, I was too scared.”

She describes her training enthusiastically. “We started off by doing things out of booklets, like telling the time. After that, we got pictures of where the college was, and with a few people in a group we went for a walk to see it.”

After familiarisation theory work, practical on-bus training got underway, with the bus located within Pontins holiday camp. “We had to stand there, put our arms out, get on, say where we wanted to go, say thank you and smile when we got off.”
As for taking part in the training, Amy says: "I found it all quite easy, and I had thought that it would be really hard. I enjoyed going out and showing people which college I was going to go to."

She has already put her training into practice, and has travelled on her own. "I’ve been going to town and back" she says delightedly. In real life, she found that the most difficult aspect for her, and the one which made her nervous, was standing on her own waiting for the right bus to come along and signalling for it to stop. "It felt a bit weird really because I had always had somebody there, and then suddenly I had nobody to talk to."

Amy will be going to Blackpool and Fylde College to do a course in childcare, after which she says: "I hope to get a really good job. I feel a lot more confident in using the bus now. It’s improved my confidence and improved my friends’ confidence as well. I thought it was really good and it really helped me."
Dee Murphy, Education Officer within Leicester City Council’s Property, Contracts and Procurement Department, was chair of the steering group. Bus companies were asked to join, but preferred to be kept informed of developments rather than send representatives. Dee comments that the group was unwilling to sign up formally to an agreement, but agreed a statement of intent: ‘The purpose of the group is to establish barriers to learners participating in post-16 learning and to make recommendations to the appropriate organisations to remove those barriers.’

**Drawing up the questionnaires**

It was agreed that a survey should be the main source of information gathering, utilising the administrative support available. Dee says that they used the committee to devise the questionnaire: “We agreed we would look at Year 11 children, their perceptions and expectations, Year 12 to see if what they felt was different, and also the parents of Year 11 to see if their perceptions and expectations coincided with those of their offspring. We also felt that it would be useful to get some feedback from the young people who didn’t go into FE at all to see if there were any transport indications there. Lastly we needed to speak to those who either never returned after Year 12 or who never finished Year 12. Difficulties in conducting the research were compounded by the fact that we had three consecutive postholders in the administrative role.”

**Agencies join forces to steer Leicester’s research**

The DfES sponsored study by Steer Davies Gleave into transport provision for Further Education students aged 16-19 highlighted the importance of collaborative working. Leicester City Council put this into practice by bringing together City and County LEAs, the Learning and Skills Council, Connexions, sixth form and Further Education (FE) providers, City Transport Planning and Social Services, forming a steering group to oversee a local transport research study. An administration officer was appointed on a one year fixed term contract to ensure the project stayed on track.
Educational institutions were advised of the survey, and the forms sent out with guidance on how to distribute the questionnaires. Year 12 non-completers/non-returners were contacted via their home address. This latter group was offered the incentive of participation in a prize draw with the reward of £50 HMV vouchers.

Results so far, however, have fallen short of expectations. The rate of return from individuals, schools and colleges has been small, and the low volumes mean that it is difficult to draw valid conclusions based on the feedback. "What it did highlight for us, though, was the lack of co-ordination in FE transport for students with special needs. There are the colleges themselves, the LEA, and Social Services all providing some support, but it’s not co-ordinated" says Dee.

**Successful outcomes**

Despite the low response rate to the questionnaires, there have been successful outcomes as Dee explains. "We were able to get from Connexions the addresses of all school leavers from the previous year and where they were attending college. We commissioned a map showing their distribution by postcode.” Maps were produced for each college illustrating from which areas they were drawing their students. Leicester City and Leicestershire County have a combined Local Transport Plan (LTP) and a map was produced for the LTP area.

Dee explained that some students find themselves ineligible for transport support because they live in a ‘county’ area, but want to attend a ‘city’ college which is not the nearest appropriate college to their home address. "The potential students might live on a bus route to the city but there’s an FE college at Coalville, which is closer, but not on a direct bus route. They would not get support to attend a city college, but would get support to go to Coalville. Many have to travel across the city from one bit of the county to another to be eligible for transport support, passing by Leicester College en route.”

A successful outcome of the Pathfinder was ‘information exchange’ between the partners. This resulted in a transport presence at the November Learning and Skills Council Options Fair. Previously student transport information had been distributed in March, often when student decisions had already been made as to which college to attend. This illustrates the need for further work to produce a 16 plus transport partnership communications strategy.
If transport is free, can it be improved? Lincolnshire trials explore some options

Lincolnshire is one of the country’s most sparsely populated counties. It’s 5,924 square kilometres in area with a population of 645,000 - that’s a population density of 1.1 persons per hectare. At the beginning of the Pathfinder, Lincolnshire County Council already provided free transport to post-16 learners, and with this as the starting point, the funding was directed at assessing how this free provision could be improved.

With a poor local transport infrastructure and no national bus operators, being bussed to a place of learning is part of everyday life for Lincolnshire children. Post-16 students frequently travel in the same vehicles as school pupils, and free transport is offered post-16 under the following criteria:

- students must live 4,827m (three miles) from the college or sixth form;
- free transport is provided to the sixth form or college serving the area, or one that is nearer home;
- free transport is available if the nearest sixth form or college is unable to offer subjects the student wishes to study, and which are shown as entry requirements to a particular university or Further Education (FE) course.

There are six FE colleges within Lincolnshire, and nine others outside the county offering free transport for Lincolnshire students under the stated criteria. Around 3,800 students travel to FE colleges, but when compared to their previous school journeys, travel times and distances are often extended, sometimes lasting more than three hours a day.

Other travel issues include the necessity to stay on-campus all day to await pick-up, even when lectures may be morning or afternoon only, and the poor quality of vehicles, including reliability and punctuality problems. Pathfinder funded the trialling of several different approaches to improving free transport provision, and reactions were assessed.
Quality v direct routes

Students in one area were asked to choose whether they wanted to travel on a basic bus over the most direct route to their destination college (around 40 miles away), or to use a coach with more comfortable seats, seat belts, video and toilets, but taking a longer route.

Denise Carr, Assistant Head of Transport Services explains what this necessitated. “Two existing services/contracts that carried 154 students to college along this corridor were re-negotiated with the existing operators and increased to three vehicles. A bonus was an additional mid-morning and mid-afternoon service to accommodate pupils who did not need to be at college all day.” At the end of the trial 59% preferred the direct vehicle. “I arrive home earlier at night giving me longer to prepare my homework for the next day” says one. The mid-morning, mid afternoon provision also found favour: “The thought that I can leave shortly after the end of lessons on Wednesday and Thursday means that I attend more now than I did.”

Additional provision

Students attending Lincoln College from a corridor of rural villages were frustrated by the early start they had to make on the existing service. This dropped them off in Lincoln at 8am, with an hour’s wait before the start of classes. Denise Carr: “An additional service was bought, which meant that students were collected from 8am onwards, arriving in Lincoln for the start of college.”

Tackling long journeys

To accommodate students living in isolated locations taxi feeders deliver them to main routes for journey completion, or there are extended bus routes, but both mean long journey times. To tackle the problem, two types of trial were introduced. In the south of the County, students with long journey times were identified and taken all the way by taxi. This was much appreciated, as illustrated by one parent’s comment: “My daughter has learning difficulties, so I feel she is safer not waiting for a bus and crossing the road.” In the second trial, areas were identified where taxi feeders could reduce journey times. Reactions were favourable: “Under the new arrangements I was saving approximately one hour travelling time, which benefits my study.”

Other trials included the installation of CCTV equipment on buses, investigation of students’ perceptions on vehicle overloading, a driver-training package, and independent travel and mobility training.
In this context, the creation of a pan-London baseline post-16 transport policy for London is a tribute to the willingness of all partners to develop a long-term vision to support young Londoners’ access to FE.

The DfES supported this work by providing the Association of London Government (ALG) with funding from April 2003 for a fixed term 16-19 Transport Officer post to develop local partnerships, manage a research project and build on the minimum baseline policy.


The ALG and Further Education (London Regional) Services (FELORS) were asked by representatives from a range of stakeholders including DfES, LEA Officers, local LSCs and Transport for London (TfL) to facilitate the development of a pan-London approach in September 2002. They then worked closely with partners to draft a regional framework to guide LEA transport policy development.

The 2003/04 policy was designed as a starting point for greater pan-London 16-19 transport coherence and consistency in the future. It recognised that a long-term strategic approach was essential, and that work needed to start in identifying common factors across the region.

In March 2003, a draft post-16 transport baseline policy was circulated to Student Support Officers at the 33 London LEAs. “It was a very collaborative process, the way the Baseline policy was developed, with everyone having the opportunity to contribute”, says the ALG’s 16-19 Transport Officer. “This meant that when the 33 councillors on the ALG Education Panel came to agree the policy, everyone was comfortable with the eligibility criteria and supporting rationale it contained.” London boroughs then developed their local 16-19 transport policies using the framework in the Baseline policy.

The policy has now been updated and agreed for 2004/05.
Developing understanding of a shared vision

Information gathering is an important part of taking the Policy further. A research project was completed, supported by a steering group of representatives from agencies in the London region, including LEAs, Transport for London, the Mayor’s Office, Connexions, the Association of Colleges (London Region), and others.

Over 4,500 young people, studying at 62 FE Institutions in 31 London boroughs, took part in the main survey. The survey introduction stated: ‘We want to understand the ‘travel to study’ needs of 16-19 year old students so that London can provide the best services possible. We want to know how you get to your place of study, how you pay for this travel and what you think about it.’

ALG made the commitment that students would be given information about the survey findings, and students who returned completed questionnaires had the option of being entered into a prize draw to win music vouchers worth £25. Schools and colleges who returned completed questionnaires also went into a draw for computer equipment.

Year 10 and 11 students at 10 schools across the London region also participated in the survey. This questionnaire asked students whether they were considering going to a sixth form or college and, if so, how they were intending to travel there, how they would pay for the travel and what they thought about it. A third strand of research, and probably the most challenging targeted students who enrolled in FE, but left without completing the course. This research aimed to examine the influence of transport on their decision. Findings showed that:

- one in three prospective students rated the cost of travel in the top five factors affecting their choice of FE institution;
- one in four rated length of travel.

Another key finding was around the provision of information and the importance of providing it in good time. The research found that prospective FE students need to receive this information at the beginning of year 10 to make a difference. It was recommended that TFL, the London Connexions Services and the ALG should facilitate the creation of a one stop, comprehensive source of information about travel and student support suitable for both current and prospective students aged 16-19 in London. It was also recommended that further research was undertaken to better understand the travel patterns, costs, needs and concerns of FE students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

A further study looking specifically at the transport needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is now underway. The results of this study will inform future developments in transport support and services in the London region.
Somerset sets up Bus Buddies

Somerset was allocated Pathfinder funding for research and development and to help support students with learning difficulties or disabilities (SLDD). The project built on the Somerset Learning Partnership’s Overview of Post-16 Provision report of 2003.

To help students with learning difficulties or disabilities attend their centres of learning, two new schemes were set up: a standby taxi service and training for students travelling independently.

The partners involved in the Pathfinder recognised that transport which was available to take students to and from college only at the beginning and the end of the day reduced choice for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, or caused difficulties for them.

Fast-response taxis

Dawn Smith is Operations Manager, (Individual Contracts) Integrated Passenger Transport Unit, in Somerset County Council’s Economy, Transport and Environment Department: “Basically the idea of the standby taxi service was to try and create a level playing field. College courses aren’t necessarily nine to five or nine to three and there are times when students don’t have to be there. The mainstream youngsters can get a bus, but students with learning difficulties or disabilities are almost certainly linked to a taxi, and they have to wait for that to arrive at the ‘normal’ time.” Currently around 80 students are carried by 50 taxis to and from learning.

To give flexibility for identified students, a service was provided where the college could summon a named taxi operator to bring in students or take them home. Somerset put out tenders and asked operators to give a price for the service, sourcing an operator who was willing to offer a discounted rate. “At one stage, we thought we would have to be paying a standing fee for the taxi to be available, but that didn’t happen. Operators work quite well with us and we actually got a discount for taxis to come out when they were called.”
Building independence

The Bus Buddy Scheme enables students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to use public transport from their homes to their centres of learning and back. ‘Bus Challenge’ funded a parallel scheme which also includes adult Social Services clients, and Pathfinder funding focused the concept specifically on post-16 students. Somerset recruited and trained ‘travelling companions’ for the students, to familiarise them with using buses, build their confidence and equip them to eventually travel alone.

Students with special needs may start special school as early as two years old, and progressing through education, they may be transported door to door up to the age of 25 in some cases. Yet with help, some might be able to use public transport to get to school or college, giving them wider life experience, added confidence, and of course, using a more cost efficient mode of travel. “They may not be able to use public transport in any other context, but at least that’s one area of independence that they will have achieved” comments Dawn.

Somerset College of Arts and Technology had already started to do some bus training, and the Bus Buddy scheme was able to build on those foundations. “Last year they got around three people using the bus. This year since we have become involved they have had about nine.” The Bus Buddy team identifies young people who are likely to benefit, working with students, schools, colleges and parents. Dawn explains: “They work out how best to provide whatever training is needed - that’s working in the college as well as working on the bus and in the streets. They discuss the training with parents to make sure they are on board and happy about it.

The buddies’ work is to take the child from their door, walk with them to the nearest bus stop, ride on the bus with them, make sure they get off at the appropriate stop and guide the student to the college.”

“The bus is really good!”

The scheme has been well received, especially by students, as some of their comments illustrate. ‘Entry’ is the Somerset College of Arts and Technology newsheet, written by the students in the SEN unit. Carly Richmond writes: “I am using the bus at the moment and I am finding it really easy...I now have my own bus pass so I can come to college every day and go back home again. The bus is really good!” The stop press section notes: “Katie Pavey now has at least two special days every year. Her birthday and her bus day. Yes, Wednesday 3 June 2003 is the day Katie Pavey caught the bus to college for the first time.”
Free travel feasible? Greater Merseyside checks it out.

Greater Merseyside is one of the UK’s most densely populated urban areas with more than 1.5 million people living in its 6 Local Education Authority (LEA) areas - Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral. Of these, 5 were awarded Pathfinder status with all being pilots for Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

Within Greater Merseyside, there are approximately 60 000 young people 16-18, with around 46 500 in learning - around 22 000 in Further Education (FE) and 11 000 in school sixth forms. Local research highlights access and cost as significant deterrents to learning participation. Poor access leads to take up of inappropriate courses, with a consequential high drop out rate. Through the Pathfinder, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in Greater Merseyside conducted a pan-Greater Merseyside study looking into a universal entitlement to concessionary or free travel for young people in all learning routes including work based learning.

Helen Hodges is Strategic Options Analyst with LSC Greater Merseyside and explains: “The six LEAs have very different policies ranging from the generous, to a number who only provide assistance for those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The FE colleges tend to pick up where the LEA provision stops, providing transport support via their Learner Support Funds to their own students who can demonstrate hardship.” Non employed work-based learners have their transport costs covered by their local LSC.

Working with their Pathfinder partners, LSC Greater Merseyside established the scale and scope of the study. It aimed to produce the entitlement or concession to deliver three key objectives:
- to increase rates of participation and retention in post-compulsory education and training;
- to remove or reduce transport-related barriers which constrain access to learning;
- to promote more sustainable transport patterns and the use of more environmentally friendly modes of travel.

Via the tendering process, the Pathfinder Steering Group (LEAs, Connexions, Merseytravel PTE, Government Office North West, Merseyside Colleges Association) selected specialist transport consultants the TAS Partnership to carry out the study.

The original timescale was tight, with Invitations to Tender issued in August 2002 for presentation and reporting in mid-December. David Brennan, LSC Greater Merseyside’s Director of Strategy and Planning, says: “The reason for the pre-Christmas deadline, was if there was to be any chance of implementation for September 2003, then we needed to start that phase prior to Christmas.” It later became clear that timescales were too restrictive and so it was agreed that any implementation was more realistic for September 2004. “I think that because of that we got a better quality product than we would have done” comments David.
A two-phase study was to take place. The first included mapping to identify travel-to-learn patterns and gaps in service, with trends and numbers informing cost estimates of the options under consideration. The second focused on consulting key stakeholders and approaches to organisations about their potential to provide funding. “We also looked at examples of good practice elsewhere in the country including where transport support was seen to be an incentive, and the impact of EMAs,” adds Helen Hodges.

**Results and future plans**

TAS consulted with 18 transport operators to identify options which would achieve Greater Merseyside’s aspirations. Options considered were:

- free travel covering the whole of the Greater Merseyside area;
- free travel within restricted zones;
- hybrid - free to learning plus half fare at other times;
- hybrid - free to learning plus 50p flat fare at other times;
- half fare at all times.

The preferred option was a hybrid, consisting of a semi-commercial 50p flat fare, valid at all times and available to all holders of appropriate annual pass/photocards, issued for a £5 administration charge. Alongside this is a free pass based on existing term time tickets for which a charge would be paid through Merseytravel (estimate £180 pa), and recharged at a discounted cost to the learner with a target of no more than £140 pa. Helen comments: “Free travel potentially would be restricted to those living one mile or more from the learning centre, but all learners would qualify for the flat fare. Passes could use the existing administrative and reimbursement structures of Merseytravel, but ‘gatekeeping’ and access to both elements should be the remit of learning providers. The whole scheme would cost about £4 million.”

LSC Greater Merseyside consider that the valuable results of the study, the partnership working, and the setting up of a steering group (which will continue), have given them a greater understanding of local concerns and established a structure for progress. John Taylor, Director of The TAS Partnership says: “The LSC deserves credit for tackling the inequalities in transport which, although important, are beyond the vision of most educationalists. The LSC was an active partner throughout in defining, structuring and managing the project and was willing and able to think laterally about potential solutions.”
Tyne and Wear students enjoy travel flexibility

The Tyne and Wear area encompasses five Local Education Authorities (LEAs): Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North Tyneside, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland. Both Newcastle and South Tyneside were awarded funding as a combined Pathfinder to deliver an extension to the NEXUS (the administrative arm of the Passenger Transport Executive) concessionary travel scheme to all full-time Further Education students resident in the Tyne and Wear area. LEAs worked together with NEXUS, Connexions Service, local colleges and the local Learning and Skills Council in the initiative.

NEXUS originally operated a Teen Travel concessionary scheme for 16 and 17 year olds. Tyne and Wear’s 16-19 Learner Support Sub Group decided it would be a useful exercise to include 18 year olds, whilst highlighting the need to extend the concessionary scheme to include students up to the age of 19. It was also agreed to consult Newcastle College on how to improve support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities (SLDD) attending vocational courses. Part of the Pathfinder funding was allocated to pay for the cost of transport for those students living within the City of Newcastle and attending vocational courses at local colleges.

Train, bus and ferry too!

The NEXUS Teen Travelticket was made available for 16-18 year old students on a range of transport - the Metro light rapid transport system, local buses, some local Arriva trains and the Tyne ferry. “To qualify for the ticket, they just have to be in full-time education and resident in the Tyne and Wear area,” says John Curry, Customer Services Officer. The ticket offers these students a 50% discount on the standard travelling cost. Students can use the discounted tickets all day, including evenings and weekends, at prices on a sliding scale according to zoned areas within Tyne and Wear.
NEXUS issued press releases and publicity material to spread the word about the extension of the scheme, and there was excellent take up with approximately 800 students applying. "It was very successful," says John Curry, "We got a lot of additional students applying." The application form, available at educational institutions, the LEA or NEXUS travel shops, is validated by the college or school to confirm that the applicant is in full-time education. A passport-sized photograph must also be included, and a branded identity card is issued. Discounted Teen TravelTickets are issued on production of the card.

New routes

NEXUS wrote to all schools and colleges requesting information on gaps in current transport provision. The responses illustrated a number of gaps in bus services which were affecting participation. "We were also able to get a lot of information from NEXUS - who’s using the buses, passengers, whether they are paying, whether they have passes - and so on," explains John Curry. "This helped us a lot in seeing which bus routes were successful and those that were not". The responses were assessed and a tender was distributed by NEXUS. As a result, 14 new services were provided to fill the gaps. Existing college services which were poorly used were re-routed with intensive promotion of the new routes to the students. "Part of NEXUS’s remit is to secure services which are not provided by bus companies for a variety of reasons - non-viability, for instance," says John "It was a very useful exercise and helped us look at services and to decide which should be given priority over others."

John concludes: "To be honest I think we are fairly lucky in the Tyne and Wear region. It’s a fairly compact area and we have good working relationships with partners - an existing forum which we simply extended. There are regular meetings with all partners in the area, proving all that is needed is communication and working together. That’s got to be the way forward." The only major difficulty was the question of sharing funds. Pathfinder funding came to Newcastle and South Tyneside LEAs and the decision was made that the funding would be shared throughout the Tyne and Wear region. There were some initial difficulties between the LEAs and other partners in understanding that the partnership developed the transport policy for all. "If there are funds available for transport, they need to go down the partnership route," says John.
CASE STUDIES: ISLE OF WIGHT

Isle of Wight launches fleet

In 2002, Isle of Wight Local Education Authority set up a partnership group including the Deputy Leader of the Council, portfolio holders for education and transport, and the Assistant Director of Education. This group decided to use the Pathfinder initiative to concentrate on two areas: research and development, and filling gaps in service. The latter resulted in an exciting and productive venture - the purchase of a fleet of Volkswagen minibuses.

The population of the Isle of Wight is 132,000, located principally in the main towns of Newport, Cowes, Sandown and Ryde. The status of public transport, however, means that it would be extremely difficult for a student to attend parts of a learning programme in different locations.

Kim Johnson, Assistant Director Education and Community Development, gives the background to the Pathfinder initiative in his area. “The partnership agreed that what we should do is to provide open access to all courses on the Isle of Wight as part of what we offer from September. Our transport policy in the past has been to support a student going from a particular area to a college course, providing the course was not available at their local school. That has, without doubt disadvantaged some students who would have preferred to go to the Further Education (FE) college, but the policy was necessary because it has been extremely difficult to predict how many we would need to pay for.”

He continues: “It also complements what we’re trying to do with 16-19 collaboration, which is to decide the courses we should try to run somewhere on the Isle of Wight and then assess how to get students there with minimum difficulty.” Offering bus passes offers part of the solution, the other is through the Pathfinder initiative - a fleet of people carriers to transport students between FE sites.
Customised Transporters

Using the Pathfinder funding, seven Volkswagen Transporter vehicles were purchased, customised for two wheelchairs and supported by a five year maintenance package as part of the purchase price. The Island has five high schools, one FE college and two special schools which are able to share one vehicle because they are near to each other. The vehicles are based at the institutions and 20% of common timetabling was agreed for September 2003, with a probable increase for the following year. Although the vehicles can carry up to eight people, they can be driven on a normal licence and additional police checks are not necessary. Initially, the vehicles were driven by teaching staff, but a more cost-effective approach is planned for next educational year. "In the second phase proposal, we will allocate some of the new DfES Transport Partnership Funding to each of the institutions to extend the contract of non-teaching staff who are already security cleared to drive the vehicles."

Each vehicle is 'owned' by and registered with its school and a nominated co-ordinator in each school is responsible for the use of the transport. Students approach the co-ordinator to discuss their needs and arrangements are made. The co-ordinator is also aware of all curricular or extra curricular school activities where the vehicle might be used productively and can make it available for suitable journeys.

Curricular value still to come

As was expected, initial usage has tended to be for 16-19 extension activities. The Premises Manager at Ryde High School describes some of the activity which ownership of the vehicles has facilitated so far. "The bus has been in constant use since we were able to take delivery. I can confirm that the students have travelled as far as Arran and Ireland (Geography Field Trips) as well as trips to London and all over the Island. The recorded mileage is 2,528 involving 60-70 students. The departments which have been able to use this excellent resource have been PE, Art & Design, Drama, Activity Trips, Business Studies and Science."

Kim Johnson says of the vehicles: "They have not yet been as curricular orientated as they will become. The special schools have already used theirs in a curricular sense because they co-operate with the college in terms of both work experience and specific courses for some of their young people, and they've been able to use their vehicle in ferrying to and from. They have found it very helpful."
Hull tells the story of independence

The City of Hull used the Pathfinder initiative to produce a special pack advocating the advantages of independent travel to special educational needs (SEN) pupils and students with learning difficulties and disabilities (SLDD). Following consultation with other agencies including Connexions, schools, colleges and Social Services, Hull Local Education Authority (LEA) identified the lack of training and support as key obstacles to students with learning difficulties and disabilities taking up Further Education (FE). Working closely with the Inclusion Service, Hull City Council’s Learning Services brought in a freelance writer with a background in education, and set about preparing supportive information to train and encourage students to use public transport.

The pack - ‘Getting There!’ - comprises a specially written book, titled ‘The Audition’ and an accompanying teaching pack that has been successfully piloted with Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils. The aims of this aspect of Hull’s Pathfinder initiative are described as three fold:

1. to enable parents, teachers and other professionals to understand that most young people can travel independently;
2. to provide a range of high quality materials to ensure this understanding is translated into good practice;
3. to establish a structure that ensures continued promotion of the benefits of independent travel.

The story’s just the start

‘Getting There!’ addresses the needs of the 14-19 age group, where young people aspire to have more independence. It allows them to practice travel skills in the safe environment of the school, in the lead-up to making their choices in FE. Using a mixture of group discussion, tasks and role play, seven modules focus on essential skills including safety, planning journeys, handling money, understanding timetables, maps and communication skills.

In the story, which features Laura and her twin brother Mark, students are presented not only with the day to day practicalities of travel, but also have to confront some of the problems too, one of which is that they are travelling without their parents’ permission.

Jennie de Vries, Head of the Inclusion Service, Teskey King School says: “Access to transport is essential to enable young people with learning difficulties to lead full and purposeful lives. It is hoped that the pack will not only increase educational opportunities, but will be vital in increasing self confidence, developing social skills, and will have a positive impact on learning and job prospects.”

Pupils who took part in the seven month piloting of the project in the city’s schools were presented with certificates by the Lord Mayor to mark the successful completion of their training programme.
Rayma Crawford, Education Officer (Client Services) has led the development of ‘Getting There’. She says: “Many students face problems and lack confidence in using public transport and the early indications are that the ‘Getting There’ pilot has been very well received by pupils, teachers and parents.” One High School turned the story into a play as part of their GCSE drama class.

**Using the pack productively**

The pack was launched regionally at a seminar for teachers, education and special needs professionals, training and transport providers at the beginning of July in Hull’s Kingston Communications Stadium. Further seminars took place in the autumn in London, Birmingham and the North of England. Rayma emphasises the importance of this approach. “You can’t merely send out the pack”, she stresses, “it has to be championed. It should not be used in isolation. It’s how you deliver it, how you carry out the assessment, transition planning and so on.”

The cost of transport for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is high, and independence training can make a major contribution to saving LEA funds in the longer term. Aside from cost considerations, the training played a valuable role in boosting the self-confidence and supporting the mobility of the students who took part. Their views were extremely positive as 14-year old Kimberley explains: “It made me think about things I’d never thought of before. What if I lose my money? What if I get lost? But I have realised how to get help. It has given me confidence to travel on a bus and built up trust between my parents and me.”

Kelly, who is 15, emphasises the enjoyment of the group work. “I like circle time. It made everyone relax and work as a team. It helped us talk about our feelings, like being scared, frightened and upset. When we covered directions, it made me realise I must think before I speak and read people’s body language.”

The national roll out of ‘Getting There!’ will help tell the story of independence to an even wider audience. A pack has been sent to every special, secondary school, FE college, LEA and Learning and Skills Council in England and a CD-ROM has been produced as an additional training aid.
Suffolk - operating an in-house transport fleet

In Suffolk, an Education Maintenance Allowance Transport (EMA T) pilot scheme is operating until the end of July 2004. This provides a free travel pass, and achievement and attendance bonuses for those who meet specified criteria relating to residency, parental income, participation in a full-time course, and an individual learning agreement. The Local Education Authority also operates a direct local maintenance scheme, under which students whose parents are in receipt of certain benefits qualify for an allowance of £545 per annum (2003/2004). This may be used to assist with transport as well as other course related costs.

Support is offered through passes for use on contract or public transport services. Suffolk also considers direct financial help to those for whom such services cannot be made available, so that they can make their own travel arrangements. Criteria for this assistance includes age, attendance at an approved full-time course of Further Education (FE) for at least 12 guided hours per week, residency in the county and living at least three miles away from the institution to be attended measured by the nearest available walking route.

Students who qualify receive assistance to attend the sixth form centre at the school which serves the area where the student lives, or the local college of further education in Suffolk.

There are 30 sixth form centres attached to High Upper Schools and four FE colleges within the county, but as with other rural counties, many students cross county boundaries to attend college. Assistance is also available to students taking an approved full-time course at a school or FE institute outside the local area (3 or more miles from their home) subject to the home to school/college journey time not exceeding 75 minutes. The charge to the student for subsidised transport is £82 per term (2003/2004) with exemptions for low income families. Transport for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is provided in accordance with expert advice about need, but is provided irrespective of minimum distance and other criteria.

Almost 3000 students use Suffolk transport

Suffolk currently transports 2900 16-19 year olds. 300-400 of these would not qualify for assistance under the 3 mile ruling, but are covered by the provisions of the EMAT. There are 5600 students in sixth forms, and of these, 22-23% are provided with transport. “In general terms,” says Terry Donovan, Transport Manager of the Education Service of Suffolk County Council, “we are providing transport for around 20% of all young people in our various schools and colleges.”
Giving an overview of transport in Suffolk he says: “Public transport services are very limited compared with many parts of the country and therefore we are hugely reliant on closed contract vehicles which do our work and only our work. We are running each day 1240 vehicles, the majority of which are specially contracted, to transport our children and young people.”

**Variety of vehicles**

Alongside hired vehicles from commercial operators, the Council operates and manages its own 56-vehicle fleet. It owns 31 coaches - large 53-57 seat vehicles, some adapted to be wheelchair accessible, plus 25 minibuses of up to 16 seats, including two specialised 24 seat wheelchair accessible vehicles. Terry explains: “Having a fleet of our own is historic and goes back to the 1970s. The cost and availability of commercial operators vehicles caused difficulties, and today cost and availability continues to be a reason for having our own fleet. We also consider it important that having our own fleet allows us to act when an emergency occurs, to cover areas of work where reliability is at a premium, where there are special considerations, for example, young people with special needs.” He also places value on the loyalty and commitment of having their own staff, employed by the County Council.

The work secured by the Council fleet is obtained in open competition with other commercial providers, which as a valuable by-product allows the Council to monitor the pricing policy of commercial operators. Suffolk does not have an integrated transport unit. The Education Transport Unit and Public Transport Unit operate independently but in close co-operation because of their joint interests, for example in providing services to Social Care. Tendering is managed by the Procurement and Commissioning department.

**Best-value review**

Suffolk, at the time of writing, is currently involved in a very wide-ranging Best Value Review of transport - ‘Moving People’. “We are working with public transport, environment, social care and others” explains Terry. Key actions identified in the improvement plan are:

- focus on Moving People, not internal structures;
- shape services around policy, specification, procurement and provision roles;
- review policies to support new approaches;
- lobby Government for change in regulations to support new ways of working;
- be more proactive in meeting rural transport needs;
- establish effective project management to ensure Improvement Plan is implemented.

The Review is a holistic approach to transport issues within the area, and is expected to provide valuable results.
The Transport Pathfinder enabled Blackburn with Darwen Local Education Authority (LEA), in conjunction with the Chief Co-ordinator of Public Transport, college principals, sixth form schools and the Learning and Skills Council, to initiate an effective partnership and develop research to identify appropriate transport support arrangements.

In the LEA area, there are two Further Education (FE) institutions and one sixth form college. The transport-related difficulties for students are closely allied to the locations of these three institutions and the cost of bus travel. For example, one institution is out of town at the top of a very steep hill without a direct bus link, while another is at the very centre of town. Standard transport costs are high, especially in view of the fact that the area suffered from high levels of deprivation. While there are two towns in the Borough, both FE institutions are in Blackburn.

Working with Blackburn Borough Transport Ltd, the Pathfinder initiative allowed heavily subsidised bus travel to be offered, with free travel for some students. Alongside the subsidised travel, in areas where there were no scheduled services, the LEA negotiated the provision of four dedicated buses to deliver students direct to the three institutions.
**Annual Rover Card**

A Blackburn Borough Transport Ltd Rover Card was initially available for £360.00 and valid on all the company buses for the 42-week academic year. Due to economies of scale, the price was then reduced to around £310.00. This compares very favourably with a price of £3.30 per day for a daily fare. The card is free for students whose parents are on benefits. Peter Morgan, Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, explains further. "What the bus company normally does is to issue Rover Cards on a weekly basis, at around £12 per week." Because such high volumes of tickets were involved, the LEA was able to negotiate a subsidised annual ticket.

To pave the way for the Rover Card introduction, letters were sent out to all Year 11 students explaining about the subsidised bus travel and customised bus routes. "The only problems we had were associated with the speed of the whole process. The customised routes were obviously more difficult to set up" says Peter, "and with the ticket scheme we did have some issues in the first few weeks of term with not all the drivers being aware of the new Rover Cards, but these things sorted themselves out."

Students requiring the ticket were briefed to take the relevant documentation to their institution where enrolment and eligibility were checked. Leaflets about both parts of the bus travel scheme - Rover Cards and new bus routes - were also produced for each institution, with a nominated staff member to answer queries and respond to ticket requests.

"We found that the Rover Card scheme appealed much more to people who were on means-tested benefits, and the customised routes appealed much more to those who weren’t. In all, about 150 students made use of the Rover card."

**Contributing to future prosperity**

Executive member for Education and Lifelong Learning, Councillor Mahfooz Hussain believes the Pathfinder initiative has been instrumental in supporting young people who want to continue their education. "We have been extremely pleased with the success of the Pathfinder scheme, and the Rover passes initiative in particular. The way that all the colleges and other providers in Blackburn with Darwen have worked together to identify need, and then strategically plan to meet those needs, has been impressive."

Councillor Hussain believes that ultimately the policy will contribute to the future prosperity of the area: "Our focus in the LEA is to work with others to build learning communities across our Borough. We also need to overcome barriers for young people to improve their skills and contribute to the long-term renewal of the Borough. Transport can be a big barrier. The Pathfinder scheme has been central to encouraging young people to stay in education and to achieve their learning goals."
Hartlepool forges close working relationship with consultants

Hartlepool is a small unitary authority, one of five which make up the Tees Valley conurbation. It is an area which is experiencing population loss in contrast to nationwide population growth.

Under the Pathfinder initiative, a close working relationship between Hartlepool Borough Council and consultants Steer Davies Gleave (SDG) led to productive information gathering on current student transport patterns, student attitudes, and barriers to learning. The consultancy’s study notes: “Through this study we have built up a comprehensive picture of current needs and provision, existing gaps, and have been able to suggest options to fill these gaps. Our methodology was also intended to be fully inclusive - we consulted users and non-users and a wide group of stakeholders so that they had a genuine input to the options being developed.”

Hartlepool approached five consultancies in the summer of 2002, requesting tenders, and four bids were received. Danielle Swainston, Education Officer, says: “We worked very closely with our transport department. We had set criteria on which we scored each bid and concluded that SDG would produce the best transport study for us and probably give us the best advice.”

3-stage study

Danielle feels that the initial meeting after SDG was appointed was crucial. “It was important that we set the rules and clarified what we wanted to achieve from the transport study, and that it was agreed by both of us.” Close liaison continued on a weekly basis as a minimum.

There were three stages to the study:
- inception, data gathering and analysis (collating data primarily from local colleges, Connexions and bus operators);
- consultation (with students at the four FE colleges, young people not in FE, their parents, schools, colleges and other local stakeholders);
- development of options for improvement, including indicative costs, timescales and implementation timescales.
The study began in October and included questionnaires and focus groups. “One of the reasons we picked SDG was because they were going to be consulting with people, parents and students with learning difficulties and disabilities (SLDD) on a face to face basis. We found the focus group results really informed us where we should be going with regard to transport in Hartlepool.”

Suggestions for travel improvements from the students themselves included strong views on cost: “they should subsidise the price of a Megarider, if you paid £5, it’s going to be better than £7”; “you would think the bus company would actually offer schemes because they all know we use the buses.”

SDG supplied an interim report prior to Christmas 2002 which helped Hartlepool assess how best to allocate its Pathfinder funding. The final report was delivered around the beginning of February 2003 and this included proposals for transport initiatives - quite a tight timescale if initiatives were to be actioned in the remainder of the academic year.

**Ideas in action**

One of the initiatives which developed following the research findings was a website for students to access information about transport. SDG wrote a brief for the website design and its content, and for information booklets, so that those concerned with designing the communication material could work from identified needs. This initiated the development of a facility for the website whereby students can select an institution, and bring up graphical information to show the best route and transport method by walking, bus or cycling.

A second initiative was to arrange cycle storage by means of racks and/or sheds in most Further Education establishments and cycling proficiency courses were also set up. Hartlepool is quite compact and students do not travel great distances to college, so it made sense to establish a cycling culture, starting in the schools. “We worked quite closely with our road safety team who have been promoting cycling to younger pupils within schools, but we wanted to extend that policy, and link it to the transport study.” Training was also introduced to help students with learning difficulties and disabilities access public transport.

Danielle Swainston adds: “SDG also helped us organise a transport briefing day where we had representatives from all the secondary schools and the colleges, Connexions and LEAs in the region. Everybody shared information about how they fund transport, what enables students to go to different colleges, and so on. It worked very well and we will probably run it regularly every two years. The evaluation we got back was very positive.”

Danielle felt that SDG’s experience and knowledge of transport complemented her own background in education and that the bringing together of these two areas of expertise was especially effective. “Though we have finished the work with SDG their ideas will continue to help us.”
Support via bus and bikes in North East Lincolnshire

North East Lincolnshire is one of the Education Maintenance Allowance Transport (EMA T) pilot areas. Under the scheme, eligible students pay one quarter of the full price bus pass or receive a free pass. Under EMA review procedures a questionnaire was sent out to students. From this, one of the main issues the students identified was lack of flexibility in the transport to college.

“We were already giving quite a generous allowance for travel, but it was for two journeys, limited to between 7am to 7pm” says Hazel Cantle, Education Officer, Student Services. The questionnaire gave students a chance to comment on existing arrangements and was incentivised with a prize draw to encourage participation. “We got an excellent response. We surveyed something like 1,200 students and got 878 back.” Hazel feels that sending out the questionnaire with the EMA review forms and giving an incentive played a part in the success.

Connexions Card

The original passes issued under EMA were valid from September 2002 for one term and the intention was to provide increased support in Term 2. DfES agreed to extend the use of the EMA allocation to widen the scope of the transport allowance. The intention was for the Connexions card to be used as the basis for the concessionary travel, and so consultation with the local transport provider Stagecoach, and with Connexions card producers Capita, began early in the 2002 academic year. Negotiations however, proved difficult and protracted. The main problems were associated with settling on a price for a Megarider - a weekly ticket which was to provide unlimited travel with cashless transactions - and with agreement to maintain costings until the end of the pilot.
Hazel Cantle describes the ongoing negotiations: “Stagecoach then agreed to honour the ‘expired’ passes for a further term to enable the problems to be considered. The local divisional manager has been extremely keen to see the scheme successfully running.” Finally, agreement was reached on a weekly cost and on an additional logo to be added to the Connexions card so that it could be recognised by bus drivers and a cashless transaction could take place. There were still difficulties to come however: Capita were unable to deliver all the cards to the agreed deadlines for a number of reasons, including low turn out of young people to organised photo sessions. A good lesson was learnt here about the need to plan properly and of all partners to work together to promote the scheme to young people in order to maximise take-up rates.

Not to be deterred, North East Lincolnshire produced an in-house bus pass, with the necessary logo and managed to issue it in time for the start of Term 3. “The EMA scheme funds the Megarider’s increased costs and the Pathfinder facilitated the scheme” explains Hazel. “We took on board the Stagecoach comments regarding the behaviour of students and potential fraud issues, and alerted students to these matters when advising them of the new provision.”

“Apart from one or two teething problems regarding administration, all seems to be working well. These will be addressed in the 2003/04 academic year” says Ron Smith, Stagecoach’s Divisional Manager.

**Freewheeling to college**

Beginning in September 2003, the policy was amended to provide a Megarider ticket if the student lives more than one mile from their institution. Second year returning students living less than one mile away will be offered a bicycle, lights, lock, helmet and a monetary amount for cycle training. Demand indicates that this will also be offered to new students. The mile is measured by student services on Gistix software - a North East Lincolnshire mapping system which swiftly measures distances ‘as the crow flies’.

Students further than one mile away will now be able to use the Megarider to reach their institutions however many bus journeys it takes. They can travel between study at different centres, visit the library at lunchtime using the bus, or even use the pass at weekends. “We also have schools and colleges that have formed partnerships so they can travel between the two” comments Hazel.
East Riding of Yorkshire Council is geographically the largest unitary authority in England, covering approximately 1,000 square miles. A largely agricultural area with seasonal tourist employment, it has one of the fastest growing populations. This is due in some part to migration from the surrounding inner city areas, such as Hull, Leeds, and Sheffield. This means that additional school places have to be created, so prior to the Education Act 2002, the Local Education Authority (LEA) had focused their funding on pre-16 transport.

Within the LEA there are 2 Further Education (FE) colleges and 17 schools with sixth forms, with 3 FE colleges in Hull and 1 in York. Currently there are around 3,000 students attending ‘A’ level studies at school, of which 220 receive a bursary based on means testing. There are similar numbers of students attending FE colleges who have not received travel support from the LEA during the 2002/2003 academic year. Previous travel support was means tested using the same formula as school bursaries. Apart from the Pathfinder schemes, a substantial amount of transport provision has been supported by individual FE colleges.

Long journeys from remote areas
The Authority shares close boundaries with several others, such as Hull, York and North East Lincolnshire. Students can travel on average up to 15 miles a day where there is no direct bus route or convenient public transport service. Some students take the option of attending an FE institution out of their LEA but closer to their homes. Research showed that availability of transport to FE was not a major consideration for students when choosing courses at the outset. It became clear, however, that it was an influencing factor in the increasing numbers of students withdrawing from FE after only one term’s attendance.

East Riding students take a ride by moped
East Riding of Yorkshire Council is geographically the largest unitary authority in England, covering approximately 1,000 square miles. A largely agricultural area with seasonal tourist employment, it has one of the fastest growing populations. This is due in some part to migration from the surrounding inner city areas, such as Hull, Leeds, and Sheffield. This means that additional school places have to be created, so prior to the Education Act 2002, the Local Education Authority (LEA) had focused their funding on pre-16 transport.
Ursula Siegle is Student Support Manager, and describes the background to public transport in the area: “Due to the extensive rural areas present in the Authority, the development of the public transport network has not always been a priority. The ability to address gaps in the network, such as lack of bus routes and services to some of the more remote villages and hamlets, needs to be planned and prioritised in accordance with other highway maintenance work schedules, which also have been identified as key problems.”

**Twenty mopeds purchased**

Providing the most needy students with their own transport seemed an ideal way to plug the gaps in the existing public transport system, and that is exactly what East Riding set out to do. The LEA used its tendering procedures to purchase 20 new 50cc CPI Popcorn mopeds. The comprehensive package for each student includes protective clothing, (helmet, jacket, trousers and gloves) one year’s insurance, provisional licence, Compulsory Basic Training (CBT), 6-monthly servicing, breakdown recovery and one full tank of petrol.

CBT training forms part of the supplier’s contract and is provided locally by qualified instructors. It is envisaged that in the new academic year, training will be provided in groups of 10-15 students rather than individually. The students keep the mopeds at their homes, and the servicing has been contracted to one garage that will collect from the students’ homes if required.

Ursula Siegle explains: “The assistance is aimed at students from low income families and those living in rural areas. Students can apply to the LEA’s student support team providing simple financial information in respect of state benefits received, including Working Families Tax Credits, and Housing Benefits. If they or their parents have been in receipt of any of these for a period of six months during the previous financial year they were approved for the scheme.”

**Students like the bike!**

The scheme proved very popular with students, both male and female. Ursula says: “The very first student was extremely excited when he picked up his moped after having his CBT training. His father contacted me recently to say thank you for giving his son the chance to attend the college and course of his choice. He also said that whoever thought of this scheme should be recommended, as it provided his son with an additional learning incentive and showed him how to take on ownership and responsibility for the moped.”

The record of servicing has been good, with no problems from the technical side. The scheme has been modified for the future as Ursula explained: “We have tweaked the specification of the mopeds for the next round of tendering. We have also changed some of the operational and administrative procedures to deal with larger numbers of students and their mopeds.”
To college in minutes – by moped

Laura, studying AS levels at Hornsea School Sixth Form, has found her moped gets her to her place of study within minutes, and she considers it good fun to ride too! Students using public transport in East Riding can face long and inconvenient journeys to their destination, with early starts, and lack of direct routes. Laura’s situation was typical. She lives six miles from Hornsea School, not a great distance by some standards, but, she says: “The bus journey took a long while to get there, and set off really early.”

The publicity generated by East Riding’s ‘Wheels to College’ scheme caught her eye, and she decided to find out more about how to take up the opportunity to use an LEA-provided 50cc moped for her journey. “I saw an article in the Hull Daily Mail, and I thought it sounded good and useful.”
Training in how to use the moped safely is part and parcel of the scheme, and Laura says that she found learning to ride was easy and quite fun. Her journey to Hornsea School Sixth Form now takes just about 15 to 20 minutes, and she can set off at an appropriate time for her classes, and return when she is ready. Carrying books and other student necessities can be a little problematical with restricted storage space on the bike, and it is sometimes a chilly ride, but overall Laura feels it is a much better alternative than bus travel.

Using her moped has added to her independence in other ways too. "I enjoy using it and sometimes use it to go out or to go to work on" she says. Laura’s friends and parents were equally enthusiastic: "They thought it was good, and one of my friends also applied for one. My parents thought it was a useful scheme and practical for the distance."
Close working relationship with community transport in Barnsley

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Local Education Authority (LEA) has commissioned a comprehensive information gathering exercise on transport in partnership with the three other South Yorkshire LEAs (Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield). The results will be used to inform LEAs and South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTE) decisions on altering existing services.

Barnsley students already benefit from a SYPTE scheme where any student aged 16-18 is entitled to a concessionary pass. This pass entitles the user to a flat fare of only 35p for any public transport journey within the South Yorkshire area. Pathfinder funding was used to provide free transport to all Year 12 and 13 students who live more than 3 miles from their place of study and who qualify for maximum Education Maintenance Allowance.

For students with learning difficulties and disabilities (SLDD), Pathfinder funding was allocated to provide a special vehicle to serve the main Further Education centre, Barnsley College. Julia Sykes, Assistant Manager, Strategic Support, gives the background. “Originally we got representatives together from the area’s post 16 establishments and the SYPTE to discuss where and what transport barriers students experienced. Barnsley College stated that students with learning difficulties and disabilities had problems accessing their college.” The College is situated in the centre of town, and for mainstream students, many using the 35p flat fare, getting to the site was not a problem as there were many bus services to the centre of town. To support students with learning difficulties and disabilities it was proposed that a dedicated bus should be provided. “The idea was to pick up students from around the borough and drop them off at the college. Dial-a-Ride arranged the special vehicle for us and provided a driver as well. Community Transport has been excellent - they have really tried to accommodate Barnsley College and the students’ needs.”
Support from institutes essential

Sue Hague is Transport Officer with Barnsley LEA, and is equally praiseworthy of the working relationship. “We have always had very strong links with our Community Transport” she says. “In line with national trends we have a shortage of specialist vehicles that are wheelchair accessible for pupils. Community Transport provides quite significant numbers of vehicles for us to get pupils in wheelchairs to school. It was an extension of this, when the Pathfinder came along, to be able to do that for Barnsley College.”

The original idea was for the specialist vehicle to act as a shuttle bus, with flexibility on start and finish times. However, for a variety of reasons, in practice this concept was not feasible. “That’s not to say we could not do something on those lines for the future” says Sue. “There has been discussion about a taxi bus service or a dial-a-bus where a student can ring in and be able to access a service. It’s not been taken up at the moment but it is a facility which can be explored.”

Productive partnerships

Sue believes that commitment from the education institutes is essential in making a shuttle bus concept work productively. Although Barnsley LEA had regular meetings with college staff, it was felt that students should also have been canvassed to assess how best to serve their needs. “We also had problems with the short notice we were given on the Pathfinder to get the bid together and to decide what to do in the limited time available. It was not possible to target students early enough before they were in the process of choosing the courses.” Earlier notification, she feels, could have made a difference to the success of the scheme. “But the good thing about Pathfinder is that it has brought a variety of agencies together in partnership - Lifelong Learning, Learning and Skills Councils, Community Transport and so on - so we are pleased with the way that it has turned out.”
Rutland - providing generous out of county transport arrangements

Rutland is England’s smallest mainland county, with a total population of approximately 37,000. Post-16 education is offered at Rutland College in Oakham, where a mix of advanced level and vocational courses are available. As a rural county, the public transport routes are thinly spread. Council tax is comparatively high, ranging from £1209 to £1243 for a Band D property.

For post-16 students, the Local Education Authority applies a 3-mile walking distance rule for subsidised transport eligibility, so that if a student lives within Rutland but more than three miles from the college, then subsidised transport is available. If Rutland College is not able to offer the type of course the student wishes to pursue, then transport may be provided at a subsidised rate to the nearest alternative college offering the subject choice within an eight mile radius of the county boundary. Colleges in Melton Mowbray, Stamford and Corby are popular choices.

A parental contribution is requested toward the cost of transport provision, but is waived in the case of pupils whose parents qualify for income-based allowances such as Jobseekers’ Allowance or income support. For post-16 transport the current charge is £94 per annum - just 50p per day.

Denominational students

There are particular arrangements which may be offered to denominational students. Rutland will consider providing transport assistance if each of the following apply:

- a parent or pupil adheres to the religion or denomination for which the college provides daily collective worship;
- the transport application is supported by proof of baptism of the pupil in the faith, or by the parish priest or local vicar confirming that parent(s) adhere to the religion in question;
- the student attended a denominational school while of statutory school age;
- the student lives more than three miles, but no more than 25 miles from the institution and is attending the nearest appropriate denominational college offering the desired courses.

SEN students

The County Council work in partnership with local colleges and provide students with a travel pass that allows the student free travel on public transport and contracted bus services where appropriate. Travel passes can be used during term time and at any time of the day when services operate.
Glossary:

ALG – Association of London Government
ATCO – Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers
CBT – Compulsory Basic Training
EMA T – Education Maintenance Allowance Transport Pilot
FE – Further Education
FELORS - Further Education London Regional Services
IPTU – Integrated Passenger Transport Unit
ITU – Integrated Transport Unit
LEA – Local Education Authority
LSC – Learning and Skills Council
LTP – Local Transport Plan
PTA – Passenger Transport Authority
PTE – Passenger Transport Executive
R&D – Research and Development
SDG – Steer Davies Gleave
SEN – Special Educational Needs
SENCO – Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators
SYPTTE – South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive

Further Reading:


DfES Contact Details

If you require further information please use the DfES Transport Website: www.dfes.gov.uk/financialhelp

Alternatively contact one of the team:

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<th>Transport Development Pathfinders</th>
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Shaded areas indicate 2nd wave Pathfinders running from November/December 2002