

## Home to School Transport Review

### Survey Monkey Questions

1. Is / are any of your child(ren) currently eligible for free home to school transport?

Yes- Yes-my child(ren) is / are eligible for home to school transport but do not use the service

Yes - my child(ren) is / are eligible for home to school transport and use the service

**No** ✓

Don't Know

2. What is the main reason that your child(ren) uses free home to school transport?

Please select one option

My journey to work would not allow me to drop them at school myself

It is too far for them to walk or cycle

I believe it is one of the safest ways to get to school

The weather is often too bad to walk or cycle

Other (please specify)

3. If your child(ren) is / are eligible for free home to school transport but do not use it please select the reason(s) why from the list below?

Please select all that apply

I feel my child is too young to get the bus

The drop off point is not convenient

I believe it is safer to drive my child to school

The weather is often too bad

It is just as easy to drive my child to school

The school is on my way to work

My child(ren) do not want to use the bus

Other (please specify)

4. Home to School Transport is provided free of charge to over 84,000 pupils in Northern Ireland. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

“Home to school transport is a useful service that the Northern Ireland Executive should continue to provide.”

Please select one option

**Strongly agree** ✓

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

5. Do you think a future home to school transport policy should:

Please select one option

**Offer free transport to all pupils** ✓

Only offer free transport to pupils living in rural areas

Only offer free transport to pupils in receipt of free school meals

Only offer free transport to pupils living in rural areas and/or in receipt of free school meals

Ask some parents to pay a contribution to the costs of their child(ren)'s home to school transport

Remain unchanged

Other (please specify)

6. The main reason that home to school transport is provided is to support pupils to get to school who otherwise might not be able to get there. The policy could also have other benefits, some of which are listed below.

On a scale of one to five with one being your top priority and five your lowest priority, please prioritise which benefits you think should be included within a future policy.

Protecting the environment by reducing the number of cars on the road **4**

Improving pupil health by encouraging walking and cycling to school **3**

Improving the safety of pupils getting to school **1**

Supporting those on low incomes **2**

Improving the economy by reducing congestion and allowing business traffic to move more freely **5**

7. If a future Minister for Education decided that some of the funding for home to school transport should be used to increase funding for schools, which of the following options do you think would be better?

Please select one option

The number of pupils receiving free transport should be reduced by increasing the minimum distance from home to school before a pupil qualifies for transport assistance

The number of pupils receiving free transport should be reduced by providing free transport only to the nearest school within your chosen category. ✓

Some parents should be asked to contribute towards the cost

Don't know

8. Do you believe funding should be diverted from other public services to provide free home to school transport to more school pupils?

Please select one option

Yes ✓

No

Don't Know

9. Do you have any comments on the questions asked or suggest any areas that should be considered in any future home to school transport policy?

'Accessibility' to education is one of the most important, and fundamental, issues facing the Education Authority. In the 'Schools for the Future' document the Department for Education acknowledges that 'accessibility is likely to assume a much greater importance for an isolated rural school than for an urban based school'. Exploring various examples of good practice, shows that for an Education Authority to assess travel arrangements for pupils being 'suitable', the arrangements must enable the child to reach school without stress, strain, or difficulty that may prevent them from benefitting from their education.

All transport provided should also be safe and of reasonable comfort. There are concerns that children from poorer backgrounds may be disproportionately affected by travel problems within rural areas. Such children are more likely to be dependent upon the school bus for travel to and from school, and therefore have difficulty in accessing both informal and formal after-school activities. Therefore, pupils who are most likely to benefit from activities such as homework clubs or access to computers are less likely to be able to participate unless these activities are provided close to their homes or additional access/transport is made available

Consideration of the impact on child safety should be the paramount criterion of any policy which is implemented by EANI, and especially in relation to transport to and from school. Therefore, instead of EANI assessing the individual child's eligibility for school transport by measuring the distance between home and school by the 'nearest available route', they should instead measure the distance a child would have to travel via the 'nearest, and safest, available route taking into account major roads, junctions, footpaths, cycle paths.

Any reduction in the level of transport provision will place significant financial burdens on some families, especially those who may have a low level income or may not have access to a car or other method of transportation. This could leave children walking/cycling long distances on dimly lit roads with potential adverse implications for their personal safety, and with additional stress or worry to their parents/carers.

.