

## Response ID ANON-ZG34-QK64-E

Submitted to **Consultation on free bus travel for people resident in Scotland aged under 19**  
Submitted on 2020-12-01 22:44:24

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

#### Objectives of the scheme

#### Eligible people

#### Eligible services

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

Yes

#### Please provide further comments:

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. We are a membership organisation, representing over 100 regional and national youth organisations. We champion the role and value of youth work and represent the interests and aspirations of the voluntary and statutory youth work sector. Our vision is of a nation which values its young people and their contribution to society, where young people are supported to achieve their potential.

Scotland's youth work sector consists of 80,000 youth work practitioners reaching in excess of 380,000 young people in youth work opportunities each week. While the activities, venues, and approaches utilised to deliver youth work are varied – and include youth clubs, youth projects, specialist or targeted provision, social activism, outdoor learning, awards programmes, uniformed organisations, and democratic participation – youth work in all its forms provides fundamental support to young people across Scotland's local authorities.

In 2019, YouthLink Scotland was pleased to respond supportively to the consultation on Scotland's National Transport Strategy. At the time, we highlighted the importance of affordable, efficient and accessible transport for the effective delivery of youth work services. In order, to ensure young people have equity of access to youth work opportunities - which makes a significant difference to the lives and prospects of thousands of young people across Scotland.

#### COVID19

We know the impacts of COVID19 are leading to growing inequality and poverty and will impact significantly on young people. There is also an increasing prevalence of poor mental health among young people. Many of the hardest hit are from deprived backgrounds and often have fewer educational and employment prospects. For those experiencing poverty, lack of affordable transport is a significant barrier to education, work, volunteering and accessing youth work opportunities and the benefits these provide. Addressing this provides an opportunity for the transport strategy to promote greater equality for young people. Therefore, we recommend that the age is raised from the proposed plan of 19 years old to 25 years old. We want to be clear that COVID19 has drawn attention to existing barriers for young people to participate in public life. The pandemic has shone a light on a perennial problem and exacerbated many existing issues. However, the proposed adjustment to the plan should be seen as one to support young people now and in the longer term.

#### The Transport System: A key structure to facilitate youth work participation

We were heartened by the National Transport Strategy's vision for a: "sustainable, inclusive and accessible transport system helping to deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors", particularly the emphasis on climate action and improving lives. In relation to the latter, we encourage Scottish Government to consider the importance of the transport strategy in sustaining and optimising participation of children and young people in youth work, as well as furthering the rights and opportunities of young people in Scotland. This is fundamental if the strategy's vision to deliver a healthier and fairer Scotland is to be realised.

Access to safe, reliable, efficient and affordable transport is fundamental for young people to access opportunities. Transport connects young people to college/university, work, volunteering, hobbies and leisure activities, social networks and key youth work services and a lack of access to transport isolates young people from friends, education and work opportunities.

#### Raising the Age of Free Bus Travel to 25

We believe raising the age of free bus travel to 25 is increasingly important at a time when young people have made so many sacrifices. However, this issue pre-dates the pandemic. We know from our co-production on the new National Youth Work Strategy (2021-2026) for Scotland that accessibility to youth work is a key priority for young people within our sector.

It is positive that Scottish Government intends to launch a new statutory national concessionary travel scheme providing free bus travel for young people resident in Scotland up to their 19th birthday. However, to be responsive to our sector's needs, we believe the proposal should be extended up to their 25th birthday. This would cater for the entirety of our sector and provide another avenue for those not accessing youth work due to transport costs, an opportunity to do so.

Young people tell us that transport issues prevent inclusivity of young people in youth work and that it impacts on their wellbeing. We would ask that these issues are given full consideration in the development and implementation of the new strategy. This should also be seen in the context of how negatively affected young people have been as a result of the pandemic.

Youth workers' and volunteers tell us that transport alienation is common. The cost and timing of travel, particularly in rural areas, can preclude young people from gaining youth work opportunities. It can also impact on youth workers, as the expense of covering transport expenses (to ensure young people, staff and volunteers can attend activities and other opportunities) can place added pressure on already constrained youth work budgets. Youth workers tell us of young people who cannot access their service as they do not have the budget to cover travel expenses. They are often unable to provide travel to events and other opportunities for young people, due to budget cuts, combined with the lack of affordable transport options. The cost of travelling to training courses can limit opportunities for professional development, particularly for those working in rural areas where travel to such courses is more costly. Further, the youth work sector is underpinned by a large number of volunteers, and transport issues and/or expenses can also prevent them from travelling to assist young people and/or to do so safely.

In closing, YouthLink Scotland are keen to explore how the youth work sector's vast network can support a fairer transport system for all Scotland's children and young people. There is a real opportunity to be a beacon of hope for young people at this time. We believe a strategy that includes free bus travel for young people up to the age of 25 would be a helpful and symbolic gesture to assist young people at a time when they need it most.

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

No

Please provide further comments:

**Delivery options**

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

Yes

Please provide further comments:

Answered "yes". However, this would need to be agree with Young Scot.

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

Not Answered

Please provide further comments:

Unsure.

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

Please give us your views:

**Reimbursement**

**COVID-19 implications**

**Assessing impact**

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

Please give us your views:

**7 Do you think the proposals contained within this Consultation may have any additional implications on the rights, wellbeing and safety of children and young people? Please be as specific as possible.**

Please give us your views:

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

Please give us your views:

**Other considerations**

**9 Are there any other issues you wish to raise which are not covered in the points or questions elsewhere in this Consultation?**

Please provide any further comments:

**About you**

What is your name?

**Name:**

Kevin Kane

**What is your email address?**

**Email:**

kkane@youthlinkscotland.org

**Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?**

Organisation

**What is your organisation?**

**Organisation:**

YouthLink Scotland

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

Publish response with name

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

Yes

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

None of the above

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

I sometimes use buses (for example once a month)

**I confirm that I have read the privacy policy and consent to the data I provide being used as set out in the policy.**

I consent

**Evaluation**

**Please help us improve our consultations by answering the questions below. (Responses to the evaluation will not be published.)**

**Matrix 1 - How satisfied were you with this consultation?:**

Very satisfied

**Please enter comments here.:**

**Matrix 1 - How would you rate your satisfaction with using this platform (Citizen Space) to respond to this consultation?:**

Very satisfied

**Please enter comments here.:**