

Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-05-748

Petition title: **School buses for school children.**

Petition text:

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure every child's safety is put first when traveling to and from school.

We want designated school buses so children can travel safely to and from school, each with a seat and seat belt, with no child forced to travel on overcrowded public buses. Children's safety must come first.

Our children have a right to feel safe. Public buses can become over crowded. We have no clue who may board a public bus. Public buses are for public use not school transport. We are not asking for this service to be free, We don't want something for nothing, Just peace of mind that our children are safe when traveling to and from school. We teach our children about stranger danger yet we are expected to send them on a public bus full of strangers daily.

Having lost my daughter under the wheels of a public bus she had travelled home from school in, I feel it's only a matter of time before another parent lives my nightmare if something isn't done to ensure children have a safe means of transport to and from school.

Additional information:

A lot of people will remember my Daughter Louise and the horrific way she lost her life. For those that don't Louise was 11 years old and had not long started high school. Because of the distance to get to school my Children relied on using a public bus. On the 19th March 2001 Louise was due home from Connah's Quay High school at her normal time, only this day the bus was late. I started to worry as I headed out the door I was greeted by Louise's

friends telling me she had been run over. I ran to the end of my street to find my beautiful Daughter clinging to life in the road, distressed school children all around. I couldn't understand what had happened. Over months it emerged the bus Louise had travelled home from had been over crowded, adults had stood talking to the driver, there was an alleged push, also a mention her bag had got caught in the door or wheel causing her to be dragged under the bus she had just alighted from, it was proven the mirrors had blind spots that had been a contributing factor.

After the decision to close a local school, John Summers High School, a lot of parents have spoken to me with concerns for their Child's safety travelling on public buses to and from school. Points have been raised that totally alarm me, So I'm heading a campaign in my Daughter's name to make sure no Child is forced to use public transport buses as school transport.

Dedicated school buses

The Petitioner is calling for **dedicated school buses** for all school pupils and that school pupils should not travel by public transport. The Petitioner is not asking that this provision should be free of charge.

The Welsh Government has published [Learner Travel Operational Guidance](#) (June 2014) which defines 'dedicated learner transport':

"Dedicated learner transport includes buses, coaches, minibuses, taxis. It is transport provided or secured by a relevant body (a local authority or the governing body of a maintained school), specifically for the purpose of transporting learners of compulsory school age (that is, those aged between 5–16) between home and school. Dedicated learner transport is for the use of learners only. Members of the general public are not allowed to use the service."

Service buses may be used to transport learners between home and school but are also used to transport fare paying passengers who are members of the general public on the same service routes. I have been unable to find any statistics on the numbers of pupils travelling on dedicated school transport or public service transport.

In his response to the Committee, Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure stated that the provision of dedicated learner transport buses is a matter for local authorities to consider.

Standards for local bus services and local bus policy

The Welsh Government funds local bus service operators via that Bus Services Support Grant (BSSG) which is administered by local authorities. It also published [Voluntary Welsh Bus Quality Standards](#) in 2016. This says:

operators providing local scheduled bus services will be required to meet the core requirements of the Welsh Bus Quality Standard to maintain their eligibility for public funding made available through BSSG.

While these do not refer to standards or driver training for school bus services, they do include other training requirements and suggest how Welsh Government funding can be used to achieve policy outcomes on local bus services.

The Welsh Government is currently consulting on policy ([*Bus Services Policy Discussion: improving local bus services in Wales*](#)). This highlights that the [*Safety on Learner Transport \(Wales\) Measure 2011*](#) required local authorities and Governing Bodies of maintained schools to ensure that every bus used for **dedicated learner transport** to have a seat belt fitted to every passenger seat by October 2014.

Previous Assembly business

In response to concerns about a number of accidents involving buses carrying children, the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee of the Second Assembly conducted a policy review of School Transport. The policy review was published in April 2005. The review made 30 recommendations in relation to issues of conduct and behaviour, clarity of responsibility, criminal record checks, risk assessment, procurement and contract issues and the safety and security of vehicles on the school journey. Following this, the [*Safety on Learner Transport \(Wales\) Measure 2011*](#) gave Welsh Ministers powers to introduce specific safety standards for **dedicated school transport**. This includes the option to introduce specific driver training, CCTV, escorts and compulsory risk assessment and compulsory seat belts on dedicated home to school buses.

Guidance on Home to School Transport Risk Assessments

The Welsh Government has developed [non-statutory guidance](#) to help local authorities and operators carry out risk assessments on home to school transport. This should be used for all school transport service contracts. The guidance states that it can also be modified for **use on public services that carry school pupils** or for contracts carrying pupils with specific travel requirements.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

