

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON FREE BUS TRAVEL FOR OLDER AND DISABLED PEOPLE AND MODERN APPRENTICES

November 2017

CEL CIS (Centre for excellence for looked after children in Scotland), based at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, is committed to making positive and lasting improvements in the wellbeing of Scotland's children and young people living in and on the edges of care. We welcome this opportunity to contribute to the consultation on free bus travel, and we strongly support proposals for free bus travel for Modern Apprentices.

There are over 15,000 children and young people who are 'looked after' in Scotland, nearly 2,000 of whom are aged 16 or over. There are also over 4,500 care leavers (young people eligible for aftercare services). Children become looked after for a wide range of reasons, and live in a variety of circumstances such as in foster care (35%), in kinship care with relatives or friends (28%), in residential homes or schools (10%), or at home with one or both of their birth parents (25%).¹ These are children and young people who have experienced significant adversity and disadvantage. Whilst varied in their individual characteristics, needs, strengths and vulnerability, a host of complex factors contribute to an overall gap between the educational and post-school outcomes of these children and young people, and those of all children.² For a variety of reasons, success in school can be limited, which can impact on a young person's chances of securing high quality employment opportunities through traditional academic routes.³ Modern Apprenticeships offer an alternative way for young people to access high quality learning and employment opportunities, and hold real potential for young people with care experience. Three hundred and twenty eight Modern Apprentices who began their apprenticeships in 2016/17 self-identified as having care experience, which represents 1.3% of the total number of young people who began Modern Apprenticeships.⁴

4a. Are you in favour of providing free bus travel to Modern Apprentices?

Yes. Young people who have care experience often face additional barriers to accessing, securing and sustaining opportunities such as Modern Apprenticeships. Care leavers are a particularly vulnerable group, often navigating the transition to adulthood and independence without the consistent family and social supports

other young people rely on. Financial hardship and poverty impacts disproportionately on this group.⁵ Modern Apprenticeships offer young people the valuable opportunity to 'learn while they earn', but the developmental nature of the employment opportunity is reflected in the wage level. Young people aged under 19, or in their first year of their Modern Apprenticeship, will be paid a minimum of £3.50 per hour. For those aged 19 and over, and in at least their second year of their apprenticeship, the national minimum wage rate applies.⁶ Although some employers offer higher salaries than the minimum, Modern Apprentices are generally in receipt of lower rates of income. For care leavers, this can be in the context of managing the complexities and costs of independent living for the first time. Providing free bus travel to Modern Apprentices would alleviate some of the financial strain which is often felt more acutely by care leavers, and in some cases could be a critical factor in enabling employment opportunities to be sustained.

4b. Should this be targeted at Modern Apprentices under Age 21?

No. The [Scottish Care Leavers Covenant](#) recognises the multiple barriers and disadvantage faced by care leavers in Scotland, and as such sets out the rationale for an 'assumption of entitlement' for care leavers to all forms of discretionary support from corporate parents and associated agencies. This means there should be a default position where care leavers are entitled to services, support and opportunities, up to their 26th birthday. Where discretion exists in definitions of vulnerability or in giving priority access, these should be exercised in favour of care leavers.

Due to the level of need and vulnerability of looked after children, young people, and care leavers, the state's responsibilities to safeguard their rights and promote their wellbeing are set out in law. [Part 9: Corporate Parenting of the Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#), (and associated [statutory guidance](#)), requires Scottish Ministers, local authorities and a range of other public sector bodies (including Transport Scotland and Skills Development Scotland) to uphold particular responsibilities in all areas of their work. Corporate parents must promote the interests of looked after children and care leavers, and enable them to make use of supports and services they provide. Corporate parenting responsibilities apply equally to all looked after children and care leavers, irrespective of their age, up to a care leaver's 26th birthday. For all care leavers to benefit from free bus travel as Modern Apprentices, it is necessary to provide free bus travel for those with care experience up to the age of 26.

4c. Is there a better way to provide support to help with the travel costs of Modern Apprentices?

Consideration should be given to providing support with travel costs for other forms of transport in local areas, in addition to buses. For example, the Zone Card, which allows travel on the SPT subway and bus networks in Glasgow.

Thank you for providing us with this opportunity to respond. We hope the feedback is helpful; we would be happy to discuss any aspect in further detail.

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¹ Scottish Government (2017) [Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland 2015/16](#), Edinburgh: Scottish Government

² Scottish Government (2017) [Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2015/16](#), Edinburgh: Scottish Government

³ Morton, L (2016) [Modern Apprenticeships: Opportunities for employees with a care experience](#); Glasgow: CELCIS

⁴ Skills Development Scotland (2017) [Modern Apprenticeship Statistics: Full Year Report 2016/17](#)

⁵ Ayre, D., Capron, L., Egan, H., French, A. & Gregg, L. (2016) [The cost of being care free: The impact of poor financial education and removal of support on care leavers](#), The Children's Society

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/apprenticeships-guide/pay-and-conditions>