School transport for "disadvantaged young people"

Accessibility or social engineering?

Their impact on crime, public health and antisocial behaviour is so marked that a single 157,000 cohort of 16 to 18-year-old Neets will cost the country a total of £15 billion by the time they die prematurely in about 2060.

The Times

Disadvantage costs.....

- Defining disadvantage?
- Child poverty
  - Nearly 1 in 3 children in poverty
  - Aim for halving by 2010, eradication 2020
- NEETs
- But also young carers, looked after, travellers, asylum seekers

The personal costs:

- Less likely to succeed educationally
- More likely to be ill
- More likely to be killed or injured
- Have less choice

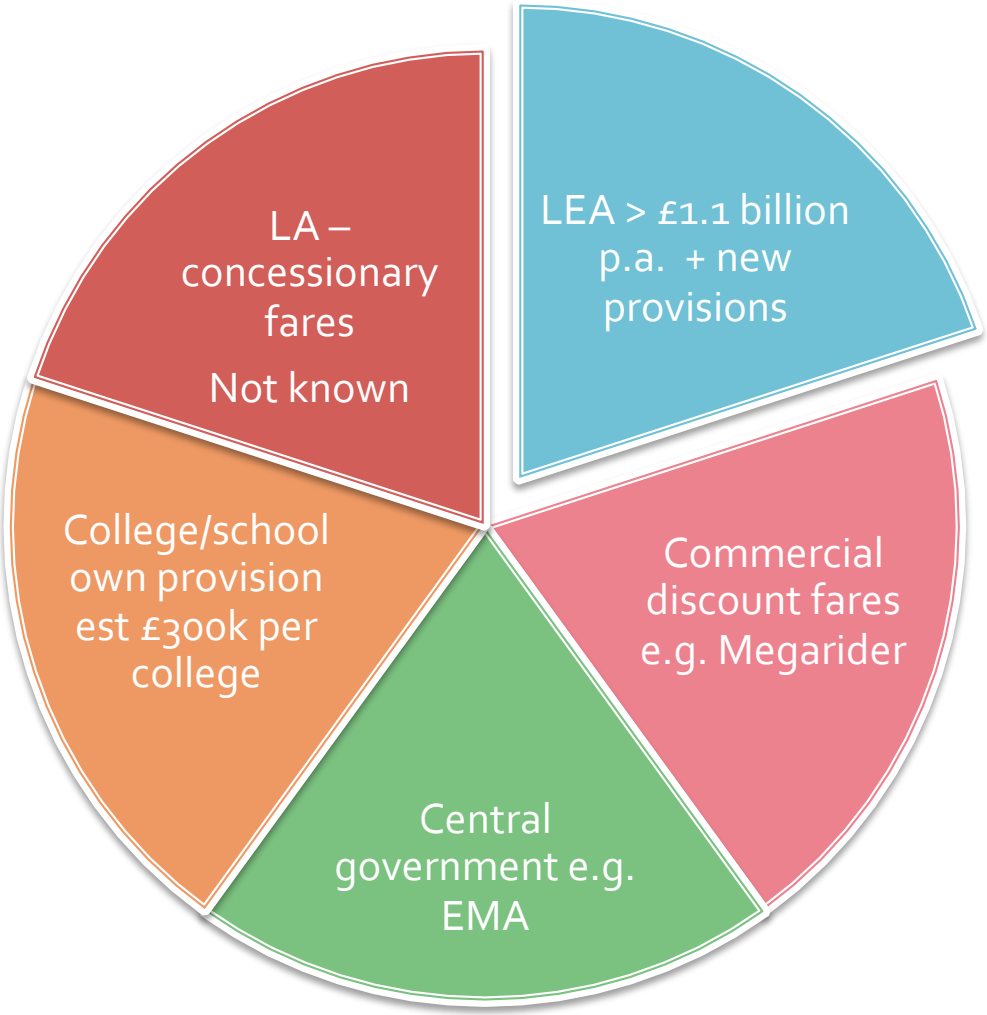
Inverse care law

- Long known that the poor make least use of services
- For school transport the argument was:
  - Transport costs and availability are barrier to choice and attainment post 16
  - School transport provided mainly benefits rural areas &
  - Rural areas more likely to be wealthy

So…what now must be provided?

- General home to school transport provisions remain….but now:
- 2004/5 – EMAs introduced
  - Part contribution to transport
- Education & Inspections Act 2006 (not Wales)
  - FSM/WTC gateway benefits
  - Choice of school
  - Lower walking distances
- Local Government legislation
  - Well being powers – widen powers to include post 18 and those not in FT education for concessionary fares
- ASCL Act 2009
  - Additional provisions for 19-24 yr olds
  - Strengthens provisions for post 16s

What this costs?



But is this working…is it the right approach?

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

Einstein/Franklin

And we've been here before!

Do social engineering and school buses mix.....?

- Race - desegregation
- Religion
- Academic selection

- All expensive & controversial
- LEAs spent long time trying to rationalise

- Now income

What's the problem with this approach?

- Arguably increases inequity
- Not what young people want
- Not what parents want
- No evidence really needed
- Expensive to administer

"...means tested benefits are complex and expensive to administer. They generate high levels of error....by contrast universal benefits are simple, effective and popular" *CPAG*

We should be ensuring access for all young people

- DfT's new concept?…..“Accessibility planning”!
- But had this since 1870
- All children “irrespective of place of residence” can get to school
- Minimum accessibility standard
  - Enshrined in legislation
- All Western countries have same approach
  - Mileage and special needs
- Simple, it works, high take up
- Cost effective to deliver

- Not without problems…. but better then where we are?

What should we do?

- Be realistic
  - Ensure minimum **access for all**
  - "Journey not so long that cannot benefit from education received"
  - Duty to tax payers and financial pressures!
  - Unfettered free provision not necessarily good
- Keep it simple!
  - Partnership and strategy overload
  - Simplify funding structures
- Colleges know their students
  - If there's enough incentive – they'll provide additional transport
  - Hardship funding – targeted where necessary
- Operators know their market
  - Many are highly creative in attracting students/young people

And what authorities should do…

Walking

Cycling

National 1/2 fare concessionary scheme + explicit criteria local bus 'socially necessary' education journeys

Free school transport

2/3 miles (would prefer 2 miles for all)
to nearest suitable school/college
Special needs