



MORE LIFE

St Thomas More
Catholic High School

13th JUNE 2023

FAIRER FARES CAMPAIGN SUCCESS!

Throughout their time in Sixth Form, many students from St Thomas More have been involved in a campaign to reduce the price of public transport for those of college age. Through an initial listening campaign in 2018, we learned that young people aged 16-19 in other parts of the region were paying a flat fare of £1 to use buses on the Stagecoach and Go North East Network. However, for young people using Arriva buses to get to college, they were being charged adult fares.

Our young people felt this price discrimination in their wallets, particularly as many were having to work part-time jobs on the minimum wage for 16–18-year-olds to fund getting to college. Often our Sixth Formers would be travelling into St Thomas More with their younger siblings to attend the same education institution, to be taught by the same teachers, in the same classrooms, and being charged a different fare. Our students sought to campaign for change with the help of our allies from the Tyne & Wear Citizens alliance.

The campaign started with letter writing to Arriva to arrange a meeting, which very quickly went nowhere. We wrote a column for The

Journal and appeared in different places talking about Fair Fares. It wasn't until a meeting with Jamie Driscoll, North of Tyne Mayor, that Arriva began to take notice of us.



They agreed to meet, although we still found it difficult to arrange, and so in July 2022, a group of Sixth Formers decided to go directly to Arriva, taking public action, to get noticed. Our students dressed up in 'professional' adult clothes that their parents would normally wear to work, exclaiming "we look ridiculous dressed like this, yet this is how you see us by charging us adult fare". We were successful in gaining a meeting, and it was a pleasure to meet Kim Cain, Commercial Director of Arriva North East.

Eve Zikhali,
Shantel Suneesh
and Mishama Sony
meeting with Mayor
Jamie Driscoll, 10th
March 2022

Public Action outside
Arriva headquarters,
July 2022



While this work was going on, we were also playing a key role in a consultation by Transport North East, who were looking to write a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in advance of a bid to central Government. In the resulting BSIP, fair fares for young people became one of the top priorities.

When we met with Kim Cain, these two approaches dovetailed and we discovered that, subject to the Department for Transport funding and the Bus Service Improvement Plan, fair fares could soon be a reality. Ms Cain also promised that if the funding was to fall through, Arriva North East would work with St Thomas More to ensure fares were being charged fairly to Sixth Form pupils. We couldn't have asked for much better than that!



Mishama, Shantel and Eve, accompanied by Suzie McKenzie, Aaryn McDonald-Brown and Michael Thompson, meeting Kim Cain from Arriva.

At the end of May, Transport North East (alongside all bus operators in our region), announced that young people under the age of 22 in the areas of Tyne & Wear, Northumberland and Durham would now only be charged £1 for a single journey. After years of campaigning, our dream became a reality, and now young people are able to "get round for a £", opening doors for a greener future where young people see public transport as a viable alternative to other options.

We would like to thank all those who have been involved in the campaign, including a large number of our fantastic Sixth Form students for driving it for so long. Particular thanks to Shantel Suneesh, Mishama Sony and Eve Zikhali for their hard work in the past year, whilst studying for A Level exams, to bring this home. Thanks also to the

Commercial Directors of Stagecoach and Go North East, who we were in touch with along the way, as well as to Mayor Jamie Driscoll, Transport North East and our allies from Tyne & Wear Citizens. We plan to have a more formal celebration to publicly thank everyone involved in the last week of term, bringing together all who were part of the process; this will be an opportunity to recognise just how much of a difference this change is going to make to the lives of all young people who rely on public transport to get to college. - Michael Thompson, School Chaplain

Thanks to the following students who have helped along the way: Zac Smith, Lucas Garrard, Tasiyah Chowdhury, Sophie Newton, Imogen Lisle-Clark, Louise Bennett, Matthew Johnson, William Beattie, Victoria Peleva, Dannah Cruz, Angela Pascua, Renee Tapon, Charles Dela Fuente, Dana Buendia, Ely Medina, Joshrem Te, Emma Strong and Harley Doyle-Davies.

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