

Kent 16+ Travel Card Provider technical/guidance document (2018/19)

1) Purpose

The purpose of this document is to detail the specification and the operating arrangements for the Kent 16+ Travel Card.

2) Background

The Kent 16+ Travel Card forms part of Kent's Post-16 Transport Policy, published in June 2014, following a period of statutory consultation.

The KCC Post-16 Transport Policy for 2018/19 fulfills the Authority's responsibility to enable access to education. The funding support for the scheme is entirely discretionary.

The Kent 16+ Travel Card is available to all Kent post 16 learning and training providers. Every effort should be made by providers to make this card available to their learners, as students cannot apply directly to KCC. The Kent 16+ Travel Card is also available for Apprentices aged 16-19.

In September 2014 KCC reduced the cost to £400 and expect schools and colleges to also discount this further for those students facing financial hardship. Learners can use this card to access education and also travel at evenings and weekends, so can take advantage of part time employment opportunities. Learning providers are able to use 16-19 Bursary Funding and other learner support funds to reduce the final cost of the Card to individual learners where this is considered appropriate. Guidance that learning providers might want to adopt to consider such requests is provided within this document.

3) Changes for 2018/19

Following consultation on KCC's Post 16 Transport Policy and feedback from schools and colleges, from June 2018 the application and payment process for the Kent 16+ Travel Card is changing. From June, applications and payment will be made direct to KCC and payment will be made at the time of making the application.

By changing the process in this way we are able to respond to feedback from schools and colleges about the administrative burden of managing payment to KCC and at the same time improve processes for students / parents.

The change to process will ensure that applications can be made throughout the summer and not be reliant on staff being present at schools and colleges, making it easier to apply on time and more likely for students to get their passes for the start of the term. It also means that we are able to offer students / parents the opportunity to split the cost of the pass by buying two half year passes instead of having to buy a full years travel in one go, which is consistent with our Young Person's Travel Pass scheme. The fact that these changes mean that the scheme is easier to administer also mean that we can also reduce the administration fee that we have to charge for refunds.

Applications can be made on line at; www.kent.gov.uk/post16travel . Applicants will need to have all of the student's information (including details of the establishment that they are going to attend), a passport style photo in the appropriate format and a credit or debit card for payment. Alternatively print off an application form from the website and complete and return it with a passport photo and cheque or postal order (payable to Kent County Council) and send it to; Kent 16+ Travel card, Kent County Council, PO Box 441, Aylesford, ME6 9HJ.

Also as part of its review of the provisions for post 16 students, we have also reviewed the arrangements for the Vacant Seat Payments Scheme (VSPS). For students who do not have access to a bus service but where there is an existing KCC school transport contract for a Coach or Taxi that has space on it, students can apply to make use of any spare seat to go from home to school. Previously seats have been made available at a cost of £490 per annum which was consistent with the Council's old post 16 charge but from this year this cost has been reduced to £400 to bring it into line with the Kent 16+ Travel Card. Full details of this scheme are available at; www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/school-transport/vacant-seats-payment-scheme

4) Kent 16+ Travel Card

The card allows the holder unlimited bus travel in Kent (and on direct bus services crossing the county boundary, e.g. to Medway and East Sussex, where the card holder either boards or alights within the administrative boundary of Kent County Council) including evenings, weekends and holidays.

The card enables students freedom to travel to work experience placements, seminars, out of school/college activities, jobs and social life.

The maximum cost of a season ticket, if purchased from a bus company, would be approximately £750, although there are lower rates for more localised travel. For all eligible pupils, (see below), KCC will in effect provide access to unlimited travel at a maximum cost to the learner of £400. Learning providers and employers may contribute 16-19 Bursary Funding and other learner support funds to reduce the final cost to individual learners, where appropriate.

The total cost of providing a universal card depends upon the actual travel that students undertake. By guaranteeing a maximum cost to the learner of £400, KCC will meet any additional costs that may be incurred, either individually or in total, so these will not be passed onto learners, parents or learning providers.

By making a universal and unlimited travel scheme available, with the support of learning providers and employers contributing to the costs of cards where applicable, the number of learners receiving post-16 travel support in Kent will increase. Around 7,000 students took up the option of the pass in the 2017 / 18 academic year.

If bus travel is not the most appropriate form of transport for a learner, then learning providers may wish to assist, perhaps through use of bursary funding towards other means of travel if they consider this appropriate. Because learners no longer receive individual Education Maintenance Allowance grants, KCC will not accept applications directly from individual learners; this is a service available to providers who wish to support their students.

5) Pass Types

By taking the payment direct from the applicant, the Council has been able to offer parents the opportunity to split the full year cost of £400 by applying for two separate half year passes costing £200 each, valid from Terms 1 – 3 and Terms 4 – 6 respectively. Alternatively, students can still apply for the whole year in one go.

In summary :

16+ Travel Card Pass Type	Duration	Cost
1 st Half Year Pass	01/09/2018 to 01/03/2019	£200
2 nd Half Year Pass	25/02/2019 to 31/08/2019	£200
Full Year Pass	01/09/2018 to 31/08/2019	£400

6) Eligibility and guidance on further financial assistance

To be eligible for a Kent 16+ Travel Card Learners must be resident in Kent (i.e. live in a household paying Council Tax to KCC, not Medway or any other authority), must be in school years 12 – 14 and be attending a recognised (by KCC) learning provider (inclusive of recognised apprenticeship schemes).

The normal cost of the pass is £400 for a full year pass or £200 for a half year pass but learning providers may wish to consider providing financial support to their students based on the following advice.

- a) A learner with a travel need and whose household income is above **£20,818** can buy a card for the full £400 year.
- b) A learner with a travel need whose household income is between **£20,817** and **£16,191** may benefit from a further subsidy payable by, and at the discretion of, their learning provider or employer, reducing the cost to the learner from £400 to no less than £200 for their card.
- c) A learner with a travel need and a household income equivalent to the prevailing Free School Meal criteria (as described below), may benefit from a further subsidy payable by, and at the discretion of, their learning provider or employer, reducing the cost to the learner from £400 to no more than £200 .
- d) Where an employed 16-19 year old apprentice can demonstrate hardship caused by travel-to-learn and travel-to-work pressures, then they can be treated as category (b) above. Employers should be approached for additional funding support.
- e) Where learners have received the £1,200 Bursary Payment in the vulnerable learner category, they can be offered the card at £400 .

While the decision to further subsidise each card is entirely at the discretion of the provider, the guidance in (a) to (e) above is designed to assist in ensuring a minimum standard level of subsidy for all learners in Kent.

The operation of the card does not prevent individual providers using their own discretionary funding to support bespoke travel arrangements for their learners, or being more generous than the proposed support mechanisms.

7) The application and payment process

Since 2016-17 academic year applications for the Kent 16+ Travel Card have been able to be made directly to KCC Public Transport.

From June 2018 the application and payment process for the Kent 16+ Travel Card is evolving again and payment will also be made direct to KCC at the time of making the application, usually on-line using a credit or debit card in the same way as students / parents currently do for the Young Person's Travel Pass scheme.

By changing the process in this way we are able to respond to feedback from schools and colleges about the administrative burden of managing payment (both from students and to KCC) and at the same time improve processes for students / parents.

The change to process will ensure that applications can be made throughout the summer and not be reliant on staff being present at schools and colleges, making it easier to apply on time and more likely that students can get their passes for the start of the term. It also means that we are able to offer students / parents the opportunity to split the cost of the pass by buying two half year passes instead of having to buy a full years travel in one go, which is consistent with our Young Person's Travel Pass scheme. The fact that these changes mean that the scheme is easier to administer also mean that we can reduce the administration fee that we have to charge for refunds.

Applications can be made on line at; <http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/travelling-around-kent/bus-travel/bus-passes/16-travel-card>

Applicants will need to have all of the student's information (including details of the establishment that they are going to attend), a passport style photo in the appropriate format and a credit or debit card for payment. Alternatively they can print off an application form from the website and complete and return it with a passport photo and cheque or postal order (payable to Kent County Council) and send it to; Kent 16+ Travel card, Kent County Council, PO Box 441, Aylesford, ME6 9HJ.

8) When to apply ?

Students can apply from Monday 4th June for passes valid from September 2018. The application must be received by KCC Public Transport by Friday 13th July 2018 to be sure of having a pass ready for the start of term. However, applications can be made at any time of the year until 24 May 2019.

Applications for second half year passes can be made from 19th November and should be received by KCC Public Transport by 4th January if students are to be sure of having their pass for the start of term 4.

Applications can take up to 28 working days to process at busy times of the year. We do not refund bus fares so you will have to cover the normal cost of travel whilst you wait for any pass.

9) Where will passes be sent and verified ?

Passes will continue to be sent to learning providers for collection on the first day or term or as soon as the pass is ready, for applications received at other times of the year.

As passes will have already been paid for, there will no longer be a need for KCC to check in advance with the learning provider if the student is eligible for the scheme and attending your establishment. We will continue to provide a list of students with the passes and recommend that establishments have students sign to confirm collection of the pass. We would ask that when issuing passes to students, establishments are even more careful to check that in doing so, the student is eligible for the scheme and is and will remain a student at that establishment.

10) Will refunds be available ?

Yes. We understand that the circumstances of students in post 16 education can change more than secondary school children and we will therefore make refunds available for this scheme.

Refund requests can be made to KCC as long as your pass is returned to us by Friday 24th May. The amount due to be refunded will be calculated based on the number of full academic terms remaining minus a £10 administration fee. Passes returned to us unused or not collected before the start of the academic year f can get a full refund minus the £10 fee. A term is calculated as having a value of £66.67 based upon the £400 annual cost divided by the 6 school terms.

For example, a pass returned to KCC for a refund during term 3 would have 3 full terms remaining and the refund due would be calculated as follows; $£66.67 \times 3 = £200.01$ minus $£10 = £190.01$ TOTAL REFUND DUE.

The summary table below applies :

Passes returned in Term (between dates) :	Refund Value Due
Not collected or returned before the start of the year	£390
Term 1 (3 rd September 2018 and 19 th October 2018)	£323.35
Term 2 (22 nd October 2018 and 19 th December 2018)	£256.68
Term 3 (20 th December 2018 and 15 th February 2019)	£190.01
Term 4 (18 th February 2019 and 5 th April 2019)	£123.34
Term 5 (8 th April 2019 and 24 th May 2019)	£56.67
Term 6 (No full terms remaining)	£0

Passes will not be refunded if not physically returned to KCC, Public Transport.

11) What if a student leaves education or moves establishment ?

With payments now being made direct to KCC, this becomes less of a problem particularly for the learning provider who is no longer liable for the cost. However, we do require establishments to help us manage the scheme by making us aware if a student changes establishment or particularly if they leave education entirely.

As the scheme is only available to learners in full time education and enables them to access a subsidy, they will no longer be eligible to hold a pass in the event that they leave full time education. As such we would ask that establishments seek to recover the passes of any student leaving education and return it to KCC Public Transport who will arrange for the student to be refunded using the mechanism described above.

If a student is more simply moving establishments then we would ask that they and / or the learning provider advise KCC Public Transport in order that we can update our records.

12) Invoicing and Payments

With payment now being made direct to KCC, there will no longer be a need for KCC and learning providers to agree values and raise and pay invoices respectively. All payment to KCC will now be made at the point of application and any subsequent arrangement for further subsidy using bursary funding or payment by instalment would be between the establishment and the learning provider.

This will not affect any outstanding payments due in lieu of passes already issued and KCC will need to agree values and raise invoices in respect of term 5 and 6 passes issued in the 2017/18 scheme year.

Once the scheme year has finished, Public Transport will be in contact with learning providers to agree the values attributable to term 5 and 6 passes and will then raise final invoices.

END

Schools Concessionary Travel Team
May 2018