

Kent 16+ Travel Card Provider technical/guidance document (2017/18)

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 2017/18 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.

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. 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 at evenings and weekends so can take advantage of part time employment opportunities.

Efforts should be made to enable learners to make staged payments to learning providers to assist in accessing this discounted travel. KCC will invoice retrospectively, three times a year to enable funds to be collected in a staggered way and ensure schools and colleges have no cash flow difficulties as a result of this scheme. It is recognized that the scheme will require a small administrative commitment from the learning provider, but this is a great incentive for learners to choose a particular provider, and every effort will be made to keep this to a minimum.

The Vacant Seat Payments Scheme (VSPS) and travel support for learners with learning difficulties, like the post 16 Travel card will remain the same as in previous years.

3) Kent 16+ Travel Card specification

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 will be expected to 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. Over 7,000 students took up the option of the pass in the 2016 / 17 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.

4) Eligibility

Eligibility for the Kent 16+Travel Card is as follows:

- a) Learners must be resident in Kent (i.e. live in a household paying Council Tax to KCC, not Medway or any other authority) and must be in school years 12 - 14.
- b) A learner with a travel need and whose household income is above **£20,818** can buy a card for the full £400 year.
- c) 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 of their card from £400 to no less than £200
- d) 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 of their card from £400 to no more than £200 .
- e) 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.
- f) Where learners have received the £1,200 Bursary Payment in the vulnerable learner category, they can be offered the card at £400 .

All eligible learners must demonstrate to their providers that they have a genuine travel-to-learn need. When a decision to apply for a card is being considered the following considerations can be made:

- i) Can a learner's travel needs be met more cheaply through other arrangements? Is it worth them paying for a card given the distance they actually live from the provider or the use they will make of the card?
- ii) Is travel likely to be a significant barrier to the learner's participation post-16?
- iii) Will supported travel encourage a specific learner to stay on between Years 12, 13 and 14 and complete a course?
- iv) Will supported travel help improve an individual learner's attendance record?

While the provider or employer funding that could be used 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.

5) The application process

Since 2016-17 academic year applications for the Kent 16+ Travel Card have been able to be made directly to KCC Public Transport. Applications can either be made online at: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/travelling-around-kent/bus-travel/bus-passes/16-travel-card> or in the post with application forms being sent directly to KCC Public Transport, PO Box 441, Aylesford, ME6 9HJ. In the event that a student applies in error to the establishment then they should be directed to apply on line at the address above or alternatively the completed form and photograph can be forwarded on.

However, as some learning provider offer further subsidies and payment plans to students KCC remains unable to take direct receipt of the payment for the pass at the time of the application. As such it will remain the responsibility of the learning provider to ensure that payment for the pass is agreed based on any particular arrangements specific to the establishment and the individual student. It is recommended that this is completed either prior to or at the point of issuing the pass to the student.

KCC will check with the learning providers that with all applications received are for learners eligible for the pass. In advance of the passes being dispatched KCC will issue learning providers with a list of students who have submitted an application. This will enable the learning provider to verify that the student will be attending the establishment for their post 16 studies and that a payment plan has been agreed.

If the pass is dispatched to you and it then comes to light that something has changed, in particular in reference to the historical non-attendance and/or movement of students that takes place between schools and providers at the beginning of the academic years then the pass should be retained and to KCC Public Transport as soon as possible so now cost is incurred. Please note that for Term 1 schools will not be charged or subject to the cancellation fee provided the card is returned to Public Transport 30 September 2016.

Once a pass has been issued to a student, the learning provider will be liable for the cost of the pass. For any passes that have been issued and then subsequently cancelled, learning providers will be charged for the terms used and will be subject to the administrative fee.

The card will be issued as a smartcard, for audit and data capture purposes. Cards will be sent to each provider to be issued to learners. Cards will be available for the first day of the new academic year if the application is received no later than 15 July 2016. Applications received after this date are unlikely to be available for the start of the academic year. Applications received after the start of the academic year will be processed as quickly as possible but can take up to 28 working days from receipt.

Applications can be made at any time during the year up to 26 May 2017 as in the table below. It is important that the learning provider clearly identifies the term in which the card is to start. All cards have an expiry date of **31 August 2018** irrespective of the date of issue. The cost of part-year cards, based on the date of receipt of the application at KCC, would be:

	Cost
A card valid from the start of academic year	£400
A card valid for the start of term 2 (30 October 2017)	£340
A card valid for the start of term 3 (4 January 2018)	£280
A card valid for the start of term 4 (19 February 2018)	£210
A card valid for the start of term 5 (16 April 2018)	£140
A card valid for the start of term 6 (4 June 2018)*	£70

*All applications must be received no later than 25 May 2018

If a learner leaves post-16 education (or ceases to be eligible by virtue of moving home to outside of Kent or any other reason), a refund based on the proportion of time remaining on a card, less an administration fee of £50, will be made as shown below.

Insert dates below	Value portion	Less admin fee
A card returned before the start of term 2	£340	£290
A card returned before the start of term 3	£280	£230
A card returned before the start of term 4	£210	£160
A card returned before the start of term 5	£140	£90
A card returned before the start of term 6*	£70	£20

*No refund is payable for cards returned after 1 June 2017

The £50 fee is to cover the cost of administration associated with contacting the relevant transport service providers and processing the closure of the account.

Passes will not be refunded if not physically returned to KCC, Public Transport. Every effort must be made to recover these.

The provider must retrieve the card from the learner and return it to KCC to receive a refund. When returning passes, establishments need to include a covering letter identifying why the pass is being returned. Providers will need to make their own arrangements for recovering reimbursement of any subsidy that they have made to a learner for the purchase of a card as well as any reimbursement to the learner.

In the event that schools and colleges are unable to recover a card due to a student leaving the area without seeking any reimbursement, the provider must let KCC, Public Transport know at the earliest opportunity and inform the team of the date the student left. KCC will stop the card and confirm non-usage.

Where a learner transfers to another post-16 provider, and the new provider has assessed that the learner still needs a card to travel, the card does not need to be returned and the learner can continue using it. If the full payment has been made to the initial provider KCC can continue to invoice this establishment for the pass. However, if only partial payment has been made, the two providers will need to work together to transfer payment to the new provider who would then become responsible for collecting the remaining payment.

The new provider will need to reimburse the previous provider, on the basis of the above schedule, and this will be for the providers to resolve between themselves. However providers must inform KCC Public Transport for invoice purposes and distribution of the pass.

Up to three replacement cards (for those lost, damaged or stolen) in any academic year will cost £10 irrespective of circumstance. Parents (not learning providers) must apply for the replacement card directly by contact KCC on 03000 41 84 84.

6) Invoicing and Payments

As KCC does not take payment for the pass at the time of the application, learning providers will be invoiced during the year for any passes issued.

Establishments must ensure payment terms are discussed with parents and carers as KCC will only liaise direct with establishments over payment of passes. Ensuring payment is met is a learning establishment responsibility.

Learning providers will be invoiced three times per year; in November (for Terms 5, 6 & 1), in January (for Term 2) and in March (for Terms 3&4).

In advance of the invoice being issued, Public Transport will email to establishments a summary of the invoice which will identify the invoice value, itemise the passes applicable to it and detail any adjustments that have been made in respect of returned passes etc. This will enable schools and colleges to raise queries and agree the invoice value before the invoice is raised.

The payment terms are such that in effect invoices relating to term 1 (which relates to the majority of students) would not need to be paid until March which allows plenty of time for establishments to take receipt of payment for passes and continue to support any associated payment plans. Invoices will be raised directly, outside of the Edu-Kent system and will be remitted to KCC education directly.

As this is a change to the previous invoicing process for this year, the first (November) invoice will be for term 1 only, with outstanding payments relating to the 2015 / 16 scheme remaining a matter between establishments and KCC education and subject to existing process.