

Petition Statement

Good Afternoon,

We are here today to debate the petition about the popular Kent freedom passes which are currently issued to 11-15 year olds, with our petition hoping to increase the age limit to 20. Many teens attend a college and those older teenagers are just starting out at university and the money situation can be very low. We and many others who signed the petition feel that we are being penalised for going onto higher/further education as the bus fares are extortionate and are not value for money at all. The council should also bear in mind that the school leaving age has been increased to 18, paying for this bus fare can be extremely difficult, whether you have a job or not. Finding a part time job is really hard for people our age. Employers want a candidate that can be flexible with their hours and can commit to the job. We have run numerous searches across popular Kent job websites searching the criteria "Part Time, within 30 miles of Maidstone, Any industry" only 20 results have been returned most times we have searched this criteria, the jobs tend to be assistant manager roles or part time teachers with the desired qualifications. For those of us in a job, our wages that we do manage to earn are spent immediately on bus fare and college supplies.

Jamie currently attends Mid Kent College in Gillingham; He is also in a part time job in Rochester working Monday and Tuesday 9am – 5pm and is on campus at college Wednesday and Friday 9am - 4pm. This is hardly ideal for Jamie; he has to work these hours in order to raise enough money to pay for the monthly bus fare of £80, Pay his keep in his house to parents, pay for lunch (Monday – Friday) This is near enough half of Jamie's wage spent, we like most teens would like to learn to drive and own our very own car, however this is very difficult currently in the circumstances, Jamie has to work these hours in order to even make it to college, further more in extreme cases Jamie knows of some classmates on his course that have had to leave partly down to the extortionate bus fare, surely the council cannot agree its teens and students should have to pay such extravagant amounts with few jobs available.

Melanie has had a year out of education but will be starting Hadlow College in September; her bus fare for 2 years is going to cost her £900. That is a disgraceful amount for a student! Melanie does have a part time job and all the money that she earns is to a large extent on bus fare. Teens feel as we are still in education we earn this right to have the Kent Freedom pass as we can't afford the bus travel and as I said still in education. It feels like we are being punished for carrying on with our studies.