

By:	Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Education Learning and Skills Patrick Leeson – Corporate Director, Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Education Cabinet Committee – 19 March 2013
Subject:	Post 16 Transport Policy
Classification:	Unrestricted
Summary:	This paper sets out the proposed arrangements for Post 16 Transport in line with KCC's statutory duties, outlines details of the successful Post 16 Transport arrangements in 2012/13 and proposes the continued support and operation of the Kent 16+ Travel Card.
Recommendations:	Members are asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the success of the 16+ Travel Card • Agree the proposed Post 16 Transport Policy for consultation (a continuation of existing arrangements) • Support the continued operation of a Kent 16+ Travel Card.

1. Introduction

1.1 Local Authorities have a duty to prepare and publish an annual Transport Policy Statement (see Appendix 1) specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport or otherwise that the LA considers it is necessary to make to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.

1.2 The intention of the 16-18 Transport Duty is to:

- ensure that learners of sixth form age are able to access the education and training of their choice; and
- ensure that if support for access is required, this will be assessed and provided where necessary.

2. Background

2.1 The Post 16 Transport Policy introduced the expectation that learning providers would support students with transport as there was neither funding nor a statutory duty for KCC to fund transport. This approach was driven by the government's decision to withdraw the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) paid directly to students and replace it with Bursary funding paid directly to learning providers. This significant change meant that learning providers are now funded and best placed to support students where they consider assistance is appropriate. Notwithstanding this change, Members were keen to develop a universal bus pass that would be affordable to post 16 learners and assist in preventing transport from being a barrier to post 16 learning and training.

It should be noted that 16-24 year-old learners with Statements of Educational Need or a Learning Difficulty Assessment (section 139a), would continue to

receive assistance from KCC in line with the 16-19 Statutory Duty and existing KCC discretionary transport policy. An Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out when the policy was first introduced in 2012 and is listed as a background document.

3. The Kent 16+ Travel Card

3.1 In Spring 2012, KCC took the decision to introduce a travel card for Kent resident learners in Years 12, 13, and 14 who were starting, continuing or completing their 14 – 19 studies in Kent and areas surrounding Kent.

3.2 The Kent 16 + Travel Card is intended to provide support for learners to:

- assist with travel costs to schools, colleges, work-based learning providers and apprenticeship placements;
- facilitate Kent learning providers to meet the requirements of Full Participation in learning to 18 years of age by 2015 (though there is no statutory duty to provide free or subsidised transport to learning opportunities);
- enable access and maintain choice of post-16 provision for Kent learners.

3.3 The Kent 16+ Travel Card allows the holder unlimited bus travel in Kent (and single stop journeys to neighbouring LAs) and is valid for use 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, where public bus services are operating.

3.4 The true cost of the card to the LA can vary as KCC is charged for the number of journeys undertaken. The projected cost of the card is expected to average out at about £750, but each card will have a different true cost to KCC.

3.5 Members were keen make a card available at no more than the equivalent of £10 per week to the learner and consequently a price was set at £520 committing KCC to a potential subsidy of £230 per pass.

3.6 Learning providers and employers were expected to further contribute 16-19 Bursary Funding and other learner support funds to reduce the final cost to learners from low income families. Such an approach allowed KCC to support all learners and schools and colleges to better target bursary funding to those most in need.

4 Evaluation of the travel card scheme in 2012/13

4.1 There has been significant take up of the Kent Post 16 Travel Card. Not only has there been the anticipated increase in the numbers purchasing the card as an alternative to the previous Vacant Seat Payment Scheme (which provided single journeys to and from school at a cost of £490) but also more young adults are now travelling on the bus network than in previous years, indicating a significant shift in modes of transport by Kent's young adults. **112** different learning providers are engaged in the scheme enabling **3318** learners to access the Kent 16 + Travel Card.

4.2 The shift in approach was not without some issues raised by learners and providers in the early stages. These centred primarily on rail travel where this had previously been a preferred mode of transport. However, in some instances this was overcome by providers using their bursary funding to support students with contributions towards rail cards instead of the Kent 16+ Travel Card and

KCC has also offered to extend its purchasing powers to supply rail cards at its discounted rate where providers sought to procure passes on behalf of their students in advance. This latter aspect had little take-up, but will continue to be offered as a facility to learning providers.

4.3 There was an understandable concern on the part of providers that new administrative responsibilities would fall to them, but these were soon overcome and most establishments were quick to embrace the new approach, resulting in:

- 50 cards purchased by 13 out of county providers (all schools);
- 3268 cards purchased by providers in Kent (schools and colleges);
- 905 cards purchased by colleges, including every campus in Kent and Medway;

Top five providers purchasing cards:

K College Tonbridge	198
Canterbury College	185
Simon Langton Boys	167
NWest Kent College Dartford	129
NWest Kent College Gravesend	114

Top five schools purchasing cards:

Simon Langton Boys	167
Simon Langton Girls	113
Homewood	97
Bennett Memorial	93
Barton Court	76

4.4 Take up was quickly rolled out and most cards were purchased in term 1 (2842) with a fall off in term 2 (382) and 3 (94)

4.5 Research into the numbers of passes paid for at full cost and the extent to which bursary funds were used to support learners by the colleges will form part of the evaluation to be completed by the Skills and Employability Service alongside the consultation set out below.

4.6 The outcome of last year's equality impact assessment did not identify any adverse impacts in relation to the protected characteristics. It was expected that the new policy would result in a shift in travel patterns for some students, and that colleges would be able to support those groups to enable them to access courses in a subsidised way. A further impact assessment will be undertaken to ensure that the implementation of the policy continues to provide fair access and opportunity to travel and education.

5. Financial Implications

5.1. There is a gross pressure on this budget line of +£1,180k due to the implementation of the new Kent 16+ card which is partly covered by income from the sale of tickets of £1,142k. The forecast pressure is based on limited usage data from when the scheme began in September 2012 and a more accurate

forecast is expected in the next exception report. As a result of the successful launch of the 16+ card, only those students who started post 16 studies before September 2012 still receive transport under existing home to college arrangements and consequently, during this transitional period, numbers travelling are less than budgeted for, leading to a gross underspend of -£471k and a reduction in income for the sale of tickets of +£200k.

6. Consultation on Transport Policy 2013/14

6.1 In line with the statutory duty KCC must carry out a 28 day consultation with relevant stakeholders on the Post 16 Transport Policy. During the consultation period users and learning providers will be invited to feed back their experiences of the Kent 16+ Travel Card and suggest any improvements to the operation which may benefit users.

6.2 A 28 day term time consultation will run from 1st March 2013 to 28th March 2013.

6.3 Providers will receive a letter inviting them to take part, with a response sheet and the guidance document outlining the process and their responsibilities.

6.4 Carers and parents will receive a letter inviting them to take part, with a link to an online survey or the option to return a response sheet to be distributed via learning providers and their students.

8.4 Students will be targeted directly by learning providers and encouraged to feedback to the consultation.

7. Recommendations

Education Cabinet Committee Members are invited to:

- Support the retention of the existing Post 16 Transport Policy for consultation (Appendix 1)
- Note the positive take up and benefit that the introduction of Kent 16+ Travel Card has brought.

Background Documents

Equalities impact Assessment

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/Post16TransportPolicy2012/consultationHome>

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Proposed 16+ Transport Policy for consultation

1. (1) For students entering into year 12 in September 2013 it is proposed that there will be no direct support to Post 16 transport users. KCC will instead assist education and training providers to deliver a cost effective pass for use on all registered public bus routes in Kent. It will operate in the same way that the current pre 16 Kent Freedom Pass.

(2) The proposal will include the retention of the Kent Post 16 Travel Card available to learners direct from the education providers who will have the discretion to identify the level of travel subsidy and consequently the overall charge they make to students. Learning providers will be able to purchase the Kent Post 16 Travel Card direct from KCC at a cost of £520. KCC will continue to commission and secure the best value pass with public bus operators.

(3) The KCC Transport Policy seeks to enable schools and colleges to secure a pass which will provide extended access to all students in a fair and sustainable way. The changes in government funding arrangements will mean that these will be procured directly from the education providers by students.

(4) If bus travel is not the most appropriate form of transport for a learner, it will be up to the learning provider to facilitate an alternative. KCC will continue to act as a broker to procure other transport at attractive rates, but as a paid-for service to learning providers.

(5) Any learner who is not eligible for a contribution from their provider or employer would pay the full cost of the Post 16 Freedom Pass at £520.

Proposed Eligibility Criteria for Providers

2. (1) It will be for learning providers to determine the level of subsidy they wish to introduce. As in 2012/13, KCC will set out recommend provisions as a best practice guide for providers to adopt where they consider this appropriate. These are proposed as follows:

a) For learners whose family income is not more than £16,190, who are on Income Support, Income Based Job Seekers Allowance, Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance or Child Credit, but not Working Tax Credit, it is recommended that they pay no more than 50% for the Pass.

b) For learners whose family income is between £16,190 and £20,817, it is recommended that they may receive a learning-provider contribution to the cost of the Pass, at a level set by the learning provider, in addition to the KCC subsidy.

c) For learners whose family income is above £20,817, it is recommended that they pay the full cost.

d) Where a 16-19 year old apprentice falls outside these criteria, but can demonstrate hardship caused by travel-to-learn and travel-to-work pressures, they can be treated as category (b) above. Employers should be approached for additional funding support.

e) All eligible learners must demonstrate to their institutions that they have a genuine travel-to-learn need.

f) While the learning-provider funding or employer funding that could be used to further subsidise each Pass is entirely discretionary, the guidance in (a) to (e) above is designed to assist in ensuring a standard level of subsidy for all learners in Kent.