

202 Post 16 Transport Policy Consultation report

1. Introduction and context

KCC has a statutory duty to consult annually on its Post 16 Transport Policy. This report details the reasons, scope and responses to the 2012 consultation.

As part of the Post 16 Transport Policy, KCC currently provides a yearly transport pass to students attending their nearest school or college. Changes in the way students will be funded in 2012 included the removal of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and introduction of the coalition government's new 16-19 Bursary scheme. This resulted in learning providers being resourced directly by government through bursary funding, whereas in previous years funding had been directed through Local Authorities. For Kent these changes mean that:

- The existing approach to transport support adopted by the KCC is no longer fit for purpose
- The existing level of support offered by KCC to Post 16 Learners is not sustainable. Post 16 learners no longer receive funding they can use to subsidise their transport directly

The KCC Post-16 Transport Policy for 2012 was written against this backdrop and the need to fulfil the Authority's responsibility to ensure full participation for all 18 year olds in education by 2015.

2. Reason for change

- Removal of the Education Maintenance Grant (EMA) means that students do not have direct funding to stay on in education or training.
- Young People have been telling us that the post 16 passes should be more flexible and more like the Freedom Pass which is available to under 16 year olds.
- While the next few years will continue to see considerable pressure on public services it is important that KCC looks at how we can best support our young people when funding arrangements change.

3. Proposal for consultation

To change the current Post 16 Transport Policy to the following:

(Effective from the 2012/13 academic year)

- KCC will assist education and training providers to provide a post 16 transport pass
- The passes are exclusive to KCC and have an average value of £750. The council will subsidise to a value of £230,
- Each pass will cost no more than £520 each. (Schools, colleges, work place learning providers and employers may choose to subsidise to reduce the cost further).
- The pass would be a Universal Pass valid for bus journeys across the county, at all times, including holidays and weekends
- Cover bus travel only.

The consultation invited comments on the proposal and it's impact on individuals or specific groups.

4. Decision Making process

KCC is statutory required to have in place a Post 16 Policy by 1st June 2012.

Governance:

- A proposed Post 16 travel pass was taken to the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee 15 March 2012 for comment before approval to proceed with public consultation on the Post 16 Transport Policy.
- Consultation findings were taken to the Education Cabinet Committee on the 9th May 2012
- Cabinet Member approvals finalised policy 14 May 2012
- Policy is sent to central government 31 May 2012

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- Policy is enacted as of 1 June 2012

5. Consultation process

- **When**

Consultation took place between Tuesday 27th March 2012 to 12 noon on 4th May 2012.

- **Who**

Young people, parents / carers, learning providers, teachers and anyone who was interested was invited to tell KCC their views on the proposed policy, so that KCC could ensure these proposals, where possible, address the needs of Kent's young people

- **How**

- *online questionnaire*
- *by email*
- *by post*
- *Hard copy questionnaires were distributed by Kent Youth Service*

The consultation was promoted via:

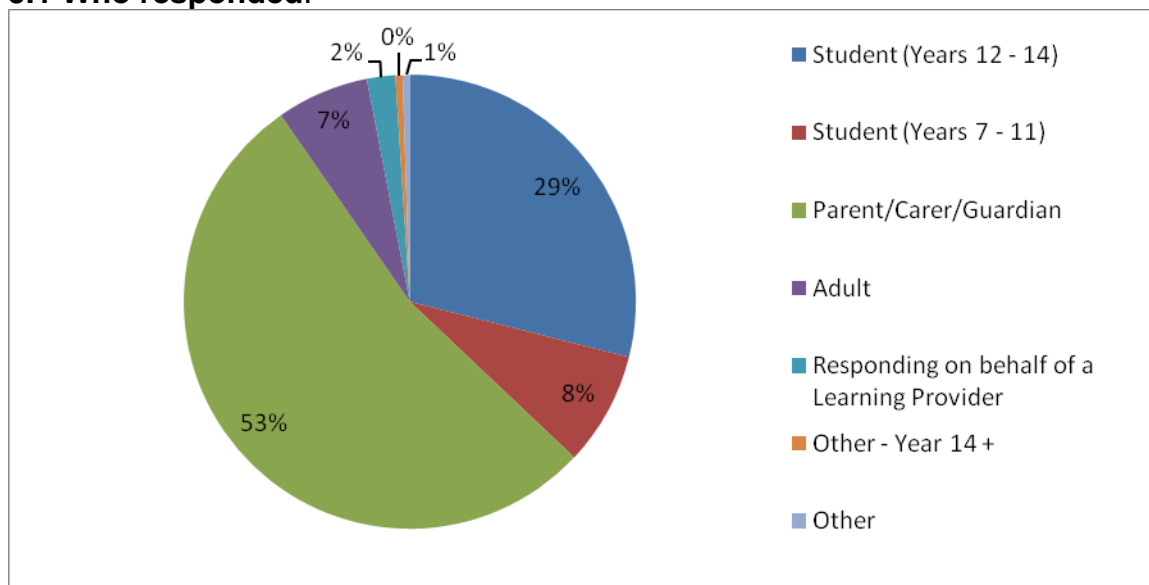
- *Kent.gov.uk*
- *Posters were distributed to schools*
- *Social Media – KCC's twitter and Facebook accounts*

Schools, colleagues, education establishments were engaged throughout the development of the policy and had an officer as a point of contact for any technical queries. This was run separately to the consultation and is not included in this document. Please note that all could still respond the public consultation.

5. Summary of feedback

There were 197 completed responses to this consultation.

5.1 Who responded:



	No. of responses	%
Student (Years 12 - 14)	57	29%
Student (Years 7 - 11)	16	8%

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Parent/Carer/Guardian	105	53%
Adult	13	7%
Responding on behalf of a Learning Provider	4	2%
Other - Year 14 +	1	1%
Other	1	1%
	197	100%
There are six 'Others' in total but three belong to the Years 12 - 14 category and 1 to Years 7 -11.		
Other - year 14 +' has been analysed with other Students.		
The final 'Other' has been analysed with 'Adults/Parents etc as the comment mentions a son.		

5.2 Key messages received

There is almost unanimous consensus from all respondents that the pass is too expensive. Most have compared the cost of the Freedom Pass at £100 and considered the additional cost to be unfair.

Eligibility Criteria

- **Some would like to see that the Policy include support for Post16 Transport another felt that this should be extended to learners up to the age of 24 to help with university**

Types of Travel supported by the policy

- **Some commented that they would like the policy to have included train travel**

Management of Bus Pass by providers

- **One comment related to consistency between providers – KCC has introduced a guide for them to address this.**

Are there any ways in which the new policy might be unfair to particular groups

- **Cost was a consistent theme**

Do you know of any ways in which we could better support such groups

- **It was suggested that people concerned about travelling on busses be consulted**

It is worth nothing that there were some discrepancies between the equality monitoring questions and how respondents classified themselves (Question 1: Are you). Analysis found that the responses were very similar regardless to how the equality questions were completed for each group and so these remain in the figures stated in this report.

5.3 Analysis of Student Years 7 to 11 and Student Years 12 to 14

- Students from years 7 to 14, accounted for 38% of the total responses.
- Of the 57 students who answered the Questions 'Do you current use the post 16 travel pass?' 9 responded yes, 44 responded no and 4 did not respond to this question.

Are you:	No. of responses	%	% of Total Responses (197)
Student Years 12 to 14	57	77%	29%
Student Years 7 to 11	16	22%	8%
Other	1	1%	1%

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	74	100%	38%
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Do you currently use the post 16 transport pass?	No. of responses	%
Yes	9	16%
No	44	77%
No response	4	7%
	57	100%

Summary of points raised:

Consultees were asked to categorise their comments under four headings (more than one category could be selected).

- 55 comments related to the cost of the bus pass,
- 21 related to the type of travel included in the scheme,
- 20 related to the eligibility criteria,
- 7 related to the management of the pass.

Introducing the Post16 Pass Travel Pass to years 12 - 14 is seen as a "fantastic" idea but:

- Many respondents felt that it is too expensive
- The price difference between the post 16 and under 16 passes (£520 compared to £100) was seen as unfair.
- It needs to include Sixth Form students.
- Some would like to see train travel included in the scheme
- It is too expensive to pay in one bulk payment.
- The price of the pass should be lowered across all of the Eligibility Categories.
- Some feel that young people from rural communities are being penalised.
- One respondent questioned KCC's legal responsibility for young people who live in villages and have to walk on unlit and single track roads.
- Others feel that the price of the bus is too expensive for unreliable services, which makes it cheaper to drive short distances.
- The Megarider bus ticket works out 50p extra a week but could work out cheaper over the year as students might not need to purchase tickets for school holidays.
- Concerns were raised over the ability of schools to manage bus passes, will there be guidelines in place for schools to follow?

5.4 Analysis of Parent/Carer/Guardian and Adult

- Parent/Carer/Guardian and Adult accounted for 60% of the total responses

	No. of responses	%	% of Total Responses (197)
Adult	13	11%	7%
Parent/Carer/Guardian	105	88%	53%
Other	1	1%	1%
	119	100%	60%

Summary of points raised

Consultees were asked to categories their comments under four headings (more than one category could be selected).

- 102 comments related to the cost of the bus pass,
- 45 related to eligibility criteria,
- 33 related to the type of travel included in the scheme and
- 15 to the management of the bus pass by providers.

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Overall there is a positive reaction to introducing a Travel Pass for post 16 but:

- Many feel that the price proposed is too expensive, particularly if you have more than one child.
- There are strong concerns that family budgets will not stretch to cover the extra expense and that it will put considerable strain on families.
- The household income level is set too low and it is not clear if it includes tax credits.
- It seems unfair that young people in London get to travel for free.
- Combining the bus ticket with a train ticket would make it 'a much more viable option'.
- Some feel that it is excessively high compared to the Freedom Pass for under 16s. They query why the new pass isn't the same price and conditions as the under 16s pass.
- There is a strong need to be able to pay in instalments rather than one lump sum.
- There is a risk that it will mean an increase in students and their parents driving instead which will increase congestion and have a negative impact on the environment.
- Seen as more of a benefit for young people living within towns in Kent than those from rural communities where the numbers of buses are limited.
- Could there be a cheaper option for more limited travel, e.g. term time only, buses and/or trains.
- Moves to raise the cost of travel is seen as unfair given that young people are being encouraged (and we are moving towards compulsory) to stay on in education.
- Should also include students going into year 13.
- "I believe it is totally unfair that pensioners receive free bus passes but that children in full time education have to pay for their travel. "
- "By making public transport affordable to the majority of young people allows them to become more use to travelling on bus/rail and therefore more likely they will continue this as adults."

5.5 Analysis of respondents on behalf of a learning provider

There was just 4 responses from Learning Providers.

Summary of points raised

Respondents were asked to categorise their comments under four headings (more than one category could be selected).

- 4 related to the type of travel included in the scheme and
- 2 comments related to the cost of the bus pass,
- 2 related to eligibility criteria,
- 2 to the management of the bus pass by providers.

Overall responses raised issues regarding the technical delivery of the pass and highlighted rail transport was the most appropriate or only option of travel for some students but that this would not be included in the new pass. Comments included:

- Problems of administering the pass in the July / September period, subsidies only payable once students are enrolled, but it could take up to 28 days for passes to be issued. This would result in students funding the full price of travel for the interim period.
- Cost of the pass is still very high
- Rail travel should be included
- The year pass does not support courses / students which only run for 3 months e.g. foundation learning courses.

6. Next Steps

This report will be provided to the Cabinet Member for Education to inform the decision on the post 16 Transport Policy.

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END

Appendix A – Equality information of respondents.