

By: Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education, Learning & Skills  
To: Roger Gough – Cabinet Member for Education & Health Reform  
Subject: Post 16 Transport Policy  
Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: The purpose of this paper is to seek agreement for KCC to continue its existing approach to Post-16 Transport Policy for 2013.

KCC has a statutory duty to consult each year on its Post 16 Transport Policy before determining and publishing arrangements. A paper was brought to the Education Cabinet Committee in March 2013 to seek agreement to consult on retaining the existing Post 16 Transport Policy and the continued LA support for the 16 Plus Travel Card.

There is no statutory duty to provide support for Post 16 Transport however the LA should enable pupils to access post 16 learning or training. Those pupils with a statement of special educational need that names a specific requirement for transport continue to be supported.

The changes to Post 16 Policy introduced in September 2012 were in response to continued lobbying for KCC to introduce some form of discounted travel scheme with similar benefits to the Kent Freedom Pass. The Kent 16 Plus Travel card has operated successfully over the previous year and statistics outlining its success are included in the earlier report which went to ECC.

Decision required The Cabinet Member for Education and Health is asked to:

- (1) note the consultation summary feedback, and
- (2) agree the proposal to retain the existing 16+ Transport Policy and Eligibility Criteria as set out in this report, and
- (3) agree the continued support for the Kent 16+ Travel Card
- (4)

## Historical context of current provision

- 1.1 Prior to September 2012 a yearly transport pass was available to students attending their nearest appropriate school or college where they live more than 3 miles from the provision, at a cost of £490. This fee was waived if the family received Income Support, Income Based Job Seekers Allowance, Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit, Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance or Child Tax Credit. Provided that the family do not get Working Tax

Credit and have a yearly Income according to HM Revenue & Customs of not more than £16,190.

- 1.2 The transport pass entitled learners to a single journey at the beginning and end of the school day to and from school or college only. IT was restricted to the most appropriate form of transport as determined by KCC and could include bus travel, rail travel and in some circumstances a mixture of both.

## **2. Context for change**

- 2.1 Kent County Council introduced the Kent Freedom Pass in 2009. It has proven to be an extremely popular and important form of support for young people in Kent, in enabling them to access a range of activities including learning, work and leisure.
- 2.2 The pass is however only available to learners attending school in Years 7 to 11, and KCC have been lobbied to develop some sort of Post 16 Travel Card that can provide similar flexibility to Kent's 16-19 year old learners. KCC is keen to introduce similar benefits to those enjoyed by pre 16 learners in an affordable way.
- 2.3 Changes in funding for Post 16 learners meant they no longer received funding they can use to subsidise their transport directly, following the government's cessation of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). KCC therefore proposed a policy that allowed for transport to be funded in a different way, whilst recognising the importance of supporting those families most in need.
- 2.4 The KCC Post-16 Transport Policy for 2012 was written against the backdrop of the need to fulfil the Authority's responsibility to ensure full participation in learning and work based training for all 18 year olds by 2015, the removal of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and introduction of the government's new 16-19 Bursary scheme.
- 2.5 With more post 16 learning institutions funded directly by government through the Bursary scheme, they are now able to provide support for transport through their various grants. KCC could not sustain a growing demand for support with post 16 transport when there is no legal duty to do so, or any funding direct from government for such provision.
- 2.6 The proposed scheme in 2012 enabled pupils to access all Kent public bus networks for as little as the equivalent of £10 per week, learning providers proved keen to progress this approach to Post 16 Transport Support in a collaborative way. For little additional cost, students have significantly benefited from the 2012 policy change details of which are set out below.

## **3. Existing 16+ Transport Policy**

- 3.1 The recommended KCC Post 16 Transport Policy is to allow schools and colleges to secure a travel pass which will provide extended access to all students in a fair and sustainable way. KCC will provide the opportunity for all education and training providers to secure a Post16 Transport Pass available for use on all registered public service bus routes in Kent.

- 3.2 The subsidised pass will be available to schools and colleges for an annual fee of £520, or £10 a week, and can be further subsidised by them for their registered students.
- 3.3 The changes in government funding arrangements will mean that these will be procured directly from the education providers by students. It is expected that such providers who will have benefited from the government's new 16-19 Bursary scheme can use elements of this funding to support the cost of their students' travel.
- 3.4 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, where required, continue to act as a broker to procure other transport at attractive rates, as a paid-for service to learning providers.
- 3.5 Any learner in education or training 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.

#### **4. Eligibility Criteria**

- 4.1 From the start of the academic year 2013/14 all year 12, 13 and 14 learners will be able to apply for a pass through their employer (if in an apprenticeship), or their college or school sixth form.
- 4.2 It will be for learning providers to determine the level of subsidy they wish to introduce, however KCC recommends that providers model their support structures along the criteria set out below:
- a) A learner whose family income is not more than £16,190, who is 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. This would result in providers reducing the cost to the learner of their Pass to between £0 and £260.
- b) A learner 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, reducing the cost of their pass to the learner to between £260 and £520. This is to be in addition to the KCC subsidy. For example learners may benefit from a further subsidy payable by, and at the discretion of, their learning provider, reducing the cost to the learner of their Pass to between £260 and £520.
- c) A learner whose family income is above £20,817. It is recommended that they pay the maximum amount of £520 .
- 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, then 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.

#### 4. Summary Feedback to the Consultation

4.14.1 A full and widespread consultation on the policy change took place back in 2012, this year in line with its statutory duty KCC consulted on retaining the existing policy for 2013 a summary of the feedback to this consultation is below:

- (a) There were 70 responses, broken down as follows:

parent, carer, guardian	46
student years 12 – 14	12
student years 7 – 11	3
learning provider	7
other	2

- (b) Responses fell into for categories – the number of responses is given for each category:

Cost of the travel card	62
Types of travel included	9
Management of the scheme by providers	6
Eligibility criteria	3
Administration of the scheme	1

4.2 A number of responses praised the scheme but often provisionally with comments about cost, types of travel subsidised, management and administration suggestions.

4.3 The travel card was considered useful, a way to encourage the use of public transport and an opportunity for young people to take part fully in after school and weekend activities.

4.4 Unsurprisingly the biggest issue related to cost most felt it was too expensive at £520 per year especially if they had previously benefited from the KFP available for just £100. Of course the reality is the cards have a street value of upward of £750 so they are already discounted significantly by the LA. The scheme also enables further subsidy by learning providers for students with genuine financial hardship.

#### 5. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 5.1 An equalities screening has been undertaken in order to identify any adverse impacts that may exist in relation to the implementation of the policy in 2013 and can be found at <http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/Post16Transport/consultationHome>

#### 6. Issues and Risks

6.1 If this decision were not taken, KCC will not meet its statutory duty to publish its agreed transport policy.

## **7. Education Cabinet Committee and democratic processes**

7.1 At its meeting on 19 March a report was presented to the Committee reviewing the first year of the new post 16 strategy. The Committee agreed to endorse the continuation of the policy and asked that a report on the feedback from the consultation be brought back its meeting on 21 June 2013.

7.2 This decision has been referenced on the forward plan of decisions and will be taken in the under Kent County Council's agreed processes.

### **Recommendations**

The Cabinet Member for Education and health is asked to:

endorse the proposed continuation of the existing 16+ Transport Policy and Eligibility Criteria for continued use in 2013/14.

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Background Documents  
Education Cabinet Committee Report - Post 16 Transport Policy -19 March 2013

# Appendix 1

## Analysis of post 16 Travel Card Consultation

### Background

This consultation went public on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2013 and was accessible on [www.kent.gov.uk/Post16Transport](http://www.kent.gov.uk/Post16Transport). It closed on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

Schools and FE colleges in Kent were sent details of the consultation directly. Medway schools were reached through the local authority.

Parents, carers, guardians, students and providers were invited to respond.

### Response

There were 70 responses, broken down as follows:

parent, carer, guardian	46
student years 12 – 14	12
student years 7 – 11	3
learning provider	7
other	2

Of the 7 learning providers, 3 identified themselves as named Kent schools and 2 said they were heads of sixth but did not name their institution.

There were no obvious responses from training providers, apprentices or apprenticeship providers, or FE colleges.

30 respondents stated they did not hold a travel card or have young people in their care who did: 15 respondents did hold travel cards

### Categories of response

Responses fell into for categories – the number of responses is given for each category:

Cost of the travel card	62
Types of travel included	9
Management of the scheme by providers	6
Eligibility criteria	3
Administration of the scheme	1

## **Public response**

A number of responses praised the scheme but often provisionally with comments about cost, types of travel subsidised, management and administration suggestions.

The travel card was considered useful, a way to encourage the use of public transport and an opportunity for young people to take part fully in after school and weekend activities.

### **.Cost of the Kent 16\_ Travel Card**

The overwhelming majority of responses was concerned with the cost of the travel card – “incredibly expensive”, “disgusted” and “criminal” are among the epithets used to describe the price of the pass.

The following comments were made:

- There should be a clearer message about payment by instalments: some respondents were even unaware that this was a possibility.
- In order to bring the price down, there should be a travel card which covers journeys to and from school only.
- The price of the travel card needs to be at a level which discourages school journeys by car.
- In the case of two or members of the family requiring a travel card, there should be a system of reduced pricing..
- There should be more correlation between the price of a Freedom pass at £100 and the travel card at £520 ( maximum price): this does not reflect the price differential between adult and child ticketing.
- The price of the travel card should be part of the raising participation policy, enabling travel to the most appropriate providers: at this price it is perceived not to be.
- There was much confusion about the Raising of the Participation Age framework. Respondents felt that since education was now “compulsory”, travel to and from school should be cheaper, if not free. £100 seemed right as a charge.
- For some respondents, purchase of Megariders was a much more cost efficient option.
- At current costs, students will take up car travel as soon as they can.

### **Management of the Kent 16\_ Travel Card by learning providers**

The following comments were made:

- There should be a wider window for application, thus reducing late applications
- Although schools are happy to offer staged payments, this places an extra burden when staff when instalments and debt need to be chased up.
- It would be helpful if parents could start applying and paying for the pass from end term 5 or at least before study leave- this would give them more time to make a decision and find the money for the pass.

- Thought should be given to those who wish to purchase the card but have not yet made their choice of sixth form school – this caused problems last September.
- There is an equity issue – some schools were happier offering phased payments than others.
- It was suggested that a monthly card be made available, or that payment can be made monthly by direct debit/standing order for the annual pass. I
- A monthly card would also be more helpful to those young people working with training providers.

### **Administration of the scheme**

The following comments were made:

- The administration of the scheme is burdensome for learning providers in both verifying eligibility for the scheme and acting as the financier.
- The policy needs to be better publicised and schools do not advertise it.
- The reason KCC cannot administer and issue the cards needs to be more clearly stated.

### **Types of travel included in the scheme**

The following comments were made:

- Kent County Council should urgently reinstate discounts on rail travel for 16+ students, especially for students in those areas with no bus routes – young people are forced to buy adult season tickets, students reductions being time limited.
- The example of Surrey Student Transport Partnership was given.  
A student train fare card enables 16 to 18 year old Surrey students attending full-time further education to buy season tickets at half the adult rate for their home to school/college train journey. Season tickets are available for periods of 7 days (minimum), 1 month and between 1 month and 1 year.

### **Access to information**

The following comments were made:

- There were problems finding and getting information needed to help students.
- Basic information such as the application form, cost and how to apply were difficult to locate.. I
- It was not clear where to send students' details.
- KCC to school invoicing was also delayed.