

16+ Transport Policy 2018/19

For 16 - 19 year olds in the pursuit of, or receiving education or training at schools, academies and other institutions within the further education sector.

1. Kent County Council (KCC) considers that in most circumstances the provision of a Kent 16+ Travel Card at the subsidised rate of £400 per annum (subject to change) is sufficient to facilitate the attendance of persons aged between 16 – 19 at their chosen education or training provider. This may be at schools, academies, colleges or in the workplace through an apprenticeship or other work based training provision.

The Kent 16+ Travel Card is available to purchase from Kent County Council. The 16 + Travel Card offers free at point of travel access, to the entire public bus network operating in Kent including single destination journeys out of Kent and back into the County. It is available for use 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Learning providers can choose to further subsidise this charge to their students or trainees if they meet Bursary conditions.

Children and Young People (CYP) who are not eligible for help with transport can alternatively apply for a seat on vehicles hired by the Local Authority under the Vacant Seat Payment Scheme (VSPS).

Vacant seats on hired vehicles are only made available after the start of term, once all statutorily entitled CYPs have been accommodated onto transport and vehicle spaces are known. Consequently parents seeking to purchase a vacant seat may need to make other arrangements for their child to access school during the period when vacant seats are being collated for allocation. This will not be refunded by the LA. VSPS awards seats on a first come first serve basis.

Where a VSPS seat is granted, it may have to be withdrawn at a later date for a CYP who is entitled to free transport, if the Local Authority decide to stop running the vehicle or if it is decided to run a smaller vehicle.

If the seat is taken away, parents will be given until the end of the academic year when they will then have to make their own arrangements.

VSPS is not available on public transport. Charges are normally £130 for the autumn and spring terms and £140 for the summer term per CYP but this can be subject to change. The charge must be paid in advance and part payments and pro-rata payments cannot be accepted.

2. To support the provision of suitable education or training for young people who are 16 and 17 and not in education, employment or training (NEET), Kent County Council may offer fixed term (up to one month) travel cards at subsidised rates to facilitate travel to interviews, work experience and other activities necessary to secure appropriate provision. To be eligible, young people must be registered and receiving support through Early Help and Preventative Services.

3. KCC recognises that in some rural communities, access to public bus services may be a challenge at key times. KCC operates a Kent Wheels to Work scheme, where discounted access to a moped can be made available in certain circumstances. More information is available at www.w2wkent.gov.uk

4. If, however, you have special circumstances which you believe should make you eligible to receive help of an alternative nature than those set out above you should write to **The Transport Eligibility Team, Room M4.26, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone ME14 1XQ** setting out those circumstances, in full. You may rely upon any circumstances which are relevant to your application. The way that Kent County Council exercises its duty to enable access to education, be it with financial or practical support is entirely at the discretion of Kent County Council, including where appropriate a decision to meet the full cost of your transport or alternatively to offer no additional support. The following considerations will be given greater weight by us when we consider your application, but do not guarantee you will be eligible to receive additional assistance from Kent County Council.

(i) that it is not/would not be reasonably practicable for you to attend the educational establishment at which you are registered or at which you would like to register to receive education or training using a Kent 16+ Travel Card on the terms described above

(ii) that the distances and/or journey times, between your home and the educational establishment at which you are registered or would like to register makes the use of Kent 16+ Travel Card, on the terms described above impractical or not practical without additional assistance. Kent County Council will usually only provide one form of support for Low Income Families

(iii) that you and your family cannot afford the Kent 16+ Travel Card on the terms described above.

This will normally require proof of receipt of certain benefits i.e.

- Income support
- Income based jobseekers allowance
- Child Tax Credit (TC602 for the current tax year with a yearly income of no more than £16,190pa)
- Guaranteed element of state pension credit
- Income related employment and support allowance
- Maximum Level of Working Tax Credit

Assistance on this ground will normally only be given where the educational establishment is not more than 6 miles from your home. Any additional provision or assistance would be reviewed on an annual basis and your parents would be required to provide the Transport Eligibility Team with up to date proof of the family's income at that time.

(iv) that the nature of the route, or alternative routes, which you can reasonably be expected to take with a Kent 16+ Travel Card makes the use of the Card impractical or not practical without additional assistance.

(v) that reasons relating to your religion or belief (or that of your parents) mean that the use of the Kent Travel 16+ Card is not practical or is not practical without additional assistance.

Where a learner is attending an educational establishment of the same denomination as themselves (or religion in cases where the religion does not have denominations) in order to be considered for transport assistance, they must also have the application form signed by a vicar/priest or religious leader of the same denomination (or religion where there are no denominations) as the school stating that the learner is a regular and practising member of a church or other place of worship of the same denomination (or religion where there are no denominations) as the educational establishment concerned.

Where a learner is attending a church school of a different denomination or religion to that of the parent, in order to be considered for transport assistance, they must also have the application form signed by a vicar/priest or other religious leader stating that the learner is a regular and practising member of that religion or denomination. The learner will also need to explain why their religion of belief makes it desirable for the learner to attend that particular educational establishment rather than another educational establishment nearer to the learner's home, given that the chosen educational establishment is not of the same religion or denomination as that practised by the learner.

Where a learner is attending an educational establishment for reasons connected with his or her non-religious belief, in order to be considered for transport assistance the learner will need to explain what that belief is and why the belief makes it desirable for the learner to attend that particular educational establishment rather than another nearer educational establishment. The learner will also need to provide evidence to prove that they do indeed hold the belief in question. This could be confirmation from a person of good standing in the community who knows the learner, for example a councillor, a doctor, a social worker or a lawyer or alternatively proof of the learner or his parent's medium or long term membership of a society or other institution relating to that belief.

Free transport or other transport assistance will only be awarded under any of the three categories above where Kent County Council is persuaded that the religion or belief is genuinely held and that the placement of the learner at the institution in question will be of significant benefit to the learner because of the relationship between the religion or belief of the learner and the nature of the educational institution in question.

(vi) that any disability or learning difficulty that you have means that the use of the Kent Travel 16+ Card is not practical or is not practical without additional assistance. Kent County Council recognises that in some circumstances

public transport may not be appropriate as a result of a disability or learning need and again in these exceptional circumstances other means of support will be considered on the provision of evidence supplied by supporting documentation from a range of appropriate specialists or professionals, for example consultant/health/educational.

The Local Authority will normally only agree to such requests for a maximum period of one year. Arrangements would then be reviewed. The Local Authority can then agree such requests for the duration of the course up until the end of the year in which the young person reaches the age of 19.

Learners aged 16 – 19 for whom the Local Authority maintains an Education Health and Care plan are also expected to seek a 16+ Travel Card from KCC. It would be expected that where students have not accessed public transport previously, that they will engage with Kent's Independent Travel Training Team to be trained to use public transport. Refusal to embark on such training where this is considered appropriate, may affect any future decisions where additional support for transport is being requested. Where the learners are unable even with appropriate independent travel training, to access public bus travel as a result of their levels of need, consideration will be given to other means of support.

If the learner has a disability or mobility problems in accessing public transport, evidence from their consultant must be provided to the Local Authority in order to consider and review the request.

You should also state what additional or alternative steps you would like Kent County Council to take to assist you in attending the educational institution at which you are registered/would like to register.

5. Please note you will be asked to provide evidence to support any case that you may present, for example and where relevant-

(i) proof that you have applied to or are registered at a particular educational establishment such as a copy of your acceptance/offer letter from the college;
(ii) proof of your and/or your family's income and savings e.g. TC602 from HM Inland Revenue;

(iii) proof of any disability or learning difficulty that you have; (report from consultant or report from Special Educational Needs Department providing confirmation that you are unable to access a nearer educational establishment to your home and/or are unable to access public transport for example);

(iv) proof that you have applied to colleges or other educational establishment closer to your home (for the same course or for a similar course), which if accepted would have meant that you would not have required additional assistance from us and proof that those applications were turned down. (Copies of refusal letters would be required);

(v) details of the unsuitable route that you say you would need to travel and detailed reasons why you consider the same to be unsuitable;

(vi) proof that you are a member of a particular religion or religious denomination or (where possible) that you have a particular belief where that

is relevant to your argument. Ordinarily, where you are making an application on faith grounds, you will be required to attend an establishment with the same religious denomination as your place of worship.

5. Please send the details of your special circumstances to **The Transport Eligibility Team, Room M4.26, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone ME14 1XQ**. We will let you have a written decision as to whether we are able to make any additional financial or other support available to you within 28 days of you providing any supporting evidence that we may require and of you answering any additional questions that we may raise. In the event that transport assistance is refused, details of the appeals procedure will be included in the decision letter.