Kent 16+ Travel Card

The guidance below was reviewed in March 2013. We would like your feedback on the proposal to keep the processes the same for the 2013-14 academic year. For more information and to give your views, please go to www.kent.gov.uk/post16transport

Kent 16+ Travel Card
Provider Technical Guidance Document
June 2012

1) Purpose

The purpose of this document is to detail the specification and the operating arrangements for the proposed Kent 16+ Travel Card.

2) Background

The Kent 16+ Travel Pass forms part of the Kent Post-16 discretionary Transport Policy, which was published May 2012, following a period of statutory consultation.

The KCC Post-16 Transport Policy for 2012 has been written against the backdrop of the need to fulfil the Authority’s responsibility to ensure Full Participation for all 18 year olds by 2015, the removal of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) introduction of the coalition government’s new 16-19 Bursary scheme, and to address considerable financial pressures currently on KCC.

Up until the end of the 2011/2012 academic year, the KCC Post-16 Discretionary Transport Policy comprised 5 main elements:

a) Travel support for Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities
b) Free bus or rail travel for students on low incomes and living more than 3 miles from their nearest appropriate school or college
c) Bus or rail travel costing £490 for students above the minimum income threshold living more than 3 miles from their nearest appropriate school or college
d) The Vacant Seats Payment Scheme
e) Continuing Kent Freedom Pass eligibility for endorsed applications by young people in care, care leavers and Young Carers

The Kent 16+ Travel Pass replaces the arrangements in (b) and (c) above from the start of the academic year 2012/2013 for all new year 12 learners. The
Vacant Seat Payments Scheme, travel support for Learners with Learning Difficulties and Kent Freedom Pass eligibility will remain the same for 2012/2013.

The key difference between the Kent 16+ Travel Pass, and existing KCC supported post-16 arrangements, is that learning providers and employers will be expected to contribute 16-19 Bursary Funding and other learner support funds, to reduce the final cost of the Pass to learners.

The Kent 16+ Travel Pass will be available for Apprentices aged 16-18. This is the first time that this category of learner will have been included within the KCC Post-16 Discretionary Transport Policy.

3) Transitional Issues

Students who were in Year 12 2011 - 2012 will have started their courses with a reasonable expectation that their KCC-facilitated transport arrangements will continue into Year 13 or 14. To meet the expectations of this group, their existing transport arrangements remain in place during 2012/13 as a transitional year. This will ensure continuity for current 16-19 learners.

4) Kent 16+ Travel Pass specification

The Pass will allow the holder unlimited bus travel in Kent (and single stop journeys to Medway and East Sussex) including evenings, weekends and holidays.

This compares to the existing post-16 arrangements where travel is limited to two journeys a day, at certain times, during weekdays only and during term time only. The Pass will enable students much greater freedom to travel to work experience placements, seminars, out of school/college activities, jobs and social life.

The maximum cost of a Pass, if purchased from a bus company, would be approximately £750. For all eligible pupils, see below, KCC will in effect contribute a subsidy of £230 per Pass, leaving a maximum cost to the learner of £520. Learning providers and employers will be expected to contribute 16-19 Bursary Funding and other learner support funds to reduce the final cost to certain learners.

The total costs of providing a universal Pass depends upon the actual travel that students undertake. By guaranteeing a maximum cost to the learner of £520, KCC will meet any additional costs that may occur on a Pass by Pass basis, so these will not be passed onto learners, parents or learning providers.

By offering a universal and unlimited travel offer, the number of learners receiving post-16 travel support in Kent will increase.

If bus travel is not the most appropriate form of transport for a learner, the learning provider may provide an alternative. KCC would continue to act as a broker to procure another alternative at attractive rates, but as a paid-for service to learning providers.
5) **Eligibility**

It is proposed that learner eligibility for assistance with their travel costs, including the Kent 16+Travel Card will be as follows:

a) *Learners must be resident in Kent.*

b) A learner with a travel need and whose household income is above £20,818 can be expected to pay the full cost of their travel.

c) A learner with a travel need whose household income is between £20,817 and £16,191 may benefit from a further subsidy payable by, and at the discretion of, their learning provider or employer, reducing the cost to the learner of their transport by up to 50% of the full cost.

d) A learner with a travel need and a household income equivalent to the prevailing Free School Meal criteria (as described below), may benefit from a further subsidy payable by, and at the discretion of, their learning provider or employer, reducing the cost to the learner of their travel from zero to no more than 50% of the full cost. It is recommended that the average cost to these learners should be £100 per year.

e) Where an employed 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.

All eligible learners must demonstrate to their providers that they have a genuine travel-to-learn need. When a decision to apply for a Pass is being considered the following considerations can be made:

i) Can the learner’s travel needs be met more cheaply through other arrangements? Is it worth them paying for a Pass given the distance they actually live from the provider?

ii) Is travel likely to be a significant barrier to the learner’s participation post-16?

iii) Will supported travel encourage a specific learner to stay on between Years 12, 13 and 14 and complete a course?

iv) Will a supported travel Pass help improve a specific learner’s attendance record? Where a subsidy is made from Bursary Funding, providers can choose to withdraw a Pass under their own Bursary Fund policy.

While the provider or employer funding that could be used to further subsidise each Pass is entirely at the discretion of the institution, the guidance in (a) to (e) above is designed to assist in ensuring a minimum standard level of subsidy for all learners in Kent.
The operation of the Pass does not prevent individual providers using their own discretionary funding to support bespoke travel arrangements for their learners.

6) How the Pass will operate

Existing KCC discretionary travel passes are issued via an individual application process direct to KCC.

It is proposed that the application process for the Pass will involve:

a) Learners making a request to their post-16 learning provider for travel support under the scheme.
b) Providers determine learner eligibility for a Pass and a level of support from their discretionary funding.
c) Providers will purchase the required number of Passes from KCC at £520.
d) Providers will sell the Passes to learners at £520, or the price reduced by their subsidy.

Providers may choose to collect fees from learners first, prior to making the application to KCC. Alternatively providers can offer staged payments to learners.

Providers must not sell a Pass for more than £520. They must not charge their learners an admin fee for the issuing of a Pass.

It is intended to offer the largest providers the ability to apply (but not pay) online, with all other providers providing the same information direct to Transport Integration (either by spreadsheet or by paper form):

Learner details
a) First name, last name and date of birth
b) Main residence address and post code
c) Gender
d) Provider site attended

Parent/carer details
a) Title, First Name, Last name
b) Contact telephone number
c) E-mail address

A recent passport sized photograph will need to be included for each learner. The pass will be issued as a smartcard, for audit and data capture purposes. The design of the pass will be similar in layout to the Kent Freedom Pass but clearly different in terms of branding and colour.

Passes will be sent back to each provider to be issued to learners.

KCC aims to ensure that each learner receives their Pass on the first day of the new academic year. In accordance with existing timescales, Passes will be supplied to schools to meet this deadline if applications are received no later than 31 July 2012. Passes will run from 1 September 2012 to 31 August 2013.
Outside of this timetable Passes can be applied for at any time up to 31 May 2013, with all passes having an expiry date of 31 August 2013, irrespective of the date of issue. The maximum turn around time from receipt of an application would be 28 working days at peak periods but is typically around 10 working days at other times.

If a learner leaves post-16 education, then KCC will operate a refunds policy, based on the proportion of time remaining on a Pass, less a £15 admin fee. The provider must retain the Pass from the learner and return it to KCC to receive a refund. It is proposed that the level of refund should be.

A Pass returned to KCC during term 1 would receive a £432.50 refund.
A Pass returned to KCC during term 2 would receive a £345 refund.
A Pass returned to KCC during term 3 would receive a £260 refund.
A Pass returned to KCC during term 4 would receive a £175 refund.
A Pass returned to KCC during term 5 would receive a £87.5 refund.
A Pass returned to KCC during term 6 would not receive a refund.

Providers will need to make their own arrangements for reimbursement of any subsidy that they have made to a learner for the purchase of a Pass, and reimbursement to the learner.

Where a learner transfers to another post-16 provider, and the provider has assessed that the learner still needs a Pass to travel, then the Pass does not need to be returned and the learner can continue using it. The new provider will need to reimburse the previous provider, on the basis of the above schedule and will be for the providers to resolve between themselves. (Will this pro-rata cost also apply to new applications made part way through an academic year?)

Replacement passes (for those lost, damaged or stolen) will cost £10 irrespective of circumstance. Second replacements will be charged at the full rate.

Application arrangements for the other policy elements under item 2 remain unchanged:

a) Through Admissions and Transport
d) Direct to Transport Integration
e) Direct to Transport Integration (with prior endorsement)