

16 - 19 Transport Policy 2023-24

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. Young people aged 18 and 19 years are included in this policy, only to the extent that it relates to a course of education that they began before they reached the age of 18.

Kent 16+ Travel Saver

1. Kent County Council (KCC) considers that in most circumstances the provision of a subsidised KCC 16+ Travel Saver card is sufficient to facilitate the attendance of persons aged between 16 – 19 years 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 KCC 16+ Travel Saver card is available to purchase from Kent County Council. The KCC 16+ Travel Saver 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.

The KCC 16+ Travel Saver card may be available at an even lower rate for young people with parents on a low income. Applications for cards at this lower rate should be made directly through the young person's education provider.

Alternatively, Children and Young People (CYP) who are not otherwise eligible for help with transport can apply for a seat on vehicles hired by the Local Authority (LA) 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Where a VSPS seat is granted, it may have to be withdrawn at a later date for a CYP who is entitled to free transport, if the Local Authority decide to stop running the vehicle or if it is decided to run a smaller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.

Young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)

2. To support the provision of suitable education or training for young people who are 16 and 17 years old 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.

Active Travel

3. Our Active Travel Strategy aims to make active travel an attractive and realistic choice for short journeys in Kent. Active travel means walking or cycling as a means of transport, in order to get to a particular destination such as school, the shops or to visit friends. Active travel can be for complete journeys or parts of a journey, and more people in the community making more active travel journeys can lead to a range of positive individual and shared outcomes. These include improved health, reduced traffic congestion, reduced pollution and financial savings to the individual and businesses. More information is available at www.kentconnected.org.

Transport for young people for whom the KCC 16+ Travel Saver card, VSPS or Active Travel Strategy is not a viable option.

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 and powers 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 you have special educational needs and/or a disability and/or mobility problems, which mean 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 KCC 16+ Travel Saver card on the terms described above. Kent County Council recognises that in some circumstances public transport may not be appropriate as a result of special educational needs, a disability or a mobility problem and again in these exceptional circumstances other means of support will be considered. In these circumstances you must provide copies

of documentation to support your application including a copy of your Education, Health and Care Plan (if applicable) and evidence from appropriate specialists or professionals, for example consultant/health/educational.

Learners aged 16 – 19 years for whom KCC maintains an Education, Health and Care Plan are also expected to seek a KCC 16+ Travel Saver card. It would be expected that where students have not accessed public transport previously, that they will engage with KCC'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.

(ii) 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 KCC 16+ Travel Saver card on the terms described above.

(iii) 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 a KCC 16+ Travel Saver card, on the terms described above impractical or not practical without additional assistance.

(iv) that you and your family cannot afford the KCC 16+ Travel Saver 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 £16,385pa)
- Guaranteed element of state pension credit
- Income related employment and support allowance
- Maximum Level of Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods).

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. Kent County Council will usually only provide one form of support for Low Income Families.

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

(vi) that reasons relating to your religion or belief (or that of your parents) mean that the use of the KCC 16+ Travel Saver 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 or 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.

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.

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 special educational needs, disability or mobility problems that you have; (for example, a copy of your EHC plan, a copy report from consultant or from your local authority's Special Educational Needs Department providing confirmation that you are unable to access a suitable educational establishment nearer to your home and/or are unable to access public transport);
- (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.

Please note that we cannot return documents that you supply to us, and so you are requested to only provide copies of documents that you may wish to send accompanying or supporting your application.

6. 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.