

Customer Service Toolkit Addendum

In light of the current situation with the pandemic, here is an update on the messaging for the launch of the Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme for Under 22s.

Applications will still be open from 10 January, but the launch of the national marketing campaign, including the campaign website, will be postponed until a later date.

Given the developing situation with the pandemic, the decision has been taken not to heavily market the scheme (which proactively encourages bus travel) at this time. That said, it is important that **children and young people who rely on the bus for essential travel are still able to apply to access free bus travel from 31 January. There is no prescribed list of what constitutes essential travel – it will differ for different children, young people and families. But it might include travel for education, training, work, care or health reasons.** So applications will be open to all eligible children and young people from 10 January as planned, but we are encouraging those young people for whom bus travel is essential to apply at this stage.

The information in the original toolkit is still relevant as we will launch the full marketing campaign nationally at a later date (still to be determined) to proactively encourage all those eligible to access the scheme. **However, until then, please use the interim messaging outlined in this addendum.**

Marketing Campaign: Schedule and Phasing

The full launch of the multi-channel marketing campaign will be delayed until there is a reduction in transmission of COVID-19.

The launch of the campaign website, freebus.scot, has also been paused. **Information about the scheme will, instead, be available on the [Transport Scotland website](#) from 5 January ahead of applications opening on 10 January.** This approach aims to help reduce pressure on local councils processing applications while ensuring 5-21 year olds for whom bus travel is essential are able to access the scheme from 31 January.

Key Messages & Supporting Information

Key message for all groups:

- Continuing to follow [Scottish Government COVID guidance](#).
- Reducing initial volume of applications to help reduce pressure on local councils processing them.
- Encouraging 5-21 year olds for whom bus travel is essential to apply to access the scheme from 31 January.

- Proactively encouraging all 5-21 year olds to apply to access the scheme by launching the full marketing campaign nationally at a later date.

Key Messages

- Applications for the scheme will open on 10 January as planned. However, please only apply if you do need to make essential journeys by bus from 31 January.
- All other eligible applicants will be encouraged to apply at a later date when the situation with the pandemic has improved.
- Even if you already have a National Entitlement Card or Young Scot National Entitlement Card, you must apply for a new or replacement card to travel by bus for free.
- Information on how to apply can be found on the [Transport Scotland](#) website
- If you do have to make an essential journey by bus, you must follow the latest [Scottish Government COVID-19 guidance](#) at all times.

Additional Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Why haven't you advertised the scheme?

We want all 5-21 year olds living in Scotland to benefit from free bus travel. However given the situation with the pandemic, we do not want to heavily market the scheme at a time when people are being actively discouraged from travelling unless they really need to. That said, it is important that children and young people who rely on the bus for essential travel such as to work, where they can't work from home, or for the purposes of education, care and health and so on are able to apply to access free bus travel from 31 January. That's why we have made factual information available on how to apply. The national marketing campaign will follow in due course.

Why are you launching the scheme at a time when there are additional Covid-19 restrictions?

We want all 5-21 year olds living in Scotland to benefit from free bus travel. In particular at this time it is important that those who rely on the bus for essential travel such as to work, where they can't work from home, or for the purposes of education, care and health and so on are able to apply to access free bus travel from 31 January. Scottish Government advice regarding the pandemic should be followed at all times.

Will Council offices be able to process in person applications given the situation with the pandemic?

Applications can be made online at [GETYOURNEC.SCOT](#) or at [parentsportal.scot](#), if this is used by your child's school but for those who are unable to apply online, or choose not to, individuals also have the option of applying in person. Due to the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and the Omicron variant on staffing levels, some local councils may not be able to offer in-person applications at all times and so we are advising people planning to apply in this way to check their council website or call before setting off. Scottish Government advice regarding the pandemic should be followed at all times.

Getting a card : Information for parents and guardians

Parents / guardians of children under the age of 16 are encouraged to apply for the scheme at a later date, unless it is essential that their child travels on the bus while restrictions are in place.

Staying Safe

Please follow the latest [Scottish Government COVID-19 guidance](#) at all times.

General Questions

If applications are open, why are people being encouraged not to apply for the scheme?

It is important that we all do our bit to stay safe and protect our NHS. Therefore we are encouraging people not to travel unless it is essential. However, we recognise that many children and young people under the age of 22 still have to make essential journeys by bus and it is important that they can still apply to access free bus from 31 January, recognising that not travelling is not an option for them.

Long Form Copy (from 10 January)

This replaces what was in the original customer service toolkit

[Please note this is subject to change due to the ongoing impact of COVID-19]

5-21 year olds living in Scotland can now apply to access free bus travel from 31 January. In light of high levels of COVID-19 transmission, the Scottish Government is asking that you only apply for the scheme at this point if it is essential that you, or your child, travel while restrictions are in place. All other eligible applicants will be proactively encouraged to apply at a later date.

Even if you already have a National Entitlement Card or Young Scot National Entitlement Card, you must apply for a new or replacement card to travel by bus for free. Parents or guardians must provide approval for children aged between 5-15 to access the scheme by applying on their behalf. Young people aged 16-21 should apply themselves.

The [Transport Scotland website](#) provides all the information needed to apply.

There are two ways to apply:

- Online at [GETYOURNEC.SCOT](#) (or through [parentsportal.scot](#) if this is used by your child's school).
- Local council: if you cannot, or do not want to, apply online please [contact your local council](#) who can tell you how to proceed.

[Please note that this paragraph is optional: It can be included for those local authorities who are using school bulk process] In some local council areas, schools are coordinating applications on behalf of their pupils. Schools will contact parents/guardians and pupils directly if this arrangement is in place.

Short Form Copy

This replaces what was in the original customer service toolkit

[Please note this is subject to change due to the ongoing impact of COVID-19]

Between 10 and 30 January:

From 31 January, 5–21 year olds living in Scotland will be eligible for free bus travel across Scotland with a valid National Entitlement Card. You can apply from today. However, in light of high levels of COVID-19 transmission, the Scottish Government is asking that you only apply for the scheme at this point if it is essential that you, or your child, travel while restrictions are in place. All other eligible applicants will be proactively encouraged to apply at a later date.

Even if you already have a National Entitlement Card or Young Scot National Entitlement Card, you must apply for a new or replacement card to travel by bus for free.

Visit the [Transport Scotland website](#) to find out how to apply and more.

From 31 January:

Free bus travel is now available for 5–21 year olds living in Scotland. However, in light of high levels of COVID-19 transmission, please only travel if it is essential.

If you are 5–21 years old and living in Scotland – and it is essential that you travel – you can travel for free on the bus by applying for a new or replacement National Entitlement Card or Young Scot National Entitlement Card.

Visit the [Transport Scotland website](#) to find out how to apply and more.

Amended FAQ

I don't want to throw away my old National Entitlement Card (NEC)/Young Scot NEC. Can it be recycled?

Yes it can. If you are getting a new card and would like your old one to be recycled, please send it to:

Transport Scotland Card Recycling
Buchanan House
58 Port Dundas Road
Glasgow G4 0HF