



# **Consultation on ceasing the Sussex Student Card rail discount**

Consultation runs from Monday 30 March 2020 – Friday 1 May 2020

## Overview

The Sussex Student card was created in partnership by East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council. It has supported thousands of young people by reducing their rail fares by 34%.

In August 2019, the Department for Transport launched a national rail scheme for all 16 and 17 year olds. The 16-17 Railcard costs £30.00 per year and gives 50% off standard Anytime, Off-Peak, Advance and Season tickets for travel at any time of the day.

The 16-17 Railcard is valid for one year or up until the 18th birthday, whichever comes first. A season ticket bought before the Railcard expires, can be extended by up to 4 months after the expiry date.

The 16-17 Railcard was a welcome and overdue development and has removed the need for local authorities to negotiate individual local arrangements, the Sussex Student Card being a case in point.

## Why are we thinking about ceasing the Sussex Student Card?

Since the advent of the 16-17 Railcard, new applications for 2019/20 (July to December) for the Sussex Student Card have fallen by over 94%.

In order to see who might be affected by its withdrawal, we have done some calculations (below). This consultation is to make sure we understand the full picture.

It is not possible give a definite answer for each individual and their circumstances. This is because train fares will differ from case-to-case, because a young person's date of birth will affect the level of discount and some will study for three years rather than two. Young people and families may wish to do their own calculations on the impact on them should the Sussex Student Card be discontinued.

## Discount comparisons

The calculations have been based on the following assumptions and are for illustrative purposes only:-

1. Students buy the same ticket every month, from September to end of June
2. The monthly adult fare is £100
3. Use is made of the 4 month 'extension' beyond 18 that 16-17 Railcard holders can obtain
4. August birthdays are assumed as 31<sup>st</sup> of the month and January and September birthdays are assumed as 1<sup>st</sup> of the month. This will show the full range of discount.
5. We have included the annual cost of the 16-17 Railcard where applicable

For a 2 year course, the cost per student would be as follows:

Full adult fare = £2000 - 0% discount  
(20 months x £100 per month)

Sussex Student Card = £1320 a 34% discount  
(20 months x £66 per month)

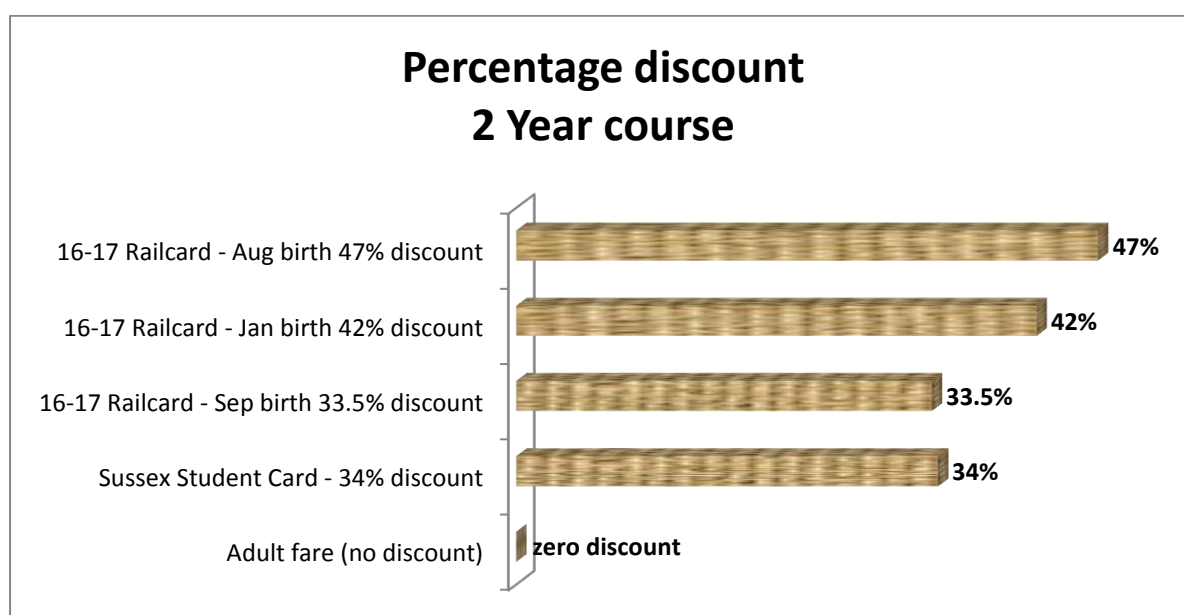
16-17 Railcard (born September) = £1330 a 33.5% discount  
(14 months x £50 per month, 6 months x £100 per month + 1 x Railcard at £30)

16-17 Railcard (born January) = £1160 a 42% discount  
(18 months x £50 per month, 2 months x £100 per month + 2 x Railcard at £30)

16-17 Railcard (born August) = £1060 a 47% discount  
(20 months x £50 per month + 2 x Railcard at £30)

This indicates:

- most students will be financially better off using the national 16-17 Railcard
- some students will obtain a similar discount.



For a 3 year course, the cost per student *based on the same parameters* would be as follows:

Full adult fare = £3000 - 0% discount  
(30 months x £100 per month)

Sussex Student Card = £1980 a 34% discount  
(30 months x £66 per month)

16-17 Railcard (born September) = £2330 a 22.3% discount  
(14 months x £50 per month, 16 months x £100 per month + 1 x Railcard at £30)

16-17 Railcard (born January) = £2160 a 28% discount  
(18 months x £50 per month, 12 months x £100 per month + 2 x Railcard at £30)

16-17 Railcard (born August) = £1860 a 38% discount  
(24 months x £50 per month, 6 months x £100 per month + 2 x Railcard at £30)

This indicates:

- some students will benefit from a greater overall discount when compared to the Sussex Student Card scheme (38% compared to 34%)
- other students may have a reduced overall discount if they only use the 16-17 Railcard followed by adult fares

## **Mitigations**

There are alternative schemes available which will reduce the price of the adult fare such as:

- [Unizone](#) If you're studying in or around Brighton or Worthing, the Unizone ticket gives you unlimited travel at a discount
- [16-25 railcard](#) for those not travelling each day (subject to a minimum fare)
- [Disabled Persons Railcard](#) where there are no time restrictions

In addition, only a small percentage (approx. 5%) of further education students complete 3 years of study. These tend to be on vocational courses at the larger colleges where there are good alternative transport links. There is no data about the number of 3<sup>rd</sup> year students travelling by train but some will live within walking distance of their college, some will cycle, some will travel by bus and some will drive or be dropped off by parents or share with friends.

Students suffering from financial hardship can also speak to their college about Bursary Funds to support their attendance.

Given the diminishing number of students potentially affected, coupled with other discount schemes or alternative travel solutions or support, suggest the termination of the Sussex Student Card will have a minor impact. Nevertheless, we would like to hear from individuals about the proposal.

## **Please give us your views**

Please complete the East Sussex online survey running from Monday 30 March until Friday 1 May 2020. Your responses will be considered when we finalise our Post 16 Transport Policy by 31 May 2020.