

# Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme for Under 22s

## Customer Service Toolkit

The aim of this toolkit is to provide information for key stakeholders, organisations and support groups to assist in their communications of the scheme with customers/clients.

This toolkit contains:

- Key messages
- An overview about the scheme and eligibility
- Information about getting an NEC
- A factsheet about the Transport Scot Pass Collect app
- Frequently asked questions (FAQs)
- Long and short form copy
- Suggested social media copy and graphic to promote the app

## Key messages:

- Applications for the scheme are open for all young people and children aged 5-21.
- There are a range of application routes to suit everyone and ensure that all 5-21 year olds can benefit from the scheme – including for those without digital access or photo ID.
- Young people must have a valid NEC or Young Scot NEC with them when boarding the bus to be able to travel for free. Even if you already have a National Entitlement Card (NEC) or Young Scot NEC, you must apply for a new or replacement card to travel by bus for free.
- **However**, if you're aged between 16 and 21 and already have an active NEC or Young Scot NEC, you can download free bus travel onto your existing card using the [Transport Scot Pass Collect app](#). This means you may not need to apply for a new card to access your free bus travel.
- More information about the scheme and how to apply is available on [freebus.scot](http://freebus.scot).
- Anyone using public transport should continue to follow [Scottish Government COVID guidance](#).

# About the scheme

## Overview

Since 31 January 2022, nearly a million 5–21 year olds living in Scotland have been eligible to benefit from free bus travel. The scheme is helping to embed sustainable travel behaviours from a young age, opening doors to new opportunities, and helping to meet our target of net zero emissions by 2045.

Children and young people who are 5–21 years old need a new or replacement NEC or Young Scot NEC to travel for free by bus. However, young people aged between 16 and 21 who already have an active NEC or Young Scot NEC, can download free bus travel onto their existing card using the [Transport Scot Pass Collect app](#). This means they may not need to apply for a new card to access free bus travel. You can read more about the app in our factsheet.

Parents, guardians or carers of 5–15 year olds must apply on their behalf. Children under 5 years old already travel for free on commercial bus services and do not need a card.

The Scottish Government works with its partners at the Improvement Service – who is accountable for the NEC Scheme - and National Entitlement Card Programme Office – who is responsible for the management of the NEC and support local authorities with the application process – and Young Scot to deliver the scheme, which began on 31 January 2022.

Read [about the scheme](#) and find out more [information on the legislation](#).

## Eligibility

If you are 5–21 years old and live in Scotland then you are eligible for free bus travel, no matter your nationality.

You must have a valid NEC or Young Scot NEC that is in good working order. The photograph on the card must look like you (if your NEC or Young Scot NEC includes a photo) to travel by bus for free.

Children aged under 5 years do not need to apply for a card as they already travel for free on commercial bus services across Scotland.

## Getting your NEC

Age	Which NEC?	Approval required?
0–4 year olds	No card needed to travel for free by bus	N/A
5–10 year olds	NEC	Parent / guardian / carer to apply
11–15 year olds	NEC or Young Scot NEC	Parent / guardian / carer to apply
16–21 year olds	NEC or Young Scot NEC	Apply by themselves

Lots of children and young people already have an NEC or Young Scot NEC. However, you will need a new or replacement card before you can travel by bus for free. 16-21 year olds also have the option of retaining their card by downloading the [Transport Scot Pass Collect app](#) and collecting the free bus entitlement.

How you do this depends on what age you are:

- A parent, guardian or carer must apply on behalf of 5–15 year olds and provide approval for them to travel for free by bus.
- 16-21 year olds should apply themselves. If they already have an active NEC or Young Scot NEC, they can download free bus travel onto their existing card using the Transport Scot Pass Collect app. This means they will not need to apply for a new card to access free bus travel.

Read more about [how to apply](#).

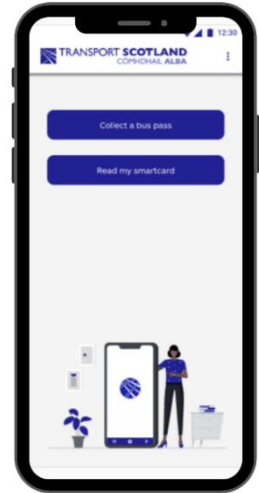
# Transport Scot Pass Collect app factsheet

Watch a guide on [how to use the app](#)

The [Transport Scot Pass Collect app](#) lets people aged 16 – 21, who already have a Young Scot National Entitlement Card (NEC) (or non-Young Scot branded NEC), download free bus travel onto their existing card. This means they may not need to apply for a replacement.

The app guides them through the process of downloading free bus travel onto their card, with simple step-by-step instructions. It will tell them when free bus travel has been successfully downloaded onto the card, and then they are ready to jump on the bus for free straight away.

The app can also be used by anyone to 'read' an NEC or Young Scot NEC to see what smart travel concession passes or other travel entitlements are stored on the card.



## Who can use the app?

- Anyone aged 16 and over with an existing active NEC or Young Scot NEC. Active cards are those received since 2016 – they'll have a long number next to the ITSO logo and, if there is a date of birth shown, it will be highlighted with a pink strip, as shown.
- Anyone with a compatible smartphone can use the app to download free bus travel onto an existing card or read an NEC or Young Scot NEC. If you don't have a compatible phone, a family member or friend can download the app on their phone for you.
- The photo on the card must be kept up to date and should still look like the cardholder.



## What device is needed to download the app?

- Android (version 6 or later) or iOS phone (version 6 or later).
- The phone must be connected to the internet (Wi-Fi or mobile connection 3G+).
- It must have Near Field Communication (NFC) - this is the same service used for mobile contactless payment.

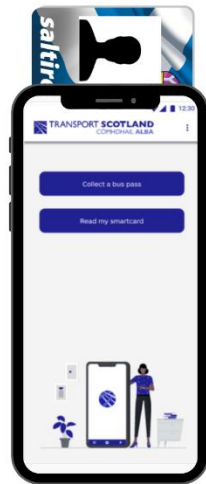


## Downloading the app

- The Transport Scot Pass Collect app can be downloaded on [Apple](#) and [Google](#).
- Or by opening an app store, searching for Transport Scot Pass Collect, clicking 'download', then 'open', and the app will be ready to use.

## Using the app

- The app is easy to use and provides simple instructions for the user or you can watch a [video](#) on how to use the app.
- The app can remotely collect free bus travel and also 'read' what passes or entitlements are currently on the NEC or Young Scot NEC.
- For phones to scan and read a card, it's important to place the card in the correct position on the back of the phone. This is different for iOS and Android phones as shown below.



Correct position for iOS



Correct position for Android

## What if it doesn't work?

- If an error message is displayed, it will provide details about what has gone wrong and tell you what to do next, or who to contact.
- Like any busy service, during peaks in demand people may have to try more than once to download their free bus travel onto their card.

## Is any personal data held on the app?

- There is no data, personal or other, held or stored on the app.
- [App terms and conditions](#) are available on our website.

# Frequently asked questions

Help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by following [guidance on how to stay safe](#).

## Getting a card: information for applicants

### Who can get free bus travel?

Every 5–21 year old living in Scotland for more than six months of the year can travel for free by bus if they have a valid NEC or Young Scot NEC. If you are 5–15 years old, your parent, guardian or carer will apply for you. If you are 16–21 years old, you should apply for your own NEC or Young Scot NEC. Children under 5 years old do not need an NEC as they can already travel for free on buses.

### How do I get free bus travel?

You will need an NEC or Young Scot NEC. You will not be able to travel for free on the bus without one. If you already have one, you will need to apply for a replacement that will allow free bus travel. Visit [freebus.scot](http://freebus.scot) for information on [how to apply](#).

If you are aged 16 and over, and you have an active NEC or Young Scot NEC, you can download your free bus travel onto your existing card using the Transport Scot Pass Collect app. This means you may not need to apply for a new card to access free bus travel.

### What will I need to get an NEC or Young Scot NEC?

You will need to provide proof of identity (your name and age), proof of residence (where you usually live) and a photograph if you are 11 years old or over.

Parents, guardians or (in some cases) carers will need to provide proofs of person and address for both themselves and their child, as well as proof of the relationship.

Find out what documents you can use to provide proof on [freebus.scot](http://freebus.scot) and the [NEC website](#).

If you are aged 5 -15 years old, your parent/guardian/carers must apply for your NEC on your behalf. If you are aged 16–21 years old, you must apply by yourself.

### Should I get a Young Scot NEC or standard NEC?

If you are over 11 years old you can choose to apply for the Young Scot NEC or a standard NEC. If you choose a Young Scot NEC, you can use it to save money with in-person and online discounts – with over 500 discounts in Scotland and over 100,000 deals across Europe. It also acts as proof of age. What's more, you can collect points by taking part in activities and exchanging these for rewards. Find out more at [young.scot/card](http://young.scot/card).

## **If all 5–21 year olds travel free, why do I need a new NEC or Young Scot NEC?**

Digital access to the free bus travel scheme will be added to your new card.

All bus journeys made under the scheme must be recorded so that the Scottish Government can reimburse operators for the fare. Tapping your NEC or Young Scot NEC on the ticket machine each time you travel makes this possible.

This also helps keep card holders safe as once you've tapped, the driver knows that you are eligible for free bus travel. This is important if you are 5-15 years old as your parent, guardian or carer must approve you to travel for free by bus.

However, those who already have an existing active NEC or Young Scot NEC and are aged between 16 and 21, can use the app to download free travel onto that existing card. Once the product has been successfully downloaded onto the card, the cardholder can jump on the bus for free immediately.

If you don't have a valid card, you will need to pay your fare in the normal way.

## **I live in Scotland for part of the year. Can I still get free bus travel?**

If you live in Scotland for the majority of the year (at least six months), then you are eligible.

## **I study and live in one council area but my family home is in another. Which local council do I apply to?**

If both places are in Scotland, then you can choose either local council area. Some local councils offer additional concessions to residents, so you may want to check what is available.

If you are studying in Scotland and your family home is elsewhere, then you are eligible if you live in Scotland for more than six months of the year.

## **I already have an NEC / Young Scot NEC, can I use this for free bus travel too?**

No. You must get a replacement NEC or Young Scot NEC that will allow you to travel for free by bus.

However, if you are aged 16 and over, and you have an active NEC or Young Scot NEC, you can download your free bus travel pass onto your existing card using our Transport Scot Pass Collect app. This means you may not need to apply for a new card to access free bus travel.

## **I already have a Disabled NEC. Will I need a new card?**

It is your choice. Some local council areas provide discounted travel on rail, tram or subway with a Disabled Persons' NEC, but you are likely to have to renew that more often. Currently, a Disabled Persons' NEC is valid for up to three years. Further information can be found on the [Transport Scotland website](#).

However, if you have a Disabled Companion NEC, allowing a companion to travel for free with you, then you should not change to the new scheme. The new scheme does not allow anyone to travel with you for free.



### **Why do I need a photo on my NEC /Young Scot NEC, but my younger sibling doesn't?**

All 11 year olds and over must have a photograph on their NEC or Young Scot NEC. If you have a Young Scot NEC, this also has a PASS hologram that means you can use it as proof of age. Children who are 5–11 years old have a different type of NEC and that does not need a photograph.

### **The photo on my existing NEC / Young Scot NEC no longer looks like me. Will I need a replacement?**

Yes, the photograph must look like you. You can request a replacement card online at [getyournec.scot](http://getyournec.scot) or by contacting your local council.

### **My application has been rejected. Why?**

You should be told why your application has been rejected and given advice on how to submit a successful application. Check to see that your details are all correct and your photo meets all the requirements. If you are unable to apply online, get in touch with your local council.

### **I am just about to turn 16 years old – why does my parent, guardian or carer need to apply on my behalf?**

If you are 5–15 years old, then your parent, guardian or carer must apply for a replacement NEC or Young Scot NEC on your behalf. You can wait until your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and apply for yourself.

### **How long do I need to wait for my new NEC / Young Scot NEC?**

For online applications, you should allow up to ten working days (which is the same as two calendar weeks) from the date your application was submitted for it to be reviewed. However, during busy periods this may take slightly longer. Once approved the card will be dispatched within two working days. You can check the status of your online application by logging into the NEC portal on [getyournec.scot](http://getyournec.scot).

If you have applied for a Young Scot NEC through your school, the school can provide more information on when your card will be delivered.

### **My details aren't right. What do I do?**

Most cardholders can update your details at [getyournec.scot](http://getyournec.scot) or get in touch with your [local council](#) to have your details amended.

### **Why does my parent, guardian or carer have to apply for a NEC / Young Scot NEC on my behalf?**

If you are 5–15 years old, then your parent, guardian or carer must apply on your behalf. This will make sure they are aware that you get to travel for free by bus, so that they can ensure you are safe and well. If you are 16 years old and over, you must apply yourself.

## **I don't want to throw away my old 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

## **Why do I need to provide proofs to apply for free bus travel?**

We need to be able to check and verify who you are and whether you are eligible for the scheme, so we ask for proof of identity (your name and age) and proof of residence (where you live).

For children aged 5-15 years old, we also need to carry out some extra checks for child safety reasons. We need to be able to verify who the person making the application is, the child is, and know that they are authorised to act on behalf of that child.

When doing this, we need to make sure we comply with identity verification standards and protocols, and with standards required by the [UK National Proof of Age Standards Scheme \(PASS\)](#). Young Scot NECs carry the PASS logo and can be used as proof of age.

## **Is [getyournec.scot](#) new?**

No, [getyournec.scot](#) has been available since July 2020. Thousands of people have already used it to apply for their NEC to access the Older and Disabled Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme or order a new or replacement Young Scot NEC. This has now been extended to enable people to apply online for the Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme.

## **Why do you use biometric scans during the online application process?**

[Getyournec.scot](#) checks proofs digitally during the application process. A face scan is used to make sure that the person submitting the application is the same person as on the identity proofs supplied. It's a way of replicating the in-person application process. Biometric scans are only used when applying online, not when making in-person applications.

## **Can I save progress on my online application as I go along?**

Yes, you can save your application as you go along and go back to it at a later date.

## **Can you make the application process simpler?**

We continually review the application process to make it as straightforward as we can. However, we must also make sure that we meet child safety requirements, and comply with identity verification standards, protocols and PASS standards.

We have made video guides to [getyournec.scot](https://www.getyournec.scot) which take you through the online application process step-by-step:

- [How to apply for a card for your child](#)
- [How to request a replacement card with free bus travel](#)
- [How to apply – parental approval](#)
- [How to apply if you are aged between 16 and 21](#)

You can also [ask for help](#) if you run into problems when applying through [getyournec.scot](https://www.getyournec.scot).

### **I can't apply online. How do I get a card?**

If you cannot apply online, there are other ways to apply provided by your local council, such as face-to-face, in-person applications or, in some cases, through schools. Please [contact your local council](#) for more information.

### **I don't have the proofs required to apply online. How do I apply?**

If you don't have proofs such as a passport or driving licence, you can apply directly to your [local council](#).

There are other documents you can use as proof of identity if you don't have a passport, driving licence, Biometric Residence Permit, Young Scot card, Yoti account or birth/adoption certificate. A full list of acceptable documents is available on the [NEC website](#).

### **Will applications be prioritised based on who needs to make essential journeys?**

All applications submitted will be processed and there is no prioritisation of one person's application over another.

Please contact your [local council](#) to find out how you can apply before setting off.

## **Getting a card: information for parents, guardians and carers**

### **Why do parents/guardians/carers of 5–15 year olds have to apply on their behalf?**

If you are a parent, guardian or carer of a 5–15 year old, then you must apply on their behalf. This will allow you to continue to exercise responsibility over their wellbeing and safety.

By applying on their behalf, you are agreeing for them to receive an NEC or Young Scot NEC that allows them to travel for free on any registered bus service in Scotland, as well as a limited number of local cross border services into northern England.

### **What if I don't have a passport or driving licence – what can I use to apply?**

You can now also use a Young Scot card or Biometric Residence Permit as proof of identity to apply online. Check which documents you will need to apply online at [getyournec.scot](http://getyournec.scot).

If your child has an existing Young Scot NEC, you can use it to obtain a Yoti account. This account can then be used to verify your identity when applying for an NEC or Young Scot NEC on [getyournec.scot](http://getyournec.scot).

If you don't have the proofs required to apply online, and your child doesn't already have a Young Scot NEC, you should use the in person application routes provided by your local council.

### **I am a parent, but my child doesn't live with me. Can I apply on their behalf?**

Your child can only have one NEC / Young Scot NEC. You should decide which parent, guardian or carer applies on their behalf.

Young people who are 16–21 years old must apply themselves. If your 16-21 year old needs additional support with their application please [contact your local council](#).

### **I do not want my child to have free bus travel. How do I make sure that they don't get it?**

You should not apply for the free bus travel scheme. Also, a parent, guardian or carer must apply on behalf of 5–15 year olds. If you are applying on behalf of your child for an NEC or Young Scot NEC, do not 'opt in' to the free bus travel entitlement. This will allow them to receive their card without access to free bus travel.

Once a young person is 16 years old and over, they can apply for their own NEC or Young Scot NEC and get access to free bus travel.

### **What happens if I change my mind and want to stop my child having free bus travel?**

If you are the parent, guardian or carer of a 5–15 year old, you can apply to have the free bus travel removed from their NEC or Young Scot NEC. If they have a Young Scot NEC, they will still have access to the free Young Scot services and opportunities.

You can do this online at [getyournec.scot](http://getyournec.scot) or by contacting your [local council](#). Or, you can apply for a new NEC or Young Scot NEC without 'opting in' to the free bus travel scheme.

Young people who are 16-21 years old must apply themselves.

### **My child will soon be five. How soon can I apply?**



You can apply for an NEC up to two weeks before your child's fifth birthday.

### **Will my child's school be arranging to help apply for cards, including getting parental approval?**

Your local council will let you know if they are offering to place bulk orders for NEC or Young Scot NECs in your area. These come in three types:

- a photoless NEC (primary school age)
- an NEC
- a Young Scot NEC (secondary school age)

### **My child is 16 years old (or older) and needs help to apply. Can a parent, guardian or carer do this on their behalf?**

Contact your [local council](#) if you need additional support with the application process.

### **My child is 16 years old (or older). Can I apply on their behalf?**

No. Anyone who is 16 years old or above must apply for their own NEC or Young Scot NEC, unless they have difficulty in applying on their own (see question above).

### **Will my child's NEC or Young Scot NEC last until they are 21 years old?**

Yes. A replacement NEC or Young Scot NEC is likely to be needed to keep their photograph up to date. If they have a Young Scot NEC, they can continue to use it for Young Scot services until the day before their 26<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **Can I see what journeys my child makes?**

Transport Scotland does not share the details of individual journeys made.

However, local councils and Transport Scotland can share an individual's personal and card usage data with Police Scotland or the British Transport Police (BTP), as is already the case with the Older and Disabled Scheme, but only in very limited circumstances such as when a serious crime has been committed or in the case of a high risk missing person.

### **Is there a limit to how many of my children can get free bus travel?**

No. All 5–21 year olds can travel for free by bus in Scotland.

### **I don't read English. How do I apply for free bus travel for my child?**

Please contact your [local council](#) to find out more and get support.

## **Using the Transport Scot Pass Collect app**

**I've already applied for a new NEC or Young Scot NEC but it hasn't arrived yet. Can I use the app?**



If you've already applied for a new card, depending on where you are in the application process, you may be able to download free bus travel onto your current card so you can use it until your new card is issued.

However, this will only work temporarily until your application is processed. This is because when your new card is issued, your old card will automatically be set to stop working. You can then recycle or dispose of your old card.

If you've applied for a new card and your application has now been processed but you've not received it yet (for example, it is in the post), then you may not have free bus travel available to download via the app. But don't worry – this means your new card is coming.

If you have applied on [getyournec.scot](https://getyournec.scot), you can log back in to check the status of your application.

### **What if my application for a new card has been approved and a new card is sent to me after I have already used the app to get free bus on my existing card, will both work?**

When your new card is issued, your old card will automatically be set to stop working and you can recycle or dispose of it. If you would like to recycle your old card, you can send it to:

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

### **Why can't there be an app instead of a card we can use on the bus – it would be much easier?**

We recognise that there is an interest in an app based travel solution. Unfortunately, the compatible technology is not yet available to provide an app for concessionary travel, but we continue to monitor technology advancements in this area.

### **Why can't Young Scot cardholders under 16 use the app?**

For young people aged 5-15, a parent, guardian or carer must apply on for free bus travel on their behalf. This is to make sure the parent, guardian or carer knows that the young person is able to travel for free by bus, and can ensure their child is safe and well.

During the application process, it is important to verify who the person making the application is, who the child is, and know that the person making the application is authorised to act on behalf of that child.

As the app cannot store personal data, this information cannot be captured or verified. This means that for anyone aged 5-15, parents, guardians or carers will need to [apply for a new card](#) either online or through their local council.

### **I am turning 16 next week/soon – can I use the app?**

Yes, the system will be updated regularly so that free travel will be available to collect on your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. Remember that this only applies if your existing application has not been processed.

### **Can I use someone else's card to collect my free bus travel?**

No – your card is unique to you. To download your free bus travel you must use your own card.

### **Can I use someone else's Transport Scot Pass Collect app to download my free bus travel?**

Yes – the app will check your card with the details held on the system and will download free bus travel for you, if available, via anyone's Transport Scot Pass Collect app.

### **Can my friend download their free bus travel using my phone?**

Yes. The app will check their card details with the system and download free bus travel for them. You can only download free bus travel for the intended person onto their card – you cannot download their free bus travel onto your card, for example.

### **I couldn't download the app from the Google Play Store or Apple Store. What should I do?**

Check your smart phone is connected to the internet with good signal and you have space on your mobile device to download the app.

If you still cannot download the app your phone may not be compatible – it needs to be Android (version 6 or newer) or iOS (version 6 or newer) and have Near Field Communication (NFC) compatibility - the same function you use for contactless payment with your phone.

If you still don't have access to the app, you can use someone else's Transport Scot Pass Collect app to download your free bus travel onto your card.

### **Is any personal data held on the app?**

- There is no data, personal or other, held or stored on the app.
- View the [app terms and conditions](#).

### **How much data space does it take?**

The app doesn't take up too much space or take long to download. It's around 100mb on Android and only 30mb on Apple - but you do need a good signal to download it (3G + or stronger).

## What to do if you receive an error message

If you've successfully downloaded the app onto your phone but you've received an error message when using it, the message will provide details about what has gone wrong and tell you what to do next or who to contact. Check the error messages below to help.

### **It looks like you're offline**

Check you are connected to the internet. If you're connected via mobile network, check you have a strong signal.

### **The NFC (near field communication) is disabled**

If you have NFC, you may need to switch this on in your settings. NFC is the same service used for mobile contactless payment – you can check online or with your phone provider to see if your phone has this.

### **Card read but nothing to collect**

The app is only for those aged 16-21 who have an active NEC or Young Scot NEC.

Check your card is active – this means it was received after 2016, it should have a long number next to the ITSO logo and if your date of birth is on it, it will be highlighted with a pink strip.

If you have already applied for a new card, this means your application has nearly finished being processed and your new card will be with you soon.

If your card is active, and you have not already applied for a new card, please contact us as there may be an issue with your card.

### **Uh oh! Something went wrong, or we are busy**

This message appears when there are too many people trying to collect bus travel at the same time. Please try again in a few minutes and remember to hold your card very still at the back of your phone. It's important to place the card in the correct position, which is different depending on whether you have an Android or iOS phone. This correct position is usually at the top for iOS and in the middle for Android.

### **Oops that didn't work – looks like your card is full**

This message appears if you have lots of other travel tickets on your smartcard. Please try again and if it still doesn't work, please contact us.

### **Oops that didn't work – we're having trouble reading your card**

This message usually appears if you have accidentally moved your card when holding it to the phone. Try again, putting your card on a table and holding your phone above it to help keep it steady. If you have a cover on your phone, please try removing this as well.



If it doesn't work again after doing this, get in touch with us in case there is something wrong with your card (please remember to check you are using an active NEC or Young Scot NEC first).

### **Oops that didn't work – looks like your card is not supported by this app**

This usually appears if you try and read a smartcard that is not an NEC or Young Scot NEC – for example, a Subway or ScotRail card. The app is only for those aged 16-21 who have an active NEC or Young Scot NEC.

### **Oops that didn't work – looks like your card is expired**

This usually appears when your card is no longer valid and means you will need to apply for a new card. Find out [how to apply for a new card](#).

Check your card is active – this means it was received after 2016, it should have a long number next to the ITSO logo and if your date of birth is on it, it will be highlighted with a pink strip.

### **Oops that didn't work – looks like your card is blocked**

This usually appears when your card has already been replaced by a newer version. Please find your most recent card and use this instead.

If you cannot find the newer version, you will need to apply for a new card. Find out [how to apply for a new card](#).

## **Get in touch**

If the information above doesn't answer any queries you have about the app, or if you have issues using it, please contact us:

Email - [concessionarytravel@transport.gov.scot](mailto:concessionarytravel@transport.gov.scot)

Opening hours:

- Monday – Thursday: 9.00 am to 4.30 pm
- Friday: 9.00 am to 4.00 pm
- Closed on weekends and public holidays

## **Using your NEC or Young Scot NEC**

### **How do I use my NEC / Young Scot NEC on the bus?**

In most cases, you place your card on the card reader machine next to the bus driver. Ask the driver if you have any questions.

### **What do I do if my NEC / Young Scot NEC is not working?**

For information on how to apply for a replacement card go to [getyournec.scot](http://getyournec.scot). You will need to pay any fares until the replacement arrives.

### **How much will it cost to get a replacement?**

Replacements are free of charge.

### **My friend has lost their NEC / Young Scot NEC. Can they use mine?**

No. It is only for you and you should not share it with anybody else.

If your card has a photo, then please keep it up to date, as the bus driver might not let you travel if you do not look like your photo. The photo on your Young Scot NEC also needs to be kept up to date to use it for proof of age.

You can update the photo for free.

### **Can my access to free bus travel be stopped?**

Yes, if you misuse the free bus travel scheme (such as letting someone else use your card), then you might have free bus travel removed from your card.

### **If my free bus travel is removed will I still be able to use my NEC / Young Scot NEC for other services elsewhere?**

Yes, your other services will still be available as suspension removes only the free bus travel from your card.

### **Can I load my NEC / Young Scot NEC on an app so that I don't have to carry it?**

No, you must have your NEC or Young Scot NEC with you if you want to travel for free.

### **Where can I go under the free bus travel scheme?**

You can travel anywhere in Scotland on local and long distance bus services, apart from a few exceptions such as premium-fare night buses, city sightseeing buses, and some airport transfer services. Check with your bus operator if in doubt.

If you are travelling to England, you will be able to travel to Carlisle or Berwick-Upon-Tweed, but cannot be used to travel within these towns.

### **Are there any limits on when I can travel?**

There are no limits on when you can travel. Most bus services across Scotland are included, but you cannot use tour buses or any services that are charged at a premium rate, such as some night services.

### **Does my NEC / Young Scot NEC allow me discounts or free travel on rail, tram, subway or ferry?**

This scheme is for free bus travel only. However, there may be other discounts available. Please check on the [Transport Scotland website](#) for further information.

## **Do children need to be accompanied by a parent/guardian/carer to access free bus travel?**

No. However, if you are in any doubt check with the bus operator before travelling. All bus operators have conditions of carriage which set out who can travel on their services and they may require younger children to be accompanied.

## **Can I book a seat for my bus journey?**

If the service on which you are travelling offers seat bookings, you can book your seat through the bus operator you are travelling with. They may charge a booking fee which is not covered.

## **What are the terms and conditions for my NEC / Young Scot NEC?**

You must ensure that your card is in good condition and presented to the bus ticket machine or other transport ticketing equipment in good working order (e.g. it's not damaged). [Full terms and conditions](#) can be found on [freebus.scot](http://freebus.scot).

## **I already have an NEC/Young Scot NEC that was issued by my local council to travel on the school bus. Will my new card replace this?**

Please speak to your local council school transport team for advice on arrangements for school transport.

# Staying safe

## Personal safety

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

### What measures are being taken to support children to travel safely?

Transport Scotland worked closely with Barnardo's Scotland to develop a training package aimed at educating bus drivers on safeguarding young people travelling on the bus network which was delivered in winter 2021. This is still available for new drivers and provides advice on recognising and responding to children or young people who need support while travelling on the bus network and helping ensure that they can travel safely.

We have also included safe travel advice for children and young people and their parents, carers and guardians on the [freebus.scot](https://www.freebus.scot) website.

### Can an unaccompanied child travel on the bus for free?

For 5–15 year olds, if a parent, guardian or carer has approved them to have access to free bus travel, and they are happy for them to travel unaccompanied, then yes. However, all bus operators have conditions of carriage setting out who can travel on their buses and they may require younger children to be accompanied.

### Will the new scheme cause overcrowding and how will this be managed or mitigated against?

This is not likely to be an issue in the short term, due to the ongoing effect of the pandemic on the numbers of people using public transport. If this does become an issue, operators may need to review their service provision and adjust accordingly to meet any changes in demand.

We also intend to review the scheme after a year in operation and will consider the impact on matters like this.

### What is being done to protect bus users from experiencing the potential for increased anti-social behaviour (due to greater numbers of young people using the bus)?

All bus operators have conditions of carriage that passengers are expected to follow. It is important to remember that the new scheme changes the way in which bus travel is paid for, but does not change rules of behaviour.

Advice for young people is available on [how to travel safely](#), with consideration for drivers and other passengers and their responsibilities when using the scheme.

## **Do I need to follow Covid restrictions whilst travelling on the bus?**

Absolutely. Check the [Scottish Government guidelines](#) and your bus operator's information to find out current restrictions.

## **Personal data**

### **How is the information on my NEC / Young Scot NEC secured?**

Only the data required for the provision of the relevant service is made available to the required service provider. For example, if you access both library services and concessionary travel using the NEC or Young Scot NEC, the people administering bus travel cannot read any information about your library membership.

### **Does the Scottish Government have a central database that records everything I do using my NEC / Young Scot NEC?**

No. The central database used for producing and maintaining the physical NECs, known as the Card Management System (CMS), does not receive details of what you have done using your NEC. The Scottish Government does not have access rights to the CMS. Access is restricted to those administering the card on your behalf.

The only personal information held by the CMS is the detail necessary to print or re-print a card for an individual and deliver it. More detail can be found in the NEC Privacy Impact Assessment, which can be downloaded from the [NEC website](#).

### **Who can see what I do with my NEC / Young Scot NEC?**

Transport Scotland records details of journeys made using a NEC / Young Scot NEC to reimburse transport operators; however, they do not need to hold your personal details to do this, only the fact that a valid NEC / Young Scot NEC was used. Transport Scotland does not share the details of individual journeys made.

An individual's personal data and card usage may be shared with Police Scotland or the British Transport Police (BTP) under the relevant data sharing agreements, as is already the case with the Older and Disabled Scheme, but only in very limited circumstances such as when a serious crime has been committed or in the case of a high risk missing person.

### **How can I check what data the NEC Scheme holds about me?**

To check that the details the NEC Scheme holds for you are correct, please contact your [local council](#). They will also be able to help make changes to your details. If you wish to exercise any of your data protection rights, including the right to see a copy of all the relevant personal data held by the NEC Scheme, you should make a subject access request to your local council who is the lead Data Controller for your data. Further details of Data Controllers can be found at the [NEC website](#).

## General questions

### **This scheme was announced in January 2020, why was it not launched until January 2022?**

The implementation of the scheme was delayed by the pandemic and the knock on impacts of the pandemic, such as the global supply shortage of the silicon chips needed for the smart travel cards.

The launch of the scheme on 31 January 2022 delivered on our post-Covid commitment to implement the scheme this financial year.

### **Will the scheme push up the cost of bus fares for others?**

We do not expect this to be the case. The scheme is funded by the Scottish Government who reimburse bus operators so that they are no better or worse off for participation in the scheme.

### **Will the scheme affect free bus travel for those people over the age of 60 or who are disabled?**

No. The Scottish Government is providing additional funding for the new scheme.

### **Who runs the NEC Scheme?**

The Improvement Service is accountable for the NEC Scheme and the National Entitlement Card Programme Office (NECPO) supports its management and delivery.

### **Why is the reimbursement rate for the scheme different than that of the Older and Disabled Persons Scheme?**

The new scheme will have two reimbursement rates during financial year 2021-22: 43.6% of the adult single fare for under 16 year olds and 81.2% for 16–21 year olds. The terms are based on adult single fares for practical administrative reasons but take account of the fact that many journeys made by this age group, especially by 5–15 year olds, would have been made at commercially discounted child rates.

These rates reflect different travel patterns among younger people and has the same aim as the older and disabled scheme and to leave the bus operator no better or worse off for participation in the scheme.

### **Does the scheme cover all council areas in Scotland?**

Yes, this will be available across all 32 local councils in Scotland.

### **Why does the scheme not include under 26s?**

Young people who are 5–21 years old are the priority for the new scheme as they are more likely to travel by bus and to find public transport expensive and they are also more likely to be in low-paid or insecure work.

However, Scottish Government has commissioned a 'Fair Fares Review' to ensure a sustainable and integrated approach to public transport fares. This review will look at the costs and benefits of public transport concessions across all modes, alongside affordability and availability more generally as part of our ongoing work across public transport.

### **What impact will the scheme have on school transport provision?**

Registered local bus services are included in the scheme and we know that a large number of school children, particularly secondary school age children, rely on these bus services to get to and from school. Transport Scotland and its delivery partners are working with representatives of ATCO and COSLA to consider the potential impacts of the introduction of the scheme on dedicated school transport provision.

### **Why doesn't the scheme cover all public transport modes such as rail, subway and tram?**

Bus provides the widest network of public transport provision in Scotland. The new scheme is for bus travel only in the same way as the existing older and disabled persons free bus scheme.

There are separate local concessionary schemes that are run by local authorities or Regional Transport Partnerships that cover other modes of transport. Any decision to extend concessions to these modes rests with them.

Scottish Government is undertaking a 'Fair Fares Review' to ensure a sustainable and integrated approach to public transport fares. It will look at the range of discounts and concessionary schemes which are available on all modes, and will consider both cost and availability of services.

### **What is an ITSO card?**

ITSO is the smart technology in your card. It means that you can store tickets for travel across different modes of transport and with different operators. This means that rail and subway tickets for some operators can be loaded onto your card at ticket offices, ticket vending machines, on board or in advance online.

## Further enquiries

**For enquiries about card applications or replacements or any other question about the National Entitlement Card:**

- If the individual applied online via [getyournec.scot](http://getyournec.scot) - get [help with getyournec.scot](#)
- If the individual applied online via [parentsportal.scot](http://parentsportal.scot) - get [help with parentsportal.scot](#)
- If the individual applied elsewhere - [contact your local authority](#)

**For enquiries about how the scheme works, the Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme policy, or the Transport Scot Pass Collect App please contact Transport Scotland:**

Email - [concessionarytravel@transport.gov.scot](mailto:concessionarytravel@transport.gov.scot)

Opening hours:

- Monday – Thursday: 9.00 am to 4.30 pm
- Friday: 9.00 am to 4.00 pm
- Closed on weekends and public holidays



## Long form copy

**This can be used on websites and other communications, and tailored according to proposed audience:**

5-21 year olds living in Scotland can apply to access free bus travel.

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

However, if you're aged between 16 and 21 and already have an active NEC or Young Scot NEC, you can download free bus travel onto your existing card using the [Transport Scotland Pass Collect app](#). This means you may not need to apply for a new card to access your free bus travel.

[Freebus.scot](#) provides information on the scheme and how to apply.

There are a number of different ways to apply, not just through the online portal:

- Online at [getyournec.scot](#) (or through [parentsportal.scot](#) if this is used by your child's school).
- Through your local council: if you cannot, or do not want to, apply online please [contact your local council](#) who can tell you how to proceed.
- Using the [Transport Scot Pass Collect app](#): if you're aged 16 or over and have an active NEC / Young Scot NEC you can use the app to download your free bus travel onto your existing card.

*[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/carers and pupils directly if this arrangement is in place.

## Short form copy

**This will be used mainly on social media and can be adapted according to the context in which it is used:**

Free bus travel is now available for 5–21 year olds living in Scotland with a valid National Entitlement Card (NEC) or Young Scot NEC.

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

If you're 16+ and have an active NEC or Young Scot NEC, you can download free bus travel onto your existing card using the [Transport Scot Pass Collect app](#), meaning you may not need to apply for a new card.

Visit [freebus.scot](https://freebus.scot) to find out how to apply and more.

## Short form copy on the app

**This can be used on websites and other communications to provide information about the Transport Scot Pass Collect app, and tailored according to proposed audience:**

If you already have a valid National Entitlement Card (NEC) or Young Scot NEC and are aged 16-21, you can now download free bus travel onto your existing card using the Transport Scot Pass Collect app. This means you may not need to apply for a replacement. You can [find out more](#) and watch Young Scot's video on how to use the app at [freebus.scot](https://freebus.scot).

## Social media post on the app

The suggested social media post below can be used across social media channels and can be adapted according to the context in which it is used:

Aged 16-21 and already have a valid NEC or Young Scot NEC? You can use the Transport Scot Pass Collect app to collect #FreeBusTravel onto your existing card! Find out more (link to <https://freebus.scot/how-to-apply/transport-scot-pass-collect>)

## Social media graphic on the app

The graphic below can be used alongside posts on social media to promote the Transport Scot Pass Collect app from 28 February:

A circular inset image showing a hand in a light blue sleeve tapping a blue and white card on a black bus fare reader. The card has 'TICKETS' and 'NEC' visible. The reader has a small screen and buttons.

**Under 22s free  
bus travel?**

**Download the app  
Collect to your card  
Tap and go free!**