**Sir Oliver Heald MP and rail companies encourage jobseekers in the East of England to take advantage of 50% off train travel**

* The rail industry is encouraging jobseekers in the East of England to boost their job searches by applying for the free Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card
* The number of journeys made by cardholders in the East of England fell to 86,300 during the pandemic, highlighting that many people in the area are missing out on big savings
* Over 62% of journeys using the card are taken in London and the South East

Local MP Oliver Heald is joining Britain’s train companies in promoting the use of a half price rail discount card to get more jobseekers back on track and into work. New research shows that although use of the card has been best in London and the South East, journeys made using the card still dropped by 25,400 in the East of England since the start of the pandemic, meaning that thousands of jobseekers could be missing out on major savings.

The Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card gives holders a 50% discount on journeys across Britain and anyone claiming Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit for 3-9 months (18-24 year olds) or 3-12 months (over 25s) can apply through their Work Coach and local Jobcentre Plus.

The drop reflects a national trend which has seen usage of the card reduce by over a third in the months March 2020-October 2021 – with over 62% of journeys taken using the card in London and the South East. With new unemployment figures out this week which show joblessness at 109,000 in the East of England, Oliver Heald is working with the Rail Delivery Group and Jobcentre Plus teams to further promote the card. Last year, jobseekers saved a total of over £1.5m using the discount available to them.

Jacqueline Starr, Chief Executive of Rail Delivery Group, said:

“Over 700,000 journeys were made during the pandemic by people using the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card, including 86,300 in the East of England, but with the world of work opening back up and new opportunities becoming available, we want to encourage even more people to take advantage as they look to secure new jobs. The railway is a key part of Britain’s clean and fair recovery, and this discount card is yet another way that train companies are helping the country to bounce back.”

NE Herts MP Oliver Heald said:

“The towns in North Hertfordshire and also Ashwell and Watton at Stone are on the railway line and so this is particularly important for jobseekers in our area.”

Ends.

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**Notes to editors**

1. **Data sources:** ONS Labour market statistics published at 07:00 on Tuesday 16 November:
* [Labour market in the regions of the UK - Office for National Statistics](https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/regionallabourmarket/latest)
* [Vacancies and jobs in the UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/jobsandvacanciesintheuk/latest)
1. **About the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card:** The card provides discounts of 50% on Anytime Day tickets, Off Peak Day tickets, and Season tickets up to three months in duration. The card is valid for use on selected services nationwide and can be used to purchase tickets online, including via [National Rail Enquiries](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/), at ticket machines and ticket offices.
2. **Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card eligibility:** The card is available to those unemployed claiming Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit for 3-9 months (18-24 year olds) or 3-12 months (over 25s). Other benefit recipients may receive a Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card from 3 months of their claim and if they are actively engaged with a Jobcentre Plus adviser. Cardholders are entitled to a 50% discount on selected rail tickets. Anyone eligible for the discount card can contact their nearest Jobcentre for more information on the card and how to apply: <https://find-your-nearest-jobcentre.dwp.gov.uk/>
3. **Journeys made by region using the card:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Origin Region** | **Journeys made with card pre-COVID (Mar 2018 - Oct 2019)** | **Regional split of pre-covid journeys made with card** | **Journeys made with card during pandemic (Mar 2020 - Oct 2021)** | **Regional split of pandemic journeys made with card** |
| London | 552300.00 | 49.49% | 322300.00 | 44.58% |
| South East | 159900.00 | 14.33% | 130200.00 | 18.01% |
| East | 111700.00 | 10.01% | 86300.00 | 11.94% |
| West Midlands | 89500.00 | 8.02% | 69100.00 | 9.56% |
| Scotland | 64400.00 | 5.77% | 43700.00 | 6.05% |
| North West | 63300.00 | 5.67% | 26400.00 | 3.65% |
| Yorkshire And The Humber | 27500.00 | 2.46% | 15700.00 | 2.17% |
| East Midlands | 13000.00 | 1.16% | 10600.00 | 1.47% |
| South West | 18900.00 | 1.69% | 10900.00 | 1.51% |
| Wales | 8900.00 | 0.80% | 5600.00 | 0.77% |
| North East | 6500.00 | 0.58% | 2100.00 | 0.29% |
| **Total** | **1115900.00** | **100.00%** | **722900.00** | **100.00%** |
| **Difference** |  |  | **-393000** |  |