

# Free travel on public transport to help local people move into work

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Residents in the West Midlands who have just gained a new job could benefit from free bus, tram and rail travel to work.

Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) has teamed up with local transport operators to offer two four-week tickets free, then a third four-week ticket at a 50% discount from the standard price on selected bus, tram and network travel passes through the Workwise scheme.

The scheme is aimed at giving newly employed people a helping hand into work.

Previously, Workwise offered half-price travel for three months on selected West Midlands travel passes, and TfWM, which is part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), and its partners have now launched a new offer to help more people into work.

The former scheme had supported nearly 4,900 people over the past four years and in a recent TfWM survey, almost half of those who responded said they wouldn't have been able to take up their new job without help with their travel costs.

Matthew Savin, aged 22, from Oldbury, has recently joined the WMCA as a service desk support apprentice.

He said: "The Workwise offer has helped me to get cheaper access to transport links, which allowed me to kickstart my new apprenticeship. I was unemployed for almost six months and the scheme has given me much-needed travel support, making it easier for me to get to work. I'm really looking forward to my new job and the future is bright."

Councillor Iqbal Padda, Sandwell Council's cabinet member for regeneration and growth, who attended the launch at West Bromwich Bus Station said: "We welcome this boost for getting the people of Sandwell back into work, to develop their skills so they can respond to changing business needs and obtain jobs in the growing West Midlands economy."

Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands, said: "Sadly we know thousands of people have lost their jobs or been put on furlough because of the pandemic, so it's never been more important to help residents into work.

"There are lots of jobs available now, in sectors such as construction, health and care, and digital, but we know that the cost of travel to work is a major barrier to employment because most people don't get paid for up to a month after starting their new job.

"That's why we are offering eight weeks' worth of free bus, tram and rail travel for people moving into work, plus a half-price ticket for four more weeks – and I would ask all employers to make sure their new staff are aware of this offer."

Cllr Ian Ward, leader of Birmingham City Council and WMCA portfolio holder for transport, said: "It's critical that local people are able to take up the job opportunities they are offered.

"The Workwise scheme is a great example of how TfWM and local transport operators are working together to help residents, especially those on benefits, move into work. In addition, supporting more people to use public transport is part of our wider goal to help the region achieve net zero by 2041."

Anyone paying an adult fare who lives or works in Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall or Wolverhampton, and who started a new job after being unemployed, could be eligible to apply for Workwise.

Apprentices and those who are increasing their weekly hours to 16 or more in their current job could also benefit from the scheme.

If you'd like to find out more about how Workwise could help you or a friend or relative move into work, visit <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/swift-and-tickets/discounts-and-free-travel-passes/discounts-for-jobseekers/>

Employers can find out more about helping new staff to apply for Workwise here: <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/swift-and-tickets/discounts-and-free-travel-passes/discounts-for-jobseekers/help-someone-apply-for-workwise-travel-support/>

*Photo credit: Transport for West Midlands*