

# Rail seeks to raise awareness of travel help for jobseekers

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Awareness is being raised of a travel discount card for jobseekers – after its use dropped sharply following the start of the pandemic.

Use of the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card, which gives those looking for work 50% off fares, has gone down by nearly a third since the arrival of COVID-19.

The Rail Delivery Group says 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.

Before the pandemic, more than 1.1 million journeys were made using the card; the number has fallen to 722,900 between March 2020 and October 2021. This is despite vacancies for jobs hitting a record high of 1.17 million.

The Rail Delivery group says this means hundreds of thousands could benefit in light of these figures.

More than 62% of journeys taken using the card are in London and the South East, contributing to the

lion's share of over £1.5m in savings made by jobseekers travelling by rail during the pandemic.

To remedy this, The Rail Delivery Group says it is working with Jobcentre Plus teams to further promote the card to local areas, as well as writing to politicians across Britain asking them for their support in raising awareness in their respective regions. Although it says rail isn't a suitable option for all job seekers, some areas such as Wales and the North East account for fewer than 1% of all discounted journeys made during the pandemic.

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 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."

Minister for employment, Mims Davies MP, said: "We're committed to breaking down any barrier preventing jobseekers from accessing the vital training and employment opportunities they need to get back in work and back on track."

"Through our multi-billion pound Plan for Jobs and the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card, we're helping jobseekers across the country to cut costs and raise their job prospects as we push to build back better."