

Dem pesky kids - free bus pass controversy

After readers of a London newspaper claimed that free bus passes were partly responsible for a rise in anti-social behaviour, members of Headliners decided they wanted to present an alternative opinion.

Readers of [The London Paper](#) have been complaining about a rise in the number of attacks and disturbances on public transport. This has been blamed on the free transport for young people, for those 18 and under in full-time education.

In response, a team of young journalists decided to question some people on east London's Exmouth Market about their experience of young people's disruptive behaviour on buses, and how far an extent the free bus passes were to blame.

Carl Taffley, though not a regular traveller on public transport, couldn't see why the passes would make any difference to their behaviour but "helped to make young people's lives easier". He felt that nowadays, young people are disruptive anyway, thus to "give them a free ride will make no difference".

Cyprian Evi witnessed a fight on the bus involving a young person assaulting a guy in a wheelchair. She was aware that under-18s had free travel but felt that it played no contribution to the disruptive behaviour, and like Carl, felt there would be behaviour such as the aforementioned, regardless of the free travel.

Big Issue volunteer, Sean Micheals, had also experienced young people being disruptive towards other passengers. He empathised with the behaviour, dismissing the view that young people are 'malicious', however putting the problem down to the fact they are just 'young and showing off'. He also felt it good for young people to be given free travel, as it allowed children to reach school that were further away, for example. He concluded that this 'showing-off' behaviour was 'all a part of growing up'.

38-year-old advertiser Flavio said, "Sometimes it's very noisy especially with the young ones, but I can understand that because I was young as well. Kids are just being kids, it doesn't matter whether or not they have free transport".

28-year-old businessman, Richard said, "I have had more problems with adults than young people".

We also wanted to see what young people thought about the issue. Demi, Lucy, and Ashley admitted to witnessing disruptive behaviour by young people. They put disruptive behaviour such as 'shouting, and playing loud music' down to 'getting bored' and wanting to 'act big in front of others'.

Speaking to a couple of older adolescent boys, we found that they believed that the behaviour was down to young people having 'nothing to do,' but did not feel the free bus passes made any difference.

We also fail to see the link between young people's behaviour on buses and the free transport they get. This free transport helps out low-income families, who would otherwise have to pay for their children's transport. It also means other parents are encouraged not to drive the children, benefiting the environment.

Rather than removing this beneficial free travel, we think it should be extended to the unemployed or students who can't afford travel. While the Mayor of London is funding under-18's that can afford travel, there are unemployed active people who are over 17 who cannot afford to travel. We also believe a greater emphasis should be put on the fact that we no longer have bus-conductors on any of the London buses. Perhaps it is this that has led to the increase in the amount of disruptions on our buses rather than free travel.

About this article

This article was written by Natalia Fahrni, Orrel Lawrence, and Pamwan Osemwal, members of a Project Subway group of Headliners.

3 comments

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my daughter is 18 and get's distressed due to bad behaviour on buses but when she continues her further education in september she will have an income of £30 and will not be able to travel anywhere unless it is by foot !

k price from london, 30 December 1899 00:00

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doesn't it occur to our respondents that if kids had to pay they would not get on buses. Buses are more crowded, noisier and there are more instances of vandalism since the free bus pass. Given TFL lack of response people just give up and don't complain. It is hard on the kids that don't cause problems but there are too many who do.

george , 30 December 1899 00:00

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some buses dont even let you on if you are under 18 or not. so theres not much of a difference.

and its not fair, theres more good than bad. why does it have to affect all of us teenagers who live far from good schools? its realy frustrating hearing these "so called adults" whining like children.

mina from croydon, 30 December 1899 00:00

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