# TfL hikes Oyster fees sharply, hitting elderly Londoners hardest amid cost crisis



Transport for London has once again resorted to a hike in fares, the first in over a decade, hitting London’s most vulnerable hardest. The recent increase in Oyster card prices, especially the steep near-doubling of the application fee for the 60+ London Oyster photocard—from £20 to £35—reveals TfL’s relentless pursuit of revenue at the expense of the very residents it is supposed to serve. This government-driven strategy of squeezing older Londoners—many of whom rely heavily on concessions—exposes a clear priority shift away from public service to fiscal survival.

Despite claims that these adjustments are necessary to “cover rising costs,” it’s evident that this scheme is increasingly unsustainable and unjust. The 60+ Oyster scheme, which provides vital, often life-changing, free or discounted travel for the elderly, is now burdened with increased fees that disproportionately impact those on fixed incomes. While TfL claims the scheme is self-sustaining, critics argue that such a heavily subsidized service, costing around £500 million annually, cannot justify such ongoing expense if it is driven by inefficiency and political priorities rather than genuine necessity.

Moreover, the introduction of a £10 annual residency verification fee—a measure deployed under the pretext of fraud prevention—has been widely dubbed a “scam” by many. This fee unfairly penalizes vulnerable residents, demanding ongoing payments simply to maintain access to already heavily subsidized travel concessions. Against the backdrop of a cost-of-living crisis where many Londoners are struggling to make ends meet, forcing the most vulnerable to pay more is morally questionable and politically embarrassing.

Meanwhile, other fee increases, including higher prices for Zip photocards and new Oyster and Visitor Oyster cards, reflect TfL’s ongoing attempts to squeeze more revenue from passengers under the guise of inflation management. These hikes come as the government continues to underfund public transport, forcing London taxpayers to prop up a system that increasingly prioritizes budget recovery over affordability or social inclusion.

Notably, official measures like a trial to give free travel all day on Fridays for certain older residents have yet to offset the cynicism surrounding these fare hikes. The reality is that this government’s approach—marked by frequent fare increases and cost-cutting that targets the most vulnerable—undermines efforts to support social cohesion and mobility for the elderly. Instead, it risks deepening social divides, all under the guise of “financial sustainability.”

Such moves raise serious questions about the true priorities of TfL and the government behind it. While they maintain that fees are necessary, it’s clear that their real agenda is to privatize and commercialize public transport, pushing the costs onto those least able to afford them. As opposition voices continue to criticise these changes, it becomes increasingly evident that London’s elderly, many of whom have contributed lifelong to society, are being exploited as a cash cow in a system that claims to be “public” but functions more like a revenue-generating machine.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/oyster-card-price-rise-tfl-over-60-b2793758.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/60-oyster-freedom-pass-tfl-increase-concessionary-card-b1238876.html> - Transport for London (TfL) has announced a significant increase in the application fee for the 60+ Oyster card, raising it from £20 to £35. Additionally, the annual eligibility check fee has been increased from £10 to £18. The 60+ Oyster card provides free travel on TfL services after 9am on weekdays and at any time on weekends and public holidays. The changes are set to take effect on July 22, with charges reviewed annually thereafter. TfL stated that the fee adjustments are necessary to better reflect the operational costs of the scheme.
3. <https://www.cityam.com/tfls-10-fee-to-60-oyster-card-holders-causes-stir-as-user-brand-it-scam/> - Transport for London's (TfL) decision to charge 60+ Oyster card holders £10 annually to verify their London residency has sparked criticism. One user described the fee as a 'scam,' questioning the fairness of the charge. TfL introduced the £10 annual check in August 2019 to ensure that users benefiting from the travel concession are still residing in London and remain eligible. The fee is non-refundable and is required each year to maintain the validity of the 60+ Oyster card.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/freedom-pass-over-60s-free-morning-travel-sadiq-khan-tfl-peak-fares-b1135440.html> - In January 2024, London Mayor Sadiq Khan announced an expansion of the Friday off-peak fares initiative, allowing holders of the 60+ Oyster and Freedom Passes to travel for free throughout Fridays. This trial, set to begin in March 2024, aims to encourage commuters back into workplaces and boost the night-time economy. The initiative is in addition to the partial fares freeze, which will leave all pay-as-you-go Tube and bus fares unchanged until March 2025, though Travelcards and the 'cap' on the total cost of multiple pay-as-you-go journeys will increase by about five per cent.
5. <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/deals/oyster-card/> - MoneySavingExpert provides information on the 60+ Oyster card, which offers free travel on London's public transport, including buses, Tube, tram, DLR, and London Overground. The card is available to those aged 60 and over who live in a London borough and is valid until the holder becomes eligible for a Freedom Pass. The 60+ Oyster card is a cost-effective option for older Londoners, providing significant savings on daily travel expenses.
6. <https://www.tfl.gov.uk/fares/free-and-discounted-travel/60-plus-oyster-photocard%26lang%3Den> - Transport for London (TfL) offers the 60+ London Oyster photocard to residents aged 60 and over who live in a London borough. The card provides free travel on buses, Tube, tram, DLR, London Overground, and most National Rail services in London. Holders can travel free on TfL services anytime Monday to Friday, except between 04:30-09:00, and at any time on weekends and public holidays. The card also offers discounted fares on River Services and Santander Cycle Hire.
7. <https://www.pie.tax/tax-pible/free-travel-for-over-60-s-costs-500-m-london-scheme-faces-scrutiny> - The 60+ Oyster photocard and Freedom Pass schemes, which provide free travel for older Londoners, are facing scrutiny due to their estimated annual cost of around £500 million. While these concessions aim to support active aging and social inclusion, some argue that the scheme disproportionately benefits wealthier pensioners and places a burden on younger taxpayers. Advocacy groups highlight the scheme's role in reducing isolation and supporting low-to-middle-income seniors, questioning the fiscal and social sustainability of the current model.