



Welcome to the latest Accord Newsletter - a quarterly update on new developments for Aberdeen's very own smart citizen's card. Remember, this is your opportunity to keep up-to-date with what the Accord Scheme can do - and what it can offer you. Our mailing list is growing by the day. To join and receive your own copy of this newsletter in future, just email us at info@accordaberdeen.co.uk and we'll do the rest.

ACCORD LAUNCHES GREAT GAMING DEAL

ABERDEEN'S PIONEERING SMARTCARD ACCORD HAS TEAMED UP WITH THE CITY'S TOP DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT VENUE TO PUT TOGETHER A GREAT OFFER FOR SCHOOL PUPILS.

Using their Accord Card, students can now book free and discounted gaming sessions and access cut-price PC repairs at Café LAN, on Market Street.

The great deal allows our younger users to play all the latest games and top-of-the-range systems - and even multi-play in teams with friends.

For a limited period, cardholders receive 10% off PC and X-Box gaming, as well as one free hour when they sign up. Users will also receive 10% off fresh food, with soup, sandwiches and salads on the menu.

Laptops are available to borrow on site - and pupils with their own computers can claim a 10% discount on all PC and laptop repairs.

Accord already offers access to many activities that keep the body healthy. Gaming, however, has long been considered an excellent way of keeping the mind sharp. Other acknowledged educational benefits include:

- **Improving problem solving skills;**
- **Encouraging reading among all age groups;**
- **Teaching imagination skills;**
- **Teaching individuals to be adaptive;**
- **Challenging the mind and teaching creative problem solving;**
- **Motivating, stimulating and engaging the gamer;**
- **Improving motor and cognitive functions,**
- **And improving eye-hand co-ordination.**



Accord users and gaming fans Ryan Bremner and Steven Strachan at Café-LAN.

Where gamers act in teams - a culture our promotion with Café-LAN promotes - additional benefits include skills around strategic planning, team building, co-operation and social interaction.

Café-LAN is a far cry from the stereotypical video arcade - taking a professional, responsible and progressive approach towards gaming and technology.

Beyond the clear benefits for young people of all gaming and technological abilities, the partners feel this promotion has the potential to do more.

The gaming industry is a big business in Scotland and offers many excellent career opportunities. For instance, Dundee is considered a centre of excellence, boasting a pool of computer, video gaming and on-line talent, making it a key centre in the UK.

The industry is a growing employer and provides exciting opportunities

for designers, computer enthusiasts, artists, and serious gamers along with the associated support services, finance, marketing and human resources.

"The Accord card is not just a mechanism to allow payment for school meals - it is a multi-functional card that aids service delivery, tackles exclusion and, we hope, offers real value to the holder," said Accord Scheme Marketing Officer Claire Burt.

"Café-LAN takes a professional, responsible and progressive approach to gaming - bringing clear benefits for our young cardholders and their schools.

"We believe these activities can be a beneficial part of pupils' social lives and education - a position supported by studies undertaken worldwide."



Free Bus Travel hits the road

Accord is now the key to free nationwide bus travel for thousands of people in Aberdeen. From April 1, pensioners and some other concessionary travel users have been able to claim free bus travel anywhere in Scotland, using their national entitlement card – combined with the Accord Card in Aberdeen. More than 30,000 of the new cards have already been issued in the city, with the majority of users receiving theirs in

March. Anyone who is eligible for free bus travel, but has not applied for a card can still do so. Just visit any of the following offices to make an application:

Peterculter Area Office, 102 North Deeside Road, Peterculter Aberdeen AB14 0QB

Bucksburn Area Office, 23 Inverurie Road, Bucksburn Aberdeen AB21 9LJ

The Point, St Nicholas House, Broad Street, Aberdeen AB10 1BX

Robust and Durable Card Protection

For a plastic card receiving heavy and sustained use, the Accord Card has proven to be robust and durable – but officers are working on new ways of extending their lifetime even further. It is estimated that around 60% of young users currently take very good care of their cards. Now, however, the team hopes to improve on that figure and cut down on the number of misplaced or damaged cards reported. This, in turn, should cut down on the number of temporary and replacement cards issued. As part of that drive, school pupils across the city were surveyed on a range of products which could help them look after their Accord Cards. Given the option, 38% of pupils said they would prefer to use a Pull Back and Cardholder to keep their card safe. Some 14% opted for a Lanyard and Cardholder, 13% a Ripper Wallet and 12% a Plastic Wallet. The remaining 23% said they would rather continue carrying their card however they currently do. The Accord team is now working on making these helpful products available to its users.

Cinemas Usher in Accord

Picturehouses in Aberdeen are currently using our proof-of-age readers to ensure underage patrons don't illegally access certain films, goods and services. Vue on Shiprow is one of the cinemas taking part and has a policy of checking customers' ages if they are under any doubt – and have turned away young people who have not produced an Accord Card. So effective is the system, some cheeky moviegoers now try to claim the Accord Card is not available to pupils at their school. However, staff are one step ahead – and, unless customers can produce another valid proof-of-age, simply hand out Accord application forms and leaflets before refusing admission.

PRIMARY SEVEN NEW GENERATIONS

A new generation of Accord users are about to be introduced to the city's smartcard.

The team is in the process of signing up Primary 7 pupils across Aberdeen, before they move on to secondary school. And, following the success of last year's Accord Scheme P7 Roadshows, the events will be held again in 2006.

Many of the schools that hosted roadshows found them extremely useful and have told us they are keen to repeat the process. However, the sessions are set to be revamped to take account of feedback from pupils and lots of new additions to the Accord Card since last year.

The purpose of the shows is to explain to Primary 7 pupils about the Accord Card; how to take care of it; use it as a library card, and the many other benefits. Colleagues from the Dialogue Youth team will also explain about the Young Scot functions of the card and what Dialogue Youth is all about. There is also an opportunity for questions and answers.

GOOD LUCK, RHONA!

Former General Manager Rhona Atkinson has left the Accord team for a new post within Aberdeen City Council. She was recently appointed Head of Service for Service Design and Development, in the newly formed Continuous Improvement section. Rhona will be greatly missed by her former colleagues – and everyone at Accord would like to congratulate her on her new job and wish her all the very best for the future.

WELL DONE, NADIR

Congratulations to the Accord Scheme's Nadir Freigoun on successfully completing the requirements to become a Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer. Nadir is one of Accord's Maintenance and Support Technicians.

UNIVERSITY ROADSHOW

The Accord team has been busy signing up new customers – taking a recent roadshow to the University of Aberdeen to give students the chance to apply. With secondary school pupils and many older people in the city already carrying Accord Cards, late teens and twenty-somethings are a new target group, with many keen to use the card as proof-of-age and some still eligible for Young Scot promotions.

PERSONAL BALANCE READERS RESULTS

This handy keyring gadget allows cardholders in city schools to see how much cash they have loaded onto their cards – and how many Healthy Eating Points they have accumulated. The readers have reduced the queues at load terminals and at tills, where pupils would previously often ask staff to check their balance.

Some pupils complained about short battery life, a problem which has been raised with the manufacturer and is being investigated. It is easy to replace the batteries for the unit by simply unscrewing the back. There were some concerns among students about durability, but most breakage appears to have been deliberate. The readers are tested to the same standard as other electrical equipment and, while just as robust, obviously require the same level of care.

Meanwhile, the majority of pupils felt readers should be issued to all new pupils entering secondary schools in Aberdeen.



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