

Title of Policy: Learner Support Fund Policy

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Policy Statement

The Learner Support Fund is an annual allocation to the College paid through the SFA & EFA. It is used to provide financial help to students whose access to, or completion, of education might be inhibited by lack of finance. This policy sets out the principles Barnet and Southgate College adhere to in allocating these funds to learners.

- Funds may only be used for the benefit of students on EFA or SFA funded courses who meet the eligibility criteria.
- The fund will be open for applications for the following academic year from 1st July each year, Application forms will be available in paper format from Customer Services and electronic format on the College's intranet and website.
- Applications will be accepted from eligible students from the opening date of the fund until the appropriate deadline dates (as stated on the application forms). However, applications cannot be processed until a student is fully enrolled. Funding is not guaranteed by the acceptance of an application form.

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16-19 BURSARY SCHEME

Introduction

The 16-19 Bursary Fund has two elements:

- 1) A Vulnerable Student Bursary of £1,200 a year for learners who are:
 - a. In care;
 - b. Care leavers;
 - c. Young people in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit; or
 - d. Disabled young people in receipt of Employment Support Allowance or Incapacity Benefit who are also in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments

- 2) Discretionary Bursaries awarded by the College to young people in ways that best fit the needs and circumstances of our learners. Bursary awards are targeted towards those young people who face the greatest financial barriers to participation; such as the costs of:
 - a. transport;
 - b. meals;
 - c. books; and
 - d. equipment

16-19 Bursary Scheme Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to receive either of the above 16-19 bursaries in the 2016/17 academic year, the learner must be:

- Aged 16 or over and under 19 on 31 August 2016
- A Home student for fee purposes
- A Refugee granted full status or Leave to Remain
- Ordinarily resident in England and Wales
- Enrolled on a course funded by the EFA (either directly or via a local authority); or
 - funded or co-financed by the European Social Fund; or

- otherwise publicly funded and leading to a qualification (up to level 3) that is accredited by Ofqual or is pursuant to Section 98 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000
- Fully enrolled at Barnet and Southgate College
- Studying for a minimum of 12 Guided Learning Hours per week
- On a Means-Tested Benefit or on a Low Income (an annual household income below £16,105)
- A recognised dependant of a student in HE

General Information:

- Where the learner turns 19 during their programme of study, they can continue to be supported to the end of the academic year in which they turn 19, or to the end of the programme of study, whichever is sooner.
- Funds will not be awarded to students if they received any form of funding during the previous academic year and did not complete their course, unless they repay the funds received.
- The College may, in exceptional circumstances, use its discretion to pay bursaries to younger learners.
- In 2016/17, funding for learners who are eligible for the Vulnerable Student Bursary will be held centrally. The College will draw down funding on demand from the Learner Support Service.
- 16-19 Bursaries **are not** payable to:
 - Learners on an HE Course (with the exception of those participating in HE access courses;
 - Learners on waged Apprenticeships;
 - Learners in prison or a young offender institution or those released on temporary licence/day release.

16-19 Vulnerable Student Bursary Payments

Learners who meet the 16-19 Bursary eligibility criteria detailed above and who are:

- in care;
 - a care leaver;
 - in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit; or
 - disabled and in receipt of Employment Support Allowance or Incapacity Benefit and also in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments;
- will be eligible for a bursary of **£1,200** if their course lasts for 10 weeks or more. If the course lasts more than 10 weeks but less than 30 weeks, the bursary will be pro-rata'd to the course length.
- Additional travel subsidies will be made available when it is assessed that travel costs could be a barrier to attendance.

16-19 Discretionary Bursary Payments

- Discretionary awards are made by the College to learners who meet the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary fund eligibility criteria. The payments will be made in ways that best fit the needs and circumstances of our learners. Bursary awards are targeted towards those learners who face the greatest financial barriers to participation.

- The College may make payments of up to **£800** to cover costs such as:
 - a. transport;
 - b. meals;
 - c. books;
 - d. stationery;
 - e. attending university interviews and open days

- The College may consider other exceptional circumstances when assessing the need for financial support.

Conditions of Payment

- a. Payments will depend on attendance of 100%. Where attendance is unsatisfactory, payment can either be withheld or reclaimed.

- b. Payment will also be subject to satisfactory behaviour in accordance with the College's learner code of conduct. Therefore any learner under a sanction within the Learner Disciplinary Procedure will not be eligible to receive payments.

- c. The College reserves the right to reclaim monies paid to learners where information given on the application form is found to be false.

- d. The College reserves the right to reclaim monies paid to learners where the learner has withdrawn before the end of the course.

Unused Funds

- Any underspend from the 2015/16 fund can be rolled forward into 2016/17 and used alongside the 2016/17 discretionary allocation to help address the needs of disadvantaged learners.

FREE COLLEGE MEALS

The Free College Meals Fund has two elements:

- 1) 16-18 Free College Meals for learners who are:
 - a. Young people in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit;
 - b. Disabled young people in receipt of Employment Support Allowance or Incapacity Benefit who are also in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments.
 - c. Financially dependent on parents who are in receipt of Income Support
 - d. Financially dependent on parents who are in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance

- 2) 19-24 Free College Meals for learners who are subject to a:
 - a. Learning Difficulty Assessment
 - b. Education Health and Care plan

Free College Meals Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to receive either of the 16-18 Free College Meals or 19-24 Free College Meals in the 2016/17 academic year, the learner must be:

- Aged 16 or over and under 25 on 31 August 2016
- A Home student for fee purposes
- A Refugee granted full status or Leave to Remain
- Ordinarily resident in England and Wales
- Enrolled on a course funded by the EFA or SFA (either directly or via a local authority); or
 - funded or co-financed by the European Social Fund; or
 - otherwise publicly funded and leading to a qualification (up to level 3) that is accredited by Ofqual or is pursuant to Section 98 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000
- Fully enrolled at Barnet and Southgate College
- Studying for a minimum of 3 Guided Learning Hours per week
- Student or parent on a Means-Tested Benefit

General Information:

- Where the learner turns 19 or 25 during their programme of study, they can continue to be supported to the end of the academic year in which they turn 19 or 25, or to the end of the programme of study, whichever is sooner.
- Funds will not be awarded to students if they received any form of funding during the previous academic year and did not complete their course, unless they repay the funds received.

19+ HARDSHIP ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Students must be:

- 19+ on the 1st September of the year of application **AND**
- Enrolled on a course funded by the SFA and studying for a minimum of 3 Guided Learning Hours per week, **AND**
- a 'Home' student or a 'European Economic Area' student **OR**
- a Home student for fees purposes **OR**
- have been granted Indefinite Leave to Remain, or Humanitarian Protection, or Full Refugee Status by the Home Office **OR**
- have applied for Asylum to the Home Office or have been refused and are being supported by NASS and have been resident in the UK for 6 months **AND**
- On a Means-Tested Benefit or on a Low Income (household income of less than £21,000 per annum), **OR**
- A recognised dependant of a student in HE

DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUND 19+

- The Discretionary Learner Support (DLS) fund is aimed at supporting learners with a specific financial hardship that prevents them from taking part in learning. Before

making an award, the College will identify the learner's specific financial hardship within the following areas:

- 19 or over and in financial hardship
- 20 or over with childcare issues
- Learners who are eligible for support are not automatically entitled to it.
- Learners funded through Loans can get access to DLS through the dedicated 19+ Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund (see below for further details).

19+ Hardship

- The 19+ hardship funding is provided to support vulnerable and disadvantaged learners and to remove barriers to education or training.
- Payments made through this fund are based on learner needs and local circumstances. The types of support offered include:
 - Course related costs (including day trips, books and equipment, support with domestic emergencies and emergency accommodation);
 - Transport;
 - Examination fees;
 - Accreditation fees, professional membership fees and any fees or charges due to external bodies
- If an asylum seeker is eligible for provision the College may provide learner support in the form of course-related books, equipment or a travel pass. No support will be provided in the form of cash.

20+ Childcare

- 20+ childcare funding provides targeted childcare support for learners who are at risk of not starting learning, or not continuing learning, as a result of difficulty getting childcare.
- Childcare funding can only be provided to pay for childcare with a provider who is registered with Ofsted. Amounts are dependent on individual need and arrangements of students and provider. Funding is paid directly to the childcare provider.

19+ ADVANCED LEARNER LOANS BURSARY FUND

- The 19+ Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund is aimed at helping vulnerable learners who are being funded through a 19+ Learner Loan such as those with learning difficulties or disabilities, parents who need help with childcare and ex-military personnel.

- The 19+ Advanced Learner Loans Bursary is only available to those eligible learners who have had a loan approved by the Student Loans Company.
- The Loans Bursary Fund will provide funding for the following:
 - 1) Discretionary Learner Support type activity for:
 - Hardship
 - Childcare and residential support
 - 2) Learning Support such as:
 - Support from teaching assistants
 - Necessary adjustments under the equality act

Payments

- Learning support for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (additional learning support) will be available following assessment in line with existing College policy for up to a value of £2,000 per year. Support above this level will be available subject to a decision made by two managers. This will include a financial decision based on whether the College can afford reasonable adjustments and the Equality Act.
- Learners should apply direct to Additional Learning Support for this element.
- Payments for Discretionary Learner Support for learners who have difficulty meeting the costs of attending their course, will be means-tested and time limited in line with College policy on discretionary learner support and childcare funding. Support of up to £1,000 per year will be available to all 19+ loan learners, subject to means and needs testing.
- Support above this level will be available subject to a decision made by two managers. This will include a financial decision based on whether the College can afford the costs, and the Equality Act.
- The fund will be distributed by the College and is not an entitlement.

Conditions of Payments

- a. Payments will depend on attendance of at least 90%. Where attendance is unsatisfactory, payment can either be withheld or reclaimed.
- b. Payment will also be subject to satisfactory behaviour in accordance with the College's learner code of conduct. Therefore any learner under a sanction within the Learner Disciplinary Procedure will not be eligible to receive payments.
- c. The College reserves the right to reclaim monies paid to learners where information given on the application form is found to be false.

- d. The College reserves the right to reclaim monies paid to learners where the learner has withdrawn before the end of the course.
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GRANTS

In addition to the above funds, grants are offered for those courses where it is vital to acquire equipment necessary to the completion of the course. These grants are worked out on the course equipment need.

PRISCILLA INGRAM TRUST SAFEGUARDING FUND

- In addition to the above funds, the Priscilla Ingram Trust Safeguarding Fund is an allocation to the College paid through a private local Charity. It is used to provide emergency financial help to support vulnerable and disadvantaged learners and to remove immediate barriers to education or training. Payments made through this fund are based on learner needs and local circumstances. The fund is used only for those that are at immediate risk of dropping out of education through severe and immediate financial hardship and is available to all students of all ages. The types of support offered include (but are not limited to):
 - Support with domestic emergencies and emergency accommodation;
 - Transport;
 - Sustenance
 - Proof of immediate hardship must be demonstrated and endorsed by a member of the College Safeguarding Team and the relevant curriculum representative and sanctioned by a member of the Executive Leadership Group.
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GENERAL INFORMATION ON ALL LEARNER SUPPORT FUNDS

- **Universal Credit**

From 2013, there was a phased introduction of two new benefits. There may be some 16-19 learners affected by these benefit changes and therefore learners who receive a Universal Credit payment in their own name or who are disabled and receive Employment Support Allowance and a Personal Independence Payment in their own name are also now eligible for a 16-19 bursary.
- **Priority**

Priority for an award will be given to students who are:

 - Disabled or have learning difficulties
 - Disadvantaged
 - On a Means-Tested Benefit
 - Students who are aged 19 years and are financially dependent on their parents/carers who are in receipt of a Means-Tested Benefit

- On a low income or in receipt of Working Tax Credit and have a household income below either £16,105 or £21,000, depending on which fund you are applying to
 - On income based Job Seekers Allowance
 - On either Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment and either Incapacity Benefit Allowance or Employment Support Allowance
- **Appeals**
 - Students have the right to appeal a decision. This must be in writing to the Appeals Customer Services Manager within 21 days of receiving confirmation of an award or a rejection.
 - The letter should set out the reasons for the appeal which must prove that they have been wrongly assessed as falling outside the eligibility criteria, plus any further evidence to support the Appeal.
 - The decision of the Customer Services Manager is final and will be given in writing within 14 days of the decision.
- **Audit**

The fund will be audited annually within the College's annual audit.
- **Administration**

5% of the annual fund from the Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency will be used by the College for the administration of the fund.
- **Review**

This policy, together with the procedures and practice, will be reviewed at the end of each academic year.
- **Equal Opportunities**
 - The Fund will be administered within the procedures and practice of the College's Equalities Policy.
 - The Fund is Equality Impact Assessed
- **Monitoring**

The operation of the Learner Support Fund is by the Customer Services Team. The team membership consists of:

 - Head of Commissioning/Marketing
 - Customer Services Manager
 - Customer Services Supervisors
 - Admissions Advisors
 - Customer Service Officers

The Customer Services team's remit in relation to the Learner Support Fund is to:

1. Revise procedures in line with new regulations and identify good practice
2. Propose for approval by ELG the criteria for awards for the Learner Support Fund as allocated by the SFA & EFA
3. Monitor expenditure on a termly basis
4. Track student retention for the Learner Support Fund
5. Set and monitor service standards
6. Review the Learner Support Fund policy annually