

POLICY/PROCEDURE: 14-19 LEARNER SUPPORT FUND POLICY

Approval required by:	Executive	Y	Governing Body	Y
SMT Lead:	Vice Principal Students			
Responsible Manager:	Head of Student Services			
Date approved:	March 2024			
Date to be reviewed:	May 2025*			

Relevant to:	Students	Y	Staff	Y
	Visitors	N	ITS	Y
Relevant to:	All students	N		
	16-18 Vocational	Y	Sixth Form	Y
	Higher Education	N	Adults	Y
	Apprenticeships	Y	14-16	Y
	Other	Y	
Relevant to:	All staff	Y		
	Board	Y	SPH	Y
	Managers	Y		
	Teaching staff	Y	Support staff	Y

Accessible to	Students	Y	Staff	Y
Friendly version	Students	Y	Staff	Y

EQIA required Y

Significant changes to policy

This policy has been merged with the previous 14-16 and 16-18 policies to create a single source of reference and guidance for learner support funding.
 Removal of obsolete benefits schemes in eligibility criteria.
 Proposed change of policy renewal dates to ensure compliance with ESFA guidance.
 Clarification regarding EHE young people.
 Increase of household income threshold for 16-19 learners from £37,000 to £40,000.

Impact of changes

Clarification and reduction in unnecessary policy duplication.
 Increase number of 16-19 learners in receipt of LSF and distribution of funds.

Approved at Executive Meeting Monday 4 March 2024

SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This policy details how Barnsley College and ITS (“the College”) will offer financial support to students aged 14-18 through the available funding allocations. The age group is defined as being over the age of 14 and under the age of 19 on the 31st August of any given academic year.

INTRODUCTION

The Learner Support Fund is available to help provide financial support towards the essential costs of studying. The funding is to enable a students’ continuation and completion of their course where they would be unable to do so due to financial barriers to learning.

The information provided within this document references the guidance given to the college by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

Each application to the fund will be assessed individually, there is not an automatic entitlement to the fund even if all criteria is met, students must demonstrate an actual financial need.

1. 16-19 ELIGIBILITY

Three separate funds are available for students who are aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31st August 2024.

- Enhanced Bursary.
- 16 -18 Student Support Fund.
- Care to Learn.

1.1 Age:

Students must be aged 16 or over but under the age of 19 on 31st August when making an application to the fund. Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a discretionary bursary if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuers) or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

1.2 Course

- Students must be participating in provision at Barnsley College that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (for example Ofsted). The provision must also fall into one of these groups:
- funded directly by the ESFA, or by the ESFA via a local authority.
- otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including level 3) accredited by Ofqual or on our list of qualifications approved for funding 14 to 19
- Non-employed students aged 16 to 19 who are participating in a Prince’s Trust Team Programme are eligible to receive the bursary in the same way as any other student participating in an eligible, publicly funded course.

1.3 Residency

Students must meet residency requirements [Advice: funding regulations for post-16 provision - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-funding-regulations-for-post-16-provision).

Asylum seeking students (Accompanied)

Students who record that they are asylum seekers and evidence that their application for asylum has not been refused will be able to apply for in kind support such as books, equipment or a bus/train pass. This applies to

students who are living with parents or guardians. Under no circumstances will cash be given unless the applicant is an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child

Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking child.

Students who are not residing with parents or guardians and are under the age of 18 are recorded as unaccompanied and will be eligible for the enhanced bursary. Students who meet these criteria are eligible to apply to the fund until they reach the age of 18 for travel, food, and equipment.

1.4 The fund is unable to accept applications from:

- Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for vulnerable groups.
- Students aged under 19 enrolled on higher education qualifications are not eligible for support from the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund.
- Students on apprenticeship programmes, or any waged training, are employed. They are not eligible for the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund.
- Employed students aged 16 to 19 who are participating in a Prince's Trust Team Programme
- Students enrolled to distance learning courses where there are no financial costs evidenced in completing the course. (Exceptions for travel to exams/tutorial meetings through temporary bus passes).
- Students who are enrolled to courses which do not attract public funding (see 1.2).
- Young offenders who are
 - Serving a custodial sentence
 - On early release from a custodial sentence
 - Remanded in a secure institution

ENHANCED BURSARY

Students who meet the criteria, who have a financial need can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups (Enhanced Bursary). The defined groups are identified as students who are unlikely to be receiving financial support from parents or carers. Students must demonstrate their eligibility for the bursary in each year that they require support

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- Looked After (by the local authority)
- Care leavers
- Students receiving Income Support (IS), or Universal Credit (UC) because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or partner
- Students receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right, as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right
- be under the age of 18 and an un-accompanied asylum-seeking child in the care of the local authority. If settled status has not been confirmed by the time the student reaches the age of 18 a review to continue the financial support will be made

If students do not meet these criteria but meet all criteria under point 1 and demonstrate a financial need, they will be assessed for the Learner Support Fund and not the Enhanced bursary .

Students who meet the criteria above can receive Learner Support Funds to cover the associated costs of studying, including travel, food and any essential equipment required for the course, students will not be automatically awarded £1,200. If there is no evidence of actual financial need as needs are being met from elsewhere, funding applications can be refused.

Students in receipt of the Enhanced Bursary will only be eligible for other financial support in exceptional circumstances.

FE 16 -19 Student Support Fund

In addition to the criteria set in point 1 students must evidence the following for a financial assessment to be made:

- Evidence that their household income is less than £40,000
- Students who evidence their household income meets the Post 16 Free School Meal income assessment will be awarded Free School meals for each full day of study at the same rate of £4 per day cashless credit.

The fund will be available to students who evidence a household income that falls below a college agreed threshold. Applications will be assessed and whereby a student meets the Free School Meal threshold, will be recorded 'FSM' for audit and IRL return.

Care to Learn

Childcare funding is available for students aged under 20. Students must apply for childcare funding direct through the Care to Learn Scheme online application portal. The funds are paid directly to the childcare provider from the ESFA. The college will complete monthly attendance returns for the release of funds to be actioned via the ESFA.

2. 14-16 ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for 14-16 LSF, the learner must not be registered with a mainstream school, special school, independent school, academies or Pupil Referral Units and must be enrolled to the direct entry scheme at Barnsley College. 14-16 enrolled learners are eligible for LSF and Care to Learn funding. The 14-16 LSF fund is not funded by the ESFA.

14-16 LSF is not available for learners who access tuition or provision on a part time basis (Skills Academy), either while enrolled with a school (of any kind), or EHE (Elective Home Education).

1.1 Age:

Students must be aged 14 or over but under the age of 16 on 31st August when making an application to the fund, in school years 10 or 11.

1.2 Course

- Students must be participating in provision at Barnsley College that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (for example Ofsted) within Direct Entry.

1.3 Residency

Students must meet residency requirements [Advice: funding regulations for post-16 provision - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/advice-funding-regulations-for-post-16-provision).

Where relevant, the same rules are applied for asylum seekers for 14-16 as post-16.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applying to the fund

Any students wishing to apply for financial support need to complete an application form and produce proof of household income for each year they study with the college. In addition, students must demonstrate an actual financial need and sign a declaration to acknowledge the information provided is correct and complete.

Household Income

Students will be required to submit evidence of household income and will meet the threshold if they evidence the funds income thresholds:

Students aged 16-19 will need to evidence a household income of less than £40,000 gross.

Students aged 14-16 will be assessed through a tiered income threshold of less than £20,000 receiving travel support and food and those with incomes evidenced between £20,001-£37,000 will receive travel only. Equipment costs are not awarded to 14-16 learners.

On confirmation of household income, the student will then receive funding towards the cost of travel, food and essential equipment (16-19 only).

Accepted Income Evidence

Income Evidence must be provided and examples of the types of evidence accepted include the following:

- Pension Credit Guarantee
- Contribution based Job Seekers Allowance
- Universal Credit Full Journal documentation
- Carers allowance
- Wages / earned income

Evidence of parent name and address must also be provided.

Who in the household will need to provide income evidence.

- Students who live independently where child benefit is not being claimed will be required to provide evidence of their income and their partners if residing with a partner.
- Students residing with parents or guardians, the income of all such adults will be required.

What happens after a student has applied for financial support

Applications will be assessed by Student Funding Adviser's within 10 working days, the assessment will assess against the criteria and the student will be informed of the outcome by email to their student email address or their preferred method of contact, if stated on the application form. Compliance with separation of duties evidenced through income assessment and award process.

Missing information

If an application is missing information required, the student will be asked by email or their preferred method of contact to re-submit the missing information. The student will be responsible for the provision of the missing information, financial support will not be provided until all evidence is provided.

Response Times

Confirmation of the award will be sent in writing within 10 working days upon a student having successfully evidenced the criteria above. Students will be informed that their funding award will be subject to satisfactory attendance.

Awards

Allocations for subsistence will be paid directly onto student ID cards using the cashless vending process. Equipment and clothing will be provided at the start of the study programme but must be returned to the college if a student leaves before the end of their programme. Payments will be made in the form of direct payments into student bank accounts, cashless cards, high street vouchers, bus passes or internal payments for essential course related equipment and trips.

Attendance and Behaviour

Students are required to maintain above 90% attendance in order to receive their full allocation of support, students will receive a pro-rata payment aligned to attendance that falls below 90%. Attendance recorded less than 50% will have their full award put on hold.

Discretion to re-instate is available in consultation with pastoral teams and the students' individual circumstances, changes to the award could be made to enable attendance through the provision of bus passes instead of payment should this be preferred.

Any student with consecutive absence of 4 weeks or more will have their funding suspended.

Fraud

Students are required to sign a declaration to confirm the information provided is correct. Giving intentionally false information may result in the application being suspended. Students are asked to acknowledge that the funding is given from public monies and that fraudulent claims can result in disciplinary action.

Data Protection

The information students provide in the application form will only be used for the purpose of processing the application. It may be necessary for the Assessors to contact other College staff for additional information to allow applications to be processed and for attendance monitoring purposes. Personal and supporting information will be used by the Assessors for College/Audit purposes and record keeping.

APPEALS PROCESS

Students have the right to appeal against a decision made by the financial assessment team. Appeal forms are available from Student Services and must be returned to the Head of Student Services. Please see appendix B for the appeals process.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

An Equality Impact Assessment for this policy (EIA) is available on request.

Students aged 14-16 will not be funded through the Education Funding Agency (EFA) but will instead receive funding from the college. However, all assessments will be made in line with this policy.

LOCATION AND ACCESS TO THIS POLICY

This policy is available on the college's intranet.

APPENDIX A

16-19 AWARDS

<u>Award</u>	<u>Household Income below £40,000</u>	<u>Method of payment</u>
Travel	<p>Students must be within a travel distance of 1.5 miles to receive travel funding. The fund will cover the cheapest cost of travel on an individual basis but will not fund over the maximum of £27.00 per week.</p> <p>Bus passes are available for students who are not eligible for the travel South Yorkshire concessionary passes</p> <p>The fund does not provide taxi's for students</p>	<p>Paid every half term into student bank accounts based on the number of weeks in the half term.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the student to budget this payment for the number of weeks within the half term it is paid for.</p> <p>Bus passes may be allocated based on individual assessment</p>
Food	<p>Students will receive £4 per full day of study by credit being added to their student card.</p> <p>Students attending placement will be eligible for food allowance off site</p>	<p>Money is uploaded weekly and can be spent in any of the college catering outlets. Any remaining funds left at the end of the week will not roll to the following week</p>
Extreme Hardship	<p>To be determined on an individual case by case basis and in collaboration with the college's pastoral and safeguarding teams</p>	<p>Determined by individual circumstance</p>
Essential* Kit and Equipment	<p>Essential materials confirmed by Head of Curriculum areas funded in consultation with the Funding Team in Student Services. DBS costs are not eligible for funding through the Learner Support Funds</p>	<p>Direct refund into bank account where receipt is provided</p> <p>Payment to the department for any kit supplied directly to the student by the department</p> <p>Student Services direct order on request from department</p>
Essential* Curriculum related activities	<p>Contribute to essential curriculum related activities (e.g. trips and visits) to a maximum of £100 per year.</p>	<p>Direct refund where receipt is provided</p> <p>Payment to department where costs have been covered through department</p>
UCAS Fees	<p>Cover the cost of UCAS application</p>	<p>Direct refund where student has paid for the application themselves</p>

		Student to select 'Payment to centre' on the UCAS system
Childcare Support	Childcare will be funded through Care to Learn.	Applications to be made through the care to learn system, for any student with costs above the care to learn maximum allowance should speak to an Adviser to access top up funds from the 16-19 learner support funds.

14-16 AWARDS

<u>Income Threshold</u>	<u>Award</u>		<u>Method of payment</u>
Income between £20,001 and £37,000 Travel Only	Travel	Students must be within a travel distance of 1.5 miles to receive travel funding. The fund will cover the cheapest cost of travel on an individual basis but will not fund over the maximum of £27.00 per week. Bus passes are available for students who are not eligible for the travel South Yorkshire concessionary passes. The fund does not provide taxis for students	Paid every half term into student bank accounts based on the number of weeks in the half term. It is the responsibility of the student to budget this payment for the number of weeks within the half term it is paid for. Bus passes may be allocated based on individual assessment.
Less than £20,000 Food and Travel	Food	Students will receive £4 per full day of study by credit being added to their student card. Students attending placement will be eligible for food allowance off site	Money is uploaded weekly and can be spent in any of the college catering outlets. Any remaining funds left at the end of the week will not roll to the following week.
	Extreme Hardship	To be determined on an individual case by case basis and in collaboration with the college's pastoral and safeguarding teams	Determined by individual circumstance
	Childcare Support	Childcare will be funded through Care to Learn.	Applications to be made through the care to learn system, for any student with costs above the care to learn maximum allowance should speak to an Adviser to access top up funds from the 16-19 learner support funds.

APPENDIX B – Appeals Process

The Appeals Procedure

1. A student must make best effort to resolve any issues arising from the decision reached on their eligibility for financial support, in informal discussion with a Student Services Adviser.
2. In the event that the issue cannot be resolved, a student wishing to appeal against a decision made by Student Services must lodge their appeal in writing with the Head of Student Services within 10 working days of the date of the award email. Grounds for appeal should be clearly stated and supporting evidence provided.
3. Appeals against a financial support decision will only be considered on the grounds of one of the following:
 - The process of decision making in respect of an application did not follow the prescribed procedure or is deemed to be unfair.
 - Pertinent new information is available which was not included in the original application.
4. Appeals against rules governing funds will not be accepted.
5. The Head of Student Services reserves the right to reject any appeal immediately if it clearly does not fall within the grounds stated above.
6. If it is deemed that there are valid grounds, the Head of Student Services will convene an Appeal Panel, normally within 10 working days. The appellant and the Student Services staff member who made the assessment will be present to establish the facts of the matter to the satisfaction of the Appeal Panel.
7. The appellant shall be advised in writing as follows:
 - They are entitled to give evidence to the Appeal Panel in person or via online platform, and may be accompanied or represented, if so desired, by a friend or colleague.
 - They have a right to submit a written statement for consideration by the Panel. Any such statement must reach the Head of Student Services at least 5 working days prior to the hearing.
 - They may call witnesses to attend the hearing, but the responsibility for their attendance rests with the appellant.
 - They shall inform the Head of Student Services, at least 5 working days prior to the hearing, of their intentions in respect of personal attendance and of the names of any friend or witnesses who will be attending or giving evidence.
8. Written evidence shall be made available to the Appeals Panel, to the appellant prior to the hearing. The Appeal Panel should be quorate with the following:
 - Head of Student Services who will act as Chair.
 - A representative of the Students' Union.
 - A senior independent member of Barnsley College Staff.
 - A Student Services Officer will act as secretary to the Panel but will not have a vote.

The Hearing of an Appeal

1. The Appeal will be heard as soon as possible and normally within 10 working days of a valid appeal being lodged.

2. The appellant (and if the appellant so chooses, a friend) and the assessing Student Services Adviser shall be entitled to be present throughout the giving and receiving of evidence but must withdraw when this is completed.
3. Evidence shall be taken in the following order:
 - The appellant.
 - The appellant's friend and witnesses in support of the appellant.
 - A Student Services Adviser.
 - Other witnesses, if any.
 - The appellant.
4. Where the appellant does not appear in person, the Appeal Panel may nevertheless proceed.
5. When the giving and receiving of evidence is concluded the Appeal Panel shall deliberate with the secretary present. The findings shall be reached by simple majority vote, with the Chair having a second or casting vote where this proves to be necessary.
6. The Appeal Panel shall inform the appellant of its decision immediately, or if the appellant is not present, within five working days of the hearing.
7. The findings shall be recorded, and the Student Services Officer shall be advised of the findings in writing, by the Chair of the Appeals Panel, within 5 working days of the hearing.
8. The findings of the Appeal Panel shall be final.