

Policy Title **Discretionary Learner Support Funds**

Author/Responsible Manager	Student Services Team Leader
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Risk Assessment (please note here any identified risks of non-compliance with the policy)	Non-compliance with policy could lead to wrong allocation of public funding identified through audit and breach of funding requirements.

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Equality Impact Assessment				
Characteristic	No impact	Positive impact	Negative impact	Evidence
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Specific reference to ethnicity as a barrier to application
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Support in completion of application
Gender	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Pregnancy/Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Religion/belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sexual orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No age limit
Gender reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marriage & civil partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Carried out by: T Breeze				

Actions required:

Action	Date	Reviewed by	Date

1. Introduction

The College will use the 16-19 Bursary Fund, 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF) and Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund to increase access, retention and achievement for Department for Education funded FE provision for students who meet priority groups, (with exception of Higher Education courses, waged Apprenticeships or Full Cost programmes). It is the College's priority to use the funds to help as many students as possible access College programmes, including those with protected characteristics.

The College will provide information and advice to all applicants on money management and employability and will utilise the application form to raise awareness of and signpost students to other support. Help in completing the application will be provided for students with a disability or language barrier.

2. Policy Statements

In line with the Government's priority to eliminate gaps in attainment between students from different backgrounds including those with a protected characteristic such as race, age or disability, the College recognises that the 16-18 Bursary Fund, 19+ Discretionary Funding and the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund have an important role to play in removing barriers to some students accessing and completing further education courses.

Students aged 19 or over are eligible to receive a discretionary bursary from the 16-18 Bursary Fund if they are.

- Continuing a study programme, they began aged 16-18 ('19+ continuers') or have an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP)

This policy outlines eligibility criteria, what the funds will be used for and the processes to ensure a fair allocation along with an appeals procedure to ensure the above statement is fulfilled.

The funds are for students in a low-income household and in financial hardship, income thresholds determine how funds are allocated, however, if household income is more than £35,000 students may still be eligible. Individual circumstances will be considered, and financial hardship will be considered on an individual basis.

Where household income is between £35,000 and £45,000, we will assess for transport costs only.

What students can apply for?

It is the aim of the College to use funds to increase access, retention, and achievement through providing items that support students to complete and succeed on their study programme. Consideration is given to students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties who may need additional support to access activities such as trips and visits. A residential bursary is also available to help with the costs of accommodation when provision is not available locally.

The following items will be prioritised:

Course Fees

19+ students can apply for funding to cover course and exam fees if they are studying a Level 1 or 2 course. For Level 3 courses, funding cannot displace the Advanced Learning Loans. To avoid any delay, an enrolment for a course can be processed if an application for financial assistance has been received and has been

checked by a member of the Student Services Team. However, the funding to cover the course fee is only guaranteed once the application has been approved.

Transport

Transport support will have a maximum allocation of £1000.

If a student applies for petrol money when a bus route is available, they will be awarded up to and not exceeding the cost of a bus pass. If a student lives more than one mile from a bus stop, mileage of 45p per mile will be paid to/from the student's home and the bus stop. This will be paid into the student's bank account termly at the end of September, end of January and end of April.

If a student is awarded a bus pass, this will be fully paid for. The purchase of a bicycle will be allocated a contribution of up to £50.00.

Students can apply for Transport support if they live more than 1.5 miles away from college.

Childcare

If a student is aged under 20 years old on the date, they start their study programme childcare is available through the Care to Learn Scheme. The College will apply for the funding on the student's behalf.

If a student is studying a Level 1 or 2 programme and is aged 20 or above, funding is provided through the 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund.

If a student is studying a Level 3 programme and is aged 20 or above funding is provided through the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund

For all of these options the provider must be Ofsted registered and payments will be made directly into the childminder's bank account. Childcare is only for the timetabled hours of the course including attendance at work placement although students can complete an additions form for study time for upcoming assignments (term time only).

Laptops

Student Services have a supply of laptops available to loan. Students can apply for a College Laptop. Laptop must be returned at the end of the academic year. If the Laptop is not returned, an invoice will be sent to the student. The student will not be able to apply for financial support in the future if the laptop is not returned or the invoice is unpaid. Laptops are allocated on a first come, first served basis.

Meal Support (Including Free School Meals)

Free meals are targeted at disadvantaged students. For the purposes of eligibility for free meals, 'disadvantage' is defined by the students being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit

- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa.

Students who do not meet free school meal eligibility will be offered meal support if household income is below £16,190, this will be funded from the 16-18 Bursary Fund.

Meal allowances will enable students to purchase food from the College cafes on Milnthorpe Road and Arts & Media Campus to the value of £4.50 per day. Students based on the Westmorland campus can access either (with the AMC being a 3-minute walk). For any eligible students based at the Westmorland campus with mobility issues or other characteristics, individual arrangements will be made. Consideration will be given to disclosed dietary requirements.

Student will receive a QR code sent to their email, which they will show to Café Staff to access meal support.

Amendment – From March 2026, all students whose families are on Universal Credit will be able to access free meals at college.

(This funding will come from our 16-18 bursary fund and is not free school meal entitlement).

This is in advance of the governments free school meal policy change in September 2026.

Emergency Meal Support

A student who is 16-18 and is homeless and in temporary accommodation and who has applied for supported housing and income support, will be given a £30.00 a week bursary from the relevant fund for their general food costs until permanent accommodation and benefits have been secured. This will be paid in cash and will be reviewed every 2 weeks.

Equipment & Kit

Equipment and kit can be funded if the student is 16-18 or 19+ and co-funded (e.g. they have paid for the course themselves or have gained funding for their fees through the LSF). If the student is fully funded the essential course resources will be provided by the department. 19+ fully funded students can apply for up to £250 for additional resources to help them practice at home.

Payments will be made directly into the student's bank account once attendance has been confirmed for a minimum of two weeks.

Equipment & Kit will remain the property of the college and students must return it once they have completed their study programme. Checks will be made that the item is on the mandatory equipment list for the courses or courses they are enrolled on.

Receipts must be submitted for all purchases.

Residential Support Scheme

To be eligible for RSS, a student must not be able to access the same or similar substantial Level 2 or Level 3 qualification within reasonable daily travelling distance of their home address.

Students must be 16 or over but under 19 years old on 31 August 2025.

Students aged 19 or over are only eligible for RSS 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).

Students must have a household income of £30,993 or less in the previous tax year, the amount of RSS a student is awarded is based on an income-assessment that uses the following thresholds:

- Income up to £20,000 - Maximum available £3,458
- £21,001 - £25,704 - £2,305
- £25,705 - £30,993 - £1,152

Students must apply for RSS each academic year they need support from the scheme. This is to enable the institution to check that students still meet all the criteria for support, including household income.

Payments are made directly to eligible students' landlords for their rental costs. Payments cannot be made to the students directly.

Students who choose to travel to their institutions instead of taking out a tenancy agreement do not meet the RSS eligibility criteria.

Course Trips

Awards for course trips will be up to a total of £350 per student per year. Any remaining amount will need to be raised by the student and support is available to help them secure part-time employment to support this.

University & Apprenticeships Interviews

Students can apply for funding to cover transport to interviews and fees for university drama auditions.

Accommodation for university or apprenticeship interviews will not be funded.

UCAS Application Fee

Student who are eligible for FSM will not need to pay a UCAS application fee.

Distribution of Funds

Except for the Vulnerable Bursary, all funds will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. All applications for full-time students received on or before 19 August 2025 will be guaranteed to receive a minimum level of support. Further support will be dependent on availability of funds. Applications can be submitted after this date but will be dependent on remaining funds available. Money will be kept aside for part-time students who can apply at the beginning of their course.

In cases of exceptional hardship or where emergency help is required, support may be arranged to reflect the individual needs of the student, with approval from The

Principal. A small emergency fund for exceptional circumstances and late emerging vulnerable students will be retained.

The fund will be distributed in a consistent and equitable way, following guidance issued by Department for Education. Student eligibility will be determined through priority group assessment with relevant evidence. This process will be managed by the Deputy Principal (Data and Funding) and coordinated by the Student Services Team Leader.

Applications received before the October half term may have payments calculated from the start of the course if funding allows. Applications received after this date will only be assessed from the date received and no backdated payments can be awarded.

Appeals against decisions will be referred to the Deputy Principal for Data and Funding.

Annual reporting of allocation will be carried out in line with Department for Education requirements.

All support is subject to funds being available. An annual review of the policy is required to reflect changes in funding and priority groups. For this reason, information provided to students will be as current as possible and will be reflected at the earliest review opportunity within this policy.

Criteria for Awards

Vulnerable Bursary Fund

16-18 students in any of the following groups and living independently will be eligible to receive the Vulnerable Bursary of £1,200 per year:

- Receiving Universal Credit because you are financially supporting yourself or financially supporting yourself and someone who is dependent on you and living with you such as a child or partner.

A student may be eligible if they claim in their own right while living in the parental home if there is a financial need.

Any payments over £1,200 must be paid from the discretionary bursary allocation or from the Colleges own funds if additional support is required to remain in education.

A student who does not have any actual financial need may not need support from the scheme. For example, their financial needs are already met and/or they have no relevant costs.

If the student applies for a meal card this will be covered under the general 16-19 Bursary Fund and will not affect their £1,200 allocation.

The above young people will need a letter setting out the benefit to which they are entitled.

We are fully committed to supporting the needs of all of our looked after children with education related costs, we can access up to £1200 from Government Funds.

Kendal College will not award the full amount automatically we will allocate based on identified needs and where another party is not responsible for this support, such as The Local Authority or Foster Carers.

This refers to 16-18 students in the following groups.

- In Care
- Care Leaver

The above young people will need a letter or written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from the local authority responsible for them or who provides their leaving care services.

Student Services will meet with all students who meet the criteria from the defined vulnerable groups to establish their identified needs. Not all students will be awarded funds.

All Other Funds

To be eligible for funding, students must be living in a low-income household and in financial hardship. A low-income household is defined as a household receiving income-based state benefits or with a net income of less than £35,000 (£45,000 for travel costs)

College may make exceptions in cases of particular financial hardship.

If the student's parent/s or guardian/s are receiving HE student finance, their grants will be counted as income but not their loans.

If the student is 16-18 and living with parent/s or guardian/s, the household income will be based on their parent/s or guardian/s income not theirs.

If the student is 16-18 and living independently, the household income will be based on their income.

If the student is between 19 and 25 years old on the first day of the academic year and living with parent/s or guardian/s, the household income will depend on whether they are financially dependent on their parent/s or guardian/s.

They will be deemed financially independent if they:

Have a gross income of more than £7,500 from wages and/or benefits.

If the above doesn't apply, and they are dependent on their parent/s or guardian/s support, the household income will be based on their income.

If they are 19+ and living independently, the household income will be based on their income, and if they live with a partner, their income too.

In order to gain financial assistance, students must complete an application form with a supporting statement and provide evidence of low income/ financial hardship.

Support for 16–18-year-olds will not affect entitlement to any DWP income related benefits. If the student is in receipt of DLA and ESA or Universal Credit, parents can no longer receive child benefit. It is the responsibility of 19+ students to tell DWP about any support they receive as it may affect eligibility for some benefits.

Income thresholds to determine how funds are allocated.

Household Income thresholds for

- **16-18 Bursary Fund**
- **19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF)**
- **Advanced Learner Loan**

Up to £35,000

This is based on 1 or 2 Adults and 2 children who are in full-time school or in post 16 further education.

For each additional child we will decrease the income threshold by £1500.

For example: 2 Adults and 4 Children with an income of £33,000 would be assessed as £30,000.

Allocation of Funds

16-18 Bursary Fund

- Bus Pass or Fuel
- Equipment
- Trip
- Laptop Loan
- Workshop Fee
- Transport Costs to University & Apprenticeship Interviews

19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF)

- Bus Pass or Fuel
- Equipment
- Trip
- Laptop Loan
- Workshop Fee
- Course Fee
- Childcare
- Transport Costs to University & Apprenticeship Interviews

Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund

- Bus Pass or Fuel
- Trip
- Laptop Loan
- Workshop Fee
- Childcare
- Transport Costs to University & Apprenticeship Interviews

For all categories, income between £35,000 and £45,000

- Bus Pass or Fuel Only

3 Procedure

3.1 Students will receive information about the funds available through pre-entry information, during induction and published on the College website. Where a student will need additional help in understanding the concept and procedure for accessing the fund, they will receive assistance from a Student Services Advisor including help in completing the form.

Information provided to students, in both written and verbal format, will ensure they feel able to apply for the funding without fear of embarrassment or the need to openly disclose their personal financial difficulties. Interviews in a private guidance room can be offered to ensure there is no discriminatory behaviour.

Information on the allocation of the Vulnerable Bursary Fund will be targeted at young people in vulnerable groups as a priority.

- 3.2 The College will liaise with feeder secondary schools to ensure the procedure is in line with that adopted by local schools and to support the targeting of information to known vulnerable students.
- 3.3 Students make an application for funding using a Financial Assistance Application Form prior to or at the beginning of the term in which their course commences, subject to funding being available.
- 3.4 Secondary/subsequent applications will be considered subject to funding being available.
- 3.5 Applications for childcare from students will be dealt with in line with eligibility criteria.
- 3.6 A Student Advisor will test the application against the eligibility criteria, check the evidence, and discuss the application with the student if required. Any other potential sources of funding will also be considered. In line with service standards, this stage is normally completed within 2 weeks of application.
- 3.7 If the student is eligible on standard criteria, the application will be considered by the Student Services Team Leader. A panel comprised of the Student Services Team Leader, Vice Principal (Data, Funding & Information) and a Student Advisor will be called to discuss complex cases. Appropriate exceptional circumstances will be considered when assessing the application.
- 3.8 The application process, in line with service standards, is normally completed within 3 weeks of the application. Students will be contacted by telephone or email when there are queries in respect of their application.
- 3.9 A Student Advisor will notify the student in writing of the decision. If the student already has a successful application and is requesting an additional item, confirmation will be via the most relevant means e.g. letter, text, email or verbal confirmation. Potential students can be given an indication of a likely award before starting a course, but this can only be confirmed once the student has started the course. Where appropriate, the decision can be notified to a third party with the agreement of the applicant.
- 3.10 The agreed award will then be paid or provided in the most appropriate and cost-effective manner, including:
 - Bankers Automated Computer System (BACS)
 - Cheque to student or direct to college
 - Payment to childcare provider
 - Payment to equipment/ service provider
 - Loan of equipment or short-term funding
 - Provision of lunch card
 - Provision of travel pass
- 3.11 The designated Student Advisor will populate the ILR field with the Department for Education requirements.

- 3.12 Students are advised that they can appeal in writing to The Principal within 10 days of receipt of the letter notifying them of the award if they are not satisfied with the decision made.
- 3.13 The designated Student Advisor maintains records of all payments made including all payments made to Vulnerable Bursary students.
- 3.14 The required reporting in line with Department for Education policy will be completed including in-year management information at the end of October and end of year.
- 3.15 Equality impact monitoring will be completed annually to identify applications by protected characteristics and actions put in place to target groups where there may be disadvantage in accessing funding.

4. Documentation

Appendix 1 Application Form & Guidance Notes

Appendix 2 Application for Childcare Costs

5. Reference to other policies

Equality

Admissions

College Hardship Fund for Full & Part Time Degree Students

The bursary fund is available to Full and Part Time students who are studying at a minimum intensity of 50% of a Full-Time course. Part Time awards will be given on a pro rata basis.

The fund will assess applications based on household income and a supporting statement.

Preference will be given to the following priority groups.

- A student with Children, especially single parents
- A mature student with existing financial commitments
- From a low-income family
- Disabled
- A student that was previously in care (care leaver)
- Homeless or living in a foyer.

To be eligible for the fund you will need to have an SFE assessment of household income that is below £25,000.

Awards are based on a shortfall model. This is the difference between income and expenditure.

In exceptional circumstances a loan or grant can be made but only where residual income is below £100 a month.

Appeals will not be accepted unless an error has been made.