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**16-19 BURSARY POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

**2022-2023**

**Important information – please read and retain for future reference.**

The 16-19 Bursary Fund offers help to learners to continue in full-time education, who might otherwise be financially disadvantaged. The Fund has two parts, to be eligible for either type of bursary learners must be enrolled with us and aged over 16 and under 19 as of 31 August 2022. Please see full guidance link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2022-to-2023-academic-year/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2022-to-2023-academic-year>

Receipt of bursary funding does not affect receipt of other means-tested benefits paid to families, such as income support, jobseeker’s allowance, child benefit, working tax credit, housing benefit or, generally, universal credit.

If a learner is in receipt of disability living allowance (or personal independent payment) and employment support allowance, parents can no longer receive certain household/family benefits for that child, such as child benefit.

We will not make bursary fund payments as payments for living costs. This is out of scope of the bursary fund and any such payments would be subject to the Social Security Amendment (Students and Income-related Benefits) Regulations 2000.

**1. ELIGIBILITY**

**1. Vulnerable Bursary**

The bursary for vulnerable groups can pay up to £1,200 per year to a learner participating on a study programme that lasts for 30 weeks or more if they need that amount of support. learners on study programmes of less than 30 weeks will be paid a pro-rata amount, as appropriate based on an assessment of their actual needs. Learners defined vulnerable are those who are:

 • in care

 • care leaver

• receiving Income Support, or Universal Credit 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

• receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in their own right, as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right

Learners who meet the criteria for bursaries for vulnerable groups are not automatically entitled to a bursary if they **do not** have financial needs and/or their financial needs are covered from other sources. They may receive a lower amount of bursary or no bursary, if they do not have any actual participation costs.

**2. Discretionary Bursary**

Learners who are not eligible for the Vulnerable Bursary can apply for a discretionary award. Awards will be dependent on the funds available from the Education and Skills Funding Agency and the number of eligible learners. Awards will be made on the level of household income (including all benefits); with the threshold being up to £25,521. We do not make blanket or flat rate/fixed rate payments:

* to all learners
* to learners in particular income bands
* to learners whose families are in receipt of particular benefits

We will consider the actual needs of each learner. For example, although many learners who had previously benefitted from a free school meal may have financial needs, these will vary depending on personal circumstances so an individual assessment of actual need will be made.

Discretionary awards can also be awarded to learners aged 19 or over (as of 31st August 2022) if they have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Our discretionary bursary helps with the cost of travel, to buy essential books, equipment, or specialist clothing (such as protective overalls, for example). These are iteming the learner would otherwise need to pay for to participate.

Our bursary fund is not intended to provide learning support – services that institutions give to learners, for example, counselling or mentoring – to support extra-curricular activities where these are not essential to the learners’ study programme or provide living costs support. We must ensure funding reaches those learners who are most in need of financial support. This means we must use household income in some way to help establish which learners are eligible before confirming the amount of support a learner may need.

We are not permitted to use the bursary fund in any way that would give us a competitive advantage over other organisations. Examples include:

* fees for access to facilities in the institution
* block subsidy of the canteen
* block subsidy of transport, or support for travel for all students regardless of family incomes
* block provision of equipment, material or books
* making bonus payments to reward attendance or achievement
* payments to support students’ general living costs

We must not use the bursary as a way of incentivising attendance or as a marketing tool to encourage learners to choose us over another.

**2. APPLYING**

To apply for either Bursary you will need to complete an application pack which you can access from your tutors or training provider administrators.

It is your responsibility to ensure the application is complete. Incomplete applications will not be processed. Once your application has been processed, we will inform you if you have been successful. To check the progress of your application please contact kelly.channon@vlearningnet.org.uk.

You can apply once you are enrolled or at any time throughout the year. You will receive a pro-rated payment depending on when you apply, it can only be backdated to one calendar month.

Due to limited funding on the discretionary fund, we cannot guarantee applicants will receive any or part of the funding requested. Therefore, learners should actively seek alternative financial assistance from other agencies, organisations, and funds. The financial help provided is a contribution towards costs. Payments for extra-curricular activities or to support living costs cannot be made. We will process the application on a first come bases, once funding has been fully allocated a waiting list system will be implemented.

**3. EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS**

**Vulnerable Bursary**

**In care (option 1)**

Children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis (section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order (section 31 of the Children Act 1989). Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 defines the term ‘looked after child’

A young person placed with a foster carer by the local authority, including where the foster carer is on the books of an independent fostering agency, is classed as looked after. They meet the criteria for the ‘in care’ vulnerable group where they need financial support to participate.

A child who is privately fostered (in other words, a private arrangement is made between the parent and the person who will care for the child) is not classed as a looked after child and is not eligible for the bursary for vulnerable groups.

**Care leaver (option 2)**

A young person aged 16 and 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16; or

A young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16

Evidence we require for ‘in care’ or ‘care leavers’ - written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority – this is the local authority that looks after them or provides their leaving care services. This could be a letter or an email but must be clearly from the local authority

**Universal credit (option 3 or 4)**

Universal credit award notifications do not include any information on the benefits they replace. For this reason, the description of the bursaries for vulnerable group category that relates to receipt of universal credit or income support is that a learner must be receiving universal credit in their own right because they are financially supporting themselves and anyone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or partner.

Bursary funds awarded to a learner should not form part of the UC assessment undertaken by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). How DWP treat any funding for education depends on whether the learner is undertaking advanced full-time education.

Evidence of entitlement to a named benefit, with details of the calculation of that benefit (in learners’ own name).

Evidence we require for person in receipt of universal credit (UC), or income support (IS) is a copy of their UC or IS award notice. This must clearly state that the claim is in the learner’s name/confirm they are entitled to the benefits in their own right. The evidence must not state any conditions that prevent them from participating in further education or training.

For learners in receipt of UC, we must also see a document such as a tenancy agreement in the learner’s name, a child benefit receipt, children’s birth certificates, utility bills and so on.

Evidence required for learners receiving universal credit (UC)/employment support allowance and disability living allowance (DLA)/personal independent payments (PI). A copy of their UC claims from DWP and evidence of receipt of DLA or PIP must also be provided.

UC claimants should be able to print off details of their award from their online account or provide a screenshot to the institution.

learners can also contact their UC Work Coach (or relevant Benefit Office if they are receiving getting IS or ESA) and ask them for help in providing evidence of receiving benefits.

**Discretionary Bursary**

Evidence of your total household income including all benefits will need to be provided, this includes parent(s), carer(s) and partner(s), but excludes siblings and grandparents (unless they are your carer) who are earning and living within the household. Disability Living Allowance is the exception when calculating your household income, this element of funding is not included. We may also need to see a copy of your last month’s bank statement.

We keep our bursary policies under review to ensure we continue to provide support to learners who need it. For example, learners from households being supported via lower income jobs could be in more financial need than a learner in receipt of free school meals or where the family receives other benefits.

An assessment of individual need for both bursary funds will take place.

**For both funds**

You will need to provide us with the bank account details of where you want any award to be paid into. It is your responsibility to ensure that you provide us with the correct bank details, we do accept evidence of the bank account information into which the award will be paid i.e., a copy of a bank paying in slip or bank card to verify your bank details. We cannot accept responsibility if incorrect bank details are passed to us, and any payments made do not reach the nominated account. Second payments will not be made due to incorrect bank details. Under our retention policy, all documents provided for Bursary evidence will be kept securely for 6 years.

Please submit photocopies of all documentation. We cannot accept originals; we cannot be responsible for any loss of evidence.

**4. PAYMENTS**

**Vulnerable Bursary:**

Payments are processed monthly and paid by BACS directly into your bank account on receipt of your attendance.

**Discretionary Bursary:**

Payments are processed on receipt of invoices and paid by BACS into the learner’s bank account.

**TRANSPORT**

Your bursary payment can be used towards your transport cost and other expenses incurred whilst studying with us. Please state on the application your travel arrangements and cost.

**5. ATTENDANCE**

Your attendance will be monitored monthly and should be a minimum of 80%. All absences must be authorised and be notified to the training provider immediately and supported by a letter from your parent/carer. Awards will be made as follows based on the following attendance levels:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Attendance Thresholds** | **Payment of bursary** |
| 100% - 80% | 100% |
| Below 80% | 0% |

If there are mitigating circumstances for lower attendance levels these will be considered on an individual basis.

**6. DECISIONS, REVIEWS AND APPEALS**

You will normally be notified of our decision and any allocation by letter to your home address. No payments will be made until we receive confirmation that you have enrolled on your course. Payments will normally be made direct to you, using the bank account information you will provide. Please retain all receipts to claim the rewarded amounts.

Decisions regarding the payment or non-payment of monies from the 16-18 Bursary Fund and the amount of any payments shall be made by our administrators, in accordance with Government guidelines for administration of the fund.

If you are dissatisfied with the result of your review, you may request an appeal. Your appeal must be made in writing, within 21 days of the date of the result of your review. Your reasons for wanting an appeal should be clearly stated and, in the first instance, addressed to Kelly Channon. If you are still dissatisfied you can then appeal to the chair of trustee Colin Wadsworth.

Appeals will not be considered where a turndown has been made due to the fund being exhausted.

Our procedure is designed to ensure that learners have a full opportunity to raise, individually or collectively, matters of concern to them without fear of disadvantage and in the knowledge that privacy and confidentiality will be respected.

**6. OTHER**

If you are unsuccessful with your application, you can speak to a member of the finance team to discuss the option of a payment plan to support you with costs if necessary.

An application form must be completed at the beginning of every academic year you attend with us, as your personal circumstances may change. Learners must notify us of any changes in their circumstances throughout the year, they will not normally be expected to repay an award, but their entitlement to further payments may be affected.