

## **Guide to the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund in the 2024 to 2025 academic year**

This guide is for all institutions that administer the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund. This includes schools, academies, and further education (FE) colleges, sixth-form colleges, training providers, specialist independent providers and local authorities.

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students overcome the specific financial barriers to participation they face so they can remain in education.

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- bursaries for defined vulnerable groups.
- discretionary bursaries which institutions award using policies they set, in line with these funding rules.

Full guidance can be found here: [16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide 2024 to 2025 academic year - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2024-to-2025-academic-year)

The accompanying checklist can be found here: [16 to 19 Bursary checklist.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-bursary-checklist)

Bursary funding is to help eligible students with costs such as travel to and from school or college, to buy essential books, equipment, or specialist clothing (such as protective overalls, for example) that are required for their study programme. These are items the student would otherwise need to pay for to participate.

The bursary fund is not intended to provide learning support – services that you give to students, for example, counselling or mentoring – or to support extra-curricular or non-compulsory activities that are not essential to the students' study programme or to provide living costs support.

All institutions will need to adhere to the following points:

- Publish a policy or statement on their website setting out how they will use their bursary fund and what eligibility criteria they use.
- Consider the relevant local authority's transport statement when setting their bursary fund policy.

### **Bursary Application Processes**

- Bursary Application forms, policies, and any supporting information must all make it clear that students who meet the criteria for the vulnerable groups' bursary are not automatically entitled to a bursary if they do not have financial needs and / or their financial needs are covered from other sources.
- Bursary fund policies must set out clearly what type of help the institution offers, for example, help with transport, books and equipment, field trips and other course-related costs and whether bursary support is available to contribute to the costs of attending industry placements, university interviews and open days.
- Students and/or their families should sign a declaration when they apply for help from the bursary to confirm that the evidence, they have provided is correct and complete to the best of their knowledge and belief. Students and their families should be made aware

that giving false or incomplete information that leads to incorrect/overpayment may result in future payments being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds being recovered. They should also be informed that this might result in a referral to the police with the possibility of the student and/or their family facing prosecution.

### **Following application**

- Institutions must assess the needs of individual students when awarding bursary funding. No student should automatically be awarded a set amount of funding without an assessment of their level of need. Institutions must ensure they have fully verified the student's eligibility and assessed their participation needs before submitting any funding claim to the Student Bursary Support Service (SBSS).
- Institutions should consider the number of hours involved in a student's study programme when deciding if a pro-rata payment is more appropriate. A student studying for around 16 hours a week is likely to have greater costs than a student studying for 4 hours a week, for example.
- Institutions must ensure they can evidence their application process, how the student was assessed, how they made the decision to award a specific amount of bursary and the funds that they have issued to the student.
- It is for individual institutions to decide the process they will use to assess financial need and the evidence they will request from students / their families.
- Young people who are being cared for under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) are defined 'as having left care' so should be classed as a care leaver. They must meet the definition of a 'care leaver' in full to be eligible for help from the bursary for vulnerable groups, if they need additional financial support to participate.
- Institutions are encouraged to pay bursaries in-kind rather than cash as it is believed that this will help to ensure that the bursary is spent on the things it was intended for. This can include travel passes, vouchers or credits for meals, required books and / or required equipment. If an institution purchases books or equipment for a student, they can specify that the student returns these at the end of their study programme so they can be used again by another student if appropriate. If keeping equipment on campus is the best way of ensuring this happens, institutions have the right to set this as a condition.
- Where institutions make bursary fund payments to students rather than providing support in-kind, they can insist that students only spend the payments on travel costs and/or a meal during the day, to buy equipment or any other support that has been agreed.

### **Students who are eligible for the vulnerable group bursary but are assessed as having no financial need**

- Institutions can refuse a student's Bursary application if they are assessed as having no financial need. This might be because costs are already being met or because they have no relevant costs.
- Institutions can also choose to pay a vulnerable group student more than £1,200 per year if they assess they need extra help to remain in education. But any payments over the maximum £1,200 will have to come from the institution's discretionary bursary allocation or their own funds.

### **What the bursary fund cannot be used for:**

- provide learning support – services that institutions give to students. Examples include counselling, mentoring, extra tutoring, or support such as servicing laptops/tablets.
- support extra-curricular activities where these are not essential to the students' study programme.
- support the costs of foreign/overseas field trips where the content can be found within England at a much cheaper cost and/or to support the costs of fields trips that are not an essential part of a student's study programme goals.

### **Emergency Meals remains in place for 2024 2025**

Institutions can use their bursary fund in individual cases of severe hardship, to provide food support whilst a student attends their study programme, for a student they consider to be in real need, without undertaking the checks on household income or gathering other evidence that would normally be required. We expect this to only apply to a very small number of the total 16 to 19 student cohort.

For audit purposes, institutions must retain a copy of:  
a record of the number of students supported in this way

- the number of days this support is given
- the £'s value of support given to each student along with the rationale for the food support
- the signed confirmation of receipt of funding by the student, if actual spend receipts are not obtained

We do not expect this arrangement to continue on an ongoing basis for any individual student. Institutions should exercise their discretion in each case and should be mindful that this flexibility relates to food support only.

### **Information for Social Care Colleagues**

It is important to note that:

- The DfE guidance regarding bursaries has been updated for 2024 - 2025
- It is not an automatic allocation
- There is an expectation that schools/settings have made appropriate enquiries before allocating the bursary. Therefore, they may request relevant information from social care colleagues.
- Settings may choose not to allocate the full amount and will take into consideration other monies available to the young person.
- Settings may be audited and will be expected to have a process in place which reflects the guidance and how they meet those expectations.
- The bursary is intended to meet costs associated with accessing education such as travel costs.
- A student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2022 (19+ continuers) or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to be eligible for help from the bursary fund in the 2024 to 2025 academic year.

- The bursary fund is not intended to support costs not related to education (living costs), extra-curricular activities or provide learning support services that institutions give to students such as counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring.
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are treated as looked after children and are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups ('in care' group), where they have a financial need.
- Students on apprenticeship programmes, or any waged training, are employed, rather than in education. They are not eligible for the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund.
- 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.
- It is recommended that the application is submitted at the earliest opportunity as evidence is required to support the application and this can take time.
- The application needs to be made directly to the college/training provider.
- The application form should be available on the website for each college/training provider.
- Settings can withhold payments if a student does not meet agreed standards (such as attendance), but they should always consider the individual circumstances of the student first. Sanctioning a student to the extent that their bursary funding had been stopped for a whole term, for example, is not recommended as it can stop students attending and undermine the purpose of the bursary fund.
- Settings should consider the impact on attendance that might be caused by illness, caring responsibilities, or other exceptional circumstances. This should be built into the payment conditions agreed between the student and their institution, so that both parties are aware of the potential effect on payments.
- Examples of young people eligible for a bursary who do not require the funding include a student attending a specialist residential provision that covers their education costs in full, a student taking a distance learning programme who has no financial barriers to participation (e.g. they have no travel costs or meal costs), In the care of the local authority whose educational costs are covered in full by the local authority.

Further information on how to make a claim can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund/how-to-claim>

### **So, what might this mean for individual care experienced young people, their carers and staff**

It's hard to give a detailed response as decisions around individual 16 -19 Bursary Awards will be made by the setting the young person attends. All young people should be encouraged to claim this Bursary.

However, if their Bursary application is refused or you feel that they have been awarded a low level of financial support than please let the Virtual School know via email at [virtual.schools@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:virtual.schools@norfolk.gov.uk)