

POLICY / PROCEDU	DATE OF APPROVAL			
NCG Learner Support	Fund Policy October 2024			
APPROVED BY	VERSION NO.	VALID UNTIL		
Executive Board	2	October 2027		

OWNER	Finance Manager (responsible for the Learner Support Fund Team)							
GROUP EXECUTIVE LEAD	Tony Lewin, Executive I	Principal (Curriculum)						
DOCUMENT TYPE	Policy ⊠ Gro	up Procedure □	Local Procedure □					
PURPOSE	This policy sets out the rules which all NCG colleges must follow in supporting learners with financial support. There is one policy for all NCG colleges. However, it is recognised that colleges will need to have local finance guides for learners. Compliance with the NCG policy is a requirement.							
APPLICABLE TO		rs, trainees/students, vo	nts, vendors, agency workers, olunteers and/or any other parties					
EQUALITY ANALYSIS COMPLETED	Yes ⊠	No □	N/A □					
[POLICIES ONLY]	(If EA not applicable, ple	ease explain)						
KEY THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THIS POLICY	' '	om the Learner Suppo	entitlements which NCG colleges ort Funds, based on the ESFA					
	It allows some discr needs of the college		e support which align to the local					
	3. This policy ensures funds are allocated to assist learners in reducing barriers to education and to encourage engagement for those from disadvantaged backgrounds by providing financial support.							
EXPECTED OUTCOME	-	their responsibilities in	panisational position on Learner relation to the policy and comply					

MISCELLANEOUS	
LINKED DOCUMENTS	16-19 bursary fund guide 2024 to 2025 academic year
	Audit Skills Fund (ASF): funding rules 2024 to 2025
KEYWORDS	Funding
	Learner
	Support
	Bursary

Equality Impact Assessment

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT			
	Yes	No	Explanatory Note if required
EIA 1 - Does the proposed policy/procedure align with the intention of the NCG Mission and EDIB Intent Statement in Section 2?			The answer to this must be YES
EIA 2 - Does the proposed policy/procedure in any way impact unfairly on any protected characteristics below?			
Age		\boxtimes	The answer to this must be NO
Disability / Difficulty		\boxtimes	The answer to this must be NO
Gender Reassignment		\boxtimes	The answer to this must be NO
Marriage and Civil Partnership		\boxtimes	The answer to this must be NO
Race		\boxtimes	The answer to this must be NO
Religion or Belief		\boxtimes	The answer to this must be NO
Sex		\boxtimes	The answer to this must be NO
Sexual Orientation		\boxtimes	The answer to this must be NO
EIA3 - Does the proposed policy/processes contain any language/terms/references/ phrasing that could cause offence to any specific groups of people or individuals?		×	The answer to this must be NO
EIA4 - Does the policy/process discriminate or victimise any groups or individuals?			The answer to this must be NO
EIA 5 - Does this policy/process positively discriminate against any group of people, or individuals?			The answer to this must be NO
EIA 5 - Does this policy/process include any positive action to support underrepresented groups of people, or individuals?			The answer to this could be yes or no as positive action is lawful. However, an explanation must be provided for clarity.
EIA 6 - How do you know that the above is correct?	_	idance has ne review of	been reviewed and considered the Policy.

1. GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

This policy sets out the eligible criteria and entitlements which NCG offer to learners from the Learner Support Funds, based on the ESFA funding rules and guidance. It allows some discretion to set appropriate support which align to the local needs of the colleges.

This policy ensures funds are allocated to assist learners in reducing barriers to education and to encourage engagement for those from disadvantaged backgrounds by providing financial support.

This policy will ensure consistency across NCG whilst allowing colleges to have local arrangements where appropriate.

2. SCOPE

This policy is to outline the financial support that can be awarded to eligible students in the 2024/25 academic year, from the following discretionary fund bursaries:

- 16-19 Discretionary Bursary Fund.
- 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary Fund.
- Free Meals.
- 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund.
- Advanced Learner Loan Bursary.

NCG will assess the student's actual need for financial assistance before determining whether to award financial support and the amount that is awarded.

The bursaries are a discretionary award and financial support is conditional on attendance. The expectation is that students achieve 100% attendance however there is an appreciation that in some cases financial hardship can result in a lowering of attendance. Support will be provided when a student achieves 90% or above attendance (including authorised absence) across all parts of their programme. Colleges have the discretion at a local level to provide support to learners who have attendance lower than 90%. NCG will stop payments where students have been absent for a period of 4 continuous weeks or more.

NCG retain the right to cancel the support of learners who do not demonstrate behaviours in line with the student code of conduct.

The Learner Support Fund Policy is based on the funding guidelines at the time of writing this policy; NCG reserves the right to amend the policy should the funding guidelines change.

The budget for financial support to students is finite. Students who may be eligible for support may not automatically receive it once the limited funds have been exhausted (with the exception of those who qualify for the 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary Fund and Free Meals). Early application for funding is therefore advised.

All college related travel will be supported for eligible students including Industry placements up to a maximum of £2,500.

Learners awarded support from the 16-19 Bursary can be awarded travel support when living one mile or more away from the campus they are studying at. Learners are not automatically awarded support, this decision will be made by the member of staff completing the assessment as it may be more appropriate for the learner to walk due to bus stop / train station locations and timings.

3. 16-19 BURSARY

To be eligible for the discretionary bursary, students need to meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August 2024.
- Aged 19 or over at 31 August 2024 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Aged 19 or over at 31 August 2024 and continuing on a study programme they began aged 16-18 ('19+ continuers').
- Meet the residency criteria in ESFA 2024/25 academic year funding regulations for post 16 provision.
- An accompanied asylum seeker who has not had their application for asylum refused.
- A member of a household whose gross income is below £37,300, OR resident in a household receiving a means tested benefit (i.e. Income Support / Job Seekers Allowance / Employment Support Allowance / Universal Credit and earning less than £37,300.
- Experiencing financial hardship and has been identified as being in exceptional need. Assessments of household income can take into account any unearned income such as shares / investments and savings.

And

Be participating in provision funded by ESFA.

In exceptional circumstances where under 16 students are on funded 16 to 19 study programmes, we will use discretion to pay bursaries to younger students.

4. 16-19 VULNERABLE BURSARY

To be eligible for the vulnerable bursary, students need to be in one of the defined vulnerable groups:

In care (including unaccompanied Asylum Seeker students).

- OR a care leaver.
- OR a student in receipt of 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.
- OR a student 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.

5. FREE MEALS IN FURTHER EDUCATION (16-18 YEAR OLDS)

Colleges must make provision for free meals to eligible students (those who are in receipt of the qualifying benefits and who make a successful application for free meals) for each day the student is timetabled to attend their study programme.

To be eligible for Free Meals, students need to be in receipt of, or have 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 guarantee 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 (HRMC)).
- 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 (after tax and not including any benefits you get).

6. 19+ DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUND AND ADVANCED LEARNER LOAN BURSARY

To be eligible for Discretionary Learner Support Fund or Advanced Learner Loan bursary, students need to meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Aged 19 years or over on 31 August 2024.
- Studying at NCG for a qualification at level 3 or below which is funded by the ESFA
 / Devolved authority.

- Have an approved Advanced Learner Loan in place if receiving funding to cover the cost of course fees.
- Meet the residency and eligibility for funding criteria as stated in the <u>Adult skills fund:</u> funding rules 2024 to 2025.
- Asylum seekers are eligible to receive funding if they have lived in the UK for 6 months or longer while their claim is being considered by the Home Office, and no decision on their claim has been made, or are receiving local authority support under section 23C or section 23CA of the Children Act 1989 or the Care Act 2014.
- An individual who has been refused asylum will be eligible if they have appealed against a decision made by the UK government against granting refugee status and no decision has been made within 6 months of lodging the appeal, or they are granted support for themselves under section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, or are receiving local authority support for themselves under section 23C or section 23CA of the Children Act 1989In receipt of a means tested benefit in their own right (i.e. Income Support / Job Seekers Allowance / Working Tax Credit up to free prescription level / Employment Support Allowance / Universal Credit).
- OR Living in a single independent household and has a gross household income of between £7,800 and £21,530.
- OR Living in a household, consisting of the student and their partner / spouse / parent(s) that has a gross household income of less than £32,300.
- Experiencing financial hardship and have been identified as being in exceptional need.

It is the learner's responsibility to inform the Department for Work and Pensions about any learner support they are receiving, as these payments may affect their eligibility to state benefits.

20+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund and Advanced Learner Loan Bursary - Childcare Fund

To be eligible for the childcare funds, students need to meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Aged 20 years or over on 31 August 2024.
- Studying a Further Education programme of study funded by ESFA / Devolved Authority at NCG.
- Have an approved Advanced Learner Loan in place if receiving funding to cover the cost of course fees.
- Meet the residency and eligibility for funding criteria as stated in the Adult Education Budget funding and performance management rules 2024/25 or the Advanced Learner Loan funding rules 2024/25.
- Asylum seekers are eligible to receive funding if they have lived in the UK for 6
 months or longer while their claim is being considered by the Home Office, and no

decision on their claim has been made, or are receiving local authority support under section 23C or section 23CA of the Children Act 1989 or the Care Act 2014.

- An individual who has been refused asylum will be eligible if they have appealed against a decision made by the UK government against granting refugee status and no decision has been made within 6 months of lodging the appeal, or they are granted support for themselves under section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, or are receiving local authority support for themselves under section 23C or section 23CA of the Children Act 1989.
- In receipt of a means tested benefit in their own right (i.e. Income Support / Job Seekers Allowance/ Employment Support Allowance/Universal Credit and earning less than £32,300).
- OR Living in a household, consisting of the student and their partner / spouse / parent(s) that has a gross household income of less than £32,300.
- Be financially responsible for the child that requires childcare.
- Experiencing financial hardship and have been identified as being in exceptional need

Learner attendance will be monitored and funding may be stopped if learner's attendance falls below an expectable level.

If the learner does not meet the criteria for funding, is not registered with the provider and is not drawing down funds from AEB, they cannot receive learner support.

All Childcare fund terms and conditions must be adhered to or funding may be stopped.

Childcare must be provided by an OFSTED registered provider. Only timetabled sessions will be considered for childcare support. Payments will be made direct to the childcare provider. If the student is eligible for other sources of childcare support such as the government funded 15 or 30 hours per week free early years childcare, these must be used to cover the required sessions before funding will be provided by Learner Support.

7. EMERGENCY SUPPORT

A student may receive emergency financial support following an interview with a nominated member of staff to establish need. Sums paid will vary and may or may not be repayable but will be the minimum required to meet the need. For emergency help a student may not have to meet the support fund financial eligibility criteria. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

8. ASYLUM SEEKERS

Asylum Seekers aged 16-18 are eligible to access the discretionary hardship funds in the form of course related books, equipment and trip costs or a travel pass but they must not

be given support in the form of cash unless they are an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child (UASC).

This support will be offered at relevant points during the academic year and be subject to continuing satisfactory attendance of 90% (including authorised absences) across all parts of their programme. Asylum Seekers aged 19+ are eligible to receive cash payments as well as support in kind, this is at the Colleges discretion.

9. CARE TO LEARN

Childcare financial help for 16-19 year old learners is provided by a Government scheme called <u>Care to Learn</u> and must be applied for separately if you are under 20 years of age and have childcare responsibilities. Nominated staff in each College will assist learners with these applications and will complete the monthly attendance reports. In exceptional circumstances the 16-19 Bursary fund may provide further help with childcare costs for those young parents in receipt of Care to Learn whose costs exceed the weekly maximum rates for that scheme.

10. HARDSHIP FUND

The Hardship Fund will be used to support students who do not meet the eligibility criteria for any of the other funds but is in financial hardship and needs support. These funds are limited and will be available to students on a first come first served based. This fund will be managed by Newcastle College Learner Support Fund Team.

11. EQUIPMENT

Learners can receive equipment as part of their support. If this equipment has a value of £100 or more, learners must return this equipment. College's must monitor equipment that is given out and ensure it is returned at the end of the learners learning aim.

12. OVERPAYMENTS

NCG reserves the right to amend learner support based upon changes to timetables available at the initial point of assessment; overpayment of funds may be recovered from the learner.

13. ADMINISTRATION COSTS

NCG will use 5% of each fund allocation for administration costs (excluding 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary).

14. HOW TO APPLY

Learners can apply by completing an online application and uploading all necessary household income evidence via a link on the College's website.

15. APPEALS

If a student wishes to appeal a decision regarding support, the appeal should be made to the college nominated staff within 7 working days of the original decision.

16. PUBLICATION

Group Policy Statements are held centrally on the Group intranet.

NCG - NCG Policies

17. POLICY ASSURANCE

Application of, and compliance with NCG policies, falls within the remit of the Group Business Assurance Team and could, therefore, be subject to review.

18. STATEMENT ON IMPLEMENTATION

Upon approval, this policy will be uploaded to the policy portal and communicated to staff via The Business Round-Up.

19. STATEMENT ON EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

NCG is committed to providing equality of opportunity. Further details or our aims and objectives are outlined in our Equality Diversity Inclusion and Belonging Strategy.

This policy has been assessed to identify any potential for adverse or positive impact on specific groups of people protected by the Equality Act 2010 and does not discriminate either directly or indirectly. In applying this policy, we have considered eliminating unlawful discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and promoting good relations between people from diverse groups.

20. STATEMENT ON CONSULTATION

This policy has been reviewed in consultation with finance colleagues.

VERSIO	VERSION CONTROL											
Version No.	Documentation Section/Page No.	Description Rationale	of	Change	and	Author/Reviewer	Date Revised					
1	New Policy	N/A				Executive Principal South	June 2021					

2	Full Review	Minor amendments.	Finance Manager	April
		Transferred to new template		2024

NCG Learner Support Fund Policy



Appendix 1 - NCG Learner Support Fund Entitlements

16-19 Bursary & 16-19 Vulnerable	Newcastle College	Newcastle Sixth Form	Kidderminster College	West Lancs College	Carlisle College	Lewisham College	Southwark College
<u>Bursary</u>		College					
Tier One – Up to £1	6,190						
Travel Pass	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
	1 miles or more from campus						
Travel Payments	Yes						
•	1 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	1 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	1 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	1 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	1 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	1 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	1 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500
College Bus Service	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Meals	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day				
Essential books, equipment and uniforms	Yes						
Educational Visits	Yes						
Laptop Loan* and Wifi	Yes						

Travel Pass	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
	1 miles or more						
	from campus						
Travel Payments	Yes						
•	1 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	1 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	1 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	1 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	1 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	1 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	1 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500
College Bus Service	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Meals	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day				
Essential books, equipment and uniforms	Yes						
Educational Visits	Yes						
Laptop Loan* & Wifi	Yes						

Tier Three - £25,00	1 - £37,300						
Travel Pass	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	No	No				
Travel Payments	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,500
College Bus Service	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Meals	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day				
Essential books, equipment and uniforms	Yes						
Educational Visits	Yes						
Laptop Loan* & Wifi	No						

All payments made as per the individual college payment schedule.
*Laptop supply is limited and will be assessed on learners individual need.

19+ Discretionary	Newcastle	Newcastle	Kidderminster	West Lancs	Carlisle	Lewisham	Southwark
Learner Support	College	Sixth Form	College	College	College	College	College
Fund & Advanced		College					
<u>Learner Loan</u>							
<u>Bursary</u>							

Tier One – Up to £16,19	90						
Travel Pass	Asylum	N/A	Asylum	Asylum	Asylum	Asylum	Asylum
	Seekers only		Seekers only	Seekers only	Seekers only	Seekers only	Seekers only
	2 miles or more		2 miles or more	2 miles or more			
	from campus		from campus	from campus	from campus	from campus	from campus
Travel Payments	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
-	2 miles or more		2 miles or more	2 miles or more			
	from campus		from campus	from campus	from campus	from campus	from campus
College Bus Service	No	N/A	No	Yes	No	No	No
Meals	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	£4.50 per		£4.50 per	£4.50 per	£4.50 per	£5 per timetabled	£5 per timetabled
	timetabled day		timetabled day	timetabled day	timetabled day	day	day
Books, equipment	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
and uniforms							
Educational Visits	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Laptop Loan* & Wifi	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Exam, accreditation &	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
professional							
membership fees							
Childcare	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Course Fees	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	(in exceptional		(in exceptional	(in exceptional	(in exceptional	(in exceptional	(in exceptional
	circumstances)		circumstances)	circumstances)	circumstances)	circumstances)	circumstances)

Tier Two - £16,191 - £25,000											
Travel Pass	Asylum	N/A	Asylum	Asylum	Asylum	Asylum	Asylum				
	Seekers only		Seekers only								

	2 miles or more		2 miles or more	2 miles or more			
	from campus		from campus	from campus	from campus	from campus	from campus
Travel Payments	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
-	2 miles or more		2 miles or more	2 miles or more			
	from campus		from campus	from campus	from campus	from campus	from campus
College Bus Service	No	N/A	No	Yes	No	No	No
Meals	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	£4.50 per		£4.50 per	£4.50 per	£4.50 per	£5 per timetabled	£5 per timetabled
	timetabled day		timetabled day	timetabled day	timetabled day	day	day
Books, equipment	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
and uniforms							
Educational Visits	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Laptop Loan* & Wifi	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Exam, accreditation &	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
professional							
membership fees							
Childcare	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Course fees	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	(in exceptional		(in exceptional	(in exceptional	(in exceptional	(in exceptional	(in exceptional
	circumstances)		circumstances)	circumstances)	circumstances)	circumstances)	circumstances)

Tier Three - £25,001 - £32,300								
Travel Pass	Asylum	N/A	Asylum	Asylum	Asylum	Asylum	Asylum	
	Seekers only		Seekers only					
	3 miles or more		3 miles or more					
	from campus		from campus					
Travel payments	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	

	3 miles or more		3 miles or more	3 miles or more			
	from campus		from campus	from campus	from campus	from campus	from campus
College Bus Service	No	N/A	No	Yes	No	No	No
Meals	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	£4.50 per		£4.50 per	£4.50 per	£4.50 per	£5 per timetabled	£5 per timetabled
	timetabled day		timetabled day	timetabled day	timetabled day	day	day
Books, equipment	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
and uniforms							
Educational Visits	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Laptop Loan* & Wifi	No	N/A	No	No	No	No	No
Exams, accreditation	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
& professional							
membership fees							
Childcare	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Course fees	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	(in exception		(in exception	(in exception	(in exception	(in exception	(in exception
	circumstances		circumstances	circumstances	circumstances	circumstances	circumstances

All payments made as per the individual college payment schedule. *Laptop supply is limited and will be assessed on learners individual need.