



**Cheshire College
South & West**

Learner Support Fund Policy 2023-24

Key Information	
Policy Reference Number	CCSW - LSF
ELT Post Responsible for Update and Monitoring	Deputy Principal / Deputy CEO
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1. **Aim/Scope**

- 1.1 The College is committed to providing a fair and transparent policy for the distribution of publicly funded bursaries. The policy is designed to be accessible and easily understood by learners, potential learners, staff and parents.
- 1.2 In establishing such a policy, the College takes account of government policy and guidelines.
- 1.3 The fund has been developed to support learners who face a real financial barrier to learning. The College recognises that within the local area associated transport costs and options for travel to and from college are a barrier, and therefore priority is given to this area. The College also recognises the economic and financial environment, and further priority will be given to support meals whilst at College, and access to digital devices.
- 1.4 All funding is subject to maintaining satisfactory levels of attendance, progress and behaviour.
- 1.5 Commercial courses, Higher Education, Waged Apprenticeships, and young people in prison or a young offender's institution or have been released on temporary license for example, day release and Work Based Learning courses cannot be funded through the Learner Support Fund.
- 1.6 This policy will not discriminate either directly or indirectly against any individual on the grounds of gender, race, ethnicity or nationality, sexual orientation, marital status, religion or belief, age, disability, socio-economic status or any other personal characteristic.

2. **Introduction**

- 2.1 The College administers five funds on behalf of the ESFA, the focus of all funds is to support learners who would face a financial barrier remaining or continuing in education. This policy was developed in accordance with Government Guidance and Policy. All funds excluding the 16-19 Enhanced Bursary Fund are limited, therefore applications will only be approved if sufficient funds remain available. Applications must be submitted by Friday 20th October 2023, forms received after this date will be assessed only when funds are available.

3. **Types of Funding Available**

3.1 The 16-19 Bursary Fund

- 3.1.1 This fund is available to learners who are aged between 16-18 years old on the 31 August 2023. Learners aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a discretionary bursary if they are continuing on a study programme, they began aged 16-18 or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (*EHCP*).

3.2 Free College Meals

- 3.2.1 This funding is available to learners who are classed as disadvantaged. Free meals in further education defines disadvantage as learners being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the identified means tested benefits:
 - 3.2.1.1 Income Support
 - 3.2.1.2 Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance
 - 3.2.1.3 Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance (*ESA*)
 - 3.2.1.4 Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - 3.2.1.5 Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
 - 3.2.1.6 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)*)
 - 3.2.1.7 Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
 - 3.2.1.8 Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 for each year (*after tax and not including any benefits they get*).

3.3 The 19+ Discretionary Fund

3.3.1 This fund is available to learners over the age of 19, and on a provision, which is funded by AEB. The fund is divided into two categories:

- 3.3.1.1 hardship funding – general financial support for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners; and
- 3.3.1.2 20+ childcare funding – for learners aged 20 or older on the first day of learning who are at risk of not starting or continuing learning because of childcare.

3.4 The Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund

3.4.1 This fund is available for learners who have secured an Advanced Learner Loan. The funding is divided into three categories:

- 3.4.1.1 financial hardship;
- 3.4.1.2 childcare; and
- 3.4.1.3 classroom assistance for a disability or learning difficulty (*after assessment by College*).

3.5 16-19 Enhanced Bursary Fund

3.5.1 This fund is available to learners to meet one or more of the following conditions:

- 3.5.1.1 in care;
- 3.5.1.2 care leaver;
- 3.5.1.3 in receipt of Income Support/Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves and or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them such as a child or partner; or
- 3.5.1.4 In receipt of 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

3.5.2 Learners eligible for this fund can receive up to £1200 per year if they are participating in a programme of study that lasts 30 weeks or more, a pro rata'd amount is paid to learners on a programme of less than 30 weeks. Consideration on the amount awarded will be taken regarding the number of study hours and the financial need of each learner. Payments will only be backdated a maximum of 4 weeks.

4. Banding and Funding Criteria

4.1 Along with meeting the agreed criteria of each funding stream, learners will be assessed based on their household income. Learners with a household income below £35,000 will be eligible to apply for funding.

4.2 All funds (*excluding the 16-19 Enhanced Bursary Fund*) are limited and completed applications including all required documentation will be assessed on a first come first served basis.

4.3 Learners with a household income of above £35,000 and evidence of exceptional circumstances will be reviewed individually by a panel.

4.4 Support is available towards transport, equipment, DBS, educational visits, meals and associated educational costs. All equipment including books remains the property of Cheshire College and must be returned when the course is completed.

4.5 All funding streams will be reviewed termly, additional funding may be applied, should sufficient funds be able and/or-the learner can demonstrate an ongoing need for increased support.

Banding	Criteria	Travel	Equipment	Educational visits	Childcare (20+only)	Meals	Additional Payment
GB 16-18 only	Meet Conditions of the Enhanced bursary	100% funded	100% Funded.	100% funded Up to £600	100% funded	£4/day	Up to £1200

1 16-18 only	Eligible for FCM or in receipt of pupil premium at school	100% funded	100% funded up to £300	100% funded up to £600	100% funded	£4/day	
2	Household income below £35,000	100% funded	100% funded up to £300	100% funded up to £600	100% funded	£4/day	Termly allowances for 19+
W	Eligible for EMA	100% funded	No funding	No funding	No funding	Subject to meeting eligibility as per 3.2	No Funding

(Table 1: Banding & Funding Criteria)

5. Exam and Tuition Fees

- 5.1 In exceptional circumstances 19+ learners can apply for help with tuition fees and exams fees. Learners can only apply for tuition fees support if they are applying for a Level 1 or 2 (*funded*) course, and their household income is below £35,000.
- 5.2 Learners eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan cannot receive help towards tuition costs.

6. Childcare

- 6.1 20+ learners can apply to the fund for help with childcare payments, the childcare provider must be Ofsted registered. Any learner receiving an Advanced Learner Loan must have their loan approved before funding is released.
- 6.2 If the learner is under 20 years old when they start learning they must apply to Care to Learn for their childcare support if they live in England. You will need to apply online at <http://www.direct.gov.uk/caretolearn>.
- 6.3 Childcare funding is capped at £200/week per child, and £400/week per learner (*for those with more than one child*) up to a maximum of £10,000/academic year. Anything over this amount, is the sole responsibility of the learner.
- 6.4 Learners who receive free government childcare funding are asked to use this allocation towards their course time-tabled hours. Any childcare hours in addition to free entitlement will be funded through the bursary to the childcare provider.
- 6.5 Childcare agreement must be signed by the learner before any funding is released.
- 6.6 Childcare is paid one month in arrears direct to the provider as per College Finance guidelines. If a learner funds the childcare personally then the learner will be reimbursed according to the same payment schedule as per a childcare provider.
- 6.7 Private childcare/child-minder fees will be calculated on 43 weeks which includes half terms, Christmas and Easter. Breakfast and After School Club will be calculated on 36 weeks.
- 6.8 The fund can only cover the costs for time spent in College lectures, and not private study time.
- 6.9 Continued support is subject to satisfactory attendance of all the subjects you enrol on at the College. You MUST ensure your attendance is at least 90% per term. All learner attendance is monitored for continued receipt of the bursary. If funding is withdrawn, the learner will be liable to cover their childcare costs.

7 Equipment, Educational Visits, Books and Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) Check

- 7.1 Equipment (*including core textbooks*) will be purchased on the learner's behalf by the College if it is essential to their course. Any equipment that is bought by the fund for the learner (*uniform etc.*) will be returned to the College at the end of the academic year. Equipment funding is capped at £350 per academic year.
- 7.2 Approved educational visits can be funded up to a maximum of £600 per year. Anything over this amount will be the responsibility of the learner.

- 7.3 Funding is available for DBS costs, where this is a mandatory requirement for their course.
- 7.4 Funding is available to support the cost of applying to university and any associated interviews.
- 7.5 Where learners do not have access to suitable devices at home, laptops will be purchased on the learner's behalf by the College if it is essential to their course.
- 7.6 If an asylum seeker is eligible for provision, you may provide learner support in the form of course-related books, equipment, cash payments or a travel pass.

8 Travel

- 8.1 Travel funding for 16–18-year-olds is capped at £350 per term where there is no public bus or College Coach service available. Discretion may be applied above this rate where there are considerable travel costs.
- 8.2 To be eligible for travel support you must live more than one mile away from your campus of study.
- 8.3 Learners who live in Wales, but also meet the bursary criteria may also apply for transport support.
- 8.4 16-19 learners are only eligible to receive travel support for approved travel passes. These can include College coaches, public bus passes and train passes. Learners will not be funded for fuel costs.
- 8.5 Bus passes will only be replaced once within the academic year at a reduced cost of £25. Learners will be liable for the full cost of the replacement thereafter. These prices vary and are set by the operators.
- 8.6 Discretion may be applied if the travel passes available are not reasonably suitable from the learner's home address/circumstances a termly payment may be made to the learner's bank account.
- 8.7 19+ learners are eligible for funding of both travel passes or car allowance costs.
- 8.8 Students who are attending a work placement as part of their study programme can apply for travel support. Learners and lecturers are encouraged where practicable to arrange a placement that is convenient for the learner to attend.

9 19+ Termly Payments

- 9.1 Termly awards will be made to 19+ learners based on a rate of £200 per term to support additional costs associated with attending full time education. Additional funding may be applied, should sufficient funds be able and/or-the learner can demonstrate an ongoing need for increased support.
- 9.2 Payments will be made at the beginning of the term subject to meeting satisfactory behaviour, progress and attendance.
- 9.3 Termly payments are only available for learners on full time provision.

10 Hardship Awards

- 10.1 Hardship awards are available to help support all learners who experience unexpected financial difficulties or a change of circumstances during their programme of study. All awards are assessed on an individual basis.
- 10.2 Learners must complete a hardship application form and supply three months bank statements and further supporting evidence to apply. Each case will be considered on an individual basis and must be approved by two members of the bursary and transport team. Awards are limited to £500/term.

11 Funding Approval

- 11.1 Application forms will only be assessed when the form has been completed fully and submitted with the required photocopied evidence. All incomplete forms will be returned by post.

- 11.2 All funding is subject to maintaining satisfactory levels of behaviour, attendance and progress.
- 11.3 Applicants will be notified within 15 working days on the outcome of their application.
- 11.4 It is the learner's responsibility to declare any direct payments from the Learner Support Fund to the Department for Work and Pensions.

12 Appeals

- 12.1 If a learner wishes to appeal against the outcome of their application their case will be referred to the Director of Marketing and Schools Partnerships. A written response will be sent to the learner within 10 working days.