



## **LEARNER SUPPORT FUND POLICY**

**2024/2025**

Approved by Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee

**AUTHOR : Director of Learner Services**

**DATE : May 2024**

**VERSION : 2.0**

## **LEARNER SUPPORT FUND POLICY**

### **1 PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Learner Support Fund Policy is to provide a clear set of guidelines to learners, their parent/carers, staff, and other workers within the college community; together with wider stakeholders. The College will discharge learner support funds in line with the relevant funding guidance set out by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Calderdale College receives allocations of funds from the ESFA to help students overcome the individual financial barriers to participation and institutions must ensure the funds are allocated to those who genuinely need them. Different funding streams have different eligibility criteria, which are set out below.

Calderdale College is committed to supporting students who are experiencing financial disadvantage and as such barriers to accessing education. This policy and the accompanying procedure will outline available bursaries, processes for applying, eligibility, evidence requirements and how the funds will be allocated.

The term 'college', where used in this document and appendices, is a generic term that encompasses all sites.

The College reserves the right to amend / cease support detailed in this policy due to changes in the funding rules or changes or requirements from the ESFA. Once the fund is fully allocated it will close to new applications and all funds are delivered on a first come, first served basis to ensure fairness. Fully completed applications only will be assessed.

Learning support funding is intended to help students overcome the individual financial barriers to participation to ensure they achieve the best possible outcomes. To ensure finance is not a barrier to accessing courses and retention and achievement, the College will promote these funds and other sources of financial assistance to help students who are in financial hardship.

Students who may be eligible for support may not automatically receive it, as limited funds are available and can be exhausted. Awards are only given when financial need is demonstrated. In light of this, the College asks students to consider any financial commitments they take on prior to any entitlement being awarded from the student bursary team.

The College complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 when setting the criteria for financial support and does not discriminate against students either directly or indirectly because of their protected characteristics.

## 2 SCOPE

All learners are able to apply on the correct bursary application form available through the “My Calderdale” App. The fund is not open to students who are studying an apprenticeship programme. Applications are then assessed according to the eligibility criteria for the relevant funding stream. The policy clearly defines the eligibility criteria for each bursary type to ensure the College meets the requirements of the funding guidance. There are five available bursaries which are:

- 16-19 Bursary Funding
- 16-19 Free College meals
- Vulnerable Bursary Funding
- 19+ Adult Education Budget Learner Support Funding
- Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Funding

The procedure identifies to learners all the criteria that relates to a particular bursary fund.

## 3 DETAILS OF POLICY

### Introduction

Financial support applications are taken throughout the academic year. The student bursary team will carry out checks at set points over the academic year to ensure accurate allocation of funds. It is acknowledged that in some cases a student’s particular circumstances may lead them to delay their participation in learning or leave their course early, funding is only available to students for the period that they are actually on the college roll and a new application must be submitted each academic year. Support will not be back dated after the October half term break.

Students are requested to provide evidence of their household income as part of their application to ensure they receive their Learning Support Fund (LSF) entitlement. This evidence will be reviewed by the student bursary team when assessing applications, which is a requirement from the ESFA. Evidence will be kept on the college systems.

To ensure applications are assessed in a timely manner, it is important that the application form and supporting evidence are submitted via the “Pay my Student” portal accessed via the “My Calderdale” student App. Delays in providing evidence could impact on students securing funding.

Applications are assessed on a first-come first-served basis.

### Ongoing eligibility for the bursary

To remain eligible for the bursary, students must adhere to all College policies and procedures including the student code of conduct. Attendance is checked at specific payment points throughout the academic year to confirm student’s ongoing eligibility for support. If a student’s attendance drops below expected target, for a period of four weeks or more, the student’s entitlement may be impacted. Students must inform the student bursary team of any change in circumstances.

## Payments to Learners

Wherever possible, students will receive support in kind, rather than cash. Where this is not possible, payments will be made through BACS transfers directly into a student's bank account.

## Audit/Governance

Administration and allocation of funds will be subject to the College's normal governance and audit regimes. Audit guidance is available on the Department for Education website. The College will keep records as evidence as required by the ESFA, for audit purposes. Examples include:

- Copies of income evidence to assess entitlement
- Letters confirming a student's vulnerable status
- Invoices received from childcare providers for childcare costs

## Appeals

Students are advised, in writing, of the College's decision and of the reasons if they are not successful in their application.

If a student is unhappy with the decision, then they can appeal the decision. The student should notify Student Services of their wish to appeal by contacting [Studentservices@calderdale.ac.uk](mailto:Studentservices@calderdale.ac.uk). A panel will be convened. The panel will consist of, a Student Bursary Officer and A manager from Student Services. Following this, if the decision is upheld an appeal can, then be logged with the Director of Learner Services, The Director of Learner Services decision is final.

## **Support for students through the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund**

### Types of Support

The 16-19 bursary fund provides support to help students overcome the financial barriers to participation they face so they can remain in education.

This could include but is not limited to

- Travel
- Essential books, equipment and uniform
- University visits or open days

### Eligibility

To be eligible for 16-19 bursary funding students must:

- Be aged 16-18 years old on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024 or if they are continuing on a programme they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuers)
- Be aged 19 -24 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan
- Satisfy the residency criteria set out in the ESFA funding guidance for 2024/25
- Be studying at a learning provider that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (e.g. OFSTED)
- Provision of learning must be funded by the ESFA or relevant authority, European Social Fund (ESF) or otherwise publicly funded and must lead to a qualification that is accredited by Ofqual or is pursuant to Section 98 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

The bursary application must be completed. Assistance with completing the application is available from Student Finance, appointments for assistance with completing the application during the summer break can be made by emailing [studentservices@calderdale.ac.uk](mailto:studentservices@calderdale.ac.uk)

#### Evidence

The following are examples of appropriate evidence that will be requested on application:

- Letter from the Benefits Agency or Job Centre Plus setting out benefit entitlement (letter should be less than three months old)
- Universal Credit statements covering a three-month period
- Self-assessment tax calculation or certified accounts from previous tax year
- Tax Credit Award Notice for current tax year April 2024 to April 2025 (showing income from previous year)
- Last 3 wage slips from each working adult in the household.

Bank statements **will not** be accepted as evidence. Students are unable to self-certify their receipt of benefits or salary from employment and must provide evidence.

Copies of all documentary evidence will be available on the application portal for audit purposes.

In extreme circumstances when the requested evidence is unavailable, a panel consisting of a Student Finance team member and Student Services Manager can approve a student's application after considering an individual's circumstances. This can also be supported by a curriculum manager or a member of the Safeguarding and Advisor team supporting on a student's behalf if they are aware of financial hardship impacting on their student's participation on their course.

#### **Entitlement**

##### Free Travel to College

If requested then students travel will be funded at the cheapest way possible, this may be by the providing of a bus pass or by payment by BACCs for daily ticket purchases. To qualify for help towards travel a student must live more than 1 mile away from the college site attended.

##### Travelling to College

The College may provide students with a SMART bus pass or identification on the student's ID badge which allows travel on Arriva and / or Stagecoach buses from their home to the College site. The student bursary team will inform students which pass is applicable for their route. It is the student's responsibility to keep this pass throughout the year, for SMART cards. If cards are lost or misplaced the students must apply to the student bursary team for a replacement which will include a fee of £5.00.

#### **Support with Course Equipment / Uniform**

The LSF allows students to apply for financial support with purchasing course related materials that are required to complete their programme of study.

Household Income	£16,191 - £30,000	£30,001 +
Uniform (where appropriate)	Full Cost	Applications may be submitted alongside proof of financial hardship
Course related equipment	Full Cost	Applications may be submitted alongside proof of financial hardship
Discretionary meals	If requested. £2.41 per timetabled day	Applications may be submitted alongside proof of financial hardship
Educational Trips	Applications must be submitted. To be arranged by your tutor.	Applications must be submitted. To be arranged by your tutor.

### Childcare

Students aged 20 and under at the start of their course, may be entitled to support from the Care to Learn Scheme provided by the Government. Further information on this scheme can found on the Government website [Care to Learn](#)

### **Support for students through the Free College Meal Bursary Fund**

#### **Types of Support**

- Free meals entitlement allows the students to purchase a set meal from the College catering facilities
- For student that do not attend the main campus, or it is deemed too far to travel for lunch shopping vouchers will be provided.
- In the event of enforced closures, students will be provided with direct payments via BACS
- In exceptional circumstances, the College will provide shopping vouchers to support the purchase of meals

### Eligibility

- Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a free meal if they are continuing on a programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers') or have an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). These 2 groups of aged 19 plus students can receive a free meal while they continue to attend education (in the case of a 19+ continuer, this must be the same programme they started before they turned 19), as long as their eligibility continues.

## Evidence types

Families must be in receipt of one of the following benefits to be eligible:

- 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)
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- UC with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

Bank statements **will not** be accepted as evidence. Students are unable to self-certify their receipt of benefits or salary from employment and must provide evidence.

Copies of all documentary evidence will be available on the application portal for audit purposes.

If you are experiencing financial hardship and feel that your circumstances are not covered by the above criteria or prescribed allocation, we invite you to make a written application for discretionary support to the student bursary. This application should include a full explanation of why you feel your application should be considered and what you would need funding for and how this is a barrier to your learning.

If you would like assistance with this application, please see any of the Student Adviser Team.

Your application will be reviewed, and you will be informed of the panel decision in writing.

## Support for Students through the Vulnerable Bursary fund - (Students in Care/Care Leavers or defined vulnerable groups)

The Vulnerable Bursary Fund provides support to help students overcome the financial barriers to participation they face so they can remain in education. This is not an expected amount it is based on financial need only. Therefore, it is possible that an amount cannot be claimed, or a limited amount will be available.

### Types of Support

- Students receiving the funds will be assessed on their actual financial need and the amount of support required
- Support costs may include but is not limited to, free travel, free meals, and cost towards course equipment
- Based upon assessment of need there is a possibility of no award or a limited award
- The maximum bursary is up to the value of £1,200 (pro-rated for courses lasting less than 30 weeks) in value

## Eligibility

- Be aged 16 to 18 years old, meet the criteria shown below and have a financial need
- Be enrolled on to a course that is funded by the ESFA and falls within ONE of the following categories:
  - In care
  - Care leaver
  - In receipt of Income Support, or Universal Credit because they are 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 Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right

## Evidence

- For students who are in care, written confirmation of their current or previous looked after status. This must be provided by the relevant local authority
- For students who are in receipt of income support, a copy of their income support or Universal Credit award notice in the student's name. For students in receipt of UC, the College must also be provided with evidence of a tenancy agreement in the student's name, birth certificate or utility bill to confirm identity
- For students receiving UC/ESA and Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments. Evidence of receipt of these benefits must be provided

Bank statements **will not** be accepted as evidence. Students are unable to self-certify their receipt of benefits or salary from employment and must provide evidence.

Copies of all documentary evidence will be available on the "Pay my Student Bursary" application portal for audit purposes.

## Students undertaking Industry Placements

Consideration will be given to students who satisfy the eligibility criteria as set out above and are undertaking industry placements to ensure that the LSF fund is used to remove barriers to participation.

## Support for students through the 19+ adult education budget learning support fund

### **Types of Support**

The 19+ bursary fund provides support to help students overcome the financial barriers to participation they face so they can remain in education.

This could include but is not limited to

- Childcare
- Equipment and uniform
- IT Resources
- Meals allowance
- Travel



Consideration will be given to any written request for additional support that will remove a financial barrier to learning.

### Eligibility

- Be aged 19 or over on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024 and not be eligible for any awards from the 16-19 Bursary fund
- Satisfy the residency criteria set out in the ESFA funding guidance for 2024/25
- Be studying at a learning provider that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (e.g. OFSTED)
- Provision of learning must be funded by the ESFA or ESFA or relevant authority, European Social Fund (ESF) or otherwise publicly funded and must lead to a qualification that is accredited by Ofqual or is pursuant to Section 98 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000

### Evidence

- 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)
- 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

In extreme circumstances when the requested evidence is unavailable, a panel consisting of the Student Services manager and a member of the bursary team can approve a student's application after considering an individual's circumstances. This can also be supported by a curriculum manager supporting on a student's behalf or a member of the safeguarding and welfare team if they are aware of financial hardship impacting on their student's participation on their course.

Bank statements **will not** be accepted as evidence. Students are unable to self-certify their receipt of benefits or salary from employment and must provide evidence.

Copies of all documentary evidence will be available on the "Pay my Student Bursary" application portal for audit purposes.

### Entitlement Travelling to College

The College provides support towards bus travel to and from college on the day's attendance is required. All payments are made on a monthly basis and are based on 75% of the daily ticket or Student M card whichever is cheapest.

Travel will not be paid to students who live less than 1 mile from their site of study.

Assistance is **not** available to cover fuel costs

## Childcare

- Students aged 20 years and above, on or before 31st August 2024, may be eligible for support with childcare costs up to £55 per day.
- The College notes that some eligible learners can receive free education and childcare for 2-year-olds through Government-funded nursery provision. Some eligible learners can receive free education and childcare for 3–4-year-olds from 15 hours or 30 hours of government funded nursery provision per week, both of which will be taken into consideration when allocating a bursary amount
- The childcare provider must be registered with Ofsted and complete a childcare form before the support can commence
- The contract the student has for childcare is with the childcare provider and NOT with the college Financial assistance for childcare is only available in accordance with your timetable. If you use the childcare outside your timetabled sessions, you will be liable for the payment for those sessions.
- All payments are made direct to the childcare provider on receipt of their invoice. Childcare will not be payable if another parent/guardian is available and able to look after the child. LSF does not pay for childcare registration fees. Retainers for College holidays, (where applicable) are paid at half the agreed fee, with the exception of one Christmas week in December and the summer break, where no fees are payable by LSF.
- Please understand that the student is responsible for childcare fees which have not been agreed by the student bursary team
- Students will be required to provide evidence of parental responsibility for the child/children they are claiming childcare support for, we will need to see evidence of receipt of Child Benefit and the child's full birth certificate.

## Support with Course Equipment and Uniform

The LSF allows students to apply for financial support with purchasing course related materials that are required to complete their programme of study.

## Meals Allowance

Only available if you are aged 19-24 in receipt of an Education and Health Care (EHCP) plan (apprentices not included).

Household Income	£16,191 - £30,000	£30,001+
Travel allowance	75% of daily bus costs or 75% of the cost of a M card (whichever is cheapest)	Applications may be submitted alongside proof of financial hardship.
Childcare	<b>£55.00</b> per child per day - <b>£38.00</b> per session for a nursery <b>£40.00</b> per child per day - <b>£28.00</b> per session for a child-minder <b>£10.00</b> per child per day for before school care <b>£16.00</b> per child per day for after school care	Up to 50% at a maximum of £27 per day, per child of childcare costs paid for timetabled and

		<p>attended college days.</p> <p>Applications for further support may be submitted alongside proof of financial hardship.</p>
Course related Equipment/Uniform	Your tutor will advise you about any essential equipment you need for your course. If you require support with these costs you may apply for support up to 75% of the costs, you can if needed apply for a stationary grant of up to £25.	Applications may be submitted alongside proof of financial hardship.
Meal Allowance	Only available if you are aged 19-24 in receipt of an Education and Health Care (EHCP) plan (apprentices not included).	

If you are experiencing financial hardship and feel that your circumstances are not covered by the above criteria or prescribed allocation, we invite you to make a written application for discretionary support to the student bursary. This application should include a full explanation of why you feel your application should be considered and what you would need funding for and how this is a barrier to your learning. Your application will be reviewed, and you will be informed of the panel decision in writing.

### **Support for students through the Adult Learner Loan Bursary Fund**

Students who have been approved for the Advanced Learner Loan from the Student Loans Company could be entitled to support with course equipment, uniform and childcare. For these students it is imperative that the loan is agreed and in place, to enable access to these funds.

If your application is successful and you are in receipt of any state benefits, it is your responsibility to inform the Department for Work and Pensions about any learner support you receive from us, as the learner support payment may affect your eligibility for some state benefits.

#### Conditions

Applications will be accepted until the end of the academic year 2024/25 or until funds have been fully allocated, whichever is sooner. However, submission of an application for this support does not mean an automatic entitlement to funding and decisions are at the discretion of the college which will consider available funding. It is recommended that students apply early for any assistance with support from this fund as the amount of funding is limited.

No bursary funding will be released until you have applied directly to the Student Loans Company and your loan is approved. Your National Insurance Number must be validated by the Student Loans Company.

If you fail to provide the correct evidence to the Student Loans Company and your Loan is not approved within a reasonable time, we will deem your application as unsuccessful, and any costs incurred from a childcare provider or for essential course materials or uniform will be your sole responsibility.

Types of Support may include but is not limited to:

- Childcare
- Uniform

#### Eligibility

- Be aged 19 or over on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024
- Learners must be studying an eligible Level 3 to 6 Further Education (FE) course and accessing the Advanced Learner Loan from the Student Loans Company.
- Learners must satisfy the residency criteria set out in the Advanced learning loan funding rules for 2024/2025

#### Evidence

- 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)
- 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

Bank statements **will not** be accepted as evidence. Students are unable to self-certify their receipt of benefits or salary from employment and must provide evidence.

Copies of all documentary evidence will be available on the “Pay my Student Bursary” portal for audit purposes.

#### Entitlement to Childcare

- Students aged 20 years and above, on or before 31st August 2024, may be eligible for support with childcare costs up to £55 per day.
- The college notes that some eligible learners can receive free education and childcare for 2-year-olds through Government-funded nursery provision. Some eligible learners can receive free education and childcare for 3–4-year-olds from 15 hours or 30 hours of Government funded nursery provision per week, both of which will be taken into consideration when allocating a bursary amount.
- The childcare provider must be registered with Ofsted and complete a childcare form before the support can commence.
- The contract the student has for childcare is with the childcare provider and NOT with the College.

- Please understand that the student is responsible for childcare fees which have not been agreed by the student bursary team.
- Students will be required to provide evidence of parental responsibility for the child/children they are claiming childcare support for.

#### Uniform/ Essential Personal Protective Equipment

The bursary allows students to apply for financial support with purchasing course related materials that are required to complete their programme of study.

#### **Household Income**

In order to be eligible for Loans Bursary funding you must provide full and complete evidence of your household income. Details of acceptable evidence can be found on the bursary application form on the College website. If you fail to provide evidence within a reasonable time, we will deem your application unsuccessful, and any costs incurred from a childcare provider or for essential course materials or uniform will be your sole responsibility.

	<b>Household Income £16,191 - £30,000</b>	<b>Household Income £30,001 +</b>
<b>Childcare</b>	Up to 100% at a maximum of £55 per day, per child of childcare costs paid for timetabled and attended college days.	Up to 50% at a maximum of £27 per day, per child of childcare costs paid for timetabled and attended college days.  Applications for further support may be submitted alongside proof of financial hardship.
<b>Uniform</b>	75% of any course related uniform or equipment costs	Applications may be submitted alongside proof of financial hardship.
<b>Travel</b>	75% of daily bus costs or 75% of the cost of a M card (whichever is cheapest)	Applications may be submitted alongside proof of financial hardship.

#### Applications outside of income thresholds prescribed allocations

If you are experiencing financial hardship and feel that your circumstances are not covered by the above criteria or prescribed allocation, we invite you to make a written application for discretionary support to the student bursary. This application should include a full explanation of why you feel your application should be considered and what you would need funding for and how this is a barrier to your learning.

If you would like assistance with this application, please see any of the Student Bursary Team or a Student Advisor

Your application will be reviewed and you will be informed of the panel decision in writing.

#### 4. Policy Review

Change(s) Made			Reason for Change		
Review Date	Reviewed by:	Initial Approval by:	Final Approval by:	Next Review Date:	Review Period
May 2024	Director of Learner Services	Senior Leadership Team	Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee	May 2025	1 year

#### 5. Equality Impact Assessment

First Assessment Conducted by:	Date:	Final/Approved Assessment Conducted by:	Date:
Director of Learner Services	May 2024	EDI Co-Ordinator	May 2024

#### 6. Publication

Audience:	Published:
Students Parents/Carers Staff	College Website