

Policy Title	NCG Group Learner Support Fund Policy
Policy Category	Compliant
Owner	Executive Principal South
Group Executive Lead	Chief Finance Officer
Date Written	May 2023
Considered By	N/A
Approved By	Executive Board
Date Approved	June 2023
Equality Impact Assessment	The implementation of this policy is not considered to have a negative impact on protected characteristics
Freedom of Information	This document will be available through the Groups Publication Scheme.
Review Date	June 2024
Policy Summary	NCG Learner Support Fund policy for 2023/24. This policy sets out the rules which all NCG colleges must follow in supporting learners with financial support. There is now this 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.

Applicability of Policy	Consultation Undertaken	Applicable To
Newcastle	Yes	Yes
Newcastle Sixth Form	Yes	Yes
Carlisle	Yes	Yes
Kidderminster	Yes	Yes
Lewisham	Yes	Yes
West Lancashire	Yes	Yes
Southwark	Yes	Yes
Professional Services	Yes	Yes

Linked Documents	
Document Title	Relevance
16-19 bursary fund guide 2023 to 2024 academic year	Funding rules and guidance
ESFA funded adult education budget (AEB): funding and performance management rules 2023 to 2024	Funding rules and guidance

## **1. Purpose**

This policy sets out the eligible criteria and entitlements which NCG colleges 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.

## **2. Background**

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

## **3. Scope**

This policy is to outline the financial support that can be awarded to eligible students in the 2023/24 academic year, from the following discretionary fund bursaries:

- 16-19 Discretionary Bursary Fund.
- 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary Fund.
- 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. College 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.

Learners who do not demonstrate behaviours in line with the student code of conduct may have their support cancelled.

The Learner Support Funds 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 including Industry placements up to a maximum of £1,500.

#### **4. 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 2023.
- Aged 19 or over at 31 August 2023 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Aged 19 or over at 31 August 2023 and continuing on a study programme they began aged 16-18 ('19+ continuers').
- Meet the residency criteria in ESFA 2023/24 academic year funding regulations for post 16 provision.
- Be participating in provision funded by ESFA.
- An accompanied asylum seeker who has not had their application for asylum refused.
- A member of a household whose gross income is below £32,300, 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 £32,300.

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.

#### **5. 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.

## **6. Free Meals in further education**

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 (HMRC)).
- 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).

## **7. 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 2023.
- 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 / Devolved Authority funding and performance management rules 2023/24 or the Advanced Learner Loan funding rules.
- An asylum seeker who has legally been in the UK for six months or longer while their claim is being considered by the Home Office, and no decision on their claim has been made.
- In 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 2023.
- 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 2023/24 or the Advanced Learner Loan funding rules 2023/24.
- 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 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.
- 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.

## **8. 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.

## **9. 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.

## **10. Care to Learn**

Childcare costs for learners aged 16-19 will be met via the 'Care to Learn' national scheme. Nominated staff in each College will assist learners with these applications and will complete the monthly attendance reports.

## **11. 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.

## **12. 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.

### **13. 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.

### **14. Administration Costs**

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

### **15. Covid-19**

Support provided to learners may change in-year as a result of the exceptional circumstances due to coronavirus (COVID-19). For example, where it may not be financially viable to provide a travel pass at the commencement of the 2023/24 academic year, cash payments may be made as an alternative, which will be calculated based upon travel company ticket costs and campus timetabled sessions. Where in-year it is identified that a travel pass is more financially viable, payments may stop and travel passes purchased for learners. NCG will provide support to learners based on what is considered to be the most financially viable, to ensure that funds are used effectively and can reach as many eligible learners as possible.

We may publish further updates to this policy due to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) and the updated guidance from the ESFA.

### **16. How to apply**

Each college within NCG has an application form which learners are required to complete and submit, with evidence to the College nominated staff. Please see the college websites for details.

### **17. 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.

### **18. Publication**



Group Policy Statements are held centrally on the Group intranet.

[NCG - NCG Policies](#)

## **19. 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.



### Appendix 1 - NCG Learner Support Fund Entitlements

<b>16-19 Bursary &amp; 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary</b>	Newcastle College	Newcastle Sixth Form College	Kidderminster College	West Lancs College	Carlisle College	Lewisham College	Southwark College
Tier One – Up to £16,190							
Travel Pass	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	No	No
Travel Payments	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,000	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500
College Bus Service	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Meals	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day
Essential books, equipment and uniforms	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Educational Visits	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
HE Interviews and Open days	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Laptop Loan* and Wifi	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

<b>Tier Two - £16,191 - £25,000</b>							
Travel Pass	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	No	No
Travel Payments	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,000	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500	Yes 2 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500
College Bus Service	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Meals	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day
Essential books, equipment and uniforms	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Educational Visits	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
HE Interviews and Open days	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Laptop Loan* & Wifi	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

<b>Tier Three - £25,001 - £32,300</b>							
Travel Pass	Yes 3 miles or more from campus	Yes 3 miles or more from campus	Yes 3 miles or more from campus	Yes 3 miles or more from campus	Yes 3 miles or more from campus	No	No
Travel Payments	Yes 3 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500	Yes 3 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500	Yes 3 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500	Yes 3 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500	Yes 3 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £2,000	Yes 3 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500	Yes 3 miles or more from campus Up to a max of £1,500
College Bus Service	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Meals	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day
Essential books, equipment and uniforms	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Educational Visits	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
HE Interviews and Open days	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Laptop Loan* & Wifi	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

All payments made as per the individual college payment schedule.

\*Laptop supply is limited and will be assessed on learners individual need.



<b><u>19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund &amp; Advanced Learner Loan Bursary</u></b>	Newcastle College	Newcastle Sixth Form College	Kidderminster College	West Lancs College	Carlisle College	Lewisham College	Southwark College
<b>Tier One – Up to £16,190</b>							
Travel Pass	Asylum Seekers only 2 miles or more from campus	N/A	Asylum Seekers only 2 miles or more from campus	Asylum Seekers only 2 miles or more from campus	Asylum Seekers only 2 miles or more from campus	Asylum Seekers only 2 miles or more from campus	Asylum Seekers only 2 miles or more from campus
Travel Payments	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	N/A	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	Yes 2 miles or more from campus
College Bus Service	No	N/A	No	No	No	No	No
Meals	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	N/A	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day
Books, equipment and uniforms	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Educational Visits	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
HE Interviews and Open days	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Laptop Loan* & Wifi	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Exam, accreditation & professional membership fees	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Childcare	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Course Fees	Yes (in exceptional circumstances)	N/A	Yes (in exceptional circumstances)	Yes (in exceptional circumstances)	Yes (in exceptional circumstances)	Yes (in exceptional circumstances)	Yes (in exceptional circumstances)

<b>Tier Two - £16,191 - £25,000</b>							
Travel Pass	Asylum Seekers only 2 miles or more from campus	N/A	Asylum Seekers only 2 miles or more from campus	Asylum Seekers only 2 miles or more from campus	Asylum Seekers only 2 miles or more from campus	Asylum Seekers only 2 miles or more from campus	Asylum Seekers only 2 miles or more from campus
Travel Payments	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	N/A	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	Yes 2 miles or more from campus	Yes 2 miles or more from campus
College Bus Service	No	N/A	No	No	No	No	No
Meals	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	N/A	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day
Books, equipment and uniforms	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Educational Visits	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
HE Interviews and Open days	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Laptop Loan* & Wifi	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Exam, accreditation & professional membership fees	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Childcare	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Course fees	Yes (in exceptional circumstances)	N/A	Yes (in exceptional circumstances)	Yes (in exceptional circumstances)	Yes (in exceptional circumstances)	Yes (in exceptional circumstances)	Yes (in exceptional circumstances)

<b>Tier Three - £25,001 - £32,300</b>							
Travel Pass	Asylum Seekers only 3 miles or more from campus	N/A	Asylum Seekers only 3 miles or more from campus	Asylum Seekers only 3 miles or more from campus	Asylum Seekers only 3 miles or more from campus	Asylum Seekers only 3 miles or more from campus	Asylum Seekers only 3 miles or more from campus
Travel payments	Yes 3 miles or more from campus	N/A	Yes 3 miles or more from campus	Yes 3 miles or more from campus	Yes 3 miles or more from campus	Yes 3 miles or more from campus	Yes 3 miles or more from campus
College Bus Service	No	N/A	No	No	No	No	No
Meals	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	N/A	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £4.50 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day	Yes £5 per timetabled day
Books, equipment and uniforms	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Educational Visits	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
HE Interviews and Open days	No	N/A	No	No	No	No	No
Laptop Loan* & Wifi	No	N/A	No	No	No	No	No
Exams, accreditation & professional membership fees	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Childcare	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Course fees	Yes (in exception circumstances)	N/A	Yes (in exception circumstances)	Yes (in exception circumstances)	Yes (in exception circumstances)	Yes (in exception circumstances)	Yes (in exception circumstances)

All payments made as per the individual college payment schedule.

\*Laptop supply is limited and will be assessed on learners individual need.