

GROUNDWORK

CHANGING PLACES
CHANGING LIVES



R2W – Bursary Policy 26/27 GWSNT – COL27

This policy applies to all Route2Work learners and staff.

Aims and scope

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

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries and this policy refers to both:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups
- Discretionary bursaries

This policy aims to:

- Set out clear and transparent processes for the use and allocation of 16 to 19 bursary funds
- Make sure that bursary funds are administered appropriately and fairly, with due regard to the Equality Act 2010
- Make clear to parents/carers and learners the type of support that is available and how to apply for it
- Make clear to parents/carers and learners the attendance and behaviour conditions for receiving the funds

Guidance

This policy is based on advice from the Department for Education (DfE) on the [16 to 19 bursary fund for the 2026 to 2027 academic year](#).

Definitions

- 'In care' is defined as: children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis ([section 20](#) of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order ([section 31](#) of the Children Act 1989)
- 'Looked after child' is defined as: a child in the care of a local authority or who is provided with accommodation by the authority in the exercise of any functions for more than 24 hours ([section 22](#) of the Children Act 1989)
- 'Care leaver' is defined as:
 - A young person aged 16 or 17 who was previously looked after for a period of at least 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to at least 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16 (they can have entered care at any age, but they must have spent at least 13 weeks in care after their 14th birthday before leaving after the age of 16), or
 - A young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to turning 18 for a period of at least 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to at least 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16

Roles and responsibilities

The governing board

The governing board has overall responsibility for:

- Approving this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy
- Monitoring the implementation of this policy
- Ensuring compliance with relevant requirements

The Head

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Making sure that staff are familiar with this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy
- Making sure the policy is being applied consistently
- Setting eligibility criteria for bursary funding and making sure these comply with the Equality Act 2010
- Promoting awareness of the 16 to 19 bursary fund to prospective applicants and their parents/4.3 Bursary panel

The bursary panel is responsible for reviewing applications and supporting evidence in accordance with this policy. The panel consists of Head, Deputy and Business Manager. The business manager is responsible for ensuring that the bursary funding is accounted for accurately.

Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to notify staff or the headteacher of:

- Any concerns or queries regarding this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy
- Any change in circumstances that might affect eligibility for bursary funding

Learners

Learners / parents / carers are responsible for meeting the conditions attached to the receipt of any support from the bursary funding.

How we use the bursary fund

Financial support is available to eligible learners from the 16 to 19 bursary fund. See below for details of our eligibility criteria.

The fund is intended to support learners aged 16 to 19 in overcoming specific financial barriers to participation so they can remain in education.

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups; and
- Discretionary bursaries

We use the fund to provide learners with support to fund items the learner would otherwise need to buy to participate:

- Books
- Equipment
- Specialist Clothing
- Emergency Meal

We will provide support for learners from the bursary fund by making payments in kind where possible.

The bursary fund is not for non-education related costs. For example, it will not be provided for:

- General living costs
- Non-essential extra-curricular activities
- Any learning support and pastoral services that we provide

The bursary fund may be used to provide exceptional further help with childcare costs if the costs exceed the [Care to Learn](#) scheme's weekly maximum rates. Childcare provision must meet Care to Learn scheme eligibility rules, and evidence will be required that the maximum amount is already paid through that scheme and a top up is required. Any top up will be made in line with Care to Learn funding rules and go directly to the childcare provider, not the learner.

Eligibility criteria for the 16 to 19 bursaries

Please note: the following eligibility criteria will be assessed **in addition** to the individual learner's actual financial needs. This means there is no guarantee of funding.

- No learner will automatically be awarded an amount of funding without an assessment of the level of actual financial need they have
- Funding provided to each eligible learner is based on their actual participation needs (supported by evidence) and not a flat or fixed-rate payment that does not reflect the actual costs they face
- Learners with no participation costs will not receive funding

Age

To be eligible for either bursary in the 2026 to 2027 academic year, learners must be at least 16 years old but under 19 years old on 31 August 2026.

Learners aged 19 or over are eligible only for a discretionary bursary if they:

- Are continuing on a study programme or course that they began when they were aged 16 to 18 years old (19+ continuers), or
- Have an education, health and care (EHC) plan

Learners aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for defined vulnerable groups.

Learners aged under 19 enrolled on higher education qualifications are not eligible for support from the 16 to 19 bursary fund.

Eligible education provision

The Learners' provision must be subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (e.g. Ofsted). The provision must also fall into 1 of these groups:

- Funded directly by the DfE, or by the DfE via a local authority
- Otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including level 3) that is accredited by Ofqual or is on the DfE's [list of qualifications approved for funding](#)
- Non-employed learners aged 16 to 19 who are participating in a King's Trust Team Programme

Learners are not eligible if:

- They are on an apprenticeship programme
- They are participating in any waged training

Learners who are studying via distance learning are not likely to require financial help from the bursary fund. If they do require financial help, we will provide support in kind, such as a travel pass to attend exams. Details of this shall be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Residency

Learners must meet the residency criteria in the [DfE funding rules for 16 to 19 provision](#).

Asylum seekers

Accompanied asylum seeking children (under 18 with an adult relative or partner), and asylum seekers aged 18 and above are entitled to education but are not entitled to public funds. If necessary, they can apply to the Home Office for suitable housing and cash for essentials.

We will provide in-kind support such as books, equipment and a travel pass to asylum-seeking young people who have not had asylum refused.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are:

- The responsibility of the local authority
- To be treated as 'looked after' children
- Eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups, where they have a financial need

When these learners reach 18 years old, we will consider their immigration status. They will still be eligible for a bursary as a learner from a defined vulnerable group if the asylum claim is in their favour and will be treated as a 'care leaver' until they reach the upper age limit.

Bursaries for young people in defined vulnerable groups

Learners with a financial need, who meet 1 of the following 4 criteria below, in addition to the criteria outlined above, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups.

The defined vulnerable groups are learners who are:

- In care
 - Note: those who are privately fostered are not classed as looked after and are not eligible for the bursary for vulnerable groups
- Care leavers
 - Note: where a young person has left the care of the local authority via achieving permanence through an order, such as a Special Guardianship Order, they are a care leaver. They must meet the definition of a 'care leaver' in full (see section 3 of this policy) to be eligible for help from the bursary for vulnerable groups
- Receiving Income Support (IS) or Universal Credit (UC) 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
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) in their own right, as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right
 - Note: learners must be in receipt of DLA or PIP and ESA or UC to be eligible. Receipt of DLA or PIP alone does not meet the criteria

UC is replacing some benefits for new claimants, including IS and income-related ESA, so current and future young people aged 16 to 18 will not be in receipt of 'legacy' benefits. However, learners aged 19 to 25 and funded from the 16 to 19 budget (such as learners with an EHC plan) may still receive 'legacy' benefits.

Learners will be funded to reflect the amount of support they need to participate based on an assessment of the actual participation needs and costs they have.

Learners who meet the criteria for a bursary for vulnerable groups are not automatically entitled to a bursary.

Learners will not receive the bursary if they do not have any actual financial need (for example, because their financial needs are met from other sources and/or because they have no relevant costs). Should we refuse the application on this basis, we will discuss this with the learner and their support worker/parent/carer where applicable.

Where a bursary is provided, the funds will generally be up to £1,200 per year for study programmes lasting 30 weeks or more. When calculating the amount, cases will be looked at individually and the outcome based on a particular learner's needs. Learners will only receive the amount they actually need to participate and will not automatically receive £1,200 if they do not need the full amount.

We can use our discretion, on a case-by-case basis, to provide more than £1,200 per year for a learner who meets the criteria for a bursary for vulnerable groups if it is necessary, in all the circumstances, for the learner to remain in education. Any such additional payment will be paid either from the college's discretionary bursary allocation or the college's own funds.

If a learner's study programme lasts for less than 30 weeks, this will be considered in the assessment for the bursary amount provided as they may not need as much financial support as those on longer programmes. We will also consider the number of hours involved in a learner's study programme when deciding the correct bursary amount to ensure it is appropriate.

We will review each learner's eligibility position each academic year. Learners will only continue to receive a bursary for vulnerable groups if they continue to satisfy the criteria.

Application and payment process

Applications

Applications should be submitted by **2nd October 2026** to allow enough time for our college to assess the overall level of demand and make discretionary awards on a fair basis. This date will be clearly stated on the application form.

However, we acknowledge that learners' circumstances may change and therefore the application process will remain open for the whole college year.

Applicants will be notified in writing (either via email or via letter) whether their application has been successful, together with the amount of funding awarded. If a learner wishes to appeal the outcome of their application for a bursary, they must follow the college's complaints procedure.

Any enquiries about the application process should be directed to college office by telephone 0191 4241580 or via email R2W.Admin@groundwork.org.uk

Evidence

All applications for 16 to 19 bursaries must be supported by appropriate evidence, which we will verify. Examples of acceptable evidence we may request are:

- A copy of the UC or IS award notice from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and/or evidence of receipt of DLA or PIP, in the learner's name
- Documents such as a tenancy agreement in the learner's name, a child benefit receipt, birth certificate or utility bills
- Written confirmation of the learner's current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority

Payment process

Payment will be made in-kind into the learner's bank account on receipt of evidence of the purchase i.e. retail receipt or invoice.

Conditions for the receipt of bursary payments

Payments of the bursary are conditional on learners meeting the following conditions in relation to their standards of attendance and behaviour:

- Attendance above 90%
- Receipts or expenditure and purchases on receipt of evidence of the purchases i.e. retail receipt or invoice

All learners are required to sign a declaration confirming that they agree to these conditions.

Learners who fail to meet these conditions may have their payment withheld, but we will always take learners' individual circumstances into consideration. This includes considering the impact on attendance that might be caused by illness, caring responsibilities or other exceptional circumstances.

If learners have received in-kind support such as equipment, they will be asked to return these if they fail to meet the conditions.

We will stop payments where learners have decided to withdraw from a study programme.

We reserve the right to take back money from learners where it is not spent for the reasons it was awarded.

We will consider the impact of such an action on the individual learner before taking a final decision to do so, and any decision will be confirmed to the learner in writing.

If we find evidence that a learner or parent/carer has knowingly submitted misleading or fraudulent information, resulting in the learner receiving a bursary they were not entitled to, we will attempt to recover the overpayment from the learner. Any instances of significant fraud will be reported to the DfE.

Change in circumstances

If there are changes in circumstances that may affect eligibility for a bursary, applicants and/or parents/carers must notify the college without delay.

Record keeping and audit

The college will maintain comprehensive and accurate records relating to the 16 to 19 bursary fund. These records will be kept securely and be readily available for audit purposes. Records will include, but are not limited to:

- Copies of application forms and supporting evidence
- Proof that learners meet eligibility criteria
- Records of 'zero bursary' learners
- Details of assessment decisions and rationale for awards
- Records of all payments made to learners, including dates, value and purpose
- Copies of documents signed by learners to give formal agreement to the conditions of payment
- Evidence of learner's attendance and progress monitoring
- Records relating to emergency meal and travel support (including the number of learners supported, the value and reason for support, and signed confirmations from learners)

Records will be retained for 6 academic years after the end of the academic year in which the learner completed their programme.

Unspent funds

Funding for bursary funding cannot be carried forward by the college for more than 1 year. Unspent funding must be reported to the DfE by the college using the [customer help centre](#), specifying the amount of funding and the year(s) it relates to, no later than 31 March each year. The DfE will recover all unspent funds.

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Head and approved by the governing board.

Complaints or appeals

Where any learner or parent is unhappy with how we have managed their application for bursary funding or the support that has been provided, they are free to make a complaint or appeal as per the college's complaints policy.

Policy review

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Version Control

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