



Education & Skills  
Funding Agency



# DurhamLearn

## 16-19 Bursary Fund Policy 2023/24

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## Aim of this Policy

The 16-19 Bursary Fund administered by Durham County Council's DurhamLearn service provides financial support to help learners overcome the specific financial barriers they face to participation so they can remain in education.

There are two types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- bursaries for defined vulnerable groups (aged 16 and under 19)
- discretionary bursaries which institutions award using policies they set, in line with ESFA funding rules (aged 16-19 and 19-24 with EHCP in place)

All applications must be made using the Bursary Application Form (DLBF001) and will be considered on an individual basis.

## Eligibility Criteria: All Bursaries

Learners must meet the age, type of education provision and residency criteria to be eligible for help from the bursary fund, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2023-to-2024-academic-year/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2023-to-2024-academic-year#eligibility-criteria-all-bursaries> and evidence to support eligibility will be collected from the learner on application to the fund.

## Eligibility Criteria: Bursaries for Young People in Defined Vulnerable Groups (aged 16-19 only)

Learners who meet the criteria, and who have a financial need, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups. The defined groups reflect that these learners are unlikely to be receiving financial assistance from parents or carers, so may need a greater level of support to enable them to continue to participate. Learners will be awarded the amount of support they need to participate based on an assessment of the types of costs they have.

This policy follows statutory guidance for the provision for young people (**aged 16-19 only**), meeting the criteria of the following identified groups:

- **in care** (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). Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 defines the term 'looked after child'). This also includes a young person placed with a foster carer by the local authority, including where the foster carer is on the books of an independent fostering agency. A child who is privately fostered (in other words, a private arrangement is made between the parent and the person who will care for the child) is not classed as a looked after child and is not eligible for the bursary for vulnerable groups.
- **care leavers** (a young person aged 16 and 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16; or a young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks

consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16

- 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 (PIP) in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right

UC has now fully rolled out and so young people aged 16 to 18 will no longer be in receipt of the other benefits listed above, ie Income Support and Employment and Support Allowance. However, students aged 19 to 25 and funded as 16 to 19 (19+ continuers and those with an EHCP) may still be in receipt of those other legacy benefits.

The bursary for vulnerable groups can pay up to £1,200 per year to a learner participating on a programme that lasts for 30 weeks or more if they need that amount of support. Learners on programmes of less than 30 weeks will be paid a pro-rata amount, as appropriate based on an assessment of their actual needs. The actual amount of funding will be determined by DurhamLearn based on guidance provided by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

We may decide that although a young person may be eligible for a bursary because they are in one or more of the defined vulnerable groups, they do not have any actual financial need. This might be because their financial needs are already met and/or because they have no relevant costs. We can refuse a learner's application on this basis.

Learners will need to have 90% attendance, punctuality and appropriate attitude to learning, to qualify for any weekly bursary agreed. The tutor will sign a printed copy of the register to authorise payment, which will then be paid directly into the learners' bank account. Failure to meet the stipulated criteria unless there is an extenuating circumstance, will result in non-payment for that particular week only.

### **Eligibility Criteria: Discretionary Bursaries (aged 16-24 if 19 and over with EHCP)**

Discretionary bursary awards can be made to help learners with the cost of travel, to buy essential books, equipment, or specialist clothing (such as protective overalls, for example). These are items the learner would otherwise need to pay for to allow them to participate. DurhamLearn have agreed the following criteria and allocation, for discretionary bursaries to support a wider group of learners, through their learning with DurhamLearn.

Discretionary financial support will be available to learners whose total household income falls below £22,700 for families with 1 child and £26,300 for families with 2 or more children. Learners will have an opportunity to apply for hardship funding for items to support learning up to a value of £200 per academic year, which would be ordered/arranged through ALSS. No cash alternative is available.

In addition to the above any learner experiencing short term financial hardship, including Emergency Food, can request one off assistance through the Bursary Fund. This can be accessed through their Tutor who would complete the Bursary Fund request form with them or on their behalf.

If learners are requesting items which are not study related, ie clothes, footwear, etc, a price for these items will be agreed with the learner, prior to purchase. Learners can then use the bursary fund issue for whole or part payment of the item. Receipts must be provided for any items purchased before bursary fund for these items is released, only in exceptional circumstances will money be released first, without receipts. Any application of this type must be approved by the Curriculum Manager before being submitted to finance for approval/payment.

Learners and/or their families will need to sign a declaration when they apply for help from the bursary fund to confirm that the evidence they have provided is correct and complete to the best of their knowledge and belief. Learners and their families should be aware that giving false or incomplete information that leads to incorrect/ overpayment may result in future payments being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds being recovered. They should also be aware that this might result in a referral to the police with the possibility of the learner and/or their family facing prosecution.

Learners and/or their families also need to be aware of the impact of receipt of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund on other benefits. Receipt of bursary funding does not affect receipt of other means-tested benefits paid to families, such as IS, Jobseeker's Allowance, Child Benefit, Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit or, generally, UC. If a learner is in receipt of DLA (or PIP) and ESA, parents can no longer receive certain household/family benefits for that child, such as child benefit.

DurhamLearn will not make bursary fund payments to cover living costs. This is out of scope of the bursary fund and any such payments would be subject to the Social Security Amendment (Students and Income-related Benefits) Regulations 2000.

## **How to Apply for 16-19 Bursary Funds**

### **Application process**

In the first instance, learners should obtain an application form from their tutor and return the completed 16-19 Bursary Fund Application Form (along with a completed enrolment form/proof of benefit entitlement/proof of income if applicable) to the tutor at the earliest opportunity. It is a Tutor's responsibility to ensure all required details are provided and that it is submitted to DurhamLearn Administration Department on [durhamlearnadmin@durham.gov.uk](mailto:durhamlearnadmin@durham.gov.uk) who will then forward to the Curriculum Manager for approval.

Each application will be reviewed by the Curriculum Manager and other senior members of staff in the ALSS team and the level of assistance will be determined based on eligibility criteria, personal circumstances and the availability of funds at the time of application.

## **Successful and unsuccessful applications**

All learners who are allocated funding from 16-19 Bursary Funds will be sent written confirmation outlining the terms and conditions for the funding and information about how the money will be paid to them.

Further evidence of eligibility may be requested at this time if not supplied with the original application. From time to time, we may ask to meet with a learner to discuss their claim.

All applicants who are unsuccessful will be advised in writing and given information about how to appeal against the decision.

## **Appeals Process**

We hope that you do not have a complaint about the Service and the 16-19 Bursary Fund. However, if you do, we hope to make it easy for you to express your views and receive a speedy and effective response. The procedure is outlined below.

### **Step 1**

If you dispute a funding decision you may appeal against it. Valid grounds for appeal are:

- You feel the assessment of your application did not take into consideration all previously reported circumstances that may have significantly affected our decision
- You feel that we did not appropriately assess your eligibility or ability to pay
- There are other compelling circumstances that you consider would affect our decision that you could not reasonably report at the time of our assessment of your application
- You feel that we did not carry out the assessment of your application in a fair manner in line with principles of equality and diversity
- You feel that we did not correctly follow administrative procedures or we made a significant mistake in the administrative process

If you wish to appeal, you will need to contact the Curriculum Manager for an Appeals Form. You will need to complete it and return it to them within 14 days of the decision letter, together with relevant supporting evidence.

### **How we will deal with your appeal**

Your appeal will be forwarded to the Adult Learning & Skills Service Bursary Fund Support team who will:

- Confirm whether or not you have grounds to appeal. If you do not have grounds for appeal, we will write to you and tell you the reason for this.
- If you have grounds to appeal, they will fully review your application and supporting evidence you provide.
- They will make a new decision on your eligibility for funds and make and record the decision

- A copy and explanation of the decision will be sent to you in writing. We will use our best endeavours to reply within 15 working days.
- If you are eligible for funds support, your payment will be processed after the decision has been made.

We hope to resolve most appeals at this stage, but if you feel the matter remains unresolved, you can use the ALSS complaints procedure to take the matter further.

## **16-19 Bursary Fund Terms and Conditions**

All learners:

- will be required to attend at least 90% of possible sessions (for example 11 weeks for a 12-week course, 32 weeks for a 36-week course etc). Learners will be contacted regarding any absences
- should complete all of the necessary homework/coursework
- must undergo the assessment and/or sit the examination and/or achieve the necessary outcomes at the end of the course. If they do not, they will be required to reimburse ALSS for the cost of any exam or assessment for which they have been entered
- should notify their Tutor of any change to their social or financial circumstances during the course
- will be required to pay back any monies received from the 16-19 Bursary Fund in the event of leaving the course early
- must return any books and/or equipment (non-perishable) given or purchased on their behalf, at the end of the course