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**Person Responsible:** Vice Principal Curriculum Innovation, Quality & Performance

## LEARNER FUNDING POLICY & PROCEDURES

### APPROVAL/CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

WHO BY	REQ?	DATE	WHO BY	REQ?	DATE
SLT	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	03-07-23	Corporation	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	
Health-Safety Comm.	Y <input type="checkbox"/>		Finance-Resources Comm.	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	
Trades Union	Y <input type="checkbox"/>		Audit Comm.	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	
Education-Standards Comm.	Y <input type="checkbox"/>		Remuneration Comm.	Y <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>POLICY LOCATION:</b> Internal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>(Sharepoint)</b> External <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>(Specify options)</b> WEBSITE					
<b>Related Documents:</b>		•			

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The College recognises the need to widen participation, promote lifelong learning and improve the retention and achievement of Learners by providing them with a comprehensive system of means tested financial support. Learner Support funds should mitigate as far as possible any barriers to learning for those Learners who are experiencing financial hardship.

## 2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY

### 2.1 Purpose

- 2.1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework within which the College's Learner Funds are set, awarded, distributed and monitored.

### 2.2 Scope

- 2.2.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Learner Funding Guidelines 2023/2024(see Appendix 1).

- 2.3.1 This policy applies to the following Learner Funds;

- 16-18 Discretionary Bursary and Vulnerable Bursary Scheme (ESFA)
- 19+ Learner Support Fund (ESFA & WMCA)
- 19+ Advanced Learner Loans Bursary (ESFA & WMCA)
- Care to Learn
- Learner Hardship Fund (FE)
- Learner Opportunity Fund (HE)

## 3. OBJECTIVES

- To ensure that all staff and Learners understand the regulations and eligibility for the different Learner Funds.
- To set appropriate Learner Fund awards and payment levels taking into account the relevant funding agency regulations.

- To ensure that the Learner Fund awards are distributed fairly and consistently and in line with funding agency guidance.

#### **4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY**

4.1 College will ensure that:

- All parties have access to the relevant sections within the policy
- All parties can access appropriate advice and guidance from specialist staff.

#### **5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

5.1 This policy will be reviewed annually and approved by SLT

5.2 Termly audits of the funds will be carried out by the Learner Funding team with an annual external audit carried out in line with college procedures.

5.3 ESFA monitoring returns will be submitted at regular intervals to evidence the distribution of the funds.

#### **6. REVIEW OF POLICY**

6.1 The above policy will be reviewed by the relevant parties annually, or as required.

#### **7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 The College is fully committed to the sustainability agenda.

7.2 All policies take into consideration, at the time of writing and approval with the Senior Leadership Team, their impact on the agenda.

7.3 Policies may not be approved or be amended if they impact significantly on our commitment to improving our carbon footprint and our corporate social responsibility.

#### **8. GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)**

8.1 All policies which are approved by the Senior Leadership Team are in line with our GDPR suite of policies and procedure.

#### **9. LIST OF APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1:** Learner Funding Guidelines 2023/2024

## LEARNER FUNDING GUIDELINES 2023/2024

## 1. Funds &amp; Allocations 2023/2024

FUND	TOTAL
19+ DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUND (ESFA & WMCA)	£450,000*
ADVANCED LEARNER LOANS BURSARY FUND (ESFA & WMCA)	£80,498*
16-18 DISCRETIONARY SUPPORT FUND (ESFA)	£507,265*
FURTHER EDUCATION FREE MEALS	£130,611*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,168,374</b>

\*Includes a 5% administration fee that will need to be deducted from total

## 2. Application Information – All schemes

- In order to qualify for funding Learners must be participating on a course which is ESFA funded.
- Full cost courses (*non-publicly funded courses*) are not eligible for any funding or schemes outlined in this document.
- Applicants must satisfy the residency criteria set out in the relevant funding guidance to receive funding.
- All forms of financial support offered by Coventry College are subject to the availability of funds. Where there are no more funds available the College cannot be held responsible for the costs incurred, nor can the College offer back payments if additional funding is provided by the government.

## Application Process

- Learner funding applications will open on the 15th August 2023 and will close when the available funds have been allocated, thus application deadlines cannot be given. Funds will be issued to those eligible on a first come first serve basis.
- An application must be completed in full and submitted with the required documentation to Learner Services in order for the application to be considered.
- Funds will not be released until all documentary evidence has been received and the application has been fully approved.
- Missing information or documentation requested for all schemes must be received within 2 weeks of the notification sent by the Learner Funding team to provide the additional information or documentation requested will result in an application being withdrawn and funding being allocated to another Learner.

## 3. Demonstrating a Financial Need

Discretion will be applied where appropriate with each case being considered on an individual basis.

In order to assess financial need, proof of household income is required in the form of:

- 2 most recent wage slips if in employment
- DWP Benefits notice, or entitlement letter, or most recent bank statement

- On-line Universal Credit account showing amount received in the last month
- Learners who are self-employed or part of a household where someone is self-employed will be required to provide a recent copy of certified accounts for the business or a recent Working Tax Credit Assessment.
- Learners aged 16-18 living independently or who are estranged from their parents/guardians will be assessed on their individual gross income. 16-18-year olds who live with their parents or guardian will be assessed on the total gross household income.
- Learners aged 19 and over who live with parents or partners will be assessed on the total gross household income.
- Children who are looked after will require a letter from Social Services to evidence their status in order to apply for the vulnerable bursary

#### **4. Learner Eligibility**

Full details of learner eligibility are set out in the Education & Skill Funding Agency Funding Rules.

##### **16-18 Discretionary Bursary (16-18 DB) Eligibility**

- Learners must be aged 16 or over and studying on a further education course funded by the ESFA (for further information please see the Agency Rules).
- Have an annual household income below £26,000 gross
- Learners over 19 and who are in receipt of an Education Health and Care Plan will be funded through the 16-18 Discretionary Bursary.

##### **19+ Learner Support Fund (19+ LSF) Eligibility**

- Learners must be aged 19 or over on 31st August 2023
- Have an annual household income below £26,000 gross
- Settled in the UK and have been ordinarily resident in the UK or EC for the 3 years preceding the start of their course. "Settled" means having either indefinite leave to enter or remain (ILE/R) or having the right of abode in the UK. Right of abode includes the following:
  - Those with British or European Community passports
  - British Overseas Territory Citizens
  - Those whose passports have been endorsed to show they have right of abode in the UK
  - Those who have a certificate of naturalisation or registration as a British Citizen.
  - Asylum Seekers who have legally been in the UK while their claim is being considered by the Home Office for longer than 6 months and no decision has been made. Asylum Seekers who have been declined refugee status and are appealing this decision, where the appeal has been made at least 6 months prior and no decision has been made
  - Those granted refugee status. (Refugees are not required to meet the 3-year residency rule)

##### **16-18 Vulnerable Bursary (16-18 VB) Eligibility**

- Learners must be under 19 on August 31st 2023.
- Learners eligible for a £1,200 Bursary are:
  - Young people in care
  - Care leavers
  - Young people in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit in their own name
  - Young people in receipt of Employment Support Allowance, or Universal Credit, who are also in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in their own name

## Advanced Learner Loan Bursary (ALLB) Eligibility

- Learners must be aged 19 or over on 31st August 2023
- Enrolled on Level 3 or Level 4 funded course
- In receipt of an Advanced Learner Loan
- Have an annual household income below £26,000 gross

### Learners who are not eligible are:

- Learners who have not enrolled onto a programme of study at Coventry College
- If the Learner is eligible but it is more appropriate for them to receive support through learning support for the same purpose.
- Learners on Job Centre Plus (JCP) Work Programmes or similar schemes are not eligible for childcare or travel support if these expenses are covered by JCP.
- Learners who have been released on temporary licence (ROTL) whilst serving custodial sentences.
- Waged Apprentices with learning aims which are wholly identified as funded by other sources.
- Learners studying on Higher Education programmes.

## 5. Type of Support

The expenses incurred by learners for which assistance will be provided and the funds eligible for them are shown in the grid below

	16-18 VB	16-18 DB	19+ LSF	ALLB
Course materials	✓	✓	✓	✓
Non-mandatory, course related trips	✓	✓	✓	✓
Travel Costs	✓	✓	✓	✓
College meals		✓		
Childcare costs			✓	✓
Tuition fees			✓	
Weekly payments	✓			
Laptops	✓	✓		✓

Adult Learners will only be able to apply for childcare **or** tuition fees in addition to travel, equipment and trips due to the level of funding required covering these awards.

## Learning Materials

- Learners approved for funding will have the costs of the materials needed for their course paid for by the college. These funds will be provided directly to the curriculum department who will make the necessary purchases on behalf of the learner.
- Learners who have been approved for learning materials and who have applied to higher education via the UCAS process may receive a refund of their registration fee if there are sufficient funds available in February 2024.

## Educational Visits and Trips

- Payments will only be made for department organised visits which are deemed to be of an educational nature
- Payment will be made for each Learner who is eligible for Learner Funding and has requested to receive support for trips on their application form.
- Learners who apply for funding and become eligible for support after a trip has taken place will not be reimbursed retrospectively for any money they have paid towards a trip.

- Funding for eligible Learners will be made in one payment via internal transfer to the relevant department.
- Trip funding for those on the 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary will be funded from the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary.

## Travel Costs

- Learners aged 16-18 and living within 1 mile of the college post code CV1 5DG will not normally be eligible for travel support, except in exceptional circumstances i.e., attending Alan Higgs Centre as part of their course.
- Learners aged 19 or over and living within 1.5 mile of the college post code CV1 5DG will not normally be eligible for travel support, except in exceptional circumstances i.e., attending Alan Higgs Centre as part of their course.
- Distance will be calculated using a walking route on Google Maps from the college post code CV1 5DG to the learner's post code as recorded on ProSolution.
- Subject to the above criteria being met travel costs will be paid as follows;
  - Full-time Learners (3 or more days) travelling by bus and living within CV1-CV6 will receive a yearly bus pass.
  - Part-time Learners (1 or 2 days) travelling by bus and living within CV1-CV6 will receive daysavers.
  - Learners living in CV7 and beyond will receive a monthly instalment in line with the West Midlands monthly (outside of area) costs by BACS payment. Those learners who only attend 1 or 2 days will receive a reduced rate.
  - Those travelling by train will receive a contribution towards their travel costs via a BACS payment. These will be on a case-by-case basis, the learner will have to provide a return TRAIN ticket and their monthly contribution will be based on this. The maximum contribution per month will be £125.
  - Those travelling by car will receive a contribution towards their travel costs via a BACS payment as detailed in the grid below. Learners travelling by car will also receive a termly contribution towards parking in the college car park.

Age on 31st August	16-18			19+		
	Under 1 mile	1 - 5 miles	5+ miles	Under 1.5 miles	1.5 - 5 miles	5+ miles
1-2 days	Nil	£15.00	£20.00	Nil	£15.00	£20.00
3+ days	Nil	£25.00	£35.00	Nil	£25.00	£35.00

Payments for travel costs will be subject to Learners meeting the colleges expected attendance requirement. Failure to do so may result in payments being suspended or stopped.

## Childcare Payments

- Childcare payments for learners aged 20 years and over are £30 per session for a morning or afternoon session, £7.50 for a before or after school session, up to a maximum of £300 per week per learner irrespective of the number of children being funded and will be paid for the duration of the course or for a maximum of 36 weeks.
- Payments for travel costs will be subject to Learners meeting the colleges expected attendance requirement. Failure to do so may result in payments being suspended or stopped
- Payments will only be made directly to the childcare provider once an invoice has been received.
- Learners will be responsible for any childcare costs in excess of the £300 per week allocated to them.

- Applications approved before the October half-term will have payments made for both the September and October months. After this time, all other payments will be made from the date of application approval and will not be backdated.
- Payments for childcare will be subject to the Learners meeting the college's expected overall 95% attendance requirements. Failure to do so may result in the childcare funding being suspended or stopped.
- Where a Learner's attendance is a cause for concern and in the likelihood that the Learner will not finish the course, the curriculum will be asked to intervene and make a decision.
- Learners will be responsible for payments where any childcare costs that are over the £300 per week allocated to them.
- The College will only fund childcare during term time, on the days/hours that the Learner is timetabled to be in college. Exceptions to this may include exam periods or placements.
- Decisions regarding childcare funding for Learners who are not meeting the attendance requirements will be made in the 3rd week of each month. Childcare providers and Learners will be contacted once the decisions have been made.

### **Care to Learn Eligibility**

- Learners must be under the age of 20 on the first day of the course
- Enrolled on a publicly funded course and a British citizen or a national of a European Economic Area (EEA) country
- Must be the main carer for the child and in receipt of child benefit for the child
- Be using an eligible (OFSTED registered) childcare provider
- Be subject to periodic attendance checks carried out by the College via the SSBS Portal

### **Tuition and Examination Fees Eligibility**

- Tuition fees are covered for Learners aged 19 + on 31st August 2023 studying on entry, level 1 and 2 courses.
- Tuition fees will only be covered by the 19+ Learner Support Fund where Learners are not eligible for College fee remission or an Advanced Learner Loan, but meet the overall criteria of the fund.
- Where eligible, tuition and examination fees will be covered in full.
- Resit examination fees are not covered by the 19+ Learner Support Fund.

### **16-18 Vulnerable Bursary Payments**

For eligible Learners the bursary will normally comprise of:

- Learners eligible for the Vulnerable Bursary are provided with a maximum of £1200 each year. Depending on when they apply will determine how much they will receive, as shown in the table below.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Term 1	£1200
Term 2 – first half	£800
Term 2 – second half	£600
Term 3 – first half	£400
Term 3 – second half	£200

- A one-off payment will be made to the department at the beginning of the academic year to cover any learning materials and this will be deducted from the learner's overall amount.
- If the learner requires a bus pass, the cost of this will be deducted from the learner's overall amount.
- The remaining amount, after any learning materials and bus pass costs are deducted, will be divided into the number of weeks remaining in the academic year.

- Payments are subject to a Learner meeting the college attendance requirements, failure to do so may mean that the payment is withheld.
- Registers will be checked on a weekly basis and payments will be made if the learner meets the required attendance amount of 50%. All learners whose attendance is below 50% will have their payment put on hold for one week. If, in the second week, the learner's attendance is above 50% they will receive both payments. If their attendance is below 50%, both weeks payments will be removed. The process will then start again the week after.
- Where attendance drops below the minimum requirement the Learner Funding Team will raise the issue with the Wellbeing Team. The learners coach will let the Learner Funding Team whether to make the payment that week, based on the interactions they have made with the learner.

### **Learner Laptop Loan**

- Is for those learners in continuing financial difficulty who are already receiving funding from either the 16-18 DB, 16-18 VB or the ALLB.
- The numbers of laptops are limited, this support is intended to provide IT access for learners who do not have access to a computer at home.
- Learners must complete an application form, a check on acceptable attendance and an assessment of hardship is made by the Learner Funding Team.
- Learners are required to return the laptop at the end of each academic year. If a learner is on a 2-year course they must reapply for the laptop fund at the start of the next academic year.

## **6. Payments**

Payments are normally:

- Internal college transfers for departmental organised visits and trips, tuition fee payments and equipment costs.
- Direct to Learner via BACS.
- Paid in cash only in exceptional cases where Learners are unable to open a bank account.
- By voucher in the form of bus pass or tickets for travel support.
- Childcare payments will be paid directly to child care providers via BACS.

	<b>When?</b>	<b>Method</b>
Course materials	Single payment	Internal Transfer
Non-mandatory, course related trips	Upon approval	Internal Transfer
Bus Pass	Annually	Code sent via email
Bus Tickets	Half-Termly	Day savers
Petrol Costs	Monthly	Bank Transfer
Car Park Costs	Monthly	Bank Transfer
College meals	Daily	Payment on College ID card
Childcare costs	Monthly	Paid to Provider
Tuition fees	Upon approval	Internal Transfer to Finance
Weekly payments	Weekly	Bank Transfer/Cash payment
Laptop	Upon approval	On loan

### **Learner Hardship Fund**

- Available for Learners on FE funded courses as an emergency payment for living and course costs where exceptional financial hardship is evident and are not in receipt of any of the main Learner Funds listed above.
- Sometimes it may be more appropriate for a Learner to receive funding from the Hardship fund rather than the main Learner Funds, this will be only be done at the discretion of the Learner Funding Team.



- Learners may receive funding as either a small cash payment (i.e., for the cost of a bus ticket) or as a larger cash payment (i.e., for the purchase of clothing).
- Learners may also receive meal vouchers for use in the college canteen areas.
- Payments are made at the discretion of the Learner Funding Team.

### **HE Learner Bursary**

- Only available to Learners who are enrolled on Higher Education courses who have exhausted all avenues of financial assistance from Learner Finance England.
- Learners will need to submit evidence of household income, in line with the eligibility conditions of the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary.
- Payments are made at the discretion of the Learner Funding Team.

## **7. Exceptional Extra Costs**

- The College also holds emergency funding to help Learners who face particular short-term hardship. These costs have to be evidenced and associated with living and course costs. Each instance will be considered on its own merits.
- If an exceptional or extra cost is determined to be necessary, then a one-off payment will be made to the Learner.
- These extra costs will be taken from the relevant main Learner fund in the first instance, signed by a member of the Learner Funding Team and approved by the Head of Learner Services.

## **8. Withdrawals**

- If a Learner withdraws from their course within 4 weeks of the start date, 100% of funds allocated to them and/or equipment purchased for them will be required to be returned. Funds will be re-allocated accordingly.
- When a learner withdraws, their funding will be stopped for the remainder of the year.
- If they have a bus pass, this will be cancelled at the end of that month.

## **9. Appeals**

- Appeals must be made in writing within **two weeks** to the Head of Learner Services who will review the decision based on the information available. The outcome of the appeal will be sent to the applicant within 10 working days.