



Education
Funding
Agency

16-19 Bursary Fund Examples of Good Practice

May 2012

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Introduction

This document provides practical examples of how schools and colleges have met the requirements of the 16-19 Bursary Fund Guidance and helped students experiencing the greatest financial need participate in education.

It is aimed at schools, colleges, academies, training providers, independent providers and local authorities (referred to as providers) administering the 16-19 Bursary Fund in the 2012/13 academic year. It supports implementation of the *16-19 Bursary Fund Guide for Providers 2012/13* and should be read alongside the accompanying *2012/13 16-19 Bursary Fund Q&A for Providers and local authorities*.

The Bursary Fund Guidance for 2012/13 re-emphasises the importance of ensuring available funds are targeted at those students experiencing the greatest financial disadvantages, that the amounts allocated are sufficient to enable these students to participate in education and that the availability of funding is effectively communicated to prospective and actual students both before and when they enroll. This document gives examples of how different providers have set out to achieve this in the current academic year and reflects the headings set out in the guidance.

Its content is based on interviews the Department for Education held with 30 providers early in 2012 and has received input from stakeholders such as the NCAS, Barnardo's, the Association of Colleges, the Association of School and College Leaders and the Who Cares Trust. The examples it contains were initially shared with the Association of Colleges at their conference in March 2012. It is by no means exhaustive and we would welcome other examples of how the needs of financially disadvantaged students have been met. Please send these to 1619bursaryfund.EFA@education.gsi.gov.uk

We would like to acknowledge and to thank all those providers who have given us permission to use their examples of best practice in this document: Astley Cooper School, Bolton College, Bradford Academy, Chew Valley School, Coulsdon College, Eggbuckland Community College, Hayes School, Hertford Regional College, Huddersfield New College, Newcastle College, Newcastle-Under-Lyme College, Oldham College, South Downs College, South Tyneside College, Thanet College, The Sheffield College, Trafford College, Mid-Kent College and Wiltshire College.

Eligibility

Vulnerable Bursaries

The *16-19 Bursary Fund Guide for Providers 2012/13* outlines four defined vulnerable groups:

- Young people in care,
- Care leavers,
- Young people in receipt of Income Support
- Disabled young people in receipt of Employment Support Allowance who are also in receipt of Disability Living Allowance.

Where students fall into one or more of these groups, they are eligible for a bursary of £1,200 (which should be pro-rated where appropriate).

These students may be harder to identify or engage in education and are less likely to be aware of the support available from the Bursary Fund.

Working with local authority looked after children's education services and care leaver services provides the best way of identifying looked after children and care leavers and encouraging them to apply for support. This may also help provide the appropriate evidence of the young person's status required to award funding.

Below are some examples of where providers are working with other local services to identify young people in these defined groups.

Since the 16-19 Bursary Fund was introduced, the college has worked with Connexions advisers¹ and the council's social services team. Together these services have helped the college identify young people who fall into the defined vulnerable groups and encourage them to enrol at the college and apply for funding.

**Bolton College, Bolton
General FE College**

The college has made links with the borough's care team, who refer young people in care/care leavers and encourage them to apply for the Bursary Fund. Tutors at the college have also been made aware of the eligibility criteria for a £1,200 bursary so that they can also make referrals.

**Hertford Regional College, Hertfordshire
General FE College**

¹ Connexions services across the country are changing and may have been renamed or operate differently in 2012/13. These examples are given to encourage collaborative working with the local authority who has a continuing duty to work with schools and colleges to raise participation in education in their area.

The college has made links with social services and other external agencies that identify young people in care, care leavers and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children before they enrol.

**Newcastle College, Newcastle
General FE College**

The college works with Connexions and the local authority to identify young people in the defined vulnerable groups using case conferences and effective information sharing protocols.

**Oldham College
General FE College**

Torbay's Care to Community team has a joint working protocol with their further education college that includes information sharing and joint working to manage problems with attendance, behaviour, punctuality or performance.

South Gloucestershire Council has developed a protocol (taking account of data protection issues) between social care and FE colleges. Social care staff notify named people in each college of the details of care leavers who are enrolled at their college. In this way the colleges know which students are eligible for a vulnerable group bursary and can focus support on them according to their needs.

Discretionary Bursaries

All students may apply for a discretionary bursary from their school, college, academy or other provider. Bursaries are intended for students who are in most need of financial support and the eligibility criteria needs to reflect this. Here are some examples of how providers are ensuring discretionary funding is reaching students most in need of help.

Two levels of eligibility are applied: *medium priority* includes any student who is in receipt of Free School Meals and *low priority* includes students whose household is in receipt of means tested benefits. In addition any student, regardless of their personal or family circumstances, can apply for a low priority award if they have an identifiable financial need. A student awarded a medium priority bursary is not precluded from also applying for a low priority bursary where extra support is required. Proof of evidence is sometimes required to support an application and could include:

- Certified letter from the LA regarding Free School Meals eligibility
- Certified letter from the DWP
- Family P60
- Self Employment Income evidence
- Other means tested certification

**Astley Cooper School, Hertfordshire
Secondary School**

Eligibility is based on the household income being below £16,100 or the student's parents being in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support or an equivalent benefit, or if the student is receiving help from the National Association of Special Schools. Students are required to provide documentary evidence which could include:

- Letter from Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council
- HMRC Tax Credit Award Notice or similar
- Letter from the Jobcentre Plus confirming benefits
- Letter from the DWP

**Bradford Academy
Academy**

Two main categories are applied based on household income or the receipt of benefits, but the college also operates a third category for students facing extreme financial hardship, which enables them to make emergency payments where required. Students applying for support under the third category do not have the household income/benefit criterion applied to their application.

**Coulsdon College, London
Sixth Form College**

Making the criteria for awards specific enough enables providers to identify those students who would not otherwise be able to participate in their chosen course without financial support. The amount allocated then needs to be sufficient to enable them to participate (for example, allowing students to get to college, buy a meal whilst there and to cover the cost of any equipment or clothing for their course).

Where more than one income band is being applied in the eligibility criteria, different amounts can be awarded to recognise different income levels.

Local or tailored arrangements

A number of providers have worked locally to develop common eligibility criteria for discretionary bursaries, for example:

Hayes School, Bromley works with other local providers to apply a consistent eligibility criteria and awards three levels of payment based on household income and/or receipt of benefits. The school also operates a contingency fund which is used for one-off payments to help students attend school trips or college interviews for example.

The majority of secondary schools in Plymouth operate a collaborative bursary fund supported by **Plymouth City Council**. Post-16 teams in the schools assist the students to complete a simple application form which is forwarded to the LA and assessed against common criteria and payment of awards are arranged. In the application form students are asked to indicate what they want to use the funding for and evidence of household income is checked.

FE colleges and local authorities in the **former Avon area** have agreed a set of principles governing the award of vulnerable group bursaries, which include:

- tailoring bursaries to meet the financial barriers and circumstances of individuals;
- a hierarchy of support – starting with travel and course costs where applicable;
- staggering payments (both cash and in-kind) and linking them to attendance;
- providing budget management support for students;
- providing students with a written breakdown of how their bursary has been calculated; and
- where a student permits it, sharing bursary information with foster carers.

By participating in collaborative schemes like the one adopted in Plymouth school sixth forms and new or smaller providers can benefit from the experience of larger ones such as FE colleges. This approach also enables providers to share good practice and provide a consistent level of support to students in their area.

Taking unusual or exceptional circumstances into account as well as setting eligibility criteria means that the support offered can be tailored to students' individual needs. This might include taking into account particularly high costs, such as those associated with certain courses or for example where a family has more than one young person studying at the same time.

In addition to having an income threshold of less than £21,000 a year, **Newcastle-Under-Lyme College** holds a list of courses that have particularly high costs, such as for equipment or specialist clothing. The college provides students participating on these courses with subsidies to help them purchase the necessary equipment.

South Tyneside College set its eligibility criterion on a family income of £22,000 or below, but also offers students whose course is deemed to require specialist equipment or uniforms the necessary items free of charge.

At **Wiltshire College** applications are assessed on the household income of the student, which must be below £21,000; in addition, the number of dependent children in full-time education in the household is taken into consideration when assessing applications for a discretionary bursary.

Assessment and Payment of Bursaries

Assessment of bursaries

Different providers will have different enrolment patterns and the way they assess applications for bursaries will have to reflect this. Applications for support for both the vulnerable group and the discretionary elements of the fund may also be received throughout the academic year. Holding some funding back in the form of a contingency enables these to be met. The following examples demonstrate that this is possible with careful management.

The school operates a 16-19 Bursary Fund Committee, which is made up of the Head of Post-16, Deputy Head teacher, Key Stage 4 Progress Leader and the Business Manager. The committee sits as and when required throughout the academic year and approves all awards. For 'low priority' awards, the committee discusses every individual case based on the documentary evidence available and all the personal circumstances of the student, and decides on an appropriate amount. The award is paid in kind such as provision of necessary equipment and travel tickets.

**Astley Cooper School, Hertfordshire
Secondary School**

The school operates a general eligibility criterion based on household income but there is no fixed award. This depends on individual circumstances, for example; outgoings, value of savings, number of siblings, cost of courses etc. Applications are anonymised so that students feel comfortable that their personal circumstances are not known to others. Applications are assessed by Governors throughout the academic year.

**Chew Valley School, Bath and North East Somerset
Secondary School**

The college operates a Learning Mentoring Team which supports students who are at risk of non-completion. Students can approach the team directly or be referred to them by a concerned tutor or lecturer. On occasions the team contact a student themselves if they've noticed a record of poor attendance developing. They have access to a contingency fund top-sliced from the college's allocation to provide support if it's deemed appropriate. There is no prescribed amount to be awarded in these circumstances but the team will ensure that the request is reasonable and accounted for and students need to meet a household income means test.

**Bolton College, Bolton
General FE College**

Receipt of a bursary should be subject to the student meeting conditions set out and agreed with the provider. The following are examples of the best practices that some providers are using in setting standards.

Students have to be on target for every subject to receive payment of their discretionary bursary. This includes achieving their predicted grade as well as a behavioural element. Individual circumstances, such as illness or family problems are taken into account.

**Bradford Academy, Bradford
Academy**

The college has very clear terms and conditions for receipt of the bursary, which are highlighted on the application form. The college monitors this to identify any issues and consideration of additional support. A minimum 85% attendance is the current standard but support may continue if a valid reason exists why their attendance falls below the requirement.

**Oldham College, Oldham
General FE College**

Payments of bursaries

Many colleges have found that paying discretionary bursaries 'in kind' is an efficient and cost-effective way of helping students to meet their expenses. This could include providing a travel pass or course equipment, free meals or waiving fees for course trips. This helps ensure that the bursary awarded genuinely is sufficient to meet students' needs.

At a small college in Oxfordshire all successful applicants receive an award 'in kind' that is tailored to their needs and can be in the form of a travel pass, free meals, course equipment, course trips/visits, exam resit fees, stationary and printing.

In almost all cases payment is made in kind, in the form of course equipment or uniforms, a bus pass or credit paid onto the student's college card.

**Bolton College, Bolton
General FE College**

For vulnerable group bursaries **Mid-Kent College** tailors its support for each individual rather than applying a one size fits all solution. Every student who qualifies for the £1200 bursary is offered an interview with a financial support advisor to decide together on the best way to deliver their support. Priority areas are addressed first; travel to college,

equipment costs and food, and appropriate amounts are allocated to ensure the student is supported with their studies. Additional expenditure such as university visits is also discussed and where money remains an amount is retained for unforeseen costs.

Emergency payments

The Guidance recommends: '*A small emergency fund for exceptional circumstances and late emerging vulnerable learners should also be retained.*' A number of providers have ring-fenced some of their bursary allocation to make emergency payments throughout the academic year.

At **Thanet College, Kent** students who have been awarded a bursary can apply for additional support if they find themselves in desperate circumstances later in the year. Any subsequent support would be dependent on the outcome of an appeals process which would confirm eligibility in the light of the circumstances involved.

The Sheffield College, Sheffield operates a contingency fund for non-standard awards which is allocated to each site at the start of the year; these funds can be vired between sites.

South Tyneside College, South Tyneside keeps part of the Bursary Fund back to deal with emergencies; this is used on a weekly basis to help anyone whose family relationships break down during their course.

Communications, Governance and Monitoring

Promotion of the Bursary Fund

Communicating details about the 16-19 Bursary Fund is the responsibility of individual providers or groups of providers where they have chosen to collaborate locally working together with the local authority

Keeping information about financial support for students up to date in their literature and on their websites and ensuring these are received by prospective students is obviously important. Other providers have adopted more innovative solutions to raise awareness of the fund. Setting local eligibility criteria, for example, means that young people know what support is available before they enroll, often an important factor amongst those young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Working with local authority Children's Services is the best way of identifying young people who are or have been in contact with the care system and would be eligible for the vulnerable group payment. As the following examples demonstrate there is a lot that can be done to inform young people that help is available.

The college promotes the scheme on a face-to-face basis at enrolment and induction; the college have found that a personal approach helps to assess need and identifies other issues the student may face.

**Thanet College, Kent
College**

The college operates a partnership with two local authorities in the college's catchment area. The LAs send information to the college on children in care, which helps them to identify students in this vulnerable group and establish direct communications with them.

**South Downs College, Hampshire
College**

Mid-Kent College employs a variety of methods to ensure eligible students are aware of the vulnerable group bursary; aside from information in marketing materials the College also promotes the bursary and other support services to partner organisations such as Connexions, social services, foster parent networks, schools, asylum support teams and relevant services including youth offending and health. Within the college all staff are informed about the support available and the needs of young people in the vulnerable groups. The college works with social service teams to identify and engage with young people considering further education and to provide opportunities to discuss the support they can expect.

During the summer the college sends detailed information to students and parents, together with a flyer and a Q&A about the Bursary Fund together with an application form. Information is also available on their website and intranet. During enrolment and induction finance staff attend group sessions and help students to complete their application forms. The college has partnerships with the LEA and Connexions Service who help to provide information to potential students.

**Oldham College, Oldham
General FE College**

The Bursary Fund is promoted throughout the college on screen savers, posters and flyers. School coordinators tell Year 11 pupils about the fund on visits to local schools and each applicant receives information about the fund when they apply. All students who enrol are told about the fund when they enrol.

**Newcastle College, Newcastle
General FE College**

Information about the fund is on the college's website and they send communications to all existing and prospective students at regular intervals throughout the academic year. Within the first three months of starting at the college, all students are emailed about the bursary funds.

Huddersfield New College, Huddersfield

Further information

Information about the bursary fund and links to all supporting documents are available on the Department for Education website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople/studentssupport/funding/a00203061/16-19-bursaries>

Further advice and information about administering the 16-19 Bursary Fund has been produced by the Association of Colleges, and the 2012/13 version is available on their website. This advice is aimed at colleges, but may be useful to other provider types, such as schools.

Queries on the 16-19 Bursary Fund should be sent to

1619bursaryfund.EFA@education.gsi.gov.uk



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