



Education  
Funding  
Agency

# **Residential Support Scheme Guide for 2012/13**

**May 2012**

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## Introduction

1. This guide provides information to all those involved in the delivery of the Residential Support Scheme (RSS) in 2012/13. It provides general advice about the criteria for eligibility for the scheme which have been set by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) – the successor body to the Young People’s Learning Agency (YPLA) from 1 April 2012.
2. This guide does not attempt to offer definitive advice for every situation; stakeholders who require further or more detailed help and advice should contact the Learner Support Service (LSS) who administer the scheme on behalf of the EFA:
  - Learning providers and providers of information, advice and guidance etc. can call the provider helpline on **0845 600 79797** or e-mail: [rss@efalearnersupport.co.uk](mailto:rss@efalearnersupport.co.uk)
  - Young people can call the learner helpline on **0800 121 8989**
  - Learning providers can order application packs in bulk from Prolog by calling **0845 602 2260** or emailing [learnersupport@prolog.co.uk](mailto:learnersupport@prolog.co.uk), quoting reference number EFA-RSS-2012/13
  - Young people should contact their learning provider for an application pack. If needed, learners can order a pack from the Learner Support Service by calling the learner helpline on the number above.
3. Following an internal review of residential support arrangements in 2011, the Department for Education (DfE) has decided not to make any changes to the Residential Support Scheme (RSS) or the Residential Bursary Fund (RBF) in 2012/13 for young people aged 16-18.
  4. Distinct RSS and RBF schemes for young people will be retained for 2012/13, but DfE will continue to review arrangements for future years, considering how existing arrangements might be replaced by a simpler means of providing residential support.
  5. Residential support for those learners starting in learning aged 19 plus will remain the responsibility of the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills. Learners who are aged 19 and over at the start of the 2012/13 academic year (27/08/2012) will be able to apply for support from the Residential Access Fund, part of Discretionary Learner Support funding which is allocated directly to colleges and training providers for them to distribute to those learners most in need.
  6. Learners who received RSS in 2011/12, who are aged 19 or over and whose courses are continuing in 2012/13 will, however, continue to receive RSS support in 2012/13. More information about continuing learners aged 19 plus can be found at paragraph 18.

## Residential Support Scheme in the academic year 2012/13

7. The RSS is intended to help support learners aged 16-18 with the costs of living away from home in order to study because the provision is not available locally. RSS will provide annual support of up to £3,458 (up to £4,079 in the London area) towards living costs. Learners must meet the eligibility criteria set out at paragraph 8 in order to receive RSS support.

## Learner eligibility

8. Points a) to g) below set out the RSS eligibility criteria for 2012/13. To be eligible for RSS, a young person must:

**a) Be aged 16-18 on 27 August in the academic year in which they start their programme of study.**

Where a young person turns 19 during their course, they can continue to be supported to the end of the academic year in which they turn 19 or to the end of their course, whichever is sooner. RSS is only payable to young people who have reached the statutory school leaving age.

**b) Have been settled in the UK and ordinarily resident in England for the three years preceding the start of their course.**

'Settled' means having either indefinite leave to enter or remain or having the right of abode in the UK. Please see paragraph 9 on page 6 about dependents or spouse or partners of armed forces personnel posted to bases overseas.

**c) Have a household income of £30,993 or less in the previous tax year (for the 2012/13 academic year this is the 2011-12 tax year).**

'Household' is defined as the learner and the adults they live with who are mainly responsible for them.

The amount of RSS awarded is based on an income-assessment using the thresholds below:

**Scales based on income-assessment for the 2011-12 tax year:**

| <b>Gross income level</b> | <b>Outside London</b> | <b>Inside London *</b> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Up to £21,000             | £3,458                | £4,079                 |
| £21,001 - £25,704         | £2,305                | £2,685                 |
| £25,705 - 30,993          | £1,152                | £1,355                 |
| £30,994 and over          | nil                   | nil                    |

\*The following London Boroughs are eligible for the London weighting: Barking & Dagenham, Barnet, Bexley, Brent, Bromley, Camden, Croydon, Ealing, Enfield, Greenwich, Hackney & City of London, Hammersmith & Fulham, Haringey, Harrow, Havering, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston-upon-Thames, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Newham, Redbridge, Richmond-upon-Thames, Southwark, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Wandsworth and Westminster.

These amounts are the **maximum** available for each income bracket and young people will not receive the maximum support if the actual costs of their accommodation are less than the figures shown. If their course lasts for less than one year then the amount of support will be awarded on a proportional basis.

A learner may apply to be assessed as an **Independent Learner** if they meet one of the following conditions at the start of the academic year:

- They are married or in a civil partnership
- They are a parent
- They have supported themselves for at least three consecutive years (36 months) prior to the course commencement
- They have no living parents
- They are estranged from their parent(s)

Learners should contact the Learner Support Service by calling **0800 121 8989** if they think they meet the independent learner conditions.

**d) Have been offered a place on a full time course (defined as 450 guided learning hours over the academic year or 16 guided learning hours or more week) at a learning provider in England.**

**e) Intend to follow a programme of study that is Learner Responsive funded and which lasts for a minimum of ten weeks.**

**f) Intend to follow a programme of study that is at full Level 2 or Level 3**

In order to be eligible for RSS, the programme of study is normally expected to lead to the achievement of the young person's first full Level 2 or first full Level 3 qualification. However, support for repeat qualifications may be provided in exceptional circumstances, for example:

- if a young person wishes to pursue a second Level 2 which is vocational where their first Level 2 was an academic qualification.
- if the young person holds a Level 2 qualification but is required by the provider to undertake a further specific Level 2, in order to progress into the necessary Level 3 element of the course.
- if a young person is seeking to pursue a second Level 3 as preparation for entry into higher education and the second Level 3 specifies an existing Level 3 qualification as part of its entry requirements.

In exceptional cases support may be provided at Level 1.

**It is important to note that no exceptions to the first full Level 2 or first full Level 3 criteria can be guaranteed. All cases are assessed individually based on the specific circumstances in each instance.**

**g) Be living outside of reasonable daily travelling distance from the learning provider, where similar provision is not available locally to their home.**

- Similar provision is defined as courses which have the same learning aim reference number on the Learning Aims Database (LAD) and whose content satisfies the awarding body's criteria.
- Daily travelling distance is defined as a daily return journey that takes less than two hours on public transport; or a distance of under 15 miles from the learner's home or term-time lodgings to the learning provider.

Young people **cannot** apply for RSS if they are attending one of the specialist colleges which administer Residential Bursary Funds.

Young people **cannot** receive RSS if they are in receipt of Housing Benefit.

## **Dependents of armed forces personnel posted overseas**

9. If the young person is the child (or spouse or partner) of a person who is a member of the armed forces serving abroad (i.e.: outside of the UK) they will be exempt from the requirement to be ordinarily resident in England for the three years prior to the start of their course.

## **The RSS application process in 2012/13**

10. Young people should apply for RSS before their course starts where possible. To apply, they must have an unconditional offer of a place.

11. Applications may be made after the course has started but awards will only be backdated to the beginning of the term in which the application is received by the Learner Support Service.

12. The young person should complete the RSS application form for 2012/13 (which they can obtain from the Learner Support Service or from their learning provider – for details of how to obtain a pack see paragraph 2) and pass it to their learning provider.

13. The learning provider must seek confirmation from the young person's home local authority that a similar course is not available locally to the learner's home address. Paragraph 8 confirms the definition of 'locally available'. The learning provider must complete the declaration on the application form, including the contact details of who has been consulted, and pass the form back to the young person. If the learning provider identifies that the young person is a dependent of a member of the armed forces posted overseas (see paragraph 9), they should contact the Learner Support Service for advice.

14. The young person should then send the form and the supporting evidence required to the Learner Support Service in the pre-paid envelope provided in the application pack. Should the pre-paid envelope be lost, the return address is also set out below:

Freepost RSLX-CAZR RHLY  
Learner Support Service  
Birmingham B24 9FD

15. Important: the young person must include a copy of their tenancy agreement with their application form. This must have been agreed and signed and include the following information:

- the young person's name
- the dates of the tenancy
- the young person's term time address
- the landlord's name, address and signature (the landlord cannot be related to the young person)
- the cost of the rent

16. If the young person does not send a tenancy agreement with their application only a provisional Notice of Entitlement (NoE) can be issued by the Learner Support Service. No payments will be released by the Learner Support Service until they have received a copy of the tenancy agreement.

17. Once the young person's RSS application has been assessed, the Learner Support Service will write to the young person and the learning provider to notify them of the outcome.

## **Continuing learners aged 19 plus**

18. As set out in paragraphs 5 and 6, residential support for learners who are aged 19 and over at the start of the 2012/13 academic year can apply for support from the Residential Access Fund, part of the Discretionary (19+) Learner Support funding which is allocated directly to colleges and training providers for them to distribute to those learners most in need. Learners who are aged 19 or over are not eligible to apply for RSS in 2012/13.

19. However, any learners who successfully applied for RSS support in 2011/12, who are now aged 19 or over and whose courses are continuing in 2012/13 (based on the information submitted by them in their 2011/12 RSS application form) will continue to receive RSS support in 2012/13.

20. All learners who meet this criterion will be issued with a Notice of Entitlement (NoE) by the Learner Support Service. This will confirm that their RSS payments will continue at the same award level in 2012/13 if their course details/dates remain as they stated on their 2011/12 application form and if their learning provider confirms to the Learner Support Service that the young person has returned to the course in 2012/13 as they initially intended. Learning providers must confirm to the Learner Support Service by e-mail ([rss@efalearnersupport.co.uk](mailto:rss@efalearnersupport.co.uk)) that the learner has returned to their course as originally intended before any payments can be released.

21. Attendance will also continue to be monitored in the usual way via the remittance advice and AS1 reports (see also paragraph 27).

22. There will be no re-assessments for learners aged 19 or over in 2012/13. The only exception will be in circumstances where household income is lower than it was in the 2011-12 tax year due to disability as stated by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). Learners should contact the Learner Support Service on **0800 121 8989** if they think this may apply to them.

23. If learners aged 19 or over think they may need additional help with their residential costs, over and above that provided by RSS in 2012/13, they should talk to their learning provider to see if they may be able to receive any additional help from the Residential Access Fund.

Learners who are aged 19 or over, who received RSS in 2011/12 and whose courses are continuing in 2012/13 do not need to submit an RSS application for 2012/13.

24. If providers have any queries about continuing learners aged 19 or over they should contact the Learner Support Service provider helpline on **0845 600 7979**.

## Payments and Monitoring

25. The Learner Support Service will send payments to learning providers at the beginning of each term for the provider to pay the young person's landlord or agency directly. Learning providers must retain proof of payment.

26. If the young person has already paid the rent, learning providers may refund their costs (but this must be within the period agreed in the RSS award). Again, they should retain proof of payment.

27. The attendance of RSS supported learners is monitored by the Learner Support Service via the remittance advice and AS1 reports which the Learner Support Service will send to providers for completion. It is the responsibility of the young person and/or learning provider to notify the Learner Support Service of non-attendance and the potential stoppage of payments. If the Learner Support Service identifies that the young person has left the course, they will calculate any potential overpayment and attempt to recover funds from the learning provider or, if the learning provider has notified the Learner Support Service that payment has already been made to the landlord, from the young person.

## Learning providers with Residential Bursary Funding

28. A small number of learning providers are not part of RSS, instead they operate the Residential Bursary Fund (RBF). Young people at these providers should not apply for RSS support but should apply directly to their provider for help with residential costs. These providers are listed on the direct.gov website at [www.direct.gov.uk/studyingaway](http://www.direct.gov.uk/studyingaway)



## Further Information

29. Further information about RSS in 2012/13 will be made available on the DfE website: [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk) (for providers) and the direct.gov website: [www.direct.gov.uk/studyingaway](http://www.direct.gov.uk/studyingaway) (for learners).
30. Providers should direct any queries about the administration of, or eligibility for, RSS to the Learner Support Service provider helpline on **0845 600 7979**.



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