

BURSARY POLICY

Policy last updated: August 2023

Review date: August 2024

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this policy is to ensure that North Lancs Training Group Ltd (NLTG) administer the Bursary Fund according to the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) guidelines.

NLTG are responsible for administering the Bursary Fund awarded within the above guide.

We aim to have a clear and transparent process including an appeals procedure. All recording along with evidence of eligibility will in addition follow NLTG's procedures/ guidelines.

It is a requirement that institutions provide information advice and guidance on financial support available to their students. NLTG promote the Bursary Fund via widely available marketing and publicity materials and on the NLTG website.

It is our aim that all students will be made aware of the following:

1. There are 2 types of Bursary Fund
2. Who is eligible for the Bursary Fund
3. The application process in order to apply for the Bursary Fund
4. NLTG assess the eligibility and evidence before they claim funding
5. NLTG will set their own eligibility for discretionary funds, but that these must comply with the basic eligibility conditions
6. NLTG comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 when setting our eligibility criteria
7. The way in which the bursary payments will be made
8. The Appeals procedure if they do not agree with the award decision

There are 2 types of bursaries:

1. A vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups
2. Discretionary bursaries that institutions award to meet individual needs (discretionary bursaries are targeted at students who cannot stay in education without financial help for things like transport, meals, books and equipment)

VULNERABLE BURSARY

Young people in the defined vulnerable groups are eligible for a bursary of £1,200 if their course lasts for 30 weeks or more, or a pro-rata amount for courses of less than 30 weeks.

Young people in the defined vulnerable groups are usually living apart from their parents/carers', so they can get social security benefits in their own right.

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- in care, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- care leavers
- receiving Income Support or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves or themselves and a dependent (child or partner)
- receiving both Disability Living Allowance (or the new Personal Independence Payments) and Employment and Support Allowance (or Universal Credit) in their own right

The young person does not have to live independently of their parents to claim Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit, although their parents will not be able to claim Child Benefit for them if the young person's claim succeeds.

Eligibility Criteria for Vulnerable Bursaries

- NLTG pay vulnerable bursaries to those students who are in the defined vulnerable group and provide evidence of this which must accompany their application, e.g. letter from DWP or written confirmation from the Local Authority, confirming the young person's current or previous looked after status.
- Based upon the information the student will be awarded bursary payments, pro-rata for their learning programme. These will be paid on a weekly basis.

Identifying vulnerable students

NLTG is responsible for identifying students in the defined vulnerable groups.

Students who are in care or care leavers might not want to say so because of fear of stigma.

NLTG provide confidentiality to reduce these concerns, by telling students how their information will be used and shared and not make students identify themselves publicly.

NLTG will ask for and retain copies of evidence from the student, for example:

- For students in receipt of qualifying benefits, a letter from DWP saying which benefit the young person is entitled to
- For students who are in care or a care leaver. Obtain written confirmation of the young person's current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority.

NLTG must document the process and retain copies of the evidence provided. These are included in the list on the application form where the students can verify their eligibility, as long as it is backed up by relevant evidence.

How are children in care, and care leavers defined?

For the purposes of the Bursary Fund, the definitions are:

- "Children in Care"
 - Means 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). Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 defines the term 'looked after child'.
- "Care Leavers" means:
 - either young people aged 16 and 17 who were previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or for periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16.
 - or
 - a young person who is aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods of 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16.

In legal terms, these children are called relevant children or former relevant children.

Foster care, including foster care that has been privately arranged

Any 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, is classed as looked after and is therefore in a defined vulnerable group for the bursary.

A child who is privately fostered (the arrangement is made between the parent and the person who will care for the child) is not classed as a looked after child, as this is a private arrangement.

Local authorities should have published policies stating what support they will provide in these circumstances.

Where a student has been in the care of the local authority and subsequently that care is transferred to another party via a permanent form of fostering such as a Special Guardianship Order then that student is deemed to have left care and is now a care leaver and entitled to a vulnerable student bursary as a former relevant child/care leaver.

Impact on household benefits

Receiving Bursary Fund payments does not affect entitlement to DWP income-related benefits. Bursaries are paid directly to students in addition to other means-tested benefits paid to families, such as Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Child Benefit, Working Tax Credits and Housing Benefit and does not affect them.

However, if the student is getting Disability Living Allowance (or Personal Independence Payments) and Employment and Support Allowance (or Universal Credit), parents can no longer receive certain household/family benefits for that child such as Child Benefit.

Receipt of other financial support does not exclude a student from receiving a bursary. For example, a student who is receiving support from Care to Learn may also receive a bursary if they are experiencing financial difficulty with meeting costs associated with learning.

Pro-rata bursaries for vulnerable group students

NLTG can pay more than £1,200 if the student needs it to continue in education.

The Student Bursary Support Service, which administers the vulnerable bursaries for the ESFA, will only pay a maximum rate of £40 per week. The Student Bursary Support Service will adjust any claims for a higher funding level to the £40 weekly maximum. If an institution wants to pay a student more, they should pay it from their discretionary allocation, if they have one, or their own funds.

The vulnerable bursary is payable for each academic year the student is in education or training, providing they continue to meet the eligibility criteria.

DISCRETIONARY BURSARY

Discretionary bursaries are targeted at students who cannot stay in education without financial help for things like transport, meals, books and equipment.

NLTG assesses each student's actual needs for financial help before deciding to make an award and if so how much.

NLTG document the assessment, get evidence to support the amounts being claimed and retain it for audit purposes.

NLTG pay bursary payments weekly and payment depends on the student meeting agreed standards, such as attendance, attainment and or behaviour.

NLTG are responsible for identifying students who are eligible to access the discretionary bursary fund. We assess each students' needs before deciding if the student is eligible for help. We take into account the household income of the student. Students whose household income is below £31,000 are eligible to apply for the discretionary fund. The discretionary fund is paid to students for travel to and from Centre and Work Experience. Course costs and work wear costs are covered under the discretionary bursary. To do this we could use:

- Evidence of benefits
- P60
- Tax credit award notice
- Evidence of self-employment

In some instances where parents / guardians earn more than £31,000 discretionary bursary may be awarded to students if their parents / guardians declare that without financial support their son / daughter would not be able to enter education.

The assessment is recorded for audit purposes.

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY FOR THE BURSARY FUND

This section covers basic eligibility and mirrors eligibility for publicly funded 16 to 19 education and training.

Assessing young people's need for bursaries

Receipt of both vulnerable and discretionary bursaries, depends on the student meeting agreed standards, relating to attendance and standards of behaviour. These conditions are set out in the attendance policy, which is in the Student Handbook and explained during the student's induction. Evidence that a student has seen and agreed to these conditions is kept for audit.

Age

To be eligible to receive a bursary the student must be aged:

- 16 or over
- Under 19 at 31st August before the academic year in question

If a student turns 19 during their programme of study, they can continue to get the bursary to the end of the academic year in which they turn 19, or to the end of the programme of study, whichever is sooner.

Residency

Students must meet the residency criteria in the ESFA funding guidance for the current academic year. The guidance sets out the evidence that institutions must see to confirm eligibility.

Accompanied asylum seeking children

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

Eligible education provision

Students have to be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (e.g. Ofsted). That provision is also either:

- Funded by the ESFA directly or via a local authority
- Otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including level 3) accredited by ofqual or on the list of qualifications approved for funding.

STUDENTS WHO WILL NOT RECEIVE BURSARIES

Students aged 19 and over at 31 August in the year they start their study programme

This includes students starting the second year of their course. Students who are 19 and over should contact their institution to see if they can access Discretionary Learner Support.

Students on waged Apprenticeships

Students on waged Apprenticeship programmes, or any waged learning or training, are not eligible to apply for a bursary.

Students on a traineeship programme are non-waged so may be eligible to apply for a bursary.

Administering the bursary fund

When assessing and paying students, NLTG are bound to equality legislation, which means that they cannot discriminate against the student, directly or indirectly. They are also subject to the public-sector equality duty in section 149(1) of the equality Act 2010.

Students can apply at any point during the academic year for bursary.

When assessing the need for support, institutions need to consider other exceptional circumstances, these could include:

- The student looking after a sick or disabled relative
- Unearned household income, such as shares or rental income etc. can be taken into account
- The number of dependent children in the household can be taken into account

Assessing eligibility

Receipt of other financial support does not exclude a student from receiving a bursary, for example a student who is getting support from Care to Learn may also receive a bursary if they are experiencing financial difficulty with meeting costs associated with learning, other than childcare.

DECLARATION

NLTG make students and their families aware that if false or incomplete information is submitted, or if they do not tell us about any part of their income that is relevant, the matter may be referred to the Department for Education or the Police. The student and/or their parent/guardian could face prosecution and we will seek to recover any payments the student is not eligible for.

Paying bursaries

Payment of any bursary is dependent upon attendance in a planned learning activity. Students who do not attend the planned learning activity will not be eligible for a bursary payment.

NLTG pay bursaries directly to the students via BACS transfer to their own account.

Students aged 16 can open a basic bank account. The basic bank account will allow BACS transfers.

NLTG will not pay the money into another person's account, except in exceptional circumstances where the student is unable to administer their own account. If the student is in one of the vulnerable groups and cannot manage their own funds, NLTG will need to know who is going to manage the bursary on the student's behalf, with the student's agreement.

Student Absence

Bursary payments are not paid for holiday leave. Students will be paid a bursary payment when they have attended the learning activities agreed.

Where a student has no choice but to miss learning because of another appointment (such as a medical appointment, probation meeting, funeral or caring responsibility) this maybe authorised. In deciding whether an absence should be authorised or not, NLTG take into account three general principles:

1. The presumption is that any un-notified absences will be considered to be unauthorised unless there is a valid reason otherwise.
2. If the claimed reason for the absence could have been foreseen, the student should have applied for authorised absence in advance.
3. Where the claimed reason for absence could not reasonably have been foreseen, NLTG should consider whether the absence was really unavoidable. An absence, which could not have been notified in advance, should be notified on the day in question before learning starts; unless exceptionally, there is a good reason why this could not be done, in this case to the Study Programme Manager will be consulted.

Absences which cannot be foreseen in advance

Where an absence genuinely could not have been foreseen in advance, the student should nevertheless make arrangements to tell the Centre as soon as possible on the day of absence that they will be missing learning and the reason why. Where a student has failed to do this, this absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Action to be taken on absences

Where 4 weeks of non-attendance are recorded students will be removed from programme. Every effort by the Study Programme staff will be made to make contact with the student, to discuss action taken on non-attendances. This will include, letters to home addresses, telephone calls, texts, social networking contact, contact with their known agencies/individuals who support the student and home visits.

Examples of legitimate reasons for absence are:

- Medical appointment which cannot be arranged outside training hours
- Caring responsibilities
- Religious holiday
- Probation meeting
- Funeral
- Severe transport disruption
- Driving test

Examples not acceptable for absence

- Part time work
- Leisure activities
- Birthdays
- Babysitting
- Shopping
- Driving lessons

This list is not meant to be exhaustive.

RECORDING STUDENT ATTENDANCE

1. If a student is sick/late/absent this will be recorded
2. At the end of the week, a weekly payment decision will be made by the study programme manager.
3. If the student will not be receiving their payment they will be notified by message via Aptem.

All bursary documents are auditable by the ESFA and payment decisions must be able to be substantiated at a later date or monies will be reclaimed.

COMPLAINTS

If a student is unhappy with the way their request for a bursary was handled, they should follow the NLTG complaints procedure. This procedure is detailed in the student handbook which is issued and explained on day one of the student's programme.

In addition to this, they may appeal against the decision by the following process:

HOW TO APPEAL

If students are not satisfied with the decision they may appeal in writing to:

Collette Humphreys, Operations Director
North Lincs Training Group Ltd
Bradshawgate House
Oak Street
Accrington
Lancashire, BB5 1EQ
Tel: 01254 397119

Any appeal must be made within 4 weeks from the date of the original decision being given to the student.

In the event of a student appealing against a decision made, the following timescales will apply:

- NLTG will give an initial response that explains how we will deal with the matter within 5 working days
- Investigate the complaint thoroughly
- Keep students up-to-date on progress if an immediate response cannot be given
- Provide a full response within 15 working days, giving full reasons for the rejection of any complaint

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION AND DATA RETURNS

Management information

NLTG will submit and end of year management information (MI) return to ESFA.



Signed _____
GARETH LINDSAY
NLTG Managing Director

Bursary Appeals Form

Name:

Address:

e-mail address:

Programme of
study:

Centre:

Date programme
commenced:

Following NLTG's decision not to award a bursary, I wish to appeal against the decision made for the following reason:

I am submitting evidence as follows to support my appeal:

Please return this form to:

Collette Humphreys, Operations Director, North Lancs Training Group Ltd, Bradshawgate House, Oak Street, Accrington, Lancashire, BB5 1EQ

Office Use Only:

Date Form Received:

Appeal upheld or
rejected:

Reason for decision:

Date student informed:

Admin signature:

Operations Director
Signature:

Date of decision: