

## FE STUDENT SUPPORT FUNDS POLICY & ALLOCATION GUIDELINES 2025-2026

16-19 SUPPORT FUNDS,  
16-19 CHILDCARE SUPPORT  
19+ DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUNDING,  
20+ ADULT CHILD CARE,  
ADVANCED LEARNER LOAN BURSARY

**Reference: SSF/POL-3/SS**

CLT Team Approval Date:	10th June 2025
Review Date:	June 2026

### Related Policies, Procedures and Guidance

- Complaints Procedure
- Equality and Diversity Policy

Version Control		
Dates of Reviews	Revised by	Description of the Revision
26 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	Katherine Skudra, Welfare Manager	1-New policy with amended income thresholds and updates to role titles.
1 <sup>st</sup> June 2021	Katherine Skudra Head of Student Welfare	2-Amendment of job titles and inclusion of new band of eligibility
31 <sup>st</sup> May 2022	Katherine Skudra Head of Student welfare	Review of eligibility criteria and offer of support Small change in process
16 <sup>th</sup> June 2023	Katherine Skudra Head of Student Welfare	After review of 2022/23 spend and discussions with users no change to eligibility criteria, small change to level of award for trips and travel to reflect increase in costs. Small change to guidelines regarding contact
30 <sup>th</sup> May 2024	Katherine Skudra Head of Student Welfare	Review of policy in light of allocation and guidelines – small changes made
10 <sup>th</sup> June 2025	Katherine Skudra Head of Student Welfare	Review of Policy in view of Government guidelines and allocation. Change to eligibility criteria, support level for trips, tighter controls for transport payments and provision for the administration of funds for Childcare support for those under the age of 20 (formerly C2L)

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

The College is committed to equality of opportunity and to giving everyone appropriate support to reach their full potential. This policy is concerned with the fair and equitable allocation of relevant support funds to disadvantaged Further Education (16-18, 19+ and Adult learner Loan) students to provide financial support to help students overcome specific barriers to participation, so they can remain in education.

The Support Funds covered by the policy are summarised below:

### **16-19 SUPPORT FUNDS**

The 16-19 Funds comprise two main elements:

- a bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in defined vulnerable groups (Priority Bursary) for transport and essential costs of study.
- discretionary awards to young people facing the greatest financial barriers to participation.

### **19+ Discretionary Learner Support Funds**

The 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Funding is aimed at supporting learners with a specific financial hardship that prevents participation in learning. Before making an award, a specific financial hardship must be identified within the following areas:

- 19 or over in financial hardship. (Studying on levels 1 and 2. Level 3 only if the advanced learner loan is not applicable).
- 20 or over with childcare needs. (Studying on levels 1 and 2. Level 3 only if the advanced learner loan is not applicable.)
- 19 or over Residential Access Fund.

### **20+ Adult Child Care**

The 20+ Adult Child Care funding supports those who are eligible for the 19+ Discretionary Learner Support and Advanced Learner Loan Bursary funds with the costs of child care.

### **Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund**

The Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund is provided to help vulnerable and disadvantaged learners who are being funded through an advanced learning loan such as those with learning difficulties or disabilities and parents who need help with childcare.

## **POLICY RESPONSIBILITY**

-Director of Quality, Student Experience and Inclusion has overall responsibility for the policy.

The Head of Student Welfare manages the allocation of funds and evaluates their effectiveness.

The Support Funds Officer is responsible for allocating, managing and recording the funds in line with the College Policy and Allocation Guidelines.

The Finance Director has responsibility for making BACs payments and transferring internal funds.

The Support Funds Panel determines eligibility and the level of award where necessary. The panel comprises the Head of Student Welfare, the Support Funds Officer and a student or other member of Student Services.

In developing the policy there has been consultation with students and managers.

## **POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

### **General**

- Students are informed about Support Funds in pre-enrolment information, at interview, on both the website and the intranet, in the on-line prospectus and during their induction to the College. Publicity information is also available on notice boards at each college. Applications and guidelines are available online and from members of the Welfare teams at all colleges
- Applications for funds must be submitted by completion of the relevant form which must be signed by the student and parent / guardian if the student is under 18
- Applications will only be processed if the student is currently enrolled on a course which is subject to inspection by a public body, eg Ofsted, and confirmed on the College Student Records database. Full cost recovery courses are not subject to inspection by a public body and therefore not eligible.
- Applications will only be processed if supported by evidence of income (e.g. copies of payslips, proof of current benefit) and receipts where needed
- The low income threshold is household income of **£30,000** net per annum **increased by £1,000** for each dependent child and those in this bracket can apply for help all forms of help outlined in this policy to include transport, childcare costs, fees, equipment and materials and discretionary help dependant on need.
- Those outside these thresholds are not excluded from applying if there is hardship but a supporting statement and evidence of serious financial difficulties must be provided to be considered by the Support Funds Panel.
- The funds will be used to help those on an income-based benefit subject to household income levels as above (either as an individual or part of household income if aged 25 or under).
- If a student in receipt of Support Funds leaves the course early, they may be required to repay all funds received. All students are required to sign to confirm their acceptance of this condition.
- Support funding will normally help with 75% of college charges, exam fees and recommended equipment except in exceptional circumstances. Payment for equipment will be up to a maximum of £350. Where available all recommended equipment must be purchased through the College online shop using the Support Funds option.
- The funds will help with 75% of the costs (subject to availability of funds) of residential stays or trips which the curriculum area has confirmed are an essential part of the course/qualification to a maximum total for trips of £400.
- Enrichment trips not essential and compulsory to the study programme are not eligible for support from these funds.
- Students can only apply for help with one course initially unless subsequent courses can be shown to be a necessary complement to career progression.

- The availability of other sources of funding to which the student might be entitled will be taken into account when making decisions about the allocation of support funds.
- The allocation of funds will be made according to individual needs in accordance with the support funds policy and within these guidelines, which together detail eligibility and allocation criteria.
- Items of individual equipment bought for the use of an individual student remain the property of the College.
- Those eligible for free meals in college will receive £5 per day, the balance from allocation being made up from the Support Funds
- Where help with the cost of transport is awarded a contribution to petrol costs this will be paid at £0.30 per mile

### **16-19 Support Funds**

- The priorities for 16-19 Support Funds are:
  - a) A bursary of up to £1,200 a year is available for young people in the following defined vulnerable groups: in care, care leavers, young people in receipt of income support or Universal Credit and those young people receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right as well as Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit (UC) in their own right.
  - b) Discretionary awards to young people facing the greatest financial barriers to participation; such as the costs of transport, meals, books and equipment.
- Students aged 19 or over on 31 August 2024 are eligible for help from discretionary bursaries if they are continuing on a study programme, they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers) and those who have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Vulnerable (known as Priority Bursaries) 16-19 bursaries are made on a pro-rata basis for courses lasting less than 30 weeks.
- Where a young person is eligible for a bursary under the vulnerable group categories but their financial needs are already met or they have no relevant or course related costs, no bursary award will be made.
- Applications for recommended equipment will be processed on presentation of the fully completed application form, relevant evidence of income and clear confirmation of cost as given to the whole class.
- Where bus passes are authorised, they are authorised termly subject to attendance and funds being available. Re-authorisation will be made within a four-week period (three weeks before the end of term and one week into the new term (if absolutely necessary), unless agreed otherwise by the Support Funds Panel).
- The 16-19 Support fund will normally help with the cost of bus passes that have not already been subsidised. Applicants must pay the first £25 towards the cost of their pass, through the online College Shop. If attendance is good, 100% of the spring and summer terms will be paid. Bus pass applications to be submitted for each term and renewal will only be made subject to an attendance of 90%.
- Except in exceptional circumstances only 1 bus will be funded and where there are 2 providers available the lower priced provider will be used/funded by the Support Funds.

- Students must use the most cost effective mode of public transport and any award / refund for train fares will be calculated at best available price.
- All applications for petrol costs will be considered by the Support Funds Panel and will only be considered where travel to and from College by public transport is not a viable option. A statement of need may be asked for.
- Those with an attendance less than 90% might be considered for bus pass help with the support of their tutor particularly in the summer term. A written statement outlining why attendance has been poor would be helpful when making a decision.
- All awards are subject to a 90% attendance unless exceptional discretionary circumstances are identified.

### **16-19 Support for Child Care Costs – formerly known as Care to Learn**

- Enrolled parents who are eligible for 16-19 Discretionary Learner Support Funds are entitled to apply for a funded place for their child at any nursery and before/after school provision (maximum age 11).
- All new childcare fund applicants must attend an interview with the Head of Student Welfare or member of the Support Funds Team prior to confirmation of a childcare award.
- All applicants for childcare funds must complete a Support Fund Childcare form and sign a childcare agreement.
- Registration fees and meals will not be met from the fund.
- Payments will not be made for childcare for half-terms, personal holidays, Christmas/Easter periods and evenings.
- Retainer payments over the Summer break 2026 will be paid if the student is progressing to further study in the College in September 2026.
- Payment will only be made if the student has a good attendance.
- No student will be entitled to more than £180 per week per child for childcare support for the duration of the course excluding retainers for holiday periods. Any shortfall may be met from the 16-16 Discretionary pot
- Childcare providers must provide a copy of their Ofsted Registration Certificate and complete a 'Proforma for Application for Childcare Support' to give the College their details and expected cost of the childcare
- Childcare will not be authorised or paid for until the College has received a fully completed proforma and invoice from the relevant childcare provider (and student's application and evidence is in order).
- Funding for this provision is not on an allocation but is drawn down by the College and paid out by College directly to the Childcare provider upon invoice

### **19+ Discretionary Learner Support and Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Funding**

- The priority for 19+ Discretionary Learner Support and Advanced Learner Loan Bursary funding is to support adult learners with a specific hardship that prevents them from

participating in learning. However, those who are eligible for support are not automatically entitled to it. Awards are subject to availability of funds and proof of hardship, which is not necessarily solely based on the student's financial position.

- Priority for funding will be in accordance with Government Guidelines. Where a student has been accepted onto, and studying a programme of learning which is subject to inspection by a public body, they will be eligible to apply for support funding, with the exception of students serving a custodial sentence, and those who have been released on temporary licence or have been remanded to a secure institution. Exceptionally, help will be given to those who need to do a course to enable them to get employment.
- Some funds will be retained to meet emerging costs due to changes in circumstances during the year. Improvements to personal circumstances will also be taken into account.
- 19+ discretionary support funding is available for help with the tuition part of the course fees. Discretionary Learner Support funding can help with 75% of tuition fees subject to availability of funds (this may affect those applying later in the year).
- Awards for the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary CANNOT be made towards the payment of fees.
- For the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary, no application will be accepted until the Advanced Learner Loan has been confirmed by Finance England to Warwickshire College Group Finance Office.
- Students aged 25 years of age and under who are applying for 19+ discretionary support funding and who live with parents/guardians, must include evidence of parental income which will be taken into account unless the student can provide evidence of having been self-sufficient for the last three years, ie full-time work before commencing the course and an annual income around £10,000 net. The application will then be considered by the Support Funds Panel to ascertain the level of hardship and eligibility. Those not including parental income will only be awarded help with fees unless agreed otherwise by panel.
- A partner's income will be taken into account in assessing eligibility for an award.
- Students who are aged 25 years or older at the time of application will be regarded as financially independent.
- Where it is not possible to purchase a termly bus pass payments will be made termly by way of refund for public transport for those aged 19+ travelling a minimum of two days per week subject to evidence of cost of travel and will be dependent on both attendance and availability of funds. The maximum payment per annum will be **£1200**. If there is a need for this payment to be increased the student will be considered at Panel.
- All awards are subject to 90% attendance unless exceptional circumstances are identified.

### **20+ adult childcare funds and from Adult Learner Loan Bursary for childcare**

- Enrolled parents who are eligible for 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Funds and Adult Learner Loan Bursary are entitled to apply for a funded place for their child at the College, any other nursery and before/after school provision (maximum age 11).
- All new childcare fund applicants must attend an interview with the Head of Student Welfare or member of the Support Funds Team prior to confirmation of a childcare award. Returning students are required to attend an interview with an administrator and must also complete and submit a master course timetable.

- All applicants for childcare funds must complete a Support Fund Childcare form and sign a childcare agreement.
- Registration fees, holiday retainers and meals will not be met from the fund.
- Payments will not be made for childcare for half-terms, personal holidays, Christmas/Easter periods and evenings.
- Payment will only be made if the student has a good attendance.
- No student will be entitled to more than the prevailing Care to Learn maximum (£180 per week per child) for childcare support for the duration of the course excluding retainers for holiday periods.
- Childcare providers must provide a copy of their Ofsted Registration Certificate and complete a 'Proforma for Application for Childcare Support' to give the College their details and expected cost of the childcare
- External childcare will not be authorised or paid for until the College has received a fully completed proforma and invoice from the relevant childcare provider (and student's application and evidence is in order).

## ELIGIBILITY EXCLUSIONS

The following categories of students are not eligible for support funds:

- i) Those EU nationals or family members of EEA and Swiss Workers without pre-settled or settled status
- ii) Students on HE courses, with the exception of those participating in HE access courses or other HE falling within paragraph 1(g) or 1(h) of schedule 6 to the Education Reform Act 1988, provided the courses are funded under the 16-19 Learner Responsive model.
- iii) Students on waged Apprenticeships or any learning or training undertaken while a wage is being drawn.
- iv) Students in prison or a young offender institution or who have been released on temporary licence, for example on day release.
- v) Students enrolling on a course which is not subject to inspection by a public body.
- vi) Those who have received a grant for the last two consecutive years are unlikely to be eligible for a grant this year unless there is clear career progression.
- vii) Students living in Scotland or Wales, i.e. as the main residence/home.

## APPEALS

Students are provided with information on how to appeal against any decision made. The process is explained on the information sheet, intranet and receipt slip. Students who are dissatisfied with the decision they receive may appeal informally to the Head of Student Welfare on 0330 135 6174.

They can appeal formally in writing to Customer Services, Warwickshire College, Warwick New Road, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 5JE, email [customerservices@warwickshire.ac.uk](mailto:customerservices@warwickshire.ac.uk),

or complete an on-line feedback form at:

[http://www.warwickshire.ac.uk/about\\_us/customer\\_services.aspx](http://www.warwickshire.ac.uk/about_us/customer_services.aspx)

## **POLICY MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

This policy is monitored by the Head of Student Welfare through the countersignature of all applications and evaluated through the retention and achievement rates of students supported by the funds. The policy is reviewed annually.

## SUPPORT FUNDS ALLOCATION GUIDELINES

- Applications for support funds can be made throughout the academic year September to July unless funds are already spent prior to this. All awards are made subject to funds being available.
- The Support Funds Panel will review decisions on applications in line with the policy and allocation guidelines. –An email to the student email address explaining corrections and confirming any amended award will be sent by the Support Funds-Officer. This could mean students have more to pay. The panel may consider applications on an individual basis where appropriate.
- Applications received after May 1<sup>st</sup> 2026 for that year will all be considered by the Support Funds Panel
- All contact with students on issues relating to their support funds queries, allocation and payments will be to their College email address once enrolled.
- The funds may help with emergency accommodation/food – the minimum amount needed in order to enable students to stay on the course will be paid usually no more than 2 nights.
- Allocations will be used to offset outstanding College debts, if applicable and then to a third party where possible.
- Decisions of the Support Funds Officer are overseen and countersigned by the Head of Student Welfare. Applications presenting exceptional circumstances will be reviewed by the Support Funds Panel.
- Applications will be processed on presentation of a fully completed application form and relevant evidence of income.
- Any monies due to students will be paid by BACs (as provided on their application form).
- Where possible, applications for 16-19 bus passes will be processed on presentation of the fully completed application form, relevant evidence of income and confirmation from the College online shop that the £25 contribution has been paid (unless the Support Funds Panel has agreed to waive the payment of the student falls within the Priority category)
- Where it has not been practical for essential equipment to be bought through the online shop refunds due to those students will be made by BACs subject to evidence of purchase and good attendance of 90%. Refunds will not be paid before half-term in October. There will be no refunds for less than £20 unless agreed by the Support Funds Panel.
- If errors have been made by the College or evidence is later found to be deficient, a letter explaining the correction and confirming the amended award will be sent by the Support Funds Officer. This could mean students have more to pay.
- A copy of this policy and guidelines will be made available on the WCG website under ‘Money Matters’ together with downloadable versions of the application form and guidance on the application process at enrolment and during the academic year.
- There are many other **Charities and Trusts** which the Support Fund Team and the careers Team can advise you on if more help is needed or you are not eligible for these funds.