

Bursary and Free School Meal Policy

BURSARY AND FREE SCHOOL MEAL POLICY

Scope

The scope of this policy is in line with the national Department for Education (DFE) 16-19 Bursary Fund Guide for 2026/2027 and from consultation with the Local Authority and wider provider network.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a set of standards and principles for the administration of the 16-19 Bursary Fund, which provides financial support to help learners overcome specific barriers to participation so that they can remain in education,

There are two types of 16-19 bursaries:

- Vulnerable bursary for defined vulnerable groups of up to £1,200 a year.
- Discretionary bursary which providers award to meet the individual needs of the learner, for example, help with the cost of transport, meals, books and/or equipment.

The 16-19 Bursary Fund is subject to funds being made available from the Department for Education (DFE) and, therefore, CTS Training cannot guarantee that it will be able to grant every application made, unless the applicant is within the vulnerable bursary group.

Principles

We seek to ensure that the assessment, administration, and allocation of the fund is open and transparent to all parties.

The Bursary Fund will be targeted at learners who face the greatest barriers to continuing in education or training post 16.

- CTS Training will pay eligible learners by BACS transfer into their own bank account.
- CTS Training will pay/reimburse eligible learners the bursary for costs relating to participation in learning, for example, transport, meals, and any additional learning costs in line with the 16-19 Bursary Fund Policy. The Bursary Fund is not intended to provide learning support services that providers give to learners, for example, counselling or mentoring, or to support extra-curricular activities where these are not essential to the learner's study programme.
- CTS Training will ensure that the assessment and allocation of funds is conducted in a professional timely and responsive manner and in compliance with current DFE guidance.
- CTS Training will not discriminate against any learners based on any protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and in CTS Training's Equality and Diversity Policy.

- All documentation relating to applicants will be treated confidentially in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations from May 2018 (GDPR).
- CTS Training will raise awareness of the 16-19 Bursary Fund with referral agencies and through recruitment processes amongst learners, particularly the most vulnerable and those that face the greatest financial barriers to participation. This will include publishing the information regarding the application process on the CTS Training website.
- CTS Training will be responsible for ensuring all learners, including those learning with approved sub-contractors, are fully aware of the 16-19 Bursary Fund, the assessment criteria and how to make an application.

Bursary Types

The 16-19 Bursary Fund has two elements:

- A vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups (subject to funds from the Learning and Support Service).
- A discretionary bursary for learners facing the greatest financial hardship with a threshold of household income below £40,000. Providers award the discretionary bursary to meet individual needs, for example, help with the costs of transport, meals, books and equipment (subject to funds being made available to CTS Training and there being an assessed need for financial help).

Age Eligibility

A learner must be aged 16 or over, but under 19, on 31 August 2026 (or 19+ with an EHCP) to be eligible for financial support from the Bursary Fund in the 2026/2027 contract year.

Residency Eligibility

Learners must meet the residency criteria in the DFE funding regulations for post-16 provision in the 2026/2027 contract year. Learners must have the legal right to reside in the UK.

Accompanied Asylum Seeking Children (Under 18 with an Adult Relative or Partner)

seekers are not entitled to public funds. Accompanied asylum seeking children, those that are 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 any other income.

As long as an asylum seeker has not had their application for asylum refused, CTS Training can provide in-kind student support such as books, equipment or a travel pass. Under no circumstances should CTS Training give cash to any asylum seeker unless they are an accompanied asylum seeking child (UASC).

Vulnerable Bursary

Learners who meet one of the 4 criteria detailed below and who have a financial need can apply for a vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200 per year if they are participating on a Study Programme that lasts for 30 weeks or more. Where a Study Programme is less than 30 weeks the value of the bursary to be paid will be based on a pro-rata amount. The vulnerable bursary reflects that these learners in these groups may need a greater level of support to enable them to continue to participate.

The defined vulnerable groups are learners who are:

- In care;
- Care leavers;
- Receiving Income Support or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves, and someone who is dependent on them and living with them such as a child or partner.
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right.

CTS Training can pay a bursary to a vulnerable learner of more than £1,200 if we assess they need extra help to remain in education. Any payments over £1,200 will be made from our discretionary bursary (subject to available funds).

Equally, CTS Training may decide that although a young person may be eligible for bursary because they are in one of the defined vulnerable groups, they do not have any actual financial need and so do not need support from the scheme. For example, their financial needs are already met and/or they have no relevant costs.

The DFE 16-19 Bursary Fund defines 'in care' as 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'.

A 'care leaver' is defined as:

- A young person aged 16 and 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16; or
- A young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16.

Foster care is defined as:

- A 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. They are in a defined vulnerable group (in care) and eligible for help from the bursary for vulnerable groups.
- A child who is privately fostered (in other words, a private arrangement is made between the parent and the person who will care for the child) is not classed as a looked after child and is not eligible for the bursary for vulnerable groups.

In some instances, a young person may have been in the care of the local authority and the care transferred to another party via a permanent form of fostering such as a Special Guardianship Order. In these circumstances, the young person is defined as having left care so is now a care leaver. They are in a defined vulnerable group (care leaver) and eligible for help from the bursary for vulnerable groups.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit has replaced Income Support and Employment Support Allowance as well as other benefits. Institutions will increasingly see learners claiming bursaries for defined vulnerable groups based on receiving Universal Credit.

Universal Credit award notifications do not include any information on the benefits they replace. For this reason, the description of the bursaries for the vulnerable group category that relates to receipt of Universal Credit or Income Support is that a learner must be receiving Universal Credit in their own right because they are financially supporting themselves and anyone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or partner.

Evidence of Eligibility

CTS Training will obtain evidence from each learner that they are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups, and we will retain copies for audit purposes.

- Learners in care or a care leaver – written confirmation of their current or previous looked after status from the relevant local authority. This is the local authority that looks after them or provides their care services. The evidence could be a letter or an e-mail but must be from the local authority.
- Learners in receipt of Income Support – a copy of their Income Support award notice. They must be entitled to the benefit in their own right and the evidence must confirm that the young person can be in further education or training (some young people in receipt of benefits are not allowed to participate).
- Learners in receipt of Universal Credit – a copy of their Universal Credit Award Notice. They must be entitled to the benefit in their own right. They must also provide

additional documentation to confirm their independent status, for example, a tenancy agreement in their own name, a child benefit receipt, a birth certificates, utility bills, etc.

- Learners in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments and Employment Support Allowance – a copy of their relevant award notice. They must be entitled to the payment in their own right and the evidence must confirm this.

CTS Training will only submit a funding claim to the DFE for bursaries for vulnerable groups when they have seen and verified appropriate evidence to confirm that the learner is eligible.

Pro Rata Bursaries for Vulnerable Groups

Learners who have a financial need who meet the criteria for a bursary for vulnerable groups may be eligible for a bursary up to £1,200 (with the actual amount dependent on the specific financial needs they have) if they are on a Study Programme which lasts for 30 weeks or more in the academic year. Learners who meet the criteria and who are on a Study Programme lasting less than 30 weeks should be given their bursary on a pro rata basis, as appropriate, with the actual amount dependant on the assessment of their specific financial needs.

For example:

- A learner is on a 30 week programme and the institution assesses that their financial needs require the full £1,200, they bursary may be allocated as $\text{£1,200} / 30 = \text{£40}$ per week.
- If the learner was on a 10 week programme, the pro rata bursary may be $\text{£40} \times 10 \text{ weeks} = \text{£400}$.

Learners will be awarded a daily amount of £2 or £3 depending on their age for each day they are timetabled to attend CTS Training for travel costs. This will be paid into their bank account weekly and is to be used for travel.

Eligible Young People Who Do Not Require Bursary Funding

In some cases, a young person might be eligible for bursary for vulnerable groups because they meet one or more of the criteria, however, their financial needs are already met and/or they have no relevant costs. For example:

- Attending specialist residential provision that covers their educational costs in full.
- Taking a distance learning programme which has no financial barrier to participation (for example, they do not have any travel costs or meal costs).
- Is in the care of the local authority whose educational costs are covered in full by the local authority.
- Is financially supported by their partner.

In these circumstances, CTS Training will explain to the learner and/or the learner's parents or carers the aim of the bursary funding and why not bursary is being awarded. CTS Training will ensure that all applicants are made aware that meeting the criteria for a bursary for vulnerable groups does not automatically mean funding will be given.

Discretionary Bursary

CTS Training will ensure all learners who are in financial hardship have the opportunity to apply for financial support from the Discretionary Bursary Fund.

CTS Training will use household income to help establish the amount of support they award to a learner. This will be used in conjunction with other factors, such as the distance to travel from CTS Training and the number of dependent children in the household.

CTS Training will ensure that all learners, who have a household income below £40,000 per year, have the opportunity to be considered for financial support from the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary Fund to help them overcome the individual barriers to participation they face.

3 months wage slips or P60 will need to be provided to support a claim for discretionary bursary to evidence that the household income is below £40,000 per year.

Learners, or their parents and/or carers, receiving one or more of the following benefits may also be eligible to receive discretionary bursary support:

- Income Support
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income Related Employment Support Allowance
- Universal Credit
- Pension Credit
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child or Working Tax Credits

Learners will need to provide evidence in the form of a letter (dated with the last 3 months and where that is not possible the most recent letter may be accepted) from the Job Centre, Home Office or Pension Service confirming their entitlement in order for their application to be processed.

All decisions about which learners receive a discretionary bursary and how much bursary they receive will be based on each learner's individual circumstances and their actual financial need. The bursary fund is intended to help learners overcome the specific financial barriers to participation they face; these will vary from learner to learner, depending on a range of factors, for example, their household income, the distance they need to travel to the institution and the requirements of their Study Programme.

Free Meals

Learners, or their parents and/or carers, receiving one or more of the following benefits may also be eligible to apply for Free Meals:

- Income Support
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income Related Employment Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit run on, paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit

Where a Vulnerable Learner is not entitled to a Free Meal, a food allowance will be provided from the Vulnerable Bursary to ensure the learner has a substantial meal while attending their Study Programme, this will be paid at £7 per day.

Due to the cost of living crisis and energy cap removal, from 1st August 2026, Free Meals will be paid at a rate of £2.66, with an adjusted uplift from discretionary bursary fund of £4.34. This will allow learners to be paid a daily rate of £7 to be used for the provision of a meal. This will be paid for every day that a learner attends for their Study Programme. This will be paid directly into the learner's bank account on a weekly basis.

For learners that attend CTS Manvers in Rotherham there is an onsite cafe for learners to obtain their daily meal. Once learners have confirmed their daily attendance, the Learner Mentor verifies eligibility and generates a voucher for eligible learners. The voucher is then issued, signed for, and redeemed with the approved vendor to purchase a meal. To maintain accountability, the Centre Manager checks for duplicate or invalid vouchers, while the Learner Mentor records each redemption on a tracking spreadsheet to provide an audit trail linked to attendance. Redeemed vouchers are collected from vendors, submitted weekly to the administration team for central storage, and finally reconciled through management reporting to ensure accurate payment, spending oversight, and compliance.

Travel

To qualify for assistance with the costs of travel between home and CTS Training, a learner must live at least 1 mile away from their normal CTS Training centre.

16-18 year olds must apply for a Zoom 16-18 Travel Pass.

<https://www.travelsouthyorkshire.com/en-gb/ticketsandpasses/zoom-16-18-pass>

This travel pass entitles learners to concessionary travel at £1 on buses and trams in South Yorkshire.

18+ year olds that do not qualify for a Zoom 16-18 Travel Pass must apply for a Travel Master 18-22 Discount Card.

<https://www.sytravelmaster.com/18-22discountcard>

The Travel Master 18-22 Discount Card is a smartcard available to all young people, regardless of where you live.

CTS Training will support all learners who are eligible to apply for either a 16-18 travel pass or an 18-22 travel pass.

Learners will be entitled to the following amounts:

- £2 per day for 16-18 year olds.
- £3 per day for 18-21 year olds.

This will be paid for every day that a learner attends for their Study Programme. This will be paid directly into the learner's bank account on a weekly basis.

Application Process

During the enrolment process it will be identified if learners are eligible for either Vulnerable Bursary or Discretionary Bursary. Learners will be expected to complete a CTS Training 16-19 Bursary Application Form and provide the required evidence. CTS Training will assess the young person's actual need for financial assistance before awarding a bursary. CTS Training will confirm if the application has been approved or declined via an Award Notice letter. Once the application has been approved the amount to be awarded will be documented in the Award Notice letter. The first payment will be received by the learner within 10 days of the application being awarded.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

In accordance with GDPR, personal information collected through the application process will only be used for the purpose of determining eligibility for the bursary fund and when making payments. CTS Training will only keep your personal information for as long as we need it, after which it will be securely destroyed.

Payment Process

Learners eligible for the 16-19 Bursary Fund will receive weekly payments, in arrears, to reimburse their costs relating to their participation in learning. To receive payment a young person must adhere to the terms and conditions of their individual Study Programme. All learners are required to supply valid bank account details in their own name for payments to be made via BACS.

Where there are exceptional circumstances preventing a young person from receiving bursary funds directly, CTS Training has the authority to make alternative payment methods to learners. Any exceptional circumstances must be recorded and retained in the learning funding file.

If/when a learner has been overpaid, for whatever reason, CTS Training reserves the right to reclaim the amount overpaid. Where this is not possible, CTS Training will adjust future claims to compensate the overpayment. The following will apply:

- Where CTS Training has paid the learner bursary that they are not entitled to, for example incorrect declarations on the application, CTS Training can seek to recover the funds.
- Where CTS Training has made an error, for example the issue was not the learner's, CTS Training would not seek to recover the funds.

CTS Training make note that the use of the 16-9 Bursary Fund to support transport related costs does not replace the statutory duty on local authorities to set out the arrangements they will make to facilitate the participation in education or training of young people. Bursary payments will be assessed at the application process where the costs have been identified as a barrier to participation.

Approval and Rejection of Payment

Approval of payment is subject to daily attendance which will be confirmed by the learner's tutors. Learners will only be paid their bursary fund for the days that they have attended. Payments can be withheld if learners have been reported to:

- Have not contributed to their learning agreement.
- Broken the behaviour agreement with CTS Training.

It is the responsibility of their tutors to record any failings by the learner to adhere to their terms and conditions of their learning agreement. This should be recorded on the daily electronic register within session outcomes. This will be reviewed weekly to ensure bursary payments are aligned. Communication of the terms and conditions of the bursary fund are held within this policy, and it is the responsibility of CTS Staff to make learners aware of these points of reference.

Change to Learner Circumstances

It is the learner's responsibility to inform CTS Training where their circumstances change, for example, they are no longer deemed vulnerable, or they are no longer in financial hardship. Once a change has been identified, CTS Training will make the necessary arrangements to end a learner's claim so that no further payments are made. It is also the learner's responsibility to inform CTS Training if they fall into the vulnerable category or feel that they are in financial hardship whilst on their Study Programme. CTS Training will help and support these learners apply for the bursary fund.

CTS Training will promote and support application to the bursary fund throughout the young person's time on programme and respond to any change in a learner's circumstances.

Where a learner changes their bank account, it is the learner's responsibility to notify CTS Training of their new details. If the learner fails to do so, CTS Training will not take the

responsibility for loss of funds to the learner as we were not aware of the changes. Thus, payments will continue to be made into the previous bank account until we are notified otherwise. A learner can update their bank account details by asked any member of staff for a Change of Bank Account Details form.

Appeals and Complaints

Learners who wish to appeal towards a decision regarding the outcome of their bursary application or where a payment has been withheld due to their attendance and/or behaviour, should follow the CTS Training Complaints Procedure, which is made available through the enrolment process and their Study Programme.

This policy is supported by:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2026-to-2027>

[Free meals in further education funded institutions guide: academic year 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK](#)

Signed		Date	01/08/2026
Position	Chief Executive Officer	Review	31/07/2027