



Learner Financial Support Policy 2023/24

Version:

Final

Author:

Vice Principal
Finance & Planning

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Approved by SMT
Approved by F&R Committee
Approved by Corporation

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Impact Assessment Completed

Yes

Date of Next Review

June 2024

Equality Impact Assessment Form

The completion of the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will help us to ensure that our policies, procedures and practices do not discriminate or disadvantage people and also improve or promote equality.

In relation to: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

1. Please explain if you identified any inequalities or possible discrimination in the policy, procedure or practice?

The financial support needs of all learners will be considered in this policy, including those funded by 16-19 Funding, Advanced Learning Loans, Apprenticeship and Adult Education Budget. Shipley College prioritises the allocation of the funds to enable the maximum number of learners to complete their course successfully. Assessment of financial support will follow government guidance, ensuring a transparent application process and, where appropriate, taking into consideration any exceptional circumstances raised by learners. This will enable the College to be more inclusive, removing financial barriers to learners enrolling on the course and access learning opportunities and enhance their future employment prospects and quality of life.

2. If identified, how have you changed the policy, procedure or practice to remove or mitigate the inequality or discrimination?

N/A

3. Any follow up actions required?

None

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to set out Shipley College's approach to the allocation of Financial Support funds available for learners.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to the following funds:-

- 16-19 Bursary funds
- Free College meals
- Discretionary learning support for 19+ learners
- Discretionary learning support for learners funded by "Free Courses for Jobs"
- Loan Bursary Fund for Advanced learning loan learners
- Discretionary learning support for 16-18 learners

3. Responsibility

It is the responsibility of all staff to comply with the requirements of this Policy and for Student Services staff and Heads of Department to ensure its implementation. Policy and practice is overseen by the Vice Principal Finance and Planning.

4. Principles

- 4.1 The 16-19 Bursary and Free College meals allocation given to the College by the ESFA will be distributed by the College within the funding body specific rules and guidance provided to learners, including information placed on the Student Portal and available on request from Enrolments or as part of advice and guidance meeting.
- 4.2 Discretionary Learner Support (DLSF) will be used to support learners with a specific financial hardship that prevents them from taking part in further education. There are 4 hardship funds which must be operated within the current funding body rules:
 - for 16-18 year old learners
 - hardship for 19+ learners and
 - childcare for 20+ learners.
 - Loan bursary fund - Learners who have an Advanced learning loan can be supported through the Loan bursary fund with childcare, transport costs, help towards course materials and equipment or classroom assistance for a disability or learning difficulty following a College assessment.
- 4.3 To simplify the process for learners, the College has one application process per age group. Further information on the DLSF can be obtained from Student Services and on the Student Portal under the Student Handbook section. The College then allocates applications and costs to the appropriate fund. Students or prospective students who need financial support to access learning should contact Student services or Enrolments who will assess their eligibility for support.
- 4.4 Shipley College prioritises the allocation of the funds to enable the maximum number of learners to access learning and complete their course successfully. The priority groups being:

- o Those in care or recently left care
- o Those on probation
- o Those eligible for fee remission because they are, or they are the dependant of someone else who is, receiving a means tested state benefit or Tax credit
- o Those eligible for fee remission because they are undertaking a first full level 2 or level 3 qualification
- o Those eligible for fee remission because they are in work but earning less than the current income threshold *relevant to the learner's postcode and associated funding body
- o Those taking a Skills for Life programme of study
- o Those with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND)
- o Those unemployed or recently made redundant
- o Those from low income households
- o Those vocational students undertaking capacity and delivery fund (CDF) industry placements to help access their placements.
- o Those experiencing financial hardship or have limited or no access to finances.

*please ask student services or enrolments for current income thresholds.

- 4.5 The fund cannot be used for learners on a Community Learning Programme or who are paying for a full cost course. It can not be used where other funds are available to the learner e.g. help with travel or childcare costs from Jobcentre Plus or a Work Programme provider in connection with pre-employment training.
- 4.6 The fund can only be used for Apprenticeships in exceptional circumstances as there is an expectation that employers will provide support.
- 4.7 Hardship funding is provided to support vulnerable and disadvantaged learners and to remove barriers to education or training. This will include:
- o Course-related costs, books and equipment (where these costs are not included in the funding rate), support with emergencies
 - o IT kit for online learning where none is available in the household
 - o Transport costs for over 19 learners
 - o Tuition & examination fees
 - o Emergency food support
 - o Support provided by others, or by providing items or services
- 4.8 Childcare funding is provided for learners over the age of 20 where the lack of such a facility would create a barrier to learners e.g. group provision at community centres, or for individual learners.
- 4.9 To reach its decisions, the College will determine the eligibility of learners to apply to the Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF) based on the information provided in the application form and other appropriate sources. The College may then make reference to tutors to confirm:
- o Attendance, progress and commitment to their studies
 - o The likelihood of completion, particularly if support needs are considerable.
- 4.10 The DLSF cannot be used to "pay off" debts.

- 4.11 The DLSF is both limited and discretionary. There is no automatic entitlement to support from this fund.
- 4.12 If an application is successful, the DLSF may not cover all costs, but will make a contribution.
- 4.13 In order to assess an application, the College requires personal financial information from applicants or their parents/carers. All information supplied is treated as confidential.
- 4.14 The Learner Support Fund Management Group (LSFMG) meets as and when necessary, in order to agree Policy and Procedures relating to LSF. This group consists of:
- o Vice Principal Finance & Planning
 - o Head of Student Services
 - o Student Services Administrative Team Leader
- 4.15 Exceptional cases are considered by at least 2 members of The LSFMG
- 4.16 Appeals are decided by the Vice Principal Finance and Planning in line with the guidance in the "Learner Support Fund Guide" on the student portal, following an investigation by the LSFMG.
- 4.17 Appeals prior to enrolment can be made through the College complaints procedure.

5. Monitoring and reporting

Compliance with Policy and Procedures will be monitored by the Vice Principal – Finance and Planning and Student Services.

Annual review of spend is carried out for the completion of the monitoring returns to be submitted to the ESFA in line with their monitoring timetables.

External audit review the Policy, Procedure and claim via the annual regularity audit carried out in late September/early October each year.

Learners benefitting from support by these funds are flagged as such in the Individual Learning Record (ILR).

6. Related to other documents

This policy links to Student Guidance on the Shipley College student portal. This guidance can also be made available to prospective students during the enrolment period on request.