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**POLICY/PROCEDURE: LEARNER SUPPORT FUND 19+ POLICY**

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Approval required by:	Executive	Y	Governing Body	Y
Senior Lead:	Vice Principal Students			
Responsible Manager:	Head of Student Services			
Date approved:	March 2025			
Date to be reviewed:	May 2026			

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**Significant changes to policy**

Removal of the amount of money that determines the threshold

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**Impact of changes**

Clarification.

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## **SCOPE AND PURPOSE**

This policy details how Barnsley College and ITS (“the College”) will offer financial support to students aged 19+ through Hardship and Loans Bursary Funds.

Three separate support funds are available to students aged 19+:

- FE 19+ Hardship.
- 20+ Childcare fund
- Loans Bursary Fund.

### **FE 19+ Hardship**

The 19+ Hardship Fund is available to students aged 19+ who have a household income that falls below a College agreed threshold and meet the AEB residency and eligibility rules. The threshold will be determined once our LSF Allocation has been determined.

A maximum of 10% of the overall funding available within the 19+ SSF is held centrally to support students who experience sudden, unavoidable and extreme hardship.

Where possible payments will be made in the form cashless cards, high street vouchers, bus passes or internal payments for essential course related equipment and trips. In the event a payment cannot be made using this method all payments will be paid direct into the student’s bank account.

The fund will cover funding towards the following based on an assessment of actual financial need:

- Course-related costs, including course trips, books and equipment (where costs are not included in the funding rate)
- Support with domestic emergencies and emergency accommodation provided by others, or by providing items or services or cash direct to the learner, this can be in the form of a grant or repayable loan provided by you
- Transport costs (but not make a block contribution to post-16 transport partnerships or routinely fund transport costs covered in the local authority’s legal duty for learners of sixth-form age)
- Food support for full day attendance in college
- Accreditation fees, professional membership fees and any fees or charges due to external bodies
- Registration fees
- To support learners on a traineeship including the work placement element
- ICT devices by loan purpose only

In exceptional circumstances the fund will be used to support with course fees for learners who need financial support to start or stay in learning

### **20+ Childcare**

All payments for childcare will be made directly to the Ofsted registered childcare provider. A contract will be made between the College and the Childcare Provider, payment will be made on receipt of an invoice from said Childcare Provider.

## **Loans Bursary Fund**

The same rules apply as the 19+ Hardship Fund however there will not be any funding available for essential equipment. This must be applied for as part of their loan.

The loans bursary fund is available to students aged 19+ who have a loan approved by the SLC that has passed the liability point and evidence a household income that falls below a college agreed threshold.

The loans bursary fund will provide financial support for learners where a financial hardship is preventing them from taking part or continuing in learning. Financial support through the loan's bursary will be categorised within:

- Hardship
- Childcare Funding
- ALS Support

Hardship, including transport costs, equipment which is not required to be part of the fee, whereby this is the case the cost of equipment should be added to the loan application process. Professional membership fees and exceptional domestic emergencies. The funding is not available for apprentices.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

### **Applying to the fund**

Any students wishing to apply for financial support need to complete an application form and produce proof of household income for each year they study with the college. In addition, students must demonstrate an actual financial need and sign a declaration to acknowledge the information provided is correct and complete.

### **Household Income**

Students will be required to submit evidence of household income.

It is the students responsibility to tell the Department for Work and Pensions about any learner support they are receiving from the learner support fund, as learner support payments may affect their eligibility to state benefits

### **Accepted Income Evidence**

Income Evidence must be provided and examples of the types of evidence accepted include the following:

- Pension Credit Guarantee
- Contribution based Job Seekers Allowance
- Universal Credit Full Journal documentation
- Carers allowance
- Wages / earned income

Evidence of name and address must also be provided.

### **Who in the household will need to provide income evidence?**

- Students who live independently will be required to provide evidence of their income and their partners if residing with a partner.
- Students residing with parents or guardians: the income of those adults will be required.

### **What happens after a student has applied for financial support?**

Applications will be assessed by Student Funding Adviser's within 10 working days, the assessment will assess against the criteria and the student will be informed of the outcome by email to their student email address or their preferred method of contact, if stated on the application form. Compliance with separation of duties evidenced through income assessment and award process.

### **Missing information**

If an application is missing information required, the student will be asked by email or their preferred method of contact to re-submit the missing information. The student will be responsible for the provision of the missing information, financial support will not be provided until all evidence is provided.

### **Response Times**

Confirmation of the award will be sent in writing within 10 working days upon a student having successfully evidenced the criteria above. Students will be informed that their funding award will be subject to satisfactory attendance.

### **Awards**

Allocations for subsistence will be paid directly onto student ID cards using the cashless vending process.

Equipment and clothing will be provided at the start of the study programme but must be returned to the college if a student leaves before the end of their programme.

Payments will be made in the form of direct payments into student bank accounts, cashless cards, high street vouchers, bus passes or internal payments for essential course related equipment and trips.

### **Attendance and Behaviour**

Students are required to maintain above 90% attendance in order to receive their full allocation of support, students will receive a pro-rated payment aligned to attendance that falls below 90%. Attendance recorded less than 50% will have their full award put on hold.

Discretion to re-instate is available in consultation with pastoral teams and the students' individual circumstances, changes to the award could be made to enable attendance through the provision of bus passes instead of payment should this be preferred.

Any student with consecutive absence of 4 weeks or more will have their funding suspended.

### **Fraud**

Students are required to sign a declaration to confirm the information provided is correct. Giving intentionally false information may result in the application being suspended. Students are asked to acknowledge that the funding is given from public monies and that fraudulent claims can result in disciplinary action.

### **Data Protection**

The information students provide in the application form will only be used for the purpose of processing the application. It may be necessary for the Assessors to contact other College staff for additional information to allow applications to be processed and for attendance monitoring purposes. Personal and supporting information will be used by the Assessors for College/Audit purposes and record keeping.

## **APPEALS**

Students have the right to appeal against a decision made by the financial assessment team. Appeal forms are available from Student Services and must be returned to the Head of Student Services.

### **The Appeals Procedure**

1. A student must make best effort to resolve any issues arising from the decision reached on their eligibility for financial support, in informal discussion with a Student Services Adviser.
2. In the event that the issue cannot be resolved, a student wishing to appeal against a decision made by a Student Services Adviser must lodge their appeal in writing with the Head of Student Services within 10 working days of the date of the award email containing the outcome of the assessment for financial support. Grounds for appeal should be clearly stated and supporting evidence provided.
3. Appeals against a financial support decision will only be considered on the grounds of one of the following:
  - The process of decision making in respect of an application did not follow the prescribed procedure or is deemed to be unfair.
  - Pertinent new information is available which was not included in the original application.
4. Appeals against rules governing funds will not be accepted.
5. The Head of Student Services reserves the right to reject any appeal immediately if it clearly does not fall within the grounds stated above.
6. If it is deemed that there are valid grounds, the Head of Student Services will convene an Appeal Panel, normally within 10 working days. The appellant and the Student Services staff member who made the assessment will be present to establish the facts of the matter to the satisfaction of the Appeal Panel.
7. The appellant shall be advised in writing as follows:
  - They are entitled to give evidence to the Appeal Panel in person or via online platform, and may be accompanied or represented, if so desired, by a friend or colleague.
  - They have a right to submit a written statement for consideration by the Panel. Any such statement must reach the Head of Student Services at least 5 working days prior to the hearing.
  - They may call witnesses to attend the hearing, but the responsibility for their attendance rests with the appellant.
  - They shall inform the Head of Student Services, at least 5 working days prior to the hearing, of their intentions in respect of personal attendance and of the names of any friend or witnesses who will be attending or giving evidence.
8. Written evidence shall be made available to the Appeals Panel, to the appellant prior to the hearing.  
The Appeal Panel should be quorate with the following:

- Head of Student Services who will act as Chair.
- A representative of the Students' Union.
- A member of the senior management team
- A Student Services Officer will act as secretary to the Panel but will not have a vote.

### **The Hearing of an Appeal**

1. The Appeal will be heard as soon as possible and normally within 10 working days of a valid appeal being lodged.
2. The appellant (and if the appellant so chooses, a friend) and the assessing Student Services Adviser shall be entitled to be present throughout the giving and receiving of evidence but must withdraw when this is completed.
3. Evidence shall be taken in the following order:
  - The appellant.
  - The appellant's friend and witnesses in support of the appellant.
  - A Student Services Adviser.
  - Other witnesses, if any.
  - The appellant.
4. Where the appellant does not appear in person, the Appeal Panel may nevertheless proceed.
5. When the giving and receiving of evidence is concluded the Appeal Panel shall deliberate with the secretary present. The findings shall be reached by simple majority vote, with the Chair having a second or casting vote where this proves to be necessary.
6. The Appeal Panel shall inform the appellant of its decision immediately, or if the appellant is not present, within five working days of the hearing.
7. The findings shall be recorded, and the Student Services Officer shall be advised of the findings in writing, by the Chair of the Appeals Panel, within 5 working days of the hearing.
8. The findings of the Appeal Panel shall be final.
9. If the appellant is a Higher Education learner and remains dissatisfied after exhausting Barnsley College's internal Student Financial Support Appeal Procedure, they may request a review from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA). Further information can be found at [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk). Students must request a Completion of Procedures letter prior to any application to the OIA.

Funds are limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis. The college cannot be responsible should the funds become fully spent.

### **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

The EQIA for this policy is available on the college's intranet.

### **LOCATION AND ACCESS TO THIS POLICY**

This policy is available on the college's intranet.

## APPENDIX A

### STUDENTS WITHOUT AN ADVANCED LEARNER LOAN

<b><u>Award</u></b>	<b><u>Household Income below £42,000</u></b>	<b><u>Method of payment</u></b>
Travel	<p>Students must reside farther than a travel distance of 1.5 miles to receive travel funding.</p> <p>The fund will cover the cheapest cost of travel on an individual basis but will not fund over the maximum of £40.00 per week.</p> <p>Bus passes are available for students who are not eligible for the travel South Yorkshire concessionary passes</p> <p>The fund does not provide taxi's for students</p>	<p>Paid every half term into student bank accounts based on the number of weeks in the half term.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the student to budget this payment for the number of weeks within the half term it is paid for.</p> <p>Bus passes may be allocated based on individual assessment</p>
Food	<p>Students will receive £4 per full day of study by credit being added to their student card</p> <p>Students attending placement will be eligible for food allowance off site</p>	<p>Money is uploaded weekly and can be spent in any of the college catering outlets. Any remaining funds left at the end of the week will not roll to the following week</p>
Extreme Hardship i.e. homeless	To be determined on an individual case by case basis	Determined by individual circumstance
Essential* Kit and Equipment	Essential materials confirmed by Head of Curriculum areas funded in consultation with the Funding Team in Student Services	<p>Direct refund into bank account where receipt is provided</p> <p>Payment to the department for any kit supplied directly to the student by the department</p>
Essential* Curriculum related activities	Contribute to essential curriculum related activities (e.g. trips and visits) to a maximum of £100 per year	<p>Direct refund where receipt is provided</p> <p>Payment to department where costs have been covered through department</p>
UCAS Fees	Cover the cost of UCAS application	<p>Direct refund where student has paid for the application themselves</p> <p>Student to select 'Payment to centre' on the UCAS system</p>
Childcare Support	Up to a maximum of £180 per week per household	Paid directly to the Ofsted registered provider via Invoice on

		completion of childcare supplementary application form
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ALS SUPPORT	To be confirmed by the college's ALS department	Internal recharge to the ALS department
Extreme Hardship i.e. homeless	To be determined on an individual case by case basis	Determined by individual circumstance
Childcare Support	Up to a maximum of £180 per week per household	Paid directly to the Ofsted registered provider via Invoice on completion of childcare supplementary application form