Further Education
Access Fund Policy
2025 - 2026

New College Durham is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, as well as vulnerable adults, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Policy Title	**Further Education Access Fund Policy**
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Owning Directorate	**Corporate Services**
Owning Department	**Access Fund**
Directorates and Departments affected by this Policy	**All FE academic areas**
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New College Durham

Further Education Access Fund Policy

(Equality and Diversity Assessment)

We will consider any request for this Policy to be made available in an alternative format.

We review our Policies regularly to update them and to ensure that they are accessible and fair to all. Whilst Access Fund Policies are based upon prevailing national guidelines all Policies are subject to Equality Impact Assessment which consider whether the Policy has, or is likely to have, a different impact on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or human rights.

We are always keen to hear from anyone who wants to contribute, and we welcome suggestions for improving the accessibility or fairness of the Policy.

To make suggestions or to seek further information please contact:

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1. Introduction

1.1 The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students overcome specific financial barriers (i.e., costs associated with studying/attendance at college) to support the engagement and participation in their studies and allow for them to remain in education. This policy adheres to the prevailing government guidance on the use of these funds, the current guidance can be accessed: -

16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide: 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK

Nothing in this policy is intended to conflict with the guidance and if inadvertently it does, then it is the national guidance the College will follow.

1.2 The College in applying this guidance must ensure: -

- The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund is used for the actual financial needs **to support the engagement and participation of a student in their studies.**
- Students are eligible for support when awarding bursary support.
- Limited funds available to the College are distributed effectively and efficiently to those students with the greatest financial need.

2. Scope and Duration

2.1 This policy replicates the prevailing government guidelines at the time of writing this policy. The support detailed in this policy is subject to the College receiving funding from the government. Given this is public money, any support given under our scheme would be subject to external scrutiny and potential recovery, if it is deemed that the College has not followed the guidance set out above.

2.2 Eligibility for support will be dependent on students: -

- making/signing key declarations (e.g., household income).
- providing supporting evidence of said declarations.
- meeting their responsibilities as stated in our Student Engagement in Learning Policy and their signed learning agreement relating to high levels of attendance and being up to date with their studies.

2.3 The College reserves the right to amend/cease the support detailed in this policy considering changes to funding received or changes in the requirements from funding bodies.

2.4 The College will review the Access Fund Policy on an annual basis to reflect changes to the guidance. This annual review may change eligibility for any support detailed in the policy, and in some cases remove elements of support entirely.

2.5 The support identified in this document is strictly for the period of the academic year 2025-26 and does not confer any entitlement for support outside of this period or for any support to be made retrospectively for the previous academic year.

3. Initial eligibility considerations

3.1. The budget for support to students is finite. Students who may be eligible for support may not automatically receive it once the limited funds have been exhausted. Support is based on the principle that it meets individual and actual needs of a student to engage in education (the principle applies to vulnerable/discretionary/19+ scheme).

The College will ensure that an assessment of the actual financial needs of individual students in addition to eligibility is completed when considering awarding bursary support.

3.2 Support under this scheme is based upon meeting the eligibility criteria regarding residency. A student must be 'settled' in the UK and have been ordinarily a resident in the UK for the three years preceding the 1st September 2025. 'Settled' means having either indefinite leave to enter or remain (ILE/ILR) or having the right of abode in the UK. Students falling into one of the categories below are specifically excluded from applying for support via the Access Fund:

- Asylum seekers aged 19 and over
- Prisoners on day release and
- Non-EU nationals

3.3 In addition to students meeting the eligibility criteria in 3.2, bursary support will only be awarded to students **who have a household income of £60,000 or less applying for** discretionary bursary and proof of this income is supplied to the College as soon as practicable after enrolment on the course and certainty within one month of commencement on the course.

3.4 Bursary support for students 19+ will be based on a household income of £32,000 or less and proof of this is supplied to the College as soon as practicable after enrolment on the course and certainty within one month of commencement on the course.

3.5 For ease of reference this policy is sub-divided into three parts to reflect the types of bursaries available:-

- **Section 4 & Annex A** – support that may be given to vulnerable students.
- **Section 5 & Annex B, (including B1 to B4)** - support that may be given to students aged 16-19 (discretionary bursary including Care to Learn);
- **Annex 5 & Annex C** - the support that may be given to students who are aged 19+.

4. Applications for Vulnerable Bursary (see also Annex A)

4.1 Students will only receive the support they need to participate in their studies.

4.2 Students can apply for support at any point in the academic year 2025/26.

4.3 The College will consider the number of hours involved in a student's study programme when deciding if pro-rata support is more appropriate. A student studying for around 16 hours a week is likely to have greater costs than a student studying for 4 hours a week, for example.

4.4 The College may decide that although a young person may be eligible for a bursary because they are in one or more of the defined vulnerable groups, they do not have any actual financial need. This might be because their financial needs are already met from other sources and/or because they have no relevant costs/financial barriers to engagement in their studies. The College can therefore refuse a student's application on this basis.

4.5 Students will be required to identify at the point of application what educational support that they require to engage in their studies.

4.6 Once an application has been approved a member of the Access Fund Team, Student Support Team, and other key individuals may meet to determine the actual support required for a student to engage in their studies and whether any needs are being met elsewhere.

4.7 Only fully completed, signed application forms submitted with relevant evidence will be accepted.

4.8 Students on apprenticeship programmes, or any waged training, are employed, rather than in education are not eligible to apply for the 16 to 19 bursary.

4.9 Students will receive notification upon applications being processed and approved.

4.10 The college regularly runs checks on bus pass and meal usage. If it is identified that students have been fraudulently using either their bus pass or meal card/app and this use is verified the college will cease all support. The student will automatically be disqualified from receiving any further support under this policy and could be subject to disciplinary process.

4.11 Where it is identified that a student is withdrawn or leaves programme of study early, they will be required to return any kit, equipment, uniform, books, or resources back to the College.

5. Applications for 16 – 19 Discretionary (see also Annex B, B1 to B4)

5.1 The household income threshold for application is set at £60,000.

5.2 Applications will be considered based on the following three criteria and are related to household income. It is identified that students in Tier 1 may require more support than those students whose household income is in Tier 3. Students will be required to identify at the point of application the support that they actually require to engage in their studies.

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
If the annual household income (including Tax Credits) is £16,190 gross per annum or less.	If the annual household income (including Tax Credits) is greater than £16,190 and less than or equal to £32,000 gross per annum or less.	If the annual household income (including Tax Credits) is greater than £32,000 but less than or equal to £60,000.

5.3 Students can apply for support at any point in the academic year 2025/26.

5.4 Application forms are available on the College Intranet, website, Curriculum Support Teams, and the Access Fund Office.

5.5 Only fully completed, signed application forms submitted with relevant evidence will be accepted.

5.6 Students must fully state on the application form what support they require from bursary funds to help them to engage in their studies.

5.7 A member of the Access Fund Team will contact the student upon applications being approved and check the support required.

5.8 Students on apprenticeship programmes, or any waged training, are employed rather than in education are not eligible to apply for the 16 to 19 bursary.

5.9 Students are expected to meet minimum standards of attendance and participation throughout their programme. Failure to do so may result in the withdrawal or clawback of bursary support.

5.10 If fraudulent claims are identified and verified the student will automatically be disqualified from receiving any support under the policy and could be subject to disciplinary process.

5.11 Where it is identified that a student is withdrawn or leaves the programme of study early, they will be required to return any kit, equipment, uniform, books, or resources back to the College.

6. **Applications for Care to Learn (**C2L)

6.1 Provides funding for childcare to help young parents (defined as those aged under 20) continue in education after the birth of a child. The scheme provides funding for childcare whilst the young parent is engaged in a study programme and is not able to provide care for their child. It can also help the young parent with any additional travel costs involved in taking the child to the childcare provider. C2L can also provide funding for childcare whilst young parents are on work placements or industry placements, where these are a defined part of the study programme.

6.2 If students would like to apply for C2L support they must indicate on their application form and come and speak to a member of the Access Fund Team.

7. Applications for 19+ Bursary (see also Annex C)

7.1 The household income threshold for application is set at £32,000.

7.2 Applications will be considered based on the following three criteria and are related to household income. It is identified that students in Tier 1 may require more support than those students whose household income is in Tier 3. Students will be required to identify at the point of application the support that they actually require to engage in their studies.

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
If the annual household income (including Tax Credits) is £16,190 gross per annum or less.	If the annual household income (including Tax Credits) is greater than £16,190 and less than or equal to £25,000 gross per annum or less.	If the annual household income (including Tax Credits) is greater than £25,000 but less than or equal to £32,000.

7.3 Students can apply for support at any point in the academic year 2025/26.

7.4 Application forms are available on the College Intranet, Website, Curriculum Support Teams, and the Access Fund Office.

7.5 Only fully completed, signed application forms submitted with relevant evidence will be accepted.

7.6 Students should fully state on the application form what support they require.

7.7 A member of the Access Fund Team will contact the student upon applications being approved and check the support required.

7.8 Students on apprenticeship programmes, or any waged training, are employed rather than in education are not eligible to apply for the 16 to 19 bursary.

7.9 If fraudulent claims are identified and verified the student will automatically be disqualified from receiving any support under the policy and could be subject to disciplinary process.

7.10 Where it is identified that a student is withdrawn or leaves the programme of study early, they will be required to return any kit, equipment, uniform, books, or resources back to the College.

8. Assessment - All Bursaries

8.1 The College will ensure students are eligible for the bursary in each year they require support.

8.2 Students must meet the age and residency criteria to be eligible for support from the bursary fund as set out in Annex A to C.

8.3 The bursary fund is intended to help students with the essential costs of participating in their study programme, i.e., books, equipment, cost of travelling to college.

8.4 The bursary fund is not intended to support costs not related to education (living costs), extra-curricular activities or provide learning support – services that institutions give to students – such as counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring.

8.5 The College will conduct an assessment to determine the actual support that a student may need to engage in their education. Support could include (but is not restricted to);

- Enhanced support for meals whilst in College
- Travel

- Out of hours support for mileage (due to onward travel disruption/delays or no service) i.e., requirement to stay at college outside normal hours or travel to/from placement
- Kit, equipment, and uniform
- A contribution of costs towards computers and PCs where essential to support studies (this is dependent on allocation received by the College for bursary support).
- DBS (if this is not already covered in the costs of the course you are studying).
- Stationery
- Support for examination preparation (e.g., study guides, additional stationery etc)
- Support for Industry Placements (additional travel costs/College meals)
- Contribution of cost for visits and trips (depending on cost)
- Specialist books/journals required for programme of study
- Care 2 Learn (childcare support)

The key determinate for support is what are the financial barriers to education and how can this fund help address them?

8.6 An assessment is made on the evidence presented, if from looking at the evidence it appears that there is missing information or there is an income that has not been declared the Access Fund Office would ask for this additional evidence to be presented.

8.7 All income and benefits (including Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Universal Credits, Working Tax Credits and Child Maintenance etc) are considered as household income. The College does not consider Child Benefit, Disability Living Allowance or PIP payment when calculating total household income.

8.8 Meeting their responsibilities as stated in our Student Engagement in Learning Policy and their signed learning agreement relating to high levels of attendance and being up to date with their studies.

At the point any support is requested the Access Fund Office will check with the curriculum teams to assess student attendance and engagement.

8.9 Support to external childcare providers will be paid on receipt of an invoice from the childcare provider at the end of each month. There is no payment in advance for services yet to be provided and regular checks are made with childcare providers to validate support being given.

9. Case Review

9.1 When support is awarded or students feel the decision not to award support is unfair or unjust, they have the right to have their case reviewed by the Access Fund Manager.

9.2 A request for a case review must be made in writing (letter or e-mail) within 10 working days of receipt of the College's decision to decline support. Please ensure that the following information is clearly stated in the written communication:

- The grounds for requesting the case review, (these grounds will normally be an error in procedure or error in fact).
- Sufficient detail and any evidence to support the case review request (i.e., evidence of mitigating circumstances that have affected attendance).
- The outcome that they are seeking from the case review.

Please address all case review requests – Case Review, Access Fund Office, New College Durham, Framwellgate Moor Campus, Durham, DH1 5ES or e-mail access.fund@newdur.ac.uk

9.3 Case reviews will aim to be undertaken, and the decision communicated within 10 working days of receipt of the case review request.

10. Appeals

10.1 Applicants who have been refused support following a case review have the right to make a final appeal.

10.2 Appeals must be made in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the case review decision to decline support.

The Appellant should state, in their written communication:

- The grounds for the appeal, (these grounds will normally be an error in procedure or error in fact).
- Sufficient detail and any evidence to support the case review request (i.e., evidence of mitigating circumstances that have affected attendance).
- The outcome that they are seeking from the Appeals Process.
- How they would wish to have their appeal considered either via correspondence or personally attending an appeal hearing.
- How they would wish to receive any correspondence, including the appeal outcome decision (e.g., email, letter etc.). In the absence of any preference, the College's default method of communication will be via letter.

10.3 All case review requests must be sent to the Access Fund Appeals Panel, Access Fund Office, New College Durham, Framwellgate Moor Campus, Durham, DH1 5ES or e-mail access.fund@newdur.ac.uk

10.4 The Appeals Panel will arrange to meet within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal communication. The outcome as determined by the panel

will be communicated within 5 working days of the hearing. **The decision of the panel will be final.**

10.5 The panel will consist of:

- A Vice Principal (Chair)/Deputy Chief Executive
- Students' Union President
- Head of Advice, Support and Careers

10.6 The Appellant can be accompanied to the appeal by a representative of ASC (normally Learner Development Co-Ordinator).

11. Policy Review

11.1 Responsibility for this policy rests with the Deputy Chief Executive.

11.2 The College reserves the right to amend this policy, without prior notice responding to changes to government/funding body requirements and financial constraints.

12. References

12.1 The policy has been written in line with government guidance which can be accessed –16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide: 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK

Implementation Date	1st August 2025
Termination Date	31st July 2026

Annex A – Eligibility Criteria: Bursaries for Young People in Defined Vulnerable Groups.

Students who meet the criteria and have a financial need, can apply for bursary support for vulnerable groups. The guidance recognises defined groups reflect that these students are unlikely to be receiving financial assistance from parents or carers, so may need a greater level of support to enable them to participate in their studies.

The guidance states the College should only award vulnerable students the amount of support **they need to participate** based on an assessment of the types of costs they have and no student must automatically be awarded £1,200, there is no automatic right to £1,200 and the College avoids terminology like "***guaranteed £1200 bursary***", the bursary is based on what is needed to remove the educational barriers to study (which are not met elsewhere) and will differ between students. Bursary support is not intended to provide learning support, services that the College may provide to students, for example, counselling, mentoring or support extra-curricular activities where these are not essential to the students' study programme or provide living costs support.

The College may decide that although a young person may be eligible for a bursary support because they are in one or more of the defined vulnerable groups, they do not actually have financial need, because their financial needs are already met, for example a student:

- attending specialist residential provision where educational costs covered in full.
- taking a distance learning programme and have no financial barriers to participation (e.g., no travel costs or meal costs).
- in the care of the local authority whose educational costs are covered in full by the local authority.
- who is financially supported by their partner or other family member.
- has no relevant costs, the College may refuse an application on this basis.

If a student, student's parents, or support worker, still wants to claim a bursary for vulnerable groups, the College will consider the circumstances in each case. The College will assess whether no bursary should be awarded (because the student has no financial needs) or to award a reduced amount (because the financial help needed is limited).

The College will ensure students are eligible for the bursary for defined vulnerable groups in each year they require support, so will seek evidence to support this eligibly for one of the defined vulnerable groups of students who may be:

- in care.
- care leavers.
- receiving Income Support, or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves and/or 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.
- students meeting the eligibility in 3.3 (**Initial eligibility considerations).**

- Support will only be awarded to students who are meeting their responsibilities as stated in our Student Engagement in Learning Policy and their signed learning agreement relating to high levels of attendance and being up to date with their studies.

In determining the level of support The College will also consider the number of hours involved in a student's study programme when deciding if pro-rata support is more appropriate. A student studying for around 16 hours a week is likely to have greater costs than a student studying for 4 hours a week, for example. The government guidance is clear that; "*vulnerable students should only receive the amount they actually need to participate, and institutions must not automatically award students £1,200 if they do not need the full amount."*

Equally, the College may support a vulnerable student to a value of more than £1,200 if we assess they need extra help to remain in education. Any support over £1,200 will be made from the discretionary bursary allocation (see Annex B) or from our own funds. If paid from discretionary bursary, the student will not be able to claim for costs already paid for under the Vulnerable Group Scheme.

Evidence of Eligibility

The College will obtain proof that students meet the criteria for the bursary for vulnerable groups in full. In other words, that they are in receipt of the specified benefits in their own name or that they fully meet the definitions for in care/care leavers. Institutions should ask for evidence from each student and retain copies for audit purposes. The guidance is clear as to the evidence that can be collated to check status of vulnerable students.

16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide: 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK

Pro-rata Bursary Support for Vulnerable Groups

Students who have a financial need who meet the criteria for a bursary for vulnerable groups may be eligible for a bursary support up to the value of £1,200 (with the actual amount dependant 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. Students who meet the criteria and who are on study programmes lasting for less than 30 weeks should be given a bursary on a pro-rata basis, as appropriate, with the actual amount dependent on the assessment of their specific financial needs. For example: **Student A is on a 33-week programme –** Student A has identified the following barriers to participate in education. (** would need to be returned at the end of the studies*)

Student A – Barriers to education	Allocation under Scheme
Travel –Total annual cost of bus pass	£750
Access to food – top up sponsored meal support	College receives government contribution of £2.41 per day of study. The College top this up to £5.00 (£2.59 x 4 days x 33 weeks = £341.88) (hardship College meal).
Need for specialist kit/equipment/uniform*	£100
Support for visits and trips (curriculum requirements)	£200.00

Student B is on a 30-Week Programme.

Student B identifies similar barriers but identifies that weekly travel is more cost effective than a termly bus pass (a £10 weekly bus pass), but the nature of the course demands more external visits.

Student application identifies barriers to education as	Allocation under Scheme
Travel – weekly bus pass cost (£10)	£300 (30 weeks x£10)
Top up sponsored meal support per day of study	College receives a government contribution of £2.41. The College tops this up to £5.00 (£2.59 x 4 days x 30 weeks = £310.80) (hardship College meal).
Need for specialist kit/equipment/uniform*	£150
visits and trips linked to curriculum requirements	£300.00

(* would need to be returned at the end of the study)

Student C is on a 10-Week Programme

Students C is with the College for a 10-week programme, they elect to travel by bus each day and have no need for specialist kit equipment etc and the external visit is a local trip.

Student application identifies barriers to education as	Allocation under Scheme
Cost of travel per day £7 x days in college 4 x 10 weeks	£280
Top up sponsored meal support	£103.60 (£2.59 x 4 x 10)
Visits and trips linked to curriculum requirements	£25.00

Annex B – Eligibility Criteria Discretionary Bursaries

In considering support for students under Annex B of this policy, a student **must**:

- be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31st August 2025 or
- be aged 19 or over on 31st August 2025 and have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) or
- be aged 19 or over on 31st August 2025 and continuing a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuers).
- be enrolled **on a full-time course** as defined by New College Durham.
- Students meeting the eligibility criteria above and that stated in section 3.3, will only be awarded to students who have a household income of less than £60,000, are meeting their responsibilities as stated in our Student Engagement in Learning Policy and their signed learning agreement relating to high levels of attendance and being up to date with studies.
- The attendance records for this scheme includes attendance across the whole study programme and specifically includes attendance at Maths and English and Personal Development classes where applicable and does not differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence.

The College will make discretionary bursary support to help students with the cost of travel, buy essential books, equipment, or specialist clothing (such as protective overalls, for example). These are items the student would otherwise need to pay for to participate in education. Bursary support is not intended to provide learning support – services that the College may provide to students, for example, counselling or mentoring – to support extra-curricular activities where these are not essential to the students' study programme or provide living costs support.

In exceptional situations where a student's financial circumstances have significantly changed in year it is important that the student speaks to Access Fund Office as soon as practical, in year evidence of household income may be accepted and assessed. The Access Fund Office reserves the right to review this on an individual case basis.

The support is finite, and support allocated will be calculated based on household income and the individual needs of the student, the available support will be distributed according to the number of eligible applicants who meet the above criteria.

The College will base all decisions about which students receive a discretionary bursary and how much bursary they receive on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need. These will vary from student to student, depending on, for example, eligibility based on household income, and their actual financial needs such as the distance they need to travel to the institution and the requirements of their study programme. The government guidance precludes making blanket or flat rate/fixed rate payments:

- to all students
- to students in particular income bands
- to students whose families are in receipt of benefits without considering the actual needs of each student.

Care 2 Learn

C2L provides funding for childcare to help young parents (defined as those aged under 20) continue in education after the birth of a child. The scheme provides funding for childcare whilst the young parent is engaged in a study programme and is not able to provide care for their child. It can also help the young parent with any additional travel costs involved in taking the child to the childcare provider. C2L can also provide funding for childcare whilst young parents are on work placements or industry placements, where these are a defined part of the study programme.

The college will manage through the Access Fund applications from students, requiring support for childcare through Care 2 Learn and will determine eligibility and the amount of support required for a student and for making payments to childcare providers, based on confirmation of continuing attendance.

Care to Learn guidance - GOV.UK

Using Household Income and Establishing Individual Student Need

The College will ensure their bursary policy ensures funding reaches those students who are most in need of financial support. This means the College will use household income to help establish which students are eligible before confirming the amount of support a student may need. An assessment of individual will help to identify those students who will benefit from this support to allow engagement with their studies. These are independent assessments used solely for the purpose of assessing actual need and will not be shared outside of Access Fund, failure to supply such evidence will lead to a review of the continuation of this support.

Paying Bursary Funding to Eligible Students

The guidance advises that the College should pay bursaries in-kind rather than cash support as far as possible. This helps to ensure that the bursary is spent for the reasons it was awarded. In-kind payments can include travel passes, vouchers or credits for meals, required books and required equipment.

Where it is deemed that a cash payment will be made i.e. refund of travel the funding will be paid by BACS transfer to the student's own bank account. A basic bank account (which students can open at age 16) allows BACS transfers and allows the student to withdraw money.

If it is identified that a payment will be made as per the example stated above the College, as a precondition of this policy, will insist that receipts are provided to ensure **students only spend the bursary payment made to them on the support that has been identified to help them participate in education**. The College will specify students can only use the funds to pay for travel costs and/or a meal during the day, to buy equipment or any other support that has been agreed.

Some examples are stated below as to how a student could be supported through the bursary scheme.

For example: **Student A is on a full time 33-week programme.**

Student A identifies the following barriers to participate in education. The student also qualifies for Sponsored Meals Support.

Student A - Barriers to education	Allocation under Scheme
Travel – total annual cost of bus pass	£750
Access to food - top up sponsored meal support	College receives government contribution of £2.41. The College tops this up to £5.00 (supported College meal allowance) (£2.59 x 4 days x 33 weeks = £341.88) (hardship College meal)
Need for specialist kit/equipment/uniform*	£100
Support for visits and trips (curriculum requirements)	£200.00

(* would need to be returned at the end of the studies)

Student B is on a 33-week programme.

Student B identifies similar barriers, but the College identifies that a weekly travel refund is more cost effective than a termly bus pass (a £10 weekly bus pass), but the nature of the course demands more external visits. The student does not automatically qualify for sponsored meal support but has demonstrated a need for meal support through hardship.

Student application identifies barriers to education as	Allocation under Scheme
Travel - weekly bus pass cost (£10)	£330 (33 weeks x £10)
Top up sponsored meal support	£660.00 (£5.00 x 4 x 33)
Need for specialist kit/equipment/uniform*	£0
Visits and trips linked to curriculum requirements	£300.00

(* would need to be returned at the end of the study)

The College is not permitted to make large, lump sum or blanket payments to students.

Key Support Schemes

Underpinning the discretionary bursary scheme are several key supports designed to remove the barriers to engagement in education. Although the College will consider costs outside the schemes below it will do so only for those costs incurred in line with the prevailing government guidance: -

- Annex B1 - Travel Support
- Annex B2 - Childcare Support – Students Under 20
- Annex B3 – Sponsored Meal Support
- Appendix B4 - Kit/Uniform/Equipment

Annex B1 - Travel Support

New College Durham recognises that travel can pose a barrier to engaging in education. The College operates a scheme which provides a contribution to the cost of students' travel to and from college.

At travel application stage students are encouraged to declare household income and if they have been eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) in previous study. The information collated will be used to ensure that students receive information and support to access the support as stated previously.

Support for travel to college will be given based on the following.

Students who are 16 -18 on a full-time programme of study and apply for the 16 -19 discretionary bursary scheme would be able to use their bursary funding to support their travel costs to college, as long as they live 2 or more miles from college. The support given would be either through a bus pass or refund of travel tickets to the maximum value of the calculated at the annual cost of a bus pass.

- Students where household income is less than £60,000 should apply for bursary support. A fully completed bursary form will be required with relevant evidence presented for support to be given as soon as practicable after enrolment on the course. In this instance the student will be supported through bursary funding for a bus pass or travel refund (only valid for travel to and from college during term time only). It is important to note that failure to complete a bursary form or submit relevant evidence could result in the bus pass being cancelled.
- Students who have a household income of more than £60,000, a subsidised scheme is place. Students will be required to submit evidence of household income in order to qualify for the scheme and they would be required to pay £75 towards the cost of the bus pass or refund. Proof of this income should be supplied to the College as soon as practicable after enrolment on the course and certainty within one month of commencement on the course. It is important to note that failure to submit relevant evidence of household income could result in the bus pass being cancelled. In this instance no refund of the £75 will be made.
- Over £99,999 no travel support will be provided.

Travel support is offered via various schemes, but the college reserves the right to amend the scheme, whilst still maintaining the principle of supported travel to and from the college. Students cannot be issued with tickets/bus pass for multiple travel companies (e.g. Go North East, Arriva and another).

Upon applying for travel support students must state whether they require an Arriva or GNE bus pass or would prefer to receive travel refund to enable them to travel to/from college. The College will arrange (where appropriate) for bus ticket refunds/passes/Smartcard or Mobile App for the selected scheme.

Travelling with Arriva

In order to ensure that students have stability at the start of term and are not worried about travelling to and from college. The College will issue all eligible students with a bus pass in term 1. Note in term 2 and 3 all students with an Arriva pass will be moving to a ticket refund. Refunds will be made 1 week in advance direct by BACS into your bank accounts and will continue for the remainder of study based on students attending college and being up to date with work.

When students select the means by which they want to travel they must be careful in their selection. If they select the wrong bus company and later want to make a change the college will charge £15 per change made, this is a cost that the college inherits from the bus companies due to administrative charges.

The current scheme students can travel weekdays Monday to Friday 6am – 7pm term time only, if students require support outside of these hours they must contact the Access Fund Office so that alternative arrangements can be made, this would be applicable only for those students who receive hardship support and will be explored on a case-on-case basis.

Any student who is struggling with travel arrangements/costs are encouraged to speak to the Access Fund Office immediately, specifically if travelling from rural locations where independent bus provider costs may be incurred outside of any of the existing schemes, and/or that they live closer than 2 miles from the College and any information presented will be considered on an individual case basis.

Please note, no refunds will be given where it is established support has not been applied for. Where it has been agreed with the Access Fund Office the College will not refund the cost of any bus tickets purchased prior to the receipt of the termly or academic year pass**.** The College will not refund the cost of any bus tickets for periods outside of study unless the student is required to complete work placement and prior approval has been granted by the Access Fund Office. In this instance there is a requirement for a separate travel application form to be completed by the student and signed by the Curriculum Member of Staff.

For those eligible students* living outside of County Durham they are also eligible to apply for bus pass or travel refunds.

**For those students living outside County Durham the College at its absolute discretion may relax the criteria regarding household income needing to be below £60,000. Such consideration will be made on a case-by-case basis but will be still based on a financial needs assessment.*

The College will seek to provide travel assistance to those eligible students by the most cost-effective means. The Access Fund Office regularly review ticket/pass utilisation and bus tickets provided to check for points at which the student accesses and departs the bus, if it is found that claims or passes are being used for journeys outside of travel to college i.e. not the address or locate we have on file, the College reserves the right to cancel/remove any tickets which are underutilised. There is a significant cost to the College in providing travel support and students are encouraged to return any passes which are not in regular use and/or where other modes of transport are utilised. Students who only require a travel ticket/pass for infrequent use should contact the Access Fund Office to explore alternative arrangements. *

***The travel ticket/pass/refund will only be provided to those students who use the bus as their primary and regular mode of transport to college. If a student has received a bus pass and it is found that they have not informed us that they no longer require this pass the College can request a full refund for the cost that we have incurred.*

The College will seek to provide travel assistance to those eligible students who are unable to travel independently because of a medical condition or Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). The College will provide support each term up to the value of either a termly bus ticket or total cost of an academic annual bus ticket whichever is most cost effective for the College. Students are required to submit up to

date, written supporting evidence from a doctor or other relevant health professional, stating specifically that the student is unable to travel independently, along with the application form. **Refunds to the value stated above will only be made on production of valid dated taxi fare receipts.**

Termly audit on usage of bus travel will be conducted by Access Fund Office, for those students who have 20 or less journeys over the termly period they will be contacted to confirm if they still require the pass, if there is no reply received the Access Fund Office has the right to cancel this pass.

Once eligibility has been confirmed Access Fund Office will confirm this via email to the student with instructions as to how this can be accessed.

Annex B2 - Childcare Support – Students Under 20

Students aged under 20 on 31st August 2025, may be eligible to apply for the Government's "Care to Learn" Scheme.

The Care to Learn Scheme is **not** a New College Durham Scheme, but guidance on the application process and eligibility criteria can be obtained from Access Fund Office.

Students may be eligible for support with childcare costs from the Student Support Fund if they satisfy the General Eligibility Criteria in **Annex B2. There is no entitlement to Childcare Support and each application will be assessed on a first come first served basis.** If funds are available, the support to eligible students will be provided on the following basis:

- The childcare provider who is receiving payment via the bursary support **must** be registered with Ofsted.
- Where students are required to pay retainer fees to retain the place in the nursery in non-term time, for example Christmas, Easter, half terms, it is vital that this information is reflected in any application of childcare support.
- The College will only pay a retainer fee, which equates to no more than 50% of the fees normally incurred in term time.
- If a student engages in employment during the non-term times, they are **not** eligible to receive support via the Student Support Fund during the period of employment.
- Childcare payments are normally available only to support attendance at college classes/tutorials/placements except for retainer fees. In exceptional circumstances the College may consider an extension to this to allow completion of academic work.
- The College payments will be solely for childcare and there will be no payment for penalty charges which are levied by some providers (e.g. late payment fees). Where insufficient notice is provided to the Childcare provider by the parents, the College will not meet the payment for this notice period.
- There may be a limit each household will be able to claim for childcare support it is important that your needs are discussed with the Access Fund before agreeing to childcare with a provider. The student will be liable for any childcare costs incurred over and above the stated limits.

Annex B3 – Free Meal and Sponsored College Meal Support

Free School Meals

Students who have been eligible for free school meals prior to studying at college are likely to quality for meal support whilst at college. If assessed through household income students must be enrolled on a full-time course and be in receipt of, or have parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than **£16,190,** as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa. The College would be able to accept proof that the student was eligible for free meals at school through receipt of a letter from Local Authority or a confirmation letter/email from the school previously attended.

The College receives a separate government allocation of £2.53 per eligible student per day, in recognition that students should be ready to learn the bursary funding will be used to top this value up to £5.00 (£2.47 per day, funded from bursary funds). Costs for this top up will be taken from this bursary funding allocation to ensure that students who are eligible have ability to purchase a breakfast and lunch to aid engagement in their studies and in recognition of the increase of the cost of food. There will be no cash equivalent for those students who elect not to be supported through this scheme.

Students must apply for support to the Access Fund Office with supporting evidence/information identified above. Students who apply for meal support where they have been previously eligible at school, their application will automatically be processed for bursary support.

Returning students who were eligible in the previous year of study can complete a self-declaration stating that financial circumstances have not changed which would ensure that support is continued into the next academic year. Please note that in this instance Access Fund has the right to request further financial evidence to check eligibility.

Sponsored College Meal

For students who were not eligible for free meal support at school they have the option to use their bursary funding to access a meal whilst in college. Students would only be eligible for this support upon receipt of a fully completed bursary form submitted with relevant evidence. The student can request that £5 per day is allocated from their bursary support for a meal for each day of study.

Once eligibility has been confirmed Access Fund Office will confirm this via email to the student with instructions as to how this can be accessed.

Replacement meal cards

If a student requests a new card as they have lost or misplaced their original there will be a administration charge of £5 per replacement. This value must be paid before a new card will be issued.

Appendix B4 - Kit/Uniform/Equipment

Students who are required as part of the curriculum to wear an occupational specific uniform e.g. Hair, Beauty and Catering students, will receive support for the provision of uniform will form part of a package of support. There are internal processes by which kit, equipment and uniform are purchased, this is the preferred method that students must follow, and curriculum teams can support in this process. In exceptional circumstances if kit, equipment and uniform have been purchased outside of this process a refund may be given, this would be on production of a valid receipt and the value would be paid via BACS into the student's bank account. *

**Any kit, equipment or uniform remains the property of the College and again will form part of the package of support. The College has the right to request any kit, equipment or uniform are returned to college upon completion of your course.*

Once eligibility has been confirmed Access Fund Office will confirm this via email to the student with instructions as to how this can be accessed.

Annex C - Support for Students Aged 19 and Over

General Eligibility Criteria for Students aged 19 Plus

In considering support a student **must**:

- be aged 19 and over on 31st August 2025 (students aged 19 or over who have an EHCP or are continuing are covered in Annex A).
- Enrolled on a full-time and part time course as defined by New College Durham.
- have an income of £32,000 or less.
- be meeting their responsibilities as stated in our Student Engagement in Learning Policy and their signed learning agreement relating to high levels of attendance and being up to date with their studies.
- The attendance records for this scheme includes attendance across the whole study programme and specifically include attendance at Maths and English classes where applicable and does not differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence.

Students aged 19 and over, at the commencement of their course, and who meet the General Eligibility Criteria and have a gross household income of less than £32,000 in the previous tax year (2024/25) ** may be eligible for support under this scheme.

*** In exceptional situations where a student's financial circumstances have significantly changed then more current evidence of household income may be accepted. The Access Fund reserves the right to review this on an individual case basis.*

Support for 19 plus students is finite and the available support will be distributed according to the number of applicants who meet the above criteria. In recognition that students start their learning journey at different points throughout the year applications will be accepted termly. Only one application will be accepted per student.

Students who are eligible for bursary support are also eligible to receive sponsored meal support.

Travel for 19+ Further Education Students

The college will provide a contribution to the cost of student travel for the Academic year 2025-26 for students who satisfy eligibility criteria set out in **Annex C** and live at least 2 miles from the College. Travel costs will only be paid for the days that a student is timetabled to be in college, any deviation from these dates need to be checked and confirmed by their tutor.

The College will only make payments for weekday term-time travel to and from the College, termly allocation will be made determined by the costs incurred by the student. Any support will only be made in arrears and only on production of tickets used on the days of attendance at college. For those eligible students who are unable to travel independently because of a medical condition or Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). The College will seek to provide travel assistance to college each term up to the value of either a termly bus ticket or total cost of an academic annual bus ticket whichever is most cost effective for the College. Students are required to submit up to date, written supporting evidence from a doctor or other relevant health professional, stating specifically that the student is unable to travel independently, along with the application form. ***NB refunds to the value stated above will only be made on production of valid taxi fare receipts.***

Childcare Support – Students 20 Plus

Students aged 20 and above on 31st August 2025 may be eligible for support with childcare costs from the Student Support Fund if they satisfy the General Eligibility Criteria in **Annex B2. There is no entitlement to Childcare Support and each application will be assessed on a first come first served basis.** If funds are available, the support to eligible students will be provided on the following basis:

The childcare provider who is receiving payment via the bursary support **must** be registered with Ofsted.

Where students are required to pay retainer fees to retain the place in the nursery in non-term time, for example Christmas, Easter, half terms, it is vital that this information is reflected in any application of childcare support.

The College will only pay a retainer fee, which equates to no more than 50% of the fees normally incurred in term time.

If a student engages in employment during the non-term times, they are **not** eligible to receive support via the Student Support Fund during the period of employment.

Childcare payments are normally available only to support attendance at college classes/tutorials/placements except for retainer fees. In exceptional circumstances the College may consider an extension to this to allow completion of academic work.

The College payments will be solely for childcare and there will be no payment for penalty charges which are levied by some providers (e.g. late payment fees). Where insufficient notice is provided to the Childcare provider by the parents, the College will not meet the payment for this notice period.

Each household will be limited to maximum childcare support of £100 per child/per week for a maximum of two children. The student will be liable for any childcare costs incurred over and above the stated limits.