

19+ GLA Discretionary Learner Support Fund Policy 2023 - 2024

Author	Student Bursary Co-ordinator
Date	March 2023
Person Responsible	Vice Principal Information & Learner Resources
Approval/review bodies	Senior Leadership Team
Frequency of Review*	12 months

**Policies will be reviewed more frequently if legal changes or good practice require*

Review History:		
Date	Reviewed by	Reason for review
May 2019	Student Financial Support Co-ordinator	Annual Review
Jun 2020	Student Financial Support Co-ordinator	Annual Review
Mar 2021	Student Financial Support Co-ordinator	Annual Review
Mar 2023	Student Bursary Coordinator	Annual Review

Table of Contents

1.	Policy Statement.....	2
2.	Eligibility Criteria	3
3.	Travel Awards.....	6
4.	Childcare awards	6
5.	Residential Fees (Hadlow Students Only)	8
6.	Tuition fee awards	8
8.	Raising Awareness and the Application Procedure	8
9.	Student Commitment.....	9
10.	Appeals.....	10
11.	Fraudulent Claims.....	10
12.	Data Protection	10

Related policies/documents:

16-18 Bursary Fund and Free Meals Policy;
19+ Advanced Learning Loan Bursary Fund Policy;
19+ Discretionary learner Support Bursary Fund (Non-London Boroughs); and
Residential Bursary Fund Policy.

1. Policy Statement

North Kent College (“the College”) is a multi-sited Further Education institution and incorporates Hadlow College (“Hadlow”).

The Greater London Authority (“GLA”) provides the 19+ GLA Discretionary Learner Support Fund, which is distributed by the College, to help learners who are aged between 19-23 and are in need of financial support to ensure they can attend College and successfully complete their course.

The fund is for:

students who are 19 or over on 31 August within the 2023/2024 funding year and living in a London Borough

If the student does not live in a London Borough, they are ineligible to apply for the 19+ GLA Learner Support Funding and should apply for funding from the 19+ Discretionary Learner Support funds.

They must also meet the residency requirements, set out in the ESFA funding guide, in one or more of the following categories:

- UK nationals and other persons with right of abode;
- UK nationals in the European Economic Area (EEA);
- EEA nationals in the UK; and/or
- Other non-UK nationals

See [19+ GLA Funding Rules 2023-24](#)

A separate Free Meals in Further Education Fund is provided by the Government, which provides free meals for 19-24-year-old students who have a Learning Difficulty Assessment or an Education, Health and Care Plan (“EHCP”) and meet the Government set Income criteria

Residential funding is available to students who wish to reside at Hadlow campus, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria set in the Residential Bursary Fund Policy.

The Bursary helps remove the barriers that learners from low-income households may face by assisting with the costs of undertaking their course. Assistance may be given with course material fees, essential books, kit, equipment and travel and also with childcare costs for students who are aged 20 or over on their first day of learning and residential fees.

The College distributes the fund to learners in accordance with the GLA Funding Guidance.

The College reserves the right to make changes to financial support provision in response to Government guidance and other mitigating factors.

ESFA guidance is updated regularly and may affect eligibility for funding. Any changes to this policy and financial support guidance will be communicated with all members of the College community at the time of any change.

Students/parents/guardians/partners of students, who are in receipt of any state benefits, must ensure they inform the Department for Work and Pensions (“DWP”) of any learner support they receive from the College, including any Bursary awarded.

Any bursary awarded covers term time only.

2. Eligibility Criteria

Students must meet the following criteria:

- 2.1 be resident in a London Borough undertaking GLA funded AEB;
- 2.2 enrolled on an eligible full-time course funded by the GLA aged 19 or over on 31 August of the year they start the course; and
- 2.3 meet the GLA residency criteria (see [19+ GLA AEB Funding rules](#))

Residential support is also available for students who meet the above criteria and also:

- 2.4 who have a complex journey to the College and it takes more than two hours daily to get to and from the campus they are studying at (Hadlow);
- 2.5 are enrolled on a full-time course which lasts for at least 10 weeks of the year;
- 2.6 need to be on campus for early and late duties as an integral part of the course; and
- 2.7 are enrolled on a land based course.

Students who are aged 19 on 31 August (for September start) and continuing a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuers) or have an EHCP must provide evidence of household income including that of their parent(s)/carer(s).

For students who live with their parents (regardless of age), household income means the income of the parent(s), guardian(s), and/or the parent’s partner(s) that they live with.

For student who live independently from their parents: household income is the student’s own income, plus the income of any co-habiting partner, where relevant.

All residential bursary students must supply evidence of household income, including parents/guardians/partners. If a residential student is 19 and over and living with their parents /guardians, then it will be the full household income that is used to determine eligibility.

If the above criteria is met, the student can apply for the bursary but their household income must be below the threshold set by the College.

Students on apprenticeships and on Higher Education courses are not entitled to the bursary. Students in receipt of a 19+ Advanced Learning Loan should apply for the NKC Advanced Learner Loan (bursary) Fund

Awards are made to students whose household income is less than the threshold set by the College. Where household income has dropped/changed significantly, an award may still be made depending on the student's personal circumstances. In this case, the Student Bursary Coordinator responsible for the relevant College Campus will make the final decision. This may be in the form of a partial award i.e. assistance with travel only.

All residential bursary students will need to supply evidence of household income, including parent(s)/guardian(s)/partner. If a residential student is 19 and over and living with their parent(s)/guardian(s) then it will be the full household income that is used to determine eligibility.

Household income includes any income from employment or self-employment and income from any state benefits received. These include (but not limited to):

- 2.8 Income Support ("IS");
- 2.9 Job Seekers Allowance ("JSA");
- 2.10 Employment Support Allowance ("ESA");
- 2.11 Tax Credits;
- 2.12 State Pension Credit;
- 2.13 Universal Credit;
- 2.14 Housing and Council Tax benefit;
- 2.15 Personal Pension;
- 2.16 Carers' allowance; and/or
- 2.17 Other income.

Disability Living Allowance, disability elements of Tax Credits and Personal Independence Payments are not included in the calculation of household income.

However, evidence of these benefits is still required in order to consider the individual circumstances

When applying for funding students are required to provide full evidence of the household income before a bursary application can be assessed. Eligibility for a 19+ GLA Discretionary Learner Support Fund Bursary does not mean that the student is automatically entitled to an award. The 19+ GLA Discretionary Learner Support Fund is a limited fund and awards are made on a first come-first served basis.

The student's attendance is monitored and any payments due may be withheld if their attendance drops below 90%. This is checked on a monthly basis and the dates viewed for the attendance are between 18th of the previous month to 17th of the current month the bursary is due.

Discretionary Bursary awards are tailored to the needs of the individual student and will depend upon the course that the student is on and where they live. Bursary awards made may include the following and are only a contribution towards costs and may not cover the full amount required:

- 2.18 course contribution/materials fee (this will depend upon the course and is a one off payment);
- 2.19 the cost of essential books required for the course (as determined by the Head of Curriculum and is a one off payment);
- 2.20 essential kit or equipment required for the course (as determined by the Head of Curriculum and is a one off payment);
- 2.21 support with domestic emergencies; (**exceptional circumstances only**). This would only be agreed with the Student Bursary Coordinator and you may be required to provide further evidence to support any request;
- 2.22 an award for travel (monthly payments made in arrears - see below);
- 2.23 trips - deposit only. This is for mandatory trips that are required for the student to pass their course. **Not all trips are mandatory.** (Maximum £100 for the deposit only and is a one off payment only);
- 2.24 childcare – a contribution towards childcare for one nursery aged child (subject to terms and conditions and paid directly to the childcare provider); and/or
- 2.25 Residential Accommodation (Hadlow students only) – subject to meeting the College's criteria (paid in monthly instalments to North Kent College). See separate Residential Bursary Fund Policy.

Note: All payments will be made from the date of approval and not the date the application was submitted.

Where students have applied for funding for course equipment or trips, this funding will be made "in kind" where possible or paid direct to the curriculum. If funding is paid to

the student by BACS, this will not be paid until after the first half term.

3. Travel Awards

An award for travel may be made to students who live more than two miles away from the campus they are studying at or (for students studying at Dartford only) from Dartford Railway Station (since a free shuttle bus from the station is provided by the College).

Travel payments are calculated using Google Maps. Depending on where the student lives and how they choose to travel to College, students may be awarded the following.

3.1 A Monthly Travel Payment

A travel payment may be awarded to students depending on where they live and the number of timetabled days. Funding is at the discretion of the College and will take into account: the discounts available to students; if the student already has support in place from the local authority; and will only be a **contribution** to assist with travel and may mean the student is awarded funding for monthly ticket options for example.

Students travelling from a London Borough to any North Kent College campus will be required to use their 18+ Oyster Card within the Oyster catchment area, which gives discounted travel. The College may contribute towards the discounted travel amount. If the student is at Gravesend, Tonbridge, or Hadlow campus, additional funds may be awarded towards the onward journey, outside of the Oyster catchment area.

Discounts such as these are reflected in assessments of funding allocated to students and the College will contribute to the cost of passes.

Awards for travel will be paid directly into the student's bank account via a BACS payment, in monthly instalments.

The student remains liable for their travel costs until an award is agreed and reimbursement for travel costs before this time is not paid.

All payments are made in arrears and under no circumstances will payments be made in advance,

Students who apply for and are awarded a residential bursary are not eligible to also apply for a travel award.

4. Childcare awards

An award for childcare may be made for students who are aged 20 or over on the first day of learning, to assist with the costs of their childcare while they are in College. Funding is provided for full daily childcare for one child only, although consideration will be given to funding for additional school-age children who are attending out of school provision, such as after-school clubs. Where the child is eligible for "free for two" funding or the 15 hours' free government funding for three or four-year olds, the

student is expected to use this free childcare during the time they are at College and the College will then fund any remaining childcare costs from the 19+ GLA Discretionary Learner Support Fund.

Young parents who are below the age of 20 are not eligible for childcare from this fund. However, they may apply for financial support towards childcare through the government's Care to Learn ("C2L") scheme. For further information, students should visit <https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn>.

The following terms and conditions apply for childcare awards:

- 4.1 Applications for childcare support must be submitted with essential documentary evidence: Birth certificate or Passport or Adoption papers for relevant child(ren);
- 4.2 it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the Childcare Agreement, provided by the College, is completed and signed by both them and their childcare provider. This duly completed form must be received by the College before payments can commence;
- 4.3 the College will only pay for the cost of one child's childcare during College term time. The student will be liable for any costs outside of these dates;
- 4.4 if the student finishes the course before the end of term, the College will only pay childcare costs up to when the student finishes and not to the end of term;
- 4.5 if the childcare award is withdrawn, the student will become liable for any further costs. Both the student and Childcare provider will be notified of this in writing;
- 4.6 it is the student's responsibility to keep the childcare provider informed of their end date together with any changes to timetabled hours/days;
- 4.7 the College will only pay for childcare for the days and hours that the student attends College or placements associated with the course;
- 4.8 the College will only pay if the student's attendance is 90% or above, unless there are mitigating circumstances. If the attendance level drops below 90% the student may become liable for all costs;
- 4.9 the College pays monthly in arrears, never in advance;
- 4.10 the College will pay up to a maximum of £79.50 for a full day, £54 for half days (am) and £49.50 for half days (pm). If the child is eligible for any Government Funding, this grant amount will be deducted from the funds awarded;

- 4.11 once the student's timetable is known, the College will agree with the student and the childcare provider the fees payable per week and calculate the total fees for the whole of the academic year. This is based on the weekly fee, multiplied by 34 weeks unless otherwise agreed by the Student Financial Bursary Co-ordinator.

Note: The College will pay the childcare provider directly into their bank account at the end of the month in arrears. **Under no circumstances will the College pay the student.**

- 4.12 the childcare provider must have a current OFSTED rating of Good or above and provide their OFSTED registration number; and
- 4.13 The College does not pay any deposits, retainers or administration fees, and the student is liable for any such fees.

5. Residential Fees (Hadlow Students Only)

Please see the separate Residential Fees Policy.

6. Tuition fee awards

Tuition fees are not covered by the bursary fund.

7. Residential Bursary

A maximum award of 80% towards accommodation fees can be awarded, subject to meeting the household income and Residential Bursary and Accommodation criteria.

8. Raising Awareness and the Application Procedure

The College has information on the website from April for the following academic year and information is marketed around the College. Applicants and returning students are sent notification of the financial support available and the application process. The College works with the local authority and agencies in order to support students to access financial support.

The College has a single online Student Financial Support application form which covers all the bursary funds. The on-line application form will be available on the College's website after the Easter half term for the following academic year. Bursary awards do not automatically carry-over from one year to the next and students will need to make a new application for each academic year. On-line applications help reduce our impact on the environment, however, paper applications are also available via the website and the Student Financial Support Team.

Along with their application, students will need to provide full evidence of household income for the current tax year. Where financial circumstances have changed from the previous year, a note needs to be made on the online application. This will be

considered when the application is assessed. Applications submitted without full evidence of household income cannot be assessed and, in these circumstances, Student Bursary Team will contact the student to explain what is required.

Students who are continuing at College for a further year should apply by 1 June for an award for the following academic year. New applicants to the College are encouraged to apply before enrolment and, at the latest, by 1 August. Complete applications received by these dates will be assessed before the student enrolls, this will ensure that students who are awarded a bursary are notified before enrolment day and the student will then be aware if they need to make additional payments at enrolment.

Applications will be accepted after these dates, subject to funds being available. For applications received by 1 August, we aim to assess these within 10 working days and will inform applicants if assessment will take longer. Applications received after 1 August may take up to 30 working days to assess. Students, however, will remain liable for any costs accrued at enrolment until an award has been confirmed in writing by the College.

The outcome of the assessment will be communicated to the student via their personal email, held on the College records before enrolment and after enrolment any future correspondence will be sent to either the student's College email and/or personal email address,

Application forms submitted without supporting documentation and evidence will not be able to be processed. If applications are received without the required evidence, the Student Bursary Team will attempt to contact the applicant three times via telephone or email and if no response is received a final reminder letter will be sent to the address held on the College records.

9. Student Commitment

Awards are made on the understanding that the student maintains an attendance level of at least 90% (in all subjects/courses), otherwise payments will be withheld or reduced.

The student's attendance is monitored and any payments due may be withheld or reduced if their attendance drops below 90%. Monitoring takes place on a monthly basis and the dates viewed for the attendance are 18th of the previous month to the 17th of the current month the bursary is due.

If attendance drops below 90% and the payments are withheld or reduced, it is up to the student to discuss with their tutor the reasons regarding the low attendance. If the tutor is happy with the reasons, they must email Student Bursary to request that the reduced payments are released. Consideration will be given to mitigating circumstances such as: child protection; family illness; caring responsibilities;

transport issues; and any other issues affecting the learner's attendance. For travel payments, the amount will be reduced to reflect the student's attendance. i.e., If the student has only attended 67% of the allocated time, then they will only receive 67% of the residential / travel award for the month.

Funding for students who have not attended for four weeks or more will be stopped without notice and funding may also be stopped if a student has not adhered to the College rules.

The College reserves the right to request repayment of funds and the return of any equipment purchased through funding. This includes the Kent 16+ Travel Saver Card if these have been funded through financial support.

10. Appeals

In the first instance, the student (or the parent(s)/guardian(s) should contact the Student Bursary Co-ordinator and ask for a re-assessment of their situation. If the student is still not satisfied with the outcome, an appeal must be made in writing, within two weeks to the Head of the Department. The letter must clearly state why the award should be re-considered. The student may be asked to provide additional information or be invited to discuss their individual circumstances as part of the appeal. The decision of the Head of Department is final.

11. Fraudulent Claims

It is the College's duty to protect public funds from the possibility of fraudulent claims. The College asks for detailed information and may invite applicants for interview so it can distribute the funds correctly. If the student's claim is considered fraudulent, i.e. through false representation of household income or other eligibility rules, during spot checks or auditing processes, the College will request that the funds awarded to them are repaid in full. If the student fails to repay this, the College may take legal action.

An application which is found to be fraudulent, i.e. through false representation of household income or of other eligibility rules, may be cancelled and the learner may be subject to disciplinary measures by the College. The College will have the right to recover the monies awarded.

12. Data Protection

College employees who are involved in administering the 19+ GLA Discretionary Learner Support Fund will comply with the College's policy on the storage and transfer of information in the course of application and payments of funds.