

2022/23 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund Guidelines

Please take the time to read the information below before completing the application form.

This document will provide you with information about whether you are eligible to apply to the Discretionary Learner Support Fund, what sort of assistance you might get, and how to apply.

If you are applying for help with the cost of childcare you will need to make sure that you read **Help with Childcare Costs** as well as the general information about the fund.

If you require help with the information contained in these guidelines or help completing your application, please contact a member of the Stoke on Trent College Student Financial Assistance team.

What is the 19+ Learner Support Fund?

The Learner Support Fund aims to help eligible students who need additional financial support throughout their time at College in order to complete their course. The fund can help with travel, course related costs and childcare costs.

For more information about Learner Support Funds, please contact our team by emailing studentassistance@stokecoll.ac.uk

Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must be aged 19 or over on 31 August 2022 to apply for general course related costs and aged 20 or over at the start of their course to apply for childcare costs.

Applicants must have been accepted onto a 'Learner Responsive' course for which they are funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

Many college courses are eligible **but** there are certain types of courses and certain groups of students who are **not** eligible for Learner Support Funds – these are listed below.

Are you aged 19-24 with an EHC plan?

If you will be aged 19-24 on 31 August 2022 and you have an EHC Plan (Education, Health and Care Plan), please contact the College's Student Financial Assistance team via email: studentassistance@stokecoll.ac.uk for further guidance about the bursary support which you may be entitled to.

The following students are **NOT** eligible to apply for Learner Support Funds:

- Students who are aged 24 or over at the start of their course and who are enrolling on a Level 3 or Level 4 course which is eligible for an Advanced Learning Loan.
- Students who are over 19 at the start of their course and already have a Full Level 3 qualification.
- Students who have been classed as 'Overseas Students' for fee purposes.
- Students studying Higher Education courses (e.g. HND's, HNC's, Foundation Degrees)
- Students on self-funding courses (full cost recovery courses)
- Student on Work Based or Community Learning Courses
- Waged Apprentices
- Learners who are in prison or youth offender institutions/or released on temporary licence
- Students who are Job Seekers Allowance claimants who are attending through the Work Programme cannot apply for funds for costs which Job Centre Plus will be meeting.

Asylum seekers are eligible to apply for Learner Support funds (except for the types of courses listed above) but if successful in their application can only be awarded 'payments in kind' for example, travel passes or books/equipment purchased on their behalf.

Are Learner Support Fund applications income assessed?

The Bursary Scheme will be assessed on household income, applicants must be in receipt of an out of work income related benefit or have an income of less than £28,000.

Please note: All thresholds are for gross income (before tax) per year and Child Benefit, Tax Credits, Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment or Attendance Allowance are not counted as income for the purposes of the bursary scheme.

Applicants who are aged 24 and under and who live with parents(s)/carer(s): will in most cases be assessed on parental/carers' income using the £28,000 income threshold. Students who claim income related benefits in their own right or who are in full time employment can demonstrate they live independently in the parental/carers' home and all students who are aged 24 or over will be assessed on their own income.

2022/23 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund Guidelines

What financial help can I apply for?

Financial help received is intended to be a contribution and may not meet the full costs.

You can apply for help with:

- Travel costs – if you live at a distance of 2 miles or more from the College site at which you study.
- Childcare costs whilst you are studying for the days attending College. You can find information applying for help with childcare costs further on in these guidelines, under the heading ‘Help with Childcare Costs’.
- Students who are not ‘fully funded learners’ can also apply for help with:
- essential equipment and uniform costs.

If I am eligible, will my application to the Learner Support Fund definitely be successful?

Although Stoke on Trent College will endeavour to help as many eligible applicants as possible, the College has a limited amount of money available to help students and eligibility does not guarantee an award will be made. You are strongly advised to make an early application.

When can I apply?

Application forms and guidelines will be available on the College website, returning students and new students who have applied for a full-time course will be sent an application form in the post.

What happens after I have submitted my application?

If you make a successful application we will write/email with details of your award.

For further information about the application process and awards for childcare costs, please refer to the information under the heading ‘Help with Childcare Costs’

Unsuccessful Applications

If you have been unsuccessful, we will write to you informing you why and with details of how you can appeal against any decision made.

Evidence

If you do not supply the evidence of income/benefits we have asked for on the application form, we will contact you to request further evidence but will not be able to make an assessment until it has been supplied.

How and when will Awards be made?

Essential equipment and uniform will usually be purchased or costs met by the College on behalf of the student, the Bursary Fund will reimburse the College.

If you are required to purchase essential uniform and equipment, these would be reimbursed by BACS credit transfer.

Please note that no guarantee can be given that the full cost of an item will be reimbursed.

For Students living in North Staffordshire, travel support will take the form of a subsidised Smart multi-operator bus pass, which allows you to travel on buses provided by different operators across North Staffordshire with just one ticket – facilitated by weekly, monthly and three-monthly passes issued by the Student Financial Assistance team.

If you live outside of the North Staffordshire area, we would look to provide subsidised travel support in the form of a First bus pass. If you have to use alternative transport methods you may be eligible for Discretionary Bursary travel payments, which will be made by monthly BACS credit transfer into the student’s bank account.

Are there any other conditions for receiving payment?

You must be fully enrolled on your course and have attended all your lessons and tutorials for at least 2 weeks before any payment is made. To continue to receive payments throughout the college year your attendance must be 90% or above and you must adhere to the conditions of your Learner Agreement, which you will sign at enrolment. Attendance will be checked monthly before a payment is made.

If attendance is below 90%, unless there are extenuating circumstances confirmed by your tutor, no payment will be made.

Appeals

Appeals in respect of any unsuccessful application or with respect to the award made need to be made in writing to the Director of Student Services.

Changes in Circumstances/Fraud

Students are required to disclose any change in circumstances – personal, financial or educational that may affect their eligibility for funding. Failure to notify us of these changes could result in students becoming liable for the cost of funding given. Forms must be filled in truthfully and accurately and the College reserves the right to recover any funding which has been obtained fraudulently.

Confidentiality

Forms and evidence of income are only seen by staff involved in the administration/auditing of the 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund and all formation is stored securely and treated as confidential.

2022/23 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund Guidelines

Equality and Diversity Statement

The Director of Student Services and the Student Financial Assistance Team will:

1. Take positive action to ensure that all eligible students can apply for financial support to the bursary scheme, thus widening participation and providing learning opportunities for underrepresented groups.
2. Ensure that no applicant to the bursary scheme receives less favourable treatment which cannot be justified in relation to individual financial/personal circumstances.
3. Ensure that all literature, marketing and publicity materials are free from stereotypes, discriminatory assumptions, images and language.
4. Monitor and review the effectiveness of the support on a regular basis.
5. Ensure that this form is available in other formats if required.

GDPR

Stoke on Trent College is a data controller committed to ensuring the security and protection of the personal information that we process under the terms of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

The Student Financial Assistance Team collect data requested on the bursary application form and use it to assess your eligibility to access learner support funds. Data is inputted onto our electronic systems to allow us to make payments. Application forms and associated evidence is stored securely on campus: for learners studying off site this data will be stored at one of our main sites (Cauldon or Burslem).

Your data may be shared with relevant government departments or their agencies for the purpose of quality assurance and compliance.

Our Data Protection Policy is available on our website if you require further information.

Useful Information

Guidelines on the purpose and use of the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Scheme are detailed in the Education and Skills Funding Agency Funding Rules 2022 – 2023. Copies of relevant extracts are available from the College's Student Financial Assistance Team.

Help with Childcare Costs

Additional Eligibility Criteria

Students applying for help with Childcare must meet the general eligibility and attendance requirements, which have already been outlined in this guidance.

In addition, you must also meet the following criteria:

- Be aged 20 or over at the start of the course.
- Be the person who is mainly responsible for the

child/children for whom you are applying for childcare costs. You will be asked to provide proof of this, for example; your Child Benefit Entitlement letter.

- Your childcare provider must be Ofsted registered. If your application is successful we will write to your provider for proof.

The maximum awards the College can make per-child for Childcare are detailed in the table below:

Nursery	Registered Childminder	Before and After School Clubs
Daily £45	Daily £45	Per Session
Half Day £25	Half Day £25	AM £5 PM £8

How many children can I apply for help with?

As our funds are limited we will only be able to pay our maximum award of £45 per day, any awards for a second child will be subject to availability of funds and at the discretion of the College.

If your household income threshold is above £28,000 you will not be eligible to apply to the Bursary Scheme.

We will also take into account any 2 or 3 year old funding you receive when making awards.

What if my childcare provider charges more than this?

If your childcare provider's rates are higher than the above rates, it will be your responsibility to pay for any shortfall in funding. It might be advisable for you to discuss this with your provider and put in place weekly or monthly payments.

How much Childcare can I apply for help with?

The bursary will only contribute for the days/half days or hours when you are timetabled to be in college for lessons and tutorials, and for reasonable travelling time to and from College. It is important that you take this into account when arranging your childcare with your provider. It is also important to be as accurate as possible when filling in your provider details and how much childcare you require as initially we will base our estimated award on this.

Are there any additional conditions for receiving financial help with Childcare costs?

Your child's attendance with the Childcare provider must be 80% or above each month, and we will make regular checks with your provider.

2022/23 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund Guidelines

If I am eligible, will my application for Childcare costs definitely be successful?

Although Stoke on Trent College will endeavour to help as many eligible applicants as possible with Childcare costs, the College has a limited amount of money available to help students and eligibility does not guarantee an award will be made.

Priorities for funding

Childcare Applications will be considered in date order of receipt.

If your Childcare application is successful we will write to your Childcare provider confirming payment arrangements (subject to you being fully enrolled).

If your Childcare application is unsuccessful we will write to you to confirm we cannot fund your application.

If there is not sufficient funding for all applicants who have applied, the following criteria in the order stated will be used to prioritise funding:

1. Applicants who are studying full time for their first full level 1 or level 2 qualification
2. Applicants who are aged 23 or under and who are studying full time for their first full level 3 qualification
3. Applicants who are part time students and studying basic skills courses: Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL
4. Any other Applicant (please note we will give priority to full time applicants)

Should any childcare funding remain after this date, applications will be considered in date order of receipt. The College will however prioritise funding to applicants as detailed in the above criteria if the fund is over subscribed.

Please note that the childcare provision contract is between the Student and Childcare Provider and the College cannot be responsible for any childcare costs incurred because of an unsuccessful application.

Please note: Application forms and evidence are posted at your own risk and the college does not accept responsibility for evidence, which has not been received.

What happens after I have made my application?

Upon receipt of your Bursary Scheme application, we will provide you with further details about the application process.

How will payment for Childcare be made?

Payments will be made directly to your Childcare Provider by BACs credit transfer. Normally, these will be equal monthly payments from the start to the end of your course.