Barking & Dagenham College

19+ Learner Support Funds Policy

Policy Author:	Head of Admissions & Onboarding	Date of Approval:	October 2026
Approved By:	SLT Policy Committee	Reviewed:	Annually

OUR VISION

To be an exceptional college

OUR MISSION

Empowering futures, transforming lives

OUR CULTURE AND VALUES

Barking & Dagenham College is a unique, diverse and inclusive environment in which everyone is supported to grow, develop and really flourish.

We treat each student as an individual because we know that everyone is different. Every individual has their own unique talents, circumstances, challenges and aspirations. Every student brings something special and it is this diversity and richness of ideas that makes College life interesting, fun and vibrant. Our culture is such that all students, staff and visitors should feel welcome, safe and valued. Guided by our principles of honesty, integrity and transparency, we treat each other respectfully and seek to establish trust. By building resilience and confidence, we encourage students and staff to rise above challenges with determination and a positive mindset.

Whilst we are rightly proud of our unique internal culture, Barking & Dagenham College is an outward facing organisation that recognises the critical importance of working through networks and collaboration to lead change and influence local agendas. By partnering with industry-leading employers and embracing innovation, digital technologies and new ways of thinking, we strive to push the boundaries of learning and ensure that our students are ahead of the curve. Our many stakeholder partnerships mean that we have established our place at the heart of our community and as a key partner in the regeneration of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

At Barking & Dagenham College, we are dedicated to inspiring students and staff to embrace challenges and pursue their dreams with confidence. Most of all, we are ambitious and we expect excellence - from ourselves and from our students.

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1 Introduction / Context

This 19+ Learner Support Funds Policy outlines the College's policy for managing the 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund and Advanced Learner Loan Support Fund for students on Further Education courses within the college. The College is committed to providing a professional and transparent service and to the pursuit of clear, fair and consistently applied policies and procedures.

2 Principles / Purpose

Barking and Dagenham College aims to deliver a clear, consistent, fair and timely Student Financial Support process that is fully understood and adhered to by all staff, learners. The College will ensure that the principles of this policy are consistently applied to all learners regardless of age, choice of course, mode of attendance and funding type.

The College values diversity and inclusion and is committed to promoting equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination. Therefore, staff will apply and administer this policy fairly and consistently to ensure that there is no discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, young persons in care and care leavers, young carers and care givers, young parents, youth offenders, and those receiving free school meals.

The college will accept applicants against an approved criteria which is outlined below taking learners individual needs into consideration.

2.1 19+ Discretionary Support Funding

The funding issued is based on the guidance's published by the Department for Education (DfE) and Greater London Authority (GLA) and consolidates best practice within the sector. The college is committed to ensuring the fund is used to provide some financial assistance with the costs associated with coming to college such as travel, books, uniform, childcare and equipment. Funds are designed to support vulnerable and disadvantaged students and to remove barriers to education or training. Learners who are eligible for support are not automatically entitled to it. If demand exceeds the available funds, then reduced awards may be given. When funds are fully committed no further awards will be made.

There are two types of funds available

1. 19+ Discretionary Support Fund
2. Advanced Learner Loan (A.L.L) Support Fund

Regardless of fund, all learners follow the same application and assessment process, with differences applying to the evidence we request and what they are eligible for.

2.2 Categories of support

- Course materials, equipment, books and uniforms – A separate request form must be completed by the learners' tutor to be considered for this funding; awards will be made in kind and/or via a third party where possible. Requests for this are completed online through the

students PayMyStudent account and students are required to provide receipts/proof of purchase before support can be considered.

- Travel expenses (Public Transport) – Learners must live over 1.5 miles from their college campus. Each payment is then awarded based on the student **maintaining a minimum 95% attendance for the previous month.**. Receipts may be requested at various points throughout the year to provide evidence of travel costs.
- Travel expenses (Petrol) - Private vehicle fuel support is available where the learner is responsible for the fuel costs associated with travelling to and from college. Fuel support is not available where the learner is transported as a passenger and does not incur the fuel cost, including being dropped off/picked up or travelling as a passenger in a car share.
- External registration fees e.g. DBS - A separate request form must be completed by the learners tutor to be considered for this funding. Requests for this are completed online through the students Pay My Student account and students are required to provide receipts/proof of purchase before support can be considered
- Assistance towards compulsory course trips – The course tutor or curriculum manager would need to have made prior arrangements with the Student Financial Support Team Leader or Head of Admissions & Onboarding. These trips must be compulsory to the learner completing the course.
- College Meals - If eligible this is paid on a monthly basis, directly into the students nominated account and is payable for each timetabled day in college, including work experience. This is paid at £5.00 per meal. This is where the College will provide payments towards College Meals, not Free Meals. Learners must **maintain a minimum 95% attendance for the previous month.**
- Childcare – Childcare is paid in relation to the days/times learners are required at College/Placement/Work Experience. Learners must **maintain a minimum 85% attendance for the previous month.** Childcare can only be offered to Ofsted registered providers and support is paid directly to the provider Childcare – Childcare is paid in relation to the days/times learners are required at College/Placement/Work Experience.

The Student Financial Support department may be able to support towards other college related expenses. Such requests would need to be put in writing to either the Student Financial Support Team Leader or Head of Admissions & Onboarding.

2.3 Eligibility Criteria

19+ Discretionary Support Fund

- The learner must have a current enrolment for the current academic year.
- The learner must be eligible for and funded via the DfE/GLA for their course, using either the Department for Education Adult Skills Fund / Greater London Authority Adult Skills Fund guidance
- The learner must not be enrolled on a Work Based Learning or Apprenticeship course.
- The learner must not be enrolled on a Higher Education course.
- If the learner is on a 1 year programme. The learner must be aged 19+ on the 31st August 2026.
- If the learner is on a 2 year programme. The learner must be aged 19+ on the 31st August 2025, prior to starting the 2 year programme in the 2025-26 academic year.

- You or your household must have an income below £50,000 per year before tax and deductions (with no individual income exceeding £30,000 per year before tax and deductions) and must be able to provide complete and sufficient evidence of this.
- You or your household must have savings and/or accessible capital of £16,000 or less. Savings/capital of up to £6,000 will be disregarded when assessing eligibility. Where savings/capital are above £6,000 but do not exceed £16,000, the application will be considered on an individual basis, taking into account the learner's household circumstances and financial need. Applications where savings/capital exceed £16,000 will not be eligible for support.

Advanced Learner Loan Support Fund

- The learner must have a current enrolment for the current academic year.
- The learner must be eligible for and funded via an Advanced Learner Loan using the Department for Education Adult Skills Fund
- The learner must not be enrolled on a Work Based Learning or Apprenticeship course.
- The learner must not be enrolled on a Higher Education course.
- If the learner is on a 1 year programme. The learner must be aged 19+ on the 31st August 2026.
- If the learner is on a 2 year programme. The learner must be aged 19+ on the 31st August 2025, prior to starting the 2 year programme in the 2025-26 academic year.
- You or your household must have an income below £50,000 per year before tax and deductions (with no individual income exceeding £30,000 per year before tax and deductions) and must be able to provide complete and sufficient evidence of this.
- You or your household must have savings and/or accessible capital of £16,000 or less. Savings/capital of up to £6,000 will be disregarded when assessing eligibility. Where savings/capital are above £6,000 but do not exceed £16,000, the application will be considered on an individual basis, taking into account the learner's household circumstances and financial need. Applications where savings/capital exceed £16,000 will not be eligible for support.

Learners in receipt of 19+ Learner Support Funds will not be disadvantaged financially where attendance is affected by characteristics that are protected under the Equality Act 2010. Where a 95% attendance threshold is in place for 100% payment, the College also acknowledges the need to support learners who may not meet the monthly attendance threshold. The College does not have an 'authorised' absence mark, but does offer support in the following ways;

1. Attendance Appeals – where a learner has a justifiable and evidence backed reason for not being in College. This can be related to immovable appointments, such as Hospital, Home Office and/or Court summons. This may also relate to religious holidays or exceptional circumstances. Attendance Appeals are submitted by a member of staff in collaboration with the student and reviewed by the Student Financial Support Team , a 'B' Bursary mark can be applied to their registers which acts as a positive mark for all Bursary related attendance reports.
2. 50% Payment for learners who achieve a 90-94% monthly attendance. Where a student may not achieve the 95% attendance threshold, we have a small window of 90-94% monthly attendance where we will issue a 50% payment (of their expected funds). This allows learners to receive some funds whilst they review their attendance and discuss any anomalies with their tutors.

If there are any corrections required (including any attendance appeals), students/staff can inform the SFS team once the amendment has been made and we will review their attendance and release any funds that match their attendance.

If a learner is 16-18 or 19+ but have an EHCP, they should apply under the 16-19 Bursary Fund Policy, not the 19+ Learner Support Funds Policy.

2.4 Supporting Evidence

The evidence required relates to the learners' personal circumstance at the time of their Student Financial Support application. The evidence required is outlined as part of the application process and via the application form due to the many variations of personal circumstances.

Learners who apply for Childcare support will require their Childcare provider to complete a confirmation form, detailing their details including, but not limited to, Company Name, Ofsted Registration Number, days, times, and a breakdown of fees they charge in relation to childcare for this learners child/children.

2.5 Application & Process

The Student Financial Support application is a digital form via the PayMyStudent Portal (https://bdc.paymystudent.com/portal/), which asks the learner relevant information relating to themselves, their course, their situation/income as well as if they live with anyone else. The application adapts based on the learners' answers to questions. As part of the application, learners must upload the relevant information/evidence. Only fully submitted applications with evidence will be processed. If any information/evidence is missing, learners will be contacted via their student Gmail account and provided with a deadline to provide the missing information/evidence.

Once an application has been submitted via the PayMyStudent Portal, the College aims to process the application within 25 working days from the date the learners application was fully submitted (all supporting evidence supplied). A member of the Student Financial Support department will then complete a full assessment and consider all funding requests.

Once approved for funding and processed, the learner will be given a breakdown of expected payments/support and payment dates for ongoing support. All assistance is at the discretion of the Student Financial Support department. The college's allocation of the 19+ Learner Support Funds will be dispensed fairly. There is no guarantee that all claims will be successful or to the desired level.

2.6 Payments

- Payments are made via BACS, there are exceptions to this depending on the financial support awarded; for example some equipment expenses may be paid directly to the curriculum area or supplier.
- Learners must apply using bank details in their own name; only in an exceptional circumstance can the College process details in another person's name.
- Payments can only be made into standard current accounts; Savings account and Post Office details cannot be processed.
- Childcare payments are made directly to the Childcare Provider, not the learner.

- Financial support towards eligible childcare costs is subject to internal funding limits determined by the College. These limits are used as a framework to ensure that available funds are distributed fairly, consistently and sustainably. The College reserves the right to exercise discretion and approve support above the standard limits where there are evidenced exceptional circumstances, subject to available funding.
- The Student Financial Support department release payment on Wednesdays, with payments usually depositing into learner accounts on Fridays, this is subject to change and amendments throughout the academic year. Please speak to the Student Financial Support team for an up-to-date list of expected payment dates.
- All payments must be processed before 5pm the day prior to release. All payments take 3 working days to clear in the learner's account.
- Where financial monitoring indicates impending exhaustion of funds, the college reserves the right to readjust award value
- Receipts for reimbursement must be submitted while the learner remains enrolled on their programme. Claims submitted after a learner has completed or been withdrawn from their programme will not normally be processed, even where the purchase was made before the learner's completion or withdrawal date.

2.7 Conditions

- All financial support provided is at the discretion of the college and works on a 'first come, first served' basis
- Payments/Support is subject to learners maintaining a minimum attendance of **95% each month. Where a learner achieves a monthly attendance of 90-94%, a 50% payment may be made.** Should the percentage fall below this, payment will be withheld.
- Payments can be withheld if the learner does not maintain good punctuality, behaviour and continue to make good progress on all programmes of study.
- Any missed or outstanding payments will not be processed after the deadline date. A list of deadline dates is available from the Student Financial Support department. A copy will also be sent alongside a payment schedule in the students' acceptance email.
- The Student Financial Support department has a right to refuse discussion of an application, or agreed funding, over the telephone unless the learner is present and can answer all security questions to the staff member's satisfaction.
- The Student Financial Support department have a zero-tolerance approach towards abusive, violent, rude and threatening behaviour. The Student Financial Support department has the right to refuse support to a learner if they or a family member/friend show any of these signs.
- Support awarded is only valid for academic year or current length of enrolment (whichever is less). If the learner re-enrols during the year, it is their responsibility to inform a member of the Student Financial Support team, and must be aware that funding is subject to availability and is not guaranteed.
- If the learner enrols again for a new academic year, they will need to submit a new application. No application is carried over multiple academic years.
- If a learner has applied for funding using an account that is not their own, the college cannot be held responsible for any payment complications where the department is not at fault.

- All issues relating to attendance must be taken up with the college tutors or the learners Support and Achievement mentor. It is not the responsibility of the Student Financial Support department to provide any information other than overall monthly percentage data.
- Support awarded is based on actual attendance in college, Distance learning will not qualify for payments. This may include periods of suspension and early completion.
- Once approved, eligible payments will be released once a learner has past their "Qualifying Period", for majority of courses this is 42 days after their start date.

2.8 Fraudulent or Misleading Information

The College reserves the right to verify any information or evidence provided as part of an application/request for financial support.

Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that information or evidence provided is false, altered, misleading or fraudulent, the College may place the application and/or any outstanding payments on hold while further checks are undertaken. The learner may be asked to provide additional or original evidence to support their application and/or attend an in-person meeting to provide further clarification.

Where the College is satisfied that false, altered, misleading or fraudulent information or evidence has been knowingly provided, the application may be rejected and any existing award may be withdrawn. The College may also seek repayment of any financial support already provided as a result of that information.

Cases may also be referred for consideration under the College's relevant disciplinary, fraud or financial procedures and, where appropriate, may be reported to the relevant funding body or other appropriate external authority.

2.9 Appeals Procedure

If a learner's application has been rejected, they have the right to appeal this decision within 90 days of the application. After 90 days they will have to submit a new application. Similarly, if a learner would like to appeal support granted, they have the right to appeal this decision within 90 days of the application.

In the first instance, should an applicant be dissatisfied with the outcome of their application/amount of support granted, they can put in an appeal in writing to the Student Financial Support Team Leader or alternatively email SFSAppeals@bdc.ac.uk.

If the applicant is dissatisfied with the initial appeal response from the Student Financial Support Team Leader, they may escalate their appeal to the Head of Admissions & Onboarding for a final outcome.

3 Scope

The 19+ Learner Support Funds Policy applies to all learners who apply for support via the Student Financial Support team and meet the entry requirements set out in section 2.3.

4 Responsibilities

- Learners
  - Submitting their online Bursary application form and keeping their details up to date.
  - Maintaining 90% above attendance, and communicating with BDC staff on absences.
- Student Financial Support Team
  - Assessing and processing applications, change of bank details requests. Supporting learners through the application and assessment process.
  - Communicating with learners regarding any amendments to agreed payment dates.
- Curriculum Teams / Support and Achievement Mentors (SAMs)
  - Accurately recording registers, supporting learners by submitting Bursary Attendance Appeals where appropriate.
  - Signposting to the Student Financial Support team where necessary.

5 Definitions

- *DfE: Department for Education*
- *GLA: Greater London Authority*
- *ASF: Adult Skills Fund*
- *SAMs: Student and Achievement Mentors*
- *SFS: Student Financial Support*

6 Review

This policy will be periodically monitored in light of legislative, regulatory, codifiable of necessary changes, and in any event formally reviewed, and revised, if necessary, on an annual basis in July/August.

7 Linked Policies

Please read this in conjunction with the following policies.

- GDPR
- Attendance & Punctuality Policy
- Promoting Positive Student Behaviour and Disciplinary Policy
- Admissions Policy

8 Appendices

- *DfE ASF 2026/27 Guidance:* *https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-skills-fund-funding-rules/adult-skills-fund-funding-and-performance-management-rules-2026-to-2027*
- *GLA ASF 2026/27 Guidance:* *https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/jobs-and-skills/training-providers-teaching-skills/adult-skills-fund/information-adult-skills-fund-providers/gla-adult-skills-fund-funding-rates-and-formula*

9 Amendments

Amendments Made	Page Number	Line/Section Number	Made by	Date
Updated links in Appendices to 2026 - 2027 versions	8	8. Appendices	Alex Cohen	August 2026
Travel Expenses (Petrol) added	3	2.2	Alex Cohen	August 2026
Reimbursements post course completion/withdrawal context	6	2.6	Alex Cohen	August 2026
Childcare fees framework	6	2.6	Alex Cohen	August 2026
Responsibilities	7	4	Alex Cohen	August 2026
Update to Household income threshold	3 & 4	2.3	Alex Cohen	August 2026
Addition of 'Savings' Cap	3 & 4	2.3	Alex Cohen	August 2026
Added Fraudulent & Misleading Information Section	7	2.8	Alex Cohen	August 2026