

2025/26 BRIGHTER FUTURES BURSARIES PROTOCOL

Brighter Futures Merseyside Ltd will administer the Bursary Fund awarded within the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) 16-19 Bursary Fund Guidelines. We aim to have clear and transparent processes including an appeals procedure. All recording along with evidence of eligibility will in addition follow Brighter Futures' procedures/guidelines.

The different types of additional support available to young people aged 16-19 who commence their training in the year 2025/2026 include:

Vulnerable Bursary

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- In care
- Care leavers
- Receiving Income Support, or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and 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 who meet the Vulnerable Bursary criteria can be eligible to receive a bursary of up to £1,200 per year or pro-rata in the case of short courses where students are assessed as requiring financial support for their programme. Applications are **not** guaranteed. Evidence to support the application will be needed such as written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from the relevant Local Authority or the benefit award notice clearly stating the student's name and confirming they are entitled to the benefits in their own right.

Applications to the Vulnerable Bursary pot are not guaranteed and will be awarded based on individual financial requirements.

Discretionary Bursary

This may be awarded on an identified financial needs basis and at the discretion of Brighter Futures, to cover costs such as travel, books/equipment, meals, and other miscellaneous items associated with being in learning and will meet the Institution's assessment criteria below:

- Applicants must have met the 16-19 Study Programme eligibility criteria.
- Evidence of Household Income below £32,000 must accompany the application prior to assessment. As each application is individually assessed there may be some flexibility, for example, consideration would be given to the number of dependants in a household.
- The distance from the learner's home address to the training location will be taken into consideration. Each learner will need to detail their route to college and the mode of transport they expect to take within the application form. As each application is individually assessed there may be some flexibility depending on the safety of the route to the training centre and the method of transportation available.
- Based on the information received and if financial hardship is identified, the learner will be awarded:
 - A subsidy towards travel costs upon submission of evidence e.g. Travel Tickets/Weekly Pass. Learners should be aware that this may not equal 100% of the cost of evidence submitted; this will be dependent on each individual learner's financial assessment.

- Up to £4 per day towards lunch meals; this may, depending on eligibility criteria, include the 'Free Meals' element of support which has a separate list of criteria detailed on the 2025/26 Bursary Fund Application Form. Learners eligible for the 'Free Meals' element of support will be provided with food vouchers on a weekly basis in advance, up to a maximum value of £20. Learners not eligible for the 'Free Meals' element of support must submit food receipts as evidence.

In addition, if other barriers are identified, learners assessed as being eligible for the discretionary element, can also request financial assistance towards programme related clothing, equipment etc.

Bursary Process

In both cases the young person will complete an application form and will provide the required evidence as listed on the 2025/26 Bursary Fund Application Form. The application will take no longer than 5-10 working days to process (upon receipt of the required evidence). Once an application has been approved, the learner will receive a confirmatory letter or email detailing the funds they should expect to receive as a result of their individual financial assessment, subject to the appropriate evidence being submitted.

Receipt of the bursary will be conditional on the young person meeting agreed standards of attendance and behaviour, as detailed in the Brighter Futures Training Agreement and Code of Conduct which will be discussed at induction. Travel reimbursement will not be paid for timetabled educational days which are not attended by the student. For those receiving food vouchers, any full week of Unauthorised Absence marks on registers will discount that student from receiving the subsequent week's food vouchers.

Brighter Futures are committed to providing timely support to all students approved as eligible to receive any form of Bursary funds. As a result, the Brighter Futures Bursary team will purchase food vouchers for Free Meals eligible students upon approval of their Bursary application, to cover the upcoming educational week. Once a student has been approved as eligible to receive bursary support, payments will be made on a weekly basis dependent on receipt of acceptable reimbursement evidence and attendance standards being met by the student during their programme.

Any bursary reimbursement evidence submitted exceeding 4 weeks from the date of purchase will not be backdated for reimbursement.

Please be aware that receipt of bursary funding does not affect receipt of other means-tested benefits paid to families, such as Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Child Benefit, Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit or, generally, Universal Credit. If a student is in receipt of DLA (or PIP) and ESA, parents can no longer receive certain household/family benefits for that child, such as child benefit.

The Institution's Complaints Procedure is in place to cover:

- Queries/disagreements over applications for the Vulnerable and Discretionary Bursary funds and Free Meals.
- Queries/disagreements over the agreed standards of attendance and behaviour.