<table>
<tr><td>Name of Policy / Strategy:</td><td colspan="3">16-19 Bursary Policy</td></tr>
<tr><td>Written by:</td><td colspan="3">Quality Manager</td></tr>
<tr><td>Approved by:</td><td>CEO</td><td>Date:</td><td>18/08/26</td></tr>
<tr><td>Implementation Date:</td><td colspan="3">August 2026</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">This document will be reviewed yearly or when there are operational or legislative changes that require a review.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Amendments (include date)</td><td colspan="3">August 2024:
• Updated to meet the guidance set out in the DFE 16-19 Bursary Fund guide 24-25 academic year.
August 2025
• Updated to meet the guidance set out in the DfE 16-19 Bursary Fund guide 25-26 academic year.
• Addition of milage rate
• Change from ESFA to DfE
• Updated process
October 2025
• Wording adjusted for Vulnerable Bursary eligibility criteria to be in line with DFE guidance

August 2026
• Minimum income threshold updated</td></tr>
</table>

Policy Statement

SS&L recognises that the DFE 16-19 bursary is key in helping to remove barriers to participation in learning. The 16-19 bursary fund provides support to vulnerable learners to overcome financial barriers. This is so vulnerable learners can remain in education.

The bursary fund exists to help students with the cost of travel, essential books or equipment/specialist clothing. These are programme-specific items that the learner would otherwise need to pay for to participate. The bursary fund should not be used for learning support, extra-curricular activities or to provide cost of living support.

When awarding bursary funding, SS&L will assess the eligibility and actual needs of all learners. We will support learners based on their actual participation needs. We will not make flat or fixed rate payments to learners that do not reflect the actual costs they face. We are required to assess actual individual needs each year.

There are two types of 16-19 bursaries:

Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups can pay up to £1,200 per year to a learner participating on a study programme. Their study programme will last for 30 weeks or more to be able to receive the full amount of support. Learners on programmes of less than 30 weeks should be paid a pro-rata amount as appropriate. The actual amount will depend on the assessment of their specific financial needs.

Discretionary bursaries are available from SS&L. We have created our own eligibility criteria (see page 5). There is no set limit for how much discretionary bursary can be awarded to learners. Discretionary bursaries are also dependent on individual assessments of learners.

Eligibility criteria for all 16-19 bursaries

All learners must meet the age, provision and residency criteria below to access the 16-19 bursary fund. To ensure ongoing eligibility, learners must be reassessed each year.

1 - Age

Generally, a learner must be aged 16 or over (but under 19) on 31 August 2026 to be eligible for help from the bursary fund in the 26-27 academic year. However, there are a few exceptions to these eligibility rules.

- Learners aged 19+ and have an education, health, and care (EHC) plan.
- Learners aged 19+ can be eligible to receive a discretionary bursary. However, this is only if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18. This group is referred to as 19+ continuers.

These 2 groups of aged 19+ learners can receive a discretionary bursary while they continue to attend education. In the case of a 19+ continuer, this must be the same programme they started before they turned 19. However, the learner must be re-assessed as needing support to continue their participation. Learners aged 19+ are not eligible for bursaries for vulnerable groups.

Bursary funds should not be awarded to learners enrolled at another learning institution. This includes situations where that institution also receives public funding for the learner.

2 - Eligible education provision

Learners must be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality. SS&L is currently subject to Ofsted inspections. The provision must also fall into one of these groups:

- Funded directly by the DFE. This can either be direct funding or via a local authority.
- An otherwise publicly funded programme which leads to a qualification (up to and including level 3). The programme must be accredited by Ofqual or on the DFE list of qualifications approved for funding. The full list of qualifications approved for funding can be found here.
- A 16-19 study programme.

Learners on apprenticeship programmes, in paid training, are employed, rather than in education are not eligible for the 16-19 Bursary Fund.

Non-employed learners aged 16-19 who are participating in a Prince's Trust Team Programme are eligible to receive the bursary. They are as eligible as other learners participating in an eligible, publicly funded course.

We do not expect learners on distance learning provision to need help from the bursary fund. This is because they do not have the kinds of costs the bursary is intended to cover. In the rare instances where SS&L identifies such a learner requiring financial help, we will provide support in-kind. An example could be providing a temporary travel pass for the learner to attend exams.

3 - Residency

Learners must meet the residency criteria in DFE funding regulations for post-16 provision. These regulations can be found here. This document specifies the evidence SS&L must see and retain for audit to confirm eligibility for post-16 funding. This also allows SS&L to meet the residency criteria for bursary fund eligibility.

4 - Accompanied asylum seeking children (under 18 with an adult relative or partner

Generally, asylum seekers are not entitled to public funds. However, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and those aged 18+ are entitled to education. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are those under 18 with an adult relative or partner. If any asylum-seekers find themselves destitute, they can apply to the Home Office (HO) for suitable housing and cash for essentials. However, they are not eligible for other income.

If an asylum seeker has not had their application for asylum refused, SS&L can provide in-kind learner support. This includes funds for books or equipment. SS&L are unable to offer cash to any asylum seeker unless they are an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child.

5 - Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children do not receive cash support from the HO. They are legally seen as the responsibility of the local authority. They are treated as looked after children and are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups ('in care' group) if they have a financial need.

When these young people reach legal adulthood at age 18, SS&L must consider their immigration status. If an asylum claim is decided in their favour, the local authority must provide them with the same support and services as they do care leavers. As such, they continue to be eligible for a bursary as a learner from a vulnerable group until they reach the upper age limit.

Where an asylum claim is not supported, the individual may not be able to stay legally in the UK. When asylum claims have been fully heard/the appeals process exhausted, an individual has no entitlement to public funds. There are a few exceptions where the withdrawal of support would be seen as a breach of human rights.

Additional eligibility criteria for bursaries for young people in defined vulnerable groups

Learners who meet the criteria (and who have a financial need) can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups. Learners in these defined group are unlikely to be receiving financial assistance from parents or carers. As such, they may need a greater level of support to enable them to continue to participate in education.

The defined vulnerable groups are learners who are:

- in care.
- care leavers.
- receiving Income Support (IS), or Universal Credit (UC) 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 (ESA) and Universal Credit (UC)

We include definitions and additional information on vulnerable groups in Appendix A.

Additional eligibility criteria for discretionary bursaries

Learners who meet the bursary criteria above (and who have a financial need) can apply for a discretionary bursary from SS&L. To be considered for a discretionary bursary the learner's household income must be less than £40,000 per year.

Applying for a Bursary

Learners will be required to complete an application form and provide the required evidence. This evidence might include proof of household income or residency status. Applications will be assessed on an individual basis within 2 weeks of receipt.

Levels of Bursary Awards

Bursary awards will be based upon the learner's individual circumstances. Awards will be made at the discretion of SS&L and in line with DFE guidelines and available funds.

Conditions for receiving bursary funding

Learners must meet SS&L's agreed standards of attendance and behaviour to receive their full bursaries.

Payments will stop where learners have been absent for a period of 4 continuous weeks or more (excluding holidays). Payments will also stop if the learner has decided to withdraw from a study programme.

Payments can be made to the eligible learner or direct to the supplier e.g. taxi company, IT supplier. Payments will be made following submission of evidence (e.g. bus ticket, train ticket or receipt of payment). Claims for milage will be reimbursed at a rate of 25p per mile and should be supported by fuel receipts. In situations whereby mileage is claimed but the eligible learner is a passenger and not the driver, details of the driver must be provided, and payments must be directed to the driver and not the learner.

Changes of circumstances

Learners are required to disclose any change of circumstances at the start of each academic year. This may affect their eligibility for a bursary award.

Emergencies and crisis

Immediate financial assistance or crisis payments may be required following a full assessment of a learner. SS&L will ensure provision is in place to meet these needs.

SS&L Process

The following steps will be taken where a learner expresses a need for financial support:

<u>Initial application – Purchase of equipment</u>

Application form is completed, justifying learner eligibility and details of support required

↓

Justification of the need for the required equipment/support is detailed on the form.

↓

Bank details are NOT required for claims for equipment/support

↓

Learner reads and signs the declaration

↓

Tutor /recruitment team sends form, alongside evidence/confirmation of eligibility to learningsupport@sslcic.co.uk

↓

Learning support team confirm eligibility and approve application

↓

Learning support team indicate on the tracker that eligibility has been confirmed and stores all documentation relating to the learner on SharePoint

↓

Learning support team contacts Technology Coordinator to request the purchase of equipment (as applicable)

↓

Technonolgy Coordinator identifies source of equipment, records cost on tracker and informs Finance

Initial application – Reimbursement of expenses

Application form is completed, justifying learner eligibility and details of expenses

↓

Learner reads the declaration and signs the form

↓

Learner denostrates proof of expense. Where milage is being claimed, learner provides evidence of fuel payment and details of the driver. Mileage is paid at 25p per mile.

↓

Tutor/recruiotment team sends completed application, evidence of eligibility and proof of expenses to learningsupport@sslcic.co.uk

↓

Learning support team confirm eligibility and approves application

↓

Learning support team indicate on the tracker that eligibility has been confirmed and stores all documentation relating to the learner on SharePoint

↓

Learning support team notifies Finance of approved claim

↓

Finance processes reimbursement

↓

Subsequent claims do not require another agreement to be completed. Tutor to forward a completed bursary claim form, alongside receipts/bus tickets to Finance for reimbursement

Appendix A
Definitions of Vulnerable Groups

In Care

The 16-19 Bursary Fund defines 'in care' as children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis (section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order (section 31 of the Children Act 1989). Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 defines the term 'looked after child'.

Care Leaver

A 'care leaver' is defined as a young person aged 16 and 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16. A 'care leaver' is also defined as a young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16.

Foster care (including privately arranged foster care)

A young person placed with a foster carer by the local authority, including where the foster carer is on the books of an independent fostering agency, is classed as looked after. They meet the criteria for the 'in care' vulnerable group if they have a financial need.

A child who is privately fostered (in other words, a private arrangement is made between the parent and the person who will care for the child) is not classed as a looked after child and is not eligible for the bursary for vulnerable groups.

In some instances, a young person may have been in the care of the local authority and the care transferred to another party via a permanent form of fostering such as a Special Guardianship Order. In these circumstances, the young person is defined as having left care so is now a care leaver. They must meet the definition of a 'care leaver' in full (so, the period of weeks and age range set out above). If they do, they are eligible for help from the bursary for vulnerable groups, where they need financial support to participate.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit (UC) has replaced Income Support (IS) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) as well as other benefits, for new claimants.

UC award notifications do not include any information on the benefits they replace. For this reason, the description of the bursaries for vulnerable group category that relates to receipt of UC or IS is that a student must be receiving UC because they are financially supporting themselves and anyone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or partner.

The Department for Education is keeping the situation surrounding the legacy benefits (above) under review, to ensure the descriptions of the defined vulnerable groups reflect the benefits situation.

Bursary funds awarded to a student should not form part of the UC assessment undertaken by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). How DWP treat any funding for education depends on whether the student is undertaking advanced full-time education.

It is unlikely that 16 to 18-year-olds will be in advanced full-time education as they are generally on study programmes at level 3 or below. Since full roll out of UC, any current and future 16–18-year-old can only claim UC, they can no longer claim IS or income related ESA.

Under UC, any educational award which is paid under a scheme to enable persons under age 21 to complete a course of non-advanced education (which will include the 16 to 19 Bursary) does not fall to be treated as grant income for UC purposes – as provided under reg 68 (7) of the UC Regulations 2013.