

## Bursary Payment Policy 2024 – 2025

### Contents

Item	Description
1	Introduction
2	Eligibility
3	Definition of Care and Care Leavers
4	Vulnerable Bursary
5	Discretionary Bursary
6	Apprenticeship Bursary
7	Evidence
8	Payments
9	Attendance and Behaviour
10	Audit
11	Complaints or Appeal about a Decision

## **Introduction**

Central Training Group (CTG) receive a learner Bursary Fund that can provide financial support to help learners to overcome specific barriers to learning, which would enable them to remain in education.

There are three types of learner bursaries:

- Vulnerable bursary for 16-18 year olds of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups
- Discretionary bursaries, 16-18 year olds or 16-24 year olds if you hold an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), which enable CTG to award to learners to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of transport, meals, books and equipment.
- Apprenticeship bursary for 16-24 year old care leavers, Instalments of a total of up to £3,000 to help with the transition to work.

## **Eligibility**

To be eligible for a bursary learners must:

- Be aged over 16 and under 25 at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024.
- Meet the residency criteria in Education Funding Agency (EFA) 2024-2025 academic year funding regulations for post 16 provision.
- Be funded by the ESFA.
- Be completing a study programme or Apprenticeship.

Learners completing apprenticeship programmes, or any waged training, are employed, rather than in education. They are not eligible for help from the 16-19 Bursary Fund unless they are a care leaver.

To be eligible for the vulnerable bursary, learners must be in one of the defined vulnerable groups:

- In care.
- Care leaver.
- In receipt of Income Support, or Universal Credit in place of Income Support in their own right.
- In receipt of Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit and Disability Living or Personal Independence Payments in their own right.

To be eligible for the discretionary bursary, learners must be facing financial barriers to participation and need help to stay in education.

If a learner turns 19 during their programme of study, they can continue to receive the bursary until the end of the academic year in which they turn 19, or to the end of the programme of study, whichever is sooner.

To be eligible for the Apprenticeship bursary, the learner must be a care leaver and have started an apprenticeship programme on or after 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024.

## **Definition of Care and Care Leavers**

For the purpose of this fund, 'in care' is defined 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 defines the term looked after child.

A care leaver is defined as:

- Either 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.
- Or a young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods of 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16.

In legal terms these children are relevant children or former relevant children

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 are therefore in a defined vulnerable group ("in care") and eligible for help from the vulnerable bursary.

## **Vulnerable Bursary**

Learners who are in one or more of the groups above can apply for a vulnerable bursary or up to £1,200 as long as they are participating in a study programme that lasts for 30 weeks or more. CTG will pay a pro-rata amount for learners on a study programme of less than 30 weeks.

Learners are not required to live independently of their parents to be eligible for a vulnerable learner payment – they can claim ESA or Universal Credit in their own right while living in the parental home. CTG will inform parents that they cannot continue to claim Child Benefit if the learner's claim for ESA is successful.

CTG will assess if the learner is eligible to receive a vulnerable bursary payment and will retain evidence to support the decision.

The Vulnerable Bursary is payable for each academic year that the learner is in education or training, as long as they continue to meet the eligibility criteria of the scheme.

## **Discretionary Bursary**

Discretionary bursaries are awards made to learners by CTG to help overcome the individual barriers to participation a learner faces, for example, help with the cost of transport, meals, books and equipment.

CTG will decide which learners receive a discretionary bursary and the amount they will receive, dependent upon each individual learner's circumstances. CTG will comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 when identifying learners to receive the discretionary payment. CTG will not discriminate against learners, either directly or indirectly, on the basis of their protected characteristics.

In 2024/25 academic year learners who are aged 19 or over who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are eligible to apply for discretionary bursary funding (if all other scheme criteria are met).

Learners who apply to CTG for help will be assessed individually taking account of:

- household income
- distance to travel to CTG
- number of dependent children in the household
- whether the learner is a young parent or carer

and award a bursary payment based upon their actual financial need. This assessment will be documented and evidence obtained to support the award for audit purposes.

### **Apprenticeship Bursary**

Apprenticeship bursaries of up to £3,000 are awarded to 16-24 year olds who have left care. The definition of a care leaver is stated above. This bursary is to help learners transition in to work and overcome initial financial barriers.

### **Evidence**

Learners applying for bursaries will be required to submit evidence to support their claim. Evidence can be in the form of:

- Key worker contact name and telephone number to confirm care/foster arrangements are in place.
- Letter/statement detailing payment of Income Support, Universal Credit or other Government Benefit.
- Letter from parent confirming household income.

### **Payments**

Payments are normally made by bank transfer and, in some cases, cash.

It is not expected that bursary payments will be paid into another person's account, except in exceptional circumstances where a learner is unable to administer their own account.

Learners are required to complete and sign the CTG Bursary Claim forms to confirm their agreement to their eligibility and the conditions of payment.

Payments will be stopped where a learner has been absent for a period of four continuous weeks or more (excluding holidays, or if there is evidence of an intention to return) and where learners have made a decision to withdraw from a study programme.

### **Attendance and Behaviour**

Where there are concerns with learner attendance and behaviour, in the first instance the course tutor will speak to the learner, if there is no improvement then CTG will review the situation and may withhold the bursary payments until there has been an improvement.

Learners must maintain an average attendance of 90% or above to continue to be entitled to bursary funds.

### **Audit**

CTG will retain records to show what payments they have made from the bursary fund. For vulnerable bursaries, this will include:

- A copy of the vulnerable bursary funding claim.
- Evidence detailing the learner's eligibility.
- Evidence of payments received i.e. bank statements and remittance advices.
- Evidence of payments made to the learner.

For discretionary bursaries, this will include:

- Copies of evidence used to assess entitlement, such as a letter from DWP, or evidence of household income.
- A copy of the learner's individual assessment of actual need.
- Receipts for purchases made, for example, bus pass, lunch receipts or book receipts.

### **Complaints or appeal about decisions to award the Bursary Fund**

If a learner is unhappy with the decision CTG has made about their claim they should firstly speak to their tutor, who will take up the appeal with the Centre Manager.

The Centre Manager will review the evidence and make a decision on the evidence provided and inform the applicant of the outcome of the appeal.