

Adult Skills Fund Education Bursary Policy

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This policy and procedure is subject to The Equality Act 2010 which recognises the following categories of individual as Protected Characteristics: Age, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex (gender), Sexual orientation, Disability.

Adult Skills Fund Policy

Introduction and Overview

1. This policy sets out the financial support available in 2025/26; the eligibility criteria and the conditions for continuous receipt of Bursary support for 19+ year old students (who are not in receipt of an Advanced learner Loan) attending Milton Keynes College.
2. Milton Keynes College recognises that the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) has an important role to play in removing barriers for some learners accessing and completing further education courses. It is the aim of the College to optimise the impact of support linked to this funding on recruitment, attendance, retention, student progress and achievement rates.
3. The fund will be distributed in a consistent and transparent way and in accordance with the guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE). Learner eligibility will be determined through assessments of student social and economic disadvantage and level of study.
4. It is the policy of the College to optimise the ASF Fund to provide support to those people facing the greatest financial barriers to continuing in education. To ensure the funding has a positive impact, priority will be given to those defined as vulnerable learners, those eligible for free meals and to those from low-income households whose income could prevent them from participation and achieving their qualifications. Once enrolment has finished and all priority costs have been met, any surplus funding may be used to award discretionary bursaries.
5. Eligible applications are considered on a first come first served basis. The College monitors actual expenditure linked to this allocation and reserves the right to close the application process for students at any stage, with immediate effect, to ensure that spending does not exceed the allocation. With this in mind, students are advised to apply at the earliest opportunity and ensure that all relevant supporting evidence linked to an application is provided in a timely way in order to access this funding. The Bursary Team is on hand at both Chaffron Way and Bletchley sites to provide advice and guidance linked to bursary applications.
6. ASF bursary is available to students who are studying on a qualifying funded full or part time course and who are aged 19 and over as of the 31st August 2025. Students aged 19+ are normally assessed as independent students and household income is assessed on their own income, together with that of their spouse/partner/parents if applicable. However, if a student has no income,

household income will be based on the income of the person(s) on whom the student is dependent.

7. Students who are studying a Tailored Learning course are unable to access support through the ASF bursary. A Tailored Learning bursary is available to learners on these courses. An application can be made through the bursary team. These funds are limited and meeting the criteria does not guarantee funding. Funds are allocated and assessed on a first come, first served basis.
8. Students aged 19 and over in receipt of the Advanced Learner Loan should apply for the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary.

Eligibility

Students must provide evidence of how they meet each of the following strands of eligibility for financial support:

- Age – Students must be aged 19+ as of 31st August 2025.
- Residency – Students must have resided legally in the UK/EU/EEA for at least the past three years before the start of the course.
- Household Income – Total household income must be below £35,000, evidence of all household income must be declared and provided for inspection at time of application.
- Enrolment – Students must be enrolled on a qualifying funded full or part time course.
- Vulnerability – student must be identified as a 'vulnerable' student, i.e. learning difficulties, health issues, disabilities, ex-military personnel.
- Learners on waged Apprenticeships are not eligible for the ASF Bursary Fund.

Bursary Payments

The Discretionary Bursary will be offered in the following strands:

- Meals
- Travel
- Essential Course Costs
- Childcare (Students aged 20+ years)

Meals

9. The meals bursary of £4.80 will be awarded for each full day of timetabled attendance at college. This will not apply for those timetabled for part of the day. This fund will be loaded onto the student's ID card to be spent at the College's food outlets. Any funds unspent at the end of each day will be cleared and new funds added for the next timetabled day that the student is in learning.
10. Students aged 19 and over with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan) will also qualify for the Free School Meal criteria set by the DfE.

Free Meals in Further Education

11. Students aged over 19 who are continuing on the same study programme (19+ continuers) they started before they turned 19 or who have an EHC plan are eligible for a free meal where they meet the criteria.

Travel

12. Students who live less than 3 miles away are not eligible for travel support unless they are able to provide medical evidence to support their need for help with travel to and from college. Payments are only available where Milton Keynes College is the closest learning provider offering the chosen course.
13. Students attending extended work placements can apply for a travel bursary if not already covered by their travel bursary or bus pass.
14. Payments for the travel bursary will be made on the following basis:
 - Termly – Bus Travel - Paid directly to travel provider for bus travel.
 - Monthly – Train Travel – Paid directly to the student's bank account.
 - Weekly – Exceptional Travel Arrangements – Paid directly to the student's bank account.
15. For adult students travelling by car, the travel support will be limited to a maximum amount as awarded to those travelling by bus.

Essential Course Costs

16. Some courses have essential costs including books, materials, equipment, uniform, or trips. A discretionary course cost bursary may be awarded, subject to household income and the availability of funds.

17. Bursary support may be awarded to contribute to the costs of attending industry placements and university interviews/open days.
18. Essential course cost items must (wherever possible) be purchased through Milton Keynes College. All funds will be transferred internally from Bursary to the supplier.
19. The College will require the return of any equipment where a student withdraws from their course early. This equipment will then be available for reuse with consideration being given to hygiene and reasonable wear and tear.
19. Bursary funding can only be used to support the mandatory costs of field trips that are a compulsory part of the student's curriculum – in other words; the student cannot achieve their qualification without it.

Childcare (Students aged 19)

20. Childcare support for young students (up to the age of 20 years) who have children is provided through Care to Learn (C2L). It is only available if the students' childcare provider is Ofsted-registered and offers up to £180 per week per child.
21. Students aged under 20 years must apply to C2L scheme through their education provider

Childcare (Students aged 20+)

22. All students over the age of 20 who meet the eligibility criteria for the ASF Bursary can apply for the Childcare Bursary (where appropriate).
23. Where places at our preferred provider are unavailable (Little Explorers Nursery) or your child attends compulsory education, you may select an OFSTED registered childcare or breakfast/after-school club provider of your choice.
24. The ASF Bursary fund may be available to contribute to exceptional further help with childcare costs for those young parents in receipt of C2L whose costs exceed the scheme's weekly maximum rate.

25. Childcare bursary funding may only be used towards the cost of an Ofsted registered childminder, nursery or pre/after-school club.
26. Enrolment and attendance checks will be made before the first payment is sent.
27. The availability of free childcare and education for all 3- and 4-year-olds (and some 2-year-olds) is verified with each student, and also with their nursery. If they are eligible for 2-, 3- and 4-year-old funding, childcare is only supported where the student's timetable exceeds the number of government funded sessions. Government funding for free childcare and education must always be claimed by a student if their child is eligible before any additional payments are made by the College.
28. Confirmation of support for childcare is subject to the student supplying a copy of their childcare contract, and proof of childcare registration with Ofsted. Invoices will also be requested for any other Childcare providers before payment is made.
29. Support for childcare is given only for timetabled teaching hours plus any travel time as applicable.
30. Bursary does not cover nursery deposits, late fees or childcare retainers payable during college holidays. This is communicated to students and childcare providers along with the initial award letter.
31. ASF Bursary funding will be calculated (after Government Funding has been exhausted) to a maximum of up to £180 per week per child – this also includes travelling time.
32. If you withdraw from your course or finish early, you may be expected to pay back any overpayments.

Conditions and Procedures

33. The College awards means- tested ASF bursaries for those based on a household income up to £35,000- including all benefit and income evidence

Bursary Category	Award
Meals Bursary	Up to £4.80 per day
Travel Bursary	Contribution towards Public Transport Costs (cheapest option)

Essential Course Costs	Contribution towards Associated Essential Costs
Childcare Bursary	Contribution towards childcare for timetabled days in college

34. Learners who apply for the Bursary will be required to supply evidence of all household income and information about their actual need for support. This should be in the form of benefit or other official documents or verification from statutory or other agencies.
35. Payments are subject to satisfactory attendance, conduct and progress at college. The College reserves the right to suspend, delay or reduce payments where a student's attendance or conduct is giving cause for concern, in consultation with their curriculum area.
36. Staff administering the fund will examine attendance, disciplinary records and the timely submission of assessments for all bursary recipients on a weekly basis. Should the attendance of a student currently receiving bursary drop below 90% across a given four-week period, their award will be reviewed and may be either withdrawn or adjusted. This decision will be taken in consultation with relevant curriculum teams and will be informed by an understanding of the context of the issues linked to the performance of the student in question.
37. Should an applicant withdraw from their chosen course of study and decide to leave college, they may be required to repay monies or return equipment supplied/bought by the support fund.
38. The majority of bursary transactions now focus on providing smart services to students (e.g. meals via ID cards, bus travel via a travel card) rather than making direct payments to students for these services. Only where exceptionally necessary will any payments to students will be made by BACS into the student's own bank account.
39. Students will be required to disclose any change of circumstances during the year, which may affect their eligibility for assistance. If a student in receipt of assistance withdraws or transfers before the completion of the course, they may be required to repay all or part of their award, or return any equipment purchased with their award.
40. Applicants will be notified in writing how much has been allotted to the categories they have applied for help with, including how payment will be made. Awards will be made to a third party or paid by internal budget transfer

where possible. In all cases the application will be judged on its individual needs as outlined in the DfE guidelines. The amount awarded will be specific to each application. The student will be required to sign an agreement agreeing to the terms of the allocated bursary. If this agreement is not returned the College has the right to withdraw the offer of financial support.

41. Learners who apply for the ASF Bursary will be required to supply evidence of household income and information about their actual need for support. This should be in the form of benefit or other official documents or verification from statutory or other agencies.
42. If a student is unhappy with their award decision, they can appeal by contacting the Bursary Team.
43. Payments begin when an application has been approved. The amount of bursary provided will depend upon individual circumstances and may be subject to change due to the availability of funds.

Organisation and Responsibility

This Policy reflects the Milton Keynes College Structure in June 2025. The policy is the responsibility of the Strategic Leadership Team.

The Bursary team are responsible for the administration of the fund.

Quality Assurance and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Activity and budgets are reviewed on a monthly basis through the College Financial Review process.