

LEARNER SUPPORT POLICY



Policy Group: Quality and Support

Effective: June 2024

Approved: Emma Barrett-Peel, Chief Operating Officer

Responsible Officer: Tim Williams, Student Services Director

Next Renew Date: June 2025

Ref no: 4.13



GUIDANCE

Vision

Transform lives through learning

Values



PASSIONATE - We are passionate about inspiring young people, adults and our Purple People to be their best and we take pride in creating a positive learning environment to fulfil their potential.



UNSTOPPABLE - We are unstoppable in our quest for the pursuit of excellence. We are dedicated and resilient to develop ourselves and our learners.



RIGHT - We treat each other with respect and strive to do the right thing through insight, inclusion, honesty, growth and trustworthiness.



PARTNERSHIPS - We support the people surrounding us in our everyday lives, building effective partnerships with businesses, learners and all stakeholders where we can pass on our knowledge and skills to help them meet their goals.



LEARNERS - Learners are at the centre of everything we do and we are driven to provide life-changing and life-long learning for them.



EMPOWERED - We encourage our Purple People to be independent and autonomous to maximise their goals surpassing their barriers and targets. Feel it, believe it, live it.

Tone of voice

Our tone of voice takes its direct influence from our core values. We are passionate about people and learners and are driven to get the best out of everyone by understanding them. We are caring and supportive, as well as being determined and striving for growth. We talk with purpose and enthusiasm in a way that connects and empowers people.

Innovation is at the heart of Learning Curve Group and we're always thinking about what's next!

SUMMARY CHANGES

Date	Page	Details of Amendments
June 2023	Whole document	Annual review
July 2023	7	Update to academic year in 16 to 19 Bursary section
October 2023	9 & 13	Update to attendance % to receive bursary payment
June 2024	Whole Document 7 8 9 10 13	Annual review and update to Academic Year to 2024/2025. Revision of Eligible education provision Revision of Award notice for Full £1,200 Bursary & Bursary Process updated Update to Discretionary Bursary household income threshold. Removal of audit evidence paragraph. Removal of 19+ additional support (no funding) Update of C2L amounts payable. Updated related documents
September 2024	8	Addition of Mileage Expenses reimbursement and Annex A.

INTRODUCTION

Learning Curve Group (LCG) is one of the largest national training providers in the UK, providing education and training nationally. All companies within the LCG family uphold the same company Vision, Mission and Core Values and follow our group policies and procedures.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that LCG is an inclusive and supporting environment where learning, achievement and progression are accessible for everyone.

Applies to

This policy applies to all staff involved in the enrolment and delivery of all learning programmes across all LCG provisions. The policy applies to all learners who are funded by the ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) and WG.

Reason for policy

LCG is committed to providing a range of provision that provides a caring and happy environment in which learners can realise and reach their full potential and transform their lives through learning.

This policy and procedure do not form part of your terms and conditions of employment and can be changed at any time as we deem appropriate.

POLICY

This policy has strong links with a number of our key policies and procedures. These include our:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Handbook

It emphasises LCG's commitment to making learning and progression accessible to all individuals and to respond fully to current Equality legislation.

LCG is committed to enabling all learners to reach their full potential. LCG will meet individual learning needs by providing reasonable adjustments and promoting non-discriminatory practice across the functions of the organisation. This includes aiming to ensure the availability of a range of services and aids to meet the needs of learners who have a learning difficulty and/or disability that may affect their ability to access provision.

All learners have the right to work, study and progress within LCG where they:

- Are fully respected.
- Feel welcome.
- Are treated fairly.
- Are encouraged to disclose additional learning needs.
- Have equality of opportunity for learning and training.
- Have full access, wherever possible, to the range of LCG facilities and services.
- Feel confident that action will be taken to address any reported harassment or discrimination.

Staff Responsibilities

All LCG staff should:

- Comply with current legislation relating to equality and LCG Equality and Diversity and Inclusion policies.
- Review teaching styles and practices to ensure that provision is accessible and that reasonable adjustments are built in to anticipate likely support needs.
- Ensure that recruitment, assessment and examination arrangements are flexible to the needs of learners and anticipate the need for likely adjustments.
- Encourage learners to disclose a disability and/or special educational need, where it would enable additional adjustments, exam/assessment arrangements or auxiliary aids to be put in place, whilst maintaining confidentiality to the level requested by the learner, wherever possible.
- Ensure that support needs are identified and that support arrangements are in place to meet the identified need.
- Maintain effective working links with learning support staff to maximise inclusive practice and to meet the additional support needs of learners.

LCG provides a centralised Student Support Service for all Academies, which will receive and support with any requests.

This is split into 3 distinct areas:

1. Learner Support Service – help@learningcurvegroup.co.uk

2. Careers Service – careeradvice@learningcurvegroup.co.uk
3. Additional Learner Support Service – send@learningcurvegroup.co.uk

This service will provide:

- Course IAG to learners and parents.
- Enrolment and financial support application support.
- Careers Advice. (see Career Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) Policy)
- ALS/SEND support. (see SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Policy)
- Financial Support.
- Pastoral Support.
- Learner benefits.
- Attendance monitoring. (see Attendance Policy)
- At risk interventions. (see Attendance Policy)

This policy will relate to two specific services in Pastoral Support and Financial Support.

Pastoral Support

LCG's pastoral care is at the heart of the overall policy. We seek to provide a caring and happy environment so that individuals can realise their full potential and develop their personal and social development. This support encourages learners to:

- Develop a sense of self-worth.
- Take responsibility and accept the consequences of their actions.
- Respect the rights and feelings of others.
- Develop the basic skills, experiences, knowledge and attitudes that are required for employment and leisure in our ever-changing society.
- Develop self-discipline.
- Be responsible for their own academic, personal, and social development.
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LCG will provide support or, where required, signpost to a range of support services that meets the needs of the individual. These can include but is not limited to:

- Math's and English Support.
- Support for hearing and visual loss.
- Support for specific learning difficulties.
- Well-being and mental health support.
- Support with personal issues which may impact their course

Financial Support

This section of the policy will identify the financial support available across the wide range of provisions that LCG offers within funding limits. To access financial support, all learners will be required to undertake a rigorous assessment and provide appropriate compliance evidence to support the funding claimed.

There are 5 types of financial support available at LCG:

1. 16 to 19 Bursary (defined vulnerable groups and discretionary) for ESFA Study Programmes.

2. Free meals in further education for ESFA Study Programmes.
3. Care to Learn (C2L) for ESFA Study Programmes.
4. 19 plus discretionary financial support including those learners studying on a learner loan funded programme for ESFA programmes.
5. Support costs for WG Jobs Growth Wales+ programmes.

16-19 Bursary

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help learners overcome specific financial barriers to participation so they can remain in education.

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

1. Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups of up to £1,200 a year
2. Discretionary bursaries to meet individual needs

To be eligible for both types of bursaries all learners must meet the following criteria:

- A learner must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2024 to be eligible for help for 2024/25 academic year.
- Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a discretionary bursary if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHP)
- Learners must be participating in a provision that is subject to Ofsted inspection or inspection by a public body that assures quality. The provision must also be either:
 - Funded directly by ESFA or by ESFA via a local authority
 - Otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification up to and including level 3

Learners who are undertaking distance learning programmes will not be eligible to receive bursary funding.

16-19 Bursary for Defined Vulnerable Groups

Learners who meet the initial eligibility criteria, and who have a financial need, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups.

The defined vulnerable groups of learners who meet one of the following conditions:

- In care
- Care leavers (or classed as a 'Looked After Child')
- 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
- Unaccompanied asylum seeker children who are classed as in the care of the local authority

The maximum funding available for each learner is £1,200 per year to a learner that is undertaking a study programme that lasts for 30 weeks (about 7 months) or more. Learners on study programmes of less than 30 weeks (about 7 months) will be paid a pro-rata amount.

Learners who need additional support, above and beyond this allocation, can also access the discretionary fund.

The learner is not automatically entitled to receive the full £1,200 bursary, even if they are assessed as eligible – there needs to have an actual financial need identified through the application.

16-19 Discretionary Bursary

All learners who meet the initial eligibility may apply to access funding to help them achieve their aims and aspirations.

This funding can be used for the following:

- Travel/transport costs including mileage claims in exceptional circumstances (see Annex A).
- Books and equipment that are essential for the learning being undertaken (e.g., hairdressing kits, uniforms for course and clothes for interviews)
- Appropriate resources to enable learning to continue to take place when external factors impact on the learner's normal learning environment (e.g., Pandemics). Examples of equipment can include laptops, technology, etc.

Bursary Process

Learners must complete a Financial Support Application Form for which they and/or next of kin will receive an email containing the link from Salesforce (LCG CRM). Learners and next of kin can also request the forms to be sent through Proportal.

This application form will enable them to upload the relevant evidence required and hold it for audit purposes.

Such evidence will be:

Vulnerable Bursary

- Learners in care or a care leaver – written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from the local authority. The evidence can be a letter or an email but must be from the local authority.
- Learners who are in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit, a copy of the award notice. This must clearly state that the claim is in the learner's name/confirm they are entitled to the benefits in their own right. The evidence must not state any conditions that prevent them from participating in further education or training.
- For learners in receipt of UC, additional evidence must be provided such as: tenancy agreement in the learner's name, a child benefit receipt, children's birth certificates, recent utility bills.
- Learners receiving UC/ESA and Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independent Payments, a copy of their UC claim from DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) and evidence of receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment must also be provided.

Discretionary Bursary

This assessment will be made on the household income of the address allocated to the learner and must be less than £40,000 per annum. To evidence this we will require proof of household income which could be:

- Most recent benefit award letters in parent/carers name, last 3 months bank statement of parent/carer confirming benefit.
- Most recent wages, last 3 months wage slips for parent/carer, P60.
- Most recent self-assessment return for self-employed parents.
- Letter headed annual account summary from company accountant for self-employed parents.

Payments of the Bursary

Learners will receive payment in one of the following methods subject to achieving the following criteria:

- 75% attendance as per the learner's timetable.
- Payments can still be made for authorised absences. *

**A list of "authorised absences" can be found in 4.12 Learner Attendance Policy - Academies England - July 2023*

Payments will be made direct to the learner's bank account via bacs transfer one week in arrears. Only in exceptional circumstances will payments be made to an alternative account. This will be upon request to Student Services.

All evidence must be provided to justify the claim. This must be retained on record for audit.

Learners will only receive payments backdated up to the maximum of 4 weeks of the application being received for assessment. Any further adjustments will be at the discretion of the Student Services Director and reliant upon funding available.

Free Meals in Further Education

Free meals are targeted at disadvantaged learners, and they must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2024 to be eligible to receive a free meal.

Learners aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a free meal if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers') or have an EHCP.

These 2 groups of 19 plus learners can receive a free meal 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), as long as their eligibility continues.

Eligible benefits

Free meals in further education defines disadvantage as learners being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- UC with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 for each year (after tax and not including any benefits they get)

A learner is only eligible to receive a free meal when they, or a responsible adult on their behalf, have made a successful application to the institution where they are enrolled.

Learners must also satisfy the residency criteria set out in our funding regulations guidance.

As LCG do not have canteen facilities, Learners will be paid £4.50 for each day they attend their study programme, to provide them with a suitable healthy option as all locations have outlets able to provide this as evidenced by survey of all locations on affordability.

This is above the £2.53 rate allocated by ESFA. In line with ESFA guidance on justifying any variations from this amount, we conducted a survey of all academies involved in Study Programmes at LCG. This highlighted the average cost across Academies was above the recommended allocations. ([Survey](#))

Payments will be made direct to the learner's bank account via bacs transfer one week in arrears.

Learners will only receive payments backdated up to the maximum of 4 weeks of the application being received for assessment. Any further adjustments will be at the discretion of the Student Services Director and reliant upon funding available.

Care to Learn (C2L)

C2L provides funding for childcare to help young parents (defined as those aged under 20) continue in education after the birth of a child. The scheme provides funding for childcare whilst the young parent is engaged in a study programme and is not able to provide care for their child. It can also help the young parent with any additional travel costs involved in taking the child to the childcare provider.

C2L pays up to a maximum amount of £180 per child per week or up to a maximum of £195 per child per week in London.

To be eligible, the young parents study programme must have some direct public funding and their childcare provision must be registered with Ofsted.

Eligibility criteria

In addition to reflecting the criteria in the ESFA funding regulations for post-16 provision, to receive C2L, the young parent, their education institution and childcare provider must all meet the eligibility criteria.

- The young parent must be under 20 years old on the date they start their study programme. Young parents who become 20 years old during their study programme can continue to get funding to the end of that specific study programme, so to the end of the same programme at the same level.
- The young parent must be the main carer and in receipt of Child Benefit for the child(ren) for whom they are claiming C2L. If a young parent loses custody of their child(ren), even temporarily, they must tell the SBSS immediately. The mother or father of the child can claim C2L as long as:
 - the other parent is unable to provide childcare, for example, they are also in education or are absent
 - the other parent is not claiming childcare paid through any other source, for example, government funded early education places or Childcare Tax Credits

A London weighting applies to the scheme.

The following study programmes are not eligible for C2L:

- privately funded education, for example, at an independent school or other institution where students are required to pay tuition fees
- voluntary work that is not a required part of an agreed study programme
- apprenticeships, because apprentices are paid by their employer
- HE courses in an HE institution or FE institution, including courses leading to a first degree, HND, HNC, diploma in HE, foundation degree or initial teacher training
- social activities/groups where no actual programme of study takes place
- any instances where a young parent is still looking after their child, for example, while they are undertaking a study programme with a childcare provider

We can identify support that young people can receive but it is important all parties understand it is the young parent who applies for C2L. The application is in their name, and they must be fully aware of, and fully understand, that they are applying for C2L. C2L applications must not be submitted by one of the other parties involved in the application process without the young parent's knowledge and agreement.

Once they have completed the application in full, young parents should ensure they understand the privacy notice and read and agree to the declaration before they submit it. The SBSS will send a notification to confirm the application has been successfully submitted.

All payments except travel payments will be made direct to the learner and as such we only need to retain any information given from SBSS portal and any receipts for travel paid.

Support costs for WG Jobs Growth Wales+

All non-employed learners who start the JGW+ programme must be provided with Support Costs for the duration of their time on the programme. These can consist of:

- Training Allowances
- Travel Costs
- Essential Accommodation
- Childcare support
- Additional Learning Support (ALS)
- Free meal for 24/25 year

Training Allowances will be paid at £60 per week per, pro-rated rate in accordance with attendance on the specific strand of programme.

Travel Costs will be paid upon submission of claim and receipts, pro-rated rate for attendance pattern. All other support costs will be claimed when identified by the SENCO.

Free meals are currently being used to fund the learners for £3.90 per day they attend to provide a meal.

Appeals Process

All learners are entitled to access the complaints procedure or appeal against decisions made to Student Services Director within 10 days of the notification of the decision stating clearly the reason for the appeal and any additional details they wish to be taken into consideration. Appeals will be considered, and notification of the outcome will be given within 10 working days of receipt. Learners who disagree with the outcome of the appeal and believe their application has not been assessed in accordance with the policy are able to follow the formal complaints procedure.

DEFINITIONS

LCG – Learning Curve Group

ESFA – Education and Skills Funding Agency

ESFA – Education and Skills Funding Agency

WG – Welsh Government

RELATED DOCUMENTS

[Advice: funding regulations for post-16 provision - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/advice-funding-regulations-for-post-16-provision)

[16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide 2024 to 2025 academic year - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2024-to-2025-academic-year)

[16 to 19 education: financial support for students - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-education-financial-support-for-students)

[Free meals in further education funded institutions guide 2024 to 2025 academic year - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/free-meals-in-further-education-funded-institutions-guide-2024-to-2025-academic-year)

[Care to Learn Guide for the 2023 to 2024 academic year - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/care-to-learn-guide-for-the-2023-to-2024-academic-year)

[jobs-growth-wales-plus-programme-specification-version-1-3.pdf \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/2023-03/jobs-growth-wales-plus-programme-specification-version-1-3.pdf)

ANNEX A

In exceptional circumstances LCG understands that there will be the need to use other forms of transport than public transport. In such cases we will re-imburse the fuel costs.

Such circumstances will be:

1. Long term medical conditions requiring support from a parent/next of kin.
2. Where barriers to accessing public transportation causes difficulties to get to the Academy.

We would need clarification in the form of an email from the parent/next of kin to state why their young person cannot use public transport and then we will calculate on the mileage from home to academy using the following tables:

Engine Size	Petrol – rate per mile	Diesel – rate per mile	LPG – Rate per mile
1400cc or less	13p	12p	11p
1401cc to 1600cc	15p	12p	13p
1601cc to 2000cc	15p	14p	13p
Over 2000cc	24p	21p	18p