

19+ Adults Skills Funding Policy 2024 - 2025

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**Policies will be reviewed more frequently if legal changes or good practice require*

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Related policies/documents:

16-18 Bursary Fund and Free Meals Policy;
 19+ Advanced Learning Loan Bursary Fund Policy;
 19+ GLA Discretionary Bursary Fund Policy; and
 Residential Bursary Fund Policy.

1. Policy Statement

North Kent College (“the College”) is a multi-sited Further Education institution and incorporates Hadlow College (“Hadlow”).

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (“ESFA”) provides a 19+ Adult Skills Fund which is distributed by the College to help learners who are aged 19+ and in need of financial support to ensure they can attend College and successfully complete their course.

The fund is for:

- 1.1. students who are 19 or over on 31 August within the 2024/2025 funding year;
- 1.2. individual's resident in areas of England outside of devolved authority areas undertaking ESFA funded Adult Skills Funding (ASF)); and/or
- 1.3. continuing learners who are resident in devolved authority areas, who have not completed their learning by 31 July 2024, but started their learning before the authorities' devolution date with providers who have an ESFA agreement (grant) only.

They must also meet the residency requirements, set out in the ESFA funding guide, in one or more of the following categories:

- 1.4. UK nationals and other persons with right of abode;
- 1.5. UK nationals in the European Economic Area (“EEA”);
- 1.6. EEA nationals in the UK; or
- 1.7. Other non-UK nationals.

If the student lives within a London Borough, they are not eligible to apply for NKC 19+ Adult Skills Funding support and will be assessed for funding from the 19+ GLA Discretionary Learner Support Fund.

Residential Bursary funding is available for students who wish to reside at the College's Hadlow campus but must meet the eligibility criteria specified in the separate Residential Bursary Fund Policy and the Residential Accommodation Policy.

The Bursary Fund helps remove the barriers that learners from low-income households (currently set at £28,000 net, including benefits (subject to change, should funds be available)) may face by assisting with the costs of undertaking their course. Assistance may be given with essential books, equipment, UK essential trips, travel, childcare (for students who are aged 20 or over on their first day of learning) and residential accommodation (Hadlow students enrolled on Land-based courses only).

The College distributes the funds to learners in accordance with the ESFA Funding Guidance.

The College reserves the right to make changes to financial support provision in response to Government guidance and other mitigating factors.

ESFA guidance is updated regularly and may affect eligibility for funding. Any changes to this policy and financial support guidance will be communicated to all members of the College community at the time of any change.

Students/parents/guardians/partners of students, who are in receipt of any state benefits, must ensure they inform the Department for Work and Pensions (“DWP”) of any learner support they receive from the College, including any Bursary awarded.

Any bursary awarded covers term time only.

2. Eligibility Criteria

Students must:

- 2.1. be resident in areas of England outside of devolved authority areas undertaking ESFA funded ASF;
- 2.2. be continuing learners who are resident in devolved authority areas, who have not completed their learning by 31 July 2024, but started their learning before the authorities’ devolution date with providers who have an ESFA agreement (grant) only;
- 2.3. be 19 or older on 31 August within the 2024 to 2025 funding year and meet the following residential criteria;
 - 2.3.1. meet the ESFA residency criteria (see ESFA 19+ ESF Guide); and
 - 2.3.2. not live in a London Borough. A separate fund is available for students living in a London Borough. (19+GLA fund)
- 2.4. Residential support (maximum of 80% towards accommodation costs for Hadlow students only) is also available for students who meet the above criteria and who also:
 - 2.4.1. have a complex journey to the College and it takes more than two hours by public transport each way to get to and from the campus they are studying at (Hadlow);
 - 2.4.2. enrolled on a full-time course which lasts for at least 10 weeks of the year;
 - 2.4.3. need to be on campus for early and late duties as an integral part of the course; and
 - 2.4.4. enrolled on a Land Based course.

For students who live with their parent(s) (regardless of age), household income means the income of the parent(s), guardian(s), and/or the parent’s partner that they live with.

For students who live independently from their parents: household income is the student's own income, plus the income of any co-habiting partner, where relevant.

All residential bursary students must supply evidence of household income, including parents/guardians/partners. If a residential student is 19 and over and living with their parents/guardians, the full household income used to determine eligibility will be used.

If the above criteria are met, then the student can apply for the bursary, but their household income must be below the threshold set by the College (currently £28,000 net including all benefits).

Students on apprenticeships and on Higher Education courses are not entitled to bursary funding and those in receipt of a 19+ Advanced Learning Loan will be assessed for the NKC 19+ Advanced Learner Loan (Bursary) Fund

Awards are made to students whose household income is less than the threshold set by the College. Where the household income has dropped/changed significantly, an award may still be made depending on the student's personal circumstances. In this case, the Student Bursary Coordinator at the College campus will make the final decision. This may be in the form of a partial award i.e., assistance with travel only.

Household income includes any income from employment or self-employment and income from any state benefits received. These include (but are not limited to):

- 2.5. Income Support ("IS");
- 2.6. Job Seekers Allowance ("JSA");
- 2.7. Employment Support Allowance ("ESA");
- 2.8. Tax Credits;
- 2.9. State Pension Credit;
- 2.10. Universal Credit;
- 2.11. Housing and Council Tax benefit;
- 2.12. Personal Pension;
- 2.13. Carers' allowance; and
- 2.14. Other income.

Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments and disability elements of Tax Credits are not included in the calculation of household income. However, evidence of these benefits is still required to consider the individual circumstances.

When applying for funding, students are required to provide full evidence of the household income before a bursary application can be assessed. Eligibility for a 19+ Adult Skills

Funding Bursary does not mean that the student is automatically entitled to an award. The 19+ Adult Skills Fund is a limited fund, and awards are made on a first come-first served basis.

The student's attendance is monitored and any payments due will be withheld or reduced if their attendance drops below 90%. Monitoring takes place monthly, and the dates viewed for the attendance are 18th of the previous month to the 17th of the current month the bursary is due.

Adult Skills Funding Bursary awards are tailored to the individual student's needs and will depend on the course they are on and where they live. Bursary awards made may include the following and are only a contribution towards costs and may not cover the full amount required:

- 2.15. the cost of essential books required for the course (as determined by the Head of Curriculum and is a one-off payment);
- 2.16. essential, equipment or uniform required for the course (as determined by the Head of Curriculum) and is a one-off payment;
- 2.17. an award for travel (paid in monthly instalments, in arrears - see below);
- 2.18. support with domestic emergencies (**exceptional circumstances only**). This would only be agreed with the Student Bursary Coordinator, and you may be required to provide further evidence to support any request;
- 2.19. trips: this is for UK essential trips related to the course the student is undertaking. **Not all trips are essential.** (Maximum £75 contribution towards essential trip costs for the academic year);
- 2.20. a contribution towards travel costs (paid monthly in arrears – see below);
- 2.21. childcare: a contribution towards childcare for one nursery aged child (subject to terms and conditions and paid directly to the childcare provider); and/or
- 2.22. Residential Accommodation (Hadlow students only) – subject to meeting the College criteria (paid in monthly instalments to North Kent College). See separate Residential Bursary Fund Policy).

Where students have applied for funding for course equipment or trips, this funding will be made "in kind". If funding is paid to the student by BACS, this will not be paid until the end of November.

Note: All payments will be made from the date of approval and not the date the application was submitted.

3. Travel Awards

An award for travel is made to students who live more than 1.5 miles away from the campus they are studying at. Students must be studying at the College nearest to their home that offers their chosen course.

Travel payments are calculated using Google Maps. Depending on where they live and how they choose to travel to college, students **may** be awarded the following:

3.1 A Monthly Travel Payment

A travel payment may be awarded to students depending on where they live and their number of timetabled days. Funding is at the discretion of the College and will consider the discounts available to students and if the student already has support in place from the local authority. It will only be a **contribution** to assist with travel and may mean the student is awarded funding for monthly ticket options for example. The contribution will not exceed the cheapest option for travel to college.

A maximum of £2,000 per academic year can be made.

Students travelling from a London Borough to any campus will be required to use their 18+ Oyster Card which gives discounted travel. The College may then contribute towards the discounted travel amount. If the student is at Gravesend, Tonbridge, or Hadlow additional funds may be awarded towards the onward journey.

Discounts like these are reflected in assessments of funding allocated to students, and the College will contribute to the cost of passes.

Awards for travel will be paid directly into the student's bank account via a BACS payment, in monthly instalments.

The student remains liable for their travel costs until an award is agreed and reimbursement for travel costs before this time is **not** paid.

All payments are made in arrears and under no circumstances will payments be made in advance.

Students who apply for a residential bursary are not eligible to also apply for a travel award. See the Residential Bursary Fund Policy.

4. Childcare awards

An award for childcare may be made for students who are aged 20 or over on the first day of learning, to assist with the costs of their childcare while they are in College. Funding is provided for full daily childcare for one child only, although consideration will be given to funding for additional school-age children who are attending out of school provision, such as after-school clubs. Where the child is eligible for free Government Funding for childcare, for any child over nine months, the student is expected to use this free childcare entitlement during the time they are at College and the College will then contribute towards any remaining childcare costs from the 19+ Adult Skills Fund for any remaining hours the student is timetabled for lessons.

Young parents under 20 are not eligible for childcare from this fund. However, they may apply for financial support towards childcare through the government's Care to Learn scheme. For further information, students should visit <https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn>.

The following terms and conditions apply for childcare awards:

- 4.1 applications for childcare support must be submitted with essential documentary evidence; birth certificate or passport or adoption papers for relevant child(ren);
- 4.2 The student is responsible for ensuring that the Childcare Agreement, provided by the College, is completed and signed by them and the childcare provider. This duly completed form must be received by the College before payments can commence;
- 4.3 the College will only pay for the cost of one child's childcare during college term time. The student will be liable for any costs outside of these dates;
- 4.4 if the student finishes the course before the end of term, the College will only pay childcare costs up to when the student finishes and not to the end of term;
- 4.5 If the childcare award is withdrawn, the student will become liable for any further costs. Both the student and childcare provider will be notified of this in writing;
- 4.6 it is the student's responsibility to keep the childcare provider informed of their course end date together with any changes to timetabled hours/days;
- 4.7 the College will only pay for childcare for the days and hours that the student attends College or placements associated with the course;
- 4.8 the College will only pay if the student's attendance is 90% or above unless there are mitigating circumstances. If the attendance level drops below 90% the student may become liable for all costs;
- 4.9 the College pays monthly in arrears, never in advance; and
- 4.10 The College will pay up to a maximum of £88.05 for a full day; £59.81 for half days (am); and £54.88 for half days (pm). If the child is eligible for any Government Funding, this grant amount will be deducted from the funds awarded.

Note: The College will pay the childcare provider directly into their bank account at the end of the month in arrears. **Under no circumstances will the College pay the student;**
- 4.11 the childcare provider must have a current OFSTED rating of Good or above and provide their OFSTED registration number;
- 4.12 Once the student's timetable is known, the College will agree with the student and the childcare provider the fees payable per week and calculate the total fees for the whole of the academic year. This is based on the weekly fee multiplied by 34 weeks unless otherwise agreed by Student Bursary Team; and
- 4.13 the College does not pay any deposits, retainers or administration fees and the student is liable for any such fees.

5. Residential Fees

Please see the separate Residential Fees Policy

6. Tuition fee awards

Tuition fees are not covered by the bursary fund.

7. Residential Bursary

A maximum award of 80% towards accommodation fees can be awarded, subject to meeting the household income and Residential Bursary and Accommodation criteria.

8. Raising awareness and Application Procedure

The College has information on its website from April for the following academic year and information is marketed around the College. Applicants and returning students are sent notification of the financial support available and the application process. The College works with local authorities and agencies to support students accessing financial support.

The College has a single online Student Bursary application form which covers all the bursary funds. The online application form will be available on the College's website after the Easter half term for the following academic year. Bursary awards do not automatically carry over from one year to the next, and students will need to apply for each academic year. Online applications help reduce our impact on the environment, however paper applications are also available via the website and Student Bursary Team.

Along with their application, students will need to provide full evidence of household income for the current tax year. Where financial circumstances have changed from the previous year, a note needs to be made on the online application. This will be considered when the application is assessed.

Applications submitted without full evidence of household income cannot be assessed and, in those circumstances, the Student Bursary Team will contact the student to explain what is required. This will delay the processing of the application and may impact its success, as the fund is finite and once all funds are awarded, subsequent applications will be declined.

Students continuing at college for another year should apply by 1 June for an award for the following academic year. New applicants to the College are encouraged to apply before enrolment and, at the latest, by 1 August. Complete applications received by these dates will be assessed before the student enrolls, this will ensure that students who are awarded a bursary are notified before enrolment day and the student will then be aware if they need to make additional payments at enrolment.

Applications will be accepted after these dates, subject to funds being available. For complete applications received by 1 August, we aim to assess these within 10 working days and will inform applicants if the assessment takes longer. Applications received after 1 August may take up to 30 working days to assess. Students, however, will remain liable for any costs accrued at enrolment until an award has been confirmed in writing by the

College. The outcome of the assessment will be communicated to the students, via their personal email held on the College's records, before enrolment. After enrolment, all further correspondence will be sent via email to either their personal email address and/or their college email address.

Application forms submitted without the required supporting documentation and evidence will not be processed. If applications are received without the required evidence, the Student Bursary team will attempt to contact the applicant three times, via telephone or email. If no response is received a final letter will be sent to the address the College holds. If no response is received from the final letter within 14 days, the application will be closed.

9. Student Commitment

Awards are made on the understanding that the student maintains an attendance level of at least 90% (in all subjects/courses), otherwise payments will be withheld or reduced.

If the student's attendance drops below 90%, the Bursary payments due will be withheld or reduced. This is checked monthly, and the dates viewed for the attendance are 18th of the previous month to 17th of the current month the bursary is due.

If attendance drops below 90% and the payments are withheld or reduced, the student is required to discuss with their tutor the reasons regarding the low attendance. If the tutor is happy with the reasons, they must email Student Bursary to request that the withheld/reduced payments are released. Consideration will be given to mitigating circumstances such as: child protection; family illness; caring responsibilities; transport issues; and any other issues affecting the learner's attendance. For travel payments, the amount will be reduced to reflect the students' attendance. i.e., if the student has only attended 67% of the allocated time, they will only receive 67% of the residential/travel award for the month.

Funding for students who have not attended for four weeks or more will be stopped without notice and funding may also be stopped if a student has not adhered to the College rules and regulations.

The College reserves the right to request repayment of funds and the return of any equipment purchased through funding. This includes the Kent 16+ Travel Saver card and IT equipment if these have been funded through financial support.

10. Appeals

In the first instance, the student (or their parent/guardian) should contact the Student Bursary Coordinator and ask for a re-assessment of their situation. If the student is still not satisfied with the outcome an appeal must be made, in writing, within two weeks, to the Head of the MIS and Admissions. The appeal must clearly state why the award should be re-considered. The student may be asked to provide additional information or invited to discuss their individual circumstances as part of the appeal. If you are unhappy with the outcome of your appeal, you should follow the college's complaints procedure [here](#).

11. Fraudulent Claims

It is the College's duty to protect public funds from the possibility of fraudulent claims. The College asks for detailed information and may invite applicants for interview so it can distribute the funds correctly. If the student's claim is considered fraudulent, i.e., through false representation of household income or other eligibility rules, during spot checks or auditing processes, the College will request that the funds awarded to them are repaid in full. If the student fails to repay this, the College may take legal action.

An application found to be fraudulent, e.g. through false representation of household income or other eligibility rules, may be cancelled and the learner may be subject to disciplinary measures by the College. The College will have the right to recover the monies awarded. Government guidance advises that institutions that identify significant fraud should report it to ESFA.

12. Data Protection

College employees who are involved in administering the 19+ Adult Skills Fund will comply with the College's policy on the storage and transfer of information in the course of application and payments of funds.