16-19 STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT (BURSARY) FUND POLICY 2026 – 2027

1. **POLICY STATEMENT**

The 16-19 Student Financial Support (Bursary) Fund is provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to help students' overcome specific barriers to participation, to enable them to remain in education.

The College is committed to maintaining the integrity of its Student Financial Support (Bursary) awards and the validity of its assessment of qualifying criteria and has effective procedures for resolving appeals.

This policy sets out the financial support available through, and eligibility for, bursary funding for 16–19-year-old students enrolled at all campuses of Tameside College and Clarendon Sixth Form College.

The 16-19 Student Financial Support (Bursary) funds are managed by the College and are allocated on a first come first served basis via an online application and assessment process (https://tameside.paymystudent.com/portal). Applicants will be notified of their application outcome within 10-15 working days of a completed application.

The rules within this policy are set at the time of writing but the College reserves the right to adjust the criteria in year according to the funds available and in accordance with any changes that the ESFA may make.

1) There are two types of 16 to 19 bursary, Discretionary and Vulnerable:

a) **<u>Discretionary Bursary</u>**: awarded to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of transport, free college meals, to buy essential books, uniform, specialist clothing (e.g. protective clothing), equipment and top up towards Care To Learn childcare costs. To be eligible the student must:

i) Be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August 2026 or 19 or over and continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuers) or students aged 19 or over who have an Education, Health, and Care (EHC) Plan.

ii) Meet the residency criteria in ESFA funding regulation for post-16 provision in the 2026 - 2027 academic year.
- Accompanied asylum seeking children will not be given cash but may be awarded support in-kind.

iii) Be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (for example OFSTED). 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) accredited by OFQUAL or on our list of <u>qualifications approved for funding</u>

iv) To qualify for the Discretionary Bursary support the student's gross annual earned household income must be below £40,000.

v) Students with a gross annual earned household income of more than £40,000 can apply for Discretionary Bursary support providing the student can demonstrate they are facing financial hardship. In this instance the College will take into account any extenuating circumstances and a decision will be made.

vi) An award for discretionary support may be awarded to eligible students where one or more of the following applies:
- Specific course related equipment, books, protective clothing/uniform and college meal are needed for the student to participate in their college course or college approved work-related activity.
- The student lives 1 mile or more from college or college approved work-related activity and the cost of travel is a barrier to attending. PayMyStudent (PMS) automatically measures distance using postcode.
- An educational visit/field trip must be an essential part of achieving the student's study programme goals.
- The student needs financial support for UCAS application costs and/or financial assistance towards a University open day or interview.
- The student is facing unexpected financial hardship that is creating a barrier to attending College and or learning.

- The student is taking part in an Industry Placement and incurs an increased demand for further travel to access their placement and/or incur additional participation costs, such as for equipment or clothing.
- The student needs financial support for a meal when in college.
- The student requires financial support to maintain their health and wellbeing.

vii) The bursary fund (discretionary bursary and bursary for defined vulnerable groups) **cannot** be used to:

- Provide learning support i.e., services that institutions give to students such as counselling, mentoring, extra tutoring or support such as servicing laptops/tablets.
- Support extra curricular activities where they are not essential to the students' study programme
- Support the costs of foreign/overseas educational visits/field trips where the content of the trip can be found within England at a much cheaper cost and/or to support the costs of education visits/field trips that are not an essential part of a student's study programme.

b) **Vulnerable Bursary** Vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups. To be eligible for the vulnerable bursary, students must be in one of the defined vulnerable groups:

i) In care.
- Including 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.

ii) Care leavers.

iii) Receiving Income Support or receiving 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.

iv) 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.

v) The maximum bursary is £1,200 per student for defined vulnerable groups; will be awarded based on need to participate; will be awarded in-kind.

vi) Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for vulnerable groups.

Students will only be awarded the amount of support they need to participate based on an assessment of the types of costs they have and will not be automatically awarded £1,200. Some may not have any actual financial need, this may be because their financial needs are already met and/or they have no relevant costs, and a student's application may be refused on this basis. Equally, the College can pay a bursary to a vulnerable group student of more than £1,200 if it assesses the student needs extra help to remain in education. Any payments over £1,200 will be paid from the College's discretionary bursary allocation. Where a student's circumstances change in-year and a student becomes eligible as a vulnerable student, they will receive a pro-rata amount.

c) **Care to Learn Childcare** awarded to help meet costs for Ofsted registered childcare for the children of young parents under the age of 20 whilst they are studying. The Care to Learn scheme can also support the young parent with any additional travel costs involved in taking their child to the childcare provider.

i) To qualify for Care to Learn (C2L) Childcare bursary support the student's gross household income must be below £40,000.00. If the student is eligible to receive vulnerable bursary support, the student must be in one of the defined vulnerable groups stated above.

ii) The student must be living and studying in England to receive C2L.

iii) The student must be the main carer and in receipt of child benefit for the child(ren) they are claiming C2L funding.

iv) Informal childcare provided by a relative cannot be funded.

v) No more than 3 children will be funded by the scheme

vi) The national rate payable for C2L funding is £180.00 per child per week.

vii) Funding is only to be used for timetabled days in College, work experience and industry placements that a student needs to attend as an integral part of their study programme and remote blended learning sessions plus 30 minutes travelling time before and after college hours. We will only pay for eligible childcare provided on production of an invoice supplied by a OFSTED registered childcare provider.

viii) If the child is eligible for government funded early years places or Childcare Tax Credits, these **must** be used to cover the required sessions.

ix) C2L funding can pay deposits of up to a maximum of £250.00 per child if the childcare provider requires this.

x) C2L funding will pay any registration fees that are charged by the childcare provider in the maximum sum of £80.00 per child. NB : this is a one off payment and will not be paid for subsequent academic years if the student uses the same childcare provider.

2) Not Eligible

a) Students on apprenticeship programmes, or any waged training, are employed, rather than in education. They are not eligible for help from the Vulnerable or Discretionary Bursary Fund or Free College Meals.

b) Students who are aged 19 and over on 31 August 2026 are not eligible for support from the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund unless they:

i) Have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan and are attending eligible education provision; or

ii) Are a 19+ continuer, in other words, a student who is continuing on an eligible Study Programme they began aged 16 to 18.

c) Students on distance learning provision are not expected to need help from the bursary fund because they do not have the kinds of costs the bursary is intended to cover (travel, equipment, and uniforms, for example). In the rare instances where the college identifies such a student does require financial help, we will provide support in-kind. An example could be providing a temporary travel pass for the student to attend exams.

3) Free School Meal Awards and Free College Meals

a) **Free School Meal Award criteria**: A student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2026 to be eligible to receive a free school meal. Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a free meal if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 – 18 (19+ continuers). Students aged between 19 and 25 who have an Educational Health Care (EHC) Plan are also eligible for a free school meal allowance. Free School Meal Awards are targeted at disadvantaged students. For purposes of eligibility the students or their parents must be 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 Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit.
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa (after tax and not including any benefits they get).
- Working Tax Credit is **NOT** a qualifying benefit for a free school meal award.

b) **Free College Meal Award criteria:** For those students who do not meet the criteria to receive a Free School Meal Award a Free College Meal Award will be provided if the student meets the Discretionary Bursary criteria (as set out in 1a)

i) The food allowance will be made available to students aged between 16 and 19 years old (as at 31 August 2026). If a student turns 19 during the academic year, they will remain eligible until the end of the academic year or until the course of study finishes. Students aged between 19 and 25 who have an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) are also eligible for a free college meal allowance.

c) **Free School or College Meal Awards**

i) A food allowance of £6.00 will be available each day that a student attends college or college approved work-related activity/educational visit, at the following rates:

- £6.00 from the discretionary allocation for a free college meal or

- £2.61 from the free school meal allocation, where applicable, and supplemented by £3.39 from the discretionary allocation.

ii) Eligible students attending an internship and do not access college food hubs will receive a food allowance by BACs transfer, into their nominated bank account@ a rate of £60 per term from the applicable allocation.

4) **Bursary Online IT Learning Equipment Loan (including, but not limited to, Laptop, Dongle, Ipad, Tablet) Procedure**

a) Allocation will be decided in line with strategic objectives, in the following order:

i) Students socio-economic need
ii) Students who have no access to online learning equipment due to household financial situation
iii) Students who may have additional learning needs
iv) Students who have shared access to online learning equipment
v) Students who are able to access online learning equipment from alternative sources
vi) If the demand outweighs supply the college reserves the right to recall loaned equipment as required.
vii) Students must sign the online learning equipment agreement (below):

IT Learning Equipment Loan Agreement

- By using the above IT Learning Equipment, you are accepting the Tameside College IT ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY.
- Please note that this Tameside College IT Learning Equipment is loaned for the use of, and is THE responsibility of, the person named in the IT Learning Equipment Loan Agreement.
- If the IT Learning Equipment is broken or not returned you will be liable for the full cost of the IT Learning Equipment.
- You agree to take reasonable care of the IT Learning Equipment as you will be financially responsible for any loss or damage due to personal negligence.
- Please return IT Learning Equipment to the Bursary Team on request.
- Any Online Learning Equipment that has not been returned within 2 weeks of a request to do so will be unable to access the college network.
- DO NOT GIVE THIS IT LEARNING EQUIPMENT TO SOMEBODY ELSE TO USE.
- If IT Learning Equipment is recalled the student must return said equipment within 5 working days.

b) Within 5 days of their course end date, the student is expected to return, in good working order, all loaned IT Learning Equipment. Where IT Learning Equipment is not returned within the specified timeframe, the college will contact students to recover the equipment loaned. If the equipment is not returned when requested, then the student's details will be passed to the Finance/Debt Collection Department for the recovery of any costs incurred from the unreturned equipment.

5) Payments / Repayments of Bursary Awards

a) Payment: will be made direct into the student's bank account via the BACS system. Only in exceptional circumstances where a student is unable to administer their own account will a payment be made into another person's account. Bursary fund payments will not be made as a regular payment for living costs.

i) Travel

- Where the award is for a travel payment to and from College, students living within the Greater Manchester area who are aged 16-17 at the start of the academic year will be expected to apply for the Greater Manchester "Our Pass". On receipt of the Our Pass registration number the student will be able to recover the £10 admin fee.
- Where the award is for a travel payment to and from College, students living within the Derbyshire area who are born between 21/09/2005 and 21/09/2008 will be expected to apply for Derbyshire Council "purple b_line2 Pass". The pass is free on 1st application and £10.00 for a replacement (students will be reimbursed, on production of evidence of actual cost). **This is an external trial scheme.**

- Students living outside of the Greater Manchester area or not covered by the purple b_line2 pass will receive a weekly BACs payment in arrears of £20.60 for full time students and £10 for part time students.
- Where the award is for travel passes i.e. for students seeking asylum, bus passes will be issued in line with days attending college/approved college activities.
- Payments will be made to credit student accounts on Mondays. In the case of a bank holiday payments will be made to credit student accounts on Tuesdays.
- Payments will be made during term time only.
- Collection of bus passes will be available Monday to Thursdays 09:00hrs to 16:00hrs, Fridays 09:00hrs to 14:00hrs.

ii) Kit, Uniforms and Books

- These payments will be made either to the supplier usually within 7 working days from application assessment and approval date or directly to the student (where a valid receipt of expenditure by student, is supplied).
- In-year replacement/replenishment of items deemed by college as 'consumed/worn', additional payments for kit/uniform/books. Additional payments will be made on the first Monday of every term if the student has met the attendance requirements for the previous term.

iii) Educational Visits/Field Trips/ Work experience/Industry placements

- Bursary Funding can only be used to support the costs of an educational visit/field trip that is an essential part of achieving a student's study programme goals.
- Bursary Funding cannot be used to support the costs of foreign/overseas field trips where the content can be found within England at a much cheaper cost and/or to support the costs of fields trips that are not an essential part of a student's study programme goals
  - **(a)** Where awarded under the above criteria, these payments will be made either directly to the student or to the department on an ad hoc basis throughout the year – usually within 6 weeks of being notified of an educational visit/field trip from the curriculum area. The bursary scheme will contribute up to 100% of the overall cost of the trip per bursary student
  - **(b)** Where an educational visit is required to undertake work experience/industry placements, bursary may pay for additional costs incurred, if not already provided for under alternative bursary awards i.e., travel outside of the area, additional clothing, additional forms of ID etc. This will be assessed on an individual basis.

b) Repayment of the Bursary

i) The student will be required to repay all or part of the bursary if it is terminated in the following circumstances:

- If the student has used the bursary payment for anything other than the stated purpose.
- If the student has knowingly or recklessly provided false or inaccurate information about their financial position.
- If the student has been found to have committed a serious breach, or series of persistent minor breaches, of discipline for which the sanction would normally be expulsion or required removal.
- If kit purchased with bursary funds is damaged through misuse or neglect, then the student will be liable for the cost of replacement items.

ii) If a student is withdrawn within the first six weeks of their course, we may attempt to reclaim all monies paid and/or ask for equipment and uniform that has been paid in kind to be returned to us.

For all applications funding is limited, meaning evidence of eligibility does not guarantee an award. Students wishing to apply for financial support are advised to do so as soon as possible from the start of their course.

6) Attendance Criteria at College Site and Including Blended Learning

a) Attendance criteria is set at 85% following October half term break.
   i) 85% weekly attendance - automatic award of travel payment if student is eligible.
   ii) Less than 85% weekly attendance payment will be cancelled for that week for students in receipt of discretionary bursary.
   iii) Less than 85% weekly attendance for students in receipt of the Vulnerable Bursary, the following action will be taken (in order):
   - Suspend payment.
   - Contact relevant college staff (course tutor, progress tutor, welfare support team) and request information (if any) to support continued financial support for students.
   - Assessment of information by Bursary Officer and a decision is made to continue or stop award. Passed then to the Manager for counter signature.

7) Appeals Process

a) First appeal must be made in writing to studentfinancialsupport@tameside.ac.uk
b) Second appeal can be made in writing to the Head of Central Support & Enrichment or the Deputy Principal Quality & People within 14 days of notification of a decision. All Appeals will receive a response within 10 days of receipt. All decisions on appeal are final.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

This policy applies to all 16–19-year-old students enrolled at Tameside College, Tameside One and Clarendon Sixth Form College and sets out the financial support available through, and eligibility for, Student Financial Support (Bursary) funding. The college reserves the right to review and make in year amendments to this policy.

3. POLICY REVIEW

Bursary policies will be reviewed on an annual basis taking in to account statutory guidance from DfE and ESFA. The college reserves the right to review and make in year amendments to this policy to ensure fair distribution of funds to those most in need of financial support to enable them to remain in education. Amendments made in year will be applicable from 1 day after the date of the in-year review only.

4. LOCATION AND ACCESS TO THE POLICY

The 16-19 Student Financial Support (Bursary) Fund Policy 2026-2027 and supporting policies and other documents are available via SharePoint on the College network.

5. POLICY STATUS

Responsibility: Gail Clifford – Head of Central Support & Enrichment
Approved by: Senior Leadership Team
Issue Date: January 2026 DRAFT
Annual Review Date: July 2026 (or on release of updated guidance)
Annual review / in-year amendments:

Review July 2025 GC/LH	Annual review in line with guidance	Approved by SLT
Dec 2025	In year review in line with guidance	Approved by SLT
February 2026	In year review in line with guidance	Approved by SLT