**2025-26 Learner Bursary Information**

These guidelines are for any young person who will be attending Valley College from September 2025 and the Advocates who are financially responsible for the young person.

This document sets out the 16-19 Bursary Fund guidance issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for learners attending Valley College who are eligible for the Vulnerable Bursary Award and also the College’s eligibility criteria for learners as determined by the College for Discretionary Awards. A copy of the ESFA’s 16-19 Bursary Fund Guide for 2024-25 can be accessed via the gov.uk website: 16 to 19 education: financial support for learners - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)). Please note that any information that is gathered to check the eligibility of a learner is treated as confidential.

**Summary of the 16-19 Bursary Fund for 2025-2026**

The 16-19 Bursary Fund has three elements:

1. **A Vulnerable Bursary:** A bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in the following defined vulnerable groups:

* in care (including a young person placed with a foster carer by the local authority and unaccompanied asylum seekers)
* care leavers
* receiving Income Support (IS), or Universal Credit (UC) 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 (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right

**No other groups are eligible.**

It should be noted that even if a learner meets the criteria for the 16-19 Bursary this does not necessarily mean that they will automatically receive a financial award (as this would be dependent upon their actual financial need). Some learners may be entitled to all elements of the bursary (travel, meals and other associated costs), some may be entitled to one element of the bursary (such as travel) and others potentially could not be entitled to any.

**2. A Discretionary Bursary Award** is made to young people in a way that best fits the needs and circumstances of our learners. Bursary awards will be targeted towards those young people who face the greatest financial barriers to participation ie. Live in a household with an annual income (including benefits and tax credits) below £30,000.

Valley College is free to determine the assessment criteria for eligibility for discretionary bursaries, and the frequency of and conditions for all awards; subject to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Valley College recognises that many factors need to be considered when deciding what financial assistance is required by an individual learner. Therefore, we will assess the level of need by looking at such factors as household income, number of other dependants within the household, distance needed to travel to college, mode of transport and costs associated with the learner’s programme of study.

**Valley College’s Household Income criteria are as follows:**

You will not be eligible for the college bursary if your household income is above £30,000 per annum **unless** there is more than one sibling at Valley College.

If an application is received from a household with more than one dependant, then their household income total will be deducted by £5000 for each additional dependant before the following threshold of £30,000 is applied:

**3. Emergency support** can be used in individual cases of severe hardship due to current/changed circumstances or with an exceptional situation.; to provide meal support on the day a learner attends Valley College. This can be awarded by the college for a learner considered to be in real need without undertaking the checks on household income or gathering other evidence that would normally be required. It is expected that this will only be rarely triggered.

Learners can apply for Free College Meals as a standalone entitlement (when they are not eligible for the actual bursary).

**When can I apply to the Bursary Fund?**

Applications for the 2025-26 Learner Bursary can be made in September for existing and new learners. The deadline date for this phase of applications is 30th September 2025.

Application forms are available on the college website and from the college admin team.

A paper copy of the bursary application, with original signatures, and supporting documents needs to be returned to the college for processing.

**How will I know if I have been successful and when will I receive my bursary?**

We will write to all applicants to let them know whether their application has been successful. If successful, the letter will contain details of the learner’s Bursary Entitlement for the academic year 2025-26. Bursary awards will be backdated to the date that your application is ready to be processed (i.e. when the application form and all required evidence has been received).

**Please note that a successful award in one year does not guarantee a future award. New evidence of eligibility must be submitted each academic year.**

**Changes in Circumstances**

It is very important that you notify Valley College if your personal or financial circumstances change resulting in you no longer being eligible for bursary funding. Failure to notify college of such changes may make you liable to repay the cost of funds already received.

**What should I do if I am not happy with any decision relating to my bursary application?**

If a learner wishes to appeal against a decision, they should write to the Principal within 10 days of the decision, stating fully their reasons for the appeal.

**Can I only apply for the Learner Bursary once during an academic year?**

You can apply again at any point during the remainder of the year if your own circumstances have changed, or if your advocates financial status has changed.

**If I miss the initial deadline of 30th September 2025, can I apply later in the year?**

You can apply at any time during the academic year for the Learner Bursary. However, as stated above you will only start to receive any awards when your application and evidence have been received in full.

In the event that there is a shortfall in funding and Valley College is unable to make awards to all eligible applicants, the college will prioritise eligible learners based on their individual needs and circumstances.

**Confidentiality and Data Protection**

The data requested on the bursary application form will only be used for the purpose of assessing a learner’s eligibility for financial support from the bursary fund. Valley College will not share this data with a third party without your consent unless the College is required to do so by law. If you have any queries relating to the need and use of the data provided on the application form, please contact the college Business Lead at j.rutter@valleycollege.svt.org.uk or on 01706 214640 Option 2.

If you need any help completing the Bursary application form, please contact the Admin on 01706 214640 Option 2 or email valleycollege@valleycollege.svt.org.uk All applications can be returned to the Ewood Campus Reception which will be open 08.30 a.m. to 04:00 p.m. Monday to Friday during term time. Any supporting evidence will then be photocopied and returned.

Alternatively, you can return the application form by post to the following address:

Valley College, Ewood Campus, Clod Lane, Haslingden, Rossendale, BB4 6LR

**Please note – emailed applications will not be processed (evidence can be emailed but the actual application needs to be a paper copy with original signatures).**