



**LINCOLN COLLEGE**

**LEARNER SUPPORT FUND POLICY AND  
PROCEDURES 2024-2025**

**POLICY CQ/PO/8**

**SPONSOR**

**Student Financial Support Specialist, Student Services**

## **Equality and Diversity Statement**

Lincoln College strives to treat all its members and visitors fairly and aims to eliminate unjustifiable discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, political beliefs or practices, disability, marital status, family circumstances, sexual orientation, spent criminal convictions, age or any other inappropriate grounds.

# **LINCOLN COLLEGE**

## **LEARNER SUPPORT FUND POLICY AND PROCEDURES ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-25**

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# **LINCOLN COLLEGE**

## **LEARNER SUPPORT FUND POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

### **1 PURPOSE**

To set out the procedures involved in the assessment, distribution and management of the College's Further Education (FE) Learner Support Funds, so as to ensure consistency, transparency and audit compliance.

### **2 AIM OF THE POLICY**

To ensure the FE Learner Support Funds are distributed in compliance with the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) guidelines contained in their "Funding Regulations for Post-16 Provision 2024 to 2025" "16-19 Bursary Fund Guide: 2024 to 2025 Academic Year", "Free Meals in Further Education Funded Institutions Guide: 2024 to 2025 Academic Year", "Adult Skills Fund: Funding Rules 2024 to 2025", and "Advanced Learner Loans Funding Rules: 2024 to 2025", thus ensuring audit requirements are met.

### **3 INTRODUCTION**

The College's Learner Support Funds are intended to support learners whose access to, or completion of education might be restricted or prevented by financial considerations. Through the timely and targeted distribution of the funds the college seeks to help learners commence and remain in study; get the best out of their studies and achieve their potential, as well as widening participation and helping those financially disadvantaged by removing barriers to learning.

The Learner Support Funds, however, are cash limited. Support, therefore, cannot be guaranteed. If funds are low the college will prioritise support further. Should this happen learners within the groups identified below will be given priority for remaining funds:

- Learners facing an emergency situation who, without financial support, would be at immediate risk of withdrawing from their course,
- Learners identified by the college Safeguarding Team as having a safeguarding need whom, without financial support, would be at immediate risk of withdrawing from their course.
- Learners who have been assessed as meeting the 2024-25 eligibility criteria for Free College Meals.

### **4 WHAT THE COLLEGE LEARNER SUPPORT FUNDS CAN OR CANNOT BE USED FOR**

#### The Funds Can Be Used For:

Full details of what the Funds can be used for can be found in the document "Financial Support-Student Eligibility Guide Academic Year 2024/2025" (see Annex 1).

### The Bursary Cannot Be Used To:

- Provide Learning Support (except 19+ Advanced Learner Loan learners), such as counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring
- Support extra-curricular activities
- Support general household incomes
- Gain a competitive advantage over other institutions
- Pay for access to facilities within Lincoln College, such as college sports facilities membership fees
- Block subsidise the canteen
- Block subsidise transport, or support travel for all students regardless of family income
- Block subsidise provision of equipment, materials or books
- Pay attendance allowances or achievement and attendance bonus payments
- Make payments to support students' general living costs
- Help with non-essential course participation costs.

## **5 RESPONSIBILITY**

The following personnel will be responsible for ensuring this policy is adhered to:

- Student Financial Support Specialist
- Financial Support Team Leader
- Financial Support Team Administrators
- Head of Student Services

## **6 ELIGIBILITY**

### **ESFA 16-19 Bursary Fund**

The ESFA 16-19 Bursary Fund is divided into two separate funds within Lincoln College.

They are known as the 16-18 Learner Support Fund and the 16-18 Extended Bursary (known nationally and respectively as the ESFA's 16-19 Hardship Bursary and 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary). For learners to be eligible to receive support from these Funds the following must apply:

- Learners should normally be aged 16, 17 or 18 on 31/08/2024 and have enrolled and started on a course of learning with Lincoln College. The exceptions to this are: i) students aged 19 to 24 on 31/08/2024 who have a 2024-25 Academic Year Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and ii) students aged 19 on 31/08/2024 who are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (known as 19+ Continuers).
- Learners must satisfy the residency criteria in the document *ESFA Funding Regulations for Post-16 Provision 2024 to 2025*. A copy of this document is available from the Student Financial Support Specialist, Student Services, Lincoln College.
- The course studied by the learner must be funded by the ESFA or otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and

including level 3) that is on the ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding.

- Learners on a Higher Education course or Apprenticeship programme (or any waged training) are not eligible for support. Learners in prison or a young offender institution or who have been released on temporary licence (eg day release) or who have been remanded to a secure institution are also not eligible for support.

#### Additional eligibility criteria for the 16-18 Learner Support Fund

- Except in exceptional circumstances, (e.g where a written endorsement supporting a learner's need for financial support is received from the college Safeguarding Team) the gross household income of a learner's parents/guardians must be no more than £40,000pa, or
- The learner's parents/guardians must receive one of the following Means Tested benefits: Job Seekers Allowance, Universal Credit (where the Take Home Pay on the Universal Credit Monthly Award Notice (UCMAN) when added to their Universal Credit Monthly Payment on the UCMAN does not exceed the equivalent of £40,000pa), Pension Credit-Guarantee Credit, Income Support, Employment Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support or Working and/or Child Tax Credit (but only where Total Income for the year 2024-25 when added to the parent's/guardian's Tax Credit for the Period shown on the Final His Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) Tax Credit Award Notice for 2024-25 is less than £40,000pa).
- All students may be required to sign an income/savings and investments declaration.
- Further evidence may also be requested eg. a bank statement.
- Support will not be given if any of the evidence submitted shows that there is not a financial need or savings and/or investments exceed £16,000.

#### Additional rules for the 16-18 Learner Support Fund

Except in exceptional circumstances, in which case further evidence will be required:

- The maximum amount of award for learners who qualify for support for equipment/uniform will be £150, except where college essential course uniform/equipment lists demonstrate that the cost is in excess of this.
- Awards for uniform/equipment/books will be based on essential course uniform/equipment lists provided to students by the academic area they are studying in. Where this information is not available, the academic area must confirm in writing that the items required/purchased are essential to the student for their course.
- Help with trips/visits will only be provided if the trip/visit is in mainland Great Britain and is essential for students to complete specific course learning aims and the academic area responsible for the trip/visit has confirmed this in writing.
- Applications received after 30/05/2025 will not be accepted except in exceptional circumstances, and subject to sufficient funding remaining available.
- The minimum award that will be made, subject to eligibility, is £5.00

- Any award paid for a specific item (eg. uniform/equipment) may be deemed the property of the college and learners may be requested to return it on completion of their course or if they withdraw early.
- Full awards will normally only be made to learners whose attendance is 100% and whose standard of behaviour meet college requirements.

#### Additional eligibility criteria for the 16-18 Extended Bursary

Learners must be:

- A looked after young person in Local Authority care, or
- A Local Authority care leaver, or
- In receipt of Universal Credit in their own right, or
- In receipt of Disability Living Allowance (or Personal Independence Payments) **and** Employment Support Allowance (or Universal Credit in place of Employment Allowance) in their own right.

Current, documentary evidence must be provided to confirm which of the above 4 categories of support match the student's circumstances.

Learners in receipt of Universal Credit must also provide additional evidence to confirm they are supporting themselves independently, eg) a tenancy agreement in their name, utility bill etc, or that they are supporting someone else, such as a child or partner.

#### Additional rules for the 16-18 Extended Bursary (16-18 EB)

- The maximum annual 16-18 EB amount available is £1,200 and is based on a learner's study programme lasting a minimum of 30 weeks and them studying full-time. Part-Time learners may be eligible for a pro-rata amount, the maximum amount of which will be based on factors such as their weekly guided learning hours, number of days attended each week and the number of weeks their course lasts for in the Academic Year if less than 30.
- All planned 16-18 EB payments will be subject to a learner's behaviour and attendance.
- 16-18 EB payments will cease immediately if a learner withdraws early from their course, whatever the reason.
- 16-18 EB payments will only be paid in to the learner's bank account.
- 16-18 EB payments can only be made to support a learner's essential course participation costs. Where a learner has no essential course participation costs, or where their essential course participation costs are being wholly or partly met from another source of financial support, they will either not receive the 16-18 EB or their 16-18 EB will be reduced.
- Where a learner's essential course participation costs exceed £1,200 they may receive additional support from the 16 to 18 Learner Support Fund, provided their, or their parents/guardians, circumstances meet the eligibility criteria for that Fund. The learner and/or their parent(s)/guardian(s) will be required to complete a paper-based application form in this circumstance.

- Exceptionally, an application for additional support from the 16 to 18 LSF may be accepted where it is not possible to confirm the learner meets the eligibility criteria of that Fund, provided confirmation of the learner's unique circumstances is received in writing from the college Safeguarding Team.

### Additional Eligibility Criteria for Free College Meals (FCM)

Learners must be aged 16 to 18 on 31/8/2024 and be, or have parents who are, in receipt of one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seekers 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 His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for m4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit (UC) with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 for each year (after tax and not including any benefits they get)

Students aged 19 or over are not normally eligible for FCM unless they or their parents receive one or more of the above benefits or types of support **and,**

- They have a 2024/25 Education Health Care Plan, or
- They are a 19+ Continuer (they are on the same programme they started before they turned 19)
- Where a student has not provided evidence that their or their parents financial circumstances meet the FCM eligibility criteria, Lincolnshire County Council or Nottinghamshire Council may be contacted by email to see if Transitional Protection applies. This must only be done where the student or their parent has given consent for the college to contact the relevant Local Authority.

### Free College Meals Maximum Daily Allowance

The national Free College Meals basic rate for 2024/25 is £2.53. The college's Free College Meals maximum daily allowance is £4.00, so includes an enhancement of £1.47 from the college's 2024/25 ESFA single allocation (combined 16 to 19 Bursary Allocation and Free College Meals allocation). The maximum daily allowance of £4.00 reflects:

- The cost of a nutritional meal available through Lincoln College's catering outlets.

In addition to learners eligible for Free College Meals, meals support at the same rate is provided to learners who are not eligible for FCM but who meet the 16 to 18



Learner Support Fund eligibility criteria. The rationale for providing this support includes:

- Parents of these learners are either in receipt of a means tested benefit, but above the level at which FCM is available, or whose gross, not net, income is below £40,000pa so have less disposal income available to them.
- According to statistics provided by national research company Pumplot, the average salary for all Local Authorities in Lincolnshire residents is less than the United Kingdom average.
- Lincolnshire is a rural county and has a large low paid, low skilled land-based economy.
- Lincolnshire is the second largest county in England, with poor transport links, which has an impact on household incomes, unlike other urban areas, such as London, where transport is frequent and free.
- According to the Office of National Statistics Lincoln is ranked as the 65<sup>th</sup> most income-deprived area of England, out of 316 local authorities.

### **19+ Adult Skills Fund Learner Support Fund**

The 19+ Adult Skills Fund Learner Support Fund (19+ ASF LSF) is divided in to two separate funds within Lincoln College. They are known as the 19+ ASF LSF and the 20+ ASF Childcare Fund.

For learners to be eligible to receive support from the 19+ ASF LSF the following must apply:

- Learners must be aged 19 or over on 31/08/2024 (except for i) the Childcare Fund, where learners must be 20 or older on the first day of learning and ii) the exceptions referred to on page 2 concerning the 16-19 Bursary Fund)
- Learners must have enrolled and started on a course of learning with Lincoln College.
- Learners must have been accepted onto a programme funded through the ESFA Adult Skills Fund.
- Learners must satisfy the residency criteria and other eligibility criteria contained in the ESFA's *Adult Skills Fund: Funding Rules 2024 to 2025* and *Advanced Learner Loans Funding Rules 2024 to 2025*. A copy of these documents is available from the Student Financial Support Specialist, Student Services, Lincoln College.
- Learners on a Higher Education course, waged Apprenticeship or provision with learning aims that are identified as wholly funded from other sources are not eligible for support. Learners in custody or who have been released on temporary licence (e.g. day release) are also not eligible for support.
- The learner receives one of the following Means Tested benefits:- Job Seekers Allowance, Universal Credit (where the Take Home Pay on the Universal Credit Monthly Award Notice (UCMAN) when added to their Universal Credit Monthly Payment on the UCMAN does not exceed the equivalent of £40,000pa), Pension Credit-Guarantee Credit, Income Support, Employment Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support or Working and/or Child Tax Credit (but only where Total Income for the year 2024/25 when added to the Tax Credit for the Period shown on the Final HMRC Tax Credit Award Notice for 2024/25 is less than £40,000), or

- The gross income of a learner living with his or her parents/guardians must be less than £15,000pa, or
- The gross income of a learner who lives independently as a single person must be less than £25,000pa, or
- The gross household income of a learner who lives with a partner must be less than £40,000pa.
- All students may be required to sign an income/savings and investments declaration.
- Further evidence may also be requested eg. a bank statement.
- Support will not be given if any of the evidence submitted shows that there is not a financial need, or savings and/or any investments exceed £16,000.

#### Additional rules for the 19+ ASF Learner Support Funds

Except in exceptional circumstances, in which case further evidence will be required:

- Applications received after 30/05/2025 will not be accepted, except in exceptional circumstances, and subject to sufficient funding remaining available.
- The minimum award that will be made, subject to eligibility, is £5.00.
- The maximum amount of award for learners who qualify for support for essential equipment/uniform will be £150.00, except where college essential course uniform/equipment lists demonstrate that the cost is in excess of this.
- Awards for uniform/equipment/books will be based on essential course uniform/equipment lists provided to students by the academic area they are studying in. Where this information is not available, the academic area must confirm in writing that the items required/purchased are essential to the student for their course.
- Help with trips/visits will only be provided if the trip/visit is in mainland Great Britain and is essential for students to complete specific course learning aims and the academic area responsible for the trip/visit has confirmed this in writing.
- Any award paid for a specific item (eg. uniform/equipment) may be deemed the property of the college and learners may be requested to return it on completion of their course or if they withdraw early.
- Full awards will normally only be made to learners whose attendance is above 100% and whose standard of behaviour meet college requirements, except in exceptional circumstances.
- Learners classed by the ESFA as being Fully Funded and those in receipt of an Advanced Learner Loan will not be eligible for help with the Disclosure and Barring Service check. It is the college's responsibility to pay for this for these learners.
- Learners who qualify for full remission or an Advanced Learner Loan can only get help towards the cost of uniform and equipment if the items requested are to be taken outside of the learning environment. Should this not be the case it is the college's responsibility to pay for these for these learners.

### Additional rules for the 20+ ASF Childcare Fund

Except in exceptional circumstances, in which case further evidence will be required:

- The learner must receive one of the following Benefits:- Universal Credit (where the Take Home Pay on the Universal Credit Monthly Award Notice (UCMAN) when added to their Universal Credit Monthly Payment on the UCMAN does not exceed the equivalent of £40,000 pa), or Working and/or Child Tax Credit (but only where Total Income for the year 2024/25 when added to the Tax Credit for the Period shown on the Final HMRC Tax Credit Award Notice for 2023/24 is less than £40,000pa, or Income Support.
- Learners awarded childcare support will get 100% of their childcare fees paid.
- Learners must maintain a minimum attendance level of 85%, except in exceptional circumstances.
- The maximum amount of childcare support available to a learner will be £8,000, irrespective of how many children support is sought for.
- The Fund will only support eligible learners who use a childcare provider registered with Ofsted.
- Subject to continued eligibility and funds being available the college may support learners with the cost of childcare for a maximum of three academic years.
- Children supported must be a dependant of the learner attending college.
- Any support awarded is on the understanding that learners do not have a spouse/partner living at the same address who is able to undertake childcare responsibilities.
- For learners who withdraw early from their course, payments made to childcare providers will cease on their last date of attendance. Learners who do not give their childcare provider a minimum of 4-weeks' notice will be responsible for any outstanding fees, unless exceptional circumstances apply.
- Childcare providers will not be paid a deposit or a retainer fee during summer holidays.
- Payment will be made direct to the learner's childcare provider.
- The Fund cannot be used to help learners already receiving help with childcare costs from other government sources.

### Additional rules for Travel Support

Except in exceptional circumstances, in which case further evidence will be required:

- The maximum amount the college will refund the learner is £2,160.00 per academic year (£60 per week)
- Full awards will normally only be made to learners whose attendance is 100%.
- Learners will only receive support for days when they have time-tabled classes.
- Learners must use the cheapest and most appropriate mode of transport, including the use of rail cards, discounted bus-fares (e.g.

Stagecoach Day/Mega Riders), and can only claim for one return journey from and to their normal place of residence per day.

- The rate per mile for travel by car/motorcycle is £0.25p. Learners will only be paid this mileage rate if they are the driver/rider, or if they are being driven to college by another person who is making an exceptional journey to convey them to college.
- Where two or more learners car share to attend college, the Fund will only support the driver (subject to their eligibility). It will not support the passenger(s).
- The Fund will not reimburse car parking charges or parking fines.
- The Fund cannot be used to support learners already receiving help with travel costs from their Local Authority, Jobcentre Plus or a Work Programme.
- Travel support will normally only be given to the nearest designated Lincoln College site except in exceptional circumstances.
- Learners must live more than 1.5 miles away from the college site they attend.
- Travel support will be calculated using the shortest suggested route from home to college, including walking, on Google Maps.

### **Advanced Learner Loan Bursary**

The Advanced Learner Loan Bursary will follow the same rules as applied to the 19+ASF LSF, and 20+ ASF Childcare Fund with the following additions:

- Under no circumstance will a learner be able to use the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary to get help toward the tuition fee of a course that they have taken out an Advanced Learner Loan for, irrespective of whether the Loan they have taken out covers only a part of the tuition fee for that course.
- Learners will only be able to receive support from the Fund if the college has received confirmation from the Student Loans Company that the learner has a fully approved Loan for the Advanced Learner Loan eligible course they have enrolled on for Academic Year 2024/25.
- Learners will not be able to receive support from the Fund unless they have enrolled and attended a minimum of 2 weeks on their Advanced Learner Loan approved Lincoln College course.

## **7 GROSS HOUSEHOLD INCOME THRESHOLD RATIONALE**

The Gross Household Income Threshold used by Lincoln College to assess whether a student is eligible for support is based on the following:

- The 2023/24 National Living Wage was £10.42. For an adult in full time employment of 37 hours per week this gives a weekly wage of £385.54. Annually, therefore, an adult in receipt of the Living Wage would receive £20,048.08. Where 2 adults live in a household this would give a gross household income of £40,096.16. To aid with ease of communication and administration, this figure has been rounded down to a gross household income threshold of £40,000.
- In adopting the Gross Household Income Threshold of £40,000, attention is paid to the fact that Lincoln College is situated in a rural area, with the nearest comparable Further Education college being

approximately 25 miles away. This means, therefore, that a significant number of students have no option but to travel some distance to college which inevitably increases their essential cost of participation.

- Lincolnshire has historically been a low-wage county. The Threshold figure used, therefore, takes account of this fact.
- This threshold will be reviewed each year, taking in to account any increase in the National Living Wage and funding to be received and available for the forthcoming academic year.

## **8 PUBLICISING THE FUNDS**

- The Financial Support Team will publicise the Funds through a variety of means. These include, but not exclusively, the college website, the college Canvas and Lib-Guides sites, the college Workplace page, posters, leaflets, college prospectuses, college newsletters, the Student Services annual Induction, college Open Days (evenings and weekends), college Welcome Days and college Parents/Carers Information Evenings.
- Information leaflets will be produced which give the precise details of the support available through the Funds. These will be made available in both paper-based and electronic format. As a minimum an electronic copy will be available in the Support section of the college Website and the Student Services>Financial Assistance section of the Student/Staff Canvas and Lib-Guides sites.
- The Financial Support Team will provide the college's Schools Liaison Officer with information required to promote the 16-18 Learner Support Fund within local schools and other education establishments.
- Information on the Funds will be updated annually by the Financial Support Team, Student Services.

## **9 THE APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

- Learners must complete an on-line application form. To ensure equality of opportunity a paper-based version of the on-line application form will, in exceptional circumstances, be available where a learner is not able to complete an on-line application.
- All sections of the on-line or paper-based application form must be completed, for eligibility for support, or otherwise, to be fully determined.
- Evidence requested to support an application must be submitted. Additional evidence must be requested and provided where that initially supplied is not sufficient for eligibility for support, or otherwise, to be fully determined.
- Evidence submitted must be current and clearly state the learner's name where the learner is aged 19+, or demonstrate that the learner resides in the same household as the parent(s)/guardian(s) submitting evidence where the learner is aged 16-18, except in exceptional circumstances.

- Where a learner is aged 16-18 and is not living in the same household as their parent(s) they must submit evidence to confirm that the adult(s) with whom they are living are their legal guardian(s). If such evidence is not supplied then they must provide evidence of their parents' income.
- Where a learner aged 16 to 18 claims to be estranged from their parent(s)/guardian(s) and is not, therefore, able to provide evidence of their parent(s)/guardian(s) financial circumstances then their application must be endorsed in writing by a member of the Student Services Safeguarding Team.
- The member of staff assessing the application should disregard any money received by the learner/their parent(s)/guardian(s) for Child Benefit, Severe Disability Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance, Universal Credit Disabled Children payments and Tax Credit Disabled Children payments.
- The member of staff assessing the application should, on all occasions, declare any personal interest to the Student Financial Support Specialist of any application received, such as from a relative or close personal friend. The Student Financial Support Specialist will ensure that the application is assessed by a member of the Financial Support Team who has no personal interest in the application.
- Where possible, awards agreed will be made by Internal Transfer to the learner's Lincoln College School. Where awards are to be made direct to the learner this will be by bank transfer. Cheque payments will not be made.
- Once an application has been submitted learners will receive written confirmation within 10 working days of the outcome of their application or whether further information is required (this will be extended to 15 working days during the Autumn Term, due to the volume of applications received during this period).
- The Assessor must at all times be aware of the contents of this Policy and must be aware of funds available before authorising an award.

## **10 APPEALS**

### **No Award Appeals**

- Where an application for support has been refused and a "No Award" decision made, the learner will be notified in writing of the decision and the reason for the decision. "No Award" decisions can be made for many reasons. Examples of "No Award" may include where a learner's (or their parent(s)/guardian(s)) income is above the threshold for support; where the learner's address is less than 1.5 miles from the college they attend for travel support; where the learner does not meet the ESFA residency requirements for support; where the learner's childcare provider is not registered with Ofsted as required by ESFA for support. Whatever the notified reason for a "No Award" decision the learner is encouraged to make an appeal if they consider the reason to decline support is incorrect.
- The "No Award" correspondence sent to the learner should specify that any appeal against a decision to not provide support should be made in writing and specify the College address and email address that the learner, or their parent(s)/guardian(s), should send the appeal to.

- All appeals should be addressed to the Student Financial Support Specialist.
- The Student Financial Support Specialist will, except in exceptional circumstances, provide the learner with a written response to their appeal within **10 working days** of receipt of correspondence.
- Should the learner not be satisfied with the outcome of the appeal reached by the Student Financial Support Specialist they can further appeal to the Head of Student Services who will provide the learner with a written response to their appeal within **10 working days** of receipt of correspondence.

### Other Appeals

- The learner may also make an appeal where the level of award made does not match their expectation. For example, where the amount awarded for kit/equipment is lower than the amount shown on receipts submitted.
- In such cases the learner should, in the first instance, contact the Financial Support Team, Student Services. This can be done either in person by making an appointment to see a member of the Financial Support Team through one of the College's Main Reception desks or by telephone by contacting Main Reception at Lincoln (01522 876000) or Newark (01636 680680) and asking to speak to a member of the Student Services Financial Support Team or by email [financialsupport@lincolncollege.ac.uk](mailto:financialsupport@lincolncollege.ac.uk).
- The above is not an exhaustive list of when a learner can make an appeal against any decision made relating to the College's Learner Support Funds. The learner is encouraged, therefore, to make an appeal on each and every occasion where they believe they have reason to do so.

## 11 COMPLAINTS

- Learners who wish to make a verbal complaint should be directed in the first instance to the Student Financial Support Specialist (01522) 876000.
- If a learner is not satisfied with the outcome of their "No Award" appeal or "Other" appeal or the way in which the "No Award" appeal or "Other Appeal" has been handled, or is unhappy with any aspect of the administration of their application or the service they have received from the Financial Support Team, Student Services they can take the matter further through the Lincoln College Complaints and Grievance Procedure.
- If the learner wishes to complain in writing then they can do so by using the standard complaints form available from each of the College's Main Reception desks or request that a form be sent to them.
- A copy of the College's Customer Complaint and Grievance Procedure can be found at <https://www.lincolncollege.ac.uk/support>.

## 12 MANAGEMENT OF THE FUND

The Student Financial Support Specialist and/or Financial Support Team Leader will be responsible for the following:

### Annually

- Ensuring that a suitably robust recording system is in place that shows each individual Learner Support Fund transaction by detail code, that is also able to show real-time information on current expenditure, free funds and committed funds.
- Ensuring that a suitably robust recording system is in place to capture the financial and statistical management information required mid-year and at year end by the ESFA.
- Liaising with the Head of Central Information Services to prepare and submit mid-year (February), end of year (June) and final (October) Learner Support Fund returns to the ESFA.
- Liaising with internal and external auditors of the Fund and ensuring that any recommendations arising from an audit are put into effect within the timescale identified.
- Ensuring that an annual report is produced and made available to the Head of Student Services that shows the impact on course completion of learners who received Learner Support Fund support, and which also shows a comparison with previous academic years data. This report should include data relating to the retention of learners by ethnicity, gender, and disability.
- Liaising with the College's Group Management Accountant to produce an agreed reconciliation spreadsheet for the 2024/25 Learner Support Funds. In addition to confirming Funds allocated, this spreadsheet will also confirm any unspent funds that will be carried forward to the next academic year.
- Ensuring ESFA are informed of any unspent funds (not previously reported) from any year up to and including the 2022 to 2023 academic year.

### Monthly

- Receiving budget print-outs from the Finance Department. Reconciling entries in budget print-outs against the appropriate detail codes in the Learner Support Fund spreadsheets.
- Providing the Finance Department with a written report notifying any amendments that need to be made.
- Reviewing expenditure to ensure all Funds remain within allocated budgets and, where necessary, review and amend individual allocations.

### Weekly

- Providing the Head of Student Services and the staff of the Financial Support Team with a weekly bulletin which shows the financial status of each of the Learner Support Funds.
- Ensuring that students in receipt of a Learner Support Fund award and those who access their Free College Meals Entitlement are added to the college ILR.
- Providing the college Finance Department with a spreadsheet showing Bacs payments to be processed (spreadsheet to be sent to Finance 3



times per week during the first half-term of the 2024/25 Academic Year).

#### Ad-Hoc

- Providing the college Finance Department with a spreadsheet showing Internal Transfer payments to be processed.
- Ensuring accurate and timely submission of 16-18 Extended Bursary funding claims to the Student Bursary Support Services (SBSS).

#### Unspent Funds

- Unspent 2024-25 16 to 18 Learner Support Fund and Free College Meals funds can be carried over to the next academic year. Any funds carried forward to 2025-26 **must** be used to support students in line with the ESFA's funding rules in the "*16-19 Bursary Fund Guide: 2024 to 2025*" and "*Free Meals in Further Education Funded Institutions for 2024 to 2025*" guide.
- Funds carried over cannot be added to general institution funds.
- The college cannot carry forward funding for the bursary fund and/or free meals funding for more than one year. This means the college must return unspent funds prior to, and including, the 2022 to 2023 academic year or any funds that are over our current year allocation value.

### **13 STORAGE OF RECORDS**

- Any paper-based document received **must**, at all times, be kept in locked filing cabinets in room M002 at Student Services Lincoln and room PM29 Student Services, Newark. Documents received should be uploaded onto the on-line Learner Support Fund portal within a maximum of 15 working days of receipt. Once uploaded and confirmed as attached to the learner's account on the on-line application portal each document should be disposed of by placing in the confidential waste disposal bins available within Lincoln and Newark Student Services.
- To comply with ESFA audit requirements, records must be kept for 6 years from the end of the academic year in which an application was made. They must then be deleted/disposed of.

### **14 ADMINISTRATION OF THE COLLEGE LEARNER SUPPORT FUNDS**

- The Learner Support Funds will be administered on a day to day basis by the following staff: Student Financial Support Specialist, Financial Support Team Leader and Financial Support Team Administrators.
- The Financial Support Team will maintain an on-line database, known as PayMyStudent, to accurately record all Learner Support Fund applications received, assessments undertaken and awards made to learners.

- An on-line Dashboard on PaymyStudent shows the total sum of money committed to and allocated to learners. This will ensure that, at any time, the Team can see the value of awards committed and allocated, and so can act as an aid to budgeting.
- A simple 5% calculation will ensure that the Team can identify its administration costs for the current funding year in compliance with ESFA requirements (5% of total allocation for 16-18 Learner Support Fund and Free College Meals, excluding any carry forward of funds from the previous academic year; 5% of actual funds allocated for 19+ AEB LSF, 19+ ALL LSF, 20+ AEB LSF Childcare and 20+ ALL LSF Childcare).
- The PayMyStudent on-line application portal will also report and retain evidence on spending for each of the categories of support.

#### **14 AUDIT, ASSURANCE AND FRAUD**

- To minimise the risk of fraud, the assessment of applications and the authorising of awards will be conducted by different college departments. The Financial Support Team, Student Services Department, will be responsible for the assessment of applications and authorising payments. The college's Finance Department will be responsible for the payment of awards.
- To ensure accountability, the member of Financial Support Team staff responsible for authorising payments must complete and sign a copy of the LSF BACS Authorisation Form each time an LSF Payment Spreadsheet is sent to the college Finance Department. In addition, the completed Form must be counter-signed by either the Student Financial Support Specialist or Financial Support Term Leader where a single payment (except childcare) exceeds £600 or the total value of payments on the spreadsheet to be sent to Finance exceeds £10,000.
- The ESFA must be notified where significant fraud is suspected. Significant fraud may involve one or more of the following: i) the amount of money is over £1,200. li) the particulars of the fraud are novel, unusual, systemic, or complex. lii) there is likely to be great public interest because of the nature of the fraud or the people involved.

#### **15 REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed annually for approval by the Board of Corporation.