

ESCC 16-19 year old students transport Hardship Fund

For new starters from 2016/17, East Sussex County Council has ceased direct travel support for 16-19 year old students from low income families as a result of diminishing resources. A similar Hardship Fund has been retained, and colleges with a significant number of these students will be allocated a proportion (approximately 25% of the original fund).

In order to ensure equality and fairness, the Council proposes the eligibility criteria set out in Section A. There is also a requirement for monitoring and reporting on the recipients on an annual basis in order to continue to receive the Hardship Fund allocation.

Post-16 providers are asked to note that, as we move forward, the Council may need to make further savings and this funding may be withdrawn, reduced further or otherwise altered. If this occurs appropriate notice will be given.

Section A: Eligibility criteria

Recipients should satisfy all five of the following criteria:

- ✓ Age 16-18 at the start of the academic year.
- ✓ The student is from a family which meets the low income criteria, or is independently in receipt of one of the following:
 - Income Support (IS)
 - income-based Jobseekers Allowance (JSA)
 - income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
 - support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
 - Child Tax Credit assessed on an Income of £16,190 or less (but not Working Tax Credit unless there is no reduction due to level of earnings)
 - Universal Credit (UC)
- ✓ The student's main residence is over 3 miles away measured by the shortest walking distance (as a young person should be able to walk this distance without the need for financial support for public or other transport). This can be calculated using Google maps and the walking option.
- ✓ The college or sixth form is the closest provider offering a suitable course which allows the student to follow their chosen career, or to go on to university.
- ✓ The course runs for a minimum of one academic year on a full time basis (a minimum of 12 hours per week).

Section B: Other factors for consideration

Students may be eligible for alternative sources of financial support, and in this instance they may not require assistance from the Hardship Bursary fund.

1. Students may qualify for 16-19 Bursaries funded by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) which has introduced a new online application process. Payments can be cash or in-kind. There are 2 types of bursary:
 - a vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups; young people in or leaving care, those receiving benefits including IS, US in place of IS, and young people with SEND receiving ESA and DLA or PIP in their own right
 - a discretionary bursary which should be targeted at students who cannot stay in education without financial help for things, including travel to their placement
2. Some students with SEND will be entitled to a disabled Person's Bus Pass. This gives free travel, although it can only be used after 9:30am so may not always be suitable for morning journeys.
3. Students with SEND may be able to claim benefits in their own right about which they may be unaware, including DLA (which at the higher rate includes an element to assist with transport costs) and ESA; which in turn provide eligibility for the EFA bursaries.

Section C: Monitoring allocation of the Hardship Fund

In order to continue to receive an allocated share of the transport Hardship Fund, providers should report to ESCC on the following for each recipient at the end of the academic year:

- a) Name
- b) Date of birth
- c) Postcode
- d) College site
- e) Course name
- f) Amount allocated
- g) Reason for approval*

*suggested information includes confirmation of family / independent student income, the nature of travel being funded or subsidised, any other relevant circumstances

ESCC contact details: xxx.xxx@eastsussex.gov.uk 01273 XXXXXX