

16-19 Bursary Fund Policy 2025-2026

MK Christian Foundation



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1. Aims

MK Christian Foundation aims to:

- Have clear and transparent processes for the use and allocation of 16 to 19 bursary funds
- Make clear to parents/carers and trainees the type of support that is available and the means of applying for it
- Make clear to parents/carers and trainees the attendance and behaviour conditions for receiving the funds

2. Guidance

This policy is based on advice from the Department for Education (DfE) on the 16 to 19 bursary fund for the 2025 to 2026 academic year.

3. Definitions

- 'In care' is defined as: children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis (section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order (section 31 of the Children Act 1989)
- 'Looked after child' is defined as: a child in the care of a local authority or who is provided with accommodation by the authority in the exercise of any functions for more than 24 hours (section 22 of the Children Act 1989)
- 'Care leaver' is defined as:
 - o A young person aged 16 and 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16, or
 - o A young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for approving this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy, but can delegate this to a committee, an individual Board member or the Head of Learning.

The Board of Trustees also has overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this policy.

At MK Christian Foundation, responsibility for approving this policy has been delegated to the Board of Trustees.

At MK Christian Foundation, monitoring the implementation of this policy has been delegated to the Head of Learning.

4.2 The Head of Learning

The Head of Learning is responsible for ensuring relevant staff are familiar with this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy, and that it is being applied consistently.

4.3 Staff

Relevant staff members are responsible for implementing this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy consistently.

4.4 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to notify staff or the Head of Learning of any concerns or queries regarding this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy.

4.5 Trainees

Trainees need to make sure they meet our requirements set out in our Trainee Agreement in order to receive bursary support.

5. How we use the bursary fund

Financial support is available to eligible trainees from the 16 to 19 bursary fund. See section 6 below for details of our eligibility criteria.

The fund is intended to support trainees aged 16 to 19 in overcoming specific financial barriers to participation so they can remain in education.

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups; and
- Discretionary bursaries

We use the fund to provide trainees with support to fund:

- Transport
- Books and equipment where necessary
- Uniform
- External visits and other course-related costs
- The costs of attending job fairs, interviews and associated costs
- Lunches and breakfast

6. Eligibility criteria for the 16 to 19 bursaries

Please note: the following eligibility criteria will be assessed **in addition** to the individual trainee's actual financial needs. No trainee will automatically be awarded an amount of funding without an assessment of the level of actual financial need they have.

6.1 Age

To be eligible for either bursary in the 2025 to 2026 academic year, trainees must be at least 16 years old but under 19 years old on 31 August 2025.

Trainees aged 19 or over are eligible only for a discretionary bursary if they:

- Are continuing on a study programme or course that they began when they were aged 16 to 18-years-old, or
- Have an education, health and care (EHC) plan

Trainees aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for defined vulnerable groups.

6.2 Eligible education provision

Trainees must be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (e.g. Ofsted). The provision must also fall into 1 of these groups:

- Be funded directly by the DfE or by the DfE via a local authority;
- Be funded or co-financed by the European Social Fund;
- Be otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including level 3) that is accredited by Ofqual or is on the DfE's list of qualifications approved for funding 14 to 19; or

All of our 16-19 provision at MK Christian Foundation falls into the eligible education provision.

6.3 Residency

Trainees must meet the residency criteria in the DfE funding regulations for post-16 provision. Please ask the Head of Learning for this guidance should you require it.

6.4 Asylum seekers

Accompanied asylum seekers under 18 with an adult relative or partner, and asylum seekers aged 18 and above are entitled to education but are not entitled to public funds. If necessary, they can apply to the Home Office for suitable housing and cash for essentials.

We will provide in-kind support such as books, equipment and a travel pass to asylum seekers who have not had asylum refused.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children:

- Are the responsibility of the local authority;
- Are to be treated as 'looked after' children; and
- Are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups, where they have a financial need

When these trainees reach 18-years-old, we will consider their immigration status. They will still be eligible for a bursary as a trainee from a defined vulnerable group if the asylum claim is in their favour and will be treated as a 'care leaver' until they reach the upper age limit.

6.5 Bursaries for young people in defined vulnerable groups

Trainees with a financial need, who meet 1 of the following 4 criteria below, in addition to the criteria outlined in sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 above, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups.

The defined vulnerable groups are trainees who are:

- In care (NB: those who are privately fostered are not classed as looked after);
- 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; or
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) in their own right, as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right

Universal Credit has now replaced Income Support, as well as other benefits above, for current and future young people aged 16 to 18. However, trainees aged 19 to 25 and funded from the 16 to 19 budget (19+ continuers and trainees with an EHC plan) may still receive the legacy benefits listed above.

Trainees who meet the criteria for a bursary for vulnerable groups are not automatically entitled to a bursary. Trainees will not receive the bursary if they do not have any actual financial need (for example, because their financial needs are met from other sources and/or because they have no relevant costs).

Where a bursary is provided, the funds will generally be up to £1,200 per year for study programmes lasting 30 weeks or more. When calculating the amount, cases will be looked at individually and the outcome based on a particular trainees' needs. Trainees will only receive the amount they actually need to participate and will not automatically receive £1,200 if they do not need the full amount.

We can use our discretion, on a case-by-case basis, and provide more than £1,200 per year if such would be necessary in all the circumstances for the trainee to remain in education. Any such additional payment will be paid either from our discretionary bursary allocation or our own funds.

If a trainees' study programme lasts for less than 30 weeks, they will be paid a pro-rata amount. We will also consider the number of hours involved in a trainee's study programme when deciding whether a pro-rata payment is more appropriate.

We will review the trainee's eligibility position each academic year. Trainees will only continue to receive a bursary for vulnerable groups if they continue to satisfy the criteria.

We will provide this support for trainees from the bursary fund by making payments in kind where possible. It will not be provided as regular payments for living costs.

6.6 Discretionary bursaries

In addition to the criteria outlined in sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 above, trainees can apply for a discretionary bursary if they satisfy 1 or more of the following criteria:

- Total household income does not exceed £25,000 per annum. This includes working children in the household.

There is no set limit for the amount of discretionary bursary that can be awarded to trainees. We will base all decisions around which trainees receive a discretionary bursary, and how much bursary they receive, on each trainees' individual circumstances and their actual financial need.

We will review the trainees' eligibility position each academic year. Trainees will only continue to receive a discretionary bursary if they continue to satisfy the criteria. In exceptional circumstances, financial support

may be given to a young person who is not entitled to bursary payments if other circumstances place them at a substantial disadvantage. This is at the discretion of MK Christian Foundation.

6.7 Evidence

All applications for 16 to 19 bursaries must be supported by appropriate evidence. Examples of acceptable evidence we may request are:

- A copy of the UC or IS award notice, in the trainee's name.
- Written confirmation of the trainee's current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority
- A copy of the UC claim from Department of Work and Pensions (including the last three payments)

7. Application and payment process

7.1 Applications

Applications should be submitted within the trainees' probation period to allow enough time for us to assess the overall level of demand and make discretionary awards on a fair basis.

However, we acknowledge that trainees' circumstances may change and therefore the application process will remain open for the whole academic year.

Applicants will be notified in writing (either via email or via letter) whether their application has been successful, together with the amount of funding awarded. Trainees are entitled to appeal against decisions made in relation to their application for a bursary or the withholding of payments. They should first raise their concerns with the Head of Learning, and if such a meeting fails to resolve any differences they should make a written complaint for consideration by the MK Christian Foundation Director. If this fails to resolve differences, trainees can take their appeal to the Board of Trustees.

7.2 Payment process

Payments are made using the following process:

- Make in-kind payments, such as for equipment, lunches and other course related costs
- Make weekly payments by BACS transfer to the trainee's bank account for travel related costs (please note that we cannot pay any fund into a bank account which is not in the name of the trainee)

7.3 Conditions for the receipt of bursary payments

Payments of the bursary are conditional on trainees meeting the following conditions in relation to their standards of attendance and behaviour:

- Attendance above 85% (subject to exceptional circumstances)
- Following the conditions outlined in our Trainee Workplace Agreement, including expectations around wearing uniform and PPE.

All trainees are required to sign a declaration confirming that they agree to these conditions.

Trainees who fail to meet these conditions may have their payment withheld or be invoiced for uniform, but we will always take individual circumstances into consideration. This includes considering the impact on attendance that might be caused by illness, caring responsibilities or other exceptional circumstances.

We will stop payments where trainees have been absent for a period of 4 continuous weeks or more (excluding holidays) and where trainees have decided to withdraw from a study programme.

We reserve the right to take back money from trainees where it is not spent for the reasons it was awarded.

We will consider the impact of such an action on the individual trainee before taking a final decision to do so, and any decision will be confirmed to the trainee in writing.

8. Change in circumstances

If there are changes in circumstances that may affect eligibility for a bursary, applicants and/or parents/carers must notify MKCF without delay. If changes are not reported, staff are obliged to report fraudulent claims.

9. Record keeping

Any paperwork and documents we retain for audit purposes (for example, copies of application forms, documents as evidence and any agreements signed by trainees) will be kept securely in line with our data protection policy, privacy notices and record retention schedule. These can be provided upon request.

10. Unspent funds

Funding for discretionary bursary funding cannot be carried forward for more than 1 year. Unspent funding must be reported to the DfE using the online enquiry form, specifying the amount of funding and the year/s it relates to, no later than 31 March each year. The DfE will recover all unspent funds.

11. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed by the Head of Learning every year. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Board of Trustees.