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for Education

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund: Year 2 Process Evaluation

Research report

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents findings from the second year of the independent evaluation of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund, commissioned by the Department for Education. The evaluation aims to:

1. Investigate the number and characteristics of young people who have applied for and/or received Defined Vulnerable Group and Discretionary Bursaries;
2. Evaluate the perceived impact of the policy and review decision-making processes that have been used by providers to allocate funds.

The report follows the Year 1 interim report (May 2013¹) which reported the number and characteristics of young people receiving a Bursary and provider practices in administering the Fund in the first year of implementation, along with early perceptions of impact.

Background

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund was introduced in September 2011 and provides financial support to young people who face significant financial barriers to participation in education or training post 16. The Bursary Fund has two parts:

1. Vulnerable young people (those in care; care leavers; young people receiving Income Support and young people receiving both Disability Living Allowance and Employment Support Allowance) receive yearly bursaries of £1,200 (referred to in this report as **Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries**).
2. The rest of the fund is allocated to schools, colleges and training providers so that they can identify and support the young people who need it with a **Discretionary Bursary**.

Methodology

This report draws on:

- Management Information returns completed by providers.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-16-to-19-bursary-fund-year-1-report>

- A survey of 16 to 19 providers that collected information on Bursary spending, the characteristics of applicants and recipients, the administration of the Bursary Fund and perceptions of its impacts on young people.
- A survey of young people aged 16 to 19 from a sub-sample of the providers participating in the provider survey to find out about their experiences of financial support and views about the Bursary Fund.
- Qualitative case studies with 12 providers which included interviews with staff about experiences and perceptions of the Bursary Fund and focus groups with young people.

The next stages of the evaluation, to be conducted in 2013/14, will include further waves of the provider case studies and survey and qualitative interviews with young people.

Summary of findings

The Characteristics of Bursary applicants and recipients

The total number of young people in England receiving a Defined Vulnerable Group (DVG) Bursary in 2012/13 is estimated to be 34,600, the majority of whom were receiving a full Bursary.²

The number of DVG Bursaries was much higher in FE and sixth form colleges than in other provider types.

Profiles of applicants and recipients for DVG and Discretionary Bursaries across all characteristics were very similar, suggesting that no groups were more or less likely to be awarded Bursaries if they applied.

Awarding Discretionary Bursaries

The total number of students awarded Discretionary Bursaries in 2012/13 in England is estimated to be 357,300.

The majority of providers continued to use income-related criteria to determine eligibility for Discretionary Bursaries in the second year of implementation, with Free School Meal entitlement, household income and household benefit receipt being the most common criteria. Other eligibility criteria used by providers included identifying students' financial and equipment needs.

² Please note that due to some extreme values reported in the provider Management Information this may over estimate the number of DVG awards.

Providers most commonly mentioned awarding Discretionary Bursaries for transport costs and educational equipment.

Bursary awards were conditional on attendance at most providers (90%). Just over half (53%) of young people with conditions attached to their award said that their behaviour had changed as a result of this, for example by improving their attendance or the amount of time spent studying at home.

The amount allocated as individual Discretionary Bursary awards varied considerably; from under £10 to around £6,000 per award, with a median spend of £445 per recipient in this academic year. Awards to cover general spending, transport costs or educational equipment costs (such as books or uniforms) tended to be higher than those for other purposes.

Awareness and take up of Bursaries

Providers are responsible for making young people aware of the Bursary Fund. Providers had publicised the Bursary Fund to young people using written materials (77%) and at events such as open days (70%).

The rate of awareness of the Bursary Fund was relatively high amongst young people at 70 per cent. However, levels of awareness at the time of making decisions about post-16 education were lower - of those young people who had heard about the Bursary, just 37 per cent had done so before finishing Year 11.

Young people participating in the case studies generally understood that some form of financial support was available; although they often had little understanding of the criteria for receiving a Bursary, the level of support available and the conditions imposed.

Of the young people in the learner survey who were not eligible for a DVG Bursary, 38 per cent had applied for a Discretionary Bursary. The most common reasons why non-vulnerable learners had not applied for Bursaries were that they did not need financial support (49%) and that they did not think they would be eligible (43%). Awareness was also a factor with 29 per cent saying that they were unaware that financial support was available.

Bursary Fund spending

Individual awards for Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries were fixed at £1,200 for a full Bursary and pro-rated as appropriate for part-time learners.

Discretionary Bursary awards were £410 on (median) average, indicating that Discretionary Bursaries tended to be smaller than Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries.

Just over half (53%) of providers had spent less than 90 per cent of their funding allocation. Providers tended to be cautious in allocating funds to minimise the risk of unaffordable over spends, although under spends were less prevalent than in the first year of the Bursary Fund. Another factor in under spending was students failing to meet the conditions attached to receipt of Bursaries.

Administering the Bursary Fund

The case studies revealed that providers who administered their own Bursary Funds continued to feel that the strengths of this approach were that it allowed them to be responsive to their organisations' circumstances and to the individual circumstances of students. Perceived drawbacks were potential inequality in the financial support available to young people at different providers in the same area, the administrative burden placed on providers and lack of experience of assessing financial circumstances. The administrative burden meant that sometimes the level of resources available to administer the scheme determined the model, rather than the provider being able to implement the Fund in the way they would ideally want.

In areas where the local authority administered the Bursary Fund on behalf of schools, this was seen to offer efficiencies in administration, to separate out financial support from education and to ensure equality in the level of support available at different providers. However, there was less flexibility, with providers unable to adapt how payments were made, resolve errors quickly or respond to individual student needs.

Providers took a range of approaches to determining the level of Discretionary Bursaries, taking into account young people's background and course-related factors. Young people's views on the levels of discretionary payments and whether they were sufficient to meet their needs varied and three factors influenced these:

- **Level of support from other sources** - when young people could draw on support, particularly from parents and the wider extended family, levels of bursary payments were generally considered to be adequate. However, where young people had limited access to these types of other support, levels of discretionary payments were less likely to be perceived as adequate.
- Young people were less happy when the Bursary Fund did not cover all their course related costs **including equipment, fieldwork and transport costs**.
- **Hours of study / training** - some held the view that payments should be more generous when more study hours were required.

As in the first year of implementation, Bursary awards were more commonly paid directly to students rather than paid in-kind (for example in the form of books or equipment). The majority of providers paid all Bursary awards directly to students (58%), with around a third (35%) using both direct payments and in-kind awards and less than one in ten (7%) only making in-kind awards.

Young people were generally positive about the type of Bursary Fund support they received and how they were paid. However, nearly half of recipients (45%) had experienced some problems with delayed payments which could make managing finances difficult.

Bursary awards were conditional on attendance in most providers (90%). Other conditions set by providers included compliance with behaviour standards (61%), punctuality (50%) and completion of course assignments (39%).

In the second year of the Bursary Fund implementation, more than half of providers were not intending to make changes for the 2013/14 academic year (61%).

Perceived impacts of the Bursary Fund

Provider perspectives on participation and engagement

The majority of providers thought that the Bursary Fund was having a positive impact on young people's participation (77%) and engagement in learning (70%). Similarly, around three-quarters (78%) thought it was effective in targeting young people facing the greatest barriers to participation. In the second year of implementation providers tend to be more positive about the impact of the Bursary Fund than reported in the first year report.

Providers saw the flexibility they had in awarding and administering Bursaries as key to targeting their students' needs effectively. Some welcomed the ability to use in-kind payments to ensure that the Bursary Fund was targeted on needs related to education and training.

Some concerns were expressed by providers about the impact of the Bursary Fund on young people, with regards to:

- whether the sums that could be awarded in individual Bursaries were sufficient to meet students' needs
- whether providers with high numbers of students in financial need had sufficient funding to meet high demand (i.e. to be able to give a Bursary to everyone who needed one).

Young people's views

Generally, young people we spoke to at case study providers perceived the Bursary Fund as an important means of support, this was consistent with the survey findings with the majority of Bursary Fund recipients saying that this allowed them to cope better (75%), and nearly a third (28%) feeling that this was integral to being able to continue in education. A small proportion (9%) of young people responding to the learner survey who were not in receipt of a Bursary reported being at risk of dropping out from education due to the costs of studying, and a quarter were struggling to cope financially. This suggests

that there are still a number of young people who would benefit from this financial support to aid their continued participation in education.

Conclusions and recommendations

The flexibility of the Bursary Fund continues to be seen as its major asset.

Providers value being able to make decisions about how to use the fund in the ways they consider best to meet their students' needs to participate and engage in continued learning. As reported in the first year of implementation, this is reflected by the use of both in-kind and cash bursaries, varied purposes of Discretionary Bursary awards made and payment frequencies.

Many young people were not aware of the Bursary Fund support when making post-16 choices.

Although general awareness of the Bursary Fund amongst young people was high when we spoke to them, many had not been aware of this support when making decisions about their post-16 participation. It is important that young people know about the types of financial support which will be available at the right time (i.e. before end of Year 11) to inform their decisions. Therefore, it is important that particular effort goes into ensuring that information is easily available to young people during Years 10 and 11 at open days, in prospectuses and schools rather than waiting until young people are enrolled in sixth forms, colleges, or have stopped participating.

There are still some challenges to overcome in the administration of the Fund.

Whilst young people generally view the financial support available positively, and feel it is reaching those who are in need, there are still some challenges for young people receiving the financial support due to administrative problems and the level of funding received.

Perceived impacts of the Bursary Fund are generally positive amongst young people and providers.

However, some young people were still struggling with administration problems and during case study visits some spoke of severe sanctions causing significant challenges for young people whilst they are studying. It is important that providers continue to develop their funding programmes to best meet young people's needs, target vulnerable groups and reduce any stigma associated with applying for this important financial support.

From the second year of implementation we are able to make several recommendations for providers and the Department for Education:

Recommendations for schools and 16 to 19 providers:

- Providers should publicise information about the Bursary Fund to prospective students during Years 10 and 11, when they are making choices about further study. Providers and schools should work together to achieve this.

- Publicity about availability of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund support should be clearer, setting out the eligibility criteria, conditions and application process for young people and their parents.
- Consider, where possible how greater flexibility can be given when assessing student eligibility for a Bursary, to help meet the complex individual needs of students.

Recommendations for the Department for Education:

- Bursary Fund guidance documents should clearly state how providers can communicate with young people about the available support.
- Consider whether it is acceptable for providers to carry over funds to future academic years if there is an under spend and the implications of doing so (for the Department, providers and young people).
- Monitor how the change to centrally administering the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries affects administration in providers.

1 Introduction

This report presents findings from the second year of a three-year evaluation of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund. In this section we describe how the Bursary Fund works and provide an overview of the evaluation's aims and methods.

1.1 The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to young people who face significant financial barriers to participation in education or training post 16. The Bursary Fund has two parts:

3. Vulnerable young people (those in care; care leavers; young people receiving Income Support and young people receiving both Disability Living Allowance and Employment Support Allowance) receive yearly bursaries of £1,200 (referred to in this report as **Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries**).
4. The rest of the fund is allocated to schools, colleges and training providers so that they can identify and support the young people who need it most with a **Discretionary Bursary**.

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund was introduced in September 2011. Providers are responsible for administering applications, deciding award criteria for Discretionary Bursaries and distributing funds. The first year of the Bursary Fund was a 'transitional' year; most second year students who had previously received Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) continued to receive transitional payments and could apply for discretionary bursaries, but all students were eligible and able to apply for the Bursary Fund from September 2012. EMA payments for all students ended in August 2012.

To be eligible to receive a 16 to 19 Bursary in the 2012/13 academic year (the second year of implementation), the young person must have been aged under 19 at the start of the academic year in which they started on an eligible programme of study.³ Young people are only eligible if they are attending provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (e.g. Ofsted) and must also be:

- funded by the EFA (either directly or via a local authority); or
- funded or co-financed by the European Social Fund; or

³ Full guidance is available at

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/16-19%20Bursary%20Fund%202012-13%20Guide.pdf> [Accessed 24-01-14]

- otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to level 3) that is accredited by Ofqual or is pursuant to Section 98 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

In future years the administration of Defined Vulnerable Group bursaries will be managed centrally with providers claiming this funding from a central source as required.⁴ This change was planned for year 3 of implementation so was not in place at the time of the research.

1.2 Evaluation aims and methods

The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned NatCen Social Research to conduct an evaluation of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund. The aims of the evaluation are to:

5. Investigate the number and characteristics of young people who have applied for and/or received Defined Vulnerable Group and Discretionary Bursaries;
6. Evaluate the perceived impact of the policy and review decision-making processes that have been used by providers to allocate funds.

The evaluation will meet these aims using the following methods:

7. An **initial scoping study** was conducted to explore current practice and inform the main evaluation.
8. **Surveys of providers.** Surveys took place in the 2012 and 2013 summer terms to collect information about Defined Vulnerable Group and Discretionary Bursaries. A further survey to update information about the Discretionary Bursaries will also be carried out in 2014.
9. **Provider case studies.** Twenty-seven 'light-touch' case studies were carried out in summer term 2012 and autumn term 2012. Twelve of these providers were re-visited as in-depth case studies during the second year of implementation (2012/13). A further visit to the case study providers will be carried out in the third year of the evaluation.
10. **Research with young people.** A survey of 16 to 19 year old learners in education or training was carried out in 2013 to collect information about their experience and perceptions of the Bursary Fund. Qualitative interviews will then be carried out in 2013/14 with a sample of young people who took part in the survey to explore the issues in greater depth.
11. **Analysis of Management Information.** The evaluation includes analysis of information collected from providers by the DfE about the Bursary Fund and synthesises this analysis with the findings from the other strands of the evaluation.

⁴ 16-19 Bursary Fund Guidance 2013/14
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239840/EFA-00044-2013.pdf [Accessed 28-01-14]

This report presents findings of the Year 2 Management Information, provider survey, learner survey and provider case studies. Details of the methods used for these research elements are provided in the following sections.

A separately-commissioned quantitative evaluation will analyse the impact of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund on levels of participation and attainment in post-16 education. This strand is being undertaken by the Institute for Fiscal Studies and will report separately.

1.3 Summary of methods

This section summarises the methodology used, more details are provided in Appendix A.

1.3.1 Management Information

The Department for Education asked all providers who had received Bursary funding in 2012/13 to complete a short Management Information (MI) return in October 2013, relating to their Bursary Fund for the 2012/13 academic year. Providers were asked to complete this return electronically.

The information included in this return and analysed for this report was:

- Numbers of young people receiving full and pro-rata Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries;
- Numbers of young people in each of the Defined Vulnerable Groups receiving a Bursary;
- Numbers of young people awarded Discretionary Bursaries;
- Numbers of Discretionary Bursary awards made.

A total of 2,454 providers completed the MI return. DfE carried out initial checks of the data, removing inconsistencies that could not be resolved with the provider. Following this checking process, 2,385 provider records were included in the data for analysis. DfE then provided this data to NatCen for analysis.

Weights were applied to the MI data to correct for differences in likelihood of responding to the MI request and to scale up the responses to represent the whole population of providers receiving funding. This allows us to estimate the overall spending and awards made by providers in England, supplementing the more detailed data available from the longitudinal survey of providers.

Analysis of the data was carried out using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a software package for statistical analysis. Some further inconsistencies with the data were identified (for example, unfeasibly large values for some responses) and records were excluded from particular analyses accordingly.

More detail on the weighting of the MI data can be found in Appendix A.

1.3.2 The Year 2 provider survey

Data collection

The survey used postal and online data collection. Providers were posted a paper questionnaire and sent a link to the online version by email.

Selected providers were sent the survey by post and email in early June 2013 and asked to complete it by the end of term. As response rates were below target by the end of term, providers who had not responded were emailed again in September 2013 and asked to complete the survey by early October.

The main content of the questionnaires was:

- Overall spending on Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries
- Spending and award criteria for Discretionary Bursaries
- Numbers and characteristics of applicants and recipients of Discretionary Bursaries
- Administration of the Bursary Fund
- Perceived impacts of the Bursary Fund

Sampling and response

The sample comprised of those providers that responded to the Year 1 survey and a refresher sample of new providers. The refreshment sample was selected based on funding allocations provided to NatCen by the DfE. A sample of 317 providers was selected for the survey (257 respondents from the Year 1 survey and 60 new providers).

Overall, 203 providers completed the survey, a response rate of 64 per cent (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Provider survey response rates by sample type and mode of completion

	Original sample		Refresher sample		All	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Issued	257	100	60	100	317	100
Completed - web	120	47	17	28	137	43
Completed - post	54	21	11	18	65	21
Total	174	68	28	47	202	64

Many of the providers who completed the survey did not answer all the questions, presumably because they did not hold the information that was requested. This was a particular problem on the questions relating to characteristics of Bursary applicants and recipients. Analysis in this report is based on valid responses and unweighted base sizes are shown in figures.

1.3.3 Learner survey

Data collection

The survey used online, telephone and postal data collection. Young people were posted a paper questionnaire and given details about how to access the survey online.

Participating young people received a £10 high street voucher as an incentive for completing the survey.

Sampling and response

The sample for the survey of young people consisted of young people aged 16-18 studying at providers included in the first survey of providers.

Students were only selected from providers that responded at the first survey. Forty-seven of the responding providers were selected (out of a total of 256 responding providers) and 75 students were sampled from each of them.

The sample of students came from two sample frames. This is because at the time no single database held information about all students aged 16-18 years. Students in school sixth forms were selected from the National Pupil Database (NPD). Students in separate sixth form colleges, Further Education Colleges and other providers were selected from

the Individualised Learner Record (ILR).⁵ The NPD does not include telephone contact details so young people sampled from this source were invited to take part online and by post only.

Overall, 1,240 young people took part in the survey, a response rate of 34 per cent (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 Learner survey response rates by sample type and mode of completion

	NPD sample		ILR sample		All	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Issued	450	100	3,250	100	3,700	100
Completed - web	22	5	530	16	552	15
Completed - post	134	30	216	7	350	9
Completed - telephone	-	-	338	10	338	9
Total	156	35	1,084	33	1,240	34

1.3.4 In-depth case studies

Qualitative case study visits were carried out with 12 providers to explore in detail their experiences of administering the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund in the second year of implementation. The purpose of these visits was to explore key issues in relation to how providers were implementing the funding including the range of approaches adopted by providers to administer bursaries; to gather feedback on the perceived impacts of Bursary support and to track change in Bursary implementation over time. Table 1.3 shows the composition of the achieved case study sample by provider type.

Table 1.3 Overview of case study provider sample

Type of provider	Achieved Number
School Sixth Forms	4
FE Colleges	4
Private Training Providers	2
Special Schools	2
Total	12

⁵ This is a record for all students who are studying outside the school system. The majority of students aged 16-18 years are on the ILR. The NPD and ILR records have since been merged so a single database is now available.

In each case study, depth interviews were carried out with:

- A senior member of staff responsible for determining Bursary policy
- A member of staff responsible for the administration of Bursary Funds
- A member of staff at the local authority with responsibility for supporting post-16 provision

In addition, a focus group with students aged 16 to 19 was conducted in each case study provider (twelve in total).

The findings presented here reflect the range and diversity of views and experiences among the staff and young people interviewed. As a qualitative study, the prevalence of views and experiences arising from the case study data are not reported.

1.4 Report conventions

1.4.1 Table conventions

- Throughout the report, percentages based on fewer than 50 cases are enclosed in square brackets, and should be interpreted with caution.
- Figures have been weighted, and the unweighted base population is shown in each table.
- Percentages are rounded up or down to whole numbers and therefore may not always sum to 100.
- Where more than one answer could apply, this is indicated under the table.
- Percentages less than 0.5 (but greater than 0) are shown as '+’.

1.4.2 Analysis of Management Information

Results from the Management Information have been scaled-up to provide estimates for the whole population of 16-19 education and training providers. This has been done by applying a scaling weight to make the providers included in the analysis look like the whole population. Estimates have been rounded to the nearest hundred. It is important to note that due to some extreme values reported in the provider Management Information the analysis may over estimate the number of both DVG and Discretionary awards.

1.4.3 Analysis groupings

Providers have been grouped as follows for the analysis of Management Information and survey responses:

Provider type

- Further Education and Sixth Form colleges
- Schools (includes maintained school and academy sixth forms)
- Special schools (includes special schools and colleges)
- Other providers (includes local authorities and private training providers)

Median

The median is the value at the mid-point of the distribution of a set of values.

In this report median figures are quoted for spending amounts and for numbers of students unless otherwise stated. The median is used instead of the mean (average) as means can be distorted by extreme outlying values.

2 Characteristics of applicants and recipients of Bursaries

In this chapter we examine the profiles of applicants and recipients of Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries and Discretionary Bursaries, using findings from the Management Information, provider survey and survey of learners.

Key findings from this chapter include:

- The total number of young people in England receiving a Defined Vulnerable Group (DVG) Bursary in 2012/13 is estimated to be 34,600, the majority of whom were receiving a full Bursary. Across all providers, the median number of students receiving a full Bursary was one.
- The number of DVG Bursaries was much higher in FE and sixth form colleges than in other provider types.
- The largest group of DVG Bursary recipients was young people in receipt of Income Support; an estimated 14,300 young people on Income Support received one of these bursaries.
- Profiles of applicants and recipients for DVG and Discretionary Bursaries across all characteristics were very similar, suggesting that no groups were more or less likely to be awarded Bursaries if they applied. For example, whilst there was a very slight gender difference in applications - 51 per cent of applicants were male and 49 were female, this was the same for the same for recipients (male: 51%; female: 49%).

2.1 Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries (MI returns)

Providers were asked to record in the Management Information returns the numbers of young people receiving full and pro-rata Defined Vulnerable Group (DVG) Bursaries.⁶

Across all providers, the median number of students receiving a full Bursary was one. On average, the number of recipients was much higher in further education colleges and sixth form colleges (median of 25, compared to 2 in special schools and 1 in school sixth forms). Using this information, the total number of young people in England receiving a full DVG Bursary in 2012/13 is estimated to be 23,600.

The numbers of young people receiving a pro-rata DVG Bursary were much smaller. The median number receiving a pro-rata Bursary was zero. The median total number of students in further education colleges and sixth form colleges was two and for all other

⁶ Please note that due to some extreme values reported in the provider Management Information this may over estimate the number of DVG awards.

providers was zero. The total number of young people in England receiving a pro-rata DVG Bursary in 2012/13 is estimated to be 11,900.

The median number of students receiving any DVG Bursary (i.e. full or pro-rata) across all providers was one. In further education colleges and sixth form colleges, the median was 25, compared to much smaller numbers in special schools (2) and other types of providers (1). The total number of young people in England receiving any DVG Bursary in 2012/13 is estimated to be 34,600.

2.1.1 Recipients in Defined Vulnerable Groups (MI returns)

The Management Information returns asked providers to give the numbers of young people in each of the Defined Vulnerable Groups who were receiving a Bursary.⁷

The largest group of DVG Bursary recipients was young people in receipt of Income Support. Based on the MI returns, an estimated 14,300 young people on Income Support in England received a DVG Bursary (Table 2.1). The estimated total number of young people in care receiving a DVG Bursary was 10,800 while for care leavers this was 4,700. Of those young people receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Employment Support Allowance (ESA), 3,200 were estimated to be receiving a DVG Bursary.

The number of young people in each group in individual institutions tended to be small, with those on Income Support, in care and care leavers concentrated in further education colleges and sixth form colleges.

Table 2.1 MI returns: Estimated total numbers of Bursary recipients in each Defined Vulnerable Group in 2012/13⁸

	Number
Income Support	14,300
In care	10,800
Care leavers	4,700
DLA and ESA	3,200
<i>Provider MI returns</i>	<i>2,385</i>

⁷ Please note that due to some extreme values reported in the provider Management Information this may over estimate the number of DVG awards for individual groups.

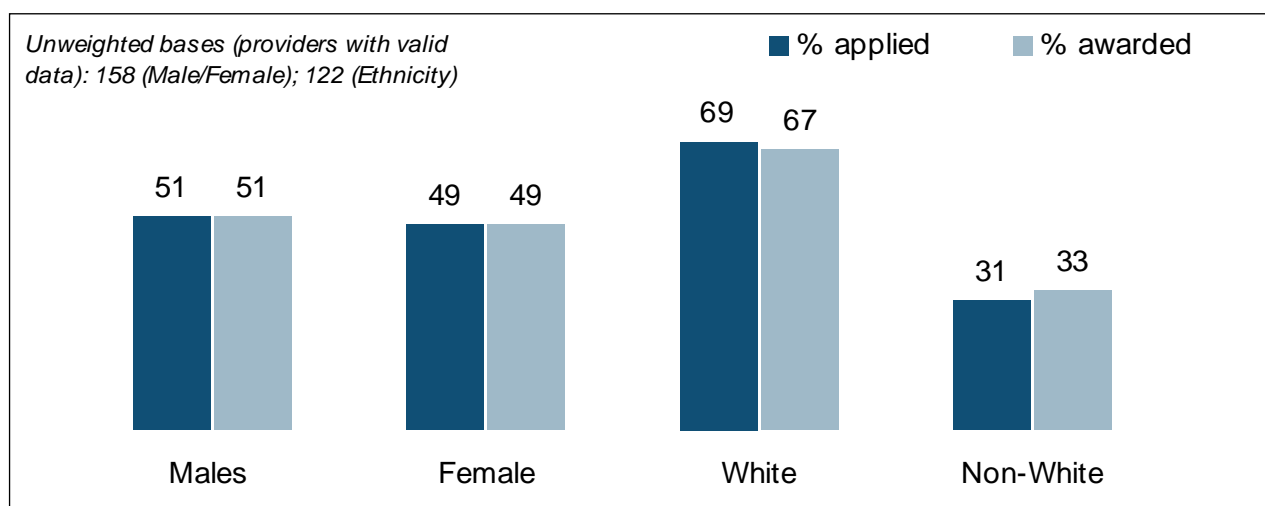
⁸ Due to missing data submitted in the Management Information returns the sum of Bursary recipients in this table does not add up to the total number of recipients given in section 2.1.

2.1.2 Characteristics of applicants and recipients of Discretionary Bursaries (provider survey)

Providers responding to the survey were asked to give information on the characteristics of applicants and recipients for Discretionary Bursaries. There was a very slight gender difference – 51 per cent of applicants were male and 49 were female, with the proportions being the same for male and female recipients of discretionary bursaries (male: 51%; female: 49%; Figure 2.1). This, in addition to similar proportions of applications resulting in an award (male: 93%; female: 94%) indicates that a Bursary was equally likely to be awarded to both groups (Figure not shown)..

Overall, around a third (31%) of Discretionary Bursary applicants were from a non-White ethnic group and a similar proportion (33%) received funding (Figure 2.1). The proportions of applications resulting in award were also similar for White (95%) and non-White (93%) students (Figure not shown).

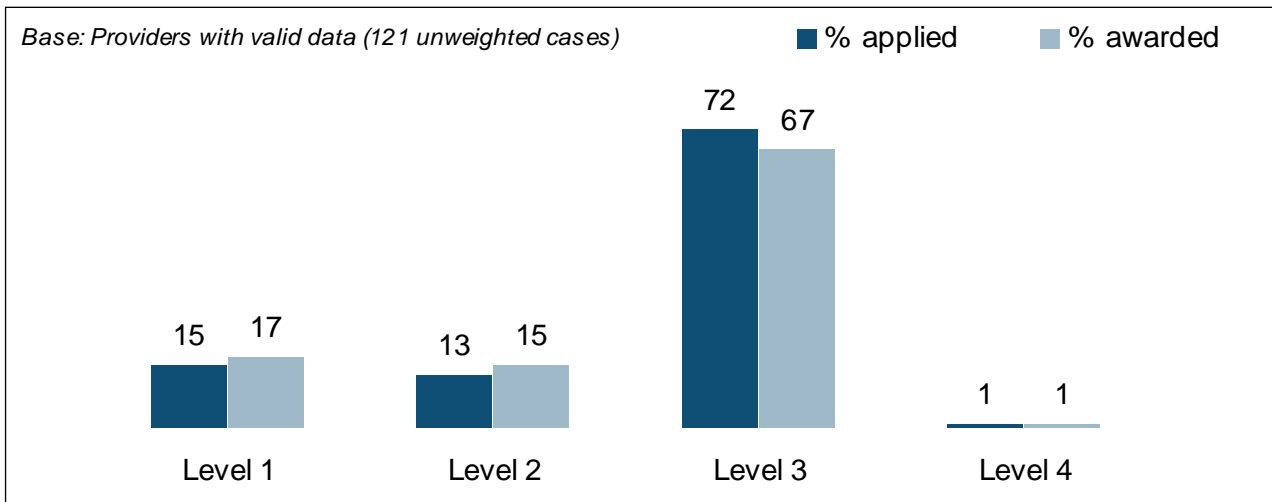
Figure 2.1 Provider survey: Mean percentage of applicants and recipients of Discretionary Bursaries by gender, ethnicity, full-time or part-time study



The majority of Discretionary Bursary applications, just under three-quarters (72%), were from young people studying at Level 3 (Figure 2.2). The proportions of applications from young people studying at all the other levels were therefore much lower – 15 per cent at Level 1, 13 per cent at Level 2, and one per cent at Level 4. ⁹

⁹ A small number of providers reported that young people studying Level 4 qualifications were in receipt of a bursary. The 16-19 Bursary Fund guidance states that only students are eligible up to Level 3 so this may be due to miss-reporting of data (e.g. if a student is studying more than one qualification).

Figure 2.2 Provider survey: Mean percentage of applicants and recipients of Discretionary Bursaries by level of qualification studied



The number of providers giving information about Discretionary Bursary applicants and recipients by disability status was too small for robust analysis.

3 Awarding Discretionary Bursaries

Providers have the freedom to establish their own criteria for awarding Discretionary Bursaries, the forms these awards take and the size of awards. In this chapter we look at how providers award Discretionary Bursaries.

Key findings from this chapter include:

- The total number of students awarded Discretionary Bursaries in 2012/13 in England is estimated to be 357,000, an increase from 251,800.
- Based on the MI returns, the total number of students awarded Discretionary Bursaries in 2012/13 is estimated to be 357,300. This is an increase from 251,800 in the first year of implementation which reflects the fact that more students were eligible to receive Bursary funding in 2012/13.
- Providers can award more than one Discretionary Bursary to each young person and often do so for more than one purpose. The total number of Discretionary Bursary awards made by providers in England in 2012/2013 was estimated to be 738,300 which is more than double the number of Bursary recipients.
- For most providers the proportion of applications for Discretionary Bursaries which resulted in an award was very high - 49 per cent reported that all applications resulted in an award.

The majority of providers continued to use income-related criteria to determine eligibility for Discretionary Bursaries in the second year of implementation; household income (67%), Free School Meal entitlement (62%), and household benefit receipt (62%) were the most commonly mentioned criteria. The criteria used by providers were similar to the first year of implementation.

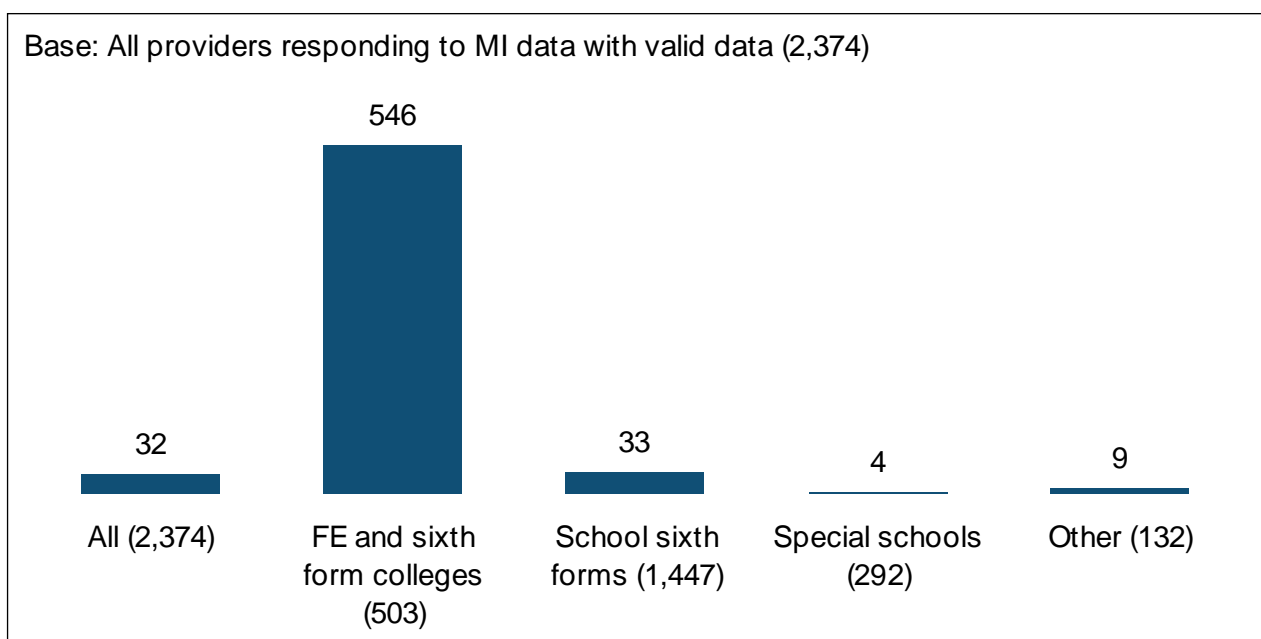
- Providers were most likely to award Discretionary Bursaries as general cash awards to young people for use as needed (54%). Providers also commonly mentioned awarding Discretionary Bursaries for transport costs (50%) and educational equipment (39%).
- The amount allocated as individual Discretionary Bursary awards varied considerably; from under £10 to around £6,000 per award, with a median spend of £445 per recipient in this academic year. Awards to cover general spending, transport costs or educational equipment costs (such as books or uniforms) tended to be higher than those for other purposes.

3.1 Numbers of Discretionary Bursary awards (MI returns)

The Management Information returns asked providers for the numbers of young people who had been awarded a Discretionary Bursary in 2012/13 and the total number of awards, these figures can be different because providers are able to award more than one Discretionary Bursary to each student.

Across all providers, the median number of students awarded a Discretionary Bursary was 23 (Figure 3.1). The median number of Discretionary Bursary awards was much higher for further education colleges and sixth form colleges (546) compared to other provider types; 33 in sixth form schools and academies, four in special schools and nine in other provider types.

Figure 3.1 MI returns: Median number of students awarded a Discretionary Bursary in 2012/13 by provider type



Based on the MI returns, the total number of students awarded Discretionary Bursaries in 2012/13 was estimated to be 357,300, an increase from 251,800 in the first year of implementation, reflecting the fact that more students were eligible to receive Bursary funding in 2012/13. This represents approximately 23 per cent of the 16-18 cohort in education and work based learning¹⁰, an increase from 17 per cent in the first year of

¹⁰ Participation in education, training and employment by 16- 18 year olds in England to the end of 2012, DfE, 27th June 2013.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/209934/Participation_SFR_end_2012_-_FINALv2.pdf [Accessed 31/01/14] Calculation based on 1,544,400 16 to 18 year olds in education or work based training.

implementation. In total it is estimated that approximately 25 per cent of the 16-18 cohort received either a Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary or Discretionary Bursary.

Across all providers, the median proportion of students awarded a Discretionary Bursary was 42 per cent¹¹. This was slightly higher at further education colleges and sixth form colleges with a median of 55 per cent of students, compared to 41 per cent at schools and 20 per cent at special schools.

The total number of Discretionary Bursary awards made by providers in England in 2012/2013 was estimated to be 738,300 (more than double the number of Bursary recipients). This suggests that where providers are awarding Bursaries for more than one purpose e.g. to cover transport costs and equipment costs, these are being counted on the MI return as two Bursaries.

3.2 Numbers of Discretionary Bursary awards (provider survey)

In the second year of implementation there continued to be a wide variation in the numbers of applications providers received, reflecting the diversity in the size of student populations. Across all providers, the median number of applications for Discretionary Bursaries was 26 (Table 3.1). A quarter of providers had received 13 or fewer applications, whilst at the other end of the scale around ten per cent of providers received over 400 applications. The median number of awards made was 24, which is similar to the median number of applications. As expected due to the larger number of young people eligible for a Bursary in the second year of implementation the median number of applications and awards are higher than those reported in the first year of implementation (18 applications; 17 awards).

¹¹ Whilst we would expect this figure to be higher than reported last year (10%) because in the second year of implementation more students are eligible to apply. However, these figures should be treated with caution as feedback from the Education Funding Agency about the MI collection suggests that some providers may have included each separate payment made to a young person in their response to this question, instead of the number of individual students in receipt of an award.

Table 3.1 Provider survey: Number of applications and awards

	Number of applications	Number of awards
25 th percentile (25% of values below this)	13	12
Median (Half of values below this and half above)	26	24
75 th percentile (25% of values above this)	58	56
<i>Unweighted base (providers with valid data)</i>	189	190

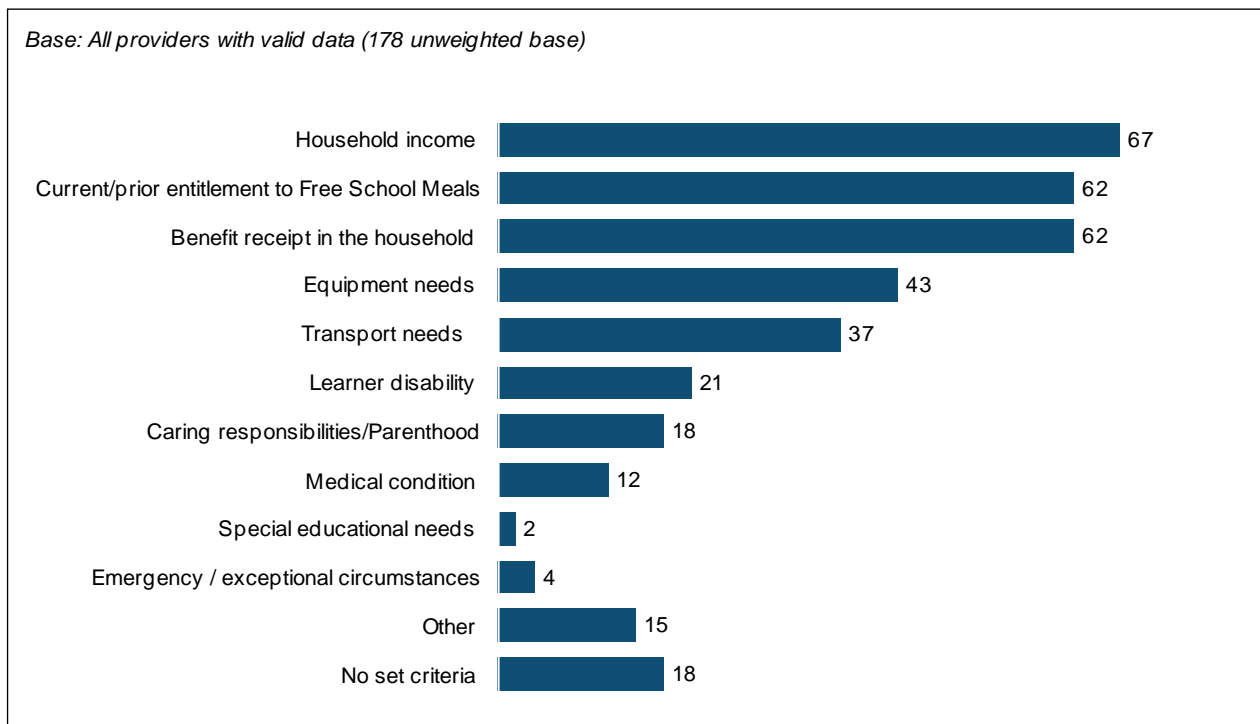
For most providers the proportion of applications for Discretionary Bursaries which resulted in an award was very high, with 49 per cent reporting that all applications resulted in an award. Just six per cent of providers reported that less than 75 per cent of applications were successful, the lowest success rate being 52 per cent.

3.3 Criteria for awarding Discretionary Bursaries (provider survey, case studies)

Criteria directly related to financial circumstances were the most frequently used by providers to award Bursaries. This included household income, mentioned by just over two-thirds of providers (67%), current/previous entitlement to Free School Meals (62%), and benefit receipt of the household (62%; Figure 3.2). Needs-based criteria such as equipment (43%) and transport (37%) were also commonly mentioned by providers. Other eligibility criteria were mentioned by less than a quarter of providers including, learner disability (21%), parenthood or other caring responsibilities (18%), medical conditions (12%) and special educational needs (2%). Eighteen per cent of providers reported they had made awards on a case by case basis with no set criteria and a small percentage did so as required for young people in exceptional or emergency circumstances (4%).¹² The criteria used by providers is similar to the first year of implementation when the majority of providers also used income related criteria.

¹² Most likely there is some overlap in the understanding of these two answer options – awards were being made to young people experiencing short-term hardship or when pressing needs materialised outside regular eligibility for Discretionary Bursaries.

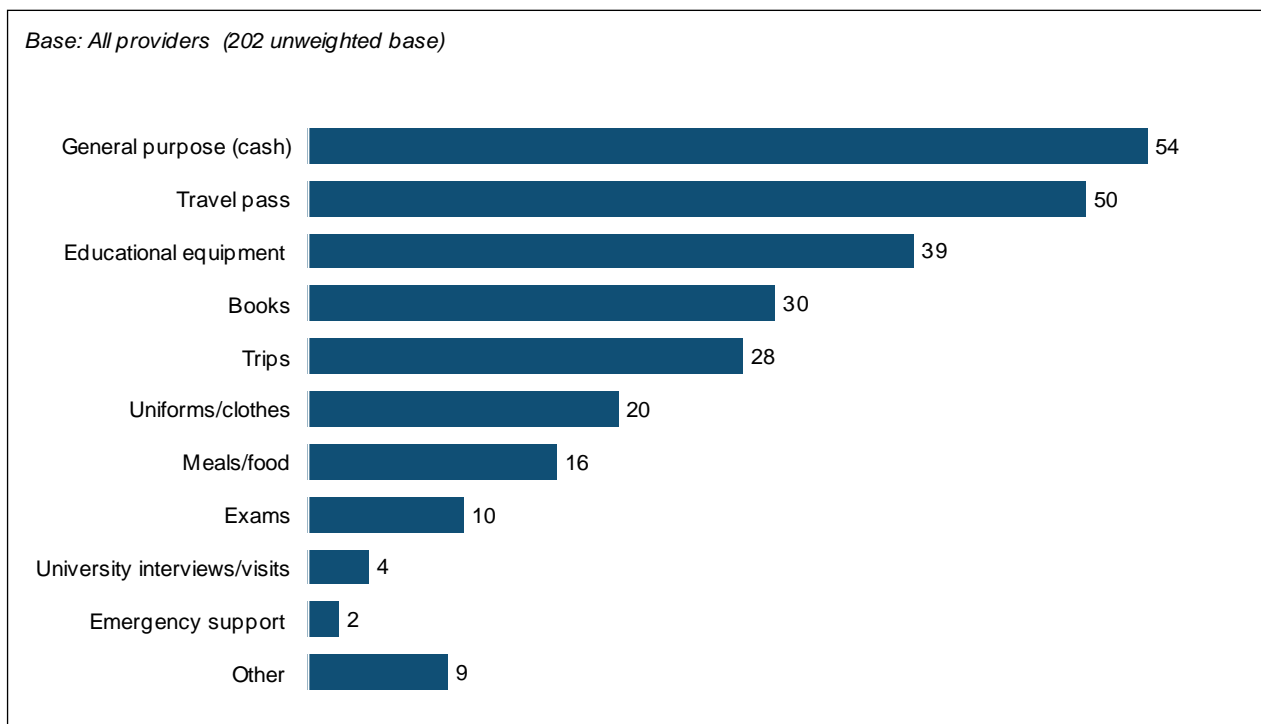
Figure 3.2 Provider survey: Criteria used by providers to award Discretionary Bursaries (% mentioned)



Note: multi-response question - providers could mention more than one criterion

For this year’s survey, when providers said that they were using household income to award Discretionary Bursaries, they were asked how many different income thresholds they used to make awards (e.g. for making awards of different sizes or types). The large majority - around three-quarters of providers (76%) used only a single threshold below which a young person would be eligible for the award. Sixteen per cent of providers used two income thresholds, and a minority of providers used three (8%) or four (1%) income thresholds to award Discretionary Bursaries (Figure 3.3)

Figure 3.3 Provider survey: Number of income thresholds used to award Discretionary Bursaries



The provider survey findings illustrate the diverse criteria used to determine eligibility for Discretionary Bursaries. The following examples drawn from the case study providers illustrate the range of approaches adopted in further detail.

No fixed criteria model:

In this special school, young people were encouraged to make applications to the fund for specific purposes and each case was assessed by a panel of staff. Decisions took into account each application's individual merits, including how support from the Bursary Fund would benefit the young person educationally. Awards were generally made on a 'one off' basis for a specific need.

Mixed criteria model:

In this large FE College eligibility for Discretionary Bursary support was determined in three ways. For receipt of a travel pass eligibility was based on living over two miles away and a minimum of 12 hours of courses a week. In addition, equipment costs would be paid in full (subject to a means test) and students had access to a support fund for one-off needs where eligibility was determined by a one-to-one interview to discuss individual needs and circumstances. All final decisions were made by a weekly awards panel.

Income threshold model:

In this school sixth form, eligibility for a Discretionary Bursary was set at an income threshold of £16,200 (based on the threshold set for eligibility for Free School Meals via the benefits system). Where applications were made just above this threshold some flexibility was employed and a decision on eligibility made on the individual circumstances of the case, including the number of siblings and the family circumstances.

From the perspective of young people who participated in the case study focus groups, eligibility criteria based on a set income threshold were sometimes considered to be too crude a measure of need, and they felt other factors needed to be taken into consideration when determining eligibility. In particular, the number of siblings in the family, as well as individual travel and course costs were identified as criteria that should be factored into decisions. Some also held the view that more detailed appraisal of family circumstances including caring responsibilities, health issues and the level of parental support should be factored into decisions. However, it was acknowledged that this level of individual assessment may not be practical in reality.

Evidence from the case studies suggests providers using a single threshold for support did so because this was simpler to administer and complex tiered systems were administratively burdensome and time consuming:

'I personally think it should be if you earn more then you get less, but they don't do that here, because, we just haven't got enough people to sit there and, and work that out.. it's only fair that if you earn £20,000 thousand and I earn £10,000 like, the child that their family only earns £10,000 should get more. That's, how I feel.. it's just we wouldn't be able to do it. Well, we would, but we've have to employ someone else.'

(Sixth Form Finance officer)

However, where single thresholds had been set there was some concern over young people who fell just outside the eligibility criteria:

'I sometimes think that these cut off in terms of income et cetera are a bit arbitrary because you know, somebody who were on a pound more, you're still in the same situation but have just missed out, if that makes sense. So I think provided you're doing the best as I said, with the situation that they've got and the funding that they've got, um, and it's breaking down the barriers for those young people who

can access it, but my concern is for those young people who can't, and what support's in place for them if you like.'

(Local Authority staff member)

Concerns that Discretionary Bursaries were not always reaching the right students led some staff and young people to argue for universal provision of support for 16 to 19 year olds. Offering some form of universal support was considered to have the advantages of:

- ensuring all young people receive some help;
- reducing the risk of unmet need;
- removing barriers relating to the stigma of means tested support and privacy concerns around the disclosure of financial information;
- increasing awareness of support available with a single consistent approach, and;
- sending a message that society values a skilled workforce and rewards those who continue in education.

However, others considered that funds were better spent targeting the individuals in most need and a universal system risked providing support to young people who did not need it.

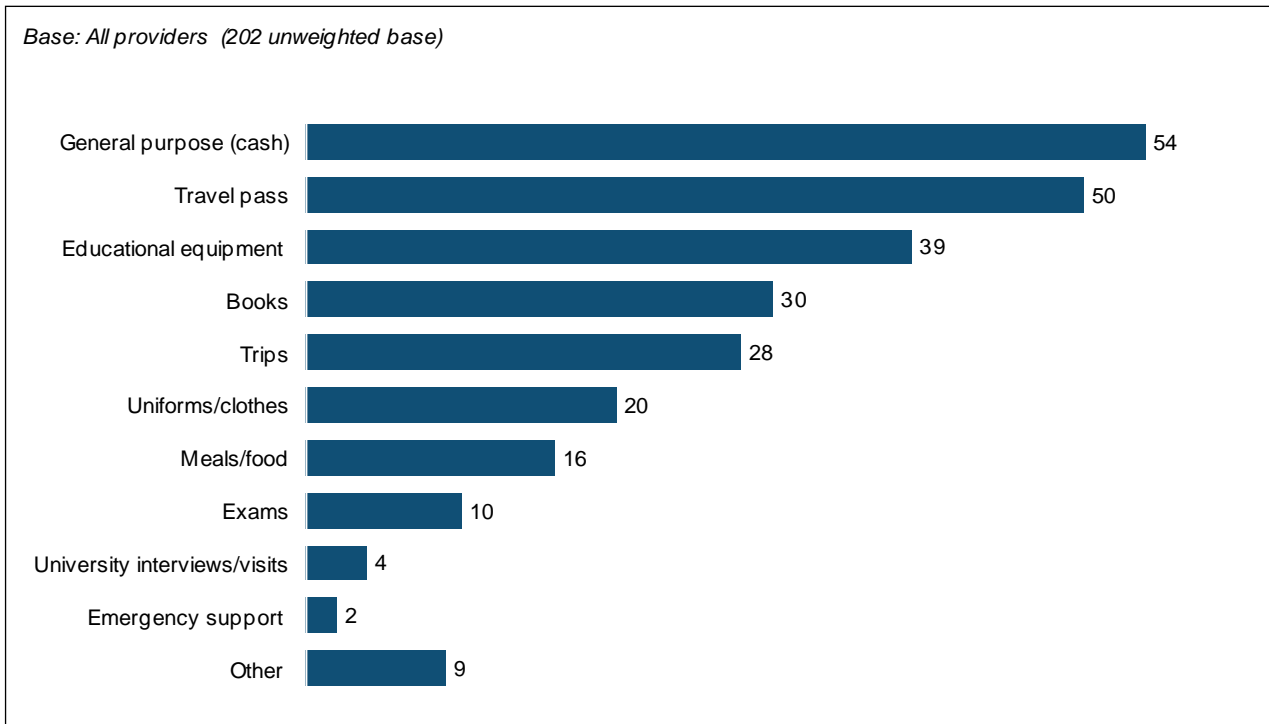
3.4 The purposes of Discretionary Bursary awards (provider survey)

Providers in the survey were most likely to award Discretionary Bursaries as general cash awards to young people for use as needed – mentioned by more than half of providers (54%, Figure 3.4). Half of providers (50%) reported that awards were made for travel purposes, and 39 per cent reported that awards were to cover the costs of educational equipment. Bursaries to cover other costs related to study were also common with 30 per cent of providers offering Bursaries to purchase books, and 28 per cent to attend trips or outings.

Smaller percentages of providers reported having made awards for visits to universities (e.g. to attend open days or interviews; 4%), and as emergency support to the recipients (e.g. hardship loans, emergency accommodation; 2%). Nine per cent of providers reported awarding Bursaries for another specific purpose that did not fit into the pre-specified answer categories. Examples included for help with personal care, with the cost of the Disclosure and Barring Service (previously Criminal Record Bureau checks), or enabling participation in activities such as sports and music).

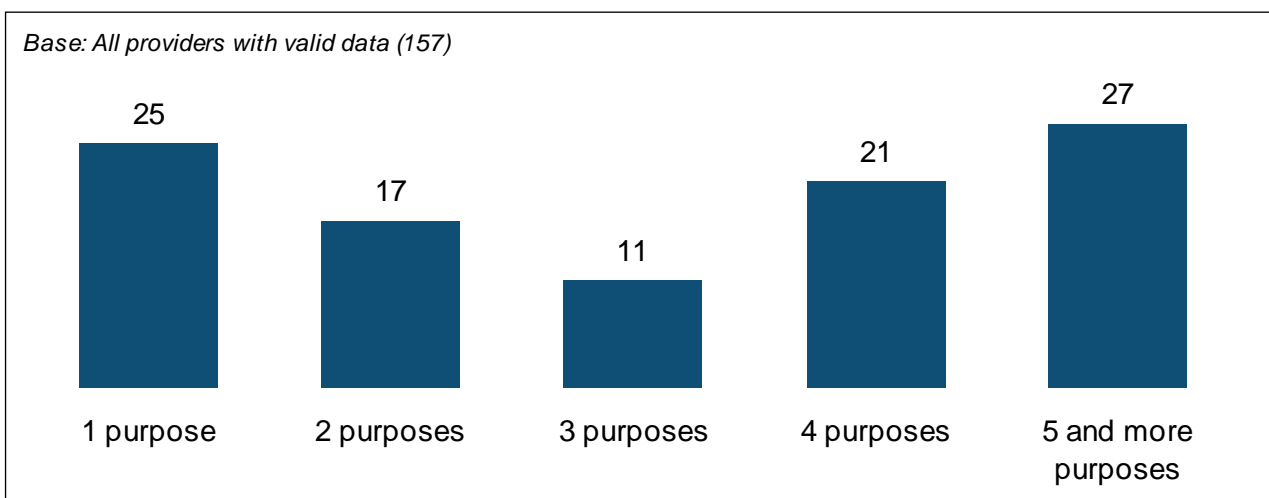
In the second year of implementation, awards for general purposes and books were more common than reported in Year 1 (16% and 17% respectively).

Figure 3.4 Provider survey: Purposes of Discretionary Bursary awards (% mentioned)



Discretionary Bursaries were awarded for between one and eight different purposes. A quarter of all providers had offered awards for one single purpose (Figure 3.5). The median value was three purposes which means that half of all providers had offered awards for up to three specific purposes. A quarter of providers offered Discretionary Bursaries for five or more specific purposes.

Figure 3.5 Provider survey: Number of purposes providers offer Discretionary Bursaries for (%)



3.4.1 Determining the size of Discretionary Bursary awards (provider survey)

Providers can set the level of Discretionary Bursary awards as they wish. The median spend per recipient on Discretionary Bursaries was £410.¹³ However, the size of Bursaries awarded by providers varied considerably - from £1 awarded to around £6,000 at the extreme ends. The distribution of Bursary sizes is skewed, with a minority of bursaries representing a large proportion of spending. The median size of a Discretionary Bursary was £400; this is based on all the different types of Discretionary Bursaries that providers reported offering and not the number of awards made to students.¹⁴ At the extremes, a quarter of Discretionary Bursaries had a value of up to £215 while a quarter of bursaries were almost three times this amount (£623: Table 3.2), which explains why the typical provider had a higher mean spend per recipient, of £445.

Table 3.2 Provider survey: Value of Discretionary Bursaries

	£
25 th percentile (25% of values below this)	215
Median (Half of values below this and half above)	400
75 th percentile (25% of values above this)	623
<i>Unweighted base (providers with valid data)</i>	1,521

As many providers award Discretionary Bursaries for a combination of purposes it is not straightforward to separate the amounts awarded for each specific purposes. For example, whilst the size of Discretionary Bursary awards was highest when the purpose of the awards included books (a median of £585; Figure 3.6), in many cases these awards cover other purposes too so it is important to take this into account when interpreting this data.

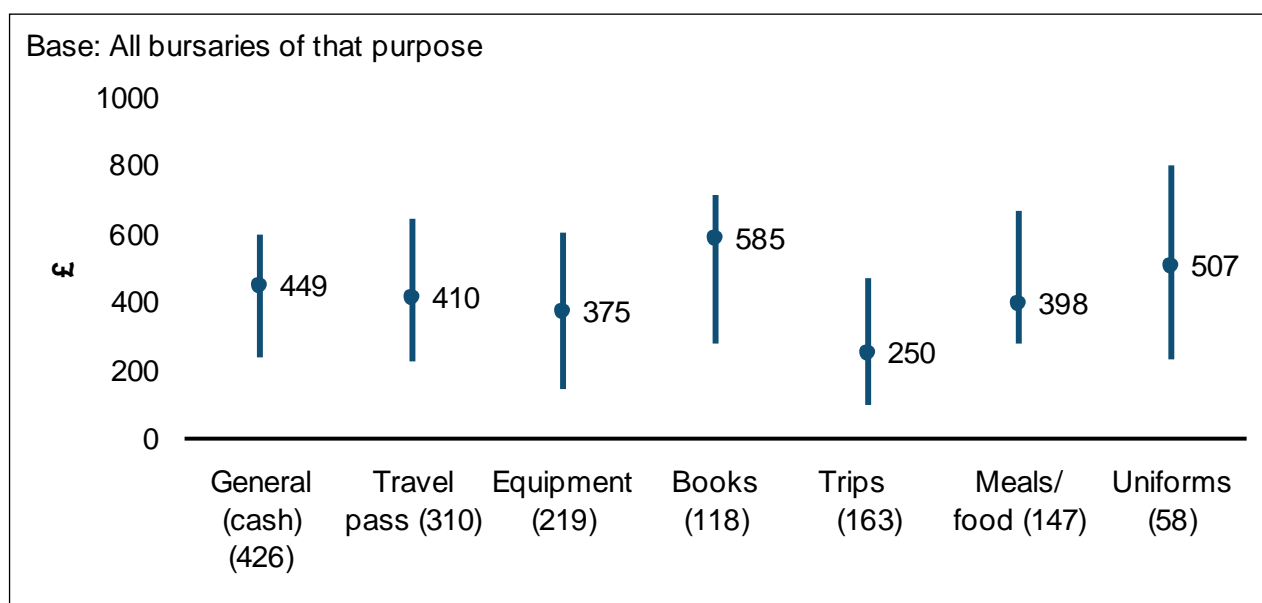
The size of Discretionary Bursaries was lower for visits to universities (for interviews, open days etc; £346), for covering exam costs (£295), and for educational trips (£250).

The table also shows the wide range in the size of Bursaries. For example, a quarter of Bursaries that included educational equipment were £148 or less but a further quarter were £604 or more (Figure 3.6).

¹³ Calculated by dividing the provider's total spend on Discretionary Bursaries by the number of recipients and taking the median of these figures across providers.

¹⁴ For in-kind awards providers gave the cash value of the in-kind provision which is used to calculate award sizes.

Figure 3.6 Provider survey: The values of Discretionary Bursary awards, by purpose (median labelled)



In line with the provider survey findings, there was a wide variation in the size of Bursary awards reported by young people who responded to the learner survey. The smallest Bursary was a one-off in-kind award of £3 value, and the largest was £2,100 (a combination of a one-off cash and in-kind award, along with regular in-kind payments). Half of all the Discretionary Bursary recipients¹⁵ had received up to £400, with a quarter having received £300 or less. At the other end of the scale, a quarter had received £780 or more¹⁶ (Table 3.3). For the majority of Discretionary Bursary recipients the value of Bursary support received was less than the £1,200 per annum awarded as part of the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary.

Table 3.3 Learner survey: The value of Discretionary Bursary awards received

	£
25 th percentile (25% of values below this)	300
Median (Half of values below this and half above)	400
75 th percentile (25% of values above this)	780
<i>Base: 'Non-vulnerable' recipients of bursaries with valid data</i>	268

¹⁵ Discretionary Bursary recipients are defined as those young people in the survey receiving Bursaries who were not categorised into one of the defined vulnerable groups as per the indicators in the survey.

¹⁶ Bursary recipients were asked to specify the amounts (cash and in-kind) they had received regularly and the frequency of payments (e.g. weekly, each month, each term). If respondents did not receive regular Bursary payments they were asked whether they had received any additional payments (one-off, irregular), or any lump sum payments. The amounts were summed up to give the overall, per annum size of the received Bursary support.

3.4.2 Young people's views on the size of Discretionary Bursary awards (case studies)

The year 1 report found that a range of approaches for determining levels of Discretionary Bursary awards were adopted by case study providers. These different models remain in place in the second year of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund implementation with some providers adopting a fixed award size; others varying the award depending on the level of demand (to minimize the risk of overspend) and others continuing to operate an 'ad hoc' system of awards typically made up of one-off payments made to meet a specific need.

Young people's views on the levels of discretionary payments and whether they were sufficient to meet their needs varied. Three factors influenced how support levels were viewed:

- Level of support from other sources

Where young people felt they could draw on resources and support from elsewhere, particularly from parents and the wider extended family, levels of Bursary payments were generally felt to be adequate. However, where young people had limited access to other support, levels of discretionary payments were less likely to be perceived as adequate. Examples given included cases where young people came from large families and parents were struggling to make ends meet; and where young people were supporting parents by paying rent or contributing to household bills and food:

'They don't think about what like if you're still living at home and you've got to pay rent as well. They believe that all the bursaries should really ... [go on] school stuff like you clothes, which is understandable but what about yourself, your situation and things you have to like put in for, like put money in towards? I don't think it's like covering all aspects of what it could be used for..mine pretty much goes on my family. I hardly see any of my money back. By the time it comes in it goes straight to them because well we don't get DLA and there's four boys not just one so that's four other mouths to feed.'

(Young person focus group, FE college)

- Course and transport costs

Young people were more positive about the levels of support received when they were considered to meet the costs directly associated with staying on in education. For young people with limited costs associated with continuing in education (because they lived locally and did not have transport costs for example), Bursaries were generally felt to meet their needs. Similarly where Bursaries were considered to remove a cost (for example, a travel pass that met transport needs)

this was viewed positively. Young people were less positive about levels of support where the amount received was not adequate to meet needs. For example, in one case a £2 daily payment to contribute towards food costs was considered inadequate, while in another case costs for trips associated with a course were not felt to be adequately covered by the Bursaries.

- Hours studying / training

Some young people considered that the number of hours studying each week should be factored into the level of support offered because of the costs associated with being in college/school five days a week. In particular, young people studying in training colleges with an element of vocational training felt the levels of support were not commensurate with the work and effort they put in. Comparisons were made to apprenticeships where payments were higher and some held the view that payments should be more generous when more hours were involved.

4 Awareness and take up of Bursaries

In this chapter we look at the ways providers publicise the Bursary Fund to raise awareness about this financial support, methods for targeting young people in need, levels of awareness amongst young people and the characteristics of young people applying and receiving a Bursary.

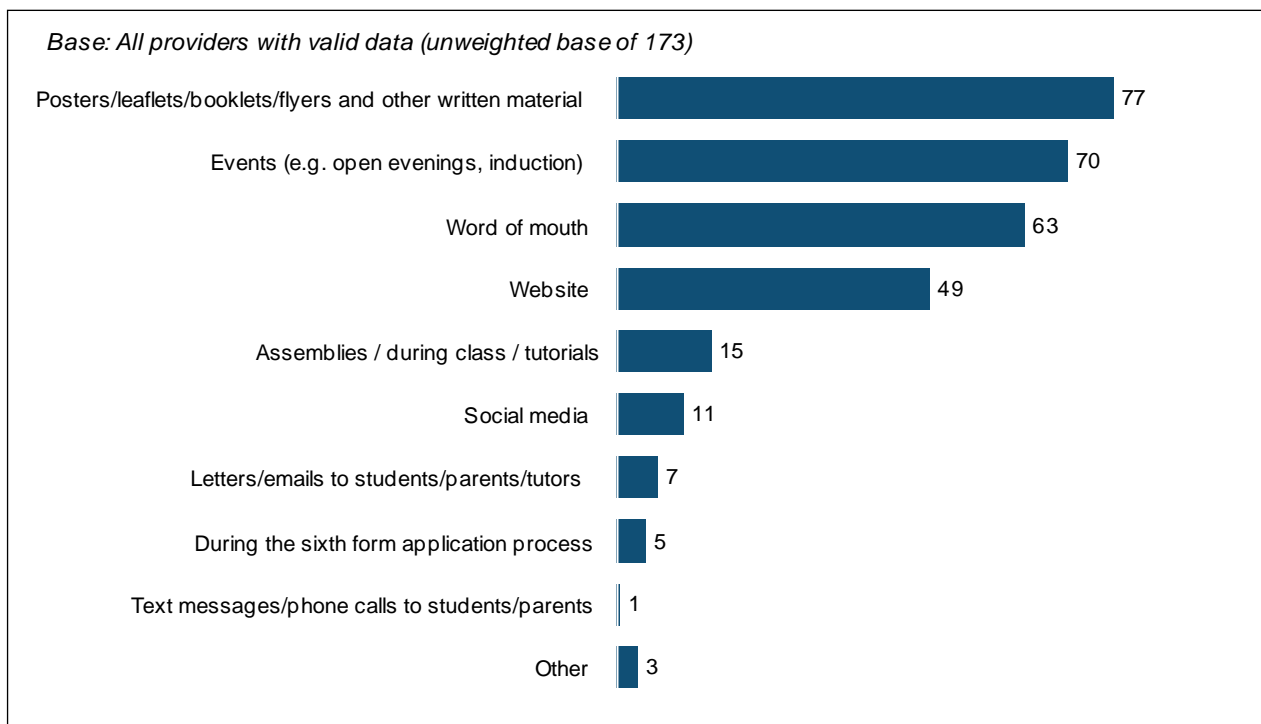
Key findings from this chapter include:

- Providers are responsible for making young people aware of the Bursary Fund. Providers had publicised the Bursary Fund to young people using written materials (77%) and at events such as open days (70%).
- Around half of providers had put information about the Bursary Fund on their websites (49%), with 11 per cent of providers also using social media to advertise the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund.
- Young peoples' awareness of the Bursary Fund was relatively high, at 70 per cent. However, of those young people who had heard about the Bursary Fund, just over a third (37%) had done so before finishing year 11, while the majority (63%) had heard about it after finishing year 11.
- Young people participating in the case studies generally understood that some form of financial support was available; although they often had little understanding of the criteria for receiving the Bursary, the level of support available and the conditions imposed.
- Of the young people in the learner survey who were not eligible for a DVG Bursary, 38 per cent had applied for a Bursary. The most common reasons why non-vulnerable learners had not applied for Bursaries were that they did not need financial support (49%) and that they did not think they would be eligible (43%). Awareness was also a factor with 29 per cent saying that they were unaware that financial support was available.

4.1.1 Provider activities to publicise the Bursary Fund (provider survey)

Providers are responsible for making young people aware of the Bursary Fund. The most frequently cited method of publicising 16 to 19 Bursaries was through the distribution of written materials such as posters, leaflets, booklets or flyers (77% of providers; Figure 4.1). Over two-thirds (70%) of providers had used provider events such as open evenings or induction days to publicise the Bursary Fund, and around two-thirds (63%) reported using word of mouth to make young people aware of the funding. Around half of providers had put information about the Bursary Fund on their websites (49%), with 11 per cent of providers also using social media to advertise the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund.

Figure 4.1 Provider survey: How the Bursary Fund was publicised (% mentioned)



Note: Providers could mention more than one method of publicising the scheme

4.1.2 Young people's awareness of the Bursary Fund (learner Survey)

The rate of awareness of the Bursary Fund was relatively high, at 70 per cent. Of those young people who had heard about the Bursary Fund, 37 per cent had done so before finishing year 11, while the majority (63%) had heard about it after finishing year 11 (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Learner survey: When young people heard about the Bursary Fund (%)

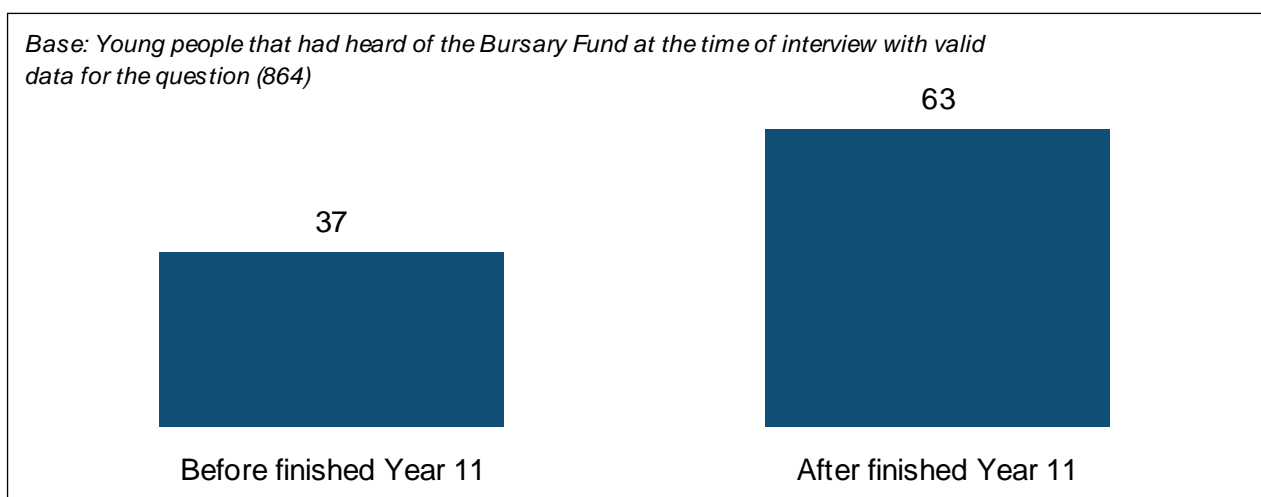
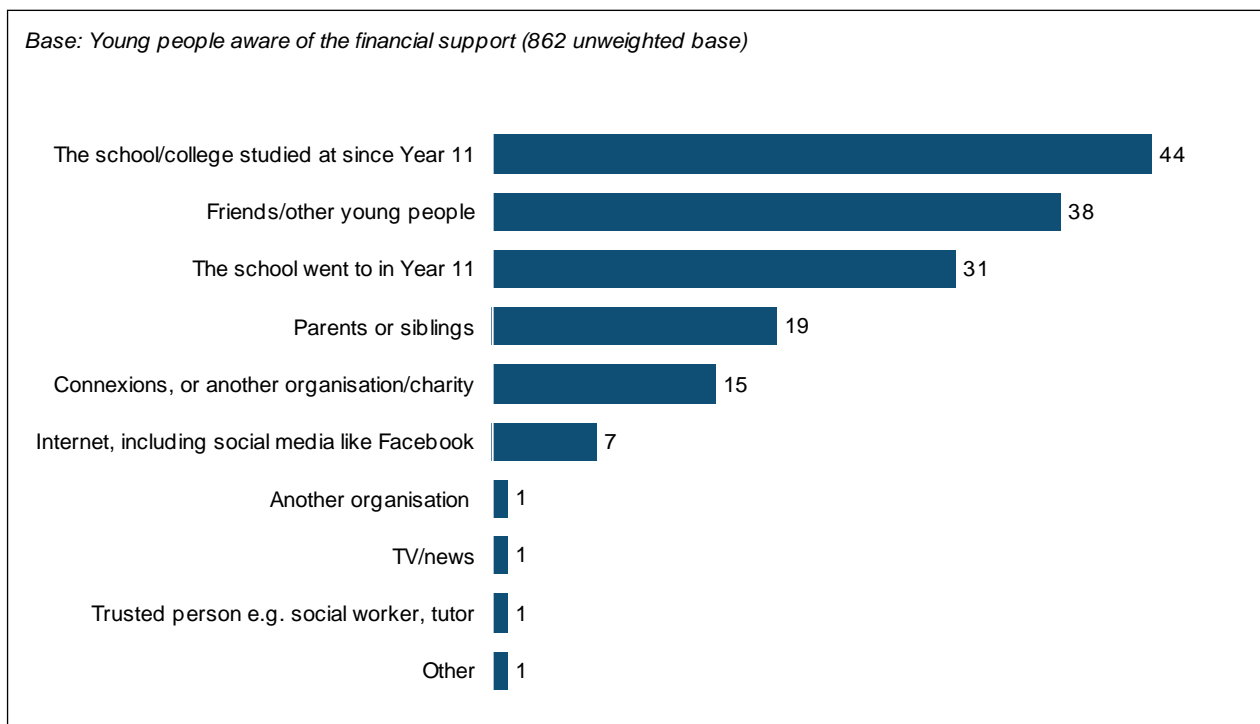


Figure 4.3 shows the main channels through which young people found out about the Bursary Fund. The main ways included formal channels, such as schools and colleges, and informal channels, such as family and friends.

Figure 4.3 Learner survey: How they found out about financial support



Note: Respondents were able to select more than one way of find out about the Bursary Fund.

4.1.3 Promoting and raising awareness of the Bursary Fund (case studies)

The provider survey findings illustrate the wide range of methods used to raise awareness and promote the Bursary Fund. These methods are echoed in the case study findings.

When providers chose to advertise the Fund, the methods and levels of advertisements varied widely between providers. Promotion was seen in varying forms such as face-to-face (assemblies, workshops, tutor meetings), via letters and leaflets, and also online, for example on the providers website and intranet. Their activities to promote awareness can be broadly grouped into three approaches:

- Advertised the Bursary Fund **before** the young people applied.

This was seen across all four provider types. In some sixth forms, the Fund was discussed with young people in year 10/11, and sold as part of a 'further education package'. Case study training providers also actively promoted the Fund, by going into schools to tell the young people about what they had to offer and how they could support them. This was seen to be valuable as financial considerations were a big factor in the decision making process of young people attending this type of provider.

'I think for a lot of ours it is [money is a factor]. I do, I think if they were getting nothing they'd probably look elsewhere as well.'

(Manager, Training Provider)

- Advertised the Bursary Fund **after** the young people had registered/ started.

The Fund was normally explained on induction days, in assemblies and tutor groups. In special schools, parents were made aware of the Bursary before their child started, and young people were informed once they had started the course. Due to the characteristics and needs of the students at special schools, providers tended to work more closely with parents (and primary care givers). This involved continual face-to-face and telephone contact with parents, as well as an open day during which parents could talk to 'ex- parents' about the Bursary Fund.

- Limited promotion of the Fund

Providers cited a number of reasons for not advertising the Bursary Fund, including the perception that they were following DfE guidance¹⁷; and so by not promoting the Bursary they were avoiding using it for competitive advantage.

'It's not supposed to be used for that. That would count as being used as part of marketing, isn't it? And it's actually strictly said you shouldn't use it as competitive means.'

(Assistant Principal, School Sixth form Academy)

There was also an assumption that students knew funding was available, and therefore would seek the help if they needed it. In one sixth form for example, application forms were available at enrolment and the expectation was that pupils would apply if eligible. In another case, the first year of implementation saw Bursaries paid out on an ad hoc basis if pupils approached staff with a particular need, although in the second year more had been done to raise awareness of the funds available because it was felt there was limited awareness amongst students.

¹⁷ The DfE guidance for 2012/13 stated that "*Bursary Funds should not be used by a provider for any purpose designed to give them a competitive advantage over other providers, such as the provision of benefits, gadgets or other financial incentives.*" However, the guidance also says "*Providers should develop a statement, setting out how they will administer and distribute their funds, in good time to inform young people's consideration of their choices about what and where to learn in the following academic year.*"

As seen in section 4.1.2, a significant proportion (30%) of young people had still never heard of the Bursary Fund. It was generally understood that some form of financial support was available; although young people often had little understanding of the criteria for receiving the Bursary, the level of support available and the conditions imposed.

This lack of awareness was due to a combination of issues:

- Variation in approaches from different providers meant there was no 'clear message' getting through to young people. This led to confusion as to what was available and who could receive it.
- The Bursary Fund was not as widely known as the Educational Maintenance Allowance. This lack of consistent dissemination meant general awareness, and word of mouth 'publicising' was missing.

Larger providers in particular, reported challenges when trying to raise awareness. Young people who attended large FE colleges, which were 'multi-site', reported having low levels of awareness. This was due to either different levels of promotion in each building (i.e. posters & knowledgeable teachers) or because there was only one 'support building' which young people did not realise they needed to attend.

'R¹⁸: In my college there are all like posters up on the wall about it and stuff in the art building.

I: And here?

R: Here there are only like one or two.. Not many posters'

(Young person focus group, FE College)

Young people in the focus groups thought the best way to raise awareness would be to increase promotion at school in Years 10 and 11, before making decisions about post 16 education.

'Because some kids go into education and they may not have the best background and they don't think about the money. Then they'll leave school, but they don't think about what bursary they could get while they're at school. So, they need to really be told about it and stuff like that.'

(Young person focus group, Training provider)

However, other young people felt that raising awareness of the Bursary could have negative consequences.

¹⁸ R= Respondent, I=Interviewer

'If you do then everybody's just gonna come for the money and they might just mess about and everything'

(Young person focus group, Training provider)

Case Example

This Sixth Form Academy had high levels of awareness reported by both staff and young people. A number of approaches were taken, for example, young people were told on enrolment about the support, the provider repeatedly sent emails to all pupils before the application deadline and flyers were given out. The provider also held assemblies and sent out letters to parents. In order to help those who would receive a Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary the provider requested a list of those in care, who were then approached by the Entry and Foundation Team.

Local authority staff fed back that it was important for professionals working with vulnerable young people to have a good awareness of the financial support available so they could support young people in accessing it. The view was held that levels of awareness varied amongst other professionals such as social workers, youth workers and staff working in virtual schools. Local authority staff had worked to increase awareness amongst these groups, but this was challenging because of the varied schemes, levels of support and eligibility criteria in different providers. High work loads and staff turn over were identified as particular barriers to ensuring professionals were up to date with the support available.

'What I found was that ...there was a huge differentiation as well between what some of these professionals knew about the 16-to-19 Bursary and what others knew. Some knew nothing at all. So it's about those professionals having the information so they can help the young people get what they're entitled to.'

(Local Authority staff member)

4.1.4 Take up of Bursaries (case studies)

In the second year of implementation, the case study work explored the views of provider and local authority staff and young people. The following barriers to take-up were identified:

- Application Process

Providers considered that for some young people the bureaucracy of paperwork, combined with a general lack of engagement led to some not applying or applying late. Although those that held this view also recognised that this attitude would be hard to change and that there was no 'easy fix'.

'There's bound to be students that just haven't bothered themselves because of the age thing, because I think they need a lot of coaxing at that age, 16, 17, you know? And it does seem like a lot of work to go and fill in, pick up a form, take it home and get your mum to fill it in. Then take it to the customer service centre but that's, that's nothing you're gonna get around because you're dealing with students of that age, you know? I don't think there's an easy fix on that one'

(Administrator, School Sixth Form)

Special schools raised the issue that some of their students with special needs had difficulties opening bank accounts. This made it difficult for providers to ensure the money was going to the young person. This challenge was overcome by working directly with parents to help them fully understand the fund, banking and possible benefit changes.

There were examples of young people who had not applied because either they did not want their parents to know, or they did not know how much their parent earned and would struggle to evidence their eligibility. One case study provider for example reported that a third of application forms were sent back because they did not have the correct evidence. This prompted a concern about how many young people, having been rejected once, did not return with the right information.

'At the beginning of the year, literally every, every third one that comes in: 'No, sorry, not the right evidence.' Well, I can't keep track of whether they come back to me.'

(Administrator, FE College)

- Stigma and disclosure of confidential information

Views were mixed on the extent to which the stigma associated with means tested support was a barrier to take up. Providers reported that for a proportion of parents there was stigma attached to 'claiming money', while some spoke of 'family pride' being a barrier to take-up.

For those in care, one barrier was disclosing their 'in care' status to the provider. It was recognised that for these young people, leaving school to move into post-16 education was seen as a time to 'redefine' themselves. For these young people starting post-16 education gave them an opportunity to leave behind their 'in care' status and prove that they could manage without help. Local authority staff had particular experience of this because of their care teams. They spoke with young people in care who actively avoided telling their 16 to 19 provider of their 'in care' status.

'We do hear from the Leaving Care service that [for] some people it's an opportunity for them to redefine themselves to some extent. So, after being a looked after kid in school for umpteens years nobody knows who they are when they go to college, it's a whole new bunch of people and, and they're reluctant to identify as looked after'

(Local Authority staff member)

- Financial privacy and confidentiality

Providers expressed some concern that families did not want to disclose personal information.

Providers who were situated in smaller localities reported parental unease about giving financial information. These providers felt that where parents were known to staff, disclosing financial information was a barrier as parents did not want staff 'knowing their business'.

- Impact on other benefits/income

There were some concerns about young people who would be eligible for a Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary based on receipt of Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Due to concerns about the possible wider financial impacts of claiming ESA and DLA 19 the young people were not claiming this benefit, and were therefore not receiving the Bursary. This view was held especially amongst special schools with some reporting that they had tried to help by educating parents about the benefits system.

¹⁹ Bursary Q&A guidance for 2012/13 states that if a young person claims ESA and DLA this may affect the household / family benefits the parents can claim for that child and families should take this into consideration (DfE, 2012).

4.1.5 Take up of Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries (learner survey)

Four per cent^{20 21} of responding young people were classified as being in defined vulnerable groups based on their survey responses.²²

Not all of these vulnerable learners were receiving the Bursary. Indeed, only 43 per cent of vulnerable learners said that they had applied for a Bursary. Those who had not applied for a Bursary cited a range of reasons for not applying.²³ While 35 per cent said that they did not need financial support, a similar proportion (36%) said that they were unaware that financial support was available (Table 4.1). A small proportion (3%) of vulnerable learners did not apply for a Bursary as they did not want anyone one to know that they needed financial support, consistent with the case study findings.

Table 4.1 Learner survey: Why vulnerable learners did not apply for the Bursary

Reason why did not apply	%
Did not need financial support	[35]
Did not think would be eligible	[19]
Could not be bothered with the process of applying	[6]
Unaware that financial support available	[36]
Did not want anyone to know that needed support	[3]

²⁰ This figure is the weighted prevalence percentage; the unweighted count of young people who appear to belong to the defined vulnerable groups is 63;

²¹ 46% of respondents in the vulnerable groups were in care or had been, 1% were in receipt of DLA and ESA, and 56% were receiving income support. These are the weighted percentages, and they do not add up to 100 because a young person could fall in more than one of the defined vulnerable groups.

²² The survey asked questions to provide indicators for which of the respondents might be 'defined vulnerable group' young people as defined by the policy: respondents were asked "whether they are currently in care or have ever been in care"; and whether they "received benefits in their own right" with DLA, ESA, and Income Support being answer options. Where respondents had reported that they are or were in care, and/or that they are in receipt of Income Support, or ESA and DLA in combination, they were treated as seemingly vulnerable young people according to the policy.

Some level of unreliability in the data should be expected (e.g. not all young people might be sure which benefits they are in receipt of) so there is chance that there is an underestimation of the level of defined vulnerable group people in the responding sample. On the other hand there is a chance of over-estimation too because the survey asked whether respondents have 'ever' been in care. The policy does define rules on how long ago and for how long one must have left care to qualify as a 'care leaver' vulnerable young person or for how long one needs to have been in care, but this specific information was not available from the survey. Some respondents may also have answered the question positively when there had been any involvement with social services only, without the respondent necessarily having been removed from home and placed in state care.

²³ This figure and the following figures that are based on vulnerable young people who have not applied for bursaries need to be treated with caution due to the low base size.

Got financial support automatically without applying	[8]
Advised not to apply	[1]
<i>Unweighted base (Vulnerable learners not applying for Bursary)</i>	30

In terms of actually receiving the financial support - only 29 per cent of the vulnerable young people said that they have been receiving Bursary support with a small proportion (7%) having been unsuccessful in applying for the funding. The majority of those vulnerable young people who had not received support had either been in care in the past, or were currently in receipt of Income Support. Whilst this group is small and findings should be treated with some caution, analysis suggests that most of the unsuccessful applicants had changed provider since Year 11, and so their circumstances may not have been known to their current providers.

4.1.6 Characteristics of applicants and recipients of Discretionary Bursaries (learner survey)

Of the young people who were not eligible for a DVG Bursary, 38 per cent of respondents in the learner survey had applied for a Bursary (a smaller proportion than among vulnerable learners). The most common reasons why non-vulnerable learners had not applied for Bursaries were that they did not need financial support (49%; Table 4.2) and that they did not think they would be eligible (43%). Awareness was also a factor with 29 per cent saying that they were unaware that financial support was available.

Table 4.2 Learner survey: Why non-vulnerable learners did not apply for the Bursary

	%
Did not need financial support	49
Did not think would be eligible	43
Unaware that financial support available	29
Could not be bothered with the process of applying	6
Advised not to apply	5
Did not want anyone to know that needed support	4
Got financial support automatically without applying	1
<i>Unweighted base (Non-vulnerable learners not applying for a Bursary)</i>	748

Note: Young people could give more than one reason for not applying.

Whilst there were no gender difference between applicants and non-applicants, there was some variation in the other characteristics of young people applying for a Bursary. Non-white learners surveyed were more likely to apply for a Bursary (57% compared to

33% of white learners; Figure 4.5), as were those with fewer than 5 GCSEs (53% compared to 34% of those with at least 5 GCSEs at grades A* to C; Table 4.3) and learners whose parents were not educated to degree level (42%). As may be expected, just over half (53%) of learners in receipt of benefits applied for a Bursary, compared to 36 per cent of those not in receipt of benefits.

Table 4.3 Learner survey: Profile of non-vulnerable learners applying for a Bursary Fund

Characteristic	% Applying for Bursary Fund
Gender	
Male	39
Female	36
Ethnicity	
White	33
Non-white	57
Qualification level	
Has at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C	34
Without 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C	53
Level of parental education	
<i>With</i> a parent educated to degree level	20
<i>Without</i> a parent educated to degree level	42
Whether receives benefits (not Income Support or ESA&DLA)	
Receives benefits	52
Not receiving benefits	36
<i>Unweighted base (Non-vulnerable learners)</i>	1,170

Of those non-vulnerable learners who applied for a Bursary, 69 per cent were successful in their applications and received financial support. This success rate is lower than reported in the provider survey where just six per cent reported less than 75 per cent of applications were unsuccessful. This difference may in part be due to providers only counting final submitted applications while young people may have started but not completed and submitted an application, or may not recall whether they did so. Overall, of the 1,214 young people in the (weighted) learner survey sample, who may have been

eligible for a Discretionary Bursary, 27 per cent reported that they had received a Bursary.²⁴

There were no significant differences in the proportion of applicants receiving bursaries by gender, qualification level or parental education (Table 4.4). However, young people from non-white ethnic groups were more likely to be successful in their Bursary application than white young people (Table 4.4). It is important to note that this analysis does not take into account any differences in other circumstances between the two groups. Therefore, differences in the economic circumstances of applicants from different ethnic groups may explain this apparent difference in Bursary receipt.

Table 4.4 Learner survey: Profile of non-vulnerable learners receiving a Bursary

Characteristic	% Receiving a Bursary
Gender	
Male	64
Female	75
Ethnicity	
White	64
Non-white	84
Qualification level	
Has at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C	68
Without 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C	72
Level of parental education	
<i>With</i> a parent educated to degree level	70
<i>Without</i> a parent educated to degree level	60
Whether receives benefits (not Income Support or ESA&DLA)	
Receives benefits	[76]
Not receiving benefits	68
<i>Unweighted base (Non-vulnerable learners)</i>	<i>395-420</i>

²⁴ This is the equivalent to 316 of the weighted sample.

Generally there were few differences between the profiles of Bursary recipients and unsuccessful applicants, although recipients appeared to be more likely to have less favourable economic circumstances. However, compared to these groups young people who did not apply for a Bursary tended to have characteristics commonly associated with more favourable economic circumstances (e.g. based on parental work status and learner qualification levels).

As may be expected due to the income criteria commonly used for awarding Discretionary Bursaries, around a third (32%) of all young people receiving a Bursary were from families with no parent working, compared to seven per cent of those who did not apply (Table 4.5).

Young people receiving a Bursary were less likely to have a Level 3 qualification (67%) than those who did not apply (76%). With regard to young people receiving benefits in their own right, 13 per cent of both recipients and unsuccessful applicants were in receipt of benefits, similar to benefit receipt amongst non-applicants (8%).

Table 4.5 Learner survey: Bursary Fund application status by parent economic status, young person's qualification and benefit receipt

Characteristic	Recipients	Unsuccessful applicants	Non-applicants
	%		%
<i>Parent economic activity</i>			
At least one parent is working	68	82	93
Parents are unemployed and/or inactive	32	18	7
<i>Unweighted base</i>	288	133	745
<i>Young person's highest qualification (levels)</i>			
Up to Level 1	12	7	7
Level 2	21	21	17
Level 3 and higher	67	73	76
<i>Unweighted base</i>	306	135	742
<i>Benefit receipt</i>			
Receiving benefits (other than ESA+DLA and income support)	13	13	8
Not receiving benefits	87	87	92
<i>Unweighted base (all learners with valid data)</i>	300	139	773

4.1.7 Targeting young people who may be in need (case studies)

Beyond setting initial eligibility criteria, proactive targeting was mainly used to encourage those who had not applied but may be in need of support, whether this was when all applications were being made, or if a young person's circumstances changed during the year. Targeting happened in a number of ways:

- Large Providers

Larger providers, who were most likely to have support teams (Connexions services/ guidance teams / Entry and Foundation teams), used this resource to actively target young people who they thought/knew should be receiving help. For large providers in 'transient areas' targeting pupils throughout the year was seen as a challenge. This was due to a lack of information available about students as this was often delayed being sent from their previous local authority.

'I wonder whether, as the year goes on, there may be young people that come into the system that we perhaps miss. I know we do pick young people up as the year goes on because I think in (this area) people are transient; people move in and out of boroughs for whatever reason, you know? And I think that, that's tough'

(Head of Student Services, FE College)

- Small or specialised providers

Smaller providers, in particular school sixth forms, used their pre-existing knowledge of the young people to actively target them and inform them about the Bursary. This was normally done on a one-to-one basis with a teacher or form tutor. Smaller providers also considered they had closer relationships with their pupils, and could therefore easily identify if someone's circumstances had changed.

'if a normal, happy-go-lucky student suddenly seems very upset, depressed, missing school, not doing their work, you know, something's triggered it. They [the staff] are very good at identifying any needs that might be there'

(Finance manager, School Sixth Form)

In contrast, young people at this provider felt some people missed out on support because of the lack of targeting and promotion.

'So, I think if the teachers can see these pupils in their lesson, they should suggest it to them and think, 'I can see you haven't got the right equipment today, maybe you should apply for this and you might be able to get this help with your learning', but it's just not worked that way.'

(Young people focus group, School Sixth Form)

Special schools also considered that they had a close relationship with their pupils, and the parents, so they could easily identify who needed support.

- Defined Vulnerable Groups – ‘looked after’ young people

Some providers took more of a hands-off approach when targeting young people in care. Instead of directly targeting the young person, providers informed social services of the fund, or gave them the application packs (to pass on to the young people). It was acknowledged that this approach may help with stigma/disclosure issues (explored above) as it meant the young person did not have to disclose their ‘in care’ status. Providers who had extensively promoted the fund, and were confident everyone was informed, felt it was the responsibility of the young person to declare themselves.

5 Bursary Fund spending

In this chapter we examine the amounts of money that providers reported awarding as part of the Bursary Fund. We look separately at spending on Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries and Discretionary Bursaries; then examine total spending and reasons for over and under-spending compared to funding allocations.

Key findings from this chapter include:

- Individual awards for Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries were fixed at £1,200 for a full Bursary and pro-rated as appropriate for part-time learners.
- Discretionary Bursary awards were £410 on (median) average, indicating that Discretionary Bursaries tended to be smaller than Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries.
- Further education colleges and sixth form colleges had a higher median spend on DVG bursaries (reflecting larger numbers of eligible young people), at £19,000 compared with schools and academies, where median spending was £1,200, the equivalent to one full Bursary.
- The total estimated spend by all providers on Discretionary Vulnerable Group Bursaries was £27.2 million. Further education colleges and sixth form colleges had the highest spend at just under £19 million and school sixth forms and academies the lowest; £4.4 million.
- Total spending on Discretionary Bursaries reported by providers ranged from zero (three providers) to a maximum of just under £1.6 million. The overall median amount spent was just over £11,000.
- Just over half (53%) of providers had spent less than 90 per cent of their funding allocation. Providers tended to be cautious in allocating funds to minimise the risk of unaffordable over spends, although under spends were less prevalent than in the first year of the Bursary Fund. Another factor in under spending was students failing to meet the conditions attached to receipt of Bursaries.

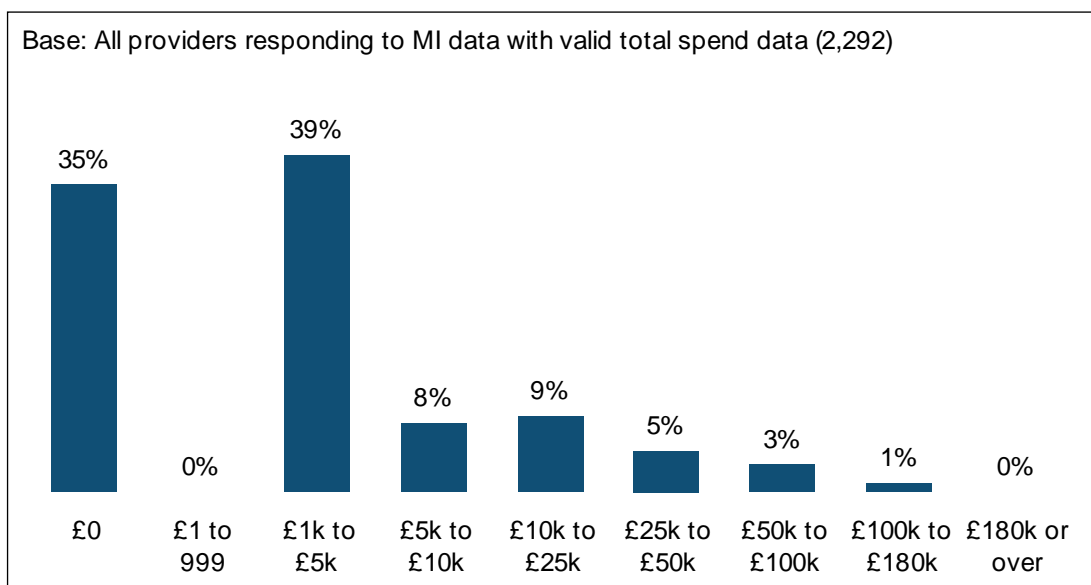
5.1 Spending on Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries (MI returns)

The Management Information return (see section 1.3) asked providers to report the total amount they had awarded to young people in receipt of Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries (DVG) Bursaries. The amount awarded ranged from a minimum of 0 (800 providers) to £359,400. The overall median total amount awarded was £1,200.

Further education colleges and sixth form colleges had a higher median spend on DVG bursaries (reflecting larger numbers of eligible young people), at £19,000 compared with schools and academies, where median spending was £1,200, the equivalent to one full Bursary. In special schools, median spending was £2,400 which is equivalent to two full Bursaries.

Figure 5.1 shows the distribution of spending on DVG Bursaries among all providers.

Figure 5.1 MI returns: distribution of provider spending on Vulnerable Group Bursaries 2012/13



The total amount spent by all providers was £27.2 million. Further education colleges and sixth form colleges had the highest spend at just under £19 million (£18,995,990) and school sixth forms and academies the lowest; £4.4 million.

5.2 Spending on Discretionary Bursaries (provider survey)

Providers responding to the survey gave information about spending on Discretionary Bursaries. The Management Information return did not include spending on Discretionary Bursaries.

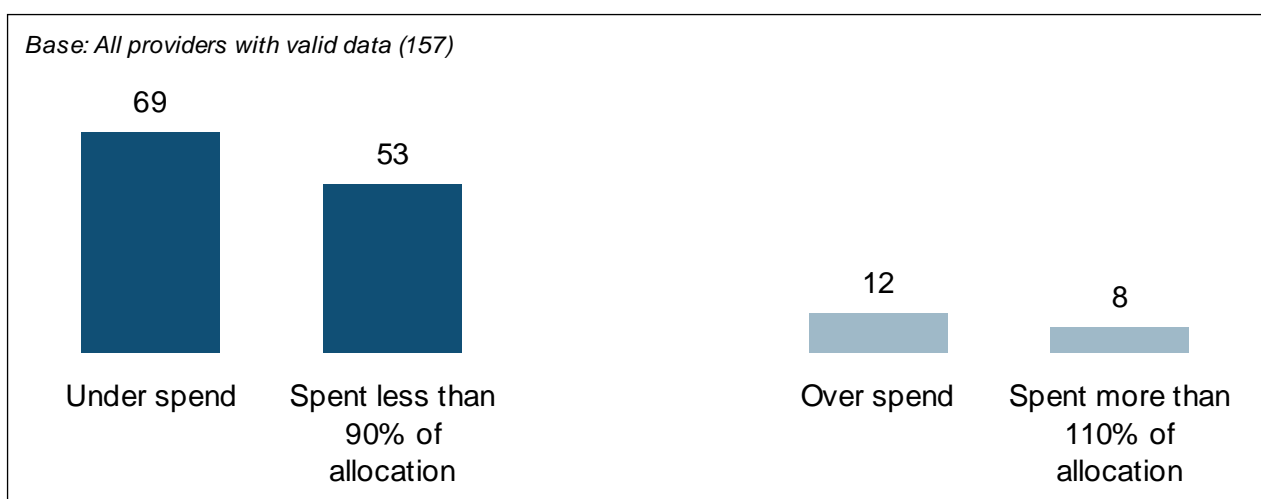
Total spending on Discretionary Bursaries reported by providers ranged from zero (three providers) to a maximum of just under £1.6 million. The overall median amount spent was just over £11,000 (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Provider survey: Overall amount spent on Discretionary Bursaries

	£
25 th percentile (25% of providers spending less than this)	5,329
Median (Half of providers spending less than this)	11,035
75 th percentile (25% of providers spending more than this)	25,319
<i>Base: all providers with valid data</i>	165

Using the information provided in the survey about spending on both Defined Vulnerable Group and Discretionary Bursaries it is possible to calculate the overall spending and compare this to funding allocations. Comparing provider spending on the Bursary Fund with allocations reveals that in the second year of implementation the majority of providers (69%) spent less than they were allocated, with over half (53%) of providers having spent less than 90 per cent of their allocation. The prevalence of under spending amongst survey providers was lower than in the first year of implementation (81%). Overall, over-spending was less common with 12 per cent of providers reported to have done so, and eight per cent had spent more than 110 per cent of their allocation (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2 Provider survey: Under and over spend 2012/13 (%)



There were no significant differences in the likelihood of providers over or under-spending by the size of their funding allocation. The next section explores reasons for under and over-spending from the case studies.

5.2.1 Reasons for under/over spend (case studies)

As in the first year of implementation, some providers continued to top-up their funds to provide additional support to students. The following case study example illustrates how providers top-up their funds:

Topping up support:

This private training provider specialises in foundation learning, with a large component of vocational work based training. Students typically attend four days a week for on average six months before moving on to apprenticeships or work. To maintain levels of engagement and remove barriers to participation, this provider ‘tops-up’ its bursary scheme (subsidising it from the commercial arm of the business) to enable it to pay all students £30 weekly (£5 a day and an additional £10 for full attendance). This provider was reluctant to run a scheme that only supported the less well off students because they felt all their students should have some recognition of the hours worked each week in work placements. They also held the view that participation and retention levels would drop without this level of support.

For other providers, particularly school sixth forms, the scope to top-up funds were limited, and providers spoke about the importance of keeping within Bursary budgets. Indeed, as the provider survey suggests, the majority of providers continue to under spend their funds although the levels of under spend are lower than in the first year of implementation. The reasons for under-spending outlined in the Year 1 report, continue to hold true in Year 2 with providers generally taking a conservative approach to schemes to minimise the risk of overspends that would be unaffordable. The facility to carry forward under spends to the following financial year was generally welcomed by providers and this facility may also in-part explain the continued levels of under spend of Bursary Funds. However, carrying over funds in this way will not be permitted in the third year of implementation (2013/14) which may reduce Bursary under spends going forward as providers seek to use the funds rather than risk losing them.

6 Administering the Bursary Fund

This chapter examines findings from the provider survey, case studies and learner survey related to the administration of the Bursary Fund. Providers are given considerable freedom to determine how Bursaries are paid, the timings of payments and the conditions attached to receipt. In this chapter we explore how providers approached the administration of the Bursary Fund, the range of practices that emerged and young people's views on how this works.

Key findings from this chapter include:

Two models of administration were identified in the case studies, both of which had their own strengths and weaknesses so are suited to different provider and learner views.

- **Schemes administered by an individual provider:** the most common model used

Advantages:

- Responsive to individual learner needs
- Can adapt the scheme to the provider context
- Can use knowledge about individual learners to target those most in need and provide support with applications (particularly in smaller providers)

Disadvantages:

- More likely to lead to differences of support for students across providers in close proximity
- High administrative burden
- Disclosure of sensitive information can be a barrier
- Non-standardised approach could result in some providers not meeting their obligations to provide appropriate support to young people.

- **Local authority administered models:** involves a number of providers grouping together and working with the local authority to administer a single scheme across the area with consistent levels of support and eligibility criteria.

Advantages:

- A consistent message in the local authority/local area about support available to young people
- Equality of provision across a local area (same eligibility criteria, payment amounts etc)
- Lower administrative burden for providers
- Central/local authority staff familiar with examining evidence of eligibility

Disadvantages:

- Less flexibility to change payment frequency and the sanctions for not meeting conditions
- High demand at the beginning of the academic year can easily cause delays in administration
- Vulnerable to staff changes/reductions in local authority staffing so annual reviews required
- Correcting errors in application forms can be more time consuming

- Providers took a range of approaches to determining the level of Discretionary Bursaries, taking into account young people's background and course-related factors. Young people's views on the levels of discretionary payments and whether they were sufficient to meet their needs varied; three factors influenced these:
 - **Level of support from other sources** - when young people could draw on support, particularly from parents and the wider extended family, levels of bursary payments were generally considered to be adequate. However, where young people had limited access to these types of other support, levels of discretionary payments were less likely to be perceived as adequate.
 - Young people were less happy when the Bursary Fund did not cover all their **course related costs** including equipment, fieldwork and transport costs.
 - **Hours of study / training** - some held the view that payments should be more generous when more study hours were required.
- As in the first year of implementation, Bursary awards were more commonly paid directly to students rather than paid in-kind (for example in the form of books or equipment).

- Young people were generally positive about the type of Bursary Fund support they received and how they were paid. However, nearly half of recipients (45%) had experienced some problems with delayed payments which could make managing finances difficult.
- In the second year of the Bursary Fund implementation, more than half of providers were not intending to make changes for the 2013/14 academic year (61%).

6.1 Models of administration (case studies)

Two broad models of Bursary administration were described in the Year 1 report – administered by an individual provider and a local authority administered model. In the second year of implementation, Bursary administration can still be described in terms of these two models, with evidence from the provider case studies giving more detail about how these are working in practice. For full analysis of the administration models used please see Appendix C.

- Scheme administered by a single provider

Amongst the case study providers this was the most common model of administration with the design and administration of schemes completely defined and implemented by the individual provider. Early feedback in year one identified the ability to be both responsive to individual learner needs and the ability to tailor schemes to the provider context as strengths of this model of administration. The flexibility of local administration continued to be highlighted as a strength of this approach by providers and local authority staff interviewed in year two of implementation:

'I think you can change, if something isn't working we can actually adapt it and change a bit more, or work it so it actually suited everybody again. There is that scope.'

(Manager, Training provider)

For smaller providers – special schools and small sixth forms in particular, the ability to tailor support to individual students more effectively and use local knowledge of individual need was also valued:

'Because it means we can directly target it where we think there'll be impact. In terms of if it was somebody from central London or somebody

from the local authority saying you need to target X group of students but don't target this other group of students, actually, as a school, as a post 16 department, we know those students much better than anybody else from the local authority, from central government. It's us that knows those students, us that know where those targeted needs are so I think it's appropriate that we've got that freedom.'

(Headteacher, Special School)

However, providers operating schemes of this kind also highlighted a number of concerns with this model.

The potential for inequality of provision for students across providers was the main concern in the second year; while some providers and local authority staff considered variation in provision reflected different contexts and levels of need, others felt uncomfortable that young people were receiving different levels of support simply because of the provider they had chosen.

The administrative burden placed on individual: the level of resources available to administer the Bursary scheme often determined the frequency of payments and the level of complexity of eligibility systems rather than the ideal model they would like to implement. Limiting providers to five per cent of the budget to cover administrative costs was generally considered to be inadequate.

The need for families to evidence income and share personal financial information with local providers: while some thought families might be more comfortable disclosing information to a local provider rather than a national scheme, others considered that this acted as a barrier to applications and stigma remained an issue for some families.

The success or failure of this approach was also considered to be largely dependent on the quality of the individual provider. Concerns were raised that poorer quality providers with weaker leadership might not fulfil their obligations and some young people might miss out on appropriate support as a result. This was contrasted to the Educational Maintenance Allowance which provided a standardised level of support to all eligible young people.

- Local authority administered models

This model of administration involved a number of providers grouping together and working with the local authority to administer a single scheme across the area with consistent levels of support and eligibility criteria. Only one case study school was part of a local authority administered model so there is a limit to what conclusions can be drawn, however, in year 2 of implementation, the school remained happy with the local authority led model and particularly valued the equality of provision

available across the area because of the agreed eligibility criteria chosen for the scheme. The local authority also wanted to ensure there was one clear consistent message on entitlement:

'[The aim was] to bring something together and to have something that wasn't done piecemeal, it was done on a consistent basis that you could actually put out a message that wasn't too confusing, I think. The schools are quite close together you've got cousins, brothers...and you may have them across schools and one will be saying 'well I get this' and 'I get that' and 'why do you get it and I don't?' 'Why don't I?' So they wanted to have something that had a consistent message, and that was quite a strong driver for this.'

(Local Authority staff member)

The school considered that the model removed a large amount of the administrative burden from individual schools and allowed for an independent appeals process beyond the school gates. Other benefits of this model included the fact that local authority staff familiar with examining evidence of eligibility were taking on this role rather than school administrators or teaching staff.

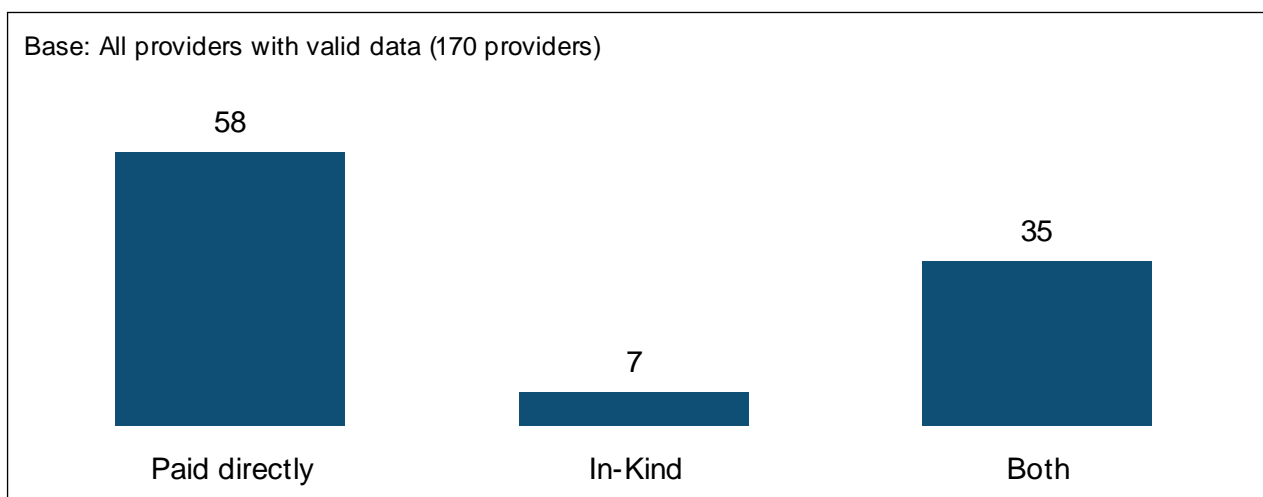
However, a co-ordinated centralised scheme was less flexible and was constrained by resources which meant that Bursary payments were not paid as frequently as the provider would have liked. The school would also have liked to introduce a scheme whereby payments were reduced rather than completely removed if conditions were not met but the local authority operated an 'all or nothing' approach where the payment was completely withdrawn.

Another potential issue for this approach was delays in the administration process at the start of the school year because of high volumes of applications being managed by the local authority. The process of correcting errors, and addressing issues with evidence in application forms was also potentially more time consuming in a centralised system, and the local authority highlighted that further cuts in the local authority may jeopardise administration timescales further in the year 2013/14 because of staff reductions.

6.2 How Bursary awards were made (provider survey and learner survey)

All providers in the survey were asked whether Bursaries were awarded as cash payments, paid 'in-kind' (for example as bus passes or meal vouchers) or a combination of both. The majority (58%) of providers paid young people directly in cash, 35 per cent only awarded in-kind bursaries and seven per cent of providers awarded Bursaries in-kind as well as in cash (Figure 6.1).

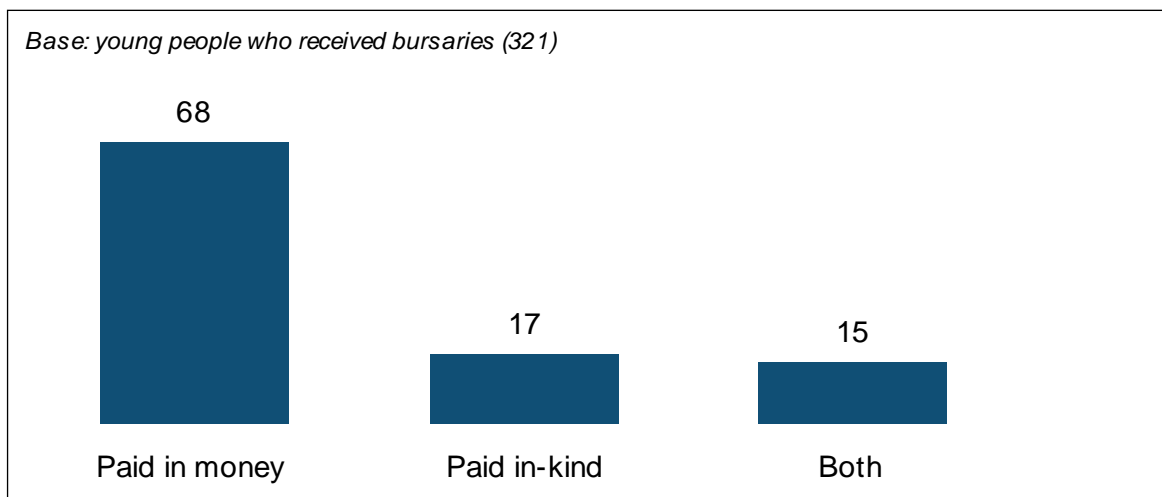
Figure 6.1 Provider survey: Providers who awarded Discretionary Bursaries in-kind, directly to young people, or both (%)



Almost three quarters (72%) of school sixth forms paid bursaries in cash only, while around a quarter (24%) of FE colleges paid bursaries in this form, similar to the first year of implementation. The majority of FE and sixth form colleges paid bursaries both in-kind and as cash (69%).

Similarly, young people responding to the learner survey who were receiving a Bursary were more likely to be receiving their Bursary directly in cash, or into bank accounts (68%; Figure 6.2). Less than one-fifth of the recipients reported being paid their support in-kind only (17%), and 15 per cent of Bursary recipients were receiving their support as combinations of cash and in-kind payments.

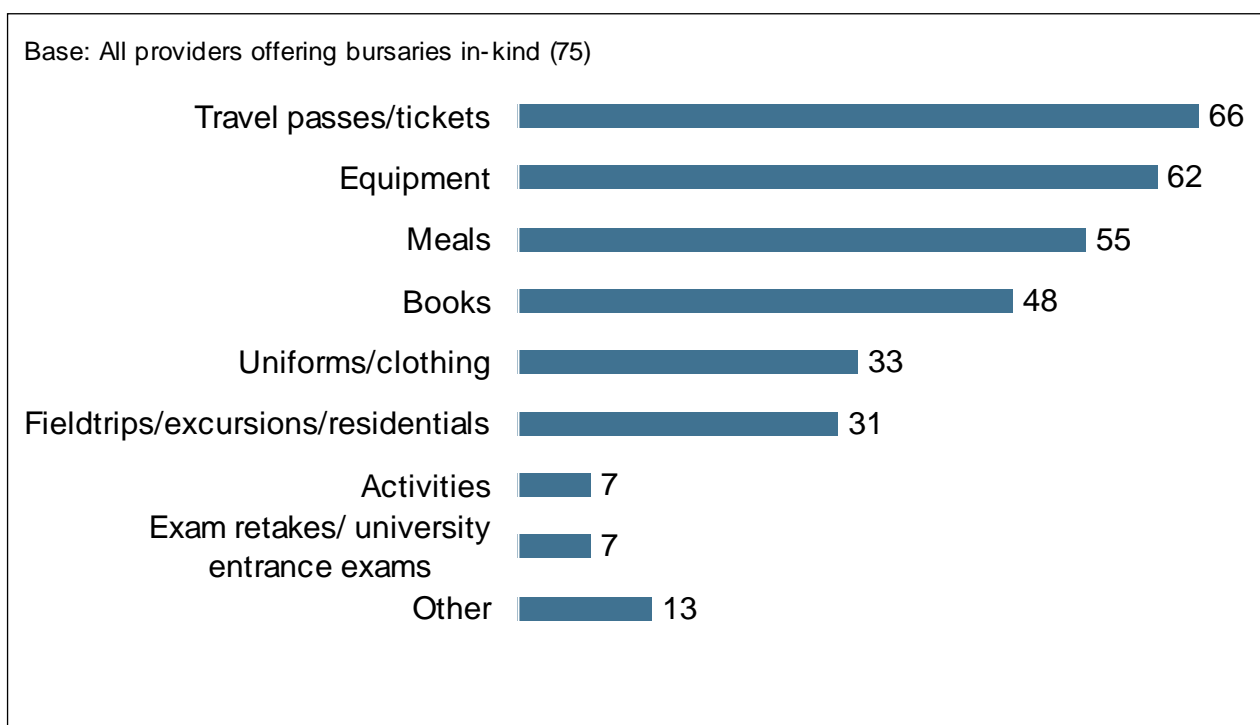
Figure 6.2 Learner survey: Type of Bursary awards – cash, in-kind, both (%)



6.3 Payment of ‘in-kind’ Bursaries (provider survey)

Providers who paid Bursaries in-kind were asked what form the payments had taken. The most common types of in-kind award were travel passes, mentioned by around two-thirds (66%; Figure 6.3) of providers and equipment (62%). Over half of providers had awarded Bursaries in-kind in the form of meals (55%) and nearly half had done so for books (48%). A third (33%) had provided uniforms, or clothing to Bursary recipients. Providers were less likely to mention in-kind awards for activities such as field trips (7%) and exam retakes or entrance exams (7%).

Figure 6.3 Provider survey: Forms of in-kind awards (% mentioned)



Note: Providers could mention more than one type of ‘in-kind’ Bursary

The numbers of different types of providers responding to the survey mean that we cannot perform robust analysis by institution type. However, the use of in-kind Bursaries was broadly consistent with the first year of implementation in that FE and sixth form colleges were more commonly offering meals (84%), and uniforms and clothing (56%) as in-kind payment, compared to all the other provider types. (Figure not shown.)

6.4 Reasons for using in-kind and cash awards (case studies)

The year 1 report identified a number of reasons why providers chose cash or 'in-kind' Bursary payments. These findings are updated here, with views of the young people who participated in the focus groups.

6.4.1 Cash bursaries

Reasons for choosing cash payments included:

- **Flexible and better able to meet diverse range of needs**

Staff and young people who preferred cash payments considered these to be a more flexible form of support and could be used for a range of purposes tailored to the individual circumstances of the young person. In particular, young people living independently valued cash payments that could contribute to household expenses including rent and utility bills. The view was held that 'in-kind' payments for direct education costs did not sufficiently help with general living costs which were an important barrier to student's full participation. Some young people felt they would not be able to attend without cash payments that they could use towards household expenses.

- **Independence**

Staff and young people valued the independence cash bursaries gave young people. For young people this meant they did not have to ask for as much support from parents and were able to manage and budget their own funds. Staff held the view that cash bursaries promoted budgeting and responsibility and these were important skills for 16-18 year olds to develop.

- **Motivational**

The learner survey found that 57 per cent of those receiving a Bursary in cash (compared to 31% of those paid 'in-kind') said it changed their behaviour at school or College. Staff and young people in the case studies fed back that conditions attached to receiving bursaries could be motivational and incentivise attendance and punctuality. These motivational effects appeared to be strongest for those who were least engaged compared to young people who had strong career and educational aspirations.

6.4.2 'In-kind' bursaries

Reasons for choosing in-kind Bursary awards included:

- Value for money

Both staff and young people who favoured 'in-kind' Bursaries considered this type of provision to be better value for money if bulk purchasing or discounts meant the 'in-kind' support had a higher monetary value than what could be provided in cash terms. Examples given included bus passes and course equipment costs.

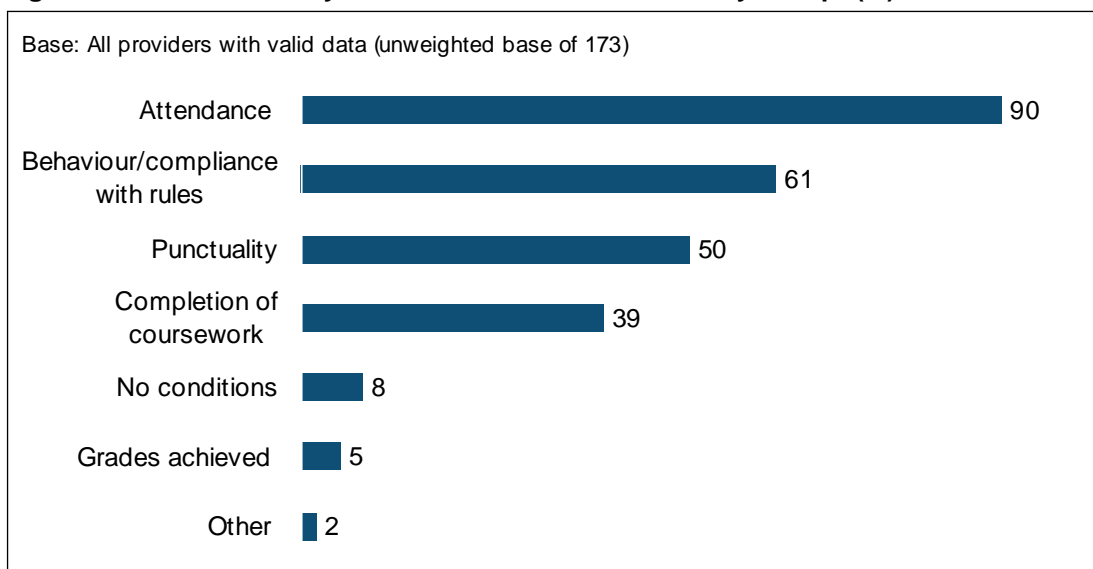
- Meets specific educational needs

In instances where young people had received specific equipment to support their learning (for example, i-pads for use as communication aids in a special school or travel passes to meet transport costs), these were viewed very positively. Echoing the year one findings, staff who preferred this form of payment also considered it was better targeted and ensured funds were spent on educational needs and not used for other purposes. For some young people with particular learning difficulties, 'in-kind' support in the form of communication aids and after-school activities were considered to be of more value than money.

6.5 Conditions attached to the receipt of Bursary awards (provider survey, learner survey and case studies)

Attendance was the most frequently mentioned condition linked to the receipt of Bursaries (90% of all providers; Figure 6.4). Sixty-one per cent of providers reported that receipt of Bursaries was conditional upon young people complying with rules, whilst half (50%) reported punctuality to be a condition. A small proportion of providers (8%) reported having no conditions attached to the receipt of the Bursary award.

Figure 6.4 Provider survey: Conditions attached to Bursary receipt (%)

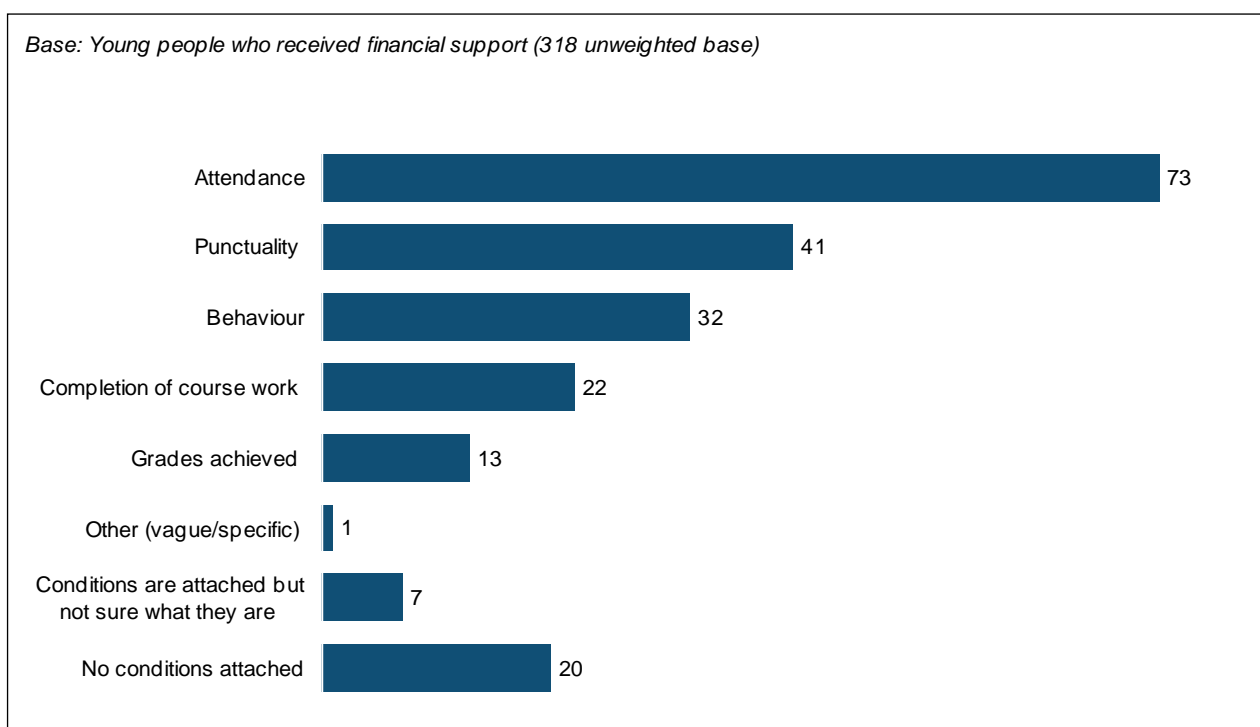


Note: Providers could mention more than one condition

All FE and Sixth Form colleges in this study reported attendance to be a condition of receiving a Bursary. This condition was also reported by the majority of schools (95%), special schools (75%) and other providers (74%). There was large variation in the use of conditions by provider type. A quarter (25%) of special schools, and 18 per cent of other schools reported that no conditions were attached to the Bursary payment, in contrast to a very small proportion (2%) of school sixth forms. (Figures not shown.)

The vast majority of young people reported that receiving Bursary payments in full depended on conditions being met with the most frequently mentioned by recipients being attendance (73%; Figure 6.5). Forty-one per cent said that punctuality was a condition, and for around a third receiving their support depended on good behaviour (e.g. attitude in class). Echoing findings from the provider survey, payments linked to educational achievements were less common – less than a quarter of Bursary recipients said that receiving their support was linked to meeting expectations around course work (22%), and 13 per cent reported that this was linked to achieving grades. Seven per cent of the Bursary recipients said they were aware of conditions being attached but did not know what these were. One-fifth of Bursary recipients said there were no conditions attached to receiving their payments.

Figure 6.5 Learner survey: Conditions attached to Bursary receipt (%)



Those who reported that conditions were attached to being paid either some or all of their Bursary were asked whether this had changed their behaviour, for example their attendance or the amount of time they spent studying at home (Table 6.1). Just over half

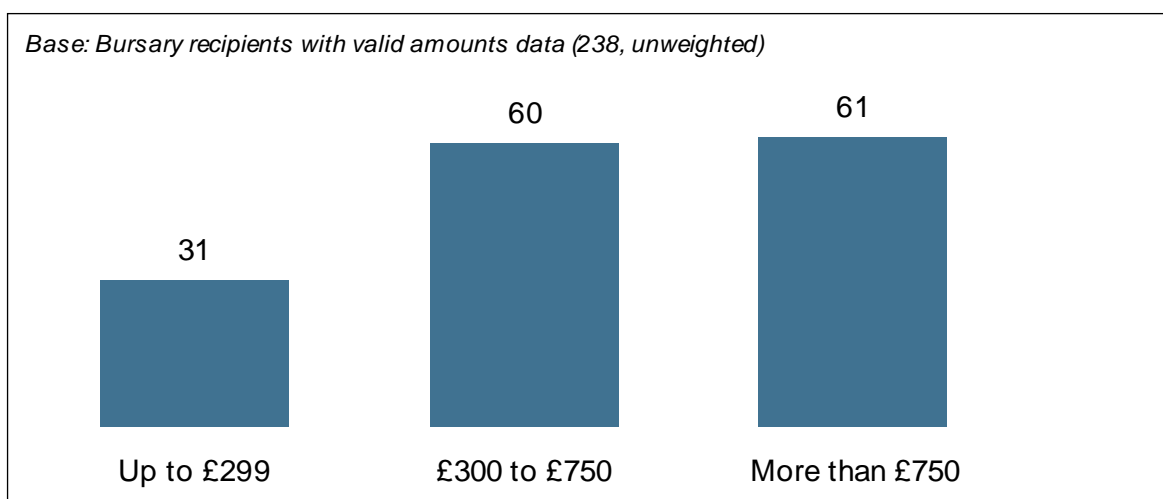
of respondents (53%) said that their behaviour had changed a lot or a little as the result of having conditions attached.

Table 6.1 Learner survey: Whether conditions attached changed behaviour

	%
Yes, very much	19
Yes, a little	34
Not really	31
Not at all	17
<i>Bursary recipients who reported conditions attached to receiving support (unweighted base)</i>	<i>238</i>

The size of Bursary received affected how likely young people were to change their behaviour (Figure 6.6). Fewer than a third (31%) of recipients who had received up to £299 in Bursary support said that it had changed their behaviour ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’, whereas the recipients who had received between £300 and £750 were around twice as likely to say so (60%).

Figure 6.6 Learner survey: Changing behaviour as a result of conditions, by level of support (%)



There was a general consensus amongst the young people participating in the case study focus groups that attaching conditions to the receipt of Bursary support was fair and that it was right for there to be expectations around behaviour, attendance and punctuality. However, there were certain circumstances in which the fairness of the conditions and how they were applied was questioned:

- Awareness of conditions

In some instances young people described being unclear about the conditions set for receipt of Bursaries and in these cases it was felt to be unfair when Bursary payments were withheld. This lack of awareness stemmed from a lack of clarity over the attendance and punctuality thresholds and limited communication around the criteria set.

- Circumstances not taken into account

Withholding Bursary payments because of a failure to meet the conditions set was viewed as unfair in cases where it was felt not enough consideration had been given to the individual circumstances of students. For example, in one case a young man had his payment withheld because of caring responsibilities for his father that affected his punctuality and attendance. In another instance, a young woman with health difficulties was able to get an 'authorised absence' for the time she was off ill, but because her absence impacted on her grades her Bursary was not paid as she failed to meet a condition relating to effort and attitude to learning.

- Inadequate attendance / punctuality monitoring

Examples were given of Bursary payments being withheld in error because of inaccurate attendance monitoring. Young people argued for robust attendance monitoring systems to minimise errors and for clear communication with teaching staff to impress upon them the importance of keeping accurate records to ensure Bursary payments were not withheld unfairly. In one case study, young people appreciated having access to an on-line system that allowed them to keep track of their own attendance levels and an email alert system that warned them if their attendance was dropping below the expected level.

- Level of sanction

The level of sanction applied to young people for failing to meet conditions was raised as an issue. Where Bursaries were paid less frequently (for example, at half-termly or termly intervals) a failure to meet conditions could result in payments for the whole term being withdrawn. Young people considered that this level of sanction was too severe and a preference was voiced for a system of proportionate reductions in payment. Concerns were also raised that severe sanctions for not meeting conditions could undermine an individual's ability to continue participating - for example, in cases where bus passes were withdrawn which further jeopardised the individual's ability to attend and participate.

From a staff perspective, a primary reason for implementing an 'all or nothing' approach to sanctions was the additional administration time required to monitor conditions more regularly and determine proportional decreases in payment. This was considered to be beyond the scope of the resources available to them, although some considered this would be the ideal if they had the capacity. In other

instances, an 'all or nothing' approach was considered an important sanction to affect behaviour change and improve attendance.

The impact of setting conditions on behaviour and motivation was a recurring theme during discussions of Bursary administration and the Bursary Fund scheme was considered to perform two functions – one as a means of removing financial barriers to participation, and the other as a motivational tool to encourage good attendance, behaviour and effort. The learner survey findings suggest that conditions did impact on perceived behaviour changes with 57 per cent of young people receiving cash payments saying this made a difference and in 31 per cent of respondents receiving 'in-kind' Bursaries. This mixed picture of the perceived impact of Bursaries on behaviour was supported by findings from the cases studies where young people fell into two broad groups:

- Bursary receipt as a motivator

For some young people the prospect of receiving their Bursary payment acted as a motivator for regular attendance and punctuality. Some described how it had improved their attendance and punctuality while others conceptualised it in the same terms as getting paid for a job.

- No impact on behaviour

One group of young people who expressed this view described high levels of motivation driven by career aspirations, enjoyment of their courses and good quality teaching. For this group, there was a sense that they would have met the conditions set for Bursary receipt anyway and consequently receiving a Bursary did not change their behaviour:

'I've got my head focused on learning this trade, there's no stopping me coming in.'

(Young person focus group, FE College)

For another group of young people, the levels of support were viewed as too low to change their behaviour and consequently the funds had little impact in this respect.

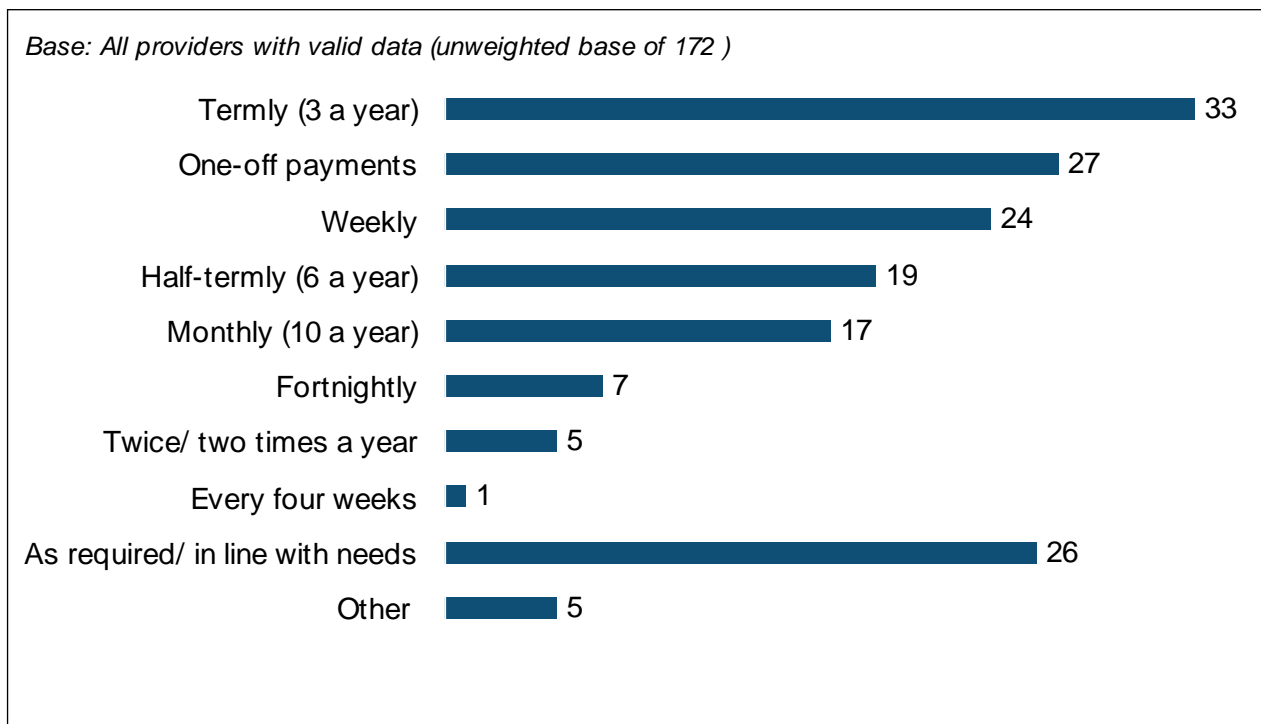
6.6 Timing and frequency of Bursary payments (provider survey, case studies)

6.6.1 Frequency of Bursary payments (provider survey, case studies)

There was a considerable range in the frequency with which Bursary payments were made (Figure 6.7). Amongst providers responding to the survey this varied from weekly (24%) to twice a year (5%). Similar proportions of providers reported paying Bursaries as

a one-off payment (27%), as required (26%) and on a weekly basis (24%). The payment frequency reported the most was each term, mentioned by one third of providers.

Figure 6.7 Provider Survey: Frequency of Bursary Payments

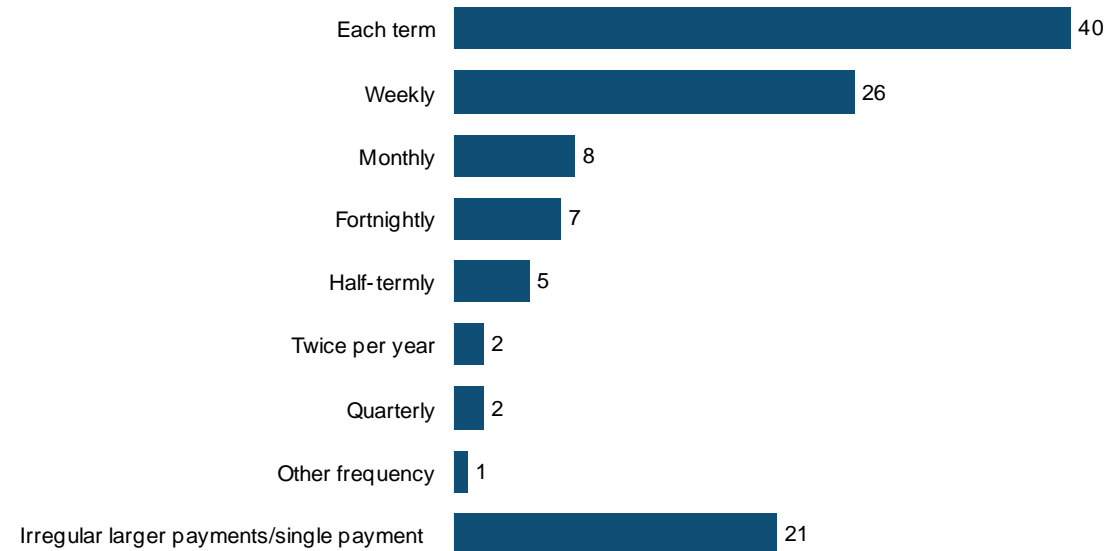


Note: Providers could mention more than one frequency of payment

We also asked the young people in receipt of Bursary support whether they received their financial support in regular intervals or only as one-off or irregular payments. Figure 6.8 includes both cash and in-kind payments, and shows that two-fifths of all young people (40%) reported to have received Bursary support each term. Just over a quarter of young people received their support as a weekly payment (26%). Other intervals were less frequently mentioned (by less than 10% of young people). Around one-fifth of Bursary recipients said they were not paid in regular intervals but instead received their support as one-off single or irregular payments instead. It is likely that this includes the young people who receive Bursary support “on a case-by-case basis” i.e. as emergency or hardship support or as and when support for something specific (e.g. a field trip) is needed, as per the provider survey (see section 3.4).

Figure 6.8 Learner Survey: Frequency of Bursary Payments

Base: young people received financial support (314 unweighted base)



As set out in the report on the first year of implementation, case study providers who paid Bursaries infrequently (for example in termly or half-termly intervals) generally did so to minimise the administrative burden involved. In contrast, providers opting for more frequent weekly / fortnightly payments chose this approach because it was considered to be more motivational (incentivising attendance / punctuality on a weekly basis), and supported students to manage their money. In one case study for example, a large FE College was planning to move from a half-termly to a weekly or fortnightly payment for Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries next year because it considered this had a greater impact on attendance and retention:

Next year.. we want to either do it weekly or fortnightly.. I think partly because it enables the students to manage their money better.. We also.. notice that the attendance and retention isn't as good as it was with EMA. So with EMA, because it was paid weekly they were really upset if they didn't get their payment but because it's half-termly here it doesn't quite have the same impact.

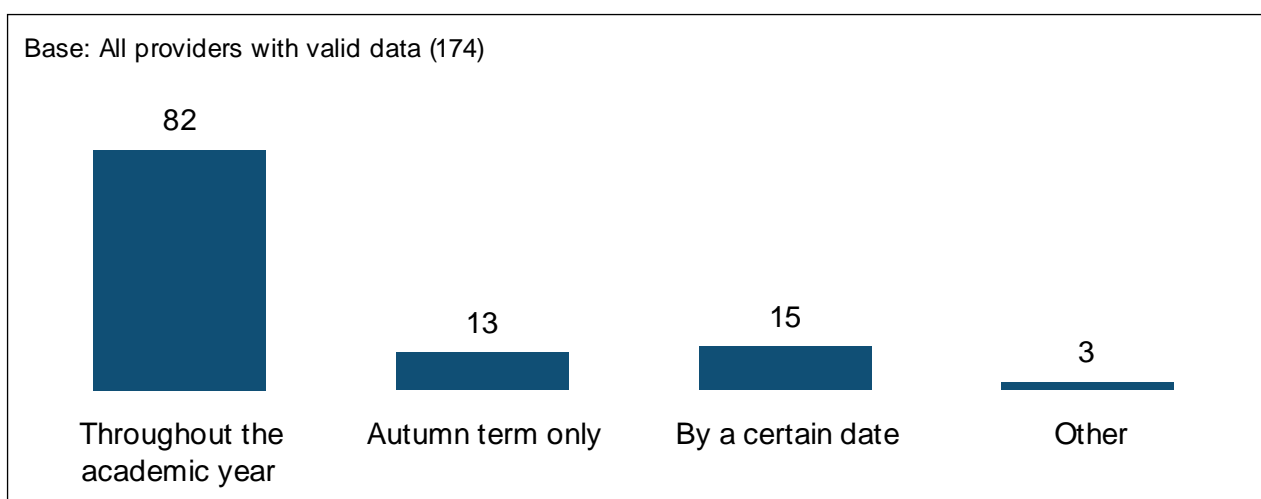
(Head of Student Services, FE College)

6.6.2 Timing of applications (provider survey)

Providers were asked at what point in the academic year applications for the Bursary could be made. Eighty-two per cent reported that applications could be made anytime throughout the academic year (Figure 6.9). A smaller percentage reported that applications could be made in the Autumn term only (13%) and by a certain date (15%).

When we look at changes in the timing of applications in the second year of implementation, providers were now more likely to accept applications at any time throughout the academic year (85% in year 2, compared to 77% in year 1²⁵). However, there was also an increase in those reporting to accept applications in the autumn term only (11% in year 2, compared to 4% in year one).

Figure 6.9 Provider Survey: When applications can be made (%)



6.7 Young people's views on models of administration (learner survey, case studies)

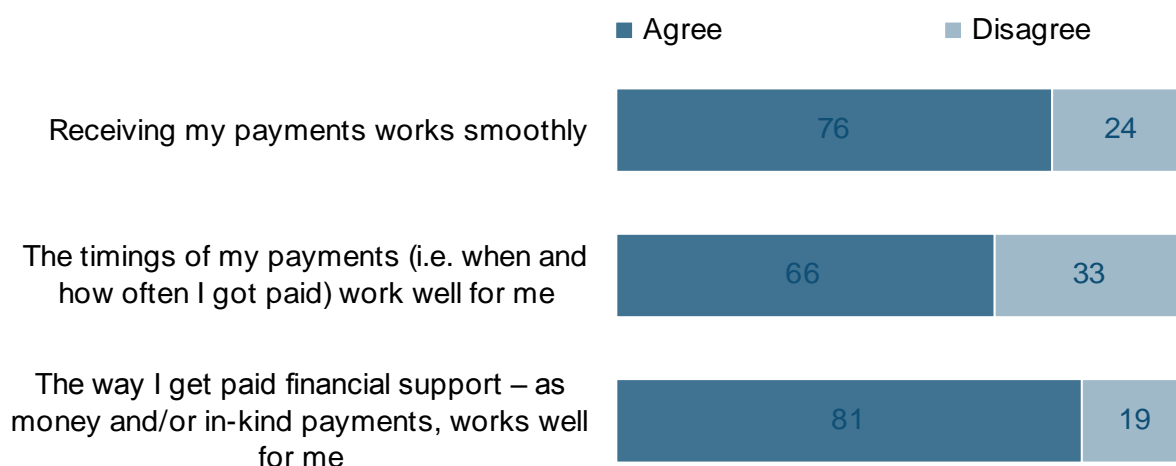
Young people in receipt of a Bursary were asked to give their views on how the administration of this support was working for them (Figures 6.10 and 6.11). Overall, respondents were positive about the type of Bursary support they received – 81 per cent agreed that this worked well for them and only 19 per cent were not happy with the form of the support. Around three-quarters (76%) of respondents also agreed that the receipt of the payments worked smoothly. However, nearly half (45%) of Bursary recipients indicated that they had experienced problems with payments being late or not paid when expected. Bursary recipients appeared to be less positive about the timing and method of

²⁵ This longitudinal analysis is based only on providers that responded to both the first and second year surveys.

payments with 66 per cent agreeing that this worked well for them. Within this group, those who received the payments weekly during term time were those most satisfied with the timing of payments, with 85 per cent agreeing that this works well for them. Around half of young people receiving payments once a year (55%) and three times per year (51%) agreed that these timings worked well.

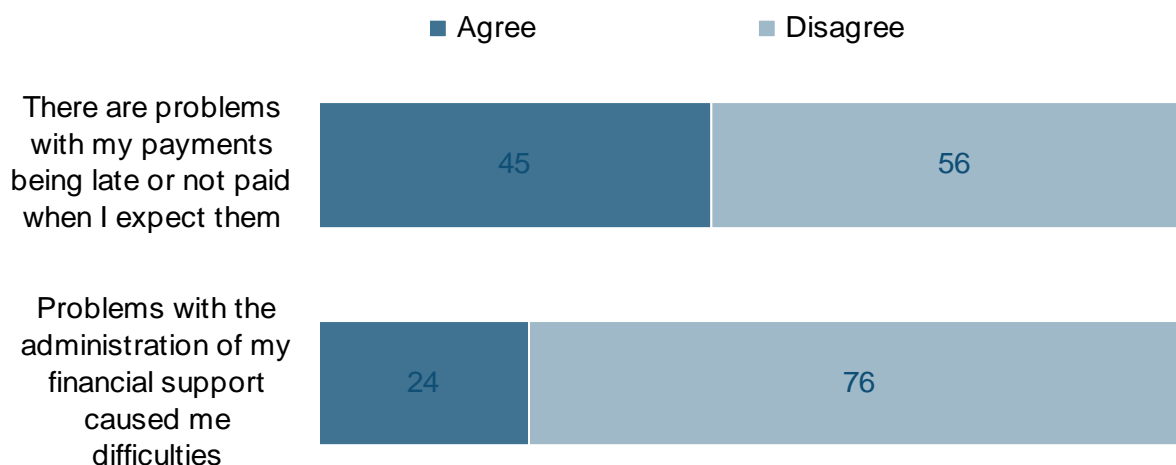
For around a quarter of Bursary recipients (24%) problems with the administration of payments had caused them difficulties.

Figure 6.10 Learner survey: views on the administration of financial support (%)



Base: bursary recipients with valid data (unweighted, 286-310 across the statements)

Figure 6.11 Learner survey: experience of the administration of financial support (%)



Base: bursary recipients with valid data (unweighted, 286-310 across the statements)

Young people who participated in case study focus groups articulated a preference for frequent Bursary payments, ideally on a weekly basis. The reasons given were:

- Easier to budget

Regular weekly payments were considered to be easier to manage and budget, compared to larger less frequent payments where there was a temptation to spend the money and not budget it to last until the next payment.

- Easier to respond to educational needs

It was generally considered that it was easier to meet educational needs as and when they arose if payments were made regularly, rather than having to wait six weeks or a term before key needs could be met:

'The thing is you're going to have to be getting resources.. you've got to pay for your printing allowance.. And then it's like you've got all your books and stuff to buy... So, every three months, you could have run out of something by then and you might need something for college that you can't get.'

(Young person focus group, FE College)

- Delays / non-payments less problematic

Where payments were made frequently, it was less problematic if a payment was withdrawn because the next payment would be received a week later. Where providers had adopted 'all or nothing' conditions and operated on a termly basis an individual could potentially wait two terms before receiving any Bursary support. In one case for example, a young man had received his first Bursary payment in November but because his attendance fell below the level required he missed his second payment in February and was not due to be paid again until May.

Young people also expressed a preference for some form of up-front Bursary support to meet educational needs. In instances where the first Bursary payment was received at the end of the first term this was generally considered to be too late because transport, equipment and subsistence costs would need to be paid in advance of receipt.

Seventy-nine per cent of young people agreed that the way they are paid their Bursaries (i.e. either in cash or in-kind) works well for them. Among those paid in-kind, this proportion rises to 84 per cent compared with 76 per cent among those paid in cash.

A considerable proportion of young people reported problems with the timing of payments (42%), and that they had experienced issues with the administration of the payments (21%). Young people receiving their payments in cash (compared with in-kind)

and those receiving payments weekly (compared with three times per year or once per year) were more likely to report problems. Indeed, about half of young people in each of these categories agreed with those statements.

Mirroring the views from the learner survey above, young people in the focus groups described instances where delays, errors and unexpected non-payments had caused difficulties for them. Of particular concern were schemes where payment periods varied and were not paid consistently at equal intervals (for example, because of holiday periods) as young people struggled to budget and keep track of when they could expect their payments.

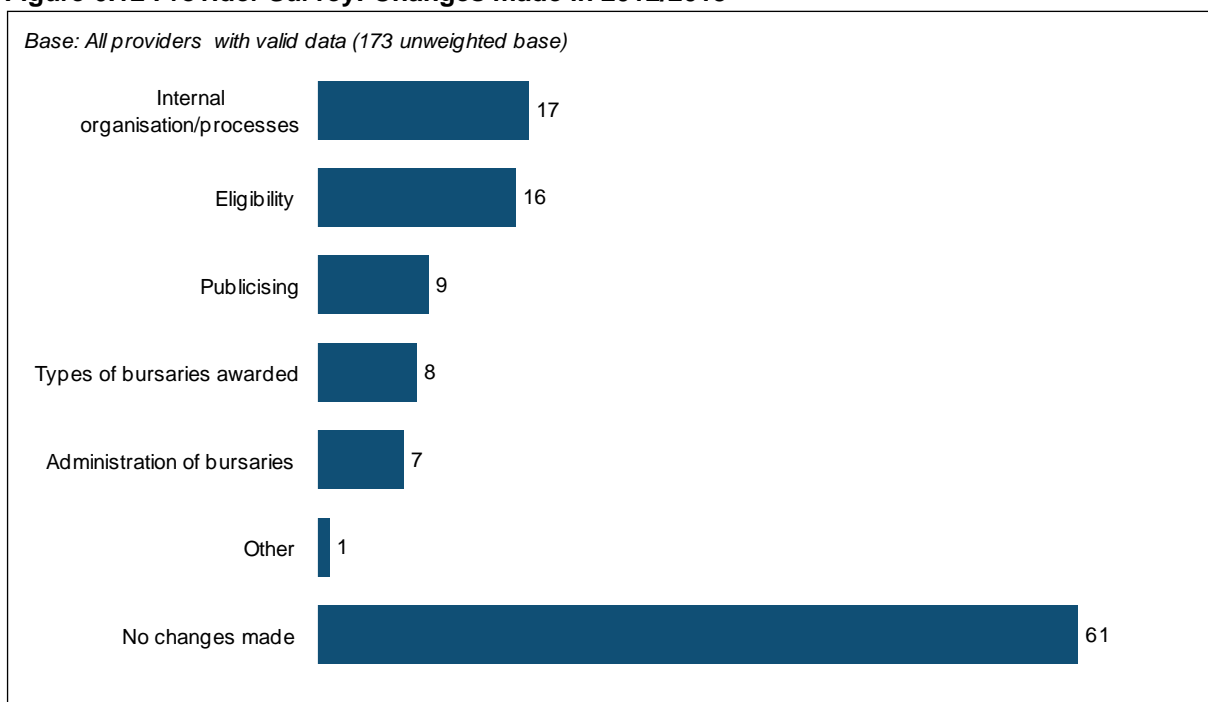
From discussions with case study providers, one potential reason given for delays in Bursary payments was a reliance on one member of staff to oversee this part of the administration. Delays could occur when that member of staff was absent and no other staff members were able to authorise payments.

6.8 Changes to Bursary administration

6.8.1 Changes made to administration in 2012/13 (provider survey)

Providers were asked if they had made any changes to the Bursary Fund in the 2012/2013 academic year. Whilst the majority of providers (61%; Figure 6.12) reported making no changes, the most frequently cited changes included amendments to internal processes such as staffing, resources and IT systems (17%) and eligibility (16%). Other changes included changes to the way Bursaries are publicised (9%) and the types of Bursaries awarded (8%).

Figure 6.12 Provider Survey: Changes made in 2012/2013

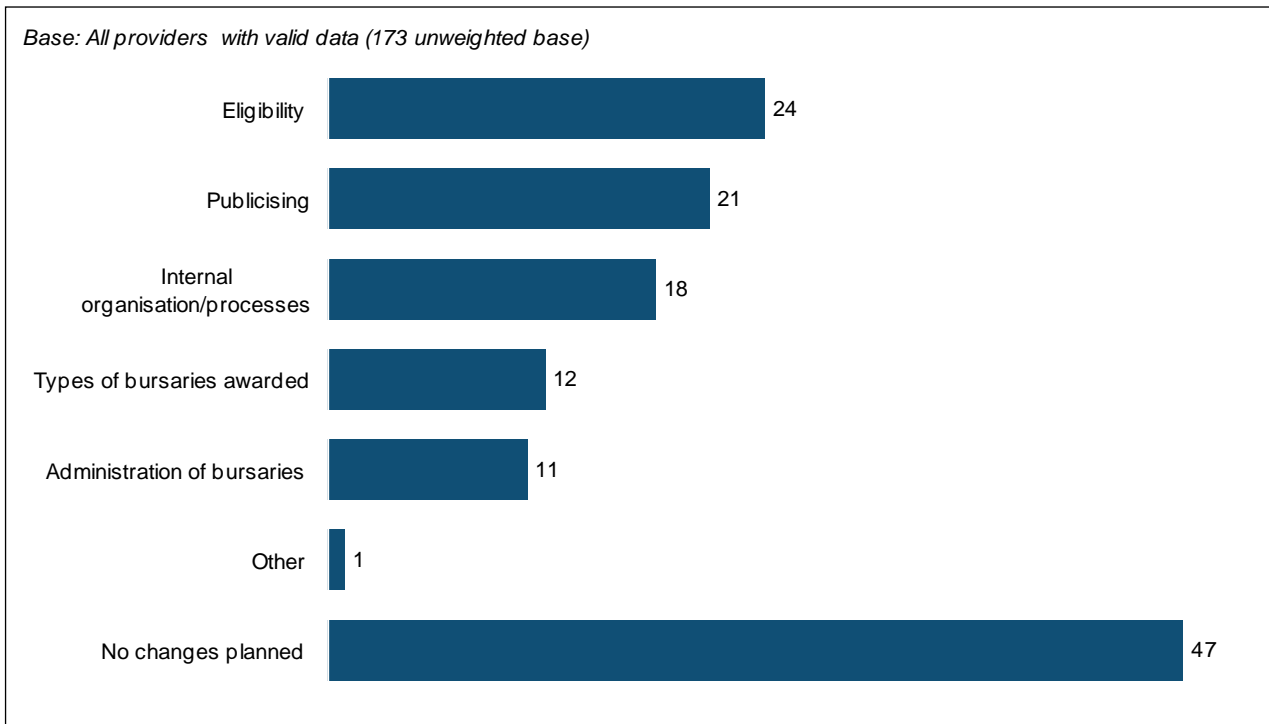


Note: Providers could mention more than one change

6.8.2 Changes planned to administration in 2013/14 (provider survey)

Providers were also asked if they were planning on making any changes in the 2013/14 academic year (Figure 6.13). Nearly half (47%) of providers did not plan to make any changes to the fund in the third year of implementation. Almost one quarter (24%) reported that they were planning to make changes to their eligibility criteria, for example by changing income thresholds and evidence requirements. Around one-fifth of providers planned to make changes to the way the Bursary Fund is publicised (21%) and their internal organisation/ processes (18%).

Figure 6.13 Provider Survey: Changes planned for 2013/2014



7 Perceived impacts of the Bursary Fund

This chapter reports on provider and young people's perceptions of the impact of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund. We discuss the impacts the providers perceived the Bursary Fund to be having in the second year of implementation on young people and young people's views on the Bursary Fund support.

Key findings from this chapter include:

Provider perspectives

- The majority of providers thought that the Bursary Fund was having a positive impact on young people's participation (77%) and engagement in learning (70%). Similarly, around three-quarters (78%) thought it was effective in targeting young people facing the greatest barriers to participation. Generally, in the second year of implementation providers were more positive about the impact of the Bursary Fund.
- Providers saw the flexibility they had in awarding and administering Bursaries as key to targeting their students' needs effectively. Some welcomed the ability to use in-kind payments to ensure that the Bursary Fund was targeted on needs related to education and training.
- Some concerns were expressed by providers about the impact of the Bursary Fund on young people, with regards to whether the level of support available was sufficient to meet students' needs and the level of provision available at providers with high demand due to their numbers of young people in need.

Young people's views

- Generally, young people spoken to at case study providers perceived the Bursary Fund as an important means of support.
- This was consistent with the survey findings with the majority of Bursary Fund recipients saying that this allowed them to cope better (75%), and nearly a third (28%) feeling that this was integral to being able to continue in education.
- A small proportion (9%) of young people responding to the learner survey who were not in receipt of a Bursary reported being at risk of dropping out from education due to the costs of studying, and a quarter were struggling to cope financially. This suggests that there are still a number of young people who would benefit from this financial support to aid their continued participation in education.

7.1 Provider perceptions of impacts on young people (provider survey)

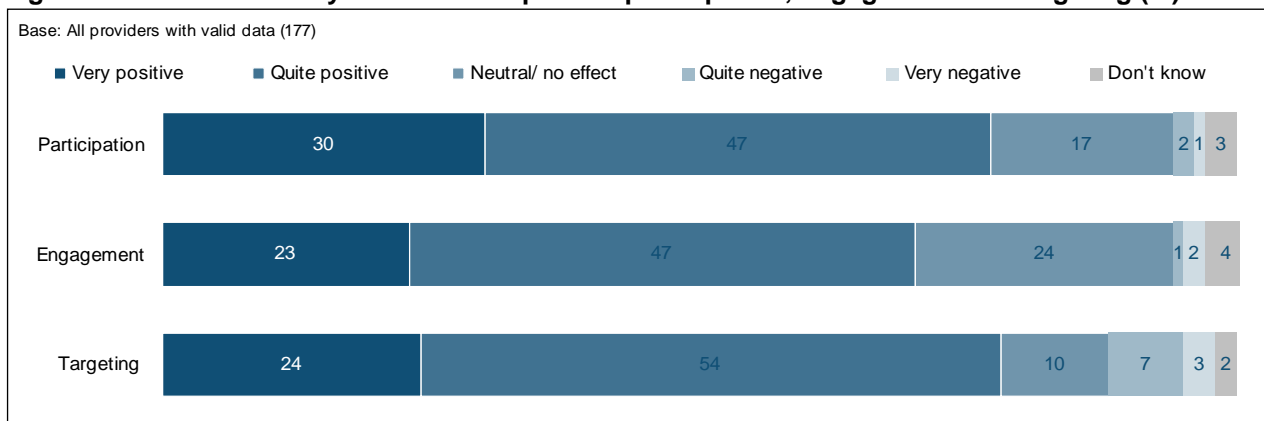
The survey asked providers for their opinions on how well the Bursary Fund was meeting their intended aims. Three questions were included in the survey:

12. To what extent do you think the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund is having a positive or negative effect on **participation** in education among those 16 to 19 year olds who face the greatest financial disadvantages?
13. To what extent do you think the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund is having a positive or negative effect on **engagement** in education among those 16 to 19 year olds who face the greatest financial disadvantages?
14. How effective do you think the Bursary Fund is at targeting those learners who face the greatest financial disadvantages?

All three questions had a five point answer scale, from 'very positive' to 'very negative' for the first two questions and from 'very effective' to 'not at all effective' for the third question.

Just over three-quarters of providers reported that the Bursary Fund was having a positive effect on participation (77%; Figure 7.1) and was effectively targeting learners who face the greatest financial disadvantages (78%). The majority (70%) also considered that the Bursary Fund was having a positive impact on engagement in education. Overall, in the second year of implementation providers expressed more positive views about the impact of the Bursary Fund scheme, compared to those reported in year 1. However, almost a quarter of providers (24%) reported that the Bursary Fund was having no effect on engagement. One in ten providers (10%) thought that the Bursary Fund was not very effective or not effective at all at targeting learners who face the greatest disadvantage.

Figure 7.1 Provider Survey: Perceived impact on participation, engagement and targeting (%)



7.2 Impacts on post-16 participation decisions (case studies)

The focus groups with young people discussed how far the Bursary Fund influenced decisions to stay on in post-16 education. For those who felt it had not impacted on their decisions the following reasons were given:

- Lack of awareness

As already discussed in section 4.1.3, there was a large proportion of young people who were unaware of the Bursary Fund prior to enrolment at their post-16 provider and consequently because they were unaware of the support available it had not been a factor in their decisions on whether and where to study.

- Other priorities

Young people identified a range of other factors influencing their post-16 decisions which were considered to be more influential than Bursary Fund support. These included career and educational aspirations, their enjoyment of their chosen courses, the quality of the teaching and the convenience / quality / familiarity of the provider.

- Perceived need

Young people were confident that they would have the support of family and / or have minimal costs associated with continuing post-16 and so did not factor financial support into their decision making.

However, some young people did feel the availability of Bursary Fund support had influenced their decisions. In one case for example, a young man who was living independently had left a college course and joined a training provider that paid financial support weekly rather than monthly, because he found it easier to manage and budget that way.

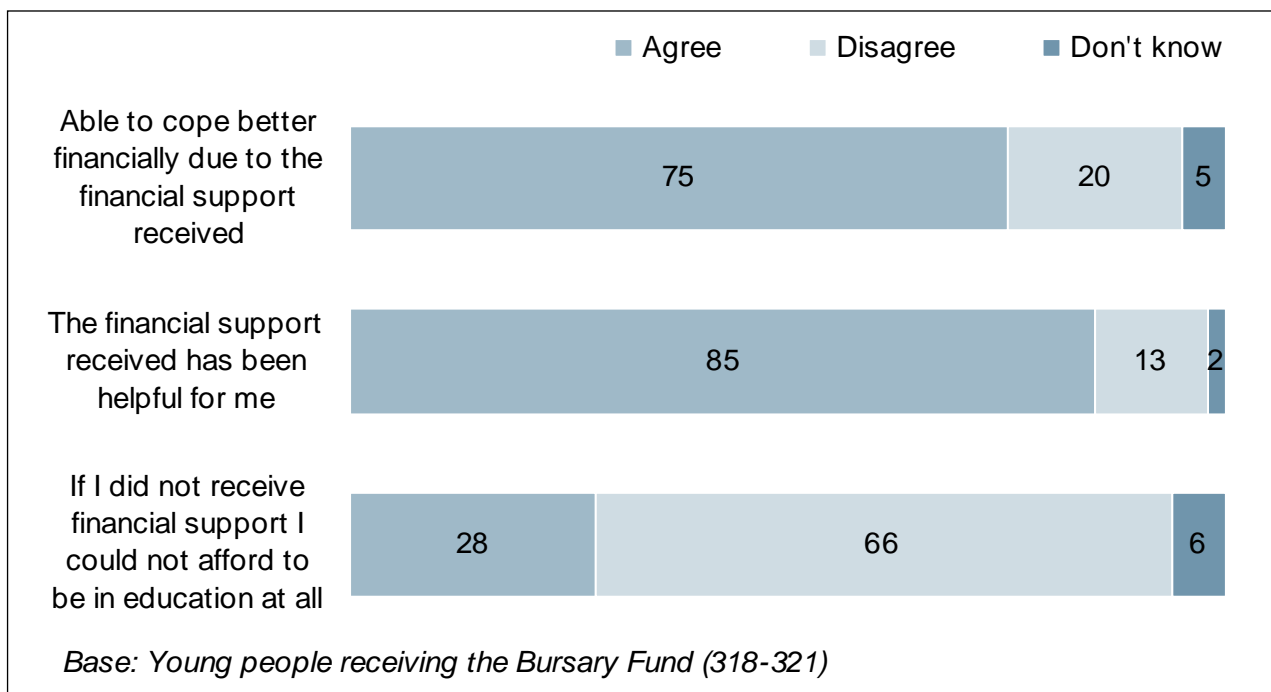
From a provider perspective, some had raised concerns in Year 1 of implementation that the Bursary Fund might be used competitively by providers to attract students. There were concerns that students would choose their provision primarily on financial considerations rather than because of the quality of the provision or the suitability of the course. During discussions in Year 2 case study visits, the general perception was that these fears had (in the main) not been realised. Staff views on why this type of competition was limited mirrored the reasons given by young people including the view that awareness of other schemes may not be particularly high amongst young people and in the majority of cases other priorities influenced post-16 decisions. In addition, providers considered the size of Bursary Funds as generally too low to act as an incentive to move provider, and there was a disincentive for providers to use it in that way because they would suffer with retention issues when young people chose courses inappropriately.

Despite the perception that Bursary Funds were not having a large overall impact on post-16 decisions, some providers and local authority staff were concerned that they may influence the most vulnerable students with the greatest financial concerns. This was felt to contrast with previous EMA provision under which financial support was consistent across providers and so less likely to influence post-16 provider and course choices. Careful monitoring of any impacts of this kind were considered to be important to ensure that the most vulnerable young people are not disadvantaged because their choices are more likely to be driven by financial rather than educational considerations.

7.3 Impacts on young people: young people perspectives (learner survey, case studies)

The Bursary Fund was perceived as an important means of support by the young people receiving it with high levels of agreement to the statements “I am able to cope better financially because of the financial support received” (75%) and “Overall, the financial support has been helpful for me” (85%; Figure 7.2). Furthermore, 28 per cent of those receiving support agreed that they would not be able to afford to stay in education at all if they did not receive a Bursary.

Figure 7.2 Learner Survey: Impact of receiving support on young people receiving the Bursary Fund

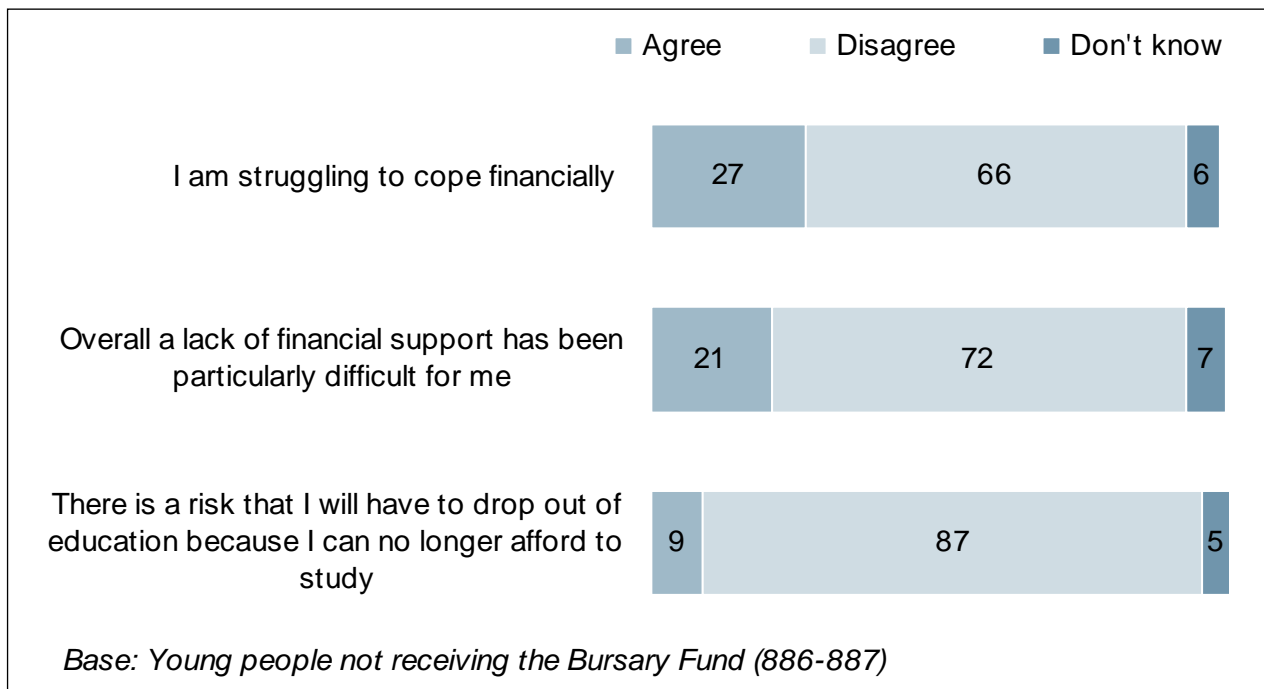


We looked further at the relationship between whether recipients agreed that they could cope better financially because of the support they have received and respondent demographic characteristics, provider type, type of payment, frequency of payment, amount awarded and views about how happy the young person was with how and when payments were made.

Logistic regression analysis was used which allows us to control for a number of factors which may be associated with whether young people were able to cope better because of their award (see Appendix D for details). Overall, young people who agreed the timing of their payments (when and how they get paid) worked well for them were more likely to agree that they were able to cope better because of the Bursary they received. There were no significant differences by young people’s characteristics, provider type or other administrative information.

Among those young people who did not receive a Bursary, around a quarter agreed that they are struggling to cope financially (27%; Figure 7.3). However, a lack of financial support did not seem to have impacted heavily on the educational choices of this group; indeed, a relatively small proportion (9%) said that there was a risk of them dropping out of education given the lack of affordability of studying.

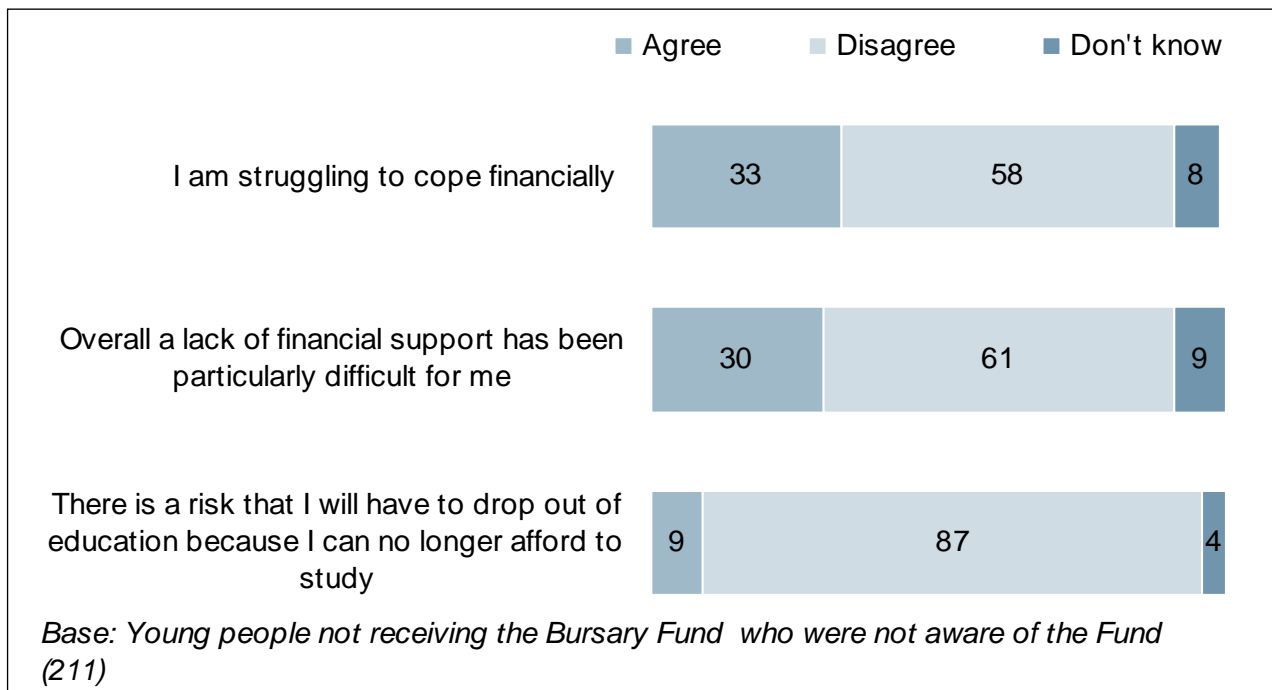
Figure 7.3 Learner Survey: Views of young people not receiving the Bursary Fund



Looking only at the views of young people who did not receive financial support because they were not aware of it,²⁶ the proportion of those with financial problems is similar (33%; Figure 7.1) to the overall group of young people who did not receive a Bursary (27%; Figure 7.3). Moreover, the same proportion (9%) agreed with the statement: “There is a risk that I will have to drop out of education because I can no longer afford to study.”

²⁶ Please note that this is a sub group of those not receiving the Bursary Fund included in Figure 7.3 – non-recipients who reported not have applied for a bursary because they were not aware of the funding.

Figure 7.4 Learner Survey: Views of young people not receiving the Bursary Fund who were not aware of the funding scheme



Young people in receipt of bursaries were more likely to experience financial pressures which could lead to difficulties in continuing their education than non-recipients. Bursary recipients were less likely to agree that they would have stayed on in education without financial support (78% compared to 86% of non-recipients; Table 7.1). Even when receiving the financial support, this group were more likely to say they struggle to stay motivated with their studies due to money worries (29% compared to 21%) and with paying for things needed for their studies (24% and 18% respectively). This suggests that in some cases the support received by young people may not be at a level to relieve the financial pressure sufficiently. There were no differences in the proportions of recipients and non-recipients agreeing that they have to/had to take on work to help support themselves whilst studying.

Table 7.1 Learner survey: Financial difficulties and education by whether received Bursary

	Received Bursary Fund %	Did not receive Bursary Fund %
I would have stayed on in education anyway – whether or not I received this financial support		
Agree	78	86
Disagree	14	10
Don't know	8	4
I have/had to take on paid work to help support me financially while I am studying		
Agree	37	37
Disagree	58	57
Don't know	5	6
I struggle to stay motivated with my studies do to money worries		
Agree	29	21
Disagree	67	77
Don't know	4	2
I am able to buy or do the things I need for my studies – e.g. buy equipment, join field trips		
Agree	73	80
Disagree	24	18
Don't know	4	3
<i>Unweighted base (all young people)</i>	<i>319-321</i>	<i>886-888</i>

Interestingly, a relatively high proportion of respondents receiving a Bursary (40%) agreed that it is difficult to get financial support to stay in education after Year 11 (Table 7.2). However, only 17 per cent of this group disagreed with the statement that “Those young people who really need financial support for staying on in education after Year 11 can usually get the support they need”. This suggests that while there is a general feeling amongst recipients that the support is going to those in need, young people can find the

process difficult in some ways (for example due to lack of awareness, application forms and evidence, or the conditions attached to being paid).

Thirty-five per cent of young people receiving support disagreed that the financial support available to young people who need it is enough to make a difference to them, this is consistent with the earlier finding that recipients of Bursary support can still experience difficulties coping financially.

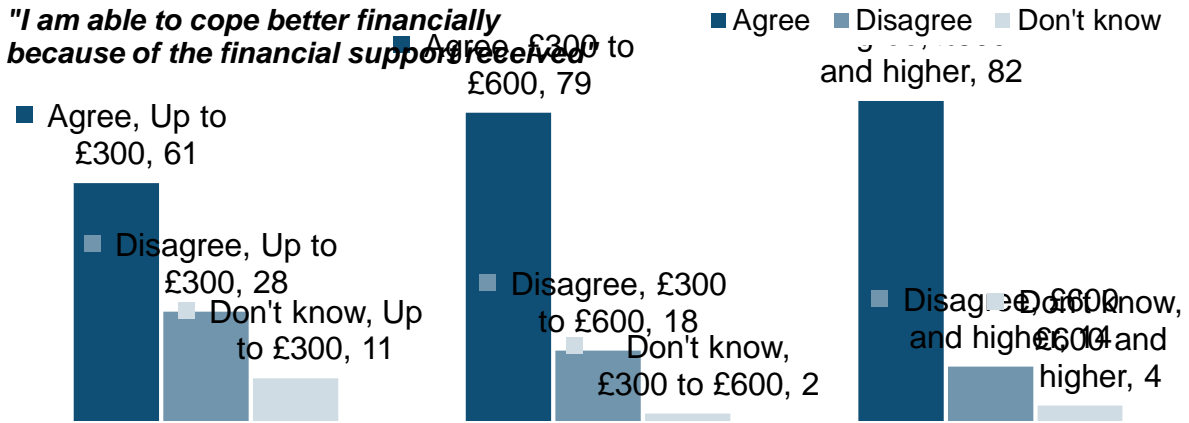
Table 7.2 Learner survey: General views about education funding by whether received Bursary Fund

	Received Bursary Fund %	Did not receive Bursary Fund %
It is difficult to get financial support to stay on in education after Year 11		
Agree	40	44
Disagree	55	30
Don't know	5	27
Those young people who really need financial support for staying on in education after Year 11 can usually get the support they need		
Agree	75	61
Disagree	17	21
Don't know	8	18
The financial support that is available to young people who need it is enough to make a difference to them		
Agree	58	55
Disagree	35	14
Don't know	7	31
<i>Unweighted base (all young people)</i>	<i>320-322</i>	<i>892-895</i>

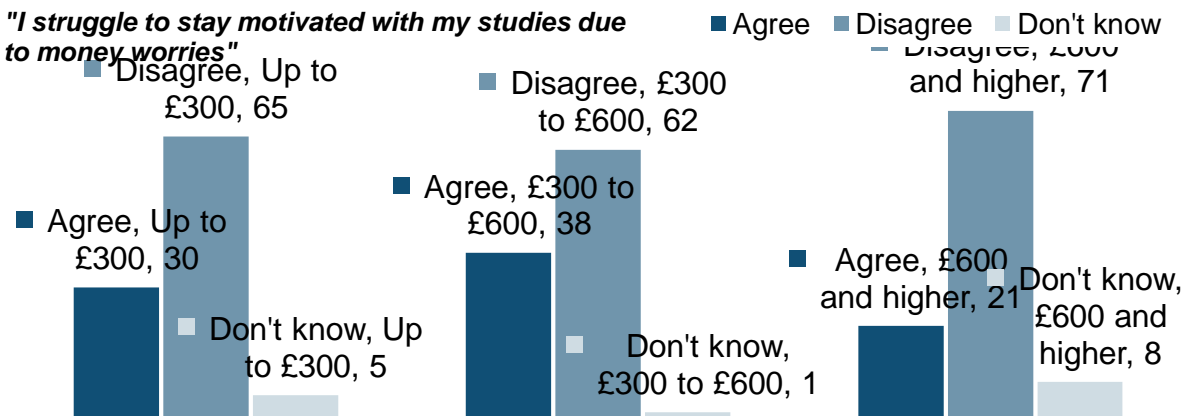
When we look at experiences of financial pressures by the level of support received, as may be expected young people receiving larger bursaries tended to think that the financial support available could make more of a difference to young people and tend to cope better financially (Figure 7.5). Around half (54%) of those receiving up to £300 per year disagreed that the support available is enough to make a difference compared to a quarter of those receiving £600 or more. Whilst the other statements about financial

pressures broadly follow the same pattern these differences are not statistically significant.

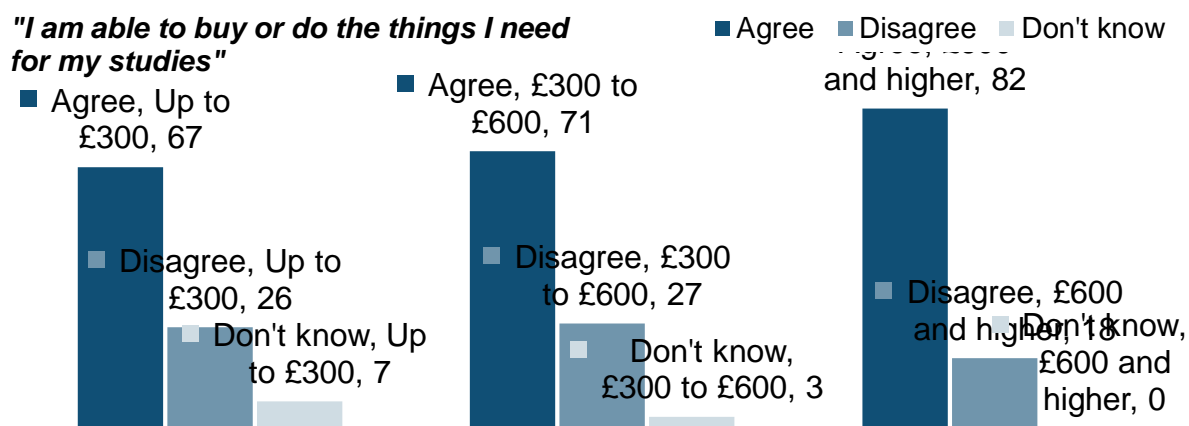
Figure 7.5 Learner Survey: Views about education funding by amount of Bursary Fund per annum



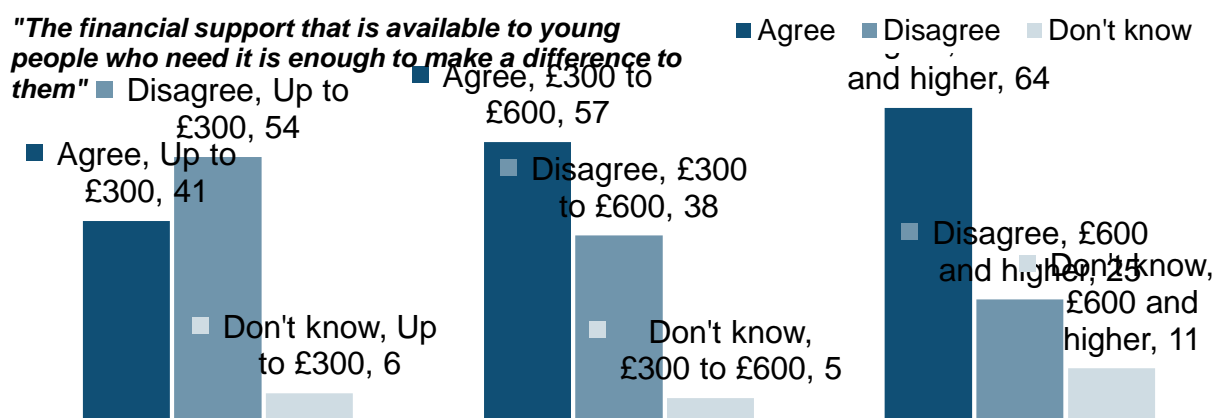
Base: All young people in receipt of bursaries with valid data (286 unweighted)



Base: All young people in receipt of bursaries with valid data (286 unweighted)



Base: All young people in receipt of bursaries with valid data (285 unweighted)



Base: All young people in receipt of bursaries with valid data (284 unweighted)

Reflecting the mixed picture of views from the learner survey, young people who participated in the case study focus groups, also had mixed views on the degree to which the fund had or had not removed financial barriers to their participation. Their views can be broadly grouped into three perspectives:

- Meets need and supports their participation
For this group, the support from the Bursary Fund was viewed as critical to their continued participation and without it they would consider leaving to find work.

'If I wasn't receiving this, I think I'd probably have to start working somehow if I had to, if I wasn't receiving financial support because with what I'm studying, I have to pay a for a lot of things.'

(Young person focus group, FE College)

Having sufficient support to meet specific costs including transport and equipment needs as well as being able to rely less on parents who may be struggling financially and unable to support them was particularly valued:

'It's 'cause of the bursary I've been able to maintain being in college 'cause otherwise my dad wouldn't be able to give me the money to get my stuff for my course'

(Young person focus group, FE College)

- Valuable but not critical to participation
A second viewpoint expressed was that the support had been valuable and helped them with their studies but had not been critical to their continued participation. Young people who held this view did not identify financial barriers to their continued participation and therefore while the support from the Bursary was valued (impacts beyond participation are discussed further below), the funds were not considered to have impacted on their ability to continue in education. Limited costs associated with continuing in education (for example, for those who lived near their provider and had no transport costs and where course costs were minimal or already met by their provider) was one reason given for not viewing the support as critical. Young people who held this view were also able to access financial help from their families:

'R1²⁷: I think the question [whether the Bursary removes financial barriers to participation] doesn't apply to us kind of thing here. Maybe it might apply to others more than us 'cause like me, if I don't get bursary or something I can always go to my dad if I want money so I don't really.. R2: Need it? R1: yeah.'

(Young person focus group, FE College)

- Not sufficient and struggling
This group reported struggling financially despite being in receipt of Bursary support. Those who expressed this view generally felt less able to draw on financial support from family and were therefore more reliant on Bursary Funds to support their studies:

'I can't get money like from my family 'cause they can't afford to give me money and I'm out all day every day, nearly. And I've gotta make £20 last me like a week and it just doesn't at all.'

(Young person focus group, FE College)

²⁷ R1= Respondent 1; R2=Respondent 2

Indeed, in some instances young people described contributing to household costs including food and household bills and this placing additional pressure on them. The levels of support were considered to be too low to meet their needs, particularly in cases where there were high costs associated with transport and equipment. In addition, some identified delays / errors in payments causing hardship while others expressed concerns that failing to meet the conditions attached to their bursaries could jeopardise their ability to continue. For some young people in this group, having a part-time job had made the difference between staying or dropping out of post-16 education:

R²⁸: [I pay my parents rent] every month.. so, that's what some of the money goes on as well.. That's why I needed a job instead of wanted the job.

I: Have you at any point thought 'Oh I'm not sure I can afford college, I might drop out'?

R: All the time.. when I didn't have a job yeah 'cause like we need the money for the bills and when you need money for the bills college isn't important anymore in your head.'

(Young person focus group, FE College)

7.3.1 Removing financial barriers to participation (provider and local authority views in case studies)

From the perspective of case study providers and local authority staff, the views of the wider impacts on participation were also mixed, with providers recognising all three groups discussed above. Where courses were considered to have minimal costs (already covered by the provider), and where students lived locally and had family support, the Bursary Fund was not viewed as critical to participation. In one case study Special School for example, transport needs and equipment costs were met and students were able to apply for Free School Meals. In this case, the Bursary Fund was less critical for enabling participation and more valuable for enriching the learning experience through access to after school clubs and trips that would have been unaffordable otherwise. In another case study school, staff considered the motivation and aspiration levels were so high amongst their student body that participation levels would not drop if there was no Bursary support available:

'If you took it away, I still think we'd have the numbers, so I guess because the culture is so different here and that a lot of students know that education for them is a way of getting out of the area they're in.. getting into a university and going on

²⁸ R= Respondent; I=Interviewer

post-16 seems very important. So, bursaries on their own won't change, you know, won't make a huge significant [difference], but the fact is it's there does mean that students have an added incentive.'

(Headteacher, School sixth form)

For other providers however, the Bursary Fund was considered to have played an important role in removing financial barriers for some vulnerable young people, with examples given of students who could not afford their transport costs, or were struggling to live independently:

'There's maybe five or ten students that if we weren't giving them the bursary, I don't think they'd be here... so it's very, very, important that, you know, that we've been able to help them.'

(Finance Manager, School sixth form)

In other cases the level of support was not viewed as sufficient to meet the need in the student population and there were limitations on how effective the Bursary Fund could be when presented with high levels of need:

'I mean, it is quite difficult in terms of lots of people who drop out when they say the reason for withdrawing is financial; they have much bigger issues.. money is a big one.. So they've got far bigger issues than anything we could necessarily deal with.. I do know lots of students are under pressure from their families particularly those on benefits because they just literally don't have the money to give them so...we do our best to try and keep as many as we can.'

(Student Finance Manager, FE College)

Local authority staff fed back that it was difficult to judge whether there had been any impact on participation levels across their areas since the phasing out of EMA and the implementation of the Bursary Fund. Some reported numbers of young people who were NEET were remaining constant, although others reported that local cuts had meant tracking the number of young people who were NEET had become more difficult and the number of young people whose post-16 destination was 'not known' had increased making it hard to judge changes in participation level. There was some anecdotal feedback that training providers offering foundation learning to re-engage young people who were at risk of being NEET may have been finding it harder to recruit and retain students, but this had not yet been verified. Other factors that were considered to impact on participation levels included reductions in local levels of Information, Advice and Guidance (which were felt to have had a negative impact on participation levels) and

limited job opportunities in the local area (which were felt to have had a positive impact on post-16 participation because of the limited nature of the other options available to young people).

7.3.2 Impacts on on-going engagement, attendance and learning (case studies)

In terms of on-going engagement and attendance, providers predominantly delivering foundation level training considered that Bursary support played a critical role in motivating and incentivising attendance for a group of young people who might otherwise be NEET. From their perspective, if no financial support was available this would lead to an increase in the number of young people not in education, employment or training. This was considered to be particularly true when training provision required long hours of work based learning where young people would have an expectation of receiving some payment for their labour. In the following case example, a training provider who tops-up their Bursary Fund to provide all students with up to £30 a week, reflects on the impact of EMA ending:

R²⁹: We're very much work focused and if somebody's clocking on and doing a full day and they're coming out gardening, painting, doing five days a week, they were getting £30 and then suddenly they're getting nothing, it wasn't just attendance, it was time keeping, more so behaviour. That, that, EMA bonuses and things was the bit of control we got and the bit of motivation, the carrot if you like that the supervisor each day had got to work with them. Then suddenly that was gone.

I: What impact did it have on numbers?

R: Massive, yeah it was massive. It was more the progression rates have sort of dropped like a stone because they just stopped coming in and then because we're very strict on timekeeping and attendance.. we were losing more people than ever. Just 'cause they wouldn't come in. And I don't blame them one bit, why would you get up every day for nothing and work?

(Manager, Training provider)

While staff in case study Special Schools were less likely to view the Bursary Fund as a scheme that removed financial barriers to participation, they identified a range of positive impacts in relation to improving engagement and enriching learning. Examples included using Bursaries to provide i-pads as communication aids, supporting students to access after-school clubs they previously could not afford, providing access to laptops at home for homework and equipment and clothes for vocational training.

²⁹ R= Respondent; I=Interviewer

8 Conclusions and recommendations

The flexibility of the Bursary Fund continues to be seen as its major asset. Providers value being able to make decisions about how to use the Fund in the ways they consider best to meet their students' needs to participate and engage in continued learning. As in the first year of implementation, the use of both in-kind and cash bursaries, varied purposes of Discretionary Bursary awards made and payment frequencies reflect this.

In the second year of implementation, learners have expressed their views about how the Bursary Fund works for them in surveys and focus groups. Whilst young people generally view the financial support available positively, and feel it is reaching those who are in need, at this stage of implementation we can identify some aspects of the administration that seem to work well, and some aspects which can be more challenging for staff and young people.

The **application process** involves a lot of paperwork which together with providing evidence can be off-putting for some young people. Whilst the need for evidence to assess eligibility is understandably a requirement, consideration should be made to minimise concerns young people or their families may have about sharing sensitive information, and to the ease of completing application forms.

Although general **awareness** of the Bursary Fund amongst young people was high when we spoke to them, many were not aware of this support when making decisions about their post-16 participation. It is important that young people know about the types of financial support which will be available at the right time (i.e. before end of Year 11) to inform their decisions. Therefore, providers and local authorities should ensure that information is easily available to young people, and publicise the Bursary Fund early at open days, in prospectuses and schools in Years 10 and 11 rather than waiting until young people are enrolled. Providers expressed some uncertainty about what the DfE guidance permitted them to do with regards to publicising funding so clearer guidance about this, possibly with some best practice examples in future would help providers.

We found some providers were already pro-active in **targeting young people**, particularly those they believed were in most need but some young people may require more encouragement or help to seek the support they are entitled to.

Providers tend to use a **combination of financial and needs-based criteria to assess eligibility** for Bursary Fund support. Typically, this needs-based criteria covers equipment required for the course and transport costs. In Year 2, concerns were expressed by both providers and young people about the fairness of awarding criteria and taking into account special circumstances when making funding decisions and sanctions. When only financial information was taken into account this was felt by young people to be too crude and could be ignoring these important other factors. Therefore, it is important that their characteristics such as caring responsibilities, SEN status and

support available from other family members are considered in funding schemes as these can have a crucial role in a young person's ability to cope financially.

While cash awards were more common than in-kind awards, both types of award offer advantages for providers and young people.

- The **flexibility of cash payments** was seen by many providers as better because they are more able to meet the diverse needs of young people, encourage independence and young people can manage their money. In addition, young people receiving a cash bursary were more likely to say it changed their behaviour so this type of award may be more influential as an incentive to improve attendance and punctuality than in-kind awards.
- In-kind awards can however present good value for money as providers can purchase items in bulk or with discounts to maximise the use of the Bursary funding pot (e.g. bus passes, equipment costs). This type of award also has the advantage that providers can be sure the awards are meeting specific needs and provide assurance that they are being used for purpose intended to help young people.

Whilst attendance was the mostly frequently mentioned **condition linked to Bursary receipt** by providers (90%), many young people seemed unaware that there were conditions attached to receipt of the financial support.

- Higher levels of Bursary award were associated with increased likelihood of changing behaviour as a result of conditions attached to the award.
- Consideration should also be made to the sanctions of not meeting conditions and special circumstances, for example absence due to family caring responsibilities or illness. In some cases the **level of sanction** was felt to be too strict, particularly when payments were made only a few times a year. For example, the whole of a termly payment could be withheld if a young person failed to meet one condition. Also, in some cases the sanction undermined young person's ability to meet condition, which could lead to a downward spiral, for example if a bus pass is withdrawn then the young person may be unable to travel to college next term and so on.

The **perceived impact** of the Bursary Fund is generally positive. However, some young people are still struggling and problems with the administration of payments (e.g. frequency) can cause significant challenges for young people whilst they are studying so it is important providers continue to develop their funding programmes to best meet these needs. As the DfE are administering the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary from 2013/14 this should reduce the administrative burden on providers in future years.

Weekly payments were not too common amongst providers, possibly due to the higher administrative costs but the flexibility and independence were highly valued by young people.

- Young people tended to be more satisfied with the scheme when they received weekly payments, this allowed them to manage their money more easily than those receiving half-termly/termly payments to meet the educational needs of their course. These more frequent payments were associated with more delays or administrative problems, however providers considered that it was less problematic if a weekly payment was withdrawn because the next would be the following week.
- The timing of first payments was also crucial for young people; this should be made early enough to help them in the first term when often they are required to buy course equipment such as books. In cases where the first payment is not made until the end of the first term this causes more financial pressure for those concerned.

During the second year of implementation, there were lower levels of **under spending** observed compared to the previous year. Providers felt more confident predicting demand but there was still a tendency to be cautious to ensure that they have sufficient funds to meet the needs of learners throughout the academic year. It will be interesting to see how this may change in 2013/14 when providers will no longer be able to carry over funding to the next academic year.

In Year 3 of the implementation we will be able to look more at the views of young people from learner focus groups and the final year of the provider survey to see how the funding continues to help young people in need. We will also be able to report on the perceived impacts of centralising the DVG bursaries, allowing providers to focus on the administration of Discretionary Bursaries.

From the second year of implementation we are able to make several recommendations for providers and the Department for Education;

Recommendations for schools and 16 to 19 providers:

- Providers should publicise information about the Bursary Fund to prospective students during Years 10 and 11, when they are making choices about further study. Providers and schools should work together to achieve this.
- Publicity about availability of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund support should be clearer, setting out the eligibility criteria, conditions and application process for young people and their parents.
- Consider, where possible how greater flexibility can be given when assessing student eligibility for the Bursary, to help meet the complex individual needs of students.
- Consideration should be made by providers to reassure young people and their families about the confidentiality of any data on application forms.

Recommendations for the Department for Education:

- Bursary Fund guidance documents should clearly state how providers can communicate with young people about the available support.
- Consider whether it is acceptable for providers to carry over funds to future academic years if there is an under spend and the implications of doing so (for the Department, providers and young people).
- Monitor how the change to centrally administering the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries affects administration for providers.

Appendix A Methodology

This appendix provides a more detailed account of the methodology for the Provider and learner Surveys, the MI data analysis and the qualitative Case Studies.

Provider survey

Sample design

The provider sample was drawn from a list of providers and their funding allocations provided to NatCen by the DfE. Contact information and other variables were added to this list of providers from either the Independent Learner Record (ILR) or Edubase. It was necessary to use both sources as providers were split between the two data bases.

In the first year of the survey a sample of 1,700 providers was selected for the survey. The sample was designed to over-sample providers that teach/train significant numbers of students from deprived backgrounds. The sample was then drawn disproportionately across the four main strata, with more sample taken from the stratum containing providers with a higher proportion of disadvantaged young people.

In the second year of the survey the sample comprised of providers that responded to the Year 1 long version of the questionnaire and a refresher sample of new providers for the Year 2 survey. The refreshment sample was select based on their funding allocations provided to NatCen by the DfE. A sample of 317 providers was selected for the survey (257 respondents from the Year 1 survey and 60 new providers).

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaires for the surveys were drawn up by NatCen in consultation with DfE and the Evaluation Steering Group. The questionnaires were repeated many of the questions from the first year of the survey which were informed by a series of scoping interviews with providers and local authorities that were carried out at the start of the evaluation.

The main topics covered in the questionnaire were:

- Spending on Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries
- Spending on Discretionary Bursaries
- Characteristics of applicants and recipients of Discretionary Bursaries
- Administration of the Bursary Fund
- Perceived impacts of the Bursary Fund

Online questionnaires

The questionnaire was made available as an online survey so that providers could complete the survey online if they wished. The online questionnaire replicated the content and layout of the postal questionnaire in order to minimise any 'mode effects' that is, differences in response that arise due to the mode of survey completion.

Fieldwork

The questionnaires for the survey were mailed to providers on 10th June 2013. The mailing consisted of a questionnaire and covering letter which explained the purpose of the survey and provided information on how to take part either by post or online. A reply-paid envelope was also included in the mailing. The initial mailing to providers was addressed to the Head teacher, Principal or head of the organisation.

Providers were sent an email in the same week as the postal mailings, with a link to the survey website and their secure log-in details (these details were also included in the postal mailing). Emails were sent to named individuals at providers, using a list of contacts for the Bursary Fund provided by DfE.

Providers were asked to complete the survey by the end of the summer term, either online or by post. A survey email address was available for any queries that providers had.

Reminder strategies

A second postal mailing with another copy of the questionnaire was sent to all providers who had not already responded on the 21st June.

Telephone calls were made to providers where we did not have an email address, to collect the details of the most appropriate member of staff. A reminder email with the survey link was then sent to providers on 24th June.

Fieldwork extension

By the end of the summer term, a total of 172 questionnaires had been completed, a response rate of 54 per cent. As response rates were below the target of 200 completed questionnaires, the survey was re-issued in the autumn term.

Telephone calls were made from mid-August to mid-September 2013 to providers who had not completed the survey in order to update their details. An email was then sent out to providers with the survey link and their log-in details, asking providers to complete the survey in regard to the 2012/13 academic year, by 18th September.

Response rates

By the end of the fieldwork extension, 203 providers had completed the survey and the response rate had increased to 64 per cent (Figure 8.1).

Appendix Table A 1 Provider survey response rates by sample type and mode of completion

	Original sample		Refresher sample		All	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Issued	257	100	60	100	317	100
Completed - web	120	47	17	28	137	43
Completed - post	54	21	11	18	65	21
Total	174	68	28	47	202	64

Data Preparation

Data from questionnaires returned by post were keyed into the online questionnaire so that all data were in the same format. Codeframes for open-ended questions and 'other' responses were developed by researchers based on the responses given in the first 100 questionnaires. Responses to open-ended questions were coded into these codeframes by NatCen's Data Unit. A series of edit checks were carried out on the data at this stage, with data checked against the paper questionnaires where appropriate.

The data were prepared in SPSS. More detailed data checks were carried out on the SPSS data, for example checking unusual or inconsistent values on a case by case basis. In some cases unusual responses were excluded from analysis for a particular question. Responses were not queried with providers due to time and budgetary constraints.

Survey Weights

The Year 2 provider sample contained 316 providers and was formed of two parts – a sample 256 providers that had responded to the long version of the questionnaire at Year 1 and a fresh sample of 60 providers selected at Year 2.

Completed questionnaires were received from 202 providers. Twenty-eight questionnaires were received from providers in the fresh sample (47% response) and 174 from providers that had participated in the Y1 interview (68%). A set of non-response weights were required to make the 202 responding providers representative of all providers in the population.

In addition, it was necessary to generate the weights that permitted the 174 respondents to be analysed separately. The weights for these 174 providers should weight them back to their original distribution and allow longitudinal analysis.

Selection weights

The first stage was to generate selection weights. The sample was drawn disproportionately across four sampling strata:

- 0 No vulnerable learners
- 1 Providers with lowest proportion of vulnerable learners (remaining providers with vulnerable learners)
- 2 Providers with middle proportion of vulnerable learners (21-50% of all providers with vulnerable learners)
- 3 Providers with the highest proportion of vulnerable learners (top 20% of all providers with vulnerable learners)

Providers that taught a higher proportion of 'vulnerable' students had higher selection probabilities. This was to ensure there were sufficient vulnerable students in the learner sample. These students were then over-sampled at the second stage because they were more likely to be in receipt of a low income Bursary and therefore of specific research interest.

The selection weights were generated as the inverse of the selection probabilities. They weight down the larger providers and providers where a high proportion of the intake could be classed as vulnerable. The purpose of the selection weights is to make the overall issued sample (Year 1+ refreshment) representative of the population from which it was selected.

Appendix Table A 2 Combined Y1 and 2 issued samples.

Strata	All available providers		Total selected at Y1	Selected at Y2	Total selected providers (unweighted)		Selection weight	Total selected providers (weighted)	
	Count	%	Count	Count	Count	%		Count	%
0	1650	53.5	510	38	548	31.1	3.01	1649	53.5
1	702	22.8	534	9	543	30.9	1.29	700	22.8
2	441	14.3	379	3	382	21.7	1.15	439	14.3
3	290	9.4	277	10	287	16.3	1.01	290	9.4
Total	3083	100	1700	60	1760	100		3079	100

Non-response weights

A set of non-response weights were then generated. These weights adjust the sample to correct for biases that arise due to non-participation of providers to the survey.

The weights were generated in two steps;

- Step 1 modelled response by providers to the initial information request
- Step 2 adjusted for non-response to the follow up interview.

The Year 2 refreshment sample and the Year 1 initial sample were pooled at the first step. This is because the response behaviour of the refreshment sample at Year 2 would be very similar to the response behaviour of the initial sample at Year 1.

Only providers that had been followed up at Year 2 were included in the second step. Hence the weights for the 28 refreshment sample cases came from the first step only, whereas the weights for the 174 followed up providers incorporated both steps.

The weights for the first step were generated using a logistic regression model. A logistic regression can be used to model the relationship between an outcome variable (response to the survey) and a set of predictor variables. The predictor variables comprised a set of school and local area characteristics taken from the sampling frame.

The model generated a predicted probability for each provider. This is the probability the provider would complete the returns, given their characteristics. Providers with

characteristics associated with non-response were under-represented in the sample and therefore receive a low predicted probability. These predicted probabilities were then used to generate a set of non-response weights. Participants with a low predicted probability got a larger weight, increasing their representation in the sample.

The non-response model incorporated information about provider type, local area characteristics (ONS ward-level area classification), local deprivation indicators (Index of Multiple Deprivation), the number of learners, and population density of the local area. The model was used to generate a response propensity. This gives the probability of responding to the first survey. The non-response weight for step 1 was calculated as the inverse of this propensity.

At the second step, a further adjustment was made for differences in response by provider type. This weighted up providers that were less likely to respond at the follow up survey.

The weights for the 28 refreshment sample cases were generated as the product of the selection weight and the weight from the step1 non-response model. The weights for the 174 followed up providers were generated as the product of the selection weight, the weight from the step1 non-response model and the step 2 adjustment.

The provider survey required a set of weights to adjust for differences in sample selection and response. The weights adjust for differences in the selection probabilities of providers in different sampling stratum and non-response to the provider questionnaire. Non-response weights were generated using logistic regression modelling.

The first stage of the weighting was to generate selection weights. These weights correct for unequal selection probabilities across sampling strata.

Learner survey

Sampling

The sample for the survey of young people consisted of young people aged 16-18 studying at providers included in the first survey of providers.

Students were only selected from providers that responded at the first survey. Forty seven of the responding providers were selected (out of a total of 256 responding providers) and 75 students were sampled from each of them.

The sample of students came from two sampling frames. This is because no single database holds information about all students aged 16-18 years. Students in school sixth forms were selected from the National Pupil Database (NPD). This is a database of all school pupils. It includes information about older children but only if they are being educated through the school system, i.e. at a sixth form attached to a school.

Students in separate 6th form colleges, Further Education Colleges and other providers were selected from the Individualised Learner Record (ILR). This is a record for all students who are studying outside the school system. The majority of students aged 16-18 years are on the ILR.

The providers had been selected with probability proportional to the number of learners aged 16-18 years that they contained. A fixed number of students was then selected from each provider. Hence the sample was designed to be efficient for analysis of learners, rather than providers.

In addition, 'vulnerable' students had higher selection probabilities, since these students were most likely to be in receipt of a Bursary and therefore of specific research interest.

For the NPD sample vulnerable students were defined as any student who met at least one of the following criteria:

- Students with a Special Educational Need (both those with statement and non-statement)
- Students in receipt or eligible for Free School Meals
- Students with a disability
- Students in care or who have been in care.

The ILR contains its own vulnerable learner flag, which is based on similar criteria. Vulnerable students on the ILR were identified using this flag. The number of vulnerable students selected per provider varied in proportion to the total number of vulnerable students studying at the provider. This means a larger number of vulnerable students were selected from providers where a higher proportion of students who were vulnerable, although the total number of students selected from each provider was fixed at 75.

In total 3,525 students were selected; 2,925 came from the ILR (75 x 39 providers) and 600 students from NPD (75 x 8 providers).

Weights

The final weights incorporated a number of stages

- Selection weight for providers – select 47 providers from 256 providers that responded to the first provider survey
- Selection weight for students within providers – select 75 students from each selected provider.
- Non-response weight for students
- Final non-response weight for responding providers

The selection weights were generated as the inverse of the selection probabilities. There were two stages of selection: the first was the selection of 47 providers from which the learner sample would be selected from, the second was the selection of 75 students from all the students aged 16-18 years who were studying at that provider.

The next stage was to generate weights to adjust for non-response (refusals, non-contacts, etc) by students to the survey. This was carried out separately for students selected from the NPD and ILR.

ILR sample

The bulk of the sample came from the ILR. There were 2,925 students selected for the sample, of which 1,084 responded (37 per cent). This meant there were sufficient ILR cases to generate a non-response model. Information from the ILR sampling frame that was requested along with the sampled cases was used to generate the predicted probability of response of selected ILR respondents to the survey. The model incorporated information on the student's age, sex, eligibility for extra funding, deprivation level of student's home area and classification of the student's home area. Other variables that were included in the modelling (health problems, vulnerable flag and urban rural indicator) were dropped because they were not significantly related to response.

The final non-response weights for the ILR sample were then generated as the product of the two selection weights, the weight from the non-response model and the final provider weight, hence the weight correct for bias due to non-response by students, differential selection probabilities of students and providers for the learner survey and non-response of providers to the initial provider survey.

NPD sample

There were 600 NPD cases selected for the sample, of which 156 responded (26 per cent). There were too few cases to generate a non-response model, although a non-response analysis suggested there were some significant differences between the responding and issued samples in terms of age, special educational needs, vulnerable student flag and eligibility for free school meals. Calibration weighting methods were used to generate weights for the responding sample. The weights adjust the responding sample to make it look like the issued sample in terms of the variables listed.

The final non-response weights for the NPD sample were then generated as the product of the calibration weight (which incorporated the two selection weights) and the final provider weight, hence the weight correct for bias due to non-response by students, differential selection probabilities of students and providers for the learner survey and non-response of providers to the initial provider survey.

Final combined sample weights

The two samples were then put together and the final weights checked and scaled. The scaling ensured the weighted sample size matched the unweighted sample size and gave the weights a mean of one.

Management Information data analysis

The MI data was collected electronically by DfE in October 2013. All providers in receipt of Bursary funding in 2012/13 (3,238) were asked to submit a return and it is estimated that approximately 76% of providers completed the returns. DfE undertook checks of the data and resolved inconsistencies with the providers where possible. Records which had inconsistencies that could not be resolved were excluded from the clean data. Following this checking process, the cleaned data was provided to NatCen for analysis.

NatCen matched the MI data to information about the providers (for example, provider type, local authority) before undertaking analysis. A total of 2,385 records were included in the analysis, although where further inconsistencies were found in the data, records were excluded from particular analyses.

The MI data required a set of weights to correct for the possible effects of non-response bias and to scale-up responses to provide estimates for the total population of providers in receipt of Bursary funding.

The first step to generating weights was to identify the current (i.e. 2012/13) provider type for each provider that responded to the MI request. This information needed to be matched to the MI data. It was matched using a combination of the Provider Sampling Frame and provider population data from DfE.

The weights were generated using calibration methods. The aim was to reduce bias resulting from differential non-response to the request for MI data. An iterative procedure was used to adjust the sample until the distribution of the (weighted) sample matched that of the population by Region³⁰ and Provider Type.

School sixth forms and academies were grouped together for the weighting. The large number of recent academy conversions and some issues during the matching process meant there were some doubts about the accuracy of academy status in the MI data. Academies and school sixth forms were grouped into a single category during analysis.

Table A3 shows the profile of the population, the sample of providers who responded to the MI request before weights were applied and the weighted sample of providers. It can be seen that the responding sample is relatively close to the population. This suggests

³⁰ We attempted to weight using local authority (rather than Region) but the large number of areas, some of them rather small, resulted in more extreme weights. Some issues matching the MI data to the population information meant additional information could not be incorporated into the weighting scheme.

that response did not vary greatly by provider type, which is encouraging since it means response bias by provider type will be low.

Appendix Table A 3 Provider Type of the population and weighted and unweighted MI respondents

	Sample (unweighted)	Sample (weighted)	Population
	%	%	%
16-18 provider	40.2	36.3	36.3
Academy	20.6	23.6	23.6
School sixth form	21.1	17.5	17.5
Special schools (including PRU and Annex C)	12.4	14.7	14.7
Non programme funded provider - not special schools	3.2	4.4	4.4
LA and other independent private providers	2.5	3.6	3.6
Total	2385	2360	3346

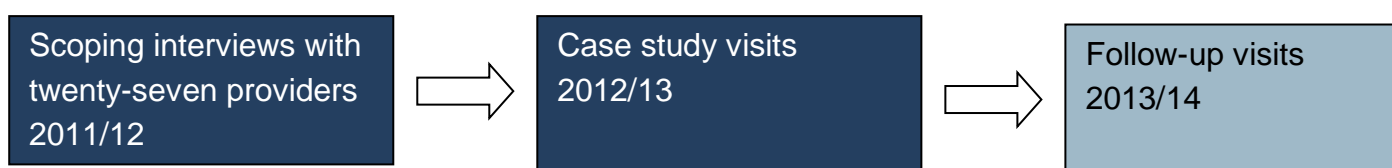
There are more differences in the distribution of providers by Region, with lower response from providers in the Greater London area (15% of the sample, compared to 16.1% of the population). The non-response adjustment made the regional distribution of the weighted sample match that of the population.

Appendix Table A 4 Regional distribution of the population and weighted and unweighted MI respondents

	Sample (unweighted)	Sample (weighted)	Population
	%	%	%
East Midlands	9.5	9.1	9.1
East of England	10.8	10.4	10.4
Greater London	15.0	16.1	16.1
North East	4.7	4.9	4.9
North West	12.8	12.4	12.4
South East	15.7	15.9	15.9
South West	9.3	9.2	9.2
West Midlands	12.0	12.6	12.6
Yorkshire and the Humber	10.1	9.3	9.3
Total	2385	2360	3323

Case studies

The aim of the qualitative case studies was to explore in detail the range of approaches adopted by providers to administer bursaries; to gather feedback on the perceived impacts of Bursary support and to track change in Bursary implementation over time. Scoping interviews with twenty-seven providers were initially undertaken in 2011/12, and then twelve were invited to participate as case studies and followed up in 2012/13 with a further planned visit in 2013/14:



Sampling and recruitment

This report reports the findings from the case study visits in 2012/13 and the following table provides a breakdown of the achieved case study sample, with diversity in relation to region, provider type and level of deprivation:

Appendix Table A 5 Overview of case study provider sample

Sample criteria		Achieved sample
Region	London	2
	North East	1
	North West	3
	East Midlands	2
	West Midlands	2
	Yorkshire & Humber	2
Provider Type	School Sixth Forms	4
	FE Colleges	4
	Private Training Providers	2
	Special Schools	2
Deprivation level	20-29%	3
	30-39%	2
	40-49%	1
	50+	3
	Not known	3

In each case study, depth interviews were carried out with:

- A senior member staff responsible for determining Bursary policy
- A member of staff responsible for the administration of Bursary funds
- A member of staff at the local authority with responsibility for supporting post-16 provision

In total, twenty interviews were conducted with staff across the case study sites (involving twenty-eight staff members) and an additional eight interviews were conducted with local authority staff. Initial recruitment emails and leaflets about the research were sent to a named contact in each provider and these were followed-up by a phone call to discuss

the research further. Discussions with this initial contact helped identify the most appropriate staff to speak to and leaflets introducing the research and explaining what would be involved were passed on to them before arrangements made for interviews. Copies of recruitment materials can be found in Appendix B.

In addition, a focus group with students aged 16 to 19 was conducted in each case study provider (twelve in total). Provider staff identified and recruited young people to participate in the focus groups and a leaflet was provided for staff to pass on to students providing further detail about what participation would involve.

Seventy-four young people participated in the groups which ranged in size from four to eight participants. Figure 8.3 provides a breakdown of the achieved sample of young people.

Appendix Table A 6 Overview of achieved young people sample.

Sample criteria		Achieved sample
Age	16	10
	17	33
	18	22
	19	7
	20	2
Gender	Male	41
Provider Type	Female	33
Ethnicity	White	51
	Asian or Asian British	11
	Black or Black British	6
	Other	6
Qualification level studying for	Entry level	8
	Level 1	9
	Level 2	13
	Level 3	37
	Not provided	7

Fieldwork interviews

Fieldwork took place between March and July 2013. Interviews and focus groups were conducted by three NatCen researchers and each interview typically lasted about one hour. Students participating in the focus groups received £20 as a thank you for their participation and were asked to complete a form to record key demographic information at the close of each discussion.

Analysis of case study data

Interviews were digitally recorded and the data was analysed using Framework, an approach developed at NatCen which involves the systematic analysis of interview data within a thematic matrix (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The key topics and issues emerging from the interviews were identified through familiarisation with interview data, as well as reference to the original objectives and the topic guides used to conduct the interviews. A series of thematic charts were then drawn up using NVivo software and data from the interviews summarised under each topic. The final stage of analysis involved working through the summarised data in detail, drawing out the range of experiences and views, identifying similarities and differences, and interrogating the data to seek to explain emergent patterns and findings. Verbatim interview quotations are provided in the report to highlight themes and findings where appropriate.

The findings presented here reflect the range and diversity of views and experiences among the staff and young people interviewed. As a qualitative study, the prevalence of views and experiences arising from the case study data are not reported.

Appendix B Case study recruitment materials

Case study provider leaflet:

NatCen

Social Research that works for society

16-19 Bursary Fund Evaluation

What is the research about?

The Department for Education (DfE) has commissioned NatCen Social Research (NatCen) to conduct an independent evaluation of the 16-19 Bursary Fund. NatCen is an independent social research organisation. The aims of the evaluation are to explore how bursaries are awarded; understand the impacts of the 16-19 Bursary Fund and explore the characteristics of applicants and recipients of bursaries. In order to ensure that we can explore the range and variation of approaches to managing and administering bursaries we are conducting twelve provider case studies to explore experiences of administering the 16-19 Bursary Fund.

Why have I been contacted?

You very kindly took part in a short telephone interview in the Summer 2012 to feedback your experiences of administering the Bursary Fund in its first year. Your feedback was really valuable and we would now like to invite [name of provider] to take part in the next stage of the research as one of twelve case studies.

What will taking part involve?

Participating as a case study would involve two research visits from the research team. We appreciate that you are very busy and we will do our best to arrange the research visits on dates that are convenient to you. To thank you for your time and to cover any administration costs of taking part, each case study provider will receive £500 (£250 in the Spring 2012 and £250 in the Autumn).

Visit one (Spring 2012)

The aim of this visit is to gather views and experiences of administering the Bursary Fund in its second year of implementation, including details of how funding is allocating, criteria for eligibility, barriers and facilitators to take-up and views on impact. The visit would take place over one day and would involve:

- An interview with the Head Teacher or a member of senior management team (lasting approximately 1 hour)
- An interview with the Business Manager / Staff member involved in the administration of the fund (lasting approximately 1 hour)
- A group discussion with 6-8 young people (this would last approximately 1.5 hrs and young people would receive £20 each as a thank you).

Visit two (Autumn 2012)

This visit would aim to follow-up on the first visit and explore how administration of the Bursary Fund has changed over time. We would like to include the following interviews, and will discuss the feasibility of this with you further:

- An interview with the Head Teacher or a member of senior management team (lasting approximately 30 mins to 1 hour to follow-up on issues raised)
- An interview with the Business Manager / Staff member involved in the administration of the fund (lasting approximately 1 hour)
- A group discussion with teachers to gather their views on the impacts of the fund (lasting approximately 1 hour)
- A group discussion with 6-8 young people who applied for a bursary and did and did not receive one (this would last approximately 1.5 hrs and young people would receive £20 each as a thank you).
- A group discussion with parents/carers to explore the impacts of the Bursary Fund on families.

Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part. Taking part is entirely up to you, and you can change your mind at any time.

Who will see the findings?

Everything discussed in the case study interviews is completely confidential and treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act. The Department for Education have commissioned the research but do not know who has been invited to participate and all providers will remain anonymous. We will not discuss your actions, views or opinions outside of the research team. We will audio record the interview so that we have an accurate record of what has been said. The recording stays within the research team and is kept securely so that no one else can listen to it.

A report will be produced at the end of the research that will include your views and experiences along with those of other people who took part in the research. However, no individuals' names or names of learning providers will be included in the report. The final evaluation report will be made available on the DfE website after publication.

What will happen next?

A member of the research team will be in touch to discuss the research with you in more detail. If you are happy to take part we will then arrange a date for the research visit and discuss next steps in further detail.

Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions about the research please contact [Name of Researcher] at NatCen at [email] or [telephone number]

Young people focus group recruitment leaflet:

What is the research about?

NatCen Social Research is carrying out an evaluation of the 16-19 Bursary Fund on behalf of the Department for Education. The 16-19 Bursary Fund is money given to schools, colleges and training providers to financially support young people aged 16-19 to stay in education or training. This support could provide equipment or a travel pass, or be in the form of a cash payment to contribute to the costs of staying in education. As part of the research we are carrying out focus groups with young people around the country to find out your views and experiences of the Bursary Fund.

If you're reading this leaflet you will have been invited to take part in a focus group to share your views and experiences. By getting involved you will receive £20 in cash as well as a chance to let the government know what you think about financial support for young people continuing in education.

Who can take part?

You can take part if you are aged 16-19 and studying in the Sixth Form, at College or with a training provider. You may have received support from the Bursary Fund but you do not need to have received support to take part.

What will the focus group be like?

The group will last up to 1.5 hours and there will be 6 or 7 other young people there from [name of provider]

The researchers will ask you to discuss your experiences and views of the financial support available to young people studying post-16. There are no right or wrong answers; we just want to hear what you think.

We will record the discussion so that we have an accurate record of what has been said but no one outside of the NatCen research team will have access to the recording. We will not tell anyone that you've taken part or what you have said and it's completely up to you whether or not you take part. You can find out when and where the focus group is happening from whoever first told you about this research. You can also let them know if you don't want to take part.

What happens after the focus groups?

The focus group discussions will be used to write a report about the 16-19 Bursary Fund. We will also be talking to teachers and parents to gather their views of the fund and their views will also be included in the report.

Who is NatCen?

The Department for Education, the government department responsible for schools and colleges has asked NatCen, an independent social research organisation to carry out the research on their behalf. You can find out more about NatCen at our website: www.natcen.ac.uk.

If you have any questions about the research you can email [name of researcher] on: [email] or call on [telephone]

RESEARCH PROJECT

Young people's views and experiences of the 16-19 Bursary Fund



**Department
for Education**

NatCen
Social Research that works for society

Case study topic guides:

Topic guide for case study provider staff:

1. Introductions

- Introduce yourself and NatCen
- Introduce the study:
 - Funded by Department for Education
 - Overall project aims: looking at how bursaries are administered, the characteristics of students applying for and receiving them and what is the perceived impact of bursaries. Other components of the evaluation include a survey of providers and a survey of learners.
- Digital recording, length, data security, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality

2. Background

Aim: to gather background contextual information building on knowledge already gained from light-touch interview.

- Overview of their role
- Re-cap on key contextual factors (drawing on evidence from light-touch interview)

3. Aims of the Bursary Fund

Aim: to explore how providers perceive the aims of the Bursary Fund

- Their understanding of the aims of the Bursary Fund

4. Bursary funding

Aim: to explore the level of bursary funding the provider receives and their views on this. To explore the nature of any over or underspends on the fund.

- What level of Bursary funding do they receive
- Views on level of funding received for bursaries
- Understanding of how funding levels were set / criteria used
- Extent of underspend / overspend in first year
- Are any funds retained as a 'contingency fund'?

5. Bursary administration

Aim: to explore how providers have organised the administration of the Fund, including who is involved in decision making, administrative processes, needs assessment and changes over time.

- Process for determining bursary approach and policy

- Nature of any staff training delivered
- Administrative preparation
- Needs assessment
- Changes to bursary administration over time
- Timings of eligibility notifications (overall how long is the process?)

6. Communicating the Fund to young people

Aim: to explore how providers promote awareness of the fund and perceptions of awareness levels amongst learners

- How learners find out about the bursaries and detailed eligibility criteria
- Format of communication to learners / parents
- When
- Challenges and facilitators to promoting the fund

7. Targeting learners and take-up

Aim: to explore how providers target young people for may be eligible for support. To understand the extent to which providers employ pro-active targeting and the barriers and facilitators.

- Targeting learners
 - Extent of 'proactive' targeting of groups
 - Facilitators and barriers to targeting learners
 - Views on levels of awareness amongst learners with greatest barriers to participation / highest levels of need
- Take-up
 - Views of take-up: are they reaching eligible learners
 - Facilitators and challenges to take-up
 - Unmet need

8. Administering bursaries

Aim: to understand how the provider administers 'defined vulnerable group' as well as 'discretionary' bursaries. To gather detail on the application process, criteria and conditions for awarding bursaries and any changes from the first year of implementation to the second.

- Eligibility
 - Defined vulnerable group bursaries
 - Views on whether targeted at the right learners
 - Discretionary bursaries
 - Income threshold
 - Other eligibility criteria
 - Views of these criteria in relation to reaching those in need
 - Was there a particular time where applications for discretionary bursaries were high?
- Application process

- Decision making
- Conditions attached to bursaries (probe for differences between vulnerable and discretionary bursaries)
- Format of bursary payments (probe for differences between vulnerable and discretionary bursaries)
- Monitoring bursaries
- What are the perceived challenges of the administrative process?

9. Other sources of support

Aim: to explore how the bursary fund interacts with other sources of support, including transport and food subsidies.

Provider based support:

- Other support provided to students alongside 16-19 Fund
- Nature of any top-up funds to the bursary
- Whether bursary funds have replaced other funds previously available
- Nature of any changes to additional support anticipated

External support:

- Local authority provision
- National provision

10. Perceived impacts

Aim: to explore the perceived impacts of the fund and the extent to which providers feel it is achieving its aims.

- Impacts on learners
 - Participation in post-16 learning
 - Engagement in post-16 learning
 - Nature of other impacts
 - Impacts on equalities
 - Factors contributing to these impacts
- Impacts on providers
- Overall reflections

11. Future plans

Aim: to explore whether there are any planned changes in the administration / and allocation of bursaries planned

- Plans for next year (2013/14)
- Impact of raising the participation age

Topic guide for young people focus groups:

1. Introduction

- Introduce yourself and NatCen
- Introduce the study:
- Digital recording, length, data security, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality

2. Background

Aim: To gather background information about the participants. A short anonymous screening questionnaire will also be completed to capture key demographic information.

- Participants backgrounds

3. Role of finances in post-16 decision making

Aim: to understand the extent (and in what ways) financial support influenced decisions to participate post-16.

- Reasons they chose to study post-16 (brief)
- Whether intend to go to university or undertake any Higher Education
- How they chose post-16 provider
 - Factors taken into consideration
- Financial considerations
 - Extent financial considerations contributed to decision making
 - To participate post-16
 - Choice of provider post-16

4. Awareness of the bursary fund

Aim: to understand the level of awareness amongst young people of the bursary fund – at what point they were first made aware of the fund and their understanding of its purpose.

- Awareness of the Bursary Fund
 - Awareness of EMA and its abolition
 - Whether they have heard of the Bursary Fund
 - At what point they were made aware
 - Sources of awareness
 - Recommendations for increasing awareness
- Understanding of the aims of the Bursary Fund
 - Understanding of the aims of the fund
 - Views on the aims of the fund

- Extent to which Bursary Funding played part in decision-making
 - Whether / how bursary funding influenced decisions
 - Awareness of bursary funding available at other providers

5. Bursary eligibility

Aim: to understand young people's awareness and views of the eligibility criteria for bursaries

- Awareness / understanding of the different types of bursary
- Understanding of the eligibility criteria for 'defined vulnerable group' bursaries
- Understanding of the eligibility criteria for 'discretionary bursaries' at their provider
 - Nature of criteria
 - Views on the eligibility criteria
 - Recommendations for any changes
- Views on local determination of discretionary bursary eligibility criteria

6. Bursary application process

Aim: to understand how young people experience the application process and their views on this. To explore their views on take-up and barriers and facilitators to this.

- Understanding of the application process
- Evidencing eligibility
- Time scales
- Take-up

7. Views on the bursary support available

Aim: to understand young people's views on the support available through the bursary fund, including detail on the format of bursary funds, the frequency of payments and the conditions set for their receipt.

Defined vulnerable group bursaries

- Views on level of support available (£1,200)
- Views on format of bursary payments – cash / in-kind
- Frequency of payments
- Nature of any conditions set for eligibility

Discretionary group bursaries at their provider

- Views on level of support available at their provider
- Views on format of bursary payments – cash / in-kind
- Frequency of payments
- Nature of any conditions set for eligibility
- Any recommendations / changes to bursary support available

- Views on local determination of discretionary support levels

8. Impacts

Aim: to understand perceived impacts of the Bursary Fund on young people, including in relation to post-16 participation and engagement.

- How bursary funds are used
- Impact on young people's decisions to participate post-16
- Impact on young people's engagement post-16
- Impact on retention and risk of 'drop out'
- Nature of any other impacts of the Bursary Fund
- Views on whether the Bursary Fund achieves its aim of removing financial barriers to participation post-16

9. Recommendations

Aim: to gather their recommendations for ways in which young people could be supported to participate post-16, and their views on raising the participation age.

- Recommendations for any changes to the 16-19 Bursary fund
 - Eligibility criteria
 - Format of support
 - Frequency of payment
 - Application process
- Key messages

Topic guide for Local Authority Staff:

1. Introduction

- I Introduce yourself and NatCen
- Introduce the study:
- Digital recording, length, data security, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality

2. Background

Aim: to gather background contextual information on the Local Authority (very brief as detailed already gathered in light-touch interviews)

- Overview of their role.
- Recap briefly context provided in light-touch interview

3. Communicating the Fund to providers / young people

Aim: to understand the Local Authority's role in communicating the fund to providers / young people

- Role of LA in communicating with providers
- Role of LA in communicating with learners about the bursaries
- Views on levels of awareness amongst young people with highest barriers to participation
- Take-up
 - Views of take-up: is the fund reaching eligible learners
 - Facilitators and challenges to take-up
- Unmet need
 - Views on whether there is unmet need
 - Reasons for unmet need

4. Administering bursaries

Aim: to understand the extent to which the LA plays a role in administering bursaries. To gather detailed information on how bursaries are administered in Local Authorities which are administering the bursaries on behalf of providers.

For LAs not administering bursaries centrally

- Nature of role in bursary administration (if any):
- Awareness of approaches taken by providers across the LA in relation to:
- Views on why approaches have varied across providers
- Views on LAs administering bursaries centrally

For LAs administering bursaries on behalf of local providers

- Nature of role in bursary administration in relation to:
 - Setting eligibility criteria
 - Setting conditions attached to bursary payments
 - Determining format / frequency of payment
 - Administering payment
 - Appeals process
- Rationale for adopting an LA administered approach
- Funding
 - How Bursary funding is managed in LA administered models
 - Extent of underspend / overspend in first year (2011/12)
 - Are any funds retained as a 'contingency fund'?
- Facilitators and barriers to LA administered scheme
 - Provider buy-in
 - Resources / administrative structures
 - Communication with providers
- Views on LA administered schemes
 - Strengths
 - Weaknesses
 - Feedback from providers / young people on first year of administration

5. Additional support

- Pre-existing/ additional bursaries/ financial support
 - Nature of any additional bursaries / funds for learners at the LA level
- Changes to these funds as a result of bursaries

6. Impacts

Aim: to explore how well they feel the fund is working in relation to removing barriers to participation. To explore views on the impacts of the fund, both on the specific case study provider and more generally across the Local Authority.

- Nature of feedback the LA has received from providers / young people

- Impacts on learners
 - Participation in post-16 learning
 - Engagement in post-16 learning
 - Other impacts
- Impact on providers
 - Feedback from providers on impacts
- Impacts on equalities
 - Extent to which bursaries are monitored across the LA
 - Views on impact of Bursary fund on equalities

Future plans

Aim: to explore whether the LA anticipates any changes in the way bursaries are administered in their area.

- Plans for next year
 - Knowledge of any planned changes to way bursaries administered/awarded next year
- Impact of raising the participation age
 - Views on likely impact on bursary administration and eligibility criteria
- Overall reflections
 - Nature of any recommendations
 - Key messages

Appendix C Models of administration (case studies)

Two broad models of Bursary administration were described in the Year 1 report administered by an individual provider and a local authority administered model. In the second year of implementation, Bursary administration can still be described in terms of these two models, with evidence from the provider case studies giving more detail about how these are working in practice.

- Scheme administered by a single provider

Amongst the case study providers this was the most common model of administration with the design and administration of schemes completely defined and implemented by the individual provider. Early feedback in year one identified the ability to be both responsive to individual learner needs and the ability to tailor schemes to the provider context as strengths of this model of administration. The flexibility of local administration continued to be highlighted as a strength of this approach by providers and local authority staff interviewed in year two of implementation:

'I think you can change, if something isn't working we can actually adapt it and change a bit more, or work it so it actually suited everybody again. There is that scope.'

(Manager, Training provider)

For smaller providers – special schools and small sixth forms in particular, the ability to tailor support to individual students more effectively and use local knowledge of individual need was also valued:

'Because it means we can directly target it where we think there'll be impact. In terms of if it was somebody from central London or somebody from the local authority saying you need to target X group of students but don't target this other group of students, actually, as a school, as a post 16 department, we know those students much better than anybody else from the local authority, from central government. It's us that knows those students, us that know where those targeted needs are so I think it's appropriate that we've got that freedom.'

(Headteacher, Special School)

However, providers operating schemes of this kind also highlighted a number of concerns with this model, with the main concern relating to the potential for inequality of provision for students across providers. While some providers and local authority staff considered variation in provision reflected different contexts

and levels of need, others felt uncomfortable that young people were receiving different levels of support simply because of the provider they had chosen:

'My biggest concern still I think is that on the basis that some schools have used the same sort of criteria of free school meals, perhaps household income bands.. you can have two students that live on the same street but one comes here and one goes to [provider two] or to [provider three] and they're receiving different amounts. And that to me seems inconsistent with what's intended and could, could potentially determine where you go'

(Finance Officer, School Sixth Form)

Providers also raised concerns around the administrative burden placed on individual providers to manage Bursary schemes. Limitations on the frequency of payments and the level of complexity of eligibility systems were often determined by the level of resources available to administer the schemes rather than the ideal model they would like to implement. Limiting providers to five per cent of the budget to cover administrative costs was generally considered to be inadequate, and staff and administration costs were above this level.

Concerns were also raised about the need for families to evidence income and share personal financial information with local providers. While some thought families might be more comfortable disclosing information to a local provider rather than a national scheme, others considered that this acted as a barrier to applications and stigma remained an issue for some families;

'[Name of town] is a small place, you know, there's quite a few of the students whose parents are known to staff, whose parents are known to each other and those are the sorts of reasons why they probably would be mixed about applying or for people knowing their business and sending in copies of their sort of benefit statements for me to check.'

(Finance Officer, School Sixth Form)

The success or failure of this approach was also considered to be largely dependent on the quality of the individual provider. Concerns were raised that poorer quality providers with weaker leadership might not fulfil their obligations and some young people might miss out on appropriate support as a result. This was contrasted to the Educational Maintenance Allowance which provided a standardised level of support to all eligible young people.

- Local authority administered models

This model of administration involved a number of providers grouping together and working with the local authority to administer a single scheme across the area with consistent levels of support and eligibility criteria. Only one case study school was

part of a local authority administered model so there is a limit to what conclusions can be drawn, however, in year 2 of implementation, the school remained happy with the local authority led model and particularly valued the equality of provision available across the area because of the agreed eligibility criteria chosen for the scheme. The local authority also wanted to ensure there was one clear consistent message on entitlement:

'[The aim was] to bring something together and to have something that wasn't done piecemeal, it was done on a consistent basis that you could actually put out a message that wasn't too confusing, I think. The schools are quite close together you've got cousins, brothers...and you may have them across schools and one will be saying 'well I get this' and 'I get that' and 'why do you get it and I don't?' 'Why don't I?' So they wanted to have something that had a consistent message, and that was quite a strong driver for this.'

(Local Authority staff member)

The school considered that the model removed a large amount of the administrative burden from individual schools and allowed for an independent appeals process beyond the school gates. Other benefits of this model included the fact that local authority staff familiar with examining evidence of eligibility were taking on this role rather than school administrators or teaching staff.

However, a co-ordinated centralised scheme was less flexible. While the provider in this model would have preferred weekly or fortnightly Bursary payments, the scheme operated on a five weekly model because it did not have the resources for more frequent payments. The school would also have liked to introduce a scheme whereby payments were reduced rather than completely removed for the five week period if conditions were not met, but the local authority operated an 'all or nothing' approach where the payment was completely withdrawn (to reduce the risk of accusations of unfairness if different providers were more or less lenient with their students).

Another potential issue for this approach was delays in the administration process at the start of the school year because of high volumes of applications being managed by the local authority. The process of correcting errors, and addressing issues with evidence in application forms was also potentially more time consuming in a centralised system, and the local authority highlighted that further cuts in the local authority may jeopardise administration timescales further in the year 2013/14 because of staff reductions.

This analysis uses statistical modelling (logistic regression) to identify the characteristics of young people and Bursary administration that are predictive of young people saying that they were able to cope better financially because of the financial support they received.

The model includes all possible predictors simultaneously so we are able to distinguish between factors that genuinely do predict outcomes after taking all other observed factors into account. In cases where two factors appear to be strongly predictive of a successful outcome but are also strongly related to each other, the model will suggest which of the two factors has the stronger association with the outcome.

The following variables were included in the model:

Characteristics

- Sex
- Ethnicity (white/non-white ethnic group)
- Vulnerable group status (as defined from learner survey responses)
- Whether received free school meals at any point during Years 10 or 11
- Highest achieved qualification level

Economic factors

- If currently doing any paid work
- Whether any parent is in work
- Whether lives with family or independently
- Whether the young person receives any pocket money, allowances or other support towards your day-to-day spending such as food or clothing parents, relatives, or a guardian

Location

- Whether lives in London
- Whether lives in a rural or urban area

Bursary administration

- Bursary amount received per annum (up to £299, £300 to £599, £600 or more)
- Type of provider attending

- Type of Bursary payment – cash, in-kind or both
- Frequency of payment- if receives lump sum or irregular payment

Views about the Bursary

- Whether the timings of payments (i.e. when and how often I got paid) work well for the young person
- Whether the way the young person gets paid financial support – as money and/or in-kind payments, works well for them.



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