Department
for Education

The 16 to 19 bursary fund: year 3 process evaluation

Research report

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List of Abbreviations

BTEC   Accredited vocational / work-related qualification

DB   Discretionary bursary

DLA   Disability living allowance

DVG bursary   Defined vulnerable group bursary

EFA   Education Funding Agency

ESA   Employment and Support Allowance

FE   Further Education

EMA   Education Maintenance Allowance

FSM   Free School Meals

LA   Local Authority

MI data   Management information data

NEET   Not in Education Employment or Training

NVQ   National Vocational Qualification

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents findings from three years 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 on levels of participation and engagement amongst young people, and review decision-making processes that have been used by providers to allocate funds.

The report follows the interim reports from the first (May 2013[1]) and second (April 2014[2]) years of implementation which reported the number and characteristics of young people receiving a bursary, provider practices in administering the Fund, learners' views about the financial support, and perceptions of impact.

Background

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund was introduced in September 2011, replacing the Education Maintenance Allowance in England, 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. **Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries**. Vulnerable young people (those in care; care leavers; young people receiving Income Support and young people receiving both Disability Living Allowance or a Personal Independence Payment and Employment Support Allowance) receive yearly bursaries of up to £1,200.

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[1] Callanan et al (2013) Evaluation of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund: Year 1 Report Research Report
Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/199996/DFE-RR265.pdf
[2] Callanan et al (2014) Evaluation of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund: Year 2 Process Evaluation. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/307118/RR345_-_The_16_to_19_Bursary_Process_Evaluation.pdf

The funding of individual awards of this bursary type was centralised from 2013/14.

2. **Discretionary Bursaries**. 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.

Methodology

The evaluation was carried out using a range of research methods. This report draws on:

- **Management Information** data with details about all the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries awarded in 2013/14.

- 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, focus groups with young people and telephone interviews with parents.

- Qualitative **depth interviews with 27 young people**, following up the learner survey.

This is the final process evaluation report and focuses on how the Bursary Fund was being administered and spent in the third year of implementation, perceived impacts, and how these changed since the Bursary Fund was introduced.

Key Findings

Awareness and take up of Bursaries

Providers are responsible for making young people aware of the Bursary Fund. Providers had publicised it to young people using written materials (78%) and at events such as open days (75%). Over half of providers put information about the Fund on their website (59%).

The level of awareness of the Bursary Fund amongst learners was relatively high at 71% 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 36 per cent had done so before finishing Year 11. Just under a third (29%) of young people who had not applied for a bursary said this was because they were unaware that financial support was available.

Young people thought that the best way to raise awareness would be to increase promotion in schools during Years 10 and 11, before decisions are made about post-16 education.

Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary Awards

From September 2013, the administration of Defined Vulnerable Group (DVG) Bursaries was centralised with providers being able to claim the funds for DVG awards as and when needed, instead of having to provide this funding from their own bursary allocation.

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

The total number of young people in England receiving a Defined Vulnerable Group (DVG) Bursary in 2013/14 was 23,900. Of these, 21,865 attended FE Colleges or school sixth forms, equating to 1.8 per cent of the overall cohort of 16-19 year olds in these providers[3].

The total amount spent on this type of bursary was £23.5 million.

Discretionary Bursary awards

Providers have the freedom to establish their own eligibility criteria for awarding Discretionary Bursaries, the size of awards and how these are paid. Management Information, available in the second year of implementation, suggested the total number of students awarded Discretionary Bursaries was estimated to be 357,300, representing

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[3] This figure excludes Special Schools and Local Authority provision as no cohort size figures were available for these groups.

approximately 23 per cent of the 16-18 cohort in education and work based learning.[4] There is no reason to expect this has changed in year 3.

As in previous years of implementation, the majority of providers continued to use income-related criteria to determine eligibility for Discretionary Bursaries with household income (66%), Free School Meal entitlement (65%), and household benefit receipt (58%) being the most common.

The success rate of applications continued to be very high – 95 per cent of applications resulted in an award being made. Profiles of applicants and recipients for Discretionary Bursaries across all characteristics were very similar, suggesting that no groups were more or less likely to be awarded Bursaries if they applied.

The amount allocated as individual Discretionary Bursary awards varied considerably; from around £60 to just below £4,000, with a median spend of £447 per recipient in the 2013/14 academic year.

Young people reported most commonly using the Bursary Fund to buy equipment for their course, travel passes, meals and books.

Discretionary Bursary Fund spending

Total spending reported by providers ranged from zero to over £3.5 million with an overall median spend of just below £11,000.

In the third year of implementation we had expected the level of underspends to reduce as providers should be better able to estimate demand, and no longer have to provide the DVG Funds from their allocation. Around half (51%) of providers had spent less than 90 per cent of their in-year funding allocation, which is similar to the second year of implementation, though we have estimated that underspends amounted to only 6% of allocations in surveyed providers. Providers continued to be cautious in allocating funds to minimise the risk of unaffordable overspends, many also had funds carried over from

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[4] 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.

previous years which, together with lower awards due to students failing to meet the conditions attached to the receipt of their bursary, meant the money was not used.

Administering the Bursary Fund

The case studies revealed that providers who administered their own Bursary Funds continued to consider the flexibility and opportunity to tailor the support to their students to be beneficial. Perceived drawbacks were potential inequality in the financial support available to young people at different providers in the same area, the wide variation in the quality of the schemes and the administrative burden placed on providers. 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.

Young people were generally positive about the Bursary Fund support they received. Sixty-six per cent of bursary recipients felt that the timing and way their bursary payments were made worked well for them. This rose to 85 per cent for those who received their payments weekly during term time. Young people fed back that regular payments made it easier to budget and respond to educational needs.

Young people in receipt of cash payments were also more likely to say that it changed their behaviour (57% compared to 31% of those paid 'in kind'). Bursary awards were conditional on attendance at most providers (85%). 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.

In the third year of implementation young people continued to experience delays in receiving payments and conditions for receipt were not always clear. Just under half (47%) of providers reported delays in making bursary payments which can cause difficulties for young people to attend and fully participate in courses.

Perceived impacts

Overall, providers and young people were positive about the impact of the Bursary Fund on participation. Most providers (83%) reported this, and 28 per cent of bursary recipients agreed that they would not be able to afford to stay in education at all if they did not receive the support. The majority of bursary recipients agreed that they were able to cope better financially because of the support received (75%) and that generally

the financial support has been helpful (85%). However, around a third of young people (35%) receiving support disagreed that the financial support available was enough to make a difference to them.

Three-quarters of providers reported that the Bursary Fund was having a positive impact on young peoples' engagement with their studies.

The majority of providers (80%) said that the Bursary Fund was effectively targeting young people who faced the greatest financial disadvantages. There were however a small but significant proportion of young people (9 per cent) who were not in receipt of a bursary and reported that there was a risk of them dropping out of education because they could not afford it. Among non-recipients, around a quarter (27%) stated that they were struggling to cope financially, suggesting that there remains a proportion of young people in need of financial support who are not currently being reached by the Bursary Fund.

Conclusions and recommendations

In the third year of implementation the flexibility of the Bursary Fund was seen as its major asset. Providers valued being able to make decisions about how to use the Fund in ways they considered best met their students' needs. However, this greater flexibility also brought with it variability in the support available across providers in close proximity and variability in the quality of schemes.

In the third year of implementation, young people and their families expressed their views about how the Bursary Fund worked for them in case study interviews. Generally speaking young people viewed the financial support available positively with it reaching many of those who were in need. However, there were concerns about inequalities between providers and whether the funding was sufficient to enable full participation and engagement in education post-16.

During the first year of implementation providers were familiarising themselves with the new 16 to 19 Bursary Fund policy and their role as fund administrators. Between years two and three of implementation there were few changes in the way providers were awarding the Bursary Fund. Many aspects of the administration continue to work well, and some aspects have been identified as more challenging for staff and young people.

The table below summarises key findings and recommendations.

Finding	Recommendations
Although young peoples' general awareness of the Bursary Fund was high, many were not aware of this support when making decisions about their post-16 participation.	▪ Schools and 16 to 19 providers should work together to ensure pupils in Years 10 and 11 are aware that there is financial support available through the Bursary Fund to help them make informed decisions about post-16 participation. There is guidance about the responsibilities of schools and other institutions in DfE's statutory careers information and guidance document to support this recommendation. ▪ Clear, detailed information about the Bursary Fund should be available on 16 to 19 providers' websites. ▪ Providers should consider how best to raise awareness about the availability of Defined Vulnerable Group and Discretionary Bursary awards, for example in prospectuses and application forms (such as having a box for young people to request extra information).
Not all providers were aware of the centralised Defined Vulnerable Group administration.	▪ The DfE and Education Funding Agency should make efforts to ensure all providers are aware of how to draw funds from the Defined Vulnerable Group system, and that they are encouraged to do so to support these vulnerable young people. ▪ The DfE should consider how best to estimate numbers of the cohort from vulnerable groups to allow longer term measurement of met/unmet need.
Some young people may require more encouragement to apply for support.	▪ Providers should maintain confidentiality, administer bursaries discreetly, and encourage applications to minimise barriers to take-up related to stigma and embarrassment. Providers should consider what data sharing arrangements they have in place with local organisations (in compliance with the Data Protection Act) to assist them in proactively targeting young people who may be eligible for support.

Finding	Recommendations
Providers tend to use a combination of financial and needs-based criteria to assess eligibility for Bursary Fund support but this is sometimes considered too crude, or unfair, by young people.	▪ When using objective eligibility criteria, providers should design these to be sufficiently wide ranging to minimise the risk of young people just falling out of these criteria being substantially disadvantaged. ▪ When assessing eligibility on a case by case basis this increases the difficulties for young people to understand what they may be entitled to and can lead to perceived unfairness. Therefore, providers should consider having a basic guarantee clearly stating the minimum requirements.

Many young people seemed unaware of the conditions attached to receipt of the financial support, when payments will be received and reasons for any delays.	▪ Young people should be given clear information from their providers about:
	
	   - when they will receive payments
	
	   - the value of each payment
	
	   - the conditions attached to payments and sanctions for not meeting these
	
	   - if there are delays/non-payments an explanation of why
	
	   - contact details to speak to a member of staff if there are any payment queries.

Young people preferred frequent payments, as these helped them budget and respond to educational needs more easily.	▪ Providers should explore whether more frequent payments can be made to young people where these are currently only available on a termly or less frequent basis.

Finding	Recommendations
Young people value financial support at the start of the first term and application cut-off dates may cause hardship for those whose circumstances change during the year.	▪ Providers should review when Bursary Fund applications can be made to improve access and to meet needs at the start of the academic year, including: - whether the application process can start before the start of term to help young people with early course costs and travel - providing flexibility throughout the year by avoiding application cut of dates
Levels of underspending had been anticipated to fall in the third year of implementation, however, the number of underspending institutions has remained stable.	▪ The DfE should review and improve the Bursary Fund allocations methodology and guidance on carrying over funds to ensure these are based on 16 to 19 students numbers and characteristics, and support providers to award funding to those most in need.

1   Introduction

This report presents findings from the third and final year of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund evaluation. In this chapter 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:

1. **Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries**. Vulnerable young people (those in care; care leavers; young people receiving Income Support and young people receiving both Disability Living Allowance or a Personal Independence Payment and Employment Support Allowance) receive yearly bursaries of £1,200 if they are on courses for 30 weeks or more.[5]

2. **Discretionary Bursaries**. The rest of the fund is allocated as a block to schools, colleges and training providers so that they can identify and support the young people who need it.

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund was introduced in September 2011 to replace the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Providers are responsible for administering applications, deciding eligibility criteria for Discretionary Bursaries and distributing funds. The first year of the Bursary Fund (2011/12) was a 'transitional' year; most second year students who had previously received Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) continued to receive transitional payments and could also apply for discretionary bursaries. EMA payments ended in August 2012. From the second year (2012/13), all students were eligible to apply for the Bursary Fund.

To be eligible to receive a 16 to 19 Bursary in the 2013/14 academic year, the young person had to be aged between 16 and 19 at the start of the academic year in which

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[5] Full Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries of £1,200 are awarded to students if their course lasts for 30 weeks or more, if courses are less than 30 weeks a year students are eligible to receive a proportional (pro-rata) amount.

they started studying a course which was deemed eligible.[6] Young people are only eligible if they are studying at a provider that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (e.g. Ofsted) and must also be:

- funded by the Education Funding Authority (either directly or via a local authority); or

- funded or co-financed by the European Social Fund; or

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

Whilst providers give out these Bursaries in the first instance, in 2013/14 the administration of Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries was centralised with providers claiming the funding from a central source for every award. This change was introduced during the third year of the evaluation so providers were still adapting to this change at the time of the research.

1.2 Evaluation aims and methods

The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned NatCen Social Research to carry out an evaluation of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund. The aims of the evaluation are 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 on young people's participation and engagement in post-16 education and on providers who are responsible for administering the fund, and review decision-making processes that have been used by providers to allocate funds.

The evaluation met these aims using the following methods:

1. An **initial scoping study** to explore current practice and inform the main evaluation.

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[6] Full guidance is available at
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239840/EFA-00044-2013.pdf

2. **Surveys of providers**. Surveys took place in the 2012, 2013 and 2014 summer terms to collect information about Discretionary Bursaries, and prior to their centralisation, about the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries.

3. **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) and again in the third year (2013/14).

4. **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 experiences and perceptions of the Bursary Fund.

   Qualitative follow-up interviews were carried out in 2013/14 with 27 young people (22 of whom took part in the survey) to explore the issues in greater depth.

5. **Analysis of Management Information**. The evaluation includes analysis of information collected from providers by the DfE about the Bursary Fund in 2011/12 and 2012/13 and information from the centralised administration of the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary in 2013/14 to add to findings from the other strands of the evaluation.

Table 1.1 summarises how these methods meet the evaluation aims.

Table 1.1 Summary of evaluation aims and research methods used

		Inform evaluation design	Number and characteristics of young people receiving a bursary	Evaluate perceived impacts and review decision making to allocate funds
Scoping study		√		
Surveys of providers			√	√
Provider case studies				√
Research with young people	Survey of learners		√	
	In-depth interviews with young people			√
Analysis of Management Information			√	

This report presents findings from all strands of work across the three years of the evaluation, focusing on the Year 3 Management Information, provider survey, depth interviews with young people and provider case studies. Interim reports from Year 1[7]

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[7] Callanan et al (2013) Evaluation of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund: Year 1 Report Research Report
 Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/199996/DFE-RR265.pdf

and Year 2[8] are available from the DfE website. Details of the methods used for these research elements are provided in the following sections.

A separately commissioned quantitative evaluation analyses 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 Institute of Education and reports separately.

1.3 Summary of methods

This section summarises the evaluation methodology; more details are provided in Appendix A.

Management Information

In 2011/12 and 2012/13 the Department for Education asked all providers who had received bursary funding to complete a short Management Information (MI) return, relating to their Bursary Fund for the academic year. Providers were asked to complete this return electronically.

The information included in this return and analysed for Year 1 and 2 reports 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.

DfE carried out initial checks of the data, resolving inconsistencies that could not be resolved with the provider. 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 by provider type and region, and to scale up the responses to represent the whole population of providers receiving funding. This allowed us to estimate the overall

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[8] Callanan et al (2014) Evaluation of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund: Year 2 Process Evaluation Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/307118/RR345_-_The_16_to_19_Bursary_Process_Evaluation.pdf

spending and awards made by providers in England, supplementing the more detailed data available from the longitudinal survey of providers.

In 2013/14 information about Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries was collected centrally by Capita as part of the administration process and was comprehensive. This meant that we were able to use this complete record of the DVG Bursary awards which details the numbers of awards for each vulnerable group of young people and value of awards. This change of methodology undermines the comparability of DVG spending and awards over time and does not provide data for the total number of Discretionary Bursary awards and spending which was available in previous years.

The data was analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The Year 3 provider survey

Data collection

The longitudinal survey was carried out using postal and online data collection methods.

In Year 3, providers were sent the survey by post and email in early June 2014 and asked to complete it by the end of the Summer term.

In all three years, the questionnaire asked providers about:

- Spending and award criteria for Discretionary Bursaries
- Numbers and characteristics of applicants and recipients of Discretionary Bursaries
- Centralisation of the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary (asked in Year 3 only)
- How the Bursary Fund awards were made
- Administration of the Bursary Fund
- Perceived impacts of the Bursary Fund.

Sampling and response

The sample was the providers who responded to the Year 1 and Year 2 survey. It also included a refresher sample of new providers from Year 2 and Year 3. The refresher sample was selected based on funding allocations provided to NatCen by the DfE. The total provider sample for the Year 3 survey was 274 providers, comprised of 74 newly selected providers at Year 3 and 199 providers who had responded to the Year 2 survey (Table 1.2).

Overall, 166 providers completed the survey, a response rate of 61 per cent (Table 1.2).

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

	Original sample		Refresher sample		All	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
Issued	199	100	74	100	273	100
Completed - web	86	43	15	20	101	37
Completed - post	51	26	14	19	65	24
Total	137	69	29	39	**166**	**61**

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.

Learner survey

Data collection

The survey used online, telephone and postal data collection and was carried out in Year 2 of the evaluation. 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

Forty-seven of the 256 providers who participated in the Year 1 survey were selected with a probability proportional to the institution size (i.e. number of learners). From each of these institutions, 75 students were sampled for the learner survey from across the

eligible age range (16 to 19 years), with students who were classified as vulnerable[9] having a higher probability of selection.

After selecting providers, 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).[10] 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 1.3). The survey data was weighted to take into account differential probabilities of selection and non-response prior to analysis.

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[9] Students with a Special Educational Need, in receipt or eligible for Free School Meals, with a disability or who are in care, or have been in care.

[10] 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.

Table 1.3 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

In-depth provider case studies

Longitudinal case studies were conducted with 12 case study providers. Initial telephone interviews conducted in 2011/12 were followed up by case study visits in 2012/13 and 2013/14. The purpose of these visits was to explore how providers were implementing the funds and to track changes in implementation over time. Table 1.4 shows the composition of the achieved case study sample by provider type.

Table 1.4 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

The composition of each case study in 2013/14 varied depending on the size and context of the provider, but typically included:

- A depth interview with a senior member of staff responsible for determining bursary policy
- A depth interview with a member of staff responsible for the administration of bursary Funds

- A depth interview with a member of staff with a pastoral role (e.g. personal tutor)

- A focus group of 16 to 19 students.

In addition, four telephone interviews were conducted with local authority staff with responsibility for supporting post-16 provision in case study areas, and nine telephone interviews were conducted with parents of young people from case study providers.

Qualitative follow-up interviews with learners

Qualitative depth interviews were carried out with a sample of the young people who participated in the learner survey to explore in greater depth their views and experiences (both those who had and had not received a bursary). Fieldwork was carried out between February and June 2014, approximately seven months to a year after the survey. Consequently some young people had completed their studies and were no longer in 16 to 19 education at the point of interview. The following table provides an overview of the characteristics of the achieved sample of 27 interviews.

Table 1.5 Overview of learner follow-up achieved sample

Sample criteria		Achieved sample
Bursary receipt		
Not receiving a bursary		8
Discretionary Bursary	Less than £300	4
	£300-£600	3
	Over £600	6
Defined Vulnerable Group bursary	£1,200	6
Provider Type	School Sixth Forms	1
	FE Colleges	13
	Sixth Form Centres	10
	Private Training Providers	3
Gender	Male	10
	Female	17
Ethnicity	White	20
	BME	7
Survey impact responses	In receipt – coping better	7
	In receipt – not coping better	7
	Not in receipt – not struggling	3
	Not in receipt - struggling	5
	Not applicable	5

Further detail on the sampling, recruitment and fieldwork approach for the provider case studies and learner follow-up interviews can be found in Appendix A.

1.4 Report conventions

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/figure.

- Percentages less than 0.5 (but greater than 0) are shown as '+'.

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.

Analysis groupings

Providers have been grouped as follows for the analysis of Management Information and survey responses where base sizes are sufficient:

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)

Reporting qualitative data

The findings presented here from the case studies and follow-up interviews with learners reflect the range and diversity of views and experiences among the staff and young people interviewed. As qualitative studies, the prevalence of views and experiences arising from the case study data are not reported.

In illustrative case examples, names of participants have been changed to protect anonymity.

2   Awareness and take up of Bursaries

This chapter draws on the surveys of providers and young people and case studies to look at:

- The ways providers publicise the Bursary Fund to raise awareness about this financial support

- Levels of awareness amongst young people

- Barriers to take-up; and

- Methods for targeting young people in need.

Key findings from this chapter include:

- Providers publicised the Bursary Fund to young people in a variety of ways, including written materials such as leaflets and posters (78%) and at events such as open days (75%). Over half of providers put information about the Bursary Fund on their websites (59%), with 19 per cent also using social media.

- The survey of young people found that 71 per cent of learners were aware of the Bursary Fund. Of those, 36 per cent had heard of it before finishing year 11, while 64 per cent had heard about it after finishing year 11.

- Young people in the focus groups thought more should be done to raise awareness of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund in Years 10 and 11, before they had to make decisions about post-16 education.

- There were a number of barriers to take up, including perceived benefit versus administrative burden, stigma, financial privacy and confidentiality, and impacts on other benefits.

2.1 Provider activities to publicise the Bursary Fund

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 written materials such as posters, leaflets, booklets or flyers (78% of providers; (Figure 2.1). Three-quarters (75%) of providers had used events such as open evenings or induction days to publicise the Bursary Fund, and the majority (71%) reported using word of

mouth. Between Years 2 and 3, there was an increase in the use of websites (from 50% to 60%) and social media (from 12% to 20%) to publicise the bursary.[11]

Figure 2.1 Provider survey: How the Bursary Fund was publicised (% mentioned) (2013/14)
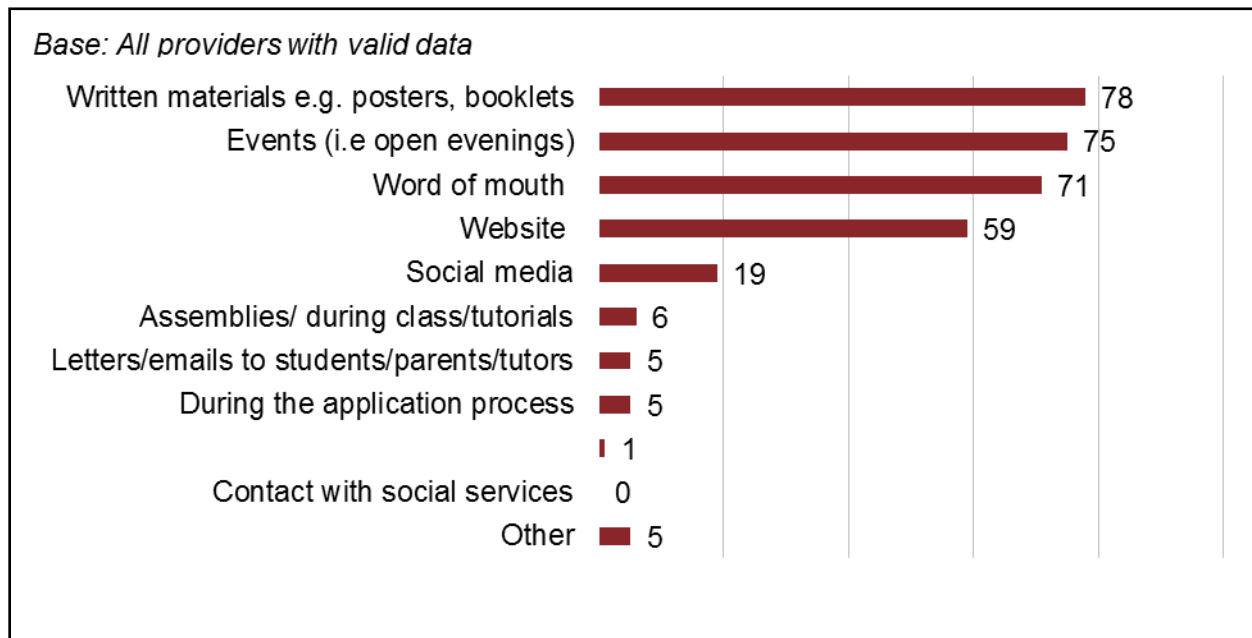
Note: Providers could mention more than one method of publicising the scheme so the total sums more than 100 per cent.

Findings from the case studies told a similar story of providers using wide-ranging promotional activity. Examples included sharing information face-to-face during assemblies, workshops or inductions, via posters and leaflets, and also online, for example on the provider's website and intranet.

In the second year of implementation we found that providers were promoting the availability of the Fund at different time points. Some providers were doing so whilst young people were still deciding on their post-16 options (for example, at open days, in their prospectuses, college staff visiting local schools and on their websites), whilst others advertised the Fund after enrolment, for example during inductions and in tutorials. A number of providers were concerned about publicising the Fund in case this

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[11] Analysis based on providers responding in Year 2 and 3 only.

activity did not comply with the DfE guidance.[12] This guidance was updated in the third year of implementation, and all case study providers reported advertising and promoting the fund in some capacity.

By the third year of implementation, providers considered there to be greater awareness of the Bursary Fund amongst their tutors, teachers and pastoral staff, which in turn led to a wider awareness amongst students. Providers were more confident that they had identified successful ways to advertise, and some recognised that previous efforts had not been sufficiently substantial.

> *'I think [last year] it was very much kind of a rumour or a secret. 'I believe there is this secret pot somewhere.' But, again I've gone down this route of complete transparency [this year].'* (Head of Sixth Form, School Sixth Form)

As reflected by the learner survey, advertising of the Bursary Fund was often done after the students had enrolled at a provider, for example during inductions, assemblies or with acceptance letters. Providers still held the view that the Bursary Fund was not as widely recognised as the Educational Maintenance Allowance. In addition, some providers expressed a concern that younger pupils currently making post-16 decisions had misconceptions about the availability of financial support at different providers and that this was influencing decision making.

Some providers acknowledged a lack of awareness amongst their students; this was a difficulty particularly in large Further Education Colleges where it was considered to be hard to 'keep track' of the student population. Providers who took a more 'personal' approach to making young people aware of the bursary also recognised some of its downfalls.

> *'One of the questions I'll always ask them, the first one-to-one is, 'How are you for money?'. That's one of the things I'll always ask but if you can imagine I've got 320 students I'm working with. I might not see the back end of students till two months down the line.'* (Student Support staff, FE College)

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[12] 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.*"

At Special Schools there was a greater focus on ensuring both parents and school staff were aware of the Bursary Fund. These schools were concerned about a lack of parental knowledge of the benefits system and how eligibility for a Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary based on ESA and DLA could impact on other benefits within the family. Therefore, case study Special Schools worked hard to support parents in understanding the system and completing the necessary forms.

2.2 Awareness amongst young people

In the second year of the study we surveyed young people about their awareness of the Fund. The rate of awareness was relatively high, at 71 per cent amongst learners. However, of those young people who had heard about the Bursary Fund, only 36 per cent had done so before finishing year 11, while the majority (64%) had heard about it after finishing year 11 (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2 Learner survey: When young people heard about the Bursary Fund (%) (2012/13)

Figure 2.3 shows the main channels through which young people found out about the Bursary Fund which included schools and colleges, as well as through informal channels, such as family and friends.

Figure 2.3 Learner survey: How they found out about financial support (%) (2012/13)

Base: Young people aware of the financial support (862 unweighted base)

Source	%
The school/college studied at since Year 11	44
Friends/other young people	38
The school went to in Year 11	31
Parents or siblings	19
Connexions, or another organisation/charity	15
Internet, including social media like Facebook	7
Another organisation	1
TV/news	1
Trusted person e.g. social worker, tutor	1
Other	1

However, the survey also found that a significant proportion (29%) of young people could not recall hearing about the Bursary Fund. Case studies and depth interviews with young people found that this lack of awareness was due to a combination of factors. The variation in provider approaches to publicising the Fund 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. This was particularly apparent for young people who had changed provider during the academic year.

Although some providers had increased their levels of advertising and had increased their awareness activities, some young people still reported a lack of guidance in the third year of the scheme:

> 'M: Cause we never got nothing when we started did we? Nothing, nothing even about our course or anything. We just literally got told to turn up on the day and then we got told about what we're doing. We never got no information about anything.
>
> F: You have to find out yourself
>
> M: Not until we got here on the day. You've got to do it all yourself, they should give you information pack around things like the finance...

F: Unless you ask, like I had to ask on the enrolment day whether I am entitled, like whether I can fill out a form or not.

M: Yeah, that's the same for me. I had to ask. They didn't like just mention it. You have to go and ask certain people for it.'   (Student focus group, FE College)

Young people in the focus groups thought more should be done to raise awareness of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund in Years 10 and 11, before they had to make decisions about post-16 education. They thought that this would lead to some young people making different decisions about future participation, for example whether or not they could afford to stay on in education. This was highlighted in cases where young people's parents were not able or willing to provide financial support, or where they would have to travel a long way to a provider. Young people also thought that finding out earlier about the support available would have helped them to plan and prepare for post-16 education, and in some instances it may have changed their decision on which provider to attend. These themes are further explored in the impacts section (section 7.1).

There was a great deal of variation in parental knowledge and understanding of the Bursary Fund. Parents considered that direct communication by letter or email to parents would be the best way to make them aware of the Fund.

Case Example

> **This inner-city school Sixth Form had high levels of awareness amongst both staff and pupils. The provider promoted the Bursary Fund in a number of ways including putting application letters in the induction pack, mentioning it repeatedly in assemblies, putting up posters around the school, writing to parents and including information on the school website. The Bursary Fund was also explained to all young people in year 11 (at the school), so they could make an informed choice about where to study next.**

2.3 Take up of Bursaries

In the third year of implementation, the provider case studies and young person interviews explored views and experiences of take up in more detail. The following barriers to take-up were identified:

- Perceived benefit versus burden

Providers considered that for some young people the bureaucracy of paperwork, combined with a general lack of engagement led to some not applying at all or applying late.

> *'I think there's always gonna be some students who haven't bothered to fill in the application form, simply out of can't be botheredness or apathy. I do think there will be some there that are eligible but haven't bothered to take it home or show mum, you know.'*
>
> (Student support officer, School Sixth Form)

Young people reported that the application process could be a 'hassle' due to how long the process took. This issue was raised by young people who felt unsupported by providers in the application process, and where the level of financial support from the Bursary Fund was seen as too low to make a difference.

- Stigma

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'; although some felt this had declined over the first three years of implementation.

> *'I've noticed that. That if there is any stigma there it's certainly a lot less than it was last year, there was last year.'*
>
> (Finance Manager, School Sixth Form)

However, depth interviews and focus groups with young people highlighted that stigma remains an issue. For some young people, claiming money was seen as something that you should be 'ashamed' and 'embarrassed' of and 'not something to be proud of'.

> *'M: Some people don't like asking for help.*
>
> *F: Yeah some people are embarrassed.'*
>
> (Student focus group, FE College)

For young people in care, one barrier to take-up was disclosing their 'in care' status to their education provider. 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.

> *'I think it's just a perceived stigma attached to having been in care, and it's maybe something, you know, when they reach college age, they leave an age that they wanna leave behind.'*
>
> (Student support officer, FE College)

Providers recognised that young people actively avoided telling staff about their situation. However, staff considered that receiving the support would be beneficial for their education. Providers recognised that they needed to do more to identify those who are/have been in care.

> *'I think we can work harder on trying to identify the vulnerables more because that is another pot that we're not really tapping into that I believe we can.'*
>
> (Business manager, Training provider)

▪ Financial privacy and confidentiality

Providers expressed some concern that families did not want to disclose personal information. This was particularly apparent in areas where the provider suspected illegal work (for example black market trading or unlicensed cab driving) was being undertaken by parents. This meant parents withheld financial information from the provider. There were also concerns that deprived families were reluctant to share financial information due to fears that the authorities were 'checking up' on them.

▪ 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 anxieties about the possible wider financial impacts of claiming ESA and DLA [13] some eligible young people were not claiming this benefit and were therefore not receiving the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary. Special schools in particular reported this to be a problem; it was believed a lack of overall awareness

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[13] Bursary Q&A guidance for 2013/14 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, 2013).

about how their benefits would be affected meant families were reluctant to apply.

Reasons why young people do not apply for bursaries

As reported in Year 2, 38 per cent of surveyed learners who were not eligible for a DVG Bursary had made an application for a discretionary bursary. For young people who did not apply, the most common reasons given were that they did not need financial support (49%; Table 2.1) and that they did not think they would be eligible (43%). Awareness was also an important factor with 29 per cent saying that they had been unaware that financial support was available.

Table 2.1 Learner survey: Why non-vulnerable learners did not apply for the Bursary (2012/13)

	%
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
Unweighted base (Non-vulnerable learners not applying for a Bursary)	*748*

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

2.4 Targeting young people who may be in need

Beyond setting initial eligibility criteria, proactive targeting was mainly used to encourage young people 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 was primarily aimed at young people who fell into one of the Defined Vulnerable Groups, especially those who had been in care. As explored above, young people in these groups may experience more stigma and disclosure issues when applying for a bursary.

Providers experienced difficulties when they had lots of new students whom they had no background information on; this was particularly apparent in large providers.

> *'We've got records from when they come to us in Year 7.. there's free school meals and there are all those kind of social factors in place. Um, it's slightly more difficult when we take in new students which we tend to do in Year 12, who come to us from other institutions.'*　　　　　(Head of Sixth Form, School Sixth Form)

In urban areas young people could come from as many as 100 different feeder schools. This made it a huge task to identify young people who might be eligible for the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary, and providers did not always feel they had enough data to proactively target the DVG bursaries.

Providers identified a number of ways of targeting young people 'in care' whilst still being sensitive to their needs. These included contact with agencies outside the schools, for example local charities, care teams (and mentors), counselling services and the Local Authority, although careful consideration had to be given to ensuring data was shared in accordance with the Data Protection Act:

> *'That's one of the things we've really developed this year is to try to identify every single looked after young person and with a, well actually quite some success there, so we've made, we've forged links with the local authority and they're sharing databases with us.'*　　　　　(Student Support Officer, FE College)

3 Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary awards

This chapter uses the Management Information (MI) data to look at the number of young people receiving a Defined Vulnerable Group (DVG) Bursary, total spending and the average numbers of DVG awards at the provider level.

Individual awards for DVG Bursaries are fixed at £1,200 for a full bursary and pro-rated as appropriate for part-time learners. The administration of DVG Bursaries was centralised in 2013/14 with providers being able to claim the funds for these awards as and when needed instead of having to provide this funding from their own bursary allocation.

Key findings from this chapter include:

- In total 23,900 young people in England received a Defined Vulnerable Group (DVG) Bursary in 2013/14. Of these, 21,865 attended FE Colleges or School Sixth Forms, equating to 1.8 per cent of the overall cohort of 16-19 year olds in these providers[14].

- The total amount spent on DVG Bursaries was £23.5 million.

- As in previous years, the largest group of DVG Bursary recipients was young people in receipt of Income Support (9,700), followed by those in care (8,750).

3.1 The number of Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary awards

The Management Information (MI) provides a record of the numbers of young people receiving full and pro-rata Defined Vulnerable Group (DVG) Bursaries. Due to the centralisation of the DVG awards in 2013/14, in the third year of implementation the MI data is based on claims and payments made to providers for vulnerable learners while in previous years estimates have been based on MI submitted by a sub-sample of providers at the end of the academic year. Therefore, comparisons with previous years would not be robust and are not made in this section of the report.

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[14] This figure excludes Special Schools and Local Authority provision as no cohort size figures were available for these groups.

The total number of young people in England receiving any DVG Bursary in 2013/14 was 23,900. Of these young people, 19,400 received a full DVG award whilst 4,500 received a pro-rata award.

Overall, 44 per cent of providers claimed central funding to award DVG Bursary Funds to their learners, with the remaining 56 per cent of providers not making a claim in 2013/14. Of those providers that did make successful claims, the median number of students receiving any DVG Bursary (full or pro-rata) was three (Table 3.1). On average, the number of awards was much higher in FE colleges and sixth form colleges (median of 26), compared to special schools (4) and school sixth forms (2).

Table 3.1 MI returns: Median number of any DVG awards by provider type

	Median			Provider
	Any DVG award	Pro-rata DVG	Full DVG award	MI returns
FE colleges and sixth form colleges	26	2	22	479
Schools	2	0	2	772
Special schools	4	0	4	206
Other providers	6	2	1	41
All provider types	3	0	3	1,498

3.2 Recipients in Defined Vulnerable Groups

The MI provided a breakdown of the numbers of young people in each of the Defined Vulnerable Groups who were receiving a bursary.[15]

The largest group of DVG Bursary recipients was young people in receipt of Income Support (9,700; Table 3.2). In total, 8,750 young people in care received a DVG Bursary. For care leavers this was 3,500, while 1,950 of the young people were

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[15] As defined in the Education Funding Agency 2013/14 guidance: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239840/EFA-00044-2013.pdf [Accessed 17-10-14]

receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and/or Employment Support Allowance (ESA).

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 FE colleges and Sixth Form colleges.

Table 3.2 MI returns: Total numbers of bursary recipients in each Defined Vulnerable Group in 2013/14[16]

	Number
Income Support	9,700
In care	8,750
Care leavers	3,500
DLA and ESA	1,950
Provider MI returns	*1,498*

3.3 Spending on Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries

The total amount claimed by all providers for DVG Bursaries in 2013/14 was £23.5 million. Further Education Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges awarded the highest value of DVG bursaries at £19.5 million, followed by school sixth forms and academies (£2.5 million) and special schools (£1.1 million). In total, 1.8 per cent of the total cohort of young people studying in Further Education Colleges and School Sixth Forms received a DVG Bursary (2.4 per cent of the cohort in Further Education Colleges and 0.4 per cent of the cohort in School Sixth Forms)[17].

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[16] Due to missing data 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.

[17] These figures exclude Special Schools and Local Authority provision as no cohort size figures were available for these groups.

Figure 3.1 MI returns: Distribution of all provider spending on Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries (2013/14)

Base: Providers with valid MI data (1,498)

£0	£1 to 999	£1k to £5k	£5k to £10k	£10k to £25k	£25k to £50k	£50k to £100k	£100k to £180k	£180k or over
1%	2%	58%	11%	12%	8%	6%	3%	0%
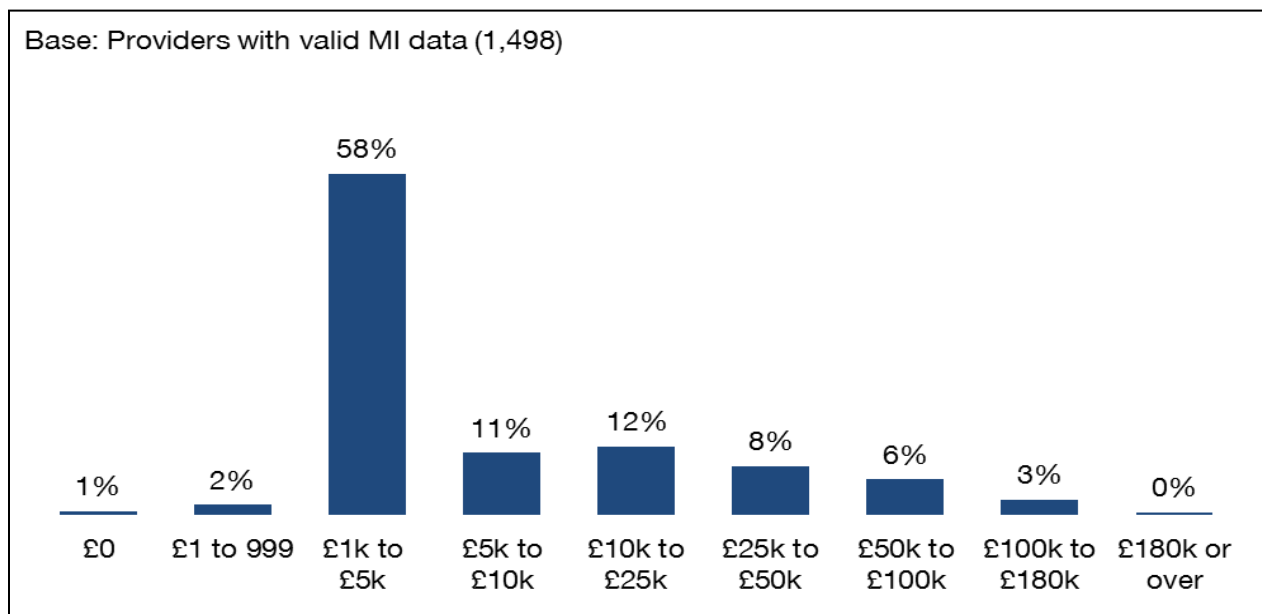
The amount awarded at individual providers ranged from £0 to £540,540; 58 per cent of providers awarded between £1,000 and £5,000 in total (Figure 3.1). Of all providers receiving funds from the centralised system, the median total amount awarded was £3,600 which is the equivalent to three full DVG bursaries (Table 3.3). The median value of DVG bursaries awarded was highest at FE colleges and sixth form colleges (£26,400) which reflects the larger numbers of eligible young people at this type of provider. At special schools the median value of awards was £4,800, which is equivalent to four DVG awards, whilst this was £2,400 at schools and academies.

Table 3.3 MI returns: Median value of DVG awards by provider type

	Median	*Provider MI returns*
FE colleges and sixth form colleges	£26,400	*479*
Schools	£2,400	*772*
Special schools	£4,800	*206*
Other providers	£5,890	*41*
All provider types	**£3,600**	*1,498*

4 Discretionary Bursary awards

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 use provider survey data and case studies to look at:

- How many Discretionary Bursary awards were made in 2013/14

- How many applications were made

- The characteristics of young people who applied for and received the awards

- The criteria providers used to assess applications and give awards.

Key findings from this chapter include:

- Overall, providers received an average (median) of 30 applications for a Discretionary Bursary. The median number of awards made was also 30.

- In the second year of implementation, the total number of students awarded Discretionary Bursaries in 2012/13 was estimated to be 357,300. This represented approximately 23 per cent of the 16 to 18 cohort in education and work based learning.

- Profiles for applicants and recipients for Discretionary Bursaries were very similar, suggesting that the likelihood of being awarded a bursary was similar across gender and ethnic groups.

- For most providers the proportion of applications for Discretionary Bursaries which resulted in an award was very high – half reported that all applications resulted in an award. Overall, 95 per cent of applications resulted in an award being made.

- The criteria used by providers to determine eligibility for Discretionary Bursaries in the third year of implementation were similar to the first and second years. The majority of providers continued to use income-related criteria; household income (66%), Free School Meal entitlement (65%), and household benefit receipt (58%) were the most commonly mentioned.

- The amount allocated as individual Discretionary Bursary Awards varied considerably; ranging from around £60 to just below £4,000, with a median spend of £447 per recipient in the 2013/14 academic year.

4.1 Numbers of Discretionary Bursary awards

In the third year of implementation there continued to be a wide variation in the number of applications, reflecting the diversity in the size of student populations. Across all providers, the median number of applications for Discretionary Bursaries was 30 (Figure 4.1). A quarter of providers received 12 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 30; this is the same median as for the number of applications, indicating that most young people were successful in their application.

Figure 4.1 Provider survey: Median number of applications and awards (2013/14)

Base: Providers responding to the survey with valid data (applications: 155, awards:190)

75th percentile, 61

75th percentile, 59

Median, 30

Median, 30

25th percentile, 12

25th percentile, 12

Applications

Awards
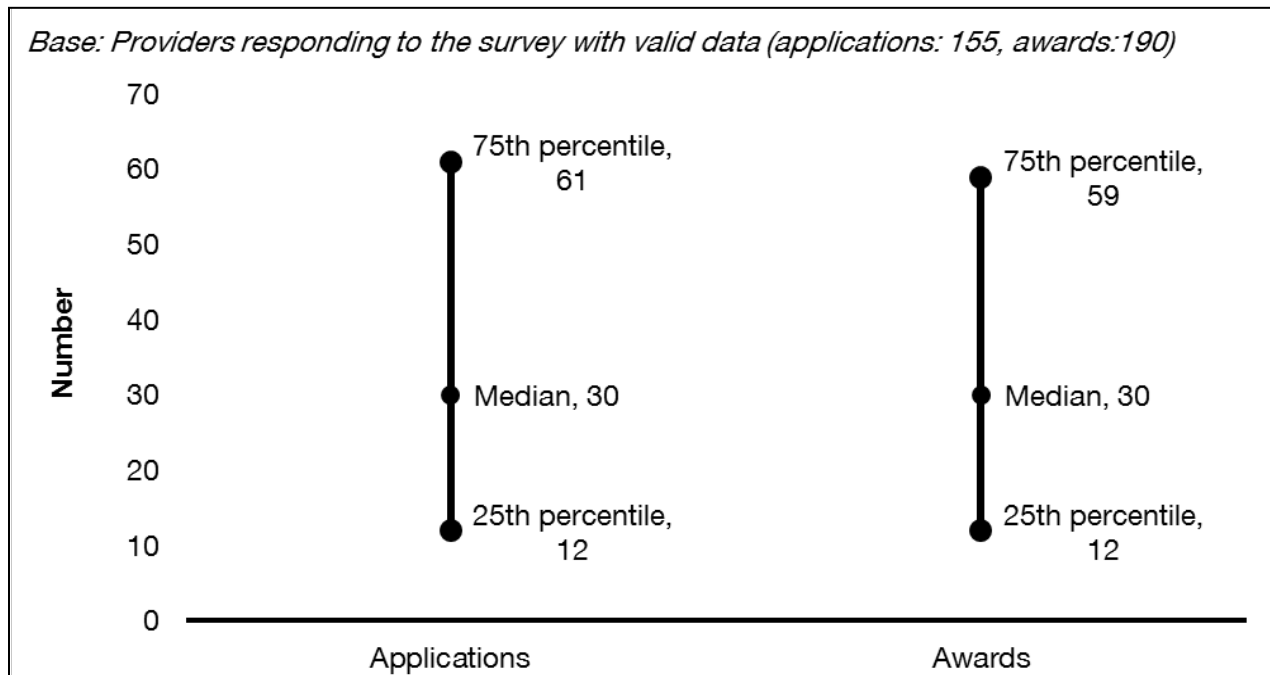
There has been a steady increase in the median number of applications in the three years since the implementation of the scheme (Figure 4.2). The median number of applications was 18 in the first year, increasing to 26 in the second year when more young people were eligible to receive the funding due to the end of transitional arrangements for Year 13, and was 30 in the third year of the policy.

In the second year of implementation, based on the MI returns the total number of students awarded Discretionary Bursaries in 2012/13 was estimated to be 357,300. This

represented approximately 23 per cent of the 16-18 cohort in education and work based learning.[18]

Figure 4.2 Provider survey: Median number of applications and awards from 2011/12 to 2013/14
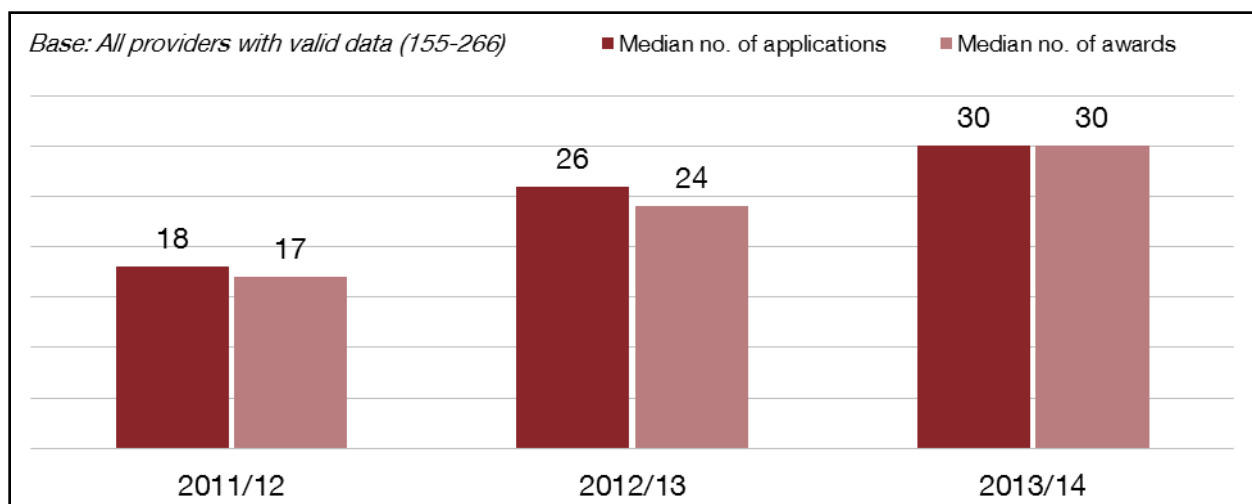
For most providers the proportion of applications for Discretionary Bursaries which resulted in an award was very high, with half of providers reporting that all applications had resulted in an award (Figure not shown). Just three per cent of providers reported that less than 75 per cent of applications were successful, the lowest success rate being 37 per cent. Application success rates were slightly lower at FE and Sixth Form colleges (mean of 91%) than Schools (mean of 96%).

The overall success rate of applications has remained stable at around 95 per cent in the first three years of Bursary Fund implementation.

In the Year 2 young person's survey we found that 69 per cent of those who were not in a defined vulnerable group and who applied for a bursary were successful in their applications and received financial support. This success rate is lower than reported in the provider survey in the same academic year (i.e. 2012/13) 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

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[18] 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.

may have started but not completed and submitted an application, or may not recall whether they did so.

4.2 Characteristics of applicants and recipients of Discretionary Bursaries

Providers responding to the survey were asked to give information on the characteristics of applicants and recipients for Discretionary Bursaries to allow us to look at differences in the likelihood of different groups applying and being successful.

As in previous years, bursaries were equally likely to be awarded to males and females with 94 per cent of applications resulting in an award for both groups (Figure not shown).

Overall, around a third (30%) of Discretionary Bursary applicants were from a non-White ethnic group and a similar proportion (33%) were awarded funding (Figure 4.3). The proportions of applications resulting in an award were also similar for White (94%) and non-White (96%) students (Figure not shown).

Figure 4.3 Provider survey: Mean percentage of applicants and recipients of Discretionary Bursaries by gender and ethnicity (2013/14)
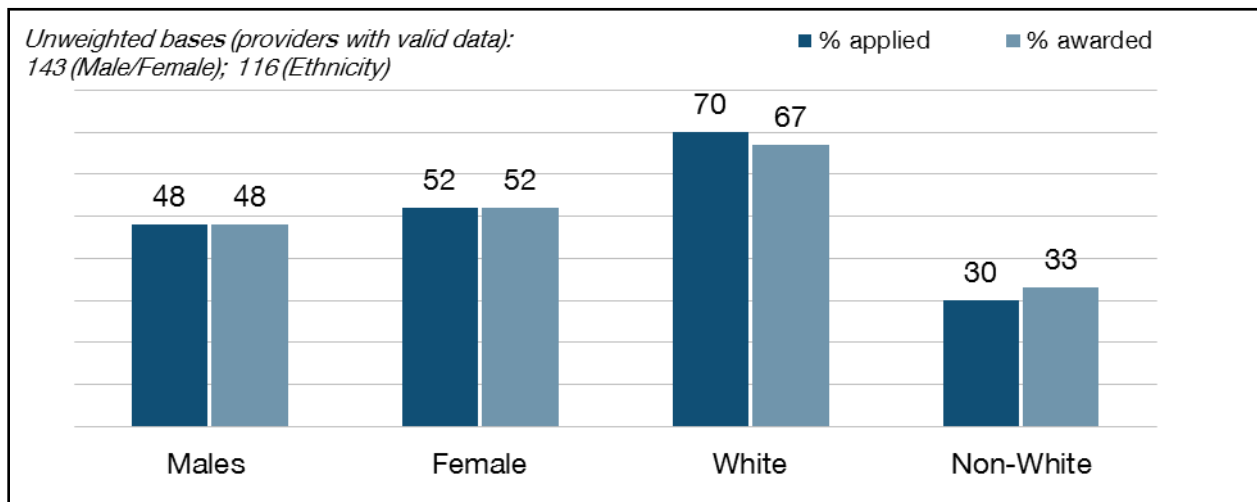
The majority of Discretionary Bursary applications (70%) were from young people studying at Level 3 (Figure 4.4). Ten per cent of applications were for young people at

Level 1, 19 per cent at Level 2, and one per cent at Level 4.[19] This pattern is consistent with the second year of implementation; however, in the third year the proportion of applications from students taking Level 1 qualifications fell from 20 per cent in the first year to 10 per cent in 2013/14 with a corresponding increase in applications from students taking level 3 qualifications (60% in 2011/12). This difference reflects the changing age profile of eligible students, with older recipients more likely to be studying at higher levels, as the transitional arrangements which kept some older students on EMA came to an end.

Figure 4.4 Provider survey: Mean percentage of applicants and recipients of Discretionary Bursaries by level of qualification studied (2013/14)
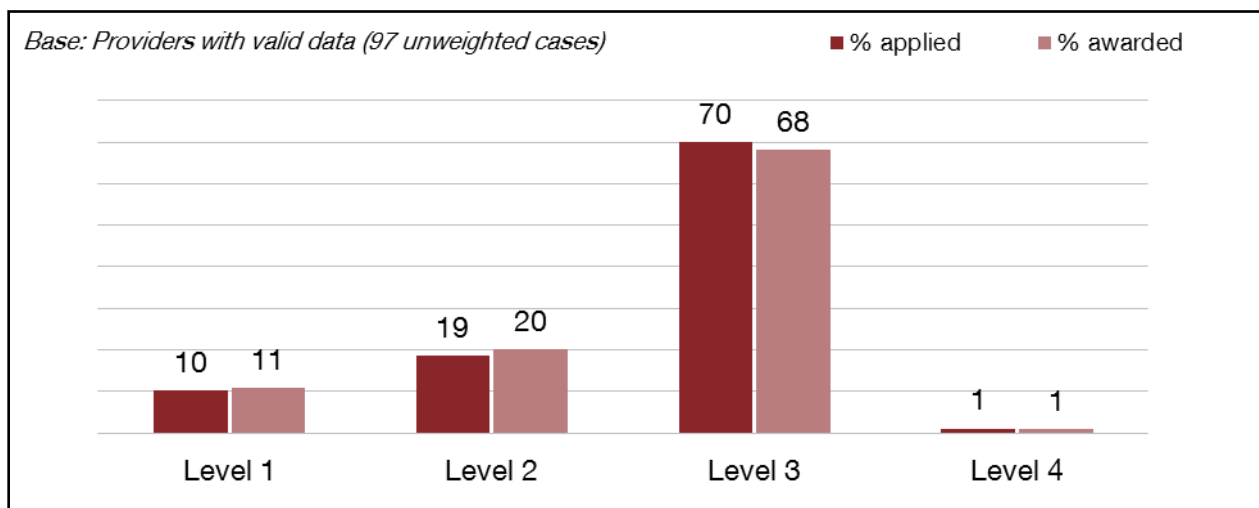
As reported in Year 2, whilst there were no gender difference between applicants and non-applicants, there was some variation in the other characteristics of young people applying for a bursary according to the learner survey. Non-white learners surveyed were more likely to apply for a bursary (57% compared to 33% of white learners; Table 4.1), 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 4.1) and learners whose parents were not educated to degree level (42%). However, it is important to note that these characteristics are also likely to be related to family income or other relevant factors, so differences observed here may not reflect any fundamental differences in relation to these characteristics in isolation. As may be expected, learners in receipt of benefits

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[19] A small number of providers reported that young people studying Level 4 qualifications were in receipt of a bursary. The 16 to 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).

were more likely to have applied for a bursary than those not in receipt of benefits (53% compared to 36%).

Table 4.1 Learner survey: Profile of non-vulnerable learners applying for a Bursary (2012/13)

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	
With a parent educated to degree level	20
W*ithout* a parent educated to degree level	42
Whether receives benefits (not Income Support or ESA & DLA)	
Receives benefits	52
Not receiving benefits	36
Unweighted base (Non-vulnerable learners)	*1,170*

Changes in the characteristics of applicants and recipients of Discretionary Bursaries

There have been few changes in the profile of applicants and recipients of discretionary bursaries over the first three years of implementation. The application success rates are similar by gender and ethnicity whilst the overall rate has remained relatively stable during the first three years of implementation at between 89 per cent and 95 per cent.

4.3 Criteria for awarding Discretionary Bursaries

Providers most frequently used criteria relating to financial circumstances to assess bursary applications. This included household income (66%), current/previous entitlement to Free School Meals (65%), and benefit receipt of the household (58%; Figure 4.5). Needs-based criteria such as transport (43%) and equipment (38%) were also commonly used. Other eligibility criteria mentioned by less than a quarter of providers included disability (19%), parenting or other caring responsibilities (14%), medical conditions (13%) and, less frequently, the number of siblings in the household (1%). Twelve per cent of providers reported they had made awards on a case by case basis with no set criteria. A small proportion of providers also reported they gave awards as required for young people in exceptional or emergency circumstances (4%).[20]

Overall, the criteria used by providers have been consistent across the first three years of Bursary Fund implementation.

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[20] 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 4.5 Provider survey: Criteria used to award Discretionary Bursaries (%) (2013/14)

Base: All providers with valid data (178 unweighted base)

Criteria	%
Household income	67
Current/prior entitlement to Free School Meals	62
Benefit receipt in the household	62
Equipment needs	43
Transport needs	37
Learner disability	21
Caring responsibilities/Parenthood	18
Medical condition	12
Special educational needs	2
Emergency / exceptional circumstances	4
Other	15
No set criteria	18

Note: Providers could mention more than one criteria so the total sums more than 100 per cent.

When providers reported 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 majority of these providers used a single threshold (73% in 2013/14) for the household income criteria. Fifteen per cent of providers used two income thresholds in 2013/14, and less than ten per cent (7%) of providers used three income thresholds to award Discretionary Bursaries. The size of thresholds used ranged from £5,000 to £31,000 with a median threshold of £20,000. The qualitative depth interviews with young people and provider case studies illustrated the diverse range of approaches to setting eligibility criteria for discretionary bursaries:

- **Income threshold model**

   Providers adopting this approach set a household income threshold for eligibility. Examples include a School Sixth Form that set a threshold of £16,200 (the income threshold for Free School Meal eligibility), and an FE College that set two tiers of eligibility (up to £21,000 and £21,000-£25,000), with the lower income bracket receiving more support than the higher one (a model similar to previous EMA eligibility thresholds).

Within this model, different approaches were used to calculate total income. In one case study, for example, the provider took account of any savings within the family, while in another case the income of both parents was considered (even if they were not living together). Other variations included a provider that disregarded child tax credits when determining household income as a way of taking account of family size when determining eligibility.

From the perspective of young people, there was a view that income thresholds could be too crude a measure of need and some frustration was voiced by those who were just over the income threshold:

> *'They said my mum's income was over the amount, but it was over by about £100, but it's like, I don't know how to explain this, but it's just, like it's hard for certain people 'cause like you're struggling just as much as the, the next person, but you can't get the same help.. it makes you feel angry, but.. there's nothing you can really do about it'*
>
> (Student, Male, 18 years old)

This was a particular concern where there was a single tier for support. Young people also felt that other factors should be taken into consideration. Suggestions included the number of siblings within the family, the distance travelled to school/college, the costs of the course and caring responsibilities. Questions were also raised over whose income it was appropriate to include. In one case for example, a non-resident parent's income was included in the assessment despite providing no support to the young person concerned.

- **Benefits eligibility model**

Providers who used benefits eligibility as their criteria did so because it was felt to be a good proxy for low income. In one case study for example, a Special School based its eligibility on the benefits a parent must be receiving to be eligible for Free School Meals. In another example, a School Sixth Form based eligibility on receipt of three income related benefits (e.g. Council Tax Benefit, Job Seekers Allowance, Housing Benefit etc.).

There was some feedback from young people that this approach did not take account of families who were on a low income and who were not in receipt of benefits. For young people in this situation, an income threshold was preferred.

- **No set criteria model**

  Under this approach, each case was assessed on individual merit with no set criteria applied. Examples of this included a Special School that encouraged students to apply on an ad-hoc basis for specific needs. Applications were then assessed on their own merit by a panel of staff before a bursary was awarded. While this approach was felt to be holistic, it was also acknowledged that it was time consuming for staff and worked best for small rather than large providers. This approach also relies on staff knowing their students well, and students did not always feel that this was the case. Furthermore, there were concerns that, without specific criteria this model also makes it difficult for young people to assess their own likelihood of receiving an award and to plan accordingly.

- **Mixed criteria model**

  Providers adopting a mixed criteria approach used a range of eligibility criteria to award discretionary bursaries. This might include an assessment of course costs, a family income measure and a travel payment based on distance travelled to school / college. This was a more complex assessment than a single income or benefit threshold and carried with it a greater administrative burden. However, it was felt to take account of a range of criteria and therefore target funds more effectively.

Flexibility when determining eligibility

While some case study providers took a flexible approach and relaxed their eligibility criteria on occasion (for example, to accommodate young people just over an income threshold), others applied their criteria strictly. There was a concern that flexibility made schemes too subjective and vulnerable to accusations of unfairness or favouritism. Where flexibility was employed (but not communicated) perceived ineligibility also meant that young people who might benefit from this flexibility did not necessarily apply.

To build some flexibility into schemes, there were examples of providers providing 'ad-hoc' payments for emergencies. While some young people spoke positively of being able to access funds this way, other young people who had attempted to access these emergency funds, described finding the process embarrassing and stigmatising. A preference for a written rather than face-to-face application process was preferred:

> *'Sometimes if we felt that what we'd got the first time wasn't enough, or our circumstances had changed and we had to reapply. So I had to keep reapplying to try and get the money for my bus pass, and it was always a no.. it was embarrassing enough having to ask for the actual money for my bus pass, and*

when they kept saying no, I just thought no, stop.. it's demeaning, I think. I don't think it would have been so bad as well if it was filling a form if you think you need more, but it was, 'Well, come and talk to us face-to-face and justify why you think you need it' (Student, Female, aged 19)

Universal versus mean-tested eligibility

In discussions around eligibility and targeting, an issue raised by some young people, parents and staff (which was also raised in the Year 2 report) was a recommendation for some form of universal support for 16 to 19 year olds. 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 supports those who continue in education.

The size of Discretionary Bursary awards

Providers had the authority to set the level of Discretionary Bursary awards. The median spend per recipient per year on Discretionary Bursaries was £447 (Table 4.2).[21] However, the size of bursaries awarded by providers varied considerably from £58 to just below £4,000 with a minority of bursaries representing a large proportion of the reported spending.

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[21] 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.

Table 4.2 Provider survey: Discretionary Bursaries spend per recipient in quartiles (2013/14)

Providers (divided into quartiles)	Discretionary Bursary spending per head
First quartile (lowest spending 25%)	£1 to £290
Second quartile	£291 to £447
Third quartile	£448 to £624
Fourth quartile (highest spending 25%)	£625 or over

Young people's views on the size of Discretionary Bursary awards

As the findings from the provider survey show, the size of Discretionary Bursary awards varied widely. Across the three years of the evaluation, how young people viewed the size of their Bursary depended on the following factors:

- Level of support from other sources

Where young people could draw on resources and support from elsewhere, 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 other support, levels of discretionary payments were less likely to be perceived as adequate.

Ellie was studying a Level 3 qualification in Childcare at a Further Education College. She came from a large family, living with her parents, three siblings and her sister's partner and baby. At the start of her course she was not eligible for a bursary but when her father stopped working, she applied and received a bus pass and two cash payments of £60 and £40. Because of her large family and because money was tight, Ellie found a part-time job and helped contribute to household bills. Although getting the bus pass was a 'weight off her shoulders', she would have struggled to continue at college without her part-time job.

- Support sufficient to meet course costs

Young people were more positive about the levels of support received when they covered the costs directly associated with staying on in education, for example equipment and transport costs. Young people were less positive about levels of support where the amount received did not cover the costs.

Melanie was studying Level 2 Hair and Beauty at College and was planning to study Level 3 next year. She lived with her granddad and because their income was low, she was eligible for a Discretionary Bursary. Her bursary paid for a bus pass, her equipment for her course and she received a £3 voucher each day for lunch. Altogether the bursary covered the main costs of studying and was enough for her to get by.

Jess was studying for a BTEC Level 3 in Business at a Sixth Form College. She lived with her mum (who was on income support) and younger brother. Because money was tight at home she was eligible for a Discretionary Bursary and received three payments (one at the end of each term). Her first payment was for £110 but as demand for bursaries increased, the second and third payments were reduced to £90. Although the bursary was a help, it did not cover her bus fare which was £138 a term and it was a struggle for her family to find the money for this. As a result, Jess did not feel the level of support was sufficient. She was not always able to attend school trips because of the cost, and occasionally could not afford to buy lunch.

- Hours studying / training

Some young people considered that the number of hours studying and working each week should be factored into the level of support provided. This was particularly the case for young people on work placements, where it was felt a small Bursary was not sufficient recognition of the contribution they were making to the workplace. This was also raised by young people who had full timetables and consequently had fewer opportunities to supplement their income with part-time work.

Guaranteed versus variable levels of support

It was not uncommon for providers to vary the amount students received depending on the level of demand as a way of avoiding over or underspend. In some instances where demand was high this meant reducing the size of each Bursary payment as the year progressed. In other cases, young people received a bonus or a larger final payment if there was a surplus at the end of the year. For bursaries to be effective in reducing financial barriers to participation, young people reflected that it was important to have clear information about how much they could expect to receive:

> *'It's definitely not - it's not stable.. you don't know how much you'll get, it can vary from term to term.. It definitely makes it hard to plan, you know, you don't know how much you'll be getting towards a pass or towards food, or anything like that, so it definitely makes it hard to plan in that respect.'*
>
> (Student, female, aged 18)

This feedback suggests that providers should consider ways of structuring their schemes to provide greater certainty over the amounts Bursary recipients can expect to receive. This would help young people relying on bursaries to plan and manage their finances better, though there would clearly be implications for providers trying to keep to budgets without changing the number of bursaries provided during the year.

4.4 How young people spent their Bursary

We asked learners in receipt of the Bursary Fund how they spent the money. Young people most commonly reported spending their bursaries on equipment for their course (59%; Figure 4.6), travel passes (54%) meals (51%) and books (48%).

Figure 4.6 Learner survey: Spending the Bursary Fund (2012/13)

Base: Young people in receipt of a Bursary Fund (251)

Category	Value
Equipment	59
Travel passes/tickets	54
Meals	51
Books	48
Uniforms	12
Clothes	6
Personal necessities/expenses	3
Exams/exam re-sits/re-takes	3
Field trips/excursions	2
Fuel	2
Something else	0
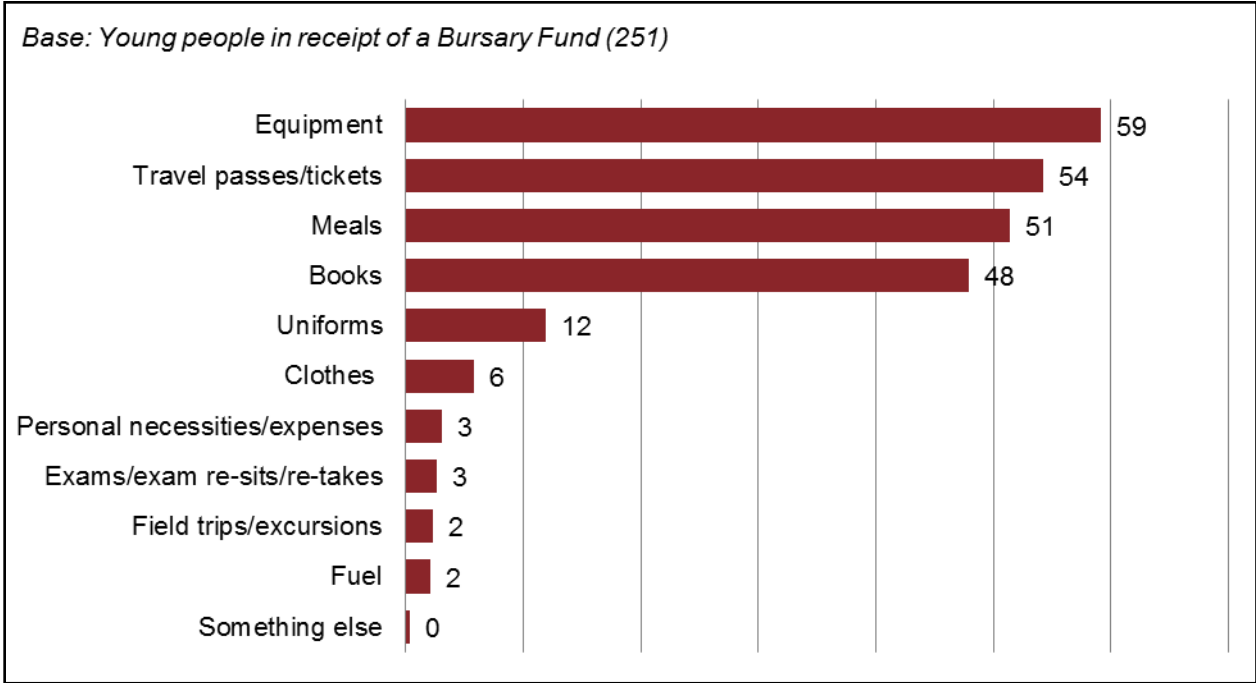
5   Bursary Fund spending

This chapter uses the provider survey and case studies to examine the amounts of money that providers reported awarding as Discretionary Bursaries, the level of estimated underspend and reasons for over and underspending compared to funding allocations.

Key findings from this chapter include:

- Total spending on Discretionary Bursaries reported by providers ranged from zero (four providers in the survey) to a maximum of over £3.5 million. The overall median amount spent was just below £11,000.

- Around half (51%) of providers had spent less than 90 per cent of their Discretionary Bursary funding allocation, which is similar to the second year of implementation. This underspend is the equivalent to approximately £1.1 million amongst the providers responding to the survey and accounts for six per cent of the total value of awards reported by the same providers.

- Providers tended to be cautious in allocating funds to minimise the risk of unaffordable overspends. Another factor in underspending was students failing to meet the conditions attached to receipt of Bursaries.

5.1 Spending on Discretionary Bursaries

Total spending on Discretionary Bursaries reported by providers in the survey ranged from zero in four cases and less than £2,000 in a further six providers, to a maximum of over £3.5 million (Table 5.1).

Spending has remained largely stable since 2012/13 when the median spend was just above £11,000), whilst as explained in section 4.1, the number of applications has steadily increased.

Table 5.1 Provider survey: Overall amount spent on Discretionary Bursaries in the 2013/14 academic year

	£
25th percentile (25% of providers spending less than this)	4,473
Median (Half of providers spending less than this)	10,982
75th percentile (25% of providers spending more than this)	20,790
Base: all providers with valid data	*149*

Under and overspend

In the first two years of Bursary administration, there was consistent underspend of funds (81% of providers underspent in the first year and 69% did so in the second). In the third-year of implementation, there was an expectation that these underspends would lessen as:

- Providers became better at estimating demand and determining their policies accordingly.

- Changes to the administration of Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries (allowing providers to draw down these funds from a central source as and when required) allowing providers to allocate discretionary funds without holding back a contingency for late Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries applications.

Using the information provided in the survey about spending on 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 the proportion of providers underspending remained the same as in the second year; the majority of providers (69%) spent less than they were allocated, with just over half (51%) of providers spending less than 90 per cent of their allocation. This underspend is the equivalent to approximately £1.1 million amongst the providers responding to the survey and represents six per cent of the total amount allocated to the same providers. This shows that while the prevalence of underspend is lower than in the first year, there continues to be high numbers underspending and there is still progress to be made to ensure funds are reaching the young people for whom they are intended.

Overspending was less common; 16 per cent of providers reported to have done so, and nine per cent had spent more than 110 per cent of their allocation (Figure 5.1). Overspending was slightly more common in the third year compared to the second year

of implementation when twelve per cent of providers reported to have overspent. This may be due to more providers having carried money over from the second year funding allocation, or more providers topping up the funds for the 16 to 19 Bursaries with other money in order to meet the demand.

Figure 5.1 Provider survey: Spending more or less than funding allocation in 2013/14 (%)
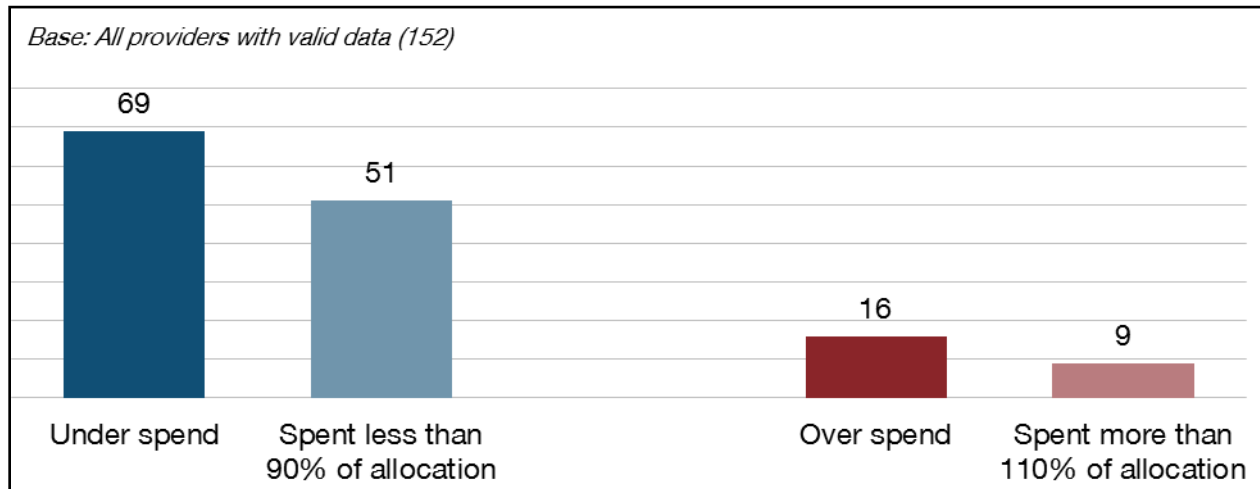
Under- and overspending varied significantly by type of provider (Figure 5.2), with school sixth forms much more likely to have underspent (81%) compared to FE Colleges (49%). School sixth forms were also much less likely to have overspent (9%) compared to FE colleges (45%). This is consistent with findings that underspends were higher in providers with smaller allocations. Twenty seven per cent of small allocations (less than £13,000) went unspent, compared to only an eight per cent underspend on larger allocations (£50,000 or over).[22]

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[22] Please note base sizes are small so these figures should be treated with caution.

Figure 5.2 Provider survey: Spending more or less than funding allocation in 2013/14, by type of provider (%) (2013/14)
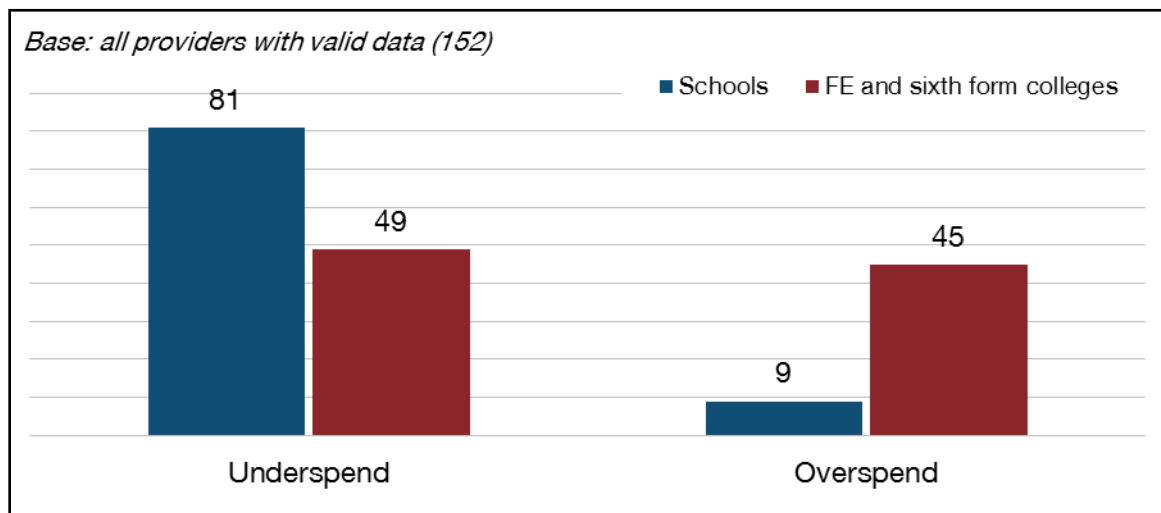
There were also differences in the prevalence of over- and underspending by the level of funding allocations but the relationship is not linear (Table 5.2). The vast majority (87%) of providers with a 'medium' size of funding allocation (i.e. £13,000 to £49,999) reported to have underspent, with less frequent underspends amongst those with smaller allocations (51%) and the highest (61%). The group with allocations between £13,000 and £49,999 was also much less likely to have overspent on Discretionary Bursaries compared to what they had been allocated.

Table 5.2 Provider survey: Under and overspend 2013/14, by size of funding allocation (%) (2013/14)

	Up to £12,999	£13,000 to £49,999	£50,000 and more
Yes, have underspent	51	87	61
Yes, have overspent	23	4	33
Base: all providers with valid data	*46*	*60*	*43*

Reasons for under/overspend

Findings from the case studies provide some possible explanations for under and overspends.

Underspends:

Case study providers who anticipated underspending their funds this year identified the following reasons:

- Remaining cautious of over committing their Bursary Funds because they cannot afford to top-up their Bursary budgets to cover any short-fall:

    'We might still have a bit left over. I have tried my best to spend most of it, not all of it, but yes… we're very careful that we know what we've got and what we've got to spend so that there isn't ever an overspend… it would have to come out of somewhere else in the budget and the budget's quite tight at the moment so.. we would avoid that yes.'

    (School administrator, Special school)

- Carrying forward underspends from the first two years, increasing the size of their fund:

    'So we're probably going to have another underspend situation this year, I think. I think that's unavoidable.. I can't remember the exact figure, but quite a large underspend rolled over. Now, you know, we could go into trying to get it spent for the sake of it, or, or we could continue to apply the, the sort of integrity, and that's what we've chosen to do is, to continue to apply that integrity and if, if there are learners that have circumstances that mean we can sort of use a bit more of it, then we'll do that.'

    (Senior staff member, Special School)

- Where a provider had seen a fall in their student numbers because of competition in their local area, a smaller cohort size had reduced demand.

- Difficulties gathering the evidence from parents needed to prove eligibility because parents may be reluctant or unable to provide evidence (see section 2.3 for more discussion of this):

    'The issues we've been having there is.. we're going to have an underspend.. the issues that some of the [providers] have been having is actually getting the evidence from parents that they meet the criteria, the Bursary criteria, because they're reluctant to give that information even though there's money that their son/daughter, et cetera, could access additional funds.'
    (Local Authority staff member)

Overspends:

Case study providers who topped-up funds did so because of perceived student need and because they felt their participation and retention levels would suffer without it. In some instances, it was felt to be necessary to remain competitive and attract students. Examples of providers who topped up included:

- A large urban FE college that supplemented their Bursary Fund to provide additional support with transport costs for all students who lived over two miles away:

  > *'Well, we did overspend, and we're likely to overspend this year as well.. Our biggest issue is travel.. Travel is an absolutely massive issue every year, really, and we struggle with it every year..'*
  >
  > (Senior staff member, FE College)

- A training provider that topped up the Bursary Fund to provide a universal Bursary for all its students. This was in part a recognition that they were all completing the same work-based training each week, and in part to encourage participation and engagement for a cohort that might otherwise be at risk of becoming NEET:

  > *'We've tried to operate systems before where [they] all get different [amounts] depending on who they are, where they come from etcetera. And we've found the learners don't like that; they don't like knowing someone's getting £30 and someone's only getting £10.. and the motivation wasn't there so we aimed at looking at some kind of parity and it's our expense but we worked that into budgets and so on. So we can afford it.'*   (Senior staff member, Training Provider)

6   Administering the Bursary Fund

This chapter focuses on how 16 to 19 providers have administered the Bursary Fund, describing alternative models of administration, the format, timing and frequency of payments and views on administration from the perspective of young people. It draws on findings from the 2013/14 provider survey, the 2012/13 learner survey and the qualitative case studies and learner interviews.

Key findings from this chapter include:

- Individual provider administered Discretionary Bursaries were considered to offer schools and colleges greater flexibility and more opportunities to tailor the support to their students. However, concerns were raised that this could lead to inequalities in the support available and wide variation in the quality of schemes.

- In the third year of implementation there was a change to how the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries were administered. From September 2013 providers were required to claim the funds for this Bursary as and when needed for vulnerable students. Just over half of providers (53%) reported that they had drawn down money from the Defined Vulnerable Group Fund. Of these, 44 per cent reported that centralising the fund had made planning financial support for students easier, whilst a minority (4%) reported the changes had made it harder.

- Sixty-six per cent of Bursary recipients felt that the timing and way their Bursary payments were made worked well for them, but this rose to 85 per cent for those who received their payments weekly during term time. Young people fed back that regular payments made it easier to budget and respond to educational needs.

- Attendance was the most frequently mentioned condition linked to the receipt of bursaries (85% of all providers). Young people understood the importance of conditions but experienced some issues with the way these were implemented and monitored (e.g. delays with attendance monitoring, severity of sanctions) and suggested ways this could be improved including clearly explaining conditions.

- Forty-seven per cent of providers reported delays in making Bursary payments. In the second year of implementation 21 per cent of young people reported   issues with the administration of their payments.

6.1 Models of administration

Drawing on the provider case studies, two broad models of Bursary administration were described in the interim reports – the individual provider administered model and the Local Authority administered model. The prevalence of these is unknown but the following perceived strengths and weaknesses were identified (Table 6.1). A third model, where providers work collaboratively and agree a common set of eligibility criteria and payment levels, was not represented in the case study sample.

Table 6.1 Models of Bursary administration – summary of strengths and limitations

Administrative model	Strengths	Limitations
Individual provider administered	▪ Offers scope to be responsive to individual learner needs ▪ Schemes can be tailored to the provider context ▪ Provider knowledge of cohort can be used to target support ▪ Smaller cohorts facilitate quicker correction of errors	▪ Results in differences in scope of support 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. ▪ Potential for confusion / lack of clarity over eligibility as a result of multiple schemes
Local authority administered	▪ 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	▪ Less responsive to individual provider contexts ▪ Less flexible and responsive to individual learner needs ▪ Larger scale may increase administrative delays

Now in their third year of implementation case study providers, parents and young people reflected on these models of administration as follows.

Individual provider administered model

For providers who preferred having individual control over their Bursary schemes, the approach was felt to give them greater control allowing them to tailor them to meet the needs of their students. In particular, providers felt they were better able to target the funds at the students who needed it most and they had greater flexibility when judging eligibility (for example, taking the number of siblings into consideration). They were able to offer the support in the format most suitable for their learners, for example in the form of equipment in a special school or as weekly cash payments to incentivise attendance and engagement in a training provider supporting young people at risk of being NEET:

> *'I think doing it locally, in school, in-house and that, we know the pupils, we know the students, we can make a decision. So like, so we use the £16,200 as the guideline for the income, but a child could come and their parents could be on a bit more money but they could have six siblings.. So you make that sort of, a more of a personalised decision on, on that child, on their circumstances at the time that they applied.'* (School administrator, School Sixth Form)

Parents who favoured the individual provider administered approach reflected that the individual school was best placed to know the needs of individual students, particularly where the provider was small and they knew their student cohort well:

> *'I quite like the fact that it's then left to the school and it's at the school's discretion, yeah.. I mean I, I think we're just quite lucky 'cause they're in a nice, small secondary school, everyone knows everyone, you know, you can, it's quite easy to go in and approach the teachers.'* (Parent of Bursary recipient)

Some young people also shared this view and particularly valued the flexibility that could be offered by a provider that knew their personal circumstances:

> *'You can't just judge someone on what they look like on paper, so the school can actually go, we know this person, you know we know for a fact you know, they've got trouble at home or whatever.. when I first tried to apply to do it when I was in Year 12. My dad earned far more money than what I, you know, the threshold was to get here yet my dad had to spend tens of thousands of pounds on personal care to look after himself because he was so ill .. We barely had anything because he was having to spend so much money on care for himself.*

So you know I couldn't get it at first. But when the school looked into it, you know, like I was saying their own discretion, then I got it.'

(Student focus group, School Sixth Form)

However, some providers, parents and young people reflected that they would prefer a system that was consistent across providers. Fairness and equity was a key concern, and some were unhappy that two young people in similar circumstances could receive varying support:

'I think it's slightly unfair, because obviously if you went to a different college you might get more or you might get less, but you're still in the same circumstances, and your circumstances aren't going to change. All the colleges really are doing the same thing, and you're having still, it's still the same level of qualifications, they still need to buy the same things so I think it's slightly unfair.'

(Student, Female, aged 18)

In part, individual local administration was considered as leading to more subjective and potentially poorer decisions being made on eligibility:

'I don't really mind, as long as it's consistent.. and as long as it's not left to us to make the decision, because I think that inevitably becomes subjective and causes problems. If we've got some sort of formula to work through, that's far easier for us… we should be told, really.. - students are eligible for Bursary if they meet this, this, this, this criteria. Rather than us have to really decide ourselves.'

(Head of Sixth Form, School Sixth Form)

Some Local Authority staff who took an overview of the range of approaches being taken in their local area also reflected that locally administered Bursary schemes inevitably resulted in examples of both good and poor practice:

'I think, you know, if you've got a system where it's down to the individual providers how they deliver it and how they run it.. you will have some outstanding providers who have systems in place to review policies regularly. And you will have some schools, I'm thinking in particular about some schools which are in challenging circumstances, might not be doing so well and they don't have the, same quality in terms of their review systems in place. So you're going to get varied practice.'

(Local Authority staff member)

To allow for some geographical variation, but to also ensure some consistency in eligibility, some parents and young people made the suggestion of setting eligibility criteria and levels of payment at the County level. It was felt that this would minimise the

possibility that young people might choose their provider based on their Bursary scheme, rather than the appropriateness of the course:

'I imagine [the level of Bursary] could sway, like if I was in year 11, where I would go.. I don't think that's right, no. But, I think you shouldn't be so naive to choose a college just based on £20, £30, £40 a week, you should go based on your future.. Like maybe an area should have one specific, like, [policy].. So for example, [in this area].. then it's not a case of, if I live locally, and I've got three different colleges, 'I'm only going to this one because it gives me £40 a month, instead of that one that gives me £10'. This way, it's, 'I live locally, so these are my only options, I'm just going to go to the one which is best suited for my future'.

(Student, Male, aged 18)

It was felt this would also reduce the subjectivity involved in setting eligibility criteria that might result from local administration:

'Now if I know in advance that in [this County] this is allowed or that's allowed, that's I think, a lot better than it being different for each school.. because I think certain schools will put, obviously, more emphasis on certain things, um, whereas if it's more general, it's going to be what is seen as acceptable by quite a lot of people, rather than just a small amount. So, if you've got 10 schools in the [local] area and all the Heads, or the Bursars, or whoever, get together and they then decide the most important things, that's what I think. Rather than the school saying, 'Well, you know, you need it for your pencil case', you know.'

(Parent of Bursary recipient)

Local Authority administered model

Only one of the case study providers was operating within a Local Authority administered scheme, so caution should be taken when drawing conclusions on the success and limitations of the approach based on the experience of one provider. In this approach, all the local schools had agreed to pool their funds and have a centrally administered scheme (run by the Local Authority) with consistent eligibility and payment levels. Reflecting on the third year of implementation the following issues were raised by young people, parents and the case study provider:

- Equality and fairness

  There was an appreciation of the fact that the scheme was the same across providers, as this was perceived to be fair.

- Application process

  There were some difficulties completing application forms correctly and delays in receiving bursaries as a result. The Head of Sixth Form in the case study school operating under this approach reflected that the centralised administration process added a layer of complication to the application process that could be avoided in a more localised approach:

  > *'With some of the students we have here completing the paperwork and the process involved in sending it off, the audit trail of all of that, parents getting letters back if they haven't had things filled in properly and not understanding what it's saying in a letter, all that kind of thing.. if we were just handling it we'd build that into our support programme, you know, in getting it filled in or whatever needs to be done in the first few days [of term]'.* (Head of Sixth Form, School Sixth Form)

- Payment delays

  Young people reported payments not reaching their accounts when they expected and this causing difficulties. There was a perception that this would be less of an issue if the scheme was operated locally by their school:

  > *'I think you, like, rely more on the school than, like, the [Local Authority] itself, I think; I think the school would be more reliable.. [the payment is] supposed to be in today and it's not.. it's like a large amount [of bursaries] like, it could get messed up easier and [if] it's just like the school.. it wouldn't be messed up as much as it would be if it was like a large group'* (Student focus group, School Sixth Form)

- Centralised administration vs local control

  From the school perspective, the centralised administration had reduced administrative burden for the school, but the Head of Sixth Form reflected that it also limited the amount of control they had and greater flexibility would also bring benefits:

  > *'It would just be nice to have that opportunity to have that pot of money and think right, how can we make it work for the students and how can we make it work for the sixth form? We don't have any say in that, it's just, it is what it is. So, I would find it more exciting as well as more of a challenge to have that opportunity to do that but I would welcome it.'* (Head of Sixth Form, School Sixth Form)

Quality assurance and audit

Whichever approach was taken, parents and young people stressed the importance of audit and oversight to ensure that funds were being allocated correctly and providers were meeting their obligations.

6.2 How Bursary awards were made

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. Around half (51%) of providers paid young people directly in cash, 37 per cent only awarded in-kind bursaries and 13 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 (%) 2013/14
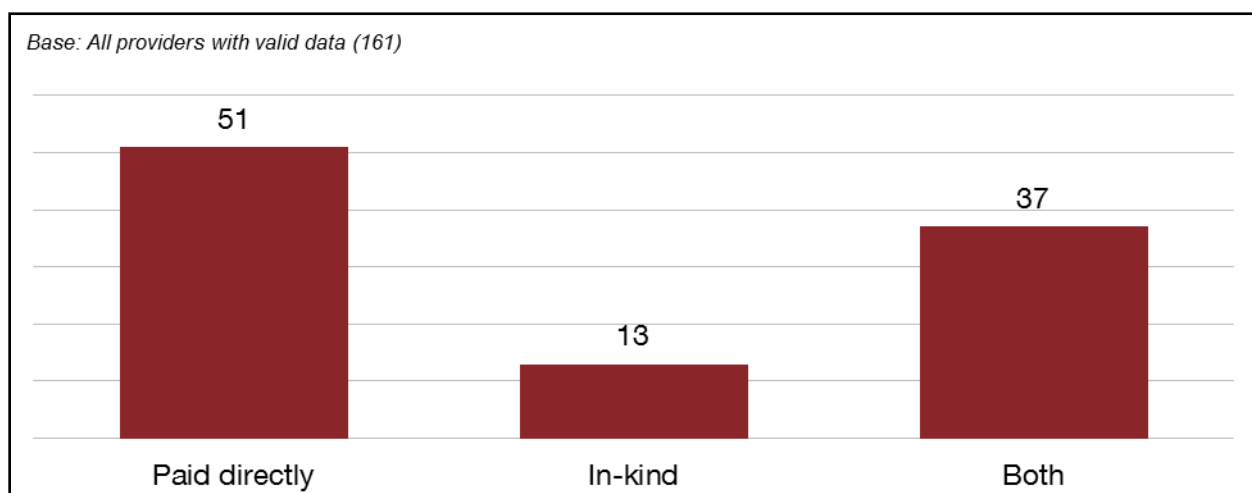
Around two-thirds of FE colleges (65%) paid bursaries both as cash and in kind, compared to only 37 per cent of school Sixth Forms. The majority school Sixth Forms paid cash directly to learners (58%) (Figure not shown).

This is similar to the second year of implementation when young people in receipt of a Bursary were most likely to be receiving this directly as cash or into bank accounts (Year 2 Learner survey: 68%).

Payment of 'in-kind' Bursaries

Providers who paid bursaries in-kind were asked what form the payments had taken. The most common type of in-kind award was equipment, mentioned by almost three-quarters of these providers (73%; Figure 6.2). Over half had awarded bursaries in-kind in the form of meals (58%) and travel passes/tickets (57%), and nearly half had done so for books (47%). Around a third (35%) had provided uniforms or clothing to Bursary recipients. Providers were less likely to mention in-kind awards for activities (8%) and exam retakes or entrance exams (2%).

Figure 6.2 Provider survey: Forms of in-kind awards (% mentioned) 2013/14

Base: All providers offering bursaries in-kind (88)

Equipment	73
Meals	58
Travel passes/tickets	57
Books	47
Fieldtrips/excursions/ residentials	39
Uniforms/clothing	35
Activities	8
Exam retakes/ university entrance exams	2
Other	9
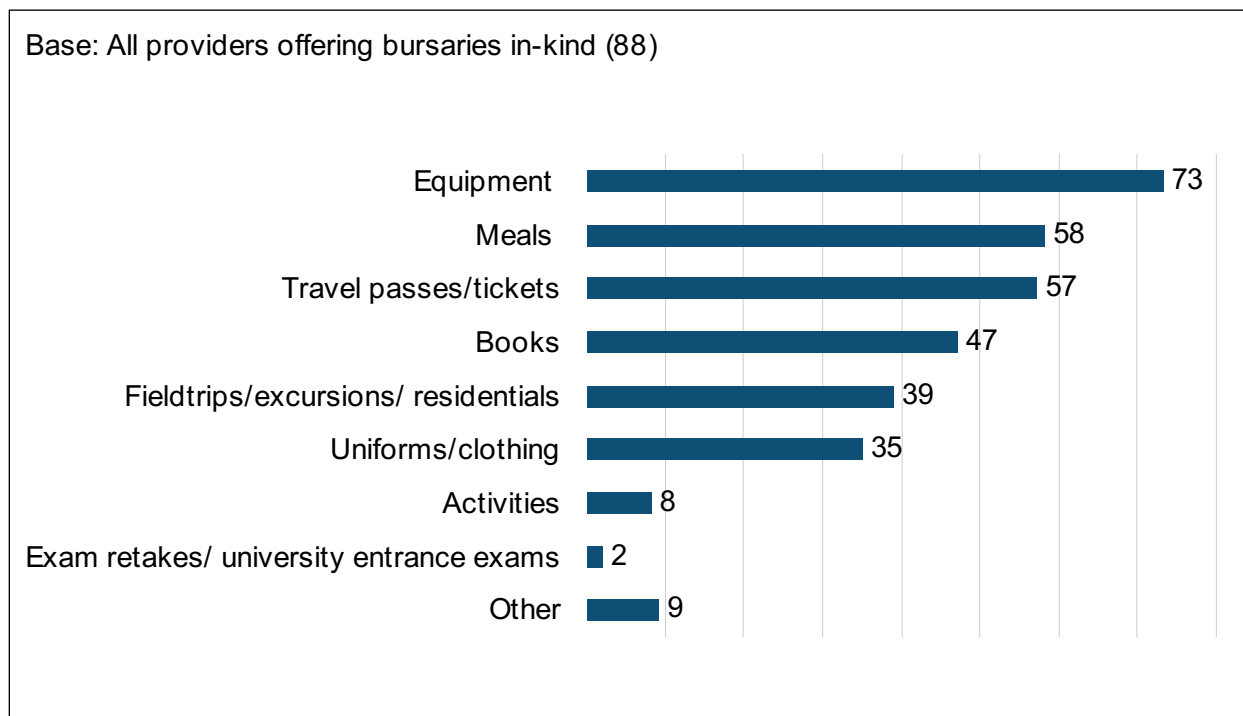
Note: Providers could mention more than one type of 'in-kind' Bursary so the total sums more than 100 per cent.

This is broadly consistent with the reasons young people reported for receiving in-kind awards. Of those young people receiving in-kind Bursary awards, most received a travel pass or ticket (61%; Figure 6.3) with around a third receiving books (35%) and equipment (33%). A fifth of young people receiving in-kind bursaries did so in the form of meal vouchers or equivalent.

Figure 6.3 Learner survey: Types of in-kind awards received (%) (2012/13)

Base: Young people in receipt of an in-kind Bursary Fund (111)

Type	%
Travel passes/tickets	61
Books	35
Equipment	33
Meals	18
Uniform	15
Field trips/excursions	5
Something else	1
Food vouchers	1
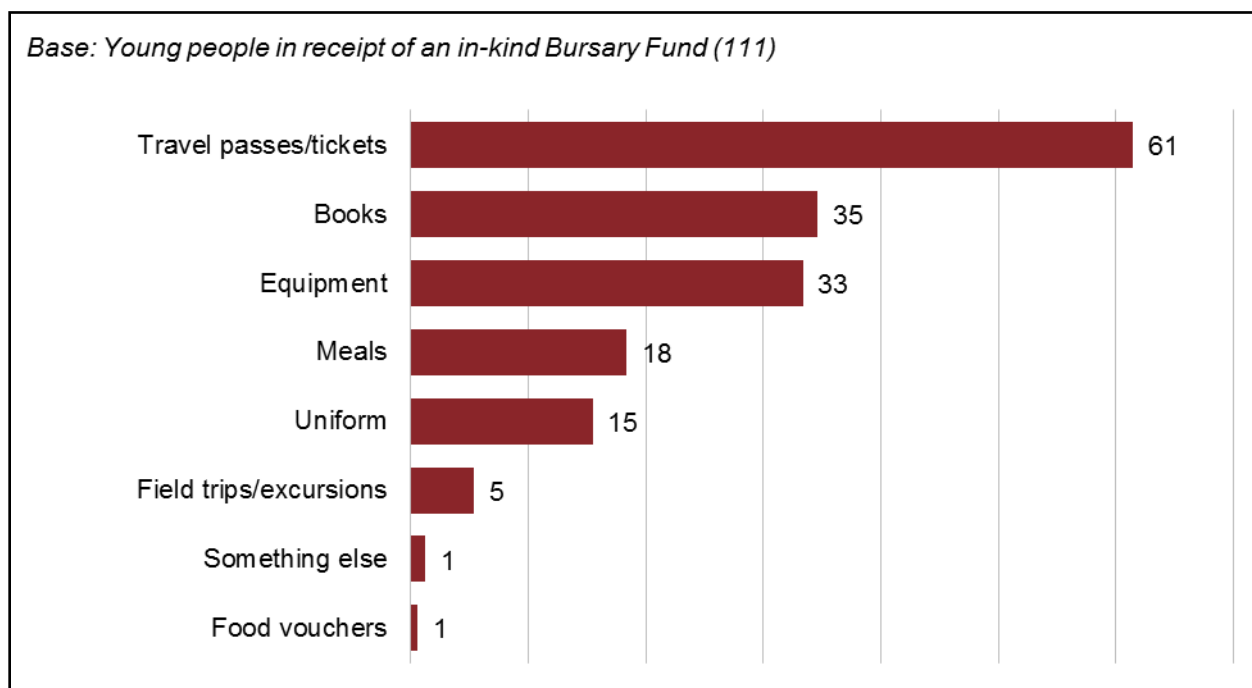
6.3 Views on in-kind and cash awards

As the survey of providers has shown, providers continue to offer a range of bursaries – both 'in-kind' awards and cash payments. This section summarises the perceived strengths and weaknesses of these approaches from the perspective of young people, providers and parents.

Cash bursaries

The year 2 report reported on the reasons why cash payments were preferred by some providers and young people. The same reasons were reiterated in the third year of the evaluation and are summarised here:

- Flexible and better able to meet diverse range of needs

  Cash payments were generally felt to be more flexible than 'in-kind' payments and therefore better able to meet a diverse range of needs. For example, young people spoke about using bursaries to pay for additional tuition or to help towards household bills and these uses could not be accommodated by 'in-kind' payments. Some young people also fed back that cash payments

allowed them to take ownership of their Bursary and source equipment of a higher quality than what could be supplied by their provider:

> *'The quality of the things, like the quality the school gets.. sometimes they don't get as good quality. If you've got your money you can go out and try and get, like, something good for - quality wise with your money. So it's your money type thing; you look after it more than if someone else is buying something for you, they won't think as much as you would about the, the quality and that.'* (Student focus group, School Sixth Form)

- Independence

Parents, young people and providers valued the independence that cash payments encouraged. Young people described being less reliant on their parents, and providers reflected that cash payments encouraged the development of budgeting and money management skills:

> *'I think the fact that they get the money and the fact that they can spend that money on what they want to spend it on is all about that step from becoming a child to an adult and managing money and, you know.. it's about giving them some independence isn't it and allowing them to budget and spend the money on what they want.'*
>
> (Head of Sixth Form, School Sixth Form)

- Motivational

Cash payments were viewed as more motivational than 'in-kind' payments. This is consistent with the findings from Year 2 that young people in receipt of cash Bursaries were more likely to say it changed their behaviour (Year 2 Learner Survey: 57% compared to 31% of those paid 'in-kind') said it changed their behaviour at school or college. This was understood to be because cash payments can be paid regularly to incentivise attendance and engagement, whereas 'in-kind' payments are more likely to be one-off items or in a format which cannot easily be withdrawn.

'In-kind' bursaries

In-kind bursaries took a range of formats including travel passes, pre-paid lunch cards, equipment, trip costs and extra-curricular activities. The strengths of 'in-kind' payments were felt to be:

- The facility to target bursaries and meet specific educational needs

Young people who favoured 'in-kind' payments (at least as a portion of their Bursary), reflected that they removed the temptation to use the funds for other purposes and guaranteed that key needs were met:

> *'[I prefer it] definitely on a [pre-paid] card because I know it's there. Like, I'd probably spend the money on something else as well, but on my card I can't access the money and get it out of my card. So if I'm hungry, I know it's there; I've got money on my card, just go and get something or printing, something like that.'* (Student, Female, aged 17)

Providers also valued being able to target specific educational needs and meet them using the Bursary funds. The case study special schools in particular favoured some element of 'in-kind' payments as a way of facilitating and enriching the engagement of young people with special needs. Examples included providing i-pads to facilitate communication, clothes for job interviews, sports equipment and paying for after-school clubs and Duke of Edinburgh Awards. A parent whose child attended a Special School reflected that 'in-kind' payments could work well for this group of students, but also stressed the importance of ensuring the item was well-matched to the needs of the student, perhaps consulting with the family where appropriate:

> *'Well I think where [in-kind payments are] well identified and appropriate for their skills and their learning development need, they're absolutely brilliant.. in fact, in many cases, as we said earlier about the loss of identity of money, because, you know, it can be lost in the mix, as it were. I think specific items are great'* (Parent of Bursary recipient)

- Value for money

There were examples of case study providers successfully negotiating discounts for bulk purchases and these were thought to offer better value than cash payments. Examples included a training provider who had negotiated a discount on weekly bus passes with their local bus company.

6.4 Administering the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary

In the third year of Bursary implementation (2013/14), the administration of the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary was centralised. Rather than a combined allocation for discretionary and vulnerable group bursaries, providers now request additional funds for

Defined Vulnerable Group bursaries as and when they need them. We explored levels of awareness about this change in the provider survey and in more detail with providers in the case studies.

Awareness and experiences of changes to Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary administration

Eighty-eight per cent of providers surveyed were aware that the Defined Vulnerable Group funding is held centrally by the Learner Support Service (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2 Provider survey: Awareness of changes to the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary funding which is now held centrally by the Learner Support Service (2013/14)

	%
Yes	88
No	12
Unweighted base	163

Around half of providers (53%) reported that they had drawn down money from the Defined Vulnerable Group Fund.

Of the providers who had drawn down funding from the Learner Support Service, 40 per cent reported that it had helped to decrease the administrative burden on providers. A further 35 per cent felt the change had no effect, whilst around a quarter (24%) reported that it had increased the administrative burden for providers (Figure 6.4).

Figure 6.4 Provider survey: Whether the centralisation has helped to reduce administrative burden on providers (%) (2013/14)

Base: All respondents who had applied for centralised funding (87)

- ■ Substantially decreased burden
- □ Neutral/no effect
- ■ Substantially increased burden
- ■ Slightly decreased burden
- ■ Slightly increased burden
- □ Don't know

| 15 | 25 | 35 | 21 | 3 | 2 |
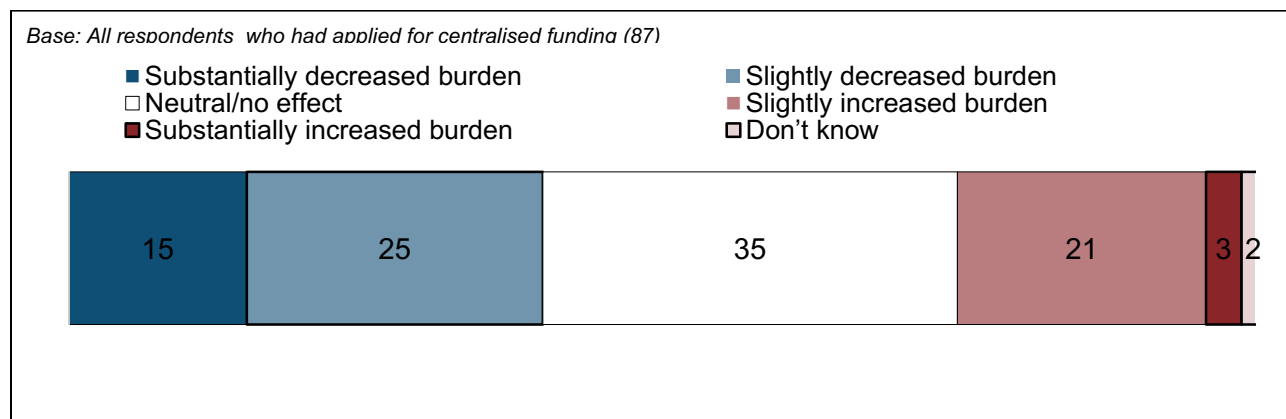
Providers were asked how the centralisation of the DVG funding had been in helping to plan financial support for students. Half of providers who had used the service reported there had been no effect on financial planning for students. Forty-four per cent reported that it had made the process slightly, or substantially easier, whilst a minority (4%) reported the changes had made it harder to plan financial support for students (Figure 6.5).

Figure 6.5 Provider survey: Whether the centralisation has helped to plan financial support for students (%) (2013/14)

Base: All respondents who had applied for centralised funding (87)

- ■ Substantially decreased burden
- □ Neutral/no effect
- ■ Substanitally increased burden
- ■ Slightly decreased burden
- ■ Slightly increased burden
- □ Don't know

| 20 | 25 | 50 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
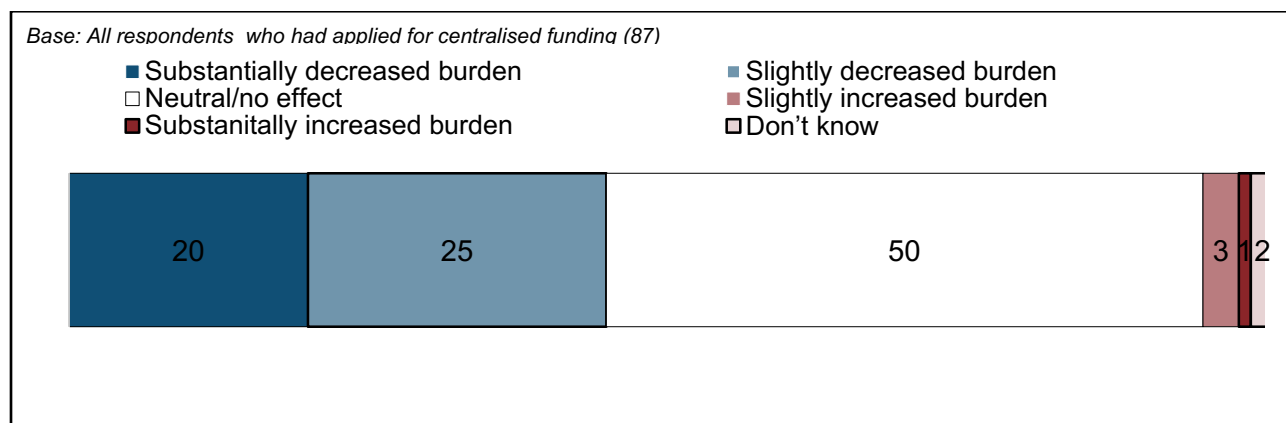
Views on changes to Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary administration

Views on changes to the administration were mixed amongst case study providers, the change was generally welcomed but it presented some challenges. Case study providers fed back that the separation of the two funds gave them greater certainty over their discretionary budgets:

81

'I've found that more helpful really, because instead of us having to say, 'We're going to need to put that money to one side because we may potentially have this', .. I think this has allowed us to be a bit more definite, and commit earlier to say, 'Well, actually, we know that the [discretionary fund] we can use on everything.. and that's made things a lot easier.. and I think it's given us almost a bit more control.' (Strategic staff member, FE College)

The new administrative procedures were generally felt to be straightforward and efficient and quick response times were appreciated:

'It's quite an efficient process, I think within a few days you get an email back saying this is how much we're going to put into your accounts and as simple as that.' (Finance officer, FE College)

The main challenge for providers in using the system was how to keep track of funds when students left early or arrived after receiving funds from other providers. Some providers reported this was potentially time consuming as they sought clarification of what had already been allocated from other providers and tried to keep track of what funds remained if a student left the provider early.

6.5 Conditions attached to the receipt of Bursary awards

The Education Funding Agency (EFA) advises providers that receipt of the Bursary Fund should be based on students meeting conditions.[23] Attendance was the most frequently mentioned condition linked to the receipt of bursaries (85% of all providers; Figure **6.6**). Fifty-five per cent of providers reported that receipt of bursaries was conditional upon young people complying with rules, whilst almost half (49%) reported punctuality to be a condition. A small proportion of providers (12%) reported having no conditions attached to the receipt of the Bursary award.[24]

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[23] EFA 2014/15 Guidance states 'Receipt of a vulnerable or discretionary bursary should be conditional on the student meeting some agreed standards. These standards are set by the institution and could relate to attendance and standards of behaviour. These standards need to be clear and the student needs to be aware of them. Evidence that the student has agreed to them should be kept.'

[24] EFA 2014/15 Guidance states 'Receipt of a vulnerable or discretionary bursary should be conditional on the student meeting some agreed standards. These standards are set by the institution and could relate to attendance and standards of behaviour. These standards need to be clear and the student needs to be aware of them. Evidence that the student has agreed to them should be kept.'

Figure 6.6 Provider survey: Conditions attached to Bursary receipt (%) (2013/14)
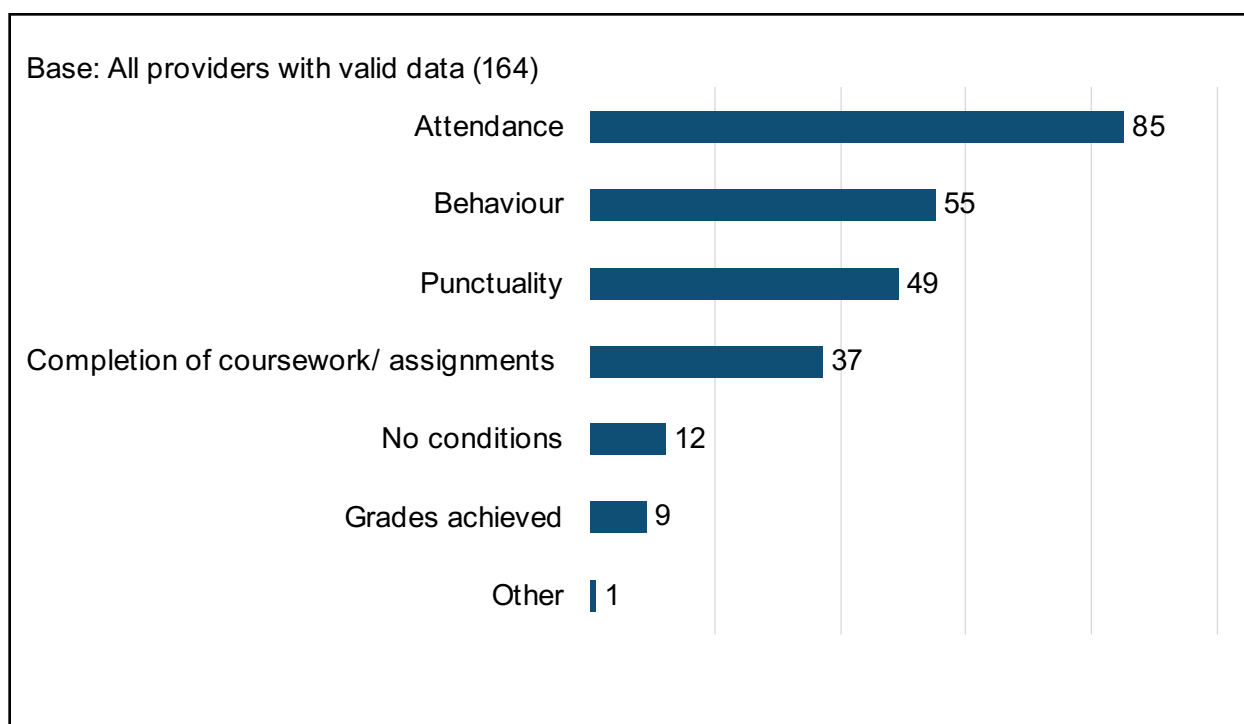
Base: All providers with valid data (164)

Condition	Value
Attendance	85
Behaviour	55
Punctuality	49
Completion of coursework/ assignments	37
No conditions	12
Grades achieved	9
Other	1

Note: Providers could mention more than one condition so the total sums more than 100 per cent.

Attendance as a condition of receiving a bursary was mentioned by 93 per cent of School Sixth Forms and FE colleges and 57 per cent of special schools. Sixty-six per cent of all School Sixth Forms reported punctuality to be a condition of receiving the Bursary, compared to 40 per cent of FE colleges. Behaviour and complying with rules was mentioned by 67 per cent of school Sixth Forms and 59 per cent of FE colleges. This was only reported by one fifth of Special Schools. (Figure not shown)

The vast majority of young people in the Year 2 learner survey reported that receiving Bursary payments in full depended on conditions being met with the most frequently mentioned being attendance (73%; Figure 6.7). Echoing findings from the provider survey, payments linked to educational achievements were less common – around a fifth 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. It is not clear why there is a difference between the extent of conditions reported by providers and recipients. One possible reason may be that recipients are not always aware of the conditions attached to their Bursary.

Figure 6.7 Learner survey: Conditions attached to Bursary receipt (%) (2012/13)
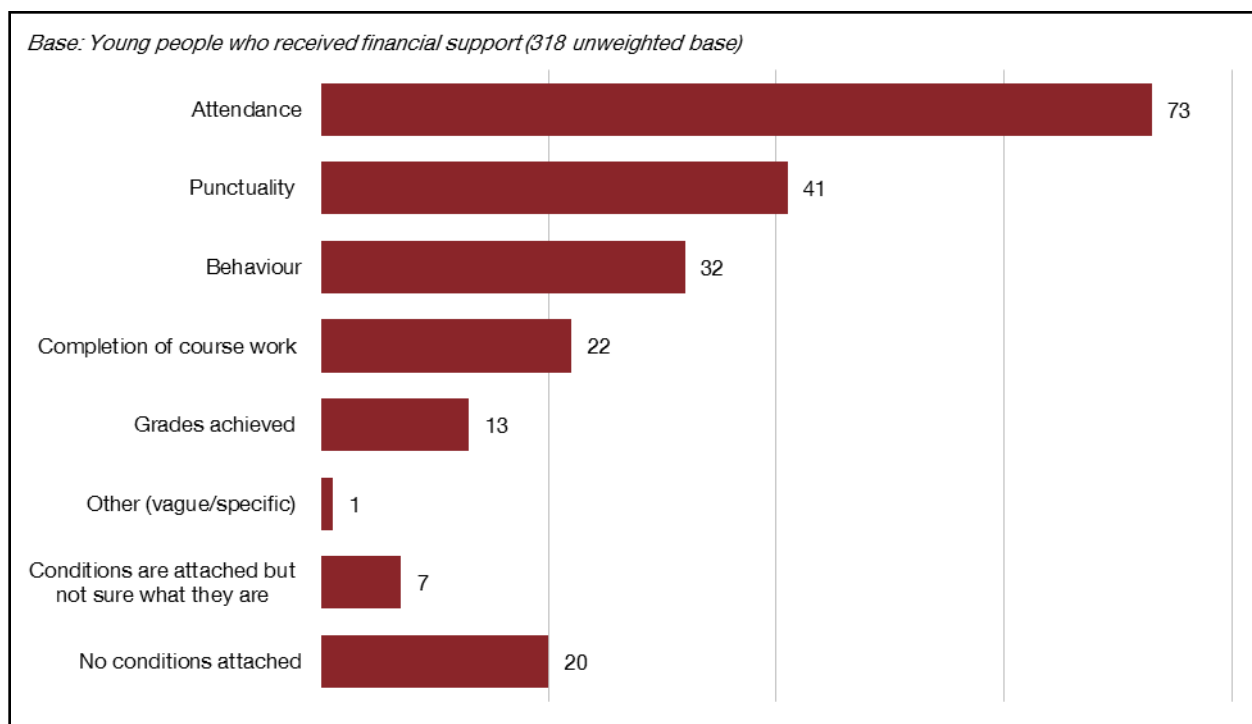
Base: Young people who received financial support (318 unweighted base)

Condition	%
Attendance	73
Punctuality	41
Behaviour	32
Completion of course work	22
Grades achieved	13
Other (vague/specific)	1
Conditions are attached but not sure what they are	7
No conditions attached	20

Note: Learners could mention more than one condition so the total sums more than 100 per cent.

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

The size of bursary received affected how likely young people were to change their behaviour (Figure 6.7). Less 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 much more likely to say so (60%).

Figure 6.8 Learner survey: Changing behaviour as a result of conditions, by level of support (%) (2012/13)

Base: Bursary recipients with valid amounts data (238, unweighted)

Up to £299	£300 to £750	More than £750
31	60	61
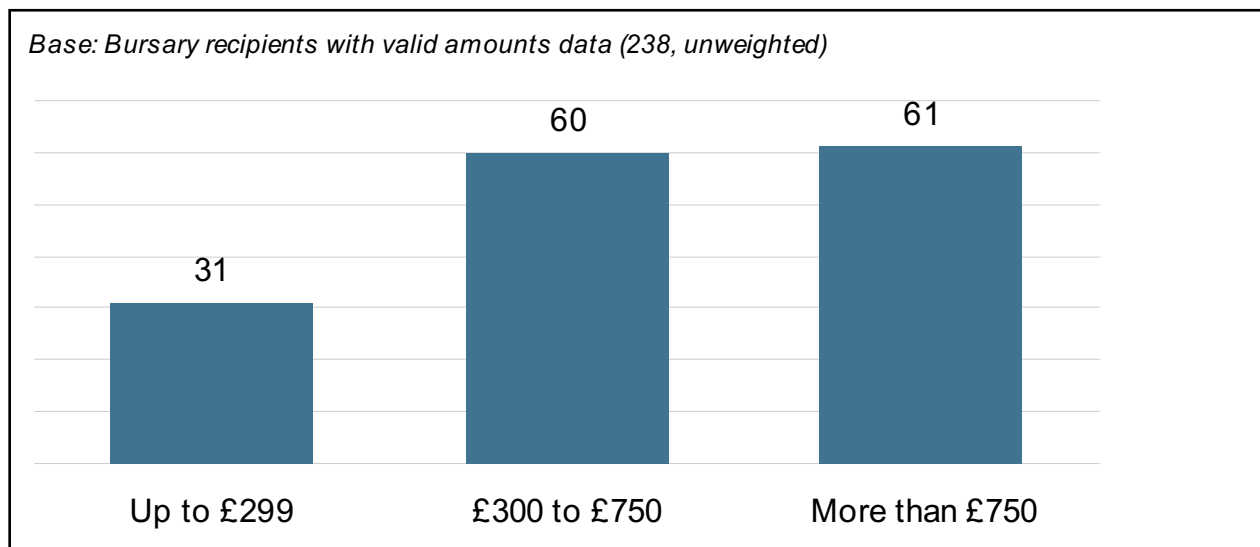
Young people who took part in focus groups and were interviewed in Year 3 agreed that it was appropriate for some conditions to be set for receipt of bursaries. However, a number of issues were raised:

- Awareness of conditions

  Young people were not always clear what conditions had been set and this made it difficult to abide by them. In other instances, they were aware of a condition (for example, a 95% attendance criteria), but had no means of keeping track of whether they were meeting the criteria. Online systems that allowed them to keep track of their own attendance, or letters that warned them they were at risk of not meeting a condition were helpful.

- Circumstances not taken into account

  While young people generally agreed that linking bursary payments to attendance was fair, there was also feedback that conditions could be too harsh and unaccommodating. Examples of this included a case where a young women felt long-term health conditions were not being taken into account.

- Inadequate attendance / punctuality monitoring

  Examples were given of bursary payments being withheld in error because of inaccurate attendance monitoring. Young people described their frustration when payments were withheld because of errors like this. In some instances, the process of getting errors corrected was time consuming, requiring students to seek out individual tutors to change attendance records. This could significantly delay payments in some cases.

- 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.

6.6 Timing of applications

Providers were asked at what point in the academic year applications for the bursary could be made. Seventy-nine per cent reported that applications could be made anytime throughout the academic year (Figure 6.9), and this did not vary by size of provider. A smaller percentage reported that applications could be made in the Autumn term only (10%) and by a certain date (17%).

Figure 6.9 Provider Survey: When applications can be made (%) (2013/14)

Base: All providers (163)

Throughout the academic year	Autumn term only	By a certain date	Other
79	10	17	2
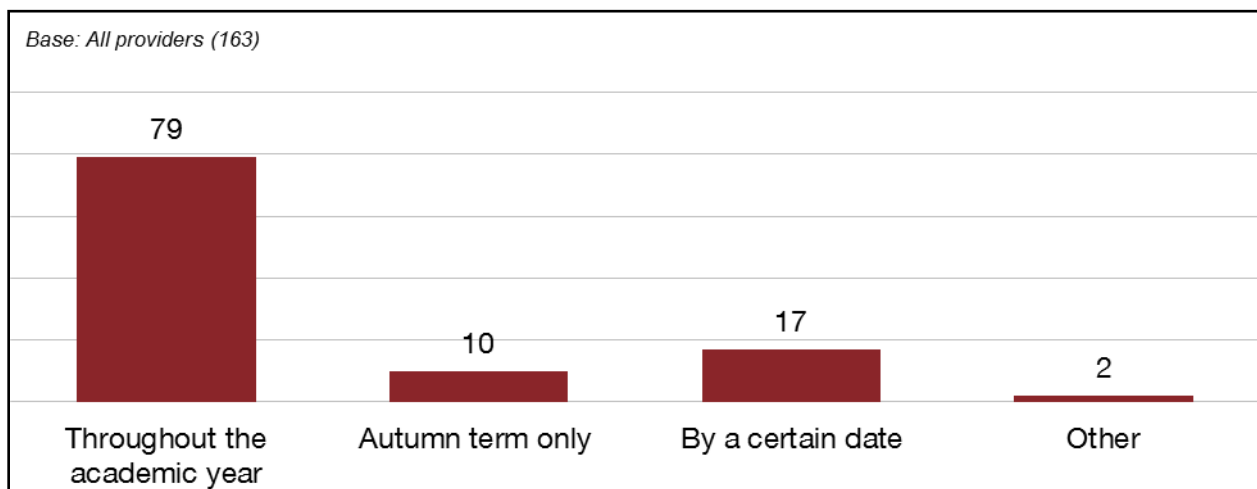
Amongst the case studies there were examples of providers who accepted applications throughout the year and others who set a cut-off for applications. From a provider perspective, a deadline for applications allowed them to assess the level of demand for their fund and allocate it accordingly. This had the advantage of limiting the risk of over or underspend by providing certainty on the number of bursaries that would be paid during the year.

However, application deadlines were perceived as unfair by the young people interviewed. Examples were given of young people who had not met the deadline because they were either unaware of the support available or had thought they were ineligible:

> *'There was like a few people that didn't apply because they didn't think that they were eligible, but there's like a date that you have to apply by and because they didn't apply, they are eligible but they didn't get it.. I thought that was really unfair because they might really need it more than other people. And just because they weren't made aware then, you know?'*
>
> (Student focus group, School Sixth Form)

In another case, a young man whose circumstances changed during the year when his mother was made redundant was unable to access support because he had missed the deadline for applications:

> *[My mum] was still working and I didn't think I needed it.. Then she lost her job.. and then I was out of the [application] window to do it. So I didn't even think about applying for it when I knew that I was out of the window.. I didn't speak to no-one because it seemed to be made clear when it was said in tutor time, like they said it like nearly every day, 'You need to apply for bursary, the deadline is coming soon'.*
>
> (Student, Male, aged 18)

6.7 Timing and frequency of Bursary payments

There was a considerable range in the frequency with which Bursary payments were made, varying from weekly (**Figure** 6.10; 21%) to twice a year (2%). Similar proportions of providers reported paying bursaries as a one-off payment (23%), on a weekly basis (21%), and half-termly (20%). Of those who completed the survey in years two and three, there was an increase in providers reporting they delivered the funds as required/

in line with needs (from 29% in Year 2 to 41% in Year 3[25]). The majority (70%) of providers who reported paying the Bursary in line with needs/as required also reported other payment frequencies.[26]

Figure 6.10 Provider Survey: Frequency of Bursary Payments (%) (2013/14)
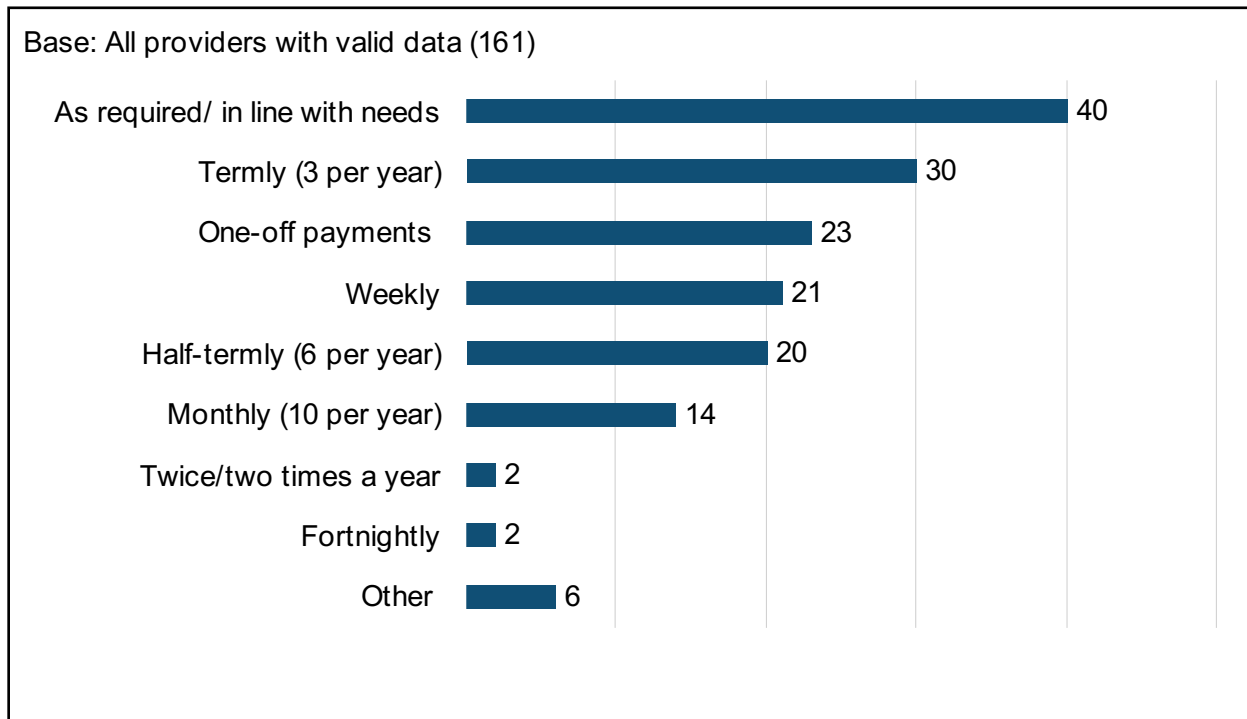
Base: All providers with valid data (161)

Frequency	%
As required/ in line with needs	40
Termly (3 per year)	30
One-off payments	23
Weekly	21
Half-termly (6 per year)	20
Monthly (10 per year)	14
Twice/two times a year	2
Fortnightly	2
Other	6

Note: Providers could mention more than one frequency of payment so the total sums more than 100 per cent.

In the second year of implementation, we asked young people in receipt of Bursary support whether they received their financial support (both in cash and in-kind payments) in regular intervals or only as one-off or irregular payments. Two-fifths of all young people (Figure **6.11**; 40%) reported to have received Bursary support each term whilst just over a quarter received their support as a weekly payment (26%). 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.

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[25] Analysis based on 129 providers who responded in Years 2 and 3.

[26] Bases are less than 50, so figures should be treated with caution.

Figure 6.11 Learner Survey: Frequency of Bursary Payments (%) (2012/13)
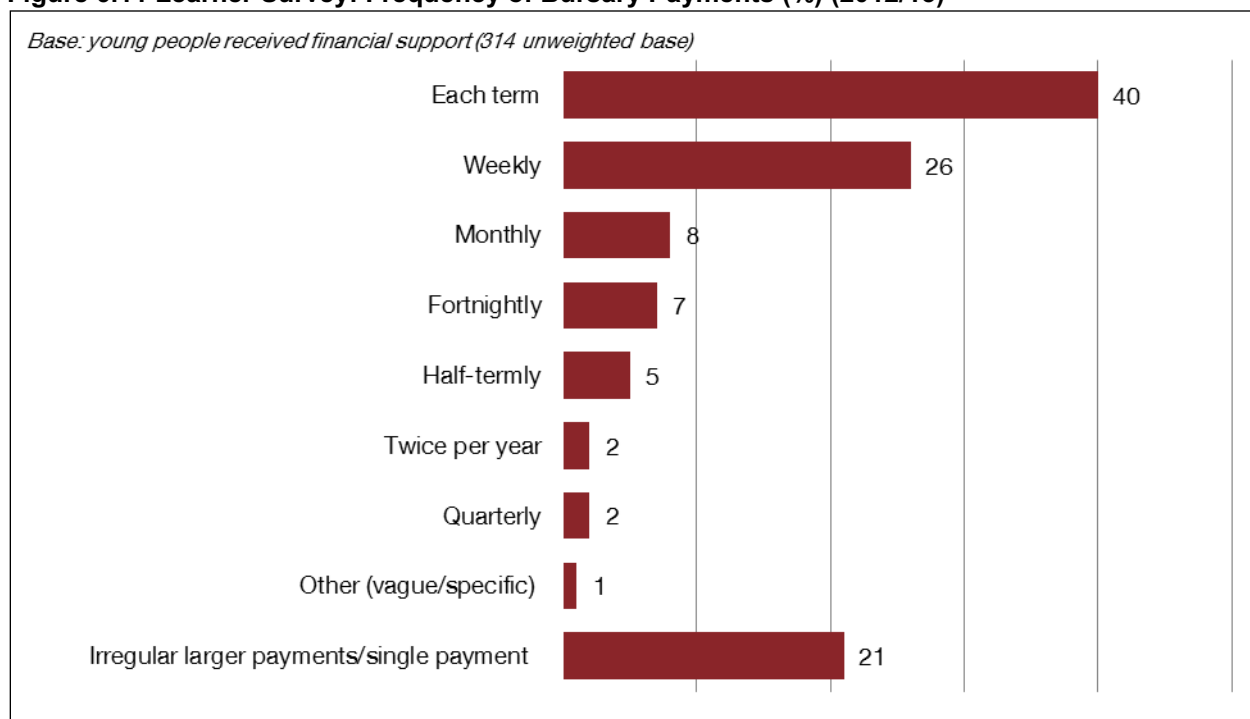
Base: young people received financial support (314 unweighted base)

Category	%
Each term	40
Weekly	26
Monthly	8
Fortnightly	7
Half-termly	5
Twice per year	2
Quarterly	2
Other (vague/specific)	1
Irregular larger payments/single payment	21

Note: Learners could mention more than one frequency of payment so the total sums more than 100 per cent.

Case study providers who paid cash bursaries infrequently (for example termly or half-termly) did so to minimise the administrative burden. Fewer payments required less staff time to check compliance with conditions, administer payments and deal with payment queries. As with previous years, where providers were paying more frequently (weekly / fortnightly) this was done because it was considered to be more motivational (incentivising attendance / punctuality on a weekly basis) and supported students to manage their money.

In the third year of implementation one of the case study providers (a large FE College) had changed its payment structure from half-termly to fortnightly to motivate attendance:

'M: Well now we're doing it on a fortnightly basis as opposed to half termly.. I remember when I was working doing the EMA here, I realised that you know the weekly payments were really good in, in kind of bringing up the attendance.. and bringing up the retention figures.

F: I must say half term is a long time for a 16 year old. It feels a long time, so in some ways it's a long time between them getting their money, but it's also if, if their attendance is out and they've missed a payment for a whole half term, it

almost then they think well it's just not achievable so what does it matter. So we really wanted to keep that regularity really.' (Strategic staff, FE College)

Although the administrative burden was higher as a result of the change, the College was anticipating improved attendance and held the view that the change had been worth implementing.

The Learner Survey found that only 66 per cent of bursary recipients felt that the timing and way they received their bursary payments worked well for them. This rose to 85 per cent for those who received their payments weekly during term time. Young people who stated a preference for weekly or fortnightly payments in Year 3 did so because they felt this:

- makes it easier to budget, reducing the temptation to spend a large lump sum in one go;

- makes it easier to respond to educational needs as and when they arise, rather than waiting for a large payment;

- reduces the impact of delays / non-payments because they only have a limited time to wait until the next payment.

There was a general consensus that it was helpful to have an upfront payment to meet the costs at the start of the academic year. In particular, young people highlighted the financial difficulties and other impacts of bursary payments that were not made until the end of each term. Where bursaries were not paid until the end of the term, this could cause hardship as illustrated by the following example of a young woman who struggled to pay for her bus pass because her termly bursary payments of £90 were not paid until the end of term:

'My mum was having to either pay - if she had the money, pay the money or get a family member to pay the money a couple of times until we could. .. It was quite difficult, and it's upsetting that.. she couldn't provide that. And then the things that are put in place [that] are meant to support that weren't…And I get that they don't want to give people money before you start, because then there's nothing to stop them taking £90 and not turning up, but I think there should be something in place.' (Student, Female, aged 20)

Another consequence of not paying bursaries when they were most needed was that young people relied on parents to pay for key expenses including transport and equipment and then when their bursary payments were made, these were spent on less essential items including leisure and clothes.

Where young people favoured less frequent payments, this tended to be because they were not reliant on their bursary to meet their daily expenses. Instead these young people were using their bursaries to save for one-off costs including school trips and additional tuition. In these instances, young people preferred larger less frequent sums to help them save:

> *'If you've got a trip coming up and you were having to save up for it weekly, then that would just make it even more difficult. Whereas if you did get it, say, in November, if you knew you had a trip coming up in January, you wouldn't have to save up the whole time. 'Cause, I mean, if you've got small amounts of cash, then you're more likely to spend it'* (Student, Male, aged 18)

Delays in Bursary payments

Providers were asked whether there were any delays in making bursary payments to young people. Forty-seven per cent of providers reported there had been some form of delays, whether it occurred rarely (31%), occasionally (13%) or some of the time (3%). A further 45 per cent reported never to have delayed the payment of a bursary to a young person (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3 Provider Survey: How often there were delays to payments (%) (2013/14)

	%
Most of the time	-
Some of the time	3
Occasionally	13
Rarely	31
Never	45
Don't know	8
Unweighted base	*163*

Fifty-two per cent of providers who had reported delays said that these had been due to young people providing incomplete or incorrect information, while 39 per cent reported this was due to delays receiving confirmation that students are meeting the conditions (i.e. attendance). Other reasons for delays included a lack of staff resources (15%), high volumes of bursary awards (12%) and staff absence (11%; Figure 6.12).

Figure 6.12 Provider Survey: Why there were delays to payments (%) (2013/14)

Base: Providers who reported delays in administering the Bursary (82)

Category	Value
Inaccurate information provided by young people	52
Delays in confirmation of students meeting conditions	39
Lack of staffing resource	15
High volumes of Bursary awards	12
Staff absence	11
External delays	10
Processing errors	7
IT/computer problems	6
Errors caused by the LA which lead to delays	4

Note: Respondents were able to select more than one way of find out about the Bursary Fund so the total sums more than 100 per cent.

6.8 Young people's views on Bursary administration

In the second year of implementation we found that a considerable proportion of young people reported problems with the timing of payments (42%) and had experienced issues with the administration of the payments (21%). Across all providers, 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.

Mirroring the views from the learner survey, the issue of late payments and administrative problems was a recurrent theme in interviews and focus groups with young people in receipt of bursaries during 2013/14 (i.e. Year 3). Young people spoke about payments not reaching their banks on the expected dates with a number of serious consequences:

- Financial pressure on families

  When payments were delayed young people discussed the financial pressure this placed on them and their families:

'For instance my mum might have you know, my dinner money, so she will always give me it, but she'll be like skinning herself for it.. I don't like you know doing that to her, I'd rather just not go. I could easily go without my lunch for a day and come home and make summat when I get home, but my mum will just throw it in my hand, and you know, 'You take it' and all that sort of thing.. I can't stand it when that happens, that makes me angry, you know just to know that probably if I had that money on that day we wouldn't have had that problem, yeah.' (Student, Male, aged 18)

- Impacts on participation

Examples were given of late payments preventing young people from attending College because they could not afford transport. In the following case for example, a young woman living independently and in receipt on a Vulnerable Group Bursary described how late payments made it difficult for her to get into college:

'You're supposed to receive £74 every - at the end of every month.. [and] every half-term you're supposed to receive £100 as well.. And like the payment from April as well, we had half-term in April and we didn't receive it 'til the end of May…and it's like how am I supposed to fund my travel getting there if I don't have the money to get there?'
(Student, Female, aged 19)

Young people attributed the late payments to administrative problems and errors in record keeping that indicated they had not met the conditions for payment:

'The only thing, the only think that makes me upset is I never get the money in my account on the same - it's like, I mean, I've had it three weeks late before and that's quite hard on me… So I find it quite hard.. I did ask once like when it was three weeks late; I said, 'When is' - they were like, 'We've put the paperwork in on Monday' - and this was Wednesday - so they went, 'It should go through by tomorrow'. And I was like, 'Okay' and they were like, 'Yeah, we just had other things that were like' - and I was like, 'Okay.' (Student, Female, aged 18)

While some were able to query payments and resolve errors, others described feeling embarrassed and uncomfortable about challenging a non-payment. In the following case, for example, the student did not receive his first two payments of the year and was unable to find out why:

'[In] my first year I think you get five payments, you know monthly, and this year, I did it again, like two months into it I still didn't get payment, so I were really like, do you know, like sort of like worried, sort of thing.. my teacher was saying you know, you need to do something about it.. she really like pushed me towards asking about it.. I don't really have guts just to go in and talk about money, you know. If someone approaches me for it I'd, I'd be happy, but it's just me approaching whoever.'

(Student, Male, aged 18)

In another case, a young woman felt powerless to do anything about late payments. When asked whether she had ever complained she responded:

'No I've never thought of it that way, 'cause I never really want to complain because like it's, like you're getting money just for going to college, so it's like I'm not sure I have the right to complain about that.. If it's like if it comes in, it comes in and if it doesn't, it doesn't and there's not much you can really do about it. You can go and ask but they just, they don't even know themselves half the time honestly yeah.' (Student, Female, aged 19)

The findings from the learner survey, case studies and follow-up interviews suggest that the administration of funds is variable and too many young people continue to experience difficulties as a result. However, there were also examples of good practice in the case studies:

One large FE College provided an upfront payment for equipment at the beginning of the year and a monthly bus pass for eligible students. In addition, monthly payments were made by BACS into students' bank accounts for Defined Vulnerable Group bursaries and (in the case of discretionary bursaries) a termly payment to help towards lunch costs. To manage the payments, the College needed to stagger the termly lunch payments across several weeks. To ensure that students were clear when they would receive their payment, they each received a letter outlining the amounts they would receive and a payment window for when they could expect payments. Students reported that payments were made when they expected them and reported no problems with late payments.

Recurrent feedback from young people who participated in interviews and focus groups emphasised the importance of certainty and reliability in bursary payments so they could plan and manage their money. They wanted clear information on the amounts they would receive, fixed reliable dates for payments and clear communication if payments were not made.

6.9 Changes to Bursary administration

Changes made to administration in 2013/14

Providers were asked if they had made any changes to the Bursary Fund in the 2013/14 academic year. Just under half (46%) reported making changes to the Bursary Fund. The most frequently cited change was to the eligibility criteria (23%) and the type of bursaries awarded (13%). Other changes included changes to administration (9%) and the internal organisation and processes (9%).

Figure 6.13 Provider Survey: Changes made in 2013/2014 (%) (2013/14)

Base: All providers with valid data (165)

Category	Value
Eligibility	23
Types of bursaries awarded	13
Publicising	9
Administration	9
Internal organisation/processes	8
Other	3
No changes made	54
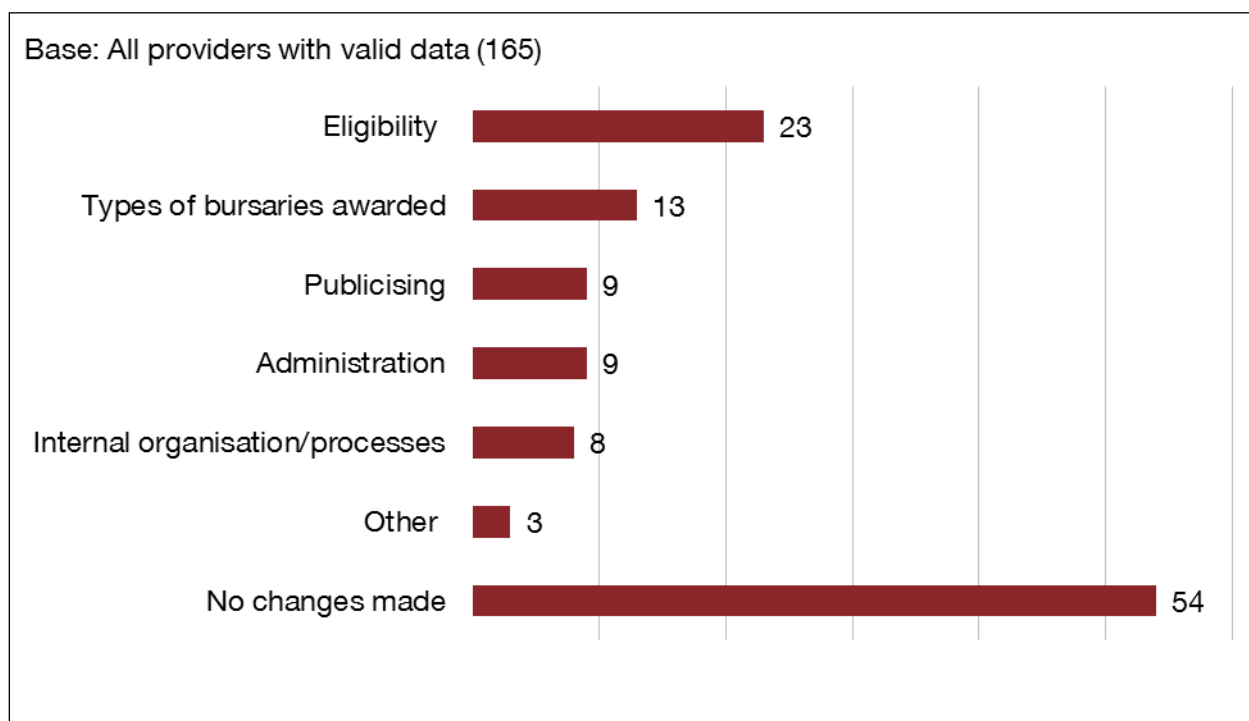
Note: Providers could mention more than one change so the total sum to more than 100 per cent.

In the 2012/13 academic year providers were asked what changes they planned to make the following year (2013/14). When we look at plans compared to actual changes reported the following year we find that the majority of providers did not go on to make the changes they had planned. For example, only 12 per cent of all providers who said they were planning to make changes to publicising the bursary reported that they had actually done this. Of the providers who said they would make changes to internal organisation and processes, only 17 per cent made this change. Around half of providers (52%) who said they would make a change to their eligibility criteria did so.[27]

Changes planned to administration in 2014/15

Providers were also asked if they were planning on making any changes in the 2014/15 academic year (Figure 6.14). Over half (59%) of providers did not plan to make any changes to the fund in the fourth year of implementation. The remaining provider planned to make changes to other aspects of administration, including eligibility criteria (19%), how they would publicise the Fund (17%) and their internal processes (14%).

Figure 6.14 Provider Survey: Changes planned for 2014/2015 (%) (2013/14)

Base: All providers with valid data (163)

Category	Value
Eligibility	19
Publicising	17
Internal organisation/processes	14
Types of bursaries awarded	13
Administration	10
Other	3
No changes planned	59
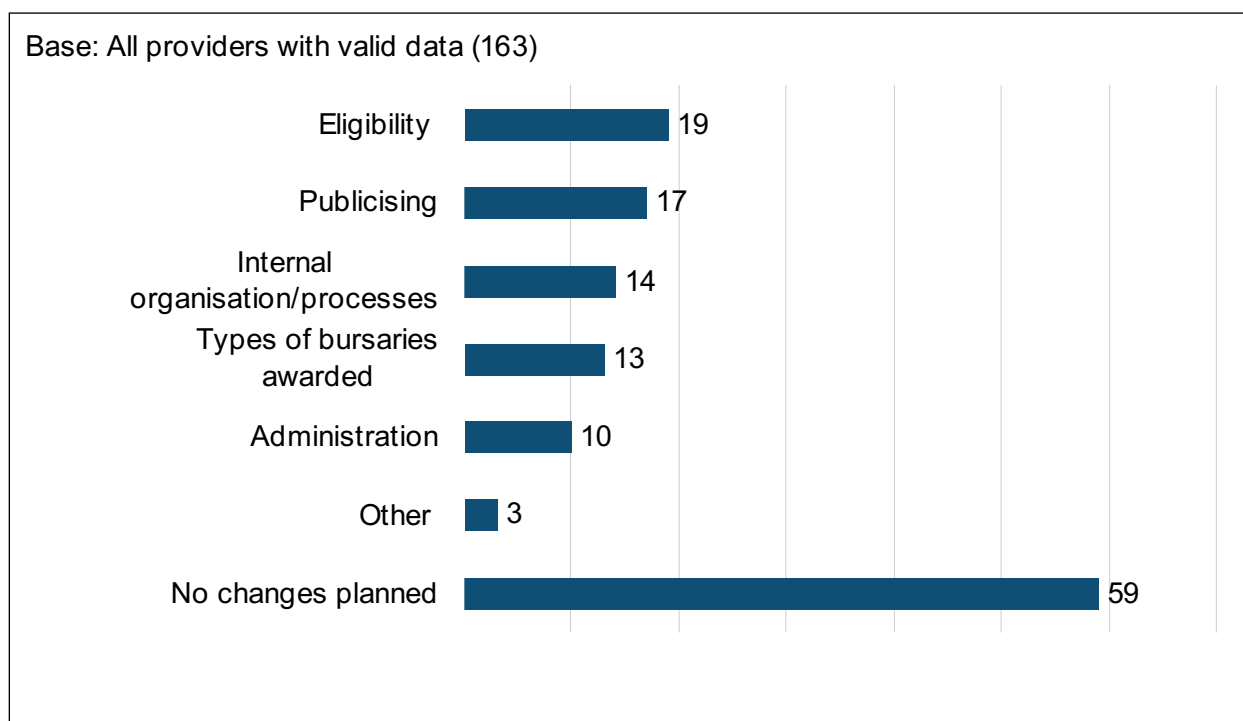
Note: Providers could mention more than one change so the total sums more than 100 per cent.

[27] Bases are less than 50, so these figures should be interpreted with caution.

7   Perceived impacts of the Bursary Fund

This chapter focuses on the perceived impacts of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund by looking at five key areas:

- Participation and the extent to which the Bursary Fund was felt to remove financial barriers to post-16 participation, as well as views on how it may or may not influence choice of provider and course studied.

- Engagement and the extent to which the Bursary Fund impacts on attendance and the ability of young people to fully engage with and get the most out of their courses.

- Impacts on broader student welfare including stress, anxiety and part-time work.

- Impacts on families and the views of parents on the extent to which the Bursary Fund alleviates the financial pressure of a child studying in post-16 education.

- Targeting of support and the extent to which the Bursary Fund is reaching the young people with the greatest barriers to participation and engagement.

There is some inevitable overlap between the issues raised in these sections and in other chapters so wherever possible issues have been discussed in one of the sections and cross-referenced in the text.

The chapter draws on findings from the 2013/14 provider survey, the 2012/13 learner survey, qualitative case studies and learner interviews. It is important to note that the learner survey and case study focus group and depth interviews with learners were carried out with young people participating in post-16 education. The findings, therefore, do not capture the views of young people who were not in employment, education or training (NEET).

Key findings from this chapter include:

- The majority of providers surveyed thought the Bursary Fund was having a positive impact on young people's participation (83%), and 28 per cent of bursary recipients agreed that they would not be able to afford to stay in education at all if they did not receive the support.

- Three-quarters of providers surveyed (75%) felt the Bursary Fund was having a positive impact on engagement.

- A small proportion (9%) of young people responding to the learner survey who were not in receipt of a bursary reported that there was a risk of them dropping out of education because they could not afford to continue.

- The majority of bursary recipients agreed that they were able to cope better financially because of the support received (75%) and that generally the financial support has been helpful (85%). However, this was not the case for all young people in receipt of support; around a third (35%) disagreed that the financial support available was enough to make a difference to them.

- Eighty per cent of providers said that the Bursary Fund was effectively targeting the learners who faced the greatest financial disadvantages, with ten per cent reporting that the fund was not very effective or not effective at all at reaching those in most need. Among non-recipients, around a quarter (27%) were struggling to cope financially, suggesting that there remains many young people in need of financial support who are not currently being reached by the Bursary Fund.

7.1 Perceived impacts on post-16 participation

Removing financial barriers to participation in post-16 education is a central aim of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund. Overall, providers were positive about the impact on participation with the majority (83%; Figure 7.1) reporting that the Bursary Fund was having a positive effect on this amongst young people facing high levels of disadvantage.[28] Of the young people surveyed who were receiving a bursary, 28 per cent agreed that they would not be able to afford to stay in education at all if they did not receive the support, suggesting that for this group, the support was vital to their continued participation (Figure not shown).

However, the survey of learners also shows that there remains some unmet need with nine per cent of young people who did not receive a bursary saying that there was a risk of them dropping out of education because they could not afford it.

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[28] The full wording for this question was 'To what extent do you think the 16-19 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?' The question did not ask about the impacts in relation to EMA or no funding arrangements.

Figure 7.1 Provider Survey: Perceived impact on participation (%) (2013/14)

Base: All providers with valid data (164)

Very positive	Quite positive	Neutral	Quite negative	Very negative	Don't know
34	49	12	1	0	5
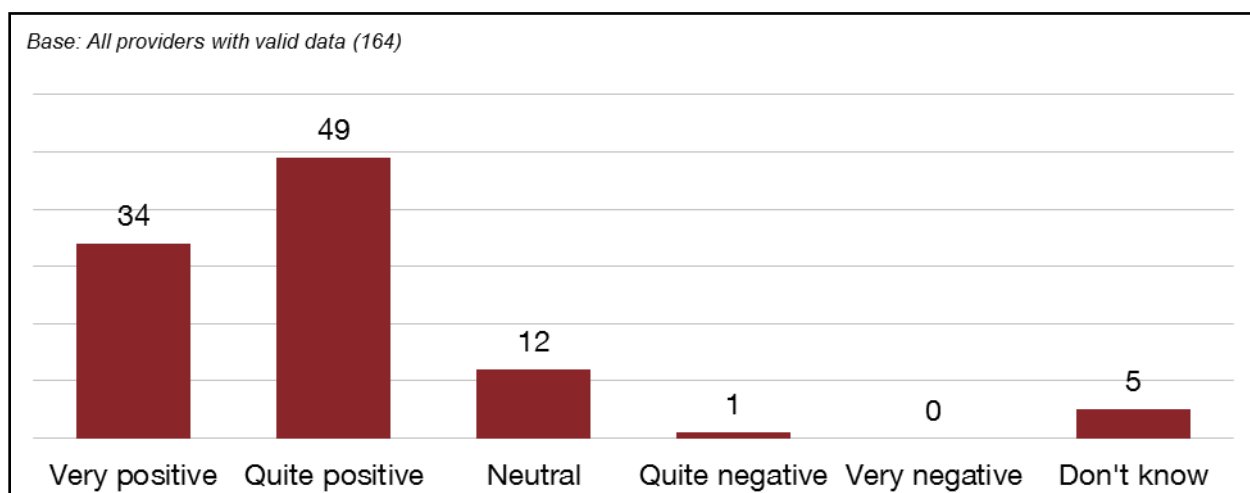
Findings from the case studies suggest that the extent to which the Bursary Fund did or did not remove financial barriers to participation depended heavily on individual personal circumstances. Travel costs, whether they had part-time work and how much their parents were able, and willing to support them financially, were all contextual factors that contributed to young people's views on the adequacy of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund. Young people's views on how far the Bursary Fund influenced their post-16 participation decisions can be broadly grouped into three categories:

1. **Future plans prioritised over finances:** For this group, finances and the financial support available to them was not a key consideration in post-16 decision making and other factors were given a higher priority including the reputation of the college or sixth form and their future career aspirations and interests. For some young people, finances were not a concern because they had financial support from their parents or had sufficient income from part-time work:

   '[The Bursary Fund] didn't influence anything because she wanted to do that course anyway, and we thought well, you know, even if she's not entitled to anything monetary, we would still support in whatever way we could.'

   (Parent of bursary recipient)

   In other cases, young people were highly motivated and committed to continuing in education to achieve their longer-term ambitions even if this meant they were likely to struggle financially.

2. **Finance one of a number of factors:** For this group, although finances did not influence their decision to participate post-16, the availability of support did influence other aspects of their decision making including their choice of provider and the

course they studied. In one case for example, a young person studying at a training provider who received a bursary of £30 a week spoke about his frustration at not being able to attend a college because the support from the Bursary Fund would be less:

> *'I'd love to go to college and just …do Maths and English every day, get some good grades…but it's the money…you can't stay on at college and get all your good qualifications with no money… If I'd have gone college … I wouldn't be able to do anything, you know, with no money what you supposed to do?'* (Student focus group, Training Provider)

In another example, older students discussed the decision-making process of a younger student and how differences in the level of Bursary Fund support available at different providers was influencing his decisions:

> *'[A younger student] was gonna go to the arts college…and then he's found out how much [bursary] we got… And now he's gonna come here…but if he comes here he can't perform and dance… So he's gonna chuck away his future just for the £16 a week.'* (Student focus group, Sixth Form College)

For others, the costs associated with travel and the support available to meet these costs influenced their provider choice. In the example below, a parent explains how the Bursary Fund money meant the difference between her daughter attending the college which was closest and attending the college she really wanted to attend:

> *'I: Do you think if you didn't have the [Bursary Fund] that she would still be able to go [to her desired college]?*
>
> *No…because, it's £16.10 [for the bus] a week and then it's like £2.50 for dinners. If she wasn't getting the bursary, that means I would have to fund bus passes, and fund dinner moneys and everything else…if she did want to stay in education, obviously she would have just had to go to [college close to home], where that's only like £1.80 per day in bus fares.'*
>
> (Parent of bursary recipient)

3. **Financial considerations key to post-16 decisions:** In this group, young people felt they would not be able to attend post-16 education at all if the Bursary Fund wasn't available to them:

> *'I'd have probably just gone straight to work if I wouldn't have got any [Bursary Fund]. I'd have just found a job straightaway… money's everything…*

I know a lot of people now that have all left college [and] are all working now…at college you don't get enough money anymore.'

(Student, Male, aged 19)

Some providers considered the help to cover transport costs from the Bursary Fund as essential to young people being able to attend:

'With certain individuals…that live slightly further away [where it] costs more to actually get here then yes, [the Bursary Fund] certainly helps and helps to remove barriers, there's no question…and I do think that if it wasn't for the bursary then maybe they wouldn't necessarily be able to afford to come in.'

(Teacher, Training Provider)

7.2 Perceived impacts on engagement

Alongside exploring the extent to which the Bursary Fund has removed financial barriers to post-16 participation, the evaluation also explored the extent to which providers and young people felt that the Fund had impacted on engagement (in the form of attendance, punctuality and the ability of young people to fully participate in their courses).

Three-quarters of providers (75%) felt the Bursary Fund was having a positive impact on engagement. In the third year of the fund, there were no providers who felt it had a negative impact on engagement, although around one-fifth (19%) felt it had had no effect (figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2 Provider Survey: Perceived impact on engagement (%) (2013/14)

Base: All providers with valid data (163)

Very positive	31
Quite positive	44
Neutral	19
Quite	0
Very negative	0
Don't know	6
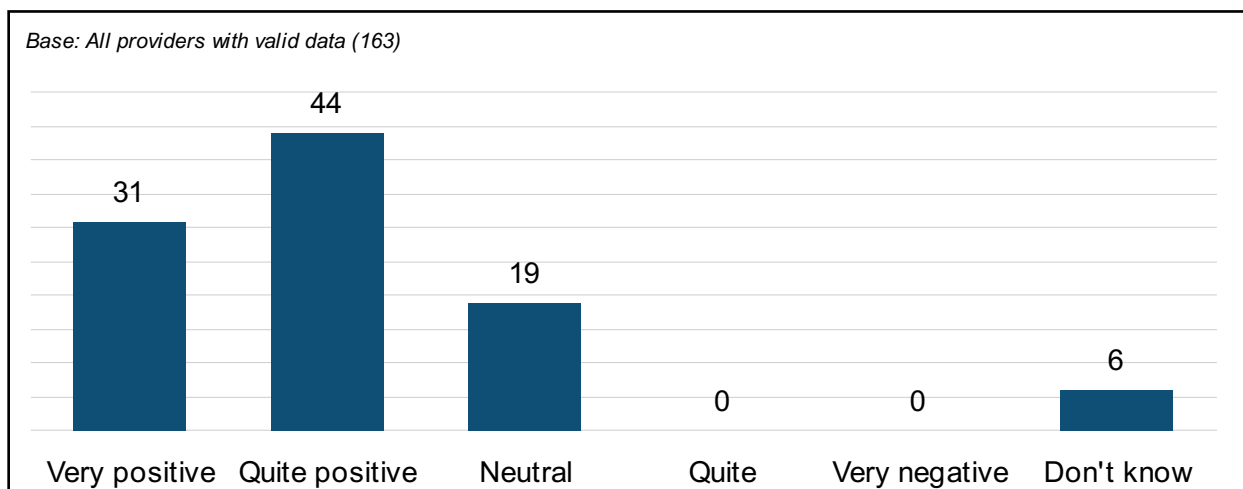
From the perspective of young people in receipt of a bursary, the majority agreed that they were able to cope better financially because of the support received (75%) and that generally the financial support has been helpful (85%). However, thirty-five per cent of young people receiving support disagreed that the financial support available was enough to make a difference to them, suggesting that the support available through the Bursary Fund is not viewed as sufficient in a third of cases (Figure 7.3).

Figure 7.3 Learner Survey: Bursary recipient views on impact on engagement (%) (2012/13)

Base: Young people receiving a bursary (318-322)   ■ Agree   ■ Disagree   ■ Don't know

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
I am able to cope better financially	75	20	5
Financial support received has been helpful	85	13	2
The financial support is enough to make a difference	58	35	7
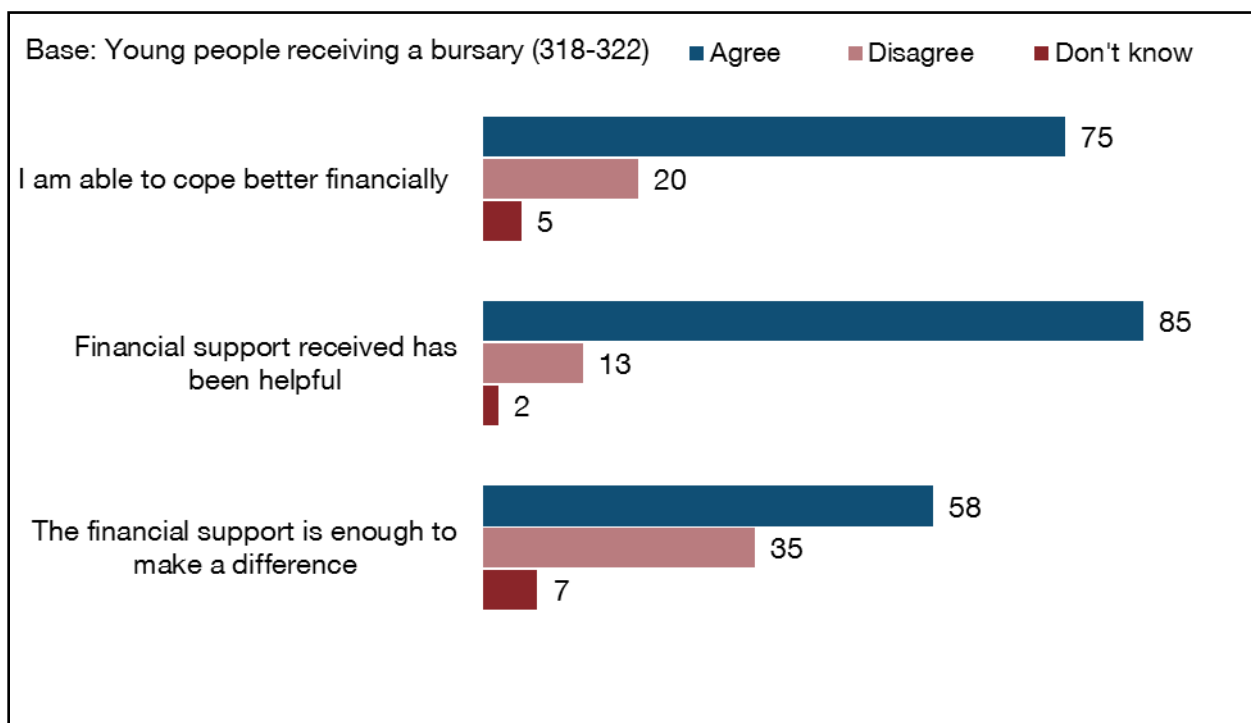
To explore the impacts on engagement further, the evaluation looked in more detail at the relationship between whether recipients agreed that they could cope better financially because of the support they have received and their characteristics; provider type; type of payment; frequency of payment; amount awarded; and views about how happy the young person was with how and when payments were made.[29] This analysis used 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 used a stepped approach by including all possible predictors simultaneously so we were 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 results from the analysis showed that young people who agreed the timing of 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. All pupil demographics, provider type and other administrative information were not significantly associated with the outcome and were therefore omitted from the final model.

The case studies and depth interviews with learners also shed light on the extent to which the Fund was felt to support post-16 engagement. The findings from the third year of the evaluation echoed views outlined in the interim evaluation reports, with views falling into three broad perspectives:

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[29] We did this using logistic regression analysis 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 F for details).

1. **The Bursary Fund meets needs once enrolled at college, supporting both attendance and broader engagement in post-16 education.**

> One student, Sam, who was 18 at the time of interview was living with an elderly relative who was on benefits and struggling to financially support her with the cost of education. Before applying for the Bursary, she was worried about how she was going to afford the equipment needed on the course at a Sixth Form College:
>
> > *'When I applied… it was over £300 to start, get the kit, get the uniform. And I was worried about, 'How are we gonna afford that?' and then we went to student services and they said they'll pay the money back after it's arrived. And that helped a lot, because then I could do what I actually wanted to.'*
>
> Although Sam was working part-time while studying, money earned from this job went into the 'household pot', leaving very little for food and this was of particular concern for her. The Bursary Fund, however, meant that she received food vouchers for lunch:
>
> > *'It does help. I don't have to spend over £20 [a week] on lunch food now… it was making me quite broke. So getting the meal voucher…helps an awful lot, because I still eat, and if [my elderly relative's] not feeling well one night and can't cook, I've eaten one meal during the day, and that helps an awful lot.'*
>
> Sam felt that the Bursary Fund met its aim of removing financial barriers to participation:
>
> > *'I: Do you think that you would be able to continue in education [without the Bursary]?*
> >
> > *Sam: No…I wouldn't be able to afford the kit. I wouldn't have been able to afford the bus pass. I wouldn't be able to afford to eat.*
> >
> > *I: What would you have done, then?*
> >
> > *Sam: I would have gone to see if I could've got a full-time job. But 'cause I can go to college with [the Bursary support], it's all good.'*

Some young people in this group felt the Bursary Fund enabled them to participate or engage further in post-16 education over and above just attending taught lessons. For some, this meant being able to go on course trips so they could fully engage in their course and experience the same opportunities as their peers.

'I use [the Bursary Fund] to pay for trips as well…it allows me not to have to miss out on very influential things.' (Student, Female, aged 18)

For others having the right equipment (for example a computer or art supplies for their course) was vital to be able to engage fully, as it meant they could complete coursework to the same standard as their peers. A sense that the Bursary Fund enhanced educational experiences was particularly prominent amongst the parents of students studying at Special Schools. Parents mentioned a number of ways in which the Bursary Fund had been used to do this, including through the use of technology such as IPads:

'It's giving him a voice which he hasn't had before… and it actually speaks what he's saying. So in other words it's the start of a little conversation he can have with somebody …and it's, I mean I think that is revolutionary for [child's name] because he hasn't been able to be involved in conversations at all… I think it's really exciting.' (Parent of bursary recipient)

While staff in case study Special Schools were less likely to report that the Bursary Fund had removed financial barriers to participation or attendance, they identified a range of positive impacts in relation to improving engagement and enhancing young peoples' educational experiences. Examples included providing clothes (such as a winter coat) for those who couldn't otherwise afford it, supporting students to access after-school clubs they previously could not afford, providing access to laptops at home for homework, as well as equipment and clothes for vocational training:

'Staying on isn't so much of a problem because of the statements that our children receive and because they don't have to go out and get a job. But what they do need additional support with are those things that I kind of mentioned, things like the social opportunities, it's, in terms of independence …in terms of the curriculum.. and for them to be able to access that when they wouldn't have previously been able to access it is going to have a big impact on their future' (Head teacher, Special School)

2. **The Bursary Fund is valuable whilst at college but is not critical to attendance and engagement**

For another group of young people, although the Bursary Fund was useful and valued by students, their attendance was not dependent upon it and access to other funds, for example parental support or part-time work) meant that the Bursary Fund

was not critical to their engagement. For these young people the Fund was an additional rather than essential support and provided them with a sense of independence:

> *'I'd still be able to go to college and do what I do, but I think [the Bursary Fund is] just there just to help me further, I reckon. It gives me more of independence as well.'* (Student, Female, aged 17)

For parents the Fund was a valuable source of support that helped reduce the financial burden:

> *'The help that she's had with her bus pass has helped us because at the moment we've not got much money coming into the house...so, we, I mean, we probably wouldn't have struggled, but it would have been a little bit more of a financial sort of burden, if you like, for us to find £40 a month extra, um, on top of what we were already paying out.'* (Parent of bursary recipient)

3. **The Bursary Fund is not sufficient and students are struggling financially to continue with their education**

For these students, despite receiving the Bursary Funding they were struggling financially. Examples of how young people were struggling included:

- Missing sixth form / college because of not being able to afford travel costs

- Not being able to afford lunch and not eating during the day

- Not being able to access the same opportunities as other students, for example course trips or visits to Universities.

There were a number of reasons why the Bursary Fund was not a sufficient source of support for this group, for example those living independently as a result of family breakdowns, or, as in the example below, using the Bursary Fund to pay for rent and food within their household:

Sarah, 18 years old was living in care at the time of the interview and attending college. She received a £25 Bursary Fund payment each week and a bus pass, but since she turned 18 she was paying £30 to her foster placement for food and rent.

> *'It's quite difficult 'cause I have to pay £30 a week, but I've only got £25. So I have to save up my money in my bank just to get the extra £5 each week. Obviously after a certain point there won't be any money saved"*

Sarah struggled to find a job which fitted in with her course and worried that having a part-time job would jeopardise her college performance. Although her foster parents could help occasionally, they also struggled financially.

Relying almost solely on the money from the Bursary Fund meant that she was particularly vulnerable to any changes to her payments or in-kind support. For example, the college she was attending stopped giving out lunch vouchers as part of the Bursary Fund which meant that she sometimes went without food and drink during the day:

> *'They don't do them anymore… some money for ma food, I've saved up outta money I've had before…but if I don't have the money then I can't get anything.*
>
> *I: Has that ever happened, that you've not had any money?*
>
> *Quite a few times…[I just] wait 'til I get home…but some of the days are quite long, 'cause I come in early on Tuesdays, so usually I can be in from eleven 'til quarter to seven.. I don't have anything to eat. Sometimes I don't have anything to drink either.'*

Sarah also worried often about her financial situation and how she would cope financially in the short term future:

> *'I: Is it something you think about a lot, or?*
>
> *Yeah, 'cause it's quite difficult, 'cause obviously in a few weeks I run out of the extra money, so I won't be able to pay, so I don't know where I'm supposed to get the money from.'*

7.3 Perceived impacts on students' welfare

Beyond impacts on participation and engagement, there were broader impacts on student welfare:

- **Food –** In a number of cases the Bursary Funding made the difference between students eating or not eating during the day. This was particularly the case where families' household budgets didn't *"stretch as far as lunches"*.

  Some providers were aware of this issue and used the Bursary Funding to try and reduce the impact of students going without meals by, for instance, giving lunch vouchers to those who fell below the threshold:

  > *''Well we had to create something specific for the 16 to 19 bursary… we did say, okay let's go for the meals because you know it seems like if some students really don't have school meals then it might affect their performance in class, affect their concentration things like that so it is quite important.'* (Teacher, FE College)

  Sometimes the Bursary Fund support (either as cash or as meal vouchers) alleviated this issue and therefore had a positive impact on the day-to-day lives of students:

  > *'I didn't have that much money, to get food and everything, so I had to go, like, five hours, and then come home and have something to eat.*
  >
  > *I: How much of a difference has that made, then, the getting the £40 a week [from the Bursary Fund]?*
  >
  > *A lot of difference, really…I can, like, get my own food instead of getting people to buy it.'* (Student, Female, aged 17)

  However, there were still students who could not afford to buy food during the day. This tended to be either in circumstances where they were above the eligibility threshold for the Bursary Fund or where they were receiving the Bursary Fund but the level of support was not sufficient to cover all their financial needs.

- **Part-time work** – thirty-seven per cent of both bursary recipients and non-recipients reported that they needed to take on part-time work to support themselves financially while they studied. Drawing on evidence from the case studies and depth interviews, a range of reasons were given by young people for taking on part-time work in addition to their studies:

  - to earn money to pay for additional items that they wanted such as family birthday presents, holidays and money for going out;

  - to reduce reliance on parents for financial support and to feel more independent;

  - to support themselves financially, either because they were not in receipt of a bursary, or to supplement this source of financial support if it was not sufficient.

Young people reported that it was difficult to find a job which fitted flexibly around college, and for those who had work, it was difficult to maintain the standard of their college work:

> *'I work at the weekends, Saturdays and Sundays, so I don't have a single day off from work. It's college or actual work. So then the teachers wonder why revision's very scarce, and it's - any time I get free I'd like to actually have a moment free.'*   (Student, Male, aged 18)

And:

> *'It got really hard to have to work and then do college work and then go to college as well…my grades could have been better if I was in college more, focused more. I lost sleep, a lot of sleep and I was stressed most of the time.'*   (Student, Male, aged 18)

Stress and Anxiety – findings from the Learner Survey showed that the majority (67%) of bursary recipients did not report struggling to stay motivated because of financial worries, although a minority did (29%). These findings reflect views from the qualitative interviews with some young people reporting that they had fewer financial worries because of receiving a bursary, while others continued to report feeling stressed or anxious about their financial situation, either because their bursary was not sufficient to meet their needs or because they were ineligible for bursary support and struggling.

- **Social inclusion** – Fitting in with other students is an important part of student life. The financial support from the Bursary Fund meant that they were able to purchase items to help them fit in with other students who were better off. This was mentioned in a number of different contexts, for example being able to go on the same trips as others and being able to buy college equipment as and when they need it:

> *'It gives me a bit more freedom. It allows me - if something's broken like a folder, I can go and buy a new one. Like, not to have to think, oh, I've gotta wait weeks until we've a bit more money. I think I'm in the same position as some of my friends [now]; like if they need a new folder they ask their mum.'* (Student, Female, aged 18)

7.4 Perceived impacts on families

Parents were asked about their views on the impact of the Bursary Fund on themselves, their household finances and on their child's education. Financial support to remove financial barriers to post-16 education was valued by parents, particularly within the context of a more challenging labour market for young people:

> *'I do think it's important... especially the ones who… desperately want to continue in education. I think it gives them the opportunity to continue that because especially if they come from a low-income family [and] if there wasn't that money for them to come to college, I don't think they would come to college'* (Parent of bursary recipient)

However, there were differing views amongst parents on the extent to which the Bursary Fund alleviated their financial concerns about their children participating in post-16 education. For some, the additional money meant that they felt they did not need to worry anymore about paying for the items needed for college courses such as materials, trips or clothing:

> *'But this bursary money has made so much difference that really I haven't gotta worry about all the arty stuff [my daughter's] had to get, or the product design bits and materials that [my other daughter's] had to buy, because they've been using [the Bursary Fund] for that…it has taken a bit of pressure off everything…it sounds ridiculous, but it's made a huge impact. It's just something I don't have to worry about. I think as a mum you worry enough about things.'* (Parent of bursary recipient)

Others did not feel that the funding received was enough to make a large impact on the families' financial situation, but reported that it was still helpful and valued by both the young person and the family:

> *'Money is not exactly in abundance [in our household]. So, I know it's only £15, but £15, it's a bit of a help, you know…[he spends the Bursary Fund] mostly on his school stuff and that and we try to, well, give him a little bit here and there, yeah."*
>
> *I: Do you think it makes a difference to [your son], having it?*
>
> *Yes, a little bit there, a little bit, yeah, yeah…£15 isn't a lot, is it [laughs]? But it's a little bit, so it helps.'*   (Parent of bursary recipient)

In addition to the financial benefits, echoing the views of young people, some parents considered that young people having their own money gave them a sense of independence which enabled them to not have to ask their parents for money:

> *'I know it's government money, but it's like his money rather than him asking for us for money for every single thing, you know. It's a little bit of his own money to use.'*   (Parent of bursary recipient)

It was felt that young people having their own money was particularly beneficial not only to the young person but to the family as a whole as it eased tensions and alleviated feelings of guilt when parents weren't in the position to help their children financially:

> *'[Having her own money] was good for her 'cause she didn't feel like she had to come and ask me. You know, 'cause they feel guilty as well, and I'm sick to death of saying, 'Oh I haven't got any money. Oh I can't afford it.' That's not fair, they don't wanna hear that."*   (Parent of bursary recipient)

7.5 Effectiveness at targeting support at those most in need

Eighty per cent of providers reported that the Bursary Fund was effectively targeting the learners who faced the greatest financial disadvantages, although ten per cent disagreed, reporting that the fund was not very effective or not effective at all at reaching those in most need[30] (Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.4 Provider Survey: Perceived effectiveness at targeting learners with greatest financial disadvantages (%) (2013/14)
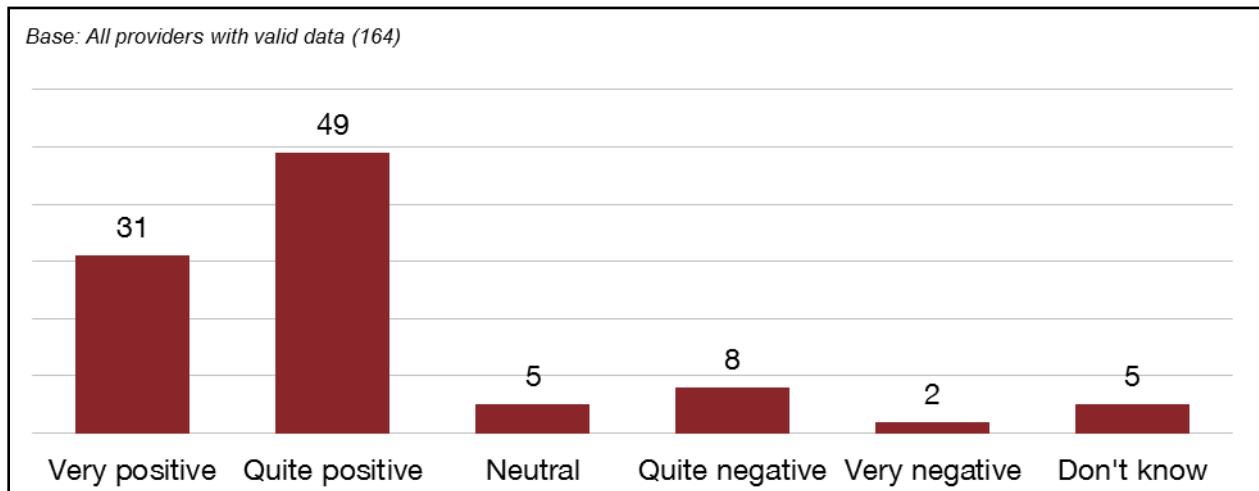
Young people in receipt of bursaries reported greater financial need than non-recipients, suggesting that broadly speaking the fund is targeted at those most in need (although not necessarily fully meeting these needs in all cases). Among non-recipients, around a quarter (27%) were struggling to cope financially, and nine per cent reported being at risk of dropping out because they could not afford to continue (Figure 7.5). These figures suggest that there remains a proportion of young people in need of financial support who are not currently being reached by the Bursary Fund.

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[30] Providers were asked about the targeting of the Bursary Fund in general, and not specifically in relation to how they administered their fund.

Figure 7.5 Learner Survey: Views of young people not receiving the Bursary Fund (%) (2012/13)

Base: Young people not receiving the Bursary Fund (886-887)

Legend: ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Don't know

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
I am struggling to cope financially	27	66	6
Overall a lack of financial support has been particularly difficult for me	21	72	7
There is a risk that I will have to drop out of education because I can no longer afford to study	9	87	5
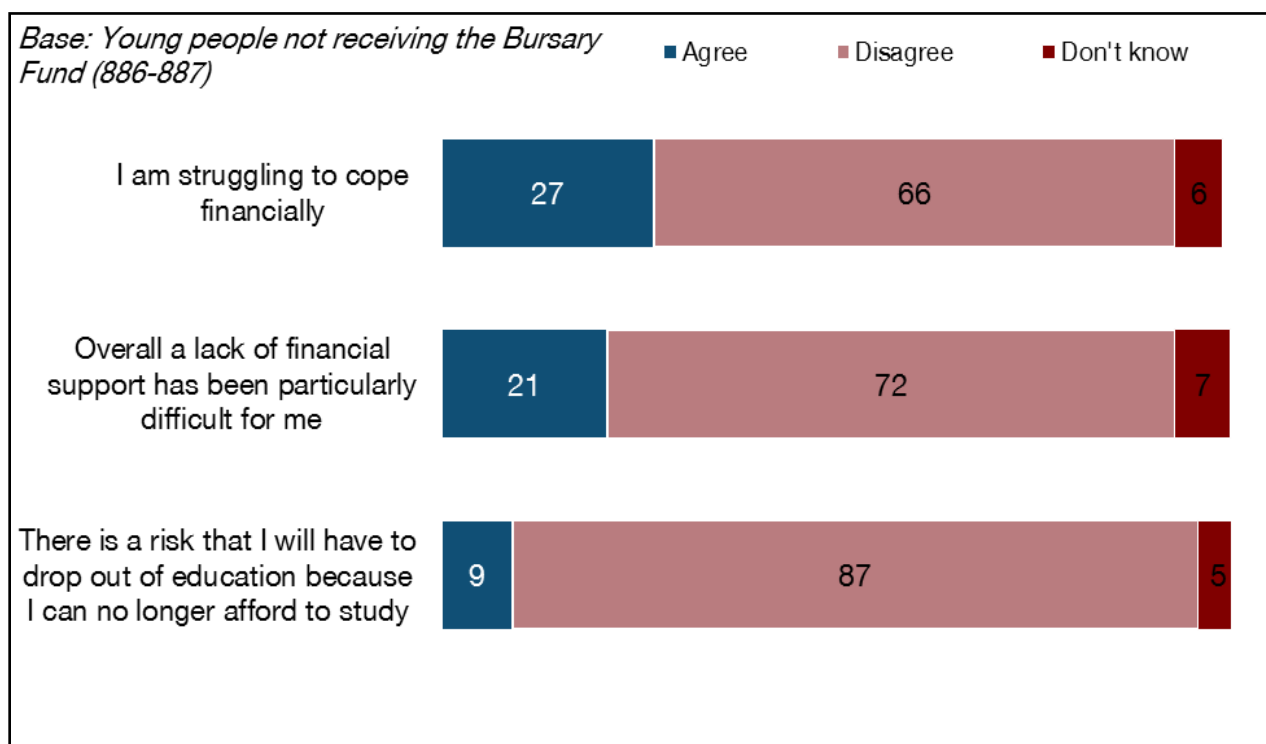
Table 7.1 shown below provides a comparison between recipients and non-recipients. Even when receiving the financial support, recipients were likely to say they struggle to stay motivated with their studies due to money worries (29%) and paying for things needed for their studies (24%). Around three-quarters (78%) of recipients agreed with the statement 'I would have stayed on in education anyway – whether or not I received this financial support'. This is in contrast to 87 per cent of non-recipients who disagreed that there was a risk they will have to drop out of education because they can no longer afford to study (Figure 7.5). 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 due 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
Unweighted base (all young people)	*319-321*	*886-888*

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). Three-quarters (75%) of this group also agreed that 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).

Table 7.2 Learner survey: General views about financial support 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
Unweighted base (all young people)	*320-322*	*892-895*

8 Conclusions and recommendations

In the third year of implementation 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 meet their students' needs. However, this greater flexibility also brings with it variability in the support available across providers in close proximity and variability in the quality of schemes.

In the third year of implementation, young people and their families have expressed their views about how the Bursary Fund works for them in case study interviews. Generally speaking young people view the financial support available positively with it reaching many of those who are in need. However, there are concerns about inequalities between providers and whether the funding was sufficient to enable full participation and engagement in education post-16.

During the first year of implementation providers were familiarising themselves with the new 16 to 19 Bursary Fund policy and their role as fund administrators. Between years two and three of implementation we have seen few changes in the way providers are awarding the Bursary Fund. Many aspects of the administration continue to work well, and some aspects have been identified as more challenging for staff and young people.

Although general **awareness** of the Bursary Fund amongst young people was high when we spoke to them in Year 2, 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.

Recommendations:

- Schools and 16 to 19 providers should work together to ensure pupils in Years 10 and 11 are aware that there is financial support available through the Bursary Fund to help them make informed decisions about post-16 participation. There is guidance about the responsibilities of schools and other institutions in DfE's statutory careers information and guidance document to support this recommendation.

- Clear, detailed information about the Bursary Fund should be available on 16 to 19 providers' websites.

- Providers should consider how best to raise awareness about the availability of Defined Vulnerable Group and Discretionary Bursary awards, for example in prospectuses and application forms (such as having a box for young people to request extra information).

The third year of implementation saw the **centralisation of the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries** which allowed providers to claim funds from a central source to support the most vulnerable learners. This change was welcomed by most providers, though awareness of the new system is not complete. This raises questions about whether all the young people eligible are receiving this important financial support.

Recommendations:

- The DfE and Education Funding Agency should make efforts to ensure all providers are aware of how to draw funds from the Defined Vulnerable Group fund, and that they are encouraged to do so to support these vulnerable young people.

- The DfE should consider how best to estimate numbers of the cohort from vulnerable groups to allow longer term measurement of met/unmet need.

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.

Recommendation:

- Providers should maintain confidentiality, administer bursaries discreetly, and encourage applications to minimise barriers to take-up related to stigma and embarrassment.

- Providers should consider what data sharing arrangements they have in place with local organisations (in compliance with the Data Protection Act) to assist them in proactively targeting young people who may be eligible for support.

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 course and transport costs. In Year 3, some concerns continue to be 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. Young people felt that the approach of only taking financial information into account was too crude and could be ignoring these important other factors. Therefore, it is important that other factors such as caring responsibilities, SEN status and support available from other family members are considered when determining eligibility as these factors can have a crucial role in a young person's ability to cope financially. Taking these factors into consideration is important to ensure the Discretionary Bursary is being used to its full potential.

Recommendations:

- When using objective eligibility criteria, providers should design these to be sufficiently wide ranging to minimise the risk of young people just falling outside these criteria being substantially disadvantaged.

- When assessing eligibility on a case by case basis this increases the difficulties young people may have in determining what they may be entitled to and can lead to perceived unfairness. Therefore, providers should consider having a basic guarantee (e.g. "all those with x,y,z get support, but more is available for certain circumstances such as a,b,c").

Whilst attendance was the mostly frequently mentioned **condition linked to bursary receipt** by providers (73%), many young people seemed unaware that there were conditions attached to receipt of the financial support.

Higher levels of bursary awards 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 severe, 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.

Recommendations:

- Young people should be given clear information from their providers about:

  - when they will receive payments

  - the value of each payment

  - the conditions attached to payments and sanctions for not meeting these

  - if there are delays/non-payments an explanation of why

  - contact details to speak to a member of staff if there are any payment queries.

The **perceived impact** of the Bursary Fund is generally positive and is acknowledged by parents to help household finances in addition to encouraging financial independence among young people. 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 bursary schemes to best meet these needs. Weekly payments were not too common amongst providers, possibly due to the higher administrative costs, but more frequent payments 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. 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.

> **Recommendation:**
>
> ▪ Providers should explore whether more frequent payments can be made to young people where these are currently only available on a termly or less frequent basis.

The timing of first payments was also crucial; this should be made early enough to help young people in the first term when 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. Similarly, application cut-off dates could cause hardship for young people whose circumstances changed during the year and were then unable to make an application.

> **Recommendations:**
>
> ▪ Providers should review when Bursary Fund applications can be made to improve access and to meet needs at the start of the academic year, including:
>
> - whether the application process can start before the start of term to help young people with early course costs and travel
> - providing flexibility throughout the year by avoiding application cut-off dates

During the third year of implementation, we observed a similar, significant proportion of institutions **underspending** as in the previous year, though the total amount of underspend appears modest. Even without having to administer the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary from their allocations, there was still a tendency for providers to be cautious to ensure that they had sufficient funds to meet the needs of learners throughout the academic year.

Recommendation:

- DfE should review and improve the Bursary Fund allocations methodology and guidance on carrying over funds to ensure these are based on 16 to 19 students numbers and characteristics, and support providers to award funding to those most in need.

9   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 databases.

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 selected based on their funding allocations provided to NatCen by the DfE, using the same sampling design as in the previous year. A sample of 317 providers was selected for the survey (257 respondents from the Year 1 survey and 60 new providers).

In the third year of the survey the sample comprised of providers that responded to both the Year 1 long version of the questionnaire and the Year two survey. It also included another refresher sample of new providers. The refreshment sample was selected based on their funding allocations provided to NatCen by the DfE. The Year 3 provider sample contained 274 providers. The sample comprised of 75 freshly selected provider at Year 3 and 199 providers who had responded to the Year 2 survey (174 providers that had been in the sample since Year 1 and 28 providers that had been selected as part of the Year 2 refreshment sample).

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 and second 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. In the 2013/14 year, the Defined Vulnerable Group bursary became centralised and this was reflected in the questionnaire.

The main topics covered in the questionnaire were:

1. Spending and award criteria for Discretionary Bursaries
2. Numbers and characteristics of applicants and recipients of Discretionary Bursaries
3. Centralisation of the Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries
4. How the Bursary Fund awards are made
5. Administration of the Bursary Fund
6. Perceived impacts of the Bursary Fund

Online questionnaires

The questionnaire was made available as an online survey. This 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

An early warning email was sent to all providers making them aware of the upcoming survey. The questionnaires for the survey were mailed to providers on 5th 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.

Throughout the course of the survey providers were sent three emails and one postal reminder.

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.

Response rates

In Year 3, 166 providers completed the survey. The response rate was 61 per cent (Table 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	199	100	74	100	273	100
Completed - web	86	43	15	20	101	37
Completed - post	51	26	14	19	65	24
Total	137	69	29	39	**166**	**61**

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.

Survey Weights

Non-response weights for the provider survey – first follow up.

Sample

The Year 3 provider sample contained 274 providers. The sample comprised a sample of 75 freshly selected providers at Year 3 and 199 providers who had responded to the Year 2 survey (174 providers that had been in the sample since Year 1 and 28 providers that had been selected as part of the Year 2 refreshment sample).

Completed questionnaires were received from 166 providers. Twenty nine questionnaires were received from providers in the fresh sample (39% response) and 137 from providers that had participated in a previous year (69%). A set of non-response weights were required to make the 166 responding providers representative of all providers in the population. In addition, it was necessary to generate the weights that permitted the 137 respondents who had participated in every wave to be analysed separately. The weights for these 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 and refreshment) representative of the population from which it was selected.

Appendix Table A 2   **Combined Years 1, 2 and 3 issued samples**

Strata	All available providers		Total issued at Y1	Number of 'Long' question-naires issued at Y1	Refresh ment selected at Y2	Carried over from Y1 into Y2	Total issued at Y2	Selected at Y3	Carried over from Y2 into Y3	Total issued at Y3
	Count	%	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
0	1650	53.5	510	180	38	51	89	32	49	81
1	702	22.8	534	189	9	73	82	14	72	86
2	441	14.3	379	133	3	42	45	26	42	68
3	290	9.4	277	98	10	36	46	3	36	39
Total	3083	100	1700	600	60	202	262	75	199	274

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 three steps;

- Step 1 modelled response by providers to the initial information request,

- Step 2 adjusted for non-response to the first follow up interview, and

- Step 3 adjusted for non-response to the second follow up interview.

The Year 2 and Year 3 refreshment samples and the Year 1 initial sample were pooled at the first step. This is because the response behaviour of each refreshment sample to their first data request (i.e. the Year 2 refreshment sample at Year 2 and the Year 3 refreshment sample at Year 3) would be very similar to the response behaviour of the initial sample at Year 1.

Only providers that had been followed up a second time were included in the second step. An adjustment was made to correct for non-response by providers from the original sample to the Year 2 interview and providers in the Year 2 refreshment sample to the Year 3 interview. Again, the response behaviour of these two groups is expected to be similar, since both sets of providers would have already completed one interview and was being approached for a second.

The final step was to make a further adjustment to correct for non-response by providers from the original sample to the Year 3 interview. This was the only set of providers who had been contacted three times. This sub-set of providers made up the longitudinal sample as they had been sampled in Year 1 and responded to every wave.

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 and whether or not the provider was in London. An equivalent adjustment (by provider type and London) was made for the third step.

The weights for the Year 3 refreshment sample cases were generated as the product of the selection weight and the weight from the step1 non-response model; the weight for the Year 2 refreshment cases was generated as the product of the selection weight, the weight from the step1 non-response model and the step2 adjustment; and the weights for the 137 providers who responded to each wave were generated as the product of

the selection weight, the weight from the step1 non-response model, the step2 adjustment and the step2 adjustment.

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 were 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 by Capita on behalf of DfE during the 2013/14 academic year. All providers who successfully claimed a Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary in the year were recorded in the MI. The MI was provided to NatCen with data from about 1,498 providers for analysis.

NatCen matched the MI data to information about all provider allocations to provide overall figures about the take up of DVG awards. A total of 3,384 records were included in the analysis.

Case studies methodology

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 and again in 2013/14:

| Scoping interviews with twenty-seven providers 2011/12 | → | 12 case study visits 2012/13 | → | 12 case study follow-up visits 2013/14 |
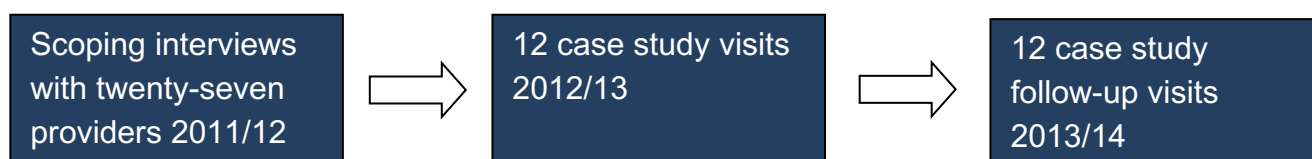
Sampling and recruitment

Case study providers

This report reports the findings from the case study visits, drawing on data from all three years but focusing primarily on the final visits in 2013/14 (previous reports provide detailed methods for Years 1 and 2 of the research). 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 3   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

The composition of each case study varied depending on the size and context of the provider, but typically included:

- A depth interview with a senior member of staff responsible for determining bursary policy
- A depth interview with a member of staff responsible for the administration of Bursary Funds
- A depth interview with a member of staff with a pastoral role (e.g. personal tutor)
- A focus group of 16 to 19 students.

In total, 26 individual or paired interviews were carried out with staff across the case study sights (involving 34 staff members) in 2013/14. A further 4 telephone interviews

were conducted with local authority staff with responsibility for supporting post-16 provision in case study areas.

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. In acknowledgement of the administration burden and staff time involved in taking part, each case study provider received £250. 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.

Eighty-four young people participated in the groups in 2013/14 which ranged in size from four to ten participants. Table A4 provides a breakdown of the achieved sample of young people.

Appendix Table A 4 Overview of achieved young people sample.

Sample criteria		Achieved sample
Age	16	14
	17	25
	18	28
	19	12
	20	3
	21	2
Gender	Male	44
	Female	40
Ethnicity	White	59
	Asian or Asian British	10
	Black or Black British	10
	Other	5
Qualification level studying for	Level 1	7
	Level 2	15
	Level 3	44
	Not provided	18

Sampling and recruitment of parents

To recruit parents to participate, each case study provider was asked to send out a letter on behalf of the research team to a sample of twenty parents (both those with a child that had received a bursary and those that had not). The letter provided parents with a contact telephone number and an email address if they were interested in taking part in a telephone interview. In total, eleven parents from across six of the case study providers expressed an interest in taking part, and nine interviews were completed. The number of interviews achieved was lower than anticipated (the target was to achieve 2-3 interviews in each case study provider) primarily because of the low opt-in rate. This limits the extent to which the views of parents could be fully represented in the evaluation.

Fieldwork

Case study fieldwork took place between December 2013 and June 2014. Face to face interviews and focus groups were conducted by NatCen researchers and each interview typically lasted between thirty minutes and 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.

Interviews with parents and local authority staff were by telephone and typically lasted half an hour. Parents received a £20 high street shopping voucher as a thank you for their participation.

Topic guides used in the interviews are appended in Appendix D.

Learner follow-up qualitative interviews methodology

The aim of the qualitative follow-up interviews was to explore in greater depth the findings from the learner survey and to gather the views and experiences of young people (both those who had and had not received a bursary).

Sampling and recruitment

The aim was to interview 35 young people with diverse characteristics across a range of criteria:

- Type of bursary (including young people not in receipt)
- Type of provider
- Gender
- Ethnicity

Following up the Learner Survey also had the advantage of enabling the research team to recruit young people who expressed different views on the impact of the bursary scheme, allowing these differences to be explored in more detail during the interviews.

An opt-out letter and leaflet was sent to 229 young people who had completed the learner survey and had given their consent to be re-contacted about further research. After a two-week opt-out period (during which two young people opted out of further contact), attempts were made to contact participants by phone and email to invite them to participate. In total, follow-up interviews were achieved with 22 young people who had participated in the learner survey.

To ensure the sample was as diverse as possible (particularly because the number of students received a Defined Vulnerable Group Bursary was low in the survey sample), a further five young people were recruited using other approaches. Two were recruited via a Local Authority Looked After team, a further two were recruited through a hostel specialising in providing housing for young people, and a final interview was obtained with a student receiving a Vulnerable Group Bursary via a school contact. The following table provides a breakdown of the achieved sample.

Appendix Table A 5 Overview of achieved young people sample.

Sample criteria		Achieved sample
Bursary receipt		
Not receiving a bursary		8
Discretionary Bursary	less than £300	4
	£300-£600	3
	Over £600	6
Defined Vulnerable Group bursary	£1200	6
Provider Type	School Sixth Forms	1
	FE Colleges	13
	Sixth Form Centres	10
	Private Training Providers	3
Gender	Male	10
	Female	17
Ethnicity	White	20
	BME	7
Survey impact responses	In receipt – coping better	7
	In receipt – not coping better	7
	Not in receipt – not struggling	3
	Not in receipt - struggling	5
	Not applicable	5

In total 27 interviews were carried out, which was lower than the intended target of 35. This was in part because contact details provided in the survey were no longer accurate and in part because recruitment of this age group to participate in research is challenging because of other commitments including work and study. Reasonable

diversity was achieved across key criteria, including the range of bursaries received and the range of impacts reported in the survey. However, the diversity in type of provider was limited (particularly in relation to school sixth forms, where only one participant took part). This means that the findings from the learner follow-up interviews may not fully represent the views and experiences of young people who attended this type of provider. While this is a limitation, the case study student focus groups included four in school sixth forms, so their views have been included in other strands of the study.

Learner follow-up fieldwork

Fieldwork was carried out between February and June 2014 by NatCen researchers. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and took place in locations that were convenient for the participant (typically their home or college or a meeting room in a local library or community centre). Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and were audio recorded. As a 'thank you' for the time involved, young people received £25.

The topic guide used in the interviews is appended in Appendix E.

Analysis of case study and learner follow-up qualitative 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, young people and parents interviewed. As a qualitative study, the prevalence of views and experiences arising from the case study data are not reported.

10 Appendix B   Case study recruitment materials

Case study provider leaflet

The 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?

Your provider is one of our twelve case studies in the evaluation. You were previously visited by the research team last year who spoke to both staff and students about the Fund. Your feedback was really valuable and we would now like to invite you to take part in the final stage of the research.

What will taking part involve?

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 £250 to spend as you like.

Visit two (Autumn 2013)
This second visit aims to explore how administration of the Bursary Fund has changed since we visited you in Spring/Summer 2013. We would like to conduct the following interviews, and will discuss the feasibility of this with you further:

- An update interview with a member of the senior management team (lasting approximately 30 mins to update on how the bursary scheme has developed since last year).

- An update interview with a staff member involved in the administration of the fund (Lasting approximately 30 minutes)

- A group discussion with 3-4 teachers / staff involved in pastoral support 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, who both did and did not receive one (this would last approximately 1 hrs and young people would receive £20 each as a thank you).

- Up to three telephone interview with parents/carers to explore the impacts of the Bursary Fund on families. (these interviews would last approximately 30minutes and parents/carers would receive a £20 shopping voucher each as a thank you).

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 interviews so that we have an accurate record of what has been said. The recording stays within the research team and is stored securely.

A report will be produced at the end of the research that will include collective views and experiences with other people who took part in the research. No individuals' names or learning providers will be identified 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 you can email Meg Callanan on: [insert researcher contact details]

NatCen
Social Research that works for society

Department for Education

Parent recruitment Leaflet

RESEARCH PROJECT

The 16-19 Bursary Fund Evaluation

NatCen
Social Research that works for society

👑 Department for Education

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 fund 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 interviews with parents about their views on this financial support.

You may have been invited to take part in a telephone interview to share your views and experiences as a parent of a child aged 16-19 in education. By taking part you will receive a £20 high street shopping voucher as well as a chance to let the government know what you think about financial support available for young people continuing in education.

Who can take part?

Parents, guardians or carers of a 16-19 year old student who is studying in Sixth Form, at College or with a training provider are invited to take part. Your child does **not** need to have received financial support for you to take part – we are interested in everyone's views.

What will the telephone interview be like?

The telephone interview will involve speaking to a researcher on the phone for up to thirty minutes.

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. Your child's school / college are passing information about the research to parents but they will not know who we speak to.

What happens after the interview?

Your views will contribute to a report about the 16-19 Bursary Fund. We will also be talking to teachers and students to gather their views of the fund and their views will also be included in the report. 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.

Who is NatCen?

NatCen is an independent social research organisation that carries out research on a wide range of social issues. 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 [insert researcher contact details]

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Young people focus group recruitment leaflet

RESEARCH PROJECT

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

NatCen
Social Research that works for society

🦁 **Department for Education**

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.

With this leaflet you are invited to take part in a focus group to share your views and experiences. By getting involved you will receive £20 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?

Students aged 16-19 and studying in Sixth Form, at College or with a training provider can take part. You do not need to have received financial support for you to take part – we are interest in everyone's views.

What will the focus group be like?

The group will last up to 1 hour and there will be 6 or 7 other students there from [insert 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 NatCen's 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. 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.

Who is NatCen?

NatCen is an independent social research organisation that carries out research on a wide range of social issues. 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 [insert contact details]

11 Appendix C   Learner follow-up interviews recruitment materials

RESEARCH PROJECT

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

NatCen
Social Research that works for society

Department for Education

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 interviews with young people around the country to find out your views and experiences of the financial support for students aged 16-19.

If you're reading this leaflet it is because you have already taken part in our survey - the '16-19 Young People's Study' and you very kindly agreed to be re-contacted about further research. We would like to invite you to participate in an interview with a researcher to share your views and experiences of financial support for students aged 16-19 in more detail. By getting involved you will receive £25 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 between 16-19. You may be studying at sixth form, at a college or with a training provider, or you may have decided to do something else. You do **not** need to have received financial support for you to take part – we are interested in everyone's views.

What will the interview be like?

The interview will last up to 45 minutes. It will take place at a time and location convenient to you. A researcher from NatCen will ask you about 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.

What happens next?

A researcher will be in touch by phone to explain the research further and to answer any questions you may have. If you would prefer **not** to be contacted by a researcher, please email bursarystudy@natcen.ac.uk or phone freephone 0808 178 9057 and let us know.

What happens after the interview?

The interviews 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?

NatCen is an independent social research organisation that carries out research on a wide range of social issues. 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 [insert contact details]

12 Appendix D   Case study topic guides

Provider staff topic guide

1. Introductions
- Introduce yourself and NatCen
- Introduce the study:
  - Funded by the Department for Education
  - Overall project aims
- Interview forms part of twelve longitudinal case studies of provider organisations.
- Digital recording – check OK, and reassure re: confidentiality
- Data kept securely in accordance with Data Protection Act
- How we'll report findings – anonymity of providers
- Reminder of interview length – (1-1.5 hours) check OK
- Any questions/concerns?
- Right to withdraw during or after the interview has taken place

2. Background
Aim: to gather any changes in the context of the case study since last year. To gather understanding of their role in relation to the bursary fund (if not interviewed previously)
- Overview of their role (brief re-cap if interviewed last year)

3. 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 and how these have changed over time.
- What level of Bursary funding they received this year (2013/14)
- Views on level of funding received for bursaries
- Nature of any top-up funds to the bursary (changes from last year)
- Understanding of how funding levels were set / criteria used
- Extent of underspend / overspend in previous year (2012/13)
- Are any funds retained as a 'contingency fund'

4. Bursary administration
Aim: to explore any changes / developments in how they have administered their funds from 2012/13 to 2013/14 and the rationale for these changes.
- Re-cap of bursary administration. (For each element check for changes):
  - Discretionary eligibility thresholds
  - Levels of payment
  - Frequency / format of payments
  - Conditions attached
  - Administrative systems – any changes to these
- How bursary policy is determined:
  - Who was involved e.g. governors, SMT, teaching staff, LA
  - Ease or difficulty in anticipating need
  - Nature of any clarification/guidance they would find helpful from DfE
- Vulnerable group bursary administration
  - Views on changes to centralised administration
  - Impact on administration / planning / learners

5. Communicating the Fund / targeting eligible learners

Aim: to capture any changes in how providers promote awareness of the fund from previous year. To gather views on whether awareness levels have changed

- When learners are made aware of Bursary funds
- Format of communication to learners / parents
- Views on levels of awareness amongst learners with greatest barriers to participation / highest levels of need
- Targeting learners
    - Any changes since last year in how they target learners:
    - Facilitators and barriers to targeting learners

6. Take-up
Aim: To understand levels of take-up and changes in take-up levels over time.

- Take-up
    - Views of take-up: are they reaching eligible learners
    - Nature of any changes in levels of take-up from previous year
    - Facilitators and challenges to take-up
    - Unmet need

7. Application process
Aim: to gather an update on the application process including timescales for administration, ease/difficulty of application process, how decisions are made, nature of the appeals process.

- Application process (probe any changes since last year)
- Decision making (probe any changes since last year)
- Appeals process – process, who is involved, how decisions communicated
- Monitoring bursaries
    - What information they record on bursary applicants
    - How recorded
    - Audit – extent of auditing for equalities impact

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

- Other support provided to students alongside 16-19 Fund
- Nature of any changes to additional support
    - Since last year
    - Anticipated for next year

9. Perceived impacts
Aim: to explore the perceived impacts of the fund in year 3 of implementation. To gather feedback on any changes in impacts since the first year of implementation.

- Impacts on learners (probe for any changes in assessment since last year):
    - Participation in post-16 learning
    - Impact of raising the participation age
    - Engagement in post-16 learning
    - Nature of other impacts
    - Impacts on equalities
    - Factors contributing to these impacts
    Importance of:
    Bursary level
        - Eligibility
        - Frequency of payment
        - Format of payment
- Impacts on providers (probe for changes from last year):

- Overall reflections (re-visit previous assessment of impact and probe for changes):
    - Views on approach adopted
    - Key facilitators and barriers to successful delivery
    - Recommendations for improvements
    - Key messages

10.   Future plans
Aim: to explore whether there are any planned changes in the administration / and allocation of bursaries planned
- Plans for next year (2014/15)
    - Any changes to way bursaries are awarded
    - Any changes to the way bursaries are administered

Young person focus group topic guide

1. Introduction
- Introduce yourself and NatCen
- Introduce the study:
    - Funded by the Department for Education
    - Overall project aims
- Focus group is part of a case study of their provider
- Digital recording – check OK
- Reassure about confidentiality and data kept in accordance with the DPA.
- How we'll report findings – anonymity of participants
- Reminder of interview length – (1.5 hours) check OK
- Ground rules – no mobile phones, confidentiality, no right or wrong answers
- Right to withdraw during or after the interview
- Any questions/concerns?
- Distribute short sample screener for completion to capture key sample data

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
    - Their name and how old they are
    - What subjects they are studying and how long for
    - Qualifications they hope to achieve at the end of their course
    - Have they had financial support or a bursary from their college
    -
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.
- Views on continuing in education post-16
- Whether intend to go to university or undertake any Higher Education
- How they chose post-16 provider
- Financial considerations

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
  - o Whether they have heard of the Bursary Fund
  - o At what point they were made aware
  - o Sources of awareness
  - o Recommendations for increasing awareness

- Extent to which Bursary Funding played part in decision-making
  - o Whether / how bursary funding influenced decisions to:
  - o 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
- 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

- Recommendations for any changes to the 16-19 Bursary fund
- Key messages

Parent topic guide

1. Introduction
- Introduce yourself and NatCen
- Introduce the study:
  - Funded by the Department for Education
  - Overall project aims
- Interview is part of a case study of their child's 16-19 provider.
- Digital recording – check OK
- Reassure about confidentiality and data kept in accordance with the DPA.
- How we'll report findings – anonymity of participants
- Reminder of interview length – (30-45minutes) check OK
- Participants will receive a £20 shopping voucher as a thank-you
- Right to withdraw during or after the interview
- Any questions/concerns?

2. Background
Aim: To gather background information about the participant as context for the discussion, including their family composition and current employment status.

- Household composition (including age of child at provider and number /age of other children)
- Day to day activities
- Are you aware of your child receiving financial bursary support from their college?

3. Views of continuing education post-16
Aim: to gather detail on the type of post-16 study their child is undertaking and to explore their attitudes to post-16 education and their aspirations for their child's future.

- Overview of their child's post-16 study
  - What courses they're studying (if known)
  - Parents aspirations for child after study

- Role of parent in young person's post-16 decisions

- Extent to which financial considerations factored into child's post-16 decisions
  - In what ways e.g. travel costs, equipment costs etc

   o Extent to which parent felt able to support their child financially to continue in education

4. Awareness of the bursary fund
Aim: to explore level of awareness amongst parents of financial support available to young people post-16. To gather feedback on how awareness could be increased.

- Awareness of the Bursary Fund
- Views on how parents should be made aware of support available
- Recommendations for increasing awareness

5. Bursary eligibility
Aim: to understand parent's awareness and views of the eligibility criteria for bursaries

- Awareness / understanding of the different types of bursary
- Views of the eligibility criteria for Vulnerable Group bursaries [Researcher to explain eligibility criteria if unaware]
- Views of the eligibility criteria for discretionary bursaries (researcher to detail eligibility criteria for their provider if not already known)

6. Bursary application process
Aim: to explore their role in the application process, particularly in relation to evidencing eligibility for discretionary bursaries

- Whether or not their child applied for a bursary

For those who did apply:

- Overview of parent's role in the application process
  - o What role (if any) parent had in bursary application
  - o Ease / difficulty of applying for a bursary
  - o Evidencing eligibility

7. Views on the bursary support available
Aim: to understand parental views on the nature of the support available, including their views on the format and frequency of support, and their views on conditions set by the provider for bursary receipt.

- Frequency of payments
- Levels of payment for discretionary bursaries
- Levels of payment for vulnerable group bursaries
- Views on format of bursary support

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

For parents whose child is receiving a bursary:
- Impact on child's decisions to participate post-16
- Impact on child's engagement post-16
- Impact on parent
- Views on whether the Bursary Fund achieves its aim of removing financial barriers to participation post-16
  - o For their child
  - o For young people in general

For parents whose child is not receiving a bursary:
- Extent to which they / their child has managed financially

- Whether financial concerns have ever led to any of the following:
    - Not attending school / college
    - Not attending school trips
    - Whether at any point considered dropping out (because of finances)

9. Recommendations
Aim: to gather their recommendations for ways in which young people could be supported to participate post-16

- Views on local determination of discretionary bursary eligibility criteria
- Recommendations for any changes to the 16-19 Bursary fund
- Key messages

<u>Local Authority staff topic guide</u>

1. Introduction
- Introduce yourself and NatCen
- Introduce the study:
    - Funded by the Department for Education
    - Overall project aims
- The interview is part of twelve longitudinal case studies with 16-19 Learning Providers
- Digital recording – check OK, and reassure re: confidentiality
- Voluntary nature of participation – can withdraw at any time
- How we'll report findings - anonymity of providers and local authorities
- Data kept securely in accordance with Data Protection Act
- Reminder of interview length – approximately 1 hour
- Any questions/concerns?

2. Background (Brief)
Aim: to recap background contextual information on the Local Authority (very brief)

- Overview of their role (nature of any changes since previous interview)
- Recap briefly context (drawing on knowledge from previous interview)
    - 16-19 learner profile in LA
    - Range of provision available
    - Levels of 16-19 currently NEET

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 (nature of any changes since last year)

- Views on levels of awareness amongst young people with highest barriers to participation
    - Whether awareness levels changed from 2012/13 to 2013/14
    - Facilitators and barriers to raising awareness
- Take-up
    - Views of take-up
    - Facilitators and challenges to take-up

- Unmet need
    - Views on whether there is unmet need
    - Reasons for unmet need
    - Any plans to monitor / address unmet need

4. Bursary administration

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
- Awareness of any changes in the approaches taken to bursary administration in their LA
    - Nature of changes
    - Rationale for changes
    - Feedback from providers
    - Feedback from parents
- Views on centralising the administration of Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries
    - Feedback from providers
- Any changes in the approaches taken to bursary administration in their LA

For LAs administering bursaries on behalf of local providers
- Nature of any changes in bursary administration in relation to:
    - Setting eligibility criteria
    - Setting conditions attached to bursary payments
    - Determining format / frequency of payment
- Nature of any clarification / guidance they would find helpful from DfE
- Views on centralising the administration of Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries
- Funding (probe for changes from last year):
    - How Bursary funding is managed in LA administered models
    - Extent of underspend / overspend in second year (2012/13)
    - Impact of raising the participation age on bursary funds
- Facilitators and barriers to LA administered scheme
- Views on LA administered schemes

5. Additional support

Aim: to explore whether any additional support for 16-19 year olds exists (whether nature of this support has changed since last year or remained the same)

- Pre-existing/ additional bursaries/ financial support (probe for changes since last yr):

6. Impacts

Aim: to explore how well they feel the fund is working in relation to removing barriers to participation (drawing on an overview of first three years of implementation). To explore views on the impacts of the fund across the Local Authority.

- Nature of feedback the LA has received from providers / young people
- Impacts on learners (overview of first three years of implementation)
- Impact on providers
- Impacts on equalities
- Overall reflections

13 Appendix E   Learner follow-up topic guide

1. Introduction
- Introduce yourself and NatCen
- Introduce the study:
  - Funded by Department for Education
  - Overall project aims
- We are interviewing up to 35 young people aged between 17-19 to gather your views and experiences of financial support available to students studying post-16 through the 16-19 Bursary Fund.
- Digital recording – check OK
- Reassure about confidentiality and data kept in accordance with the DPA.
- How we'll report findings – publically available report / anonymity of participants
- Reminder of interview length – (45 minutes) check OK
- Participation voluntary - right to withdraw during or after the interview
- Thank you payment of £25
- Any questions/concerns?

2. Background
Aim: To gather background information about the participant and to capture a broad overview of their activities since the end of Yr 11.

- Participants background
- Overview of activities since Yr 11

3. Role of finances in post-16 decision making
Aim: to understand the extent (and in what ways) financial support influenced decisions about participation in education / training post-16.

Ask the respondent to think back to when they were in Year 11:

- Explore their views on what they wanted to do next
- Reasons for choosing post-16 pathway
- Financial considerations

4. Awareness of the bursary fund
Aim: to understand the level of awareness of respondent 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
- Extent to which Bursary Funding played part in decision-making

  <u>Where unaware:</u>
  - Whether awareness of bursary funding would have influenced their post-16 pathway
  - Views on why they were not aware of financial support

5. Bursary eligibility
Aim: to understand respondent's awareness and views on 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/s

- 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.

For all:
- Whether applied for a bursary
  - If yes, what encouraged them to apply
  - If no, reasons for not applying

For those who did apply:
- Understanding of the application process
- Evidencing eligibility
- Time scales
- Bursary decision
  - Whether application was successful
    - If Yes
      - length of time taken for decision
      - How informed
      - When was the Bursary received when application was successful
    - No
      - Views on decision
      - Implications for studying
      - Nature of other support available (if any)

For all:
- Take-up
  - Views on whether all those eligible are taking-up the fund
  - Barriers / facilitators to take-up
  - Level of awareness within their college – high / low

7. Views on the bursary support available

Aim: to understand the respondent'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.

For those who received a DVG bursary:
- 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
- Any recommendations / changes to bursary support available
- Examples of what their biggest expenditures are to participate in FE
- Views on levels of support for discretionary bursaries

For those who received a discretionary bursary:
- Views on level of support available at their provider/s
- 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
- Views on Vulnerable Group Bursaries

For those not in receipt of a bursary:
- Views on levels of support for discretionary bursaries
- Views on Vulnerable Group Bursaries

8. Impacts

Aim: to understand the respondents views of the impacts of the Bursary Fund on themselves and their peers, including in relation to post-16 participation and engagement.

For those who received a bursary:
- How bursary funds were/are used
- Impact on young people's decisions to participate in post-16 education
- 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

For those NOT receiving a bursary:
- Views on how they have managed financially since leaving school
- Retention in post-16 education and risk of 'drop out'

9. Recommendations

Aim: to gather their recommendations for ways in which young people could be supported to participate post-16
- Recommendations for any changes to the 16-19 Bursary fund
- Key messages

14 Appendix F   Impacts on young people multivariate analysis

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.

This research was commissioned under the 2010 to 2015 Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government. Views expressed in this report are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect government policy.

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education

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