



The Autism Project
Free Meals and Bursary Funds
Information and Application Form for Learners
for academic year 2021-22

Free (School) Meals (FSM) Policy

Purpose

The government provides funding for the provision of free meals for learners **who meet their eligibility criteria**. For the 2021 to 2022 academic year the rate set is a minimum of £2.41 per student per meal per day.

The Autism Project funds learners eligible for free meals, £3 per student per full day of attendance be that in class or in their work-placement that is part of their study.

Please note, if you receive any payment for work (ie move into an apprenticeship or gain some temporary bank work) then these periods of time will not qualify.

Eligibility Criteria for academic year 2021-2022

Free meals are targeted at disadvantaged learners. Learners **must meet all** the following criteria to qualify for Free Meals:-

- A. **AGE** - you must be aged 16 to 18 **or** must have an **Education, Health and Care Plan**
- B. **FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES** – you must be in RECEIPT of, or have parents who are in receipt of, **one or more** of the following benefits:
- income Support
 - income-based Jobseekers Allowance
 - income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
 - support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - the guarantee element of State Pension Credit
 - Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
 - Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit) - **please note** Working Tax Credit alone **is not** a qualifying benefit
 - Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa
- C. **RESIDENCY** –as set out in the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) regulations guidance 2021-22 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2021-to-2022-academic-year#eligibility-criteria-discretionary-bursaries>) as described in Appendix A.

If you meet all these criteria you are entitled to a Free Meal for each day you attend the course and will remain entitled to the end of the course except for any periods you have paid work.

How Free Meal payments are made and conditions of payments

As The Autism Project doesn't have catering facilities you will be given vouchers to use with local food retailers or a credit will be made to your bank account (this must be in your name). Cash can only be paid in exceptional circumstances.

- Vouchers or money will be given to you on a weekly basis in advance. The allowance is £3 per day for days you attend class or your work placement.
- If you are absent for any of the days from the previous week, then the voucher or money already given must be kept and only spent on a day when you are in class or on a work placement.
- You may be asked to keep and provide receipts for food and drinks purchased as The Autism Project has a duty to ensure that you purchase a healthy and balanced meal. Your job coach will advise you about this.

Bursary Funds

There are two bursary funds offered:-

- a **'vulnerable student bursary'** – learners must be under the age of 19
- a **discretionary bursary** - students must be aged 19 or over
- Residency criteria (as Appendix A) applies to both bursaries.
- **Bursary applications must be submitted to The Autism Project by 30 June 2022.**

Vulnerable Student Bursary please note learners must be aged 16, 17 or 18 at 31 August 2021 and meet **each of the following criteria**:-

A. **vulnerable student, as defined by one of the below**

- young people in care
- care leavers (defined as a young person aged 16 and 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16; or a young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16.
- young people receiving Income Support (IS) or Universal Credit (UC) because they are financially supporting themselves and/or someone is dependent on them and living with them such as a child or partner
- young people in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in their own right as well as Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right.

B. **residency as set out by the ESFA** as detailed in Appendix A

C. **studying for 30 weeks or more and aged 16, 17 or 18 at 31 August 2021**

Where all eligibility criteria above are met, learners are eligible for a bursary of £1,200 (calculated on a pro-rata basis as appropriate, based on Full Time 5 day a week, 30 weeks study - at a maximum rate of £40 per week).

The Vulnerable Student bursary can be claimed for each academic year the learner is in education or training, provided they continue to meet the eligibility criteria.

Where a bursary is awarded the agreed standard for a learner's attendance would be expected to be 95% or above. Where a learner's health and/or medical needs impact upon their attendance, exceptions may be made at the discretion of the Head of Education & Learning.

If you wish to apply please **complete section B of the Application Form attached** and supply the necessary evidence so that The Autism Project can apply to the Education and Skills funding Agency (ESFA) via the Student Bursary Support (SBSS). **Applications must be submitted to The Autism Project by the 30 June 2022** as the deadline for submission of a claim to the Student Bursary Support Service (SBSS) is for the current academic year is the 31 July 2022. This bursary is administered by the government and typically takes 2 weeks for a decision to be made.

Discretionary Bursary

The Autism Project is awarded a small discretionary fund each year by The Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). This is managed in-line with ESFA bursary fund guidelines.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2021-to-2022-academic-year#eligibility-criteria-discretionary-bursaries> This fund is limited.

The purpose of the fund is to support individual learners to overcome specific barriers that the individual faces to full participation (eg. books, equipment, uniform or work clothes, transport, meals).

Applicants must meet the following criteria:-

- be attending The Autism Project
- aged 19 or over with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- meet the ESFA residency criteria (Appendix A)
- provide evidence of household income - this is for all family members but doesn't include DLA (Disability Living Allowance) or PIP (Personal Independence Payments) - this must accompany the application prior to assessment.
- Completed the application form and Section C additional information in full.

Based on the information received and if financial hardship is identified, the learner will be provided/reimbursed with:

- Contribution toward meal expenditure for college meals (see also Free Meals)
- Re-imburement/contribution towards travel costs upon submission of evidence e.g. travel tickets/weekly pass or invoices.
- Other as mentioned above.

The bursary fund is not intended to:

- provide learning support - services that institutions give to students - for example, counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring
- support extra-curricular activities where these are not essential to the students' study programme
- support general household incomes

Where a bursary is awarded the agreed standard for a learner's attendance would be expected to be 95% or above. Where a learner's health and/or medical needs impact upon their attendance, exceptions may be made at the discretion of the Head of Education & Learning.

If you wish to apply for a Discretionary Bursary please **complete the Application Form and SECTION C attached** and supply the necessary evidence, so your application can be considered by The Autism Project, Head of Education & Learning who will:-

- check your eligibility against government set criteria
- assess your request
- consider your household financial circumstances (evidence required)
- may request additional information from you if needed
- consult with the CEO and/or the EAP if required
- aim to inform you of the decision in writing within 3 weeks.

The Autism Project reserves the right to prioritise those in greatest financial need and to make full, partial or no awards. Family income is the primary consideration however individual circumstances will be taken into consideration. However if you or your representative (parent/carer) disagrees with a decision then you may appeal.

When the Discretionary Bursary Fund is exhausted The Autism Project will inform learners and parents and no further applications will be considered until further funding is received from the ESFA.

Impact of bursaries on Department of Work and Pension (DWP) benefits

Receipt of bursary funding does not affect receipt of other means-tested benefits paid to families, such as Income Support (IS), Jobseeker's Allowance, Child Benefit, Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit or, generally, Universal Credit.

If a student is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and Employment Support Allowance (ESA), parents can no longer receive certain household/family benefits for that child, such as child benefit.

Complaints/Appeals process

All complaints/appeals must be made in writing and will be dealt with under CareTrade's complaints procedure.

If a complaint or appeal regarding Free Meals or Bursaries is not resolved through this, then it may be passed to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Please note.

You can only be eligible to receive a free meal or a bursary after you, or a responsible adult on your behalf, have made a successful application to TAP.

To make an application please complete the relevant forms, attached, in full.

APPENDIX A - ESFA GUIDANCE ON RESIDENCY 2021-22

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2021-to-2022-academic-year#eligibility-criteria-discretionary-bursaries>

A person who on 'the first day of the first academic (or teaching) year of the course' defined as:

- 1 September if the academic year starts between 1 August and 31 December,
- 1 January if the academic year starts between 1 January and 31 March,
- 1 April if the academic year starts between 1 April and 30 June,
- 1 July if the academic year starts between 1 July and 31 July

is 'settled' in the UK, and who has been ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands (that is including the Channel and the Isle of Man) **for the three years preceding the 'relevant date'**. 'Settled' means having either indefinite leave to enter or remain (ILE/ILR) or having the right of abode in the UK. British citizens and certain other people have the right of abode in the UK.

- British nationals who hold a United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland passport.
- European Union nationals
- Family members of European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss workers
- British Dependent Territory Citizens (now known as British Overseas Territory Citizens).
- Those whose passports have been endorsed to show they have right of abode in the UK.
- Those who have a certificate of naturalisation or registration as a British Citizen
- Students who are children of Turkish workers where the Turkish worker has been lawfully employed and resident in the UK at any time in the past and where the student has been resident in the EEA and Turkey for the full three-year period prior to the commencement of their programme.

In addition to considering the groups outlined above, the ESFA will also consider the following groups of students to be eligible for funding.

- People with refugee status (RS) or humanitarian protection (HP) or discretionary leave (DL) or exceptional leave to enter or remain (ELE/ELR), their spouses, civil partners and children
- People with recently settled status (this means those having been granted indefinite leave to enter or remain, right of abode or British citizenship within the 3 years immediately preceding the start of the course)

In addition to the groups above, the ESFA will also consider the following groups of students (including those who may not have lived in the UK for the last three years) aged up to and including the age of 18 as eligible for funding.

- Those who are accompanying or joining parents or spouses (*SEE NOTES*) or civil partners who have the right of abode or leave to enter or remain in the UK (or

accompanying or joining relevant family members, usually parents, who are EEA nationals), or those who are children of diplomats.

- Those who are dependants of teachers coming to the UK on a teacher- exchange scheme.
- Those who are residing legally in the UK (including those entering the UK in the last 3 years who are or were not accompanied by their parents) who are British (or EEA) citizens or those whose passports have been endorsed to either show they have the right of abode in this country or to show that they have no restrictions on working in the UK
- Those who are dependants of adults residing legally in the UK who have been given immigration rights as workers to reside in the UK
- Those who are dependants of foreign students where the accompanying parent or legal guardian has been given Home Office Tier 4 student immigration status (the accompanying parent or legal guardian is excluded from funding)
- Asylum seekers.
- Those having been granted leave under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 (the 'Dubs' amendment) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/19/section/67>
- Those having been granted Calais leave to remain
- Those who are (including unaccompanied asylum seekers) placed in the care of social services or those in receipt of Section 4 support. *Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 allows National Asylum Support Service to provide fullboard accommodation outside London for destitute asylum seekers who have exhausted all their appeal rights but are unable to return home. Section 4 support is also known as 'hard case support'*

NOTES:-

All eligibility references to **a spouse** should now be read to include a person who has participated in either a formal state-recognised marriage or a state-recognised civil partnership ceremony.



The Autism Project Free Meals and Bursary Funds

Making an application

1. **Complete the application form and relevant SECTION form/s attached.**
2. You may need some information from your parents to complete this.
3. If you need help please ask a parent/carer to support you – with your permission they can complete it for you.
4. If you have questions about the form you can ask your job coach or The Autism Project Manager.
5. Return the completed forms and evidence as requested to Jemma Dear, The Autism Project Manager, either:
 - By hand or post in a sealed envelope to The Autism Project Manager, CareTrade, The Clarence Centre, 6 St Georges Circus, London SE1 6FE.
 - Or by email to jemma.dear@caretradeuk.org (all documents will need to be scanned and attached with form to email)
6. We aim to come back to you with a decision within 3 weeks. If it takes longer you will be kept informed. All decisions should be made within a month.

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence and only shared with the staff needed for a decision to be made.

We do not share any data with external sources unless legally required to do so.

Successful applicant's information will be scanned and stored electronically until a learner finishes the programme. Paper records will be shredded and disposed of in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

If an application is unsuccessful it will be stored for 6 months and then shredded and disposed of. We hold details for 6 months to allow time for a learner or parent/carer to have time to make an appeal if they are not happy with the decision.



Free Meals and Bursary Funds Application Form

Please provide your details below (or those of the learner the claim is being made for if you are completing this on someone's behalf) **PLUS COMPLETE the relevant additional SECTION/s A, B or C and return together with evidence.**

ALL QUESTIONS MUST BE ANSWERED. Please leave the Admin only column blank.

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SECTION		ADMIN only
Title	Mr Miss Ms Mrs	
Surname		
First name		
Address		
Post Code		
Email address		
Mobile		
Date of Birth	DD/MM/YY	
Do you have an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP)?	Yes or No	
Do you satisfy the residency criteria set out by the ESFA – (appendix A)?	Yes or No	
When did you start on The Autism Project - please give month and year		
Your age when you started on The Autism Project		
Are you applying for :-		
Free Meals - if yes please complete section A	Yes or No	
Vulnerable Student Bursary – if yes please complete to section B Please note you must be 16,17,or 18	Yes or No	
Discretionary Bursary - if yes please complete section C please note you must be aged 19 or older	Yes or No	

SECTION A – Free Meals - additional information required.

Please tick all the benefits you, the learner, or your parent/s (living at the same address) are in receipt of. Please note **You only need to evidence one eligible benefit.**

Eligible Benefit	tick=yes I receive this	Evidence – say what document you are providing a copy of	Admin only
Income Support			
Income based Jobseekers allowance			
Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)			
Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999			
The guarantee element of State Pension Credit			
Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))			
Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit)			
Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa			

Please note you may be asked to provide further evidence especially if documents provided are old.

please note Working Tax Credit alone **is not** a qualifying benefit

SECTION B – Vulnerable Student Bursary- information required. (2 pages)

The bursary is paid to enable you to attend education with us and will only be paid if you meet all eligibility criteria and your attendance and behaviour meet the required standard.

Please complete forms below and produce the required evidence as stated:

About You	YES	NO	Admin ONLY
Were you aged 16,17 or 18 on 31 August 2021?			
Do you meet ESFA residency criteria (as Appendix A)?			
Are you In Care or a Care Leaver? (evidence required – letter from Local Authority)			
Are you In receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit? (evidence required – Income Support or Universal Credit Statement letter)			
Are you In receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in your own right <u>and in receipt of</u> Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit (UC) (evidence required – financial statement showing both DLA or PIP and ESA or UC)			

Please note you may be asked to provide further evidence especially if documents provided are old.

Bursary payments will be paid directly into learners’ bank/building society accounts only (by BACS). Please be aware that The Autism Project can choose to pay Bursary awards ‘in kind’, e.g. by purchasing equipment required.

Please provide your bank details below as printed on your bank card or statement.

Account Name								
Account Number								
Sort Code			-			-		

Learner Declaration

1. I declare that the information on this form is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I have made this claim for a Bursary payment, fully aware that any false statements can lead to withdrawal/refusal of any financial support and may lead to me being prosecuted.
2. I understand that if I refuse to provide information which may be relevant to my claim, the application will not be accepted.

3. I understand that monies I receive under the Bursary Scheme have been awarded to provide me with financial support to allow me to continue in learning, that they are to be used for items such as equipment or travel and if I leave learning all financial support will stop.
4. I understand that the monies I receive under the Bursary Scheme will be paid on condition of the standards of attendance and behaviour, as explained in the Free Meals and Bursary Fund information supplied with this form.
5. I will attend regularly and complete the course for which my bursary is supporting me.
6. If there are changes to my household financial circumstances (which may result in changes to my claim), I confirm I will notify The Autism Project.
7. I will notify The Autism Project of any changes to my Bank/Building Society details.
8. I understand that I do not have an automatic entitlement to Bursary payments, and all payments are based on the information provided.
9. I understand I have the right to appeal if I disagree with the outcome of my Bursary Application.
10. This appeal should be made in writing to The Head of Education & Learning, The Autism Project, but if I feel I have not been treated fairly, I can follow CareTrade's complaint procedure.

Learner Signature		Date	
Learner's Representative Signature (if learner unable to make own application)		Date	
Name of representative			
Capacity of Learner's representative			

Section C –Discretionary Bursary – information required. (3 pages)

The bursary is paid to enable you to attend education with us and will only be paid if you meet all eligibility criteria and your attendance and behaviour meet the required standard.

Your household income is one criteria which will help us to assess your application **and it is compulsory that this is provided before your application is considered.** Your household means you, your parents or partner that you live with.

Please complete forms below and produce the required evidence as stated:

About your household	DETAILS		Admin ONLY
Who do you live with?			
What is your total annual household income? – include yourself, and parents or partner living with you Include earnings, income support, universal credit or pensions <u>Do not include DLA or PIP</u>	Under £23,000		
	Under £30,000		
	Under £40,000		
	Over £40,000 *		
Number of and ages of dependent children in the household			
Evidence of Income Provided	EVIDENCE to be attached		
P60			
Recent wage slips (latest 3)			
Income support/universal credit award letter			
Full tax credit award notice (last 3 months statements)			
Other benefits/pensions (award letter)			
Self-employed earnings (official tax return)			
* where income is over £40K evidence is optional. However this is likely to affect the award.			

Please note you may be asked to provide further evidence especially if documents provided are old.

Learner request for Assistance Form – the amount of financial assistance you will receive will be dependent on your personal circumstances. It is intended to help you with the costs of overcoming any barriers you may have to attend or when attending learning.

Use the table below to tell us what you might need financial assistance with and an estimate of how much you will need during the academic year. This information is strictly confidential and will only be used for this assessment purpose.

Assistance Requested (please give details)	£ Amount requested	Number of days/weeks/ items needed	Admin ONLY
IT equipment			
Books			
Transport			
Meals (please also complete Section A)			
Any other			
<p>If there are extenuating circumstances within your household that have not been covered but you would like us to consider as part of this application, please provide the information here.</p>			

Bursary payments will be paid directly into learners' bank/building society accounts only (by BACS). Please be aware that The Autism Project can choose to pay Bursary awards 'in kind', e.g. by purchasing equipment required.

Please provide your bank details below as printed on your bank card or statement.

Account Name								
Account Number								
Sort Code			-			-		

Learner Declaration

- I declare that the information on this form is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I have made this claim for a Bursary payment, fully aware that any false statements can lead to withdrawal/refusal of any financial support and may lead to me being prosecuted.
- I understand that if I refuse to provide information which may be relevant to my claim, the application will not be accepted.
- I understand that monies I receive under the Bursary Scheme have been awarded to provide me with financial support to allow me to continue in learning, that they are to be used for items such as equipment or travel and if I leave learning all financial support will stop.
- I understand that the monies I receive under the Bursary Scheme will be paid on condition of the standards of attendance and behaviour, as explained in the Free Meals and Bursary Fund information supplied with this form.
- I will attend regularly and complete the course for which my bursary is supporting me.
- If there are changes to my household financial circumstances (which may result in changes to my claim), I confirm I will notify The Autism Project.
- I will notify The Autism Project of any changes to my Bank/Building Society details.
- I understand that I do not have an automatic entitlement to Bursary payments, and all payments are based on the information provided.
- I understand I have the right to appeal if I disagree with the outcome of my Bursary Application. Please Appeals should be made in writing to following CareTrade's complaint procedure.

Learner Signature		Date	
Learner's Representative Signature (if learner unable to make own application)		Date	
Name of representative			
Capacity of Learner's representative			