

10th April 2013

Cabinet Member (Education) – Councillor Kershaw

Director Approving Submission of the report: Director of Community Services

Ward(s) affected: All

Title: 24+ Advanced Learning Loans Bursary Fund

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

The Government via the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) will be introducing a new model of funding for courses for adults who are aged 24+, and where the course is at Level 3 or above for courses commencing September 2013. The scheme involves the use of loans administered by the Student Loans Company in a similar style to the system which already exists for Higher Education loans. To support this new funding model a new bursary fund has been made available for vulnerable adults in this age and qualification category. The Adult Education Service already provides course up to and including Level 3, therefore requiring a policy to deal with this change. The Level 3 courses currently offered are all in vocational areas. Prior to this change the Adult Education Service (AES) was able to use the Discretionary Learner Support Fund to support these learners. This paper presents the policy of how AES will implement the fund in line with guidelines provided by the SFA.

Recommendations:

That the Cabinet Member approves the proposed policy for the implementation of the 24+ Adult Learning Loans Bursary Fund for use by the Adult Education Service.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1: 24+ Advanced Learning Loans Bursary Fund Policy
Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment

Other useful background papers:

Document: 24+ Advanced Learning Loans (Policy Overview & Frequently Asked Questions)
Date: December 2012
Location (URL): http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/SFA/FINAL24+_Advanced_Learning_Loans_-_December_2012Policy_Overview_and_Frequently_Asked_Questions.pdf

Document: A guide to 24+ Advanced Learning Loans

Date: May 2012

Location (URL):

http://readingroom.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/sfa/24plusall_updated_guide_and_faqs_may_2012.pdf

Document: Further Education – 24+ Advanced Learning Loans Equality Impact Assessment

Date: 2012

Location (URL):

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32314/12-872-further-education-advanced-learning-loans-equality-impact.pdf

Document: Funding Rules 2013/2014 (Version 1)

Date: January 2013

Location (URL): http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/SFA/Funding_Rules_2013_14_Jan_2013.pdf

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: 24+ Advanced Learning Loans Bursary Fund

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 The Government, via the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), has introduced the 24+ Advanced Learning Loan scheme whereby learners aged 24+ and doing a Level 3 course must apply to the Student Loans Company (SLC) for a loan for their fees. These learners are not eligible to apply to the Discretionary Learner Support Fund for help with any additional costs. The 24+ Advanced Learning Loan Bursary is intended to support vulnerable learners such as those with learning difficulties or disabilities, parents who need help with childcare and ex-military personnel. This paper presents the policy of how AES will implement the fund, in line with guidelines provided by the SFA.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 As the administration of the Bursary Fund is now a requirement by the SFA, no other options were considered. The delivery of the policy is in line with guidelines provided by the SFA and in line with the 16-19 Bursary Fund policy which was agreed in June 2012.
- 2.2 Proposal: The Cabinet Member approves the proposed policy for the implementation of the 24+ Advanced Learning Loans Bursary Fund (copy of proposed policy attached).

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 A consultation was undertaken by BIS in 2011 with the sector and stakeholders and the policy documents above were issued as a result of this. Discussion has also taken place with colleagues within AES to agree if the policy could be implemented in AES in the same way as has occurred with the 16-19 Bursary Fund.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 Implementation: Immediate
- 4.2 Monitoring: termly and at the end of each academic year.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Legal Services

- 5.1 Financial implications
AES has been allocated £8,020 by the SFA for the academic year 2013/14 for distribution to learners who meet the criteria of the Bursary Fund. The fund is a discretionary fund, which in line with SFA guidance is to support those from low income households (household income less than £16,190/annum), to support the purchase of such items as travel, books and equipment. Once the monies in the fund are used, AES will not be able to support any additional applications until the following academic year when another allocation is expected from the SFA. The Council will therefore not be at risk of having to provide funding for this scheme.
- 5.2 Legal implications
The Skills Funding Agency have set out funding rules relating to learning and skills provision which has been provided by the Funding Skills Agency or through loans including the 24+ Advanced Learning Loans Bursary Fund. Providers must operate to comply with the terms and conditions contained within the Funding Rules 2013/14 and where they fail to do so action may be taken against them by the Skills Funding Agency.

6. Other implications

None.

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

The Bursary Fund will provide additional monies to allow adults aged 24+ to remain in and achieve in education, when they may not otherwise have been able to do so. This will support them in gaining skills and qualifications that will allow them to meet standards within their workplace and may improve their job prospects, thus supporting economic activity in the city.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

The bursary is a discretionary fund and will be allocated on a first come basis. Once the allocation is used, additional bursaries will not be able to be allocated.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

Additional administration time is required to administer and monitor the Bursary Fund but this will be achievable within the current staffing arrangement.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

An EIA was completed in March 2013 with no negative impacts identified.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None.

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