

**FREE MEAL ALLOWANCE POLICY**

**What is the Free Meal Allowance?**

The 1996 Education Act requires maintained Schools and Academy Sixth Forms to provide free meals to disadvantaged Learners who are aged over 16.

Institutions must make a free meal available for all eligible Learners for each day the Learner attends their study programme, where this is appropriate.

Institutions receive funding at a rate equivalent to £2.41 per Learner per meal.

Where institutions receive funding for both free meals in Further Education and 16 to 19 Bursary Fund Discretionary Bursary, they may use the funding as a single allocation.

**Eligibility**

A Learner must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August of relevant academic year to be eligible to receive a free meal.

Learners aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a free meal if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (‘19+ continuers’) or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

These 2 groups of aged 19 plus Learners can receive a free meal while they continue to attend education (in the case of a 19+ continuer, this must be the same programme they started before they turned 19), as long as their eligibility continues.

The following groups of Learners are not eligible for free meals in further education:

* Learners aged 19 or over at the start of their study programme unless they have an EHCP or are a 19+ continuer.
* Apprentices, including those with an EHCP

**Policy Aims**

* To ensure that the Free Meal Allowance is administered in accordance with DfE/ESFA guidelines and Policies.
* To explain the procedure for making applications including eligibility criteria, how the Bursary is calculated and payment processes.

**Proof of Income**

Evidence of certain benefits will be required to support an application for free meal allowance. Please see the application form for the eligible evidence.

**The Academy/College assesses Applications and allocates Bursary Funding**

All Learners who are eligible should be paid free meal allowance.

Learners who are eligible should complete an application form and hand it to the Administration Team as close to the start of a new academic year as possible. However, applications can be made at any time during the year, as some courses start at different times.

The application form is available from the Administration Team or from the link below.

**How the Free Meal Allowance is paid**

Learners receive £2.41 for each day they are in a full day’s training. This can be paid by cash on a weekly, 2 weekly or monthly basis. Or it can be paid along with the 16 – 19 Discretionary Bursary into the Learner’s account on a monthly basis.

Learners must sign for any cash allowances paid.

Please note RTA have the right to ask for evidence such as receipts to confirm the payment is being use as intended for audit purposes.

Please complete the [Free meal allowance application form 2023 - 2024.doc](https://www.reynoldsgroup.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Free-meal-allowance-application-form-2022-2023.doc) This form is also available from the Administration Team.

If you have any queries, please contact the Business Support Team at: training@reynoldsgroup.co.uk or 01322 275807.

RTA Free Meal Allowance Policy – reviewed 7-3-2024