

SAAS

Student
Awards
Agency
Scotland

Funding your future

www.saas.gov.uk



College Further and Higher Education Childcare Fund

GUIDANCE

2023-24



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba



Scottish
Government
gov.scot

- ✓ Informing Choices
- ✓ Funding Futures
- ✓ Supporting Success

USEFUL CONTACTS

Student Awards Agency Scotland

Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
EDINBURGH
EH11 3UT
0300 555 0505
<http://www.saas.gov.uk/>

If colleges have any queries about eligibility or implementation of the regulations presented in this guidance, please contact the SFC Student Support Team who will be able to advise you further.

studentsupport@sfc.ac.uk

Scottish Funding Council

97 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5HD
0131 313 6500
<http://www.sfc.ac.uk/>

Students Loans Company Ltd

100 Bothwell Street
GLASGOW
G2 7JD
Freephone 0845 0738891
<http://www.slc.co.uk/>

Scottish Government

Student Financial Support Team
Atlantic Quay
150 Broomielaw
Glasgow
G2 8LU
<https://www.gov.scot/>

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
ABOUT THE FUND	4
ELIGIBILITY	6
ELIGIBILITY TABLE	7
RESIDENCE	8
AGE	8
ENGAGEMENT	8
PREVIOUS STUDY RULE/LINK TO TUITION FEE ELIGIBILITY	9
OTHER SUPPORT	9
ASSESSMENTS	12
HOW NEEDS ARE ASSESSED	12
FINANCIAL PROCESSES	14
DISBURSEMENT AND PAYMENT AMOUNTS	14
TREATMENT OF FUNDS BY INSTITUTIONS	15
ADMINISTRATION	16
ANNUAL AUDITED RETURNS	16
Annex A – Application for Lone Parent’s Childcare Grant	17

INTRODUCTION

These notes provide guidance to assist managers in the operation of College Childcare Funds, which have been allocated to them as part of the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) Student Support funding allocations for Academic Year (AY) 2023-24.

Colleges should use these guidelines to assist them to devise suitable systems, for which they will be accountable, to undertake the receipt and disbursement of these Funds to students on both Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) courses.

This guidance is aligned with the Childcare Fund guidance issued by Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) to the University sector.

ABOUT THE FUND

Changes for AY 2023-24

- There are no substantive policy changes to the guidance for colleges for AY 2023-24.
- We have removed the COVID-related flexibility that was temporarily in place for AYs 2021-22 and 2022-23 that allowed colleges to use unspent Childcare funds to supplement their HE Discretionary funds (see 'Transfer and carry-forward of funds' section on page 16).

Purpose of College Childcare Funds

College Childcare Funds sit alongside Bursary and Discretionary Funds and are available to all **eligible** FE and HE students with childcare responsibilities. The funds provide assistance with the cost of **formal registered childcare expenses**. This guidance does not place limits on the amounts individuals can access and gives institutions the flexibility to determine award levels.

However, it should be remembered that both FE and HE **eligible** lone parent students are **entitled** to a payment of **up to a maximum of £1,215 per year*** from College Childcare Funds and it is the institutions' responsibility to ensure that there are always funds available to make these payments to lone parents from Childcare Funds.

*** These payments will be assessed taking account of any other payments received for childcare costs from other sources.**

College Childcare Funds have two elements:

- **The Lone Parents Childcare Grant (LPCG) element** which will be an entitlement payment of **up to** £1,215 per year to all **eligible** FE and HE students who are lone parents and who have formal registered childcare expenses while studying. **The LPCG is not income assessed.**
- and
- **Discretionary Childcare Funds** which all eligible students may apply to for financial help with formal registered childcare expenses. Payments from Discretionary Childcare Funds will be made at the discretion of institutions and based on an assessment of need.

Distributing body of funds by student type

	Discretionary Funds	Childcare Funds	Lone Parent Childcare Grant (LPCG)
College FE student	SFC (FE Discretionary Funds)	SFC (combined HE/FE Childcare Funds)	SFC (combined HE/FE Childcare Funds)
College HE student	SAAS (HE Discretionary Funds)	SFC (combined HE/FE Childcare Funds)	SFC (combined HE/FE Childcare Funds)
University student	SAAS (HE Discretionary Funds)	SAAS (HE Childcare Funds)	SAAS (HE Childcare Funds)

Discretionary Childcare Funding in College

All eligible FE and HE students attending college will be able to apply for help for registered childcare costs from College Childcare Funds, at the discretion of their college.

Lone parent students will also be able to apply for **additional** help with registered childcare costs (over and above the Lone Parents Childcare Grant) from College Childcare Funds, at the discretion of their institution.

Students who have accessed College Childcare Funds will continue to be able to access support from the main Discretionary funds, as well as Childcare Funds, at the discretion of their college.

What is considered as 'Registered Childcare'

Childcare providers must be registered with the Care Inspectorate. Individual child minders must also be registered but nannies do not have to. However, the Childcare Fund can be used by students who use nannies that are recruited through agencies that are registered with the Care Inspectorate.

Eligibility Table

Residence

[Ordinary Residence](#)

[Forces Personnel](#)

[Other Residency Exceptions](#)

Age

Engagement

Previous Study Rule (link to tuition fee eligibility)

Other Support

[FE Bursary Funds](#)

[Maintenance Loan](#)

[Tuition Fee Loan](#)

[Other Childcare Support available to students with childcare costs](#)

[English Domiciled Students \(HE students only\)](#)

[Northern Irish Domiciled Students](#)

[Welsh Domiciled Students](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

ELIGIBILITY TABLE

Eligible to apply:	College Childcare Funds (FE & HE students)	University HE Childcare Funds
<u>Domicile/residence</u>	Meets residency criteria set out in the Education (Access Funds) (Scotland) Determination 2023 and the associated FE Residency Guidance .	Is UK domiciled and meets residency criteria set out in the Education (Discretionary Funds and FE Bursaries) (Scotland) Determination 2023. Is ordinarily resident in Scotland on the first day of the first academic year of the course, as set out in The Student Support (Scotland) Regulations 2022 as amended in The Education (Fees and Student Support) (Miscellaneous Amendment) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 .
<u>Age</u>	Must be past compulsory school leaving age.	Must be past compulsory school leaving age.
Eligible Courses	Must be attending a SFC-fundable course and must be a fundable student. An explanation of 'fundable' may be found in SFC's Credit Guidance for Colleges . HE students must be attending full-time courses.	Must be attending an eligible full-time course of study, as defined by SAAS. This includes postgraduate courses that qualify for tuition fee loan funding from SAAS. Part-time students cannot access the Childcare Funds at university, however they can apply to the main Discretionary Fund for help with childcare costs.
Other Criteria	HE students must have used some entitlement of all other available support such as student loan. Colleges must ensure that they take account of the Regulations of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 and all childcare regulations when using the CCF to cover students' childcare costs. Students must be paying registered childcare costs	Must have used full entitlement of all other available support such as student loan. HE lone parents should also have claimed the Lone Parents Grant from SAAS and have claimed Child Tax Credits and free nursery places etc., as provided by their local authority. Students must meet the eligibility criteria for tuition fees to be eligible for assistance from the Childcare Fund, apart from the Lone Parent Childcare Grant element.
<u>Other Support</u>	Students should have taken out any full free childcare entitlement available from the government and child tax credits, if applicable.	Must be paying registered childcare costs.
Priority Groups	Mature students, lone parents, part-time students, care-experienced students, student carers, estranged students (where it would not negatively impact on their ability to claim, or continue to be entitled to, income related benefits).	Mature students, lone parents, care-experienced students, student carers, estranged students (Where it would not negatively impact on their ability to claim, or continue to be entitled to, income related benefits).

RESIDENCE

Ordinary Residence

To be eligible to apply for support from the Childcare Funds, students must meet the following conditions:

- ordinary residence in Scotland
- ordinary residence in the United Kingdom and Islands throughout the period of 3 years immediately preceding the relevant date; and be one of the following-
- settled in the United Kingdom within the meaning given by section 33(2A) (Interpretation) of the Immigration Act; **or**
- a person (who has not applied for refugee status) but has been informed in writing by a person acting under the authority of the Secretary of State for the Home Department that is thought right to allow you to enter or remain in the United Kingdom and been granted leave to enter or remain accordingly which has not expired; **or**
- the spouse, civil partner or child of a person described in the two preceding sub-paragraphs above.

Forces Personnel

To prevent them from being disadvantaged, military personnel and their families should be assessed on a relevant connection to Scotland. This is because support at FE level is not portable across borders, meaning they will not receive support from the rest of the UK country in which the family member in the military was ordinarily resident when they joined up.

Other Residency Exceptions

If a student is not eligible for support under the general residence conditions, they may still be eligible to apply to the Childcare Fund for support under one of the exceptions to the ordinary residence conditions. Detailed information about the exceptions to our residency criteria can be found at [SAAS Residency conditions](#) and the [FE Residency Guidance](#). If you need further clarification on residency eligibility, please contact the [SFC Student Support Team](#), who will be happy to assist you.

EU nationals who are eligible for full living cost support will also be eligible to apply to the fund. As will those EU nationals with protected rights eligible for tuition fees only, who were here by the end of 2020, have pre-settled status, but haven't been in the UK for 3 years.

[Return to Chapter index](#)

AGE

Students entering FE or HE courses before they have reached their official school leaving date are not eligible to apply for support from the Childcare Funds.

[Return to Chapter index](#)

ENGAGEMENT

Institutions must be satisfied that students are attending/undertaking an appropriate course of education and that their attendance/ participation and progression is satisfactory and in line with any other national or local guidance on this issue.

[Return to Chapter index](#)

PREVIOUS STUDY RULE/LINK TO TUITION FEE ELIGIBILITY

HE Students must meet the eligibility criteria for tuition fees to be paid by SAAS in order to be eligible for assistance from the Childcare Funds. However, you can still award the Lone Parent Childcare Grant element to eligible students who are not receiving tuition fee support due to previous study rules.

There are currently no previous study rules that would have an effect a FE student's eligibility for assistance from the Childcare Funds.

[Return to Chapter index](#)

OTHER SUPPORT

FE Bursary Funds

Students on FE courses can apply for FE Bursary Funds. This is for full-time students and is means-tested depending on age, family circumstances and income. Students must have applied for any FE bursary to which they are entitled before receiving help from the Childcare Fund.

Maintenance Loan

Student loans are an integral part of the system of support for HE students. Students who are eligible for a maintenance student loan are, of course, free to decide whether to take out a loan and, if so, how much to borrow.

However, a student must have taken out, or applied for, the full living cost loan and/or bursary to which they are entitled before receiving help from the Childcare Fund. Institutions should contact SAAS if they are unsure whether a student has applied for any living cost support.

Tuition Fee Loan

Students do not have to take out the tuition fee loan, in order to apply to the Childcare Fund (for example, the course may attract a fee from SFC). However, colleges should consider why someone had not taken out the tuition fee loan, and whether that decision was impacting on their request for Childcare support.

For example, if a student chose to pay their own fees and not take out a tuition fee loan; does that impact on their need to cover childcare costs from elsewhere?

[Return to Chapter index](#)

Other Childcare support available to students with childcare costs: Scottish-domiciled students only

Type of Support	Description	Further Information
Tax Credits	<p>Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will pay Child Tax Credit to those responsible for at least one child, whether or not they are in paid work.</p> <p>Students who are working or have a partner who is working may be eligible for Working Tax Credit. Where both members of a couple work at least 16 hours per week, Working Tax Credit can include help with registered childcare costs.</p> <p>Universal credit will replace Tax Credits over the next few years. Universal credit can help with childcare costs for people in work, and provides financial support for parent students who have a low income.</p>	<p>Further information on Tax Credits is available at https://www.gov.uk/benefits-credits/tax-credits or by calling 0345 300 3900</p>
Free School Meals	Students who are in receipt of Child Tax Credit or some other benefits may also be eligible for free school meals.	Students should contact their own local authority for more information
Lone Parent Grant	HE Students who are widowed, divorced, separated or single with at least one dependent child are eligible for the Lone Parent Grant from SAAS. Institutions should ensure that they have claimed their full entitlement of Lone Parent Grant from SAAS when assessing any need for support through the Childcare Funds.	Further Information can be found at Living Costs Grants - Student Carers - SAAS
Funded Early Learning and Childcare	<p>Funded early learning and childcare is free to parents but funded by the Scottish Government.</p> <p>Parents can get up to 1,140 hours of funded early learning and childcare a year (around 30 hours a week in term time) if their child is 3 or 4 years old.</p>	Further information can be found at Funded early learning and childcare

English-domiciled students (HE students only)

HE English-domiciled students studying in Scotland may be able to receive a Childcare Grant from their funding body if they are using certain types of childcare:

- Childcare provided by child-minders, nurseries and play schemes registered by the Care Inspectorate.
- Childcare provided by out-of-school-hours clubs registered by the Care Inspectorate on school premises and run by a school or a local authority.
- Childcare provided by an approved foster carer. (The care must be for a child who is not being fostered by the foster carer.)
- Childcare provided in the child's own home by (or introduced through) childcare agencies, sitter services and nanny agencies which are required to be registered by the Care Inspectorate.

These students would **not** then qualify for assistance from the College Childcare Fund, **although they would continue to be eligible for assistance from the general Discretionary Funds.**

The types of childcare that qualify for the English HE Childcare Grant have been extended to include other forms of childcare which qualify for the childcare element of Working Tax Credit (WTC) administered by HMRC. This means that childcare in Scotland and Northern Ireland which counts as qualifying childcare for the WTC childcare element, now also counts as qualifying childcare for the Childcare Grant.

Northern Irish-domiciled students

Northern Irish-domiciled students studying in Scotland may be able to receive support towards childcare from the Northern Irish Government. More information can be found here:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/childcare/childcare-benefits-tax-credits-and-other-help-working-parents>

Welsh-domiciled students

Welsh-domiciled students studying in Scotland may be able to receive support towards childcare from the Welsh Government. More information can be found here:

<https://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/children-and-young-people/childcare/help-paying-for-childcare/?lang=en#content>

[*Return to Chapter index*](#)

ASSESSMENTS

How Needs Are Assessed

Factors for Consideration in the Assessment of Need

Lone Parent Childcare Grant

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

HOW NEEDS ARE ASSESSED

A balanced and proportionate approach should be taken when considering each application in regards to evidence submitted/assessed. However, it remains at the discretion of each institution as to what evidence is permitted.

In addition to their application a student **may** provide:

- proof of accommodation costs
- a recent bank statement
- details of their weekly income/expenditure
- any other information you feel is relevant to assessing hardship

It is for colleges to decide what evidence is required in order to verify the information provided by the student. However, in the interests of prudence and value for money, they should examine a random sample of cases to compare estimated expenditure with actual expenditure incurred. Students should therefore be informed that they may be asked to provide proof of actual expenditure later in the year. Institutions must remember, however, that payments from the Childcare Funds should only be made when the student has applied for their full maintenance student support and supplementary grant entitlement (if eligible).

Factors for consideration in the assessment of need

- Whether the claimed deficit between income and expenditure constitutes real need and cannot reasonably be reduced to a manageable level by the student.
- Whether the payment should be in instalments or in the form of a short-term repayable cash advance and the frequency with which payments to individuals should be made and entitlement reviewed.
- The availability of support from alternative sources, e.g. bursaries, assistance from SAAS, assistance from another UK funding body (for students from England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or DWP Benefits.
- The circumstances of students and types of need prevalent locally and any existing local schemes for improving access.
- In considering requests for support from the Funds from students who have temporarily suspended their studies through illness or who may be experiencing difficulty in finding a placement in industry as an essential part of their course, institutions should first check whether the student continues to be registered as a student. They should also take into account the prospect of the student resuming his or her course and the availability of support from other sources.

Lone Parent Childcare Grant

Lone parent students who have to pay all or part of the cost for registered or formal childcare* can receive up to **£1,215** a year, depending on the cost of childcare from their college childcare fund. "Formal" childcare includes child-minders, after-school clubs and providers of day-care and education. (If full childcare costs are paid from other sources a student should **not** apply for this grant.)

The Lone Parents Childcare Grant is not income assessed but a student must provide evidence that they are a lone parent with registered or formal childcare expenses and details of funding for childcare from any other sources. Please see [Annex A](#) for a suggested form that you may find useful for this purpose.

To confirm that the student is a lone parent, they might provide:

- A copy of the front page of their tax credit award and the relevant page which shows they have made a claim as an individual
- A copy of a letter from the Department for Work and Pensions which shows that they receive benefits as a lone parent.
- Details of their childcare provider and confirmation of how much they pay.

If lone parents have childcare costs in excess of the maximum LPCG, they can also apply for additional help with childcare costs to the Discretionary Childcare Funds. In such cases, lone parents should be assessed for Discretionary Childcare Funding in the same way as other students.

ADVICE TO STUDENTS

College may receive enquiries about assistance from the College Childcare Funds before courses commence. Those administering these Funds may advise prospective eligible students of the amount which they will receive on starting their course, especially lone parents' entitlement to the LPCG.

[Return to Chapter index](#)

FINANCIAL PROCESSES

Disbursement and Payment Amounts

Summer Support

Treatment of Funds by Institutions

Appeals, Applications and Decision-Making Process

Publicity

Treatment by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) of payments from both funds

Administration

Allocation and Payment of Funds

Transfer and Carry Forward of Funds

Annual Audited Returns

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

DISBURSEMENT AND PAYMENT AMOUNTS

Assistance from College Childcare Funds may be given in the form of a direct payment to the student or to a nominated third party, for example, a childcare provider.

When institutions choose to make direct payments to students, they must ensure that students use the money for its intended purpose. It is up to individual institution to decide how best to monitor this proof for example, request receipts to show that the money has been passed to their childcare provider. Institutions should make it clear to students what their responsibilities are for example that they must use the money to pay their childcare provider immediately.

There is no limit to what a college can award each student from Childcare Funds. However, colleges should remember to retain enough funds to help as many student parents as possible and to ensure that there are always enough funds to pay the LPCG to eligible students.

Childcare costs will only be met to cover the time a student is studying.

For example:

If a student is attending college for only three days, we would not cover costs of nursery provision for five days.

[Return to Chapter index](#)

Summer Support

Some continuing students find that they need financial assistance late in the academic year to help support them over the long summer vacation. Institutions may wish to consider holding back some of the funds, and keep in place arrangements for considering late applications.

Colleges will need to consider the circumstances of each case, particularly for those students who have childcare and/or caring responsibilities over the summer; are conducting a placement or other course related activity over the summer and therefore are limited in their capability to work during this period. There may also be other personal circumstances out with the student's control that affect their ability to gain employment over the summer.

Colleges should also be mindful that some students may be able to claim benefits over the summer, whilst others may have managed to secure employment. This should be considered when assessing applications for support.

[Return to Chapter index](#)

TREATMENT OF FUNDS BY INSTITUTIONS

Appeals, Applications and Decision-Making Process

Institutions should have an appeals procedure in place for cases where students have applied unsuccessfully for help from Childcare Funds. This procedure should be clear, and students should be informed of their right to appeal. It will be for each college to resolve any appeals internally with individual students about the award of a payment from the funds.

Colleges should have a transparent application and decision-making process. As previously stated, it will be for each institution to ensure that they have their own arrangements in place.

Publicity

Institutions are responsible for publicising the availability of these funds to their students. We would expect colleges to manage this via their own social media channels.

Treatment by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) of payments from both funds

Payments from the Funds should be disregarded as long as they are not intended for general living costs and do not, therefore, duplicate provision from the benefits system.

[Return to Chapter index](#)

ADMINISTRATION

Allocation and payment of funds

Colleges were notified of their allocations of student support funds as part of the [Funding Announcement for 2023-24](#). Colleges can draw down these funds monthly as required.

Transfer and carry-forward of funds

Colleges can use their Student Support funds across FE Bursary, FE Discretionary and FE/HE Childcare as they see fit. They are encouraged to do so to enable them to effectively meet the needs of their students and their community. When using childcare funds to meet shortfalls in bursary funds, this must meet the conditions of the bursary policy in full.

Colleges cannot use Childcare funds for students who are not eligible. Colleges should also ensure that they have met the childcare needs of students who are already being supported at the college before considering using these funds for bursary purposes.

Colleges are not permitted to transfer funding from FE/HE CCF to HE Discretionary Funds. This was allowed in AYs 2021-22 and 2022-23 to provide colleges with ongoing flexibility to respond to student demand during the COVID-19 recovery phase.

Colleges will be required to report spend on **Childcare funds for FE and HE separately and any funds transferred should be recorded as spend under FE or HE Childcare Funds in the college audited student support return.**

Colleges must account for their total spend on each fund, including transferred funds, in their audited data returns. Colleges cannot carry-forward any unspent Childcare Funds into the following Academic Year.

ANNUAL AUDITED RETURNS

SFC publishes annual guidance on the audit of Student Support funding each summer. The SFC audit guidance for last year, AY 2022-23, can be found [here](#). Colleges should comply with this guidance as it relates to the audit of Childcare Funds.

[Return to Chapter index](#)

Annex A – Application for Lone Parent’s Childcare Grant

If you have more than one childcare provider, you must fill in a separate form for each of them. Please therefore make the relevant number of copies of this form. Please also use black ink to fill in the form.

Section A: Your personal details

Name:	SAAS/College reference number: «students ref no»
Date of birth:	Your National Insurance No:
College:	

Section B: To be filled in by the student

Please give us details of the registered or formal childcare costs you expect to pay during the period 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024. If your course begins in January or April, the 12 month period we need information for will begin on 1 January and 1 April respectively. The childcare provider you use must be registered with the Care Inspectorate in Scotland and must provide their registration number in the box provided. We will not pay for informal childcare, for example, a friend or relative. **Please note that we regularly ask childcare providers to confirm that your child/children is/are registered with them. You must advise us immediately if you change childcare provider or of any change in your circumstances that may affect your entitlement to this grant. If we have paid you more than you are entitled to, we will ask you to pay this back. If you make a false claim, we will seek prosecution.**

We cannot help you with your childcare costs if you are getting them paid in full from another source. We will take the payment you expect to receive from other sources from your childcare costs for the year. If you expect to receive a payment from your local authority for pre-school education, you should tell us how much you expect this to be, even if you are still waiting to claim this back from the authority.

Childcare costs for the year: Please enter the total cost of registered or formal childcare that you expect to pay.	£
Childcare costs you expect to receive from other sources: Please enter the total childcare costs you expect to receive from other sources.	£
Total childcare costs: Please enter the total childcare costs for one childcare provider, less what you expect to receive from other sources.	£
Details of children	
Children’s Full name	Date of Birth

Section C: To be filled in by your childcare provider

I confirm that I have agreed to provide childcare to the named child/children above and I will advise you immediately of any change to this. (Please note that it would be helpful if you could keep a record of when the above child/children are in your care and the cost of this care, as we may ask you for this information sometime in the future).

Name, address and telephone number of registered (or approved) childcare provider:

Name or Company Name

Address.....

.....

Telephone number

My Care Inspectorate registration number is	C	S	2	0	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
--	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Manager or Proprietor’s
Name:.....**Signature:** **Date:**