

Staying the course

Disadvantaged young
people's experiences in
the first term of the 16-19
Bursary Fund

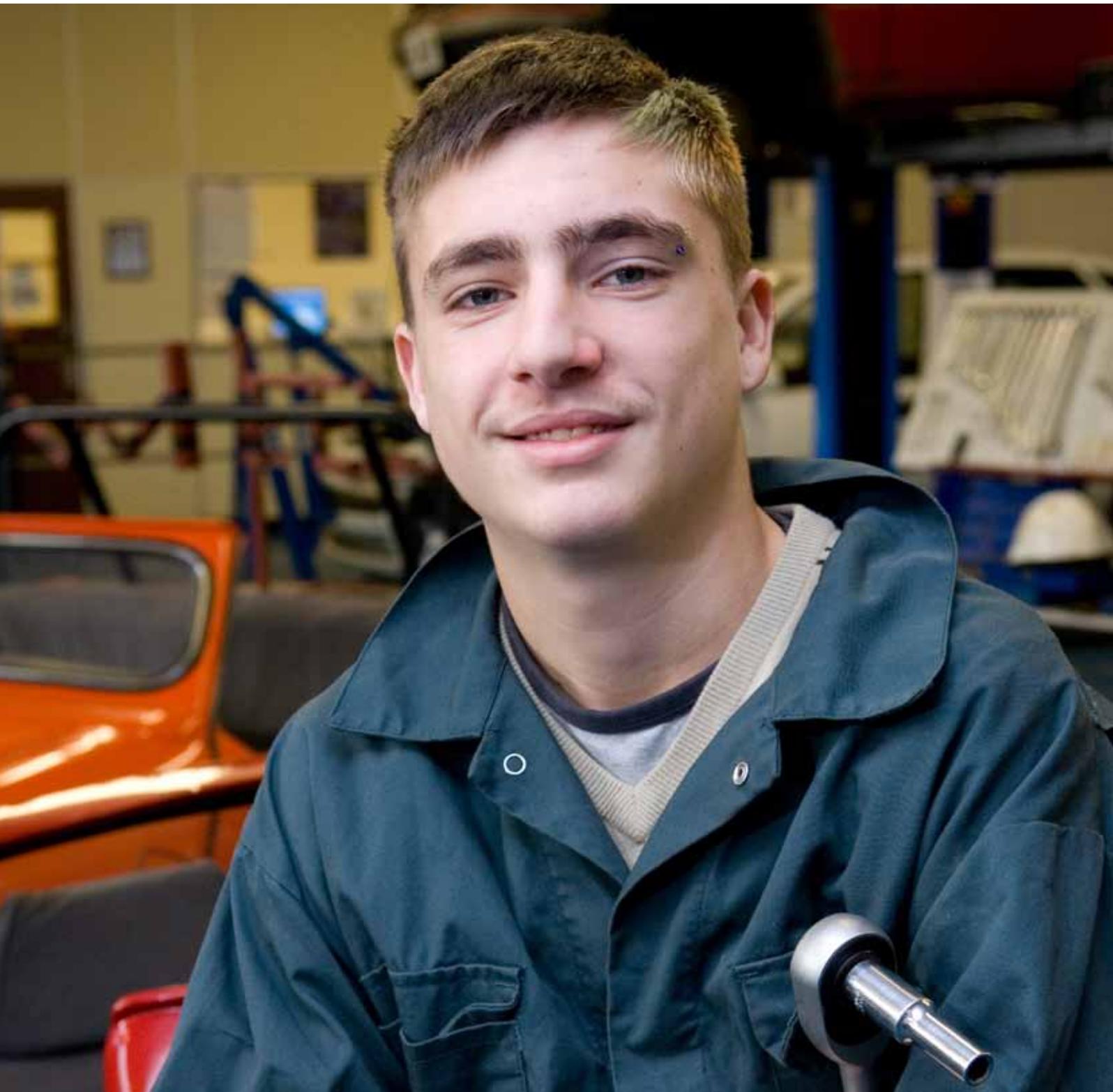
**Believe in
children**



Barnardo's

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By Jane Evans



Contents

Summary

Chapter one: Introduction

- 1.1 Improving outcomes for disadvantaged young people
- 1.2 Policy background
- 1.3 Social mobility through education
- 1.4 Policy rationale - incentive or support?

Chapter two: The research

- 2.1 Methods
- 2.2 Main findings

Chapter three: Background information

- 3.1 The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)
- 3.2 The 16-19 Bursary Fund
- 3.3 The 16-19 guaranteed bursary
- 3.4 16-19 discretionary funding

Chapter four: What do young people use the money for?

- 4.1 Food
- 4.2 Transport
- 4.3 Paying for equipment
- 4.4 Paying board to parents
- 4.5 Hardship
- 4.6 Social life restrictions
- 4.7 Motivation

Chapter five: Administering funds and payments

- 5.1 Costs of administration
- 5.2 Haste of delivery and lack of guidance
- 5.3 Complexity of the system
- 5.4 Obtaining money to pass on to learners
- 5.5 Subsidising learners' entitlement to bursary funds

Chapter six: Conclusion

Chapter seven: Recommendations

Appendix A: The cost of Barnardo's recommendations

Appendix B: EMA in the United Kingdom

Glossary

Acknowledgements

Summary

Staying the course takes a close, initial look at the new 16-19 Bursary Fund for England and its impact on disadvantaged 16 to 19-year-olds in education and training. While it is too soon to quantify any longer term impact on student numbers or outcomes, young people's experiences of the new system's first term provide important feedback to ensure lessons are captured to inform any future developments affecting this key group.

This research demonstrates that the new 16-19 Bursary Fund leaves too many without the financial backup they need to support their everyday expenses, leaving them out of pocket and seriously considering whether they can afford to stay the course.

Staying the course provides an insight into the backgrounds of young people who depend on financial support to continue in education or training. Currently it appears that cuts to funding and confused targeting may leave many vulnerable young people without sufficient means to carry on learning. Without improvements, many of the young people that the Bursary Fund should support will be held back, because they say they cannot afford to continue.



Some young people are at a greater disadvantage under the new system:

Interviewers arranged to meet Sonia, a service user at Barnardo's Young Families Service in West Yorkshire. Sonia is a young mother on Income Support and Housing Benefit, and receiving the full bursary of £1,200 per year – guaranteed to certain vulnerable young people. Together with Care to Learn childcare funding, this fully supported her studies on a Health and Social Care course. Sonia wanted to go on to a nursing degree and was managing well.

Sonia asked to bring along her college friend who was receiving just £310 per year and experiencing hardship. It was informative to hear from both girls. Naomi was doing the same course as Sonia and planned to work in elder care. Like Sonia she was doing well academically and enjoying the course. She lived with her single mother and younger brother. Her mother had been unable to find work and was on benefits; Naomi had casual seasonal employment. The family was struggling financially and Naomi found it hard to afford transport, food and books to attend college. When asked what kept her going she replied: **'It is knowing that I am going to come out with an education and eventually get a good career. Then I will have a good income and afford stuff.'**

Based on the research in this report, Barnardo's recommends that the system is better funded, better targeted and better administered to ensure that the Government's aspirations for social mobility through education can benefit 16 to 19-year-olds as well as disadvantaged school children.

As previous research¹ has shown, poor and disadvantaged young people often need encouragement to continue in education and training. However the findings of this research indicate that in many cases the new funding system fails to address their needs for financial support, potentially discouraging them from participation in education and training. Additionally, complex and inefficient administrative systems lead to delays and inconsistent payments, another deterrent for young people continuing on courses.

As youth unemployment has been rising for some time, the Bursary Fund needs amending urgently to avoid a long-term block on social mobility. Coles et al calculated the lifetime public finance cost of a cohort of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) between 16 and 18 to be at least £12 billion.² The findings of this research demonstrate that, unless bursary funding is improved, the proportions of vulnerable young people who become NEET may increase.



- 1 Evans, J; Slowley, M (2010) *Not the end of the story: supporting teenage mothers back into education*. Barnardo's, Barkingside; Evans, J et al (2009) *Second chances: re-engaging young people in education and training*. Barnardo's, Barkingside; Hayward, G; Wilde, S and Williams, R (2008) *Rathbone/Nuffield Review Engaging Youth Enquiry-consultation report*; Mayor of London (2007) *What works in preventing and re-engaging young people NEET in London: research on young people 'not in education, employment, or training (NEET)*. Research as Evidence, London.
- 2 Coles, B; Godfrey, C; Keung, A et al (2010) *Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training*. University of York, York.



Chapter one:
Introduction

1.1 Improving outcomes for disadvantaged young people

Barnardo's works across the UK to offer young people from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds the education and training they need to bring them closer to the labour market, so improving economic and social outcomes. Increasing their skills and improving confidence and aspirations helps to break damaging cycles that potentially trap generations of families in poverty. With the knowledge gained from this experience, Barnardo's campaigns to improve policies and practice which affect the chances and choices of young people furthest from the labour market to continue learning beyond 16.

1.2 Policy background

UK Governments have long recognised the importance of engaging 16 to 19-year-olds with education and training to improve their life chances and employment prospects.

In 2007, as part of a response to numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), the Labour Government announced plans to ensure that all 16 to 18-year-olds in England are participating in some form of education or training by 2015. Education or training could be at school, in an apprenticeship, on a vocational training course, or in a job with training. The young person must be receiving 280 guided learning hours each year and be working towards a recognised qualification. This is known as Raising the Participation Age (RPA) and was formally introduced in the Education and Skills Act of 2008.

In 2011 the UK Government accepted the recommendations of the *Wolf Review³ of Vocational Training (the Wolf Report)* which emphasise the value of rigorous vocational qualifications to improve the life chances for 14 to 19-year-olds. The Wolf Report stresses the importance of young people continuing to learn English and maths where they have not previously achieved a GCSE grade C or above in these subjects.

By meeting the challenges presented by RPA and the recommendations of the Wolf Report, the UK Government demonstrates that it recognises the significance of engaging this age group with education and training.

1.3 Social mobility through education

The UK Government remains committed to improving social mobility through education. The Pupil Premium promises to do much to help children from deprived backgrounds improve on their achievements at school by helping to close the opportunity gap between poor pupils and their better-off classmates.

Barnardo's recognises that the UK Government wants to clear the fiscal deficit to avoid leaving future generations with a debt. At the same time it is welcome that spending on education has been protected and in some cases increased. For example, the amount available for the Pupil Premium to reduce the gap between poor children and their better-off classmates has recently been doubled⁴ to extend its reach to benefit children who have been on free school meals at any time in the past six years. Recent commitments to provide free early years education to

³ Wolf, A (2011) *Review of Vocational Education – the Wolf Report*. Department for Education, London.

⁴ Department for Education (2011) *Schools to get even more Pupil Premium this year*, available at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/inthenews/a00199131/schools-to-get-even-more-pupil-premium-cash-this-year>



disadvantaged children from the age of two are welcome.⁵

Staying the course provides evidence to show how the 16-19 Bursary Fund can be improved and modestly enhanced so that it becomes another effective tool to improve social mobility for young people continuing education and training and fulfilling their aspirations for good jobs.

1.4 Policy rationale – incentive or support?

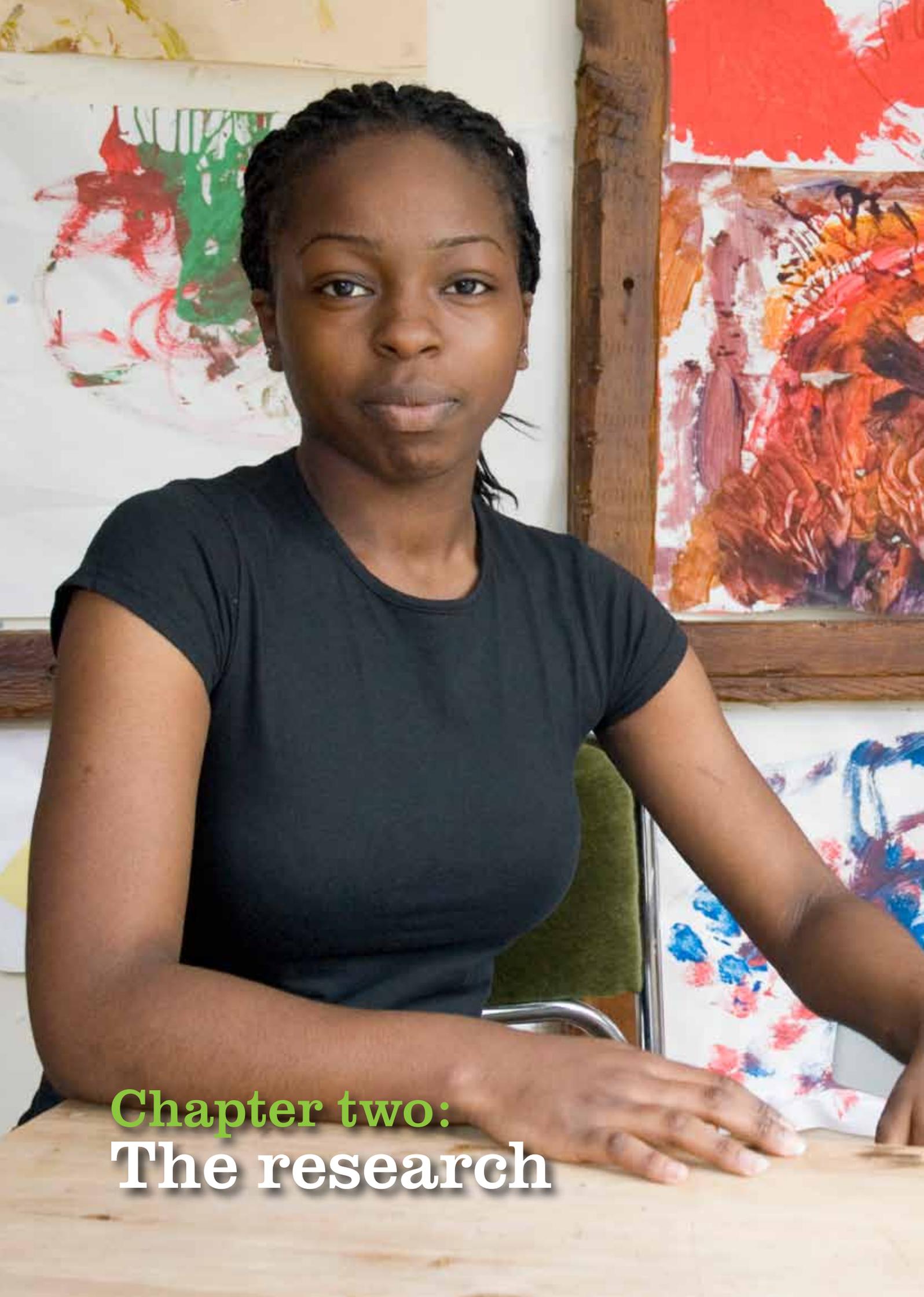
During this research, an 18-year-old identified what he thought was the flaw in the change from the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) to the 16-19 Bursary Fund. **Part of the reason they stopped the EMA was because young people were spending it on going out at the weekend; that is the richer kids though, where their mum and dad is giving them the money. We give our mum and dad board and that's £30.'**

Although EMA was originally introduced as an incentive, and there is some evidence to show that it improved attendance in post-16 learning,⁶ the assumption that EMA was an optional incentive to continue with education and training is misleading. Research for Barnardo's in 2010 showed the poorest young people used it as a necessary means of support.⁷ *Staying the course* illustrates that young people receiving small discretionary payments are suffering hardship, despite their motivation to continue in learning.

5 Department for Education (2011) *Government sets out which two-year-olds will be eligible for free early education* available at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/inthenews/a00198256/government-sets-out-which-two-year-olds-will-be-eligible-for-free-early-education>

6 IFS (2010) *An Efficient Maintenance Allowance*, [Internet], available at: <http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/5370> [Accessed 8 December 2011]

7 Meyer, D (2010) *Financial support for young people aged 16-18 in education and training*. Barnardo's, Barking-side.



Chapter two:
The research

This research was conducted to develop an initial understanding of the impact of the 16-19 Bursary Fund on poor and disadvantaged young people. Methods were designed to explore the effects of the cuts to funding and the new responsibilities placed on training providers.

This research found that the new 16-19 Bursary Fund is having a negative impact on disadvantaged young people, so the report makes recommendations with the aim of improving the situation. The recommendations hold the Government to its aspirations to increase social mobility through education for a group of young people who are vulnerable to disengagement.

The young people that Barnardo's works with are those at risk of poor employment outcomes and dependency on benefits if their learning challenges cannot be addressed. The likely cost of our recommendations in total is not likely to exceed £260m⁸ each year which is £300m less than the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), but more realistic than the amount of £180m currently allocated to support vulnerable learners in this age group. Over a lifetime the cost of being not in education, employment or training (NEET) for a single generation is calculated in the billions.⁹ However, timely improvements to the 16-19 Bursary Fund and enhancements to funding should reduce the risk of young people becoming NEET, in line with the Government's Early Intervention and Fairness agendas.

Staying the course is in two main parts:

Chapter four examines the impact of the new system on young people

themselves - many of them now managing on much less money than their older classmates who received EMA.

Chapter five describes the problems that have arisen for providers administering an unfamiliar system that was conceived, designed and delivered with extreme haste. It shows how these administrative problems impact on young people, with many of them experiencing serious delays or breakdowns in receiving the money they are entitled to. This research takes care to identify inherent problems while acknowledging that in its early days any new system is likely to have some teething problems.

Due to the devolved nature of education policy and funding decisions, this research focuses on the situation for young people with the roll out of the new Bursary Fund in England. It is perhaps useful to reflect on the situation in the devolved nations where political support for EMA funding for 16 to 19-year-olds continues.¹⁰ However, policymakers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be able to learn from the English experience as described in this report.

2.1 Methods

2.1.1 Aim

The aim of this research was to capture the initial impact of the new 16-19 Bursary Fund and to make recommendations to improve the Fund for future generations of 16 to 19-year-olds.

2.1.2 Sampling

The young people Barnardo's knows best are often from poor families and many have had disrupted school experiences (for example they are young carers, or have experienced long-term illnesses or moderate learning

8 See Appendix A.

9 Coles, B; Godfrey, C; Keung, A et al (2010) *Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training*. University of York, York.

10 Appendix B.

disabilities and special educational needs). They need extra encouragement and support to overcome their barriers, develop aspirations and find their way out of poverty. Many of them are taking up a second chance to gain qualifications after a period of being NEET. These are the young people most in need of financial maintenance to continue in learning, so this research focuses on their experiences in detail.

2.1.3 Inquiry methods

The research had three main elements:

1. In depth one-to-one qualitative interviews conducted face-to-face with 51 young people at eight of our services providing education, training and guidance to disadvantaged and vulnerable 16 to 19-year-olds in England. The young people ranged from young carers assuming adult responsibilities, to young people looked after for 52 weeks of the year in a residential special school. Nearly a quarter of them were parents, or about to become parents, most were on vocational training courses or taking A-levels; several others needed more confidence before they could start a course. Many of them were taking courses at the most basic educational level – Foundation Learning.
2. Interviews with relevant staff in eight Barnardo's services, four further education colleges, and two local authorities, as well as a manager at a social enterprise delivering Foundation Learning qualifications. Their roles ranged from providing vocational training, developing basic literacy and numeracy, supporting social and emotional difficulties, or offering careers and benefits guidance in areas of high unemployment. Others had responsibility for administering the new bursary fund – they provided

valuable insights into complications arising from the new arrangements to disburse money at the discretion of learning providers.

3. Face-to-face and telephone interviews were supplemented with documentary analysis of application forms and other paperwork that providers have developed to assess need and vulnerability.

2.2 Main findings

- The replacement for the EMA appears to have been introduced with excessive haste and stringency. Above all, the funding available is insufficient to meet the UK Government's objectives to increase social mobility and reduce poverty through education demonstrated through its commitment to the Pupil Premium.
- This research illustrates that, if improvements are not made soon to the new system of bursaries and discretionary payments, vulnerable young people will be discouraged from taking up the opportunities available to them and risk long-term unemployment with all the costs to society which that implies.
- The assumption that young people used EMA as an optional incentive to continue in learning is misleading. In fact, the poorest young people used it as a necessary means of support¹¹ and without it they struggle to continue with the education or training they need to find the jobs they aspire to.
- Although the Government has identified four vulnerable groups who are guaranteed adequate financial support, many more disadvantaged young people are left behind with minimal or no funding.

¹¹ Meyer, D (2010) *Financial support for young people aged 16-18 in education and training*. Barnardo's, Barking-side.

- Administration of the discretionary fund is over-complex, mainly because minimal guidance has been given and because it was set up too quickly. No pilot was conducted to determine the best delivery method, so some training providers have been left feeling abandoned with an unfamiliar responsibility for funds they have not managed previously. At this stage there may be teething problems that might be resolved with familiarity, but there is also evidence of serious flaws which will cause lasting problems.
- Worries about young people managing on insufficient payments led some providers to subsidise payments to ensure they were adequate. For some this was not sustainable.

- Some courses and programmes are under threat because of falling numbers of trainees and confusion over setting up funding relationships.

The overriding barrier to participation is poverty. Young people like those Barnardo's works with need extra support to continue with their education, achieve their ambitions and make up lost ground because, for too many, the poverty of their background has left them behind their better-off classmates throughout their education.¹²

The funding available for the 16-19 Bursary Fund is insufficient to meet the support needs of those in poverty and for this reason, the Fund fails to target the most vulnerable as claimed by the Government. Barnardo's recommends that for the Bursary Fund to become one of the Government's key tools in improving social mobility through post-16 education, it should at least match the aspirations for funding the Pupil Premium - the chosen method for closing the opportunity gap at school age.

Barnardo's evidence¹³ clearly shows that many young people, usually from poor backgrounds, suffer additional, well-recognised barriers to participation. These are young people with learning disabilities, special educational needs or poor prior attainment at school, and care-experienced young people. They have often left school without any recognised qualifications and need intensive support to cover the ground they have missed. These young people have a higher risk of becoming NEET. Short-term, flexible, entry-level qualifications such as those provided by Foundation Learning provide an ideal opportunity to re-engage them with learning.



12 Feinstein, L (2003) Inequality in the early cognitive development of British children in the 1970s cohort. In *Economica*, Vol 70: pp73-97. Wiley. London.

13 Evans, J et al (2009) *Second chances: re-engaging young people in education and training*. Barnardo's, Barking-side.



Chapter three:
**Background
information**

Young people and their parents know that the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) has been stopped, but one finding of this research is that awareness of the new system of funding is slight. Who can, or who should, be getting a payment and how much is available is far from clear. Because this radically changed new method of supporting disadvantaged young people into training or learning is poorly understood, a brief guide to what has changed is given below.

This chapter discusses:

- The EMA
- The 16-19 Bursary Fund for vulnerable groups
- 16-19 discretionary payments.

3.1 The Education Maintenance Allowance

The EMA was introduced in 2004 (after an extensive pilot) as an incentive to participation in education and training beyond school to age 18. It increased participation rates from 65 per cent to 69 per cent for eligible 16-year-olds and from 54 per cent to 61 per cent for eligible 17-year-olds.¹⁴ It was offered on a sliding scale to young people whose household income fell below £30,810. When it was last rolled out to the whole age group¹⁵ 642,748 young people were in receipt of between £10 and £30 weekly while they were following a course. EMA paid £560m in benefits to young people each year.

Capita, an outsourcing company, ran the EMA system for the Government for £35m¹⁶ between late 2008¹⁷ and 2011. They processed and

means-tested applications, paying money directly into each young person's bank account. Training providers used their own funds to support young people in cases of exceptional hardship.

EMA was automatically paid to those young people who were participating in entry level work-based training such as Entry to Employment (e2e) or Programme-Led Apprenticeships, regardless of household income. Barnardo's provided both of these courses in several services because they offered a supported route into employment or further training for the most vulnerable, disengaged young people most likely to become not in education, employment or training (NEET). Barnardo's now offers a range of courses at the replacement Foundation Learning level as this meets the particular needs of vulnerable young people for basic education and entry level vocational training, delivered flexibly.

EMA was not without its problems. In September 2008 the company¹⁸ that then managed the system for the Government, failed to make payments to tens of thousands of young people, leading to short-term, widespread need, demonstrating that young people were using it as a support and not just as an incentive. Recognising this, Nick Gibb, Shadow Schools Minister at the time, commented on the hardship caused by this administrative breakdown saying: **'This latest debacle is the most damaging yet as it directly undermines the educational prospects of some of the poorest children in the country... we need to know when the vulnerable students who have been**

14 IFS (2010) *An Efficient Maintenance Allowance* [Internet], available at: <http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/5370>

15 YPLA (2010) *EMA Take Up August 2010* [Internet], available from: http://readingroom.ypla.gov.uk/ypla/ypla-ema_takeup-re-aug2010-v1.xls

16 *Hansard* (2011) HC, Col 262W, available from: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm110228/text/110228w0010.htm>

17 When they took over from Liberata.

18 Liberata.

19 Lipsett, A (2008) Student grant firm fired for delays [Internet], available from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/nov/19/grant-firm-fired-liberata-capita>

so badly let down by this fiasco will receive the money they are entitled to.¹⁹

This research indicates that the new scheme has the potential to cause significant hardship to the most vulnerable in the longer term.

3.2 The 16-19 Bursary Fund

In 2011 funding for 16-19 financial support was cut from £560 million per year²⁰ to £180 million²¹ from the second year, with an allowance of £10 or £20 per week included in the first year to provide transitional funds for those who were already on EMA. The Government, through the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) sends the allocation to individual providers to disburse to students. The new funds were claimed to provide £800 per student on free school meals, 'more than many receive under current EMA arrangements'. In fact 80 per cent of eligible students received £30 EMA per week, giving most claimants up to £1,140 per academic year.²²

The new system is known overall as the 16-19 Bursary Fund and it is split into two parts:

1. The 16-19 guaranteed bursary
2. 16-19 discretionary funds

3.3 The 16-19 guaranteed bursary

Four categories of vulnerable young people have been identified who receive

a guaranteed bursary of 'at least £1,200 per year'.²³ This funding is intended to provide for the 12,000 young people the Government considers to be the most vulnerable in England:

- those who have been in care²⁴
- those who are in care²⁵
- those with a disability and claiming Disability Living Allowance, and Employment Support Allowance²⁶
- those living independently and claiming Income Support.²⁷

Each of these categories of young people have a poor record of being able to attend education or training post-16 and the guaranteed bursary is intended to offer an incentive to study or train.

The four categories of vulnerable young people are defined by benefits, social support or other provision already being received. This raises the question of young people from low income households who do not fit into the categories. Many of the young people interviewed would have been unable to manage their course without the encouragement and financial support of their parents even though this meant a struggle for the whole family. Arguably, several groups of vulnerable young people have been omitted from the list. For example, young carers were amongst the most motivated young people interviewed for this research, but they received no extra support, unless at the discretion of their college.

20 Department for Education (2011) *New bursary scheme to help the most vulnerable 16-19 year olds* [internet], available from: <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/pressnotices/a0076112/180-million-new-bursary-scheme-to-help-the-most-vulnerable-16-19-year-olds>

21 The formula allows £190 per pupil previously claiming EMA.

22 Bolton, P (13 January 2011) *Education Maintenance Allowance Statistics*, HCL SNSG/5778.23

23 Worth £31.57 per week on a standard 38 week college course, but pro rateable and not necessarily paid weekly, or in cash.

24 In 2010 there were 9,100 over 16s in this category <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000960/sfr27-2010leavers.xls#LAF1!A126>

25 In 2010 there were 13,800 over 16s in this category <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000960/sfr27-2010amv6.xls#LAA4!A1>

26 A negligible number of young people are in receipt of both these benefits at age 16 or 17.

27 2,630 young people aged 16 or 17: Office for National Statistics (2011) *Labour Market Statistics November 2011*. Available at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/november-2011/index.html>

Foram – a young carer

In East London 17-year-old A-level student Foram cares for her mother who has bipolar disorder. This includes managing the meagre family finances.

Foram decided to attend a college in the neighbouring borough after much consideration about her best options academically and also because she had fallen in with the wrong crowd at school and knew her chances would be improved if she could make a change. However this means she attends a college that makes no allowance for her caring responsibilities, although her local college would have made a discretionary payment on these grounds. She travels for an hour and a half each way by bus to save money on the tube fare.

Foram frequently misses meals or alternates eating with her sister who is in the year above her. They are putting their own health at risk to hide the financial situation from their mother. Not surprisingly, Foram is suffering from depression and anxiety herself.

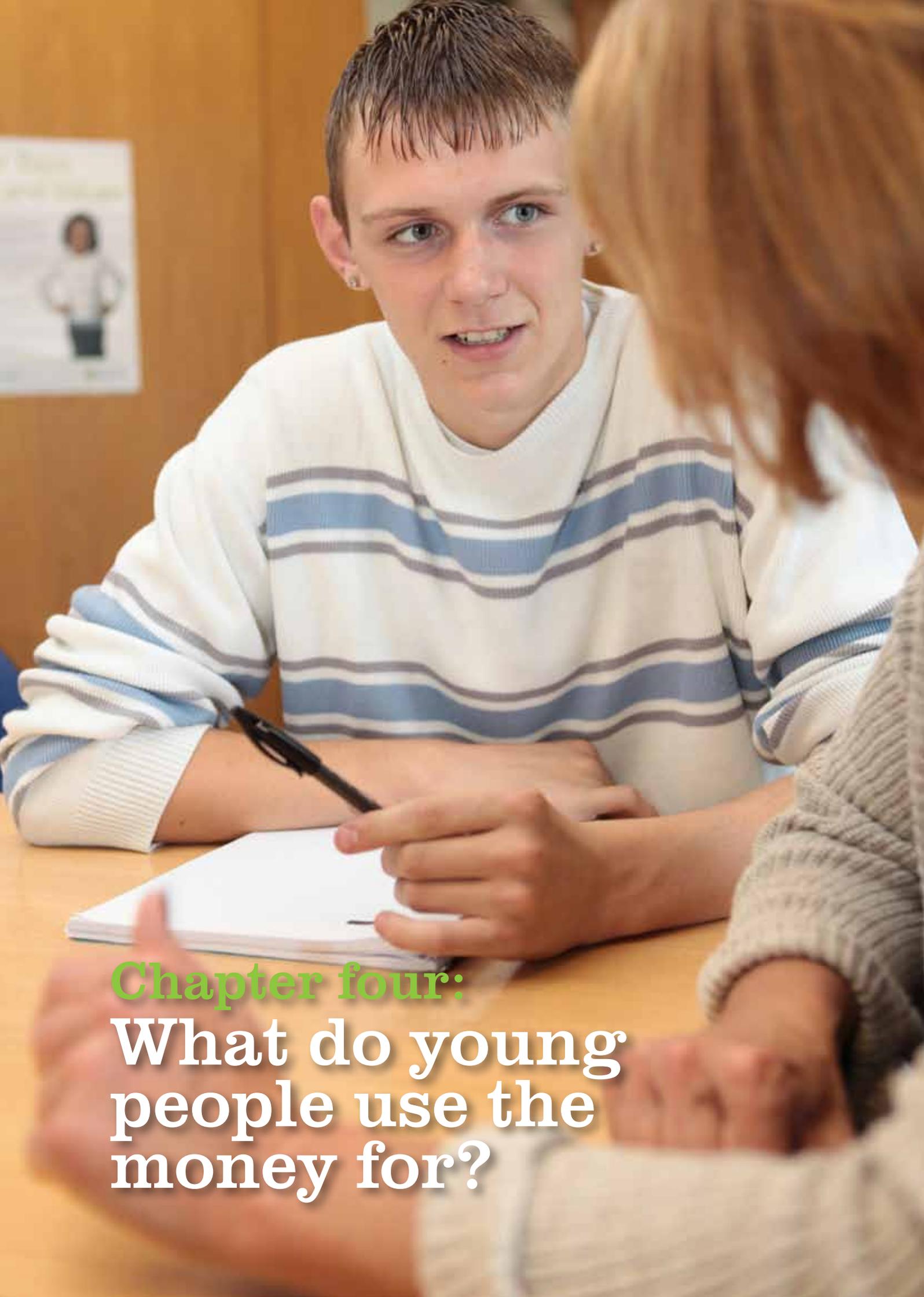
Palmersville Training Centre used 20 per cent of its allocation for discretionary payments. Secondly, the guidance given to training providers was minimal,²⁸ leaving the method of distribution entirely up to them. Many of them used family income as a guide to disbursing funds, but application forms revealed that different providers set the income criteria at different levels, meaning that a young person might qualify for funding with one provider, but not another. Others decided that certain courses would offer financial support, leaving less for poor students on other courses.



3.4 16-19 discretionary funding

The remainder of the allocation is to be distributed to other students at the discretion of the college, school or training provider. This is the element that most providers found difficult to administer. Firstly, the amount of funds available was small. The actual amounts allocated will vary according to how many disadvantaged young people are worked with, but as a guide Barnardo's

²⁸ A two page letter from the YPLA available online at: http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/YPLA/ypla_16-19_Bursary_Fund_Letter_To_All_Providers-1e-Jun11-v1.pdf



Chapter four:

What do young people use the money for?

The way funding was cut, and the amount by which it was cut appears to be underpinned by a fundamental misunderstanding about the uses that young people made of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

Although EMA was introduced as an incentive, for the poorest young people it was actually a necessary means of support while continuing in learning and this research found that the same was true for the 16-19 Bursary Fund.

As recommended by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA), young people mainly used Bursary Fund money for:

- food, because they were no longer entitled to free school meals (FSM) unless they stayed on at a school sixth form
- transport, as in many parts of the country over 16s pay an adult fare
- equipment and materials for certain courses; textbooks for others where colleges no longer provide them.

The YPLA's recommendation emphasises that the 16-19 Bursary Fund is intended to provide support and moves distinctively away from the somewhat misleading concept of incentive that underpinned the EMA. However, the funding available is now inadequate as support. This research found that young people had additional support needs, which need to be considered when working with young people from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds:

- they gave board to parents, who often expected 17-year-olds to make a contribution to the household
- several young people were experiencing hardship because of delays to funding, or receiving a small amount of funding, or simply because their lives demanded a degree of

independence which benefits and bursary payments did not support.

4.1 Food

Now that funding has been severely cut, many young people are unable to meet their basic needs. Some are not eating at lunchtime. These young people were experiencing severe hardship, but choosing, so far, to put their studies ahead of their need to eat.

Skipping lunch

'When I was at school it was a lot easier as you have free school meals. At college when I don't eat I get really bored, I can't focus and I feel faint or really tired.'

17-year-old young carer studying for four AS levels with plans to become a barrister (receiving £300 a year)

'I eat before I go to college and it lasts me until I go home and then Lee makes me a big tea.'

Pregnant 17-year-old with plans to become a vet's assistant (receiving £300 over a 10-week Parents with Prospects course)

'I bike it and when I've got some money I have some lunch.'

16-year-old boy, vocational training course (not yet receiving any money)

'We are making an average payment of £10 per week. That will buy a couple of days' meals if they are lucky.'

Administrator in a London FE college

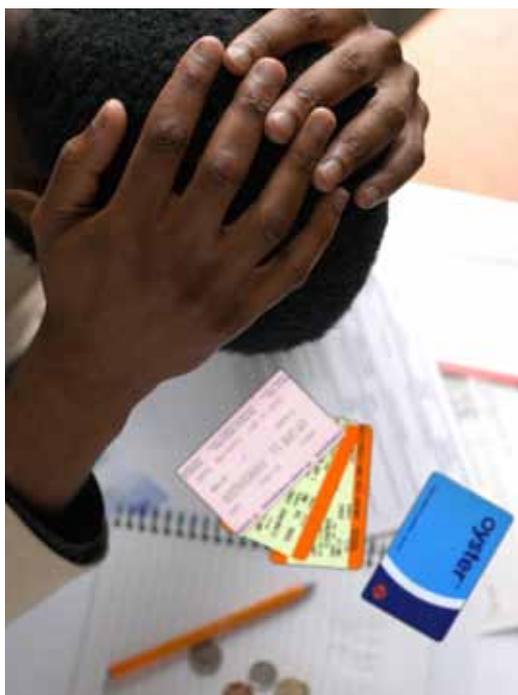
4.2 Transport

Local authorities have a duty to ensure that young people of 'sixth form age'

29 Department for Education (2010) *Post-16 Transport Guidance* [Internet], available at: <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/2010%20post%2016%20transport%20guidance.pdf>

can access training or education.²⁹ The Government stresses to local authorities that under Raising the Participation Age (RPA) 'it is important that transport provision supports young people's participation in education and training both now and in the future'. Findings for this research seem to indicate that some local authority responses to offering accessible, affordable travel options to young people do not meet the basic recommendations in the Department for Education's (DfE) transport guidance.

Despite this comprehensive guidance, many young people were having difficulties affording fares. In most areas adult fares are charged to this age group with concessions available in only a few parts of the country, notably in London where the 16+ Zip card offers free bus travel to learners. Several providers are subsidising travel or using discretionary funds to buy bus passes. One or two service managers emphasised that if travel was not subsidised by them the young people would not come. In rural areas the high fares are compounded by a lack of services.



Paying for travel

'It is £7.40 return on the Metro. I am on a three day a week course so that's my £20 gone.'

18-year-old on EMA transition payment of £20

'Me and my mum add up my travel every week and it comes to £25.'

17-year-old boy receiving £25 per week discretionary payment

'It is £7 each week for bus fare, I use the rest for my dinner or get my general things out of it like my deodorant.'

16-year-old boy on a vocational course hoping to receive £20 per week (payment delayed).

'I get the bus and it costs £2.10 to get to college but sometimes I can't get the money to go.'

17-year-old girl on £25 per week

4.3 Paying for equipment

Certain courses require the young person to have their own equipment. In the case of hairdressing, beauty therapy, car mechanics and catering, the costs for suitable clothing and equipment eventually become substantial. Barnardo's vocational training services supply equipment and overalls to trainees, but other colleges expect the young person to pay for their own. For example a hairdressing student explained that the equipment had to come from a named, specialist supplier, so she had paid £2 for a box of tissues, £3 for a water spray and £3 for a plastic mixing bowl. Scissors range from £13 to £80 and, as the hairdressing tutor at Palmersville explained, placements in salons usually require the young person to obtain a special overall.

Some colleges have had to cut costs and can no longer provide text books to students, so they need to buy their own. All the young people needed some stationery and those studying car mechanics would have benefited from a full driving licence, but found the associated costs prohibitive.³⁰ Many academic courses require extra equipment as well, with the costs of music, arts, and design courses being particularly high. Lack of funds can prevent young people with talent from fulfilling their aspirations.

4.4 Paying board to parents

Young people wanted to be able to help their parents out, while some parents were supportive although it was a struggle. As one young man said: **'Mum and dad don't want any rent and they've never said anything about money, but I have pride. If I had money I would never ask them'**. Another explained his mother gave him £5 a week to put on his travel card. In other families there was an expectation that from around the age of 17 young people would make a contribution to the family income, either through benefits, including EMA previously, or through casual employment. Parents may need more board with the recent increases in food costs. One young person said her parents wanted £80 per month board from her. Some families preferred the young person to take on labouring jobs instead of training even though qualifications improve longer-term earning potential for young adults.³¹ Young people interviewed for this research told us that they were looking for jobs, either part time to fit in with studies, or that they were considering giving up the course to find employment. Without

qualifications they risked a lifetime on low pay or benefits.³²

4.5 Hardship

Those not receiving funding or only receiving minimal amounts were experiencing different forms of hardship, ranging from being embarrassed to borrow from parents, to missing meals to save money.

The most serious cases of hardship included:

Leah, a trainee hairdresser, who could not afford to feed the gas meter to keep the house warm for her nine-month-old son for much of the day and all of the night. Gas cost her £30 a week as winter approached and, although she was receiving Income Support and a Bursary, she was also paying off a crisis loan which was taken out of the benefits.

Logan hadn't 'had any new clothes for quite a bit'. His motor mechanics course provided him with an overall and boots, which were his only shoes. The administrator at the training centre took his clothes to be washed and dried while he was working on cars on top of her other duties. This showed empathy on her part, because it was not a part of her job, but, as winter progresses, wearing just a cotton mechanic's overall in a car workshop with the doors open will be too cold.

30 A provisional licence is £50; the theory test is £31 and the practical £62. This is on top of the cost of lessons at around £20 an hour.

31 The Poverty Site (2011) *Impact of Qualifications on Work* [Internet], available at: <http://www.poverty.org.uk/31/index.shtml>

32 The Poverty Site (2011) *Ibid.*

4.6 Social life restrictions

Very few young people smoked, and most said they could not afford to go out drinking. One 17-year-old fantasised: **'When you turn 18, most people want to go out to drink; they have amazing social lives'**. A young woman described her social life like this: **'I will go and sit with my boyfriend. Getting to my boyfriend's is £2 there and £2 back, that is £4 gone. That is every single day. We have had to cut down on seeing each other, or we sometimes walk halfway to see each other'**.

Some young people managed some positive leisure activities like Marie who danced and hoped to pursue it as a career. **'Dancing is my main thing; I am always busy. I do commercial, modern, street dance and contemporary'**. She funded this activity from her job at Primark. Other young people were looking in vain for employment, frequently telling us that they had given out many CVs and heard nothing back.

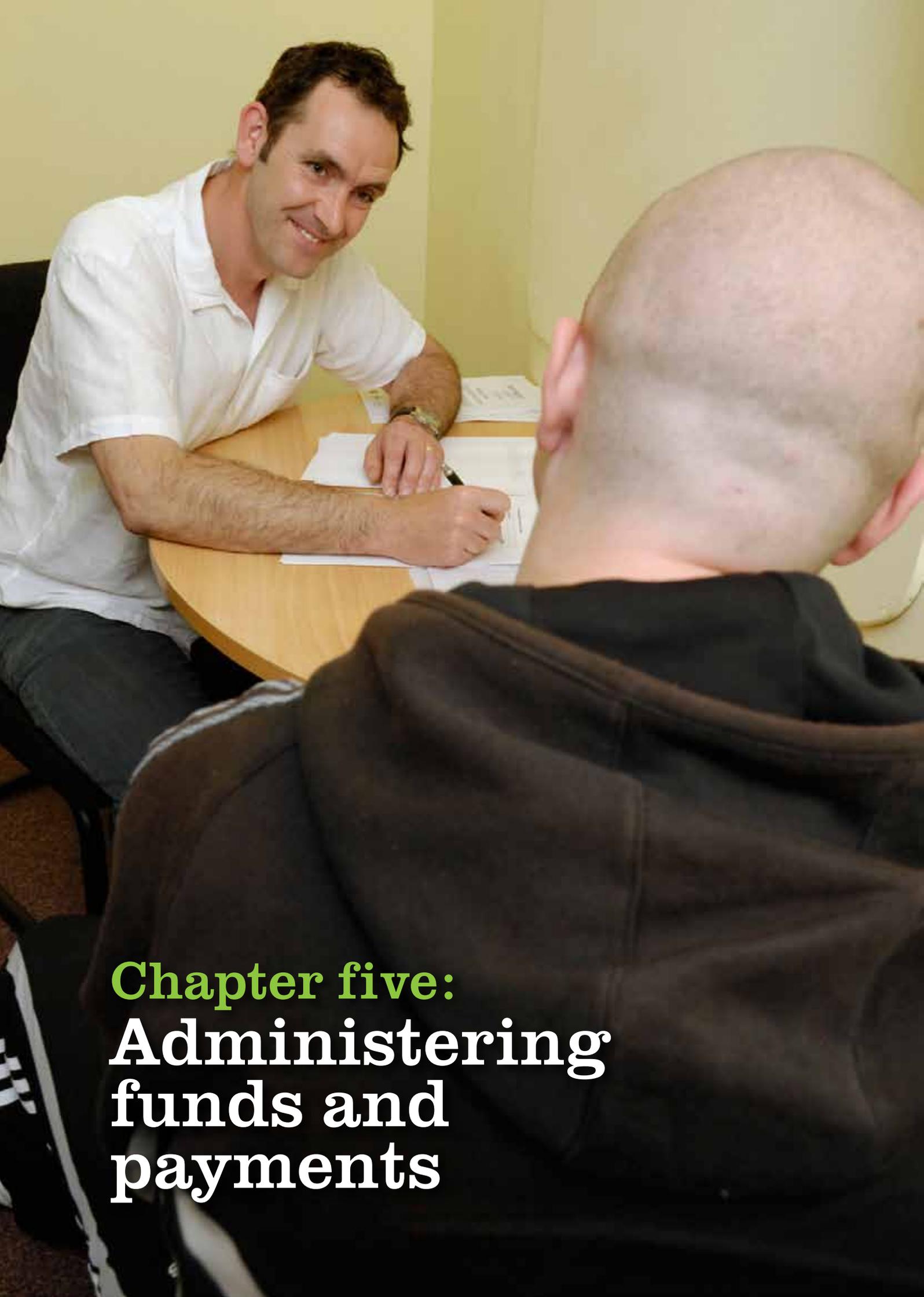
Stephen had a disabled brother that he helped his mother to care for. He longed to afford a trip to the pictures with his brother as he knew this would give them both pleasure and give mum a break.

4.7 Motivation

Despite some difficulties, most of the young people interviewed had high levels of motivation for their training, recognising the importance of qualifications in a tough job market. Many aspired to go to university, onto further training or worthwhile employment. For some young people, especially those taking Foundation Learning courses, the training they were receiving was a second chance at education when their school

experience had been disrupted or poor. For example, David's education had been frequently interrupted by heart problems and subsequent surgery. He was keen to become a DJ and was also taking part in a campaign to keep open the hospital where he had received his care.

Lack of money could be a demotivating factor though. People working closely with disengaged young people know that without money too many are tempted by short-term job opportunities and miss training or drift away, while several young people believed they would be better off on Jobseeker's Allowance, although they are not actually eligible at age 16 or 17. Regrettably, as they approached 18 a minority were viewing this as a viable option. This curtails social mobility for those young people and puts them out of reach of services that can help them progress. Barnardo's services are notably persistent with young people who miss attendance and will work with them to restart training after a time away, but some colleges may need the place for another applicant.



Chapter five:
**Administering
funds and
payments**

The new system of bursary and discretionary payments moves the administration from a central, independent body to individual learning providers. Learning providers have discretion over who should get funding and how much they should receive. Interviews with managers and administrators found that the administration of the new system is complex and confusing with the extra workload and costs falling to individual training providers. While this saves the Government a capital outlay, the management decisions required distract providers from getting on with teaching and providing support. Small providers are carrying a disproportionate burden and the actual costs of administration urgently require clarification.

Interviews with relevant staff at 15 training providers revealed that they all had difficulties. Their main issues were the:

- costs of administration
- haste of delivery and lack of guidance
- complexity of the system.

5.1 Costs of administration

Running the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) through a centralised, independent body³³ cost the Government £35m,³⁴ around five to six per cent of the total outlay. This cost has effectively been passed to individual providers across the country and no longer appears as a charge to central Government. Providers ‘may use up to five per cent of their total allocation to meet administration costs’.³⁵ An administrator at a small further education college described this as ‘five per cent of nothing, which is nothing really’.

Most interviewees agreed that the extra administration cost was not covered by the five per cent. The true cost was hidden though, as in the interests of their students and trainees training providers, local authorities and colleges appear to be absorbing and masking the costs. In most cases this was done through working time arrangements, including unpaid overtime. One instructor was taking paperwork home at the weekends as this was her only chance to sit down and do it. Larger colleges told their staff that they could take extra time off at a quieter time of year. One enterprise was passing some work to the receptionist to do when she had some spare time. No-one had taken on extra staff, as the money did not amount to anything like a part-time salary plus ongoing costs of employment. Larger providers were better placed to absorb extra costs and workload. For small providers the burden was disproportionate. The Young People’s Learning Agency (YPLA) recommends that providers use their own audit procedures which adds another cost and may not result in the full expenditure being understood by Government.

In addition to the costs of administration, colleges and other training providers have had to pay for publicity and raising awareness about the 16-19 Bursary Fund for their potential learners. As noted, awareness of the 16-19 Bursary Fund is poor and providers cannot inform an individual young person how much they may be entitled to until after an application is made.

The actual resources used by providers should be clearly presented in an auditable way because it is now unclear what the scheme is costing. Colleges, schools and local authorities are funded

³³ Capita.

³⁴ *Hansard* (2011) HC, Col 262W

³⁵ YPLA (2011) *16-19 Bursary Fund - guide for 2011/12* [Internet], available from: http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/YPLA/ypla_16-19_Bursary_Fund_Guide_for_2011-12-gn-Jun11-v1.pdf

by the public purse, so although the costs are no longer appearing on central Government's books, these hidden costs still have to be met. It is in the interests of efficiency that they are clearly presented and monitored.

5.2 Haste of delivery and lack of guidance

The 16-19 Bursary Fund was introduced very quickly. Eight pages of guidance were published in June 2011 together with a two-side allocation letter sent to providers who were to pick up the administration from September 2011. This caused issues for trainers offering roll-on roll-off courses running throughout the year. Belatedly, a little additional guidance³⁶ was provided towards the end of October 2011 regarding independent providers.

All interviewees felt that the system was delivered in haste and that this affected their administration of the money to the detriment of young people who were due to receive it. This research took place during October and November 2011. Whilst under EMA most young people would expect to receive payments from mid-September, 30 out of 51 young people interviewed between early October and late November had not received a payment at the time of interview. Of course, it is not possible for providers to make any payment to young people until they have received their application and assessed whether the young person is eligible for the Bursary or whether there are sufficient discretionary funds to make a payment.

One FE college which appeared to be managing comparatively well and had already provided payments to its students said **'we could not tell students what they were entitled to**

and then when it did come through so late there was a mad rush to get people payments as quick as we could'.

Some colleges applied a cut-off date to applications to enable them to manage the funds. This is not an approach that will work for flexible courses with rolling start dates such as Foundation Learning courses. Providers of those courses are uncertain about allocating funds fairly to students who may start later in the year.

5.3 Complexity of the system

The EMA was a straightforward, readily understood scheme with wide public awareness. In keeping with the UK Government's drive to reduce bureaucracy, some policies have been simplified. In the case of the system to provide bursaries and discretionary payment to 16 to 19-year-olds the YPLA is now gradually adding guidance in a piecemeal way that is not aiding clarity.

In June 2011 a letter was sent explaining the amount of money allocated and leaving it entirely up to each provider to decide what to do with it. This was backed-up with an eight-page leaflet with some extra explanation or suggestions.³⁷ Many providers have been unclear how to deal with this minimal guidance. One respondent explained she was anxious about auditing: **'We don't know what an auditor would say. If there are no guidelines, you don't go for the easiest option; you go to the hardest option. Then you know you're covered. All the time you're thinking about the audit trail'.** In fact YPLA expect her to make her own audit arrangements, which she had not realised. Her organisation was keeping careful records about payments to young people, but they

36 YPLA (October 2011) letter to local authorities outlining the arrangements for young people at independent provision http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/YPLA/ypla-Letter_1_To_LAs_Re_Independent_Provision-le-oct11-v1.pdf

37 http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/YPLA/ypla_16-19_Bursary_Fund_Guide_for_2011-12-gn-Jun11-v1.pdf

were subsidising payments and handing out extra work for staff to fit in with their regular duties. Resource costs like these were not being accounted for at several providers.

5.4 Obtaining money to pass on to learners

The most difficult part of the new system to understand is how providers get the funds to pass on to learners. Previously the transaction was simply between Capita and the young person's bank account.

Now the training provider must first have a relationship with the YPLA. Documentary and interview evidence found that this relationship could take a number of forms. For example:

- Further education and sixth form colleges receive and disburse funding directly. This is the simplest method of organising the bursary and discretionary payments. FE colleges can refer to helpful advice offered by the Association of Colleges.³⁸
- In the case of school sixth forms the monies go first to the local authority and are then passed to the school. So for Barnardo's special residential school, Spring Hill in Ripon, which works with many children in care, the bursary funds come through North Yorkshire Council, although the school is not maintained and the students come from diverse parts of England.
- Providers may have a direct relationship with the YPLA as a recognised provider of vocational training, as with our Palmersville Training service in the north-east which is responsible for its own

funds and those for two other Barnardo's vocational training services and four partner services.

- Barnardo's Allergrange service in Bradford is one of several providers of Foundation Learning qualifications locally whose learners receive funding through a social enterprise. The enterprise made the claims to the YPLA and then disbursed funding to the students at a dozen providers of Foundation Learning qualifications in Bradford. For a small company this represented a huge increase in administration.
- Finally, as an independent training provider, one of Barnardo's vocational training services was unable to work out how to apply for support funds for the trainees; numbers of trainees were down; the remaining young people were receiving no money and the service itself will now need to be radically restructured. YPLA guidance on claiming money for independent provision was sent in a letter (to local authorities, not to training providers or their learners) dated 20 October 2011,³⁹ weeks after young people would have started courses with independent training providers. That advice suggests that young people, or their parents or carers, should apply directly to their local authority for their bursary fund, if eligible. For others, the local authority should provide the discretionary funding.

All these complexities and increased bureaucracy could be reduced if the money was allocated for students who were previously on free school meals, or care-experienced (in line with the Pupil Premium), or attending a Foundation Learning course, with each vulnerable student receiving the same amount. This would increase choice and fairness

³⁸ Association of Colleges (2011) *Association of Colleges advice on the administration of Bursaries*, July 2011. Association of Colleges, London.

³⁹ http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/YPLA/ypla-letter_1_To_LAs_Re_Independent_Provision-le-oct11-v1.pdf

for the young people as they would be able to go to any provider certain of equal treatment, and providers would not need to provide unsustainable top-up payments.

5.5 Subsidising learners' entitlement to bursary funds

Training providers were concerned that the reduction in funding and decline in reach of funds could lead to a decline in numbers. It is too early to tell officially, although anecdotally many providers sensed that trainee numbers had dropped this year.

The response to this anxiety, coupled with reluctance to make difficult decisions about who might be eligible, led a number of providers to make subsidies from their own funds which had been earmarked for other purposes originally.

Two concerns arise from this practice:

1. As more than one provider observed, it is not sustainable indefinitely.
2. Although understandable because it provides support to needy young people in the short-term, it conceals real needs for support in the longer term because payments would otherwise be insufficient.



Examples of subsidies:

- The London Borough of Tower Hamlets, one of the most deprived areas in England, is adding a Mayor's Bursary fund of £400 to all 16 to 19-year-olds resident in Tower Hamlets, eligible for EMA. Funding is available to support this subsidy for two to three years.
- A social enterprise provider was topping up all Foundation Learning students to £30 regardless of household income. The money for this was coming from reserve funds and this approach was not thought to be sustainable.
- Barnardo's Palmersville Training added money previously put aside for transport needs in order to allocate £25 to all learners. This meant that those who lived further from the centre were cross-subsidising those who could walk, but the approach saved administration costs and seemed fair to the young people. Occasional excess transport needs were being covered anyway from other funds.
- Barnardo's Dr B's training restaurant had not yet received any funds to distribute, although they were in the pipeline. Meanwhile they had borrowed £5 from customer donations to buy a bus pass for a young person.
- Wakefield College was treating all students on its Parents with Prospects course for teen parents, as eligible for the full bursary pro-rated to a ten-week course.



Chapter six:
Conclusion

At £560 million pounds a year the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was a generous offer, so it is not surprising that students widely protested about its removal last year. For those young people who received £10 per week living in families earning nearly £31,000 a year it was possibly seen as a bonus. Research⁴⁰ which showed that many of the young people interviewed might have continued with their studies without it was used to justify a cut in funds which has disproportionately impacted on the most disadvantaged. This will not help the young people that Barnardo's works with and many others living in poverty.

Young people and training providers alike have been left struggling with a system which is confused and inconsistent. There is insufficient funding to deal fairly with those young people that the Government wishes to target in its drive to improve social mobility and young people's choice between learning providers has too frequently been compromised to one based on the financial support available.

Young people from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds and those who are vulnerable to disengagement and poor educational outcomes need a reasonable, predictable level of support so they can stay the course. Previous research for Barnardo's⁴¹ showed that young people most at risk of disengagement and becoming persistently not in education, employment or training (NEET) are frequently those who have chaotic, unsupportive home lives. Adding another layer of uncertainty to their lives and requiring them to attend

courses which leave them worse off will do nothing to help overcome the barriers they already face.

The administration of the centralised EMA could feel impersonal, especially to the less confident, so there is some merit in the 16-19 Bursary Fund's element of individual discretion if it helps colleges and training providers understand their students' needs better. However the evidence of this research is that many providers struggled to find fair methods of payment and there is no consistent interpretation of need between providers. The varying payment models employed by different learning providers are already leading to a postcode lottery which affects young people's choices and chances.⁴²

But the focus of this report is not the EMA with its various merits and flaws. What matters now is that the 16-19 Bursary Fund is re-examined and its failings and deficiencies cleared up this year before another cohort of young people turn 16 without being able to share fully in the opportunities for further education that we all expect for our children.

There is no doubt that meeting the aspirations implied by the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) will cost more; especially to engage young people most at risk of being NEET which was the intention. Not recognising this reality could increase the proportion of young people being NEET and not fulfilling their potential as they find themselves unable to cope financially. Investing in educating and training for this hard to reach group will ensure that they can become economically and socially productive members of society, saving costs in the long-term.

40 Spielhofer, T et al (2010) *Barriers to Participation in Education*. National Foundation for Educational Research, London.

41 Evans, J; Slowley M (2010) *Not the end of the story: supporting teenage mothers back into education*. Barnardo's, Barking; Evans, J et al (2009) *Second chances: re-engaging young people in education and training*. Barnardo's, Barking.

42 Lee, J (2010) *Poorest FE Students Short-changed* [Internet], available at: <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6118721>

If the Government is to remain true to its aspirations to increase social mobility through education it needs to urgently address the flaws in the discretionary part of the Bursary Fund. The objective of 16-19 funding reform should not be to save money at the expense of young people, who risk being left behind by their better-off peers. Instead policymaking should consider the best ways to give them the same chances to make the best they can of their lives and future prospects.





Chapter seven:
Recommendations

These recommendations do not call for the return of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), but Government cannot abandon its commitment to improving social mobility and reducing poverty just as young people leave school and take their first steps towards a productive adult life. So Barnardo's proposes that the fund is increased to at least match the aspirations of the recently doubled and extended Pupil Premium. Like the Pupil Premium, it should include people who have been on free school meals, as well as those, as currently, with experience of the care system. This means that the Bursary Fund will be targeted on those most in need of support, but that it will still cost less than half the price of EMA.⁴³

Young people taking Foundation Learning qualifications or equivalent need to be certain of a bursary payment. Their previously low achievement and attainment levels indicate that they have much ground to make up. Previous educational experiences and learning disabilities mean that too many lack confidence and need support to progress. Worrying about money is an unnecessary distraction from their essential studies, and for some a disincentive to study at all. The courses they are able to take are usually short-term and part-time, and many have previously been on free school meals.

Interviews revealed that the administration of the Bursary Fund is complex, with piecemeal advice simply adding to the confusion. The true costs of administering the bursary should be accounted for and audited centrally as a means to gauge the most efficient way of running a system which remains a cost on the public purse.

A simple but necessary change should be to hold local authorities

to their duties to support accessible, affordable transport for people of sixth form age. This would allow young people to spend their bursary furthering their studies, rather than paying adult commuter fares.

Barnardo's is pleased to note that the Government 'will keep the mechanism for allocating these funds under consideration to make sure that we continue to reach those students with the greatest need'.⁴⁴ That consideration must begin before next year's 16-year-olds are impacted by the current arrangements.

1. The chief recommendation of this research is that all young people who have previously been on free school meals should receive a bursary adequate⁴⁵ to meet typical support needs in line with the Pupil Premium.
2. In addition, all those young people taking a Foundation Learning course should receive adequate support for each week of the course (usually 10) assuming that they do not otherwise fall into the FSM category above. These young people are predominantly from poor backgrounds, often have learning difficulties and often already have experience of being not in education, employment or training (NEET).⁴⁶
3. Young people who are care-experienced should continue to receive a bursary in keeping with the Government's aspirations to improve social mobility and educational outcomes for this particularly challenged group.
4. Now administration costs have been devolved to training providers instead of being run centrally, it

⁴³ Appendix A.

⁴⁴ HC 1572 (31 October 2011) Participation by 16-19 year olds in education and training: Government response to the Committee's Fourth Report.

⁴⁵ See Appendix A for some suggested costings.

⁴⁶ Department for Education (2010) *Foundation Learning National Evaluation*, [Internet] available at: <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RR130.pdf>

is unclear what the Bursary Fund actually costs to administer because service providers are masking or absorbing costs and providing subsidies from their own reserves. Decentralised administration remains a cost to the public purse so, in the interests of transparency and efficiency, resource costs should be accurately accounted for by providers and presented for central audit. This is the only way that a clear understanding of the true cost of administration can be determined so that in future years providers can be adequately compensated and efficiency evaluated.

5. The UK Government should remind local authorities of their duty to support accessible, affordable transport for people 'of sixth form age' by ensuring that all young people resident in their borough receive a subsidy towards the costs of travel to college, even where they may cross a boundary to do so. Economies of scale may be available to local authorities by forming travel to learn consortia to support all local students in the broader locality.



Appendices

Appendix A:

The cost of Barnardo's recommendations

A bursary of £1,140 per year		
	Lower bound estimate	Upper bound estimate
Just for free school meals (FSM) with no ringfence for vulnerable groups	£200 million	£230 million
For FSM with ringfenced £1,200 for 12,000 vulnerable students	£210 million	£250 million
For Foundation Learning students	£17 million	£17 million

Bursary Fund funding note

- The cost of providing a bursary of £1,140 (£30 per week over a 38 week academic year) for young people previously eligible for free school meals (FSM) is likely to fall somewhere between £210 million and £250 million.
 - The lower bound estimate represents the cost of providing an £1,140 bursary just to those 16 and 17-year-olds in full-time education. The upper bound estimate represents the cost of providing an £1,140 bursary to all 16 and 17-year-olds. The true cost will be between these two estimates as some people outside of full-time education are eligible for the bursary – for example those on eligible training courses. Unfortunately, we have been unable to find a reliable estimate of the numbers outside of full-time education who would be eligible for the bursary.
 - There is a lack of clear information on how many of those who are classified as vulnerable, and so eligible to receive £1,200, are also eligible for FSM.
- We have assumed that there is no overlap between the 12,000 vulnerable students and those also eligible for FSM. This is an extremely conservative assumption which inflates the costs of providing the bursary. In reality some of the vulnerable categories, for example those on Income Support, may have been eligible for FSM. A significant overlap between these groups will tend to lower the cost of providing the bursary. The level of this assumption does not change the costs drastically. Assuming that 100 per cent of the 12,000 vulnerable students were FSM-eligible reduces the costs we have quoted by around £10 million.
- According to the Evaluation of Foundation Learning⁴⁷ there were 56,500 young people over 16 on these courses in 2009-10. Most of them are taking a 10 week course. Assuming that there is no overlap with the FSM group (which is unlikely) the cost of providing for this group will be up to £17 million.

Other modelling assumptions

- In 2010 there were around 1.95 million 16 to 18-year-olds.⁴⁸ We have taken this population as the base for looking at the impacts of the policy. Over time the cost of the Bursary Fund is likely to decrease, as the population of 16 to 18-year-olds is projected to decline in the future. By 2014 it is projected that there will be around 100,000 fewer 16 to 18-year-olds in England than there were in 2010.⁴⁹
- We have assumed that 14.2 per cent of these were on FSM in year 11 – in line with the proportions reported to be eligible for, and claiming, FSM in year 11 from Department for Education (DfE) statistics.⁵⁰ If this proportion is different for different years then the costs will change.
- We have assumed that around 25 per cent of 18-year-olds are also eligible to receive the bursary. This is in line with DfE statistics on the proportion of 18-year-olds in full-time education outside of higher education institutions.⁵¹
- For modelling of the costs of providing the bursary just to those in full-time education we have assumed around 88 per cent of 16-year-olds and 76 per cent of 17-year-olds are in full-time education, in line with statistics from the DfE.⁵²

47 Department for Education (2010) *Foundation Learning National Evaluation*, [Internet] available at: <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RR130.pdf> [Accessed on 13th December 2011]

48 Department for Education (2011) *Participation In Education, Training And Employment By 16-18 Year Olds In England*, available at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000938/index.shtml>

49 ONS (2011) 2010 Based Population Projections – England, available at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/npp/national-population-projections/2010-based-projections/index.html>

50 Lee, J (2010) Poorest FE Students Short-changed [Internet], available at: <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6118721>

51 Department for Education (2011) *Schools, pupils and their characteristics*, available at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001012/index.shtml>

52 Department for Education (2011) *Participation In Education, Training And Employment By 16-18 Year Olds In England*, available at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000938/index.shtml>

Appendix B:

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) in the United Kingdom

Scotland

EMA was launched in August 2004 and currently 37,000 young people are in receipt of EMA in Scotland. The weekly allowance is paid directly into the young person's bank account if

they achieve 100 per cent attendance and continue to meet the conditions outlined in their learning agreement.⁵³

EMA is calculated based on the young person's household income:

Household income	No. of dependent children in household	EMA award
Below £20,351	1	£30
Below £22,403	2+	£30

Northern Ireland

EMA is available to students of a household income below £33,950. Payments are made every two weeks on a Monday. Students need to fulfil part 1 and part 2 of their learning agreement.

Part 1 includes attending lessons and committing to the school or college timetable. **Part 2** is in regards to bonuses. Young people may be eligible for £100 bonus if they achieve the learning objectives and goals outlined in their learning agreement.⁵⁴

Household income	EMA award
Up to £22,930	£30
£22,931 - £28,125	£20
£28,126 - £33,950	£10

⁵³ Department for Education (2011) Ibid.

⁵⁴ EMA Scotland (2011) *EMA and Me* [Internet] available at: <http://www.emascotland.com/emasandme.cfm>

Wales

Wales have two income thresholds to assess if a young person is eligible for EMA:

Family circumstances	Household income threshold
Independent student	£20,817
An only child in the household	£20,817
The student has one or more brothers or sisters aged 16 or under in the household	£20,817
The student has one or more brothers or sisters aged 20 or under in full-time education or training and eligible for child benefit in the household	£23,077

Students who fall under these thresholds receive £30 a week after meeting the requirements of their learning agreement.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Student Finance Wales (2011) *How much will I get*, [Internet], available at: http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/portal/page?_pageid=616,6382715&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

Glossary

Abbreviation	Full expression	Explanation/definition
e2e	Entry to Employment	The e2e course was a learning development programme for 16 to 18-year-olds not in employment or education. The tailor-made programme allowed young people to develop skills to find a job.
EMA	Education Maintenance Allowance	EMA was a financial scheme to support young people in education. If their household income was below £30,810, students could receive weekly instalments of £10, £20 or £30.
FE college	Further education college	Post-16 education training provider.
FL	Foundation Learning	FL is an education provision aimed at 14 to 19-year-olds and 19 to 24-year-olds with learning difficulties and/or disabilities) to raise participation and attainment. This education scheme predominately focuses on below level 2 learning provisions.
FSM	Free school meals	Free school meals are paid by the Government for children whose parents are claiming particular benefits.
NEET	Not in education, employment or training	NEET is the Government's acronym referring to young people aged 16 to 24 who are not in education, employment or training.
RPA	Raising the Participation Age	The Education and Skills Act 2008 raises the minimum age of learning from 16 to 17 from 2013 and to 18 from 2015.
YPLA	Young People's Learning Agency	The YPLA are a non-Governmental body which are sponsored by the Department of Education.

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Barnardo's services

- Allergrange, Bradford
- Dr B's, Harrogate
- Indigo Young Carers, Ilford
- Palmersville Training Centre, North Tyneside
- Spring Hill School, Ripon
- The Point, Blyth, Northumbria
- Wheels, Stourbridge
- Young Families, Castleford.

Barnardo's often works with partner organisations to deliver courses and support services, so we are grateful for information from:

- Aspire I, Bradford
- Northumbria Youth Action.

In addition we spoke in confidence to administrators and strategic officers in a selection of local authorities and further education colleges:

- London Borough of Redbridge
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- B-Six Sixth Form College, Hackney
- Redbridge College
- Wakefield College
- Waltham Forest College.

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***Staying the course
Disadvantaged young people's
experiences in the first term of
the 16-19 Bursary Fund***

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The report was written
by Jane Evans.



www.barnardos.org.uk

Head Office, Tanners Lane,
Barkingside, Ilford,
Essex IG6 1QG
Tel: 020 8550 8822

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