

Mr Bob Smytherman
7 Willow House
Goring Chase
The Strand
Worthing, West Sussex
BN12 6NS

Principal Sue Dare
Northbrook College
The University Centre Worthing
Littlehampton Road
Worthing
West Sussex
BN12 6NU

Telephone: 0845 155 60 60
Facsimile: 01903 60 60 07
Typetalk: 18001 01903 606076

www.northbrook.ac.uk
enquiries@nbcol.ac.uk

14 July 2011

Dear Mr Smytherman

We are writing to you on behalf of the five West Sussex Further Education Colleges regarding the County Council's decision to remove travel support for those young people over the age of 16 with family incomes of less than £16,190. We believe that this decision was made in good faith based on suggestions published nationally that there would be sufficient replacement of the current Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) through the 16-18 Bursary Fund to enable each young person entitled to a free school meal to have £800 per annum.

The colleges received notification of our allocations for the 16-18 Bursary Fund in June. While we expected there to be a substantial decrease of funding support available with the demise of the EMA, we are very concerned that the allocation of the 16-18 Bursary Fund has resulted in a large cut and that it has disproportionately hit the FE sector.

The current allocations are insufficient to meet the needs of our students and are also insufficient to meet the expectations set by Ministers. The formula-driven allocations do not allow for the fact that FE Colleges attract a disproportionate amount of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. FE College students are more than twice as likely to be from disadvantaged backgrounds compared to school sixth forms, due to the College's inclusive curriculum offerings at Pre-Entry, Level 1 and Level 2. In addition, young people are more likely to need to travel to access the specialist facilities that colleges possess such as engineering and land-based, and their needs for help with equipment and materials are higher due to the nature of their vocational choices.

Of the 1,005 young people who were supported by WSCC for their travel, 98% of those with special educational needs attended an FE College (285 in total) and 85% of those young people over the age of 16 whose family are on low incomes (560 in total).

/continued overleaf

Alternative Sites
Please reply to

Northbrook College
14-19 Centre
Broadwater Road
Worthing
West Sussex
BN14 8HJ

Northbrook College
Shoreham Campus
Shoreham Airport
Shoreham
West Sussex
BN43 5FJ

Northbrook College
Business Development
Centre for Adult and
Employer Skills
17 Liverpool Gardens
Worthing
West Sussex
BN11 1RY

We have communicated our disappointment about the low allocations of the 16-18 Bursary Funds to the YPLA at the highest level. One of the responses received makes the following point:

Regarding transport costs, local authorities have a duty to ensure that students aren't prevented from attending learning because there's no transport available, or because they can't afford the fares. Local authorities are required to prepare and publish a transport policy statement each year that specifies what arrangements for the provision of transport, and for financial assistance towards transport costs, they consider necessary to facilitate the attendance of young people of sixth form age. We would advise parents and students who feel that their local authority's transport provision is placing a barrier upon their access to education, to lodge an appeal with the local authority in the first instance.

Those young people who are Looked After, Care Leavers or on Income Support in their own right are guaranteed £1,200. However, once we have met this guaranteed group this will leave very little left in the Bursary Fund for those whose live with their families, but whose parents are on income levels below the current threshold of £16,190. Again, those in the guarantee group are usually found in the college sector post-16 rather than a school sixth form.

Calculations made by the colleges show that up to 60% of the available bursary will go to this small but needy guarantee group – no more than 200 young people in total across the county. Dividing the remainder amongst the high numbers at college who live with families on low income levels results in students receiving insufficient income to pay for the travel card and their subsidised travel, yet alone receive essential support for equipment, materials and food. As an example, at Chichester College once those in the guarantee group are given their £1,200, the weekly amount available for the rest would only be £2.12.

In terms of student support which will be required by young people in order to access college, transport is a particular issue. While Councils in Hampshire, Brighton and Hove, East Sussex and Surrey will continue to support young people over 16 with travel, the current proposals would put young people in West Sussex at an additional disadvantage to that of being part of a low income household.

In the light of the actual allocations, we ask you to reconsider the County Council decision regarding the withdrawal of support for those young people over 16 with families on low incomes. This would mean that they would have equal levels of support as those children under 16 and their peers in adjoining counties. The impact will be to enable them to access the specialist education that the college sector provides and which is so effective in meeting their needs.

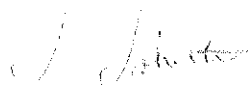
Yours sincerely



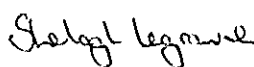
Peter Corrigan
Principal
Worthing College



Sue Dare
Principal
Northbrook
College Sussex



Jackie Johnston
Principal
The College of
Richard Collyer



Shelagh Legrave
Principal
Chichester College



Russell Strutt
Principal
Central Sussex
College