**Graduate Bursary Summer / Autumn 2018**

The Department of Children & Youth Affairs (DCYA) will re-open the Learner Fund Bursary to Early Years practitioners who are new graduates of a recognised Early Childhood Education and Care degree programme. The local City/County Childcare Committees (CCC) will process and appraise Learner Fund Bursary applications. Applications will open earlier than previously to maximise the number of graduates who can apply.

**The following rules apply to the Graduate Bursary:**

1. This qualification for which the bursary is paid must be on the DCYA Early Years Recognised Qualifications list.
2. The award must be placed at level 7/8/9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and achieved in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 or in the 2017/2018 academic year.
3. The bursary amount will be €750
4. The qualification must be a full, major award; the bursary cannot be paid in respect of partially completed awards.
5. Letters from third level education providers which state that a partially completed award is equivalent to a full award should not be accepted.
6. A letter of eligibility to practice from DCYA which states that the applicant is eligible for work as an ECCE room leader at the higher capitation rate can also be accepted
7. The qualification for which the bursary is paid must be that which qualifies the person to work in the Early Years sector (and is at least level 7 on the NFQ)
8. Applicants may only apply once and cannot be granted the Learner Fund bursary for a second time if they have already received it before
9. The applicant cannot have received any public funding in support of their completing the award relating to this application
10. The bursary is available to experienced practitioners only; applicants must have been working in a Tusla registered Early Years Service prior to beginning their course.
11. Applicants must be currently working in a Tusla registered Early Years Service
12. Application must be made by the holder of the award and not by any third party on their behalf

**Application requirements:**

1. Application form to be completed in full and by the deadline specified
2. Supporting documentation must be provided with the application form
3. In lieu of graduating certificates, transcripts from the third level education institution can be accepted.
4. The transcripts must in document form and endorsed by the institution; screenshots of online student records cannot be accepted.
5. The transcript can only be accepted if it clearly shows that the full award has been achieved or in the case -

**Please Note:**

**With regard to the Application Requirements:** DCYA Qualifications team is available to any CCC staff who have queries regarding transcripts, letters of eligibility to practice or qualifications. The application form indicates that the information may be shared with DCYA for verification if necessary.

**The CCC decision is final**: There is no appeals process for the Graduate Bursary payment. The decision of the CCC is final for the purposes of the bursary application and process, and no delays to the timely conclusion of the process should occur. If an applicant is not approved and wants clarification on this, they can contact DCYA directly.

**The DCYA Early Years Recognised Qualifications List** will be updated prior to applications for the bursary opening and this updated version should be used.

**With regard to (5) above:** Only students who have registered for and successfully completed a Level 7 Major Award are eligible

Only students who have registered for and successfully completed a Level 8 Major Award are eligible

In some specific cases, students who have registered for a Level 8 Award but successfully completed and exited with a Level 7 Major Award are eligible. This is only possible in 3 colleges as follows: National College of Ireland (Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education), Cork IT (BA in Early Years Education), London Metropolitan University offered through Portobello Institute (BA [Ord] Early Childhood Studies)as they appear on the DCYA published list of qualifications.

**With regard to 6) above:** If a person who does not have a qualification on the published list, or a letter of eligibility to practice applies for a bursary, the CCC should advise them that they cannot accept the application. The person should be advised to apply to DCYA for qualifications recognition, not to further an application for the graduate bursary, but on the basis that they are not compliant with the Regulations if they have not ascertained their eligibility to practice in the Early Years sector. They should also advise that qualifications recognition takes about 8 weeks for most applicants, and DCYA will not prioritise one application over another on any basis.

**With regard to (7) above**: DCYA is aware that an increasing number of qualified practitioners choose to pursue post-graduate education to further advance their practice, but is not in a position to provide funding in respect of this. If an applicant does not have an eligible undergraduate degree, and has a post-graduate award which is not on the published list, they should apply for qualifications recognition as a priority. The outcome of this may make them eligible for a bursary, or may not, but is unlikely to be concluded in time for the closing dates.

**Timeframe for applications:**

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| **Date** | **Action** | **Responsible** |
| Week beg. 7th August 2018 | Notice of LF bursary application process opening will be published/disseminated by CCCs at local level – CCCs can provide the guide/application form to interested practitioners | CCCs |
| 20 August | Call for applications open by CCCs | CCCs |
| 28 September | Deadline for submission of applications – close at 5 p.m. | CCCs |
| 01 - 05 October | CCCs undertake review/appraisal of applications / including sign-off by CCCs internal decision making structure | CCCs |
| 08 October | CCCs provide spreadsheet of recommendations /decision to Pobal | CCCs |
| 09 - 10 October | Pobal submit funding drawdown to DCYA for total projected bursary amount | Pobal |
| 09 - 10 October | Pobal undertake high level check of CCC recommendations & collate file for DCYA | Pobal |
| 11 October | Pobal provide file of recommendations to DCYA for review/sign-off | Pobal |
| 18 October | DCYA provide Pobal with the approval/allocation to CCCs | DCYA |
| 25 October | Pobal issue contract addendums for approved allocation to CCCs | Pobal |
| By 02 November | CCCs sign/return contract addendum | CCCs |
| By week beg. 12 November | Pobal transfer approved allocation to CCCs | Pobal |
| Week beg. 19 November | CCCs pay approved applicants | CCCs |