

Practice Learning Opportunity Allowance

Travel Scheme for bursary holders funded by Social Care Wales

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Social work qualifying training places great importance upon the ability of students to develop skills, apply knowledge and have their competence assessed within appropriate practice learning opportunities. To make best use of the practice learning opportunities available, students will be required to access placements across Wales and will often need to undertake additional travelling as part of their practice learning experience.
- 1.2 A practice learning opportunity (PLO) refers to days spent in practice training in social work, as required by Social Care Wales in its "Approval and Visiting of Degree Courses in Social Work (Wales) Rules 2018" or by the Requirements for a Social Work Qualification made by another UK Regulatory Council.

- 1.3 The Practice Learning Opportunity Allowance (PLOA) has been introduced as a contribution towards the placements expenses that students will incur as an integral part of their social work training.

2. Who is entitled to claim the allowance?

- 2.1 The Practice Learning Opportunity Allowance is available to all students who have been assessed as eligible for the Social Care Wales bursary.
- 2.2 Students will not receive the annual allowance for any year within which they do not undertake a practice learning opportunity.

3. How much is the allowance?

- 3.1 Eligible students on an undergraduate or postgraduate degree course will receive a PLOA equivalent to £7.50 per day as a contribution towards PLO costs. This PLOA is paid before you start your PLO and the amount you receive is dependent on the number of practice learning days:

	PLOA Amounts				
Days	20	30	80	90	100
Amount	£150	£225	£600	£675	£750

- 3.2 Additional PLOA (subject to a maximum daily limit) may be claimed by students who have spent their initial PLOA in any given year on eligible PLO related expenditure.
- 3.3 Only students who are able to demonstrate that they have spent their initial PLOA on eligible practice learning expenditure will be eligible to apply for additional PLOA.

4. What is eligible practice learning expenditure?

- 4.1 The allowance covers:
- Travel costs incurred travelling to and from a student's home/accommodation to their PLO. This would normally include one pre-practice learning opportunity visit and one post-practice learning opportunity visit per PLO.
 - Travel costs incurred whilst undertaking a PLO e.g. home visits to service users.
 - Accommodation costs incurred specifically to undertake a PLO e.g. renting accommodation or B&B costs.

- 4.2 In order to claim additional PLOA students must complete the Daily Expenditure sheet of the Travel Claim form from the first day of their PLO.
- 4.3 Students may claim up to a maximum of £75 per day for all private transport, parking and accommodation costs incurred solely in connection with the PLO.
- 4.4 The allowance does not cover:
- Travel to university/college;
 - Recall days;
 - Car insurance, repairs, purchase, MOT tests, RAC/AA membership etc;
 - Car rentals and leases;
 - Air travel;
 - Taxi costs;
 - Telephone costs;
 - Training course costs;
 - Food and beverage costs; and
 - Additional Practice Learning days if a placement is extended. Applications may be considered at the discretion of Social Care Wales on a case by case basis, and only if supported by both the Programme and placement provider.

5. Mileage rates

- 5.1 Claims for the use of private transport will be paid at the following rate:

Motorcars:	45p per mile
Motorcycles:	24p per mile
Bicycle:	20p per mile

6. Accommodation

- 6.1 If a student's placement is at too great a distance from their home or term-time address to make daily travel feasible or economical, claims can be made for accommodation costs incurred specifically to undertake a PLO e.g. B&B costs or the cost of renting temporary accommodation.
- 6.2 B&B accommodation is recommended for short-term arrangements only, where renting accommodation may not be feasible. For longer PLOs of 80 to 100 days in length, students are expected to take out rented accommodation and share with other bursary funded students where possible.
- 6.3 No payment will be made in respect of any claim for accommodation costs unless these have been agreed in writing by Social Care Wales in advance. Students must therefore seek Social Care Wales agreement before signing any rental agreements with a potential landlord/letting agent or staying at a B&B.
- 6.4 In the case of claims for accommodation costs, Social Care Wales will agree to consider applications only where the residence meets Social Care Wales' eligibility criteria.

Students must complete the Request For Accommodation on-line application form (which can be accessed through the students' SCWonline account) and submit to the Student Funding and Grants Team to establish whether a potential residence meets our eligibility criteria.

- 6.5 Social Care Wales will take up to five working days to acknowledge requests for approval, and may contact you to request additional information if necessary, depending on what information you've already provided.
- 6.6 You should only proceed with accommodation arrangements once you have received written approval. If you proceed without written approval, then Social Care Wales reserves the right to refuse the reimbursement of any accommodation claims.
- 6.7 When claiming accommodation costs you will need to provide a valid Rental/Tenancy Agreement which clearly demonstrates the amount of money you will be paying each week/month. Receipts must be provided with every claim for reimbursement for accommodation costs. Social Care Wales will not reimburse any accommodation costs unless it is provided with this Rental/Tenancy agreement and receipts.
- 6.8 It is the student's responsibility to secure or negotiate suitable terms for any such agreements. Any rental or tenancy agreement entered into by the student is wholly the student's responsibility and should be honoured accordingly. Social Care Wales will not participate in any discussions or disputes between tenant and landlord and will not be liable for any costs incurred from early termination of any agreements.

7. Other eligible expenses

7.1 Claims can also be made for the following:

- Parking fees can be claimed for within the daily travel limit of £75, for travel to and from the PLO and whilst undertaking work directly relating to the PLO e.g. visits to the home of service users/carers.
- Charges for tolls, tunnels, bridges and congestion charges incurred during the practice learning opportunity will be reimbursed in addition to the daily travel limit of £75.
- Public transport costs will be reimbursed in addition to the daily travel limit of £75. Claims for public transport will:
 - Reimburse the actual cost of the journey taken, as shown on ticket;
 - Require rail travel to be at lowest available price, using return tickets and standard rates.
- Students travelling by private vehicle can claim a passenger supplement of 5p per mile per passenger for up to two additional Social Care Wales bursary funded students carried. Claim forms must show the names of passengers and their Social

Care Wales reference number. Please note that where students travel together only the driver can claim.

- 7.2 Receipts/tickets MUST BE photographed or scanned and e-mailed to the Student Funding and Grants Team in order to claim reimbursement for each item of eligible expense claimed on the Travel Claim form. Social Care Wales CANNOT REIMBURSE any claim for the above unless corresponding receipts or tickets have been received by the Student Funding and Grants Team.

8. Insurance Declaration

- 8.1 All students in receipt of bursary funding must have completed section 9 of the Social Work Bursary application form or section 7 of the Bursary Renewal form, named 'Insurance Declaration'. Students will need to complete the declaration irrespective of whether they intend to use a private motor vehicle for the purposes of the practice learning opportunities.
- 8.2 It is a condition of payment of private transport claims that students have insurance cover for the following risk:
- Travel to and from permanent home address/term-time address/ PLO lodgings address and PLO address, to include the following:
 - bodily injury to, or death, of third parties;
 - bodily injury to, or death, of any passengers; and
 - damage to the property of third parties.
 - If the vehicle is used during the course of the practice learning opportunity, the cover must in addition include the following:
 - damage to, or theft, of the vehicle; and
 - an endorsement that the policy covers use for business purposes by the student personally.
- 8.3 It is the student's responsibility to see that their insurance policy covers these risks and is properly endorsed for the use of the vehicle in the course of training and that receipt of a mileage allowance is not deemed to constitute use for hire or reward. Social Care Wales will not pay for any additional cost of insurance for business use.
- 8.4 Social Care Wales will not accept liability in the event of any accident, damage, injury or death resulting from the use of a student's vehicle. Mileage allowance will only be paid if the insurance conditions are fulfilled. Although it is the student's responsibility to check that their policy meets the requirements, Social Care Wales reserves the right to examine the policy at any time.

9. Conditions of payment

- 9.1 Expense claims over and above the initial PLOA will normally be paid on a monthly basis in arrears.
- 9.2 Expense claims cannot be paid in advance.
- 9.3 All expense claims must be verified by the PLO supervisor by e-mail. Your PLO supervisor will be your on-site practice educator or senior member of staff who has responsibility for supervising your work on PLO.
- 9.4 Expense claims will be processed according to the date they are submitted or re-submitted to Social Care Wales.
- 9.5 Social Care Wales will only reimburse eligible student PLO travel costs if a travel claim form is submitted within the current academic year, i.e. on or before 31 August. Travel claim forms submitted in the following academic year after the PLO took place (between 1 September and 31 March) will only be processed at Social Care Wales' discretion and only in exceptional circumstances.
- 9.6 Checks may be carried out on private transport mileage claims using a mileage verifying process.
- 9.7 Checks may be carried out to verify that your accommodation costs meet the criteria initially agreed by the Student Funding and Grants Team in the Accommodation Request Approval correspondence.
- 9.8 Social Care Wales will check, and where appropriate, amend mileage rates, arithmetic calculations, number of miles and any additional expenses claimed.
- 9.9 In circumstances where an overpayment has occurred, future expense claims will be used to reduce/offset such overpayments.

10. How to apply for the additional allowance

- 10.1 Students who have been awarded a Social Care Wales bursary must complete the Travel Claim form to demonstrate how they have spent the initial PLOA and also for claiming reimbursement of expenditure exceeding the initial PLOA.
- 10.2 For each PLO, students will need to follow the same process to demonstrate how they have spent the initial PLOA before claiming for additional expenditure.
- 10.3 Students are reminded of their responsibility for providing accurate and honest information to Social Care Wales. Social Care Wales will take all necessary steps to recover any money paid to students who submit false or inaccurate claims. Students are also reminded that they have a professional responsibility to act with integrity and

that the submission of false or inaccurate claims may affect their professional registration.

- 10.4 Students must e-mail their completed Travel Claim forms to their PLO supervisor who will then verify the accuracy of the form before forwarding via e-mail to the Student Funding and Grants Team at studentfundingandgrants@socialcare.wales
- 10.5 Receipts/tickets should be photographed or scanned and e-mailed to studentfundingandgrants@socialcare.wales
- 10.6 Under no circumstances must PLO supervisors return forms to students for onward submission.
- 10.7 Claims will be assessed in date order received by the Student Funding and Grants Team and will take up to 20 working days to be processed by Social Care Wales.

11. How to check that Social Care Wales have received the forms

- 11.1 If you include your e-mail address on the front cover of the Travel Claim Form, we will e-mail you a confirmation of receipt of your form, once received.

If you have any questions or queries in relation to the Travel Scheme please contact the Student Funding and Grants Team directly on:

Phone: 0300 303 3444

E-mail: studentfundingandgrants@socialcare.wales