

Colleges Tackling Child Poverty Funding: Guidance for RISE and TAF for AY 2026–27



Tackling Child Poverty Funding: Guidance for RISE and TAF Funding in Colleges for AY 2026-27

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Summary: This funding supports delivery of key commitments in the Scottish Government's third Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, "[Bringing Hope, Building Futures](#)" (2026–2031).

This document provides guidance for colleges on the Raising Income through Skills and Education (RISE) and Training Access Fund (TAF) for Academic Year 2026–27, including strategic purpose, funding allocations, target priority groups, reporting requirements and possible interventions.

FAO: Principals / Chairs / Finance Directors of Scotland's colleges and the general public.

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Strategic Purpose and National Mission

1. The Scottish Government has set in statute the ambition to eradicate child poverty through [The Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#), with targets to significantly reduce the number of children living in poverty by 2030.
2. The third Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, "[Bringing Hope, Building Futures: Tackling child poverty delivery plan 2026-2031](#)" was published by Scottish Government in March 2026, setting out concrete action to drive continued progress on child poverty. The delivery plan makes clear that employment offers a sustainable route out of poverty for many families, with increasing earned incomes a critical element of the approach to reducing child poverty.
3. To help unlock the labour market for more parents, and to help parents in work increase their earnings, the plan establishes a £21 million skills package delivered in partnership with colleges.
4. This guidance covers both RISE and TAF funding, with separate guidance published for the New FWDF.
5. In Academic Year (AY) 2026-27, the RISE and TAF initiatives contribute to Scotland's mission to eradicate child poverty by investing £11 million in the college.
6. Funding is for 2026-27 only at this stage. Future funding is subject to confirmation by the Scottish Government. More information will follow as soon as it is available.
7. The key objectives of this funding are to:
 - **Break the cycle of poverty:** Support parents/carers in low-income households to enter, sustain, and progress in employment by providing college-based, employment-focused learning opportunities. These should be timetabled in a family-friendly way. This should equip people with skills to enter or progress in work, fostering collaborative multi-agency partnerships, and supporting existing ESOL provision in colleges.
 - **Provide "wraparound" support:** Deliver holistic "Whole Family Support" to address structural barriers like childcare and transport, ensuring learner choice and direct upskilling opportunities for low-paid workers are available to drive career progression.

8. Colleges must demonstrate a robust, collaborative, local approach, working with a wide range of external stakeholders to effectively reach those in the greatest need and minimise duplication. This may include other colleges, Community Learning and Development (CLD) providers, [No One Left Behind](#) (NOLB) delivery partners including Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs), expert third sector organisations experienced in directly supporting the priority groups (see [Funding Eligibility](#)), and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). This should also include working with employers in specific sectors, which have been identified by Labour Market Information (LMI) as more likely to employ individuals from the identified priority groups, and with employers which are able to offer suitable opportunities for sustainable employment.

Funding Methodology

9. The total £11 million investment for AY 2026-27 is split as follows:
 - **RISE (£9 million):** For course development, delivery, outreach, and holistic support for low-income parents/carers, prioritising key priority groups. This funding aims to support individuals up to a maximum of approx. £3,750 per person.
 - **TAF (£2 million):** For the delivery of targeted skills specifically for in-work parents/carers to support them to progress in employment. This funding, modelled around the previous Independent Learning Account (ILA) funding, aims to support individuals up to a maximum of approx. £500 per person.
10. To ensure resources are directed toward the areas of greatest socio-economic need, funding is distributed via a regional allocation model rather than standard credit-based formulas.
11. In recognition that colleges may require additional resource to assist with administration and set-up costs, we have assigned a baseline of £20k within each allocation, with the remaining allocation informed by [Scottish Child Payment \(SCP\) data \(Dec 2025\)](#). Colleges have the flexibility to utilise the baseline £20k for delivery, if additional administration budget is not required. Funding allocations can be found in [Annex A](#).
12. The SCP serves as the most robust proxy for mapping financial hardship and child poverty within a region. Unlike broader economic indicators, SCP data provides a direct, real-time reflection of Scotland's lowest-income households with children. By utilising this targeted data, instead of SIMD or standard SFC college teaching grant allocations, the fund can precisely direct resources to the communities where the risk of child poverty is most acute, ensuring an entirely evidence-led intervention.

Funding Eligibility

13. All fundable learners must be living in Scotland full-time, including those with refugee status or asylum seekers. They must be parents/carers with an individual income below £33k, with responsibility for at least one child at home aged under 18.

14. To access the funding learners will be required to self-identify eligibility at application stage.
15. Colleges should undertake targeted outreach to promote the funds to new learners from the [six priority family groups](#) most at risk of child poverty. While funding is not exclusively restricted to these groups, marketing and recruitment efforts should proactively focus on them. The identified priority groups are:
 - Lone parent families.
 - Families with a disabled adult or child.
 - Larger families (3+ children).
 - Minority ethnic families.
 - Families with a child under one year old.
 - Families with mothers under age 25.
16. Colleges should make efforts to ensure that opportunities and support meets the needs of families at greatest risk of poverty, including the six priority family groups and other marginalised groups, to ensure barriers to participation are effectively removed or reduced.

Funding for Impact

17. This funding empowers colleges to design new, flexible pathways that support families facing deep-seated or generational barriers to the labour market, helping them move into secure, fair work. It is designed for high-impact innovation and additional regional interventions. Examples of activity can be found in [Annex B](#). This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.
18. LEPs and NOLB teams have expertise in working exclusively with these target groups and have established [shared measurement frameworks](#) in place. College collaboration with the LEPs and NOLB teams will enable colleges to more effectively tailor training and educational interventions to individual needs.
19. Colleges are strongly encouraged to align regional strategies with recent, relevant, robust research from experts in this area. Examples can be found in [Annex C](#).
20. The Scottish Government have published [summary evidence on groups at greatest risk of poverty](#), which should be considered in the development of activities.
21. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) must be considered wherever possible to build on existing skills.

Key Exclusions

22. Colleges should be aware that funding cannot be used to provide additionality to apprenticeship provision or compensate parents for a loss of benefits or other income.

23. Colleges should not use this funding to provide wraparound support for students who are enrolled on credit-funded courses, to cover standard funding shortfalls or maintain/top up pre-existing college activities. The purpose of this funding is to reach out to new learners who are not already engaged with further education and skills provision through a multi-agency collaborative approach.

Reporting Requirements

24. Prior to the start of the academic year, colleges must provide SFC with a proposal which aligns strictly with the purpose of this funding and utilises the full allocation for each college. These should include a named TCP lead, a breakdown of the intended interventions, the target groups they are intended to reach, and an outline of all external delivery partners and stakeholders. This should be completed in the template provided in [Annex D](#) and submitted to SFC using the TCP@SFC.ac.uk email address by **31 August 2026**.
25. To demonstrate impact, colleges must report enrolments for all TCP funded activities via the SFC SecureShare file transfer protocol, using a template which will be provided.
26. Colleges will also be expected to submit a FES record for each student (even though they won't attract credits) as normal.
27. A series of monthly meetings will be established between SFC and each college's TCP lead to understand and report on progress against each college's proposals.
28. Colleges must report on the following measures:
- **Flag all supported learners:** Under either RISE or TAF funding streams, the volume of students which are in one or more of the six priority group and are in receipt of SCP.
 - **Record volume and course details:** Capture the total number of individuals accessing training and support, including the course title, SCQF (where applicable) and delivery method (distance learning, in person etc.).
 - **Provide full equalities breakdowns:** Report demographic data aligned with FES categories for all learners.
 - **Maintain financial oversight:** Submit detailed monthly updates on total spend versus underspend.
29. At the application stage, colleges must ask individuals to complete the privacy statement which will enable SFC to utilise data to undertake an end of year evaluation. SFC will share a proposed application template which will include necessary data protection statements for this purpose.

Branding and Timelines

30. SFC will work with Colleges Scotland and college communication leads to develop a national marketing and communications plan for all Tackling Child Poverty funded activity (RISE, TAF and New FWDF) and institutional communications leads should work closely to align engagement to this work.
31. All materials must feature Scottish Government, SFC and Colleges Scotland logos.
32. It is expected that RISE and TAF funded provision will be delivered over 12 months from August 2026 – July 2027 and should be available over the traditional academic year holiday periods, in a way which responds to learner demand.
33. Delivery schedule:
 - **Commences** – August 2026.
 - **Completion** – by 31 July 2027.

Payment of Funds and In-year Redistribution

34. Colleges will be paid in 4 equal instalments (August 26, November 26, February 27, and April 27). This will ensure that we do not pay in advance of need and are able, if necessary, to redistribute funds between colleges. In multi-college regions, the regional strategic body is responsible for the allocation of funds to their assigned colleges.
35. Through a combined process of timely, ongoing reporting via the CDC SecureShare site and monthly monitoring meetings, colleges will be expected to identify accurate spending on a quarterly basis.
36. In liaison with the Scottish Government, SFC may adjust individual allocations in-year across RISE, TAF and New FWDF and across colleges/college regions if there is evidence that any funding is being underutilised (and therefore at risk of being unspent) and there is evidence of unmet demand elsewhere. Unspent funding will be fully recovered after the end of the delivery period.

Conditions of Funding

37. This funding must only be used for the purpose(s) for which it is being allocated, as outlined above. Standard college [Conditions of Funding](#) will apply.
38. Any queries/requests for further information should be directed to SFC's Tackling Child Poverty mailbox TCP@SFC.ac.uk in the first instance.

Annex A: Funding Allocations

Name of College	Baseline	RISE	TAF	Total
Ayrshire College	£20,000	£573,138	£134,856	£727,993
Borders College	£20,000	£132,524	£31,182	£183,706
City of Glasgow College	£20,000	£898,865	£211,498	£1,130,363
Dumfries and Galloway College	£20,000	£190,950	£44,929	£255,879
Dundee & Angus College	£20,000	£497,738	£117,115	£634,853
Edinburgh College	£20,000	£881,220	£207,346	£1,108,566
Fife College	£20,000	£603,291	£141,951	£765,242
Forth Valley College	£20,000	£411,614	£96,850	£528,464
Glasgow Clyde College	£20,000	£665,573	£156,605	£842,179
Glasgow Kelvin College	£20,000	£421,969	£99,287	£541,256
Highlands and Islands Region	£140,000	£621,209	£146,167	£907,376
New College Lanarkshire	£20,000	£665,443	£156,575	£842,018
Newbattle Abbey College	£20,000	£4,834	£1,137	£25,971
North East Scotland College	£20,000	£517,907	£121,861	£659,768
Sabhal Mor Ostaig	£20,000	£7,175	£1,688	£28,863
South Lanarkshire College	£20,000	£245,398	£57,741	£323,139
SRUC	£20,000	£114,749	£27,000	£161,748
West College Scotland	£20,000	£772,420	£181,746	£974,166
West Lothian College	£20,000	£273,982	£64,466	£358,449
TOTAL	£500,000	£8,500,000	£2,000,000	£11,000,000

Note: £20k baseline allocation for each college includes separate allocation for UHI partner colleges.

Annex B: Examples Of Fundable Activity

Based on research, examples of which can be found in [Annex C](#), the following are suggested examples of actions colleges could undertake:

Structural and Academic Policy Interventions

- **Co-located Multi-Agency Hubs:** Bringing local authority Parental Employability Support (PES) workers onto the college campus.
- **Flexible Course Delivery:** Offer hybrid, online, or evening learning options so parents can balance coursework around childcare responsibilities.
- **Compassionate Academic Policies:** Establish formal institutional policies allowing lenient attendance, coursework extensions, and alternative assessment methods to accommodate sudden caregiving emergencies or child illnesses.
- **The 'Young Mothers' Guarantee':** Build on existing national youth frameworks to guarantee every young mother (aged 16-24) a dedicated pathway to a work placement, training, or education, working closely with relevant support services.

Financial Aid and Income Maximisation Interventions

- **Embedded Welfare Rights Advocacy:** Partner with expert organisations (e.g. CPAG Scotland) to deliver or train staff to embed ongoing, proactive income maximisation services within student support directly into the college enrolment process.
- **Streamlined and Expanded Institutional Aid:** Top-up dedicated student bursaries and simplify the application process to remove overly bureaucratic barriers and prevent funding delays.
- **Consolidated Emergency and Discretionary Funds:** Creating streamlined, non-bureaucracy-heavy emergency cash grants to cover minor financial shocks (e.g. ad hoc late pick-up childcare fees) within 24 hours.
- **Digital Inclusion Grants:** Provide direct hardware loans (laptops/tablets) and connectivity grants to ensure parents can access online learning components without financial strain.

On-Campus and Wraparound Support Interventions

- **Dedicated Key Worker Support:** Assign a designated caseworker to provide consistent, one-to-one navigational support for student parents throughout their educational journey, serving as a single point of contact.

- **Confidence and Soft Skills Building:** Deliver targeted workshops, coaching, and personal development modules specifically engineered to build self-esteem, resilience, and workplace confidence.
- **Comprehensive Campus Childcare Services:** Provide robust, flexible childcare solutions to enable class attendance, including on-site nurseries, backup emergency childcare provisions, and the expansion of childcare funds to cover infants under the age of one, where not already covered by DWP or other child poverty funded activity.
- **Family-Centric Campus Infrastructure:** Designate specific "Family Study Zones" on campus where parents can study effectively alongside their young children.
- **Food Security Initiatives:** Implement free on-campus breakfast and lunch clubs for parents and younger children to alleviate daily living costs.
- **Staff Awareness and Dedicated Advisory Roles:** Appoint designated student support staff trained in the specific barriers faced by low-income and single parents and deliver training to educators regarding the unpredictable caregiving demands students face.
- **Peer Mentorship and Community Spaces:** Facilitate peer-support networks and student parent groups to combat isolation, share resources, and build confidence.

Targeted and Inclusive Employability Interventions

- **Comprehensive Job-Search and Readiness Support:** Work with LEPs/PES workers to embed practical employability coaching into the student journey, including CV writing, target job searches, application assistance, and rigorous interview preparation and mock practice.
- **Inclusive Employability Programmes:** Design specialised employability programmes, including ESOL provision, and supported work placement/experience programmes that are closely linked to high-growth local economic sectors.
- **Tailored Support for Disabled Learners:** Create specific, accessible pathways for disabled student parents to transition smoothly from training into sustainable employment including supporting applications to in-work benefits e.g. Access to Work (AtW).
- **Employer-Linked Progression (TAF Focus):** Partnering directly with local Fair Work employers to build short, stackable micro-credentials (evening/weekend modules) that lead to a guaranteed interview or a defined promotion pathway for parents currently stuck in low-paid, low-progression roles.

This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.

Annex C: Relevant Research

To design evidence-backed interventions, colleges must draw on relevant research and evidence this. Key examples include:

- **One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS)** briefings [Higher Education for Single Parents](#) and the accompanying [Employability & Employment briefing](#).
- **Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Fraser of Allander Institute ([Local Labour Market Pressures](#))** – This structural research, including a specific focus on parental employability, shifts the focus from individual employability to regional job availability across Scotland's 32 local authorities.
- **The Robertson Trust ([Education Pathways Framework](#))** – This research highlights proven methods for narrowing the poverty-related attainment gap. It underscores the impact of embedding dedicated mentorship, offering flexible delivery models that accommodate care experienced or low-income students, and providing holistic, wrap-around support.
- **The Poverty Alliance ([State of Poverty Policy Labs](#))** – This work emphasises the critical need for multi-sector collaboration—particularly between the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), colleges, and local authorities.
- **Close the Gap** – Close the Gap's research highlights that because single parents in Scotland are overwhelmingly women (over 90%), child poverty cannot be tackled without gender-sensitive training models. It provides a free tool for organisations that want to follow this approach to designing policy, including on employability and training. This [blog](#) contains a short explainer on the tool, and you can find the tool itself [here](#). More information on their work on child poverty can be found [here](#).
- **CPAG Scotland and University of York ([Changing Realities Project](#))** – Built on the documented, lived experiences of low-income Scottish families, this research shows how rigid institutional systems often penalise parents trying to step into education or increase their working hours.
- **Equate Scotland ([Women in the STEM Landscape](#))** – Equate work with groups of female parent-returners who have taken time away from the workplace and are looking to return to employment in STEM fields. Their cross-report research investigates the systemic barriers affecting women and parents in the Scottish STEM landscape, highlighting a critical “policy–practice gap”.

Annex D: Colleges RISE and TAF Delivery Plan Proposal Template

Colleges RISE and TAF delivery plan proposal

Academic Year 2026-27 | Return to SFC at TCP@SFC.ac.uk before **31 August 2026**

1. Institution and Financial Allocation Overview

College / Institution Name:	[Enter College Name Here]
Baseline Administration Allocation:	£20,000 (Standard baseline allocation per region; flexible for delivery use)
Colleges RISE Funding Allocation:	£ [Insert amount from Annex A] (Target: 2,400 individuals sector-wide)
Colleges TAF Funding Allocation:	£ [Insert amount from Annex A] (Target: 4,000 individuals sector-wide)
Total Sector Tackling Child Poverty Allocation:	£ [Insert Sum of Baseline + RISE + TAF]

2. Proposed Delivery Interventions and Additional Support

Detail the structural and flexible interventions your college plans to establish using this funding. Interventions must represent absolute additionality and focus explicitly on supporting low-income parents to enter, sustain, or progress in employment.

Core Focus and Eligible Metrics	Specific College Actions / Interventions / Collaborative partners	Projected Budget and Volume
Colleges RISE (£9m Total Sector Allocation) - Parents/carers earning <£33k - Child under 18 at home - Target focus: Course development, outreach, and wrap-around family support	[e.g. Implementing standard welfare advocacy via CPAG-trained staff; developing flexible short-course provision with single-parent-proofed timetabling built around local childcare hours; creating on-campus Family Study Zones. Details should include named external stakeholders and partners]	Allocated Spend: £ Target Volume: Parents
Colleges TAF (£2m Total Sector Allocation) - In-work parents earning <£33k - Child under 18 at home - Target focus: Delivery of targeted higher-level skills progression	[e.g. Industry-linked short modules / micro-credentials delivered via flexible evening or weekend models, aligned with regional employer networks and LMI data to boost earned income lines. Details should include named external stakeholders and partners]	Allocated Spend: £ Target Volume: Parents
Baseline Wrap-Around / Setup - Fixed £20k baseline row variable - Can transfer entirely to delivery if administrative overhead is covered	[Outline implementation budget use for the £20k baseline allocation. Detail if it will support coordination staff, setup, or be converted directly into expanding course delivery funds.]	Allocated Spend: £

3. Data Compliance and Sign-off

By submitting this plan, the College confirms adherence to specified reporting conditions, measuring outcomes against AY 2025/26 baselines, providing a full equalities breakdown, and participating in quarterly live data reconciliation for potential in-year redistribution of underspends.

Prepared By (Name and Title of main college contact):	Approved By (Principal / Regional Lead):
Signature / Date:	Signature / Date: