

## **The National Piping Centre Access Scheme Policy**

**This policy applies to: Participants**

**This policy was reviewed on: 19/01/2026 by: Callum Stamper (Commercial Director)**

**This policy is due for review by: 31/01/2027**

**National Piping Centre (NPC)**

**Access Scheme Policy**

### **Purpose of this Document**

This document sets out the National Piping Centre's (NPC) Access Scheme Policy, clearly defining the principles, eligibility criteria, and operational processes that underpin the scheme. The Access Scheme builds on successful pilots delivered through the NYPBS and NPC Clubs programmes and now operates as NPC's centralised access and bursary mechanism.

#### **1. Intent**

The Access Scheme forms a core strand of NPC's Activity Programme.

As part of our commitment to increasing both the breadth and quality of engagement, NPC seeks to reduce barriers to participation in piping and traditional music, particularly for young people and those from priority groups.

A key mechanism for achieving this aim is the provision of clear, consistent, and equitable bursary support across NPC's engagement activity.

The Access Scheme provides a fair and transparent framework for allocating financial support, including free places, reduced fees, and additional assistance where needed. Applications are means-tested, with automatic outcomes where criteria are met, alongside discretionary awards that allow NPC to respond flexibly to individual circumstances and ensure equitable access.

## **2. Scope**

The Access Scheme accepts applications from anyone engaging with eligible NPC learning activities via an online application form. Applications are assessed by the Access Panel, and awards are made proactively at each panel review. Awards may include free places, tiered bursaries, and support with additional costs such as travel, accommodation or carer provision.

The scheme does not provide retrospective support. Assistance can only be awarded for participation taking place after an application has been submitted.

NPC trainees are also eligible to apply for support, including assistance with travel, accommodation, or other access-related barriers.

## **3. Eligible Activity**

The scheme currently applies to the following NPC Group Engagement Activity:

- NYPBS
- NPC Clubs
- NPC Holiday Clubs

We aspire to extend the reach of the scheme to the below activities in due course:

- The CLASP
- NPC Gatherings
- Evening Classes

At present, individual NPC tuition and audience participation activities are not within the scope of the scheme.

## **4. Eligibility Criteria**

The Access Scheme is means-tested based on self-declared household income.

To ensure fairness and consistency, the eligibility criteria outlined below are applied across all NPC engagement activities. Alongside income thresholds, priority is given to young people (under 26) and individuals from the following groups:

- Disabled people

- People from the LGBTQ+ community
- People from Black, Asian, and other global majority backgrounds
- Care-experienced young people
- Young parents
- Young carers
- People living in areas of social and economic deprivation, as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)

NPC recognises barriers related to all protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. While not all are listed explicitly, applicants experiencing barriers related to any protected characteristic are encouraged to apply

NPC recognises that individuals may experience multiple, intersecting barriers. The Access Scheme considers cumulative disadvantage when assessing applications.

### **Definition of Young Parents and Young Carers**

For the purposes of this scheme, young parents and young carers are defined as individuals under the age of 26 who have parenting and/or caring responsibilities and can evidence, if asked, that they are in receipt of the Young Carer Grant. This policy aligns with relevant Scottish Government guidance.

## **5. Types of Support**

### **5.1 Free Places**

Applicants may be eligible for a fully funded place if their total household income before tax is £25,000 or less, or if they meet any of the following criteria:

- In foster care or under the care of a local authority
- Receiving Universal Credit, Income Support, or Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Receiving Income-based Employment and Support Allowance
- Supported under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- In receipt of the Young Carer Grant
- Receiving Child Tax Credit (but not Working Tax Credit) with a household income below £16,105

- Receiving both Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit, with a household income up to £7,500

## **5.2 Reduced Fees**

Applicants with a total household income before tax of £55,000 or less may be eligible for a reduced fee, as follows:

- £25,000–£35,000: 80% bursary
- £35,000–£45,000: 60% bursary
- £45,000–£55,000: 30% bursary

## **5.3 Two-Child Discount**

Families with two or more children participating in NPC activity are eligible for a 40% discount for the second child. This discount applies to a maximum of two places.

This discount operates separately from the Access Scheme bursary system and is available to all eligible families through the standard payment process. However, it is referenced here as applicants may be signposted to this option during access reviews.

The two-child discount can be applied in addition to any bursary awarded through the Access Scheme.

## **5.4 Discretionary Bursaries**

Fees bursary applicants with a household income over £55,000+ are not eligible for an award except in exceptional circumstances, in such circumstances a discretionary award can be considered.

The threshold for making a discretionary award is described as: “A discretionary award may be made where the applicant can demonstrate mitigating circumstances that mean the income threshold-based bursaries should not apply in their case.”

The level of mitigation presented and accepted should determine the level of support offered in line with the existing bursary thresholds of 100%, 80%, 60% and 30%.

Applicants who do not meet the standard criteria but are experiencing other financial barriers may apply for discretionary support. Applicants should provide as much detail as possible about their circumstances. For example, this may include young musicians who are self-funding participation without family support.

## **5.5 Travel Bursaries**

Applicants with a household income of less than £35,000 may be eligible for a travel bursary of up to £250 per year.

Applications for support with travel costs can be submitted via the Travel Bursaries Application Form. Applicants are encouraged to state their preferred means of travel, if this is not the most cost effective means of travel they should clarify why such as extended travel times, access requirements, etc. Travel bursaries are considered based on the estimated cost of the necessary travel.

The formula used for calculating mileage costs is based on the HMRC recommended rate of £0.14p/mile.

Applicants with a household income of more than £35,000 or with total travel costs in excess of £250 may be eligible for a discretionary bursary. The threshold for awarding a discretionary travel bursary is described as: “A discretionary award may be made where the applicant can demonstrate mitigating circumstances that mean the income threshold-based bursary should not apply in their case or where a genuine, and evidenced, financial barrier to participation remains.”

The geographic eligibility criteria varies based on the activity for which the application relates. This list will be updated as the scope of the scheme expands to cover more of the NPC’s activity programme.

NYPBS and NPC Holiday Club applicants will be eligible nationwide.

NPC Clubs applications will be assessed with priority given to those who live in the community where the club is situated. The guidance for the review panel will recommend a maximum distance of 15 miles by road

## **5.6 Discretionary Support: Additional Costs**

NPC recognises that fees and travel are not the only barriers to participation. Applicants may also request support with additional costs such as accommodation or carer provision.

Applicants may also request support related to access needs including, but not limited to, disability access requirements, caring responsibilities, or adjustments to participation.

These requests should be made through the Fees Bursaries Application Form, with clear information about the support required.

## **6. Application Process**

NPC aims to process applications within four weeks. As the Access Panel meets fortnightly, most applicants can expect a decision within two weeks.

Applications are treated in the strictest confidence and information is shared only on a need-to-know basis. The panel may seek additional context from staff or applicants to clarify access needs.

Applications are submitted via the online application forms. Applicants will receive an automated confirmation once their form has been submitted.

For queries, amendments, or confirmation of receipt, applicants should contact the YC Coordinator at [accessscheme@thepipingcentre.co.uk](mailto:accessscheme@thepipingcentre.co.uk).

Alternative formats are available on request. Any alternative format created should be documented and retained for future use.

## **7. Selection and Administration**

### **7.1 Panel Review**

The Access Panel meets every two weeks and requires a quorum of three members, including at least one Director-level staff member.

Following each review, applicants are notified in writing of the outcome.

The YC Coordinator prepares recommendations based on the eligibility criteria and discretionary guidance for panel review. Final decisions rest with the panel.

### **7.2 Acceptance**

Applicants must confirm acceptance of any support offered. Where applicable, bank details will be requested at this stage to facilitate payments.

If no response is received, project leads may be asked to follow up with applicants.

Acceptance is managed via an acceptance form, which the YC Coordinator matches to applications and escalates any issues to the Access Team.

### 7.3 Actioning Outcomes

Once acceptance information has been received, payments are requested through the finance department. Payments may take up to four weeks to be processed.

Project leads are notified of outcomes to confirm enrolment and manage any fee adjustments.

## 8. Governance

NPC's Board provides strategic oversight of the Access Scheme. The scheme is project-managed by the Access Team, with administrative support from the YC Coordinator.

The Access Panel acts as a project board, providing senior user and technical perspectives to support effective day-to-day delivery.

The Access Team are responsible for record-keeping, monitoring, and reporting to NPC's Learning & Development team.

Each panel must include clearly defined roles:

- **Chair** – facilitates discussion and resolves ties
- **Senior User** – represents participant perspectives
- **Senior Supplier** – advises on NPC's delivery capacity and operational constraints

The finance department, led by the Commercial Director, is responsible for financial management, payments, and reporting.

Any conflicts of interest must be declared at the start of each panel meeting, documented, and appropriately managed.

NPC will monitor Access Scheme awards in aggregate to understand reach across priority groups and inform future improvements.”

## 9. Award Conditions

Awards are subject to confirmation of acceptance and, where applicable, bank details.

Conditions include:

- Continued eligibility throughout the award period
- Accuracy and honesty of information provided
- Notification of any changes in circumstances

- Compliance with any additional panel conditions
- Positive participation in the programme

Awards are time-limited to the relevant NPC academic or project year.

Some awards may be credited as named scholarships. Beneficiaries may remain anonymous and may choose whether or not to be publicly recognised.

NPC reserves the right to seek reimbursement if a participant disengages without reasonable cause.

There are no mandatory monitoring requirements; however, beneficiaries may be invited to contribute voluntarily to evaluation activities.

## **10. Appeals**

Applicants wishing to appeal a decision should submit a request to the YC Coordinator. Appeals are reviewed first by the Access Panel and, if required, by NPC's Senior Leadership Team.

Appeals are reviewed with fresh consideration, and panel members involved in the original decision may be excluded where appropriate.

Appeals should include any additional information that was not provided at the time of application but may help the panel in reviewing their decision.

Where an application is deemed not to be eligible for an award there is no cool down timer on follow up applications to the scheme.

## **11. Communications**

NPC's marketing team is responsible for promoting the Access Scheme and encouraging engagement.

Project staff are expected to signpost the scheme as part of project communications and enrolment processes. Enrolment systems must clearly direct participants to either pay fees or apply for access support at the point of registration.

The scheme is advertised on NPC's website, and reasonable physical marketing materials will be provided where appropriate.