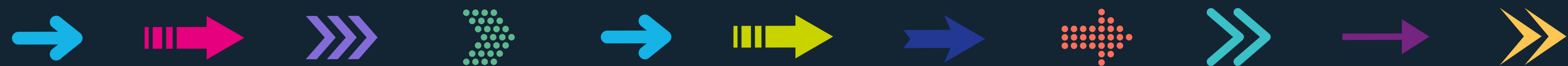


STUDENT FINANCE: THE REAL STORY



AHMAR EHSAN, STUDENT LOANS COMPANY
SAMMIE HUTCHINSON, STUDENT LOANS COMPANY

Student Finance England The UCAS Conference for Teachers & Advisers 2025

Ahmar Ehsan & Sammie Hutchinson
Funding Information Services Account Managers

Session content

With the value of higher education courses and student concerns over cost of living fully in the spotlight, this session will provide an insight into key policy enhancements for 2025/26 and look at core numbers to highlight any noticeable trends behind student loan applications across recent academic years.

Content will cover the following areas of higher education funding applications received by SLC:

- New Funding Policy Announcement – Fees and Funding Changes in 2025/26
- General Eligibility – A reminder and what is trending
- National/Regional Application Figures & Application Deadlines and Submission Monitoring
- Category Specific Application Numbers and Key Messages
- Supporting Resources for Students

Student Finance

AY 2025/26

DfE Funding Policy Announcement

All information subject to final policy approval

Student Finance - Academic Year (AY) 2025/26

AY 2025/26 DFE ANNOUNCEMENT – FEE AND FUNDING CHANGES

On 4th November 2024, the Secretary of State for Education announced changes to the undergraduate tuition fees and other student support arrangements for academic year (AY) 2025/26 in England:

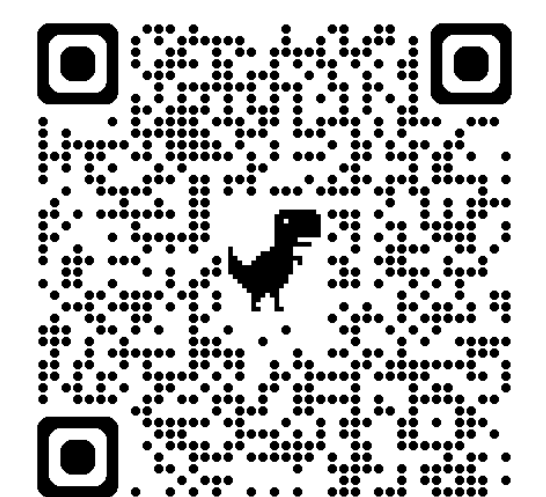
www.gov.uk/government/news/higher-education-reform-to-back-opportunity-and-protect-students

These announced changes will apply to:

- Undergraduate tuition fees - **rise by 3.1%**
- Loans for support with living costs – **increase by 3.1%**
- Fees and fee loans for foundation years

The government has now laid regulations implementing these changes on 20 January 2025:

- These regulations will be subject to Parliamentary procedure



Student Finance - Academic Year (AY) 2025/26

AY 2025/26 DFE ANNOUNCEMENT – FOUNDATION YEARS

The maximum tuition fees for classroom-based foundation years will be reduced from the start of academic year 2025/26:

- This will ensure courses are delivered *‘more efficiently and at lower costs to students’*

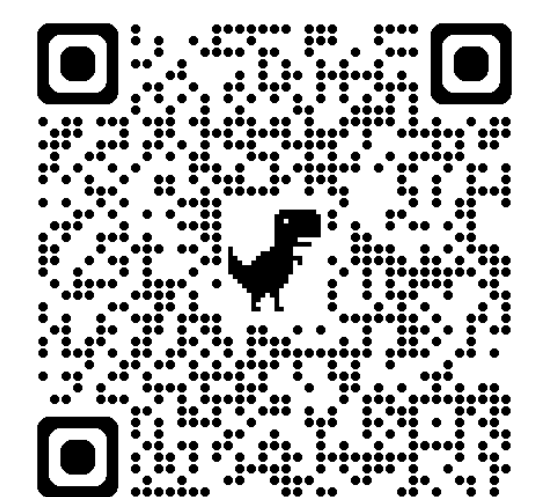
These changes will:

- Reduce maximum tuition fees and loans for foundation years in classroom-based subjects (such as business and social sciences) to **£5,760**

The maximum fees and loans for foundation years in other **(higher cost)** subjects will:

- Remain at the fee cap applicable to the relevant academic year at Approved (fee cap) Providers (due to rise to **£9,535** in AY 2025/26)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-tuition-fees-for-foundation-years



Student Finance - Academic Year (AY) 2025/26

AY 2025/26 DFE ANNOUNCEMENT – MAINTENANCE LOANS

Students cost of living will be supported with **an inflation-linked (RPIX) increase** to Maintenance Loan support:

- The increase in support of **3.1%** will provide as much as **£414 extra** per year, to help students from the lowest income families

Figures (**rounded to nearest £1**) for full-time students not eligible for benefits and part-time students (at 100% FTE):

Loan Rate	Maintenance Loan AY 2024/25	Maintenance Loan AY 2025/26	Uplift
Parental Home	£8,610	£8,877	£267
London	£13,348	£13,762	£414
Elsewhere	£10,227	£10,544	£317
Overseas	£11,713	£12,076	£363

Student Finance - Academic Year (AY) 2025/26

THE EXTRA SUPPORT

There may also be **extra financial support** available for students who:

- Have disabilities, long-term health conditions, mental health conditions or specific learning difficulties
- Have children or adult dependants
- Study overseas as part of a UK based course or go on a clinical placement
- Study eligible Nursing, Midwifery or Allied Health Profession courses

For more on this range of support go to www.gov.uk/student-finance/extra-help and www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/student-services

Many universities and colleges provide **bursaries and scholarships** for students:

- Eligibility can depend on things like **academic results, household income or course choice**, so it is important to research what is being offered!

Student Finance - Academic Year (AY) 2025/26

SFE DISABLED STUDENT ALLOWANCE – DSA

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) provides help towards the additional costs a student may face due to their disability, long-term health condition, mental-health condition or specific learning difficulty:

- DSA covers a wide selection of disabilities and conditions, with assessments based on the specific needs of each individual student
- DSA support is not income assessed and does not have to be repaid

For AY 2025/26 **up to £27,783** in DSA support is available to eligible students and can be allocated across the defined allowance categories which are:

Non-Medical Helper	General Allowance
Specialist Equipment	Travel Allowance

I've got
DYSLEXIA

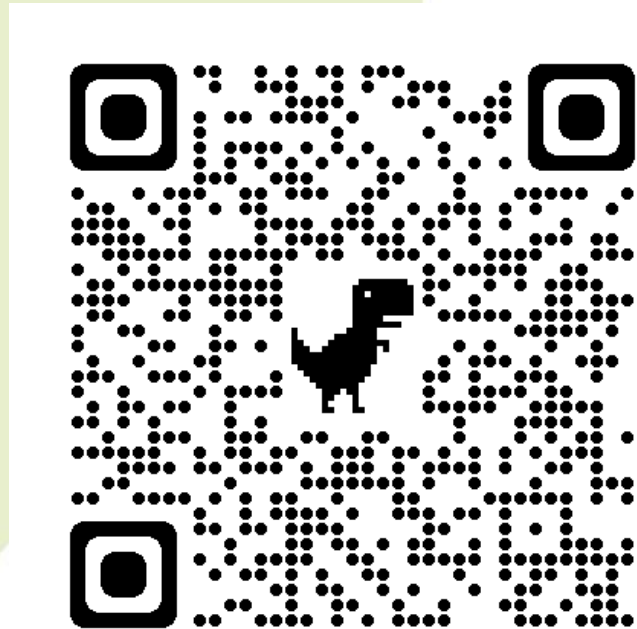
...DSA could help me with support for note-taking.

I've got
EPILEPSY

...I could get help with assistive software.

I've got
FIBROMYALGIA

...DSA could help me with ergonomic equipment.



Student Loan Repayment: Plan 5 overview

Undergraduate loans for new students in England are taken under Plan 5 terms and some essential facts about how the repayment system works include:

- You won't have to make repayments until your income is over the set threshold, which will be **£25,000 a year** (£2,083 a month or £480 a week) until **April 2027**
- From April 2027 the threshold will be adjusted annually with inflation (RPI)
- If you study a full-time course, you will be due to **start repaying** from the April after completing your course or leaving/withdrawing from higher education
- You'll repay **9%** of any income earned **over the threshold** and if employed in the UK, the deductions will be made from your pay through the tax system
- If your income drops below the threshold, your repayments will stop, and any outstanding balance will be cancelled **40 years** after entering repayment

Student Finance - Academic Year (AY) 2025/26

AY 2025/26 DFE ANNOUNCEMENT – STATEMENT POLICY

Details of the announced **changes to the undergraduate tuition fees** and **student support arrangements** can be found on GOV.UK:

www.gov.uk/government/news/higher-education-reform-to-back-opportunity-and-protect-students

www.gov.uk/government/publications/tuition-fees-and-student-support-2025-to-2026-academic-year

GOV.UK

[Home](#) > [Education, training and skills](#) > [Funding and finance for students](#) > [Student loans](#)

Press release

Higher education reform to back opportunity and protect students

Tuition fees to rise in line with inflation, helping put universities on a secure footing alongside inflation-linked to maintenance loans.

Further information on fees			
The latest Q1 2026 RPIX forecast of 3.1% gives the following uplifts to fees and maintenance loans for 2025 to 2026.			
Type	Fees 2024 to 2025	Fees for 2025 to 2026	Uplift
Full-time	£9,250	£9,535	£285
Part-time	£6,935	£7,145	£210
Accelerated	£11,100	£11,440	£340
Note: Figures rounded down to the nearest £5 – figures are higher amounts.			
Student	Maintenance loans 2024 to 2025	Maintenance loans 2025 to 2026	Uplift
Home	£8,610	£8,877	£267
London	£13,348	£13,762	£414
Elsewhere	£10,227	£10,544	£317
Overseas	£11,713	£12,076	£363

GOV.UK

[Home](#) > [Education, training and skills](#) > [Funding and finance for students](#) > [Student loans](#)

Policy paper

Tuition fees and student support: 2025 to 2026 academic year

Information about changes to undergraduate tuition fees and student support arrangements in the 2025 to 2026 academic year.

Documents

HTML

[Changes to tuition fees: 2025 to 2026 academic year](#)

HTML

HTML

[Support with living costs: 2025 to 2026 academic year](#)

HTML

HTML

[Tuition fees and loans for foundation years: 2025 to 2026 academic year](#)

HTML

Student Finance

AY 2025/26

General Eligibility Rules

Student Finance England: Eligibility

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY REMINDER

Students need to meet certain residency criteria to be eligible for financial support from SFE:

- Have settled status – **Can live in the UK without any Home Office restriction!**
- Be resident in England on the first day of the first academic year of their course and have been **living in the UK for the 3 years** immediately prior to this date (exceptions apply)
- EU, EEA and Swiss nationals with **EUSS Settled or Pre-Settled status** may be entitled to support depending on the status awarded and their residency
- Students may also be eligible for support if they have a residency status such as **Refugee, Humanitarian Protection or as a Stateless Person**

Go to www.gov.uk/student-finance/who-qualifies for more information.



Rest of World (ROW): Policy

High level SFE support summary based on first day of first AY residency:

Residency Category	UK Residence	Ordinary Resident On
Indefinite Leave to Enter/Remain	3 Years UK	First Day of First AY
Refugee Humanitarian Protection ILR Domestic Violence ILR Bereaved Partner	N/A (Providing UK residency maintained since status awarded)	Course Start Date (As supplied by HEP)
Stateless Persons Section 67 or Calais Leave ARAP/ACRS/Pitting Leave Ukraine Scheme Leave	N/A (Providing UK residency maintained since status awarded)	Course Start Date (As supplied by HEP)
Long Residency	Under 18: 7 Years UK Over 18: Half-life/20 Years UK (To include 3 Years Ordinary Lawful UK Residency)	First Day of First AY

Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE)

LLE Introduction and
Summary

Lifelong Learning Entitlement: An Introduction

The Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) will transform the post-18 student finance system in England:

- From its launch in **January 2027** LLE will create a single funding system to help people pay for college or university courses, and flexibly train, retrain and upskill
- The LLE will provide all new learners with a Tuition Fee Loan entitlement to the equivalent of four years post-18 education funding to use up to the age of 60
- This entitlement would equate to **£38,140** in today's fees
- LLE will allow for flexible and modular learning of courses
- This delivery model will enable eligible learners to **stop and start their training** at a time that's **right for them**

www.gov.uk/government/publications/lifelong-learning-entitlement-tuition-fee-limits



LLE: Course Summary

The LLE will allow people to develop new skills and gain new qualifications at a time that is right for them:

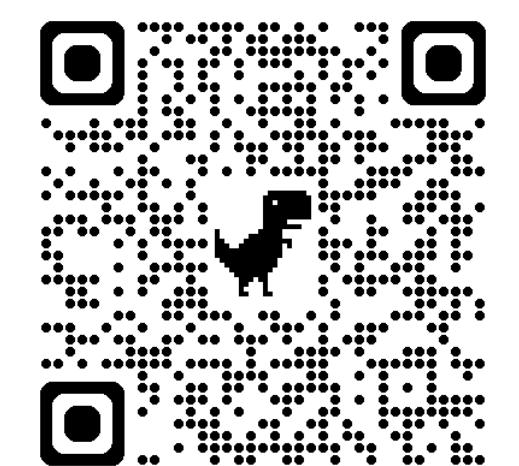
- This could be through a **full-time degree, individual modules**, or other courses (such as Higher Technical Qualifications, **HTQs**)

From its launch in **January 2027** LLE support will be available for:

- Full courses at Level 4 to Level 6, such as degrees or higher technical qualifications
- Modules of high-value technical courses at Level 4 to Level 5

Learners will be able to monitor and manage their LLE funding balance through their own personal account:

- This will help them make choices about courses and learning pathways



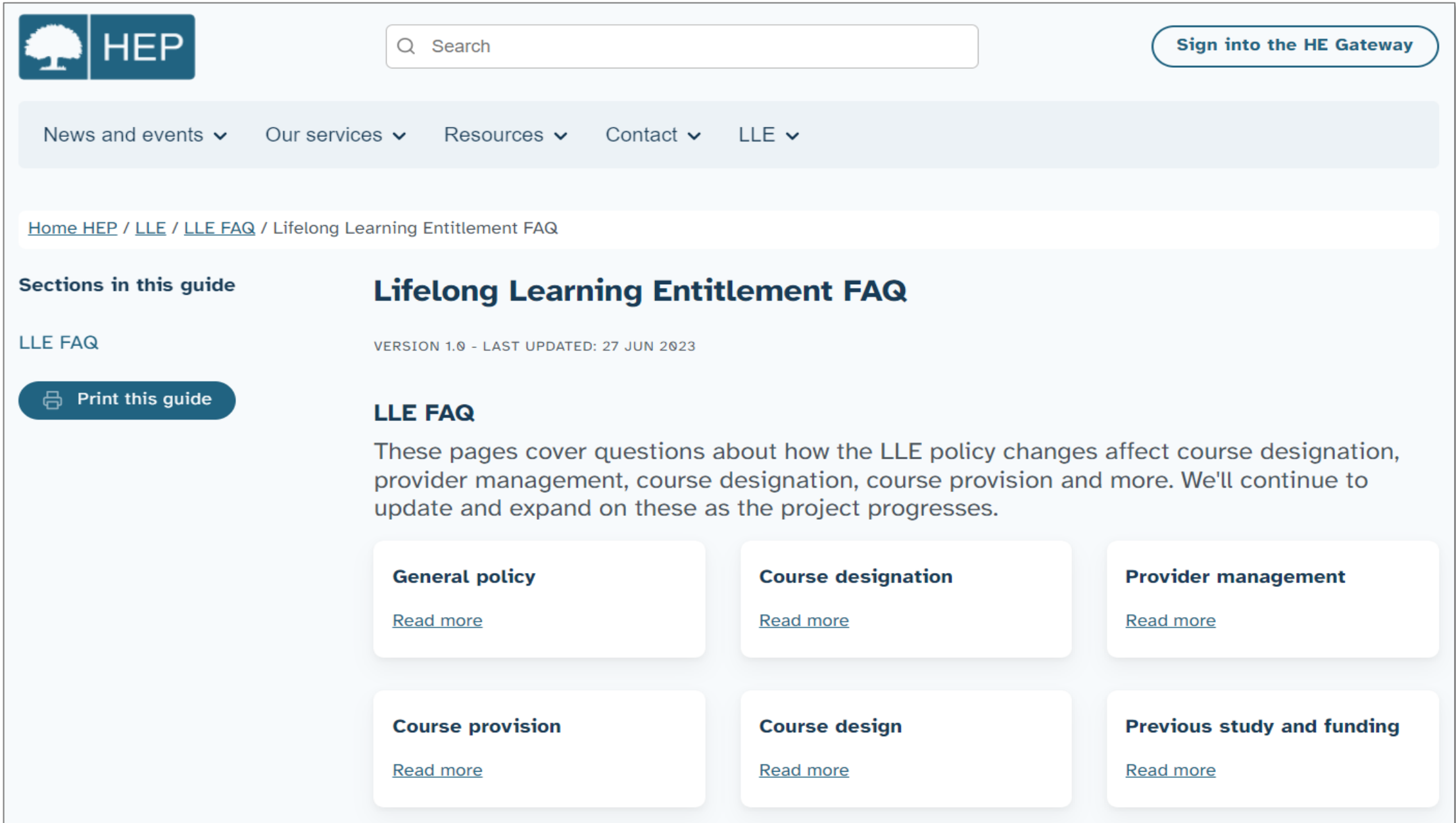
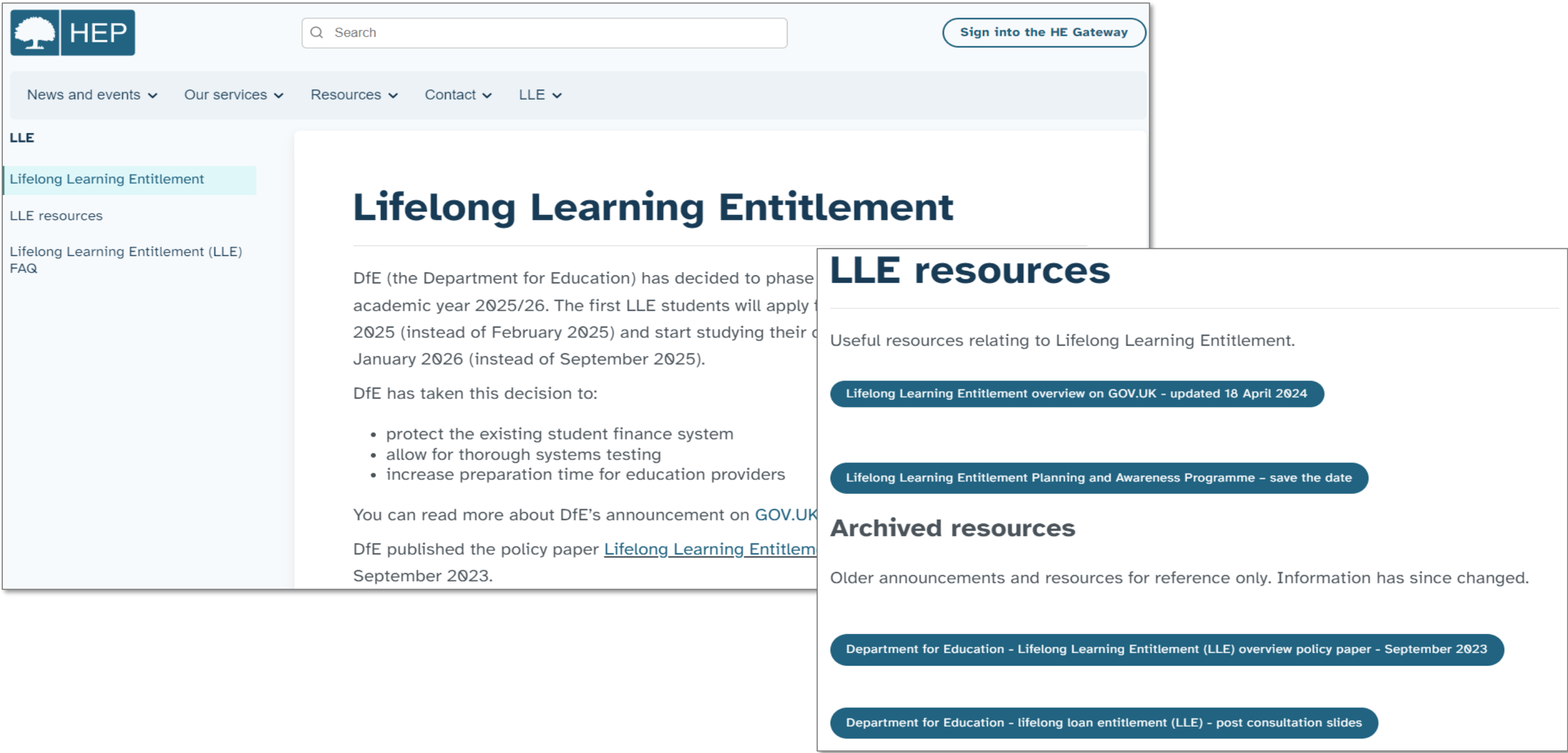
LLE: SLC Information and Resources

Dedicated information sections have been added to the HEP Services and LP Services websites and will host the latest LLE updates and resources:

www.heinfo.slc.co.uk/lle/lifelong-learning-entitlement

www.lpservices.slc.co.uk/lle/lifelong-learning-entitlement

Page content includes an LLE introduction, LLE resources and exclusive to the HEP Services website, an LLE frequently asked questions (FAQ) section

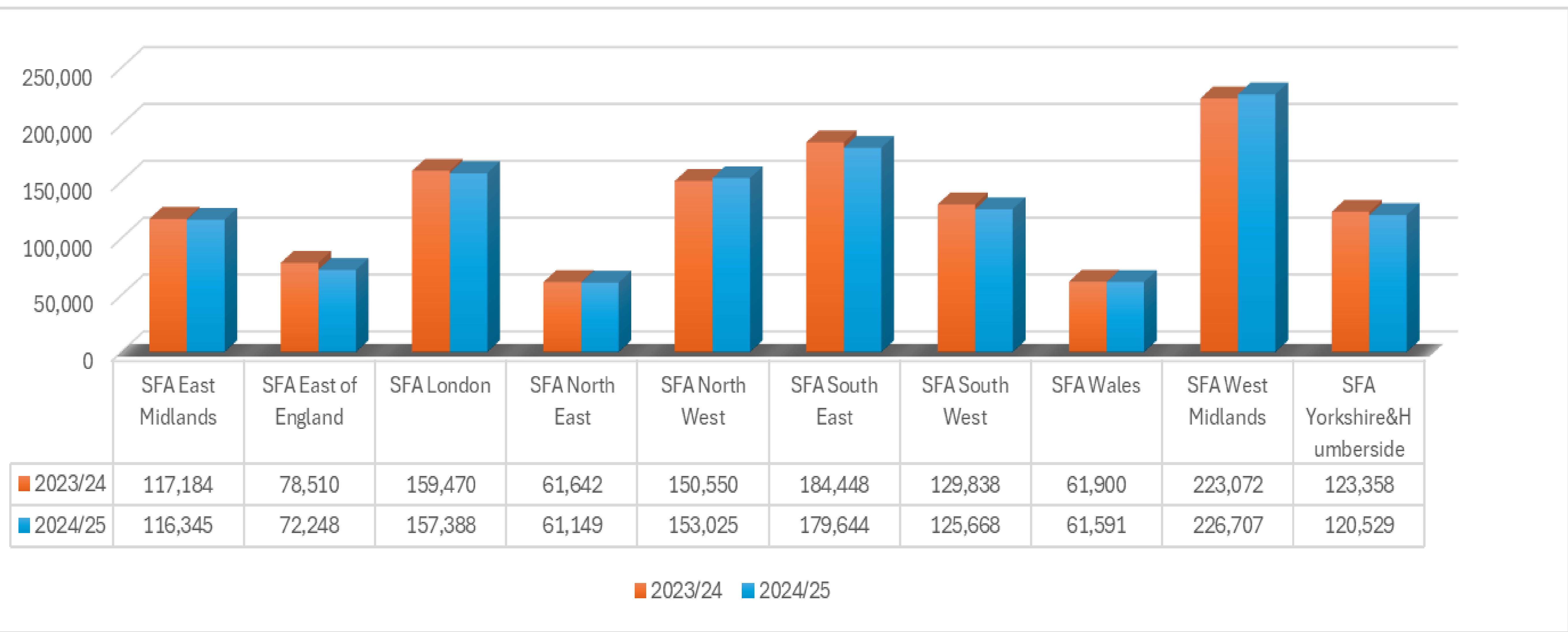


Student Loan Applications

**National / Regional Figures /
Deadlines and Submission
Monitoring**

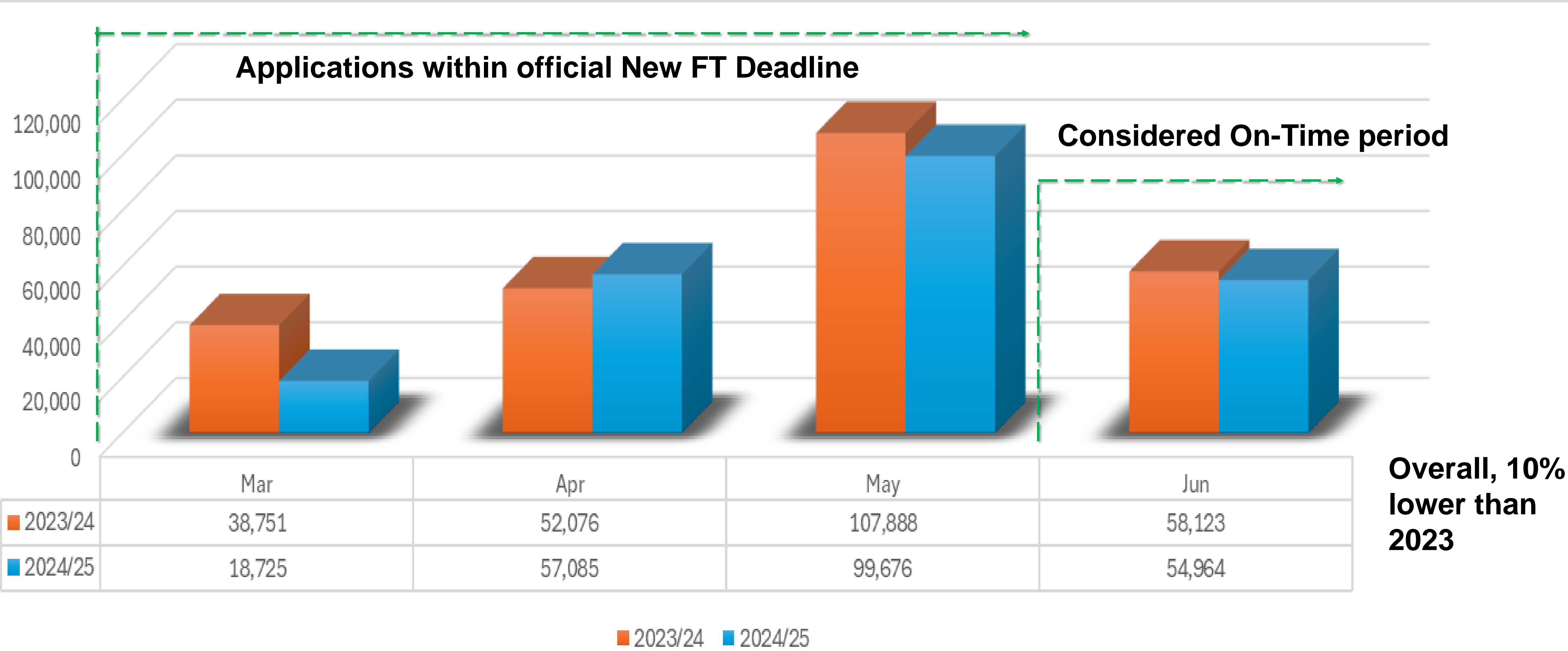
Undergraduate Applications: Regional Focus

Regional application figures can be used to monitor the overall submission figures for specific geographical areas but also allow for the identification of any spikes or drops in numbers that may warrant investigation:



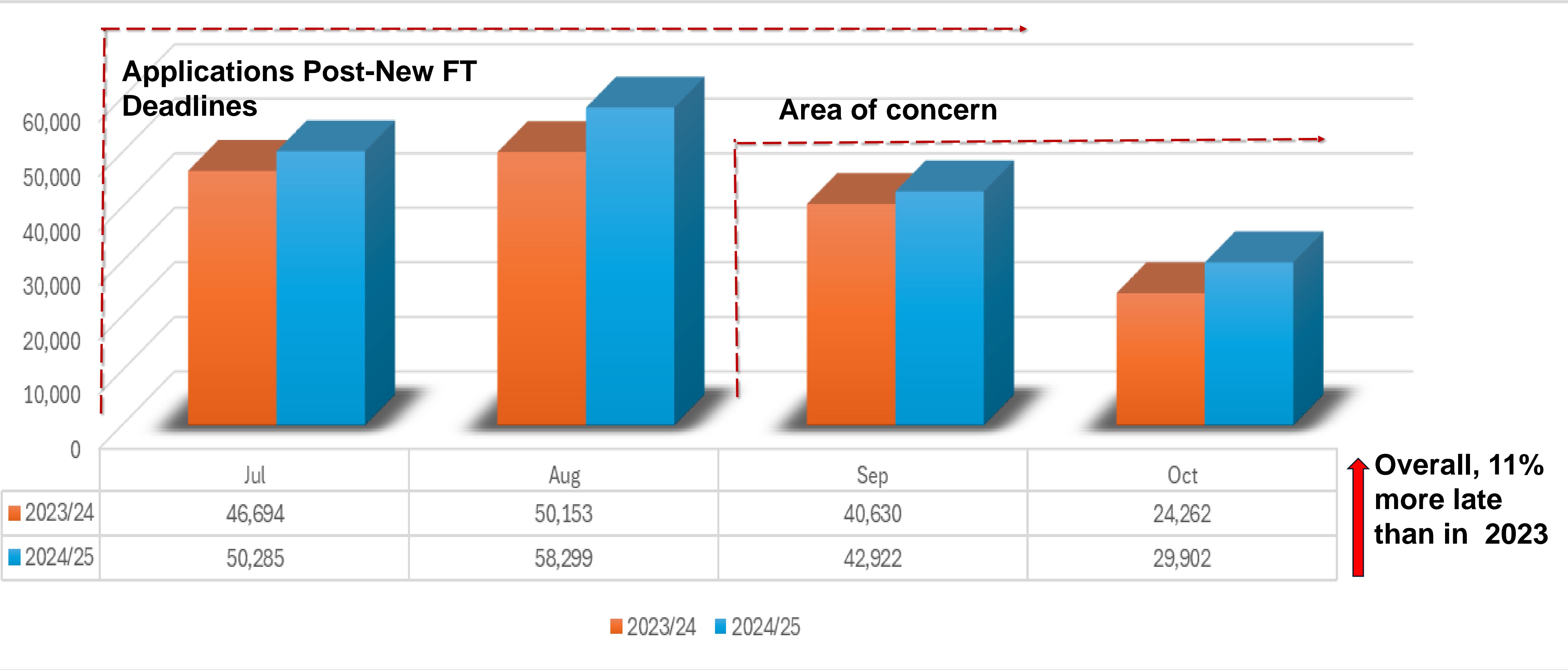
Application Submission: On-Time AY 2024/25

Submission levels picked up across the `on-time` period, **with 230,450 New full-time** undergraduate student finance applications received across March and June 2024:



App Submission: Post-Deadline AY 2024/25

Despite online campaigns, reminder prompts and IAG practitioner engagement, each academic year sees a significant number of students submit their funding applications **after** the set ‘deadlines’: **181,408 Late New applicants in 2024.**



App Submission: Calling Students to Action

The reality is that the later a student leaves it to submit their application, the more risk they run of **not receiving their full payments** at the start of their course or when returning for the next year of study:

Have you noticed any **reluctance** from students to submit their finance applications this last year?

If yes, have they given **any specific reason** as to why? Such as:

- The introduction of the Plan 5 loan Terms and Conditions and concerns over repayment or interest
- **Seeking an Apprenticeship or other alternative study or employment options**
- Taking a gap year to consider their options and potentially wait for the introduction of the LLE
- Cost of living and **'student loan debt'** concerns meaning that entering HE or continuing their course is no longer viable



We would welcome any feedback or opinions on any potential reasons that may be contributing to the drop-off in application submissions

Student Loan Applications

**Category Specific Numbers
and Messages**

Category Specific Applications

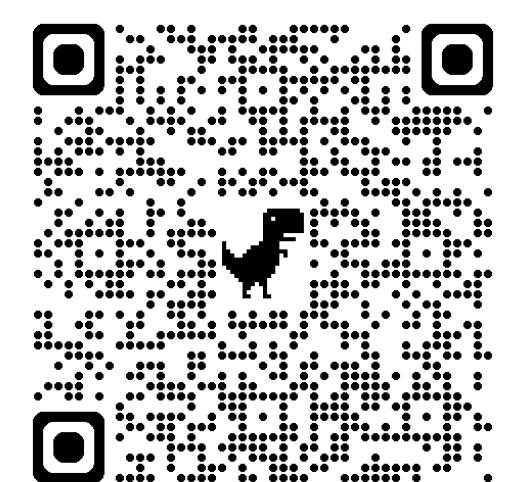
The range of support available to students and the associated eligibility policies extend to include targeted grants and funding for applicants who fall into defended categories and criteria:

These categories include:

- Students with children or adult dependants'
- Students with disabilities, long-term health conditions, mental-health conditions or specific learning difficulties
- Independent students including Care Leavers and those irreconcilably estranged from their parents
- Students eligible for funding under any of the 'protected' residency statuses

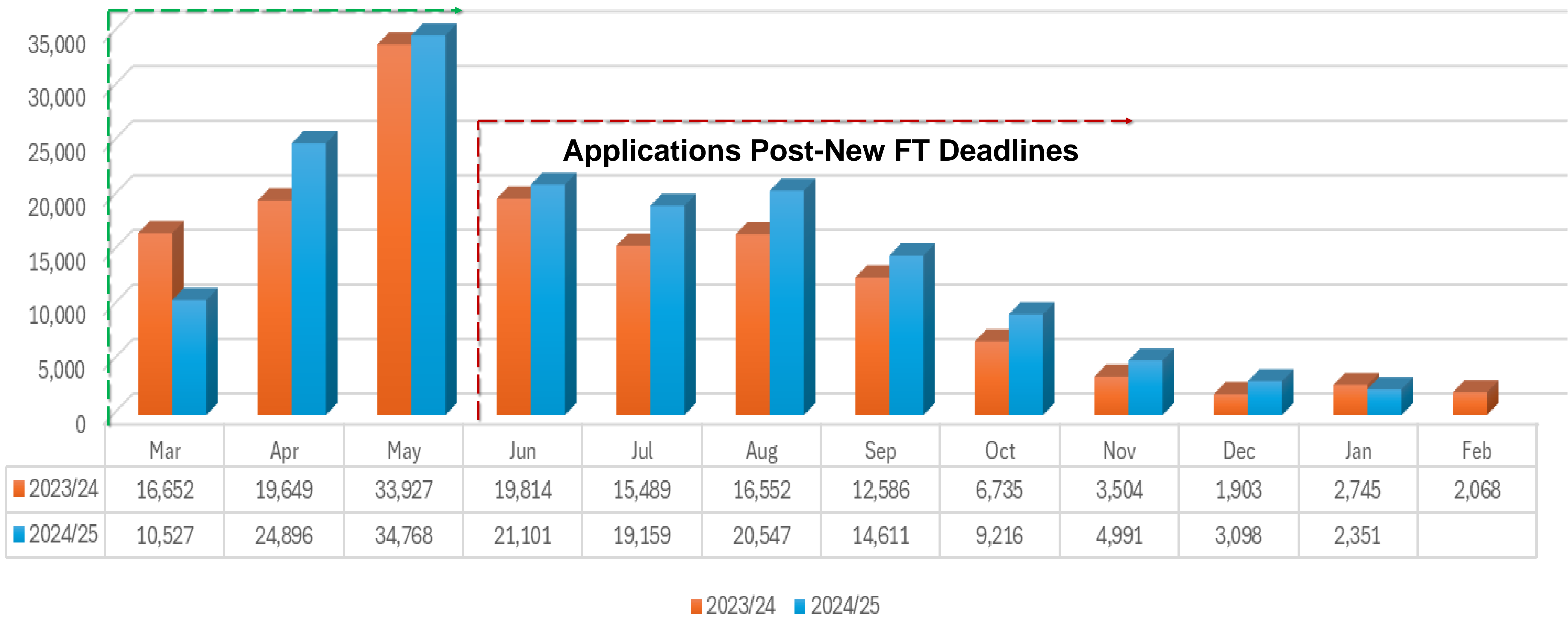
SLC's **Charter for Customers who Require Additional Support** details how SLC is committed to better understanding vulnerability and additional support needs, and to improve the service provided to customers who require the most help:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-commitment-to-supporting-customers-who-need-additional-support



DSA Applications: Year-on-Year Comparison

It can take up to **14 weeks** for DSA support to be put in place, so it is essential that students are aware of the application process as early as possible to avoid delays in accessing the equipment and help they need:



DSA Support: Raising Awareness

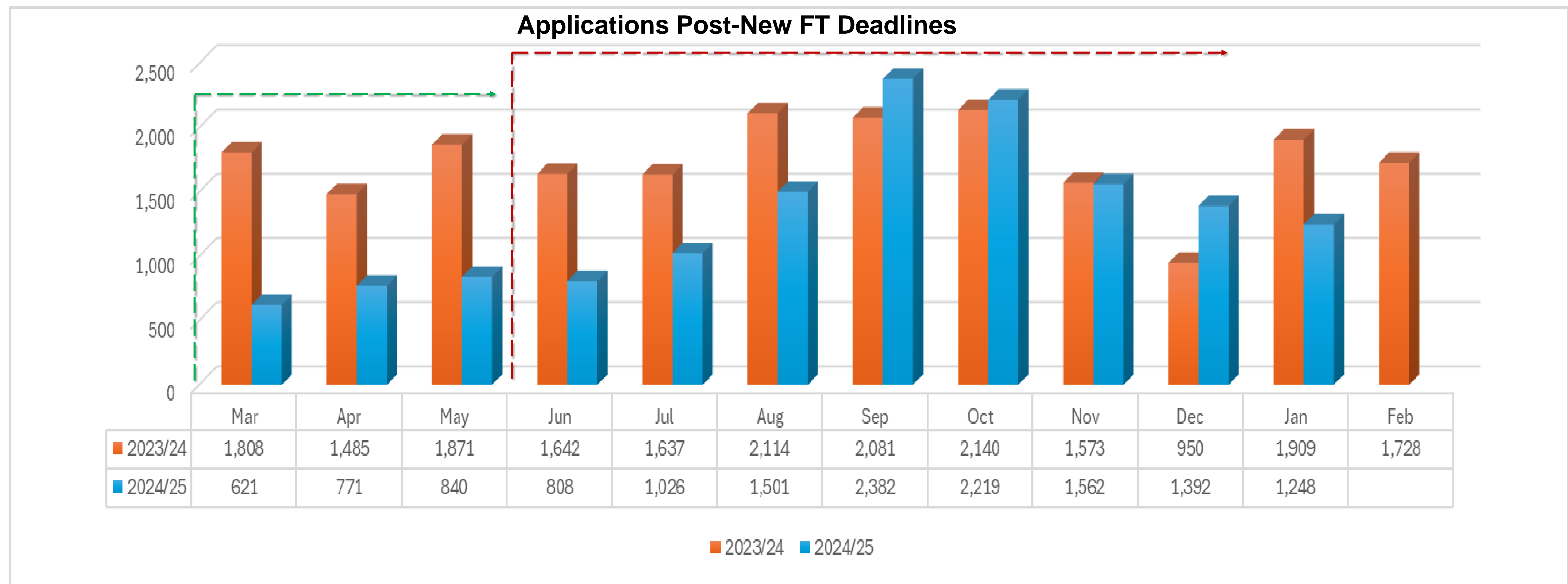
To ensure eligible students apply for and receive the funding and assistance they are entitled to, it is important to raise awareness of **the reach and scope** of DSA support:

SFE Disabled Students' Allowance support provided by disability type, AY 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24:

SFE DSA Applications	AY 21/22	AY 22/23	AY 23/24
Disability Type	%	%	%
Autism	4.9%	6.0%	7.4%
Blind/Partial Sight	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%
Deaf/Partial Hearing	1.5%	1.4%	1.4%
Specific Learning Difficulties	34.8%	34.3%	32.2%
Longstanding Illness	11.0%	12.9%	13.3%
Mental Health	24.2%	23.0%	21.9%
Wheelchair/Mobility	1.1%	1.0%	1.0%
Multiple Disabilities	21.6%	20.6%	21.9%

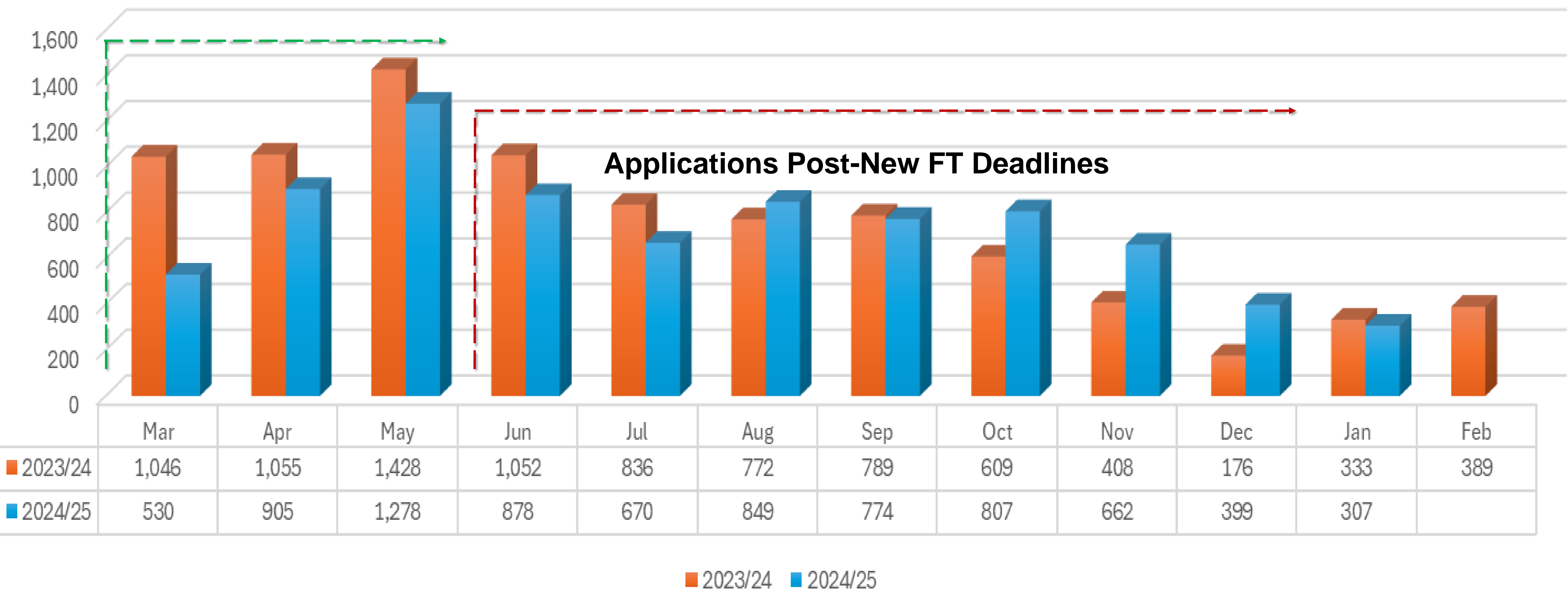
Care Leaver Apps: Year-on-Year Comparison

Once a student has been assessed as being a Care Leaver, this status is awarded **for the duration** of the course and further evidence will not usually be required for any subsequent years:



Estranged Student Applications: Year-on-Year

If students are unable to supply standard evidence documents or if they have lost contact with their support network due to circumstances or relocation, SLC assessors will identify these cases and help:



Student Loan Applications

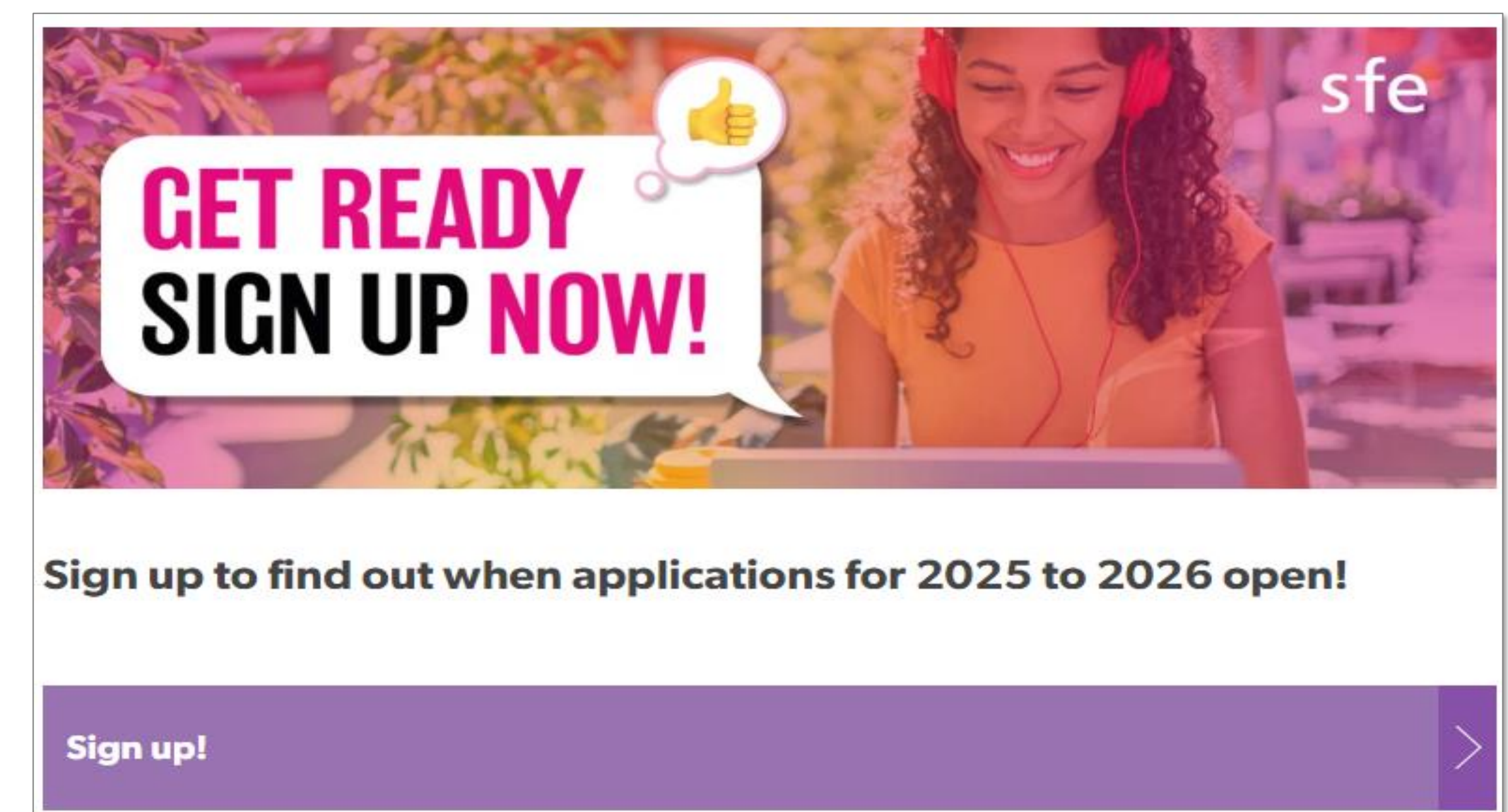
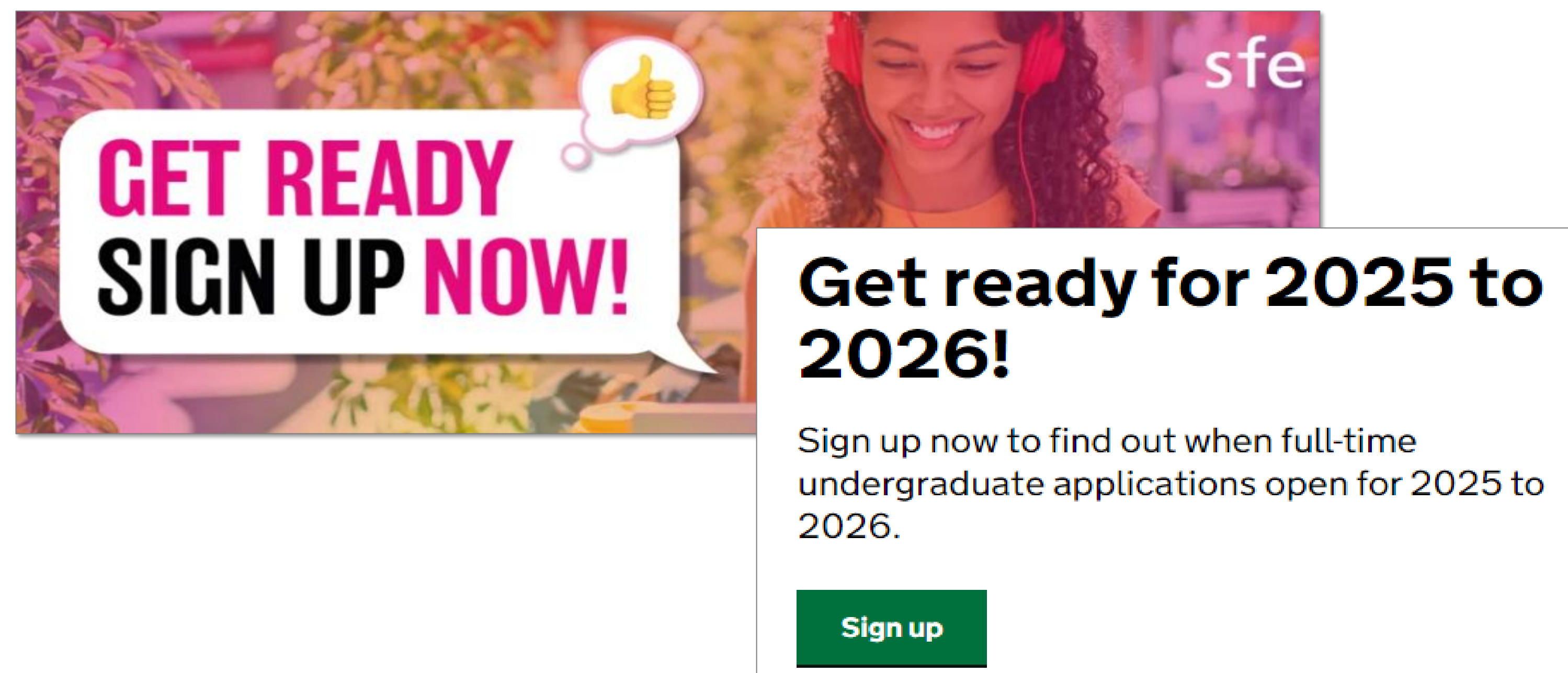
**Supporting Guidance and
Resources**

FT Application Mailing List – AY 25/26

To help promote early applications, students can sign up to receive an alert message when the full-time undergraduate service for AY 2025/26 opens:

The application alert [sign up](#) can be accessed through the SFE campaign page and the SFE zone on The Student Room:

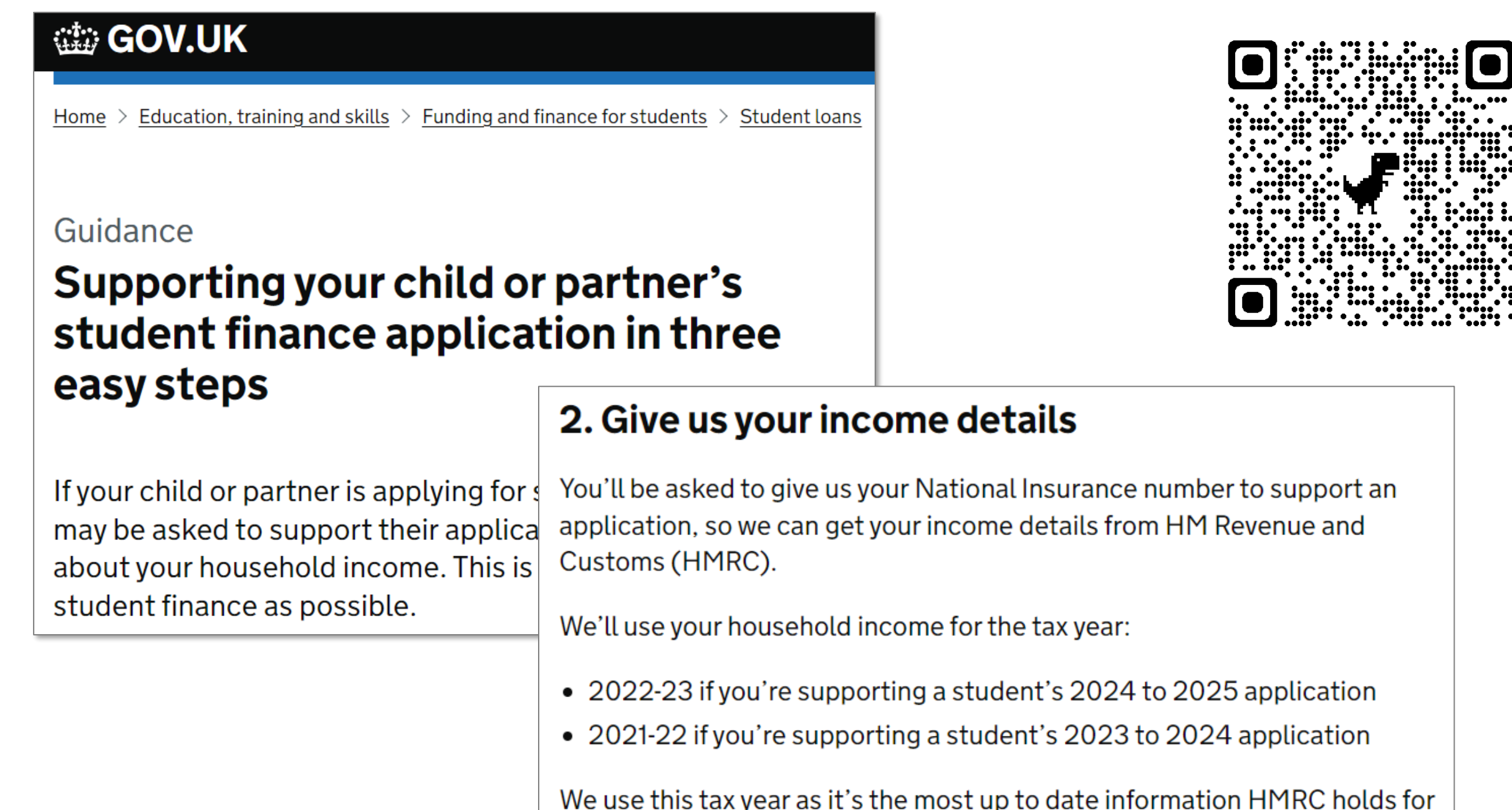
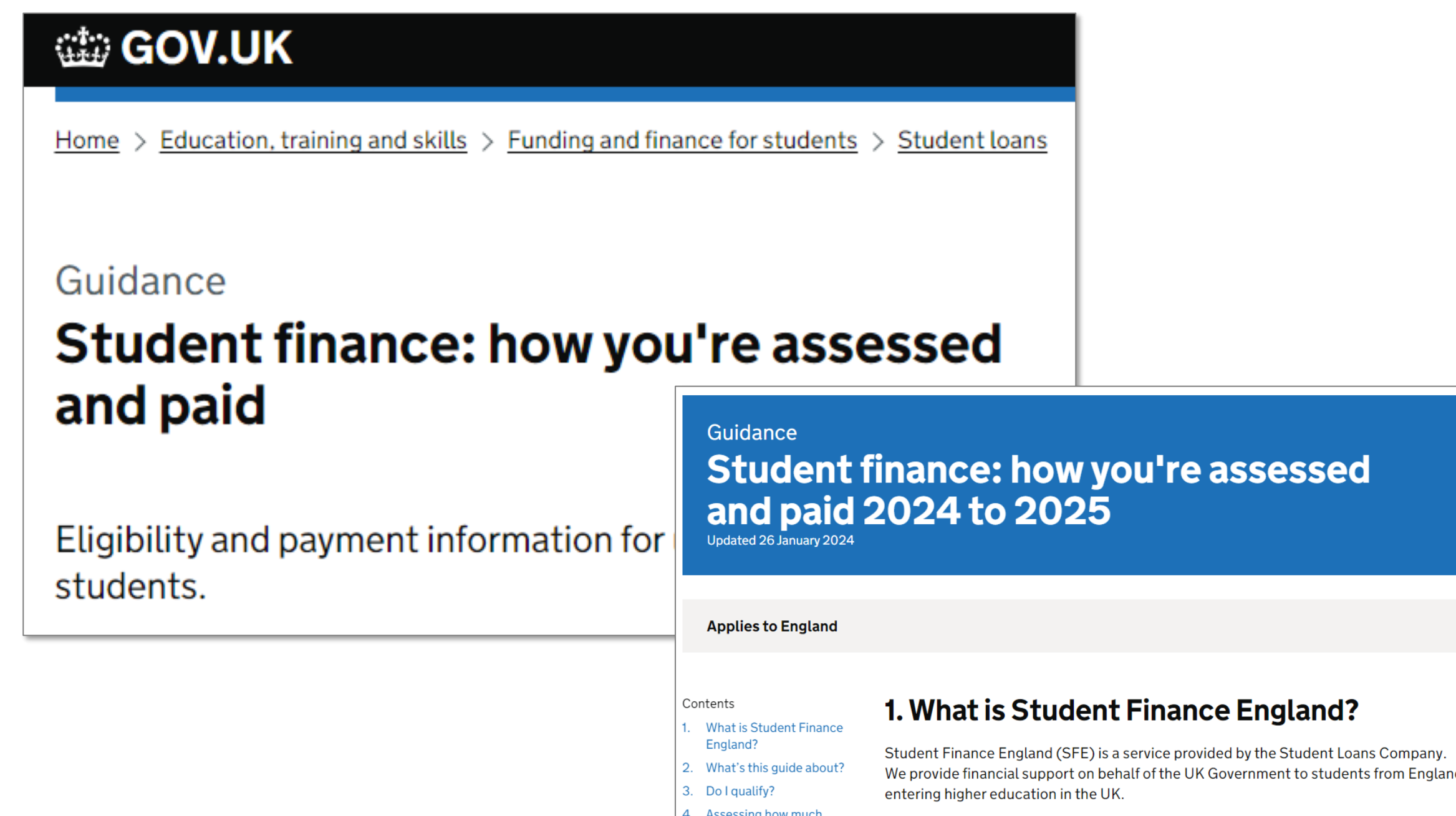
- SFE campaign page: <https://studentfinance.campaign.gov.uk>
- The Student Room: www.thestudentroom.co.uk/student-finance



SFE Applications: Sponsor Resources

Detailed information on student finance entitlement, household income assessment, means testing and how **parents and partners** can support student finance applications is available on GOV.UK:

- Student finance: How you're assessed and paid guidance
 - www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-finance-how-youre-assessed-and-paid
- Supporting student finance applications guidance
 - www.gov.uk/guidance/supporting-your-child-or-partners-student-finance-application-in-3-easy-steps

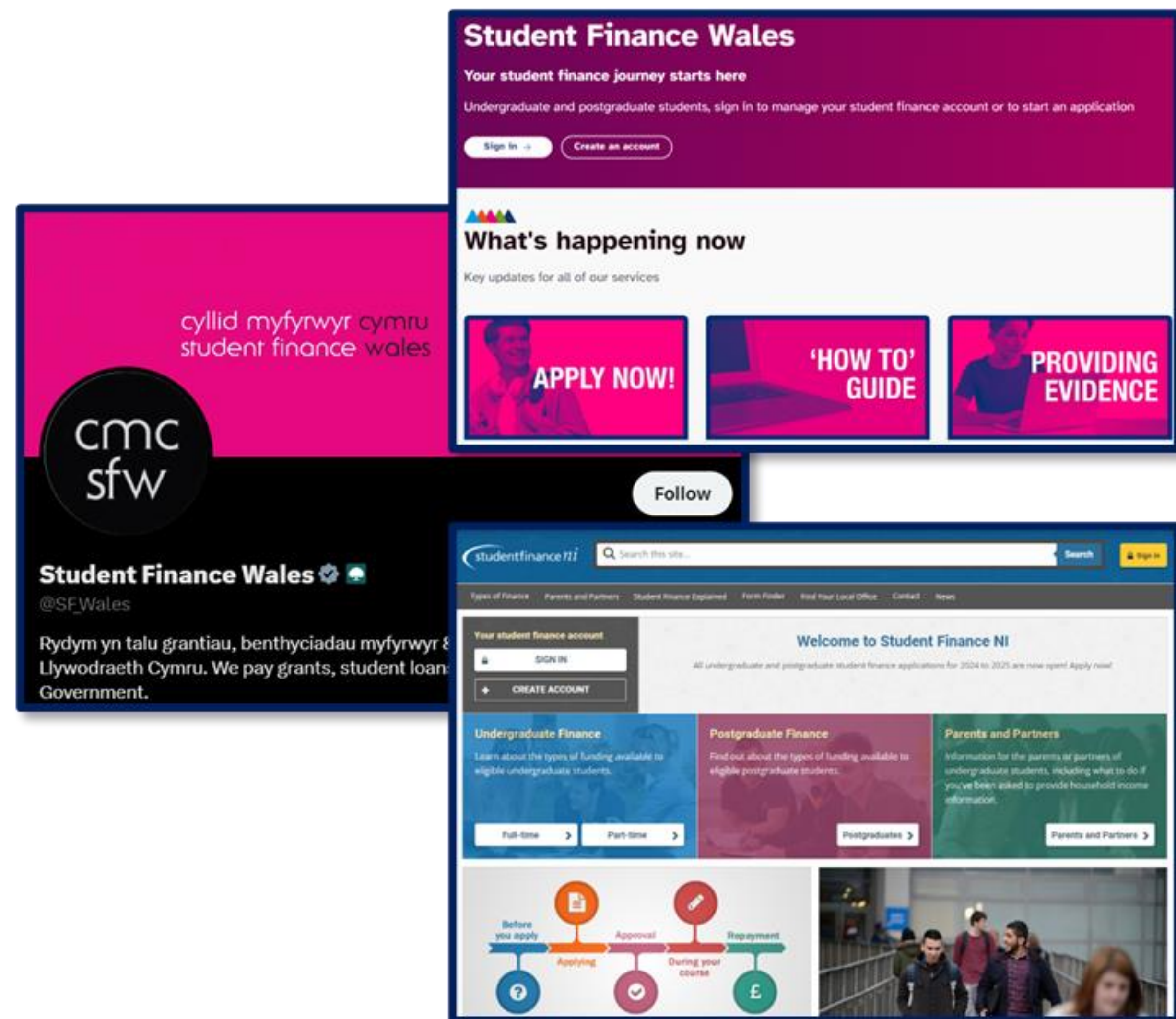


Student Finance Information: Other Domiciles

Eligibility, entitlement and application information and guidance is also readily available from the websites and social media channels supporting the other UK funding administrations:

Student Finance Wales:

- Website: www.studentfinancewales.co.uk
- Facebook: facebook.com/SFWales
- X: https://x.com/SF_Wales
- YouTube: youtube.com/user/SFWFILM



Student Finance Northern Ireland:

- Website: www.studentfinancenir.co.uk

Student Money Management: Useful Information

Useful sources of student money management and budgeting information include:



Many university and college websites will feature helpful student finance and budgeting guidance, knowledge of local costs and details of their bursary and scholarship offers

Many thanks for attending.

To discuss Student Finance updates please contact:

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