

Supporting Learning Policy

Luton Adult Learning

Author: Senior Management Team

Contact: info@lutonacl.ac.uk

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Context

The ESFA funded AEB's over-arching aim is to support as many eligible adult learners as possible to access learning. Some learners will need additional support to start or stay in learning. Luton Adult Learning will support this aim as laid out in this policy.

This policy lays out how Luton Adult Learning will administer and distribute funds demonstrating how we reflect the principles of equality and diversity and is published on our website.

This policy details **Learner Support (Discretionary)** which is available to provide financial support and **Learning Support** where a learner has identified learning difficulty and/or disability and Luton Adult Learning can help them to achieve their learning goal by making reasonable adjustments.

Learner Support fund (Discretionary) (DLSF)

Learner support is discretionary and is available to provide financial support for individuals with a specific financial hardship preventing them from taking part in or continuing with learning. Luton Adult Learning have a limited annual allocation for Learner Support and any awards are made at the discretion of the service. Once the annual allowance for support funds has been allocated, no further awards can be made for the remainder of the academic year.

Awards from the fund are made to individual learners on a discretionary basis. Any award is made subject to satisfactory course attendance of 90%; if below, the award will be suspended or withdrawn.

Eligibility

- 19+ on the 31st August of the year of application for travel, materials and fees
- 20+ on the 31st August of the year of application for childcare
- Enrolled on a course funded by the ESFA, we cannot provide Discretionary Learner Support for those on full cost recovery courses, Community Learning or Adult learner Loans
- Refugee or Asylum Seekers need to be recognised by the Home Office or need to have been resident in the EU for at least 3 years with right to remain. Adult Learning must have seen the learner's immigration permission. This would include the biometric residence permit (BRP) and in some cases an accompanying letter from the Home Office.

Support can be awarded under the following categories

- Hardship funding – general financial support for financially disadvantaged learners to support participation
- 20+ childcare funding – for learners aged 20 or older on the first day of learning who are at risk of not starting or continuing learning because of childcare costs
- ICT devices and connectivity - to support disadvantaged learners who cannot undertake online delivery.

Eligibility is based on the learner meeting the residency requirements, the overall eligibility criteria and being on a means tested benefit, disability benefit or low income. Where possible, funds awarded will be paid directly to the relevant third party or nursery.

The DLS fund provides support to learners who are experiencing financial hardship. It is a means tested fund and the amount a learner may receive depends on their household income. It can

only be used for learners enrolled on courses funded by the ESFA. All learners must be in receipt of a low household income and documentary evidence must be provided on application.

Recommended reduction for Learner Support Award

The following categories represent a sliding scale of household income* which is used to determine the amount of Discretionary Learner Support that is available to a learner:-		
Under £20,319 - £23,735	£23,736 - £26,000	£26,001 - £31,000
100% award	75% award	50% award
* Monetary values correct as at 1 April 2023 to be reviewed in April 2024		

An assessment will be made following completion of the Discretionary Learner Support Form. As part of the assessment, consideration will be given to the availability of other support for learners, for example from

- Jobcentre Plus – it is the responsibility of the learner to tell the Department for Work and Pensions about any learner support they are receiving from us, as learner support payments may affect their eligibility to state benefits
- the use of loans bursary to support specific provision funded by Adult Learner Loans

We cannot use learner support funds for any of the following:

- essential equipment or facilities if the learner is eligible to full funding with the exception of the items covered in the Hardship section and the flexibilities around ICT devices and connectivity
- a learner in custody or released on temporary licence
- a learner carrying out a higher education course or learning aims fully funded from other sources
- to pay attendance allowances or achievement and attendance bonuses

Hardship Funds

We can use hardship funds for the following:

- course-related costs, including course trips, books and equipment (where costs are not included in the funding rate)
- support with domestic emergencies and emergency accommodation provided by others, or by providing items or services or cash direct to the learner in the form of a grant or repayable loan provided by Luton Adult Learning
- transport costs
 - costs of public transport can be refunded. The best value for money solution should be found such as a monthly bus pass / travel card if this is cheaper than individual tickets.
 - requests for transport costs where the distance is less than one mile between the learner's address and the course venue will be declined unless the learner declares a disability affecting mobility.
 - should a learner cease to attend or withdraw from their course(s) at any point during the academic year, financial support for transport will finish on the last date of recorded attendance.
 - will be capped at £25 per week

- examination fees
 - for eligible learners, one exam resit can be funded. Further resits are not eligible for funding
 - accreditation fees, professional membership fees and any fees or charges due to external bodies
 - course registration fees

In exceptional circumstances, we can use hardship funds to assist with:

- course fees for learners who need financial support to start or stay in learning.
- course-related books or equipment
- transport costs for eligible asylum seekers which can be issued in the form of cash.

Childcare

Learners should apply no later than two weeks from the start of the course. Subsequent applications within the academic year must be made at the start of each term. Within one academic year, financial and bank account details only need to be re-submitted if there have been any changes from the previous application. The contribution towards childcare costs is paid directly to the provider by a BACS transfer.

We can use childcare funding for:

- parents who are 20 years + for childcare with a childminder, provider or childminder agency, registered with Ofsted graded Good or Outstanding. This must be detailed on the application form.
- where children are entitled to free childcare, this entitlement is to be used in the first instance
- should a learner cease to attend or withdraw from their course(s) at any point during the academic year, financial support for childcare will finish on the last date of recorded attendance. The responsibility for childcare costs reverts to the learner from that date.

We cannot use childcare funding to:

- fund informal childcare, such as that provided by a relative
- set up childcare places or to make a financial contribution to the costs of a crèche
- fund childcare for learners aged under 20 on the first day of learning; in this case, the learner will be directed to the 'Care to Learn' programme. We will not use childcare for those aged 20 years or older to top up childcare payments for those receiving 'Care to Learn' payments.

ICT devices and connectivity

We can continue the response to covid-19 to support disadvantaged learners who are undertaking classroom or blended learning to continue to participate via online learning where the learner does not have:

- internet access at home, and/or
- a suitable device, i.e. laptop or tablet to complete the necessary online course work

To ensure value for money when purchasing IT devices and/or internet access

- we will deploy any unused devices or explore options to access low cost second hand or recycled devices

- we will not enter into long term contract arrangements
- IT devices must only be loaned out to learners and returned at the end of their learning aim to allow them to be re-used by other learners.
- Learners must
 - leave a £20 deposit (cash only) with Adult Learning which will be returned on completion of the loan period
 - sign a declaration, confirming that they will return the device when their online learning aim(s) is complete, or if they leave before completing their learning, they will return the device in the same condition in which they received it

An up to date record of the loan and return of devices to learners will be maintained. This declaration will be kept in the learner's evidence pack.

Principles of Funding

The DLSF is limited and will be distributed on the premise that the funds available should be used to help support as many eligible learners as possible, as much as possible.

If information on the application form is found to be incorrect or has not been truthful then support funding may be withdrawn.

Receipt of DLSF is dependent upon the learner's continued satisfactory attendance on their course. If a learner's attendance is deemed to be unsatisfactory, below 90%, support funding may be withdrawn.

Applications will be assessed and reviewed by another member of staff before finalising the decision. Where possible, applications to the DLSF will be processed within a maximum of 12 working days. However, in situations in which a learner is in emergency need of financial help, their application will be prioritised and processed as quickly as possible.

If a learner is granted an award from the DLSF on the basis of a disability and the award is made in order to buy items of equipment, such equipment will remain the property of Luton Adult Learning after the end of the academic session. As such, all equipment will be required to be returned by an agreed date.

Unsuccessful applications

Learners who do not meet the eligibility criteria for DLSF will not receive an award and will be sent a letter informing them of this and detailing the reason for their ineligibility.

Learners may appeal the decision that is made on their DLSF application explaining to us why they think the decision is wrong. All learners who apply will be provided with details of how to make an appeal.

Further information can be found at

<https://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en/articles/financialsupport-further-education>

Learning Support

LAL can provide support for learning and are able to meet the cost of putting in place a reasonable adjustment, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, for those learners who have an identified learning difficulty and/or disability, helping them to achieve their learning goal.

Learning support must not be used to deal with everyday difficulties that are not directly associated with a learner's learning on their programme.

We will:

- Carry out a thorough assessment of needs to identify the support that can be put in place.
- Maintain and securely store records of all outcomes, evidence, planned and actual delivery.
- Report to the ESFA that learning support is provided and the dates support started and finished. Complete a mid-year funding forecast and a final claim.
- Provide additional support and monitoring from a Progress Coach.

Support available

- Information and guidance
 - Luton Adult Learning staff
 - National Careers Service advisers
 - Luton Adult Learning website
 - Course Information Sheets
 - Information sessions or 1:1 interviews
 - Initial assessment
- Assistance in learning situations
 - Learning Support Assistants to support learners in taught sessions.
 - Learner progress will be monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure learning goals are being achieved, and may be withdrawn if there is insufficient progress towards agreed goals.
- Additional support outside class time
 - Learning Support Assistants to support learners at a separate time where 1:1 support outside class time is provided. Learners are still required to attend normal class sessions or the support may be withdrawn.
 - Learner progress will be monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure learning goals are being achieved, and may be withdrawn if there is insufficient progress towards agreed goals.
- Specialist support as appropriate for
 - sensory impairments, physical difficulties, learning difficulties, medical conditions including mental ill-health
 - communication support: signers for the deaf, hearing loops, note takers
 - dyslexia assessments for courses where there are special arrangements for examinations
 - material adaptation
 - Special arrangements for examinations in line with awarding body protocols
- Study Support Appointments
 - available for learners who feel stressed about or are struggling to cope with their course work or exam preparation, or who have difficulties in their personal lives that are impacting on regular attendance or coursework completion and are therefore at risk of withdrawal or and/or non-achievement (including not submitting final course work or not attending examinations)
- Learning Mentors/Progress Coaches available to
 - boost learner's confidence and self esteem
 - help create an action plan with the learner
 - help learner's develop organisational skills, communication skills and study support techniques

- Resources and specialist equipment
 - course books
 - ICT equipment
 - calculators
 - adjustable height tables
 - hearing loops
 - coloured overlays
 - magnifiers
 - writing equipment
 - resources and equipment must be returned at the end of the learning activity.
- PEEP plan

Special Educational Need and/or Disability (SEND)

In addition to the support detailed above, LAL have a SENCO who works with teachers to support effective learning and will make all reasonable efforts to remove barriers and put effective special educational provision in place.

This SEN support will take the form of the four-part assess, plan, do, review cycle, where decisions and actions are revisited, refined and revised to develop an understanding of the learner's needs.

Please refer to the [SEND Policy](#) for further information

Responsibilities

The Adult Skills Delivery Manager retains overall responsibility for this policy.

The Quality and Sustainability Manager is responsible for:

- Ensuring funds are distributed and administered in line with this policy and relevant ESFA Guidelines
- Overseeing the on-going development and improvement of the Supporting Learners procedures
- Use of policy and process by CSOs

The CSOs are responsible for:

- Assessing applications and making effective judgements on learners' eligibility and award amounts in line with both this policy and relevant ESFA Guidelines
- Monitoring the DLSF budgets and providing the Management Team with accurate, up to date budget data on request
- Checking learner attendance information and using this to inform payments of DLSF awards
- Maintaining all paper and electronic records relating to DLSF consistently, accurately and within confidentiality and Data Protection guidelines
- Liaising with the Examination and Additional Learning Support Officer and Finance Team in coordinating the DLSF accounts
- Ensuring all work relevant to DLSF is carried out in line with this policy and the DLSF procedure

Examination and Additional Learning Support Officer is responsible for:

- Undertaking the appropriate action to ensure learners receive support to learn
- Processing Additional Learning Support requests and ensure funding is claimed
- Liaising both internally and externally to action Access Arrangements for learners with additional support needs
- Ensuring Access Arrangement permission is granted before the examination is taken

Applicants may be invited to provide additional information or invited to discuss their individual circumstances with the Adult Skills Development Manager or his/her deputy.

Applicants may appeal about the amount or type of an award by writing to the Quality and Sustainability Manager stating why they feel the award should be reconsidered.

The Adult Skills Development Manager will respond to the appeal in writing within ten working days. This decision is final.