

Operational Procedure

Learner Support Funding 2023/24

Includes

Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF), Advanced Learning Loan

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If you require this information in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language, please contact us and we will do our best to help.

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Introduction

Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF) is allocated to the Adult Learning Services by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). It is provided to support learners with a specific financial hardship that prevents them from taking part/continuing in learning on skills and qualifications programmes. Before we award support to a learner, we must identify their needs within the following 'categories'. (Adult Learning reserves the right to amend / cease support detailed in this policy due to changes in the funding rules or changes or requirements from the ESFA.)

- **Hardship** for those aged over 19*
- **Childcare** for those aged over 20*
- **Residential** for those aged over 19*

(* You must be aged 19 or over on 31 August 2023)

Any Learner who applies to the Discretionary Learner Support Fund must meet the criteria that has been set through the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). A learner is defined as 19 or over if their 19th birthday is on or before the 31 August 2023.

Learner Support Fund Eligibility Criteria

Financial support is available for learners studying on courses who are funded by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) through the [Adult education budget \(AEB\) funding rules 2023 to 2024](#) or are paying with and [Advanced Learner Loan](#) and who earn under £33.955per year.

Adult education budget (AEB) funding rules 2023 to 2024 sets out the rules that apply to ESFA funded AEB provision for the 2023 to 2024 funding year. (See Appendix A for **Individual Bands - Percentage of support to be provided by the DLSF**)

Eligibility is based on a learner meeting the residency requirements and the eligibility criteria of low income or being on a means tested or disability benefit. Where possible, funds awarded will be paid directly to the relevant third party. **Childcare payments will be made directly to the Childcare provider once details have been provided, meaning that the learner does not need to pay for childcare up front. (Evidence of attendance must be provided if outside normal class time).**

Should a learner cease to attend or withdraw from their course(s) at any point during the academic year, financial support for childcare and transport will finish on the last date of recorded attendance. **The responsibility for childcare costs reverts to the learner from that date.**

(Please be aware that there may be a slight delay with the first payment if we need to set up bank details).

Once the learner's allocation has been agreed they will have 6 weeks to start claiming (unless it is a short course under six weeks where the claim can be at the end). Any funding not claimed within this time will be cancelled then reallocated and the learner will need to reapply for the funds.

This Operational Procedure should be read in conjunction with this [Course Fees and Financial help](#) information document

The Service offers support from the following schemes:

19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF)

Gives financial support to adult learners who – without this money – may not be able to start or complete a course with us. We will assist to remove barriers to education or training. Types of support **may** include 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, this can be in the form of a grant or repayable loan provided by the learner.
- travel costs
- examination fees
- accreditation fees, professional membership fees and any fees or charges due to external bodies
- registration fees
- to support a learner on a traineeship including the work placement element (which evidence will be asked for before payments being made)

In exceptional circumstances, we can use hardship funds to assist with course fees for financial support to start or stay in learning.

If an asylum seeker is eligible for provision, we may provide learner support in the form of course-related books, equipment, cash payments or a travel pass.

We have allocated a modest budget to support our Community Learning Courses to help the learner take their first step back into learning.

[Learner Support: Eligibility - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

20+ Childcare

20+ Childcare funding is provided to support a learner if childcare costs are preventing them starting learning or not continuing learning.

- We can only use childcare funding to pay for childcare with a child minder, provider or child minder agency who is registered with Ofsted
- If a learner is under the age of 20 on the first day of learning and need help with the costs of childcare, they should refer to the Care to Learn programme.
- The fund must not use 20+ Childcare for those aged 20 years or older to top up childcare payments for those receiving 'Care to Learn' payments.
- Where children are entitled to free childcare this entitlement is to be used in the first instance

If the child is eligible for 15 or 30 hours per week free early education these must be used to

cover the required sessions. Timetabled days will only be considered for childcare support.

ICT devices and connectivity

We can support learners in the classroom where documents need to be uploaded as evidence, or where learning is blended or online with the loan of a laptop where the learner.

- does not have internet access at home, and/or does not have a suitable device, i.e., laptop or tablet to complete the necessary online course work.

IT devices **are only loaned** to a learner and returned at the end of their learning, to allow them to be re-used by other learners. A learner signs a declaration, confirming that they will return the device in good working order. Any devices that are not returned the **learner will be invoiced** by Norfolk County Council for a replacement device.

Exemptions

Discretionary Learner Support **cannot** be granted if any of the following apply:

- Where other funding is made available for example Job Centre Plus
- Learning funded as part of an Apprenticeship (travel and equipment costs should be met by the employer and childcare costs should be met by the apprentice as part of their normal working day)
- Learning where we cannot draw down any external funding.
- Community and Family Learning that is delivered in a single session or workshops.
- Essential equipment or facilities if the learner is eligible for full funding with the exception of the items covered in the first clause of the [hardship](#) section and the flexibilities in [ICT devices and connectivity](#) section
- 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

Please note Adult Learning reserves the right to make changes these rule as reflected by the [ESFA funded adult education budget funding rules 2023 to 2024 \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

How to apply for Discretionary Learner Support (DLSF)

Email or by calling the Learner Services Team and requesting an DLSF application form.

Telephone: 01603 306538

Email for enquiries: adultlearning@norfolk.gov.uk

Terms and Conditions

In return of Learner Support funding learners:

- Will attend at least 80% of their course.
- Will complete all the necessary homework/coursework.
- Must notify the Learner Services team of any changes to their financial circumstances during

the course.

- Must return any books/or equipment (non-perishable) given or purchased on their behalf at the end of the course where practical.
- Must be intending to undergo the assessment and/or sit the examination (failure to do so will result in the claimant being asked to reimburse the Service for the cost of any examination or assessment for which they have been entered).
- It is the learner's responsibility to tell the Department for Work and Pensions about any learner support they are receiving from you, as learner support payments may affect their eligibility to state benefits.

Level 3 and above courses

- Level 3 free courses for job offers are set up under the Free courses for jobs (FCFJ) which has been developed to support adults who are unemployed or [in receipt of a low wage](#) £20,319
- Level 3 qualifications which will support the development of new skills for adult learners and improve the prospects of eligible adults in the labour market. Eligible adults aged 24+ can now access fully-funded level 3 provision from the list of level 3 FCFJ qualifications available via the [DfE list of qualifications approved for funding](#)
- Additional level 3 qualifications for 19 to 23-year-olds that are not included in the legal entitlements
- If a learner already has an existing full Level 3 qualification or higher, or has achieved any other qualification included in the level 3 adult offer qualification before 1 April 2022
- Additional level 3 qualifications for 19- to 23-year-olds that are not included in the legal entitlements
- You can apply for the DLSF fund.

Level 3 Advanced Learner Loans

- If a learner is aged over 24 and are not eligible for the Lifetime Skills Guarantee
- If a learner is between 19 to 23-yearsold and not included in the legal entitlements
- They can apply for an [Advanced Learner Loan](#) through The Student Loan company. If the loan is not in place in six weeks of a learner starting their course, we will invoice the learner for the full amount of the course, unless prior arrangements have been discussed.
- Once a learner has taken out an Advanced Learning Loan, they have the option to apply for a bursary to help support them with Travel, Resource, and Childcare to help support them whilst they study with us.

Appendix A

Individual Bands - Percentage of support to be provided by the DLSF

Aa	Individual Status	% Fund contribution	% Learner contribution*
1	Individuals in receipt of JSA, ESA or Universal credit (earning under £617 per month (single household) or £988 per month (joint household) take-home pay [#] not including benefits) or individuals funded under Low Wage Funding (LWF)	100%	0%
2	Unemployed: but available/looking for work and taking course to gain employment or improve work prospects	100%	0%
3	Unemployed: not currently looking for work but will using this course to enable them to find employment afterwards. Only available where household income is under £33.955	100%	0%
4	Employed: income between £20,319 - £24,718 personal income per annum + taking course to improve career prospects within local labour market. We need to provide their three most recent pay slips (last 3 months) or a valid P60	75%	25% up to a maximum of £250
5	Employed: income between £24,719 - £29,955 personal income per annum + taking course to improve career prospects within local labour market. We need to provide their three most recent pay slips (last 3 months) or a valid P60	50%	50% up to a maximum of £500
6	Employed: up to £33,955 personal income per annum + taking course to improve career prospects within local labour market. We need to provide their three most recent pay slips (last 3 months) or a valid P60.	25%	75% up to a maximum of £750
7	Childcare: Learners must use an Ofsted a registered childcare provider, or approved out-of-hours school club, or similar. Childcare will look at the individual organisations Terms and Conditions.	After government fund places used 100%	After government fund places used 100%

Ba	Individual Status	% Fund contribution	% Learner contribution*
8	Childcare for learners aged under 20 years of age on the first day of learning; must be directed to the ESFA's 'care to learn' programme	After government fund places used 100%	After government fund places used 100%
9	Fees: If you are taking an Education and Training course, we can support you with your course fee. Professional membership fees and any fees or charges due to external bodies related to the course	25% to 100%	Learner will not pay more than £250 for a L2 course
10	Material: The fund can be used to purchase essentials that are not included in the course fees. Depending on personal circumstance.	Up to 100%	Not applicable
11	Travel: Support towards the cost of travel is allocated based on mileage and is paid each half-term. As Norfolk is a rural County, 45 pence will be paid per mile. Parking may be included. Public transport receipts must be scanned or photographed. and sent in with claim form.	Up to 100%	Not applicable

Key sources of Information and Guidance

[Care to Learn](#)

[19+ Financial Support Learner Support](#)

[Childcare Support 20 or Over](#)

www.gov.uk/learner-support

[Advanced Learner Loans Course Fees](#)

All information, including hyperlinks were correct when we published this document.

Note – government guidance can change within the academic year and Adult Learning reserves the right to amend or cease support detailed in this policy due to changes in the funding rules or changes or requirements from the ESFA and or Adult Learning.