

LEARNING AND SKILLS SERVICE

LOCAL FEE REMISSION POLICY 2023 - 2024

LOCAL FEE REMISSION POLICY 2022 – 23

The Learning and Skills Service at Sunderland City Council receives Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to deliver learning to Sunderland residents aged 19 and over. Provision is delivered by subcontracted learning providers via two distinct funding streams:

- Community Learning – where the learning is designed to widen adult participation in learning through a targeted approach. There is no requirement for CL learners to progress to other learning or achieve regulated qualifications.
- Adult Skills – accredited courses which lead to a full qualification.

All courses offered by The Learning and Skills Service are subject to ESFA funding rules.

Purpose of Government Supported Adult and Community Learning

The principle purpose of this funding is:

- To engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to equip them for work, an apprenticeship or further learning
- To develop the skills, confidence, and resilience of learners to progress towards formal learning or employment, improve their health and wellbeing and or develop stronger communities.

Service Objectives:

- support unemployed and low-skilled people improve skills and confidence to prepare them for training or employment.
- provide both a universal and targeted offer to support learning where needs are greatest.
- improve essential skills for learners to progress to further learning, paid/unpaid work, and involvement in the community.
- improve maths and English skills for learners by offering specific maths and English courses and by embedding maths and English in all other curriculum areas, including ESOL.
- improve recruitment of learners from equality groups e.g. those with learning difficulties and disabilities; males; minority ethnic groups; unemployed 19-25-year olds.
- provide opportunities for Sunderland residents to improve digital communication skills.
- support community development to build capacity and resilience in the voluntary sector to enable the population to help stay fit and active and create progression routes for those who want to move to more formal learning and employment

- Focus the Adult and Community Learning funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate in learning, including people on low incomes, those with low skills, and those furthest away from the labour market.
- To work with local partners to deliver a programme of high-quality learning, which clearly contributes to the priorities of the
 - Council's City Plan 2019 – 30
 - North East Local Enterprise Partnership – Strategic Economic Plan
 - Sunderland Partnership – Joint Health and Wellbeing Plan

Who is eligible to participate?

Learners must meet the general eligibility criteria regarding residence and accredited learning aims as defined in the ESFA's Adult Education Budget Funding Rules.

Fees and Remissions

Adult Skills Provision

ESFA fully funded Adult Education Budget includes support for

- 4 legal entitlements to full funding for eligible adult learners.
 - English and maths, up to and including level 2, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade 4 (C), or higher
 - first full qualification at level 2 for individuals aged 19 to 23, and/or
 - first full qualification at level 3 for individuals aged 19 to 23
 - Essential digital skills qualifications, up to and including level 1, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have digital skills assessed at below level 1

Further information can be found by reviewing the Government Contribution tables available in the Adult Education Budget (AEB) Funding rules 2023 2024.

Community Learning Provision

The Learning and Skills Service focus provision fully on those learners that cannot afford to pay and need learning to move closer to work, formal learning or volunteering and to widen adult participation in learning through a targeted approach, promoting equality and diversity, and improving access to learning for particular under-represented groups and those who have not been engaged in learning for a significant period of time.

All courses are free if the learner meets the ESFA eligibility requirements and fall into one of the key priority groups:

- Unemployed – definition of an unemployed learner is if one or more of the following apply
 - Receipt of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)
 - Receipt of Employment & Support Allowance (ESA)
 - Receipt of Universal Credit
- Care leavers
- Carers
- Learners with a learning difficulty and or disability
- Mental health service users and adults with mild to moderate mental health problems
- Learners who are homeless, in sheltered living, or in danger of becoming homeless
- Learners who are employed or self-employed and have a low income (earn less than £20,319 per annum).
- Learners with Refugee status
- Learners with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHC)
- Learners who are released on temporary licence, studying outside a prison environment, and not funded by the Ministry of Justice.
- An individual who is Economically Inactive because they are unable to claim income related state benefits.

Evidencing Fee Exemption

To be eligible for fee exemption subcontractors must ensure eligibility criteria is checked and enrolment form completed accordingly for each learner.

Low wage eligibility – at induction stage sub-contractors must ensure they see evidence of the learner's gross annual wages and record type of evidence seen on enrolment form. This could be a wage slip or a Universal Credit statement within 3 months of the learner's learning start date, or a current employment contract which states gross monthly/annual wages. If the learner is unable/unwilling to present evidence they should be charged accordingly for attending the course.

Fees

Sub-contracted providers have the option to charge fees for Community Learning funded courses, to learners who do not meet one of the key priority groups as defined above.

In this event subcontractors must not enrol a paying learner in place of a learner eligible for funding and must charge no more than £5.00 per hour of learning.

Payment of Fees

Learner fees where applicable are collected at the time of enrolment. No learner can attend without having paid their fees.

If a course is cancelled and does not run and no suitable alternative is available, then a full refund must be given.

In the event of sickness, a full or partial refund will be given on production of a valid doctor's certificate, depending on the number of sessions attended. Applications for a refund should be made in writing and submitted to the relevant sub-contracted provider for approval.

Additional Learner Charges

Sub-contracted providers are required to adhere to the hourly fee rates set out above at £5.00 per learning hour and should not impose any additional surcharges to meet the general cost of providing courses.

Learner Fee Collection

Sub –contracted providers are responsible for collecting fees from all eligible learners.

Fee information should be accurately identified on the enrolment form.

The enrolment form will be used to calculate fees owed to the Council.

At the end of the academic year the council will invoice sub-contracted providers for the Learner Fees amount.

The Learning and Skills Service will use the Learner Fees monies to support ongoing delivery of subsequent Adult Learning provision.

Recording Learner Fee Payments

Sub-contracted providers must record details of all payments (course fees and other charges) made by the learner to the provider relating to Adult Learning provision.

A sub-contracted provider must issue a receipt to the learner for all payments made by the learner.

Sub-contracted providers must retain an audit trail for fees received and should make any fees documentation available for audit as required.

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