

The Adult College of Barking and Dagenham

# Discretionary Learner Support Fund

Lead Responsibility	Service Manager Business Support
Designated Officer	Student Services Manager
Advisory Officer(s)	MIS, Exams & Finance Manager
Approved by	Service Manager Business Support
Date of approval	May 2022
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## A note to all teaching staff:

Please click [here](#) using a curriculum device to find a full list of Work and Skills policies & procedures

Please click [here](#) using an LBBB device to find a full list of LBBB policies

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# Policy Statement

## Rationale

The Adult College has a duty to ensure that the financial issues do not represent a barrier to learning for learners. The purpose of the Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF) is to provide support for learners with a specific financial hardship which is preventing them from taking part/continuing with their learning.

Once the fund has been allocated, there will be no further monies available for the rest of the academic year. Consequently, the College also has a responsibility to ensure that these funds are allocated to those learners most in need.

## Aims

- To provide a clear basis on which to process applications for support from the 19+ Discretionary Support Fund.
- To clearly identify the priority groups for financial support.
- To clearly set out the criteria for financial assessment.

## Key Principles

The College will use DLSF funds to:

- Support learners experiencing financial hardship for course costs, materials and resources, travel, and similar costs – (Hardship funding).
- Pay for Childcare support where learners have a low income (20+ Childcare Funding).
- Support learners where they need to live away from home (Residential Access Funding).
- Prioritise clearly identified groups.

## Priority Groups

- Learners who are economically or socially disadvantaged or otherwise considered 'vulnerable' (young / lone parents; those who have been in the care of the Local Authority).
- Learners who are developing skills for work.
- Learners who are developing English and Mathematics skills.

## Disbursement

The Adult College will be directly responsible for making awards to learners and will make every effort to do so. We will make all reasonable attempts to ensure that learners are aware of the fund.

To meet these objectives, Student Services will disburse the bursary in line with the policy and will ensure that all learners receive information when they enrol, or shortly thereafter. DLSF will also be actively promoted to learners early in their programmes.

## Management Reporting and Controls

Student services will send regular management report to the Senior Management Team (SMT). These will clearly identify the categories of award being supported and types of learners benefiting. Under spends must be accompanied with a plan to market and improve the uptake / distribution of the fund. Where learner needs may exceed the amount budgeted, SMT must be advised at the earliest instance.

## Data Protection

The Adult College recognises that offering support to learners requires sensitivity and respect for all those concerned. Information relating to applications will be treated confidentially.

## Implementation

Full guidance for carrying out the DLSF process can be found here

## **Eligibility for financial support**

To be eligible for financial support, including travel costs, learners must.

- be resident in the UK
- aged 19 or over on the 31st of August of the academic year in which they enrol
- Have a **household** income £21,000 or less. (This includes all income for examples: wages, evidence of self-employment, all benefits, pension etc)
- be enrolled or have an offer of a place on a GLA/ESFA funded course
- be in a classroom-based provision
- not be an apprentice, in community learning, higher education, or be released on temporary licence, or be on a job centre plus mandated learner
- meet all of the above criteria and live at least 1.5 miles from the college

## **Support Available**

Funds will be allocated to support learners with:

- childcare for parents aged 20+
- travel costs
- essential course costs (fees, professional/membership fees, equipment, kit, uniform, safety boots, trips, books)
- loan or provide digital equipment to access online sessions
- general hardship / significant changes to personal financial circumstances.
- domestic emergencies
- emergency accommodation
- residential access funds – priority will be given to learners who need accommodation, and we will only pay travel costs in exceptional circumstances.
- the amount paid will be discretionary

## **Appeals**

- Learners should discuss any concerns with the Student Services Manager first
- May appeal against decisions to an appeals panel (in writing, clearly stating the reasons why, within 10 days of the decision being made)
- The appeals panel will consist of two members of Student Services (not the Student Services Manager) and one member of Senior Management Team

## **Management**

- A contingency of 10% of the amount allocated should be set aside each year for circumstantial payments.
- A proportion of the fund may be set aside for administration costs
- Payments will be made directly via BACS into a bank account (alternatives can only be agreed by a member of SMT- and countersigned on the bank mandate).
- Overpayments can be reclaimed from future payments

## **Fraud**

Learners will:

- be reported to the police by the Student Services Manager
- deemed as guilty of gross misconduct and may be expelled from the College
- be required to return all monies (paid by the college) to the College

## **Management Reporting**

Termly reports outlining will be provided for SMT -

- The financial assistance / commitments
- Balances available for distribution
- Actions planned / taken to ensure disbursement

## Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF) Flowchart

