



LEARNER SUPPORT FUND POLICY

MARCH 2023

Version:	2
Original Policy issued:	March 2021
Next review date:	March 2024
Review Cycle:	Annual
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Policy applicable to:	All WCLL staff, subcontractors and learners

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Learner Support Fund Policy

1 | Introduction

The Wandsworth Council Lifelong Learning (WCLL) Learner Support Fund (LSF) is available to support learners who are suffering from extreme hardship. This fund is used to support students on a low income with assistance with any associated costs with their study, while studying at WCLL.

The course being studied must be fundable through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) and the costs requested must be related to the course study requirements. These costs could include support with travel, essential course materials, external childcare, and exam related fees.

Important Facts

- Only eligible learners can be supported through this fund.
- WCLL has available a limited allocation in regard to LSF Funds.
- Reduced awards may be issued to learners if demand exceeds the available funds.
- When the fund is fully committed no further applications or award allocations will be made
- This support will only accept applications for financial support and childcare using the WCLL application form.

2 | Learner LSF Eligibility

Any Learner who applies to the Learner Support Fund must meet the criteria that has been set through the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

To be eligible for support from the LSF, learners must:

- Be aged 19 or over on 31 August of the current academic year
- Be eligible for Adult Education Budget (AEB) Education and Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) /Greater London Authority (GLA) funding (London postcodes valid only)
- Be enrolled on an AEB ESFA/GLA funded course (London postcodes only)
- Have lived in the UK or within the EU for the last 3 years, and are eligible to receive public funds
- Be in a position where they are not able to access required learning resources (e.g. laptop, data, etc.) supported by the LSF – see WCLL learner assessment form.
- Have shown full commitment to their programme of study with attendance of at least 90% and a satisfactory progress (tutor reference)

Learners who are not eligible include:

- Learners not meeting the AEB ESFA/GLA eligibility rules
- Learners on courses not funded by the AEB ESFA/GLA
- Learners who are under the age of 19

3 | LSF Financial Support

The priority group for LSF are learners who are economically disadvantaged, this includes those who may need support for travel or costs associated with learning, learners who are facing financial difficulty, this fund can assist and support.

LSF allocations are at the discretion of WCLL to help learners with the cost of:

- Equipment and material costs required for the level of the course studied (kit lists will be provided by the Departments)
- Exam costs
- Registration fees
- Assessment costs
- Accreditation and professional membership fees
- Childcare support through approved childcare providers (for learners aged 20 or over on the first day of learning) childcare support will be given for timetabled sessions only
- Covid-19 response. Support is available to disadvantaged learners who cannot undertake online delivery in the event of local or national measures in response to Covid-19

Registration costs

WCLL will cover all course registration and examination costs

Equipment

Learners may apply for support with essential additional equipment or resources needed to study, any support issued for equipment must be essential for course achievement.

Discretionary Childcare Support - for learners aged 20 and over

Learners may apply for assistance with the cost of childcare for the hours that they are timetabled to attend their WCLL course.

Learners must use an Ofsted a registered childcare provider, or approved out-of-hours school club, or similar.

Central Admin will liaise with external providers and WAES Finance regarding POs and payments
Childcare Admin will liaise with Childcare Manager regarding in-year concerns.

If further childcare support is needed, this needs to be agreed by Head of Learner Development and Childcare Manager.

Issues or concerns regarding payment to external providers will be investigated by Head of Learner Development, Childcare Manager and Finance.

LSF Process

- Learners must submit a completed WCLL learner assessment application form.
- Learners will demonstrate that they fulfil the criteria to be eligible for LSF.
- If the LSF type of support requires evidence of circumstances, then the most recent evidence must be provided and must be dated no more than 30 days before the date of their LSF application.
- Learners will be notified of the outcome of the application within 10 working days.
- Payments will be made to the childcare provider.
- WCLL may require additional evidence if it is felt that the current evidence provided does not clearly match the set criteria of application.
- Learners need to be aware that all LSF evidence must be seen by the administrators managing the LSF.

4 | Appeals Procedure

- If you are unhappy with the award made to you, in the first instance, please contact WCLL administration who will investigate your appeal. This investigation may include obtaining further information regarding your personal circumstances, your financial position and information about your attendance and motivation on the course. Failure to provide any requested information or evidence requested will invalidate your appeal.
- All appeals will be discussed with management in the first instance and if the case cannot be resolved then the Deputy Head of Lifelong Learning.
- You will be advised of the outcome and any action that has been taken.
- If you are unhappy about the decision made following the initial investigation, your case will be referred to the Deputy Head of Lifelong Learning. Any referral will need to be recorded and followed through the WCLL Complaints procedure.

5 | Administration

- All applications will be recorded onto the LSF tracker.
- All applications must have the appropriate evidence to validate and meet the LSF criteria.
- All applications through the LSF will be assessed and validated with assigned WCLL staff and also management.
- All equipment or requested resources will be purchased in line with Wandsworth Borough Council (WBC) Finance regulations and Procurement processes, and GLA and ESFA funding regulations.

- Any delays with ordering or any supplier related issues will be communicated with the applicant.
- All external childcare providers need to be OFSTED registered in line with WCLL and WBC regulations.
- All external childcare providers not already registered as a supplier with WBC, will be required to complete a New Supplier Form and submit the required bank details, etc. and will need to follow the WBC No PO No Pay procedures of invoicing.
- Payments to childcare providers will be made on the provision that the parent has attended the minimum requirement of classes (dependant on course length) before payment to the provider is made.

6 | Special Circumstances

When a learner is in need of emergency support, this could be priority support instigated through a WCLL Safeguarding Lead, or external agencies funds will be made available. The request will be raised by the Deputy Head of Lifelong Learning who will identify support options. This will then be discussed with the Finance Officer. Emergency financial support will need to be agreed through finance and a confidential case overview presented alongside the request.

Urgent Support would indicate funds need to be issued within a reasonable timeframe.

7 | Fraudulent Claims

WCLL takes fraud seriously and will take action if it is found that a claim through the LSF has been made fraudulently and will take appropriate action to recover funds if necessary.