

WESTMINSTER ADULT EDUCATION SERVICE

**Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF)
Policy – 2020-2021**

Lead Responsibility	Head of Learner Development	Approved by	Executive Board
Version 1	Reviewed September 2020	Date of approval	September 2020
Effective from	October 2020	Date of next review	1 st September 2021
Policy applicable to	All WAES staff and learners		

1. Introduction

1.1 The Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF) 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 WAES.

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
- WAES has available a limited allocation in regard to DLSF 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
- Discretionary Learner Support Funds is only available to learners studying for a qualification. WAES Community Learning and WAES 'Full Cost' provision is not covered by this fund
- This support will only accept applications for financial support or childcare using the WAES application form

2. Learner DLSF Eligibility:

Any Learner who applies to the Discretionary Learner Support Fund must meet the criteria that has been set through the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

2.1 To be eligible for support from the DLSF, learners must:

- Be aged 19 or over on 31 August 2020
- 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 working and earning below £24,000
- Have shown full commitment to their programme of study with attendance of at least 85% and a satisfactory progress (tutor reference)

2.2 Learners who are not eligible include

Eligibility criteria must be followed, only applications that meet the set criteria will be supported through this fund.

- 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
- L3 Learners who are not AEB funded and are not in receipt of the Advanced Learner Loan

3. DLSF (financial support)

3.1 The priority group for DLSF 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.

3.2 DLSF allocations are at the discretion of WAES to help learners with the cost of:

- Travel to and from WAES centres –
 - For journeys in excess 20 minutes walking distance
 - For journeys involving more than one bus/tube
- Travel to and from WAES approved work related placements
- Travel & any costs associated with approved educational visits
- Equipment and material costs required for the level of the course studied (kit lists will be provided by the Departments)
- Tuition (in exceptional circumstances)
- Exam costs
- Registration fees
- Accreditation and professional membership fees
- Childcare support through external childcare providers (for learners aged 20 or over on the first day of learning) childcare support will be given for WAES 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

3.3 Travel Allocation

Travel – £4 a day

3.4 Tuition/registration costs –WAES will cover all course registration and examination costs

3.5 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.

3.6 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 WAES 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

3.7 DLSF Process

- Learners must submit a completed DLSF application form.
- Learners will demonstrate they are earning less than £24,000 will be requested to provide a one month payslips, or contract of employment. The most recent evidence must be provided and must be dated no more than 30 days before the date of their DLSF application.
- Learners will be notified of the outcome of the application within 10 working days
- For travel, applications will be matched against the WAES course register
- Payments will be made to the childcare provider
- WAES 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 DLSF evidence must be seen by the administrator who is managing the DLSF

4. Level 3 Bursary

Learners who have accessed a L3 loan are able to apply for additional support through the L3 Loans Bursary. Evidence of a loan being in place must be agreed through MIS and Central Administration.

4.1 The bursary can support with travel, essential course materials, external childcare, and registration and exam related fees.

- Registration and exam fees will be paid through the bursary at the point of enrolment
- Support with Equipment up to £300, this will support with any resources needed to assist and complete your study
- Travel to and from WAES centres
- Nursery support to assist with studies
- Dyslexia Assessments and additional learning support if required
- Central administration will meet and discuss your bursary support needed during induction or while on programme
- A valid application will be needed to support any requests through the loans bursary

5. Appeals Procedure

- If you are unhappy with the award made to you, in the first instance, please contact WAES 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 Head of Learner Development in the first instance and if the case cannot be resolved Assistant Principal for Business Support Service
- 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 Assistant Principal for Business Support Services. Any referral will need to be recorded and followed through the WAES Compliments and Complaints procedure.

6. Administration

- All applications will be recorded onto the DLSF tracker
- All applications must have the appropriate evidence to validate and meet the DLSF criteria

- All applications through the DLSF or Loans Bursary will be assessed and validated with Administration Co-ordinator and Head of Learner Development
- All equipment or requested resources will be purchased in line with WAES suppliers and our financial regulations set by WAES and WCC Finance
- Any delays with ordering or any supplier related issues will be communicated with the applicant
- If purchases have been made independently of WAES, a valid receipt will be requested and a copy of your bank statement in order for it to be paid to the bank account.
- All external childcare providers need to be OFSTED registered in line with WAES and WCC regulations.
- All external childcare providers not already registered as a supplier with WAES, will be required to complete a New Supplier Form and submit the required bank details, etc. and will need to follow the WCC 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 four weeks of classes before payment to the provider is made.

7. Special Circumstances

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

7.1 Urgent Support would indicate funds need to be issued within 1 working day, routine support would indicate funds need to be issued within 3-4 working days.

8. Fraudulent Claims

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