

Adult Skills & Family Learning Service

Learner Fees Policy 2020/21

Adult Education Budget funding – non-qualification courses

All Adult Learning Providers must adhere to the Learner Fees Policy

Introduction:

In line with 'New Challenges, New Chances' (*Further Education and Skills System Reform Plan: Building a World Class Skills System, BIS December 2011*), and to support Lincolnshire County Council's widening participation policy, the purpose of the Adult Skills & Family Learning Service's Fees Policy 2020/21 is to:

- Maximise access to Adult Skills and Family Learning programmes for adults, bringing new opportunities and improving lives, whatever people's circumstances.
- Focus public funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate, including in rural areas and people on low income with low skills.
- Collect fee income from people who can afford to pay and use where possible to extend provision to those who cannot.
- Formally recognise and grow 'Pound Plus'* within Lincolnshire Adult Skills and Family Learning Service to maximise value for money and quality of the provision.

* Pound Plus – Pound Plus refers to the additional income and savings generated by Providers over and above core income contribution from the Government's Adult Education budget.

Background information:

Adult Skills and Family Learning provision for adult learners (aged 19+) is paid for by a combination of central government funding through the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the fee paid by the learner (where applicable). The tuition fee is the fee charged by the Learning Provider for the delivery of the learning activity. This tuition fee represents only a proportion of the full cost of the course, with the remainder being paid for with grants from central government.

Learners will be expected to provide their own resources or, where available, purchase them from their tutor. Some learners will be eligible to apply for funding from the Learner Support Fund for assistance to pay for resources (please see Learner Support Fund below)

To support local needs, and Lincolnshire County Council policy, target groups of learners are able to access concessions on the tuition fee, as detailed in concessions below.

In 2020/21, in order to focus public funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate in Adult Skills programmes, fee concessions are available for learners on benefit in skills training only. The definition of courses that deliver skills training is at the discretion of the Learning Provider.

Fee paying provision

The ESFA through its Funding Rules requires Providers to seek fees from those who can afford to pay in order to ensure that the maximum amount of public funding can be focused on supporting and maximising the number of disadvantaged learners. For example, where appropriate, Providers could consider full cost recovery for repeat learners who register for similar courses over a period of several years.

To comply with the guidelines, and to support ESFA Policy, Providers are required to collect fee income, where appropriate. Fee income collected is to be utilised, by the fee collecting Provider, to extend provision and widen participation, including funding learner support to remove barriers to participation (e.g. subsidise child care). Evidence will be collected on a termly basis. Failure to comply will result in fees collected by the Provider being forwarded to the Adult Skills & Family Learning Service for re-distribution in line with this principal.

Fees

Fees are based on an hourly rate. Fees are payable at the beginning of each course as part of the enrolment process.

Learners will be charged a fee for the learning they receive. There are three fee rates:

1. Full Fee
2. Reduced Fee
3. Fee Exempt

Fees can be charged up to £5.00 per guided learning hour (glh) (maximum) **

** The aim of the Fees Policy is to standardise the levying of fees for learning provision across the county in a way that is fair and transparent so that adults within Lincolnshire are treated equitably by each delivery partner within the Adult Skills & Family Learning Provider Network. However, it is recognised that there will be regional constraints and differing course content due to the needs of learners and the locality.

In order to ensure Providers are able to meet the needs of their community they have a certain amount of discretion when applying the Fees Policy. Providers can charge **up to** £5.00/hour for some Adult Skills provision. However, it is anticipated that some provision will be charged at a lower rate in order to meet the needs of the curriculum.

Providers will outline in their own Fees Policy what fees will be charged to best meet the needs of their local community.

Provision in areas of deprivation/rural areas

In order to support learners in deprived/rural areas, targeted courses in these areas aimed at improving job prospects and learner confidence, may be delivered free of charge. Areas in Lincolnshire that apply are detailed below.

Boston Fenside	Lincoln Boultham	Weston and Moulton
Boston Skirbeck	Lincoln Bracebridge	Bourne East
Boston Witham	Lincoln Carholme	Bourne West
Fishtoft	Lincoln Castle	Deeping St. James
Alford	Lincoln Glebe	Grantham Earlsfield
Chapel St. Leonards	Lincoln Hartsholme	Grantham Harrowby
Coningsby/Tattershall	Lincoln Minster	Grantham St. Annes
Horncastle	Lincoln Moorland	Grantham St. Johns
Ingoldmells	Lincoln Park	Grantham St. Wulframs
Mablethorpe	Bracebridge Heath and Waddington	Market and West Deeping
Scarborough	Heckington	Stamford All Saints
Seacroft	Heighington and Washingborough	Stamford St. Mary's
Skegness St. Clements	Ruskington	Gainsborough East
Skegness Winthorpe	Holbeach Town	Gainsborough North
Trusthorpe	Long Sutton	Gainsborough South West
Wainfleet and Friskney	Pinchbeck	Spalding St. Pauls
Woodhall Spa	Lincoln Abbey	Spalding Wygate
Nettleham	Lincoln Birchwood	Sutton Bridge

Fee Exempt provision

These courses are paid for by central government funding through the ESFA. There are no fees and charges for these courses.

- Courses specifically for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD)
- The Course Proposal must state that the course is LLDD and the course must be only eligible to learners who have a learning difficulty or disability
- Courses where the main learning aim is English (excluding ESOL) or maths
- Digital Skills courses
- Family English, maths and language courses
- Wider/other Family Learning courses

Learners in receipt of the following income based state benefits are Fee Exempt:

- Active Benefits:

- Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)
- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) – all categories
- Universal Credit
- They receive Other State Benefits
- An offender released on a temporary licence, studying outside a prison environment, and not funded by the Ministry of Justice
- An Asylum Seeker in receipt of the equivalent of an income based state benefit
- The unwaged dependant of an Asylum Seeker
- An individual who is Economically Inactive because they are unable to claim income related state benefits
- An individual who earns less than £17,004.00 annual gross salary, and on the assumption of a 37.5hr contract with paid statutory holiday entitlement
- To confirm learner eligibility Providers must:
 - see and keep supporting evidence in the learner file, for example, this could be a wage slip within 3-months of the learner's learning start date, or a current employment contract, which states gross month/annual wages
 - enter the ILR monitoring code (363) for every eligible learner they fully fund.

Providers may also use their discretion to fully fund other learners if both of the following apply: the learner:

- a) Receives other state benefits (not listed above) and their earned take-home pay (disregarding benefits) is less than £338 a month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £541 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner), and
- b) Wants to be employed or progress into more sustainable employment, and their earned take-home pay is less than £338 a month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £541 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner), and the Provider is satisfied identified learning is directly relevant to their employment prospects and the local labour market needs.

Learners on furlough from their employment are also Fee Exempt.

Evidencing Fee Exemption

- To be eligible for fee exemption learners must provide appropriate written evidence. Providers should retain copies of the evidence and make them available for audit.
- Learner evidence which is inappropriate will result in the learner being charged a Full Fee rate.

General concessions:

- Concessions will also be available for learners aged 65 or over on 31st August 2020 (at 25%)
- Concessions will also be available for ex-service personnel disabled in service (50%)

Discretionary Remissions:

There are some categories of learners, for example but not exclusively travellers, the homeless and hostel dwellers who, whilst not necessarily in receipt of benefits, are clearly unable to contribute to the cost of their learning. In such instances, the Adult Skills & Family Learning Service may agree discretionary fee remission to groups of learners or individual learners without the prior consent of the ESFA. Records of all such discretionary remissions will be retained.

Refunds

A full refund of course fees will only be given if the Learning Provider cancels the course. If the learner withdraws from a course which has already started, depending on their circumstances, learners may be offered a pro-rata refund. A £5 administration charge is applicable.

Learner Support Fund

The Learner Support Fund aims to remove financial barriers to learning. Financial support is available for learners who would otherwise not be able to access the learning provision offered. This fund can help pay for specialist equipment, transport assistance, child care and course resources. Please contact the Customer Service Centre on 01522 782011 for information on the Learner Support Fund.

Review and Evaluation

This document is revised on an annual basis, but is subject to LCC, key stakeholders and ESFA policy in-year updates which may require further publication. The revised document will be published in July 2021.

All Adult Learning Providers delivering non-qualification courses from Lincolnshire County Council's AEB funding **must** adhere to this Learner Fees Policy and abide by the ESFA funding guidance:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/893033/AEB_2020_to_2021_funding_rules_v.1_FINAL.pdf