

Liverpool City Region Adult Education Budget - Discretionary Learner Support Policy 2020-2021

Effective Date: September 2020

Version Number: 2

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Review Date: 31st August 2021

Approved by: Chair of PODC (16th July 2020)



**LIVERPOOL
CITY REGION**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

METRO MAYOR
LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Eligibility Criteria	1
2.1 Childcare	2
2.2 Travel	2
2.3 Course Fees	3
2.4 Hardship Fund	3
2.5 Support for Asylum Seekers	4
3. Appeals Against Applications	4
4. Monitoring & Review	4

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Discretionary Learner Support Fund consists of an allocation of money funded by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's Adult Education Budget (LCR AEB). As a limited amount of funding is available, certain criteria have to be introduced to ensure that the fund can help as many students as possible. Students aged 19 and above on FE courses are eligible for Discretionary Learner Support. The fund will offer eligible students assistance with childcare and/or travel as a basic but not an exhaustive offer.
- 1.2 Five percent (5%) of the total Discretionary Learner Support allocation will be used towards administration costs.
- 1.3 Eligible students can apply for a basic package of support to a maximum of £5370 per annum plus individual participation costs for uniform or kit. This will cover the following items
 - Travel payments up to £450 per annum
 - Childcare cost up to £4920 per annum
- 1.4 Eligible student may also be awarded additional support to cover the following expenses;
 - Stationary, books, equipment or uniform required for the programme of study
 - Educational trip or visits which contribute to the aims of the programme of study
 - Applications for UCAS or travel to university interviews
 - Travel payments or childcare payments may be increase based on individual circumstances
- 1.5 Students who are 19 years old or above and in receipt of an Advanced Learner Loan are not eligible for this fund; they must make an application to the Advanced Learner Loan Fund.

2. Eligibility Criteria

Students must be enrolled on an LCR AEB funded Further Education course at the College. Students have to be in receipt of a means tested benefit or to be dependent someone in receipt of a means tested benefit e.g. Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, Full Council Tax Benefit, Universal credit or on a low wage (less than £16,190 per annum) or dependent on someone on a low wage income. Students on Higher Education courses, waged Apprenticeships or provision with learning aims that are identified as wholly funded from other sources are not eligible for Discretionary Learner Support.

2.1 Childcare

- 2.1.1 In the case of childcare support, students must be a minimum of 20 years of age and would normally have to be studying during the day for seven taught hours per week or more. Hours spent in private study will not be taken into consideration.
- 2.1.2 The Bursary fund will make a 100% contribution to the childcare costs of one dependent child upon sight of the child's full birth certificate and other documentary evidence of dependency for example Tax Credit Award Notice. Applications for funding additional children can be made in writing to Student Services Manager and will be assessed on individual circumstances.
- 2.1.3 Assistance will be withdrawn when a student has completed their course or if any non-attendance at the College exceeds four weeks of unauthorised leave, unless, in the College's opinion, there is a satisfactory reason for the absence. Expenses incurred whilst not attending College will be the personal responsibility of the student.
- 2.1.4 Eligible students that apply to the Discretionary Learner Support Fund for help with childcare fees by 2nd October 2020 will receive up to 100% of their childcare fees. Eligible students applying after the 2nd October 2020 may receive a percentage of their childcare fees paid by the fund depending on funds remaining. This percentage will be agreed by Head of Student Services and may vary over the course of the year. The childcare provider must be Ofsted-registered (Early Years Register for Children aged 0-5, Compulsory Childcare register for 5-8 and Voluntary Childcare Register for over 8's). This can be verified by checking the approved lists provided by Liverpool, Knowsley and Sefton Social Services.
- 2.1.5 The College will inform the child care provider by letter that the College agrees to pay all or part of the childcare fees for the student. The letter will explain the claim periods for the current academic year.
- 2.1.6 No Childcare support payment made will exceed £150 per week unless otherwise agreed by Head of Student Services.
- 2.1.7 Funding cannot be used to fund informal childcare, such as that provided by a relative.

2.2 Travel

- 2.2.1 In the case of travel support students have to be a minimum of 19 years of age, studying normally more than seven taught hours per week, and to live at least 1.5 miles from the College.
- 2.2.2 Students attaining 100% - 90% attendance, good behaviour and up to date course work will receive a termly payments of between £100 and £150 depending on hours studied. Partial payments for attendance between 80%

and 90% will be considered depending on circumstances and available funding.

2.2.3 The Progress Coach or Tutor will be able to appeal the decision only in exceptional circumstances. This appeal can only be made on the ground on an ongoing medical condition. Evidence must be provided and statements stating why travel support from the fund should be reinstated. The evidence will be checked and agreed by Head of Student Services. Students who are refused access to travel support will not be supported for any further travel support from the College hardship fund and will referred to the relevant Assistant Director should this be required

2.3 Course Fees

2.3.1 The College will allocate up to 20% of the total of the Discretionary Learner Support Funds received to support learners with the cost of course fees.

2.3.2 Students will not be in receipt of a means tested benefit and should be working and earning less than £25,000 per year.

2.3.3 If a student is not in employment they can apply for Discretionary Learner Support Fund on the basis that they are dependent on;

- A spouse/partner earning less than £25,000 per year gross;
- Parents where the household income is less than £25,000 per year gross

2.3.4 Students who have successfully applied to receive discretionary funding for course fees cannot additionally apply for funding for travel and childcare.

2.4 Hardship

2.4.1 Applications for the Hardship Fund are assessed by the Retention and Progression team and considered by Head of Student Services on an individual basis. The Discretionary Learner Support Fund sets limits on how much a student can claim from the Hardship Fund and is normally a maximum of £150. Students will not be able to appeal decisions regarding the Hardship Fund.

2.4.2 The fund can be used for:

- Course-related costs, including course trips, books and equipment
- domestic emergencies and emergency accommodation
- examination costs
- accreditation/professional membership to external bodies
- transport in exceptional circumstances
- UCAS application

- 2.4.5. This is not an exhaustive list and all hardship decisions will be considered on an individual basis.

2.5 Support for Asylum Seekers

- 2.5.1 All support for eligible students who are asylum seekers will be provided in kind. No cash payments will be supplied. Instead students will receive support through course-related books, equipment or a travel pass for example. Asylum seekers can apply for discretionary funding to cover the cost of their course fees.

3. Appeals Against Applications

- 3.1 The College cannot guarantee that all eligible applications are approved due to the College having a limited amount of Discretionary Learner Support Funds available. The College will process the application on a first come first served basis and allocate funds to eligible students on the same basis with due regard to individual circumstances.
- 3.2 If a student's application for support from the Learner Support Fund is not approved the student may appeal in writing to the Head of Student Services who will consider the appeal together with the Vice Principal People, Organisational Development and Culture. Appeals must be received within 14 consecutive days of the date of the letter declining the application. The panel will respond to the applicant within 28 consecutive days of receipt of the appeal. Only in exceptional circumstances will a request be paid if the criteria have not been met. The decision following consideration of the appeal will be final and binding.

4. Review

- 4.1 This Policy will be reviewed annually in line with the release of the Discretionary Learner Support Fund Guidance and is the responsibility of the Head of Student Services.

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