

Fees and Pound Plus Policy for 19+ Adult Learning Programmes

Learning Services Worcestershire

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Section 1: Context

1.1 Information about the cost of courses

Most Learning Services Worcestershire courses have some form of government funding which is received from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Some courses are match-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

Fees and charges for 19+ education are based on Pound Plus principles where the 'Pound' represents the public pound and the 'Plus' is everything else that the service generates in addition to the funding allocation from the government – such as fee income, funding from other sources, resources in kind and other sources of revenue / sponsorship / volunteering.

Our Community Learning programmes are banded into fee categories which are designed to ensure that financial resources are prioritised for those who are in most need, and can least afford, community learning provision. Our Community Learning Discretionary Bursary is also in place to support those learners who, due to their circumstances, are in need of additional support but fall outside of our published criteria for either partial or total fee remission.

Course fees are correct at the time of publication but may change.

1.2 Eligibility for funding

Most people will be eligible for funding if they are:

- Aged 19 or over on the 31st August 2022
- A UK national or a person with another right of abode

Full details for eligibility are issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency annually [Adult education budget \(AEB\) funding rules 2022 to 2023](#). Learners wishing to make an enquiry about their eligibility should contact us:

- Call 01905 728537
- Email adultlearning@worcestershire.gov.uk (for 19+ enquiries)

Learners who are not eligible for funding under the ESFA funding rules may still be able to access courses if there are sufficient places available once all other learner applications have been processed. In this case, learners will either pay the full fee as set by the ESFA (for qualifications) or an hourly rate of £10 per hour for non-accredited courses.

Section 2: Skills & Qualifications Programmes (Up to Level 2)

2.1 Course types

Our Skills & Qualifications programme covers a range of courses which are directly linked to enhancing employment opportunities and/or developing basic skills. Courses in this category include:

- English and Maths programmes, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Employability programmes
- Essential Digital Skills
- Vocational qualifications, such as hairdressing, beauty and teaching assistant programmes

Courses in this programme which offer a qualification have specific funding rules and fee values defined by government. Some are covered by Legal Entitlement, which means they must always be made available free of charge, where a learner is eligible. Courses in this programme which do not offer a qualification are funded in line with our Community Learning fee structure but where charges apply, they are at a subsidised rate.

2.2 Skills courses which lead to a qualification (accredited courses)

- Learners who are eligible for full funding from the ESFA will not be charged a fee for any aspect of the course, including exams, resources or awarding organisation registration and fees. Learning Services Worcestershire will draw down 100% of the fee allocation as set by the ESFA.
- Learners who are eligible for co-funding as specified by the ESFA will be funded at a rate of 50% with a maximum of the other 50% being paid by the learner or employer. At the discretion of Learning Services Worcestershire, some courses may be charged at less than 50% for the learner.
- Learners who qualify for no funding will pay 100% of the fee as set by the ESFA. In this instance Learning Services Worcestershire draws down no funding from the ESFA.
- Any courses that are funded as part of our Community Learning provision but lead to a small accreditation – for example, Food Hygiene – will be charged a course fee in line with relevant charges for non-accredited courses.
- Accredited courses are priced according to the funded rate specified for the qualification in the ESFA funding rules (or associated publications and databases).
- Some accreditation services are made available on a Private Candidate basis. Where this applies, the advertised rates are defined by Learning Services Worcestershire and ESFA rules do not apply.

2.3 Skills courses which do not lead to a qualification

- Learners who join a qualification-based course are expected to take the associated qualification, unless the tutor and learner agree otherwise based on the personal needs of the learner. In the case that a learner on a qualification-based course does not take the qualification due to mutual agreement, the funding criteria in paragraph 2.2 will still apply.
- If a learner chooses not to take a qualification (or registers for the qualification but fails to attend an exam or to submit coursework to the required standard and deadlines) then Learning Services Worcestershire reserves the right to withdraw the learner from the course and/or to charge a fee for continuation as a private candidate.

- Course fees and concessionary criteria for non-accredited skills courses are defined by Learning Services Worcestershire. The fee structure for Community Learning also applies to these courses.

2.4 Eligibility for a reduction in fees on Skills & Qualifications programmes

1) Legal Entitlement

Legal entitlement applies to some courses within this programme. Where there is a legal entitlement option, it will be advertised as part of the course booking and enrolment process. Where Legal Entitlement applies, courses are free. Criteria include:

- For Level 3 diplomas: The learner is aged 19-23 and doesn't already have a full Level 3 qualification
- For Level 2 diplomas: The learner is aged 19-23 and doesn't already have a full Level 2 qualification
- For Maths: The learner doesn't have a GCSE qualification in maths at A-C or 4-9
- For English: The learner doesn't have a GCSE qualification in English at A-C or 4-9
- For Essential Digital Skills: The learner's existing digital skills are below Level 1 standard

2) Unemployed Learners

Unemployed learners will not be charged for courses leading to a qualification and for funding purposes we define a learner as unemployed if one or more of the following apply and evidence is provided on request:

- They receive Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), including those receiving National Insurance credits only
- They receive Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- They receive Universal Credit, and their earned income from employment (disregarding benefits) is less than £345 a month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £552 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner)
- Are released on temporary licence, studying outside a prison environment, and not funded by the Ministry of Justice
- Receives other state benefits and their earned income (disregarding benefits) is less than £345 a month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £552 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner) and wants to be employed, or progress into more sustainable employment, and the learning is directly relevant to their employment prospects and the local labour market needs

3) Learners in receipt of a low wage

We will fully fund learners who are employed and cannot contribute towards the cost of co-funding fees, if we are satisfied the following applies:

- The learner is eligible for co-funding
- The learner earns less than £18,525 annual gross salary
- We have seen evidence of the learner's gross annual wages that supports this. This could be a wage slip within 3 months of the learner's learning start date, or a current employment contract which states gross monthly/annual wages

Section 3: Skills & Qualifications Programmes (Level 3)

3.1 Course types

Our funded Level 3 Skills & Qualifications programme provides progression routes for our Hair and Beauty programmes. Places are prioritised for learners aged 24+ as this enables the maximum number of participants to access the available allocation for Advanced Learner Loans support. Legal Entitlement opportunities are usually available via local colleges and learners who are eligible for this may be referred to these providers if insufficient places remain available once the needs of our Advanced Learner Loans applicants have been catered for.

Other Level 3 qualifications (such as the Award in Education and Training) are usually part of our Full Cost offer (see Section 5).

3.2 Funding options for Skills & Qualifications at Level 3

There are three ways in which our funded Level 3 qualifications can be accessed:

1) Advanced Learner Loans

- Advanced Learner Loans can be applied for at age 19-23 if Legal Entitlement does not apply. However, Learning Services Worcestershire are obliged to ensure that learners understand their right to Legal Entitlement and have been advised of suitable courses which would enable them to access this
- Advanced Learner Loans can be applied for at age 24+ for any eligible course
- Student Loans Company terms and conditions apply to Advanced Learner Loans. Full details are provided to learners who are seeking to finance their courses via repayable learning loans, prior to application

2) Legal Entitlement at age 19-23

- Legal Entitlement applies for eligible Diploma qualifications if the learner is aged 19-23 and doesn't already have a full Level 3 qualification (no fees are charged)
- Legal Entitlement does not apply:
 - For Award and Certificate qualifications
 - For Diplomas if the learner already has a full Level 3 qualification
 - For learners aged 24+

3) Payment in Full by the Learner

Where legal entitlement does not apply and the learner prefers not to access (or is not eligible to access) an Advanced Learner Loan, applicants can join by paying the full fee, if places remain once the needs of funded applicants have been met.

Section 4: Community Learning Programmes

4.1 Course types

Our Community Learning courses are part-funded by the government to encourage adults aged 19+ to return to learning, to build confidence in new skills, to enhance wellbeing and to take an active role within their community. Learners who join our Community Learning courses go on to a whole range of opportunities afterwards. Some stay with us longer to develop additional skills; others decide to take a qualification with us; some progress to higher level learning at college or university; some find a new job using their new skills or develop their own business; others volunteer within their community and some benefit from new social connections through joining recreational clubs and societies that they find out about during our course.

Our Community Learning Programmes are divided into a number of different curriculum areas:

- Family Learning
- Understanding SEND
- Creative Studies
- Health & Wellbeing

Our non-accredited Skills courses are also funded under our Community Learning fee structure.

All Community Learning courses are co-funded by the ESFA. This means that fees are subsidised for all learners and subsidised further for those learners who are entitled to additional concessions, as defined by Learning Services Worcestershire.

Band	Standard Fee	Concession Fee	Example Programmes
A	£0	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted provision, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Taster workshops and short, promotional courses ○ Programmes designed in partnership with other organisations for specific cohorts of learners ○ Courses which underpin legal entitlement qualifications for English and Maths ○ Employability courses
B	£2.50 / hour	£5 flat fee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted provision, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Computing (excluding Essential Digital Skills qualifications) ○ Health & Wellbeing courses
C	£5 / hour	£1 / hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal provision, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Creative Studies courses ○ Understanding SEND ○ Family Learning
D	Various	Various	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist programmes outside of the mainstream offer

At the discretion of the Service Manager, specific and targeted discounts or incentives may be agreed and marketed throughout the year.

4.2 Eligibility for a reduction in fees on Community Learning programmes

Non-accredited courses are priced according to a local agreement approved by Worcestershire County Council. Likewise, the concessions criteria are decided by local agreement.

1) Unemployed Learners

Unemployed learners will be eligible for a concessionary rate for Community Learning courses. For funding purposes we define a learner as unemployed if one or more of the following apply and evidence is provided on request:

- The learner receives Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), including those receiving National Insurance credits only
- The learner receives Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- The learner receives Universal Credit, and their earned income from employment (disregarding benefits) is less than £345 a month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £552 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner)
- They are released on temporary licence, studying outside a prison environment, and not funded by the Ministry of Justice

2) Learners in receipt of a low wage

We offer a concessionary fee to learners who are employed but receive a low wage and may find it difficult to pay the standard fee, if we are satisfied the following applies:

- The learner is eligible for co-funding
- The learner earns less than £18,525 annual gross salary
- We have seen evidence of the learner's gross annual wages that supports this. This could be a wage slip within 3 months of the learner's learning start date, or a current employment contract which states gross monthly/annual wages

3) Learners of state pensionable age

We offer a concessionary fee to learners who are of state pensionable age and may find it difficult to pay the standard fee, if we are satisfied all of the following apply:

- The learner is eligible for co-funding
- The learner is in receipt of Pension Credit
- We have seen evidence of the learner's Pension Credit entitlement that supports this. This could be a statement which shows that the benefit is in place on the learner's start date

Evidence of entitlement to a concession must be provided to Learning Services Worcestershire on request. Should learners fail to provide suitable evidence within the timeframe provided, they will be asked to pay the full fee for the course. Failure to do so may result in learners being asked to leave the course and may affect future enrolment on our courses.

Further detail about providing evidence to support a concession can be received by emailing adultlearning@worcestershire.gov.uk or by calling 01905 728537.

Section 5: Full Cost Courses

Full cost programmes are not government funded and will be charged at an hourly rate which is defined on a course-by-course basis and selected in line with market rates. There is no concessionary rate on full cost courses. A minimum number of learners on courses will apply to ensure that these courses remain financially viable.

Section 6: Financial Support

6.1 Financial help for Skills courses which lead to a qualification (accredited courses)

Learning Services Worcestershire offers limited financial assistance from a Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF) (for those aged 19+) to assist with cases of hardship related to, for example, childcare (for those aged 20+) and transport, according to ESFA regulations. In some cases, the DLSF can also support with fees if the learner does not meet the eligibility criteria to receive the course free of charge.

6.2 Financial help for Community Learning courses

A bursary fund will be made available to support access to fee concessions in cases where a learner is not eligible under existing criteria. The bursary fund is accessed by written application and is for cases of exceptional hardship. The fund applies to both Community Learning courses and Skills courses funded via the Community Learning model.

Section 7: Refunds and Course Cancellations

A refund of course fees will be made on the following basis:

1) Minimum Numbers, Cancellations and Refunds

Decisions to run courses based on learner numbers are made up to two weeks before the start date. If numbers are low courses may be cancelled and you will be issued a full refund.

2) Cooling off Period Cancellations

Each course offers the opportunity for a learner to self-cancel prior to the start date. The cancellation period is never more than two weeks prior to the course start date. During the period two weeks before the course starts, refunds are at the discretion of the Service. Once the course has started, refunds are not normally offered.

3) Partial Refunds and Payments

All courses are priced in line with the length of the full course and learners commit to attending the whole course when booking. There is no opportunity available to book for only a partial course and therefore no associated reduction in fees. In the event that a course has to be terminated part way through by Learning Services Worcestershire due to unforeseen circumstances, learners will receive a proportional refund of the fees paid in relation to the number of classes remaining. At the discretion of the Service Manager, a full refund may be issued in limited circumstances.