

BARNSELY MBC: ADULT SKILLS & COMMUNITY LEARNING SERVICE

FEES POLICY ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-21

Context

The Adult Skills & Community Learning Service is a direct provider of Adult and Community Learning. It is funded predominantly through Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Adult Education Budget and the fees it generates from participating learners.

The learning provision delivered by this local authority service is of two different types: learning for engagement and wellbeing, generally known as Community Learning and learning for skills development and qualification acquisition. From the academic year 2006/07 it was a requirement for SFA contract holders to implement a fees policy.

It is a Government priority that learning providers, in this case BMBC's Adult Skills & Community Learning Service, maximise the level of income they collect from fees attached to learning programmes and limits the use of the public subsidy provided via the ESFA to courses which engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to equip them for work, an apprenticeship or other learning. For such eligible courses the ESFA then expects that 50% of each total course fee for adults aged 19+ studying at level 2 or below should be collected, as a fee, from individuals or employers except in cases, for example in priority skill areas or for identified groups of individuals, where it identifies fee remission to be appropriate. In these cases the ESFA will meet the full cost of the learning programme. Young adults aged 19-23 years studying at all levels are subject to the same criteria but are more likely, depending on their level of prior attainment, to be eligible for fee full fee remission when undertaking learning for skills development or qualification acquisition.

From March 2013 the ESFA ceased to fund learning for qualifications acquisition at level 3 or above for adults aged 24 years and over, however, learning of this type can be funded through a centrally administered loans fund which individuals of this age can access via their preferred learning provider. From September 2016 these Advanced Learner Loans were extended to those aged 19+. However the availability of loans at Level 3 does not replace an individual aged 19 to 23's legal entitlement to full funding for a first full Level 3.

In order to ensure that its learning offer is accessible to the greatest number of people, BMBC has developed its own local policy on, and criteria for, fee reduction and delivery of non-fee bearing opportunities.

Introduction

In developing this policy the service has committed to stay true to its purpose of **empowering adults, families and communities to challenge disadvantage and achieve their potential through learning and skills development**. This will be achieved by

- Prioritising the most disadvantaged individuals, families and communities
- Providing high quality learning opportunities that are inclusive and accessible
- Promoting lifelong learning to raise aspiration and facilitate progression and achievement
- Planning and delivering a diverse and responsive curriculum

To balance the requirements of national policy, ESFA contract requirements and its own core purpose the Service will

- Continue to provide some types of learning through non-fee bearing programmes that are free of charge to learners

- Set fees in an open and transparent way, based on the number of guided learning hours delivered, and apply this across the service
- Ensure that course fees are clearly promoted and that information about fee remissions and reductions are made available to service users in an appropriate manner
- Provide clear and consistent guidelines for staff and service users

General Principles

- **Adult Learners (19 years or over at the start of their fee-bearing course) are eligible to pay a fee unless covered by the fee remission or fee reduction categories detailed in this policy**
- **Learners under the age of 19 may access learning provision at the discretion of the Service Manager and the Head of Service who will also advise on any fee that may be payable**
- **Learners who do not meet ESFA eligibility criteria will pay the full cost of the course fee which will include, where appropriate, the ESFA 50% contribution in addition to the assumed 50% learner contribution**

Non Fee Bearing Courses

The following courses will continue to be free at the point of delivery:

- Courses that help parents and carers to support their children's learning and development
- **First Step** accredited courses (maximum 15 guided learning hours) that are designed to re-engage adults who have no or very low qualifications into learning and are intended to lead to longer qualifications and develop work related skills
- Targeted provision to engage specific cohorts in to further learning or address disadvantage and deprivation for identified individuals and communities
- Short engagement activities (maximum 6 guided learning hours) that are designed to introduce learning in a specific subject area and encourage individuals to progress into further learning

Fee Structure

All learners (excluding those eligible for fee remission) studying at level 2 or below will pay a £5 registration fee for each course they enrol on. There will be no registration fee for English or maths courses. Unless otherwise stated course fees will include examination charges however any additional costs as a result of a need to re-sit any examinations will incur additional charges to the respective candidate.

In some circumstances learners may be asked to contribute to the costs of course materials. These costs will be discussed with learners prior to their enrolment on the course

The hourly rates used to calculate course fees will be £2.90 per guided learning hour where the ESFA public subsidy is applicable and £5.80 per guided learning hour where it is not. These rates do not apply to accredited level 3 programmes or courses advertised as "Full Cost" when the rate will be fixed by the relevant curriculum manager.

Examples

| Course (hours) | Registration Fee | Hourly rate | Total cost |
|----------------|------------------|-------------|------------|
| 10 hours | £5.00 | £5.80 | £63.00 |
| 20 hours | £5.00 | £2.90 | £63.00 |
| 20 hours | £5.00 | £5.80 | £121.00 |

Fee Remission and Fee Reduction

Fee remission and fee reduction does not apply to neither level 3 accredited programmes nor courses advertised as “Full Cost”

Learners who are eligible for fee remission or reduction may be required to pay for accreditation if attendance on the course is lower than 90% or they fail to attend the exam without good reason.

Fee remission or fee reduction will only be given where individuals can provide evidence of their situation prior to the start of the course. Where this is not supplied, the course fee will apply.

Fee remission and fee reduction can only be given to learners who meet the ESFA eligibility criteria for access to public funding

Fee Remission

ESFA categories for fee remission are shown below. Co-funded indicates the £2.90 hourly rate indicated above

| Provision | 19-23 year-olds | 24+ Unemployed | 24+ Other |
|---|--|----------------|--------------|
| English and Maths up to and including Level 2 | Fully funded | Fully funded | Fully funded |
| Level 2 | Fully funded (first and full) | Fully funded | Co-funded |
| Learning to progress to Level 2 | Fully funded | Fully funded | Co-funded |
| Level 3 | Fully funded (first and full) | Loan-funded | Loan-funded |
| | Loan-funded (previously achieved Level 3 or above) | | |
| ESOL learning up to and including Level 2 | Co-funded | Fully funded | Co-funded |
| | Fully funded - unemployed | | |
| Learning aims up to and including Level 2, where the learner has already achieved at Level 2 or above | Co-funded | Fully funded | Co-funded |
| | Fully funded - unemployed | | |

As a provider we have opted to use our discretion and fund learners who are in receipt of state benefits and earn less than £338 per month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £541 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner), want to be employed or progress into

more sustainable employment and where the qualification is relevant to their employment prospects.

Employed learners eligible for co-funding who earn less than £17,004.00 annual gross salary, who cannot contribute towards the cost of co-funding are eligible for full fee remission. This will support adults in low paid employment who want to progress in work and in their chosen career. Proof of earning must be provided and retained.

Anyone who is entitled to full fee remission cannot be charged a registration fee or any accreditation costs.

Fee Reduction

We continue to use our local discretion to offer a 50% fee reduction.

Fee reduction will apply to the course fee only. Additional charges such as registration, examination or materials fees are to be paid in full however individuals can apply to the Discretionary Learner Support fund for assistance with these elements.

Learners who are studying at level 2 and below and in receipt of one of the following means tested benefits (or who are the dependent named on the benefit claim paperwork/evidence) will be entitled to a 50% fee reduction on the tuition element of the course fees. This does not apply to anyone who is studying at level 3.

| Type of Benefit | Proof Required) |
|--|------------------------|
| Income Support | Benefit book / letter |
| Housing Benefit | Local authority letter |
| Council Tax Support, (excluding single person allowance) | Local authority letter |
| Working Tax Credit | TC 602 form |
| National Asylum Seeker Support | NASS document / card |
| Pension Guarantee Credit | Award notice |
| Employment Support Allowance (Support Group) | Benefit book / letter |
| Universal Credit | Benefit book / letter |

Universal Credit – Guidance on Eligibility and Evidence Required

Learners who are unemployed, receive Universal Credit, earn less than £338 a month are determined by Job Centre Plus (JCP) as being in one of the following conditionality groups:

- All Work-Related Requirements Group
- Work Preparation Group
- Work-Focused Interview Group

are eligible for full fee remission.

Learners in receipt of Universal Credit in the 'no work-related requirements group' are entitled to 50% fee remission.

Individuals unsure which conditionality group they are in, can contact the Universal Credit Service

Centre on 0345 600 0723 to request their conditionality history – this will identify which group they are in.

Payment

Fees are due at the point of enrolment when learners must identify how these will be met. This may be either by themselves, by a third party through an invoice, by an Advanced Learner Loan or through instalment arrangements.

Payment can be made online at www.barnsley.gov.uk, by telephone using the 24 hours automated telephone payment line, or by bank giro credit (cash or cheque).

Learners have the option to pay their course fee by instalments.

When the learner receives their invoice, it will include a telephone number that the learner can ring (within 7 days) to arrange to pay by instalments.

If the learner is not opting to pay by instalments, they have 30 days from the date of the invoice to pay their fee, otherwise the learner will be pursued under the Corporate Debt Recovery Procedure.

Invoices to third parties will only be agreed when a letter from the third party giving the agreement to pay and the contact details of who to invoice is provided.

Non Payment of Fees

Study may be suspended and/or future enrolment prevented if any fees are outstanding.

Certificates may be withheld if any course fees are outstanding.

Not producing evidence of benefit for fee remission or fee reduction from the start of the course will result in the full fee being due.

Non-payment of fees from the start of the course will result in the application of the Corporate Debt Recovery Procedure.

Fees outstanding from learners who did not request, or were not eligible, to pay by instalments may not be pursued due to the economic cost of recovering the debt (amounts exceeding £50 will be pursued by BMBC's Accounts Receivable department).

As stated above, debts outstanding for course fees paid by instalments will be recovered according to the Corporate Debt Recovery Procedure.

Refunds

- £5 registration fee is non refundable
- The table below shows % fee refund available

| Circumstance | Refund available % |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Prior to course commencement | 100 |
| Within 2 weeks course commencement | 90 |
| Course Cancellation by Adult Skills and Community Learning within first two weeks | 100 |
| Course Cancellation by Adult Skills and Community Learning after first two weeks | Pro-rata @ hourly rate charged |
| Exceptional circumstances e.g. long term illness | Considered on an individual basis |

- Exceptional circumstances out of the control of the Adult Skills & Community Learning service will not warrant a refund. Such circumstances will usually include, but are not limited to, war, terrorist activity, industrial dispute, bad weather (actual or threatened), fire and flood.