

Advanced Learning Loans & Discretionary Learner Support (DLS) Policy & Procedure 2013-14

Introduction

WBTC will apply Advanced Learning Loan Bursaries and Discretionary Learner Support in line with the SFA funding rules (see excerpt below)

WBTC does not have the facilities to support the residential access fund and therefore the bursary and DLS allocation will be divided between

- 19+ Hardship
 - 20+ Childcare
1. Advanced Learning Loans Bursaries are only for those learners with a loan approved by the Student Loan Company
 2. Discretionary Learner Support is only for those eligible learners on SFA funded programmes

Complaints procedure

In the first instance these should be directed to the Managing Director of WBTC. There is no set format and learners can write, email or call with their complaint which shall be recorded and dealt within 7 working days of the complaint being logged. The point of appeal in all complaints will be the Board of Trustees of WBTC followed by the Skills Funding Agency.

Applications for an Advanced Learning Loan Bursary

A bursary can be applied for only by an eligible learner who has had a loan approved by the Student Loan Company. A bursary can be applied for

- Discretionary Learner Support (see below)
- Additional learning support incl. Exceptional learning support

Applications for Additional learning support incl. Exceptional learning support

WBTC will support all learner applications via an approved initial assessment. Applications will be used to provide support in the form of teaching assistants or necessary adjustments under the Equality Act. Additional Learning Support can be requested either by the learner or the learner's training provider based on the evidence of an approved initial assessment or diagnostic tool. Evidence for support in terms of additional social needs will also need to be evidenced.

Applications for DLS

As WBTC holds a contract that supports subcontractors the DLS allocation is accessible by these partners for their learners. However no specific allocation will be made per partner. Applications for DLS must be made in respect of specific learners in line with the funding guidance. Evidence must be supplied to justify the DLS application as clearly identified as supporting one of the three main areas. Owing to the nature of DLS applications could cover a wide variety of circumstances and therefore referral to the guidance and or the SFA is very important. Supporting evidence must also accompany all applications for example receipts for learning materials, travel tickets or cost of emergency accommodation.

Applications made by a subcontractor on behalf of a learner are subject to the normal rule of the subcontractors' agreement with WBTC. Subcontractors indemnify WBTC in the result of any audit claw-back owing to non-compliance of the SFA rules pertaining to DLS applications.

A template form for DLS applications is included in this guidance

WBTC Application for Bursary/Discretionary Learner Support aged 19+

Learner Name			
Learner DOB		Learner Age	
Learner Address			
Provider Name	Provider Location		
Learning Aim(s)			
Start Date		End Date	
DLS (tick)	19+ Hardship	20+ Childcare	Residential
Application Details			
Application Value		Payment / Loan	
Evidence Attached	Travel expense claims for those on active benefits must be supported by evidence showing that JCP have refused to pay travel expenses		
Provider Representative		Signature & Date	
By signing this application I declare that the information provided is true and accurate. Any false statements or evidence may constitute a fraudulent application			

for public funds and result in criminal or civil proceedings to recoup any loss	
Learner signature & Date	

SFA Funding Guidance

Discretionary Learner Support (DLS)

Discretionary Learner Support (DLS) is intended to support Learners with a specific financial hardship that prevents them from participating in learning. Before making an award the Learner's specific financial hardship need must be identified within the following areas:

- 19+ hardship
- 20+ childcare
- Residential Access Fund.

DLS is available to support Learners studying adult further education and skills in colleges, external institutions (EIs), higher education institutions (HEIs), training organisations delivering classroom provision and sixth form colleges. Learners who are eligible for support are not automatically entitled to it.

Administration

207. Providers can use up to five per cent of their DLS allocation towards administrative costs. Where it has been agreed that a large central Provider will administer the funding for one or more other Providers, the central Provider will also be able to use up to five per cent of each of the other Providers' total DLS funds for administration instead of the individual Providers using it. Providers' bank charges must not be set against their DLS allocation.

208. Discretionary Learner Support funding is provided by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. The 16-19 Bursary Fund is provided by the Department for Education. Therefore there must be no virement of funds between 16-19 Bursary Fund and 19+ Learner Support Fund.

209. Providers must:

209.1. record and report on allocations for each of the three schemes. DLS will be allocated in the three discrete funding schemes (19+ Hardship, 20+ Childcare, Residential Access Fund). Providers have the freedom to vire funding between the three schemes

209.2. have in place criteria for how they will administer and distribute their funds. The criteria must clearly reflect the principles of equality and diversity and be available to Learners and the Agency upon request

209.3. ensure that Learners meet the Learner eligibility criteria at Annex 1

209.4. complete the appropriate Discretionary Support Funds (DSF) codes in the Learner funding and monitoring fields in the ILR. Incomplete or non-recording will affect future DLS allocations

209.5. Complete the required data monitoring and financial reconciliation forms by the due date. Otherwise the Agency will deem the allocation of funding to be unspent and reserves the right to recover such funding in the next payment run. This will impact future allocation of discretionary funds. Where data is incomplete, Providers will be asked to revise and resend the required return.

- 209.6. Complete an 'In-year' Funding Forecast in February
- 209.7. Complete a Final Reconciliation in September for the previous funding year
- 209.8. Understand that any unspent funds will be recovered and that any over delivery will be paid at the discretion of the Agency.
210. Providers must not use DLS as a means of support where the Learner is:
- 210.1. Eligible and it is more appropriate for them to receive support through Additional Learning Support for the same purpose
- 210.2. Already receiving travel or expenses funding through DWP
- 210.3. In prison or a young offender institution or who has been released on temporary licence (ROTL), for example, on day release
- 210.4. Undertaking higher education courses, waged Apprenticeships or provision with learning aims that are identified as wholly funded from other sources. Learners participating in HE access courses or courses of HE falling within paragraph 1(g) or 1(h) of schedule 6 to the Education Reform Act 1998 will be eligible to apply for DLS funding, providing the courses are funded through the Adult Skills Budget.
211. Providers must not use the funding to pay weekly attendance allowances, achievement or attendance bonuses or to make awards solely based on income without identifying whether there is any specific financial need.
212. As long as an asylum seeker has not had their application refused then learner support in the form of course related books, equipment or a travel pass may be provided. But under no circumstances should a Provider give learner support in the form of cash to an asylum seeker.

Consideration of Other Publicly-Funded Benefits

213. When making decisions about awarding public funds, Providers must take into account the availability of financial support for Learners (including support funding through DWP and Jobcentre plus (JCP) – for example, JCP work programme). Further details can be found at [Annex1](#).

19+ Hardship

- 19+ Hardship funding is provided to increase access, retention and achievement.
214. Hardship funding must only be used for:
- 214.1. course-related costs including: course trips, books and equipment;
For support with domestic emergencies; emergency accommodation
- 214.2. Fees (exceptionally). A maximum 20 per cent of a Provider's 19+ hardship allocation can be used for this purpose
- 214.3. Transport - but only in exceptional circumstances and Providers must keep records showing the amount of support provided and why that support was necessary. Providers must not use the fund to make a block contribution to post-16 Transport Partnerships or routinely fund transport costs that are covered in The local authority's statutory duty for Learners of sixth form age
- 214.4. Examination fees
- 214.5. Accreditation fees/professional membership fees and any fees/charges payable to external bodies
- 214.6. Provider registration fees
- 214.7. Support provided to third parties, or through the provision of items or services or in cash directly to the Learner, and can be in the form of a grant or repayable loan.
215. Providers must decide in each case, with reference to the incidence of Expenditure:
- 215.1. Whether payments would most appropriately be made as a grant or as a loan
- 215.2. Whether payments would most appropriately be made as a lump sum or in (regular) instalments

215.3. Whether conditions should be attached to payments for example, attendance agreements.

20+ Childcare

20+ Childcare provides targeted childcare support for Learners who are at risk of not participating or remaining in learning as a result of barriers to access childcare provision.

216. Childcare funding must be paid only to fund childcare with a Provider who is ousted registered.

217. Childcare funding must not be:

217.1. Used to fund informal childcare, such as that provided by a relative

217.2. Used by the Provider to finance the setting up of childcare places, neither must they be used to make a financial contribution to the costs of a crèche

217.3. Used for 19-year-old Learners who must be directed to the EFA Care to Learn Programme? DLS must not be used to top up childcare payments for those in receipt of Care to Learn.

Residential Access Fund

Residential Access Funds provide support to Learners attending specialist provision which requires a residential element or to support Learners who are unable to access provision locally. The fund can help Learners reside in private accommodation or in accommodation owned or managed by the Provider.

218. Providers must:

218.1. Set out clearly the criteria and procedures for considering and agreeing applications for support from their residential funds

218.2. Make payments to Learners. The maximum payment allowance per annum is £4,079 within London and £3,458 outside London

218.3. Only by exception pay for travel cost. Priority must be given to Learners who require accommodation.

219. Residential Support Scheme adults that are continuing Learners in Funding Year 2012/13 only will continue to be supported through the nationally managed Residential Support Scheme.