

Adult Community Learning (ACL)

Financial Support Guidelines 2025/26

For learners who are aged 19+

(Please retain these Guidance Notes for your records)

Introduction

These guidance notes should be read in conjunction with the application form. If you would like help with the application form, please speak to the Customer Services team at any of our centres, or your tutor.

You can apply for help from the funds mentioned below if you are 19+ as at 31st August 2025.

- Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF)
- Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund
- Tailored Learning Bursary Fund (TL)

The funds can help you with the cost of travel, educational visits, books, and equipment/resources needed for your course as well as childcare. It may also be possible to arrange for the loan of a laptop to help with your studies or provide technology that is essential for participation. All requests for technology will be reviewed on a 'case by case' basis: this support is only available to learners applying for DLSF and Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund only. Please note laptops are only on loan and must be returned.

There is assistance with tuition fees (DLSF) in exceptional circumstances. If the household income is between £25,750-£35,750 and with the intent to learn skills for career development assistance with fees may be available.

ACL Essex are allocated funding by the Department for Education (DfE) to aid learners funded by the DfE or funded by Advanced Learner Loans. Learners are advised to apply early as the funding is limited. Applications will be dealt with on a strict date received basis and this will be dependent on all paperwork being fully completed with all the necessary accompanying documentation. Incomplete applications cannot be considered and will be returned to learners.

Multiple Applications

Additional applications may be submitted and all requests for financial assistance will be considered although it may not always be possible to allocate funding.

Eligibility and Conditions

Eligibility does not mean an entitlement as funds are limited. No guarantee can be given that funds will be available when you apply. If there is a high demand on the funds, awards may be given at a reduced rate.

Eligibility: Learners are eligible to apply for funding if they meet the requirements as stated in the Funding Rules 2025/26 issued by the DfE.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-skills-fund-funding-rules/adult-skills-fund-funding-rules-2025-to-2026>

Funding support awards are always conditional on learners remaining on the course, maintaining an attendance level as stated on the learning agreement and complying with ACL's code of conduct. Learners who do not meet these conditions may be required to return equipment and any funding support they have received.

Awards will be made in accordance with the published guidance from the DfE.

Additional information required for Financial Support

Declaration of receipt of certain benefits which must be current and should be **one** of the following:

Qualifying benefits:

- Council Tax Benefit – not single adult reduction
- Employment Support Allowance (income based)
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Jobseeker's Allowance (income based)
- Pension Credit
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Universal Credit (household income below £35,750)

Immigration Status provided for:

- Refugee
- Discretionary leave to enter or remain
- Humanitarian protection
- Leave outside the rules
- The husband, wife, civil partner, or child of any of the above
- Indefinite leave to enter or remain – subject to additional criteria
- Persons under the Ukrainian schemes
- Persons under the Afghan schemes
- Asylum Seeker (resident in UK for 6 months +)

Evidence of Income:

- P60 – 2025 Gross household income of £35,750 or less (not including house shares, or where rent is paid separately).
- P60 – 2025 Gross personal income of £25,750 or less
- 3 x wage slips (most recent) from you and your partner if household income below £35,750 or from you only if your personal income is under £25,750.
- If personal income is zero, the gross household income may be considered.

Please be aware that it is your responsibility to declare any financial support that you receive from ACL Essex to the Department of Work and Pensions, as Discretionary Learner Support payments may affect your eligibility to some benefits.

Au pairs

Please note for the purpose of administration of DLSF, ACL is required to have criteria for how it will administer and distribute the funds. Under the criteria, au pairs are regarded as family members and proof of low household income is required. Financial assessment would be based **not entirely** upon an au pair's income, **but** on the household income.

Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF)

For learners studying a qualifying accredited course (from beginners to Level 3*)

***Learners studying for their first full L3 qualification or Level 3 Courses for Jobs may also be eligible.** To check eligibility please contact ACL at the email address below: lifelong.learning@essex.gov.uk

Please note: If you have an approved Advanced Learner Loan for your course fees, you can apply for financial assistance from the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund. (see below)

The DLSF could help you with the cost of course fees (exceptional circumstances), travel, childcare, educational visits, books, equipment/resources needed for your course **(please note that you may only receive a contribution towards the cost per item for approved purchases, so please check before purchasing equipment/resources)** and loan of a laptop if required. For those on Beauty or Hairdressing courses, as well as equipment, it may also be possible to help with the cost of a tunic (learner to purchase and claim reimbursement).

Advanced Learner Loan Bursary

(for learners who are funding their course through an Advanced Learner Loan).

For learners studying a qualifying Level 3 to 6 course.

You may be eligible for a discretionary award towards the cost of travel, childcare, educational visits, books, equipment/resources needed for your course and loan of a laptop if required. For those on Beauty or Hairdressing courses, as well as equipment/resources, it may also be possible to help with the cost of a tunic (learner to purchase and claim reimbursement).

Please note: There is no assistance with course fees available with this fund.

Contact us: aclstudentfinances@essex.gov.uk

Phone: 0333 032 1132
DLSF app form 2025.26 V2 July 25

Tailored Learning Bursary Fund

For learners studying a Tailored Learning course (these courses do not lead to a qualification).

You may be eligible for a contribution towards cost of travel, compulsory books and equipment needed for your course as well as childcare.

Awards to pay towards tuition fees will only be given in exceptional circumstances.

Childcare (All funds)

Financial assistance with childcare is available for the timetabled hours of your course. To claim support, you must be using an Ofsted registered childcare provider and not be in receipt of Childcare support from any other Agency.

Payments for childcare will be based on your attendance and excludes childcare costs outside term time. If you withdraw from the course or have payments stopped due to poor attendance, you will be responsible for the payment of outstanding fees to the childcare provider.

If your application is to cover costs for 3 children or more, this will be reviewed by the DLSF panel and support will be given where budget allows.

Please note that Early Years Education Entitlement (EYEE) must be used before making a claim for assistance with childcare from ACL.

The Funds will **not** pay childcare costs for the following:

- For Christmas, Easter and Summer holiday periods, bank holidays and periods of half term if there are no classes or exams scheduled.
- Deposits, retainers or to make advance payments.
- If the learner changes the number of days or hours their child attends their childcare provider and fails to inform the College Childcare Administrator.
- Food for your child.

Funds are capped and allocated at the discretion of the ACL Support Fund administrators. As funds are limited, applications for help with childcare costs received when the fund is low or exhausted may be refused.

Assistance with childcare costs will be in line with the ACL Fees and Charges policy. ACL reserves the right to alter or amend the childcare funding policy at any time.

Applications will be dealt with on a strict date received basis and dependent on all paperwork being fully completed with all the required accompanying documentation. Incomplete applications will be returned to learners.

Eligibility does not mean an entitlement and no guarantee can be given that funds will be available when you apply. If there is a high demand on the funds, awards may be given at a reduced rate.

Appeals Procedure

If you have concerns regarding the decision made on your application for any of ACL's financial support funds, please appeal in writing to the Financial Appeal's panel at the following email address.

ACLStudentFinances@essex.gov.uk

Queries regarding these guidelines should be referred to the above email address.

Support from the above funds is not guaranteed.

The above information contained is correct at the time of going to print and may be subject to change and alteration (July 25)