Discretionary Learner Support Fund Guidance 2026/27

1.0 Eligibility and Scope

1.1 The fund is open to all learners studying an Adult Core course at WM College who, at the time of enrolment, are on a means tested benefit, unemployed or earn below the GLA low earning threshold (currently £28,860 annual gross salary), may be eligible for DLSF.

1.2 For qualifying learners, financial support is available for the following:

- Travel support for asylum seekers to provide access to study
- Materials not provided by the College that are essential to achieving a qualification
- Emergency welfare payment, e.g access to food

1.3 The fund will also be used to cover the cost to the college of entering learners for exam resits.

1.4 Separate bursary and financial support funds are available for learners aged 19 or under.

2.0 Allocation of Funding

2.1 The fund will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. Should the number of applications exceed the funds available WM College will prioritise the funding to focus on groups currently underrepresented in FE, securing participation and attainment in priority learning by removing financial barriers for disadvantaged learners

2.2 Support applications cannot be backdated where an individual's circumstances change after the start of the course unless the benefit is also backdated.

2.3 The number of courses for which any learner can apply for financial help in any one year may be limited at the discretion of the Head of Learner Experience.

2.4 Personal Independence Payment (formally DLA) is ignored when assessing disabled learners' income in relation to this fund.

2.5 Council Tax Reduction and Housing Benefit are excluded from the calculation of household income.

2.6 Further information about the evidence required for means tested benefits is provided on the website and at Learner Services.

2.7 The qualifying threshold may also be reviewed by WM College's Executive Management Team (EMT) at any point in the year to ensure that the funds are being effectively and optimally utilised.

3.0 How to apply

3.1 Applications should be made in person at reception. You will need to show proof of income (e.g. pay slips, self-employed accounts for the previous year, asylum seeker/refugee documentation).

3.2 The Learner Services team will assess whether the learner qualifies for support and will confirm if their request has been successful. Learners will not be able to access this fund until evidence has been provided.

4.0 Appeal Process

4.1 If learners have had an application for DLSF support declined, they may submit further evidence to support their application. This will be considered by the Learner Recruitment & Customer Services Manager who may arrange for a reassessment of the application.

5.0 Waiting Lists

5.1 Once the funds are depleted, a waiting list will be maintained in order to keep a log of learners who may be able to receive support if further funds are made available either through additional College allocation to the fund or because a learner withdraws or cancels, and the funds are recycled.

5.2 This log will be kept by Learner Services and does not guarantee that the learners recorded on this list will receive funds.

6.0 Learner Progression and Data Collection

6.1 WM College may contact learners who have received financial support to gather information about the impact that the fund has had on their learning experience and on the improvement of their job prospects.

7.0 Responsibility, Monitoring and Review

7.1 The Head of Learner Experience is responsible for reviewing the guidance, implementing the policy and for monitoring the funds.

7.2 The policy, guidance and operational procedures will be reviewed each year and updated as necessary and in accordance with any funding body guidance.

7.3 The fund will be reviewed throughout the year to ensure that the allocation is appropriately and optimally utilised. This may mean that the eligibility criteria vary during the year at the discretion of the College's Executive Management Team or in accordance with any GLA/DfE guidelines. Any changes will be communicated to eligible learners.

7.4 EMT will be updated regularly by the Head of Learner Experience with monitoring information about the expenditure and forecast.