

**LEARNER SUPPORT FUND GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION FORM 2023/24**

**What is the Fund for?**

 The purpose of the Fund is to provide support for vulnerable and financially disadvantaged learners who
 can demonstrate that they are experiencing financial difficulties that might prevent them from participating in or completing learning. The Fund is finite and not all students who are eligible to apply will be successful.

**Who is eligible to apply?**

To be eligible you normally need to

* be 19 or over
* have been ordinarily resident in the UK or the EU (not as a full time student) for three years before your course starts
* have refugee status or have been granted it in the three years before your course starts
* be an asylum seeker has been in the UK for 6 months

**Who is the Fund for?**

Students who

* have learning difficulties or disabilities
* are parents who need help with childcare
* on income-related benefit
* on low incomes
* socially and economically disadvantaged
* those who have gained few formal qualifications or limited formal education
* those who need to retrain for work

We would not normally fund those who

* are eligible to claim a benefit but choose not to
* are short or longer term visitors e.g. au pairs, students on gap years, those visiting family, those here specifically to learn English

**What help may be available?**

You may be able to receive support towards costs of –

* travel to and from College in order to attend your class. This will be based on the most direct route and cheapest method available. Travel may not be paid if you have a more local provider.
* materials and equipment – we only consider equipment and materials which are **essential** to enable you to complete your course or learn a skill
* Childcare costs for those 20+
* a contribution can sometimes be made towards tuition fees. This is normally restricted to those on low incomes who are not eligible for concessionary fees and is limited to one course or programme of study per term

**How to apply?**

Ask for the application form at Reception or download from our website [www.marywardcentre.ac.uk](http://www.marywardcentre.ac.uk).

It is important that all sections of the form are completed.

All applications require evidence of income to be provided. Evidence may include

* Copies of last 6 (weekly or fortnightly) or 3 (monthly) payslips. This includes partners payslips
* Copies of benefit letter (no more than three months old)
* Current bank statement
* A supporting statement explaining your personal circumstances and need for funding
* Documentation from the Home Office

**Forms which are not fully completed or lack the relevant evidence will be returned.**

**Assessment of Applications**

All applications for funding will be considered against the criteria set out in this document along with income assessment. Students will be assessed on their gross annual income including income from the student’s partner.

All applications will be individually assessed. The Panel will meet on a regular basis, or as the need arises. At least two members of the Panel will be required to make a decision. The Centre aims to ensure that the funds available are distributed fairly and allocated according to individual need and circumstances.

The student will be informed of the outcome of their application within 21 days either by post or e-mail.

**What if I don’t agree with the decision?**

You should appeal in writing, within 10 days of being notified of the outcome, stating clearly the reasons for appeal and giving any additional details you think should be taken into consideration to Sue Craggs – Head of Adult and Community Learning.

**How you will be paid**

Payments for travel will be made after you have started attending the class. This will be by bank transfer.

For those with no bank account an Oyster card will be provided for transport. This is only to be used for journeys to and from the Centre.

Payments for books and materials will be made by bank transfer and we require receipts for your purchases.

Childminders will be paid upon receipt of an invoice.

**Will I have to pay the money back or can my payments be stopped?**

If your attendance is erratic or considered unsatisfactory we may ask for the money to be reimbursed to the Centre and future payments will not be made.

We will take into account all personal circumstances when determining satisfactory attendance.

If you receive an award and withdraw or are excluded from your course you may be asked to repay your award.

Where students are found to have intentionally given misleading or inaccurate information the Centre will ask for any award to be repaid.

If you have any further queries please ask to speak to Lynn Sowerby or one of the Student Services Team on 020 7269 6000 or email mwenquiries@marywardcentre.ac.uk