

What is Learner Support?

Learner Support is a package of funds, made available through the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA), to help offset barriers to participation in learning. The main barrier is financial hardship.

Some funds are based on national entitlement and some funds are based on local learning provider discretion.



Barriers to Learning

There are three major barriers to participation in learning:

- > General attitude
- > Availability of courses
- > Other financial issues



Attitude issues are addressed through effective information, advice and guidance for young people and adults. Learner Support helps address the financial barriers.

Overcoming Barriers

The purpose of Learner Support is to enable more potential learners to participate in learning, and to enable those already in learning to apply themselves without the distraction of financial hardship. In a world of demand-led funding, Learner Support helps individual learners to aspire, demand and take up learning.

Learner Support money is used to meet four types of cost:

- > Learning-related (e.g. course materials or bus fares to college)
- > Living / maintenance (e.g. housing, utilities, food, childcare) — because being in learning means not earning or earning less
- > Course fees
- > Additional provision (e.g. extra transport provision)

What is available? The 9 Strands of Learner Support

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility for entitlement-based and discretionary funds is based upon a number of criteria which include:

- Residency status
- Whether or not the learner has children
- Individual / household income
- The type of learning undertaken

1. EMA

Education Maintenance Allowance is a weekly allowance paid to young learners from low-income households. EMA supports them with the costs of learning once they have finished compulsory schooling. It is designed to ensure that all 16-19 year olds can choose to access high quality, relevant learning opportunities. For more information, please visit: <http://ema.ypla.gov.uk>

2. Care to Learn

Care to Learn enables teenage parents to continue or return to learning after the birth of a child by paying for the cost of childcare and associated travel. The aim of this weekly allowance is to re-engage these young parents in learning and help them gain useful knowledge and skills that may even lead to a qualification. For more information, please visit: <http://caretolearn.ypla.gov.uk>

3. DaDa

Dance and Drama Awards (DaDAs) are scholarships, funded by the YPLA, offering reduced tuition fees and income-assessed support for living and learning costs for talented performers and stage managers. For more information, please visit: <http://danceanddrama.ypla.gov.uk>

4. ALG

Adult Learning Grant is intended to help adults studying full-time (more than 12 hours / week) with the costs of learning. This grant is payable (subject to financial assessment) to learners aged 19+ studying for their first full Level 2 / Level 3 qualification. For more information, please visit: <http://alg.ypla.gov.uk>

5. Professional and Career Development Loans

Professional and Career Development Loans are commercial bank loans with competitive interest rates that can be used to fund a variety of work-related courses. They help people gain the experience, training and qualifications they need to improve their job skills or launch a new career. The YPLA pays the interest on this loan while the learner is in learning. Repaying the loan is the responsibility of the learner, so they should borrow only as much as they need. For more information, please visit: <http://pcdl.ypla.gov.uk>

6. Adult Childcare

> 20+ Discretionary Childcare
20+ Childcare provides support to learners aged 20 or over, who are experiencing financial difficulty with meeting childcare costs associated with learning.

7. dLS Hardship

These funds can help learners with the costs associated with learning, including support with course fees, trips, books and equipment. For more information, please visit: <http://lsf.ypla.gov.uk>

8. Transport Partnership Funding

Transport funds are given directly to Local Authorities to support a collaborative approach to local transport issues to ensure post 16 learners can access funding. For more information, please visit: <http://1619transport.ypla.gov.uk>

9. Residential Accommodation

- > Residential Support Scheme
Helps with accommodation costs for courses that are not available within 'reasonable daily travelling distance' of learner's home. For more information, please visit: <http://studyingaway.ypla.gov.uk>
- > Residential Bursary
Helps with accommodation costs for learners who are studying Land-Based provision or Art and Design at one of the 51 specialist colleges. Visit: <http://moneytolearn.direct.gov.uk/residentialbursary>

How These Funds Work

How much a learner may get depends on their individual circumstances, but the support might involve:

- A weekly payment made direct to the learner
- Discretionary help awarded from a local college/learning provider level in times of hardship
- Help with transport and accommodation
- Help with childcare costs
- An interest-free loan which a learner repays once a course has finished

To find out more the learner should contact their local Connexions, nextstep/AACS or student support adviser.



The Benefits of Learner Support

Participation, Retention and Achievement

- Out of a survey of 2000 recipients of EMA 6% said they would not have continued in learning had it not been for EMA.
- Retention rates for learners receiving EMA were 89.4% in 2004/05 compared to 87.1% for those not receiving it.
- 11% of adult learners said they would have dropped out of learning had it not been for ALG.

Life Chances for Disadvantaged and Disinclined Learners

- Only 27% of learners were NEET after receiving Care to Learn compared to 66% who were NEET at the start of their course.
- Virtually all Discretionary Hardship funded participants acknowledge and achieve personal or social benefits which may lead to future progression and development.

Employability

- 95% of ALG recipients felt they had gained new skills to help progress their careers.
- 75% of recipients of Care to Learn gained a qualification or partial qualification.

Personal Wellbeing

- 96% of ALG recipients felt more confident in their abilities after completing their courses.

Improving Access to Learning

- 97% of recipients of Care to Learn said that the scheme had made a positive impact on their ability to attend learning.
- 91% of recipients of ALG said that their experiences of ALG had influenced their intention to do future learning.

Research and Evaluation documents for all of the programme strands referenced above are available to download from:

www.ypla.gov.uk/learnersupport



Further Information

On Learner Support:
www.ypla.gov.uk/learnersupport

