

Curriculum Strategy and Fees and Remissions Policy

CURRICULUM STRATEGY

The Community Learning Service (CLS) seeks to deliver a curriculum that is aligned to the Adult Education Budget Funding Rules 2020-2021 and aligns Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) eligibility criteria. This requires all community learning providers to deliver a locally-determined learning offer.

CLS seeks to deliver high quality learning that:

- Meets Portsmouth City Council's shared aim to: *Make Portsmouth a place that is fairer for everyone: a city where the council works together with thriving communities to put people at the heart of everything we do.*
- Is planned through consultation with the people and communities of Portsmouth - putting Portsmouth residents at the heart of everything we do.
- Is responsive to the needs of communities in Portsmouth - enabling communities to thrive and people to live healthy, safe and independent lives
- Widens involvement in adult learning especially amongst adults who are at risk of being excluded making them positive about their future
- Increases learners' skills, knowledge and confidence and improves quality of life
- Has a positive impact on the communities of Portsmouth
- Forms part of a city wide planned and coherent offer of learning
- Supports employers in the city to meet business objectives
- Ensures the learning opportunities are consistent with local, regional and national priorities
- Enables learners to take their first steps in learning and be supported on to further learning either through CLS or through partnership with other providers.
- Offers clear and meaningful progression routes across the city's provision
- Maximises the use of resources to offer affordable opportunities for all

CLS has a curriculum that spans three core themes: Learning for Work, Learning for Life and Learning for Pleasure. The nature of the provision is decided by the learner's purpose for undertaking the learning and course fees are allocated accordingly. Thus, a learner embarking on the acquisition of very basic computer skills is entitled to heavily subsidised / free provision as this is deemed a necessary life skill and a learner enrolling on an Arts and Crafts course will attract a minimally subsidised fee as this is learning for pleasure. This approach enables CLS to set fees that focus public funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate and to collect fee income from people who can afford to pay.

Curriculum rationale

1. Learning for Life

Provision in this theme will contribute to a learner's sense of wellbeing, support greater independence, reduce the digital divide and develop skills that support families learning together. The provision is non-accredited and heavily subsidised by the ESFA. Progression will be further learning, increased social involvement, increased involvement in children's learning and increased use of technology to support everyday living.

2. Learning for Work

Provision within this theme contributes directly to a learner's employment potential. Progression will be employment, further work related training/learning, volunteering or self-employment. These courses are free to the unemployed and targeted at those with low skills. CLS is the city council's in-house training provider for a range of apprenticeships.

3. Learning for Pleasure

Provision within this theme contributes to a learner's quality of life with enhanced skills and knowledge of how to use leisure time. Provision is often linked to health and wellbeing and is designed to help with social isolation and to promote digital inclusion. Outcomes from these courses will be defined in terms of personal development goals. CLS also runs opportunities for employability and digital support, supported by volunteers.

FEES AND REMISSIONS POLICY

Within the three curriculum themes, CLS provides "targeted" and "universal" learning opportunities to residents of Portsmouth and its surrounding area. In all instances, the service seeks to provide high quality learning at the best possible value for money. CLS does not seek to make profit. All funding is focussed on providing the best possible learning opportunities.

Any charges will be clearly stated on all course promotion literature. CLS adheres ESFA Funding Rules for charging fees and assessing individuals' eligibility to participate in its provision.

1. **Targeted provision:** is offered to specific groups of residents considered to be at social, emotional, economic or physical disadvantage and are often set up as a result of engagement with specific communities. Targeted provision is provided at zero-cost for the learner or with minimal charges.
2. **Universal provision:** is open to all residents and openly marketed to the public. In some cases these courses charge a fee.
3. **Sub-contracted provision:** where the service sub-contracts provision to external organisations, CLS does not dictate the course fees. CLS considers an organisation's own fee policy as part of any procurement and sub-contracting assessment process.

Fully funded courses: In accordance with the Adult Education Budget, a large proportion of our courses are fully funded. For eligibility see the AEB Funding Rules document:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/90952/9/AEB_2020_to_2021_funding_rules_V3.pdf

Fees

When charging a fee we do our best to keep all our courses affordable and offer a reduced fee for eligible learners. There are 3 fee categories:

1. Full fee - attracting no public subsidy
2. Subsidised - with some subsidy for specific groups of people (remissions criteria apply)
3. Zero fee - fully subsidised - for the 20/21 academic year, this has been extended to include all computer classes to support the development of digital skills.

The vast majority of courses are subsidised by the ESFA and where appropriate there is a reduced fee available, to encourage those most vulnerable groups into learning. A learner's place on a course is not confirmed until the fee has been received.

Reduced fees

CLS offers reduced fees to learners in receipt of a means tested benefit to widen participation and secure equality of opportunity in learning. To benefit from the reduced fee, learners must provide at least one original form of evidence of being in receipt of the following:

- Income support
- Working tax credit
- Job seekers allowance (income based)
- Housing benefit
- Council tax benefit

- Asylum seeker receiving the equivalent of income based benefit
- Unwaged dependant of someone in receipt of listed benefits above
- Pension credit
- Universal credit
- On accredited courses those learners below the low-pay threshold of £17 374.50

Exceptions

Portsmouth City Council staff are eligible for a 20% reduction to the published fee. CLS staff, and current volunteers, are eligible to claim one free fee-charging course per year.

Refunds

If CLS cancel a course prior to it starting, a learner is entitled to a full refund via the method they paid.

Should a course be cancelled mid-way through by CLS or lessons be missed (e.g. through staff sickness) a partial refund would be offered.

Should a learner wish to have a refund up until five working days before the course start date, they will receive a full refund. If a learner cancels within five working days of the course start date the course fee is non-refundable. If a learner believes their need to cancel is a result of exceptional circumstances they should complete a "Request for fee refund" form for management consideration.

Recording of fees

All fees and refunds are processed through the e-payments system and recorded on the Management Information System (MIS). Fee income is subject to Portsmouth City Council's audit procedures.

POUND PLUS

CLS will continue to add value to the ESFA funding by attracting additional revenue and making costs savings. In particular they will seek to:

- Bring in additional funding through: fee income, room hire fees, access to other funding sources/grants
- Secure savings from contributions in kind, use of volunteers, sharing services, sharing premises, partnership working

SUPPLY CHAIN FEES AND CHARGES POLICY

In order to provide a high quality community learning programme for adults which meets local need and targets priority groups CLS subcontracts part of its Adult Education Budget to local delivery partners.

Subcontracting overview

The process for securing subcontractors follows Portsmouth City Council's procurement requirement and legislation. Contracts are awarded on a competitive tendering basis for academic periods following the publication of the "Specification and Invitation to Quote to Deliver Community Learning in Partnership with Portsmouth City Council Community Learning Service".

All subcontracted provision is required to be delivered in line with the ESFA's Funding Rules, CLS Quality Assurance Framework, is included in the CLS's ILR returns and is subject to Ofsted inspection. In line with the ESFA Funding Rules, CLS adheres to the Declaration of Subcontractors requirements.

Management fees and charges

The costs of managing, supporting and monitoring any subcontracted delivery are included in CLS's staffing costs. CLS seeks to ensure that no more than 20%-25% of the total funding received from the ESFA is spent on management costs.

ELIGIBILITY FOR SKILLS FUNDED AGENCY PROGRAMMES

This is a summary of the key points from the Funding Rules. The full document is available below:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/909529/AEB_2020_to_2021_funding_rules_V3.pdf

GENERAL FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

Who we fund

- To be funded by us, on the first day of learning a learner must be aged 19 or older on 31 August within the 2020 to 2021 funding year - except an apprenticeship or Traineeship (28)

Eligibility for funding

- Providers must make sure an individual is eligible before claiming funding for them (29)
- Individuals will be eligible for funding if the learning is taking place in England and they (36)
- Are a citizen of a country within the European Economic Area (EEA) or other countries determined within the EEA, including those with bilateral agreements such as Switzerland, or have the right of abode in the UK and have been ordinarily resident in the EEA or other countries determined within the EEA, including those with bilateral agreements such as Switzerland, for at least the previous three years on the first day of learning (36.1)
- The eligibility of individuals who do not meet requirements in paragraph 28, is stated below
- Any learner or relevant family member who has applied for an extension or variation of their current immigration permission in the UK is still treated as if they have that leave. Keeping this permission applies as long as the application was made before their current permission expired. Their leave continues until the Home Office make a decision on their immigration application (39)

Non-EEA citizens

A non EEA citizen is eligible for funding if they have permission granted by the UK government to live in the UK, which is not for educational purposes and have been ordinarily resident in the UK for at least the previous three years before the start of learning (43)

Individuals with certain types of immigration status and their family members

Any individual with any of the statuses listed below is eligible to receive funding and are exempt from the three-year residency requirement rule:

- Refugee Status (44.1)
- Discretionary Leave to Enter or remain (44.2)
- Exceptional Leave to Enter or Remain (44.3)
- Indefinite Leave to Enter or Remain (44.4)
- Humanitarian protection (44.5)
- Leave Outside the Rules (44.6)
- Section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 leave (44.7)
- The husband, wife, civil partner and child of any of the above (44.8)

Asylum Seekers

Asylum seekers are eligible to receive funding if they have lived in the UK for six months or longer while their claim is being considered by the Home Office and no decision on their claim has been made (45.1)

Family members of EU and EEA nationals

If the learner, who is a family member of an EEA national, has been ordinarily resident in the UK for the three years prior to the start of their course, they are eligible for funding (47)

Review date: August 2021