



DPN LEARNER SUPPORT POLICY

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Version | 2025 January Final (v2025_01f) |
| Last Reviewed | January 2025 |
| Reviewer | Janus Howard |
| Next Review Date | January 2026 |

DPN LEARNER SUPPORT POLICY

1. PURPOSE

This policy sets out the approach of DPN to administering and distributing learner support funds, ensuring that all learners are able to access and succeed in education regardless of their personal or financial circumstances. The policy is underpinned by principles of fairness, transparency, accountability, and equality of opportunity.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all learners enrolled on publicly funded Further Education programmes at DPN, including but not limited to learners aged 16–19, adult learners (19+), and those accessing Advanced Learner Loans.

3. AIMS

- To remove financial barriers that might prevent learners from enrolling, continuing, or achieving in education.
 - To ensure fair and transparent allocation of support funds.
 - To promote equality, diversity, and inclusion in the administration of support.
 - To comply with Department for Education (DfE) guidance and other statutory requirements.
-

4. AVAILABLE SUPPORT

Learner Support may include, but is not limited to:

- Travel costs
 - Course-related equipment, books, and materials
 - Childcare costs
 - Meals and hardship support
 - Examination fees and other compulsory charges
-
-

5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Support will be assessed against the following criteria:

- **Residency:** Learners must meet DFE residency requirements.
- **Household Income:** Priority will be given to those from households with income below nationally or locally defined thresholds.
- **Course Eligibility:** The programme of study must be DFE-funded or eligible under Advanced Learner Loan bursary criteria.
- **Individual Circumstances:** Consideration will be given to learners facing exceptional hardship (e.g., care leavers, those with caring responsibilities, learners with disabilities, or those in temporary accommodation).

6. ADMINISTRATION OF FUNDS

- Applications must be submitted using the standard DPN Learner Support Fund form, with appropriate evidence of income and need.
- Decisions will be made by the Learner Support Panel (comprising staff from Student Services, Finance, and Curriculum where relevant).
- Awards will be allocated according to need, availability of funds, and priority criteria set annually in line with DFE guidance.
- Payments will normally be made directly to service providers (e.g., transport operators, childcare providers) wherever possible, rather than in cash.
- Learners will be informed of the outcome of their application within 10 working days.

7. DISTRIBUTION PRINCIPLES

- **Transparency:** Information about available support and eligibility will be widely publicised (website, induction, student handbook).
- **Equity:** Allocation decisions will be consistent, fair, and free from discrimination.
- **Accountability:** Records of applications, decisions, and allocations will be maintained and audited in line with DFE and internal financial regulations.
- **Flexibility:** Awards may be reviewed during the academic year if a learner's circumstances change.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

DPN is committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion. In administering learner support funds:

- Applications will be assessed without discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender identity, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
- Reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure learners with disabilities or additional needs can access and apply for support.
- Data monitoring by protected characteristics will be undertaken annually to identify and address any disparities in fund access or distribution.

9. APPEALS

Learners who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their application may appeal in writing within 10 working days. Appeals will be reviewed by a member of the Senior Leadership Team not involved in the original decision.

10. MONITORING AND REVIEW

- This policy will be reviewed annually in line with DFE guidance and organisational priorities.
- Reports on fund distribution, usage, and equality monitoring will be presented to the Governing Body/Board of Trustees.