

## Fee Policy 2023/24

### Overview

This document sets out WEA policy for fees for 2023/24 for learners, WEA staff, Local Advisory Panels and branches.

WEA is dedicated to ensuring all adults can access high quality education in an affordable and flexible way. Our course fee structure is designed to meet Department for Education rules, but still allow for locally-driven course fee decisions and provision of a financial support package.

WEA charges a course fee to learners where their personal circumstances don't meet the Education & Skills Funding Agency's criteria for funding rules which support full fee remission. Charging a course fee is not only a requirement of our funders but also an important way to generate income to enable the WEA to continue to deliver its educational mission and be financially sustainable.

### Adult Education Budget (AEB) Courses

This section applies to all courses which are funded through either the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), or Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) grants and contracts. Further guidance is provided for other types of provision below.

The ESFA and MCAs provide a list of eligibility criteria for fee remission or reduction and as learner will be asked to provide suitable evidence matched to these criteria.

### Accredited (Formula Funded) Provision

Courses where learning leads to a formal, recognised qualification (certificated by an external awarding body), as well a number of non-accredited support learning activities fall under the Education and Skills Funding Agency's formula funded methodology and will attract set fees in a small number of circumstances.

All English and Maths qualifications to Level 2 are free for all learners, as are Essential Digital Skills qualifications to Level 1. All skills courses are free if to learners who are aged 19 – 23.

All accredited and non-accredited formula funded courses are fully funded by the Government if the learner is over 23 years old and unemployed (some terms and conditions apply based on your residency status and prior achievement). If they earn less than a set amount each year (see table below) all the accredited courses will be free of charge, as long as they haven't achieved the same qualification before.

To be eligible for free funding for a Level 3 course it must be the learners first full Level 3 and they have not achieved a Level 3 qualification (or higher) in the past.

Where the learner doesn't meet the criteria for a funded course, the Government will provide 50% of the course cost and they will be required to pay course fees for the remaining 50%. These fees are set out in the Course Information Sheet and they will be able to pay these in a flexible way. In exceptional circumstances, we will be able to use funding from our hardship fund to assist with course fees for learners who need financial support to start or stay in learning.

Due to the devolution of Adult Education Budget funding to MCAs, a number of additional restrictions on free courses also apply. Please check with your local WEA team for further information.

## Community Learning Provision

The minimum hourly rate a learner will pay for face-to-face WEA courses in 2023/24 will be £4.20/hour. For online provision, there is a standard fixed hourly rate of £3.70. This minimum rate applies to all courses, including day schools and tasters. Regions may consider differential fee setting within their region where there is specific evidence of localised need based on local income levels. This must be formally agreed by a Director of Education prior to marketing and recruitment.

Principles for fee setting for ESFA funded provision

- Course fees are set at the \*hourly rate x number of course hours. If there are any additional costs associated with the course they must be clearly shown separately to the learners (i.e., materials that the learners need to purchase and bring to the course)
- Courses which are charged at a rate higher than the standard regional hourly rate (i.e., courses which have additional cost requirements, eg arts equipment) must be publicised as such.
- All fee-paying learners must be charged the minimum hourly rate set by the region.
- Fees must be entered into the appropriate place in the Short Request Form.
- Learners should be offered the option of paying above the hourly rate if they wish to do so and they can do this by making a donation using the link provided below: <http://www.wea.org.uk/get-involved/donate>

### *Branch Day Schools*

Branch day school fees must be set at the regional minimum hourly learner rate at least. The Notification of Event Form must be completed by the branch and approved by the Head of Region and Finance Business Partner to ensure and demonstrate the course is viable.

### *Late joiners*

The full course fee is payable by late joiners, except where a place was unavailable to a learner at the course start date due to circumstances solely and exclusively within the

WEA's control. In this case a pro-rata fee is payable based on the remaining course hours at the learner's joining date

### *Places for carers*

Carers accompanying learners attend courses in a carer capacity not a learner one. Carers must not be asked to complete an enrolment form, be included in the course register, be counted in course learner numbers or be charged a course fee.

## **Funding Eligibility Criteria**

### Unemployed

If one or more of the following apply, a learner will be entitled to fully funded learning with the WEA and across all ESFA and MCA funding streams:

- receive Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), including those receiving National Insurance credits only
- receive Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- receive Universal Credit, and their take-home pay as recorded on their Universal Credit statement (disregarding Universal Credit payments and other benefits) is less than £494 a month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £782 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner)
- are released on temporary licence, studying outside a prison environment, and not funded by the Ministry of Justice

In addition, if both of the following apply, a learner will be also entitled to fully funded learning with the WEA:

- receives other state benefits (not listed above) and their take-home pay (disregarding Universal Credit payments and other benefits) is less than £494 a month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £782 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner), and
- wants to be employed, or progress into more sustainable employment, and their take-home pay (disregarding Universal Credit payments and other benefits) is less than £494 a month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £782 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner), and their learning is directly relevant to their employment prospects and the local labour market needs

### In Receipt of Low Wage

If a learner is in work or self-employed earning less than £20,500 (£23,383 in Greater London) per year before tax, or the relevant devolved regional figure in Annex 1 below, then a learner is also entitled to fully funded learning with the WEA up to and including Level 2. A learner will be required to provide evidence to support this.

## Annex 1

Different thresholds apply based on the learner's living location:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Wage Threshold</b>
North of Tyne	£19,305
Greater Manchester	£20,888
Liverpool City Region	£21,225
West Yorkshire	£21,255
South Yorkshire	£21,255
West Midlands	£19,350
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough	£21,000
West of England	£21,255
Greater London (including ESFA provision)	£23,302.50
Rest of England	£21,255