



Skills Funding
Agency

Learning Support Changes for the Academic Year 2013 to 2014

June 2014

Of interest to providers and employers

Introduction

1. This note responds to requests for more information on the Learning Support changes we introduced for the academic year 2013 to 2014. It provides colleges, local authorities, training organisations and voluntary organisations (providers) with further detailed information on the arrangements for Learning Support, as part of the Adult Skills Budget (ASB). These changes are also applicable in the academic year 2014 to 2015.
2. It provides information on:
 - the scope of the new fund and how it works, including allocations, claiming, performance reviews and assurance requirements
 - how Exceptional Learning Support embraces all eligible learners requiring in excess of £19,000 support funding
3. The ['Funding Rules 2013/14 version 3'](#) sets out the arrangements for Learning Support. However, these rules do not provide either the rationale or operational detail behind the changes.

Background

4. Working with colleagues from the Funding External Technical Advisory Group¹, as part of our work to simplify the funding of adults, we merged a range of Learning Support approaches² into a single fund called Learning Support for the academic year 2013 to 2014. This fund now forms an integral part of a provider's ASB.
5. These changes:
 - bring together and simplify the different approaches and systems used for classroom, workplace and Apprenticeships
 - reduce bureaucracy
 - simplify learner eligibility
 - provide clear and simple funding rules
 - provide consistent assurance of funds
6. The National Audit Office (NAO) also highlighted the need to introduce additional assurance for Learning Support. The new arrangements provide a balance between simplification, practicality and the need to meet the NAO's request.

¹ Funding External Technical Advisory Group acts in an advisory capacity to the Agency on funding matters.

² Additional Learning Support (ALS), Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Additional Social Needs (ASN).

The changes

7. From the academic year 2013 to 2014, Learning Support is part of the ASB for all providers. These changes:
 - introduce a new, wide-ranging definition that replaces the criteria list previously used to ensure a learner was eligible for support funding
 - cover the ongoing costs for providing 'in learning' support to **all** eligible adult learners with an identified learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD), including those on an Apprenticeship or Traineeship
 - are available to **all** providers with an ASB, to help any eligible learner who has an identified support need to achieve their learning goals
 - introduce a single approach across all providers for claiming support costs by introducing a monthly fixed rate³ of £150
 - continue to provide funding for providers to meet the costs of reasonable adjustments, as set out in the [Equality Act 2010](#)
8. In summary, learning support is available to all providers, with an ASB, to help any eligible learner who has an identified learning difficulty or disability, or both, to achieve their learning goals, regardless of the learner's background and relative disadvantage.

Definition

9. This approach to Learning Support is described by the overarching single definition and governed by simpler and clearer funding rules:

“Learning Support enables providers to work flexibly and provide support activity to meet the learning needs of their individual learners. This allows these learners to achieve their learning goal and maximise their potential. Learning Support provides funding for colleges, training organisations and voluntary organisations to meet the costs of reasonable adjustments as set out in the Equality Act 2010.”
10. Because of the simpler approach for Learning Support, we have removed the criteria list and associated evidence requirements, simplified the 2013 to 2014 Funding Rules, whilst ensuring protection of public funds.

³ Please see [A New Streamlined Funding System for Adult Skills - March 2013](#) for further clarification

Funding and allocations

11. To provide maximum flexibility and help you make the right choice to support the needs of your learners, Learning Support is part of your ASB allocation. There are no virement restrictions between Learning Support and participation funding.
12. However, we have made it clear within our funding rules that we would not expect you to increase your Learning Support funding claims significantly as part of the ASB. We will review Learning Support use to see if there is a large increase compared to participation funding.
13. The ASB allocation methodology in 2013 to 2014 includes your historic classroom-based Learning Support allocations and Employer Responsive earnings (ALN and ASN).

Accessing funds

14. You will earn Learning Support at a fixed monthly rate of £150 for each learner, regardless of where or how the learning is provided. If support needs cost more than the fixed monthly rate, you are able to claim the excess through the Earnings Adjustment System (EAS), supported by the appropriate evidence.
15. To access support funding '**contract for services (contract)**' providers:
 - must identify on the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) where a learner has a learning need associated with an identified learning aim
 - in exceptional circumstances, for learners with support needs costing in excess of the monthly fixed rate, are able to claim for excess Learning Support costs through the EAS, supported by the appropriate evidence
 - will receive payment monthly in arrears based on data submitted through the ILR
 - should note this approach applies to all Apprenticeships (including 16 to 18) workplace, and classroom provision
16. To access support funding '**conditions of funding (grant)**' providers:
 - will receive funding as part of the profile payments for ASB provision
 - must use the ILR to identify that a learner has Learning Support needs, which will generate earnings against the ASB for the duration that they provide Learning Support

- can claim and receive payment for their 16 to 18 Apprenticeship Learning Support as 'contract' providers
- can claim for excess Learning Support costs through the Earning Adjustment System, supported by appropriate evidence for learners with support needs costing in excess of the monthly fixed rate
- must submit funding claims at mid-year, year-end and final-year to cover the excess/Exceptional Learning Support costs recorded through the ILR (only)
- note that we will use mid-year claims to review any in-year changes (increases and decreases), where evidence is strong enough to support the change and where funding is available

Performance review

17. For the academic year 2013 to 2014, Centralised Contract Management will hold the value of Learning Support earned by providers within the ASB. This will be a combination of the fixed monthly rate and any excess Learning Support costs.
18. We will review budget use as part of the Agency's performance management processes. Details of these processes are available in the [Performance Management Rules 2013/2014](#).
19. Contract providers will have their ASB (including Learning Support) reviewed as part of the quarterly performance management process. We do not anticipate awarding increases to Maximum Contract Values for Learning Support alone.
20. We will review grant providers' Learning Support funding as part of the ASB claim process. For the first time Learning Support will be subject to year-end adjustment. Where a grant provider does not deliver the total value of their ASB they will be subject to any associated 'claw back' of funds

Evidence requirements

21. Grant providers will adopt the contract provider approach across their ASB delivery. We will look to see evidence that claims for Learning Support through the ILR are supported by an assessment undertaken by the provider, that there is a planned programme of additional support, and that there is evidence of a planned programme of additional support included in the learner's learning agreement.

22. Where providers claim excess Learning Support above the fixed monthly rate, we will consider these against costs within the sector. You are required to record appropriate evidence to support the excess amounts you claim.
23. For contract providers the current evidence requirements will remain in place and will cover Apprenticeship, other workplace and classroom support. 16-to-18 Apprenticeships will also operate in the same way as contract providers.
24. When the duration of learning is less than one month, or the learner is not in learning on the last day of the month, you must claim this as excess Learning Support through the EAS. These evidence requirements are the same as any other excess Learning Support claimed through the EAS.
25. We reserve the right to review providers that record a large increase in Learning Support use, as we would not expect significantly increases for Learning Support funding use as part of the ASB.

Exceptional Learning Support

26. Learners that may require support costs more than £19,000 are individuals with significant support needs. There will be other agencies involved in their care and support. Exceptional Learning Support⁴ was previously only available for learners aged 25 and over, studying at a college or other grant-funded provider.
27. We will retain the current grant-funded provider approach to Exceptional Learning Support for learners requiring this funding. We hold a central budget for this funding, which requires approval on an individual learner basis by your Central Delivery Service contact.
28. There are four significant changes for this academic year, which include:
 - contract providers, who now follow the same process as grant providers
 - self-declared learners with LDD, aged 19 to 24 not subject to a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) or Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan⁵
 - apprentices of all ages
 - Loans Bursary Fund⁶ learners (noting the Exceptional Learning Support process will mirror the process as stated in the Funding Rules 2013/14 version 3)

⁴ Previously known as Exceptional Additional Learning Support.

⁵ We would expect learners aged 19 to 24 years of age to have an LDA or EHC plan provided by their local authority, unless they are undertaking an Apprenticeship.

⁶ The Loans Bursary Fund helps loans funded learners such as those with learning difficulties or disabilities, parents who need help with childcare, and ex-military personnel.

Useful links

- [Equality Act 2010 guidance](#)
- [Skills Funding Agency funding rules](#)
- [Skills Funding Agency performance management rules](#)
- [Skills Funding Agency LLDD: financial support](#)
- [Skills Funding Agency EAS](#)
- [Individualised Learner Record guidance](#)



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