

Hartlepool Jobs and Skills Service



Pound Plus Policy

Author: Hartlepool Jobs & Skills Service

Approved By: Scott Campbell, Service Manager

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Hartlepool Jobs & Skills
CIL, Burbank Street
Hartlepool
TS24 7NY

www.hartlepooljobsandskills.com
01429 868616



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1. INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION

The adult learning sector undertakes a large volume of activity that contributes to the wider delivery of community learning and the generation of additional income central to driving up participation in the community. This is particularly significant within a contained public funding environment.

The term 'Pound Plus's describes how providers can demonstrate that they are maximising the value of public investment. It is used by funders such as ESFA (Education & Skills Funding Agency) and TVCA (Tees Valley Combined Authority) to describe the added value required to supplement the existing community learning income streams to benefit learners, particularly those who are disadvantaged and who cannot afford to pay fees within the Service.

2. AIM OF ADULT SKILLS FUND

The Council's Jobs & Skills Service delivers the Adult Skills Fund, and it offers a diverse range of flexible courses focused on national and local strategic economic priorities and the needs of the community and businesses.

Courses are available to all adults aged 19 plus, and they are designed to meet the specific needs of employers and learners so that individuals are fully prepared for the world of work.

The Service has a wide range of provisions to help learners to progress in their careers or to make the first steps back into education. This includes 'Skills' courses which are accredited and non-accredited, Learning for Inclusion, an impartial Careers Service, Safeguarding and Pastoral Support Team and Volunteering Offer.

The Service is wholly committed to equal access for all learners and therefore heavily invests in engaging with key stakeholders such as voluntary organisations, Jobcentre Plus and National Careers Service to effectively engage with hard-to-reach groups.

Within the Service, there is a differentiated Fees Policy 2022-23, which includes a mix of fully funded courses, co-funded courses and free targeted provision. This policy is fully consistent with the Service's aims to ensure that all adults can access learning, including the most affluent and disadvantaged. Fees are remitted if learners are in receipt of a means-tested benefit or employed earning under a Low Wage Threshold. It is also important to understand that non-accredited courses are free if delivered through Learning for Inclusion. There is a hardship fund for those in financial difficulty through Learner Support.

3. SECURING ADDED VALUE

The Adult Skills Fund received from ESFA and TVCA contributes to the overall costs of delivering this provision through the Hartlepool Jobs & Skills Service.

As part of the Pound Plus Policy, there is an expectation that the Service will add value to this funding by reviewing fees in line with its Fees Policy 2022-23, attracting extra income, undertaking regular efficiency saving reviews to cut costs and then reinvesting any income/savings to widen the offer to more people who are disadvantaged.

To meet this expectation, the Service works collaboratively with external partners and other Council Departments to ascertain local priorities and consider ways of securing added value, joint working leading to greater efficiency savings and investment to supplement existing income streams.

The Service generates additional income and savings over and above the core income from ESFA and TVCA through:

- Fee income from learners.
- Commercial fee income.
- Income from room hire.
- Cost savings.
- Use of volunteers to support learning.
- Curriculum efficiency – avoiding duplicated provision.
- Curriculum effectiveness – planning to ensure that the course offer meets government priorities and needs of the local community and employers and offers progression opportunities leading to increased participation and employment.
- Use of external venues at low or no cost.

By undertaking regular reviews on fees and working with partners on efficiency savings that reduce duplication of effort and generate income, the Service has provided more provision that has benefitted the end user.

For further information on our Pound Plus Policy, please do not hesitate to contact us either at 01429-868616 or by email on jobs.skills@hartlepool.gov.uk