Learner Support Policy

Item	Details
Policy owner	Kirsty Noble
Position	Quality Director
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Applies to	Learners and Staff
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1. Purpose

The purpose of this Learner Support Policy is to ensure that all learners of Skills-UK, Education & Training are given fair, inclusive, timely and appropriate support to access, participate in and successfully complete their learning programme.

This policy supports learners who may require academic, pastoral, safeguarding, wellbeing, accessibility, financial, medical, behavioural, English and maths, digital, workplace, or assessment-related support. It is intended to operate alongside the organisation's "Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy and Procedure", which sets out how learners with disabilities, learning difficulties, temporary illness, injury or personal circumstances may receive reasonable adjustments or special consideration.

Skills-UK, Education & Training will take a learner-centred approach and will make reasonable efforts to identify support needs at the earliest opportunity, agree appropriate support with the learner, implement support promptly, monitor its effectiveness, and update support arrangements where learner needs change.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all learners enrolled with Skills-UK, Education & Training, including learners on classroom-based, remote, blended, workplace, apprenticeship, adult skills, funded, commercial, regulated and non-regulated programmes.

This policy applies from initial enquiry and enrolment through to induction, teaching and learning, assessment, progress reviews, achievement, completion, progression and, where relevant, end-point assessment.

Where a learner is also employed, such as an apprentice or work-based learner, Skills-UK, Education & Training will work appropriately with the employer, subject to learner consent and confidentiality requirements, to support the learner's participation, progress and achievement.

3. Policy Statement

Skills-UK, Education & Training is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive learning environment where all learners are treated with dignity, fairness and respect. The organisation recognises that learners may experience barriers to learning for many reasons, including disability, learning difficulty, neurodiversity, mental health, medical conditions, caring responsibilities, financial hardship, personal circumstances, English language needs, digital exclusion, safeguarding concerns, previous educational experience, workplace issues, or temporary disruption.

Learner support will be based on individual need and will not be limited to learners who have a formal diagnosis. Where a learner discloses a support need, or where staff identify that a learner may require support, Skills-UK, Education & Training will respond sensitively, confidentially and without discrimination. Support will be proportionate, reasonable, evidence-based where required, and designed to help the learner access learning, participate fully, remain safe, make progress and achieve their learning goals.

The organisation will ensure that support is not used to lower the required standard of learning or assessment. Instead, support will help learners access the same opportunity to demonstrate knowledge, skills and behaviours fairly. Where reasonable adjustments or special consideration are required, these will be managed in accordance with the "Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy and Procedure" and any relevant awarding organisation, assessment body, apprenticeship, funding or regulatory requirements.

Skills-UK, Education & Training will maintain clear records of learner support needs, support agreed, actions taken, reviews completed, evidence retained, referrals made, and outcomes achieved. Records will be handled confidentially and only shared with staff, employers, awarding bodies, agencies or other relevant parties where there is a lawful basis, learner consent where required, or a safeguarding duty to do so.

4. Definitions

Learner support means any planned support provided to help a learner access, continue with, participate in or complete their learning. This may include academic, practical, wellbeing, safeguarding, financial, accessibility, equipment, digital, medical, personal or workplace support.

Learning support means support provided where a learner has an identified learning difficulty and/or disability and requires reasonable adjustments to achieve their learning goal. Where DfE funding is claimed, evidence must show the support need, the reasonable adjustment provided, the cost incurred where applicable, and the ongoing need for support.

A reasonable adjustment addresses substantial disadvantage experienced by a disabled learner within the Equality Act 2010 duties. Other learning support may also be appropriate for a learning difficulty, temporary condition or identified need without a formal diagnosis. Assessment arrangements must follow the relevant awarding organisation's requirements.

Special consideration means an action taken after an assessment, or close to an assessment, to recognise temporary illness, injury or other personal circumstances that may have affected a learner's performance.

Support plan means a documented plan that records the learner's identified needs, agreed support, responsible staff, review dates and any actions required by the learner, tutor, assessor, employer or support team.

Safeguarding concern means any concern that a learner may be at risk of harm, abuse, neglect, exploitation, radicalisation, self-harm or other significant welfare risk.

5. Principles

Skills-UK, Education & Training will apply the following principles:

- Learner support will be accessible, fair, respectful, timely and confidential.
- Learners will be encouraged to disclose support needs at the earliest opportunity, but support may be considered at any point during the programme.
- Learners will be actively involved in decisions about their support wherever possible.
- Support will be based on individual need, not assumptions about a condition, background or characteristic.
- Reasonable adjustments will be considered where a learner may otherwise be placed at a substantial disadvantage.
- Support will be reviewed regularly to confirm that it remains appropriate and effective.
- Safeguarding and learner welfare will take priority where there is a risk of harm.
- Learners will be informed of their right to request support, appeal decisions and raise concerns.
- Funding claims, where applicable, will only be made where permitted, evidenced and directly linked to eligible learner support or learning support activity.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

7. Senior Management Team

The Senior Management Team is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented effectively, reviewed regularly, and supported by appropriate resources, staff training, monitoring and quality assurance.

Senior leaders must ensure that learner support arrangements reflect equality, diversity, inclusion, safeguarding, Prevent, SEND, reasonable adjustment, funding and data protection requirements. They must also ensure that staff understand how to identify learner needs, record support, refer concerns and escalate risks.

8. Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for responding to safeguarding concerns, including concerns relating to abuse, neglect, exploitation, mental health risk, self-harm, domestic abuse, radicalisation, homelessness, online harm or other welfare concerns.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure that concerns are recorded, assessed, referred and followed up in line with the organisation's safeguarding procedures. Where a learner is under 18, or is an adult at risk, safeguarding action must be taken promptly and in line with statutory guidance and local arrangements.

9. Tutors, Trainers and Assessors

Tutors, trainers and assessors are responsible for creating an inclusive learning environment, identifying possible learner support needs, making appropriate referrals, implementing agreed support, recording relevant actions, and reviewing progress with learners.

They must not ignore signs that a learner may be struggling. Where a learner's attendance, engagement, behaviour, progress, assessment performance, wellbeing or communication suggests a potential support need, staff must discuss this sensitively with the learner and refer the matter in line with internal procedures.

10. Coordination of Learner Support

The Quality Director will nominate an appropriate member of staff to coordinate learner support. The nominated person is responsible for coordinating support assessments, support plans, referrals, reasonable adjustment requests, learning support evidence, financial support records and learner reviews.

They will work with tutors, assessors, employers, awarding bodies, external agencies and learners to ensure that agreed support is appropriate, recorded and reviewed.

11. Learners

Learners are encouraged to tell Skills-UK, Education & Training about any support needs, barriers, personal circumstances or changes that may affect their learning, wellbeing, attendance, assessment or progression.

Learners are expected to participate in support discussions, provide relevant evidence where required, attend planned support sessions, use agreed support appropriately, and tell staff if support is not working or if their circumstances change.

12. Employers

Where a learner is employed, the employer is expected to support the learner in the workplace, including making workplace reasonable adjustments where required. Skills-UK, Education & Training will only share learner support information with the employer where this is appropriate, lawful and agreed by the learner, unless there is an overriding safeguarding or legal reason to share information.

13. Identification of Learner Support Needs

Skills-UK, Education & Training will seek to identify learner support needs through:

- Initial enquiry and admissions discussions.
- Enrolment and learner declaration forms.
- Initial assessment and diagnostic assessment.
- Induction activities.
- Learner interviews and one-to-one discussions.
- Review of prior learning, prior attainment and previous support.
- Information from Education, Health and Care Plans, historical support assessments, relevant medical evidence or other relevant documentation.
- Tutor, trainer, assessor or employer observations.
- Attendance, punctuality, engagement, behaviour, welfare and progress monitoring.
- Learner self-referral at any point during the programme.
- Safeguarding, wellbeing or pastoral referrals.

Where Skills-UK delivers apprenticeships or apprenticeship units under an active approval and contract, initial assessment must be used to identify general learning needs before the programme starts, and further assessment must be carried out where there may be a learning difficulty or disability directly affecting the learner's ability to complete the programme.

14. Types of Learner Support

Skills-UK, Education & Training may provide or arrange support including, but not limited to:

- Reasonable adjustments for learning or assessment.
- Additional tutor, trainer or assessor support.
- Adapted learning materials or alternative formats.
- Assistive technology or specialist equipment.
- Extra time, rest breaks, reader, scribe, practical assistance or modified assessment arrangements, where permitted.
- English, maths or digital skills support.
- Study skills, revision, assignment planning or time management support.
- Mentoring, coaching or progress support.
- Mental health and wellbeing signposting.
- Safeguarding referral and protection support.
- Medical condition support planning.
- Attendance and engagement support.
- Financial hardship signposting or learner support funding where eligible.
- Transport, childcare, equipment or course-related cost support where eligible and permitted.
- Support with employer communication for apprentices or work-based learners.
- Referral to external agencies, local authority services, NHS services, specialist charities or other support organisations where appropriate.

15. Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration

Where a learner requires a reasonable adjustment or special consideration, staff must follow the “Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy and Procedure”.

Reasonable adjustments must be considered before or during learning and assessment wherever possible. They must be suitable for the learner’s need, must not compromise the validity or integrity of the qualification or assessment, and must be recorded clearly.

Special consideration may be considered where a learner experiences temporary illness, injury, bereavement, serious personal disruption or another circumstance that affects assessment performance. Each case must be considered individually and in line with awarding organisation rules where applicable.

Where a learner disagrees with a decision about reasonable adjustments, special consideration or learner support, they may appeal using the appeals process set out in this policy and the relevant linked procedure.

16. Support Planning

Where a support need is identified, Skills-UK, Education & Training will determine whether a formal learner support plan is required. A support plan should normally include:

- Learner name and programme.
- Identified need or barrier.
- Evidence reviewed, where applicable.
- Agreed support or adjustment.
- Staff responsible for providing support.
- Actions required by the learner.
- Any agreed employer involvement.

- Confidentiality and information-sharing preferences.
- Review frequency.
- Outcomes of each review.
- Changes to support arrangements.

The learner should normally agree the support plan in writing. For apprenticeships, the learner must agree support arrangements in writing, and arrangements should only be shared with the employer where the learner agrees, unless there is another lawful reason to do so.

17. Review of Support

Learner support must be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains suitable, effective and necessary.

Reviews may take place through learner progress reviews, one-to-one meetings, support meetings, assessment reviews, safeguarding reviews or employer review meetings. The frequency of review will depend on the learner's need, risk level, programme type and funding requirements.

For any apprenticeship learning support claims, use the current programme-specific review intervals and evidence requirements applicable to that learner and funding year. The compliance lead must record these requirements before claims begin. Evidence must demonstrate continuing need, support actually provided, effectiveness and any changes.

Where support is no longer needed, Skills-UK, Education & Training will update the learner record and stop any related funding claim where applicable.

18. Safeguarding, Welfare and Prevent

Skills-UK, Education & Training will ensure that learner support is closely linked to safeguarding and welfare arrangements. Any concern that a learner may be at risk of harm must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

For learners under 18, staff must follow the applicable child safeguarding requirements and Skills-UK procedures. Apply Keeping Children Safe in Education where it applies to the provider or through contractual arrangements, alongside relevant local safeguarding routes. Adult support and safeguarding duties must be considered separately.

Skills-UK, Education & Training will also have regard to the Prevent duty where applicable. The current Prevent guidance for England and Wales came into force on 31 December 2023 and is intended for specified authorities, safeguarding leads, senior leaders and frontline staff who may engage with people susceptible to radicalisation.

Learner support must never delay urgent safeguarding action. Where there is an immediate risk of harm, staff must contact emergency services or follow the safeguarding escalation route without delay.

19. Learners with SEND, Learning Difficulties, Disabilities or Medical Conditions

Skills-UK, Education & Training will support learners with special educational needs, disabilities, learning difficulties and medical conditions in a fair and inclusive way.

The SEND Code of Practice provides guidance on the SEND system for children and young people aged 0 to 25 and applies in England. Where relevant, the organisation will consider

information from an Education, Health and Care Plan, historical assessment, previous support plan or professional report.

Where a learner has a medical condition that may affect learning, attendance, safety or assessment, the organisation will agree appropriate support arrangements with the learner and, where relevant, parent/carer, employer, medical professional or external agency. School-specific medical guidance must not be presented as a direct duty for all adult training provision. Apply the actual health and safety, equality, safeguarding and contractual requirements relevant to the learner and setting.

Support will be reviewed if the learner's condition changes, if support is not effective, if the learner changes programme or delivery mode, or if assessment arrangements need to be amended.

20. Financial and Practical Learner Support

Where Skills-UK, Education & Training has access to eligible learner support funds, these will be administered fairly and transparently.

Learner support may be used to provide financial support where a specific financial hardship is preventing a learner from taking part in or continuing learning. Before support is awarded, the learner's need must be assessed and recorded.

The organisation will maintain clear criteria for how funds are administered and distributed. These criteria must reflect equality and diversity principles and must be available to learners and funders on request. Learner need, decisions, payments, evidence and funding codes must be recorded and retained as required.

Learner support funds must not be used for attendance allowances, achievement bonuses, or other excluded purposes.

21. Learning Support Funding and Evidence

Where learning support funding is claimed, Skills-UK, Education & Training will only claim where the learner has an identified learning difficulty and/or disability, a reasonable adjustment is required, the support is directly linked to the learner's ability to achieve their learning goal, and evidence is retained.

For Adult Skills Fund provision, learning support is available to meet the cost of putting in place a reasonable adjustment for learners with an identified learning difficulty and/or disability, but it must not be used for everyday difficulties that are not directly associated with the learner's programme. For nationally funded ASF learning support requiring monthly confirmation, record continuing necessity and appropriateness each month alongside delivery and cost evidence. Apply the corresponding contract requirements separately to devolved provision.

For apprenticeships, learning support funding may be used to make reasonable adjustments for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities so they can complete their apprenticeship or apprenticeship unit. It must not be used for unrelated activities, general learning gaps, support that does not cost money, or workplace adjustments that are the employer's responsibility.

Evidence must be retained to show:

- The learner's assessed need.
- The impact of the learning difficulty or disability on the learner's programme.

- The reasonable adjustment agreed.
- The support provided.
- The learner's agreement to support arrangements.
- The cost incurred where funding is claimed.
- Reviews of continuing need.
- Outcomes and effectiveness of support.

22. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Learner support information will be handled confidentially and in line with data protection requirements.

Information will only be shared with staff or third parties who need it to provide support, manage risk, meet legal obligations, comply with awarding body or funding requirements, or protect the learner or others from harm.

Where possible, the learner's consent will be obtained before support information is shared with an employer, parent/carer, external agency or awarding body. However, consent is not required where there is a safeguarding concern, legal requirement, emergency situation, or serious risk to the learner or others.

23. Support Decisions Access and Escalation

At initial contact, explain how learners can request support privately, including when they do not have a diagnosis or cannot complete a standard form. A request may be made verbally, in writing or through an agreed representative. Provide an accessible route and agree a safe method of contact.

The nominated coordinator must identify the immediate barrier, agree practical steps and tell the learner who is responsible and when the arrangement will be reviewed. Urgent safety or safeguarding concerns require immediate escalation. Routine support must not be delayed solely while a funding claim or external assessment is considered.

For community delivery, check accessible entry, toilets, seating, communication, emergency evacuation and digital access with the venue. Agree an alternative if barriers cannot reasonably be resolved. Do not assume the venue operator will automatically provide individual learning support.

Staff must distinguish teaching support from specialist treatment, clinical advice, benefits advice or other regulated advice outside their competence. Explain referral options and follow up appropriately without promising access to services Skills-UK does not control.

Information sharing requires an appropriate lawful basis and, where relevant, a special category condition. Consent is not the only possible basis and must not be used as a blanket substitute for assessing legal requirements. Share only what is necessary and explain limits to confidentiality, including safeguarding and urgent risk. A learner's agreement to a support plan is distinct from the legal basis for processing their information.

If a request is refused or only partly agreed, record the reason, legal and assessment considerations, alternatives offered and review route. Lack of external funding alone does not determine whether a reasonable adjustment must be made. Learners must not be charged for an adjustment where the law requires it to be provided without charge.

24. Staff Training and Awareness

Skills-UK, Education & Training will ensure that relevant staff receive training and guidance on:

- Identifying learner support needs.
- Equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Reasonable adjustments and special consideration.
- Safeguarding and Prevent.
- SEND, learning difficulties, disabilities and neurodiversity awareness.
- Mental health and wellbeing awareness.
- Recording support and maintaining evidence.
- Funding and compliance requirements where relevant.
- Confidentiality and information sharing.

Staff must seek advice from their manager, the nominated support coordinator or the Designated Safeguarding Lead where they are unsure how to respond to a learner support need.

25. Appeals and Complaints

If a learner is dissatisfied with a decision about learner support, reasonable adjustments, special consideration, financial support or the way their support has been handled, they may raise the matter through the organisation's complaints or appeals process.

Appeals will be considered fairly, confidentially and in a timely manner. Where appropriate, an independent manager or panel will review the decision. The learner will be informed of the outcome and any further options available.

26. Monitoring and Quality Assurance

Skills-UK, Education & Training will monitor learner support arrangements to ensure they are effective, fair and compliant.

Monitoring may include:

- Review of learner support plans.
- Learner feedback.
- Staff feedback.
- Attendance, retention, achievement and progression data.
- Equality and diversity analysis.
- Safeguarding and wellbeing trend analysis.
- Funding and evidence checks.
- Internal audit.
- Awarding organisation, funder or regulatory feedback.
- Complaints and appeals analysis.

Findings will be used to improve learner support arrangements, staff training, resources, communication and policy implementation.

27. Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner where there are changes to legislation, DfE funding rules, safeguarding guidance, awarding organisation requirements, organisational practice or learner support arrangements.

Changes will be approved by the Senior Management Team and communicated to relevant staff, learners and stakeholders.

28. Related Policies and Procedures

- Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy and Procedure;
- Access to Fair Assessment Policy;
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedure;
- Prevent Policy;
- Learner Health and Wellbeing Policy;
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy;
- Local Fee Remission Policy;
- Fees and Refunds Policy;
- Complaints Policy;
- Assessment Appeals Policy and Procedure;
- Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG) Policy;
- Health & Safety Policy;
- Fire Safety Policy;
- Data Protection and GDPR Policy; and
- Document Retention and Secure Storage Policy.