

Learner Handbook 2021/22



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HILLINGDON
LONDON

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Welcome

Everyone is different. Every adult who joins one of our classes has a unique set of skills, knowledge and experience that they bring to learning and is driven to enrol by goals they want to achieve for reasons that are as individual as they are. The Hillingdon Adult and Community Learning (HACL) team tries hard to provide accurate information and impartial advice that will help you to achieve those goals. We want you to succeed and we will work with you to help you to do just that.

The first section of this handbook explains what we intend to achieve with the learning opportunities we offer and how we approach finding the best course for you at every stage of your learning journey.

How we identify the best course for you

Learning in the community

Some people love learning. They appreciate the value of learning for its own sake and know that learning for their own personal development builds new skills and enhances their wellbeing. They are not motivated by the need for qualifications and often choose creative courses, such as art or learning a new language. Whether they are learning a completely new skill or developing an existing one, they can enrol online for a class of their choice or call any of our centres for advice from our team on the best option.



Other people are less sure that learning is for them.

We believe that learning is for everyone so we provide classes in the community, making attendance as easy as possible and providing an introduction to the benefits of learning.

We work with a number of community partners, such as schools and children's centres, faith and community groups, minority groups and support groups, such as clubs for people with disabilities and with carers.

We hope that you will give learning a try in one of our short community classes. Other adults who have taken part in one of our community learning groups have said that they enjoyed the experience and got much more from it than they expected. Most of them wanted to continue when their classes ended.

We hope that these first steps will lead you to consider further courses and develop your skills too.

English/ESOL, Maths and Digital Skills classes

We want to help you improve your English, maths and digital skills. As you will know, these skills are essential for everyday living and finding work. They can also help you support your children's education.

We want to help you reach your full potential so we begin by identifying your starting point. To do this we ask you to complete online tests and submit a piece of writing. We also speak with you to find out why you want to join a class and what you'd like to achieve.

Your answers help us to make sure you are offered the best combination of classes based on the skills you already have and those you need to develop. We then work closely with you to help you

progress through the qualification levels in English, maths and digital skills so that you are able to achieve your goals, like helping your children with their education or finding the job you had hoped for.

Some people need more time before they develop the fluency and accuracy they need in English to take the next level qualification, so we have developed courses that allow them a little more time to practise speaking and writing in everyday situations. These courses focus on completing a project, often fundraising for a local charity, and allows them to build their confidence and skills so that they are truly ready to move on to the next qualification level.

Others progress very quickly with their English, maths and digital skills and for those who wish to find a job we have an English for Work course.

Most people will experience a combination of these options. We have specialist staff who will help you find the course that best fits your needs and we look forward to supporting you to achieve your goals.

Qualifications that lead to a career in a particular vocational sector

We offer industry-standard, nationally-recognised courses that mean the qualifications you gain will hold their value with employers anywhere in the country. We do this to offer you the best possible chance to enjoy a long and fulfilling career in your chosen field, wherever you choose to work.

However, vocational qualifications alone are not enough in today's professional working environment. Underpinning skills such as digital skills and maths are also essential to enable you to carry out all the elements of your role efficiently, and more general skills like attendance, punctuality and teamwork combine to help you succeed.



Developing English skills is another integral part of your development, and of the vocational sector that you have chosen to enter. There is a difference between passing an English qualification and being able to use English fluently and accurately in a professional environment. The use of spoken and written English is fundamental to the career you are working so hard to build, and study skills such as researching and formal assignment writing take time and practise to mature to a level that will enable you to achieve higher level qualifications.

For these reasons we ask you to complete some tests which allow us to make sure you are offered the right combination of courses to build all of these skills as well as achieve your vocational qualification. Combined with an informal interview, these results allow us to tailor a package of courses to help you build the skills you need to succeed. If you have already studied with us, your study history and skills history (i.e. attendance, punctuality, working to deadlines) will add to that picture and allow us to provide the best possible route for your learning journey.

Few people gain the skills and achieve the qualifications they need all at once. We all have strengths and weaknesses that need to work on in order to achieve our goals. For this reason, we have a variety of course options that we will offer you, so that you can strengthen the areas that you need to develop. Here are two examples:



Learner A joined an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course to build her use of English for everyday life. Having completed some courses and gained her starter English qualifications, she decided she wanted to work in a school as a teaching assistant.

Learner A joined a Level 1 Supporting Teaching and Learning (ST&L) course and began to volunteer in her local school. She loved the work and learning the theory behind it. However, she was lacking confidence when speaking to people and was struggling to complete assignments and hit deadlines. Instead of progressing straight to the Level 2 ST&L course, Learner A agreed with us to focus on improving her English skills by taking an English for Work course and found better ways to manage her homework with her busy life.

She returned to complete the ST&L Level 2 course and although she still needed a little help to develop her study skills, she gained her qualifications. The strong base she had built, coupled with her qualifications and volunteering experience helped her to find work in a school.

Learner B always loved flowers. She knew she wanted to build a career in floristry but maths frightened her and she struggled with costing on spreadsheets during her initial Floristry course, despite the help she received through the Homework Club.

Instead of moving directly to the next qualification level, we offered her maths and digital skills courses where she developed the skills and confidence she needed to move to the next level of Floristry the following year. Learner B has since successfully completed her Level 2 Floristry and is planning her next steps.

We want you to succeed and gain all the skills and knowledge you need to reach your goals - not just to pass a qualification.

To help you succeed, we may advise you to take a different course to the one you expect, or ask you to undertake additional courses or studies which may be different from those your classmates are completing.

If you have any questions about the choice of courses available to you, please come and talk to us and we will explain the reasons behind our recommendations. If you are still unhappy, we will provide further skills tests where possible, which will be assessed by subject specialists, and a final decision will be made by the senior management team.

Responsibilities

Our responsibilities to you as a learner

We will:

- provide a safe and accessible environment
- if required for your course, arrange an interview and initial assessment prior to enrolment
- talk to you about assessment results, your goals and your commitments. We may limit the number of courses that we offer you at one time
- give clear instructions and help with enrolment
- ensure your application is processed promptly and in line with the council's Data Protection policies
- provide information on financing your course and receiving any financial support to which you may be entitled
- provide accessible learning opportunities for all, in line with our Equality and Diversity policy, including the use of IT
- provide support where possible if you disclose any disabilities and/or learning difficulties
- give information about equipment, materials or books which may be needed for the course
- provide suitably qualified and trained staff to deliver the programmes
- work with you to complete an Individual Learning Plan (ILP), which will contain your personal targets and goals and review your progress towards them at regular intervals
- provide you with all necessary health and safety instructions for your centre, specific to your course of study
- give free information, advice and guidance on progression routes, employability advice and opportunities and support you to work towards them throughout your learning journey with us
- provide regular opportunities for you to give feedback, which we will use to improve the service
- handle any complaints appropriately and efficiently

Your responsibilities as a learner

As a learner you are expected to:

- attend all classes regularly and inform us in advance when you cannot attend. Hillingdon Adult and Community Learning highly values attendance on courses. If attendance on a course is low, you may not be able to enrol on another course.
- attend all classes punctually. Please arrive a few minutes early so that we can start each session on time.
- show respect to all people at all times, in line with our Staying Safe and Equality and Diversity policies and our regulations
- familiarise yourself with our Health and Safety policies and procedures, comply with all instructions and act at all times with due regard for your safety and that of others
- wear an identification badge at adult learning centres, and comply with all safeguarding arrangements
- make a positive commitment to your own development and learning by:
 - setting your own personal targets with your tutor
 - reviewing your progress regularly through active use of your ILP
 - participating fully in sessions and ensuring that all work is completed and submitted on time
 - engaging with learning outside of class, for example through the use of our virtual learning environment (Moodle/Google Classroom) or with any additional support we agree with you
 - checking and responding to emails

- notify us as early as possible if you feel you are falling behind with work to enable us to support you
- notify us as early as possible if you have a learning difficulty and/or disability which may affect your learning, so that we can make reasonable adjustments
- co-operate with staff and other learners
- attend all exams and assessments punctually and fully prepared
- bring any concerns you have to the attention of staff at the earliest opportunity
- meet any financial commitments to HACL promptly
- understand that you will have to complete a certain amount of necessary paperwork in order for the service to give evidence of learning to relevant funding agencies
- take an active part in the various learner involvement strategies to help us improve the service
- respect HACL buildings, furniture, equipment and the environment, in line with our commitment to sustainability
- where car parking is available, park in designated places with regard for other users of the centre and residents near to the centre. *Please note: car parking is limited at all our centres and it may not be possible for you to park on site*
- respect the 'No Smoking' policies at all centres and surrounding grounds
- be respectful of our neighbours and dispose of your rubbish and cigarette butts in the bins provided

The service will not tolerate any form of bullying or harassment, as set out in its Staying Safe policy and point 6 of our regulations as stated in the brochure.

Support with your learning

HACL will do its best to provide additional support for those learners who need it, ensuring access for all in line with our Equality and Diversity policy and Mission Statement. We receive funding from the ESFA and the GLA to support learners and enable them to participate and achieve in learning.

In most cases, your tutor will be able to provide the support you need to enable you to achieve. Where you, or your tutor, feel you may need additional support, we can also offer:

Learning support

Learning support can be used to help learners with additional needs to participate and achieve. Learning support could involve:

- having a learning support assistant to help in or out of class
- learning materials that suit your needs, for example with larger print
- adaptive equipment
- someone to interpret, read or sign for you
- Moodle to provide you with learning materials
- support for maths, English, ESOL and ICT
- study skills for vocational learners, including referencing
- employment skills
- exam preparation, including techniques, language used in exams etc.
- homework support
- debate clubs and presentation clubs to further develop skills

Please talk to your tutor if you think this support could help you.

Bursary fund for learners receiving Advanced Learning Loans

Bursary funding is aimed at helping learners receiving Advanced Learning Loans, who have additional needs and/or specific financial hardship. Please ask centre staff for more information.

Support for learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties

'Disability' is defined as:

"A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on one's ability to do normal daily activities."

We are committed to ensuring that people with learning difficulties and/or a disability are treated fairly. We actively seek to encourage enrolments from all learners, regardless of any difficulties or disabilities and provide equal educational opportunities for all. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, all reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure that disabled learners are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to learners without a disability.

There is a section on the enrolment form that gives you an opportunity to disclose your disability and/or learning difficulty and we strongly encourage you to do so if you think this applies to you; this will help us to help you. Enrolment forms that identify a person with a disability will be forwarded to the learning support team and they will make initial contact with you to establish if there are any reasonable adjustments that can be made.

Disclosure can also be made at any time throughout the course. Should you choose to disclose your disability and/or difficulty to the tutor once the course is underway, you will be given the opportunity to be referred to the learning support team and asked to sign a form consenting to this. If you think you may be dyslexic, please discuss this with your tutor or contact our learning support team for more information.

In addition, if at any time during your course your tutor identifies other ways in which we can support you with your learning, they will complete a learning support referral form.

This will be discussed with you before being submitted to our learning support team and you will be asked to sign the referral form consenting to this.

Any information you provide will be treated with sensitivity and shared with HACL staff and other agencies on a 'need to know' basis.

Appropriate Adult Policy

There is advice and guidance available to support the enrolment of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

It is very important to ensure that anyone's decision to enrol is truly their own. HACL and partner organisations have a role to play in discussing the options, and we will seek to ensure that learners feel they are making informed decisions they are happy with. Even where information is presented as simply and clearly as possible some people will not be capable of making some decisions, or indeed of signalling their agreement. This is most likely to apply to some people with severe learning disabilities. However, all practicable steps must be taken to help the person make their own decision.

HACL staff will do their utmost to give advice and guidance to help find the best course for each learner. If a person is not capable of making or confirming a decision to enrol but it is deemed in their best interests, then HACL agrees that a parent or designated carer/support worker can sign the enrolment form on their behalf. Please note, HACL staff are not permitted to take on this role.

For further information please contact one of our centres.

Staying safe

HACL is fully committed to ensuring that the needs of all learners are at the centre of everything we do. We will strive to ensure that all learners and staff work and learn in a safe and supportive environment.

COVID-19 guidelines

Following the COVID-19 pandemic to help keep all the learners and staff safe, we recommend the below health and safety guidelines when attending the classes in the centre:

- test yourself twice weekly and report your results on the NHS website and HACL form
- wear a face covering over your nose and mouth in communal areas
- use the hand sanitiser provided and wash your hands regularly
- follow the signs displayed when in the buildings
- contact us if you need to self-isolate and have recently attended a class

Safety

Personal safety is essential for effective and successful learning and can only be achieved in an environment which promotes wellbeing and security for everyone, especially those who may be vulnerable. For these reasons, all learners, staff, volunteers, and visitors are issued with photo-ID badges. Please ensure that you wear yours whenever you are learning with us.

We will ensure we are fully compliant with all relevant legislation; undertake appropriate checks; combat bullying, harassment and discrimination; and ensure that all our staff and volunteers are appropriately trained.

HACL issues every learner with an email address and access to a virtual learning environment that supports learning and communication between learners in a safe way. There is no need for any learner to join other mechanisms with peer groups, e.g. WhatsApp, and this is not endorsed by the service. If you choose to do so, please ensure you take all precautions to stay safe.

HACL also supports the Prevent programme. Prevent is the UK Government's counterterrorism strategy which aims to stop people being drawn into, or supporting, terrorism.

All staff who work with young people or vulnerable adults have a duty to respond and report immediately any signs of harm, abuse or extremism that are recognised or disclosed.

Should you have any concerns about your own or someone else's safety, please report this to a member of staff as soon as possible. The staff member will report this as a safeguarding issue and a Designated Safeguarding Officer will investigate your concern. Information about Designated Safeguarding Officers is clearly displayed across the service.

A full copy of the safeguarding policy is available on Moodle.

Equality and diversity

HACL has a duty to celebrate diversity and ensure that everybody who comes into contact with the service is fairly treated and not discriminated against. The 2010 Equality Act prohibits discrimination in relation to:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marital status
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Both learners and staff are responsible for ensuring that we promote equality and diversity for all. This involves treating everybody with respect and dignity, not acting in a way which unfairly or unlawfully discriminates and being sensitive to each other's needs.

If you observe any behaviour that you find unacceptable and/or believe contravenes our Equality and Diversity policy, you have a responsibility to report this to a member of staff.

Confidentiality and data protection

All information is treated in confidence. We are, however, obliged to share some information about learners with the ESFA and the GLA, who fund the learning programmes we offer, and awarding organisations who issue qualifications.

In cases where we judge that you or others may be at risk, we have a duty to report our concerns to the relevant person or body.

HACL will ensure that all personal information supplied is held securely in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations. As a requirement of funding we have to retain other documents for set time periods including enrolment forms, attendance records, Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and qualification associated documentation.

Our full Data Protection Privacy Notice, which covers information about the personal data we hold about you, how we will use it, your rights in relation to it and the safeguards that are in place to protect it, can be found online at  www.hillingdon.gov.uk/adultlearning or at one of our learning centres.

Model release forms

Occasionally, we might ask if we can take photographs while you are learning, which may be used to promote the service. We will ask you to sign a model release form to confirm that you are happy for us to photograph you and use it for marketing and promotional reasons. If you are not happy for this to happen, you do not have to sign the form and you will not be photographed.

Sustainability

In line with HACL's aim to be as sustainable as possible, learners are asked to play their part in creating a more environmentally friendly borough. This could involve ensuring waste is disposed of or recycled appropriately and turning off lights and electrical appliances when they are not in use. You should also follow instructions about sustainable working from your tutor and other staff at our centres.

Getting involved

Feedback from learners

HACL is committed to offering learning opportunities of the highest quality. To achieve this aim your class may be visited and observed by members of staff to ensure our standards are being met. Your feedback is very important to us; we listen to it and act on it wherever possible.

Your honest participation in learner surveys and other learner involvement activities, such as class visits from our staff, enable us to determine what you think about your course and the service as a whole, and what improvements you would like to see.

Each class is invited to elect one course representative through whom you can direct any comments or complaints (see page 11). As a course representative, they can then apply to stand for election to the Learner Council. These are some of the ways in which we ensure that your voice is heard and that your learning experience is of the highest quality.

Compliments, comments and complaints

If you have any compliments, comments or complaints about the service please let us know. You can fill in a pink form (available at all our main centres) and post it in the box at each of our main centres. You can also access and submit the form online on Moodle.

If you wish to, you may write to us directly at:

Learner Engagement Officer,
Brookfield Adult Learning Centre,
Park Road,
Uxbridge, UB8 1NP

Exam complaints should be directed to:

Examinations and Assessments Officer,
Brookfield Adult Learning Centre,
Park Road,
Uxbridge, UB8 1NP

Volunteers and alumni

If you are a learner on one of our courses, you have the opportunity to contribute actively to the life of the service by joining our volunteer network. This could help you to gain confidence, improve your communication skills and boost your CV, whilst you help someone else and take part in our volunteer awards.

If you have already completed your learning with us, or are still with us but have progressed to a higher programme of study, you could help out by supporting new learners. This might involve visiting classes and speaking to students in order to inspire and encourage them, or helping out at an open day or a progression event.

Please speak to our Learner Engagement Officer or contact one of our centres to find out how you can start making a difference!

Course representatives

As part of our Quality Assurance policy and to establish good communication links between the service and learners, your class will be asked to nominate a representative to act on behalf of the group. The representatives will help the service gain feedback from learners as the courses progress and may also help to resolve any problems which arise. Course representatives must be elected by week three of the course. They will be expected to attend learner forums for their curriculum area.

Learner Council

If you are a course representative, you can stand for election onto our Learner Council where you will represent learners in the same curriculum area. You will be asked to consult with other learners on issues which affect them and you will have a chance to contribute to and influence the wider life of the service.

Other ways you can get involved:

- displaying your work in our centres or contributing to the learner newsletter
- attending our celebration events, such as certificate presentation evenings and the Festival of Learning events
- voting in Learner Council elections
- being a case study for the service
- volunteering to take part in a focus group

Celebrating and encouraging achievement

Throughout the year, we hold a series of events to celebrate and encourage achievement.

These include:

- **presentation events** where dignitaries present certificates to learners and volunteers to mark their achievements
- **extra curricular activities**, such as workshops, debates, demonstration evenings and competitions
- celebrating **100% attendance**
- annual **careers fair**

Look out for more information as we'd love you to join us and celebrate.