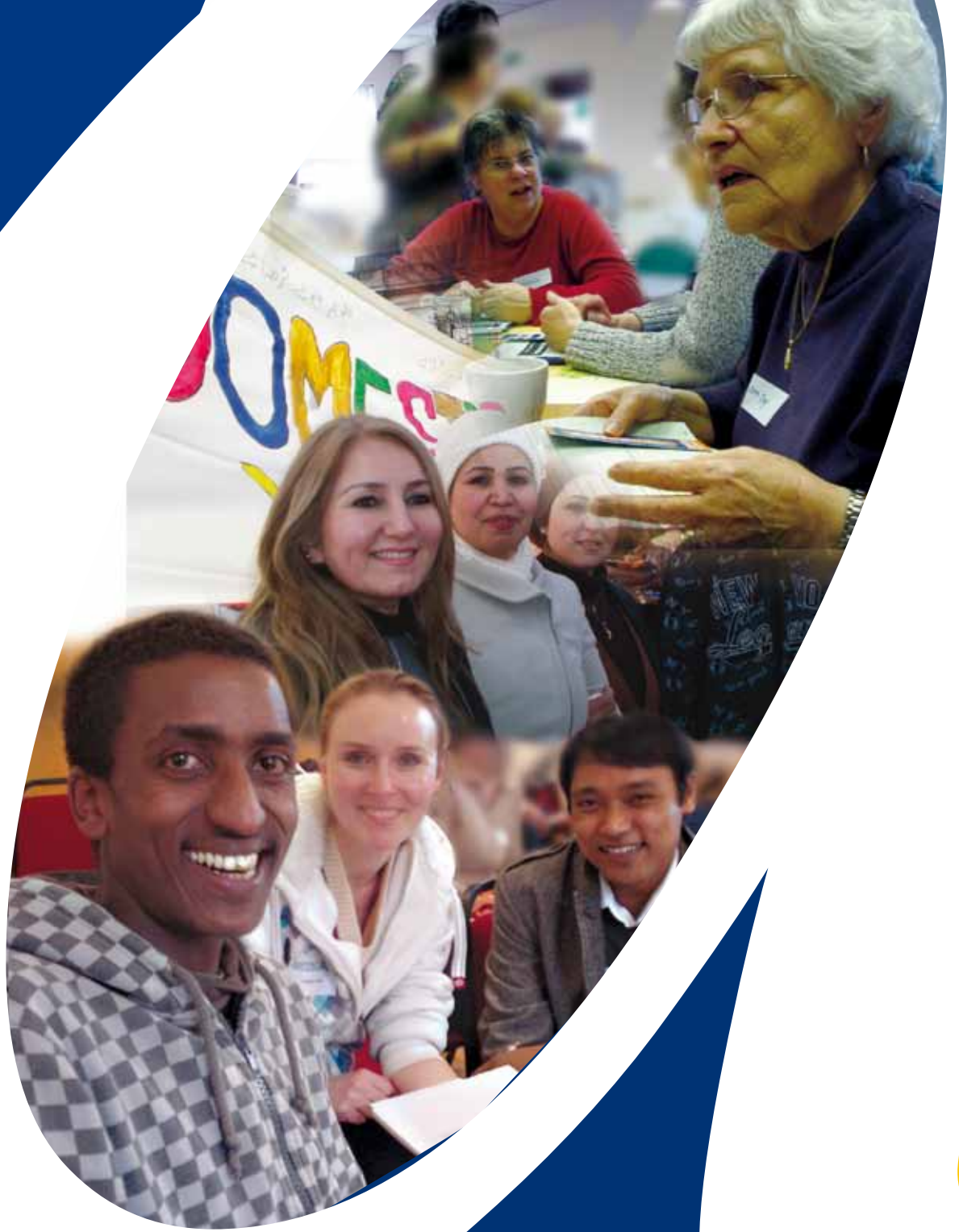


2011-12



# Services for Learners

A Guide to Financial & Other Support

The Workers' Educational Association is committed to Equality and Diversity



Learning for Life

## Services for learners

The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is a charity providing educational opportunities for adults. Our main funding is for people who are 19 years of age or over. This leaflet is designed to give you essential information about what to expect when you start a WEA course.

## Where to get more information

You can get more information:

- By talking to staff in your nearest Regional Office (see back page)
- From our brochures and other leaflets
- By talking to your local branch or local organiser
- By talking to your tutor, if you are already on a course
- From our website at [www.wea.org.uk](http://www.wea.org.uk).

You can also ask for the information in larger print, or for the information to be read to you. Some information is available in other languages.

For information about learning beyond the WEA, try the government's Next Step service at [nextstep.direct.gov.uk](http://nextstep.direct.gov.uk) or ring **0800 100 900**.

All our staff will treat requests for help confidentially. If you do not want to ask your tutor directly, you can speak to your local organiser – your tutor will have contact details – or to your Regional Office.

## Fees

Most WEA courses are publicly funded but learners usually contribute to their cost through a course fee.

A few publicly funded courses are completely free - for example, you are entitled to develop literacy and numeracy skills free of charge. Ask your Regional Office about having an assessment of your skills, about free courses and about taking a National Certificate.

To qualify for a publicly funded course, support with fees or other financial help you will usually need to be “settled” in the UK, or be the spouse, civil partner or child of someone who is settled. The main groups of settled people are:

- British or EU citizens, or people with Right of Abode in the UK
- EEA migrant workers previously settled in the EEA. (The EEA is the European Economic Area. It includes the EU plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and their Overseas Territories.)

- Refugees, or those with Leave to Remain or Humanitarian Protection
- People who have lived legally in the UK for the past 3 years (but not as full-time students).

In most cases, you will also need to be legally resident in the UK for 3 years when the course starts (although there are a few exceptions, so you may need to ask),

If you are on an eligible benefit you may be entitled to have your course fees paid through fee waiver. Eligibility for fee support depends not only on UK residency but also on income, and may vary from course to course. Not all courses qualify for fee waiver. You should always check with us either by visiting our course search at [www.wea.org.uk](http://www.wea.org.uk), or by contacting your nearest Regional Office.

Eligible benefits are listed on our Enrolment Form. Currently they include benefits such as Job Seeker's Allowance and Employment Support Allowance in the Work Related Activity Group. For most courses, there may also be fee waivers for Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Working Tax Credit (if your household income is below £15,276 p.a.) and Pension Guarantee Credit. Non-income-related benefits such as Disability Living Allowance do not automatically qualify you.

You will need to declare your residency status and provide evidence of your benefit when you enrol. If you are not sure of your status, ask your tutor or Regional Office for help.

At present, we do not know whether there will be any help with fees if you are seeking asylum. Contact your Regional Office for further advice.

## Financial support for course costs

If you are on benefit or a low income, there is limited financial support available through the WEA for some course costs, such as:

- Exam or accreditation fees
- Travel to and from your class
- Essential books, equipment or field trips, as set out in the course details
- Childcare (providing you are using registered childcare)
- Travel to and from your childcare provider.

Occasionally claims for tuition fees may also be supported if you are not otherwise eligible for fee remission.

Financial support funds are limited, so you should apply to us in good time. They are given out on the basis of residency eligibility and financial

hardship. You will be asked to:

- Show that you meet residency requirements (see previous pages)
- Show evidence of financial hardship, e.g. proof of benefit, evidence of low household income (usually below £15,276 gross p.a.), evidence of difficulty in balancing annual income and expenditure
- Sign a supporting declaration to say that you are experiencing financial hardship.

You can apply for help for up to three courses in each academic year. There are some upper limits on childcare and other costs which change annually. The £15,276 threshold may also change in the year.

Not every claim will be successful. However, if you receive financial support through us, you must:

- Let us know immediately if your circumstances change
- Refund the money if you leave without good reason
- Return books and equipment at the end of the course, if asked.

If you are seeking asylum and are aged 19 or over, you will not normally qualify for this financial support.

If you are over 19 and studying for at least 12 hours p.w. on a qualification-bearing course, you may be entitled to an Adult Learning Grant of up to £30 p.w. To find out more, ask your tutor, ring the national Learner Support Helpline free on **0800 121 8989** or visit [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk).

## Learning support

If you have a disability, a learning difficulty, a health issue or other support needs, we will do our best to provide specialist staff and resources to help you succeed on your course. Here are some examples of help:

- An assessment to find out what your needs are
- Help getting round the building
- Extra help in the classroom, e.g. someone to sign or take notes
- Extra time in exams or assessments
- Equipment such as hearing induction loops or magnifiers
- Extra help or tutorials for English, Maths or study skills.

We are still learning about the best ways to help, so the important thing is to discuss your needs with your tutor and tick the box on the Enrolment Form to say you need additional support. We will do our best to provide it.

If you would prefer to speak first to someone other than your tutor, contact your Regional Office and ask to speak to someone about learning support.

The person you speak to may need to pass on your details to your tutor or to other staff. For example, we may need to involve staff who can sign, or who are language or benefit specialists. In some cases, we may suggest that we talk to other organisations who may have helpful knowledge about your disability or difficulty.

If we need to talk to someone else on your behalf, we will ask for your permission first. The only exception is where there is likelihood of someone being harmed - for example, for child protection purposes.

We will also keep you informed about what is happening, and discuss any follow up action with you. If at any stage you are unhappy, let us know straight away. Contact your Regional Office, or use one of the methods described on page 7. You can also ask to see our Confidentiality Policy.

## During the course

We have a Learner Code of Conduct (see next page) to enable everyone to get the most out of learning with the WEA. It is based around our policies and should be given out or displayed in your classroom. For a large print version, ask your tutor or contact your Regional Office.

The WEA is committed to providing a welcoming environment where everyone is respected, valued, and can feel safe and secure. If you feel that you or other learners are unsafe for any reason at all, including discrimination, abuse, harassment or bullying, speak to a member of staff.

If you do not feel you can talk to your tutor, ring your Regional Office and ask to speak to a member of the safeguarding staff, or contact Marjorie LeGall, on **020 7426 3450**.

Most policies are on our website [www.wea.org.uk/policies](http://www.wea.org.uk/policies) or can be obtained on request from your Regional Office. The Code of Conduct is supported by the Learning Agreement set out on your Enrolment Form. Together with any ground rules that you agree with your tutor when your course begins, they set out your responsibilities, and form the basis for any disciplinary action that may be taken. Detailed disciplinary procedures are available on request.

If you are using computers, you will also be given a Student Computer Use Policy that sets out a code of conduct for using computers on WEA courses.

## The Learner Code of Conduct

When participating in WEA courses and activities, the following behaviour is expected of all staff, students and members:

- Act in a responsible way to safeguard your own health and safety and that of others (in line with the WEA Health and Safety Policy).
- Respect the different backgrounds, experiences and lifestyles of others.
- Act in ways, which do not discriminate against people of different backgrounds (in line with the WEA Equality and Diversity Policy).
- Do not use language which could offend others, e.g. racist, sexist, homophobic, ageist, or language offensive to people with a disability
- If you feel you have been treated with a lack of respect, been harassed, or discriminated against, contact either your course tutor or the WEA Regional Office. They will follow this up with you
- Comply with any other policies or rules of your centre. They will be displayed in the classroom, if applicable.

## After the course

At enrolment and induction, you will be provided with information about where your course can lead next. Your tutor will also discuss this with you towards the end of the course.

Whether or not you have finished your course, we also invite you to consider becoming a member or volunteer with the WEA. You can give us feedback or help take our work forward. Ask your tutor or Regional Office for more details

If you need more information or in-depth guidance than we can provide, we will always refer you to other organisations who can help.

The most useful of these is the government's adult careers service, Next Step. Next Step offers free comprehensive information and advice on learning and work, including CV building, careers quizzes and other activities. Visit [nextstep.direct.gov.uk](https://nextstep.direct.gov.uk) or contact the helpline free on **0800 100 900**. The helpline is open from 8 am until 10 pm, and advice is available in some community languages.

If you are under 20, you may also be able to get help from your local Connexions advice and support service, or ring the national line on **080 800 13219**.

Our leaflet called *What Next?* can also help. It is updated every year, and can be obtained from your Regional Office or downloaded from our website on [www.wea.org.uk](http://www.wea.org.uk). Your tutor should also have copies.

## Talking to us

We are always pleased to receive suggestions, compliments and complaints because they help us improve our service. There are several ways you can help us. You can:

- Complete the online learner satisfaction survey on our website.
- Contact our **Suggestions Line** on **0800 013 1903**, or email us at [suggestions@wea.org.uk](mailto:suggestions@wea.org.uk) to tell us what you like or suggest improvements.
- Become a WEA member and participate in the WEA's democratic processes.
- Complete surveys or take part in telephone interviews if asked
- Make a complaint if you feel there has been a problem.

You can register a compliment or complaint by telephone, letter, fax or email.

If you take part in a survey or interview, we guarantee to keep your identity confidential, unless you formally agree otherwise. We publish our results on our website at [www.wea.org.uk](http://www.wea.org.uk) and through WEA News (obtainable via Regional Offices).

If you do not want to be contacted by anyone for surveys, interviews or to be sent postal information, there are “opt out” boxes in the small print of your Enrolment Form. If you tick these, no one should contact you.

Our Complaints Procedure is available from our website, or ask your Regional Office. The complaint will be considered by a WEA Director. You should get a first response within one week of receipt of your complaint, and a fuller response within the next four weeks. If you are not happy with the response given by the WEA Director, you can appeal in writing to the **General Secretary at Workers' Educational Association, 4 Luke Street, London EC2A 4XW, telephone 020 7426 3452.**

## Our Service Aims and Objectives

### We can promise:

- A commitment to giving you impartial information and advice
- A commitment to equal opportunities and diversity
- Confidentiality - your personal information will not be shared with other organisations unless you give permission first (unless there are legal reasons for doing so)
- A response to requests for information and advice within 7 working days at the most
- A referral to other individuals or organisations for further information or guidance where this will be helpful to you.

### You can help us by letting us know what you think of us. You can:

- Complete surveys and questionnaires for us if asked.
- Suggest improvements or tell us what you liked by ringing our Suggestions Line on **0800 013 1903**, or emailing us on **[suggestions@wea.org.uk](mailto:suggestions@wea.org.uk)**.
- Become a WEA member or volunteer.
- Complain. Ask for a copy of our Complaints Procedure, or download it from our website.

Remember to tick the “opt out” boxes on your Enrolment Form if you do not want to be contacted for surveys or to receive postal information.

If you'd like more information about anything in this leaflet, or would like versions in larger print or other languages, contact your Regional Office.

*Cover photo: Courtesy of WEA Yorkshire and Humber Region*



### Regional contact details

#### **London & Southern Regions Support Centre**

Unit 57, Riverside 2

Sir Thomas Longley Road, Rochester ME2 4DP

**Telephone:** 01634 298 600

**Email:** [london&southernrsc@wea.org.uk](mailto:london&southernrsc@wea.org.uk)