Learning Fund 2026 Call 3 – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q. What is the Learning Fund?

A. The Learning Fund is delivered by the Antrim and Newtownabbey Labour Market Partnership (LMP) and funded by the Department for Communities (DfC). It supports local residents to gain new skills, qualifications, and licences that will help them secure employment or progress in their current career, addressing local skills and labour market shortages.

Q. Who can apply for the Learning Fund?

A. Individuals can apply if they are:

Aged 16 or over and not in full-time education (if under 18, a parent/guardian must apply on their behalf)

Resident in Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough (primary residence only)

Legally entitled to work in the UK

Unemployed, economically inactive, or currently in employment

Seeking employment or career progression

Q. How much funding is available?

A. The Learning Fund can provide:

Up to £500 for training courses

Up to £1,000 for HGV or Coach Driving licences

Funding can cover up to 100% of eligible costs, subject to eligibility, merit, and value-for-money assessment.

Q. What happens if the course costs more than the maximum award?

A. Applicants must clearly explain how any additional costs will be covered. Applications may not be progressed if this information is unclear or insufficient.

Q. What can the funding be used for?

A. Funding can support costs directly related to training, upskilling, qualifications, and accreditation, including:

Training, teaching, and assessment costs

Awarding body and exam fees

Training materials

Licensing costs

HGV/Coach Driving licence fees, including theory and practical tests

All training must be externally delivered and aligned to a clear employment or progression outcome.

Q. What cannot be funded?

A. The Learning Fund does not support:

Retrospective costs (training already started or paid for)

Travel or accommodation costs

In-house training provided by an employer

Recreational or personal interest courses

Training that is not accredited or industry recognised

Courses that can be funded through other programmes (e.g. Skill Up, Skills Focus)

Salary costs, ICT equipment, vehicles, capital works, or running costs

VAT or costs that can be reclaimed elsewhere

Cash payments or unauditable costs

Q. When must training be completed?

A. All training, assessments, and accreditation must be completed by 28 February 2027. Extensions are not available.

Q. How do I apply?

A. Applications must be submitted online via the Council's Grant Management System. Applications must be completed in full and submitted before training begins. Late or retrospective applications will not be considered. Closing date is Monday 30 November 2026.

Q. How are applications assessed?

A. Applications are assessed using a pass/fail eligibility process and reviewed on:

Eligibility and completeness

Evidenced need and barriers to employment or progression

Alignment between training and job or career outcomes

Value for money

Due to limited funding, eligible applications may be prioritised based on value for money or order of receipt.

Q. What happens if my application is successful?

A. Successful applicants will:

Receive a Letter of Offer outlining terms and conditions

Be required to sign and return the Letter of Offer within 10 days

Provide bank details for payment

Complete monitoring and evaluation requirements

The Council will also verify course costs, residency evidence, and that funding is not available elsewhere.

Q. How is the grant paid?

A. Payments are normally made:

50% upfront and 50% on completion, or

100% upfront in exceptional cases, where requested and approved

All claims must be supported by original receipts, bank statements, and evidence of course enrolment and completion. Cash payments will not be reimbursed.

Q. What monitoring and reporting is required?

A. Grant recipients must:

Complete equality monitoring

Complete pre-project, post-project, and 6-month follow-up questionnaires

Provide evidence of enrolment, completion, and qualifications achieved

Failure to meet monitoring requirements may result in grant withdrawal or clawback.

Q. What happens if I do not complete the training?

A. If training is not completed or the terms of the Letter of Offer are breached, the Council may invoke clawback procedures requiring repayment of part or all of the grant.

Q. What if my application is unsuccessful or ineligible?

A. You will be notified by email. Feedback is available upon request, and an appeals process is in place for unsuccessful applicants.

Q. Where can I get further support or advice?

A. If you are unsure about eligibility or need help completing your application, contact the Funding Unit. Officers can provide guidance to support a complete and eligible submission.