

Attendance

Policy, process and responsibilities

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1. Context

West Sussex Adult Learning Service (ALS) requires its learners to have high standards of attendance and punctuality at all planned sessions. We work to ensure the timely identification and intervention of potential attendance and retention issues with an overarching focus on supporting our learners to continue their learning, achieve their outcomes and progress to their next steps.

We appreciate that many of our learners are learning in challenging circumstances however, high levels of attendance are crucial if our learners are to achieve their learning goals and progress to their next steps in education and/or employment. As a service, we want to ensure that we are using a broad range of strategies to support learners' attendance and punctuality.

This policy outlines the responsibilities of ALS staff and the learner towards attendance. We are committed to identifying and addressing the issues which impact on learners' punctuality and attendance. Not only will this encourage full participation on courses and improve retention and achievement outcomes, but it will also support learners to achieve wider outcomes and develop strategies that will enable them to progress in all areas of their lives and work.

2. Aims of this policy

1. To safeguard our learners.
2. To support learners to achieve and progress by developing good attendance and punctuality.
3. To improve attendance, retention, and achievement rates on ALS courses and raise attendance levels to service targets.
4. To ensure learners' support needs are accurately identified for them to attend regularly and be on time for classes.
5. To ensure that all staff are aware of and carry out their roles and responsibilities.
6. To ensure learners are aware of their responsibilities.
7. To ensure that there is a consistent and effective approach to attendance, at all levels, across the service.

3. Scope and purpose

All staff directly and indirectly associated with the wider learning experience will need to be aware of the principles and ethos of this policy. Learning staff should also ensure that learners have access to and are aware of this policy.

4. Measurement of the impact of this policy

- Attendance, retention, and achievement rates.
- Feedback from learners/tutors.
- Monitored through registers and the observation process.

All activities associated with the quality cycle, including the monitoring of performance, must involve attendance statistics and the actions taken to address poor attendance.

5. Adult Learning Service Targets

West Sussex Adult Learning strives to achieve:

- a minimum attendance rate of 87%
- a retention rate of 90% on our programmes.

Beneath our overarching targets, managers agree specific targets with tutors and/or for courses, for example to allow for specific circumstances, to support improvement or where progress is behind expectations and end of course assessment is approaching.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 Learners

ALS learners are expected to:

- Attend all classes, as required.
- Arrive for classes punctually and ready to learn from the start.
- Contact their tutor in the event of sickness or absence.
- Provide advance notice of any planned absences and communicate the reason for the absence to their tutors.
- If absent from a class, find out about any work missed and complete it within the timescale agreed with their tutor.
- Contact their tutor immediately if any circumstances change that will impact upon their attendance, punctuality, or ability to participate in lessons or complete their course.
- Work with their tutors and the Adult Learning Service to overcome any barriers to attending classes regularly and on time.
- Recognise that poor attendance can affect the group and experiences of other learners.

6.2 Tutors

ALS tutors are responsible for:

- Communicating service-wide expectations to learners at induction or when they join the course that West Sussex Adult Learning Service expects 100% attendance and punctuality.
- Agreeing and setting clear ground rules about attendance and punctuality during induction.
- Sharing their work mobile number and westsussex.gov.uk email address with learners during induction and explaining how to report absence and lateness.
- Regularly making clear links between attendance, punctuality, and achievement on all ALS courses.
- Ensuring registers are complete, up-to-date, and accurate for all courses. This includes adding notes to the register with known reasons for absences and withdrawals.
- Contacting learners by email, text or phone after their first unauthorised absence to ask why they were absent, to encourage them to attend the next class and to remind them that they need to contact them if they are unavoidably

absent. Timely intervention can support learners to return to class and hopefully limit the impact of their absence upon their learning and progress.

- Sending the work which the learner has missed via email or other means, as agreed with the learner.
- Having an immediate conversation with a learner if their attendance or punctuality falls below the service target. This should explore the steps they could take to attend more regularly or arrive on time.
- Recognising changes and/or patterns in attendance that could potentially highlight a wellbeing issue or safeguarding concern, and to take further advice from their Curriculum Lead and/or the Designated Safeguarding Team.
- Having an awareness of appropriate IAG and signposting that could impact positively on a learner's attendance and achievement on their course.
- Notifying the Curriculum Support Team when a learner needs to be withdrawn. This should only happen once a learner has had three unauthorised absences, and all attempts have been made to contact the learner and support their return to class.
- Recognising and celebrating learners who achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality.

6.3 Curriculum Leads

Curriculum Leads are responsible for:

- Monitoring attendance and register marking for courses for which they are responsible on a weekly basis and ensuring timely interventions are in place.
- Reviewing the attendance and punctuality rates of tutors, managed as part of the performance review process.
- Setting attendance related objectives with tutors, where their courses have continued low rates of attendance, and monitoring performance against these.
- Supporting tutors to make clear links between good attendance, achievement on courses and progression into employment and/or further learning.
- Reporting on attendance and punctuality at management and quality meetings, taking timely actions to meet service targets and reporting on the effectiveness and impact of any actions and interventions.
- Supporting tutors to provide appropriate IAG and signposting that could impact positively on a learner's attendance and achievement on their course.

6.4 Curriculum Support Officers

Curriculum Support Officers are responsible for:

- Processing withdrawals of learners who have stopped attending or can no longer attend their course. Withdrawals are only processed when a Tutor confirms they have made attempts to contact a learner and/or offered appropriate support to a learner to return to their course.
- Notifying the Tutor and/or Curriculum Lead following contact by learners to the Adult Learning inboxes or telephone line where it is related to their course, including when linked to attendance.
- Maintaining the IAG SharePoint area and ensure all signposting links are up to date enabling Tutors and Curriculum Leads to provide appropriate IAG which supports learner attendance.

6.5 Programme and Quality Manager

The Programme and Quality Manager is responsible for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy.
- Ensuring relevant training and CPD for staff is provided.
- Monitoring attendance, retention and punctuality trends.
- Reviewing curriculum performance and agreeing actions with Curriculum Leads during termly Curriculum Performance Reviews.

7. Registers

The register is a legal requirement for all courses, and it is the responsibility of the class tutor to complete and update registers.

The register should be fully and accurately completed at the start of the session and subsequently updated should learners arrive late.

Electronic registers are accessed via [LearnerTrack](#). If the register cannot be completed in 'real time' on LearnerTrack, for example, due to wifi/data access issues, tutors must take a note of all learners (and support workers present, where applicable) and subsequently update the electronic register, no later than 24 hours after the end of each session.

8. Unexplained/Unauthorised Absences

It is a key responsibility of tutors to follow up all unexplained/unauthorised absences (X) as soon as possible and absent learners must be contacted, at the earliest opportunity after a class has ended. This follow-up forms part of our culture of safeguarding and the wellbeing we seek to provide, as well as supporting learners to access, engage and succeed in their learning with us. Timely intervention supports learners to return to classes and can have a positive impact upon attendance and retention rates.

If a learner has 3 or more unauthorised absences, tutors must note attempts to contact the learner in the comments tab on the register and email the Curriculum Support Team advising of the course instance number and learner's name.

Following this email, a Curriculum Support Officer (CSO) will attempt to make further contact with the learner and will then either finalise their withdrawal or refer to the Curriculum Lead if the learner makes further contact and requests to remain on the course.

9. Authorised/Explained and Reported Absences

All learners are expected to provide advance notice of any planned absences and must communicate the reason for the absence to their tutors. Authorised absences may include hospital appointments, family emergencies, work commitments and other extenuating circumstances. Learners may be required to provide evidence for any authorised absence.

An authorised absence (A) is counted as an 'attendance' so it is essential that work is completed satisfactorily by the learner and that the tutor notes the absence reason in the comments tab on the register. The tutor should agree the method for providing work with the learner as well as timescales for its completion and return for marking.

Where there is no opportunity for work to be set and completed, the absence should be marked on the register as explained (E).

Although we make every effort to support learners who are unable to attend, learners must make every effort to attend class to achieve their learning goals, progress to their next steps in education and/or employment and to reinforce our culture of safeguarding. Therefore, ALS management will continue to monitor the use of A/E marks and where there are concerns about a learner's attendance, this will be discussed with the Tutor/Curriculum Lead.

10. Addressing Attendance Concerns and Supporting Learners to Attend

Where a learner's attendance falls below the service target of 87%, tutors should address this with the learner as soon as possible. This conversation should explore the reasons behind the continued absence or lateness and steps that could be taken to support the learner to attend more regularly.

Any actions or targets for attendance that are agreed with learners must be added to their ILP. The group profile should also be updated to reflect individual circumstances.

Teaching staff have a core duty to actively engage with learners and where possible address barriers to attendance, thereby utilising learner feedback to improve the quality of the learning experience.

If any barriers to learning or support needs are identified, this must be discussed with the learner. If additional support is required, advice can be sought from the Curriculum Lead and a Learner Support Enquiry Form or Travel Support Application Form should be submitted to Adultlearning.Management@westsussex.gov.uk as soon as possible, if further advice or support is required.

When discussing attendance concerns, if a learner discloses a safeguarding concern, this should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Team as soon as possible.

11. Punctuality and Leaving Classes Early

Lateness needs to be challenged, but in a way that does not disrupt the lesson. If a learner arrives late, the tutor should ensure the learner settles into class quickly, with minimal disruption, and indicate that they will speak to the learner later in the session.

If a learner has a pattern of lateness, the tutor should speak to the learner at the earliest opportunity to identify and understand what may be impacting upon the learner's punctuality. This conversation should explore the steps they could take to arrive on time, such as changing their routine, travel arrangements, childcare arrangements, or work pattern.

There may be occasions where a learner's individual circumstances (e.g. caring responsibilities, school drop offs, work commitments etc) may lead to unavoidable continued lateness. In these circumstances, the tutor should discuss the situation with the learner and assess the impact of the continued lateness on the learner's ability to progress and achieve on the course. If the lateness can be managed appropriately and the learner can arrive within the first 15 minutes of the start of class, this must be documented on the group profile and monitored closely.

If a learner leaves the class before the scheduled end, the register comments tab must be updated to reflect this, evidencing the time that the learner left the class.

12. Learners Outside of the UK

Learners should remain in the UK throughout their learning, even learners who are learning online. Our funding rules do not allow us to continue funding where a learner is outside the country, even in temporary/emergency circumstances.

If a learner is temporarily absent from the UK, for example for a family event, for a short period, e.g. one week or less, then they may stay enrolled on the course and continue their learning. If they will be absent for a longer period than this, we cannot continue their learning while overseas.

If a learner informs their tutor that they are going to be outside of the UK for more than 1 week, tutors must inform their Curriculum Lead and send an email to the Curriculum Support Team stating the learners name, course code and briefly explaining the situation.

If the period of absence is unlikely to impact upon the learners' progress and achievement, based on the tutor's assessment, the learner will be marked as a break in learning and can return to their course, and continue their learning, if they return within an agreed and acceptable timeframe.

If the period of absence is expected to be prolonged and/or will likely impact upon the learner's progress, it may be necessary to withdraw the learner from the course.

13. Linked Policies/Documents

- Safeguarding and Prevent Policy and Process
- Learner Support Policy
- Learner Code of Conduct
- Learner Handbook
- Tutor Handbook
- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) statement

14. Access to this Policy

All WSCC ALS staff can access this, and all related policies, within the [Policy Hub](#) on the WSCC Adult Learning Service SharePoint.

Learners can request a copy of this policy from their tutor or by emailing Adult.Learning@westsussex.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Register Marks

Mark	Use	Impact on Attendance Rate
P	Present	Positive
A	Authorised absence For use where you have been notified in advance of a justifiable absence, with work set and completed by the learner. An authorised absence is counted as an 'attendance' so it is essential that work is completed satisfactorily by the learner.	Positive
N	Not needed Either the session didn't run, or the learner was not required to attend, e.g. late starter or early completer (by agreement and with supporting evidence). Note also that following a learner's transfer to another course, N can be used on the register.	Not counted
S	Sick / unwell	Negative
E	Explained / reported absence The learner has reported they will be absent e.g. due to caring responsibilities, extenuating circumstances, work commitments, medical appointments etc but there is no opportunity to set and complete work.	Negative
X	Absent: unauthorised / not reported. Note also that following a learner's withdrawal, X can be used for future non-attendances.	Negative
L	Late	Positive

Appendix 2: Attendance Flow Chart

