



**Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council**

CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS

Labour Market Partnership

Working Together



Personal Learning Account Fund 2026 27 Guidance Notes

Please note this is a rolling call for applications and will remain open until 12.00pm noon on Thursday 15th October 2026 or the budget is expended.

Assessments will be held weekly as outlined in section 3.6 below. Applications will be assessed on a first come first served basis, until all funding is allocated.

Council Reserve the right to close the fund at short notice when the budget is allocated.

Contents

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. Purpose of Grant Programme
- 1.2 Strategic Fit
- 1.3 Level of Grant Award
- 1.4 General Principles
- 1.5 Who can apply?
- 1.6 What can be funded?
- 1.7 What cannot be funded?
- 1.8 Exclusions

2.0 How to answer the questions.

3.0 How we assess and score your application.

- 3.1 Eligibility Assessment
- 3.2 What if an application is not eligible?
- 3.3 Assessment and Scoring
- 3.4 What happens if an application is successful?
- 3.5 What happens if an application is unsuccessful?
- 3.6 Grant Application Assessment Schedule
- 3.7 Application Process
- 3.8 Fraud and Corruption

Appendix 1

Data Protection Act

Freedom of Information Act

1. Introduction

The Personal Learning Account Fund has been developed to enable employability related upskilling within the Causeway Coast and Glens labour market. Participants have the opportunity to gain new skills and qualifications that will help them take a step closer to employment or enhance their employability and career prospects.

This fund is aimed at all people aged 16 and over, resident within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area and with a legal right to work in the UK. The programme will fund up to £500 (@100%) training per participant per financial year.

You may find it helpful to discuss your application with a member of the Labour Market Partnership (LMP) team before submitting:

Please email or call:

- LMP@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk
- The LMP team on 028 7772 2226

1.1 Purpose of Grant Programme

Causeway Coast and Glens Labour Market Partnership (LMP) is a funded programme established by the Department for Communities (DfC) to address key challenges in the local labour market for both local residents and local employers.

The programme aims to improve employability outcomes and labour market conditions locally by delivering a tailor-made action plan reflecting local conditions and needs. The LMP will support the delivery of Employability NI and as such will work closely with people that are unemployed, under-employed or needing to upskill.

The LMP will also work closely with local employers who are looking to attract talent to their business. The Personal Learning Account Fund has been developed to enable participants to gain new skills and qualifications to secure employment, or to progress in their current employment

1.2 Strategic Fit

The fund links to Council's Community Plan under the following themes:

Community Planning Outcomes: All people of Causeway Coast and Glens will contribute to and benefit from a thriving economy built on a culture of growth, entrepreneurship, innovation and learning.

The Causeway Coast & Glens area provides opportunities for all to contribute to and engage in a more prosperous and fair economy.

If your application is successful, you will be contractually obliged to provide information to Council's Labour Market Partnership Team. This will include monitoring progress and expenditure incurred, discussing challenges or obstacles and fulfilling the reporting requirements stipulated in the Letter of Offer. Please do not apply if you cannot fulfil these requirements.

1.3 Level of Grant Award

The Personal Learning Account Fund can provide funding of up to 100% costs up to a maximum of £500. Match funding is not a requirement.

If required, grants may be released upfront in full upon evidence and confirmation of course registration. This must be requested from grants team via email to grants@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk as payments will not be automatically made upfront.

If the training costs more than £500 you will be asked how you will cover the additional cost. If this is not clear, your application may not be progressed.

This is a competitive process, and all grant awards will be determined on the basis of merit. Applicants are advised that those who that have been successful in securing Council funding in the past will not automatically be guaranteed funding in the future. Council reserves the right to reduce the amount of funding awarded if we do not consider that the amount applied for represents value for money or if there are insufficient funds available to meet the request.

Please Note: Successful applicants will have to provide all evidence requested once the project expenditure is complete. (This will include payment receipt, certificate and a claim checker form).

1.4 General principles

In line with Council's Grant Funding Policy, the overarching principle for all Council grant funding is that of meeting local needs which have been identified and prioritised by Council or by others and acknowledged by Council.

Funding is allocated via a competitive process and funding is not guaranteed. Therefore, any costs incurred prior to the Assessment Panel Approval / Rejection are not the responsibility of Council.

The key thing to demonstrate in your application is how this funding will improve your employment opportunities. You must also demonstrate why you need to do the course / qualification, and detail how this helps you overcome a barrier. Specifically, this includes helping you either:

- **Get a new job**
- **Secure more hours of work**
- **Get a higher rate of pay**
- **Securing your employment (if this is at risk)**
- **Offer more services which generates more income (if self-employed)**

If course fees (either a deposit or in full) must be paid prior to making your application these are made at your own risk and Council are under no obligation if your application is unsuccessful. We encourage applicants to not pay any fees until the Letter of Offer is received and accepted.

Where a deposit or payment is required to secure a place on the course, it must be paid no more than 30 calendar days prior to applying for the fund.

Please be aware that all grant applications MUST be submitted prior to the course start date. Applications received after the course begins will not be eligible.

Please note,

- Applicants who have previously received PLA (and/or Business Seed) Funding must have completed and submitted all claim documentation. Applicants with outstanding or incomplete claims cannot submit a new application.

- Applicants cannot apply for two or more courses at one time. One course must be completed and claim returned before applying for funding for a second course.
- Applicants can apply to various calls within the financial year, if previous claims are closed, but the overall amount allocated to any individual within the financial year cannot exceed £500.

Any activity that cannot be shown to meet the following basic requirements will not be provided with funding:

- Have a clearly identified need i.e., the application addresses barriers which the individual faces with regard growth in their employability and career opportunities.
- Can deliver outcomes which meet this need.
- In the case of this funding, support local people to achieve new skills and qualifications to secure employment or to progress in their career.
- The training and delivery will be undertaken by a credible, viable business with the capacity to deliver the project as stated and for reasonable value for money.
- Funding for the course or qualification is not available elsewhere.
- Reflect the statutory remit of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council aligning with the Council's Corporate Plan, the relevant Service Plan and meets the specific criteria of the fund.
- Applicants must demonstrate their commitment to promoting Good Relations and Equality of Opportunity.
- In the interests of transparency, equality and accountability, all eligible applicants will have a right of appeal should their application be rejected.

For those looking to become self-employed, the scoring panel may at times refer them to other LMP programmes if eligible for additional support.

If someone has no previous experience in the sector they wish to start a business in, the scoring panel may refuse their application for funding if there is a concern over the course not leading to self-employment or the course being deemed as 'recreational'.

All training, assessment and accreditation must be started by Friday the 30th October 2026 and completed by Wednesday the 30th June 2027 There is no provision for extending this deadline.

Applications cannot be progressed for courses which have started prior to an application being received.

1.5 Who can apply?

The key criteria for the grant is as follows:

- Individuals aged 16 and over (if under 18 a parent or guardian must submit and accept on behalf of the candidate, and the parent must input their bank details for the payment of the grant).
- Resident in the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area (this must be your main residence and not a second home or holiday residence).
- Eligible to work in the UK (we may ask for evidence to support this).
- Looking to find employment or progress in your career.
- The grant is open for applications to people who are unemployed, economically inactive and also in employment.
- Individuals who have a financial barrier to upskilling.

Please note, candidates who have received PLA Funding previously must not have any outstanding or incomplete claims. If your previous claim is outstanding or incomplete your application will not be considered by the Assessment Panel.

If a candidate has any arrears with the Councils Grants and Funding Unit, they cannot apply to PLA until a debt Management Plan is in place, **AND** a minimum of 3 payments made. These candidates cannot apply for an advance payment.

Please contact the Funding Unit if you are unsure.

Phone [028 7034 7198](tel:02870347198) or grants@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

These criteria are mandatory and an application will not proceed without them.

1.6 What can be funded?

Examples of expenditure that can be funded through this grant include:

All associated costs of training, upskilling, qualification and accreditation including:

- Teaching / training / assessment costs
- Awarding body costs and exam fees
- Training materials costs including licencing costs

1.7 What cannot be funded?

This funding programme will not award grants to the following:

- Individuals whose address is outside the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area (This must be your primary residence and not a second home or holiday residence).
- Anyone under the age of 16 (if under 18 a parent or guardian must submit, accept and receive the funding on behalf of the candidate).
- Individuals without a legal right to work in the UK.
- Courses that are either not accredited or industry recognised.
- Recreational or personal training courses not wholly and exclusively linked to employment, e.g. driving lessons for car and for trailers. Industry related driving courses such as Heavy Goods Vehicle and Bus driving however, are allowed.
- A course or qualification that can be funded elsewhere through a different programme or funding source (e.g. Skill Up, Skills Focus, Invest NI, Jobs and Benefits Office). (Extenuating circumstances will be considered, e.g. if a course training location or class times etc is not suitable considering your work rota or caring responsibilities etc).
- A foundation course to progress to a university degree.
- A university degree or post graduate qualification.
- A course that is deemed not to be value for money (market comparisons will be undertaken by the Assessment Panel). If deemed suitable, applicants may be encouraged to consider alternative lower cost courses of a similar nature.
- Courses from dubious, unsecure or questionable websites or providers (as deemed by scoring panel investigation).
- Political Organisations.
- Any business or organisations where there are ethical or reputational considerations – e.g., gambling, money lending, adult entertainment, tobacco products or cannabis products not authorised as medicines, debt factoring, hire purchase financing; pyramid schemes; projects which have as their object the promotion of political or religious views; illegal or immoral activities.
- Any other business or organisations that the Council may from time to time deem to be ineligible.

1.8 Exclusions

The purpose of this funding is to support training, upskilling and qualifications leading to employment or career progression.

Costs must be wholly and exclusively towards training, upskilling, qualification and accreditation activities.

In general, the following will not be eligible for funding: -

- Retrospective expenditure where course fees, awarding body registration, and other services/items have already been obtained and paid.
- Applications for funding received after the closing date as specified.
- Costs that are not auditable e.g., **cash payments**
- Travel costs.
- Accommodation fees.
- Costs towards ongoing running costs (e.g., electricity, rent, rates, insurance etc.).
- Building costs, capital improvements or refurbishments of any property.
- On-going licence or membership fees, unless integral to the qualification.
- Loan repayments.
- Costs for purchase of ICT Equipment.
- Mobile assets e.g. bicycles, cars, vans, lorries, boats, trailers, horse-boxes, diggers.
- Second-hand equipment including refurbished equipment.
- General maintenance or refurbishment works.
- Servicing of existing equipment.
- Information websites.
- Consumable items that are used by the business and replaced regularly because they wear out or are used up e.g. printer ink, high-vis vests for staff, hand sanitiser.
- General items required for business / self-employment.
- Costs towards banking charges and / or repayment of debt.
- Costs that can be claimed back from elsewhere e.g. VAT.
- Activities which are party-political in intention, use or presentation.
- Salary costs.
- Alcohol, gratuities, gifts and prizes.
- Purchase of stock for general trading purposes.
- Insurance costs.

2.0 How to apply.

Applications for financial assistance from Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council for the Personal Learning Account Fund 2026/27 should be submitted online at <https://grants.ccqbcapps.com/>

Applicants will be required to create an account if this is their first time using the grants and Funding Page. If they have used the grants and funding page before they will have to login using the account name and password which was previously created.

Once registered you will be required to complete several questions relating to the course including start and end date, total hours, the qualification awarding body, total costs which may need to be broken down, the organisation delivering the training, why you want to undertake the training, and how is it going to help you either find employment or progress in your career. Other additional questions may be included depending on the requirement of funders.

If you have secured funding in previous years, you can reapply for additional training.

Guidance on completing the application online is provided via the website link above and can be seen below in section 3.3. All sections must be completed as fully and comprehensibly as possible.

A paper version of the application form is available if required (contact the Funding Unit by email grants@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk).

3.0 How we assess and score your application.

Every application that is received will be assessed for the following:

1. To ensure that the individual is **eligible** to apply to this particular grant programme.
2. How much the course will **help advance the employment opportunities and prospects** of the applicant.

An acknowledgement receipt will be electronically issued to you once your submission has been received (part-completed applications and those showing as 'draft' will not be accepted. It is essential that you click 'Submit' on completion. Please check your emails for submission confirmation.)

The Funding Unit will assess your application for eligibility. If your application is eligible to apply for grant aid from the Personal Learning Account Fund, it will be forwarded to the relevant service area for a full assessment and scoring against the criteria.

3.1 Eligibility Assessment

The Eligibility of the application form will be awarded a pass or fail rating. If the applicant, based on the information supplied, is able to satisfy the Council of their eligibility to draw down the grant, they will progress to the next part of the process.

You must have zero outstanding claims under previous Personal Learning Account Fund / Business Seed Fund calls before submitting for another grant application. If you are unsure, please contact the LMP or Funding Unit team.

3.2 What if an application is not eligible?

If your application is not eligible (e.g. you do not live in the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area, or your application is incomplete), you will be notified and the reasons will be outlined to you. Your application will not proceed to assessment and scoring.

If you are not eligible for funding through the Fund, you may wish to contact Council's Labour Market Partnership Team who may be able to signpost to other sources of support.

3.3 Assessment and Scoring

During your application you will be required to answer several questions. The application will be assessed against the following criteria:

- The applicant is aged 16 and over at the time of application. (Pass / Fail)
- The applicant is resident in the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area (this must be your main residence and not a second home or holiday residence). (Pass / Fail)
- The applicant is eligible to work in the UK. (Pass / Fail)
- The applicant is looking to find employment or progress in their career, OR If self-employed, the course must help the enterprise to be more sustainable. (Pass / Fail)
- The course is accredited, or industry recognised. (Pass / Fail)
- The course has not already started by date of application submission.-(Pass / Fail)
- The course is wholly and exclusively for employment and career purposes and not recreational or personal. (Pass / Fail)
- The course is appropriate and can deliver outcomes which meet the need of the applicant. (Pass / Fail)
- The course or qualification cannot be funded elsewhere (e.g. Invest NI, Skill Up, Skills Focus, Job Centre Adviser Discretionary Fund) (unless other courses are not suitable e.g. considering work commitments or caring commitments). (Pass / Fail)
- A course that is deemed to be of reasonable value for money. (Pass / Fail)
- The training and delivery will be undertaken by a credible, viable business with the capacity to deliver the project as stated. (Pass / Fail)
- All training, assessment and accreditation must be **started by 30th October 2026 and completed by the 30th June 2027**. There is no provision for extending this deadline. (Pass / Fail)
- The applicant has no outstanding claim documentation to submit regarding past Personal Learning Account grant calls. (Pass / Fail)

Questions will also be asked in relation to your current employment situation and how the course will help you progress in your career. Questions will include:

- What is your current employment status (not assessed)
- What are you currently doing and/or have done in the past for work? (not assessed)

- **What kind of work do you hope to do once you achieve this qualification?** The job that you want to progress towards must be suitable and appropriate, e.g. be in your travel to work area. As well as including details of the type of job please include things like salary, employers looking for these skills and qualifications etc.
(Pass/Fail)
- **Why do you need this course / qualification?** Please explain why this course / qualification will help you either:
(1) get a new job, (2) secure more hours of work, (3) get a higher rate of pay, (4) secure your employment, (5) or help you offer more services (if self-employed).
(Pass/Fail)

3.4 What happens if an application is successful?

If an application is successful, Council will issue an electronic Letter of Offer which is a legal agreement with the applicant to deliver on the proposals outlined in their application form. Signed Letters of Offer must be returned within 14 days of receipt. If successful, applicants can avail of support that will explain the processes and procedures that relate to programme monitoring, submitting a financial claim, requesting a change to programme, promoting Council's support for the programme, monitoring and evaluation requirements and the process of verification.

If required, grants may be released upfront in full upon evidence and confirmation of course registration.

Applicants are required to submit certificates, receipts and council monitoring documentation at the end.

3.5 What happens if an application is unsuccessful?

If an application is not successful, officers from the Council will be available to go through the application and provide practical developmental support to address areas of concern.

An Appeals Process / Review Procedure is also available if an application is unsuccessful. The purpose of this is to ensure that the decisions taken and procedures followed for individual applications are applied fairly and consistently.

The Review will provide an independent process through which an applicant will have the opportunity to demonstrate to the Review Panel that either:

- the outcome was unreasonable or
- that the proper procedures were not followed

Appeals on any other grounds will not be considered.

3.6 Grant Application Assessment Schedule

The Personal Learning Account Fund will be **open for applications on the 4th August 2026 and close at 12.00pm noon on Thursday the 15th of October 2026.**

No late applications will be accepted under any circumstances, and all required supporting documentation must be supplied at time of submission or the application will not be considered.

Assessment/scoring of application will take place weekly.

3.7 Application Process

All applications for financial assistance from Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council for The Personal Learning Account Fund 2026/27 should be submitted online via Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's online Funding Hub at:

<https://grants.ccgbcapps.com/>

A paper version of the application form is available if required.

It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure that their application is submitted prior to the advertised time and date of closing. Applications received after the closing time/date will not be considered for funding. No exceptions will be made and there is no recourse to appeal.

The deadline for submissions to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's Personal Learning Account Fund 2026/27 is 12.00pm noon on Thursday 15th October 2026.

3.8 Fraud and Corruption

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is committed to carrying out business fairly, honestly and openly and has a zero tolerance towards fraud, bribery and corruption. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council expects full compliance with the requirements of both the Fraud and Corruption Policy and Bribery Act 2010 from Groups or Individuals applying for, or in receipt of grant aid. This is also relevant to Councillors, Employees, Agents, Partners and Suppliers involved in your project/event. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is committed to developing, implementing and maintaining effective procedures and controls to prevent any occurrence of fraud and corruption. The Fraud and Corruption Policy can be found on the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council website.

All cases of irregularities or anomalies involving attempted or suspected fraud will be reported to appropriate authorities, including the Northern Ireland Audit Office, PSNI and any other relevant funding body (if applicable) or departments within the Council (if applicable).

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council reserves the right to disallow any other grant applications and claims submitted by a group or an individual member of a group in respect of the financial year and to apply a moratorium on Council funding to any group or individual member of a group where fraudulent activity has been identified within the current financial year and for at least two forthcoming financial years. This also applies to individuals applying or claiming for bursaries.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council will inform the group's Chairperson where attempted or suspected fraud has been identified.

Appendix 1

Data Protection Act

- We will use the information you give us on the application form during assessment and for the life of any grant we award you to administer and analyse grants and for our own research.
- We may give copies of this information to individuals and organisations we consult when assessing applications, when monitoring grants and evaluating the way our funding programmes work and the effect they have. These organisations may include accountants, external evaluators and other organisations or groups involved in delivering the project.
- We may also share information with other government departments, organisations providing match funding and other organisations and individuals with a legitimate interest in applications and grants, or for the prevention or detection of fraud.
- We might use the data you provide for our own research. We recognise the need to maintain the confidentiality of vulnerable groups and their details will not be made public in any way, except as required by law.

Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives members of the public the right to request any information that we hold, subject to certain exemption that may apply. This includes information received from third parties, such as, although not limited to, grant applicants, grant holders and contractors. If information is requested under the Freedom of Information Act we will release it, subject to exemptions, although we may consult with you first. If you think that information you are providing may be exempt from release if requested, you should let us know when you apply. For further information please visit the Information Commissioner's Office at www.ico.gov.uk