



SML HUB LIVERPOOL

PARENT HANDBOOK

The Parent Handbook provides an overview of what SML Hub Liverpool can offer young people and parents, including our vision and reasons behind setting up the hub.

**Empowering young people to shape
their own learning.**



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1. Welcome!

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to SML Hub Liverpool! On behalf of the entire community, we are delighted to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to you. We are thrilled that you have chosen our Hub for your child's journey, recognising the importance of a nurturing environment that fosters holistic growth.

SML Hub Liverpool was created out of necessity, by two passionate home-educating parents, Jill and Mia, looking for something community driven, where young people have full autonomy over their own learning. Through researching various different approaches, and reading about the SML College in Hove, following Dr Ian Cunningham's pioneering approach, SML Hub Liverpool was born based on a simple belief that *'learning is most powerful when it is chosen; not imposed'*.

Our goal is to provide a learning environment that is holistic and nurtures the whole person, emphasising the development of strong, critically thinking, and deeply connected characters. We strive to create an atmosphere where students feel supported, seen, inspired, and empowered to realise their own potential.

We take immense pride in our dedicated and highly qualified Mentors and know they are committed to creating an inclusive and compassionate community where each and every individual feels valued and respected.

As parents, your involvement is crucial in creating a successful partnership between home and the SML Hub. We encourage you to actively participate in your child's journey, by volunteering, attending any meetings offered, checking in with your child and by trying your best to allow some mistakes and by making sure they have good attendance. We believe that by working together, we can provide the best possible support and guidance to our learners, ensuring their growth and success.



2. What is Self Managed Learning?

Self Managed Learning (SML) is an approach that trusts young people to take an active role in their own learning, supported by thoughtful adults (Mentors) and a rich environment.

At the SML hub, learning is not organised around a fixed curriculum, lessons, or age-based expectations. Instead, learners are supported to:

- Follow their interests and questions
- Develop skills as they become meaningful and relevant
- Take increasing responsibility for their choices and actions
- Reflect on their learning and personal growth

This does not mean that learning is left to chance. Mentors and peers carefully observe, listen, and respond to each learner, offering resources, conversations, and opportunities that support growth without taking control away.

Self Managed Learning recognises that:

- Young people learn best when they feel respected and trusted
- Motivation comes from curiosity and purpose, not pressure
- Learning is individual, non-linear, and cannot be standardised

For learners aged 11+, this approach supports not only academic development, but also confidence, independence, emotional maturity, and self-knowledge; skills that are *essential* for adulthood.

Freedom and Flexibility in Learning

The difference in the Self Managed Learning approach lies in providing a structure through which young people can plan, organise and carry out their own learning activities, enabling each individual to decide what they want to learn and how they want to learn it. In doing so, they develop lifelong skills in independence, responsibility, problem solving and self direction that extends far beyond their time with us.



A Proven Alternative

We know a great deal about how children and young people learn, most importantly, that they are all *different*. In society, there are many assumptions about what and how young people should learn; this is often shaped by fixed beliefs or traditions.

At SML Hub Liverpool, we recognise that every young person is unique, with their own interests, strengths, and ways of learning.

Since the 1970s, extensive research and study has been carried out into how best to provide personalised learning. From this valuable work, the SML approach emerged as a proven framework that supports young people to learn in ways that suit them as individuals.

At SML Hub Liverpool, we are building on this strong foundation. We share the same core belief that young people should have freedom and flexibility in their learning. Self Managed Learning gives students a genuine choice of how they learn. Some may prefer to use technology, others may use books and resources, or spend time with a mentor for one-to-one support. They may choose to work collaboratively on projects. What's important is that their voices are heard! This flexibility allows young people to find the approaches that work best for them, helping them to be both engaged and effective in their learning.

Research has identified at least 57 different modes and contexts in which young people can learn. These range from individual activities, such as reading, writing, or using technology, to collaborative approaches like group projects, discussions, or practical, hands-on work. The variety demonstrates that learning is not limited to a single setting or style instead, young people thrive when they can explore and combine methods that fit their interests, goals, and preferred ways of working.

3. How can SML help my child?



It is a somewhat strange assumption, to imagine that what is taught should equal what is learned. If teaching worked perfectly then presumably every child would pass in every exam that they took.

Classroom teaching seems to be aimed at a mythical 'average' child. This average child does not exist. Every child is so different and there is no such thing as an average child.

We know that there are huge differences in the way people prefer to learn. Educational structures that rely on control can often leave children passive and expecting someone else to undertake the task of transmitting knowledge and skills; in this students learn to *receive* an education, as if it was something done to them. One that's not even aimed towards them, but rather geared toward the average child.

The Centre for Self Managed Learning conducted research around learners who had the freedom to learn in their own way, and discovered at least 57 more ways in which we can learn. At SML Hub Liverpool, students are empowered with this same choice, and with it they discover the freedom to learn in their own unique ways. Through this individual differentiated approach, our students embrace their own style of learning. Some may like using a computer whereas others prefer to read books and some like more adult support, whereas others require more independence. Some learners may just need a safe environment to practice life skills. We are *journey focused not outcome driven*.

Our young people learn they have agency in a manner that is conducive and personal to them so they don't become passive in, but central to, the outcomes of their own learning. On some level, Self Managed Learning already naturally happens. Young people will want to choose what they learn and how often they learn. Some decide that they like a particular subject and do more work in that area; others just don't see the point of a particular subject and decide not to take it seriously. No matter how skilled; educators can't get inside people's brains and control what is actually learned.



SML Hub Liverpool hopes that by providing a dedicated space where young people will collectively add meaningful structure, they will find resources to compliment whatever education they are already experiencing at home, and find an intrinsic motivation that drives them from inside, towards their own goals.

At SML Hub Liverpool, we draw on decades of research into Self Managed Learning, which creates a structure that gives young people a meaningful alternative to school-based systems, schools which were largely designed for the world of the 19th century. A 21st century model must respond to a complex and rapidly changing world where the idea of a static, job-for-life is long gone, and where continuous Self Managed Learning is an essential skill.

We support children in the breadth of their learning. Young people need the space and encouragement to take charge of their own lives, as this not only improves mental health but also allows them to take their learning wherever it leads them.

Continuing to pressurise our children into passing exams under the assumption that this is going to get you into a university and therefore give you a good career, is the greatest of lies; unfortunately one that can create misery for many young people.

What Are Employers' Views?

Taken directly from the work of Dr Ian Cunningham, every credible survey of the views of employers' over the last 20 years comes to similar conclusions: that schools are failing by neglecting important aspects of learning such as, creativity, the ability to get on with other people, and the ability to be self disciplined and self managing.

Through the work of Dr Ian Cunningham, it became apparent that many graduates, including those with first class honours degrees, were struggling to secure employment. This was particularly striking because the creative and digital sector in his local area was experiencing skills shortages, with many employers reporting difficulties recruiting suitable candidates.



4. Is this setting right for my child?



The most important requirement is that your child genuinely wants to attend SML Hub, attendance should never be forced. For them to take ownership of their learning, the model works best when they are willing and intrinsically motivated to participate and engage. We operate as a learning community and cannot take on any young person who is not able to be part of the learning community.

SML has some strict non-negotiable aspects, which may be difficult for some of the students to conform to. Peer support, for example, is an integral aspect of the learning group structure, making it essential to maintain a cohesive bond within the group throughout the process. This dynamic will benefit not only the individual but also contribute to the overall success of the entire cohort.

SML Hub is a democratic community where everyone works together to address shared issues. This process requires openness and vulnerability, and sometimes it requires the ability to engage in discussions within the wider community. If your child finds it challenging to take part in group discussions about their learning agreements or to talk about personal or community issues, and will not participate in such settings, this environment may not be suitable for them. As a small hub with limited resources, we are not able to accommodate students who may have requirements beyond what the model provides.

We are not in a position to provide, for example, therapeutic support where students might need this. It is essential to understand that we are not attempting to provide an alternative to school or any type of organisation that would replicate existing school-like structures. SML Hub empowers students to take responsibility for developing their community, their learning and this includes being a supportive member of a learning community for the time that they attend.



5. The role of adults at the SML Hub.

The Role of Adults

At SML Hub Liverpool, our role as adults is to assist young people in learning in ways that are appropriate to them in recognising their individual needs.

To do this, we have a team of paid adults alongside volunteers. The best term for this role is Mentor.

Mentors at the hub are not teachers in the traditional sense, but they are deeply involved in supporting learning.

Their role includes:

- Creating a safe, welcoming, and resource-rich environment
- Building trusting relationships with learners
- Observing interests, strengths, and challenges
- Asking thoughtful questions that encourage reflection
- Supporting learners through uncertainty, frustration, or conflict

Mentors do not:

- Deliver lessons or follow a set curriculum
- Force participation or compliance
- Test, grade, or rank learners
- Decide what a learner should be interested in

When a learner appears disengaged, bored, or “doing nothing,” Mentors see this as information, not a problem to fix. These moments often precede growth, experimentation, or new directions.

For learners aged 11+, Mentors also support:

- Developing self-awareness and self-advocacy
- Navigating friendships and group dynamics
- Taking responsibility for agreements and boundaries
- Preparing for future transitions when appropriate



The Mentors are here to support students with their learning. We follow the same approach as SML College in Hove, where mentors provide guidance, resources, and opportunities. Rather than directing formal learning, mentors support young people from a person-centred perspective.

During our short journey at SML Hub Liverpool, our young people have requested with a wide range of professionals, including multiple photographers, Twitch streamer, DJ/music producer, mechanic, stocktrader, baker, footballer, nutritionist, pilot and singing teacher, among others. Each encounter allowed the students to explore these fields, to ask open questions, and gain practical real life insights, encouraging them to pursue the next steps or decide it's not for them.

The Mentors facilitated these experiences, however it was the students' own choices that curated these opportunities and drove the direction of what was learnt.

The Mentor role is to offer different modalities and opportunities to supplement a students' self-directed learning. The Mentors support the students, however the students are the ones who decide for themselves *what* to pursue and *how* to engage. If a choice doesn't work out; then that becomes a learning opportunity, not a mistake. There are no mistakes in learning; only feedback. This approach very much echoes real life. Learning to navigate mistakes now, in a safe environment gives the students leverage as adults, when those mistakes may become more detrimental in life. Students learn what works for them and what doesn't; developing both independence and self-awareness in the process.





6. What this may look like in practice.

Case Study: “I Want to Study for a GCSE in Law”

In 2018, a student at SML College Hove, chose independently to pursue a GCSE in Law. The College had no law specialist and no plans to recruit one. Recognising the student’s serious commitment, she was studying rigorously on her own, they offered to introduce her to someone with a law degree to give her further insight into the field. She agreed, and the meeting went ahead; if she had declined, it would not have happened. They also offered her the opportunity to visit the local magistrates’ court to see the law in action. Again, this was only arranged because she wanted to participate. Other students were invited to join the visit too.

As a result of her self-directed approach, the student completed her GCSE a year early and passed successfully.

This case illustrates how the SML approach can support learners, providing opportunities and guidance without directing their choices and allowing them to take ownership of their learning journey.

The SML approach enables students to work through their plans for learning in a unique way, providing multilayered opportunities for working relationships through 1:1's, their individual learning groups, and in whole community meetings. It also offers sub committees and working sub-groups that they can develop themselves or join in with collaboratively, so the opportunity to work in a myriad of different ways with choice about engaging at a pace that works for them, is broad ranging and wholesome, preparing them for the complexities of real adult life.

Feedback from our parents



“SML Hub has been transformational for our 12 year old who prefers to have full autonomy over his learning but also enjoys learning alongside peers. The holistic approach to the SML model has given him a deeper connection with himself and a strong sense of community and belonging with his peers. We feel very fortunate to have found a setting that meets his unique needs as there is nothing else around quite like SML.”

“I've watched my 12-year-old transform before my eyes. He's grown in confidence, discovered his strengths and abilities, and genuinely loves going to SML. He truly values the sense of community, feels connected, and loves that his voice matters and can make a difference.”

“This is the best thing we have ever done for our daughter. We've watched her blossom, become more independent and confident. More importantly she's happy and thriving!”

“SML Hub came to us at a time when we were conscious that our 13 year old required something more befitting of his age and stage of life as he entered adolescence as a home educated young person. SML Hub created a unique learning experience, encompassing the foundation and strength of a democratic community whilst ensuring constant and consistent support for individual development and autonomy. This approach supported our son in feeling confident, seen, heard and respected and in turn, encouraged him to do the same for others. This has led to him blossoming into a valued young person who can work well with others and seek out new opportunities for himself whilst supporting others in theirs. Where once he may have seen barriers & obstacles, he now sees solutions & opportunities. Most significantly, he has learned to work as part of a democratic team to effect change. SML Hub has been a positive, productive and joyful process for our son, we are hugely grateful for all of the efforts and endeavours of Jill, Mia & the team and incredibly proud of all the young people who were part of the pilot. May the SML journey continue to thrive. “

“Whatever the children want to do; a way is found for them. So they start thinking that most things are actually possible”



7. What is a learning group?

A learning group is a smaller sub-group of students, grouped by their age, which meets regularly with one of the adult mentors, and chooses a name for their group.

The learning group stays the same for the whole term and individuals are empowered to negotiate within these groups about their learning priorities and methods.

There are no limits to this except for working within the law and the availability of resources, and we have found that students are generally realistic about goals and are motivated to do the best for themselves.

Students' feelings and thoughts are sometimes better expressed in smaller numbers. Students are encouraged and free to raise whatever they like within this group in order to help them with their learning (provided they are respectful of others) and their opinions can be fed from the learning group into the larger community meetings.

The learning groups use this time together to work through their plans for learning, discuss problems, and form their agreements.

Students are supported in completing an Individual Learning Agreement and to answer five fundamental questions as part of the SML model.

The learning group is the basis on which students think through their weekly schedule of activities.

During the first week, students share within the learning group some of their conclusions from the five questions, whilst the Mentor assists.

Each week students are expected to consider their own work schedules for the next week. The following week, students review how their learning has progressed and produce new schedules for the succeeding week.

This process then rolls on week to week alongside the collective decisions made each morning in the larger community meeting which consists of all staff and all students. The role of the Mentors within the learning group is to take an overview of the learning activities of students within that group.

We do not test our students at SML Hub Liverpool, instead we assist them to achieve their personal learning goals, this is done through productive feedback, which means there is an absence of the tangible reassurance that parents might have become accustomed to, things like test results or grades, or a creation of some physical object.

8. What is a learning community?

In addition to belonging to a Learning Group each student is also part of the whole Community. This is called the Learning Community and it holds a meeting twice per day, one in the morning and one at the end of the day, before leaving the hub. The Learning Community is the whole group of students and all of the adults who are there to assist them.

In these meetings we figure out logistics, debate problems, make decisions about things/future activities, and decide and make boundaries for how we are going to co-exist in this space together.

The meetings follow a democratic model which is integral to the unique and empowering work of SML. Typically between four and five adults are available on site.

The community is transparent and conversations are honest. Young people can and do challenge adults, and it may be difficult to believe at first that equal power is shared, and that adults are not about to exert control if they are challenged, but this trust comes over time and by exercising choice about what they believe in or speaking up in a community debate. All voices are taken into account and none holds more weight than the next. This process has proven to be a great testament to the confidence gained from trust.

The community is built on a democratic process, which means it can overturn decisions made and make rules about how the community runs. In the first weeks we give significant emphasis to developing the community as a supportive place where people know each other and feel able to pursue their own interests within a community context. So, some activities will be steered in this direction rather than around each individual's needs.

Our aim is to help students to learn to plan for themselves, within their own structure. They may initially struggle to do this as it is likely to be a new process for them. However, we are not looking for perfection in this; rather we want to help each person to become fully self managing.



Our approach goes well beyond simply giving students a voice. Each student is able to decide for themselves what and how to learn within the context of a Learning Community.

The Learning Community is central, as we develop through relationships. We are social beings, and Self Managed Learning is not purely individualistic. Social arrangements provide the space for students to collaborate, support each other, and grow together.

9. The role of parents



Parents and carers are an important part of the learning community. Self Managed Learning works best when families and facilitators share a common understanding of how young people grow, learn, and develop responsibility.

Self Managed Learning may look very different from school. There may not be visible “lessons”, worksheets, or obvious progress every day.

Parents are therefore asked to:

- Trust that meaningful learning often happens through exploration, conversation, projects, and play
- Understand that learning is not always linear
- Allow time for interests to develop *deeply* rather than rushing toward outcomes

Initially students may go through a period of adjustment and it may look as though they are not learning much, however in reality this period is where some of the most profound and significant inner learning takes place; where they come to terms with becoming self managing, they advocate for themselves, and they gain confidence in social situations. They learn to lean less on external verification for reassurance, trusting themselves and their own inner guidance much more. These quieter periods are when reflection, rest, or new curiosity is emerging.

A core aim of Self Managed Learning is for young people to develop the ability to make decisions about their own learning and lives.

Parents can support this by encouraging children to make their own choices, allowing space for mistakes and experimentation, avoiding the urge to step in and solve every problem and valuing independence alongside achievement

Learning to manage yourself takes time and practice, particularly for young people.

Many families are used to measuring learning through tests, worksheets, or checking knowledge.





In a Self Managed Learning environment we encourage parents to:

- Avoid testing or quizzing children on academic topics
- Resist comparisons with schooled peers
- Focus instead on curiosity, confidence, and engagement

These habits are often deeply ingrained from school culture, so letting go of them can take time.

Mentors spend time observing students and supporting their development within the hub environment. Parents can support this by also sharing observations about their child. Open communication between Mentors and parents are going to support the young people in the hub.

For some young people, particularly those who have previously been in school, it can take time to adjust to having real autonomy over their learning. Letting go of school-based expectations is often a journey for adults as much as it is for young people. We see parents as partners in this process, not as passive observers.

Parents may notice periods of rest or decompression, intense focus on particular interests, or uncertainty about what to do next. These phases are a natural part of developing self-direction. Trust the process as much as you can, and allow space for Self Managed Learning to develop at home as well as in the hub.

Within the SML Hub Liverpool community, we want you to feel supported as parents and we encourage you to bring any concerns or questions to us and to make use of the parent group, where families can share experiences, offer support and learn from one another.

As parents you are as important in the process, as well as the students.





10. What does the day look like?

The Hub currently operates from 09.30am to 2.30pm Tuesdays and Fridays, the gate will open at 9.30am. We begin the day with a community meeting which is chaired in rotation. The role of the community meeting is to work out collective needs such as agreeing rules for working, through to organising trips or agreeing on bringing in visitors. Anything can be raised by students or adults that is relevant to the running of the whole community. All students are informed of any workshops that are running that day, which have been informed by their Learning Agreements.

We then move into our learning groups, and the learning goals of individuals are discussed, alongside any operational decisions that may need to be made such as free time, shop visits, lunch and clean up rotas.

Our induction period runs approximately over the first two weeks and is designed to help young people settle in and get to know each other. During this time, they will take part in a variety of activities that encourage interaction and build familiarity within the group. Students will have the opportunity to interview all the Mentors during this time, to learn about the support and guidance they can provide. They will also have free time to explore the site and become comfortable in their new environment.

As part of orientation, we take students on a guided walk around the local community to introduce them to key resources, including shops, the library, and the music shop. We explore their interests, likes and dislikes, and any directions they wish to take in their life. Following this, we work with students to help them think through the kind of learning they want to pursue, while supporting them to shape a plan.



11. What does learning look like at the Hub?

How do students plan their learning? This is achieved through first finding out about the students and by asking them to answer five important questions about themselves.

The five questions approach undertaken by all SML participants, is designed to really 'see' you, it rests alongside other important structures and values that help students to understand there is a place for them to enjoy the freedom to learn in whatever they need, while still having the support and framework of a community of peers and adults around them.

The Five SML Questions:

1. Where have you been?

What have your experiences of education and of life been like? What have been the ups and downs of this experience? Given that any person is today 100% formed by the past, either it's in the genes or they learned it, the answer to this question is crucial. Some students have flowed through their life so far with a degree of ease whereas many have dips in their life that have affected them. It's important to know these.

2. Where are you now?

What kind of person are you? What are your interests? What do you like or don't like doing? What's important to you? What are you good or not so good at? For students who come from school they often dwell on the things for which they have been criticised for in school and, in the process, they can undervalue their positive features. Our mentors role is to help them to develop a rounded and realistic sense of who they are now before moving on.



3. Where do you want to get to?

What kind of life do you want to lead? What kind of person do you want to be in the future? Do you have ideas already about a career? This question is generally more relevant for older students. For some learners it may be simply the confidence to go to the shop. These goals change over time. Most students have never been asked these kinds of questions before. Older students may have had family discussions about careers but even these may not be contextualised in terms of lifestyle. Hence answers to this question may be quite tentative initially and that's fine as we want to stimulate thinking not tie down precise details at this stage.

4. How will I get there?

What do I need to learn to become the person I want to be in the future? How will I learn what I need to learn? Initially students find this difficult to answer, or they slip into known ideas. At this stage we may be challenging them to think more widely and also convince them that they really can aspire to learn anything they want to and in any way that is convenient. Of our 57 known ways of learning the one that is generally ignored is the classroom; students never ever ask us to provide a classroom within which to learn.

5. How will I know that I have arrived at where I want to be?

How will I measure the outcomes of my learning? This is a tough question to answer and often students have to return to this later. However it is important that they learn to self-assess. It's often apparent that they have always relied on the judgements of others. One of the things we are doing with this process is to encourage students to take a strategic view of their learning and to manage their learning in such a way that they will be able to lead a good life in the future. As each person is different, what a good life means to one person is not the same as for another person. Some may be concerned about fulfilling their potential; others may focus on being happy in life. And so on.



12. Can students do exams or GCSEs?

At SML Hub we are only interested in testing and assessment when young people choose it themselves. Our students may take public exams if they choose to and if they do so in the context of their interests in pursuing a particular career that they themselves have freely chosen, we can support them and assist them in that choice, but we do not run exams from the Hub.

For some of our Learners, imposed testing is demeaning and undermining and a traumatic experience. We also want to say that we value all our students equally no matter how well they do in examinations.

We expect to have some students who want to leave with grades and others that are happy with none. We are interested in what's appropriate for the individual in terms of, for instance, their career objectives.

One of the issues about appropriateness of exams is to consider the timing for those young people who have a summer birth. The Government's own figures showed that at least 10,000 young people every year get a lower grade at GCSE just because they're born in the summer. Hence it may be sensible for an individual to delay taking GCSEs. On the other hand we expect students who may want to take some GCSEs early to avoid having a large number of exams at the same time.

Our mentors are able to help either way, but the responsibility and cost of external examination still rests with whoever is in the main, responsible for providing the education of our students.

We are currently developing partnerships with local exam centres and colleges to provide GCSE opportunities for SML Hub Liverpool students. While these discussions are ongoing, students wishing to take public examinations will need to sit them at an approved exam centre, with parents making the arrangements privately.



Learners enrolled at SML Hub Liverpool are considered home educated by their local authority. While the law does not explicitly mention home education, children are required to be in school or educated “otherwise.” The law does not state that school is preferable both options are legally equal. Therefore, SML Hub Liverpool is classified as “otherwise than at school” and recognised as such. We are not a replacement for any kind of education provision, we are complimentary and unique in what we deliver.

Local authorities understand that SML Hub Liverpool does not provide alternative education in the traditional school sense. Instead, we offer an alternative to the formal education system, by way of supporting parents in their child’s learning. Our focus is on learning in its broadest sense, rather than the instructional approach found in schools. It is important that you are transparent in telling us if your child is on roll or has an EHCP or intends to pursue any of these, because this could impact upon us.

13. Costs and operations

SML Hub is currently entirely parent-funded. It began as an idea among a group of home educating parents and was taken forward by Mia and Jill, the operational leads. Initially, the Hub was created to meet the needs of their own children and local community, but over the past year it has grown rapidly.

Following the success of the previous terms, and through a dedicated team and the commitment of the young people attending, it has become clear just how powerful this model is. Once we saw the impact, there was no way we could pause or step away from this work.

At the same time, it's important to be open about capacity. Mia and Jill are currently doing the work that would usually be shared across a much larger staff team. Alongside running the Hub, we also work in paid roles outside of SML, home educate our own children, and manage family life. The majority of the work we do for SML Hub is unpaid and voluntary. Because of this, we ask parents to understand that we are not a large organisation with dedicated administrative staff. While we do our best to respond promptly, there may be times when replies take a little longer, particularly during term time when our focus is on supporting the young people on site. There may be situations we have not previously encountered, and we continue to develop and refine our practice as the Hub grows. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we balance these demands and work to meet our responsibilities effectively.

Alongside these roles, we are also parents who pay the same as everyone else for our children to attend, so we fully understand the financial pressures that home education places on families. We are deeply committed to keeping SML Hub as financially accessible as possible, which is why we have absorbed so much of the workload ourselves. However, this level of unpaid work is not sustainable long-term, and we are actively exploring other ways to fund the project so it can continue to grow without placing additional strain on families.



Term Fees

SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 2026

Total provision: 13 weeks, 2 days per week (Tuesdays and Fridays, 9.30am–2.30pm)

Weekly fee: £73.33

Fees are paid in five monthly instalments as outlined below, or in advance if preferred.

- 31 August: £213.33
- 30 September: £212.32
- 31 October: £212.32
- 30 November £212.32

We operate on the basis of goodwill, giving a significant amount of our time and energy to keep the Hub accessible for families. In return, we ask for the same level of goodwill and commitment from families.

If, after reading all of the information, you decide that this setting is right for your child and accept a place, you are committing to that place for the duration of the term. Because we operate on very small margins, once a place is confirmed we are committed to covering the costs required to run the Hub.

In turn, this means families agree to pay the full contracted amount for the term. This commitment remains in place regardless of attendance, illness, or if your child is offered a school place.

By offering a place, we take on personal financial risk, and for this reason fees are not linked to attendance and are non-refundable, as fixed costs are incurred once a place is secured on your behalf.



14. Practical Information



Drop Off/Pick Up:

Parents may drop students at the front at the gate beginning at 9:30 a.m. The Hub day concludes at 2:30 p.m. Parents who pick up their student(s) we would appreciate you allowing your child/children to sign themselves out then exit through the gate as the drive way in is narrow so it is best to park up outside.

Emergencies:

The decision to close the Hub temporarily due to an emergency such as an epidemic or an inability to operate the Hub effectively rests with the Hub staff. Every effort will be made using email, text and phone to notify parents if any type of emergency situation arises. Please keep us up to date with any change of address and/or phone number.

Medication:

Medicine of any kind will not be provided by the Hub.

No medication will be administered to a student without a written directive from a parent of guardian.

The written directive must be signed by the parent/guardian and must include the time(s) the medication is to be administered to the student as directed by medical practitioner.

If your child needs to take medication during Hub hours, please request an authorisation form.

Any medication brought to us will be stored in a designated place under the control and supervision of staff. Medication sent to the Hub must include the prescribed label and include student's name and be in its original container.

Attendance:

The Hub is not a school and is not bound by school rules or Government rules in relation to schools. For instance we do not fine parents who take children out of the Hub in term time for travel. Indeed we welcome travel that provides learning opportunities for students.



However we are aware that our children may not always be separate from the educational world. For instance, Further Education (FE) and Sixth Form Colleges ask about attendance and punctuality and we would have to provide honest answers.

The need for a supportive and cohesive Learning Community is also part of Self Managed Learning values and all parents sign up to supporting the value of the community and that any student not working in that way could be asked to leave.

If students are repeatedly absent or late, they are not able to be fully functioning members of the community.

Clearly reasons not to attend can be marked on the register accordingly, so that any future request for this information from us for a college lets say, will be able to be explained.

We will not do this retrospectively so being fair to students we would urge parents to make certain that we always get full information on illness and emergencies.

Notification needs to be given by 09.30 on the day using the Hub Mobile telephone number. This can be found in the useful information section at the back of this booklet.



15. Policies and Procedures



Admissions:

We have two intakes each year, in September and January.

We offer trial weeks during the term before each intake, giving prospective students the opportunity to experience the Hub and decide whether it is the right environment for them. While young people are welcome to join without attending a trial, if this is the case, we strongly encourage families to read this booklet carefully so they understand what to expect and to contact the Hub if they would like any further clarification or support.

We are very much an educational based setting and not a therapy provision. Where a young person has needs that we cannot meet we will be honest about this and offer help to parents as to alternatives, wherever we can. We are working within a very complex and dynamic way that crosses between structure and flexibility. We do not wish to discriminate against any young person.

Our two main criteria for entry are:

1. Does the young person want to attend i.e., they are not being pressured to attend.
2. Will they benefit from being with us? We operate as a learning community and cannot take on any young person who is not able to be part of the learning community.

No student is provided with preferential treatment, we treat all our students as equally valuable persons and wanting every person in the community to gain benefit from being in a caring environment. This continues throughout their journey with us.

Safety for other students:

We aim to make the hub as safe and welcoming as possible. We want to have an open and tolerant environment.





Mobile phones and personally-owned mobile devices brought into The Hub are the responsibility of the device owner. The Hub accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of personally - owned devices. SML Hub will take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of Hub devices. We have contracted AC App Companion CIC for their services to set up and maintain our devices, and we will continually monitor them to help prevent access to inappropriate or unsafe content.

Parents and young people are responsible for their own devices. The Hub does not take responsibility for any devices brought on site. Parents should ensure that appropriate safeguarding and parental controls are in place, and that their young person is enabled and prepared to use their devices appropriately. Young people are welcome to bring devices from home, including game consoles, mobile phones, and other internet-enabled devices, provided they are used in line with this policy, our community agreements, and with consent.

SML Hub devices have access to the on site WiFi. However, we are unable to authorise the use of the Hub WiFi for students' personal devices.

Resources

As our learning community continues to evolve, so too do the resources available within the Hub. Rather than deciding in advance what young people might need, we encourage students to identify and request resources that will support their learning and interests.

Through our democratic processes, including the Budget Committee, young people have a genuine voice in how available funds are used and can help decide which resources should be purchased for the benefit of the community.

As we operate from a shared rented venue, some requests may be limited by the building itself or by the conditions of our lease. Where this is the case, we will always work with the community to explore alternative ways of meeting students' needs.





16. The Parent Journey

Clearly parents play the lead role in the education of their children. We are keen to maintain good relationships with parents throughout the time their children are with us. We understand what a big step it is for you too! You have given your young person this golden opportunity to fly a little solo on their own wings, and we also know that many would like to know how things are going. So towards the end of each term we have a meeting of three, which includes the parents, your young person and their Mentor.

This meeting is an opportunity to gain insight into the journey so far, and also explore future plans. Parents may not gain much feedback from their young person in the period between then so we encourage you to trust the professionalism of our team in helping the student to adjust and to start their learning process. It can seem bumpy at times, but often the greatest gifts are held within the unfolding of difficult situations.

If issues come up within the term then our channel of communication with WhatsApp, dedicated phone and email are available. We also hope that parents recognise that no news from us is good news, and that parents can raise queries with us at any time.

There is also an opportunity for an annual parent meeting with Mia and Jill, providing a chance to ask questions, discuss your young person's experience and gain a deeper understanding of Self Managed Learning and the ongoing development of the Hub.

17. Contacts



We would love to hear from you if you have any questions, require further information or would like to share feedback. Email is the best way to contact us, as it allows us to manage enquiries efficiently and respond as soon as possible.

SML Hub Liverpool onsite number: 07920 118 831

SML Hub Liverpool email address: SMLHub@outlook.com

SML Hub Liverpool website: www.SMLHub.co.uk

Safeguarding and Complaints: Amy.Neylon@SMLHub.co.uk

Further documents and policies can be found on our website:
www.smlhub.co.uk/documents

