

GAME ON FOR NORWICH TEENAGER - THANKS TO EDUCATION MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE

Cash boost can help Norfolk students continue to learn after GCSEs

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Just got your GCSE results? Are you thinking about leaving full-time education and not sure what to do next?

Help is at hand from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), which gives eligible students aged 16-19 an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) of up to £30 a week to take part in a learning programme or course.

If you're about to leave compulsory education, EMA could be for you. It can help with the costs of books, travel, equipment or anything else you need to continue learning, and it's paid straight into your bank account, not to your parents or your college.

The hardest-working students can also be in line for further cash bonuses at Christmas and certain other times of the year.

Computer games mad Norwich teenager, Sam Lemmon, is well on his way to fulfilling his childhood dream of designing his own graphics hero thanks to help from the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

After a year studying AS Levels at Hellesdon Sixth Form, Sam discovered the Btec National Certificate for IT Practitioners at City College Norwich.

Sam has just finished his second year and says being entitled to EMA definitely influenced his decision to carry on learning after he left school.

“Being on an IT course means I often need to buy supplies such as printer cartridges, memory sticks and blank CDs and my weekly EMA payments have really helped with this,” he said.

Sam also has a part-time job, and receiving EMA has meant that he only has to work seven hours a week and can dedicate more time to his studies.

“Without this financial help I may have had to think about learning on a part-time basis and working full-time,” he said.

So has this money helped boost Sam's grades as well as his bank balance? “Definitely. Because I have to attend all of my classes each week to receive EMA it's motivated me a lot and I've gone to lessons which I thought wouldn't be useful but were actually quite important.”

Sam has also been able to take advantage of the £100 bonuses each term because he has been progressing well on his course.

“The Christmas bonus was definitely the most useful as it meant that I was able to buy my family nice presents,” he said.

“I also had loads of coursework to do so it meant that I could concentrate on that rather than worrying about earning money.”

Sam has now been offered a place at the University of Huddersfield to study a BSc in Computer Games Programming. And the good news about EMA he's passed onto his brother – who has completed his first year of study at City College Norwich – and sister who is hoping to start a drama course at the college in September.

EMA pays up to £30 a week to help young adults aged 16, 17 or 18 in or about to leave, or have already left education to start full-time further education courses at a college or school, LSC-funded Diplomas (where available) and courses that lead to an Apprenticeship or LSC-funded e2e programmes.

Graham Brough, Area Director for the LSC in Norfolk said:

“By 2010 very few jobs will be open to those without the minimum set of qualifications. Those with five good GCSE’s (A* to C) or an equivalent Level 2 qualification earn on average 9% more than those without and employers are more likely to invest in young people’s future development and career.

“There is growing evidence to show that EMA is making a real difference to the prospects of young people who might otherwise have dropped out of full-time education. The regular income that EMA offers gives them independence to make real choices about their future education, training and career prospects.

Sam is a great example to show that staying in learning, gaining higher level skills and qualifications, provides a foundation for a more successful and fulfilling future.”

To find out if you’re eligible for an Education Maintenance Allowance contact your local college, Connexions or call 0800 121 8989 or visit www.direct.gov.uk/ema

What are the key features of EMA?

- Weekly payment bands of £30, £20 and £10 per week, depending on household income.
- Intermittent bonus payments depending on the programme of learning.
- Available for both academic and vocational study, up to level 3, which can include courses such as basic skills GCSE retakes, GNVQs, NVQs, as well as AS and A2s.
- No other household benefits are affected.
- Young people can still have a part-time job.

Who is eligible?

- Young people are eligible to receive or to continue receiving EMA in the EMA year 2008/09 providing:

- They will already be 16, 17, 18 or 19 on the 1st September 2008;
- From households where the combined family income is less than 30,810
- They are participating in full-time further education (as defined in EMA guidance) up to and including Level 3, or LSC funded e2e or a Programme led Apprenticeship

For further details, please contact 0800 121 8989 (some mobile operators may charge for calls made to this number) or visit www.direct.gov.uk/ema. Last year, EMA helped more than 500,000 young people continue in education and training.

LSC

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world-class standards. Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

**All media enquires, pictures and interviews please contact:
Liz Trott at COI News & PR. Tel: Cambridge (01223) 372787**

All public enquiries regarding EMA please contact: 0800 121 8989 (some mobile operators may charge for calls made to this number) or visit www.direct.gov.uk/ema.

All public enquiries please contact: LSC Helpdesk: 0870 900 6800

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