

MANAGEMENT ON THE HORIZON FOR BILLERICAY TEENAGER – THANKS TO EDUCATION MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE

Cash boost can help Essex 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.

Life is on the up for **Billericay** teenage mum, **Stephanie Czechowicz**.

Severely injured at the age of 13 in an accident in which she broke her back, Stephanie dropped out of secondary school without taking her GCSEs and ended up having a baby when she was 16.

Encouraged by her mother, her family and friends, Stephanie signed on at **South East Essex Sixth Form College (SEEVIC)** to study again for her GCSEs on its resit

programme. She did so well, she was offered a place to take four A-levels and sat her exams this summer.

Stephanie successfully applied for Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and receives £30 a week to help pay for her childcare and buy her books.

“Being able to get EMA has definitely helped me to carry on learning,” says Stephanie. “It’s been incredibly useful – I’ve needed to buy loads of books, especially for my Government & Politics A-level. It also really helps with the petrol I need to get to college.”

Because she has been progressing so well on her course, Stephanie has been able to take advantage of the £100 EMA bonuses each term. “I spent one bonus on a new graphical calculator for Maths. It was more than £100 and I just never would have afforded it otherwise,” she says.

Stephanie has made a fantastic success of her course at SEEVIC. Her son, who is now 3, attends a nursery within walking distance of the college and if she’s not kept busy enough by him and studying four subjects, she’s also finding the time to be on the School Council and is learning to play jazz piano!

But best of all, her predicted grades are high enough for her to have won a place at City University in London on its BSc in Management. She hopes to start there this September. Her ambition is to own and manage her own business in the leisure industry – and the way Stephanie has turned her own life around, who would doubt that she’s going to achieve this?

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.

Janice Logie, Area Director for the LSC in Essex 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 choices about their future education, training and career prospects.

“Stephanie 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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