

IT'S NOT TOO LATE FOR A NEW START

LSC urges young people in Bedfordshire and Luton to go back to learning in 2008

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New Year diets may already be out of the window and gym subscriptions are being wasted but the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is today urging young people to return to learning.

While many may be ignoring New Year resolutions already – the LSC is reminding young people that it's never too late to return to learning.

Learning something new is among the top ten New Year resolutions that people make and the LSC is urging young people to keep their pledges and enrol in one of the huge range of learning programmes available and make sure they gain the minimum set of qualifications needed to succeed.

Last year there were 1,322 16 to 18-year-olds in Bedfordshire who were not in education, employment or training and this January there are thousands of programmes available to help young people get back into learning. There is a huge variety of subjects on offer - young people can browse a complete list of courses in their area (and across England) through the online prospectus, available at <http://dcsf.gov.uk/prospectus>.

By gaining essential qualifications, young people can increase their earnings potential and also their future employability – recent research from the LSC among employers revealed that nearly half (47 per cent) would not consider employing a school leaver without the minimum set of qualifications - five GCSEs grades A*-C or a vocational qualification at Level 2.

When asked why they would not take on a young person without the minimum set of qualifications, it was found that seven in 10 (72 per cent) employers felt candidates would struggle in their profession or organisation, half (50 per cent) said they would not be ready for the world of work and that having no qualifications showed a lack of focus (44 per cent) and commitment (38 per cent) for some recruiters.

By enrolling in a new learning programme this January, young people will not only increase their employability but could also benefit from Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) of up to £30, depending on household income.

Ruth Bullen, Director of Young People's Learning at the Learning and Skills Council, said:

“As a new year begins, many will be keen to make a fresh start. With such a wide range of subjects and types of courses available, there is so much choice for young people, whatever their interests. By continuing in or returning to learning, it can help them to develop their future employability and they could also receive EMA to help remove some of the financial barriers to make it even easier to get on.

“With nearly half of employers saying they require Level 2 qualifications (five GCSEs A*-C or the vocational equivalent) from potential job candidates, the

importance of staying on in learning has been highlighted even further. The LSC is urging all young people to take their future in their own hands and gain these essential qualifications.”

ENDS

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Notes to editors:

Survey on new year's resolutions commissioned by The Royal Bank of Scotland, was conducted by RSGB, part of the Taylor Nelson Sofres Group and interviewed a representative sample of 1,000 British adults (2002)

Last year there were 1,322 16 to 18-year-olds in Bedfordshire who were not in education, employment or training, of which 491 were from Luton and 831 from the rest of Bedfordshire (figures from Connexions).

All other figures are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 561 employers. Fieldwork was undertaken between 14th - 15th November 2007. The survey was carried out online.

Learning and Skills Council

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality 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 young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

Visit www.lsc.gov.uk/inourhands or call 0800 011 30 30 for more information.

Apprenticeships

- There are currently 250,000 apprentices working in over 130,000 organisations in England, with 1,306 young people on an Apprenticeship in Bedfordshire and Luton at the moment. They can choose from over 200 career paths in 80 different sectors of industry and commerce.
- Anyone aged 16 and above is eligible to complete an Apprenticeship.
- Apprenticeships provide individuals with a mixture of on and off-the-job training whilst being paid. For employers, Apprenticeships offer the opportunity to improve their businesses bottom line through the tailored, relevant training of highly motivated individuals.
- There are two levels of Apprenticeships:
 - 'Apprenticeships', equivalent to GCSE level, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 2; key skills and in some cases a technical certificate
 - 'Advanced Apprenticeships', equivalent to A-levels, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 3, key skills and a technical certificate

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

There are 17,017 young people currently claiming EMA in Bedfordshire and Luton.

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 2007/08 providing:
 - They will already be 16, 17, 18 or 19 on the 1st September 2007;
 - Household income criteria for 2007/8 applicants will be confirmed shortly;
 - 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
- They must be:
 - a person who is 'settled' in the UK, and been ordinarily resident in the UK for at least the three years prior to the start of his learning programme; or
 - a national of any European Union (EU) country or the spouse or civil partner or child of an EU national, and been ordinarily resident in the European Economic Area (EEA) for at least the three years prior to the start of his learning programme; or
 - an EEA migrant worker or the spouse or civil partner or child of an EEA migrant worker, who is ordinarily resident in the UK at the start of the learning programme and has been ordinarily resident in the EEA throughout the three year period prior to that; or
 - recognised as a refugee by the UK Government, or the spouse or civil partner or child of a refugee, have been granted Humanitarian Protection, or have EU Temporary Protection.
- If a young person lives overseas as part of a family serving with HM Forces or the Ministry of Defence in Germany or Cyprus, they should call Service Children's Education on (0049) 2161 908 2525 for further advice.

Application

Evidence of an applicant's household income for the previous tax year 2006/2007 and proof of the individual's operational bank account are required.

Eligible applicants will receive a Notice of Entitlement explaining how much they will receive once they have enrolled and started attending their learning programme.

EMA Contract

Once enrolled, the student must attend all course sessions and sign an EMA Contract with their school or college. The contract sets out what is expected in terms of attendance, coursework and progress.

14-19 area prospectuses

- 14-19 area prospectuses are an online resource which provide information for young people on all learning courses and programmes available in an area
- The 14-19 area prospectus will be learners' first choice of information for accessing all 14-19 learning opportunities
- All areas have a prospectus to enable learners to look at prospectuses from other areas of the country there is a national portal at : <http://dcsf.gov.uk/prospectus>
- From 2008, learners will be able to access information on the Diplomas being delivered in their area, through the local 14-19 area prospectus
- The area prospectuses will empower learners by giving them access to information about all courses from all providers in an area, this is likely to increase participation and engagement