

## **My London, My Life, My Choice**

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*Choice*, the new improved online course prospectus for 14-19 year olds, was unveiled at an event held by the Learning and Skills Council in London this morning.

With many young people busy writing their GCSEs, their future careers and study options hang in the balance. For those who haven't already finalised their plans [www.mychoicelondon.co.uk](http://www.mychoicelondon.co.uk) contains over 30,000 courses and programmes offered by London's 640 schools, colleges and work-based learning providers. It is fully integrated with Google mapping and Transport for London for easy journey planning and courses are searchable by subject or area.

Young Londoners have been at the forefront of testing the new functions. Danny, 18, is busy taking A-levels at William Morris 6<sup>th</sup> Form College and plans to go on to study a business degree at university. He said, "*Choice* has loads of career opportunities, a CV builder and course searches, loads of things to help any student. It's also good for searching in terms of location 'cos you can put your location in and find the course you want in your area."

Zena, 18, wants to be a barrister, she said, "I was surprised by *Choice*, it's really informative and has so much information that you would normally have to get from a variety of websites, but here you can get it all in one place. I thought it was really good."

Some of the advanced features to help users plan their study and careers more easily, include:

- A Job planner – helps users move into a target job by selecting qualifications to date and mapping possible routes and learning required. Learner pathways and favourite courses can be saved in a personal folder
- A Career matching quiz – questions to help people establish job options
- An Action planner – helps learners set and manage as many plans as they want. Includes key steps and milestones to assist
- A CV builder – helps inexperienced job hunters create a ready-to-use CV
- Career search – 800 jobs profiled by role, range, working hours and potential salary
- Guides – helps users get the most out of the site
- Supporter system – provided by Connexions, offering help by phone, email or in person, locally.

Sean McMahon, LSC London Region's 14-19 Director, said:

“More than 100,000 visitors have already accessed the site in year 1 and we hope to increase that to a million. The curriculum will develop quickly over the next five years to include Diplomas and much more. With so much choice, we must provide increasing advice and support to help young people find the right answers to meet their individual needs.

“The new Choice service is a big step forward, but we're not stopping here. We'll continue to invest in developments to support young people in planning and managing course and career options better.”

Chris Heaume, Chief Executive of Central London Connexions, who spoke at the event, said:

“Young people in London have such a wealth of opportunities when they leave school. And now they have *Choice* to help make sense of the options and to plan their route forward. This is a real first – such a wealth of information easily searchable, with all the planning tools you could need to understand what will work for you, how you can get on to the right courses – and even what bus to catch! For parents too *Choice* is a god-send – now they can help their teenagers make their career choices, and get the help they need from Connexions and teachers in planning ahead. A real advance and a win/win for all of London’s teenagers.”

The success of the site is down to a lot of hard work and input from a variety of stakeholders including the DCSF, the Learning and Skills Council, Connexions, Local Boroughs and training providers, who make sure that the information is up-to-date and relevant for young people.

We are already seeing the results of innovative programmes such as *Choice* and the September Guarantee. London achieved the highest post-16 participation rate in England in 2007/08, according to data recently produced by the DCSF. With participation rates in London at 82.1%, these are racing ahead of the national average of 77.5%.

The number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in London has decreased substantially over the past few years to 12 400 in 2007 compared to 14 900 the previous year and London is the only region that has already exceeded its 2010 target of 7%. This is due in part to better information advice and guidance and to financial support such as EMA (Education

Maintenance Allowance), which pays up to £30 per week, depending on household income.

A £27 million ESF programme is being rolled out in NEET hotspots around London to help reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training even further.

- Ends -

### **Notes to editors**

#### **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.

#### **Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)**

This press release applies to England only. Separate schemes are operated by the administrations for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

#### *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

### **The September Guarantee**

The September Guarantee is an offer that by the end of September, there will be a place in learning to young people completing compulsory education. The guarantee was implemented nationally in 2007.

The guarantee is being extended to 17 year olds in 2008 to give those who enrol on one year or short courses, or who leave the activity they chose when leaving school, further opportunities to engage in learning.

This is an important element of the Department's strategies for reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), increasing participation, and attainment at age 19.

### **Media Enquiries**

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