



Leading learning and skills

To all Learning Provider Chief Executives and School and College Principals

21 November 2008

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to make you aware of the following changes to the Learner Support Services, which comprise of; Education Maintenance Allowance, Adult Learner Grant, Care to Learn, Sixth Form College Childcare, Dance and Drama, Residential Support Scheme and Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work, currently administered by Liberata. I want to assure providers, colleges and school sixth forms that applications will continue to be processed and that you should all continue to use existing systems to enable payments to learners to continue.

LSC APPOINTS NEW SERVICE PROVIDER FOR LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has discontinued its contract with Liberata and appointed Capita to take on its full range of learner support services – including Education Maintenance Allowances (EMA) and the Adult Learning Grant (ALG).

Learners have suffered weeks of delay in receiving payments as a result of Liberata encountering technical difficulties in processing EMA applications. The focus of the LSC and Liberata throughout this period was to ensure that all possible steps were taken to overcome these delays. At one stage the backlog of applications was in excess of 200,000. Liberata has worked to reduce this

backlog to below 12,000 and the remaining applications are expected to be cleared within the next few weeks.

Despite this progress, the LSC's view is that a change of supplier is the best way forward. The LSC has been in talks with Liberata about the future of the contract for the past four weeks and has decided to move the contract to another supplier.

We can now announce that the Learner and Learning Provider helplines, processing and payments service will transfer from Liberata to Capita on 28 November. With effect from that date, Capita will bring in a new senior management team to oversee the staff and operations in Coventry, Manchester and Darlington processing centres.

We would like to reassure learners that payments will continue and, that during the transfer period, outstanding applications will continue to be processed.

We have said throughout that it is unacceptable for young people to have their EMA payments delayed.

Capita has a long history of working on programmes such as EMA and we are delighted they are able to take this contract forward and provide learners with the service they deserve. We are working with Liberata and Capita to make the transfer as smooth as possible. Although the transfer will not immediately fix all of the helpline and processing problems, it will help us to improve the future service for young people, colleges and learning providers.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Haysom', with a large, stylized initial 'M'.

Mark Haysom CBE

Chief Executive