

## Learner Support

Progress Report and Issues

<b>Date of issue</b>	16 April 2008
<b>Audience</b>	National Council
<b>LSC office</b>	National Office
<b>Publication intent</b>	Internal
<b>Internal paper ref</b>	LSC 26/2008
<b>Agenda reference</b>	Item 9

## Purpose

1 This paper provides an overview of the role and strands of financial support that the LSC pays to learners. This is the first time that Council has taken a paper on Learner Support and Members are invited to ask questions or comment.

## General

2 In 2008/09 the LSC will spend about £800m on Learner Support, so it is one of our major activities. The Learner Support Programme's purpose is to help individual learners who might otherwise face *financial barriers* to participation. (It does not cover LLDD or Additional Learner Support, which address *health or learning barriers* and which are managed separately.)

3 The Learner Support Programme is different from most of the LSC's activity in that it mostly involves multiple payments direct to individual learners. Each year more than 600,000 household income assessments are undertaken, some 20 million individual payments are made through the BACS system, and Helplines take about 1 million calls. But the Learner Support programme's contribution is absolutely mainstream to the LSC's and Government's objectives of driving up participation and attainment, and of boosting the skills economy and tackling social inequalities.

4 There are nine strands to the Learner Support Programme, which reflects both history and that different types of learners have different needs., Until recently the various strands of the Learner Support programme were delivered under different contracts, but we are now marketing it as a single programme and have

## Learning and Skills Council

National Office

Cheylesmore House Quinton Road Coventry CV1 2WT

T 0845 019 4170 F 024 7682 3675 [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

appointed a consortium led by Liberata to run a single Helpline, Assessment and Payment Body (HAPB).

5 The strands of Learner Support are described in paragraphs 7 onwards, but operating it as a single programme will bring a number of advantages:

- a. improved end-customer experience. Someone who has been on EMA, who then has a baby so applies for Care to Learn and who then moves on to the Adult Learner Grant, will not have to resubmit identity and bank account details. We are hopeful that this increased ease of use could increase the level of participation by up to 0.5%.
- b. processing efficiencies and economies of scale.
- c. improved data management: data will be 'collected once, but used many times'.

6 The Machinery of Government Consultation Document proposes that Learner Support be kept as a national entity delivering both young people and adult operations, and be located within the Young People Learner Support Agency.

## **Learner Support Programme – Strand Descriptions**

### Education Maintenance Allowance

7 EMA supports learners from low income households to continue in learning post 16. Payments are up to £30 per week plus two bonuses a year of £100. The budget for 08/09 is £549m to support 526,000 learners.

8 Evaluation shows that EMA has increased participation by 4 percentage points and limited retention by 6 percentage points. Latest evaluation suggests the impact of EMA on attainment at level 2 and 3 to be 7ppts for female EMA recipients and 5ppts for male EMA recipients. There has been a particularly positive effect on black females, and both males and females saw improvements in average A-level tariffs of 4.5 percent.

9 Ministers in DCSF and DIUS have decided some important changes, which take effect from September 2008:

- Extension of the definition of valid provision to LSC part-funded courses, which means EMA will become available to some of the most disengaged young people. This will support the September Guarantee.
- Fewer bonuses and tougher guidance on both their use and the rules for weekly payments, so as to strengthen the incentive element and boost attainment.
- An "HE Guarantee" that if a young person qualifies for EMA they can rely on the top level of student support if they progress to Higher Education.

- An “EMA Guarantee” that a single application for EMA will be valid for 3 years and require no subsequent income assessments.
- From 30th June 2008 all E2E learners will receive the maximum £30 weekly EMA payment regardless of their household income, encouraging young NEETs to enter training.

10 We are working with DCSF on how EMA will play into the Raising of the Participation Age from 2013 but Ministers have said publicly that EMA in some form will continue.

### Care to Learn

11 Care to Learn supports teenage parents in learning by covering the costs of their childcare while they learn – up to £175 per week. The budget is £32.5m to support 7,700 learners.

12 Of all our initiatives, Care to Learn probably has the most immediate effect on bringing young people out of NEET: a recently published independent evaluation found that 88% of those surveyed would not have gone on a course without the support provided by Care to Learn; and of these 95% were on courses leading to additional qualifications.

### Adult Learning Grant

13 ALG helps low skilled, low income adults with the costs of their learning. Payments are up to £30 per week. It has been designed to allow learners to combine full-time learning with full-time or part-time employment, where they wish to do so. The budget is £35m to support 30,000 learners. Evaluation shows that ALG:

- encourages participation. (15% of recipients said they would probably or definitely not have done so without ALG)
- accelerates learning (over 27% said they would have studied part-time without an ALG rather than full-time with an ALG);
- improves retention. (17% said they would have dropped out without ALG)
- improves completion. (93% of ALG learners did so cf. average 85%)

14 ALG was rolled out nationally in September 2007(a year earlier than planned) and it featured as a significant component of the Skills Campaign. Take-up has been about twice what was projected, which is good, but this led to a processing backlog in the autumn term – which has now been cleared.

### Hardship

15 Through the Hardship strand (which was sometimes known as the Learner Support Fund or LSF) we make money available to college learner support staff to

allocate on a discretionary basis. For young people this amounts to about 5% of total spend and is important because it allows a flexible response to the sort of problems that are not addressed under EMA rules. For Adult learners the discretionary Hardship payments are the primary source of financial help. The budget for adults is £48m (topped up in 07/08 to £60m) and typically supports about 310,000 learners.

### Childcare for Adult Learners

16 Adult learners in FE do not get the same level of financial help for childcare as teenage parents under C2L or HE students: there is no entitlement and the discretionary payments average only about a quarter of that paid to the other groups. However, in March 2007 the Chancellor announced a new £75m scheme to pilot childcare costs for 50,000 workless families so that they can participate in learning. DCSF has asked the LSC to deliver the new offer.

### Transport

17 We channel £12m a year through Regions to influence Passenger Transport Authorities on the availability of public transport to colleges etc.

### Career Development Loans

18 CDLs are commercial bank loans to help individuals pay for vocational education and learning, to improve their employability. Individuals can borrow up to £8k from designated banks to invest in the learning of their choice. The LSC's role is to cover interest charges for the duration of the course, and to act as surety and cover any defaults. The budget is £22m and supports about 1300 new learners per year.

19 Evaluation shows that:

- Our £22m causes individuals to spend approaching £80m of their own money.
- Over half of learners said that without CDL they would not have done the course they did and a quarter said they would not have done any course without CDL.
- Some 85% of people taking the loan would recommend it to others.
- CDL has a positive impact on learners' employment prospects, skills and income. Over 80% agreed that CDL has helped them develop new skills.

### Dance and Drama Awards

20 A limited number of awards are available through the top specialist private providers. They enable the most talented individuals to train to become actors, dancers, and stage managers, regardless of their family income. The budget is £14.5m to support 1,465 learners.

### Residential Support Scheme

21 This provides financial support for accommodation costs to those students who need to study away from home. The budget is £4m and supports about 500 learners.

**Trevor Fellowes**

Director of Learner Support  
14.04.08

<b>Paper creator</b>	Trevor Fellowes
<b>Date created</b>	16 April 2008
<b>Document ref.</b>	G:\Chairmans Division\Secretariat\NATIONAL COUNCIL\2008 meetings\080423\Finals\26 - 2008 Learner Support.doc