

LEARNING INCENTIVES HELP IMPROVE BEHAVIOUR

Hidden social benefits of paying young people to stay in learning revealed

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A scheme to help remove financial barriers to staying in post-16 education has delivered unexpected benefits by improving young people's behaviour in and away from learning, according to new research from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

More than 1,300 young people in Bath and North East Somerset in 2006/2007 received the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)¹ which has been shown not only to encourage young people to stay in learning, but over one in three receiving the allowance also believe it has a positive impact on their behaviour. This is backed up by one in five saying it encourages them to steer clear of trouble outside college or school.

Their parents tell a similar story, with one in six of those who receive EMA (17 per cent) reporting an improvement in behaviour at home as a result of the weekly payments of up to £30.

¹ This figure relates to EMA 'take up' which is defined as the number of young people who have received one or more EMA payment during a year. This data is derived from the residence of a young person as provided on their EMA application form and is directly sourced from the EMA Payment System (EMASYS).

Psychologist Donna Dawson believes the incentive effect of paying young people has hidden benefits in improving behaviour: “Rewarding young people with weekly payments helps them to take responsibility for their own lives and their own learning and reminds young people that their future is in their own hands. This can be very empowering, so young people who receive EMA gain a sense of the value of learning and see a tangible benefit to good behaviour which extends out of the classroom and in to every day life.”

The findings come as the LSC announces changes to EMA from next September which will see payment of EMA based not only on participation, but also with a strengthened link to effort and behaviour while in lessons at college, school or on a work-based learning programme.

These changes are supported by both parents and young people, with 77 per cent of parents with children receiving the allowance and 70 per cent of young people benefiting from the scheme agreeing this will improve EMA.

Malcolm Gillespie, LSC Regional Director for the South West, commented: “EMA is a ‘something for something’ scheme designed to combat the financial barriers to learning, so we are delighted it is proving to have such extensive positive benefits to young people in addition to those originally intended.

“It is not too late to return to learning on short courses such as a BTEC award in business administration, a Level 2 certificate in Photography or an NVQ in IT. Today we want to encourage all young people to find out if they are eligible for EMA and look at the huge variety of options open to them to give themselves the best start in life.”

ENDS

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

All media enquires please contact:

Kelly Davis or Kat Forse on 0117 906 4523

kdavis@brayleino.co.uk or kforse@brayleino.co.uk

All public enquiries regarding EMA please contact: 0808 10 16219 (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

Notes for editors – EMA Applications for 2007/8 Year

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

Research among parents was conducted by YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 593 adults with children aged 16 to 19 in full or part time education. Fieldwork was undertaken between 14th - 15th November 2007. The survey was carried out online. Results have not been weighted. YouGov is a member of the British Polling Council.

Research among young people was conducted by YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 563 young people aged 16 to 19. Fieldwork was undertaken between 16th - 23rd November 2007. The survey was carried out online. Results have not been weighted. YouGov is a member of the British Polling Council.

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;
 - 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
- 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 on-line resource which provides information for young people on all learning courses and programmes available in each local area. They can be viewed via the national portal at: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?sid=41>. From 2008, learners will be able to access information on the new Diplomas being delivered in their area, through the on-line prospectuses.

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.