The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has put in place support for colleges to help those students affected by delays to their Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) payments.

Sixteen to 18-year-old students who are eligible for the EMA can now get an interim support from their college.

The allowance, which the LSC is responsible for, gives students from less well-off families up to £30.00 per week in term time to encourage them to stay in education to improve their job and life chances.

Every year hundreds of thousands of teenagers are eligible for the allowance. This year there have been some delays in processing the applications, which are managed by the contractor Liberata. Learners and their parents have also experienced problems when calling the helpline.

Mark Haysom, Chief Executive of the LSC, said: “Less well-off students starting courses without funding is simply not acceptable. We’ve arranged for colleges to have access to funds as a matter of urgency so that no student in this situation will lose out."

“The company hired to process the applications, Liberata, has now taken on an extra 460 staff to speed up the manual application process as a matter of urgency.

“This is a very regrettable and distressing situation. It is a matter of the utmost priority to resolve this issue swiftly.”

Further education colleges across the country, which attract the majority of students in receipt of EMA, are being contacted by the LSC with offer of support. The LSC is also monitoring the situation in schools and independent providers.

The funds are available for those who would otherwise not be able to attend or participate effectively in education as a result of the delay in payment of their EMA, such as not being able to pay for public transport, books, meals, or essential course equipment.
To date 157,000 applications have been fully assessed, and of these 133,000 youngsters have already been informed that they will receive their payment.

The LSC estimates that about 150,000 applications are experiencing delays caused by these technical problems.

David Collins, President of the Association of Colleges, said: “This is good news for colleges who can’t always afford to help students in this way. This should go a long way towards ensuring no one – student or college - loses out while the backlog is processed.”

Ends

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