Description of the policy

Background/History of the programme and developments to date

EMA is an income assessed weekly allowance of £10, £20 or £30 paid direct to young people aged 16-19 who are participating in learning. It is designed to encourage more young people from lower income households to remain in post compulsory learning to enable them to progress and achieve. Learners have to meet the conditions of their learning agreement, in order to receive each EMA payment.

Eligibility for EMA is based on an assessment of household income. Special arrangements are in place for particularly vulnerable groups of young people who may not be able to provide an assessment of household income i.e. those estranged from their families, those in care or leaving care, those who are the primary carer for their own child and those who are leaving a secure unit.

EMA is a substantial programme with an annual budget of over £500 million. Nearly half of learners in education qualify on income grounds, with around 80% of those in receipt receiving the maximum weekly payment of £30. In the academic year 2008/09, over 570,000 young people benefited from EMA payments.

EMA was extensively piloted before it was rolled out. The pilots tested whether offering a monetary allowance to young people from low income families would encourage them to remain in learning after the end of compulsory education. They began in September 1999 by introducing four models of EMA in 15 LAs and were extended to a further 41 areas in 2000/01, therefore operating across about one third of England in total by 2004.

From September 2004 (academic year 2004/5) - EMA was rolled-out nationally to successive 16 year old cohorts of FE learners to 17 year olds in academic year 2005/06 and 18 year olds in academic year 2006/07. The pilots were subject to one of the most extensive evaluations of any government programme. That evaluation found that EMA had a significant impact on both participation and attainment.

From 10 April 2006, EMA was extended to include learners on LSC funded Entry to Employment (E2E) or Programme-Led Apprenticeship courses benefiting up to 50,000 more young people and their families each year. Developments since then include:

i) November 2007 new criteria for all new provision was adopted

ii) From July 2008 all E2E learners who met the EMA eligibility criteria have been eligible to receive the maximum EMA regardless of their household income.

iii) From September 2008 an EMA Guarantee was introduced so that a successful income assessment entitles the learner to up to three years’
support on the same rate even if income increases, if the learner’s household income decreases they can choose to be reassessed at the beginning of the following academic year. This policy allows learners to undertake their further education secure in the knowledge of the level of support they will receive.

Policy Intention

EMA was introduced in 2004 following a decade of stagnant post 16 participation rates. It was designed to address the issue that the UK had one of the lowest rates of post-compulsory participation in education amongst Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, and to address the imbalance of participation between socio economic groups. It is designed to encourage more learners from lower income households to participate in post compulsory learning.

EMA payments are conditional on the learner meeting the terms of the learning agreement between the provider and young person. The agreement will set out what is expected of the young person in terms of attendance, effort, behaviour, and progression on their course. All learners in receipt of EMA must have a learning agreement and abide by it to receive EMA payments. This ‘something for something’ aspect of EMA is integral to EMA policy as it encourages young people to make the most of their learning opportunities helping them to progress and achieve.

Authorising EMA payments

Responsibility for determining whether a young person has met the terms of their agreement and is entitled to receive a payment rests with the learning provider, who must take account of the Learning and Skills Council’s guidance in making such decisions. The guidance states that providers should class any absence as authorised if it is directly related to the learner’s disability.

EMA valid provision

Courses offering EMA must meet common criteria i.e. they must be for no fewer than 12 guided learning hours a week for a minimum of 10 weeks and be inspected by a public body that assures quality. In addition they must be funded or co-financed by the Learning and Skills Council in England; and/or lead to an accredited qualification of up to level 3.

The 12 guided learning hours applies in all cases. However the LSC’s EMA guidance makes it very clear that providers must consider what reasonable adjustments should be made for disabled learners to facilitate their ability to carry out the required guided learning hours.

Support for families of learners aged 16-19

The aim of EMA is to encourage more young people to participate and progress, as such it is paid direct to the young person. There are also other mechanisms to support the families of young people in learning, such as child benefit and child tax credits.
The evidence base


Knight, T and White, C. (2003), The Reflections of Early Leavers and Second Year Participants on the Education Maintenance Allowance Scheme: A qualitative Study Department for Education and Employment Research Report 411


Middleton, S et al (March 2005), Young people from Ethnic Minority backgrounds: Evidence from the Education Maintenance Allowance Pilots Database, DfES RR627


Perren, K. and Middleton, S. (2005), Teenage Mothers and young People with Special needs: Evidence from the Education Maintenance Allowance Pilots Database, Department for Education and Skills Research Report 629


Sweetnam R et al Evaluation of Extension of Education Maintenance Allowance to Entry-to-Employment and Programme Led Apprenticeships (2008), Ipsos/Mori/Learning and Skills Council
What the evidence shows – key facts

Background and impact of EMA generally

EMA was introduced to encourage more young people from lower income households to stay on in learning post 16. It has been subject to one of the largest evaluations of any educational programme which has shown that the programme has a positive impact.

The evaluation was conducted by a consortium led by the Centre for Research into Social Policy (CRSP) and involving the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) and the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). The main aims of the evaluation were to assess the impact of EMA on participation, retention and achievement in post-16 education. The design of the evaluation was a longitudinal cohort study. This involved large surveys of random samples of young people in ten of the original 15 EMA pilot areas and 11 control areas, including four waves of interviews over four years. Two cohorts of young people were involved: those who completed Year 11 in Summer 1999 and those who completed Year 11 in Summer 2000.

EMA has had a considerable impact on increasing participation and has had most impact on young people from the lower socio-economic groups (SEGs)\(^1\)

The evaluation of EMA (published in 2002) indicated an increase in participation by 16 year olds of 3.8 percentage points nationally and 4.1 percentage points for 17 year olds. The impact on participation at 16 is higher for males than females, probably reflecting the lower base for males to start with.

Amongst SEG groups 2 and 3, EMA increased the proportions in education at both 16 and 17 years by 6.4 percentage points and the increase for SEG groups 4 and 5 was even larger at 9.1 percentage points\(^2\). For young people from these lowest SEGs, this increase in participation was largely the result of a significant reduction, of 7.4 percentage points, in the proportions who would otherwise not have participated in post-compulsory education at all.

Teenage mothers and young people with special needs appear to have been influenced in a positive way by EMA\(^3\)

Teenage mothers

Analysis showed that despite negative experiences at school, including low attendance and attainment, two thirds of young mothers had hoped to continue in education but only 14% of young mothers and 17% of pregnant 16 year olds were participating full time after year 11. Although numbers were small, making robust analysis difficult, there was some indication that the availability of EMA had encouraged some young mothers to remain in education with a fifth of

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\(^1\) SEG groups are: Group 1: Professional and Managers; Group 2: Other non-manual workers; Group 3: Skilled Manual Workers; Group 4: Semi- and unskilled manual workers; Group 5: Not in work.

\(^2\) Middleton et al (2003a) Table 3.2 pg 73

\(^3\) Perren, K. and Middleton, S. Teenage mothers and young people with special needs: evidence from the EMA pilots database. DCSF RR629 2005
young mothers and pregnant teenagers remaining in education in pilot areas compared with just over a tenth in the control areas.4

Evaluation5 of the Care to Learn Child care support programme for teenage parents in learning found that Care to Learn recipients who also received EMA were less likely to drop out from their course than any other group.

Young people with special needs

Where young people with special needs/disability were in receipt of EMA they were more likely than other recipients to say that receipt of the award had been important to their decision to remain in full-time education.

EMA had a positive impact on participation at 16 for young people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

While three fifths of young people in the pilot areas who had been awarded EMA felt that it had been ‘quite’ or ‘very’ important in their decision to remain in education (62 per cent) this was particularly so for Pakistani/Bangladeshi young people (70 per cent of each group).6

Research on EMA and Attainment

The LSC commissioned the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) to further examine the impact of EMA on post-16 attainment by using a combination of data sources not previously available. This analysis was based on cohorts who first received EMA in 2002/03 and 2003/04 and compared the outcomes (participation in FE, retention in FE and achievement by year 12) among people who reside in the 10 EMA pilot areas to similar young people who reside in the 11 EMA control areas that were used in the main quantitative evaluation.7

EMA has had a positive impact on attainment, particularly for some ethnic groups and those in more deprived areas

EMA was found to increase overall attainment at Level 2 and Level 3 by around 2.5 percentage points for females and just under 2 percentage points for males. For EMA recipients, attainment at Level 2 and Level 3 increased by 7 percentage points for females and 5 percentage points for males.

However, the impact varied for different groups of learners:

Ethnicity – EMA had a particularly positive and significant impact on achievement for females of Asian and black origin – by age 19, Asian females were 4.3 percentage points more likely to have achieved Level 3. Black females were 5.2 percentage points more likely to have achieved full Level 2 and 6.2...
percentage points more likely to have achieved full Level 3. Black males were also significantly more likely to have achieved Level 2 and Level 3 by 18.

**Neighbourhood Deprivation** – impacts of EMA on attainment were concentrated among learners from the most deprived 40% of neighbourhoods, for both males and females.

**Evaluation of the national roll out of EMA**

The Learning and Skills Council commissioned RCU\(^8\) to evaluate the national roll-out using a combination of perceptions research with learning providers and EMA recipients, and an analysis of existing datasets. The report was published in 2007 using analysis of 2004/05 data.

**EMA and retention against learning aims: EMA encourages greater retention of learners, particularly those from deprived areas**

The chart illustrates a trend of increasing overall retention rates from learners living in the most deprived areas through to those living in the least deprived areas. Within this trend is a marked difference in the pattern of retention rates for EMA learners and non-EMA learners. Firstly the retention rate for EMA learners is higher than for non EMA across all deprivation bands. Secondly the retention rate among non-EMA learners falls off sharply with increasing deprivation from 91% in the least deprived areas down to 82% in the most deprived. The fall off in retention with increased deprivation is much less marked for learners with EMA demonstrating the greater impact in these areas.

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7/14
Retention on learning aims of 16 year olds enrolments in FE by deprivation band 2004/05

EMA had the greatest impact on ethnic minority groups who tended to have low retention rates

For all ethnic groups retention was higher among EMA learners compared to those who did not receive the award. The greatest difference between non EMA and EMA learner retention was found among those groups where retention was lowest, namely Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean, and mixed white.

The positive difference of EMA compared to non EMA was smallest among white learners at 1.8 percentage points, but still positive.

Gender Ethnicity and Disability and receipt of EMA

The information below shows data on the number of learners in receipt of EMA in the academic year 07/08 who self declared their gender, ethnicity and disability on the voluntary equal opportunities monitoring form. The paragraphs below also give estimated breakdown by ethnicity and disability. It is important to note that it is not possible to make a direct comparison between national breakdowns and receipt of EMA because receipt of EMA is dependent on a household income assessment and we do not have details of individual household incomes.
The Gender split for EMA in 07/08 for those that answered the voluntary question on the application form was 48% male and 52% female.

Learners with a disability

07/08 EMA statistics show that around 4% of learners in receipt of EMA declared they had a disability.

We do not have data showing what percentage of the 16-18 year old population is disabled. Data from the Family Resources Survey (FRS) disability prevalence estimates 2007/08\(^9\) show there are 10.6 million people in Britain, (including 5 million people over state pension age and 800,000 children) who have a long standing illness, disability or infirmity and a significant difficulty with day to day activities. The Warnock report\(^10\) used a wider definition and estimated that around 20% of 16 year olds have some form of special educational need, although not all of these young people would necessarily consider themselves to be disabled.

Learners from minority ethnic groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Breakdown of EMA recipients 07/08 by ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White - British</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White - Irish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White - Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian - Bangladeshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian - Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian - Pakistani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian - Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black / Black British - African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black / Black British - Caribbean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black / Black British - Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed - White / Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed - White / Black African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed - White / Black Caribbean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed - Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Specified / Refused</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The estimated population in England by ethnic group, from ONS experimental population estimates for mid-2007\(^11\)

\(^9\) Everyone in this group would meet the definition of disability in the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA); however, these estimates do not reflect the total number of people covered by the DDA as the FRS does not collect this information.

\(^10\) May 1978

\(^11\) Released by the Office for National Statistics on 29 April 2009
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White - British</td>
<td>83.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White - Irish</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White - Other</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian - Bangladesi</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian - Indian</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian - Pakistani</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian - Other</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/Black British African</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/Black British Caribbean</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black / Black British - Other</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed - White / Asian</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed - White / Black African</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed-White Black Caribbean</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed - Other</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenges and opportunities

The evidence shows that EMA has a positive impact on participation in learning and attainment. The application process takes account of the special needs of certain vulnerable groups to ensure that they are able to apply for and benefit from EMA. The impact of EMA is greatest among people from lower socio economic groups and some ethnic minority groups. It has also been shown to have positively influenced teenage mothers and some disabled learners.

The percentage of disabled learners applying for EMA is lower than might be expected. However we do not have an accurate benchmark against which to measure it and it could in part be because some learners do not self declare a disability. It is also important to note that currently young people with a learning disability are twice as likely than their peers to be not engaged in post 16 education training or employment.

From April 2010, the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learners Act comes into force and responsibility for the funding, planning and commissioning of education and training for 16-19 year olds (and for 19-25 year olds with a learning difficulty assessment) will be transferred from the Learning and Skills Council to local authorities.

Local Authorities will use their partnerships, particularly 14-19 partnerships to ensure that they are able to fulfil their duty to provide a suitable place for every learner up to 19, and 25 if a learner has a learning difficulty assessment. Local authorities will be expected to encourage innovative packages of support to enable better access to learning for all young people. Foundation Learning will provide real opportunities to increase the number of disabled learners in learning by creating flexible learning routes which learners can follow at their own pace.

Support to meet the needs of learners with specific learning difficulties is provided through the Additional Learning Support Fund which is non income assessed; this can complement EMA which is available to learners from lower income households. As more disabled learners take up the new opportunities open to them we can expect more to take up EMA should they meet the EMA eligibility criteria.

Evaluations of EMA have included consultation with learners who would be directly affected by the policy. Key Sector bodies have also been involved in helping to design the application process and the LSC has a Learner support consultative forum of stakeholders to advise on delivery. However, the consultation with learners has not been targeted specifically at those who have been excluded or who are disadvantaged nor has there been any equality proofing of the application process by customers to ensure that it is equally accessible to all groups. A key challenge and opportunity for the programme will be to:-

Involve a greater range of stakeholders to provide advice on the processes used to operate the application and assessment part of the EMA operation.
Equality impact assessment
Based on the evidence and the principles set out in Annex A the assessment is that EMA has a positive impact on participation and attainment post 16.

Next steps

1) Learning and Skills Council to issue a reminder to providers to ensure they are aware of their responsibility to take into account the needs of disabled learners when drawing up the EMA Learning Agreement. Owner: Learning and Skills Council/YPLA. Timescale by March 2010

2) To review all publicity materials to ensure they feature a wide range of learners and settings. Owner: Learning and Skills Council/YPLA. Timescale by April 2010.

3) To consider the need to formally consult disadvantaged groups and specialist providers during the development of key documents and processes such as guidance, application forms and publicity material. Owner: Learning and Skills Council/YPLA. Timescale to report by August 2010.

4) The LSC to publish some good practice case studies showing how providers take into account the individual needs of their learners while still ensuring the ‘something for something’ nature of EMA which is integral to the success of the programme for all learners. Owner: Learning and Skills Council/YPLA Timescale by September 2010.

5) DCSF to consider highlighting the need to ensure that learners with learning difficulties and disabilities are aware of the funding support available to them in new guidance to local authorities to be published, alongside guidance to improve provision and support for disabled learners. Owner: DCSF, Timescale April 2010.
Annex 1 Principles

Principle 1: All learners are of equal value
All learners and potential learners are of equal value and should benefit from DCSF policies, practices and programmes:

- whether or not they are disabled
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation and faith, national origin or national status
- whichever their gender.

Principle 2: Relevant differences should be recognised
Treating people equally can mean treating them differently. Policies, practices and programmes must not discriminate, but may be differentiated to take account of differences of life-experience, outlook and background, and in the kinds of barrier and disadvantage which people face, in relation to:

- disability, so that reasonable adjustments are made
- ethnicity, so that different cultural backgrounds and experiences of racism are recognised
- gender, so that the different needs and experiences of boys and girls, women and men are recognised.

Principle 3: Workforce development
Policies and programmes should benefit all members of the workforce, for example in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development:

- whether or not they are disabled
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation and faith, national origin or national status
- whichever their gender.

Principle 4: Positive attitudes and relationships should be fostered
Policies and programmes should promote:

- positive attitudes towards disabled people, and good relations between disabled and non-disabled people
- positive interaction and good relations between groups and communities different from each other in terms of ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation and faith, and national origin or national status
• mutual respect and good relations between boys and girls, women and men.

**Principle 5: Society as a whole should benefit**

Policies and programmes should benefit society as a whole, both locally and nationally, by fostering greater cohesion, and greater participation in public life of:

• disabled people

• people of a wide range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds

• women as well as men.

**Principle 6: Current inequalities and barriers should be addressed and reduced**

In addition to avoiding or minimising possible negative impacts, polices and programmes should take opportunities to maximise positive impacts by addressing, reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that already exist between:

• disabled and non-disabled people

• people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds

• boys and girls, women and men.

**Principle 7: Policy development should involve widespread consultation and involvement**

People affected by a policy or programme should be consulted and involved in the design of new policies, and the review of existing ones. Such consultation should be both direct and through representative organisations, and should be based on principles of transparency and accountability. Further, it should involve those who in the past have been excluded or disadvantaged, and who continue to face barriers:

• disabled people

• people of minority ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds

• women as well as men.

It is in the light of these seven principles that EQUIAs should be conducted.