What Does Learner Support Do?

What is Learner Support?
Learner Support is a package of funds, made available through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), to help offset barriers to participation in learning.

The main barriers are cost of childcare and financial hardship. Some funds are based on national entitlement and some funds are based on local learning provider discretion.

Barriers to Learning
There are three major barriers to participation in learning:

1. General attitude
2. Issues with the cost of childcare
3. Other financial issues

Overcoming Barriers
The purpose of Learner Support is to enable more potential learners to participate and to enable those already in learning to apply themselves better, where finance would otherwise be a problem. In a world of demand-led funding, it helps individual learners to aspire, demand and take up learning.

Learner Support money is used to meet four types of cost:

1. Course fees
2. Transport
3. Living costs
4. Other special circumstances

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What is available? The 9 Strands of Learner Support

1. EMA
   - Education Maintenance Allowance is a weekly allowance paid to young learners from low-income households. EMA supports them with the costs of learning once they have finished compulsory schooling. It is designed to ensure that all 16-19-year-olds can choose to access high quality relevant learning opportunities. For more information, please visit: http://www.direct.gov.uk/ema

2. College Bursary
   - The College Bursary offers funds towards the costs of childcare, accommodation and travel. For more information, please visit: http://www.direct.gov.uk/bursary

3. DaDa
   - Dance and Drama Awards (DaDa) are scholarships funded by the LSC, offering reduced tuition fees and income-related support for living and travel costs for young people aged 14 to 19, wanting to study dance and drama at the National Theatre School or drama and stage managers. For more information, please visit: http://www.direct.gov.uk/dada

4. ALG
   - Adult Learning Grants are intended to help adults studying full-time more than 15 hours per week with the costs of learning. This grant is payable subject to financial assessment to learners aged 19+. For more information, please visit: http://www.direct.gov.uk/alg

5. Professional and Career Development Loans
   - Professional and Career Development Loans are commercial bank loans, with competitive interest rates, which can be used for further study in work-related areas. The loans are suitable for learners aged 16+, who are in full-time work or have been out of work for 12 months or more. Learners can choose to repay the loan over 10 years. For more information, please visit: http://www.direct.gov.uk/pcl

6. Adult Childcare
   - General FE
   - FE Colleges may be able to help parents aged 16 and over with childcare costs.

7. dLS Hardship
   - www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn

8. Transport Partnership Funding
   - Transport funds are available to support learners aged 16-19 who need help with transport and accommodation.

9. Residential Accommodation
   - www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn

How These Funds Work

1. Information and Advice
   - To find out more the learner should contact their local Connexions, nextstep or student support adviser.

2. Administration
   - National administrative arrangements and a local, learner-based, service.

3. Provider
   - Learning providers must follow the local provider guidelines to ensure that the needs of the learner are being met.

4. Learner
   - The learner should ensure that they choose courses with a high probability of completion.

5. Quality Assurance
   - There are quality assurance standards and assessment processes that ensure the quality of services provided.

Further Information

On Learner Support:
www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn

On Targets:
www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/data/statistics/learner

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Further Information

The Benefits of Learner Support

Participation, Retention and Achievement
- Out of a survey of 3000 recipients of EMA, 64% said they would not have continued in learning without EMA.

- Retention rates for learners receiving EMA were 88% in 2003/4 compared to 72% for those not receiving.

- 11% of adult learners receiving ALG would not have gone on a course without it.

- 15% of adult learners receiving ALG would not have gone on a course without it.

Life Chances for Disadvantaged and Dislocated Learners
- EMA has a greater impact on disadvantaged groups including minority ethnic groups and those with backgrounds of high deprivation.

- Over 80% of Learners identified that the hardship strand of Learner Support is effective at widening participation.

Employability
- The majority of EMA recipients aged 20 years and over said learning had helped them to find a job.

- 95% of ALG recipients aged 20 years and over who were in work also reported that the job they had was better than any job they had had before.

Personal Wellbeing
- 88% of ALG recipients said it gave them the confidence to do more studying.

Research and Evaluation documents for all of the programme strands referenced above are available to download from:
www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn

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On Targets:
www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/data/statistics/learner