Learner Support Service stakeholder e-bulletin, January 2009

Welcome to the January e-bulletin from the LSC’s Learner Support Directorate.

This month we are updating you on the progress we have made in re-stabilising the learner support service following the transfer to Capita in November and of our plans for the future of the service. We also tell you how you can pre-order 2009/10 EMA application forms and other resources to help you promote the scheme to learners.

If you would like your name added to the distribution list please email us at learnersupportupdate@lsc.gov.uk.

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1. Handover of the Learner Support contract to Capita

As you know, on Thursday, 27 November we terminated the contract with Liberata for the administration of Learner Support Services and transferred it to Capita. Two months on we are pleased to say that the transfer has gone well and the performance of the service has been stabilised.

All new EMA applications are now being processed to the same timescales as previous years. On the 16th January the number of learners who had received their EMA payments was over 509,000 so we are back on track against our forecast take-up.

The helpline performance is also much improved with 95% of all calls being answered as was the case in previous academic years. Enhancements made to the helpline also mean that helpline staff have access to better information and are better equipped to answer your questions.

However, we do recognise that there is still some way to go if we are to meet our ambition of transforming the Leaner Support Service.

Plans for the future Learner Support Service

We aim to make further improvements to the Learner Support Service for the 2009/10 academic year. This will involve replacing the Interim Learning Provider Portal to enhance the learner registration and payments process as well as improving services for learners. We will continue to keep you up-to-date with our plans via future editions of this e-bulletin.

2. EMA application forms and support materials for 2009/10 – pre-order forms today

2009/10 EMA Application forms – available now for pre-order

You can now pre-order 2009/10 EMA application packs to distribute to learners. Each pack contains an EMA application form and guidance notes for learners to help learners apply for the 2009/10 academic year.

You can pre-order a number of 2009/10 EMA application packs from LSC Publications by calling: 0845 602 2260 or emailing: lsc@prolog.uk.com. Please remember to quote ref: LSC-P-NAT-090013.

Please note that application packs will not start to be sent out until April 2009.
2009/10 Support Materials – available now for pre-order

Support materials to help learning providers promote and support EMA are now available:

- EMA resource pack - designed to support you in classroom-based learning and highlight the post-16 options available to young people. Ref: LSC-P-NAT-080120
- EMA Your Choice DVD - explains the benefits of EMA and how this has helped five young people stay on in learning who would otherwise have dropped out. Ref: LSC-P-NAT-080004

You can pre-order 2009/10 EMA support materials from LSC Publications by calling: 0845 602 2260 or emailing: lsc@prolog.uk.com.

3. EMA Roadshow targeting 2008/09 learners

As part of the national marketing programme, we have developed an EMA roadshow – a mobile unit promoting EMA to young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).

The EMA roadshow is a truck where young people can go to play games and speak directly with a Connexions adviser who can help with their learning and financial support options. Material available on the truck will include:

- Games (e.g. Wii, Guitar Hero) and music videos
- My Way (EMA DVD)
- 2008/09 EMA information leaflets and application forms
- Apprenticeships information leaflets
- Diplomas information leaflets
- Other Learner Support materials and information

The truck will be touring the country in February and will feature on local radio stations in the following locations:

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13-Feb-09 | Hull | Viking
14-Feb-09 | Stockton-on-Tees | TFM
15-Feb-09 | Newcastle | Metro
17-Feb-09 | Leeds | Radio Aire
18-Feb-09 | Long Eaton | Trent FM
19-Feb-09 | Liverpool | Radio City
20-Feb-09 | Manchester | Key 103
21-Feb-09 | Sheffield | Hallam FM
22-Feb-09 | Birmingham | Kerrang
23-Feb-09 | Oxford | Fox FM
24-Feb-09 | Bristol | GWR

4. Interim Learning Provider Portal Update

The Interim Learning Provider Portal (Interim LPP) was initially designed as a short-term measure while we introduced the new Learning Provider Portal for administering all the Learner Support schemes. However, following the difficulties experienced last year, and the change of supplier, we have had to retain the Interim LPP for longer than we would have liked.

In recent weeks we have introduced a number of changes designed to improve the Interim LPP but unfortunately there is no instant fix to some of the issues that learning providers have reported. Although we anticipate that we will have to continue to use the Interim LPP for the remainder of the 08/09 academic year, we have put together a plan to make improvements to the payments process. We will continue to keep you up to date with progress against this plan in future e-bulletins.

We know that at peak periods, normally Mondays and Tuesdays, the system runs very slowly due to the number of people trying to use it. We will continue to work towards improving this. In the meantime you may find that the system runs more quickly during off-peak periods and later in the working week.

5. Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work

From April, Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work will support adults (aged 20 and over) by paying for childcare and travel costs while they are undertaking learning that leads to work. The aim of the scheme is to encourage the non-working parent within a family to participate in learning or training that will help lead them into sustainable employment.
To make sure you receive all the latest information on the scheme please sign up for our Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work e-bulletin by sending us an email at freechildcare-adults@lsc.gov.uk.

You can find out more about Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work by visiting our website at www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn/childcaretraininglearning or calling us on 0845 600 2809.

**Application and administration regional seminars**

We have set up a series of regional seminars during February and March to raise awareness of the scheme and offer an end-to-end walkthrough of the Learner Support Service from a Childcare Provider and Learning Provider perspective.

The objectives for the seminars are:

- To explain the application process and application form for the scheme;
- To identify the role of the Learner Support Service (LSS) in delivering the new Childcare Scheme;
- To provide an update on changes in policy for the scheme;
- To advise providers on their specific role to monitor and record attendance for both the learner and their child/children; and
- To provide ‘train the trainer’ materials for intermediary organisations who will then be able to cascade the information to Childcare Providers in their area.

**Registration for these events in now open.** To book your place, please go to www.livegroup.co.uk/freechildcare.

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6. **Field Force Team Update**

The Field Force continues to support learning providers and stakeholders working within each of the regions, specifically in using the Interim Learning Provider Portal and providing support for issues and problems. The team is also there to help all stakeholders to maximise successful applications amongst their learners.
During February and March, the Field Force team will focus on the new **Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work** scheme to provide regional seminars as outlined in item 5.

Going forwards, the Field Force team will play a key role in capturing learning provider experience to help inform the development of the Service.

**Contacting the Field Force**

The first point of call for all learning provider queries should be the helpline. The helpline has full access to systems (including the Interim LPP) and will be able to resolve most issues.

If you require additional support, beyond that offered by the helpline, please contact your local field force representative using the details below. As the Field Force spend much of their time travelling, we recommend you first contact your representative by email.

| **Bryan Walsh** | NORTH WEST: All areas  
| Email: bryan.walsh@capita.co.uk | WEST MIDLANDS: Staffordshire, Shropshire  
| Phone: 07976 468 256 |
| **Kathy Betteridge** | NORTH EAST: All areas  
| Email: kathy.betteridge@capita.co.uk | YORKS AND HUMBER: All areas  
| Phone: 07909 934601 | EAST MIDLANDS: Derbyshire  
| **Rachael Norman** | EASTERN: All areas  
| Email: rachael.norman@capita.co.uk | EAST MIDLANDS: Nottinghamshire,  
| Phone: 07989 693 788 | Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Rutland  
| **Bill Rogers** | SOUTH EAST: Thames Valley (Milton Keynes,  
| Email: bill.rogers@capita.co.uk | Oxfordshire and Bucks)  
| Phone: 07989 693 717 | LONDON: All areas  
| **Vicky Bush** | SOUTH EAST: Berkshire, Surrey, Sussex, Kent  
| Email: victoria.bush@capita.co.uk | and Medway, Hampshire and Isle of Wight  
| Phone: 07500 917 351 | WEST MIDLANDS: Herefordshire and  
| | Worcestershire, Coventry and Warwickshire,  
| | Birmingham and Solihull, The Black Country |
7. Evaluation of Learner Support Schemes’ Guidance

We have recently commissioned research to carry out an evaluation of the
guidance documents for Learner Support Schemes, including EMA, ALG,
Care to Learn, Sixth Form College Childcare Scheme, Dance and Drama
Awards and Discretionary Support Funds.

In January, an email with a link to an online questionnaire was sent out to
stakeholders and we would like to ask you to please participate in this survey,
if you have not already done so.

Your views are important to us and will be used to improve guidance materials
for the 2009/10 academic year.

To fill out the survey and give feedback on Learner Support guidance please
visit www.critical.co.uk/lscsurvey and compete the survey no later than
Wednesday, 4th February.

8. Actions you may need to take

A reminder of the actions to be taken over the next few weeks. Please:

- Pre-order 2009/10 EMA application forms, EMA resources pack and
  EMA ‘My Choice’ DVD from LSC publications (see item 2 for details).
- Give your feedback on Learner Support guidance materials by visiting
  www.critical.co.uk/lscsurvey.
- Look out for the EMA roadshow coming to an area near you in
  February (see item 3 for details).
- Continue to encourage Learners to apply for Learner Support
  schemes. Application forms are available from schools, colleges,
  local Connexions services and by calling the Learner Helpline on
  0800 121 8989;
- Sign up for our e-bulletin telling you all about our new childcare
  scheme – Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work. Email
  us at freechildcare-adults@lsc.gov.uk

9. Keeping you informed

We will keep you up to date with the Learner Support news via this monthly e-
bulletin.
If you would like to find out more about the Learner Support Service or the various Learner Support schemes, including EMA and the ALG, please go to http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn or call us on 0845 600 7979.