Learner Support Service e-update

February 2008

As many of you know, the way in which we administer the various Learner Support programmes is changing.

From Spring 2008, it will be possible for learners to apply for EMA and ALG online or on the telephone. This will supplement the traditional application method of paper forms. The new Learner Support Service will improve the customer experience by helping to guide learners through the available support options and give them quick and easy access to the services we offer.

Care to Learn, Dance and Drama, 6th Form Childcare and Residential Support Scheme will move to the new application process at a later stage. Until this time, please continue to use the existing processes to apply for these schemes.

We are running customer engagement pilots in the South Yorkshire area and the South West region. In these regions, we are exclusively promoting the telephone and online channels for EMA and ALG and limiting the availability of paper application forms. In all other regions, paper application forms will be available as in previous years. The evaluation of the pilot will help us plan our approach for 2009/10. We thank these regions for agreeing to participate in this initiative.

Each month, we will be sending out an e-bulletin to keep you informed of progress towards the introduction of the new Learner Support Service.

Ordering paper EMA application forms and marketing materials

You can now order paper EMA application forms and marketing materials. You can do this by calling LSC Publications on 0845 6022260.

- For paper EMA application forms, please quote ref: LSC-P-NAT-080016
- For EMA leaflets, please quote ref: LSC-P-NAT-080002
- For EMA posters (money version), please quote ref: LSC-P-NAT-080001
- For EMA posters (choices version), please quote ref: LSC-P-NAT-080031

If you are in South Yorkshire or the South West region, you are in a pilot area and the number of forms you can receive will be limited. Please call the LSC Publications number (0845 6022260) and we will take your order as normal.

You will be sent an explanatory letter with your order along with leaflets and flyers that we ask you to distribute to your learners to promote online and telephone applications. We thank you in advance for helping us with this initiative.
Starting to handle EMA applications

We will be able to receive new EMA applications for 2008/09 from April.

In April, learners will be able to apply using paper forms or using the telephone. At this point, learners can also go to our website: [www.direct.gov.uk/ema](http://www.direct.gov.uk/ema) to find out more information on their eligibility and how they can apply.

Later in the spring, we will start processing applications. At this time, we will also offer learners more options to apply online and over the telephone.

If learners already receive EMA, they do not need to apply again in April. In spring, we will be writing to them separately to let them know how they can receive the award in 2008/09 and to provide them with their own specific application forms.

Answering your questions on the Learner Support Service (LSS)

We have received a number of questions about the new application system over the past few weeks. Here are answers to some of the most frequent queries.

Will the Learner Support Service help learners identify which awards might be available?

Yes. Later in the spring, when the new systems are available, learners will be able to get a quick decision in principle about their entitlement.

The learner will be able to find out if they might be entitled to LSC schemes by completing a questionnaire online or by calling the learner helpline. The learner will then be told how they can apply for a particular scheme or schemes.

The online facility will help learners understand their entitlement quickly and easily so they can apply successfully. It will also help them to make informed decisions and be able to plan ahead for their education and training.

Will the learner be able to save and track their application online?

Yes, when the online channel is fully operational. If a learner applies online, they will be able to use the MyAccount facility. This will be a personalised account, protected by a username and password. It will allow the learner to return as many times as they like to their application before submitting it to the LSC. After submitting the application, they will be able to track its progress online through MyAccount.
Learners that are successful in applying for a LSC scheme will also be able to use MyAccount to track their payment information and access messages.

**How will other parties (e.g. parents or carers) provide application information?**

For some of our schemes, learners might need to ask others (e.g. their parents or carers) for some information. Two options are available in this case:

a. The parents or carers can enter the information online themselves or ask the learner to do so on their behalf.

b. The parents or carers could complete the information on a pre-populated paper application form if they prefer. If this is the chosen route, the learner will fill in as much information as possible online and submit it. The Learner Support Service will then write back to the learner with a pre-populated form containing the gaps that need to be filled in by the parents or carer. The learner will ask their parents or carer to complete this information and arrange for the form to be returned to the Learner Support Service.

**Is the system secure?**

The security of customer information is of paramount importance to the Learner Support Service. We have a robust security policy in place that is compliant with e-Government guidelines and we review our processes on a regular basis to identify and manage any risks.

**Further support for learners and providers**

**Learner Support Service Workshops in March**

Some of you will have received invitations to the 9 regional LSS workshops we are running in March. These events are designed to introduce the Learner Support Service, outline the rationale for change, explain how the new channels will work in practice, discuss the impact on learning providers and, crucially, consider any concerns or issues you have. If you would like to find out more and attend these workshops, please take a look at our event website:

http://www.livegroup.co.uk/learnersupportservice/

**Helpline numbers for learners and providers**

Learning providers should use different numbers depending on the academic year they are referring to:

- **Learning provider number for 2007/08 applications:** If you have any queries about applications being made in the current academic year, please continue to call the existing number: 0800 056 2811

- **Learning Provider number for 2008/09 applications:** 0845 600 7979.
There will be a new telephone number for learners to use next month and we will let you know the number in future e-bulletins.
Keeping you informed

We want to ensure that you are kept up to date with our plans for the Learner Support Service. We will continue to send this e-bulletin to you each month and we will also update our frequently asked questions (FAQ) log.

However we would like to hear from you about other ways in which we could keep you informed – please send your suggestions and queries to the following email:

mftlearnersupportupdate@lsc.gov.uk

We will be posting all the e-bulletins, our FAQ log and other information on our website:

www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn.

We hope you’ve found this update useful. Don’t forget your next monthly e-bulletin will arrive in your inbox week commencing 24th March 2008.