Learner Support Service Stakeholder e-bulletin, March 2010

Welcome to the March issue of this e-bulletin from the LSC’s Learner Support Directorate.

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1. Update from the Learner Support Service

**Not Set payment decisions for ALG learners**

In recent e-bulletins we have encouraged you to reduce the number of ‘Not Set’ decisions recorded on laps for EMA learners. We are aware that many providers have worked to reduce outstanding Not Set decisions and would like to reiterate our thanks for their help in addressing this issue.

However, we have received a number of calls from learners querying non-payment of their ALG. It is clear that the number of Not Set decisions for attendance in the current term remains higher than expected.

It is worth remembering that ALG is an incentive payment and the incentive is lost if payments are delayed; undermining the intent of the scheme.

The easiest way to identify all Not Set decisions in laps is by using the ‘Payment’ tab. This will present you with the ‘Weekly Payment’ screen and allow you to create a list of Not Set decisions for each week. As you select each week it will bring back a list of learners who are due payments and enable you to make the decision within that screen.

If you have any queries relating to this, you can call the Provider helpline on 0845 600 7979. They will be able to help you with any difficulties you have in using laps.

Please encourage other users of laps within your organisation to support you in reducing the number of Not Set payment decisions for EMA and ALG learners.

2. EMA evaluation

During March we published the report of an evaluation to review the perception, implementation and impact of the policy changes introduced to the EMA scheme in 2008/09. The report is available to download from the EMA website at [http://ema.lsc.gov.uk/evaluation-reports/](http://ema.lsc.gov.uk/evaluation-reports/).

Please note that this research focused on a narrow range of the EMA learner cohort specifically affected by the policy changes and as a result is not directly compatible with other EMA research, where previously the entire EMA cohort was looked at.
If you have any questions on this report you can email us at learnersupportupdate@ypla.gov.uk.

3. Changes in EMA arrangements for e2e learners

During March we sent out an email to all laps users, to inform them about some changes that will come into effect for e2e learners under the EMA scheme. Please ensure you forward this message onto those with a responsibility for EMA.

You may be aware that entry to employment (e2e) is moving into Foundation Learning (FL) for 2010/11. As such, these special e2e arrangements – that they receive £30 per week EMA regardless of their household income – will cease.

The requirements for EMA to be payable include that the programme takes place at a valid provider, that it is for a minimum of 12 hours a week and lasts for a minimum of 10 weeks. All existing e2e provision must meet this requirement already.

For the 2010/11 Academic Year, all applicants for EMA will be income assessed on their household income for the 2009-10 tax year. Applicants who are successfully assessed will be eligible for the EMA Guarantee. This means that they will be eligible for EMA at the same rate for up to three years, or the Academic Year in which they turn 19.

This means that for courses starting from 28th June 2010 the e2e variant of EMA will not be available to new learners and all learners must be income assessed. To facilitate this, the EMA application form for 2010/11 no longer has a section for an e2e provider to complete their details.

For learners whose programmes start before 28th June 2010 the current arrangements will continue until the end of their course or 10th January 2011, whichever comes first. Learners in this group will need to re-apply for EMA should they wish to continue in learning.

The majority of learners currently in receipt of EMA, and enrolled on e2e courses, already apply for the income-assessed variant of EMA and have been assessed as eligible at the maximum rate (£30 a week). By introducing this change, and the removal of the EMA bonuses for all EMA recipients for the 2010/11 Academic Year onwards, this will allow an additional 80,000 learners to receive EMA.
If you have any queries about this, you can contact the Provider helpline on 0800 600 7979.

4. Feedback from National Career Guidance Show

We let you know in the last e-bulletin that the National Career Guidance Show took place on the 3rd and 4th March at the Emirates stadium in London.

We manned an exhibition stand at this event and had available marketing materials and information on all the Learner Support schemes that we administer, including EMA and Professional and Career Development Loans.

The event was well-attended and we received a lot of interest in the schemes from career guidance professionals.

We will update you of further events that we will be present at, as well as events that we organise, in future editions of this e-bulletin.

5. Post-16 Transport Guidance

The Post-16 Transport Guidance has been updated for the 2010/11 Academic Year. This Guidance for Local Authorities on the Post-16 Transport scheme is available in two parts:


2. 2010/11 Transport Funding Guidance.

The Guidance is being issued online only at this stage, and is available at http://16-19transport.lsc.gov.uk/policyguidance/.

Amendments made to the 1996 Education Act by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act (ASCL) 2009 returns responsibility for issuing guidance and monitoring how Local Authorities meet the transport duty to the Secretary of State from April 2010. Rather than wait till April to issue the guidance, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) have jointly developed Post-16 Transport Guidance to support Local Authorities in preparing their 2010/11 Transport Policy Statement.
As such, the DCSF will issue hard copies of the guidance to Local Authorities in April. If you have any queries on this, please email us at learnersupportupdate@ypla.gov.uk.

Please make Local Authorities aware that this Guidance is currently available online.

6. Marketing materials for 2010/11

As you are aware, details of what marketing materials we produce are available in our Marketing and Support Materials Catalogue 2009/10.

However, please note that marketing materials will be updated for the 2010/11 Academic Year and these will be made available from the end of April. We would therefore advise you not to order large numbers of 2009/10 marketing materials before they are updated.

We will update you in future editions of this e-bulletin of when the updated materials are available to order, and a reminder of how you can do this.

7. EMA and ALG application packs for 2010/11

Application packs for the 2010/11 Academic Year for EMA and ALG will be available to order from 12th April; however, you can now pre-order copies of these from LSC Publications. You can do this in the usual way by calling 0845 602 2260 quoting the following reference numbers:

- For 2010/11 EMA application packs; publication reference YPLA-P-100001.
- For 2010/11 ALG application packs; publication reference YPLA-P-100002.

Please note: as you are aware, currently, Prolog handles the storage and distribution of application packs and marketing materials for Learner Support schemes. This is referred to as LSC Publications. From 1st April, this will change (in name only) to YPLA Publications to reflect the move of Learner Support to the YPLA.

Work-based Learning Providers, colleges, schools and other partners will not be sent a stock of application packs this year; they must request these directly from YPLA Publications from May 2010.
It is also important to note that the EMA Guarantee means that the number of learners requiring an application form should be significantly less than in previous years. Learners who have been paid EMA during the 2009/10 Academic Year do not need to reapply. The EMA Guarantee means that they will be eligible for support at the same level until the end of the academic year in which they turn 19. Learners may re-apply for support if their household income has reduced.

If you have any queries you can ring the helpline on 0845 600 7979.

8. Move to YPLA and changes to contact details

We have mentioned in the past two editions of this e-bulletin that the LSC will cease to exist from 1st April and that the Learner Support Directorate will transfer to the Young People’s Learning Agency (YPLA) from this date. As such, there will be some changes to the contact details that you may hold for us. Please be aware of the below changes and look out for details in the next edition for any further changes.

The helpline numbers, for both learners and Providers will not change. These remain as 0800 121 8989 (learner helpline) and 0845 600 7979 (Provider helpline).

To contact us in case of query on any of the content of these e-bulletins or to provide feedback, you should now email learnersupportupdate@ypla.gov.uk.

You can find information on the Learner Support schemes from 1st April at the new YPLA website at www.ypla.gov.uk. You can access pages on Learner Support from this homepage.

Please ensure that colleagues are made aware of this change, and encourage them to sign up to the e-bulletin to keep informed of any future changes.

9. Actions you may need to take

Below is a reminder of the actions to be taken over the next few weeks. Please:

- Be aware of continuing messages regarding Not Set payment decisions and ensure they are disseminated to the relevant colleagues within your organisation (see Item 1).
• Have a look at the EMA evaluation report and take note of and disseminate the information on the changes to EMA arrangements for e2e learners (see Items 2 and 3).

• Inform Local Authorities about the publication of the Post-16 Transport Guidance 2010/11 (see Item 5).

• Take note of the information on ordering application packs for EMA and ALG for the 2010/11 Academic Year (see Item 7).

• Ensure you change your records of our contact details, and keep a look out for any changes outlined in future editions of this e-bulletin (see Item 8).

10. 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 ALG, please call us on 0845 600 7979.