Learner Support Service pilot specific e-bulletin, August 2008

Welcome to the pilot-specific edition of the August e-bulletin from the LSC’s Learner Support Directorate. The e-bulletin provides information about the changes to the ways in which the LSC’s different Learner Support schemes are administered.

This is an additional supplement for those of you in the two pilot areas that were to test the new application systems: the South West and South Yorkshire. This will be the last pilot-specific e-bulletin. In future editions there will be a single e-bulletin to cover all Learning Providers.

If you are not in a pilot area you may find it helpful to also read the main stakeholder e-bulletin available at www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn/lss.

In this month’s edition we update you on the contingency actions carried out in the pilot areas and on the transition to the Learning Provider Portal.

Continuing on from last month we are also including an ‘actions’ section at item 7 which summarises the actions you may need to take over the coming month.

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

In this stakeholder e-bulletin:
1. Ensuring Learners have access to an application form
2. Transition to the new Learning Provider Portal – important for ALG and 3PI users
3. Issues with the new helplines
4. Entry to Employment (e2e) declarations
5. EMA Notices of Entitlement (NoE)
6. Learning Provider Portal Training Slides Available
7. Actions you may need to take
8. Helpline numbers
9. Keeping you informed
1. Ensuring Learners have access to an application form

In June and July we told you about the actions we were taking in response to a delay to the online application system (Learner Portal). These actions include writing to all 16 year-old learners (i.e. school leavers) to tell them about EMA and give them an EMA application pack.

We are pleased to report that EMA application packs have now been sent to all 16 year-olds in the two pilot regions. In total more than 78,000 forms have been distributed.

The delay to the online application system is disappointing, however, our blanket approach to distributing application packs means that no one should miss out on the opportunity to apply for EMA.

We will continue to monitor the volume of applications received from the pilot areas and use the information to inform our planning for next year.

2. Transition to the new Learning Provider Portal

On 18th August we launched the Interim Learning Provider Portal (Interim LPP) to enable you to register and make payments to 2008/09 EMA Learners.

We are now ready to update the Interim LPP to include functionality to cover:

- registration and payment decisions for the Adult Learning Grant (ALG);
- Third Party Interfaces;
- the ability to record end-of-learning; and
- the ability to record 2007/08 EMA bonuses.

Updating the Interim LPP

During the week beginning 1st September we will enable the Interim LPP to be used to register and make payments to 2008/09 ALG Learners. At that point Learning Providers should stop using the spreadsheets for ALG and start to use the Interim LPP. Learner information contained in the spreadsheets will automatically be transferred to the Interim LPP.

We will also add functionality to cover Learning Providers who use either their own or third party software products to register Learners’ details and record payment decisions.
We will be writing to EMA and ALG administrators very soon to inform them about the new arrangements. Please note that some of our emails, including those containing usernames and passwords, are sometimes mistaken for junk mail. If you do not receive an email from us please check your ‘junk-mail’ folder before calling the helpline.

Please keep checking our website at www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn/lss/learning-provider-portal for the latest information on the transition to the final LPP.

**EMASYS closure**

As part of the transition to the new Learning Provider Portal, we will be closing down EMASYS at **8pm on Friday 29th August**. Please ensure that all weekly payments and bonuses for learners in the 2007/08 academic year are made before this date.

Arrangements for paying any learners who have continuing programmes of study will be sent separately.

**3. Issues with the Learner and Learning Provider Helplines**

We have recently experienced intermittent technical difficulties with the Learner and Learning Provider Helplines and some callers have found it hard to get through to us. Some callers experience engaged tones, or continued ringing. The lines do however remain open and approximately 60% of all calls are being answered.

We are investigating these technical issues as a matter of urgency and have been carrying out repairs to ensure that callers have uninterrupted access to the helplines at all times.

**4. Entry to Employment (e2e) declaration**

Learners enrolling onto Entry to Employment (e2e) programmes will automatically qualify for the £30 weekly EMA payment. Although Learners must meet all other EMA eligibility criteria, they will not require an income assessment.

In some cases providers will, however, be required to complete an e2e Learning Declaration which can be downloaded from http://ema.lsc.gov.uk/resources/support-materials/.
The purpose of the declaration is to help the Learner Support Service to identify Learners who do not require an income assessment and confirm they are entering an e2e programme.

To ensure that applications can be processed quickly, please return the e2e Learning Declaration form in the same envelope as Part A of the EMA application form.

All completed Learning Declarations and Part A of the application form should be sent to Freepost RRUB-BEXE-TJLK, Learner Support Service, Darlington, DL1 4WD with ‘E2E Learner’ clearly written on the envelope.

5. EMA Notice of Entitlement

Earlier this year we issued a Letter of Entitlement (LoE) to some 2008/09 EMA Learners to inform them of their eligibility to receive EMA.

All 2008/09 EMA Learners who have been sent an LoE should now have also received a formal Notice of Entitlement (NoE) containing part 1 of their contract to take to their Learning Provider before they begin their course.

Learners previously sent an LoE who have not received their 2008/09 NoE should call the Learner helpline on 0800 121 8989.


As you may know, we held a number of training events for Learning Providers during June and July to explain the operation of the Learner Portal and the Learning Provider Portal.

These events have been well attended and we’d like to thank everybody for their participation.

A number of attendees have asked for a copy of the training slides which are now available on our website at www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn/lss/events.

7. Actions you may need to take
This section explains the actions that Learning Providers may need to be taking during September.

Please check each action carefully to see if it applies to you.

- Ensure that all weekly payments and bonuses for 2007/08 Learners are recorded on EMASYS before **8pm on Friday 29th August**. After this time EMASYS will be shut down.

- Look out for the communications informing you of updates to the Interim LPP. You can find the latest information on the transition to the final LPP on our website at [www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn/lss/learning-provider-portal](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn/lss/learning-provider-portal)

- Make sure that all Learners who were originally sent a Letter of Entitlement (LoE) have now received their Notice of Entitlement (NoE). If they have not, they should call the Learner Helpline on 0800 121 8989.

- Ensure that all EMA e2e Learning Declaration forms are returned in the same envelope as Part A of the EMA application form and that the envelope is marked ‘e2e Learner’.

- 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.

- Order marketing materials as required by calling LSC Publications (also known as Prolog) on 0845 602 2260. Please remember to quote the publication number when placing your order. Publication numbers can be found at [www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn).

### 8. Helpline numbers for learning providers and learners

There are specific telephone helplines for learning providers and learners.

**After Friday 29th August** there will only be one Learner and one Learning Provider number. These are:

**Learning Provider helpline**

2008/09 applications: **0845 600 7979**

**Learner helpline**

2008/09 EMA applications: **0800 121 8989**
9. Keeping you informed

If you would like to know more about the Learner Support Service or Learner Support schemes which include the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and Adult Learning Grant (ALG) please go to: http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn. You can also view all previous e-bulletins at this address.