Learner Support Service
Background Briefing # 2 – August 2008

Primary audience: ALL LEARNER SUPPORT STAKEHOLDERS
From: The Learner Support Directorate at The LSC
About: the new arrangements for administering Learner Support schemes

The Learner Support Directorate at the LSC is responsible for a number of financial support schemes that are designed to help young people and adults continue in, or return to, learning, training and developing their skills:

- Education Maintenance Allowance
- Adult Learning Grant.
- Care to Learn
- Sixth Form College Childcare
- Dance and Drama Awards
- Residential Accommodation Support.

There is more on Learner Support schemes on the provider pages of the LSC website [www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn/](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn/)

After a public procurement exercise last year, the LSC appointed a new Helpline, Assessment and Payment Body (HAPB) to help administer the different schemes and offer learners more flexible and less bureaucratic ways of applying.

What is changing?

New helpline numbers

For the 2008/09 academic year we have introduced two new helplines, one for Learners (0800 121 8989) and one for Learning Providers (0845 600 7979). These helplines replace numbers used in previous years.

Learners can call the helpline to access a range of service including: finding out about Learner Support; getting an indication as to whether or not they might be eligible and requesting an application form.
The Learning Provider helpline provides advice and guidance on administering Learner Support schemes and how to use the Learning provider Portal.

**Applying for Learner Support**

In the past, all Learners applying for a Learner Support scheme had to fill out a paper application form. Over the coming months we are introducing new application methods to make it easier and more convenient to apply.

For the 2008/09 academic year, Learners are able to work through an EMA application over the telephone by calling the Learner helpline on 0845 600 7979. Learners can complete as much or as little of the application as they like and will be sent their application to sign and return.

From 2009/10 academic year, learners will be able to apply for Learner Support schemes, including Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and Adult Learning Grant (ALG), online via the government’s public-facing website directgov. This means the application process will be more flexible, streamlined and easier for the learner – while cutting back on unnecessary bureaucracy.

As part of the online application facility, the new service includes an online ‘eligibility checker’ that can:

- give a decision, in principle, as to whether or not the applicant is eligible for a particular financial support scheme;
- highlight other potential financial support schemes for which the learner might be eligible.

The ‘eligibility checker’ will also help save time and ensure there are more ‘right first time’ applications.

Whilst we are introducing these changes, please note that arrangements for Learner Support schemes will continue as usual until we tell you otherwise.

**Learning Provider Portal**

As you may know, we are introducing a new Learning Provider Portal (LPP) to replace existing payment decision systems for Learner Support schemes (EMASYS for EMA and EMS for ALG).

We are phasing the introduction of the LPP to manage the risk and complexities of migrating data from current systems to the Learning Provider Portal. We expect the LPP to be available for use during the Autumn.

Training and support

Earlier this year we received over a 1,000 responses to our Training Needs Analysis (TNA) Questionnaire about what training you felt we should provide.

We have already run training events in more than 30 locations across England to give demonstrations on how to use the online application and Learning Provider Portal (LPP) when they become available.

In addition to these events we are creating a comprehensive suite of training materials to help you get to trips with the new Learning Provider Portal, including:

- an operating manual;
- a quick start guide;
- a handy hints guide;
- online frequently asked questions
- briefing pack to include frequently asked questions.

We are now working on these in readiness for the launch of the new LPP. We will make these resources available on our website before we launch the LPP and will keep you posted via the monthly e-bulletin.

Your FAQs and workshop feedback

Over the past few months, we have collected your questions and feedback from our workshops, e-bulletins and training events. The answers to frequently asked questions can be found on our website at http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn/lss/faq.

We are adding to these answers all the time so check the website regularly for the latest information.

Monthly e-bulletins

We are producing a monthly e-bulletin for all our stakeholders. If you are not yet receiving it, please contact learnersupportupdate@lsc.gov.uk and ask to be added to the distribution list.

Past editions of the e-bulletin can be found on our website at: www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn/lss

Learner Provider Helpline

If you have any queries, please phone the Learner Provider Helpline on 0845 6007979.