Young people could miss out on vital funds due to a misconception over who is eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), according to the Learning and Skills Council.

Research from the LSC shows that 41 per cent\(^1\) of young people who are aware that EMA exists and would be eligible to receive it next year\(^2\) don’t realise that it is also available for training in vocational subjects like building or hairdressing as well as academic courses, and one in five (21 per cent) are unaware that it is available for those learning at college.

Yet EMA is available for more than a thousand learning programmes such as a Level 2 diploma in motor vehicle maintenance, fashion retail or music technology, as well as GCSE retakes and A Levels.

The LSC is today reminding 16-18 year olds thinking of dropping out of school or training of the variety of choice available to them. Continuing at school or sixth
form is not always the right option for everyone, so EMA is available whether
learning at college, school or on a work-based learning programme.

Trevor Fellowes, Director of Learner Support at the Learning and Skills Council,
said:

“Awareness of EMA is extremely high and over 450,000 young people are already
receiving payments. But there are certain gaps in awareness and understanding of
EMA among some young people and parents. Traditional school sixth form or
college is not always the best route for everyone at 16. If young people do not
know they could be eligible for EMA on other sorts of courses, they could
potentially miss out on valuable support or choose certain learning routes which
may not be for them.

“EMA is a payment which was set up to reduce the financial burden of staying on
in learning, and the Learning and Skills Council is today urging young people to
find out if they’re eligible, whatever learning route they have taken.”

Phil Hope, Skills Minister for the Department for Education and Skills, commented:
“It’s important that young people have a wide range of options available to them at
16 and that they have the financial support they need to continue in learning.

“For this reason, we have now made sure that EMA – and other family benefits
such as Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits – is available for young people
whether in practical and work based learning or at college or school. Young people
who stay on at 16 face better prospects and a brighter future, so we want to make
sure that financial reasons cannot deny young people this opportunity as it
benefits all.”
Young people can apply for EMA now or find out more by logging on to [www.direct.gov.uk/ema](http://www.direct.gov.uk/ema), or by calling 0808 10 16219 or by picking up an application form from their learning provider or their local Connexions centre.

ENDS

Notes for editors
This press release applies to England only. Separate schemes are operated by the administrations for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

1. Research was conducted by ACT2 for COI on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council in Sept – Oct 2006. ACT2 interviewed 400 15-16 year olds normally in School Year 11 and their parents. All respondents were from households where the combined annual income is £30,000 or less before tax.

2. 15-16 year olds normally in School Year 11 who are aware of EMA and meet eligibility criteria

What are the key features of EMA?

- Weekly payment bands of £30, £20 and £10 per week, depending on household income.
- Intermittent Bonus payments depending on the programme of learning.
- Available for both academic and vocational study, up to level 3, which can include courses such as basic skills GCSE retakes, GNVQs, NVQs, as well as AS and A2s.
- No other household benefits are affected.
- Young people can still have a part-time job.

Who is eligible?

- Young people are eligible to receive or to continue receiving EMA in the EMA year 2006/07 providing:
  - They will already be 16, 17 or 18 on the 1st September 2006;
  - Are from a household with a combined income of up to £30,810;
  - They are participating in full-time further education (as defined in EMA guidance) up to and including Level 3, or LSC funded e2e or a Programme led Apprenticeship

- They must be:
  - a person who is ‘settled’ in the UK, and been ordinarily resident in the UK for at least the three years prior to the start of his learning programme; or
  - a national of any European Union (EU) country or the spouse or civil partner or child of an EU national, and been ordinarily resident in the European Economic Area (EEA) for at least the three years prior to the start of his learning programme; or
  - an EEA migrant worker or the spouse or civil partner or child of an EEA migrant worker, who is ordinarily resident in the UK at the start of the learning programme
and has been ordinarily resident in the EEA throughout the three year period prior to that; or

- recognised as a refugee by the UK Government, or the spouse or civil partner or child of a refugee, have been granted Humanitarian Protection, or have EU Temporary Protection.

- If a young person lives overseas as part of a family serving with HM Forces or the Ministry of Defence in Germany or Cyprus, they should call Service Children’s Education on (0049) 2161 908 2525 for further advice.

**Application**

Evidence of an applicant’s household income for the previous tax year 2005/2006 and proof of the individual’s operational bank account are required.

Eligible applicants will receive a Notice of Entitlement explaining how much they will receive once they have enrolled and started attending their learning programme.

**EMA Contract**

Once enrolled, the student must attend all course sessions and sign an EMA Contract with their school or college. The contract sets out what is expected in terms of attendance, coursework and progress.

**LSC**

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England’s young people and adults to world-class standards. Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

*All public enquiries regarding EMA please contact:* 0808 10 16219 (some mobile operators may charge for calls made to this number) or visit [www.direct.gov.uk/ema](http://www.direct.gov.uk/ema).

*All public enquiries please contact:* LSC Helpdesk: 0870 900 6800

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