Welcome to the 9th edition of the Learner Support Update (formerly the Learner Support Partnership Team Update). This publication aims to tell you more about the LSC’s Learner Support team, including the latest on policy developments and how you can help deliver this support to learners.

In light of MOG changes, we have now changed the title of this publication, and will be making changes to the distribution list. If you know of any colleagues who would be interested in receiving this, please email us at learnersupportupdate@lsc.gov.uk.

If you have any questions on the content of this publication, please email your query to Lucy.Rowe@lsc.gov.uk.

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‘Not Set’ Payment Decisions (EMA)

We mentioned in the last issue of this Update that the number of payment decisions recorded on laps for EMA as ‘Not Set’ was higher than we would have expected. We have been working with Providers to reduce the number of ‘Not Set’ decisions. We are aware of many specific providers that have made concerted efforts to reduce outstanding Not-Set decisions and would express thanks to them for work they have already been undertaken to address this issue.

However, we would like to remind Providers of the importance of making a ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ payment decision on laps for learners. A User email is being sent to Providers on a regular basis, reminding them of the process for making payment decisions. Please inform Providers of the following information:

If it is not possible to make a ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ payment decision and a ‘Not Set’ decision is in place, colleagues are asked to make every effort to confirm the payment decision within four weeks.

It is worth remembering that EMA is an incentive payment and the incentive is lost if payments are delayed; undermining the scheme intent. Delaying payments also increases the risk of learners leaving learning for financial reasons.

The easiest way to identify all ‘Not Set’ decisions is by using the ‘Payment’ tab in laps, which will present you with the ‘Weekly Payment’ screen and allow you to create a list of ‘Not Set’ decisions by 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.

Back Payment Timeout Limit

Users who are administering payments for learners on PLA, E2E or FE Short course Programme Types should be aware that the timeout limit in laps for back payment of weekly payments and bonuses is eight weeks after a learner’s course has ended. In 2008/09, users had 52 weeks in which to make weekly payment decisions and 39 weeks to make bonus decisions. This means that users now have only eight weeks from the course end date to make a “Yes” or “No” decision for each learner’s weekly payment and bonus decision. After eight weeks, laps will no longer allow you to enter a decision and you will not be able to pay the learner.

It is therefore very important that prompt weekly payment and bonus decisions are made for all learners. As we have stated above, EMA is an incentive payment and the incentive is lost if payments are delayed. If you have any learners registered on an 2009/10 programme with ‘Not Set’ decisions, whose course ended more than eight weeks ago and you would like to enter a ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ decision, you should call the Provider Helpline on 0845 600 7979 or email lscenquiries@lsclearnersupport.co.uk for assistance.

Please note that this Back Payment Timeout Limit does not apply to learners enrolled on the FE Academic Year Programme Type or for payments that relate to the 2008/09 year.

If you have any queries at all about the payment process, please consult the Provider Guidance on the LSC website: http://ema.lsc.gov.uk/ema-guidance/guidance2009-10/. If your query cannot be resolved in this way please contact the Provider Helpline on 0845 600 7979.

ACTION:

• Ensure that Providers are aware of the importance of making payment decisions on laps.
Regional Forums for Providers

We have received some feedback from Providers administering EMA and ALG that they valued the networking sessions during the laps training sessions last year. As a result of this feedback, in December the Field Force commenced a series of Regional Networks.

The purpose of these sessions is to enable Providers to meet to get an update on Learner Support and discuss the practical implementation of Learner Support Programmes from a Provider perspective; sharing good practice and networking.

These are arranged and facilitated by the local Field Force representative and are accompanied by a representative from the Learner Support Directorate. Sessions are being planned on a regional basis throughout the year.

If you know of any Providers who would benefit from, and be interested in, one of these sessions, please advise them to contact their local Field force member. Details of who the Field Force are, and how to contact them, are available on the Learner Support Service website.

ACTION:
- Encourage Providers who would be interested in attending a Regional forum to contact their local Field Force representative.

Update from the Learner Support Directorate

Feedback on the Learner Support Update

You will be aware that we will no longer be part of the LSC from April. The Learner Support Directorate will transfer to the Young People’s Learning Agency (YPLA) and will continue to run and administer the Learner Support schemes under this agency.

We will continue to run this Update and would like to reach as many colleagues as possible to ensure that those working with Providers are kept up-to-date of issues from Learner Support and to keep Local Authorities informed. If you know of any colleagues, particularly within the new structures, who would benefit from receiving this information, please forward this onto them and ask them to email learnersupportupdate@lsc.gov.uk to sign up to receive this publication.

We would also like to hear your feedback on this Update, in light of new roles and structures. Is it providing enough information? Is the information useful, or how could it be made more useful for you? Is the information targeted at the right level? Please email your feedback to Lucy.Rowe@lsc.gov.uk. We will use your comments to improve this Update for you in the future.

ACTION:
- Forward this publication onto interested colleagues and encourage them to sign up to receive this.
- Send in your feedback on this publication.
Information on Learner Support Schemes

You can find information on all the Learner Support schemes from the Money to Learn website. Each scheme has its own micro-site, where you will find overview information on the scheme, details of the evaluations, frequently asked questions and details of any marketing materials available to help you to promote the schemes to learners.

Please take the time to look at these websites to familiarise yourself with Learner Support, and encourage those administering the schemes to do so.

To receive regular information from the Learner Support Directorate, you can also sign up to receive the monthly e-bulletins; more details of these are available in the Sign up for more information section of this Update.

ACTION:
• Visit the Money to Learn website.
• Sign up to receive regular updates on Learner Support.

Learner Support Policy Updates

Care to Learn:

URGENT – 500 applications have information outstanding

We currently have just over 500 applications awaiting further information before they can be processed. Many of these are for courses that started in September 2009. We are concerned that Childcare Providers are incurring costs and not being paid for the service they are providing; and learners are discouraged from taking up their learning as they have not completed their childcare arrangements.

Learning Providers, support workers and Childcare Providers should provide young parents with whatever information they need. In all cases where a support worker is named on the application form, a letter will have been sent to them as well as the young parent to tell them what was missing from the young parent’s application.

Information on specific applications is also available from the Learner Support Service (LSS) on 0845 600 7979. Please note that anyone ringing the LSS who is not named on the application form will need to have the young parent with them to give permission to discuss their application.

Please encourage all those who support young parents with Care to Learn applications to take note of the above information.

The ‘January Guarantee’ and early applications

In response to the economic downturn, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) are building on the successful September Guarantee by providing every 16- and 17-year old who is not in education, employment or training (NEET) in January 2010 with an offer of an Entry to Employment place. Young parents choosing to take up Entry to Employment places are also eligible to apply for Care to Learn. Local Connexions services are contacting 16-17-year olds who are NEET this month to provide them with tailored support and guidance to apply for learning.

Please encourage Providers to continue supporting learners to complete their application forms and return them to the LSS in good time. Included in each application pack are Application Form Guidance Notes, giving advice on how to complete each section of the form, which they should use to ensure that they include all the necessary information for assessment.
Learning Providers and Childcare Providers should ensure that they complete their section of the application form and return this to the young parent as soon as possible. We depend on the goodwill of Childcare Providers for the success of our schemes and providing the information we need to make prompt payments to them will help this to continue.

**Evaluation of the impact of Care to Learn**

The latest evaluation of the Care to Learn scheme, *The Impact of Care to Learn: Tracking the destinations of young parents funded in 2006/07 and 2007/08*, has now been published on the [Care to Learn website](http://www.caretolearn.org.uk), and is available for you to download.

In 2009 the LSC commissioned the Centre for Social and Economic Inclusion and Ipsos MORI to undertake a survey to evaluate the impact of Care to Learn on the destinations of young parents funded in 2007/08. This project also evaluates the longer-term impact of Care to Learn on young parents funded in 2006/07, looking at their current activity and progress since they were last surveyed in summer 2008. A smaller qualitative piece of work was also conducted to gain an understanding of why some young parents do not take up the support they applied for.

Some key findings from the report are as follows:

- **Care to Learn is vital.** 73% said they could not have gone into learning at all without Care to Learn support. 98% of young parents said Care to Learn helped them to go on their first choice of course.

- **Care to Learn supports participation in quality learning.** 71% of those surveyed studied for their course in an FE college, 7% at a school and 6% through work-based learning. 33% undertook courses lasting over 2 years. The majority (37%) were studying at Level 2, followed by those studying at Level 3 (26%) and Level 1 (19%).

- **Care to Learn supports retention.** The proportion of young parents supported by Care to Learn who completed or were still on their course in 2007/08 is only six percentage points lower than the overall retention rate of all FE learners for the same year – despite the additional challenges young parents face with bringing up a child.

- **Care to Learn supports success, progress and achievement.** Of those who received support in 2007/08, 63% completed their course, with 59% completing their course and gaining a qualification. Of those that did not complete their course, nearly half were attending a new course, many of these at a higher level. Nearly half of those who received support in 2006/07 were still in learning in summer 2009. Many of these had also progressed on to a higher course level. Half of those who received funding in 2006/07 had obtained qualifications since the previous survey in summer 2008.

Please download a copy of this latest evaluation and forward the link to any interested colleagues. Care to Learn provides key support to young parents to remain and achieve in learning, and this evaluation throws up some key points.

We are also looking for volunteers to participate in the next round of the evaluation. We would like to conduct some interviews with stakeholders to get their views on Care to Learn. If you know of a Childcare Provider, support worker or Learning Provider who deals with Care to Learn and may be interested in participating in the evaluation this Spring, please ask them to send an email to [C2Lsurvey@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:C2Lsurvey@lsc.gov.uk) giving their name, telephone number and job title.

**Eligible childcare provision**

You may be aware that during 2009 we carried out a review of the types of childcare eligible for Care to Learn. This review is now complete, and we would like to inform you of the agreed eligible types of childcare for this scheme. Please read and take note of the information below, and disseminate this to colleagues and Providers to ensure that they are aware of the changes.

**From September 2010** Care to Learn childcare support will be accessible to parents using:

- Childcare Providers registered on the Early Years Ofsted Register;
• Childcare Providers registered on either the compulsory or voluntary part of the General Childcare Register;

• Childcare provision offered by schools, such as after school and breakfast clubs;

• Relatives to care for their children if the relative lives apart from the child, is Ofsted registered, and is also providing registered care for children they are not related to.

**With immediate effect** the LSC has the discretion to approve support for provision registered on the Care Quality Commission’s register on a case by case basis if general provision is not suitable for the child.

**For the remainder of the 2009/10 academic year**, any cases where the Childcare Provider does not meet the current published criteria of being registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register or the compulsory part of the General Childcare Register will be referred to the LSC for a decision on a case by case basis.

It is important that advisers, Learning Providers and Childcare Providers are made aware of the changes in eligible childcare provision for Care to Learn. Please ensure that you pass on this message to Providers and intermediaries that you work with to ensure that learners are advised regards their chosen Childcare Provider.

**ACTION:**

- Encourage those working with young parents to apply for Care to Learn support in good time for the start of their course. Also encourage young parents to take advantage of the January Guarantee.
- Download a copy of the evaluation and forward the link to interested colleagues; encourage stakeholders to send us an email if they are interested in taking part.
- Disseminate information about changes to eligible childcare provision for the scheme.

**Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work policy changes**

As you will be aware, Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work was launched in April 2009. The focus of the scheme so far has been to provide support for the cost of childcare for the non-working parent in a family while they take up learning/training opportunities.

You may also be aware that the scheme has been the subject of a considerable amount of consultation and discussion since its launch as a trial scheme in April last year. This has led us to conclude that slight changes to the eligibility criteria are needed to help us meet the needs of a larger group of learners/potential learners in low-income families who have found it difficult to access support previously.

The following changes have been made:

• The requirement for the partner to be working for more than 16 hours a week has been revised. **The requirement is now that the partner should be in work.**

• The requirement for the applicant/learner to not be in paid employment has now been revised. **The requirement is now that an applicant may be in paid employment for up to 16 hours a week.**

**These changes are effective from 1st January.**

It is important that stakeholders, colleagues and Providers are made aware of this information, to ensure that we effectively target those parents who are now eligible to receive support from the scheme following the changes to the eligibility criteria.

**ACTION:**

- Take note of and disseminate this information to colleagues, stakeholders and Providers, to make sure that they are aware of the changes and can deliver adequate support to learners.
Post-16 Transport Partnerships

As you may be aware, the Learner Support Directorate is also responsible for the Post-16 Transport Partnership Fund. This funding is available to enable Local Authorities to develop innovative and sustainable transport solutions for learners of sixth-form age, so that transport is not a barrier to accessing provision. A short term £12 million Transport Partnership Fund has supported partnership activities and will continue in 2010/11.

Guidance on the use of funding is currently being developed by the LSC jointly with DCSF and will be issued to Local Authorities at the end of February. Colleagues who currently have oversight for this activity within their area may wish to note the continuation of the funding, which the Transport Partnerships have already been advised of. A new mailbox has recently been set up to allow Partnerships to direct their enquiries to us at post16transportfunding@lsc.gov.uk.

If you have any queries, the Post-16 Transport Partnership Funding is managed by Clare Muddiman (clare.muddiman@lsc.gov.uk) and Fiona McCulla (fiona.mcculla@lsc.gov.uk).

ACTION:
• Take note of the continuation of Post-16 Transport Partnership funding.
• Keep a look-out for the guidance being developed jointly with DCSF.

Materials to help you

Please note that the leaflet for Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work has been updated and the new version is only available to download from the website. Please ensure that Providers and stakeholders are aware that if handing out printed leaflets for the scheme to learners, to inform them of the changes in eligibility criteria.

Details of the marketing materials available for Learner Support schemes, as well as information on how to order printed copies, are available from the Marketing and Support Materials Catalogue 2009/10.

Please remind Providers of the availability of Guidance documents to help them answer queries on the administration of Learner Support schemes, and details of the eligibility criteria. These are all available to download from the Money to Learn website. For queries that cannot be answered by reading these documents, Providers can contact the Learner Support service Provider helpline on 0845 600 7979.
If you are not subscribed to receive this Learner Support Update, but would like to receive this regularly, please email learnersupportupdate@lsc.gov.uk.

We produce a number of other regular e-bulletins that give information about Learner Support. Details of how to register for your name to be added to the distribution list are as follows:

- **The Learner Support Service Stakeholder e-bulletin** is a monthly update, distributed at the end of the month for stakeholders and colleagues providing useful information on the Learner Support Service. If you would like to receive this please visit [http://www.ewagroup.com/lsc/newsletter/registration](http://www.ewagroup.com/lsc/newsletter/registration). Previous copies of this are available to view from the Learner Support Service website.

- **Childcare News** is a monthly e-bulletin, distributed at the end of each month, for stakeholders and colleagues providing useful information on all of Learner Support’s childcare schemes, including Care to Learn and Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work. If you would like to receive this please visit [http://www.ewagroup.com/lsc/newsletter/registration](http://www.ewagroup.com/lsc/newsletter/registration). Previous copies of this are available on the Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work and Care to Learn websites.

- **Professional and Career Development Loans e-bulletin** is distributed quarterly and gives information on the loans to key stakeholders. If you would like to receive this e-bulletin please email us at pcdladvise@lsc.gov.uk.