Encouraging young people to attend and commit to learning through EMA has created a generation of motivated teenagers, according to teachers.

Launched in 2004, Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was introduced to help remove the financial barriers to staying on post-16 which was historically behind more than half of those who dropped out at 16’s decision to leave learning¹. The last academic year (05/06) saw the highest proportion of 16 year olds in learning since 1994, with 89.1 per cent participating in some form of learning.

But as well as improving participation, new research from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) shows that the initiative has also brought unexpected benefits to the Further Education sector, resulting in more motivated and committed learners. In the research more than eight in 10 (82 per cent) teachers reported that EMA successfully motivates young people who stay on in learning post-16².

And because young people have to demonstrate commitment to their learning programme before receiving weekly payments, over half (61 per cent) of teachers

¹ Learning and Skills Council
² Learning and Skills Council
agree that EMA treats teenagers like adults which in turn (for 84 per cent of these teachers) has helped to prepare young people for the world of work.

These improvements also appear to be rubbing off on EMA learners’ peers, with more than one in three (37 per cent) teachers claiming the initiative has had a positive impact even on those learners not receiving the payment. And as a result of this progress, more young people than ever are now achieving the minimum set of qualifications needed to succeed in life (five A*-C GCSEs or the vocational equivalent, such as a Level 2 diploma in subjects like Aerobic Instruction, Animal Care or Music Technology).

Psychologist Donna Dawson, said:
“Research tells us that the best kind of motivation is ‘positive reinforcement’: EMA is a great example of this, as it gives students specific targets to aim for and then rewards them for their efforts. By encouraging attendance and the meeting of educational targets, EMA helps students to focus their thinking and develop the self-discipline necessary to organise and plan their work effectively. It also allows students to develop a relationship with ‘money’ that will carry over into their working lives, showing ‘cause-and-effect’ between effort exerted and financial rewards gained.”

Trevor Fellowes, Director of Learner Support at the LSC, added:
“We’re delighted to see that not only has EMA increased participation and retention rates across the board, but has also indirectly helped to motivate young people.

Money is historically the number one reason why young people drop out of learning at 16, and EMA has already removed the financial barrier to staying on post-16 for thousands of young people. From this research we can also see that
EMA is helping to prepare 16-18 year olds for the world of work – which will benefit society as a whole in the long run."

Phil Hope MP, Skills Minister for the Department of Education and Skills, adds,

“We are committed to helping all young people achieve their potential through staying on in learning, and it’s fantastic to hear such positive feedback from those working within the Further Education sector. EMA was introduced to give 16-18 year olds who continue in learning essential financial support, and we’re delighted to see that it also has indirect benefits in improving motivation among young learners.

“Teachers play a vital role in encouraging more young people to stay on and receive EMA so they can get the skills necessary to succeed in life. Working together, we can help to shape the skilled UK workforce of tomorrow and help more young people to make the most of their opportunities.”

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 online between 2nd and 4th August 2005. YouGov interviewed a sample of 2,183 individuals representative of the adult population of Great Britain. Results were weighted to be representative of the known adult population from the 2001 Census. 825 of the respondents did not stay in education or training after 16.

2. Research was conducted by PCP Research on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council in January 2007. PCP interviewed 323 teachers from state funded schools or sixth forms, further education colleges, city academies or e2e training providers.

Donna Dawson is a leading psychologist specialising in Personality and Behaviour (BA Hons, MSc, completing PhD), who has gained her credentials at Manchester University, the University of London and Brandeis University in Massachusetts, USA. She covers a wide variety of subject matter to explain how a person’s behaviour reflects on their personality, lifestyle choices and other psychological traits.

News released XXX embargoed until 00.01 on XXX.
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.
  - A person who has indefinite leave to enter or indefinite leave to remain and who received EMA payments in 2005/06

- 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

In order to apply, young people need to follow this procedure:

1. Pick up an application form from their learning provider, Connexions personal adviser or by logging onto www.direct.gov.uk/ema or by calling 0808 10 16219.
2. EMA is paid directly into a young person’s bank account; therefore if they haven’t got an account, they should set one up and obtain a statement in their name or ask the bank to fill in the relevant part of the application pack to verify the account.
3. Parents/carers need to fill in parts of the application form and provide evidence of household income in the previous financial year 2005/2006. This will normally be a Tax Credits Award Notice (TCAN) from HMRC. Some parents/carers may need to send in a P60 (for employed parents) or SA302 (for self-employed parents).
4. Once the form is correctly completed and returned to the Assessment and Payment Body, and if they are eligible to receive EMA, a ‘Notice of Entitlement’ will be sent to the young person, which will explain how much the young person can receive when they enrol on a valid learning programme with their learning provider and start attending regularly.

5. The young person should take the ‘EMA Contract Part 1’ which accompanies the Notice of Entitlement to their learning provider when they start their learning programme and sign an ‘EMA contract’ agreeing to be paid in return for regular attendance and commitment to their course.

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 with a valid learning provider.

**EMA Contract**
Once enrolled, the student must attend all course sessions and sign an EMA Contract with their learning provider. 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.

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

*All media enquiries please contact:*
LSC Press Office, T: 024 7682 3515
Suzie Barrett, Band & Brown Communications, T: 020 7419 8618, E: suzie.barrett@bbpr.com, M: 07813 203 423
Sarah Weston, Band & Brown Communications, T: 020 7419 7323, E: sarah.weston@bbpr.com
Rosalind Holley, Band & Brown Communications, T: 020 7419 8614 E: rosalind.holley@bbpr.com
Simon Francis, Band & Brown Communications, T: 020 7419 7340, E: simon.francis@bbpr.com, M: 07738 487 259

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1. The bank account chosen must be able to accept payments by BACS
2. A Tax Credits Award Notice (form TC602) is sent to parents direct from H.M Revenue & Customs, and a sample copy can be viewed at www.direct.gov.uk/ema