25 April 2007

From: Learner Support Directorate, Learning and Skills Council
To: Providers of the following financial support schemes for learners:

- Education Maintenance Allowance
- Adult Learning Grant
- Care to Learn
- 6th Form College Childcare
- Dance and Drama Awards
- Residential Support Scheme

Taking learner support into the future

I wrote to you in October 2006, outlining the Learning and Skills Council's plans to put out to competitive tender a contract for a single Helpline, Assessment and Payment Body (HAPB) for the learner support schemes named above.

This subsequent note is to update you on progress and provide you with an outline of the transition arrangements for those schemes currently administered by Manchester City Council (MCC).

As I explained in October, we are appointing a single HAPB in order to bring about better integration of learner support schemes and a more efficient service, which offers a better service to our learners, to learning providers, value for money and a sound platform for future learner support developments. We are now coming towards the end of the competitive period and are making good progress towards announcing a supplier in June 2007.

I can now confirm that when appointed in late May, the preferred supplier will take on responsibility for all services currently provided by MCC with immediate affect. There will be transition period to allow this to happen and we will, with MCC and the preferred supplier, keep you informed. It is our intentions that neither your self nor our learners will be adversely affected in this period.

We will be working over the next period to ensure our detailed transition plans for the MCC schemes are the most effective they can be. We will communicate additional information, including any instructions for learning providers if
applicable, as early as we can. In the meantime, providers should continue to use the current services as normal.

There will be no impact on the EMA scheme for 2007/08, with the preferred bidder being asked to take on EMA services in time for the 2008/09 period, including the ability to take and assess applications for those leaving Year 11 in June 2008. We will tell you more about this transition as soon as it is available.

Mike Bell

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