Young people are missing out because their parents aren’t aware of the many learning routes available today, according to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). New research from the LSC shows that despite the wide variety of learning routes available, eight in ten (80 per cent) parents encourage their children to follow traditionally academic routes such as A Levels or GCSE retakes. Some young people may be better suited to other types of learning, but leave education thinking it will be like school and, therefore, is not for them.

With 68 per cent of young people turning to their parents for advice about their options, the LSC is urging all parents to find out more about the routes their children could take and the financial support available in the form of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), a weekly payment of up to £30 which young people could be eligible for if they stay on in learning.

When most parents were younger their choices were probably limited to either the ‘academic’ route, such as A Levels, or to leave education and get a job, but today there have never been so many ways to return or stay on in learning and they don’t all mean staying on in the classroom. Courses range from A Levels or Diplomas to more vocational courses which are as far reaching as Construction, Fashion and Textiles, and New Media.
To help parents and young people, the LSC is encouraging them to ring their local Connexions service, speak to careers teachers and have a look at the online prospectus available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/prospectus for information on different learning programmes in their area.

EMA is also available to support young people from households with an income of up to £30,810 but close to a third of young people are unaware that EMA is available on vocational courses’. For more information on EMA visit www.direct.gov.uk/ema or call the helpline on 0800 121 8989.

Trevor Fellowes, Director of Learner Support at the LSC, which operates EMA, said:

“EMA isn’t just available for traditional subjects such as GCSE retakes and A Levels – 34,600 young people are currently receiving EMA on a work based learning programme. We urge young people to find out if they are eligible to ensure that money is not an obstacle in helping all young people fulfill their learning potential.”

-Ends-

For media enquiries please contact:
Anna Bifield, Hill and Knowlton, T: 0207 413 2000
E: anna.bifield@hillandknowlton.com
Beth Robins, Hill and Knowlton, T: 0207 413 3064
E: beth.robins@hillandknowlton.com

Notes to editors:

This press release applies to England only.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 563 16-19s and 593 adults with children aged 16-19. Fieldwork was undertaken between 14th - 15th and 16th - 23rd November 2007. The survey was carried out online.

Embargoed until 00.01 on Friday 7th March 2008
**Learning and Skills Council**

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality 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 young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

Visit [www.direct.gov.uk/ema](http://www.direct.gov.uk/ema) or call the EMA helpline on 0800 121 8989 for more information.

**Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)**

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

**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 2007/08 providing:
  - They will already be 16, 17, 18 or 19 on the 1st September 2007;
  - Household income criteria for 2007/8 applicants will be confirmed shortly;
  - 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

**14-19 area prospectuses**

14-19 area prospectuses are an online resource which provides information for young people on all learning courses and programmes available in each local area. They can be viewed via the national portal at: [http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?sid=41](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?sid=41). From 2008, learners will be able to access information on the new Diplomas being delivered in their area, through the online prospectuses.

**Diplomas**

The Diploma is part of a national programme to widen the choice of courses for young people to motivate them and encourage them to continue learning for longer. It will help them to gain the qualifications they need for success – at work, at college or at university.

---

*i Act 2 data conducted in Autumn 2006.*