Welcome to the third issue of the Learner Support Partnership Team Update, which aims to tell you more about the work of the LSC’s Learner Support team, including the latest on policy developments, and how you can help to deliver support to learners.

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Update on Learner Support Service

As you will be aware from the last issue of the Partnership Team Update, at the end of November 2008 the LSC confirmed its appointment of Capita to take on its full range of Learner Support schemes.

This update is to confirm that in the 2008/09 academic year, learners will not be affected by the change: all outstanding applications will continue to be processed and registered learners will continue to receive their payments.

Learners who wish to apply for any of the Learner Support schemes should use the same application forms and return addresses.

Providers should use the existing system to register and make payments to learners. The Interim Learning Provider Portal has had some improvements made (please see the section on the Interim LPP changes), so providers should have an improved experience.

Capita have cleared the backlog of applications and have returned all
original documentary evidence to learners. Work in progress of EMA application forms as at 26th January 2009 was under 2,000 applications, in comparison to around 26,000 in November 2008. This is normal for application processing and does not represent a back-log. Turnaround of applications has vastly improved since Capita took up the contract and new applications sent in are being processed within 2 weeks.

Both the Learner and Learning Provider helplines remain open and you should direct people’s queries to the helpline:

Learner helpline: 0800 121 8989
Learning Provider line: 0845 600 7979

For more information on the Learner Support Service, the Learner Support Service Stakeholder e-bulletin is produced monthly and is available to download at the following location: https://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/moneytolearn/lss/ebulletins/.

ACTIONS:
• Reassure all learners that their applications and payments will continue to be processed.
• Confirm to learning providers that they should continue to use the existing systems to administer payments to learners.
• Ensure that you and learning providers continue to encourage learners to apply for learner support schemes.
• Subscribe to the Learner Support Service e-bulletin by emailing learnersupportupdate@lsc.gov.uk.

New Opportunities White Paper published

Exciting changes to the Career Development Loan have been proposed in the New Opportunities White Paper issued by the Government earlier in January.

Launching the paper, the Prime Minister outlined how this document sets out the Government’s agenda for capturing the jobs of the future and investing in families, communities and citizens throughout their lives to help them get on and ahead.

This has been particularly important for Learner Support as one of the key measures from the Paper includes plans to develop the Career Development Loans; by trebling the numbers from 15,000 to 45,000 in the next two years.

For more detailed information on what parts of this document are relevant to the Learning and Skills Council, including the Career Development Loans, please visit the original document (link above), or the Briefing Alert on the intranet.
Evaluation on Learner Support schemes’ guidance

The Learner Support Directorate has commissioned Jigsaw Research to carry out an evaluation of the current Learner Support scheme’s guidance documents. This project aims to gather people’s responses to the changes made to the guidance for 08/09 and to produce recommendations for further improvements to be made for the 09/10 academic year.

In January an email was sent round to all stakeholders with a link to an on-line survey inviting them to take part. We would encourage everyone to take part in this research, if they have not already done so.

The questionnaire will be open until 4th February. Your views are important to us, and if you would like to participate in the survey and give your views on Learner Support guidance documents, please visit www.critical.co.uk/lscsurvey.

If there are any further queries about this evaluation, please contact Lucy Rowe.

Learner Support Service Policy Messages:

Improvements made to the Interim Learning Provider Portal

In December, the Interim Learning Provider Portal (Interim LPP) was upgraded to improve its performance and functionality. These include:

- The ability to record EMA January and July bonus payment decisions for FE learners;
- The ability to amend registrations for learners (including changing study dates, study patterns, groups and locations);
- The introduction of a ‘notice board’, which will be used to provide important messages;
- Additional learner information included on the ‘Register Learners’ page to allow you access to more information.

We hope that these changes will result in an improved experience when using the Interim Learning Provider Portal.

ACTIONS:

- Point providers and users of the Interim LPP to the guidance
If anyone has any difficulties with the new Interim LPP, please encourage them to contact the Learning Provider Helpline on 0845 600 7979.

- Reassure providers and those who use the Interim LPP that their existing username and password are still valid for use.

**Adult Learning Grant; Letters of Entitlement**

We are aware that there are still significant numbers of ALG learners who have received a Letter of Entitlement (LoE) to confirm they are eligible to receive ALG, but who have not yet taken this into their learning provider/yet been enrolled by their learning provider and have therefore not received any payments.

The HAPB have sent out letters, stating their LoE number and the level of support they are entitled to, to these learners, reminding them that they need to use their LoE to register. We would like to ask you to further remind learning providers that both the LoE and the reminder letter are a valid registration document for ALG.

In order to register a learner, learning providers should input the number from this document onto the Interim Learning Provider Portal (Interim LPP). Once a learner is enrolled, providers must ensure that each learner is assessed against the valid learning criteria (i.e. that they meet the minimum number of guided learning hours and that their course will lead to a full Level 2 or Level 3 qualification) laid out in the scheme guidance. Any learners who do not meet the criteria should not be registered for ALG.

If there are any further queries, please direct people to the Learning Provider Helpline on 0845 600 7979.

**ACTIONS:**

- Ensure that this information regards the LoE is disseminated to all providers administering the Adult Learning Grant.
- Make sure that learning providers encourage all eligible learners to use their LoE to register for ALG as soon as possible.
- Ask learning providers to encourage those learners who have not yet applied for ALG but who think they might be potentially eligible to send for an application form and apply now.

**Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work – Important changes**

The Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work scheme was announced in September by Ed Balls MP. This scheme aims to provide childcare support for low-income families (£20k or less) with children, where one parent is working and the other parent (aged 20 or over), is
out of work and looking to participate in learning that will lead to work.

The scheme will provide up to £175 (£215 in London) per child per week to help pay for childcare and transport costs.

The LSC’s decision to appoint Capita to take over the full range of learner support schemes in November 2008 has inevitably caused some disruption to the introduction of this scheme. We have therefore made two important changes to this scheme:

1. The scheme start date has now been delayed until April 2009.
2. There will no longer be a pilot for this scheme; it will now be rolled out nationally, to all Local Authorities in England, from this date.

Application packs for the scheme will be available in February and we will start processing applications in March for eligible parents looking to do training from April 2009.

In February and March we will be running regional seminars to ensure learning providers and childcare providers are aware of the application process and what will be required to support the administration of the scheme.

Further information about the seminars and the changes to the scheme is available in our e-newsletter. The latest issue of this is available on the website.

If you would like to receive a copy by email, then please let us know at freechildcare-adults@lsc.gov.uk.

ACTIONS:
- Please cascade the news of these important changes to providers.
- Sign up to receive future copies of the e-newsletter.
- Encourage providers to attend one of our seminars. To book please visit www.livegroup.co.uk/freechildcare. More information is available in the e-newsletter.

Education Maintenance Allowance – National Marketing Campaign focussing on NEET participation underway

The final phase of the national marketing campaign for EMA began on Monday 12 January 2009. This campaign is focusing on those ‘hard to reach’ and those classified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). The campaign is running for 6 weeks and will comprise:

- Regional radio stations are airing a series of case studies.
- A mobile unit ‘roadshow’ will tour the country for two weeks, commencing 5th February.
- There will be a ‘Kiss Academy Live’ in London on Saturday 21st
February: this event is an opportunity for up to 50 young people to participate in a series of hands-on workshops run by radio personalities, designed to help young people to learn about the roles within the radio industry and inspire them to follow on with further education.

The EMA roadshow commences in Plymouth on 5th February 2009. The roadshow is a truck that will tour the country, where young people can go to play games, including Wii and Guitar Hero, and speak directly with a Connexions adviser who can help with their learning and financial support options. They will have on-hand information leaflets on different routes, for example EMA, Apprenticeships and Diplomas. The dates and locations are as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 Feb 2009</td>
<td>Plymouth</td>
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<td>Essex FM</td>
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<td>Hull</td>
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<td>24 Feb 2009</td>
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**ACTIONS:**
- Providers should encourage young people to go down to the roadshow locations.
- Please continue to encourage young people to apply for the Education Maintenance Allowance.

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Education Maintenance Allowance – Marketing materials available to pre-order

EMA application packs and support materials for 09/10 are now available to pre-order to distribute to learners.

The EMA application pack contains an EMA application form and guidance notes for learners to help them to apply for the 09/10 academic year. Providers can pre-order a quantity of packs by calling 0845 602 2260 or emailing lsc@prolog.uk.com. Providers must remember to quote the reference number: LSC-P-NAT-090013. Please note that the application packs will not start to be sent out until April 2009.

Other support materials available to pre-order include the EMA resource pack (reference LSC-P-NAT-080120) and the EMA My Choice DVD (reference LSC-P-NAT-080004). The EMA resource pack is designed to support providers in classroom-based learning and highlight post-16 options available to young people. The EMA My Choice DVD explains the benefits of EMA and how this has helped five young people stay on in learning who would otherwise have dropped out. These can be ordered in the same way as above.

ACTIONS:
- Cascade this information to providers and encourage them to pre-order these items.
- Continue to encourage learners to apply for the Education Maintenance Allowance.

Subscribe to the Partnership Team Update

The update will be emailed every two months; the next issue is scheduled for April. If you would like to comment, give us feedback or have your name added to the distribution list, please email us, stating the name of this publication, at: learnersupportupdate@lsc.gov.uk

We hope that you find this update useful. Previous issues of this update are available on the LSC Intranet.

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