

The countdown to the EMA extension...

With only eight weeks to go, read on to ensure you're ready for 10 April!

January proved to be a busy and productive month, with lots of activity in the run up to the fast-approaching extension of EMA to young people on LSC-funded Entry to Employment (E2E) and courses that lead to an Apprenticeship. With the EMA extension only weeks away, this month's EMA Extension Update focuses on helping LSC Local Offices, partners and learning providers to ensure they are prepared for 10 April.

We have just completed our three EMA extension partnership conferences in Birmingham, London and Leeds, which helped partners that work with young people to prepare for the forthcoming extension. There was an excellent turn out at the conferences, with almost 350 partners from Connexions, Local Authorities and other stakeholder organisations in attendance. We were delighted that the delegates were engaged and made full use of the group discussions and Q&A session to address issues and clarify key questions.

Feedback from the evaluation forms has been extremely positive, with the majority of attendees stating that the conferences were very helpful. One aspect that rated particularly highly among the audiences was the guest speaker, Paul Ross, Director of Retail Banking at the British Bankers' Association. Paul provided insight, advice and guidance on how partners can best help young people to open bank accounts.

In this month's update we have included further information on the support that you can offer. For those of you who were unable to attend the events, speaker presentations are available online at www.direct.gov.uk/ema.

Finally, LSC Local Offices will be working closely with their LSC-funded E2E providers, and providers of courses that lead to an Apprenticeship to check they are ready for the extension.

EMA Extension Update

February 2006

Of interest to work-based learning providers, local LSCs and anyone else interested in delivering EMA

Please reference the document entitled *Learning Providers: Getting Ready for EMA*, which sets out a detailed step-by-step approach to prepare for the extension. It can be downloaded from:

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/e55add74mbd6e2esbiygh2wsloxaxeo6ym7gmb2m72wqgjk24gdb2lqeygif6mbdxqqzf4u35epji/LearningProvidersGettingReadyforEMAConferences2.pdf>

As ever, if you have any questions, comments, or thoughts on other ways in which we can support you, please email us at emaextension@lsc.gov.uk.

Thank you for your continued support in ensuring the success of April's EMA extension.

Greg Burke, Head of EMA Unit

EMASYS Training – have you attended your seminar?

There are still a number of providers who have yet to sign for the EMASYS Training Seminars.

To remind you; it is mandatory for providers to attend a seminar in order to access and operate EMASYS and make payment decisions when the system goes live in April.

The seminars provide everything you need to know about EMASYS, and the overwhelming feedback from the January seminars has been extremely positive, with delegates able to plan their implementation more effectively now they understand the system.

More training seminars are taking place, but will finish at the end of February, so, if you are an LSC-funded E2E provider/provider of courses that lead to an Apprenticeship who has not yet attended or signed up for the free training seminar, please contact your local LSC EMA Coordinator immediately to secure your place, which, again to remind you, is free of charge to you as provider.

Securing a bank account

As most of you are aware, EMA payments are made directly into bank accounts.

Ensuring that all E2E and other learners on courses that lead to an Apprenticeship who are eligible for an EMA are able to open a bank account was one of the key concerns raised by learning providers at last November's regional conferences. In response to this, the EMA Unit has been working closely with the Financial Services Authority (FSA) and the British Bankers' Association (BBA) to understand how best to support those young people who have yet to open a bank account.

Basic Bank Accounts, which are offered by 17 different banks, have been identified as the best option for young people. This is because Basic Bank Accounts are very accessible, they limit potential for debt, EMA can be paid in directly and users can gain access to their money via cash points or through the bank or post office.

The speech made by Paul Ross, Director of Retail Banking at the British Bankers' Association at the recent partnership conferences generated a lot of interest and audience interaction. The key advice he provided included the following points:

- If a young person is having difficulty providing proof of their identity, a letter to the bank from a Connexions PA or other responsible person (eg. teacher, social worker or doctor) should be accepted as evidence.
- If a young person's application is rejected, practitioners can act as a broker and talk to the bank manager directly to support the application and resolve the issue.
- If a practitioner is working with more than one EMA learner who has yet to open a bank account, he/she might want to organise a meeting with the bank manager and discuss all the applicants.
- A comprehensive leaflet on basic bank accounts can be obtained by logging onto www.fsa.gov.uk/consumer.
- Details of Banking Codes, which set standards of good banking practice for banks and building societies can be found on www.bba.org.uk.

New resources available soon

The EMA Unit is producing an 'Application Form Resource Pack' for practitioners, which will serve as an ongoing reference document explaining all aspects of the application process.

A prototype pack was produced and the proposed content and format was discussed with key partners and local LSC colleagues in the workshop session at the recent partnership conferences. Early evaluation shows delegates found the pack to be user-friendly, informative and very useful. This feedback is being used in order to develop the final version of the Application Form Resource Pack, which will be posted next month at www.direct.gov.uk/ema.

www.direct.gov.uk/ema is the main resource for anything relating to EMA and the extension in April, so please continue to log on for any further information or supporting materials that you may need.

Order your marketing and communications materials.

Promotional leaflets and posters relating to the EMA extension to learners on E2E and courses that lead to an Apprenticeship have now gone to print and will be ready by 20 February 2006. These marketing and communications materials can be ordered from LSC Publications, PO Box 5050, Sherwood Park, Annesley, Nottingham NG15 0DJ; tel: **0845 602 2260** or email lsc@prolog.uk.com or downloaded from www.direct.gov.uk/ema.

Last chance to get ready!

With only eight weeks to go until the EMA extension, E2E/providers of courses that lead to an Apprenticeship should be referencing the planning checklist found in *Learning Providers: Getting Ready for EMA*, to double-check that all the necessary steps have been taken.

Download this document from:

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/e55add74mbd6e2esbiygh2wsloxaxeo6ym7gmb2m72wqgjk24gdb21qeygif6mbdxqqzf4u35epji/LearningProvidersGettingReadyforEMAConferences2.pdf>

Update on Hardship Fund

£1.8 million has been secured for a Hardship Fund for learners on LSC-funded E2E and courses that lead to an Apprenticeship in 2006/07.

This is good news as the funding will offer E2E learners/learners on courses that lead to an Apprenticeship the same kind of additional funding that FE learners benefit from under the Learner Support Funding (LSF), therefore creating a level playing field. Guidance on administering the Hardship Fund is currently being worked on and will be distributed once it has been completed.

EMA Q and A

Payments

Is progression into a part-time job acceptable for a final progression bonus payment from E2E? If so, how many hours are the required minimum?

Although the extension to EMA will be replacing the MTA for 16–19 learners starting LSC funded E2E/courses that lead to an Apprenticeship from April 2006, it is not changing the LSC's WBL policy which still determines the requirements of the E2E programmes/courses that lead to an Apprenticeship. Therefore, as per the Requirements for Funding Work Based Learning 2005/06, paragraph 238, the minimum hours required for a progression bonus to paid employment, including that with an agency, must exceed 16 hours per week.

What are the arrangements for paying travel to E2E learners and learners on courses that lead to an Apprenticeship following the introduction of the EMA extension?

There will continue to be an element of travel funding in the E2E/courses that lead to an Apprenticeship WBL funding that learning providers receive. The funding, which will be withdrawn from April 2006 (£48), consists of the £40 MTA and £8 for bonuses. LSC WBL policy colleagues have also confirmed that these arrangements will continue through the 2006/07 financial year.

Are learners who move/progress from E2E to courses that lead to an Apprenticeship entitled to receive a second round of bonus payments in the same way as learners who move onto FE?

Yes they are.

If employers are no longer able to pay training allowances – e.g. in childcare – where is the employer engagement?

Firstly it is for the provider to negotiate an equitable balance between EMA and the employer paying wages. For example in Childcare where a placement may be paying £40 a week now this could be re-negotiated to three months on EMA (at no cost to the employer) followed by employment at £80 per week for the remainder of the first year and a raise in line with progress in the second year. While we recognise that learners are constrained in some of the duties they can perform without certain qualifications, or before they reach a certain age, during this period they do not count on an employer's headcount, and there are still many tasks the learner can perform. The LSC therefore continues to push for employers in every sector to directly employ their apprentices.

EMASYS

Where do I access the EMASYS Operating Manual?

The interim version for E2E/courses that lead to an Apprenticeship, is available in both hard copy and soft copy (CD-ROM) in the EMASYS Training Pack which learning providers will receive as they attend an EMASYS Training Seminar.

A comprehensive version which will cover FE as well as E2E/ courses that lead to an Apprenticeship will be available as a downloadable PDF document from the EMASYS website (www.emasys.dfes.gov.uk) from 10 April. To access this site learning providers will need logon IDs and passwords. These will be issued before the 10 April.

Coming soon...

In the March issue of EMA Extension Update we will be addressing and additional queries you have on the EMA extension and ensuring that you have all the information you need for 10 April.

EMA Extension Update is published monthly and is available online. It can be downloaded from our website (www.lsc.gov.uk) through the Documents section of our national home page by selecting Series on the menu bar.

We value your views, so please let us have your comments on the content and style, or any ideas on how you think we could improve LSC Extension Update at emaextension@lsc.gov.uk

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