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# Evaluation of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and Assembly Learning Grant (FE): Technical Appendix



# **Evaluation of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA): Technical Appendix**

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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## **ANNEXE A: EVALUATION WORK PROGRAMME**

### **Overview of work programme**

- 1.1 Our work programme for undertaking this evaluation has involved the following stages and activities:

### **Inception (November 2013 – April 2014)**

- 1.2 Attending an Inception meeting with the Evaluation Steering Group to discuss the requirements of the evaluation and our proposed methodology, and preparing an Evaluation Inception Report.
- 1.3 Accessing the following documents relating to the administration and promotion of the EMA and ALG(FE) in Wales:

#### **Student Finance Wales Publications**

##### **EMA**

- 'Coming soon ...' Promotional poster for EMA 2013/14
- 'Education Maintenance Allowance 2013/14 Eligibility' Leaflet
- 'Apply now for EMA' Promotional Poster for 2013/14
- 'The little book of EMA' for 2013/14
- 'EMA Next Steps Leaflet' for 2013/14
- 'EMA Standard Application Form' for 2013/14
- EMA School and College Education Maintenance Allowance Guidance Notes for 2013/14

##### **ALG FE**

- 'Coming soon...' Promotional Leaflet for ALG FE 2013/14
- 'Coming soon ... ' Promotional poster for ALG FE 2013/14
- 'ALG FE Application Form for academic year 2013/14
- 'Assembly Learning Grant Guidance Notes for academic year 2013/14'
- 'Apply now for ALG FE' Leaflet for 2013/14
- 'Apply now for ALG FE' Poster for 2013/14
- ALG FE Guidance Notes for Learning Centres Academic Year 2013/14

##### **Welsh Government published statistics**

- Education Maintenance Allowances Awarded in Wales 2012/13 (September 2013)
- Assembly Learning Grants Awarded to Welsh Domiciled Students in Further Education 2012/13 (October 2013)

- 1.4 Accessing the following policy, research and evaluation documents/reports relating to FE student finance across Wales and the UK:

#### **Wales**

- a) Welsh Assembly Government (October 2009) 'Investing in Skills: Sector Priorities Funding, Fees Policy and Financial Support for Learners' Consultation document
- b) Welsh Assembly Government (2010) Response to a consultation on Investing in Skills: Sector Priorities Funding, Fees Policy and Financial Support for Learners'
- c) Arad Consulting and GfK NOP Social Research (June 2008) 'First Stage Evaluation of the Education Maintenance Allowance in Wales: A report for the Department for Children, Education Lifelong Learning and Skills'
- d) National Assembly For Wales Enterprise and Learning Committee (April 2009) Various oral and written evidence received and the Welsh Assembly Government Response<sup>1</sup>
- e) National Assembly for Wales (2013) Website petition EMA for all<sup>2</sup>
- f) National Assembly for Wales (2013) Inquiry into educational Outcomes for Children from Low Income Households<sup>3</sup>
- g) Estyn (July 2011) The impact of deprivation on learners' attainment in further education and work-based learning
- h) Estyn Annual Report 2011 - 2012

#### **England**

- a. Department for Education and Skills Research Report (2005) No 678 'Evaluation of Education Maintenance Allowance Pilots: Young People Aged 16 to 19 Years Final Report of the Quantitative Evaluation' (Centre for Research in Social Policy and Institute for Fiscal Studies)
- b. House of Commons Library (January 2011) Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) Statistics
- c. Institute for Fiscal Studies (November 2007) 'Education Maintenance Allowance: Evaluation with Administrative Data The impact of the EMA pilots on participation and attainment in post-compulsory education'
- d. Institute for Fiscal Studies (April 1999) Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)evaluation
- e. National Centre for Social Research 'Research Report No 411(2003) The reflections of Early Leavers and second year participants on the Education Maintenance Allowance Scheme. A Qualitative Study'
- f. Research and Consultancy Service (2007) Evaluation of the EMA National Roll-out – Final Report
- g. CfBT Education Trust (April 2009) Should we end the Education Maintenance Allowance;
- h. Institute for Fiscal Studies (December 2010) Observations: reflections on current events<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-third-assembly/bus-committees/bus-committees-scrutiny-committees/bus-committees-third-els-home/bus-committees-third-els-report/bus-committees-third-el-report-el3-09-r06.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=6523&Opt=0>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=6996>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/5370>

**Scotland**

- a. The Scottish Government (2008) Consultation Document – 16+ Learning Choices: First Step Activity and Financial Support
- b. The Scottish Government (2007) Young People’s Awareness and Experience of Educational Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) and their Impact on Choices and Pathways
- c. Various publications (2002 and 2005) from the Centre for Educational Sociology Evaluation of Education Maintenance Allowance Pilots in Scotland Phase I and 2<sup>5</sup>

**Northern Ireland**

- a. Northern Ireland Assembly (September 2011) Committee for Employment and Learning Review of Education Maintenance Allowance Departmental Briefing<sup>6</sup>

**International**

- a. The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) Working Paper No 19227 (July 2013) ‘Turning a Shove into a Nudge? A ‘Labeled Cash Transfer’ For Education

1.5 Accessing various other sources providing information on the administration and take up of other FE student financial support in Wales and England such as the Financial Contingency Fund, Army Further Education Bursary Scheme (FEBS), Royal Air Force Sixth Form Scholarship, Tuition fee support, Professional and Career Development Loan (PCDL), City and Guilds bursaries, Dance and Drama Awards (DaDA), General Federation of Trade Unions Education Trust grants, 24+ Advanced Learning Loan (England only), 16 to 19 Bursary Fund (England only), Discretionary Learner Support (for childcare) (England only), Childcare Grant (England only) and Care to Learn (England only). Details for these schemes are presented in Annexe E of this Technical Appendix.

1.6 Liaising with the Welsh Government and the Students Loans Company (SLC) to discuss evaluation data requirements and resolving data sharing issues. Data Sharing Agreements were put in place between the SLC and the Welsh Government to enable the sharing of SLC data with the Welsh Government. Two Data Access Agreements were also put in

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ces.ed.ac.uk/research/Recent%20projects/EMA/publications.html>

<sup>6</sup> Note that as yet we have been unable to access the PricewaterhouseCoopers review of the EMA in Northern Ireland

place to enable the Welsh Government to share anonymised SLC datasets with WISERD and to share EMA and ALG (FE) previous recipient contact data (where these students had consented to this) with Old Bell 3. The data was transferred to WISERD and to Old Bell 3 via the secure Welsh Government portal (DEWI) and accessed in April 2014 by contracted providers. Furthermore the SLC made available to Old Bell 3, two databases of learning centres responsible for administering both EMA and ALG (FE) schemes in order to select a cross-section of institutions to include in our fieldwork.

- 1.7 Undertaking a scoping study for the analysis of administrative data held by SLC, relating to recipients of EMA/ALG (FE) and data held by the Welsh Government, about school pupils and student participation in post-compulsory education. The findings of this scoping study were set out in an Evaluation Inception Report.
- 1.8 Agreeing a list of key stakeholders to be interviewed and receiving contact data for them.
- 1.9 Undertaking scoping interviews with policy officials from the Higher Education Division of the Welsh Government and discussing our proposed methodology with stakeholders from the sector at the FE Student Services Network on 12th of December 2013.
- 1.10 Providing a form of wording for the Welsh Government, the SLC and other members of the Evaluation Steering Group to use as appropriate to brief stakeholders and learning centres about this evaluation.

#### **Desk Research and Development of Research Tools (January – May 2014)**

- 1.11 Reviewing key documentation relating to the administration of the EMA/ALG (FE) in Wales, identifying key changes to the schemes over time and take-up amongst the student population.

- 1.12 Reviewing UK and WG policies to understand how EMA/ALG (FE) contributes towards WG student finance commitments and how the wider policy context for FE student finance has evolved.
- 1.13 Reviewing other FE student financial support available to students in Wales and England to understand how well EMA/ALG (FE) fits with statutory and non-statutory student finance support.
- 1.14 Reviewing relevant policy documents and research and evaluation reports relating to FE student finance across the UK, drawing out key findings on how other student finance support schemes impact upon student enrolment, retention and achievements.
- 1.15 Writing a series of internal papers based upon these desk based reviews to focus on EMA/ALG (FE) as appropriate.
- 1.16 Matching SLC data to the Widening Access Database and undertaking a comprehensive analysis (the methodology for the matching and analysis are set out in detail in Annexe C).
- 1.17 Developing research instruments to inform the discussions with WG staff, stakeholders, learning centres, current and previous supported students/non supported students (control groups) and student fund administrators in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. These research instruments are presented in Annexe D.



## Fieldwork (January – May 2014)

1.18 Face to face interviews were undertaken with the following stakeholders:

Organisation	Contact
Welsh Government (HE Division)	Steve Nicholls, Meinir Collyer and Simon Gough
Welsh Government (FE Division)	Andrew Clarke
Estyn	Huw Collins
Colegau Cymru	Maxine Thomas
Careers Wales	Ray Collier
South West Wales Reaching Wider Team	Alice Davies, Julia Hall and Lesley Blower
NUS Cymru	Kieron Rees
Powys County Council	Gareth Jones <sup>7</sup>
UK Government	Paul Robinson, BIS and Claire Humphrey (Education Funding Agency (EFA))
Scottish Government	Parminder Kaur and Scott Gray
Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland	John Neill

1.19 In-depth visits were conducted with a sample of 11 schools offering EMA funding only (outlined below). The sample of schools was selected from a sub-set of learning centres where more than 15 students had applied for EMA for 2013/14 and which offered a cross-section in terms of geography and language. Four of the original sample of 11 schools had to be substituted for various reasons, namely that they were not prepared to participate, did not respond to our request for a visit or were about to lose (or had recently lost) their sixth form students. During each visit an interview with the head teacher and /or head of sixth form was undertaken together with one focus group with students in receipt of EMA funding. The number and profile of students interviewed is set out in Annexe B.

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<sup>7</sup> Selected on the basis of PCC having had discussions with the Welsh Government on whether EMA was being used to fund transport costs in light of their considerations to develop a free transport policy for post-16 learners in the county.

	<b>Learning Centre</b>	<b>LA</b>	<b>Geography</b>	<b>Medium Type</b>
1	Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf	Cardiff	South East	Welsh
2	Maesteg Comprehensive School	Bridgend	South East	English
3	Afon Taf High School	Merthyr Tydfil	South East	English
4	Caerleon High School	Newport	South East	English
5	Ysgol Gyfun Gwyr	Swansea	South West/Mid	Welsh
6	Ysgol Dyffryn Aman	Carmarthenshire	South West/Mid	Bilingual
7	Builth Wells High School	Powys	South West/Mid	Bilingual
8	Pembroke School	Pembrokeshire	South West/Mid	English
9	Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen	Gwynedd	North	Welsh
10	Ysgol Rhiwabon	Wrexham	North	English
11	Holyhead High School	Anglesey	North	English

1.20 In-depth visits were undertaken to all 12 Welsh further education institutions offering both EMA and ALG (FE) as listed below. At each institution, in addition to a range of college staff involved in student finance and student support, we aimed to facilitate a mix of focus groups with recipients and non-recipients. We offered a financial cash incentive of £10 to each student who participated. Given data protection issues we were dependent upon each institution recruiting students on our behalf and provided an appropriate form of wording for them to do so. We aimed to facilitate the following groups at each FEI:

- Two focus groups of students in receipt of EMA (where feasible we encouraged institutions to recruit contributors from Communities First areas to at least one of these sessions);
- Two focus groups of students in receipt of ALG (FE) – again ideally with one focusing upon students from Communities First areas;
- Either one focus group with domiciled English students ineligible for EMA/ALG (FE) (where appropriate) or one focus group with Welsh students who had either been unsuccessful in their EMA/ALG (FE) application or who are known to the FEI to be just over the household income threshold and therefore ineligible.

	<b>Learning Centre</b>	<b>Geography</b>
1	Bridgend College	South East
2	Cardiff and Vale College	South East
3	Coleg Sir Gar	South West/Mid
4	Coleg Ceredigion	South West/Mid
5	Coleg Cambria	North
6	Gower College, Swansea	South West/Mid
7	Coleg Gwent	South East
8	Grwp Llandrillo-Menai	North
9	Merthyr Tydfil College	South East
10	Coleg y Cymoedd	South East
11	Grwp NPTC Group	South West/Mid
12	Pembrokeshire College	South West/Mid

1.21 In addition telephone interviews were undertaken with a representative from the Workers' Education Association (WEA) and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Community College (on the basis that they did not have any EMA or ALG (FE) funded students).

1.22 We also undertook visits to the following three English border institutions (two FEIs and one school) to interview their heads of student services/student support or head of sixth form and facilitate two small focus groups - one with Welsh domiciled EMA recipients and the other with English domiciled students (ineligible for EMA support but of the same age cohort):

	<b>Learning Centre</b>	<b>Type</b>
1	Hereford Sixth Form College	FEI
2	Ludlow College	FEI
3	Bishop Heber High School, Cheshire	School

1.23 Qualitative telephone interviews were undertaken with 60 students who were previously in receipt of either the EMA or ALG (FE) (30 each). A random sample of previous grant recipients (who had already agreed to their data being shared for research and evaluation purposes) was provided by the SLC. Contact data was provided for students who had been in receipt of the EMA or ALG (FE) during academic years 2011/12 and 2012/13 and a mix of age and learning centres was included.

1.24 Whilst not an original intention within our fieldwork it was suggested by FE sector representatives that it would be useful to obtain feedback from a small number of parents whose children were currently in receipt of EMA. It was agreed with the Evaluation Steering Group that we would conduct 25 telephone interviews with such parents, sourcing their contact data directly via learning centres during our fieldwork visits. Sourcing these contact data proved challenging and in the event a total of 16 interviews were completed with parents and guardians. The children of these 16 parents attended a range of seven learning centres across all of Wales, consisting of six FEIs and one sixth form. Two of the parents interviewed were in receipt of more than one type of benefit, and three of the parents were retired and living off either a pension or their savings.

#### **Project Management (throughout)**

1.25 Regular progress reports were provided to the client and the evaluation team attended regular Evaluation Steering Group meetings.

## **ANNEXE B: PROFILE OF EVALUATION PARTICIPANTS**

### **Introduction**

2.1 This Annexe presents the profile of a total of 593 participants who contributed towards this evaluation, including:

- 292 current EMA recipients at FEIs (212) and schools (80)
- 30 previous EMA recipients (20 from FEIs and 10 from schools)
- 54 current non-EMA recipients at FEIs
- 13 current non-EMA recipient English domiciled students studying at English institutions
- 153 current ALG (FE) recipient at FEIs
- 30 previous ALG (FE) recipients at FEIs
- 21 current non ALG (FE) recipients at FEIs

### **Profile of Current EMA Recipient Participants**

2.2 Amongst the 292 current EMA recipient students participating, 281 were studying at a Welsh learning centre and 11 were based at English learning centres (eight at an English FEI and three at an English school).

2.3 Focus group participants were asked to complete a brief form to provide some profile details and to acknowledge receipt of the financial payment. Of the 212 current FEI EMA recipient students who completed the forms the profile of EMA recipients at FEIs was as follows:

- 120 (56 per cent) were female and 92 (43 per cent) were male;
- 54 students (25 per cent) indicated that they lived in a Communities First area. 10 students (five per cent) did not indicate where they lived;
- All but two students (one per cent) were enrolled on full time courses. One student did not provide a response;

- 95 students, (just under half) were currently in their first year of claiming EMA. 107 students (half) were in their second or third year of claiming EMA. 10 students did not provide a response to this question;
- 160 of the 211 FEI EMA recipients indicated the level of course on which they were currently enrolled at their respective institution. 72 (one third) of the total 212 students were enrolled on a Level 3 course. 41 students (just under one fifth) were studying A Levels, a similar proportion (38 students) were enrolled on a Level 2 course and nine students were enrolled on a Level 1 course.
- In terms of age, Table 1 shows that the majority were aged either 17 or 18 years:

Table 1: Age Profile of Current FEI EMA Recipients Interviewed

Age of Student	Total
16 years	20
17 years	76
18 years	74
19 years	35
20 years <sup>8</sup>	1
No response	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>212</b>

2.4 Of the 80 EMA current school-based recipients, 66 completed our focus group profile form provided to them during the focus groups<sup>9</sup>. Of these 66:

- 39 (three fifths) were female and 27 were male;
- 22 students (one third) indicated that they lived in a Communities First area. Two students did not indicate where they lived;
- All 66 students indicated they were studying on a full-time basis;
- 28 students were currently in their first year of claiming EMA. 38 students were in their second year of claiming EMA;

<sup>8</sup> A student can receive EMA in the academic year in which they have their twentieth birthday if they have received EMA in one or two of the three preceding academic years and the school/college advises that in the case in question the student should receive EMA.

<sup>9</sup> The forms were not deployed at two schools visited.

- Apart from one student who indicated they were studying a Level 2 course and another student who did not provide a response, all students were studying towards either AS or A Level qualifications.
- In terms of age, Table 2 shows that a cross section of ages were included in our focus groups:

Table 2: Age Profile of Current School EMA Recipients Interviewed

Age of Student	Total
16 years	11
17 years	32
18 years	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>

### Profile of Previous EMA Recipient Participants

2.5 Telephone interviews were completed with 30 previous EMA recipients. 20 of them had studied at an FEI and 10 at a school. Half (15) were male and half (15) were female. Six were living in Communities First areas whilst in receipt of the EMA and the average age of those interviewed was 19. Exactly half of those interviewed (15) had studied for either A Level or a Level 3 qualification. Whilst in receipt of the EMA, one had received free school meals, three had received free transport and the remaining 26 claimed not to have received any other financial support.

### Profile of Current Non-EMA Recipient Participants

2.6 In total, 54 students based at FEIs and who were either unsuccessful in their application, or ineligible for the EMA, were interviewed. Of these:

- 34 (nearly two thirds) were female and 20 (just over one third) were male;
- Eight students (15 per cent) indicated they lived in a Communities First area. Two students did not indicate where they lived.
- All but one student was enrolled on a full time course;
- 48 of the 54 students indicated the level of course on which they were currently enrolled at their respective institution. 18 (one third) of the total 54 students were enrolled on a Level 3 course.

Another 18 (one third) were studying A Levels. Eight students were enrolled on a Level 2 course, three students were enrolled on a Level 1 course and one student was enrolled on an Access course.

- In terms of age, Table 3 shows that a cross-section of ages was included in our sample:

Table 3: Age Profile of Current Non-EMA Recipients Interviewed

Age of Student	Total
16 years	15
17 years	21
18 years	10
19 years	6
20 years	1
No response	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>

### Profile of Current Non-EMA Recipient English Domiciled Students Interviewed

2.7 In total, 13 English domiciled students studying at English learning centres were interviewed. Of these:

- Eight (nearly two thirds) were female and five were male.
- All but one were studying traditional A Level courses – the other was completing a BTEC course.
- The age profile of those interviewed is shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Age Profile of Non-EMA Recipient English Domiciled Students Interviewed

Age of Student	Total
16 years	6
17 years	4
18 years	1
19 years	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

### Profile of Current ALG (FE) Recipient Participants

2.8 In total, 153 ALG (FE) current student recipients participated in our focus groups. Of these:



- 102 (two thirds) were female and 51 were male;
- 30 students (one fifth) indicated they lived in a Communities First area. 13 students did not indicate where they lived;
- All but six students were enrolled on a full time course. Five students were enrolled on a part time course and one student did not provide a response;
- 106 students (more than two thirds) were currently in their first academic year of claiming ALG (FE). 42 students (just below a third) were in their second or third year of claiming ALG (FE). Five students did not provide a response to this question;
- 116 students indicated the level of course on which they were currently enrolled at their respective institution. 63 out of the total 153 students (two fifths) were enrolled on a Level 3 course. 27 students (nearly one fifth) were enrolled on a Level 2 course, 20 were enrolled on an Access course, three were enrolled on a Level 1 course, two were studying A Levels and one person was enrolled on a Level 4 course;
- In terms of age, nearly two thirds of those who participated in the focus groups were aged between 18 and 24 as shown in Table 5:

Table 5: Age Profile of Current ALG (FE) Recipient Students Interviewed

Age of Student	Total
18-24 years	95
25-34 years	37
35-44 years	13
45-54 years	4
55-64 years	1
No response	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>153</b>

### Profile of Previous ALG (FE) Recipient Participants

2.9 Telephone interviews were completed with 30 previous ALG (FE) recipients who had all studied at an FEI. Exactly half were male and half female. 11 of the 30 were living in Communities First areas at the time of their studies and the average age at the time of interview was 24. Six

noted that they had received some additional financial support whilst studying notably travel, FCF and childcare costs. Nearly half (14 in all) were studying towards a Level 3 course when funded via the ALG (FE) scheme.

### **Profile of Current Non ALG (FE) Recipient Participants**

2.10 In total, 21 students who were either unsuccessful in their application, or ineligible, for ALG (FE) were interviewed. Of these:

- 13 (just over three fifths) were female and 8 were male;
- Five students (just less than a quarter) indicated they lived in a Communities First area;
- Two students (one fifth) were enrolled on a part time course - the rest were enrolled on full time courses;
- 16 students indicated what level of course they were currently enrolled on at their respective institution. Six (just less than one third) out of the total 21 students were enrolled on a Level 3 course. Four students (just less than one fifth) were enrolled on a Level 2 course, two students were enrolled on a Level 1 course, two students were studying A Levels and another two students were enrolled on an Access course.
- The age profile of current non ALG (FE) recipients is shown in Table 6:

Table 6: Age Profile of Non ALG (FE) Recipients Interviewed

<b>Age of Student</b>	<b>Total</b>
18-24	13
25-34	7
35-44	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>

## **ANNEXE C: ANALYSIS OF EMA RECIPIENTS WITH THE WIDENING ACCESS DATABASE**

### **Introduction**

- 3.1 This Annexe outlines how the relative characteristics of recipients of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) have been examined via the analysis of administrative educational data that follows three cohorts of Year 11 pupils during a period of three years following their completion of compulsory education. The three cohorts of students in question are those who completed their schooling during the 2004/5, 2005/6 and 2006/7 academic years. The characteristics and subsequent transitions of these pupils are mapped in a linked database of school, Further Education and Higher Education (HE) data that is subsequently referred to as the Widening Access (WA) Database. The construction of this linked database was facilitated by the Welsh Government (WG) and it is being used in an ESRC/HEFCW funded project that aims to chart the progression of pupils from compulsory education to HE and assess the effectiveness of Widening Access policies that aim to encourage students from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in HE<sup>10</sup>.
- 3.2 The use of the WA Database in supporting the evaluation of EMA represents a relatively efficient way of assessing how such data can contribute to our understanding of the circumstances of EMA recipients and what benefits would be likely to accrue to WG from commissioning larger scale data matching exercises to support future evaluations of policies surrounding student support. The next section describes the data provided by the Student Loans Company (SLC) to the project team and how these records were matched to the WA Database. In terms of assessing the quality of matches made, the following section considers how FSM eligibility measured at Year 11 relates to the

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<sup>10</sup> An overview of the contents of the WA Database is available at:  
[http://www.wiserd.ac.uk/files/4414/0429/5230/Working\\_Paper\\_WAQNCW2014-2.pdf](http://www.wiserd.ac.uk/files/4414/0429/5230/Working_Paper_WAQNCW2014-2.pdf)

subsequent receipt of EMA, with particular reference to how difficulties associated with both the coverage of EMA data and the ability to identify EMA recipients in the WA database may confound comparisons between different groups of students.

### **Matching Recipients of EMA to the Widening Access Database**

3.3 The SLC provided the research team with information regarding recipients of Education Maintenance Allowance and of the Assembly Learning Grant (Further Education)<sup>11</sup> covering the period 2005/6 to 2012/13. Figures relate to the cumulative total of approved applications received by the end of the academic year among those students who expressly consented that their data could be shared for the purposes of research. It can be seen in Table C1 that the number of records supplied to the research team are lower than official estimates of the caseload for these benefits published by the Welsh Government<sup>12,13</sup>. Among EMA recipients, it can be seen that data supplied by the SLC represents approximately 74% of the population of EMA recipients during the period 2005/6 to 2012/13. This figure falls to 66% among recipients of ALG (FE). However, it is noted that the coverage of the data extract has declined among both ALG (FE) and EMA recipients during the period covered by the data compared to published estimates. For example, in 2006 the EMA data extract accounts for approximately 84% of the total population of EMA recipients. By 2011, this figure has declined to 60%. The reason for this apparently increasing unwillingness on the part of applicants to allow their data to be linked for the purposes of research is unclear.

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<sup>11</sup> Now Referred to as the Welsh Government Learning Grant (Further Education (WGLG (FE)). For the purposes of this report we retain the term ALG(FE).

<sup>12</sup> <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Student-Support/Educational-Maintenance-Allowances-Further-Education>

<sup>13</sup> <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Student-Support/Assembly-Learning-Grants-Further-Education>

**Table C1: Total Welsh Domiciled EMA/WGLG (FE) Recipients**

Year	Supplied Data (Number of Recipients)		Published Estimates (Number of Recipients)		Coverage of Supplied Data (%)	
	WGLG	EMA	WGLG	EMA	WGLG	EMA
2005/6	0	22,090	0	25,622		86.2%
2006/7	4,325	25,487	4,730	30,372	91.4%	83.9%
2007/8	4,412	26,294	5,135	31,181	85.9%	84.3%
2008/9	3,999	26,627	5,250	32,695	76.2%	81.4%
2009/10	4,467	27,307	6,550	36,187	68.2%	75.5%
2010/11	3,967	23,502	7,330	36,458	54.1%	64.5%
2011/12	4,233	19,285	7,825	32,521	54.1%	59.3%
2012/13	4,071	17,918	7,525	30,271	54.1%	59.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,474</b>	<b>188,510</b>	<b>44,345</b>	<b>255,307</b>	<b>66.5%</b>	<b>73.8%</b>

3.4 The analysis of the WA Database will be focussing on the characteristics and experiences of EMA recipients. This is primarily due to the coverage and contents of the Widening Access Database which traces the experiences of three cohorts of Year 11 pupils from 2004/5, 2005/6 and 2006/7. The reasons we deliberately abstract from an analysis of ALG (FE) are as follows:

- The ALG (FE) is a much smaller scheme resulting in smaller matched samples.
- The ALG (FE) covers a much wider age range of learners, among whom it is likely that only a small minority are members of the three cohorts covered by the WA database.
- The last year of Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) data within the WA Database is 2009/10. This reflects its primary interest in tracking the participation of the three WA cohorts into Higher Education. Later years of LLWR data would be required in order to meaningfully incorporate ALG (FE) recipients into the analysis.

3.5 The ability to apply the analysis described in the evaluation report to ALG (FE) recipients would depend upon the creation of a larger linked

database of linked school-FE data. It is generally accepted that the quality of National Pupil Database (NPD) data (the database that contributes school data in the construction of the WA database) improved from 2004/5 onwards (for all cohorts) and so it must be recognised that it may not be possible to link the FE records of many of those who received ALG (FE) over the last decade to information held about them whilst they attended school. The emphasis of this larger database therefore would need to be extending its coverage of those who participated in FE post 2009/10 so as to capture the later cohorts of ALG (FE) recipients. Whilst later recipients of ALG (FE) who had completed their compulsory schooling during the last decade could potentially be matched to the WA Database, without more recent LLWR data it would not be possible to determine the context in which the benefit is being received.

3.6 Table C2 presents the results of the matching exercise. One of the key measures of the quality of such a linking exercise is an assessment of the proportion of records that have been matched to the underpinning population data. To construct such a rate, it is therefore important to identify which records in the SLC data relate to records from the same cohorts of students as that covered by the WA database. The upper panel of Table C2 presents information on the number of supplied EMA records which represents the potentially 'linkable' caseload. These students have been identified by having a date of birth that would associate them with being a member of one of three Year 11 cohorts in the WA Database. An important caveat to note is that if these students were not schooled in Wales (i.e. they moved to Wales following their completion of compulsory schooling or they attended school in England from a Welsh domicile but went on to attend a Welsh FEI), their records will not be able to be linked to the WA Database.

3.7 Taking the example of students who received EMA in 2006/7, it can be seen from Table C2 that records related to 25,487 Welsh domiciled

EMA recipients were supplied by the SLC. Of these, it is believed that 22,487 could potentially be located within the WA Database. This figure relates to 9,622 students from the 2004/5 Year 11 cohort and 12,865 students from the 2005/6 Year 11 cohort. The first group will generally relate to those students from the 2004/5 Year 11 cohort (i.e. those turning 18 years old in 2006/7) in receipt of EMA either during their second year of post-compulsory education or those students who entered FE following a 'gap' in their participation in education or training (e.g. having entered the labour market or having had a 'gap year'). Those students who are in their second year of post-compulsory education and who had also received EMA during the previous year will therefore also appear within the 2005/6 EMA caseload. The second group of 12,865 students from the 2005/6 Year 11 cohort will relate to those students in receipt of EMA who have entered FE immediately following the completion of compulsory education (i.e. those turning 17 years old in 2006/7). Many of these students may also subsequently appear in the EMA caseload for 2007/8 if they remain in FE for a further year.

- 3.8 The results of the linking exercise are presented in the lower panels of Table C2. The linking of EMA records to the WA database was undertaken by achieving exact matches on the basis of gender, date of birth and home postcode. All students in the SLC database are allocated a unique id number which allows their records to be linked over time. Where students appeared in the SLC database over a number of years, the matching was undertaken on the basis of the first appearance in the database so as to minimise the likelihood of missed matches resulting from changes of postcode following their completion of compulsory education. That is, the aim is to match on the postcode that is most likely to reflect their address during compulsory education. It is therefore noted that once a learner in the SLC database is matched, they remained matched even if their address details subsequently changed. It is important to note that the matching

assumes that the postcode of Year 11 children from the three WA cohorts is correct. If these children had moved address but not school prior to Year 11, matches are only likely to be made if parents have informed their child's school of their new address.

**Table C2: EMA Recipients Matched to the Widening Access Database**

	Year of EMA Receipt					All
	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	
<b>Caseload</b>	22,090	25,487	26,294	26,627	27,307	127,805
<b>Linkable Caseload</b>						
2004/5	12,153	9,622	3,065	115	0	24,955
2005/6	0	12,865	10,139	3,553	135	26,692
2006/7	0	0	13,018	10,599	3,702	27,319
All	12,153	22,487	26,222	14,267	3,837	78,966
<b>Matched Caseload</b>						
2004/5	8,499	5,784	1,532	9	0	15,824
2005/6	0	8,906	6,161	1,770	11	16,848
2006/7	0	0	9,105	6,448	1,770	17,323
All	8,499	14,690	16,798	8,227	1,781	49,995
<b>Match Rate (%)</b>						
2004/5	69.9	60.1	50.0	7.8		63.4
2005/6		69.2	60.8	49.8	8.1	63.1
2006/7			69.9	60.8	47.8	63.4
All	69.9	65.3	64.1	57.7	46.4	63.3

3.9 The base of Table C2 reveals that the linking exercise has achieved a match rate of approximately 63% overall. Table C2 also demonstrates how the match rate declines with the length of time that has elapsed between the end of compulsory schooling. During the first year following compulsory education, recipients of EMA can be matched to the WA database with a match rate of approximately 70%. During the second and third years following compulsory education, the match rate decline to approximately 60% and 50% respectively. These declining match rates are likely to reflect the address information held on the WA database being increasingly out of date with the passing of time as an



increasing number of EMA recipients will no longer live at the same address as they did when attending compulsory education.

3.10 It is difficult to assess the quality of this matching exercise. A previous matching exercise conducted by the WG between SLC and FE data achieved a match rate of 11% in an exercise that firstly attempted to match on learning provider, forename, surname, date of birth (DOB) and postcode. This match rate subsequently increased to 43% when the matching criteria were 'loosened' to exclude forename among the unmatched records and which further increased to 64% upon the exclusion of postcode as a matching variable. In the absence of specialist text matching software, lower match rates would be expected via matches made on names due to the variety of ways names can be shortened (e.g. Robert to Bob) or changed (e.g. being referred to by one's second name). The current linking exercise does not utilise names, therefore resulting in higher match rates than the WG matching exercise. However, the reliance on postcode as a matching variable does mean that students who have moved address since the completion of compulsory education will be missed. It could be speculated that the reliance on postcode as a matching variable could introduce a source of systematic bias into the matching exercise if those who have moved address are more or less likely to be eligible than non-movers for EMA or if the parents of EMA recipients are more or less likely to inform schools regarding changes of address. It is however difficult to hypothesise what the effect of such a bias on the results of any analysis.

3.11 The research steering group discussed the possibility of weighting the matched dataset received in order to establish whether the exclusion of non-consenting EMA recipients had any bearing upon the findings of the research. This would have involved the SLC undertaking some comparative work to establish whether there would have been any selection bias within the consenting database of EMA recipients in terms of gender, type of learning centre or age and for the research

team to weigh the findings to account for any bias identified. The research steering group agreed however that this was not a requirement for this study, given the high consent rate amongst EMA recipients, but would be worth considering in any similar future analysis.

### **Assessing the completeness of linked data: comparing FSM eligibility and EMA receipt**

3.12 At the outset, there might be expected to be a high degree of overlap between those students who are eligible for FSM and those who are subsequently in receipt of EMA. Currently, pupils are eligible for FSM if their parents are in receipt of the following benefits that are primarily aimed at those out of work<sup>14</sup>.

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit

3.13 Within Wales, students are eligible for EMA if their household income is less than £20,817 or less than £23,077 if there are other children or young people in the household who are under 16 years old or aged 16-20 and are in full time education<sup>15</sup>. Eligibility to EMA is therefore not restricted to those who are out of work.

3.14 The degree of overlap among these two groups of students is shown in more detail in Table C3. By definition, it is only possible to receive EMA by attending post-compulsory education. The analysis is

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/fe/ema/can-i-get-it.aspx>

therefore restricted to those students who were observed as having attended a Sixth Form or FE Institution during the three years following their completion of compulsory education. It is observed that only 42% of those eligible for FSM were also in receipt of EMA (n=4,659). A number of factors will contribute to the apparently relatively low proportion of students both eligible for FSM and in receipt of EMA. The 6,416 students (7% of the student body) who were eligible for FSM but who were not in receipt of EMA can, in part, be due to the following issues.

- The partial coverage of the EMA data supplied for the purposes of the research project; estimated to be approximately 85% of the total EMA caseload during the years representing the end of compulsory education for the three cohorts of Year 11 pupils in the WA database. This partial coverage is likely to reflect students not providing their consent for their records to be used for the purposes of research. As the identity of non-consenting students cannot be identified, they will be treated as not having been in receipt of EMA.
- Among those EMA recipients for whom data was supplied to the research team, 30% could not be matched to pupils in the WA Database on the basis of gender, date of birth and postcode. Once again, these students will be treated as not having been in receipt of EMA.

3.15 Both of these factors contribute to the WA database providing an underestimate of actual levels of EMA receipt among students in Wales. This will be particularly important among those students who are from low income households and will contribute to an overestimate of the number of students who were eligible for FSM but who are not observed as claiming EMA in the WA database. However, there are also 'real' reasons why a student who was eligible for FSM may not receive EMA. These could include students being unwilling to apply for support under EMA (although the programme of qualitative research finds that there is little stigma attached to receiving EMA) or the

changing economic circumstances of students (although we note most students enter post compulsory education quickly). Whilst we may therefore expect some students to have been eligible for FSM but not in receipt of EMA, many in this group will have actually been in receipt of both benefits.

**Table C3: Comparing FSM Eligibility with EMA Receipt**

EMA	FSM		
	No	Yes	Total
No	59,871 (66.4)	6,416 (7.1)	66,287 (73.5)
Yes	19,214 (21.3)	4,659 (5.2)	23,873 (26.5)
Total	79,085 (87.7)	11,075 (12.3)	90,160 (100.0)

Note: Cell percentages in parentheses

- 3.16 Among those students who were previously not eligible for FSM, it can be seen that approximately 1 in 4 were in receipt of EMA. This group, representing approximately a fifth (21%) of the overall student body, should therefore predominantly relate to students living in low income, in-work households. In terms of their socio-economic circumstances, they can be regarded as taking up an intermediate position between those in receipt of both benefits and those in receipt of neither. It is noted that some EMA recipients from low income, in-work households will be incorrectly allocated to being in receipt of neither benefit due to being 'non-consenting' or 'non-matched' recipients of EMA. However, the number of such students will be small by comparisons to the overall student body.
- 3.17 Subject to caveats surrounding the completeness of the matched EMA data, Tables C4 and C5 present information on the characteristics of EMA recipients compared with non-EMA recipients within the WA database.

**Table C4: Characteristics of EMA Recipients by Cohort Group**

WA Cohort		2004/5				2005/6				2006/7				All			
		Non-EMA	EMA	All	% EMA	Non-EMA	EMA	All	% EMA	Non-EMA	EMA	All	% EMA	Non-EMA	EMA	All	% EMA
Percentages																	
<b>Gender</b>	Male	51.8	48.1	50.9	21.5	51.2	48.8	50.6	23.6	51.6	47.0	50.4	23.0	51.5	47.9	50.7	22.7
	Female	48.2	51.9	49.1	24.1	48.8	51.2	49.4	25.4	48.4	53.0	49.6	26.5	48.5	52.1	49.3	25.3
<b>Ethnic</b>	White																
	British	92.3	92.2	92.3	22.7	93.4	92.5	93.2	24.3	93.8	93.2	93.7	24.6	93.1	92.6	93.0	23.9
	Other	4.4	5.0	4.5	24.9	4.0	4.9	4.3	28.3	4.6	5.0	4.7	26.2	4.4	5.0	4.5	26.4
	DK/NS	3.3	2.9	3.2	20.4	2.6	2.6	2.6	24.8	1.6	1.8	1.6	27.3	2.5	2.4	2.5	23.4
<b>FSM</b>	No	86.5	78.3	84.6	21.0	88.9	79.8	86.7	22.6	88.6	80.5	86.6	23.0	88.0	79.6	85.9	22.2
	Yes	13.5	21.7	15.4	32.1	11.1	20.2	13.4	37.1	11.4	19.5	13.4	35.9	12.0	20.5	14.1	34.9
<b>SEN</b>	No	84.4	85.1	84.6	22.9	84.5	85.1	84.7	24.6	83.9	84.6	84.0	24.9	84.3	84.9	84.4	24.1
	Yes	15.6	14.9	15.4	21.9	15.5	14.9	15.3	23.8	16.1	15.4	16.0	23.9	15.7	15.1	15.6	23.2
<b>GCSE Points</b>	0 pts	9.1	3.4	7.8	9.9	4.3	1.6	3.6	11.0	3.8	1.7	3.3	12.8	5.8	2.2	4.9	10.8
	1-10 pts	7.4	5.3	6.9	17.6	7.2	4.8	6.6	17.8	7.5	5.1	6.9	18.3	7.4	5.1	6.8	17.9
	11-20 pts	7.9	7.2	7.7	21.2	7.9	7.4	7.8	23.2	7.8	7.0	7.6	22.9	7.8	7.2	7.7	22.4
	21-30 pts	10.1	11.8	10.5	25.7	10.2	12.0	10.6	27.7	10.2	11.6	10.6	27.2	10.1	11.8	10.5	26.9
	31-40 pts	12.3	17.2	13.4	29.1	13.1	17.4	14.2	30.1	13.5	16.2	14.2	28.4	13.0	16.9	13.9	29.2
	41-50 pts	16.1	22.0	17.4	28.7	17.0	21.9	18.2	29.4	17.8	20.5	18.4	27.6	16.9	21.4	18.0	28.5
	51-60 pts	16.5	18.3	16.9	24.6	17.5	19.4	18.0	26.4	17.1	19.1	17.6	26.9	17.0	19.0	17.5	26.0
	61-70 pts	12.1	9.7	11.5	19.1	12.8	10.1	12.1	20.4	12.4	12.1	12.3	24.3	12.4	10.6	12.0	21.3
	71+ pts	8.6	5.1	7.8	15.0	10.1	5.6	9.0	15.2	10.1	6.6	9.2	17.8	9.6	5.8	8.7	16.0
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	22.7	100.0	100.0	100.0	24.5	100.0	100.0	100.0	24.7	100.0	100.0	100.0	24.0
Sample	(number)	28,872	8,499	37,371	-	27,459	8,907	36,366	-	27,693	9,105	36,798	-	84,024	26,511	110,535	

**Table C5: Characteristics of EMA Recipients by Cohort Group**

WA Cohort	2005				2006				2007				All			
	Non-EMA	EMA	All	% EMA	Non-EMA	EMA	All	% EMA	Non-EMA	EMA	All	% EMA	Non-EMA	EMA	All	% EMA
Percentages																
Not observed in 6th Form/FE	25.9	12.3	22.8	12.3	19.8	10.1	17.4	14.2	19.1	8.4	16.5	12.7	21.7	10.2	18.9	13.0
6th Form A levels	25.2	24.7	25.1	22.4	26.9	24.6	26.3	22.9	26.7	27.2	26.8	25.0	26.2	25.5	26.1	23.5
FE A levels	8.1	8.7	8.2	24.0	8.6	9.4	8.8	26.2	8.8	9.8	9.0	26.7	8.5	9.3	8.7	25.7
A levels - both	2.0	2.1	2.0	23.1	2.0	2.5	2.1	28.6	2.1	2.0	2.1	23.7	2.1	2.2	2.1	25.1
6th Form A-levels + FE Vocational	2.4	4.2	2.8	33.8	2.3	3.5	2.6	33.5	2.4	3.3	2.6	31.6	2.3	3.7	2.7	33.0
6th Form Vocational	0.3	0.9	0.5	46.2	0.3	0.7	0.4	40.0	0.8	2.0	1.1	45.7	0.5	1.2	0.7	44.6
FE Level 3/4 Other	7.5	11.9	8.5	31.9	8.9	13.5	10.0	32.9	8.7	13.0	9.8	32.9	8.4	12.8	9.4	32.6
FE Level 2	14.4	20.1	15.7	29.1	15.3	19.7	16.4	29.4	15.3	18.3	16.0	28.3	15.0	19.3	16.0	28.9
FE Level 1	8.3	6.8	8.0	19.4	9.3	8.3	9.0	22.6	9.9	8.3	9.5	21.7	9.1	7.8	8.8	21.3
FE Entry Level	1.0	0.7	0.9	18.0	1.6	0.9	1.4	16.3	1.0	0.6	0.9	16.4	1.2	0.7	1.1	16.8
GCSEs - either setting	1.2	2.0	1.4	32.5	1.1	2.0	1.3	36.8	1.2	1.5	1.3	28.8	1.2	1.8	1.3	32.7
Other Vocational Combination	3.7	5.6	4.1	30.8	4.0	4.9	4.2	28.1	4.1	5.7	4.5	31.4	3.9	5.4	4.3	30.1
Total	100	100	100	22.7	100	100	100	24.5	100	100	100	24.7	100	100	100	24.0
Sample (number)	28,872	8,499	37,371	-	27,459	8,907	36,366	-	27,693	9,105	36,798	-	84,024	26,511	110,535	-

## Detailed Regression Results

- 3.18 Table C6 presents results derived from multivariate statistical analyses conducted on each of these outcome measures as discussed in Chapter 9. The models simultaneously control for individual characteristics; school level characteristics measured among Year 11 pupils and local area characteristics. Individual controls include gender, SEN status, GCSE attainment, cohort, FSM eligibility and receipt of EMA. School level variables include controls for the composition of pupils within schools by the characteristics listed above (excluding receipt of EMA). Finally, local area characteristics are controlled for via the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation measured at Lower Super Output Area level.
- 3.19 Table C6 presents estimates of the separate and additional effect of EMA status on the various outcome measures, after controlling for the aforementioned list of characteristics. Two sets of models are estimated. The first includes control variables that combine FSM eligibility and EMA receipt to produce the four-fold classification of students described above. The benefit of this approach is that it separately accounts for those students who are defined as being eligible for FSM but not in receipt of EMA, a group of students where there are particular concerns regarding the definition of EMA receipt. Students neither eligible for FSM or in receipt of EMA are arbitrarily chosen to act as a reference category against which the effects of being in one of the other three groups are evaluated in these models. A second set of models are then run which use separate controls for FSM eligibility and EMA receipt (i.e. these 2 variables are kept separate rather than being combined to produce a four-fold classification). The estimated EMA differential derived from these models are presented in the right hand column of Table C4. The EMA differential derived from these models is essentially an overall average EMA effect. Ordinary Least Squares and Logistic Regression techniques are used according to whether the outcome measure of interest is continuous or dichotomous (i.e. a 0/1 outcome) respectively. Robust standard errors are used to take account of the clustering of pupils within schools at Year 11.



**Table C6: Multivariate Estimates of FSM/EMA Status and Outcomes**

	Estimation Method (interpretation)	Combined FSM Eligibility/EMA Entitlement			Overall EMA Differential	
		Neither	FSM but not EMA	EMA but not FSM		FSM and EMA
<b><i>Entry to Post-Compulsory Education</i></b>						
Duration to Entry	OLS (% differential)	ref.	<b>1.01</b>	<b>-2.55</b>	<b>-3.29</b>	<b>-2.83</b>
Immediate Entry	Logistic (relative odds)	ref.	<b>0.90</b>	<b>1.92</b>	<b>1.90</b>	<b>1.96</b>
<b><i>Attainment in Sixth Form/FE</i></b>						
A-Level Non-progression	Logistic (relative odds)	ref.	<b>1.38</b>	<b>1.15</b>	<b>1.20</b>	<b>1.12</b>
A-Level Points	OLS (% differential)	ref.	0.91	<b>-4.12</b>	<b>-5.09</b>	<b>-4.25</b>
Duration in FE	OLS (% differential)	ref.	<b>-1.92</b>	<b>3.65</b>	<b>4.28</b>	<b>4.21</b>
Leaving FE	Logistic (relative odds)	ref.	1.05	<b>0.69</b>	<b>0.64</b>	<b>0.67</b>
Achieving Level 3 Progression	Logistic (relative odds)	ref.	<b>0.69</b>	<b>1.59</b>	<b>1.27</b>	<b>1.64</b>
Beyond Entry Aim	Logistic (relative odds)	ref.	<b>0.91</b>	<b>1.19</b>	<b>1.17</b>	<b>1.21</b>
<b><i>Entry to Higher Education</i></b>						
HE Participation	Logistic (relative odds)	ref.	1.03	<b>0.70</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>0.70</b>
HE Undergraduate	Logistic (relative odds)	ref.	0.98	<b>0.74</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>0.74</b>

Notes: Estimation of statistically significant relationships at the 5% level are highlighted in bold.

Statistical models control for gender, SEN status, GCSE attainment, WA cohort; school levels controls for percentage of pupils who are male, SEN, non-white and FSM; and local area deprivation based on WIMD quintiles.

# ANNEXE D: EVALUATION RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

## (TG1) TOPIC GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWING WELSH GOVERNMENT STAFF

### INTRODUCTION

- Thank you for agreeing to talk to me.
- As you know Old Bell 3, in conjunction with WISERD of Cardiff University and Dateb, has been commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the EMA and ALG (FE) funding schemes.
- As part of this work, we are interviewing representatives from the Welsh Government, FE colleges, a small number of schools as well as undertaking fieldwork with supported and unsupported students at these institutions and some of their parents.
- We are also undertaking a comprehensive analysis of supported student data.
- The areas I'd like to discuss with you today include your views on:
  - The rationale for and need for EMA and ALG (FE);
  - Whether the student finance schemes are supporting the right students;
  - How effectively the student finance schemes are administered and promoted;
  - The difference that the schemes are having upon student enrolment, achievements and progression;
  - Whether they offer value for money;
  - Whether the Welsh Government should, and if so how best it could, support Welsh FE students in the future
- We will not attribute anything you say to you by name or by organisation in the final published report.
- Do you have anything you want to ask before we start?

The contact person at Old Bell 3 is Nia Bryer (01558) 822922 [nia@oldbell3.co.uk](mailto:nia@oldbell3.co.uk)  
The contact person at the Welsh Government is Sara James 02920 826812  
[sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

### Awareness and Involvement

A1 First of all tell me a little about your involvement with FE student finance?

a. Within Wales

### Policy, Rationale and Need for EMA

B1 To what extent is there a need for EMA?

a. Why do you say this?

- B2 To what extent does EMA fit with other statutory and discretionary student support provision in Wales?  
a. Why do you say this?
- B3 In what way (if at all) does the provision of the EMA fit with UK and Welsh Government policy?
- B4 How has take up of EMA changed over time?  
b. What factors have affected any changes in take up?  
c. Why do students apply for the EMA?
- B5 What impact did recent changes to the EMA have?  
a. Ask about the removal of the £10 and £20 weekly awards which were removed during 2011/12  
b. Ask about removal of performance bonus payment during 2010/11
- B6 What impact did the withdrawal of the EMA in England have upon Welsh students?

#### **Policy, Rationale and Need for ALG FE**

- C1 To what extent is there a need for ALG FE?  
a. Why do you say this?
- C2 To what extent does ALG FE fit with other statutory and discretionary student support provision in Wales?  
a. Why do you say this?  
b. If applicable, what aspects don't fit well?
- C3 How does the ALG FE provision fit with UK and Welsh Government policy?
- C4 How has take up of ALG FE changed over time?  
a. How many students apply for and receive ALG FE?  
b. What factors have affected any changes in take up?

#### **EMA Design and Objectives**

- D1 What do you understand to be the aims and objectives of the EMA?  
b. How, if at all, have these objectives changed over time?
- D2 How appropriate is it that the EMA is made available to students on the basis of household means testing?  
a. Is there a clear rationale for the current household threshold adopted?  
b. Are the eligibility thresholds set appropriate?  
c. If not, where do you think they should be pitched?  
d. Why do you say that?

- D3 Is EMA being used to support the right students?
  - a. In terms of age
  - b. In terms of study course and whether it's part or full time?
  - c. Is it appropriate that it is used to support FE students at both schools and colleges as well as other settings?
  
- D4 How appropriate is it that students receiving the EMA also get access to subsidised provisions such as free transport and free (school) meals?
  - a. How much overlap is there in terms of students accessing EMA and these other subsidised provisions?
  
- D5 How appropriate are the current EMA allowance levels?
  - a. Should they be revised at all and if so how?
  - b. What would be the implications of reducing the current level of EMA to £25/week?

### **ALG FE Design and Objectives**

- E1 What do you understand to be the aims and objectives of the ALG FE?
  - a. Have these changed over time?
  
- E2 How appropriate is it that the ALG FE is awarded based on household means testing?
  - a. Is there a clear rationale for the current household threshold adopted?
  - b. Are eligibility thresholds set appropriate?
  - c. If not, where do you think it should be pitched?
  - d. Why do you say that?
  
- E3 Is ALG FE being used to support the right students?
  - a. In terms of age
  - b. In terms of study course and whether its part or full time?
  
- E4 How appropriate is it that students receiving the ALG FE also get access to subsidised provisions e.g. via FCF or otherwise?
  
- E5 How appropriate are the current ALG FE allowance levels?
  - a. Should they be revised at all and if so how?

### **EMA Administration**

- F1 How effectively is EMA publicised and explained to students and parents?
  - a. What methods work well?
  - b. How could the promotion of the EMA be improved?

F4 How effective is the use of Learning Agreements within the context of EMA?

### **ALG FE Administration**

G1 How effectively is the ALG FE fund publicised and explained to students?

- a. What methods work well?
- b. How could the promotion of the ALG FE be improved?

### **Student Finance Outside Wales**

H9 What do you think the advantages and disadvantages of EMA and ALG FE in Wales are compared with the provision of financial support to FE students in other parts of the UK?

### **Value for money**

L1 Does EMA represent value for money?

- a. Why do you say this?

L2 Does ALG FE represent value for money?

- a. Why do you say this?

L3 Would there have been other, more cost-effective ways, of achieving similar outcomes?

- a. What would these have been?

### **Future**

M1 Should the Welsh Government continue to financially support Welsh FE students directly in the future?

- a. If so, should financial support be made available on a statutory or discretionary basis?
- b. On what basis should students receive financial support (i.e. household income, attendance, for specific provisions)
- c. If so, should there be more/less restrictions on how any allowance is spent?

M2 How could the Welsh Government better target financial support towards FE students who are in greatest need?

- a. How can students from the most deprived backgrounds be supported?
- b. Are there other ways to provide EMA/ALG FE funds other than through household means-testing?
- c. Should a more consistent level of household-income threshold be achieved across FE student finance schemes?
- d. Should support only be offered to those on benefits?
- e. How would it be possible to cut down on the number of students who work the system or who are from non-deprived backgrounds who receive EMA?

- M3 The Welsh Government currently spends over £40 million per annum on supporting FE students in Wales via the three main schemes (ALG FE is £8m pa, FCF is £7m pa and EMA is £28m pa).
- a. Should this level of funding continue? If not, what changes would you wish to see?
- M4 What impact would the withdrawal of the EMA have:
- a. Over the next 3-5 years  
b. Over the long term?
- M5 What impact would the withdrawal of the ALG FE have
- a. Over the next 3-5 years  
b. Over the long term?
- M6 Could Welsh Government FE student finance funding be used in a more effective way?
- a. If so, how?  
b. Would the funding of specific provisions as opposed to making cash payment directly to students be more effective?
- M7 Would one pot of FE student finance funding be more appropriate than the current three schemes (i.e. EMA, ALG FE and FCF)?
- a. What are the advantages?  
b. What difficulties and costs would such a change create?
- M8 If FE student finance support is ~~be~~ continued should it be grant or loan funding or a mix of both?
- a. Is there a need to introduce a loan fund for FE (similar to the 24+ loan in England)?
- M9 Should student finance support be paid in monthly instalments in the future so as to better prepare students for working life?

## **(TG2) TOPIC GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWING OTHER STAKEHOLDERS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Thank you for agreeing to talk to me.
- As you know Old Bell 3, in conjunction with WISERD of Cardiff University and Dateb, has been commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the EMA and ALG (FE) funding schemes.
- As part of this work, we are interviewing representatives from the Welsh Government, FE colleges, a small number of schools as well as undertaking fieldwork with supported and un-supported students at these institutions and some of their parents.
- We are also undertaking a comprehensive analysis of supported student data.
- The areas I'd like to discuss with you today include your views on:
  - The rationale for and need for EMA and ALG (FE);
  - Whether the student finance schemes are supporting the right students;
  - How effectively the student finance schemes are administered and promoted;
  - The difference that the schemes are having upon student enrolment, achievements and progression;
  - Whether they offer value for money;
  - Whether the Welsh Government should, and if so how best it could, support Welsh FE students in the future
- We will not attribute anything you say to you by name or by organisation in the final published report.
- Do you have anything you want to ask before we start?

The contact person at Old Bell 3 is Nia Bryer (01558) 822922 [nia@oldbell3.co.uk](mailto:nia@oldbell3.co.uk)  
The contact person at the Welsh Government is Sara James 02920 826812  
[sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

#### **Awareness and Involvement**

- A1 First of all tell me a little about your involvement with FE student finance?  
a. Within Wales

#### **Policy, Rationale and Need for EMA**

- B1 To what extent is there a need for EMA?  
a. Why do you say this?
- B2 To what extent does EMA fit with other statutory and discretionary student support provision in Wales?  
a. Why do you say this?

B3 In what way (if at all) does the provision of the EMA fit with UK and Welsh Government policy?

B4 How has take up of EMA changed over time?

- a. How many students apply for and receive the EMA?
- b. What factors have affected any changes in take up?
- c. Why do students apply for the EMA?

B5 What impact did recent changes to the EMA have?

- a. Ask about the removal of the £10 and £20 weekly awards which were removed during 2011/12
- b. Ask about removal of performance bonus payment during 2010/11

B6 What impact did the withdrawal of the EMA in England have upon Welsh students?

### **Policy, Rationale and Need for ALG FE**

C1 To what extent is there a need for ALG FE?

- a. Why do you say this?

C2 To what extent does ALG FE fit with other statutory and discretionary student support provision in Wales?

- a. Why do you say this?
- b. If applicable, what aspects don't fit well?

C3 How does the ALG FE provision fit with UK and Welsh Government policy?

C4 How has take up of ALG FE changed over time?

- a. How many students apply for and receive ALG FE?
- b. What factors have affected any changes in take up?
- c. Why do students apply for the ALG FE?

### **EMA Design and Objectives**

D1 What do you understand to be the aims and objectives of the EMA?

- b. How, if at all, have these objectives changed over time?

D2 How appropriate is it that the EMA is made available to students on the basis of household means testing?

- a. Is there a clear rationale for the current household threshold adopted?
- b. Are the eligibility thresholds set appropriate?
- c. If not, where do you think they should be pitched?
- d. Why do you say that?

D3 Is EMA being used to support the right students?

- a. In terms of age
- b. In terms of study course and whether it's part or full time?
- c. Is it appropriate that it is used to support FE students at both schools and colleges as well as other settings?



- D4 How appropriate is it that students receiving the EMA also get access to subsidised provisions such as free transport and free (school) meals?
- How much overlap is there in terms of students accessing EMA and these other subsidised provisions?
- D5 How appropriate are the current EMA allowance levels?
- Should they be revised at all and if so how?
  - What would be the implications of reducing the current level of EMA to £25/week?

### **ALG FE Design and Objectives**

- E1 What do you understand to be the aims and objectives of the ALG FE?
- Have these changed over time?
- E2 How appropriate is it that the ALG FE is awarded based on household means testing?
- Is there a clear rationale for the current household threshold adopted?
  - Are eligibility thresholds set appropriate?
  - If not, where do you think it should be pitched?
  - Why do you say that?
- E3 Is ALG FE being used to support the right students?
- In terms of age
  - In terms of study course and whether its part or full time?
- E4 How appropriate is it that students receiving the ALG FE also get access to subsidised provisions e.g. via FCF or otherwise?
- E5 How appropriate are the current ALG FE allowance levels?
- Should they be revised at all and if so how?
  - What difficulties, if at all, do some ALG FE recipients face if they lose their housing benefits as a result of becoming a student?

### **EMA Administration**

- F1 How effectively is EMA publicised and explained to students and parents?
- What methods work well?
  - How could the promotion of the EMA be improved?
- F4 How effective is the use of Learning Agreements within the context of EMA?

### **ALG FE Administration**

- G1 How effectively is the ALG FE fund publicised and explained to students?
- What methods work well?
  - How could the promotion of the ALG FE be improved?

### **Student Finance Outside Wales**

- H9 What do you think the advantages and disadvantages of EMA and ALG FE in Wales are compared with the provision of financial support to FE students in other parts of the UK?

## **Value for money**

- L1 Does EMA represent value for money?
  - a. Why do you say this?
  
- L2 Does ALG FE represent value for money?
  - a. Why do you say this?
  
- L3 Would there have been other, more cost-effective ways, of achieving similar outcomes?
  - a. What would these have been?

## **Future**

- M1 Should the Welsh Government continue to financially support Welsh FE students directly in the future?
  - a. If so, should financial support be made available on a statutory or discretionary basis?
  - b. On what basis should students receive financial support (i.e. household income, attendance, for specific provisions)
  - c. If so, should there be more/less restrictions on how any allowance is spent?
  
- M2 How could the Welsh Government better target financial support towards FE students who are in greatest need?
  - a. How can students from the most deprived backgrounds be supported?
  - b. Are there other ways to provide EMA/ALG FE funds other than through household means-testing?
  - c. Should a more consistent level of household-income threshold be achieved across FE student finance schemes?
  - d. Should support only be offered to those on benefits?
  - e. How would it be possible to cut down on the number of students who work the system or who are from non-deprived backgrounds who receive EMA?
  
- M3 The Welsh Government currently spends over £40 million per annum on supporting FE students in Wales via the three main schemes (ALG FE is £8m pa, FCF is £7m pa and EMA is £28m pa).
  - a. Should this level of funding continue? If not, what changes would you wish to see?
  
- M4 What impact would the withdrawal of the EMA have:
  - a. Over the next 3-5 years
  - b. Over the long term?
  
- M5 What impact would the withdrawal of the ALG FE have
  - a. Over the next 3-5 years
  - b. Over the long term?
  
- M6 Could Welsh Government FE student finance funding be used in a more effective way?
  - a. If so, how?
  - b. Would the funding of specific provisions as opposed to making cash payment directly to students be more effective?
  
- M7 Would one pot of FE student finance funding be more appropriate than the current three schemes (i.e. EMA, ALG FE and FCF)?
  - a. What are the advantages?

b. What difficulties and costs would such a change create?

M8 If FE student finance support is continued should it be grant or loan funding or a mix of both?

a. Is there a need to introduce a loan fund for FE (similar to the 24+ loan in England)?

M9 Should student finance support be paid in monthly instalments in the future so as to better prepare students for working life?

## TG3) TOPIC GUIDE FOR LEARNING CENTRES ADMINISTRATING BOTH EMA AND ALG (FE)

### INTRODUCTION

- Thank you for agreeing to talk to me and for arranging the focus groups with students on our behalf.
- As you know Old Bell 3, in conjunction with WISERD of Cardiff University and Dateb, has been commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the EMA and ALG (FE) funding schemes.
- In addition to our fieldwork with FE colleges and their students we are also interviewing representatives from the Welsh Government, undertaking visits to a small number of schools and undertaking fieldwork with previously supported students. We are also undertaking a comprehensive analysis of supported student data.
- The areas I'd like to discuss with you today include your views on:
  - The rationale for and need for EMA and ALG (FE);
  - Whether the student finance schemes are supporting the right students;
  - How effectively the student finance schemes are administered and promoted including your views on the application process;
  - The difference that the schemes are having upon the students supported in terms of enabling them to study, their attendance, their achievements and progression;
  - Whether the schemes offer value for money;
  - Whether the Welsh Government should, and if so how best it could, support Welsh FE students in the future
- We will not attribute anything you say to you by name or by organisation in the final published report.
- Do you have anything you want to ask before we start?

The contact person at Old Bell 3 is Nia Bryer (01558) 822922 [nia@oldbell3.co.uk](mailto:nia@oldbell3.co.uk)  
The contact person at the Welsh Government is Sara James 02920 826812  
[sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

#### IN ADDITION ASK:

**As part of our fieldwork we would like to carry out a small number of interviews with parents of EMA supported students. Would it be possible for us to obtain contact data for two to three parents of EMA supported students at your institution? We are flexible on how these could be arranged e.g. we could provide you with a form of wording to obtain consent to share their contact data with us. These interviews will be conducted by a member of the OB3 team from our Llandeilo offices during May and so ideally we need contact telephone numbers.**

### **Awareness and Involvement**

- A1 First of all tell me a little about your involvement with FE student finance?
- a. Within Wales

### **Policy, Rationale and Need for EMA**

- B1 To what extent is there a need for EMA?
- a. Why do you say this?
- B2 To what extent does EMA fit with other statutory and discretionary student support provision in Wales?
- a. Why do you say this?
- B3 In what way (if at all) does the provision of the EMA fit with UK and Welsh Government policy?
- B4 How has take up of EMA changed over time?
- a. How many students apply for and receive the EMA?
- b. What factors have affected any changes in take up?
- c. Why do students apply for the EMA?
- B5 What impact did recent changes to the EMA have?
- a. Ask about the removal of the £10 and £20 weekly awards which were removed during 2011/12
- b. Ask about removal of performance bonus payment during 2010/11
- B6 What impact did the withdrawal of the EMA in England have upon Welsh students?
- a. What impact did the withdrawal of the EMA in England have upon English domiciled students studying at Welsh institutions?

### **Policy, Rationale and Need for ALG FE**

- C1 To what extent is there a need for ALG FE?
- a. Why do you say this?
- C2 To what extent does ALG FE fit with other statutory and discretionary student support provision in Wales?
- a. Why do you say this?
- b. If applicable, what aspects don't fit well?
- C3 How does the ALG FE provision fit with UK and Welsh Government policy?
- C4 How has take up of ALG FE changed over time?
- a. How many students apply for and receive ALG FE?

- b. What factors have affected any changes in take up?
- c. Why do students apply for the ALG FE?

### **EMA Design and Objectives**

- D1 What do you understand to be the aims and objectives of the EMA?
- b. How, if at all, have these objectives changed over time?
- D2 How appropriate is it that the EMA is made available to students on the basis of household means testing?
- a. Is there a clear rationale for the current household threshold adopted?
  - b. Are the eligibility thresholds set appropriate?
  - c. If not, where do you think they should be pitched?
  - d. Why do you say that?
  - e. What issues does means-testing present for learning centres?
- D3 Is EMA being used to support the right students?
- a. In terms of age
  - b. In terms of study course and whether it's part or full time?
  - c. Is it appropriate that it is used to support FE students at both schools and colleges as well as other settings?
- D4 How appropriate is it that students receiving the EMA also get access to subsidised provisions such as free transport and free (school) meals?
- a. How much overlap is there in terms of students accessing EMA and these other subsidised provisions?
- D5 How appropriate are the current EMA allowance levels?
- a. Should they be revised at all and if so how?
  - b. What would be the implications of reducing the current level of EMA to £25/week?

### **ALG FE Design and Objectives**

- E1 What do you understand to be the aims and objectives of the ALG FE?
- a. Have these changed over time?
  - b. What do you understand to be the purpose of the ALG FE?
- E2 How appropriate is it that the ALG FE is awarded based on household means testing?
- a. Is there a clear rationale for the current household threshold adopted?
  - c. If not, where do you think it should be pitched?
  - d. Why do you say that?
  - e. What issues does means-testing present for learning centres?

- E3 Is ALG FE being used to support the right students?
  - a. In terms of age
  - b. In terms of study course and whether its part or full time?
  
- E4 How appropriate is it that students receiving the ALG FE also get access to subsidised provisions e.g. via FCF or otherwise?
  - a. How much overlap is there in terms of students accessing ALG FE and these other subsidised provisions?
  
- E5 How appropriate are the current ALG FE allowance levels?
  - a. Should they be revised at all and if so how?
  - b. What difficulties, if at all, do some ALG FE recipients face if they lose their housing benefits as a result of becoming a student?

### **EMA Administration**

- F1 How effectively is EMA publicised and explained to students and parents?
  - a. What methods work well?
  - b. How could the promotion of the EMA be improved?
  - c. Do any students miss out on the EMA because they are less well informed about it than other students? Why is that?
  
- F2 How easy or otherwise is the EMA application process?
  - a. How easy or difficult was the EMA form to complete?
  - c. Are there any aspects of the application process which could be improved?
  
  - d. What support and advice do students receive as part of their application process?
  
- F3 What role is undertaken by each learning centre in terms of the EMA scheme?
  - a. What functions are required of each learning centre?
  - b. How many students are supported by the learning centre each academic year?
  
  - c. What level of resources is provided by the learning centre to oversee the EMA scheme?
  
- F4 How effective is the use of Learning Agreements within the context of EMA?
  - a. How are Learning Agreements prepared within each institution?
  - How are Learning Agreements monitored and used within each institution?
  - b. How much significance is attached to Learning Agreements by each institution?
  - c. How are Learning Agreements viewed by students?
  
- F5 What processes are in place to monitor EMA funded students' attendance at each institution?

- a. How is student attendance classified (e.g. by teacher/tutor)?
- b. How consistent are processes across the institution?
- c. How frequently is attendance monitored (e.g. hourly, half day, daily)?
- d. How much flexibility is adopted towards student absenteeism?
- e. How seriously is attendance taken?

### **ALG FE Administration**

- G1 How effectively is the ALG FE fund publicised and explained to students?
- a. What methods work well?
  - b. How could the promotion of the ALG FE be improved?
  - c. Do any students miss out on the ALG FE because they are less well informed about it than other students? Why is that?
- G2 How easy or otherwise is the ALG FE application process?
- c. Are there any aspects of the application process which could be improved?
  - d. What support and advice do students receive as part of their application process?
- G3 What role is undertaken by each learning centre in terms of the ALG FE scheme?
- a. What functions are required of each learning centre?
  - b. How many students are supported by the learning centre each year?
  - c. What level of resources is provided by the learning centre to oversee the ALG FE scheme?

### **Student Finance Outside Wales**

- H6 a. What impact did the withdrawal of the Adult Learning Grant in England have? [border ALG FE Centres]
- H9 What do you think the advantages and disadvantages of EMA and ALG FE in Wales are compared with the provision of financial support to FE students in other parts of the UK?

### **Difference made by EMA**

- I1 What proportion of EMA funded students progress onto HE learning?
- I2 What evidence is available to show that EMA is making a difference to:
- a. Student enrolment and participation levels
  - b. Student attendance levels
  - c. Student withdrawal rates/drop out rates
  - d. Student achievement and attainment rates
  - e. Student progression and destination routes?



- I3 What evidence is available to show that EMA is making a difference to widening participation in FE?
- Does it make a difference to specific groups such as women, ethnic minorities and disabled people?
- I4 How is the EMA fund perceived by students?
- particularly amongst peer students
  - is there any element of stigmatisation in receiving it?
- I5 How are students using their EMA funds? [Try to draw out differences between 6th form and college students use of funding]
- Do any students use it to contribute towards household incomes e.g. to pay lodgings to their parents?
- I6 Is the EMA an 'essential' or 'a nice to have' contribution?
- I7 Had students not received EMA funding, what would have happened?
- What evidence do you have to support this claim?
  - What proportion of supported students would have undertaken their FE study anyway?
  - What would have been the implications of students receiving a lower EMA rate?

#### **Difference made by ALG FE**

- J1 What proportion of ALG FE funded students progress onto HE learning?
- J2 What evidence is available to show that the ALG FE is making a difference to:
- Student enrolment and participation levels
  - Student attendance levels
  - Student withdrawal rates/drop out rates
  - Student achievement and attainment rates
  - Student progression and destination routes?
- J3 What evidence is available to show that ALG FE is making a difference to widening participation in FE?
- Does it make a difference to specific groups such as women, ethnic minorities and disabled people?
- J4 How is the ALG FE fund perceived by students?
- particularly amongst peer students
- J5 How are students using their ALG FE funds?
- Do any students use it to contribute towards household incomes e.g. to pay lodgings to their parents?

- J6 Is the ALG FE an 'essential' or 'a nice to have' contribution?
- J7 Had students not received ALG FE funding, what would have happened?
- What evidence do you have to support this claim?
  - What proportion of supported students would have undertaken their FE study anyway?
  - What would have been the implications of students receiving a lower ALG FE contribution?

### **Value for money**

- L1 Does EMA represent value for money?
- Why do you say this?
- L2 Does ALG FE represent value for money?
- Why do you say this?
- L3 Would there have been other, more cost-effective ways, of achieving similar outcomes?
- What would these have been?

### **Future**

- M1 Should the Welsh Government continue to financially support Welsh FE students directly in the future?
- If so, should financial support be made available on a statutory or discretionary basis?
  - On what basis should students receive financial support (i.e. household income, attendance, for specific provisions)
  - If so, should there be more/less restrictions on how any allowance is spent?
- M2 How could the Welsh Government better target financial support towards FE students who are in greatest need?
- How can students from the most deprived backgrounds be supported?
  - Are there other ways to provide EMA/ALG FE funds other than through household means-testing?
  - Should a more consistent level of household-income threshold be achieved across FE student finance schemes?
  - Should support only be offered to those on benefits?
  - How would it be possible to cut down on the number of students who work the system or who are from non-deprived backgrounds who receive EMA?
- M3 The Welsh Government currently spends over £40 million per annum on supporting FE students in Wales via the three main schemes (ALG FE is £8m pa, FCF is £7m pa and EMA is £28m pa).

- a. Should this level of funding continue? If not, what changes would you wish to see?
- M4 What impact would the withdrawal of the EMA have:
- a. Over the next 3-5 years
  - b. Over the long term?
- M5 What impact would the withdrawal of the ALG FE have
- a. Over the next 3-5 years
  - b. Over the long term?
- M6 Could Welsh Government FE student finance funding be used in a more effective way?
- a. If so, how?
  - b. Would the funding of specific provisions as opposed to making cash payment directly to students be more effective?
- M7 Would one pot of FE student finance funding be more appropriate than the current three schemes (i.e. EMA, ALG FE and FCF)?
- a. What are the advantages?
  - b. What difficulties and costs would such a change create?
- M8 If FE student finance support is continued should it be grant or loan funding or a mix of both?
- a. Is there a need to introduce a loan fund for FE (similar to the 24+ loan in England)?
- M9 Should student finance support be paid in monthly instalments in the future so as to better prepare students for working life?

## (TG4) TOPIC GUIDE FOR LEARNING CENTRES ADMINISTRATING EMA ONLY

### INTRODUCTION

- Thank you for agreeing to talk to me and for arranging the focus group with students on our behalf.
- As you know Old Bell 3, in conjunction with WISERD of Cardiff University and Dateb, has been commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the EMA and ALG (FE) funding schemes.
- In addition to our fieldwork with 11 schools across Wales and their pupils we are also interviewing representatives from the Welsh Government, undertaking visits to FE colleges and undertaking fieldwork with previously supported students.
- We are also undertaking a comprehensive analysis of supported student data.
- The areas I'd like to discuss with you today include your views on:
  - The rationale for and need for EMA;
  - Whether the EMA is supporting the right students;
  - How effectively the EMA is administered and promoted including your views on the application process;
  - The difference that the scheme is having upon the students supported in terms of enabling them to study, their attendance, their achievements and progression;
  - Whether the EMA offers value for money;
  - Whether the Welsh Government should, and if so how best it could, support Welsh FE students in the future
- We will not attribute anything you say to you by name or by school in the final published report.
- Do you have anything you want to ask before we start?

The contact person at Old Bell 3 is Nia Bryer (01558) 822922 [nia@oldbell3.co.uk](mailto:nia@oldbell3.co.uk)  
The contact person at the Welsh Government is Sara James 02920 826812  
[sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

#### **IN ADDITION ASK:**

**As part of our fieldwork we would like to carry out a small number of interviews with parents of EMA supported students. Would it be possible for us to obtain contact data for two to three parents of EMA supported students at your school? We are flexible on how these could be arranged e.g. we could provide you with a form of wording to obtain consent to share their contact data with us. These interviews will be conducted by a member of the OB3 team from our Llandeilo offices during May and so ideally we need contact telephone numbers.**

### **Awareness and Involvement**

- A1 First of all tell me a little about your involvement with FE student finance?
- a. Within Wales

### **Policy, Rationale and Need for EMA**

- B1 To what extent is there a need for EMA?
- a. Why do you say this?
- B2 To what extent does EMA fit with other statutory and discretionary student support provision in Wales?
- a. Why do you say this?
- B3 In what way (if at all) does the provision of the EMA fit with UK and Welsh Government policy?
- B4 How has take up of EMA changed over time?
- a. How many students apply for and receive the EMA?
- b. What factors have affected any changes in take up?
- c. Why do students apply for the EMA?
- B5 What impact did recent changes to the EMA have?
- a. Ask about the removal of the £10 and £20 weekly awards which were removed during 2011/12
- b. Ask about removal of performance bonus payment during 2010/11
- B6 What impact did the withdrawal of the EMA in England have upon Welsh students?
- a. What impact did the withdrawal of the EMA in England have upon English domiciled students studying at Welsh institutions?

### **EMA Design and Objectives**

- D1 What do you understand to be the aims and objectives of the EMA?
- b. How, if at all, have these objectives changed over time?
- D2 How appropriate is it that the EMA is made available to students on the basis of household means testing?
- a. Is there a clear rationale for the current household threshold adopted?
- b. Are the eligibility thresholds set appropriate?
- c. If not, where do you think they should be pitched?
- d. Why do you say that?
- e. What issues does means-testing present for learning centres?

- D3 Is EMA being used to support the right students?
- In terms of age
  - In terms of study course and whether it's part or full time?
  - Is it appropriate that it is used to support FE students at both schools and colleges as well as other settings?
- D4 How appropriate is it that students receiving the EMA also get access to subsidised provisions such as free transport and free (school) meals?
- How much overlap is there in terms of students accessing EMA and these other subsidised provisions?
- D5 How appropriate are the current EMA allowance levels?
- Should they be revised at all and if so how?
  - What would be the implications of reducing the current level of EMA to £25/week?

### **EMA Administration**

- F1 How effectively is EMA publicised and explained to students and parents?
- What methods work well?
  - How could the promotion of the EMA be improved?
  - Do any students miss out on the EMA because they are less well informed about it than other students? Why is that?
- F2 How easy or otherwise is the EMA application process?
- How easy or difficult was the EMA form to complete?
  - Are there any aspects of the application process which could be improved?
  - What support and advice do students receive as part of their application process?
- F3 What role is undertaken by each learning centre in terms of the EMA scheme?
- What functions are required of each learning centre?
  - How many students are supported by the learning centre each academic year?
  - What level of resources is provided by the learning centre to oversee the EMA scheme?
- F4 How effective is the use of Learning Agreements within the context of EMA?
- How are Learning Agreements prepared within each institution?
- How are Learning Agreements monitored and used within each institution?
- How much significance is attached to Learning Agreements by each institution?
  - How are Learning Agreements viewed by students?

- F5 What processes are in place to monitor EMA funded students' attendance at each institution?
- a. How is student attendance classified (e.g. by teacher/tutor)?
  - b. How consistent are processes across the institution?
  - c. How frequently is attendance monitored (e.g. hourly, half day, daily)?
  - d. How much flexibility is adopted towards student absenteeism?
  - e. How seriously is attendance taken?

### **Student Finance Outside Wales**

- H9 What do you think the advantages and disadvantages of the EMA in Wales is compared with the provision of financial support to FE students in other parts of the UK?

### **Difference made by EMA**

- I1 What proportion of EMA funded students progress onto HE learning?
- I2 What evidence is available to show that EMA is making a difference to:
- a. Student enrolment and participation levels
  - b. Student attendance levels
  - c. Student withdrawal rates/drop out rates
  - d. Student achievement and attainment rates
  - e. Student progression and destination routes?
- I3 What evidence is available to show that EMA is making a difference to widening participation in FE?
- a. Does it make a difference to specific groups such as women, ethnic minorities and disabled people?
- I4 How is the EMA fund perceived by students?
- a. particularly amongst peer students
  - b. is there any element of stigmatisation in receiving it?
- I5 How are students using their EMA funds? [Try to draw out differences between 6th form and college students use of funding]
- c. Do any students use it to contribute towards household incomes e.g. to pay lodgings to their parents?
- I6 Is the EMA an 'essential' or 'a nice to have' contribution?
- I7 Had students not received EMA funding, what would have happened?
- a. What evidence do you have to support this claim?

- b. What proportion of supported students would have undertaken their FE study anyway?
- c. What would have been the implications of students receiving a lower EMA rate?

### **Value for money**

- L1 Does EMA represent value for money?
  - a. Why do you say this?
  
- L3 Would there have been other, more cost-effective ways, of achieving similar outcomes?
  - a. What would these have been?

### **Future**

- M1 Should the Welsh Government continue to financially support Welsh FE students directly in the future?
  - a. If so, should financial support be made available on a statutory or discretionary basis?
  
  - b. On what basis should students receive financial support (i.e. household income, attendance, for specific provisions)
  - c. If so, should there be more/less restrictions on how any allowance is spent?
  
- M2 How could the Welsh Government better target financial support towards FE students who are in greatest need?
  - a. How can students from the most deprived backgrounds be supported?
  
  - b. Are there other ways to provide EMA/ALG FE funds other than through household means-testing?
  - c. Should a more consistent level of household-income threshold be achieved across FE student finance schemes?
  - d. Should support only be offered to those on benefits?
  - e. How would it be possible to cut down on the number of students who work the system or who are from non-deprived backgrounds who receive EMA?
  
- M3 The Welsh Government currently spends over £40 million per annum on supporting FE students in Wales via the three main schemes (ALG FE is £8m pa, FCF is £7m pa and EMA is £28m pa).
  - a. Should this level of funding continue? If not, what changes would you wish to see?
  
- M4 What impact would the withdrawal of the EMA have:
  - a. Over the next 3-5 years
  - b. Over the long term?



- M6 Could Welsh Government FE student finance funding be used in a more effective way?
- a. If so, how?
  - b. Would the funding of specific provisions as opposed to making cash payment directly to students be more effective?
- M7 Would one pot of FE student finance funding be more appropriate than the current three schemes (i.e. EMA, ALG FE and FCF)?
- a. What are the advantages?
  - b. What difficulties and costs would such a change create?
- M8 If FE student finance support is continued should it be grant or loan funding or a mix of both?
- a. Is there a need to introduce a loan fund for FE (similar to the 24+ loan in England)?
- M9 Should student finance support be paid in monthly instalments in the future so as to better prepare students for working life?

## (TG5) TOPIC GUIDE FOR CURRENT EMA RECIPIENTS – FOCUS GROUP

### INTRODUCTION

- Thank you for attending this focus group.
- I am here on behalf of an independent research company, Old Bell 3, as we have been commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the EMA and ALG (FE) funding schemes.
- As part of this study we are keen to obtain feedback from students who are currently in receipt of EMA support.
- The areas I'd like to discuss with you today include your views on:
  - Your experience of applying for EMA
  - How you are using the funding;
  - The difference receiving the EMA made to your decision to continue in education and what would you have done in the absence of the support;
  - The difference receiving the EMA has made to your attendance;
  - How the Welsh Government should financially support Welsh FE students in the future.
- We will not attribute anything you say to you by name or by school/college in the final published report.
- I expect the discussion to take around an hour and I'd ask you to respect the confidentiality of other students.
- {College only} We offer a small financial incentive of £10 for attending – for our records we request that you complete a short form to acknowledge receipt of this contribution. This form also asks you to provide some basic information about yourself – this will only be for our benefit in terms of reporting on the profile of students we talk to as part of this study.
- {As appropriate} You may contribute in either Welsh or English. Should you wish to make any comments in confidence then please do so after the session.
- Do you have anything you want to ask before we start?

Should you wish to check our credentials or have a query about this study then the contact person at Old Bell 3 is Nia Bryer (01558) 822922 [nia@oldbell3.co.uk](mailto:nia@oldbell3.co.uk). The contact person at the Welsh Government is Sara James 02920 826812 [sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

## FOCUS GROUP WITH EMA RECIPIENTS IN COLLEGES

Name:	
Name of College:	
How old are you?	
Are you:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male or <input type="checkbox"/> Female
What course / subjects are you currently studying?	
Do you live in a Communities First area? If unsure please provide postcode	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you currently receiving the EMA:	<input type="checkbox"/> For the first time during this academic year? <input type="checkbox"/> For the second time during this academic year?
Are you studying:	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time or <input type="checkbox"/> Part time
In addition to the EMA have you received any of the following grants or loans during this academic year?	<input type="checkbox"/> No none <input type="checkbox"/> Free college meals <input type="checkbox"/> Free college transport <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Contingency Fund <input type="checkbox"/> College Bursaries <input type="checkbox"/> Other grants or loans – please specify _____

How important was the possibility of receiving the EMA to your decision to enrol on your course?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly important
	<input type="checkbox"/> Not particularly important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important
Had you not received the EMA would you have enrolled on your course anyway?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, definitely	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, probably
	<input type="checkbox"/> No, probably not	<input type="checkbox"/> No, definitely not
Has receiving the EMA made any difference to your attendance at college?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a significant difference	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a little difference
	<input type="checkbox"/> No difference at all	
Generally, how are you using your EMA funding?		
<b>DISCLAIMER:</b> I acknowledge receipt of a £10 contribution for attending the focus group and I understand that I am responsible for any tax or benefit liabilities arising from the receipt of this sum.		
Signature		Date

### FOCUS GROUP WITH EMA RECIPIENTS IN SCHOOLS

Name:	
Name of School:	
How old are you?	
Are you:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male or <input type="checkbox"/> Female
What course / subjects are you currently studying?	
Do you live in a Communities First area? If unsure please provide postcode	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you currently receiving the EMA:	<input type="checkbox"/> For the first time during this academic year? <input type="checkbox"/> For the second time during this academic year?
Are you studying:	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time or <input type="checkbox"/> Part time
In addition to the EMA have you received any of the following support, grants or loans during this academic year?	<input type="checkbox"/> No none <input type="checkbox"/> Free school meals <input type="checkbox"/> Free school transport <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Contingency Fund <input type="checkbox"/> College Bursaries <input type="checkbox"/> Other grants or loans – please specify _____

How important was the possibility of receiving the EMA to your decision to enrol on your course?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly important
	<input type="checkbox"/> Not particularly important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important
Had you not received the EMA would you have enrolled on your course anyway?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, definitely	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, probably
	<input type="checkbox"/> No, probably not	<input type="checkbox"/> No, definitely not
Has receiving the EMA made any difference to your attendance at school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a significant difference	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a little difference
	<input type="checkbox"/> No difference at all	
Generally, how are you using your EMA funding?		
Signature		Date

### **Awareness and Involvement**

A2 Tell me a little about yourself - such as study subject, career aspirations and whether you work part time as well as study?

### **Policy, Rationale and Need for EMA**

B1 To what extent is there a need for EMA to support students such as yourself?

a. Why do you say this?

c. Why did you apply for the EMA?

c. [Where relevant] What impact did the removal of the £10 and £20 weekly awards and bonus payment have upon students in the middle of their studies?

### **EMA Design and Objectives**

D1 a. What do you understand to be the purpose of the EMA?

D2 How appropriate is it that the EMA is made available to students on the basis of household means testing?

a. Is there a clear rationale for the current household threshold adopted?

b. Are the eligibility thresholds set appropriate?

c. If not, where do you think they should be pitched?

d. Why do you say that?

f. What issues does means-testing present for you and your parents?

D3 Do you think the EMA is being used to support those students most at need?

c. Is it appropriate that it is used to support FE students at both schools and colleges as well as other settings?

D4 How appropriate is it that students receiving the EMA also get access to subsidised provisions such as free transport and free (school) meals?

a. Do you also receive these other subsidised provisions?

D5 How appropriate are the current EMA allowance levels?

a. Should they be revised at all and if so how?

b. What would be the implications for you of reducing the current level of EMA to £25/week?

### **EMA Administration**

F1 How effectively is EMA publicised and explained to students and parents?

a. What methods work well?

b. How could the EMA be better promoted to students and their parents?

c. Do you think that any students miss out on the EMA because they are less well informed about it than other students? Why is that?

F2 How easy or otherwise was the EMA application process?

a. How easy or difficult was the EMA form to complete?

b. How easy or difficult was it to provide the necessary evidence to support your application?

c. Are there any aspects of the application process which could be improved?

d. What support and advice did you (and your parents) receive as part of the application process?

e. What did you think of any advice and support that you received to help complete your EMA application?

F4 b. How much importance is attached to Learning Agreements by your school or college?

c. What do you think of the Learning Agreements? Are they of value to you?

F5 How is your attendance at the college or school monitored? What does this involve?

a. How is your attendance classified (e.g. by teacher/tutor)?

b. How consistent are processes across the school or college?

c. How frequently is attendance monitored (e.g. hourly, half day, daily)?

d. How much flexibility is adopted towards student absenteeism?

e. How seriously is attendance taken?

### **Difference Made**

I2

f. How important was (the possibility of) receiving the EMA to your decision to enrol on the course?

h. What difference has/did receiving the EMA have upon your attendance at school/college?

j. What difference did/do you expect receiving the EMA to have upon the grades/qualifications that you will achieve?

I4 How is the EMA fund perceived by students generally?

a. How do students not receiving the fund view it?

b. Is there any element of stigmatisation in receiving it?

I5 How are you using your EMA funds generally? [Try to draw out differences between 6th form and college students use of funding]

a. How did you originally intend to use the funds?

b. How do you use the fund in reality e.g. is it used for educational, social or other purposes?

c. Do any students use it to contribute towards household incomes e.g. to pay lodgings to their parents?

- I6 Is the EMA an 'essential' or 'a nice to have' contribution?
- a. Would you have enrolled on the course anyway?
  - b. Would you complete the course anyway?
  - c. What is your financial situation like now?
- I7 Had you not received EMA funding, what would have happened?
- a. What evidence do you have to support this claim?
  - c. What would have been the implications of receiving a lower EMA rate?

### **Future**

- M1 Should the Welsh Government continue to financially support Welsh FE students directly in the future?
- a. If so, should financial support be made available on a statutory or discretionary basis?
  - b. On what basis should students receive financial support (i.e. household income, attendance, for specific provisions)
  - c. If so, should there be more/less restrictions on how any allowance is spent?
- M2 How could the Welsh Government better target financial support towards FE students who are in greatest need?
- M6 Could Welsh Government FE student finance funding be used in a more effective way?
- b. Would the funding of specific provisions (e.g. transport, childcare, educational resources etc) as opposed to making cash payment directly to students be more effective?
- M8 If FE student finance support is continued should it be grant or loan funding or a mix of both?
- a. Is there a need to introduce a loan fund for FE (similar to the 24+ loan in England)?
- M9 Should student finance support be paid in monthly instalments in the future so as to better prepare students for working life?

## **(TG6) TOPIC GUIDE FOR CURRENT ALG FE RECIPIENTS – FOCUS GROUP**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Thank you for attending this focus group.
- I am here on behalf of an independent research company, Old Bell 3, as we have been commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the EMA and ALG (FE) funding schemes.
- As part of this study we are keen to obtain feedback from students who are currently in receipt of ALG (FE) support.
- The areas I'd like to discuss with you today include your views on:
  - Your experience of applying for ALG (FE)
  - How you are using the funding;
  - The difference receiving the ALG (FE) made to your decision to continue in education and what would you have done in the absence of the support;
  - The difference receiving the ALG (FE) has made to your attendance;
  - How the Welsh Government should financially support Welsh FE students in the future.
- We will not attribute anything you say to you by name or by college in the final published report.
- I expect the discussion to take around an hour and I'd ask you to respect the confidentiality of other students.
- We offer a small financial incentive of £10 for attending – for our records we request that you complete a short form to acknowledge receipt of this contribution. This form also asks you to provide some basic information about yourself – this will only be for our benefit in terms of reporting on the profile of students we talk to as part of this study.
- {As appropriate} You may contribute in either Welsh or English. Should you wish to make any comments in confidence then please do so after the session.
- Do you have anything you want to ask before we start?

Should you wish to check our credentials or have a query about this study then the contact person at Old Bell 3 is Nia Bryer (01558) 822922 [nia@oldbell3.co.uk](mailto:nia@oldbell3.co.uk). The contact person at the Welsh Government is Sara James 02920 826812 [sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk)



## FOCUS GROUP WITH ALG FE RECIPIENTS

Name:	
Name of College:	
How old are you?	
Are you:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male or <input type="checkbox"/> Female
What course / subjects are you currently studying?	
Do you live in a Communities First area? If unsure please provide postcode	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you currently receiving the ALG (FE):	<input type="checkbox"/> For the first time during this academic year? <input type="checkbox"/> For the second time during this academic year?
Are you studying:	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time or <input type="checkbox"/> Part time
In addition to the ALG FE have you received any of the following grants or loans during this academic year?	<input type="checkbox"/> No none <input type="checkbox"/> Free college meals <input type="checkbox"/> Free college transport <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Contingency Fund <input type="checkbox"/> College Bursaries <input type="checkbox"/> Other grants or loans – please specify _____

How important was the possibility of receiving the ALG (FE) to your decision to enrol on your course?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly important
	<input type="checkbox"/> Not particularly important	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important
Had you not received the ALG (FE) would you have enrolled on your course anyway?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, definitely	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, probably
	<input type="checkbox"/> No, probably not	<input type="checkbox"/> No, definitely not
Has receiving the ALG (FE) made any difference to your attendance at college?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a significant difference	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a little difference
	<input type="checkbox"/> No difference at all	
Generally, how are you using your ALG (FE) funding?		
<b>DISCLAIMER:</b> I acknowledge receipt of a £10 contribution for attending the focus group and I understand that I am responsible for any tax or benefit liabilities arising from the receipt of this sum.		
Signature		Date

## **Awareness and Involvement**

A2 Tell me a little about yourself - such as study subject, career aspirations and whether you work part time as well as study?

## **Policy, Rationale and Need for ALG FE**

C1 To what extent is there a need for ALG FE to support students such as yourself?

a. Why do you say this?

c. Why did you apply for the ALG FE?

## **ALG FE Design and Objectives**

E1

b. What do you understand to be the purpose of the ALG FE?

E2 How appropriate is it that the ALG FE is awarded based on household means testing?

a. Is there a clear rationale for the current household threshold adopted?

b. Are eligibility thresholds set appropriate?

c. If not, where do you think it should be pitched?

d. Why do you say that?

f. What issues does means-testing present for you?

E3 Do you think that the ALG FE is being used to support the right students who require additional financial support? Why do you say this?

E4 How appropriate is it that students receiving the ALG FE also get access to subsidised provisions e.g. via FCF or otherwise?

a. Do you also access these other subsidised provisions? If so, what other support do you receive?

E5 How appropriate are the current ALG FE allowance levels?

a. Should they be revised at all and if so how?

b. [If appropriate] What difficulties, if at all, did you face in losing your housing benefits as a result of becoming a student?

### **ALG FE Administration**

G1 How effectively do you think the ALG FE fund is publicised and explained to students?

a. What methods work well?

b. How could the promotion of the ALG FE be improved?

c. Do you think that any students miss out on the ALG FE because they are less well informed about it than other students? Why is that?

G2 How easy or otherwise was the ALG FE application process?

a. How easy or difficult was the ALG FE form to complete?

b. How easy or difficult was it to provide the necessary evidence to support your application?

c. Are there any aspects of the application process which could be improved?

d. What support and advice did you receive as part of your application process?

e. What did you think of any advice and support that you received to help complete your ALG FE application?

d. How much ALG FE funding were you awarded and over what time period was this award made available?

### **Difference made by ALG FE**

J2 What difference has receiving the ALG FE made to you?

f. How important was (the possibility of) receiving the ALG FE to your decision to enrol on the course?

h. What difference is receiving the ALG FE having upon your attendance at college?

j. What difference do you expect receiving the ALG FE to have upon the grades/qualifications that you will achieve?

J4 How is the ALG FE fund perceived by students?

a. particularly amongst peer students

b. is there any element of stigmatisation in receiving it?

J5 How are you using the ALG FE funds?

- a. How did you anticipate using your ALG FE funds?
- b. In reality how is the fund used? Is it used for educational, social or other purposes?
- c. Do you use it to contribute towards household incomes e.g. to pay lodgings to their parents?

J6 Is the ALG FE an 'essential' or 'a nice to have' contribution?

- a. Would you have enrolled for your course anyway?
- b. Do you think you would be able to complete the course anyway?
- c. What is your financial situation like now?

J7 Had you not received ALG FE funding, what would have happened?

- a. What evidence do you have to support this claim?
- b. Would you have undertaken your course anyway?
- c. What would have been the implications of receiving a lower ALG FE contribution?

## **Future**

M1 Should the Welsh Government continue to financially support Welsh FE students directly in the future?

- a. If so, should financial support be made available on a statutory or discretionary basis?
- b. On what basis should students receive financial support (i.e. household income, attendance, for specific provisions)
- c. If so, should there be more/less restrictions on how any allowance is spent?

M6 Could Welsh Government FE student finance funding be used in a more effective way?

- b. Would the funding of specific provisions as opposed to making cash payment directly to students be more effective?

M8 If FE student finance support is continued should it be grant or loan funding or a mix of both?

- a. Is there a need to introduce a loan fund for FE (similar to the 24+ loan in England)?

M9 Should student finance support be paid in monthly instalments in the future so as to better prepare students for working life?

## **(TG7) TOPIC GUIDE FOR PREVIOUS EMA RECIPIENTS – TELEPHONE INTERVIEW**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Your name has been supplied to us by the Student Loans Company.
- I am calling on behalf of an independent research company, Old Bell 3, as we have been commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the EMA and ALG (FE) funding schemes.
- As part of this study we are keen to obtain feedback from students who have received EMA funding support in the past to understand how it has been of value to you and the difference that it would have had upon your FE studies.
- Would you be prepared to contribute towards this study? The discussion should not take more than 15 minutes of your time and I'm happy to do it now or at a time that suits you.

#### **AS APPROPRIATE:**

- The areas I'd like to discuss with you include your views on:
  - Your experience of applying for EMA
  - How you used the funding during your course;
  - The difference receiving the EMA made to your decision to continue in education and what would you have done in the absence of the support;
  - The difference receiving the EMA made to your attendance and further education achievements
  - How the Welsh Government should financially support Welsh FE students in the future.
- We will not attribute anything you say to you by name or by school/college in the final published report.
- I'm happy to conduct the interview in either Welsh or English.
- Do you have anything you want to ask before we start?

Should you wish to check our credentials or have a query about this study then the contact person at Old Bell 3 is Nia Bryer (01558) 822922 [nia@oldbell3.co.uk](mailto:nia@oldbell3.co.uk). The contact person at the Welsh Government is Sara James 02920 826812 [sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

**CODE/ASK THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ABOUT PREVIOUS EMA RECIPIENTS**

Name:	
Which school or college did you attend:	
Code gender:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male or <input type="checkbox"/> Female
What course / subjects did you study whilst in receipt of EMA (e.g. A Level and subjects)	
Did you live in a Communities First area when you were receiving EMA support?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure
In addition to the EMA did you receive any of the following grants or loans during your FE course or studies?	<input type="checkbox"/> No none <input type="checkbox"/> Free school/college meals <input type="checkbox"/> Free school/college transport <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Contingency Fund <input type="checkbox"/> College Bursaries <input type="checkbox"/> Other grants or loans – please specify _____
Were you studying:	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time or <input type="checkbox"/> Part time
How old are you now?	

**Policy, Rationale and Need for EMA**

B1 Why did you apply for the EMA whilst on your FE course?

B5 Did you receive the £30 weekly award throughout or was your payment reduced to £10 or £20 at some point?

[Where relevant] What impact did the removal of the £10 and £20 weekly awards and bonus payment have upon students in the middle of their studies?

D1 What did you understand to be the purpose of the EMA?

D2 How appropriate was it that the EMA was made available to students on the basis of household means testing?

b. Were the eligibility thresholds set appropriate?

c. If not, where do you think they should have been pitched?

f. What issues did means-testing present for you?

D3 Do you think that the EMA was being used to support the right students when you were studying?

- D4 How appropriate was it that students receiving the EMA also got access to subsidised provisions such as free transport and free (school) meals? Did you benefit from any of these other subsidised provision? If so, please provide details.
- D5 How appropriate was the EMA allowance level of £30 per week?
- a. Should they be revised at all and if so how?
- I4 How was the EMA fund perceived by students?
- a. particularly amongst peer students
  - b. was there any element of stigmatisation in receiving it?
- I5 Generally, how did you use your EMA funding? [Try to draw out differences between 6th form and college students use of funding]
- a. How did you originally intend to use the funds?
  - b. How did you use the fund in reality e.g. is it used for educational, social or other purposes?
    - b. Did you use it to contribute towards household incomes e.g. to pay lodgings to their parents?

### **EMA Administration**

- F1 How effectively was the EMA publicised and explained to students and parents?
- a. What methods worked well?
  - b. How could the promotion of the EMA have been improved?
    - c. Did any students miss out on the EMA because they were less well informed about it than other students? Why was that?
- F2 How easy or otherwise was the EMA application process? {Need to recognise that processes or forms may have changed since they attended college}.
- a. How easy or difficult was the EMA form to complete?
  - b. How easy or difficult was it to provide the necessary evidence to support your application?
  - c. Were there any aspects of the application process which could be improved?
  - e. What did you think of any advice and support that you received to help complete your EMA application?
    - b. What did you think of the Learning Agreements?
- F5 What processes were in place to monitor your attendance at school or college? What did you think of these processes e.g. attendance being classified, how seriously was attendance taken?

### Difference made by EMA

Was the EMA an 'essential' or 'a nice to have' contribution for you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Essential	<input type="checkbox"/> Nice to have
How important was the possibility of receiving the EMA to your decision to enrol on your course?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important <input type="checkbox"/> Not particularly important	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly important <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important
Had you not received the EMA would you have enrolled on your course anyway?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, definitely <input type="checkbox"/> No, probably not	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, probably <input type="checkbox"/> No, definitely not
Did receiving the EMA make any difference to your attendance at school or college?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a significant difference <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a little difference <input type="checkbox"/> No difference at all	
Did receiving the EMA make any difference to the qualifications you obtained at school or college?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a significant difference <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a little difference <input type="checkbox"/> No difference at all	
Please elaborate on any of these responses:		
What have you done since completing your FE studies?		
What are you currently doing in terms of work or study? (ASK whether they have undertaken an University course or another FE course, do they work full or part time)		
What difference did receiving the EMA make to your current education/work situation?		

### Future

- M1 Should the Welsh Government continue to financially support Welsh FE students directly in the future?
- If so, should financial support be made available on a statutory or discretionary basis?
  - On what basis should students receive financial support (i.e. household income, attendance, for specific provisions)
  - If so, should there be more/less restrictions on how any allowance is spent?
- M6 Could Welsh Government FE student finance funding be used in a more effective way?
- If so, how?
  - Would the funding of specific provisions as opposed to making cash payment directly to students be more effective?



## **(TG8) TOPIC GUIDE FOR PREVIOUS ALG FE RECIPIENTS – TELEPHONE INTERVIEW**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Your name has been supplied to us by the Student Loans Company.
- I am calling on behalf of an independent research company, Old Bell 3, as we have been commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the EMA and ALG (FE) funding schemes.
- As part of this study we are keen to obtain feedback from students who have received ALG FE funding support in the past to understand how it has been of value to you and the difference that it has had upon your FE studies.
- Would you be prepared to contribute towards this study? The discussion should not take more than 15 minutes of your time and I'm happy to do it now or at a time that suits you.

#### **AS APPROPRIATE:**

- The areas I'd like to discuss with you include your views on:
  - Your experience of applying for the ALG
  - How you used the funding during your course;
  - The difference receiving the ALG made to your decision to continue in education and what would you have done in the absence of the support;
  - The difference receiving the ALG made to your attendance and further education achievements
  - How the Welsh Government should financially support Welsh FE students in the future.
- We will not attribute anything you say to you by name or by college in the final published report.
- I'm happy to conduct the interview in either Welsh or English.
- Do you have anything you want to ask before we start?

Should you wish to check our credentials or have a query about this study then the contact person at Old Bell 3 is Nia Bryer (01558) 822922 [nia@oldbell3.co.uk](mailto:nia@oldbell3.co.uk). The contact person at the Welsh Government is Sara James 02920 826812 [sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

**CODE/ASK THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ABOUT PREVIOUS ALG FE RECIPIENTS**

Name:	
Which college did you attend:	
Code gender:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male or <input type="checkbox"/> Female
What course / subjects did you study whilst in receipt of ALG (e.g. Level and subjects)	
Did you live in a Communities First area when you were receiving ALG support?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure
In addition to the ALG did you receive any of the following grants or loans during your FE course or studies?	<input type="checkbox"/> No none <input type="checkbox"/> Free college meals <input type="checkbox"/> Free college transport <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Contingency Fund <input type="checkbox"/> College Bursaries <input type="checkbox"/> Other grants or loans – please specify _____
Were you studying:	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time or <input type="checkbox"/> Part time
How old are you now?	

**Policy, Rationale and Need for ALG**

C4 Why did you apply for the ALG whilst on your FE course?

E1 What did you understand to be the purpose of the ALG?

E2 How appropriate was it that the ALG was made available to students on the basis of household means testing?

b. Were the eligibility thresholds set appropriate?

f. What issues did means-testing present for you?

E3 Do you think that the ALG was being used to support the right students when you were studying?

E4 How appropriate was it that students receiving the ALG also got access to subsidised provisions such as free transport and free (school) meals? Did you benefit from any of these other subsidised provision? If so, please provide details.

E5 How appropriate was the ALG allowance amount you received?

a. Should this have been higher or lower at all?

J4 How was the ALG fund perceived by students?

- a. particularly amongst peer students
- b. was there any element of stigmatisation in receiving it?

J5 Generally, how did you use your ALG funding?

- a. How did you originally intend to use the funds?
- b. How did you use the fund in reality e.g. was it used for educational, social or other purposes?
- c. Did you use it to contribute towards household incomes e.g. to pay lodgings?

**ALG Administration**

G1 How effectively was the ALG publicised and explained to students?

- a. What methods worked well?
- b. How could the promotion of the ALG have been improved?
- c. Did any students miss out on the ALG because they were less well informed about it than other students? Why was that?

G2 How easy or otherwise was the ALG application process? {Need to recognise that processes or forms may have changed since they attended college}.

- a. How easy or difficult was the ALG form to complete?
- b. How easy or difficult was it to provide the necessary evidence to support your application?
- c. Were there any aspects of the application process which could be improved?
- e. What did you think of any advice and support that you received to help complete your ALG application?

**Difference made by ALG**

Was the ALG an 'essential' or 'a nice to have' contribution for you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Essential	<input type="checkbox"/> Nice to have
How important was the possibility of receiving the ALG to your decision to enrol on your course?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important <input type="checkbox"/> Not particularly important	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly important <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important
Had you not received the ALG would you have enrolled on your course anyway?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, definitely <input type="checkbox"/> No, probably not	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, probably <input type="checkbox"/> No, definitely not
Did receiving the ALG make any difference to your attendance at college?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a significant difference <input type="checkbox"/> No difference at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a little difference
Did receiving the ALG make any difference to the qualifications you obtained at college?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a significant difference <input type="checkbox"/> No difference at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a little difference
Please elaborate on any of these responses:		

What have you done since completing your FE studies?	
What are you currently doing in terms of work or study? (ASK whether they have undertaken an University course or another FE course, do they work full or part time)	
What difference did receiving the ALG make to your current education/work situation?	

### Future

- M1 Should the Welsh Government continue to financially support Welsh FE students directly in the future?
- If so, should financial support be made available on a statutory or discretionary basis?
  - On what basis should students receive financial support (i.e. household income, attendance, for specific provisions)
  - If so, should there be more/less restrictions on how any allowance is spent?
- M6 Could Welsh Government FE student finance funding be used in a more effective way?
- If so, how?
  - Would the funding of specific provisions as opposed to making cash payment directly to students be more effective?

## TG9) TOPIC GUIDE FOR INELIGIBLE OR UNSUCCESSFUL EMA APPLICANTS – FOCUS GROUP

### INTRODUCTION

- Thank you for attending this focus group.
- I am here on behalf of an independent research company, Old Bell 3, as we have been commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the EMA and ALG (FE) funding schemes.
- As part of this study we are keen to obtain feedback from students who have either applied unsuccessfully for EMA support or who are deemed ineligible for support as they maybe just over the household income threshold to quality.
- The areas I'd like to discuss with you today include your views on:
  - Your experience of applying for EMA (as appropriate)
  - How not receiving EMA support may have affected your studies including your attendance;
  - How you have funded your studies in the absence of EMA support;
  - How the Welsh Government should financially support Welsh FE students in the future.
- We will not attribute anything you say to you by name or by college in the final published report.
- I expect the discussion to take around an hour and I'd ask you to respect the confidentiality of other students.
- We offer a small financial incentive of £10 for attending – for our records we request that you complete a short form to acknowledge receipt of this contribution. This form also asks you to provide some basic information about yourself – this will only be for our benefit in terms of reporting on the profile of students we talk to as part of this study.
- {As appropriate} You may contribute in either Welsh or English. Should you wish to make any comments in confidence then please do so after the session.
- Do you have anything you want to ask before we start?

Should you wish to check our credentials or have a query about this study then the contact person at Old Bell 3 is Nia Bryer (01558) 822922 [nia@oldbell3.co.uk](mailto:nia@oldbell3.co.uk). The contact person at the Welsh Government is Sara James 02920 826812 [sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

## FOCUS GROUP WITH INELIGIBLE OR UNSUCCESSFUL EMA APPLICANTS

Name:	
Name of college:	
How old are you?	
Are you:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male or <input type="checkbox"/> Female
What course / subjects are you currently studying?	
Do you live in a Communities First area? If unsure please provide postcode	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you studying:	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time or <input type="checkbox"/> Part time
Have you received any of the following grants or loans or other support during this academic year?	<input type="checkbox"/> No none <input type="checkbox"/> Free school/college meals <input type="checkbox"/> Free school/college transport <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Contingency Fund <input type="checkbox"/> College Bursaries <input type="checkbox"/> Other grants or loans – please specify _____

PLEASE COMPLETE AS APPROPRIATE:

How important was the possibility of receiving the EMA to your decision to enrol on your course?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important <input type="checkbox"/> Not particularly important	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly important <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important
Has not receiving the EMA G made any difference to your attendance at college?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a significant difference <input type="checkbox"/> No difference at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a little difference
Do you think that not getting the EMA is likely to make any difference to the grades/qualifications you'll achieve?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a significant difference <input type="checkbox"/> No difference at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a little difference
<b>DISCLAIMER:</b>		
I acknowledge receipt of a £10 contribution for attending the focus group and I understand that I am responsible for any tax or benefit liabilities arising from the receipt of this sum.		
Signature		Date

## **Awareness and Involvement**

- A2 Tell me a little about yourself - such as study subject, career aspirations and whether you work part time as well as study?

## **Policy, Rationale and Need for EMA**

- C1 Why did you apply for the EMA?
- E1 What do you understand to be the purpose of the EMA?
- E2 How appropriate is it that the EMA is made available to students on the basis of household means testing?
- a. Is there a clear rationale for the current household threshold adopted?
  - f. What issues does means-testing present for you?
- E3 Do you think that the EMA is being used to support the right students i.e. those most in need? Why do you say this?
- E4 How appropriate is it that students receiving the EMA also get access to subsidised provisions such as free transport and free meals?
- a. How much overlap is there in terms of students accessing EMA and these other subsidised provisions? Do you receive any of these other subsidised provisions?
- E5 How appropriate is the current EMA allowance level of £30 per week?
- a. Should this be revised at all and if so how? What would be the implications of reducing this to £25 per week?

## **ALG Administration**

- G1 How effectively is EMA publicised and explained to students?
- a. What methods work well?
  - b. How could the promotion of the EMA be improved?
  - c. Do any students miss out on the EMA because they are less well informed about it than other students? Why is that?
- G2 How easy or otherwise was the EMA application process?
- a. How easy or difficult was the EMA form to complete?
  - b. How easy or difficult was it to provide the necessary evidence to support your application?
  - c. Are there any aspects of the application process which could be improved?

- d. What support and advice did you receive as part of your application process?
- e. What did you think of any advice and support that you received to help complete your EMA application?
- f. Why was your application turned down? What did you think of these reasons?
- e. Did you appeal against the decision at all? If so, what did you think of the appeals procedure?
- H2 g. What difference, if any, did not being awarded the EMA make to your decision to study?
- i. How, if at all, has not getting the EMA affected your attendance at college?
- k. Do you think that not getting the EMA is likely to make any difference to the grades/qualifications you'll achieve?
- m. What difference, if any, has not getting the EMA made to your current work situation i.e. are you working to fund your studies where you would not have done so if you'd been awarded an EMA?
- H4 How is the EMA fund perceived by students?
  - a. particularly amongst peer students. Is it stigmatised in any way?
- H5 How did you originally intend to use the EMA funds?
- H8 How are you funding your learning in the absence of EMA support?
  - a. Did you apply for funding elsewhere? If so, can you provide some details?
  - b. Were you redirected by the school or college to any alternative sources of funding or advice? If so please provide some details.
  - c. What is your financial situation like (now and in the future?)

## **Future**

- M1 Should the Welsh Government continue to financially support Welsh FE students directly in the future?
  - a. If so, should financial support be made available on a statutory or discretionary basis?
  - b. On what basis should students receive financial support (i.e. household income, attendance, for specific provisions)
  - c. If so, should there be more/less restrictions on how any allowance is spent?
- M6 Could Welsh Government FE student finance funding be used in a more effective way?
  - a. If so, how?
  - b. Would the funding of specific provisions as opposed to making cash payment directly to students be more effective?



## **(TG10) TOPIC GUIDE FOR INELIGIBLE OR UNSUCCESSFUL ALG APPLICANTS – FOCUS GROUP**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Thank you for attending this focus group.
- I am here on behalf of an independent research company, Old Bell 3, as we have been commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the EMA and ALG (FE) funding schemes.
- As part of this study we are keen to obtain feedback from students who have either applied unsuccessfully for ALG support or who are deemed ineligible for support as they maybe just over the household income threshold to quality.
- The areas I'd like to discuss with you today include your views on:
  - Your experience of applying for ALG (as appropriate)
  - How not receiving ALG support may have affected your studies including your attendance;
  - How you have funded your studies in the absence of ALG support;
  - How the Welsh Government should financially support Welsh FE students in the future.
- We will not attribute anything you say to you by name or by college in the final published report.
- I expect the discussion to take around an hour and I'd ask you to respect the confidentiality of other students.
- {College only} We offer a small financial incentive of £10 for attending – for our records we request that you complete a short form to acknowledge receipt of this contribution. This form also asks you to provide some basic information about yourself – this will only be for our benefit in terms of reporting on the profile of students we talk to as part of this study.
- {As appropriate} You may contribute in either Welsh or English. Should you wish to make any comments in confidence then please do so after the session.
- Do you have anything you want to ask before we start?

Should you wish to check our credentials or have a query about this study then the contact person at Old Bell 3 is Nia Bryer (01558) 822922 [nia@oldbell3.co.uk](mailto:nia@oldbell3.co.uk). The contact person at the Welsh Government is Sara James 02920 826812 [sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

### **FOCUS GROUP WITH INELIGIBLE OR UNSUCCESSFUL ALG APPLICANTS**

Name:	
Name of College:	
How old are you?	

Are you:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male or <input type="checkbox"/> Female
What course / subjects are you currently studying?	
Do you live in a Communities First area? If unsure please provide postcode	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you studying:	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time or <input type="checkbox"/> Part time
Have you received any of the following grants or loans or other support during this academic year?	<input type="checkbox"/> No none <input type="checkbox"/> Free college meals <input type="checkbox"/> Free college transport <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Contingency Fund <input type="checkbox"/> College Bursaries <input type="checkbox"/> Other grants or loans – please specify _____

PLEASE COMPLETE AS APPROPRIATE:

How important was the possibility of receiving the ALG to your decision to enrol on your course?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly important <input type="checkbox"/> Not particularly important <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important		
Has not receiving the ALG made any difference to your attendance at school or college?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a significant difference <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a little difference <input type="checkbox"/> No difference at all		
Do you think that not getting the ALG is likely to make any difference to the grades/qualifications you'll achieve?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a significant difference <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a little difference <input type="checkbox"/> No difference at all		
<b>DISCLAIMER:</b>			
I acknowledge receipt of a £10 contribution for attending the focus group and I understand that I am responsible for any tax or benefit liabilities arising from the receipt of this sum.			
Signature		Date	

### Awareness and Involvement

A2 Tell me a little about yourself - such as study subject, career aspirations and whether you work part time as well as study?

## **Policy, Rationale and Need for ALG**

- C1 Why did you apply for the ALG?
- E1 What do you understand to be the purpose of the ALG?
- E2 How appropriate is it that the ALG is made available to students on the basis of household means testing?
- a. Is there a clear rationale for the current household threshold adopted?
  - f. What issues does means-testing present for you?
- E3 Do you think that the ALG is being used to support the right students i.e. those most in need? Why do you say this?
- E4 How appropriate is it that students receiving the ALG also get access to subsidised provisions such as free transport and free meals?
- a. How much overlap is there in terms of students accessing ALG and these other subsidised provisions? Do you receive any of these other subsidised provisions?
- E5 How appropriate is the current ALG allowance level?
- a. Should this be revised at all and if so how?

## **ALG Administration**

- G1 How effectively is ALG publicised and explained to students?
- a. What methods work well?
  - b. How could the promotion of the ALG be improved?
  - c. Do any students miss out on the ALG because they are less well informed about it than other students? Why is that?
- G2 How easy or otherwise was the ALG application process?
- a. How easy or difficult was the ALG form to complete?
  - b. How easy or difficult was it to provide the necessary evidence to support your application?
  - c. Are there any aspects of the application process which could be improved?
  - d. What support and advice did you receive as part of your application process?
  - e. What did you think of any advice and support that you received to help complete your ALG application?
  - f. Why was your application turned down? What did you think of these reasons?
  - e. Did you appeal against the decision at all? If so, what did you think of the appeals procedure?

- H2 g. What difference, if any, did not being awarded the ALG make to your decision to study?
- i. How, if at all, has not getting the ALG affected your attendance at college?
- k. Do you think that not getting the ALG is likely to make any difference to the grades/qualifications you'll achieve?
- m. What difference, if any, has not getting the ALG made to your current work situation i.e. are you working to fund your studies where you would not have done so if you'd been awarded an ALG?
- H4 How is the ALG fund perceived by students?
- a. particularly amongst peer students
- H5 How did you originally intend to use the ALG funds?
- H8 How are you funding your learning in the absence of ALG support?
- a. Did you apply for funding elsewhere? If so, can you provide some details?
- b. Were you redirected by the College to any alternative sources of funding or advice? If so please provide some details.
- c. What is your financial situation like (now and in the future?)

### **Future**

- M1 Should the Welsh Government continue to financially support Welsh FE students directly in the future?
- a. If so, should financial support be made available on a statutory or discretionary basis?
- b. On what basis should students receive financial support (i.e. household income, attendance, for specific provisions)
- c. If so, should there be more/less restrictions on how any allowance is spent?
- M6 Could Welsh Government FE student finance funding be used in a more effective way?
- a. If so, how?
- b. Would the funding of specific provisions as opposed to making cash payment directly to students be more effective?

## **(TG11) TOPIC GUIDE FOR INELIGIBLE ENGLISH DOMICILED STUDENTS (STUDYING IN WELSH INSTITUTIONS OR IN BORDER ENGLISH INSTITUTIONS) FOCUS GROUP**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Thank you for attending this focus group.

- I am here on behalf of an independent research company, Old Bell 3, as we have been commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the EMA and ALG (FE) funding schemes.
- As part of this study we are keen to obtain feedback from English domiciled students (who are either studying in Wales or are studying in English border institutions) to be able to compare and contrast the support that is available to you with what is available to Welsh domiciled students.
- I'd like to discuss with you today your views on the financial support that is available to you and how effective this support is.
- We will not attribute anything you say to you by name or by school/college in the final published report.
- I expect the discussion to take around an hour and I'd ask you to respect the confidentiality of other students.
- {College only} We offer a small financial incentive of £10 for attending – for our records we request that you complete a short form to acknowledge receipt of this contribution. This form also asks you to provide some basic information about yourself – this will only be for our benefit in terms of reporting on the profile of students we talk to as part of this study.
- Do you have anything you want to ask before we start?

Should you wish to check our credentials or have a query about this study then the contact person at Old Bell 3 is Nia Bryer (01558) 822922 [nia@oldbell3.co.uk](mailto:nia@oldbell3.co.uk). The contact person at the Welsh Government is Sara James 02920 826812 [sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

**FOCUS GROUP WITH ENGLISH DOMICILED STUDENTS**

Name:	
Name of School or College:	
How old are you?	
Are you:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male or <input type="checkbox"/> Female
What course / subjects are you currently studying?	
Are you studying:	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time or <input type="checkbox"/> Part time
What financial support (e.g. grants, loans, bursaries, free school meals, free transport or free accommodation etc) have you received during this academic year?	

**DISCLAIMER:**

I acknowledge receipt of a £10 contribution for attending the focus group and I understand that I am responsible for any tax or benefit liabilities arising from the receipt of this sum.

Signature		Date	
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### **Awareness and Involvement**

A2 Tell me a little about yourself - such as study subject, career aspirations and whether you work part time as well as study?

### **Student Finance Outside Wales**

H1 What student financial support is available to English domiciled students studying in Wales / England?

d. Have you been able to access any of this support? If so, please provide details.

H5 What difference, if any, did the withdrawal of the EMA scheme in England make to you?

H6 What difference, if any did the withdrawal of the Adult Learning Grant in England have upon you?

H7 How effective is the FE student finance support for English domiciled students?

a. How well are any FE student finance grants or loans promoted to students?

b. What grants and loans have you received? Probe for names and amounts received

c. What difference did any grants or loans accessed have upon your decision to enrol on the course?

d. What difference do any grants or loans have upon your course attendance?

H8 [Welsh institutions only] How does the FE student finance support which is available to English domiciled students compare with Welsh domiciled students?

a. What are the advantages/disadvantages of both?

I8 How are/have you funded your learning?

a. Did you apply for funding elsewhere? If so, can you provide some details?

b. Were you directed by the College/School to any sources of funding or advice? If so please provide some details.

c. What is your financial situation like (now and in the future?)

## **(TG12) TOPIC GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWING NON WALES STUDENT FUND ADMINISTRATORS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Thank you for agreeing to talk to me.
- As you know Old Bell 3, in conjunction with WISERD of Cardiff University and Dateb, has been commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the EMA and ALG (FE) funding schemes.
- As part of this work, we are interviewing representatives from the Welsh Government, FE colleges, a small number of schools as well as undertaking fieldwork with supported and unsupported students at these institutions and some of their parents. We are also undertaking a comprehensive analysis of supported student data.
- We are also interested in drawing upon the experiences of student finance support in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- The areas I'd like to discuss with you today include your views on:
  - The key components of the FE student finance landscape in England/Scotland/Northern Ireland and the impact of any recent changes that have taken place;
  - The administration of the EMA in Scotland/Northern Ireland OR the withdrawal of the EMA in England;
  - Key findings and lessons from any evaluation studies conducted to review FE student finance schemes
  - Lessons which the Welsh Government could take on board from outside of Wales in terms of supporting Welsh FE students in the future.
- We will not attribute anything you say to you by name or by organisation in the final published report.
- Do you have anything you want to ask before we start?

The contact person at Old Bell 3 is Nia Bryer (01558) 822922 [nia@oldbell3.co.uk](mailto:nia@oldbell3.co.uk)

The contact person at the Welsh Government is Sara James 02920 826812  
[sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

### **Awareness and Involvement**

A1 First of all tell me a little about your involvement with FE student finance?

b. Outside of Wales?

### **Policy, Rationale and Need for EMA**

B3 In what way (if at all) does the provision of the EMA fit with UK and Welsh Government policy?



B6 What impact did the withdrawal of the EMA in England have upon Welsh students?

### **Policy, Rationale and Need for ALG FE**

C3 How does the ALG FE provision fit with UK and Welsh Government policy?

### **Welsh EMA Design and Objectives (If appropriate to comment upon these)**

D1 What do you understand to be the aims and objectives of the EMA in Wales?

b. How, if at all, have these objectives changed over time?

D2 How appropriate is it that the EMA in Wales is made available to students on the basis of household means testing?

D3 Is EMA being used to support the right students in Wales?

### **Student Finance Outside Wales**

H1 What are the key components of the FE student finance landscape:

a. In England

b. In Scotland

c. In Northern Ireland

d. What student financial support do English domiciled students studying in Wales access?

H2 How is the EMA administered in Scotland and Northern Ireland?

a. What allowance levels are set for the EMA?

b. What eligibility criteria are set for the EMA?

c. Who is responsible for administering the schemes?

d.[If known] In what way are the EMA schemes different to that being made available in Wales?

e. What accounts for any differences between these EMA schemes and the Welsh EMA scheme?

f. What have been the key developments or changes to the EMA schemes over time?

g. What prompted any changes to be made?

H3 How has the take up of the EMA in Scotland and Northern Ireland changed over time?

a. What factors have contributed towards any of these changes?

H4 What are the main findings of evaluation studies conducted to review FE student finance schemes outside of Wales?

a. What are the specific findings in relation to the EMA schemes in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland?

H5 What led to the withdrawal of the EMA scheme in England?

a. What impact has the withdrawal of the EMA scheme in England had upon the overall number of FE students and the profile of FE students?

H6 What led to the withdrawal of the Adult Learning Grant in England?

a. What impact did the withdrawal of the Adult Learning Grant in England have? [border ALG FE Centres]

H7 How effective is the FE student finance support for English domiciled students?

H8 How does the FE student finance support which is available to English domiciled students compare with Welsh domiciled students?

a. What are the advantages/disadvantages of both?

## **Future**

M2 How could the Welsh Government better target financial support towards FE students who are in greatest need?

a. How can students from the most deprived backgrounds be supported?

## **(TG13) TOPIC GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF CURRENT EMA RECIPIENTS – TELEPHONE INTERVIEW**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- Your name has been supplied to us by [Name of School or College] as I understand you agreed for us to call you in relation to some research we are undertaking on behalf of the Welsh Government.
- I work for independent research company, Old Bell 3, and we have been commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake an evaluation of the EMA and ALG (FE) funding schemes.
- As part of this study we are keen to obtain feedback from parents of students who are in receipt of EMA funding to understand how it is of value to you and your child.
- Are you still happy to contribute towards this study? The discussion should not take more than 15 minutes of your time and I'm happy to do it now or at a time that suits you.

#### **AS APPROPRIATE:**

- The areas I'd like to discuss with you include your views on:
  - Your experience of applying for EMA
  - How your child is using the funding during your course;
  - The difference receiving the EMA made to your child's decision to continue in education and what you/your child would have done in the absence of the support;
  - The difference receiving the EMA makes;
  - How the Welsh Government should financially support Welsh FE students in the future.
- We will not attribute anything you say to you by name or by school/college in the final published report.
- I'm happy to conduct the interview in either Welsh or English.
- Do you have anything you want to ask before we start?

Should you wish to check our credentials or have a query about this study then the contact person at Old Bell 3 is Nia Bryer (01558) 822922 [nia@oldbell3.co.uk](mailto:nia@oldbell3.co.uk). The contact person at the Welsh Government is Sara James 02920 826812 [sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sara.james@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

**CODE/ASK THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ABOUT PARENTS OF CURRENT EMA RECIPIENTS**

Name of Parent:	
Which school or college does your child attend:	
Code gender of your child:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male or <input type="checkbox"/> Female
What course / subjects does your child study whilst in receipt of EMA (e.g. A Level and subjects)	
Did you live in a Communities First area? support?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure
In addition to the EMA does the pupil receive any of the following grants, bursaries, loans or other support during their FE course or studies?	<input type="checkbox"/> No none <input type="checkbox"/> Free (school) meals <input type="checkbox"/> Free/subsidised transport <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Contingency Fund <input type="checkbox"/> College Bursaries <input type="checkbox"/> Other grants or loans – please specify _____
Is the pupil studying:	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time or <input type="checkbox"/> Part time
How old is your child?	

**Awareness and Involvement**

A2 Tell me a little about yourself (working or not) and the pupil who is in receipt of the EMA - such as study subject, career aspirations

**Policy, Rationale and Need for EMA**

B1 Why did you/the pupil apply for the EMA?

**EMA Design and Objectives**

D1 a. What do you understand to be the purpose of the EMA?

D2 How appropriate is it that the EMA is made available to students on the basis of household means testing?

f. What issues did the means-testing present for you/pupil?

- D3 Do you think that the EMA is being used to support the right students i.e. those most in need?  
Why do you say this?
- D4 How appropriate is it that students receiving the EMA also get access to subsidised provisions such as free transport and free (school) meals?  
  
Does the pupil concerned also access subsidised provisions? If so please specify?
- D5 How appropriate is the current EMA allowance level of £30 per week?  
a. Should this be revised at all and if so how?  
b. What would be the implications for you/pupil of reducing the current level of EMA to £25/week?

### **EMA Administration**

- F1 How effectively is EMA publicised and explained to students and parents?  
  
a. What methods work well?  
b. How could the promotion of the EMA be improved?
- F2 How easy or otherwise was the EMA application process?  
a. How easy or difficult was the EMA form to complete?  
b. How easy or difficult was it to provide the necessary evidence to support your application?  
c. Are there any aspects of the application process which could be improved?  
  
e. What did you think of any advice and support that you/the pupil received to help complete your EMA application?  
c. (If known) How useful/relevant are the Learning Agreements put in place?
- F5 What do you think of the processes that are in place to monitor EMA funded students' attendance at the college or school? Why do you say this?
- I4 How would you say is the EMA fund perceived by students and parents?  
b. Is there any element of stigmatisation in receiving it?
- I5 How do you/the pupil use the EMA funds? [Try to draw out differences between 6th form and college students use of funding]  
  
a. How did you/the pupil originally intend to use the funds?  
b. How do you/the pupil use the fund in reality e.g. is it used for educational, social or other purposes?  
c. Does it get used towards household incomes e.g. to pay lodgings?

16. Is the EMA an 'essential' or 'a nice to have' contribution?	<input type="checkbox"/> Essential	<input type="checkbox"/> Nice to have
17 How important was the possibility of receiving the EMA to your child's decision to enrol on your course?	<input type="checkbox"/> Very important <input type="checkbox"/> Not particularly important	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly important <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all important
17. Had you/the pupil not received the EMA would your child have enrolled on your course anyway?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, definitely <input type="checkbox"/> No, probably not	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, probably <input type="checkbox"/> No, definitely not
17. Has receiving the EMA made any difference to your child's attendance at school or college?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a significant difference <input type="checkbox"/> No difference at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a little difference
Additional comments made about these questions:		

17 Had students not received EMA funding, what would have happened?

- a. What evidence do you have to support this claim?
- b. What proportion of supported students would have undertaken their FE study anyway?
- c. What would have been the implications of students receiving a lower EMA rate?

### Future

M1 Should the Welsh Government continue to financially support Welsh FE students directly in the future?

- a. If so, should financial support be made available on a statutory or discretionary basis?
- b. On what basis should students receive financial support (i.e. household income, attendance, for specific provisions)
- c. If so, should there be more/less restrictions on how any allowance is spent?

M6 Could Welsh Government FE student finance funding be used in a more effective way?

- a. If so, how?
- b. Would the funding of specific provisions as opposed to making cash payment directly to students be more effective?

**ANNEXE E: AN OVERVIEW OF FE FUNDING INITIATIVES OR  
SCHEMES AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS AGED 16 TO 19 YEARS OLD  
ACROSS THE FE SECTOR**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Outline</b>	<b>Eligibility /qualifying criteria</b>	<b>Target Age Group</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Payment arrangements</b>	<b>Other benefits/ Link to other Policies</b>	<b>Caveats</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Link</b>
<b>Early Years Trainees: Apprenticeship Bursary Scheme</b>	A transitional measure available in the run up to the introduction of the early years educator qualifications in 2014. 1000 bursaries were made available in 2013/14 for apprentices training for an early years qualification	Individuals taking up apprenticeships after June 2013 Training for the level 3 advanced apprenticeship in Children and Young People's Workforce Hold a GCSE grade C or above in English and maths before starting employment Working in an early years setting providing early learning places for 2-year-olds Employed as a (level 3) apprentice for at least 3 months	16+	£3,000 for the 1st 200 applicants £1,500 for the remaining 800 applicants An additional £300 training allowance	Bursary paid to employer who is obliged to pay it on the apprentice after deducting any tax and National Insurance due. Employers paid additional funds to cover the cost of the employers NI Contribution		Release of bursary from the employer to the apprentice is subject to conditions set out in a grant letter	England	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/301471/apprenticeship_bursary_scheme_guidance_note_2013_to_2014.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/301471/apprenticeship_bursary_scheme_guidance_note_2013_to_2014.pdf</a>
<b>Financial Contingency Fund</b>	Provides students facing financial difficulties with support to enable them to continue with their studies. Awards can be made in the form of non-repayable grants, short-term loans or used to purchase goods or services on behalf of recipients.	Students aged 16 and over Undertaking full or part-time courses at a Further Education institution	16+	Determined on a case by case basis by institutions	Payments can be made directly to transport companies, landlords etc. or paid to students	Can be paid to students in receipt of EMA and ALG		Wales	<a href="http://wales.gov.uk/legislation/subordinate/nonsi/education_wales/2012/6601472/?lang=en">http://wales.gov.uk/legislation/subordinate/nonsi/education_wales/2012/6601472/?lang=en</a>



<b>RAF Scholarships</b>	Provides financial assistance to parents or guardians towards the cost of a young person's A2 level studies and to also develop their personal qualities. Awarded to individuals who wish to be considered for direct entry to the RAF on completion of their A levels. Awards are made on a competitive basis annually.	British national resident in the UK for 5 years Aged 16 In full time education at school or Further Education College Obtained a minimum of 46 Advanced Level Information System points from a minimum of 7 GCSEs Studying for at least 2 A Levels and predicted to achieve grades A-C in at least 2 subjects	16-17	Varies with course, but minimum £300	Scholarship paid to parents/guardians upon confirmation that the young person intends to remain in education and will make every effort to gain the necessary A2 level grades			UK wide	<a href="http://www.raf.mod.uk/careers/can-i-join/educational-requirements/raf-scholarships/">http://www.raf.mod.uk/careers/can-i-join/educational-requirements/raf-scholarships/</a>
<b>Army Officer Scholarship Scheme</b>	For candidates of a high academic ability who display leadership potential and are interested in a career as an Army Officer. It offers financial support to you & your parents while you study for 'A' Levels/ Scottish Highers at school or college.	High academic ability (minimum of 46 Advanced Level Information System points) from a minimum of 7 GCSEs) Confirmation of sixth form place Display leadership potential Full medical	16-18	£1,500 per annum	Grant paid to parents in two instalments of £1500, one each at the start of years 12 and 13. From 2015, one payment of £3000 will be made.	Guaranteed place to do officer training at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, straight after A-Levels or after university. Automatic access to an Army Undergraduate Bursary for higher education from 2014	Repayable if recipients do not complete.	UK wide	<a href="http://army.mod.uk/documents/general/AOSS.pdf">http://army.mod.uk/documents/general/AOSS.pdf</a>
<b>Army's FE Bursary Scheme</b>	Aimed at young people who want to join certain trades in the army.	Apply successfully to join the army. Studying at level 2 or above	16-18	£1,000 per annum	Lump sum payment paid	£1,000 after successful completion of soldier training Participation in	Possibly repayable	UK wide	<a href="http://www.army.mod.uk/training_education/25683.aspx">http://www.army.mod.uk/training_education/25683.aspx</a>

						Army activity weekends whilst in FE.			
<b>16-18 Residential Bursary Fund</b>	Financial help towards the costs of accommodation for young people attending designated institutions delivering specialist provision. The Fund can also help with the cost of travel between students' term time lodgings and the institution. This support is generally awarded to students at 'Specialist Residential Centres' for subjects like agriculture, art and design or horticulture.	16-19 years of age Eligibility is determined at a local level by schools and colleges on a case by case basis, but may be means-tested Institutions may choose to make provision for a 'contingency fund' at a local level.	16-19	Up to £25k	Payments for accommodation made directly to beneficiaries' landlords	Recipients are able to apply for support with course related costs from other schemes e.g. the 16-19 Vulnerable Student Bursary or the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary and for childcare costs from Care to Learn	Cannot be used to support 'hardship' cases or to meet childcare costs Travel costs cannot exceed 15% of an individual's allocation.	England	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299306/16_to_18_Residential_Bursary_Fund.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299306/16_to_18_Residential_Bursary_Fund.pdf</a>
<b>16-19 Discretionary Bursary/ Discretionary Support Fund</b>	Aimed at young people who are not eligible for a '16-19 Vulnerable Student Bursary' but still need financial help to stay on in further education or training.	FE students School sixth form students Access to Apprenticeship programme participants Beyond this, eligibility is determined at a local level by schools and colleges on a case by case basis Not subject to means testing	16-19	The value of the bursary is determined locally by schools and colleges on a case by case basis	Payment arrangements are determined at local level by schools and colleges. Bursaries might be paid into beneficiaries' bank accounts or awarded 'in kind' whereby institutions provide beneficiaries with bus passes, meal tickets or course equipment.		Schools and colleges are able to attach conditions to the award of the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary, generally based on attendance, behaviour and completion of work.	England	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide</a>