

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

AGENDA ITEM No. 5

To: Education (Resources) Sub-Committee		Subject : EDUCATION MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE, 2005-2006 PERFORMANCE REVIEW
From: Director of Education		
Date:	Ref: MM/AS	

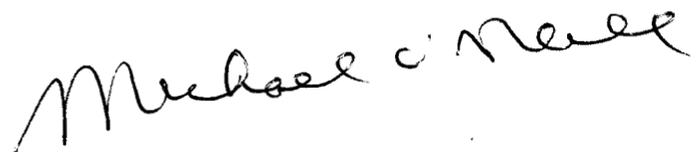
Purpose of Report

This report reviews the performance of the Education Maintenance Allowance scheme for the period August 2005 to June 2006.

Recommendations

The education (resources) sub-committee is recommended to:

- (a) note the performance of the Education Maintenance Allowance scheme
- (b) request the submission of further performance reports to future meetings of the sub-committee.



Members wishing further information about this report should contact

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NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL : DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Education Maintenance Allowance : Performance Review

Report by the Director of Education

1. Background.

- 1.1 The phased national rollout of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) commenced in August 2004. In session 2004-2005 eligibility for EMA was restricted to students born between 1 March 1988 and 28 February 1989. In session 2005-2006 this was extended to include students born between 1 March 1988 and 28 February 1990.
- 1.2 To qualify for EMA the students are required to sign a learning agreement negotiated with the school. It includes the requirement to meet certain curricular attainment and attendance criteria.

Table 1 – Income Bands and Weekly Payments

Gross Household Income	Amount of Weekly Payment
0 to £20,270	£30
£20,271 to £24,850	£20
£24,851 to £30,000	£10
Over £30,000	0

- 1.3 Students may also be entitled to receive 1 or 2 bonus payments of £150, dependent on when their eligibility for EMA support began. Bonuses are paid provided the student meets the targets for progress, attainment and attendance set down in their individual learning agreement with the school.

2. North Lanarkshire Applications

- 2.1 A total of 1948 applications were received. This is an increase of 780 (40%) against session 2004-2005.
- 2.2 24 applications were refused for the following specific reasons:
- (a) the student does not meet the resident criteria of having been “ordinarily resident” in the United Kingdom and Islands for 3 years immediately preceding the date of application;
 - (b) the student was attending a Further Education college;
 - (c) the student was too young to qualify for EMA support;
 - (d) the application was received after the deadline for submission of 31 March.

Table 2 shows a breakdown of this.

Table 2 – Applications Refused

Not resident in UK for 3 years	Attending FE College	Too young for EMA	Application received after 31 March
6	3	4	11

2.3 Of the 1924 eligible applications, 1820 awards have been made, as detailed in Table 3.

Table 3 – Awards Processed

Award	No Award	£30 per week	£20 per week	£10 Per week
No of Students	53	1365	199	203

2.4 255 applications were cancelled because the students had left school or indicated that they no longer wish to be considered for support.

3. Payments

3.1 A total of £1,053,880 has been paid to eligible students during the financial year April 2005 to April 2006. This includes weekly payments totalling £909,730 and bonus payments totalling £144,150. In addition, £360,600 has been paid since April 2005 to students entitled to EMA in session 2004-2005. Table 4 shows a breakdown of these figures.

Table 4 – Payments

2004-2005			2005-2006	
Weekly payments	Bonus 1 payments	Bonus 2 payments	Weekly payments	Bonus 1 payments
£249,900	£600	£110,100	£909,730	£144,150

3.2 A total of £1,289,810 has been paid to eligible students between August and June 2006. This includes weekly payments totalling £1,124,360 and bonus payments totalling £165,450.

4. Attendance

4.1 In accordance with Scottish Executive guidelines, students must attain 100% attendance in any week in order to receive payment for that week. Absences due to illness are not taken into account in calculating attendance provided that the student submits a medical certificate or self-certification form to the school within 14 days of the absence. Self-certification forms are only accepted for 5 days absence over the course of the academic session.

- 4.2 Schools have the responsibility for monitoring the attendance of EMA students and for authorising payment.
- 4.3 The Scottish Executive guidelines require authorities to carry out a 1% spot-check each month to ensure the validity of payments. In North Lanarkshire these are carried out on a random sample of students across all schools. For the period August 2005 to June 2006 the records of 128 students in 26 schools have been examined. To date, any issues highlighted by the spot-check procedure have been discussed with schools and resolved.

5 Audit Report

- 5.1 Internal audit recently completed an audit review of EMA procedures and reported their general satisfaction with the arrangements in place for ensuring compliance with Scottish Executive guidelines regarding payment of EMA. They also acknowledge that significant work had taken place within the section to review and improve the arrangements in place. They are satisfied that the control framework appears generally sound and that the controls are generally operating satisfactory.
- 5.2 A number of minor weaknesses were noted and recommendations for improvement made. The recommendations are currently under consideration and, where appropriate, procedures tightened.

6.1 Recommendations

The education (resources) sub-committee is recommended to:

- (a) note the performance of the Education Maintenance Allowance scheme
- (b) request the submission of further performance reports to future meetings of the sub-committee