

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: Education (Resources) Sub-Committee	Subject: Education Maintenance Allowance, 2006-2007 Performance Review
From: Director of Education	
Date: 11th September 2006	
Ref: MM/AS	

Purpose of Report

This report reviews the performance of the Education Maintenance Allowance scheme for the period April 2006 to September 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. This has been extended again in session 2006-2007 to include students born between 1 March 1988 and 28 February 1991.
- 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.
- 1.3 EMA is assessed on the basis of gross household income. The Scottish Executive has raised the income thresholds for session 2006-2007, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – Income Bands and Weekly Payments

Gross Household Income	Amount of Weekly Payment
0 to £20,817	£30
£20,818 to £25,521	£20
£20,522 to £30,810	£10
Over £30,810	0

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

2. North Lanarkshire Applications

- 2.1 A total of 1221 applications have been received to date, compared to 1463 at the same point last year, a decrease of 17%. However, it is important to note that those students not eligible for EMA support until January 2007 have been encouraged to delay applying until November 2006. In addition, despite the decrease in applications received, £45,650 has been paid to 2006-2007 applicants to date, compared to £30,500 for the equivalent period in 2005-2006.

- 2.2 4 applications were refused for the following specific reasons:
- (a) the student does not meet the residence 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.
- 2.3 Of the 1217 eligible applications, 644 awards have been made. At the same point in session 2005-2006 657 awards had been made. Table 3 shows a comparison of this.

Table 3 – Awards Processed

Session	No award	£30 per week	£20 per week	£10 per week
2005-2006	16	507	73	61
2006-2007	11	501	72	60

- 2.4 30 applications have been cancelled because the students have left school or have indicated that they no longer wish to be considered for support.

3. Payments

- 3.1 A total of £649,890 has been paid to eligible students between April and September 2006. This includes weekly payments totalling £452,790 and bonus payments totalling £197,100.

Table 4 shows a breakdown of this.

Table 4 – Payments

2005-2006			2006-2007
Weekly payments	Bonus 1 payments	Bonus 2 payments	Weekly payments
£407,140	£1,950	£195,150	£45,650

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 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. In session 2005-2006 the records of 128 students in 26 schools were examined. Schools were able to provide medical certificates or self-certification forms, or to justify payment because of exceptional circumstances. Where no evidence or justification could be provided, payments were reclaimed from students. No data is available at present for session 2006-2007.

5. Bonus payments

- 5.1 The Scottish Executive has requested that authorities submit data gathered from schools on the non-payment of bonuses, including the number of students from whom payment was withheld and the reasons for withholding payment. Appendix 1 shows a breakdown of this data.

6. 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.