



Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA):

UNISON Parliamentary Group Briefing

- The Coalition Government is to abolish the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for college students and school sixth formers in England.
- The EMA is a means-tested allowance of between £10 and £30 per week, paid to 16 – 18 year olds who stay on in education.
- 635,000 learners received at least one EMA payment in 2009/10, and around 80 per cent of those receive the full £30. This means they come from a household with an annual income of less than £20,800 per year.
- EMA was introduced by the previous Labour government to help with the cost of books, travel and equipment. The payments are made with the condition that students attend classes regularly.
- The Department for Education is stopping new EMA applications at the end of December - before it has alternative arrangements in place.
- They also intend to stop paying EMA in July 2011 to existing 16-18 year old students who will be half way through their course.
- This will mean that EMA will be completely gone by July 2011.

Impact of the cut

- The EMA is widely credited with helping to create a big increase in the number of young people going onto college in the last seven years.
- Research conducted by the Institute of Fiscal Studies revealed that the EMA increased the proportion of males staying on in full time education by 7.4% and females by 5.9%.
- The Association of Colleges (AoC) continues to make clear to Ministers and MPs that they think the decision to abolish EMAs will have a detrimental effect on recruitment, retention and achievement of 16-18 year olds.
- A number of trade unions are also worried that the axing of the EMA will see colleges hit by further funding cuts. Cuts that will put even more college jobs at risk.
- The Coalition argues that 90% of the cost of the EMA is deadweight – i.e. students would have gone on to study without EMA. This claim does not stand up to scrutiny.
- Research by the 157 group of large colleges, and other individual colleges, show that students who receive the EMA have better attendance records and are more likely to complete courses than wealthier students not eligible for support. - Times Education Supplement (FE Focus pages) December 3 2010.



- Despite coming from the poorest families and in some cases having low qualifications, EMA students miss fewer classes and are more likely to stay in education than even wealthier students.
- The Manchester College, compared figures before and after the introduction of the EMA. In 2002 almost one in 5 students who dropped out cited financial reasons, but by 2009 it was just one in 20 – Times Education Supplement (FE Focus pages) December 3 2010.

The Coalition's alternative

The Coalition claim they are not abolishing the EMA but simply targeting the money.

- They have announced that they will redirect additional money into local college Enhanced Learner Support (ELS) funds. These funds are administered locally where the EMA is a national scheme.
- All the indications however, are that the Government will only channel a maximum of £75 million into ELS funds.
- The overall EMA budget is £574 million. So this represents a savage cut of nearly £500 million which will cause hardship for many young people and their families.
- Also under current rules colleges are not able to use their ELS funds to support student transport– this will hit students in rural areas particularly hard.
- Furthermore we are concerned that when colleges are cutting their student service teams, as a result of funding cuts, they won't have the capacity on the ground to properly deliver the ELS.

Save the EMA – Pressure is building

A widely supported Save EMA campaign has been established involving young people all around the country. Further information about the campaign can be found at their website www.saveEMA.co.uk or by emailing james@saveema.co.uk.

- UNISON, UCU, NUS NUT, Unite, GMB and ATL have united to form a joint campaign to save the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).
- Trade unions are calling for nationwide peaceful lunchtime protests at FE and sixth form colleges in England on 13 December. <http://emacampaign.org.uk/>
- We are also working closely with the AoC on campaigning and lobbying work.
- Other organisations such as the Independent Schools Association and the Headmasters and Headmistresses Conference are also concerned about the decision to end the EMA.



What MPs can do:

- Support the protests in your constituency on the 13 December
- Add your support to the Save EMA campaign site www.saveema.co.uk and help build the campaign and awareness locally.
- Sign the joint union 'Save the Ema' petition <http://emacampaign.org.uk/sign/>
- Sign Nic Dakin's EDM 943

That this House expresses deep concern over the sudden, unexpected announcement of the removal of education maintenance allowances (EMAs) from 16 to 19 year olds; notes that EMAs have supported the widening of participation, raising of aspiration and growth in higher attainment levels amongst young people; and believes that their removal is likely to disadvantage seriously young people in lower socio-economic groups and from minority backgrounds in continuing their education, and that it will be to the detriment of the whole country.

- Raise the issue in Parliament and make clear to Ministers the impact the axing of the EMA will have on your constituents.

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