

**Report To:** Education & Communities Committee      **Date:** 06 May 2014

**Report By:** Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development      **Report No:** EDUCOM/44/14/WB

**Contact Officer:** Wilma Bain, Head of Education      **Contact No:** 01475 712824

**Subject:** Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) Academic Year 2014-15

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the continuation of the grant from the Scottish Government for the purposes of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) Scotland programme.

## **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) provide means-tested financial support for post-16 learning. It provides support to young people from low income households to encourage them to remain in post-compulsory education, with the aim of increasing skills and life chances for this group.
- 2.2 The EMA programme has been protected for 2014 – 15 with the budget remaining at the same level as the last three years.
- 2.3 The Committee will be informed of any future revisions to the process.

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

**Patricia Cassidy**  
**Corporate Director**  
**Education, Communities and Organisational Development**

## **4.0 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) scheme replaced Higher School Bursaries in schools and Category A Bursaries in colleges.
- 4.2 EMAs aim to provide a financial incentive to young people from low income households and vulnerable young people to encourage access to, and participation in, learning beyond the statutory school leaving age. They provide financial support for post-16 year-olds who meet the criteria for eligibility by fulfilling conditions set out in an EMA learning agreement.
- 4.3 Young people from low income families face financial barriers in continuing learning. EMA is designed to remove those barriers. Students are normally entitled to EMA for a maximum period of 3 years, however vulnerable students who are entitled to more flexible arrangements can receive 4 years' EMA support.
- 4.4 Eligibility is based on the students' age and household income.
- 4.5 The EMA is means tested. Where the household income is less than £20,351, the young person will be eligible to receive EMA and will be awarded a weekly allowance of £30. Young people from households with more than one dependant child and where the household income is less than £22,403 will also be eligible for a weekly payment of £30 per week.
- 4.6 During the year, re-assessment can take place as a result of detrimental changes in financial circumstances ie where income has fallen from above the £20,351 or £22,403 to within the EMA thresholds.
- 4.7 In school session 2013/14, 498 students were awarded EMA in Inverclyde.
- 4.8 In 2009 the Scottish Government introduced Activity Agreements to provide more training opportunities for young people who have disengaged from school and other public services. Activity Agreements focus on the provision of the most appropriate, high quality community-based learning.
- 4.9 Inverclyde Council was one of 10 pilot areas chosen to introduce Activity Agreements, with the pilot running from September 2009 to March 2011. The system has now been rolled out nationally.
- 4.10 An Activity Agreement is an agreement signed by a young person stating that they will take part in a programme of learning and / other activities which will help them to become ready for formal learning or employment.
- 4.11 The main aim of Activity Agreements is to ensure that a targeted group of young people are supported to move into a mainstream destination. All young people in Inverclyde who are covered by this approach are participating in activity that will support their progress into mainstream provision.
- 4.12 In 2013 – 14, Activity Agreements achieved the following results :  
  
All of the 54 referrals were offered an activity agreement, 51 young people took up the opportunity (2 decline, 1 on hold)  
22 Young people went onto a Positive Destination.  
19 Young people left due to various situations but were all offered ongoing support or signposted to appropriate services.

## **5.0 PROPOSAL**

- 5.1 That the Committee note the contents of this report.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

### 6.1 Financial

Since all payments awarded are funded by the Scottish Government there is no financial implication to Inverclyde Council.

### 6.2 Legal

None

### 6.3 Personnel

None

### 6.4 Equalities

None

### 6.5 Re-population

None

## **7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 EMA Guidance Document 2014 – 2015 is available  
EMA Business Model 2014 – 2015 is available