

CABINET MEMBER FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

**Venue: Town Hall,
Moorgate Street,
Rotherham.**

Date: Tuesday, 16th September 2008

Time: 10.30 a.m.

A G E N D A

1. To determine if the following matters are to be considered under the categories suggested in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.
2. To determine any item which the Chairman is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.
3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 2nd September, 2008 (Pages 1 - 2)
4. Schools Access Fund Policy 2008/09 (Pages 3 - 10)
5. Exclusion of the Press and Public
The following item is likely to be considered in the absence of the press and public as being exempt under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the Council).
6. Schools PFI Project - Annual Partnership Report (Pages 11 - 15)
7. Date and Time of Next Meeting
Tuesday, 30th September, 2008 at 10.30 a.m.

CABINET MEMBER FOR LIFELONG LEARNING
Tuesday, 2nd September, 2008

Present:- Councillor Rushforth (in the Chair); Councillors Falvey and Havenhand.

14. THE NATIONAL YEAR OF READING

Consideration was given to a report presented by the National Year of Reading Co-ordinator on the Department for Children, Schools and Families nominated 2008 to be the National Year of Reading (NYR).

The year itself runs from April-December and is focused on a number of monthly themes, determined at national level by the National Literacy Trust and the Reading Agency. These agencies have been contracted by the Government to oversee the NYR.

The final three monthly themes are:-

October: "Word of Mouth" – Storytelling, reading out loud, reading together, reading aloud, live literature.

November: "Screen reads" – Exploring the diversity of reading and writing; scripts, TV and films.

December: "Write the future" – Writing, texting, blogging.

The year aims to encourage people to read in businesses, homes, and communities around the country, providing new opportunities to read and helping people to access help and support through schools and libraries.

Rotherham libraries have based their calendar of events around each of the monthly themes whilst a number of schools have promoted the themes in newsletters to parents.

The meeting was informed that the National trend is for a declining number of people using libraries, the initiative being a way of looking for a 10% increase this year from a number of people who have signed up Nationally.

The active borrower indicator figure has shown an increase month on month in Rotherham.

The Government will adapt the most successful strategies and initiatives as part of the cultural Olympics which will run in tandem with the Olympic Games in London in 2012.

The Cabinet Member raised a question with regard to the success, if any, of any work carried out on in-depth analysis of National and local initiatives.

In discussing the report, the following issues were referred to:-

- Partnership organisations' and schools' involvement in the initiative
- Funding support
- Links to Imagination Library and enhancement to other Library initiatives
- Grant funding

A DVD to promote the initiative, which had been created in partnership with Rotherham PCT, was shown.

Resolved:- (1) That the Cabinet Member continues to support the aims of the National Year of Reading (NYR), which have been promoted locally through the library service and in schools.

(2) That thanks be extended to Rotherham PCT for their help in the compilation of a short DVD promoting the initiative within GP Surgeries.

15. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning take place on Tuesday, 16th September, 2008 at 10.30 a.m.

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Lifelong Learning Cabinet Member and Advisers
2.	Date:	16th September 2008
3.	Title:	Schools Access Fund Policy 2008/9
4.	Directorate:	Children and Young People's Services

5. Summary

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) makes an annual funding allocation to local authorities of Access funds aimed at providing financial assistance to students aged 16 and over studying in school sixth forms. The local authority must have a written policy for how it will distribute the funds. The funding allocation for the 2008/9 academic year is £26,520

6. Recommendations

The proposed Access Fund Policy (Appendix 1) is received.

7. Proposals and Details

In 2004, the Government rolled out the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), a national scheme comprising a weekly payment of up to £30 and bonuses to full-time FE learners aged 16-19. The EMA is designed to encourage participation and retention in education post-16 by removing financial barriers faced by students. Qualifying annual household income is under £30,810.

The Access Fund (also called Learner Support Fund) is an additional means of financial support for sixth form students, the purpose of which is to provide support for a specific financial need, normally course or study-related costs.

In 2007/08 academic year the Rotherham Access Fund assisted 142 students at school sixth forms in Rotherham and 1 student attending a school sixth form outside the borough. The awards were made as follows:

Type of award	Total spent (£)
Travel Grants	11,660.00
Book/Equipment Grant	2,000.00
University visits	743.56
Field Trips	11,239.45
Exceptional course costs	630.00
Grand Total (£)	26,273.01

Students qualifying for the EMA are expected to have applied for this before making an application for the Access Fund.

The Student Support Section administers the Access Fund by means of an application form distributed via school sixth forms. Account is taken of household income when considering applications and support is available for travel, school, field trips and university visits. The household income ceiling for financial assessment is £40,000. Students who have a particular financial need due to exceptional circumstances or a disability may apply with the support of a school tutor, and be exempt from a household financial assessment.

8. Finance

The funding allocation for 2008/9 is £26,520 (compared to £27,661 in 2007/8). The Authority is able to use 5% of the allocation for administration costs. As a cash-limited fund, it is possible that not all eligible applicants will be successful, especially for claims submitted late in the academic year.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Failure to publish and distribute a comprehensive Access Fund policy would be against LSC administration guidance of the Fund.

There has been a change to LSC guidance on Funds for 2008/9. It now states that financial assistance for travel should only be given in exceptional circumstances.

Rotherham however currently gives a fixed income-assessed travel grant to those students who need to take public transport to school. Given that the withdrawal of this grant with neither notice nor alternative funding arrangements is likely to cause hardship, the Authority has reached an interim agreement the LSC. For 2009/10 only, the existing transport element of the Policy may remain in place in order to honour commitments to continuing learners who were supported for 2007/8.

It appears likely that for future years however, the Fund may only be used to assist with transport costs in exceptional circumstances. The LSC has indicated that the LA has a statutory duty with regard to transport provision for learners of sixth form age and that discretionary support funding should be used as emergency funds. The issue may have implications for the Authority's transport policy and spend for future years. Further guidance on this issue is awaited from the LSC.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The Access Fund contributes to the aims of lifelong learning within the Rotherham Learning and Achieving priorities. Effective administration and distribution of the Fund will assist sixth form students in achieving their learning goals.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Learner Support Programme: Discretionary Funding Guidance and Requirements 2008/9 (Learning and Skills Council, May 2008)
- Learner Support Funds 2008/9 – Post 16 Transport (Wayne Miller LSC, 22nd August 2008)

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Schools Access Fund Awards

Policy Document

Academic Year 2008/2009

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Schools Access Fund is to provide financial help to students attending a school sixth form aged 16 and over whose access to or completion of further education might be inhibited by financial constraints. The Authority will also seek to support individuals from groups that are currently under-represented in further education (FE), e.g. Looked-after children or young people on probation, those considered to be at risk and young parents.

Applications are judged on the basis of relative financial need and not all applications will be successful. Further Education Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges also have Access Funds and students undertaking courses at these types of colleges should contact the Student Services staff at the college.

Grant entitlements may depend upon the number of applications received and the level of funding available. The Local Authority reserves the right to reduce the grants payable or refuse an application if there are insufficient funds available. Grants may also be increased after the published deadline, if funds allow.

2. Eligibility

In order to be eligible for a Schools Access Fund Award an applicant must be:

- a registered student at a school sixth form
- at least 16 years old resident in the Rotherham Borough at the time of applying.
- attending a Local Authority maintained school. Where a student attending an independent school can demonstrate particular need for support, assistance may exceptionally be considered.
- aged under 19 if an Asylum seeker
- able to demonstrate that they fulfil the residency eligibility criteria for LSC funding for their learning programme if requested to do so by the Authority.

3. Application Procedure

Applications forms for a Schools Access Fund Award are available from Rotherham schools with sixth forms.

It is expected that students who qualify for EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance) should have applied for the EMA prior to applying for the Access Fund. They should then include official notification of their entitlement to EMA with their application for a Schools Access Fund Award. Applications from students who do not qualify for EMA on income grounds must be supported

by documentary evidence of household income; wage/salary slips, Child/Working Tax Credit notification letters etc.

Forms must be countersigned by the applicant's sixth form tutor and endorsed with a school stamp. Forms must also be signed by the student and parent/guardian if providing income details.

Closing Date for applications will be 31st May 2009.

Payment will normally be made by cheque to the student and should be paid into a bank account in the student's name.

4. Assessment

When assessing a student's entitlement to a Schools Access Fund Award a number of criteria are considered, including:

- if the student is receiving Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA),
- the total income of the household in which the student lives.
- if the student has received a transport grant in 2007/8

We will take into account the gross household income from all sources including wages and child maintenance, but will disregard the following types of income:

- Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, and
- Disability Living Allowance
- Wages earned by the student for part-time work

If parents are divorced or separated we will only assess the income of the parent with whom the student lives. If the parent co-habits with a partner, we will take into account the income of both adults.

The Local Authority retains the discretion in exceptional circumstances to make payments when household income exceeds the maximum rate at which an award is normally payable.

5. What type of help is available?

- **Book and Equipment Grant.** An award of £500 per academic year for a student who does not qualify for an EMA due to other factors* and whose household income does not exceed £30,810 per year.
- A **Travel Grant** of £100 for a student who needs to use public transport from home to school and a single bus journey is required each way. Payable only where household income does not exceed £30,810 per year and the student has received an Access Fund travel grant for 2007/8
- A **Travel grant** of £200 for a student who needs to use public transport from home to school where more than one bus journey is required each way. Payable only where household income

does not exceed £30,810 per annum and the student has received an Access Fund travel grant for 2007/8.

- **Higher Education Grant:** A grant of £80 for students who have applied for Higher Education in 2009/10 to help towards the cost of UCAS fee and/or University visits. Additional funds may be claimed to an overall maximum of £150 towards the student's costs – refunded on production of receipts/travel tickets etc. Payable where household income does not exceed £40,000 per year.
- **Field Trips (necessary for course of study):** A maximum contribution of £250 towards the student's costs – refunded on production of receipts/travel tickets etc. Payable where household income does not exceed £40,000 per year.

* In some circumstances students may not be eligible for an Education Maintenance Allowance. If a student's household is affected by a change in circumstances and household income drops to less than £30,810 per year we will consider the student for a Schools Access Fund Award.

Other factors which may mean that the student is not entitled to EMA but might be considered for financial support from the Access Fund include age, residence status, and study pattern.

The following table summarises the elements of **income assessed** support for which a student may be considered:

Type of Award	Student receives EMA (household income is less than £30,810 per year)	Student does not receive EMA and household income is between £30,810 to £40,000 per year	Student does not receive EMA due to other factors* and household income is less than £30,810 per year
Book and Equipment Grant	X	X	✓
Travel Grant (returning students who have received travel grant in 2007/8)	✓	X	✓
Higher Education Grant	✓	✓	✓
Field Trip Grant	✓	✓	✓

6. Disability Fund

The Disability Fund is available for students who have extra study or travel costs due to a disability (physical or sensory), learning difficulty or illness. Payment of funds may not be subject to an income assessment, but other evidence is likely to be required to support the claim as appropriate. The form must be endorsed and have the written support of the applicant's head of sixth form or form tutor. Disability Fund forms are available from Rotherham school sixth forms and the Student Support Section.

7. Emergency/Hardship Fund

If a student can demonstrate an exceptional or urgent financial need regardless of family and/or financial circumstances the Authority may consider making a contribution towards the student's costs from the Emergency/Hardship Fund.

Applications for Emergency/Hardship Awards must normally be supported by the student's course tutor at school. Hardship application forms are available from sixth form tutors.

8. Access Bursary

A bursary may be awarded to students with particular financial needs who are identified as belonging to groups under-represented in further education (see paragraph 1). Applications should be endorsed by a third party (e.g. teacher, social worker).

9. Appeals

Any applicant wishing to appeal against a decision on entitlement or payment of an Access Fund Award should state the reasons for appeal in writing in the first instance to the Head of Student Support. Should a resolution not be reached at this stage, the appeal will be directed to the Head of Resources and Access.

Applying for an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA):

Students born between 1 September 1989 and 31 August 1992 may apply for EMA. Applications may be made by contacting the national **Assessment and Payment Body 0800 121 8989** or to order an application pack visit www.direct.gov.uk/ema.

Applying for a Schools Access Fund award:

Applications forms for a Schools Access Fund Award are available from Rotherham schools with sixth forms and the Student Support Service from September 2008 and should be returned to:

**Student Support Service
Norfolk House
Walker Place
ROTHERHAM S65 1AS**

Telephone: 01709 822651

Email: student.enquiries@rotherham.gov.uk

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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