

Damian Green MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

23 March 2009

Dear Mr Green

I am writing in response to your Parliamentary Question 251689 that asked; "What the reasons are for the time taken to make education maintenance allowance payments in Kent in 2008-09."

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) payments to learners are made within 3-4 working days of authorisation by the learning provider. This is the time taken for the payment to reach the learners bank account through the BACS system.

Earlier in the Academic Year there were delays experienced by learners being able to enrol for EMA due to difficulties faced by the contractor running the Helpline, Assessment, and Payment Body (HAPB), Liberata. These difficulties led to an unacceptable number of learners waiting longer than they should for their EMA Notice of Entitlement (NoE). As a result of this unacceptable delay, Liberata were replaced by Capita. Since Capita took over the HAPB, learners have seen an improvement in the time taken to assess their EMA application and currently applications are assessed and the learner notified via the NoE within two weeks, against a stated return time of three weeks. Once a learner receives their NoE, they need to take it to their learning provider to enable payments to be made.

Yours sincerely



Mark Haysom CBE
Chief Executive

(Agreed by and electronically signed in his absence)