

Individual Mayoral Decision 10 March 2023	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: James Thomas, Corporate Director Children & Culture	Classification: Unrestricted
Accelerate Education: Education Maintenance Allowance/University Bursaries Staffing Cost	

Lead Member	Statutory Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning
Originating Officer(s)	Farhad Ahmed, Head of School Governance, Information and Traded Services
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	No
Reason for Key Decision	This report has been reviewed as not meeting the Key Decision criteria.
Forward Plan Notice Published	N/A
Exempt information	No exempt information
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	Accelerate Education This report supports the following priorities of the Council's Strategic Plan 2022 -2026: Priority 1: Tackling the cost-of-living crisis: Support children and young people through a package of measures including universal Free School Meals throughout primary and secondary school, educational maintenance allowances for those in post-16 years, and bursaries for young people who want to go to university.

Executive Summary

This report seeks approval to:

1. fund 4 posts in-year (2022/23), which is the capacity needed to process the large volume of applications received and the short timeframe available. Both the education maintenance allowance/university bursaries schemes were previously delivered over a 12-month period, whereas, we have 6 months to ensure successful delivery for 2022/23 academic year.
2. Approve recommended oversubscription process for the Mayor's EMA and University Bursary Award

Recommendations:

The Mayor is recommended to:

1. To approve a budget of £120k in-year for four FTE posts associated with delivery of the Mayor's educational maintenance allowances for those in post-16 years, and bursaries for young people who want to go to university 2022/23
2. Approve the recommended oversubscription process for the Mayor's EMA and University Bursary Award

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 It is a priority of this council and the new strategic plan to tackle the cost-of-living crisis, by supporting children and young people through a package of measures, including educational maintenance allowances for those in post-16 Education, and bursaries for young people who want to go to university. A quick decision is required to ensure both the educational maintenance allowance and university bursary schemes remain on track to successfully meet set deadlines.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 There is no sufficient capacity within existing services to undertake the work. An alternative option would be to not fund the capacity required, but this would mean the service will be unable to deliver on this priority.
- 2.2 The prioritisation process will need to be in place for the Education Maintenance allowance as we are oversubscribed.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

Funding Details

- 3.1 This report outlines the funding required for staffing to deliver on two key educational Mayoral pledges for improving and sustaining educational standards in the borough, which are the education maintenance allowance and university bursaries.

The capacity required until the end of the financial year is four FTE at grade F, which equates to £120k.

The administrative capacity initially envisaged to deliver both schemes for 2022/23 was £32.28K, as detailed in the now approved, 26 October 2022, Accelerate Education: Education Maintenance Allowance/University Bursaries cabinet report. However, subsequent benchmarking with the Benefits team who previously delivered both schemes, allocated two FTE at grade F, and further research identified that officers at the same grade currently carry out similar work delivering other grant schemes. Compounded by the short lead time and high volume of applications received, an additional stage in service delivery now need to prioritise EMA applications (not previously in place), four FTE at a total cost of £120k requires approval to ensure successful delivery.

- 3.2 The staffing and budget required to deliver the service for 2023/24 is anticipated to be £95k, which includes the funding of 2 FTE. The reduction in delivery cost, compared to this year, is associated with having a longer lead time to process, approve, and quality check applications, and arrange payments.

Recommended Mayor's EMA prioritisation process

- 3.3 We have received 1921 eligible applications, and as it stands, we are currently oversubscribed by 671 applications

As we have more eligible applications received than awards available, applications will be ranked in the following order of precedent:

1. Total Household income

Total Household income includes the total annual income from benefits (excluding Housing Benefits and Council Tax Reductions), and earnings.

Family income includes that of the applicant's partner, their parents, their parents' partners or their carers/guardians in the event that they do not live with their parents or partner. In the event that a tie-breaker must be implemented, consideration will be given to all the circumstances of the families involved.

Where the ranked list of eligible students is more than the maximum number of awards available (i.e., 1,250 long for 2022/23), awards will be offered to the first 1,250 and where those awards cannot be taken up, will be offered to the next applicant on the list until the number of awards is exhausted.

The budget for the Mayor's EMA is cash limited. Therefore, the council reserves the right to refuse any application made under this policy on the grounds that sufficient funds are not available.

Any late applications will not be considered.

Recommended Mayor's University Bursary prioritisation process

- 3.4 We have received 1747 eligible applications, and as it stands, we are currently oversubscribed by 1347 applications

As we have more eligible applications received than awards available, applications will be ranked in the following order of precedent:

1. Young people who were in public care where Tower Hamlets Council is the corporate parent through its responsibility to a 'former relevant child'.
2. Young people having had a statement of Special Educational Needs up to the ages of 16 and leaving school, or 19 and leaving sixth form.
3. Single parents who have a child living with them.
4. Teenage parents who have a child living with them.
5. Disable young people in receipt of Disability Living Allowance.
6. Young people living alone and in receipt of income support in their own right.
7. Young people living with their partner or in a family where the sole income is from benefits, ranked in descending age order, i.e. with preference given to the youngest.
8. Young people living with their partner or in a family where the income is partly made up of benefits (other than universal benefits such as Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit), ranked in descending age order, i.e. with preference given to the youngest.

Family income includes that of the applicant's partner, their parents, their parents' partners or their carers/guardian in the event that they do not live with their parents or partner. In the event that a tie-breaker must be implemented, consideration will be given to all the circumstances of the families involved.

Where the ranked list of eligible students is more than the maximum number of awards available (i.e., 400 long for 2022/23), awards will be offered to the first 400 and where those awards cannot be taken up, will be offered to the next applicant on the list until the number of awards is exhausted.

The budget for the Mayor's University Bursary Award is cash limited. Therefore, the council reserves the right to refuse any application made under this policy on the grounds that sufficient funds are not available.

Any late applications will not be considered.

- 3.5 For more detailed information on the education maintenance allowance and university bursaries, and the prioritisation processes please refer to linked reports.

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The budget approval will help reduce inequalities brought on by the high cost of living and support young people to improve their prospects in the job market. Approval will also support young people who come from households with low incomes.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

None

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 The Funding request is for an amount of £120k to be provided from earmarked reserves and repurposing of funds for the remaining period of 2022/23 year.
- 6.2 The oversubscription policy recognises that the allocation agreed for both EMA and the University Bursaries is cash limited and funding is not budgeted to offer above the agreed number of allowances or bursaries.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 This report is seeking approval for adequate funding for the previously approved (by legal) Accelerate Education: Education Maintenance Allowance/University Bursaries schemes

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- Accelerate Education: Education Maintenance Allowance/University Bursaries schemes
- Mayor's EMA and University Bursary Award Schemes – oversubscription process

Appendices

- NONE

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A