

**Briefing title** Mayor’s EMA and University Bursary Award Schemes – oversubscription process

**Prepared for** Cllr Maium Talukdar, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning

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**Reference** For Exec Support Use Only

## 1. Key Points

The Deputy Mayor is asked to:

- Approve the recommended oversubscription process for the Mayor’s EMA (set out in section 3.4 of the report)
- Approve the recommended oversubscription process for the Mayor’s University Bursary Award (set out in section 3.5 of the report)

## 2. Focus of the briefing

2.1 This briefing note provides a progress update on the Mayor’s Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and University Bursary Awards schemes, as well as providing recommendations for addressing the potential oversubscription issue for both schemes.

## 3. Options or implications

3.1 The Mayor’s EMA and University Bursary Awards schemes went live on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022. The application process is expected to close on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2022. As of 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022, the following number of applications have been received:

Scheme	No. of applications received (as of 5 <sup>th</sup> December 2022)	Maximum number of eligible applicants that can be supported
Mayor’s Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)	1,606	1,250
Mayor’s University Bursary Award	1,332	400

3.2 Based on the number of applications received to date, it is envisaged that both schemes are likely to be oversubscribed. The School Governance and Information Service are currently working through processing the application

forms, therefore, at this stage it is not known how many of the total applications received are eligible for the schemes.

- 3.3 In devising a proposal for the oversubscription process, evidence was also drawn on from the previous schemes, where possible, to establish whether these could be applied to the current schemes.

### **3.4. Mayor's EMA prioritisation process**

3.4.1 It is important to note that when the previous Tower Hamlets EMA scheme ran from 2010/11 until 2018/19 by the Benefits Service, there was no oversubscription process in place as all eligible applicants received payment. The grant payment was split across two payments covering the Autumn and Spring Terms. In 2018/19, 1,595 students applied, of which 1,145 were eligible and received their first payment.

3.4.2 The prioritisation process that was in place previously for the Mayor's Higher Education Award (as outlined in section 3.5.1) cannot be applied to the current Mayor's EMA scheme as the Education and Skills Funding Agency (EFSA) 16-19 Bursary for vulnerable groups use similar eligibility criteria for young people and this cohort. Schools are responsible for identifying and assessing student's eligibility and bursaries are paid direct to the students for both elements of the EFSA bursary scheme. Hence, students who are eligible and have been awarded the EFSA bursary (vulnerable groups or discretionary elements) are not eligible for the Mayor's EMA.

3.4.3 The eligibility criteria used for the EFSA bursary vulnerable groups are:

- you're in or you recently left local authority care
- you get Income Support or Universal Credit because you're financially supporting yourself
- you get Disability Living Allowance (DLA) in your name and either Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit
- you get Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in your name and either ESA or Universal Credit

3.4.4 Consequently, alternative options were explored for oversubscription of the Mayor's EMA, including total household income and the order of application forms received. The latter option of 'first come, first served' basis will not be a fair approach to oversubscription and will disadvantage applicants, hence the recommended option is to order applicants based on ascending annual household income.

### **Recommended oversubscription process**

- 3.4.5 Where there are more applications received than awards available, applications will be ranked in the following order of precedent:
1. Total Household income
- 3.4.6 Total Household income includes the total annual income from benefits (excluding Housing Benefits and Council Tax Reductions), and earnings.
- 3.4.7 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.
- 3.4.8 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.
- 3.4.9 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.
- 3.4.10 Any late applications will not be considered.

### **3.5 Mayor's University Bursary Award prioritisation process**

- 3.5.1 The previous Mayor's Higher Education Award ran for two years 2013-15 and 2014-16., with the grant split across 2 years. There was a prioritisation process in place for oversubscription and having reviewed the approach, the recommendation is to adopt the same approach for the current Mayor's University Bursary Awards scheme.

### **Recommended oversubscription process**

- 3.5.2 Where there are more 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.

3.5.3 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.

3.5.4 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.

3.5.5 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.

3.5.6 Any late applications will not be considered.

## 4 Other areas of consideration

4.1 Clarification is currently being sought from the Benefits Service on non-dependent income and disability benefits received by applicants/siblings. An applicant can receive PIP payment and still be working. This could then potentially go above the threshold set out for the scheme of 25k and result in that applicant being refused. A point to add is they can receive PIP and be working at the same time but this would be a very rare case for EMA students. Given the annual figures, the question is should the applicant's income be ignored if they are in receipt of PIP, but include if they were working or do not include applicants income at all if they are under the age of 21. In comparison with Universal Credit rules for non-dependent, it clearly states there are no charges for anyone under 21 and then also an exception for over 21 if they are in receipt of certain benefits. A decision will need to be made on this matter once clarification is received from the Benefits Service.

## 4.2 PIP payments overview

	Lower weekly rate	Annually	Higher weekly rate	Annually
<b>Daily living part</b>	£61.85	<b>£3,216.20</b>	£92.40	<b>£4,804.80</b>
<b>Mobility part</b>	£24.45	<b>£1,271.40</b>	£64.50	<b>£3,354.00</b>

## 5 Background

- 5.1 Two new schemes to support young people with post-16 education were approved by the council's Cabinet on 26th October 2022. The Mayor's Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and University Bursary Awards are aimed at improving and sustaining educational standards in the borough and form part of the wider 'Accelerate Education – Cost of Living' Programme:

	Workstream	Workstream Leads	Links to Strategic Plan Priority/Mayoral Pledges
1	Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)	Farhad Ahmed	Priority 1.1 - Establish a fund to support young people who want to stay in education post-16)  Priority 3.3 - Re-introduce Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) awards for A Level pupils
2	University Bursary Awards	Farhad Ahmed	Priority 1.2 - Create a fund to provide bursaries for young people who want to go to university
3	Extending Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) to Secondary Schools	Jenny Pittam/ Katy Scammell	Priority 3.2 - Explore extending universal free school meals to secondary schools
4	Expanding Breakfast Club provision in schools	Kate Smith	Priority 3.10 - Expand Breakfast Club provision in schools and continue to offer a free and healthy school lunch to all primary school pupils, including provision in the school holidays for those most in need

- 5.2 The Mayor's EMA will allow eligible students in sixth form schools and colleges to apply for £400 to support them with their studies for the 2022/23 academic year. A funding package of £500k was announced for the first year of EMA, which will support 1,250 students. The Mayor's University Bursary Award will support eligible students with living costs at university. Students can apply for

£1,500 to support with costs associated with their undergraduate studies, including accommodation, books, and resources. The total funding of £600k for the 2022/23 academic year will support 400 students in the first year.

5.3 These schemes are timely for families and will significantly help to alleviate the cost of living pressures and its impact on household incomes., ensuring young people are supported to stay on in post-16 education and university.

## 6 Where to find more information

- [Link](#) to the Accelerate Education Cabinet report, approved on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2022

## Approvals

**All** briefings must be agreed by the relevant Director prior to circulation and logged by a member of the Executive Support Team.

Name.....

Signature.....

Position.....

Date.....