



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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Pathways Education Maintenance Allowance

This paper, commissioned by the Committee for Employment and Learning (CEL) discusses Pathways for Young People Education Maintenance Allowance (Pathways EMA) in Northern Ireland (NI), including why it was established, how it operated, its uptake and a map detailing the location of organisations that provided it.

This information is provided to MLAs in support of their Assembly duties and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual.

Introduction

This paper provides information on Pathways EMA funding. It contains the following sections:

- **Section 1:** Pathways EMA – A discussion of the background to Pathways EMA and how it operated;
- **Section 2:** Pathways EMA Statistics – Statistics provided by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) on Pathways EMA and a map of provider organisations locations; and,
- **Section 3:** Discussion – Consideration of issues and a number of scrutiny points that the Committee for Employment and Learning (CEL) may wish to consider.

1 Pathways EMA

Pathways EMA¹ was introduced as part of the *Pathways to Success Strategy*². It was one of the Strategy's four key measures to assist young people facing barriers to entry to the labour market.³

As part of the overall *Pathways to Success Strategy*, the DEL provided for:⁴

*The introduction of a training allowance for young people participating on existing ESF programmes targeted at those who are NEET.*⁵

The Strategy went on to state that:

This allowance will be designed to ensure that there are effective incentives in place for young people to progress from provision which re-engages them with learning and develops basic skills to education and training programmes which provide the skills and qualifications to support moving into and success in work.

To be eligible for a Pathways EMA payment, young people had to be participating in a European Social Fund (ESF) Priority 1⁶ Project.⁷

In addition, the following eligibility criteria had to be met:

- a. Participants had to have attained the minimum school leaving age;

¹ Please note, there are two other types of EMA currently available in NI: Money to Learn EMA and Training for Success EMA.

Further information is available here: <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/education-maintenance-allowance-introduction>

² Northern Ireland Executive, Pathways to Success, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/del-pathways-to-success-v6.pdf>

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Not in Education, Employment or Training

⁶ Priority 1 aimed to help people into sustainable employment and was designed to contribute towards increasing the employment rate and reducing economic inactivity by extending employment opportunities, particularly for those groups of people at a disadvantage in the labour market.

⁷ NI Direct, Pathways for Young People - Education Maintenance Allowance <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/education-and-learning/14-19/education-maintenance-allowance-ema/pathways-for-young-people-education-maintenance-allowance.htm>

- b. Participants had to have been under 18 years of age, under 22 years if they have a disability or under 24 years if they have experience of care;
- c. Participants had to have been unemployed; and,
- d. Participants had to have been following an individual action plan (these plans are agreed between the young person and their project provider).

If this was the case, they received the following:

- a. £10 if they attended for less than 10 hours per week; or,
- b. £25 if they attended for 10 hours and over per week.

1.1 Closure of Pathways EMA

Pathways EMA **ended** on 31 March 2015.

The Minister for Employment and Learning stated in response to an Assembly Question on the 12 June 2015 regarding the closure of the scheme:⁸

The Pathways Education Maintenance Allowance was not abolished. It was introduced as one of a series of measures under the Pathways to Success strategy, supported by a ring-fenced and time-limited budget secured under the Executive's Economy and Jobs Initiative in 2012. These programmes, and the associated budget, came to an end on 31 March 2015.

In AQW 39818/11-15 the Minister for Employment and Learning, whilst discussing the impact of financial constraints on the DEL budget, stated that:⁹

I will also no longer have in my budget the £35m additional funding the Executive made available in 2012 to deliver the Pathways to Success strategy and other initiatives in response to the economic situation at that time.

Departmental correspondence to the CEL stated that:¹⁰

Pathways EMA was funded using resources secured through the DFP three year ring-fenced budget to support ESF and Collaboration and Innovation Fund (CIF) NEET projects which ended on 31 March 2015. This facility was put in place as ESF projects were not allowed to claim for participant training allowances under the previous ESF rules on expenditure.

⁸ Northern Ireland Assembly, Assembly Questions, AQW 47179/11-15

⁹ Northern Ireland Assembly, Assembly Questions, AQW 39818/11-15

¹⁰ DEL Correspondence with the Committee for Employment and Learning, May 2015

In response to AQW 46300/11-15, the Minister for Employment and Learning stated that:¹¹

Given the 2015/16 budget outcome, resources are not currently directly available in the DEL budget to extend the Pathways EMA scheme into the new European Social Fund (ESF) Programme 2014-2020, and it should be noted that, taking into account the low uptake of EMA in the previous round of projects and the significant funding from ESF, this should not provide an onerous burden to projects.

2 Pathways EMA Statistics

Table 1 below outlines the organisations that provided Pathways EMA to programme participants in March 2015 (the latest claim period for the 2007-2013 EMA period). It also includes the locations covered and the number of young people who received payments in the claim period.¹²

Table 1: Project Organisations claiming EMA in March 2015¹³

Project Organisations claiming Pathways EMA in March 2015	Locations Covered	Number of Young People
Ashton Community Trust	North Belfast	1
Barnardo's Northern Ireland	Belfast	21
Belfast South Community Resources	South Belfast	14
The Cedar Foundation	Ballymena, Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Dromore (Co. Tyrone), Newry	19
Derry Youth and Community Workshop Ltd.	Derry/Londonderry	3
Greater Village Regeneration Trust	South Belfast	14
Include Youth	Armagh, Ballymena, Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Newtownards, Omagh	63
NIACRO	Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Portadown	13
START 360 (Opportunity Youth)	Belfast	8
South Eastern Regional College (Steps for All)	Newtownards	10
South West College	Enniskillen, Omagh	3
The Orchardville Society	South Belfast	17

¹¹ Northern Ireland Assembly, Assembly Questions, AQW 46300/11-15

¹² Correspondence from the Department for Employment and Learning, July 2015

¹³ Table sourced via correspondence with the Department for Employment and Learning

Project Organisations claiming Pathways EMA in March 2015	Locations Covered	Number of Young People
The Prince's Trust	Antrim, Ballymena, Coleraine, Cookstown, Derry/Londonderry, East Belfast, Enniskillen, Larne, Magherafelt, Newry, Newtownabbey, Omagh	59
Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC)	Belfast	6
Workforce Training Services	West Belfast	14
Total		265

Figure 1 on the page following provides a map of the locations of the organisations that ran projects, which included Pathways EMA.

Please note, the size of the circles on the map do not relate to the size of the organisation or the extent of the area served by the organisation.

Further note that this map will be added to the NI Assembly's online interactive map portal following CEL's consideration of this paper.¹⁴

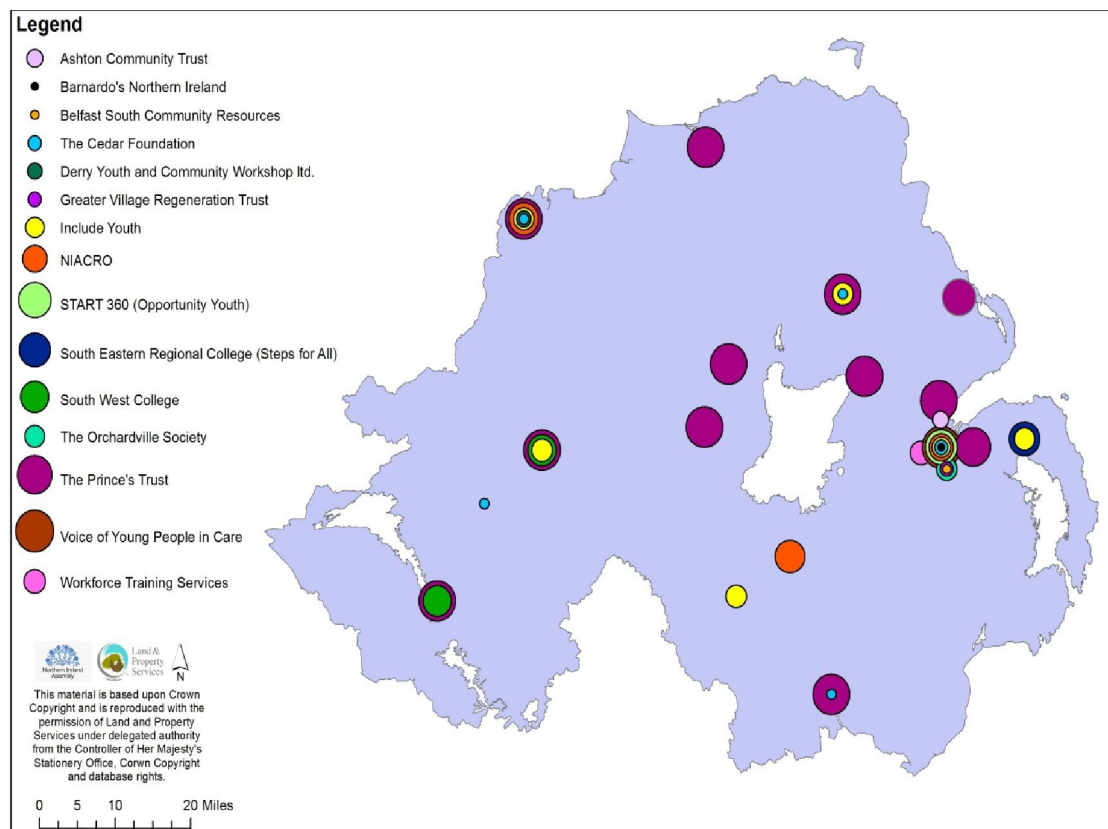


Figure 1: Project Organisations that claimed Pathways EMA in March 2015¹⁵

¹⁴ Available here: <http://niassembly.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html>

¹⁵ Ibid

3 Discussion

It is important to note that Pathways EMA is different to the other EMA allowances.

Pathways EMA was introduced as part of the *Pathways to Success Strategy* and funded through the Executive's Economy and Jobs Initiative. This support was provided as ESF projects (at that time) were unable to claim for participant training allowances due to ESF rules on expenditure.

Pathways EMA ended on the 31 March 2015 when the programmes and budget line for the Executive's Economy and Jobs Initiative ended.

However, the DEL stated in a response to an Assembly Question that it was possible under the ESF 2014 – 2020 programme for groups to include provision for similar allowances within their support schemes.¹⁶

Organisations that were successful in the recent call for applications to the European Social Fund (ESF) Programme are free to utilise the overhead cost allocations they are receiving to cover expenditure, such as allowances for participants.

The DEL goes on to quote from guidance issued to organisations in November 2014:¹⁷

It should be noted that the 40% ESF indirect Costs funding is to be used for all other costs associated with the delivery of your project and this should include participants' allowances, childcare, staff travel, rent, etc.

Correspondence from DEL states that:¹⁸

The reason for the change in funding arrangements of EMA is twofold. The European rules for claiming participant costs have changed in that projects can now claim for participant allowances whereas in the previous round this was not possible; and, in addition the Department has attempted to maximise ESF funding by channelling available resources into requests for 35% match funding, which is in addition to the 25% DEL contribution, as projects cannot progress without this in place. This support for match funding enables draw-down of the 40% ESF funding available to projects and is a more cost effective use of available resources.

However, there is some evidence that some groups were unaware of the need to claim for training allowances as indirect costs. In a letter to the Minister for Employment and Learning and provided to the CEL, Include Youth stated that:¹⁹

¹⁶ Northern Ireland Assembly, AQW 47179/11-15, answered 17 June 2015

¹⁷ See section 9.2, page 26 of Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme 2014-2020, Guidance notes for applicants, www.delni.gov.uk/esf-guidance-notes-dec-14-final4.docx

¹⁸ Correspondence from the Department for Employment and Learning, 8 July 2015.

¹⁹ Include Youth, 16 June 2015, Letter to the Minister for Employment and Learning

*We did not cost in a training allowance for participants in our ESF funding applications for the simple reason that we were not aware that we were expected to. The email that accompanied the letter of offer received in October 2012 explicitly stated that Pathways EMA was not funded through the European Social Fund programme. **During the 2014-20 ESF programme application process we received no guidance to suggest that this arrangement had changed.***²⁰

A briefing paper prepared by Include Youth also highlights that:²¹

*The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) sent a letter dated 1 April 2015 to all organisations administering the Pathways EMA informing them that as of 29 March 2015 Pathways for Young People EMA would no longer be funded by DEL. **This letter was the first and only indication that organisations received that this funding was being cut.***²²

At a meeting of the CEL, the Minister for Employment and Learning was questioned as to whether groups could re-profile their match funding in order to pay Pathways EMA. The Minister stated that:²³

They have headroom of about 40% for indirect costs, and they have the option of paying it from that. It will also be less bureaucratic in the sense that they take care of the matter themselves rather than having to go through the process of making claims to us and us vouching the claims, dare I say it, and paying them out.

The Minister went on to state that:²⁴

While there may be an impact on what the organisations do directly, if we were to directly do it as a Department there would be an even greater impact because there would be less funding across the piece for intervention work itself with young people in that context.

²⁰ Emphasis added.

²¹ Include Youth, Briefing on cutting of Pathways EMA by Department for Employment and Learning,

²² Emphasis added.

²³ Northern Ireland Assembly, Committee for Employment and Learning, Official Report 1 July 2015, European Social Fund 2014-2020, <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/committee-14101.pdf>

²⁴ Ibid

The CEL may wish to consider the following scrutiny points:

- a. When did the DEL become aware there would be further funding available for Pathways EMA?**
- b. Did the DEL clearly inform groups that the Pathways EMA would cease on the 31 March 2015 prior to its ending?**
- c. If so, what form did this notice take and when did it occur?**
- d. Did the notice period allow sufficient time for groups to recalculate their project costs and submit applications for ESF 2014 - 2020?**
- e. How many young people in total, for each project received Pathways EMA during the 2007-2013 ESF programme?**
- f. Is there any information on the outcomes for young people who received Pathways EMA; and for those who did not?**