

## CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS

### Education Maintenance Allowances 2020-21

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) provides financial support for young people aged 16 to 19 years from low-income households to overcome financial barriers to participate in school or college courses, or in an Activity Agreement. It is also available to those who are home-educated.

The programme aims to increase participation and retention in post-compulsory education.

## Contents

<b>Education Maintenance Allowances 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Contents .....	2
1. Background information .....	3
2. Impact of Covid .....	3
3. EMA recipients .....	4
4. EMA payments .....	6
Appendix A – Methodology note.....	7

## 1. Background information

The EMA is an entitlement and demand led programme that aims to provide support for young people aged 16 to 19 from low income families to overcome financial barriers to stay on in post-16 education; either in school or on a college course, or to take up an Activity Agreement.

The programme is administered by local authorities and colleges on behalf of Scottish Ministers. A weekly payment of £30 is made to a young person and is subject to attendance and agreement of a learning plan.

Additional information can be found at [www.mygov.scot/ema](http://www.mygov.scot/ema). This release is accompanied by online tables that cover more detailed analysis.

## 2. Impact of Covid and Data Quality

The COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March 2020 by the World Health Organisation, during the 2019-20 academic year. During the first national lockdown, Scottish schools and colleges were closed and learning was moved online where possible. These changes had an impact on how some EMA payments were administered and recorded by schools and local authorities. The school data recorded in this release includes only payments made via the SEEMiS system. During the pandemic period, some school staff no longer had access to SEEMiS to authorise payments, so the payments were made directly. As such, the 2019-20 spend reported here will be lower than the actual spend on EMA in that period. In addition, some local authorities have confirmed they suspended the requirement for confirmation of attendance during lockdown periods, meaning that all eligible recipients received payments. As a result, where these payments were made via SEEMiS, they are higher than would be expected in comparison with previous years.

For the reasons listed above, data for 2019-20 should not be compared to other years and will be shown as a break in any time series within figures and tables in this report.

The 2020-21 academic year saw continued COVID-19 related challenges for both schools and colleges with closures, online learning and reduced attendance at various points through the year. Data covering this year is also likely to be impacted by the issues highlighted above.

Due to the impact of COVID on EMAs and the time series, these data are being published as Official Statistics, rather than National Statistics. This approach was agreed with the Chief Statistician for Scotland and the Director General for Regulation at the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). Further details of this change is included on the OSR website:

[Ed Humpherson response to Alastair McAlpine: Temporary suspension of National Statistics status for Education Maintenance Allowances – Office for Statistics Regulation \(statisticsauthority.gov.uk\)](https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/consultation-reponses/response-to-alastair-mcalpine-temporary-suspension-of-national-statistics-status-for-education-maintenance-allowances/)

The data should be treated with caution when interpreting results. It is inadvisable to compare data across the COVID-19 period, from 2018-19 to 2020-21. The commentary below concentrates on the 2020-21 data with no time series comparisons, however the long-term trends can be seen in the charts. The data is sufficiently consistent to provide various breakdowns including age, gender and deprivation.

Further information on the data is included in Annex A.

### 3. EMA recipients

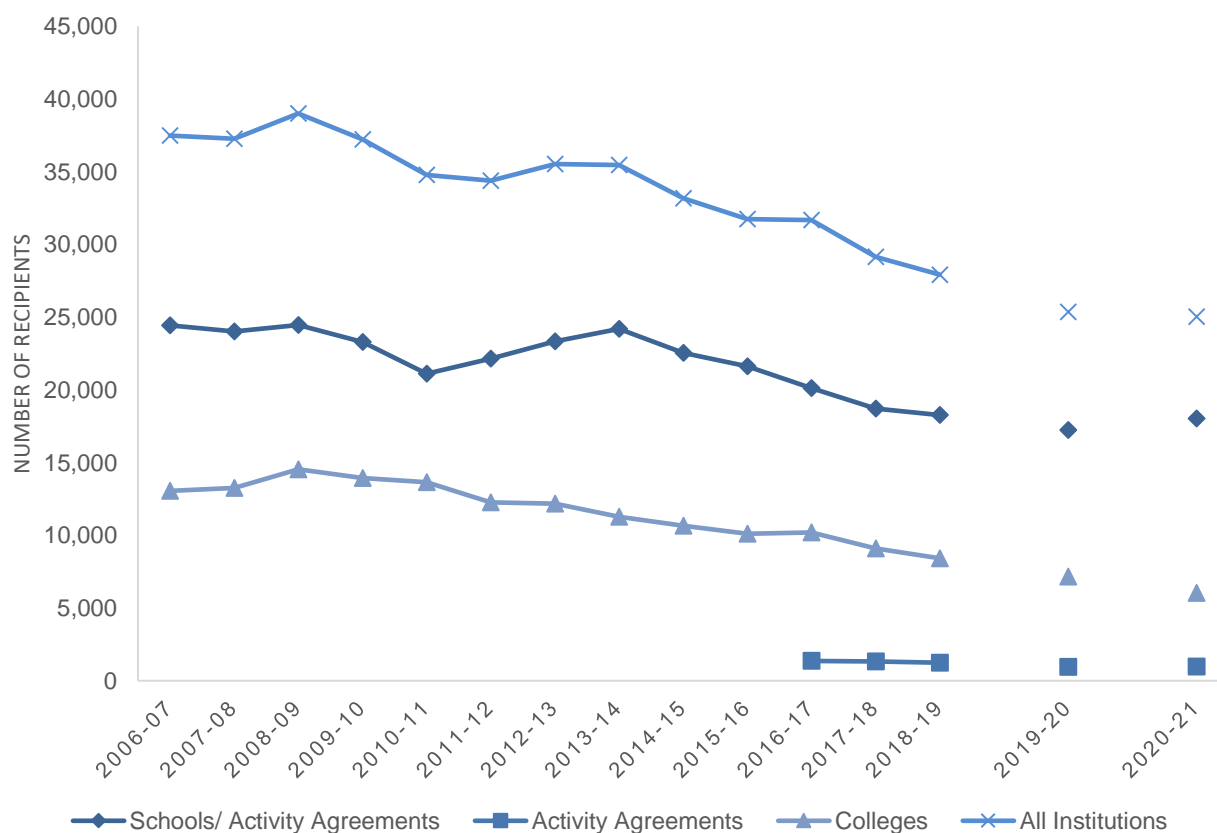
#### Types of EMA

For a young person to receive EMA support they must first meet all the eligibility criteria. This includes meeting residency criteria; having a household income under the EMA income threshold; be of an eligible age, and be taking part in an eligible course of learning.

#### Total numbers

In 2020-21 there were 25,030 young people who received EMA payments. Figure 1 shows how the number of recipients, by institution type, has changed over time.

**Figure 1: EMA recipients by type, 2006-07 to 2020-21**



Note: it is not possible to differentiate between the number of recipients from schools or activity agreements prior to 2016-17.

Due to COVID, the 2019-20 is a break in the series and should not be compared.

In 2020-21, 72% of EMA recipients were school pupils, 24% were college students and the remaining 4% were young people on activity agreements.

It is estimated that, around 15.2% of all Scottish young people aged 16-18 were in receipt of EMA in 2020-21. The proportion has been decreasing since 2016-17, when it was around 18.7% of the 16-18 population.

### Gender

Historically more females than males have claimed EMA. In 2020-21, 52% of overall EMA recipients were female and 48% were male. For schools, 53% of recipients were female, while for colleges 51% of recipients were female.

### Age

In 2020-21, 64% of EMA recipients were 16 years and under and 34% were 17 years old. Only 2% of recipients were aged 18 years and over.

Young people cannot receive EMA until they reach 16 years of age. However, as the analysis is based on age as at 30th September of the academic year, some recipients are recorded as being 15 years old.

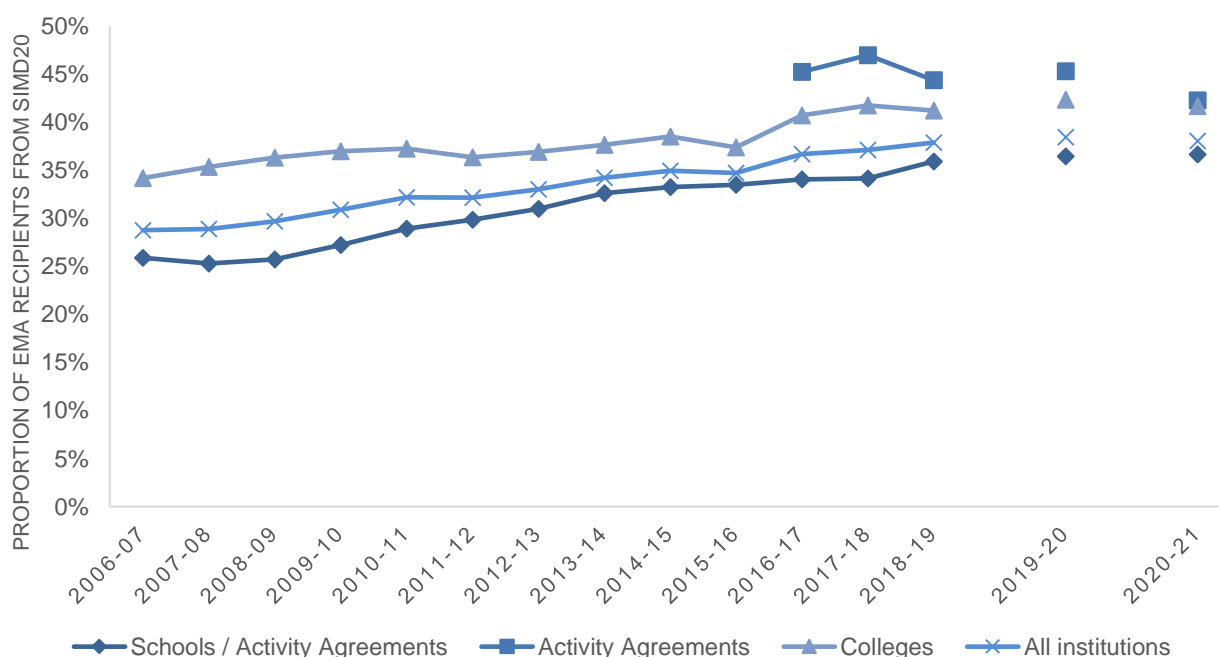
There has been a notable drop in recipients aged 18 and over at college in recent years, from almost 1,970 in 2016-17 to 265 in 2020-21, as colleges moved from providing EMA payments to bursaries for eligible 18-year old college students.

### Deprivation

Deprivation is measured using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

38% of EMA recipients were from the 20% most deprived areas in 2020-21.

**Figure 2: EMA recipients from 20% most deprived areas by type, 2006-07 to 2020-21**



Note: it is not possible to differentiate between the number of recipients from schools or activity agreements prior to 2016-17.

Due to COVID-19, the 2019-20 is a break in the series and should not be compared.

Figure 2 shows the proportion of recipients from the 20% most deprived areas over time, and shows an increase for all types of EMA over the year for all institution types.

This proportion has typically been higher for college (42% in 2020-21) than for school (37%) students. This is partly explained by the higher proportion of students at Scotland's colleges from deprived areas.

## **4. EMA payments**

### **Total spend**

The total spend on EMA in 2020-21 was £22.1 million. Of this, £16.8 million was spent on school recipients (76% of total payments), £4.6 million on college payments (21%) and £0.6 million on activity agreements (3%).

### **Average payment per person, by gender**

The average payment per EMA recipient was £882 in 2020-21.

Amongst EMA recipients, school students received on average £933 over the academic year, college students £763 and activity agreements £667. The main difference is due to the number of weeks in which each type is eligible to receive the benefit over the year.

On average, female recipients receive £891, slightly more than male recipients (£872).

### **Average payment per person, by deprivation**

Students from the most deprived areas are more likely to receive EMA: 9,525 recipients from Quintile 1 (the most deprived) versus 1,930 recipients from Quintile 5 (the least deprived).

## **Appendix A – Methodology note**

### **Data sources**

For schools and activity agreements, the Scottish Government collects the data on EMAs from local authorities (the administrators of the EMA payments) and collated by SEEMiS.

For colleges, the data is collected from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), who administer, collate and validate the data.

Where analysis refers to institutions rather than schools or colleges, data from both Scottish schools and Scottish colleges have been combined to report on all Scottish institutions.

### **Coverage**

EMA is a means tested payment to young people participating in a school or college, or an activity agreement. The data included in this publication cover those who participate in the EMA programme, but not necessarily all of those who were eligible to participate.

Although measures are taken within both the school and college data to minimise the chances of more than one record being created for the same student, an element of duplication remains possible where a student moves from school into college in the same academic year. At the moment there is no reliable way of identifying such cases.

### **Age**

The age of recipient refers to their age as at 30th September in the year of study. Although young people cannot receive EMA until they are 16 years old, some are recorded as being 15 for this reason.

### **Population estimate**

The population estimates are based on the National Records of Scotland's mid-year estimates. For 16-18 year olds, the estimates are obtained by ageing 13 year olds from the appropriate number of years earlier. This approach avoids the estimates being susceptible to changes in net migration (including incoming overseas students) during these ages.

### **Deprived areas of Scotland**

Analysis of entrants from deprived areas of Scotland is based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

EMA recipients from the 20% most deprived areas are those whose home address was within one of the 20% lowest ranked areas in Scotland. The SIMD is split into 6,976 small areas called Data Zones, with 20 per cent lowest ranked areas comprising of Data Zones 1 to 1,395. A process of postcode matching was undertaken to identify which Data Zones recipients belong to. In 2020-21, 99.6% of

recipients were successfully matched through this process. Those recipients whose postcodes belonged to one of the 20% lowest ranked Data Zones in the SIMD are classified as entrants from deprived areas.

SIMD 2016 has been used for academic years 2016-17 to 2020-21. SIMD 2012 has been used for academic years 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16. SIMD 2009 was used for all other academic years.

More information can be found at [www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD).

### **Coverage of Spend Data**

The financial figures in this publication refer to the amount spent on EMA payments only. This publication does not cover any other costs associated with the EMA programme, such as administrative costs.

Historically, a small percentage of local authority payments (estimated in previous years to be less than 0.5%) are not recorded on management information systems. As detailed in section 2, it is anticipated that there were more payments made outwith the SEEMiS systems in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years due to the impact of the COVID pandemic. These 'manual' payments are excluded from the figures presented in this publication.

### **Data presentation**

In all tables and figures, the number of recipients has been rounded to the nearest 5. Figures on EMA spend have been rounded to the nearest pound. Unknown values are not displayed individually in tables but are included in totals. Figures may not sum to totals due to rounding and the inclusion of unknown values. Unless stated otherwise, percentages are calculated from unrounded values.



## **An Official Statistics publication for Scotland**

Official and National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Both undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs and are produced free from any political interference.

Correspondence and enquiries

For enquiries about this publication please contact:

Michael Hunter

Advanced Learning and Skills Analysis,

e-mail: [FHEstatistics@gov.scot](mailto:FHEstatistics@gov.scot)

For general enquiries about Scottish Government statistics please contact:

Office of the Chief Statistician, Telephone: 0131 244 0442,

e-mail: [statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

### **How to access background or source data**

The data collected for this statistical bulletin may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact [FHEstatistics@gov.scot](mailto:FHEstatistics@gov.scot) for further information.

### **Complaints and suggestions**

If you are not satisfied with our service or have any comments or suggestions, please write to the Chief Statistician, GR, St Andrews House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG, Telephone: (0131) 244 0302, e-mail [statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.enquiries@scotland.gsi.gov.uk).

If you would like to be consulted about statistical collections or receive notification of publications, please register your interest at [www.gov.scot/scotstat](http://www.gov.scot/scotstat)

Details of forthcoming publications can be found at [www.gov.scot/statistics](http://www.gov.scot/statistics)

ISBN: 978-1-80435-796-5

### **Crown Copyright**

You may use or re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. See:

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/)

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA  
PPDAS1126162 (08/22)