

**Paying young people to stay on at school – does it work? Evidence
from the evaluation of the piloting of the Education Maintenance
Allowance (EMA)**

SKOPE Research Paper No. 69, December 2006

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**ESRC funded Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance
Oxford and Cardiff Universities**

Editor's Foreword

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Abstract

With a view to raising participation, retention and achievement rates in post-16 education among 16-18 year olds, particularly among those from lower-income families, the piloting of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) began in September 1999. The EMA is an allowance paid to young people (or in some areas in the piloting phase, to their parents), eligibility for which is dependent on parental income. EMAs were rolled out nationally from September 2004. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) funded a large-scale study over a five-year period. The evaluation comprised large-scale longitudinal quantitative surveys, longitudinal qualitative studies of young people and their parents, longitudinal qualitative studies of the local implementation and delivery of EMA, and narrative studies which collected socio-demographic information. This paper presents some key findings from the evaluation and some emerging policy developments following the national implementation of the EMA policy initiative.

Introduction

With a view to raising participation, retention and achievement rates in post-16 education among 16-18 year olds, particularly among those from lower-income families, the piloting of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) began in September 1999. The EMA is an allowance paid to young people (or in some areas in the piloting phase, to their parents), eligibility for which is dependent on parental income. The decision to roll out EMAs nationally from September 2004 was announced in the 2002 Spending Review.

This paper will draw together evidence collected from the large-scale evaluation of the piloting of the EMA to explore the impact of the initiative in terms of meeting its policy aims. It will also highlight how the national delivery of EMA varies from the models used during the pilot phase. The second part of this paper will extract findings from the longitudinal quantitative surveys designed to evaluate the impact of EMA, in order to explore other key aspects of post-16 transitions, most notably the influence of parents on young people's post-16 decision-making and the 'added value' of post-16 education on young people's entry points into the labour market. The paper will conclude with a discussion on the current policy drive to extend an EMA type of allowance beyond its use in post-16 education, to other groups of young people, for example, young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or in jobs without training, to serve the dual function of extending participation in formal learning and at the same time, of creating a common 'youth allowance'.

Policy context

The impetus to pilot a new system of financial support targeted at young people in post-16 education was driven both by a need to boost post-16 education participation rates and by evidence which highlighted the chaotic state of discretionary funding available to 16-19 year olds in full-time education. The main policy aim of the EMA pilots was to increase participation, retention and achievement levels in post-16 education amongst young people who otherwise could not afford to remain in full-time learning. In particular, the policy initiative focused on raising post-16 education participation rates among groups of young people who had lower than average staying-on rates. This included young people from lower-income families and young people with lower levels of Year 11 [aged 16] achievement.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the UK had experienced a period of growth in the proportion of 16-19 year-olds who elected to remain in post-compulsory education. For example, among 16 year olds, 55 per cent were in full-time post-16 education in 1989. This percentage rose to 71.5 per cent in 1994 (DfEE, 1999). Increases in the post-16 education population, were attributed to policy initiatives, such as the introduction of the GCSE, which boosted Year 11 attainment rates, as well as to the demise of the traditional youth labour market (Maguire and Maguire, 1997). However, by the early to mid-1990s, rates of increase in post-16 education had slowed down and were projected to be halting (Green and Ainley, 1995; Richardson, Spours, Woolhouse and Young, 1995). In fact, between 1995 and 1999 (the year when EMA was introduced), post-16 participation rates among 16 year olds remained fairly constant at between 70 and 71 per cent of each cohort. In addition, post-16 education participation rates did not compare favourably with those of some of the UK's economic competitors, such as Japan, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, France and the USA (Green and Steedman, 1993; OECD 1995). The UK also witnessed substantial decreases in the proportion of young people participating in education at the end of each post compulsory year unlike countries such as France, Germany, Scandinavia or Japan (Richardson, Spours, Woolhouse and Young, 1995).

Steedman and Green (1996) had argued that those groups of young people who were least likely to remain in full-time education had a greater propensity to suffer financial constraints which inhibited their participation in full-time learning (Steedman and Green, 1996). They also highlighted the findings from research which suggested that financial hardship may have been discouraging enrolment to a greater degree than previously envisaged, as LEAs continued to reduce discretionary maintenance awards (Green and Ainley, 1995). Alongside this evidence, the subsequent publication of the influential Kennedy Report in 1997, argued that financial support for learners was a crucial factor in achieving wider participation and in reducing drop-out in further education. Financial support for students in further education was found to be disparate, in that it was subject to variations in local decision-making, so that where a student lived determined how much or how little financial support they would receive. It was recommended that student financial support services were in need of review if qualification attainment rates were to be improved (Kennedy, 1997).

Prior to the introduction of EMA, the primary sources of financial support open to 16-19 year olds wishing to study full-time were discretionary awards and fee

remission. In 1994/5 approximately five per cent of all FE students received discretionary awards (Payne and Callender, 1997). Local Education Authorities (LEAs) made available Discretionary Awards to individual students to cover some living and travel costs. During the 1990s, the number of LEAs which had continued to offer discretionary awards had fallen and the overall value of awards that had been offered had also fallen as a direct result of budgetary restrictions. There had been a ten per cent decline in expenditure on all further education discretionary awards between 1990 and 1999. In 1994/5, the average value of an award was £665 for the five per cent of all FE students in England who had received them (PSI, 1997). In addition, the small proportion of FE students who did receive awards was not confined to the 16-19 age range. On the contrary, it included the entire FE population.

The EMA was modelled on an Australian student income policy. In an attempt to counter rising youth unemployment and low school and higher education participation rates, the Australian government introduced AUSTUDY in 1986/87. AUSTUDY was means-tested and targeted at young people in their last two years of school and at students in higher education. The benefit was means-tested on parental income and it was paid directly to the young person. However, unlike in both the piloting and the national delivery of EMA, a limit was set on the amount of income students could earn from part-time work.

An evaluation of AUSTUDY sought to determine whether increases in participation were due to the introduction of student support policies and/or due to a deteriorating youth labour market. In addition, the evaluation attempted to ascertain whether a young person from a low income household was more likely to participate in post-compulsory education as a result of changes made to benefit regulations for both students and the unemployed. Results from the evaluation showed that, over the 1989-93 period participation rates among young people from less financially privileged backgrounds had increased by between three-and-a-half and four percentage points as a result of the initiative (Dearden and Heath, 1996). The measure within the piloting of EMA was far broader, comprising three objectives. These were to evaluate the extent to which a package of financial support increased participation, retention and achievement rates in post-16 education among 16-19 year olds from lower-income families.

Methodology

The piloting of the EMA began in 15 Local Education Authority (LEA) areas from September 1999 and was subsequently extended to a further 41 LEAs in England in September 2000. During the pilot phase, the full EMA weekly allowance (of £30 or £40) was payable if the total parental gross taxable income did not exceed £13,000, while for those with a total parental income of between £13,000 and £30,000 (£20,000 for the London pilot), a progressively tapered EMA down to a minimum of £5 was payable. Four variants of EMAs were tested in the original 15 pilot areas. These offered varying weekly allowances, as well as bonuses for retention and achievement. In three of the four variants, the weekly allowance was paid directly to the young person during term time; in the fourth, payment was made to the parent. Payment was made for a maximum of two years, although some young people with special educational needs were entitled to payments for a third year.

The evaluation of the piloting of the EMA was one of the largest studies ever commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills, or indeed by any government department. The evaluation was undertaken in the original 15 pilot areas by a consortium of research organisations between 1999 and 2004. It was co-ordinated by the Centre for Research in Social Policy (CRSP) at Loughborough University. The other organisations who formed part of the consortium were:

- The Institute for Fiscal Studies;
- The National Centre for Social Research;
- The National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling; and
- The Institute for Employment Research.

The evaluation comprised the following:

- Large-scale longitudinal quantitative surveys of young people and their parents;
- Longitudinal qualitative studies of young people and their parents;
- Longitudinal qualitative studies of the local implementation and delivery of the EMA; and
- Narrative studies which collected socio-demographic information on both pilot and control areas.

Large-scale longitudinal quantitative surveys

The major part of the evaluation comprised the large-scale longitudinal surveys which were conducted in 10 of the original 15 EMA pilot areas and in a number of control areas where EMA was not being piloted. The surveys included interviews with random samples of young people and their parents from two cohorts in each pilot and control area. The target samples were drawn from Child Benefit records and the initial sample size for each EMA cohort was approximately 11,000 young people. The first cohort of young people left compulsory education in 1999 and the second cohort completed Year 11 in 2000. Each cohort of young people was followed up on an annual basis over a three-year period. The first wave of interviews with each cohort was conducted face-to-face and included an interview with a parent or guardian of the young person. Subsequent interviews with young people were conducted through telephone follow-up.

While the large-scale surveys were designed to measure the impact of EMA on education participation, retention and achievement rates among 16-19 year olds, they also collected a wealth of data on this age group in relation to their entry into and exits from work, training and NEET group status. The findings presented in this paper are drawn from four EMA quantitative evaluation reports (Ashworth et al., 2001, Ashworth et al., 2002, Middleton et al., 2003 and Middleton et al., 2005).

Two statistical methods were utilised to analyse the data. The first matched pilot and control areas at an area level and provided a *descriptive* analysis of the data. Descriptive techniques allow the data to be explored in detail, although the analysis cannot provide accurate measures of the effect of EMA. The latter was achieved using propensity score matching or *individual matching*, which involved conducting comparisons at an individual level. Each individual in pilot areas was matched with an individual in the control area on a range of characteristics, information about which was collected from young people and their parents during the survey. If the range of important characteristics is identically matched between individuals in pilot and control areas, then the only difference between the two individuals, was the availability of EMA in the pilot areas. Therefore, any observed differences in post-16 education participation, retention and achievement rates between pilot and control areas was measured in relation to an EMA effect (Ashworth et al., 2001 and Middleton et al., 2003).

It may be questioned why the large-scale longitudinal surveys were confined to 10 of the original 15 pilot areas. The original evaluation design was required to include proposals to undertake a random assignment experiment in five pilot areas. Young people were to be allocated the EMA at random to either a control or a treatment group. Randomisation removes the problems associated with matching by ensuring that young people in the control and treatment groups share similar characteristics (subject to sufficiently large sample sizes). However, the contentious issue which surrounds a random assignment design is the point at which random allocation occurs. So, how do you give a payment at random to some young people to stay on in education and not to others and justify this approach within local communities? While the attraction of testing a random assignment methodology within a large-scale methodology was attractive to some policy makers, the anticipated political and social fall-out from its implementation resulted in the proposals being withdrawn. Instead, the five pilot areas earmarked to trial random assignment, implemented their own eligibility criteria to determine the receipt of the EMA in the first year of the pilot and were subject to an evaluation which comprised a review of administrative data in each area.

EMA transport pilots and EMA pilots for vulnerable groups

The influential ‘Bridging the Gap’ report, which was published in 1999 by the Social Exclusion Unit included a government commitment to introduce an EMA which was directed at meeting the needs of young people who lived in areas with poor transport provision and at ‘vulnerable’ groups. The report claimed that one potential barrier to some young people from remaining in post-16 education was poor transport provision and that the worst areas for accessible transport were metropolitan and rural areas. In addition, it was proposed that a set of small scale EMA pilots should be set up which tested the additional support that might be required by young people who were homeless, had disabilities or were teenage parents (SEU, 1999).

From September 2000, the piloting of two variants of EMA began in four areas (two urban/two rural), in an attempt to measure whether an EMA allowance that was targeted at meeting the costs of travelling to and from a school or college, motivated more young people to participate and complete post-16 education. The transport variants of the EMA were subject to an evaluation which modelled the design applied to the original 15 pilot areas. Evaluation results, produced from quantitative data, found

no significant impact of the EMA transport models on post-16 participation and retention rates (Perren et al, 2003). Consequently, a transport model of the EMA was not included within the national implementation of the policy initiative.

In addition, from September 2000, four of the original fifteen pilot areas introduced flexibilities to the EMA to meet the needs of more disadvantaged or vulnerable groups of young people. The flexibilities included an extension to EMA entitlement to three years; the ability to study outside mainstream education; the availability of studying non-mainstream provision such as life skills, numeracy and literacy courses and an agreement that young people who were estranged from their families were classified as independent students irrespective of whether they were in receipt of Income Support. Childcare Pilots also began in five areas, three of which were EMA pilot areas. The majority of the costs of childcare were offered as an incentive to teenage parents to return to full-time learning (depending on household income).

Evaluation evidence on the performance of the EMA Vulnerable Pilots was collected both through the quantitative surveys which were conducted in the original ten EMA pilot areas and through in-depth qualitative studies which were conducted in the pilot areas over a two-year period. A wealth of data was collected on the ability of targeted payments to re-engage different groups of vulnerable young people. The evaluation concluded that 're-engaging vulnerable young people was an incremental process throughout which intensive support was required so that these young people could overcome some of the barriers to education they experienced' (Dobson et al, 2003; p27). The interviews with young people also highlighted the importance of effective and sympathetic support to enable them to resolve personal issues, while at the same time meeting educational requirements.

While some of the increased flexibilities that were offered to vulnerable groups of young people were included within the national implementation of the EMA from September 2004, such as a three-year entitlement to funding, the relaxation of regulations surrounding where a young person might study each week and for how long were abandoned. Within the national model of EMA, all young people who are in receipt of the allowance are required to study full-time, which equates to 15 or more study hours each week, with a recognised education provider, which can be a tall order for some young people who are classified as 'vulnerable'. The evaluation evidence suggested that many young people in the sample had negative experiences of

compulsory education and much lower levels of Year 11 achievement. In addition, homeless young people and teenage parents reported high incidences of attendance problems, truancy and exclusion during Year 10 and Year 11.

Data collected for the evaluation of the EMA pilots for vulnerable young people and childcare pilots could be of direct relevance to policy makers planning the piloting of Activity Agreements for 16 and 17 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEETs), which are being piloted from April 2006. NEET young people will be offered a weekly allowance in return for committing to a plan and completing agreed activities to reintegrate them back into learning. Since the NEET population includes a proportion of young people who could be described as 'vulnerable', lessons learnt through the piloting of the EMA are of direct relevance in this context and could be effectively utilised as part of future policy development.

The four variants tested in the pilot phase

The EMA means-tested weekly allowance was paid each week during term-time. In addition, non-means tested retention bonus payments were paid to young people at the end of each term, as well as an achievement bonus upon course completion. EMA recipients (and their parents) were required to sign Learning Agreements at the beginning of their learning programmes which outlined the regulations surrounding the receipt of the EMA, as well as individual learning targets, which if completed, would trigger bonus payments. Table 1 sets out the four variants of the EMA which were tested during the pilot phase.

Evaluation evidence demonstrated that the £30 weekly payment was more effective than the higher weekly allowance of £40 per week offered in Variant 2, in terms of raising (initial) participation rates in post-16 education. Furthermore, attendance problems were more commonly reported in Variant 2 (the £40 per week model) which suggested that by paying a higher allowance to young people did not in itself, enhance school/college attendance rates. However, these findings need to be countered by evidence from the evaluation of the local implementation of the initiative, which found that some pilot areas were more robust than others, in setting up and monitoring attendance monitoring systems, which may account for the higher or equal rates of attendance problems in Variant 2 pilot areas. (Middleton et al, 2003, Maguire et al, 2001 and 2002, Maguire and Maguire, 2003). The four variants also differed in

terms of to whom EMA was paid, with the weekly allowance being paid to the young person in Variants 1, 2 and 4 areas and to the young person’s parents in the Variant 3 areas. The EMA was found to be more effective in increasing post-16 participation rates in Years 12 and 13 in pilot areas where the weekly payment was made directly to the young person. (Ashworth et al, 2002).

Table 1. EMA variants

EMA Variants	Amount of money paid			LEA Pilot Areas
	Maximum weekly payment	Termly Bonuses	Achievement Bonus	
Variant 1	£30	£50	£50	Middlesborough, Walsall, Southampton, Leeds, Inner London (Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Greenwich)
Variant 2	£40	£50	£50	Oldham, City of Nottingham
Variant 3	£30 paid to parents	£50	£50	Bolton, Doncaster
Variant 4	£30	£80	£140	Stoke-on-Trent, Gatehead
Rural variant (same as variant 1)	£30	£50	£50	Cornwall

Source: Adapted from Ashworth et al, 2001, Ashworth et al 2002 and Middleton et al, 2003.

The impact of the EMA on post-16 participation, retention and achievement rates

The evaluation also sought to unravel, if increases in post-16 participation and retention were achieved, where the ‘pull’ had occurred within destination statistics for 16, 17 and 18 year olds. For example, to what extent were increases in post–16 education participation rates achieved through a decline in the proportion of young people entering the NEET group or the work/training groups.

Among EMA eligible young people, the propensity score matching (PSM) or matching techniques estimated that the overall impact of EMA, for both men and women, had been to increase Year 12 participation in full-time education by 5.9 percentage points (Table 2). Consequently, in EMA pilot areas, fewer young people had entered the NEET group and the work/training groups. 15 per cent of young people were in the NEET group in pilot areas compared to 17.4 per cent of young people in control areas. In pilot areas, 13.7 per cent of young people were in work/training compared to 17.1 per cent in control areas (Ashworth et al., 2002). However, in the early stages of the evaluation, PSM analysis did not differentiate between young people who entered work with training (including government supported training provision) and young people who entered work without training. Therefore it was not possible to unpack the extent to which increases in post-16 participation rates which resulted from the piloting of EMA, had been achieved by fewer young people entering low level, unskilled work or government supported training or work with training.

Table 2. Impact of EMA of Year 12 destination: Participation effect

	Column per cent		
	Pilot	Control	Difference
Full-time education	71.3	65.5	5.9
Work / training	13.7	17.1	-3.4
NEET	15.0	17.4	-2.4
Sample size	8923	8923	

Base: All EMA eligible young people. Cohort 1 and 2 combined. Matched sample. Pilot weights.

Source: Adapted from Ashworth et al, 2002.

In relation to post-16 education retention rates, the overall impact of EMA on the eligible population had been to increase retention rates in Year 13 in pilot areas by 6.2 percentage points. This had been achieved in pilot areas by making a limited reduction in the proportion of young people entering the NEET group (14.3 per cent of young people in pilot areas were in the NEET group, compared to 15.1 per cent in control areas). Figures presented in Table 3 also demonstrate that increases in post-16 retention

rates had resulted from the reduction in the proportion of young people in pilot areas who entered the work/training group (Middleton et al., 2003). Again, it is not possible to untangle whether the retention effect of EMA had been achieved through fewer young people entering unskilled work or work with training. However, the evaluation evidence does point to the introduction of EMA having had a much greater impact on labour market entry, as opposed to having significantly reduced the size of the NEET group.

Table 3. Impact of EMA of Year 13 destination: Retention effect

	Pilot	Control	Column per cent Difference
Full-time education	64.1	57.9	6.2
Work / training	21.6	27.0	-5.4
NEET	14.3	15.1	-0.8
Sample size	6638		

Base: All EMA eligible young people. Cohort 1 and 2 combined. Matched sample. Pilot weights.

Source: Adapted from Middleton et al, 2003.

EMA and post-16 destinations

In policy terms, disaggregating the extent to which increases in post-16 education participation and retention rates which occurred in EMA pilot areas resulted from a reduction in the number of young people entering other destinations, most notably the NEET group, work with and without training and government supported training, is highly significant. It measures the level to which EMA has successfully prevented young people entering dead-end jobs, or merely deterred young people from entering quality training places. Table 4 outlines the destinations of the combined cohort sample of eligible young people between the ages of 16-18 through a descriptive analysis of the

quantitative data. In Year 12, there was a 4.1¹ percentage point difference between EMA pilot and control areas in the proportion of young people remaining in full-time education. This was statistically significant. Among 16 year olds (Wave 1), 73.9 per cent of young people in EMA pilot areas were in full-time education, compared with 69.8 per cent in control areas. The higher rate of post-16 education participation in EMA pilot areas resulted largely from fewer young people entering the NEET group (-2.1 per cent) and work without training (-1.6 per cent). The availability of EMA in pilot areas appears to have had very little impact on the proportion of young people entering government supported training, which included both Modern Apprenticeships and National Traineeships². In EMA pilot areas, 6.9 per cent of 16 year olds entered government supported training, compared with 7.2 per cent in control areas.

An increased level of post-16 education participation rates in EMA pilot areas continued among 17 year olds (Wave 2). While the overall proportion of young people remaining in education fell among all 17 year olds in both EMA pilot and control areas, which is consistent with national trends, more young people in EMA pilot areas stayed in full-time education. Among EMA eligible 17 year olds in the sample, 63.1 per cent remained in education in pilot areas, compared with 59 per cent in control areas, which demonstrates a 4.1 percentage point difference that was statistically significant³. The increase in the proportion of young people remaining in education in EMA pilot areas can be attributed to fewer young people entering work with training (-1.6 per cent) and work without training (-1.7 per cent). The difference in the size of the NEET group between pilot and control areas was negligible (-0.5 per cent) (Table 4).

Finally, the proportion of 18 year olds (Wave 3) in full-time education remained slightly higher in pilot areas. In EMA pilot areas, 39.3 per cent of 18 year olds

¹ The 4.1 percentage points difference in participation rates in full-time education between pilot and control areas is based on a descriptive analysis of the data. Analysis of the data using the matched sample approach (PSM) which is designed to give a more accurate impact measure found a larger EMA effect. There was a 5.9 percentage point difference in post-16 education rates in Year 12 among eligible young people between pilot and control areas (Ashworth et al; 2002).

² National Traineeships formed part of government supported training provision in 1999 when the first wave of interviews for the first cohort of young people in the EMA survey was conducted.

³ The 4.1 percentage points difference in participation rates in full-time education between pilot and control areas is based on a descriptive analysis of the data. Analysis of the data using the matched sample approach (PSM) found a larger impact of EMA. There was a 6.2 percentage point difference in post-16 education rates in Year 13 among eligible young people between pilot and control areas (Middleton et al; 2003).

remained in education, compared with 36.5 per cent in control areas. The much smaller differential between pilot and control areas in relation to their post-16 education participation rates, could be largely attributed to the expiry of young people's entitlement to EMA, which normally lasts for a two-year period. Therefore, among 18 year olds, there was no visible impact of EMA on the size of the NEET group in EMA pilot areas. Indeed, the slight increase in the proportion of young people remaining in post-16 education (2.8 percentage points) was the result of fewer young people entering work with training (-2.4 per cent) (Table 4).

Table 4. Destinations of young people in EMA pilot and control areas at waves 1, 2, and 3 (combined cohort)

	Column per cent								
	Pilot	Wave 1 Control	Diff %	Pilot	Wave 2 Control	Diff %	Pilot	Wave 3 Control	Diff %
FTE	73.9	69.8	4.1	63.1	59.0	4.1	39.3	36.5	2.8
GST	6.9	7.2	-0.3	6.7	7.1	-0.4	6.2	6.0	0.2
Work: in house training	2.7	2.7	0	8.3	9.9	-1.6	20.1	22.5	-2.4
Work: no training	6.5	8.1	-1.6	11.0	12.7	-1.7	17.3	17.6	-0.3
NEET	10.0	12.1	-2.1	10.8	11.3	-0.5	17.2	17.4	-0.2
Unweighted N	5211	3161		5216	3171		5174	3155	

Base: Cohort 1 and 2 EMA eligible young people in all three-survey waves.

Key: FTE = Full-time education, GST = Government supported training.

Source: Maguire and Rennison, 2005.

Among the EMA eligible population at the age of 18, a comparison can be drawn between the results from the PSM and descriptive the data. Both sets of data show a similar difference between EMA pilot and control areas in relation to post-16 education retention rates. The data show that EMA eligible young people who were in full-time education at the age of 18, were drawn largely from the work with training group, particularly among young men. Table 5 shows that post-16 education participation rates among young men in pilot areas were 7.0 per cent higher, whilst participation in work

with training was 8.1 per cent lower, which is statistically significant. Among young women aged 18, in EMA pilot areas, there was a slightly smaller proportion of the population in full-time education, in comparison to EMA control areas. In summary, the introduction of the EMA had a much bigger impact on post-16 education participation rates among 18 year old young men, which was largely achieved through reducing entry into the work with training route.

Table 5. Impact of EMA at age 18 (wave 3) – PSM results

	Men			Women			All		
	Pilot	Control	Diff %	Pilot	Control	Diff %	Pilot	Control	Diff %
FTE	42.2	35.2	7.0	41.9	44.1	-2.2	42.1	39.7	2.4
Work:	35.3	43.7	-8.1	33.0	33.6	-0.6	34.1	38.6	-4.5
with training	23.3	31.4	-8.1	18.7	20.9	-2.2	21.0	26.1	-5.1
without training	12.0	12.2	-0.3	14.3	12.7	1.6	13.1	12.5	0.6
NEET	22.5	21.1	1.4	25.1	22.3	2.8	23.8	21.7	2.1
Sample Size	2,311			2,408			4,719		
% total pop	66.2			68.3			67.3		

Base: All EMA eligible young people who were interviewed at ages 16, 17 and 18 years. Cohorts 1 and 2 combined. Pilot weights applied.

Note: Matched samples only. Figures in bold are significant at the five per cent level or less, based on bootstrapped confidence intervals from 1,000 replications.

Key: FTE = Full-time education.

Source: Adapted from Middleton et al, 2005.

The impact of EMA on attainment

The third key strand to the quantitative evaluation was to measure the extent to which the piloting of the EMA enhanced achievement rates in post-16 education. Measuring the impact of the EMA on achievement rates proved to be the most complex part of the evaluation for a number of reasons. First, in comparison to measuring the impact of EMA on achievement rates, determining the EMA effect on participation and retention

rates had been a fairly straightforward task. The latter had been achieved by comparing the proportions of matched individuals in both pilot and control in relation to their participation and retention rates in post-16 education. In simple terms, matched groups of young people in pilot and control areas were either in or out of education and the only difference between the two groups was their receipt or otherwise of EMA. The multitude of post-16 qualifications that exist, coupled with an initial reliance on survey results to accurately collect and record from young people their post-16 attainment, resulted in significant volumes of incomplete data being generated. This hampered any accurate measurement of achievement rates. Concern over the level of inaccuracy in young people's self reporting resulted in information on post-16 qualification attainment being derived from administrative data provided by the DfES rather than from young people's self-reporting. Second, achievement data was collected from young people when due to attrition, sample sizes had reduced. Problems with data matching and additional concerns surrounding the effects of attrition, were acknowledged to have cast considerable doubt on the robustness of the findings relating to post-16 achievement. The final data presented on achievement rates therefore relied solely on data from Cohort 2, where fewer concerns were felt to exist about the accuracy of the achievement data, although the issue of the reduced sample size remained (Middleton et al, 2005).

The propensity score matching analysis found no statistically significant impact of EMA on post-16 attainment (Middleton et al, 2005). While the descriptive analysis contained in the final quantitative evaluation report largely draws the same conclusions and lends further weight to the argument that significant proportions of young people may have merely been 'warehoused' in post-16 education, without gaining any significant enhancement to their qualification profile, as a result of their time spent in post-16 education, Table 6 does demonstrate one significant finding. Between EMA pilot and control areas, there was a 5.4 percentage point increase in EMA pilot areas in the proportion of young people who had obtained 1-4 GCSEs at grade A*-C at the end of Year 11 and went on to achieve a Level 3 qualification at the age of 18. This is an important finding, given that EMA was found to be most successful in attracting middle and low Year 11 achievers to remain in education (Middleton et al, 2003).

Table 6. The impact of EMA on attainment

Year 11 Attainment	Column per cent		
	Pilot	Control	Effect
No GCSEs at grade A*-C			
No new qualification	65.7	72.3	-6.6
Level 1	15.4	10.7	4.7
Level 2	18.0	15.4	2.7
Level 3	0.9	1.7	-0.8
1-4 GCSEs at grade A*-C			
No new qualification	44.3	46.1	-1.8
Level 1	10.1	8.7	1.4
Level 2	26.4	31.4	-5.0
Level 3	19.2	13.8	5.4
5+ GCSEs at grade A*-C			
No new qualification	19.6	19.9	-0.3
Level 1	0.9	0.9	0.0
Level 2	3.2	3.8	-0.6
Level 3	76.3	75.4	0.9
N (unweighted)			
No GCSEs at grade A*-C	445	260	
1-4 GCSEs at grade A*-C	586	357	
5+ GCSEs at grade A*-C	1174	694	

Base: All EMA eligible young people in second cohort who remained in the study in 2002. Pilot and attrition weights applied.

Source: Middleton et al, 2005 (Table 5.9, p115)

Labour market experiences at 19

Large-scale longitudinal surveys of young people were needed in the evaluation of the piloting of EMA so that the impact of the initiative could be accurately measured. This was completed through analysis of a large dataset which contains a wealth of information about the trajectories of an initial random sample of over 20,000 16 year olds who completed compulsory education in 1999 and 2000 and who were tracked on an annual basis over a four-year period. Therefore, it is possible to explore the routes

that this group of young people made in and between education, training, employment and inactivity between the ages of 16 and 19 years of age.

This section provides an analysis of the data which explores the labour market experiences, at the age of 19, of young people who entered the labour market at 16, and of those young people who entered work or training at 18, following two years spent in post-16 education. It draws on a report for DfES which focuses on the labour market experiences of young people (Maguire et al, 2005). The aim of this section is to examine whether young people who remained in education for a further two years had obtained an advantage on labour market entry over young people who had entered the labour market two years earlier. This is achieved by analysing young people's position in the labour market according, first, to whether they were in work which provided training and, second, to the occupational level at which they had entered the labour market. Differences in relation to Year 11 attainment rates are also explored between the two groups. However, it should be noted that there is a significant variation in population size between the two groups, with the size of the 18 year old labour market entrant group being much smaller than their counterparts who had entered the labour market at 16.

The analysis combines data from both cohorts and includes young people who participated in all four waves of interviews between the ages of 16 and 19. The types of entry young people made into the labour market were grouped into three categories: government supported training; work with in-house, employer-provided training; and work with no training. Government supported training included young people who stated that they were participating in National Traineeships (which were in existence when Cohort 1 left compulsory education in 1999), Foundation Apprenticeships or Advanced Modern Apprenticeships. The Jobs with Training category comprised young people who were in full-time employment and who stated that they had participated in either in-house training or off-the-job training programmes or both. Finally, the Work No-Training group included young people who stated that they were in full-time employment but had not undertaken, nor were in receipt of any form of, training. Occupational entry has been ranked using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)⁴, which is based on nine major occupational groupings:

⁴ For further details see Office of Population Censuses and Surveys Standard Occupational Classification, 1990.

Managers;
Professional occupations;
Associate professional and technical occupations;
Administrative, clerical and secretarial occupations;
Skilled trade occupations;
Personal service occupations;
Sales and customer service occupations;
Process, plant and machine operatives; and
Elementary or other occupations.

Only a small proportion of young people who had spent two years in post-16 education before entering the labour market at 18 were in government supported training at the age of 19. Whilst a slightly larger proportion of young people in pilot areas were in government supported training provision (8.2 per cent), compared to young people in the control areas (7.7 per cent), this difference was not statistically significant (Table 7). However, there was a substantial difference in the levels of participation in government supported training between young people who had left school and entered the labour market at 16, and young people who had spent two years in post-16 education before entering the labour market at 18. In pilot areas, 31.4 per cent of 16 year old labour market entrants were in government supported training at 19, compared to 8.2 per cent of 18 year old labour market entrants. Among 16 year old labour market entrants in control areas, 29.3 per cent were in government supported training compared to 7.7 per cent of 18 year old labour market entrants (Table 7).

These findings point to a limited progression for EMA eligible young people between post-16 education and government supported training, while nearly one-third of early labour market entrants (16 year old leavers) remained in government supported training. The reasons for the difference in the level of participation in government supported training between the two groups are not immediately apparent. The difference may be attributed to a larger proportion of 18 year olds entering the labour market with higher Year 11 qualifications (see Table 9) and having completed a Level 3 qualification during their post-16 education, which might make government supported training programmes unappealing to some older labour market entrants. On the other hand, employers' recruitment practices in relation to government supported training

programmes may favour younger entrants because of wage costs, with 16 year old labour market entrants being more cost effective to train. Wage rates may also be a factor in relation to influencing young people's decision-making, in that, minimum training allowances may be an unattractive option to some 18 year olds leaving full-time education.

Table 7. Young people's work or training destinations at age 19

Column per cent

	16 year old entrants to labour market at the age of 19		18 year old entrants to labour market (after two years full-time education) at the age of 19	
	Pilot	Control	Pilot	Control
Government Supported Training	31.4	29.3	8.2	7.7
Work: in house training	33.7	44.5	55.6	59.9
Work: no training	34.9	26.3	36.3	32.3
Unweighted N	343	269	643	348

Base: EMA eligible young people from cohorts 1 and 2 who were interviewed in all four surveys, who were in work/training at age 19. Pilot and attrition weights applied.

16 year old entrants = in any work/training 16, 17, 18 and 19.

18 year old entrants = FTE 16 and 17, any work/training at 18 and 19.

Source: Maguire et al, 2005.

The proportions of 18 year old labour market entrants in both pilot and control areas who were in jobs that offered training were greater than those of 16 year old labour market entrants. For example, in pilot areas, 55.6 per cent of 18 year old labour market entrants were in employment with training at the age of 19, compared to 33.7 per cent of 16 year old labour market entrants. There could be two reasons for this: first, young people who entered the labour market after spending two years in post-16 education, tended to enter higher level jobs which would be more likely to offer training (see below and Middleton et al., 2003); and, second, young people who entered the labour market at 16 may have completed their training period within the three-year period spent in employment or training since leaving compulsory education.

Table 8 illustrates the destinations at 19 of *all* EMA eligible young people who were in the labour market at 18 (both 16 and 18 year old labour market entrants), that is, Table 8 includes the proportions of young people who had moved back into education or joined the NEET group at the age of 19. The data highlight that a significantly larger proportion of 18 year old entrants (20.1 per cent) had returned to full-time education at the age of 19, in contrast to their counterparts who had entered the labour market at 16 (one per cent). The difference between the two groups could be accounted for by higher qualification attainment rates among 18 year old labour market entrants, which may have encouraged significant proportions to return to education. In addition, the 18 year old labour market entrant group would also comprise a proportion of young people who were having a ‘gap year’ before progressing to higher education (Table 8).

Table 8. Destinations of 19 year olds

	Column per cent		
	Pilot	Control	Total
16 year old entrants to labour market at age of 19			
Full Time Education	1.3	0.7	1.0
Government Supported Training	24.2	29.0	26.7
Work: in house training	33.0	39.7	36.4
Work: no training	32.3	22.6	27.4
NEET	9.2	8.0	8.6
Unweighted N	330	250	580
18 year old entrants to labour market at age of 19			
Full Time Education	15.7	24.7	20.1
Government Supported Training	6.4	5.2	5.8
Work: in house training	43.5	39.3	41.5
Work: no training	30.1	22.3	26.3
NEET	4.3	8.5	6.3
Unweighted N	755	452	1207

Base: EMA eligible young people from cohorts 1 and 2 who were interviewed in all four surveys. Pilot and attrition weights applied.

16 year old labour market entrants = in any work/training at 16, 17 and 18

18 year old labour market entrants = FTE at 16 and 17, any work/training at 18.

Note: Data exclude young people with missing qualifications.

Source: Maguire et al, 2005.

Slightly larger proportions of 16 year old labour market entrants were NEET at 19 than was the case for 18 year old labour market entrants. 8.6 per cent of 16-year old labour market entrants were NEET at 19, compared to 6.3 per cent of 18-year old labour market entrants (Table 8). This difference was not statistically significant. Among 18 year old labour market entrants, the proportion of young people who became NEET at the age of 19, was larger in the control areas (8.5 per cent) than it was in EMA pilot areas (4.3 per cent), although the reason for this variation is unclear.

Table 9 presents a breakdown by Year 11 qualifications of both 16 and 18 year old labour market entrants. Among the EMA eligible population, young people who entered the labour market at 16 had lower Year 11 attainment rates, in comparison to young people who had completed two years in post-16 education before entering the labour market at the age of 18. Table 9 shows that among 18 year old labour market entrants, 58.1 per cent had obtained 5+ A-C GCSEs at the end of Year 11, in contrast to 21.9 per cent of 16 year old labour market entrants. While 38.4 per cent of 16 year old labour market entrants had left compulsory education with no qualifications or Level 1 qualifications, this compares to 13.2 per cent of their counterparts who entered the labour market at 18.

Table 9. Labour market entrants at 16 and 18 at the age of 19

	Column per cent					
	16 year old entrants to the labour market			18 year old entrants to the labour market		
	Pilot	Control	Total	Pilot	Control	Total
Year 11 qualification						
No qualifications/Level 1	44.3	32.6	38.4	16.4	9.8	13.2
1 – 4 A*- C GCSEs	34.5	44.8	39.8	31.4	25.9	28.7
5+ A* - C GCSEs	21.2	22.5	21.9	52.2	64.3	58.1
Unweighted N	330	250	580	755	452	1207

Base: EMA eligible young people from cohorts 1 and 2 who were interviewed in all four surveys. Pilot and attrition weights applied.

16 year old labour market entrants = in any work/training at 16, 17 and 18

18 year old labour market entrants = FTE at 16 and 17, any work/training at 18.

Note: Data exclude young people with missing qualifications.

Source: Maguire et al, 2005.

Table 10 presents a profile of Year 11 qualifications obtained by 16 and 18 year old labour market entrants, as well as their destinations at 19. While the overall proportion of young people returning to full-time education at the age of 19 was low among 16 year old labour market entrants, the majority of the group comprised young people who had obtained 5+ A*-C GCSEs at the end of Year 11. The largest proportion of young people who had obtained no qualifications or Level 1 qualifications and had entered the labour market at the end of Year 11, were found in work with training at the age of 19 (41.1 per cent). Around two-thirds of young people who had left compulsory schooling with Level 2 qualifications, were in either work based training or work with training at the age of 19. While 2.3 per cent of young people who had entered the labour market at 16 with 5+ A*-C GCSEs were NEET at the age of 19, this contrasts with 11.4 per cent of those who had no qualifications or Level 1 qualifications at the end of Year 11 (Table 10).

Nearly one-third of 18 year old labour market entrants who had achieved 5+ A*-C GCSEs at the end of Year 11 had returned to education at the age of 19 (30.7 per cent). This would suggest that a significant proportion of this group were taking a planned gap year or had taken a period of time out of education before deciding their future. Regardless of their academic achievements at the end of Year 11, a much smaller proportion of 18 year old labour market entrants was found in government supported training at 19, in comparison to their counterparts who had entered the labour market at 16. A consistent finding among both 16 and 18 year old labour market entrants, was that a much smaller proportion of young people who had achieved 5+ A*-C GCSEs at the end of Year 11 were NEET at the age of 19. The NEET population among this group consisted of 2.3 per cent of 16 year old labour market entrants and 3.4 per cent of 18 year old labour market entrants. Over half of all 18 year labour market entrants (52.2 per cent), who had achieved one to four A*-C GCSEs at the end of Year 11, were in work with training at the age of 19 (Table 10).

Table 11 provides an occupational breakdown of EMA eligible young people in the labour market at age 19⁵. It shows that young people who had spent two years in post-16 education were generally in a better position than those who had entered the

⁵ Cell sizes are too small to allow a pilot/control breakdown in the remainder of the analysis in this section.

Table 10. Destinations of 19 year olds: Year 11 qualifications

Column per cent

	No Qualifications/ Level 1			Level 2/ 1-4 A*-C GCSEs			Level 2/ 5+A*-C GCSEs		
	Pilot	Control	Total	Pilot	Control	Total	Pilot	Control	Total
16 year old entrants to the labour market at age of 19									
Full Time Education	0.6	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.6	0.3	4.8	2.0	3.3
Government Supported Training	16.1	20.1	17.8	29.9	30.4	30.2	32.0	39.3	35.8
Work: in house training	39.2	43.5	41.1	30.3	37.2	34.3	24.3	39.2	32.1
Work: no training	30.5	27.8	29.3	32.1	21.5	26.0	36.5	17.4	26.4
NEET	13.6	8.6	11.4	7.7	10.4	9.3	2.5	2.1	2.3
Unweighted N	<i>131</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>208</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>101</i>	<i>221</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>151</i>
18 year old entrants to the labour market at age of 19									
Full Time Education	7.7	1.7	5.5	4.9	5.8	5.3	24.7	35.9	30.7
Government Supported Training	6.8	6.8	6.8	5.6	3.7	4.8	6.8	5.6	6.1
Work: in house training	38.7	29.6	35.4	52.3	52.2	52.2	39.8	35.6	37.5
Work: no training	43.2	28.7	38.0	30.9	26.8	29.1	25.5	19.5	22.3
NEET	3.5	33.2	14.2	6.3	11.6	8.6	3.3	3.5	3.4
Unweighted N	<i>83</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>208</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>315</i>	<i>464</i>	<i>308</i>	<i>772</i>

Base: EMA eligible young people from cohorts 1 and 2 who were interviewed in all four surveys. Pilot and attrition weights applied.

16 year old labour market entrants = in any work/training at 16, 17 and 18.

18 year old labour market entrants = FTE at 16 and 17, any work/training at 18.

Note: Data exclude young people with missing qualifications. **Source:** Maguire et al, 2005.

labour market immediately after compulsory education. In particular, young people who spent two years in post-16 education before entering the labour market at 18, were much more likely to be in managerial, professional and associated professional and technical jobs (15.6 per cent) than 16 year old entrants to the labour market (5.2 per cent), which is a statistically significant difference. This would suggest that the ‘added value’ of remaining in post-16 education for two years largely outweighed any benefits that might have resulted from spending longer in the labour market, at least in terms of accessing managerial level employment. It should also be borne in mind that early labour market entrants tended to have lower Year 11 attainment levels in comparison to their counterparts who chose to remain in education, which might also have weakened their ability to access managerial level occupations.

Table 11. Occupational breakdown of 16 year old and 18 year old labour market entrants at age 19

	Column per cent	
	16 year old entrants to labour market at age of 19	18 year old entrants to labour market (after two years full time education) at age of 19
Managers/Prof & Assoc Prof & Technical	5.2	15.6
Admin, Clerical and Sec	17.9	19.3
Skilled Trades	31.9	9.5
Personal Service Occupations	12.5	20.7
Sales	11.6	18.0
Process Plant & Machine Operatives	8.9	3.2
Elementary or other Occupations	12.0	13.7
Unweighted N	611	987

Base: EMA eligible young people (pilot and control areas combined, cohorts combined) who were interviewed in all four surveys, who were in work/training at age 19. Pilot and attrition weights applied.

16 year old entrants = in any work/training 16, 17, 18 and 19.

18 year old entrants = FTE 16 and 17, any work/training at 18 and 19.

Source: Maguire et al, 2005.

Significantly, the proportion of young people who left school at 16 and were in skilled trade occupations at the age of 19 was far larger than the proportion of those who had entered the labour market at 18. These occupations would include apprenticeship training in construction, engineering and related trades. Among 16 year old labour market entrants, 31.9 per cent were in skilled trades at the age of 19 compared to 9.5 per cent of 18 year old labour market entrants. This finding strongly suggests that many employers continue to recruit ‘younger’ school leavers into apprenticeship trades. There are two factors which may explain this trend. First, age related pay rates, which are fixed by many trade associations, might be a factor. Since many employers have traditionally recruited 16 year old labour market entrants to apprenticeship training, this may also reflect some reluctance to shift from their established recruitment methods. Second, the rate of Level 2 achievement, in particular in relation to the acquisition of 5+ A*-C GCSEs at the end of Year 11, was significantly higher among 18 old labour market entrants. Therefore, some of this group would be expected to have completed Level 3 vocational or academic qualifications within post-16 education and may be looking towards higher job entry points into the labour market.

Finally, at the age of 19, larger proportions of young people who had entered the labour market at 16 were in operative work; 8.9 per cent compared with 3.2 per cent of young people who had spent two years in post-16 education (Table 11). Table 12 shows the destinations at the age of 19, of 16 and 18 year old labour market entrants in relation to both the type of work or training they were in and their occupational status. Among 16 year old labour market entrants who were in government supported training by the age of 19, well over one-half were in skilled trades (57.9 per cent). These findings would suggest that the majority of EMA eligible young people who had left education at the end of compulsory education and were in skilled trades at the age of 19 had accessed the labour market through government supported training. The largest single group of those who were in work without training were those in elementary or other occupations (18.9 per cent), although relatively large proportions were in sales or administrative jobs (Maguire et al, 2005).

Table 12. Occupational breakdown of 16 and 18 year old labour market entrants at 19 by work and training

	Column per cent							
	Government Supported Training		Work with training		Work with no training		Total	
	16 year olds at 19	18 year olds at 19	16 year olds at 19	18 year olds at 19	16 year olds at 19	18 year olds at 19	16 year olds at 19	18 year olds at 19
Managers/Prof and Assoc Prof and Technical	2.5	29.2	8.2	16.5	4.6	11.5	5.4	15.8
Admin, Clerical and Sec	14.7	10.8	20.7	21.4	17.3	17.5	17.9	19.2
Skilled Trades	57.9	36.9	23.0	7.3	16.8	7.3	31.7	9.7
Personal Service Occupations	14.7	21.5	12.9	20.6	9.2	20.6	12.3	20.7
Sales	4.1	0.0	13.3	18.8	17.3	20.6	11.7	18.0
Process Plant and Machine Operatives	2.5	1.5	8.6	3.0	15.8	3.8	8.9	3.2
Elementary or other Occupations	3.6	0.0	13.3	12.4	18.9	18.5	12.0	13.6
Unweighted N	194	84	237	587	180	316	611	987

Base: EMA eligible young people (pilot and control areas combined, cohorts combined) who were interviewed in all four surveys, who were in work/training at aged 19. Pilot and attrition weights applied.

16 year old entrants = in any work/training 16, 17, 18 and 19;

18 year old entrants = FTE 16 and 17, any work/training 18 and 19.

Source: Maguire et al, 2005.

The picture for 18 year old labour market entrants at the age of 19 was somewhat different. Over half of this group (55.7 per cent) were in management, administrative and personal service occupations. More than one-third of 18 year old labour market entrants who were on government supported training programmes had entered a skilled trade (36.9%). These findings suggest that a large proportion of EMA eligible young people who entered the labour market at 18, after spending two years in full-time education, were accessing high level occupational training through Modern Apprenticeships. However, some caution is needed here, since only 8.5 per cent of 18 year old labour market entrants were in government supported training at the age of 19 (n=84), in comparison to 31.7 per cent of their counterparts who had entered the labour market at 16 (n=194).

Table 13. Trajectories between interviews at 18 &19 for young people who entered the labour market at 18 after spending 2 years in full-time education

	Column per cent		
	AGE 18		
	Government supported training	Work with training	Work no training
AGE 19			
Full Time Education	2.7	19.0	23.2
Government supported training	69.9	1.2	1.7
Work with training	11.0	64.1	19.7
Work no training	12.3	10.9	45.9
NEET	4.1	4.8	9.4
Unweighted N	85	716	534

Base: EMA eligible young people (cohorts combined, pilot and control areas combined) who were interviewed in all four surveys, who entered work/training at 18 after spending two years in FTE. Pilot and attrition weights applied.

Source: Maguire et al, 2005.

Table 13 explores changes in the destinations of young people since their entry into the labour market at the age of 18 years. Among this group, the largest turnover had occurred among young people who had entered work without training when they left post-16 education: less than half (45.9 per cent) were still in work without training

one year later. Approximately one quarter of this group (23.2 per cent) had returned to full-time education. However, almost one-fifth of this group (19.7 per cent) had entered work with training by the age of 19 (Maguire et al, 2005). Young people who had entered work with training at the end of post-16 education were quite stable; almost two-thirds remained in this group approximately one year later (64.1 per cent). However, again, almost one fifth had returned to full-time education (19 per cent).

The highest level of stability among post-18 labour market entrants between interview waves occurred among young people who had entered government supported training. While the overall proportion of young people who had entered government supported training at the end of post-16 education was very small, 69.9 per cent of this group had retained their status approximately one year later. This finding may be a reflection of the length of time required to complete an Apprenticeship training programme, which normally spans a two year period.

Small proportions of each group had become NEET by the age of 19 and, whilst only around four per cent of those who had entered government supported training or work with training were NEET, almost one in ten who had entered work without training at the age of 18 were NEET one year later (9.4 per cent) (Maguire et al, 2005). This supports earlier findings from the EMA evaluation, which demonstrated a much higher incidence of ‘churning’ between the NEET and work without training groups (Middleton et al, 2003).

The influence of parents

The first round of quantitative interviews with each cohort of young people was conducted face-to-face and also included a separate interview with a parent or carer. The fieldwork was conducted between October and April following the end of the young person’s compulsory education, that is, between October 1999 and April 2000 for Cohort 1 and October 2000 and April 2001 for Cohort 2. The interview with parents covered a range of areas including their aspirations for their child’s future destination, the level of involvement they had in the post-16 choices that their son or daughter made and their attitudes towards education, training, work and qualifications. This section will firstly consider the aspirations that parents had for their child after leaving compulsory education. Secondly, it will compare parental aspirations for their children with those expressed by young people, in order to explore levels of agreement and

disagreement with regard to post-16 destinations. Finally, the role that parents played in young people's decision-making will be explored.

Parental aspirations

One of the questions asked in the parents' interview was about what, during Year 11, they had wanted their child to do after finishing Year 11. The majority of parents wanted their son or daughter to remain in full-time education (82.6 per cent). In contrast 8.4 per cent of parents hoped that their son or daughter would enter work/training after completing compulsory education and fewer than one in ten parents (nine per cent) expressed no preference with regard to their child's future destination (Rennison et al, 2005).

Table 14. Parental aspirations for their children

	Column per cent				
	Full-time education	Work with training	Work with no training	NEET	All
Parents' aspirations					
Full-time education	90.6	46.9	63.4	66.4	82.6
Work based training / work	2.1	38.2	22.4	20.2	8.4
Other / no preference	7.3	14.9	14.2	13.3	9.0

Base: Combined cohorts of young people who were interviewed at age 16 with a responding 'parent' who provided relevant data. Unweighted N =20,479.

Source: Rennison et al, 2005 (Table A1.1, p15)

Interestingly, the majority (66.4 per cent) of parents of young people who entered the NEET group at age 16 (at the end of Year 11), had hoped that their son or daughter would continue in full-time education. In fact, the parents of young people in the NEET group were more likely to have favoured their son or daughter entering post-16 education than parents whose children entered work with training (46.9 per cent) and

work without training (63.4 per cent). These positive attitudes towards post-16 learning were only exceeded by parents of those young people who had actually continued in full-time education (90.6 per cent). Among parents of young people in the NEET group whose aspirations for their children were for destinations other than entering post-16 full-time education, around one-fifth (20.2 per cent) hoped that their son or daughter would enter work-based training or work without training, and 13.3 per cent stated no preference/other (Rennison et al, 2005) (Table 14).

Comparing the aspirations of young people with those of their parents

There appears to be very little quantitative research evidence that examines how parents' involvement in their children's education and decision-making influences the choices that young people make at the end of compulsory schooling. This section presents evidence on the aspirations of young people and their parents included within the EMA data set. Analysis was conducted on two sections of the questionnaire which asked the same, or similar, sets of questions of young people and their parents concerning aspirations after completing Year 11 (Rennison et al, 2005).

It is evident from the data that young people were more likely to have made successful post-Year 11 transitions when they were in agreement with their parents about what their destination should be. For example, where parents and their children were in agreement, only 6.3 per cent of young people entered the NEET group (Table 15). In comparison, the rate was over three times higher (19.9 per cent) where there was disagreement between young people and their parents. Similarly, where agreement existed between the young person and their parents, 4.9 per cent of young people entered work, compared to 14.7 per cent where disagreement existed. Conversely, 83.3 per cent of young people continued in full-time education where parents and young people were in agreement compared to 45.5 per cent when they disagreed. Where disagreement existed, young people were also more likely to enter training (19.9 per cent) than where parents and young people agreed (5.5 per cent) with their decision (Rennison et al, 2005).

Table 15. Parent - young person agreement on aspirations and the young person's destination

	Row per cent			
	Destination			
	NEET	Work	Training	Full-time education
Agreement	6.3	4.9	5.5	83.3
Disagreement	19.9	14.7	19.9	45.5

Base: Combined cohorts of young people who were interviewed at age 16 with a responding 'parent' who provided relevant data. (N = 20,206).

Source: Rennison et al, 2005 (Table A3.1, p70)

The data were also analysed to explore the extent to which parents had felt that they had been involved in their child's decision-making about post-16 options. While, on the whole, parents reported that they had been actively involved in their child's decision-making, parents of young people who became NEET were *least* likely to state they had had a great deal of involvement and were *most* likely to state that they had had no involvement in their child's decision-making. Parents were also asked about their level of involvement in careers related events and activities in school during Year 11, such as parents' evenings in Year 11, as well as career talks, interviews and events. Again, the data showed that parents of young people who became NEET were the least likely to state that they had attended careers related activities. Through multi-nomial regression analysis, it was found that the most influential factors upon a young person's post-16 destination were their parents' attendance at parents' evenings and school or college open days. A pattern was evident in which, unsurprisingly, the more likely parents were to have attended a parents' evening, the more likely the young person was to be in full-time education, followed by work with training, then work with no training and least likely to become NEET (Rennison et al, 2005).

Within the survey, parents were also asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement to a number of attitude statements. Parents of young people in the NEET group were more likely than other parents both to agree and to agree strongly that they did not 'know enough about modern qualifications to give proper advice to their child'. Overall, seven in ten parents whose children were in the NEET group felt that their

knowledge about modern qualifications was inadequate, and only one in five parents of young people agreed that they were able to provide informed advice to their child. The regression model showed that parents who felt they were least knowledgeable about education and qualifications were most likely to have young people in the NEET group. As parental knowledge increased, the more likely a young person was to be, in ascending order, in work, training and full-time education. (Rennison et al, 2005). These findings need to sit alongside evidence from the young people's surveys which found that young people who became NEET were least likely to attend career interviews and events and to take part in activities such as work experience programmes organised during Year 11 (Ashworth et al, 2001).

A national youth allowance?

This paper has attempted to summarise some of the evidence which was collected as part of the evaluation of the piloting of EMA. Positive impact results about the effect of EMA on post-16 education participation and retention rates largely influenced the decision to rollout EMA nationally from September 2004. The national model is, in many respects, similar to the model used in the piloting phase although a key difference is the transfer of administration from Local Authority (LA) control to a single National Service Provider. Local LSCs have responsibility for the local implementation of EMA. The national EMA is a weekly payment of up to £30 which is paid directly to young people from income eligible households of between less than £20,270 per year and not more than £30,000 per year, who stay on in education after they reach statutory leaving age. The award is available during term time for any academic or vocational course (up to Level 3) which involves at least 12 hours of guided learning per week. Bonuses of £100 are payable termly to young people who meet targets set out in individual Learning Agreements.

What is indisputable is that the introduction of EMA removed the inequities and unpredictability which surrounded the system of student support for young people in post-16 education that previously existed. But does EMA work? There are two different answers each of which can be supported by evaluation evidence. On the one hand, it can be argued that the evaluation results indicate that the pilot policy was successful in increasing participation and retention rates in post-16 education, in particular among young men. Increased participation and retention rates were achieved

by drawing young people from both the work/training and NEET groups. The detection of a lack of impact of the piloting of EMA on achievement rates in post-16 education can be attributed to problems surrounding reduced sample sizes and to the issues of collecting accurate qualification data from young people through survey methods.

However, on the other hand, it can be argued that increases in post-16 participation and retention rates were achieved by drawing young people from the work/training route rather than through making significant inroads into reducing the NEET group population. This may not be a problem, if EMA had stopped a significant flow of young people entering dead-end jobs and had supported their routes into post-16 learning. The issue is that the statistical measures used to test the impact of EMA grouped all categories of work and training under one heading: 'the work/ training group'. Therefore, until the third wave of data was analysed, it was difficult to be precise about from where the 'pull' into education was drawn. Another area of concern, is the inability of the evaluation to measure any significant impact on achievement rates which may have resulted from the piloting of EMA. This raises alarm bells about young people being 'warehoused' in education, as opposed to providing young people with the opportunity to make progress in terms of qualification enhancement within post-16 education. In addition, the increase in the size of the NEET group populations in EMA pilot areas among 18 and 19 year olds needs to be noted. Does this suggest that EMA is holding in education numbers of young people, who subsequently fail to make successful transitions beyond their participation and retention in post-16 education?

Building on the successes of the EMA in raising post-16 participation and retention in education and the Government's commitment to achieving training targets which are aimed at ensuring that all young people reach the age of 19 with sufficient levels of qualifications and skills to equip them to enter skilled employment or higher education, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the 2003 budget that the Government would review financial support and incentives for all 16-19 year olds. The subsequent report, 'Supporting young people to achieve', was published alongside the budget in March 2004 (HM Treasury, DfES and DWP, 2004). The report sets out the Government's long-term vision of a single, coherent system of financial support for 16-19 year olds.

The 2005 Budget outlined the Government's response to the consultation which followed the publication of 'Supporting young people to achieve'. It announced the piloting of two new initiatives aimed at extending participation in education and training

among the NEET and JWT groups of young people; those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET); and young people who are in jobs without training (JWT). £60 million was allocated over two years to pilot Activity Agreements and an Activity Allowance (AA) to support and encourage disengaged 16-17 year olds back into learning. In addition, £80 million over two years was allocated to pilot a Learning Agreement (LA) for 16-17 year olds in work with no training to increase access to training options for this group. Activity Agreements and Learning Agreements are to be piloted in 12 areas of England from April 2006. Young people will be offered a weekly allowance in return for agreeing to a plan and completing activities to integrate them back into learning. A number of variants of AAs and LAs will be piloted, with a view to identifying the most successful models.

‘Supporting young people to achieve’ provided an overview of the systems of financial support currently available to young people, including the NEET group (H M Treasury, DfES, and DWP, 2004). Not since the 1988 Social Security legislation, which withdrew mainstream entitlement to Income Support among 16 and 17 year olds, while at the same time re-classifying this group of young people as NEET, has there been a review of the financial needs of young people who do not participate in education, employment or training. The review of financial support for 16-19 year olds recommended the need to offer financial support alongside the introduction of a series of approved activities as a means to encourage greater levels of participation in mainstream education and training provision among this group of young people. Current provision includes Entry into Employment (E2E), which is a full-time activity and offers support and training to young people in preparation for Apprenticeship training. Financial support is also available to young people who are ‘estranged’ from their parents and/or who drop out of full-time training or employment, through the payment of a Bridging Allowance. The Bridging Allowance is a benefit of £15, which is paid to a young person for up to 8 weeks in any one year who registers for work or training. The payment of the allowance does not require a young person to seek support and guidance during the period of entitlement. However, the time period and rate paid to young people have not increased since its introduction in 1988.

Despite policy attempts to engage more young people in education and work based training, the proportion of young people who are categorised as NEET has remained relatively unchanged since the mid-1990s. It is anticipated that the piloting of the Activity Agreement and Allowance will support and encourage 16 and 17 year olds

who are NEET back into learning/training. AAs will involve designing and implementing action plans to move young people into education or training in return for financial support. The Connexions Service, which has a focus on meeting the needs of disaffected young people, will facilitate the initiative. AAs will take the form of a weekly allowance for young people (and in some areas, to their parents) who fulfil their agreement.

AAs are modelled on one element of the Australian Youth Allowance (YA), which was presented within 'Supporting young people to achieve' as an example of an existing unitary financial support system. The YA was introduced in 1998 for young people aged between 15 and 25, as a means of simplifying financial support systems and removing disincentives to study/train. In order to receive a YA a young person must participate in full-time learning or training, actively seek, and be willing to accept offers of suitable work or undertake a combination of approved activities including part-time study, part-time work, voluntary work and others. Evaluation evidence identified positive impacts of the YA, in relation to increasing school retention rates for under 18 year olds, although the programme was also criticised for its lack of flexibility in delivery arrangements for young people who were NEET (Finn and Branosky, 2004).

The question is: does England want a Youth Allowance? The evaluation evidence from the piloting of the AAs and LAs, together with the on-going Treasury led Review will help to provide answers. While developing policies which endeavour to 'equalise' the financial support packages given to young people should be applauded, they need to sit alongside a review of the suitability of some education and training provision which is currently on available to young people. If policy makers are serious about wanting to engage more young people in post-16 education and training, in particular, among groups of young people who have remained most resilient to previous 'offers', then creating and sustaining an interest in learning is needed. The piloting of the Activity and Learning Agreements provides the ideal opportunity to test the willingness and capacity of education and training providers to be creative through the development of flexible packages of learning which are attractive to, and meet the needs of, 'hard to reach' groups. The risk is that the agenda will be swamped by the need to meet education and training targets, which will result in 'more of the same' in terms of education and training provision.

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Authors' Note

The evaluation of the piloting of EMA was a team effort. The evaluation was undertaken by a consortium of research organisations directed by Sue Middleton at the Centre for Research in Social Policy (CRSP), Loughborough University and which included research teams from CRSP, the National Centre for Social Research (Nat Cen), the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) and Malcolm Maguire (now SQW). It was both an innovative and a stimulating project.