



October 3rd 2016

To Whom It May Concern

I would like to thank the Petitions Committee for considering the petition to amend the current Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) criteria for Young Adult Carers (YACs) in Wales. Also, I would like to thank Alun Davies for his letter following up the actions to date and by way of reply would just like to clarify the following points:

- There was a very productive meeting at the YAC group on July 12th when a representative from the Student Loans Company (SLC) and Simon Gough (a delegate from the Welsh Government) attended and discussed the petition with the YACs. As a consequence, the representative from the SLC agreed to add a question to the enrolment form in time for the academic year 2017/18 with the purpose of identifying any YACs.
- The question asking “do you help care for someone?” will identify any YACs, and by way of verifying the fact they are a YAC they will be asked to provide proof, such as a letter from a supporting agency, whether it a be a statutory or third sector organisation (e.g. Social Services, local Carers Service).
- The benefit of asking such a question is not only that it will help identify YACs to colleges which in turn would lead to additional support from Student Services, but also, if the young adult carer is not currently accessing support it will encourage them to do so, which in turn may help them engage with and remain in education.

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- As such, I feel the cost attached to amending the form to incorporate this question is negligible when compared to the potential benefit, especially given the fact that currently within Wales more than 20% of all YACs are not in education, training or employment (NEET).
- Whilst it is acknowledged that schools and colleges within Wales have their own attendance requirements, I believe that by formally recognising the responsibilities that YACs have due to their caring roles, it will help raise awareness amongst education providers and set a more realistic expectation upon YACs in terms of attendance.
- As a final point, with regard to authorised and non-authorised absences, I feel that once again it needs to be recognised that a YAC may not always be able to give advance notice or even proof after the event where they may be late or need to stay home to look after the person they care for where there are exceptional circumstances, such as unforeseen illness.

I hope my letter may help the ministers to further consider the petition favourably and I am more than happy to answer any further questions arising, either in person or on the telephone.

Yours sincerely

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