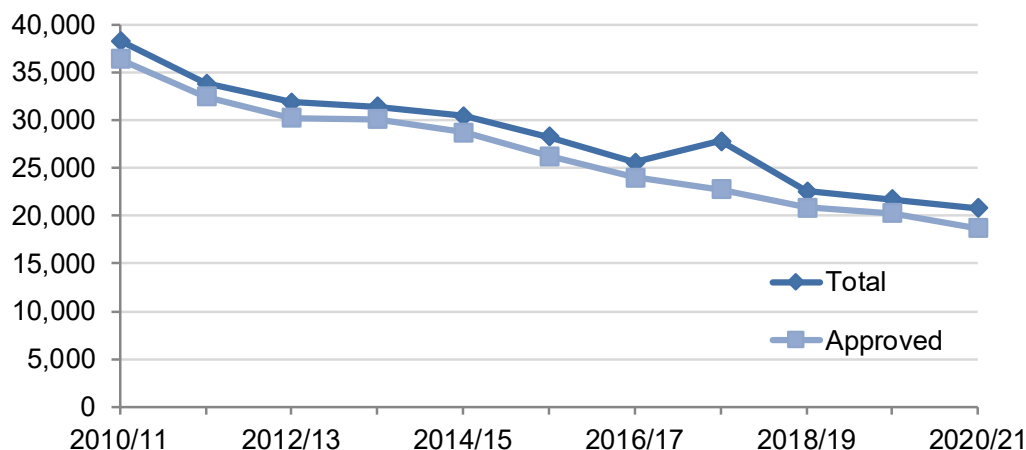




## Education Maintenance Allowances Awarded in Wales, 2020/21

23 November 2021  
SB 38/2021

**Chart 1: Trends in applications and approvals by academic year**



Note: In 2017/18, a number of candidates who were no longer eligible for EMA were incorrectly included in the total applications figure. Care should therefore be taken when comparing this data point with any other years

Source: Student loans Company

### Key points

#### In 2020/21:

**18,690**  
approved  
applications

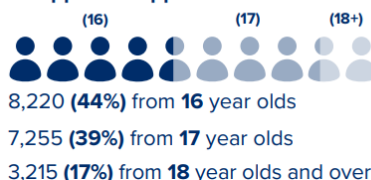
Down 8% from last year



**20,815**  
Total  
applications

Continued to fall

#### Of approved applications:



### About this bulletin

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is a scheme providing young people who wish to continue in education after school leaving age with an incentive to earn awards through good attendance and achieving agreed objectives.

The data included here are obtained from Student Loans Company (SLC). Unless otherwise stated, figures are for the 2020/21 academic year, at the end of August 2021.

### In this bulletin

#### EMA Awarded by:

Work stage	3
Household income	Error!
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Age	4
Learning centre type	5
Gender	5
Year of claimant	6
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Key Quality	
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#### Main points:



The number of both applications and approvals has shown **a downward trend since 2010/11**



**18,690**

In **2020/21**, **18,690 (90%)** of applications received were approved, **1,500 (7%)** were rejected and **615 (3%)** were incomplete



**9,185**

Of the approved applications, **9,185 (49%)** were from first year claimants

Source: Student Loans Company

## Policy and operational context

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is a scheme providing young people who wish to continue in education after school leaving age with an incentive to earn awards through good attendance and achieving agreed objectives. [Changes to this scheme were introduced from September 2011.](#)

The scheme is available to 16 to 18 year olds but entitlement may be extended beyond this if they have not already received 3 years of EMA. For more information on eligibility, see the [Notes](#) section.

Trends in applications and approvals for EMA provided in this release should be considered against the context of trends in the eligible cohort (of mainly 16 to 18 year olds), their participation in education and training, and their household income levels (since EMA is means-tested). Student numbers for 16 to 18 year olds were declining from 2015/16 but saw an increase in 2019/20. The numbers appear to be increasing in 2020/21 and 2021/22 but these are based on projected figures so should be treated with caution. Student numbers for 2015/16 to 2019/20 are taken from the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR). From 2020/21 onwards, the figures are estimates based on pupil numbers in maintained schools or further education.

2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21(e)	2021/22(e)
64,190	60,845	59,715	57,130	58,960	60,615	62,505

(e) Estimate

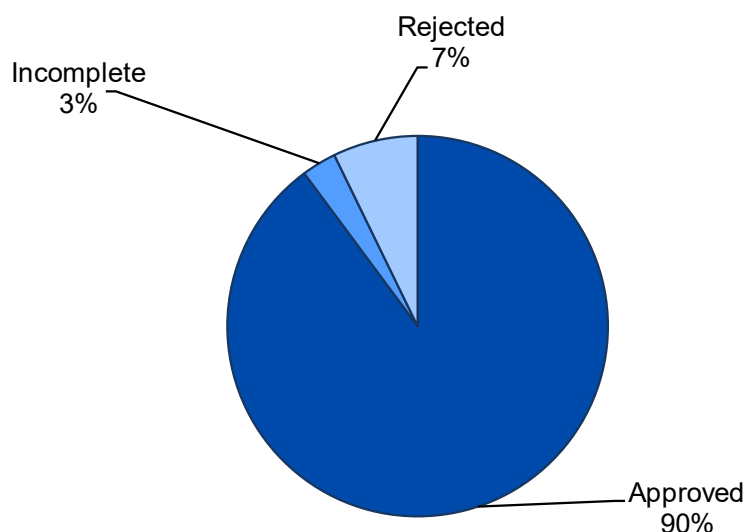
Note that these projections are for Further Education Institutions and maintained secondary and special schools, counting full time students with at least a 10 week expected duration. Independent schools are excluded.

As mentioned in the [Welsh Government Guidance 'Further education: coronavirus'](#) (First published 24 March 2020), EMA payments for eligible learners continue during the COVID-19 pandemic with learner absence for reasons of illness, self-isolation or college closure all treated as authorised absences.

This has not affected numbers receiving EMA (the numbers in this bulletin). It has resulted in more EMA paid out.

## Applications received by current work stage

Chart 2: Applications received by current work stage



Source: Student Loans Company

As at 31st August 2021, 90% of applications received had been approved and 7% had been rejected. 3% were incomplete (either 'missing information' such as no date of birth included or 'missing evidence' such as no birth certificate attached). There were very few in the 'Other' category this year.

Table 1: Applications by current work stage (a)

Application current work stage	2016/17	2017/18 (e)	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Approved	24,025	22,790	20,855	20,280	18,690
<i>of which received at least one payment</i>	23,650	22,435	20,640	20,085	18,480
Rejected	815	905	875	775	1,500
Incomplete (b)	780	910	855	635	615
Other (c)	15	3,265	25	40	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,635</b>	<b>27,870</b>	<b>22,610</b>	<b>21,730</b>	<b>20,815</b>
<i>of which are renewals (d)</i>	13,190	15,885	11,485	11,025	10,850

Source: Student Loans Company

(a) As at 31st August

(b) These include applications that have "missing information" (e.g. no date of birth included) or "missing evidence" (e.g. no birth certificate attached)

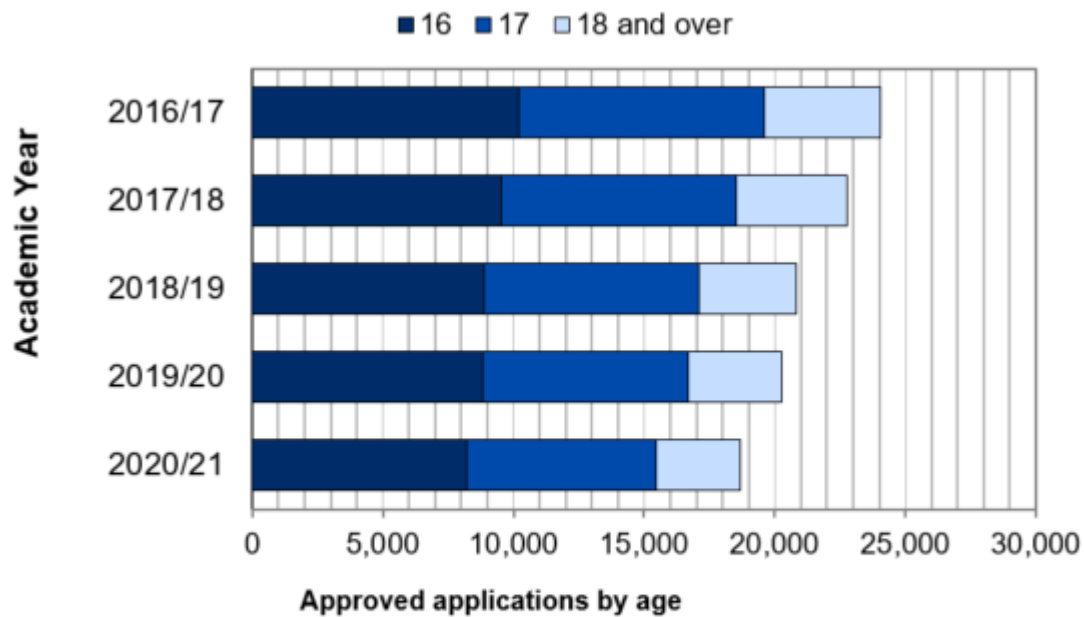
(c) These include applications that are in one of the following workstages: assessed; awaiting rejection; data capture incomplete; failed assessment; validated; verified (as defined by SLC).

(d) Applicants who also applied for an allowance in previous academic year

(e) In 2017/18, a number of candidates who were no longer eligible for EMA were incorrectly included in the other and total applications figure. Care should therefore be taken when comparing this data point with any other years.

## Approved applications by age

Chart 3: Approved applications by age (a)



(a) As at 31<sup>st</sup> August

Source: Student Loans Company

In 2020/21, 44% of all approved applications were from 16 year olds, a small increase compared to last year. This is in line with an increase in the 16 year old demographic. 39% of all approved applications were from 17 year olds and the remaining 17% of approved applications were from applicants aged 18 and over.

Relating this data to the LLWR data referred to in 'Policy and operational context', 40% of 18 year old learners received EMA whilst almost one-third (29%) of 16 to 17 year olds received EMA.

## Approved applications by learning centre type

**Table 2: Approved applications by age, learning centre type, gender and year (a)**

	2019/20				2020/21			
	16	17	18+	Total	16	17	18+	Total
<b>Further education college:</b>	<b>6,170</b>	<b>5,545</b>	<b>3,210</b>	<b>14,925</b>	<b>5,530</b>	<b>5,130</b>	<b>2,900</b>	<b>13,560</b>
Males	3,185	2,795	1,665	7,650	2,755	2,540	1,500	6,795
Females	2,985	2,750	1,545	7,275	2,775	2,590	1,400	6,760
<b>Secondary school:</b>	<b>2,465</b>	<b>2,150</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>4,830</b>	<b>2,505</b>	<b>1,945</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>4,650</b>
Males	1,090	915	105	2,105	1,065	820	95	1,980
Females	1,380	1,240	105	2,725	1,440	1,120	105	2,670
<b>Other learning centre:</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>485</b>
Males	130	115	110	355	115	120	70	310
Females	70	55	40	165	70	65	40	175
<b>All learning centres:</b>	<b>8,840</b>	<b>7,865</b>	<b>3,575</b>	<b>20,280</b>	<b>8,220</b>	<b>7,255</b>	<b>3,215</b>	<b>18,690</b>
Males	4,405	3,825	1,880	10,110	3,935	3,485	1,665	9,085
Females	4,435	4,040	1,690	10,165	4,285	3,775	1,545	9,605

(a) As at 31st August

Source: Student Loans Company

- 13,560 students attending further education colleges had their applications approved, accounting for 73% of all approved applications.
- 4,650 students attending secondary schools had their applications approved, accounting for 25% of all approved applications.
- The remaining 485 (3%) approved applications were for students attending other learning centres (Special schools, Independent schools and Grammar schools).

## Approved applications by gender

**Table 3: Approved applications by gender and year (a)**

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
<b>All Learning Centres:</b>	<b>24,025</b>	<b>22,790</b>	<b>20,855</b>	<b>20,280</b>	<b>18,690</b>
Males	11,785	11,250	10,310	10,110	9,085
Females	12,245	11,540	10,545	10,165	9,605

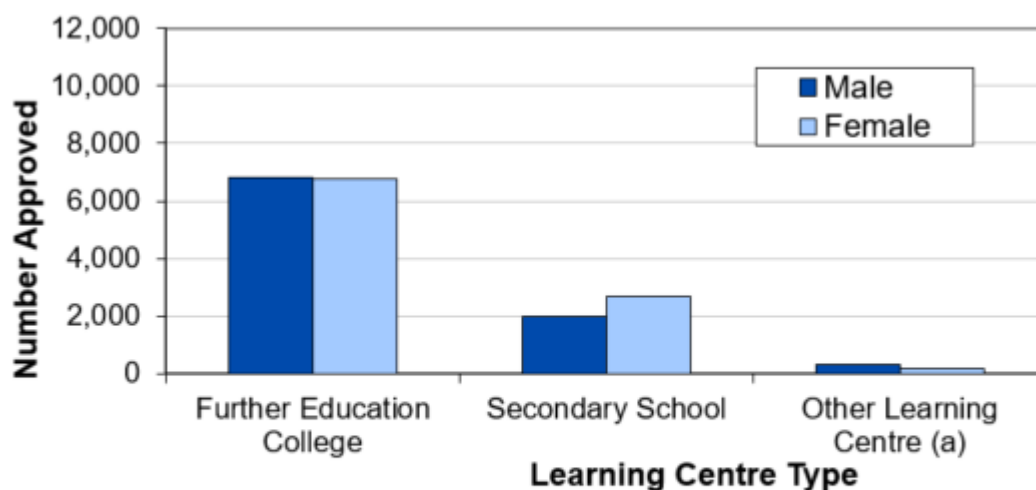
(a) As at 31st August

Source: Student Loans Company

9,605 (51%) of approved applications came from females. Since 2016/17 the percentage from females has stayed approximately the same. This broadly corresponds to the proportion of 16 to 18 year old females in full or part-time education in 2020/21 (51%)<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Source: 'Participation in education by age group and gender' (table EDUC0060) on [StatsWales](https://stats.wales.gov.uk/).

**Chart 4: Approved applications by learning centre type and gender, 2020/21 (a)**



(a) "Other learning centres" comprises of Special schools, Independent schools and Grammar schools .

Source: Student Loans Company

The number of approved applications from males and females in further education colleges was approximately equal. In secondary schools, the proportion of applications from females was greater (57%) than for males (43%). 64% of approved applications from students attending other learning centres were from males.

## Approved applications by year claiming EMA

**Table 4: Approved applications by year claiming EMA (a)**

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,025</b>	<b>22,790</b>	<b>20,855</b>	<b>20,280</b>	<b>18,690</b>
<b>Year claiming EMA:</b>					
<b>First</b>	11,645	10,965	10,080	10,050	9,185
<b>Second</b>	9,025	8,650	7,950	7,540	7,060
<b>Third</b>	3,360	3,170	2,825	2,685	2,445
<b>Fourth</b>	0	*	0	0	0

Source: Student Loans Company

(a) As at 31st August

\* The data item is disclosive or not sufficiently robust for publication (more than 0, less than 5)

In 2020/21, 9,185 (49%) approved applications were from first year claimants, down slightly from 50% last year.

# Notes

## 1. EMA eligibility criteria

Full criteria can be found on the [Student Finance Wales website](#)

### Student criteria

- Aged 16, 17 or 18 years old<sup>2</sup> on 31st August at the start of the academic year
- Has a bank or building society current account
- Meets the nationality/residency criteria

### Course criteria

- Studying full-time at a school; or studying at least 12 guided hours a week at a recognised further education institution
- Studying an academic or vocational course up to and including level 3 (eligible academic or vocational course include GCSEs, A-Levels, BTECs, NVQs, GNVQs and Basic Skills courses)
- Studying an eligible course that lasts at least 10 weeks

### Household income criteria

- Evidence of household income in the prior tax year determines whether a student will be eligible for an EMA
- There are two different household income thresholds, which are based on the student's family circumstances. Students will not be able to receive EMA if their household income is above the threshold levels

Family circumstances	Household income threshold
There is one dependent child in the household	£0 - £20,817
There are one or more dependants aged 16 or under in the household	£0 - £23,077
There are one or more dependants aged 20 or under in full-time education or training and eligible for child benefit in the household	£0 - £23,077

## 2. Data source

EMA applications and payments are administered by the [Student Loans Company](#) (SLC). Data held on EMA students is entered by SLC staff onto an administrative database for the purpose of assessing and paying EMA to students. This data is also stored in a management information data warehouse for the purpose of management reporting, operational performance reporting, audit of processes, statistics, future policy planning and forecasting.

### Data collection

The data in this release were collected via the SLC management information system and were extracted on 1 September 2021. All information is based on applications received by 31st August 2021.

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<sup>2</sup> Entitlement may be extended beyond this if they have not already received 3 years of EMA.

## **Validation and verification**

Processes and systems which enable customer and application assessment data to be held electronically are subject to periodic audit and integrity checks. SLC Internal Audit ensures that the processes governing data entry and application assessment are adhered to. Data integrity validation rules are used to identify and correct errors in data. Management Information extracted from SLC systems are subject to quality assurances prior to distribution: statisticians within the Welsh Government review the data and query any anomalies with the SLC before tables are published.

## **Publication**

Once the data has been finalised, the release is compiled and the key points and commentary are drafted. The release is independently checked and a final sense check is carried out by the relevant statistician prior to publication on the website.

## **Disclosure control and confidentiality**

All the figures are rounded to the nearest 5 for confidentiality. Where figures have been rounded there may be an apparent discrepancy between the sum of the constituent items and the total.

The following symbols are used in the tables:

- the data item is not exactly zero, but is less than half the final digit shown.
- . the data item is not applicable.
- .. the data item is not available.
- \* the data item is disclosive or not sufficiently robust for publication.

## **3. Definitions**

### **3.1 Change in applicant circumstances**

The data represented in this release refer to applicants' most recent learning agreement. Therefore, if an applicant has attended more than one type of learning centre, to avoid double-counting they are only included under their most recent status.

## **4. Equal opportunities**

9,086 Equal Opportunities monitoring forms were received in 2020/21 which equates to 44% of all applications received. It is not known whether these applications have been approved, rejected or are currently being processed since the data are disassociated from the application process, and not all forms are fully completed.

The data as at 3 September 2021 show that, of the applications for which an equal opportunities form was completed:

- 10% classed themselves as disabled and 1% did not confirm their disability status
- 2% said they were Black or British Black
- 10% made up the groups who were of Mixed race, Asian or British Asian and 'Chinese or other ethnic origin group
- 89% classed their ethnicity as White
- 7% did not confirm their ethnicity



## Key quality information

This section provides a summary of information on this output against five dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality, Accessibility and Clarity, Comparability and Coherence.

### Relevance

The statistics are used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor educational trends and as a baseline for further analysis of the underlying data. Some of the key users are:

- ministers and the Members Research Service in the National Assembly for Wales;
- officials in the Welsh Government;
- Other government departments;
- Further Education Institutions, Work-Based Learning providers, schools and local authorities;
- Wales Audit Office;
- students, researchers, academics and universities; and
- individual citizens, private companies, and the media.

These statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some examples of these are:

- advice to Ministers;
- to inform and evaluate the education policy-making process in Wales; and
- to forecast future expenditure of student support schemes in Wales.

### Accuracy

Statisticians within the Welsh Government review the data and query any anomalies with the Student Loans Company before tables are published. The figures in this release reflect the final position as at the end of the 2020/21 academic year (31st August 2021), and are correct as at 1 September 2021.

Looking at previous years' data, it is possible to estimate how close provisional data are to final data. Below is a table showing the percentage increase/decrease seen between each month's update of approved applications, compared with final (end of August) figures, published in September:

**Percentage change in the number of approved applications between provisional data (as at end of stated month) and final data (as at end of August)**

Academic year	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
2012/13	2.4%	1.1%	0.5%	0.1%	-0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2013/14	3.6%	1.6%	0.7%	0.5%	0.2%	-0.2%	-0.3%	-0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
2014/15	4.3%	2.0%	0.9%	0.7%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
2015/16	7.5%	3.5%	1.7%	1.2%	0.4%	0.0%	-0.1%	-0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
2016/17	8.4%	3.6%	1.4%	0.6%	0.1%	-0.2%	-0.4%	-0.5%	0.1%	0.0%
2017/18	3.9%	1.8%	0.5%	0.4%	-0.1%	-0.3%	-0.6%	-0.5%	0.1%	0.0%
2018/19	5.5%	3.1%	1.4%	0.9%	0.1%	-0.2%	-0.5%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
2019/20	3.4%	1.1%	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%	-0.1%	-0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
2020/21	-0.4%	2.8%	1.1%	0.4%	-0.2%	-0.6%	-1.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%

### Timeliness and punctuality

For academic year 2020/21, the first monthly publication on the number of EMA applications was released in December 2020, relating to applications up until the end of November 2020. Monthly updates during a given academic year are published as soon as possible on [StatsWales](#), a few weeks following the end of a given month, and according to a planned and pre-announced series of publication dates. Data in this release refers to final 2020/21 data.

### Accessibility and clarity

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics section of the Welsh Government website. It is accompanied by more detailed tables on StatsWales, a free to use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download data.

### Comparability and coherence

Exceptionally, a student may continue to be eligible for EMA at 19 years of age. These are the approximate numbers of such students in recent years:

2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
275	210	250	285	275	255	230	175	165

There can be a drop in approved EMA applications, often in the Spring of the academic year. This is due to the annual exercise carried out by SLC to sample check a proportion of those returning EMA applicants who have chosen to self certify their income and assess the application against the applicants' previous years income evidence. If the applicant later fails to provide evidence of household income (if requested) then they will be assumed to no longer be eligible for support.

Students meeting the eligibility criteria qualify for an award of £30 per week (this has not changed since 2011/12).

[Northern Ireland](#) and [Scotland](#) have their own EMA schemes. The EMA scheme in England has been cancelled and has been closed to new applicants since 1st January 2011. This scheme has been replaced by a [bursary scheme](#) which focuses on students from less wealthy households.

## National Statistics status

The [United Kingdom Statistics Authority](#) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

The continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in a letter in 2012, following a National Statistics assessment. These statistics last underwent a [full assessment](#) against the Code of Practice in 2010.

Since the latest review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- Including infographics to highlight the key points on the front page
- Added the EMA Wales helpline number to the front page of the bulletin to help those who happen upon the bulletin while actually seeking claims advice
- Including additional contextual information such as trends in pupil numbers.
- Including a chart of successful applications by gender
- Including more policy context by introducing a description and link to the Well-being of Wales report
- Improved accessibility by introducing alt-text and expanded alt-text detail to all charts and tables

## Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ("national indicators") that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being

goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

## Further details

The document is available at: <https://gov.wales/education-maintenance-allowances-ema-awarded-wales>

Comparable monthly data and further detailed information on EMA applications can be found on the [StatsWales website](#).

Further information about the EMA scheme can be found on the [Student Finance Wales website](#).

## Related articles

The [Scottish Government](#) and [Northern Ireland Executive](#) publish statistics on recipients of EMA. [Student support in Wales](#).

## List of tables and data items provided on StatsWales

- i. [Cumulative totals of applications for EMA by academic year and work stage](#), which provides data on EMA application on a monthly basis. This annual publication finalises data at the end of August, the monthly data for August are therefore equal to the data presented in Charts 1 and 2 above.
- ii. [Approved applications by LEA \(Local Education Authority\) and type of award](#). Only data for the £30 award has been provided since the academic year 2013/14, other awards were discontinued in 2011/12.
- iii. [Approved applications by learning centre type, gender and type of award](#).

## Next update

September 2022

The next update to the StatsWales table on cumulative applications, covering November 2021 EMA data, will be on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021.

## We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to [HigherEducationAndStudentFinance.Stats@gov.wales](mailto:HigherEducationAndStudentFinance.Stats@gov.wales)

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