

Mark welcomes help for disadvantaged students

Mark has welcomed a positive steps to provide substantial help for the poorest students.

The city MP was pleased that the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA), which gave nearly half of all sixth-formers Â£10 to Â£30 a week in benefit, has been replaced with a provision which will allow schools and colleges to direct financial help to the most disadvantaged.

Research showed that 90 per cent of students receiving EMA, which costs the country Â£600m a year, said they would have gone to school or college anyway.

Changes announced by education secretary Michael Gove this week will see Â£15 million allocated to vulnerable students who are in care or on income support â€“ up to Â£1,200 a year, which is more than under the previous system.

Mark, who received a lot of correspondence when the future of finance for 16 to 18-year-olds was thrown into question, particularly welcomed the discretion being given to headteachers and tutors who will best know where to direct the Â£165 million to those who most need it.

Now the details have been made clearer he said: "The principle of EMA was good â€“ to encourage students to stay in education after 16. In reality it was a scattergun approach to distributing money, characteristic of the last Government. EMA was spread so thinly that it could not help pupils financially unable to stay on. Instead it became a nice weekly bonus, something this country is unable to sustain. I am glad that under this new system money will be better targeted at those most in need."

There will be transitional help for those when the system changes. If you need further information or advice do not hesitate to contact Mark on 01908 686830 or lancasterm@parliament.uk.