**An Activity Agreement is a formal agreement between a Young Person and an advisor (Trusted Professional) which supports the Young Person to take part in tailored learning and activity based on an assessment of their immediate and future skills needs, which must be planned and delivered in ways which assist the Young Person to progress to a positive and sustained post school destination.**

They must take account of Young Peoples previous experiences, both in school and outside; they must recognise the wide range of influences on vulnerable Young People’s lives; and they **must** form a clear pathway towards more formal engagement with learning or employment

The contents of an Activity Agreement should straddle Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the strategic skills pipeline but may also require undertaking pre stage 1 activity.

The activities should provide participants with the opportunity to develop the skills for learning life and work with a focus on soft skills and core skills including Health and well-being, numeracy and literacy,

There must be regular monitoring of the Agreement, with the Young Person.

Where the Young Person receives EMA, this will be in accordance with EMA financial requirements.

**Funding for Activity Agreements must not substitute for other statutory funding**, e.g. from Social Work services or ILA. It is not an alternative to Self Directed Support, though an Activity Agreement may include elements which are funded through Self Directed Support. Young People with Activity Agreements may also be awarded travel, child care and other expenses so that they can access learning provision, whether or not they have an EMA, but this should be in situations where there is no existing funding.

**Eligibility**

**Activity Agreements are not for everyone.**

They are specifically for young people:

* Aged 16 –19 (in some cases up to their 20th birthday) not in education, employment or training and who have been assessed as requiring the intensive support needed to (re)engage through a tailored learning approach offered by an Activity Agreement in order to progress onto further learning or training and develop the skills needed to enter the labour market.
* Who are leaving school without an “Opportunities for All” offer in place and for whom an Activity Agreement has been identified as the most appropriate post-school intervention, based on an assessment of their learning and skills needs.

In Highland we are accessing additional funding through the European Social Fund in order to provide a more intensive programme of support this means we are specifically targeting Young People with a wide range of barriers to progression.

Please note 2 of the following criteria must be present to enable eligibility for Activity Agreements.

If you are unsure of the eligibility of a Young Person discuss with the Activity Agreement coordinator in the first instance, a full description of these criteria is shown in appendix 1

**Eligibility Criteria**

* From rural areas (1)
* From employment deprived areas (1)
* Long term registered unemployed
* No, or limited, Work Experience
* Low Skilled
* Living in a Jobless Household (2)
* Living in a jobless household with dependent children (2)
* Living in a single adult household with dependent children (2)
* Primary Carer of older person
* Primary Carer of child/children
* Disability
* Mental health issues
* Long- term physical illness or condition
* Homeless or affected by housing exclusion
* Looked after young person
* Substance related conditions
* Criminal Convictions
* Migrants
* Asylum Seeker
* Refugee

(1), (2); only one criteria from each of this type may be selected

**Allowances**

Young People being offered Activity Agreements may also be eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance. This should be applied for online at: <https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/20782/education_maintenance_allowance> if a participant is unable to apply online paper forms can usually be sourced from a Highland Council service point or through the Activity Agreement coordinators.

There will not be a requirement to complete the EMA Learning Agreement; the signed Activity Agreement replaces this.

**PERSONAL ADVISORS**

The role of the Personal Advisor is that of ‘Trusted Professional’, someone with whom the Young Person already has, or can build, a good relationship. Ideally the Personal Advisor should be identified and known to the Young Person before they leave school. This may be done through a Child’s Plan meeting or during other meetings which are held to support Young People leaving school. When they are educated out with mainstream education this should happen as they approach their school leaving date. The Lead Professional or Named Person, (e.g. a Guidance Teacher, Social Worker or other involved professional) will discuss this with the Young Person, and identify the Trusted Professional who will take on the role of Personal Advisor when the Young Person leaves school.

Personal Advisors will normally be Youth Development Officers or Skills Development Scotland advisors but they could be from a number of different agencies including Social Work Services or Barnardos Throughcare and aftercare services. It is important that they are the “best placed” person to take on the role. Their work will be supported and monitored by the Activity Agreement coordinators employed by Highland Council.

The Activity Agreement should be completed with the Young Person and referrer/Personal Advisor reflecting the activities that are relevant to the young person and their development of employability skills and learning preferences. It is important that the number of hours of engagement is appropriate for this Young Person, and the maximum they can sustain.  Both parties should sign the form. The number of hours should reflect the young person’s needs and capacity. There will be an expectation that progression and achievement is intrinsic to the plan. **Where the Young Person receives EMA, it will be the Personal Advisor’s responsibility to ensure the Activity Agreement Coordinator is informed if the Agreement is not being maintained by the Young Person.** The Activity Agreement Coordinator has the responsibility for informing the EMA Unit of this and approving EMA when appropriate.

**The role of the Personal Advisor is to:**

* Make contact with the Young Person and build and maintain a positive relationship with him or her.
* Work with the Young Person to put an Activity Agreement plan together appropriate to their needs, building on the Child’s Plan, where that is in place, and using transition planning tools where appropriate.
* Keep regular contact (weekly/fortnightly) with the Young Person and monitor their progress
* Ensure the eligibility criteria for Activity Agreements are met, and evidenced, in the Young Persons plan
* Liaise with Service Providers, other professionals involved with the Young Person, and share the content of the Activity Agreement with service providers and other appropriate professionals (The Young Person must sign their Agreement to confirm their consent to this.)
* Signpost the Young Person to other services where required, and support the Young Person to access these
* Assist the Young Person to access EMA where eligible, and travel and other expenses as required.
* Ensure the Young Person is meeting EMA requirements where they are in receipt of EMA, and take appropriate action if they are not
* Liaise with the Activity Agreement Coordinators, reporting progress and seeking guidance over any problems.
* Attend network meetings and contribute views and experience of the Activity Agreement Project in Highland
* Maintain accurate records, of contacts and progress which are able to be accessed by auditors if required
* Participate in CPD for Personal Advisors and other staff involved in Activity Agreements where appropriate

**ACTIVITY AGREEMENT COORDINATORS**

Activity Agreements Coordinators (One for the North; one for the South) will manage and monitor Activity Agreements in Highland. Activity Agreements must be lodged with them when they have been drawn up.

**The role of the Activity Agreement Coordinators is to:**

* Consult with and advise partners, including schools, health services and care services, on the identification of Young People to be offered Activity Agreements
* Take a leading role in the development of direction and guidance to providers of Personal Advisors and to Learning Providers
* Engage with and advise the providers of Personal Advisors for each Young Person
* Liaise with the Personal Advisors for each Young Person
* Monitor progress and take remedial action as appropriate
* Organise appropriate Continuous Professional Development
* Model and promote good practice in developing and supporting effective Activity Agreements
* Act as Personal Advisor where no other professional is available
* Make decisions on EMA payments based on attendance and engagement reported by Personal Advisors and Providers and informing the EMA unit of these decisions.
* Support Personal Advisors to access appropriate provision for Young People on Activity Agreements
* Source bespoke provision when required

 **Activity Agreement Coordinator Posts:**

**Areas Covered**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Matthew MacIver CoversSouth school catchment areas | Paul Macmillan CoversNorth school catchment areas |
| Ardnamurchan High schoolCharleston AcademyCulloden AcademyDrummond SchoolGlenurquhart High School Grantown Grammar SchoolInverness High SchoolInverness Royal AcademyKilchuimen AcademyKingussie High SchoolKinlochleven High schoolLochaber High SchoolMillburn AcademyMallaig High SchoolNairn Academy | Alness AcademyBlack Isle Education CentreDingwall AcademyDornoch AcademyFarr HighFortrose AcademyGairloch High SchoolGolspie HighInvergordon AcademyKinlochbervie HighPlockton High schoolPortree High SchoolSt Clements SchoolSt Duthus School Tain Royal AcademyThurso High SchoolUllapool High SchoolWick High School |
| Contact details:Matthew MacIverActivity Agreement CoordinatorHighland CouncilCouncil officesHigh streetDingwallIV15 9QNMatthew.maciver@highland.gov.uk 01349 868609/07768 067169 | Contact details:Paul MacmillanActivity Agreement CoordinatorHighland CouncilCouncil officesHigh streetDingwallIV15 9QNPaul.macmillan@highland.gov.uk01349 868673/07768 065541 |

Other education provision such as off-site centres, and including out of region placements, will normally be covered by whichever coordinator covers the home area or current location of the Young Person.

**SERVICE PROVIDERS**

The role of the service provider is to offer an appropriate tailored, supportive package of learning and activity to Young People on Activity Agreements working to a plan developed with the Young Person and their Personal Advisor.

Highland Council have procured these services through an open tendering process which is intended to include all appropriate providers if they fulfil the criteria laid down by Highland Council and can offer a service to a Young Person which meets their learning needs.

A list of provision and contact details of providers is available from the Activity Agreement Coordinators and on the council website at [www.highland.gov.uk/activityagreement](http://www.highland.gov.uk/activityagreement)

This includes types of services offered and geographical area covered.

**The role of the service provider is to:**

* Provide a tailored package of activity and learning to a Young Person in line with their Activity Agreement Plan
* Ensure they are familiar with the Young Person’s Activity Agreement Plan
* Liaise with the Personal Advisor at agreed intervals to update on attendance and progress
* Inform the Personal Advisor (or Activity Agreement Coordinator) **at the earliest opportunity** of any instances where a Young Person fails to attend.
* Co-operate where necessary with other learning providers who are also offering support to the Young Person
* Monitor and record progress of Young People for invoicing and review purposes including signed attendance records and progress reporting with invoices.
* Abide by the terms of their Activity Agreement contract with Highland Council

**SETTING UP AN ACTIVITY AGREEMENT**

**Identification**

Referrals for an Activity Agreement may be made at a Child’s Plan meeting, or as part of transition planning with a pupil. They may also be made after a Young Person leaves school if they have no positive destination, if they have dropped out of college or left employment etc.

In the first instance, they should be referred to Skills Development Scotland in their local area. If a Social Worker, voluntary organisation employee or someone else working with the Young Person is unsure who to contact they should first of all get in touch with the relevant Activity Agreement Coordinator. Activity Agreements can be proposed by the Young Person him/herself, by Social Workers, parents and carers or others involved with the Young Person. If required the Activity Agreement Coordinator will support the process to identify a Personal Advisor and put an Agreement in place.

**Assessment**

Ideally, the assessment should be based on the assessment carried out within GIRFEC processes while the young person is under 16. With the Young Person’s permission assessments can also be shared with providers, under the supervision of the Personal Advisor. Providers’ own assessments should be shared with the Personal Advisor as well as the Young Person.

**Plan**

The Activity Agreement Plan should be a person centred plan developed with the Young Person reflecting their needs and aspirations; it should be flexible and can use a combination of differing types of provision if appropriate.

**If a** **work placement or work based activity** is to form part of the Young Persons plan then this must be safety checked through the Activity Agreement Coordinator **before** the placement can begin. In order to do this Activity Agreement Coordinators must also be made aware of any **Additional Support Needs** which may impact on any placement. There is a separate process for Work experience and information on this will be on the Activity Agreement webpage. [www.highland.gov.uk/activityagreement](http://www.highland.gov.uk/activityagreement) or through the coordinators.

**Funding**

Funding must be approved by the Activity Agreement Coordinators, as it must comply with EU and Scottish Government Guidelines.

Small sums paid from petty cash to facilitate travel and other expenses, can be reclaimed by a monthly invoice to Highland Council, sent to the Activity Agreement Coordinator as an email attachment or by post with the envelope marked ‘AA Claim’.

Payment for courses and other provision must be invoiced to Highland Council, as above.

Where bus passes can be arranged for transport, this should be notified to the Activity Agreement Coordinator who can arrange for an appropriate pass to be obtained.

Expenses claim forms to recoup bus fares and mileage costs for persons transporting Young People to service providers or placements can be obtained from the Activity Agreement Coordinators.

**Submission and EMA application**

Young people should be encouraged and supported, where necessary, to apply for EMA. The application should be made as soon as possible, even if the Activity Agreement has not been finalised or signed. It can take some weeks for the financial checking for eligibility for EMA to be completed. When an Activity Agreement has been drawn up and agreed with the Young Person, including arrangements with all supporting providers**, the Agreement must be signed and dated by the Young Person and the Referrer/Personal Advisor.** EMA payments can be backdated to the date the Agreement started **though this period of backdating may be restricted due to the Scottish Government EMA regulations.**

**EMA**

EMA payments will be made fortnightly in arrears for Activity Agreements and will continue for the duration of the Agreement, including during school holiday periods if activities are being undertaken.

It will be normally be assumed that the Young Person is attending, and continues to meet the requirements for payment of EMA, **unless the Personal Advisor informs Coordinators that this is not the case.** It is therefore vital that the Personal Advisor satisfies him or herself, through the monitoring process outlined in the next section, that the Young Person is attending and participating in the provision which has been put in place.

**Please note the EMA unit must be informed of any changes in circumstances as this may also affect claims.**

**Changes of address must be advised to the AA project.**

**Monitoring**

Personal Advisors should meet regularly with the Young Person. Ideally this is weekly or at least fortnightly, but will depend partly on the role of the Service Provider and the frequency and quality of communication between the Provider and the Personal Advisor. The Personal Advisor should in any case be in regular contact with Providers to get feedback on the young person’s attendance and progress, and to ensure that the Young Person meets the requirements for EMA.

Meetings with the Young Person should use the format of the Review document provided by the Coordinators available at [www.highland.gov.uk/activityagreement](http://www.highland.gov.uk/activityagreement)

**Review/Progression**

Activity Agreements have no defined length, but the review process should identify progress, or lack of it. An Activity Agreement will not normally be time limited and should be of the duration that meets the needs of the participant so long as progression can be evidenced.

**It should be noted that longer term supports are available out with the Activity Agreement project, through employability services, should they be required.**

Personal Advisors **must** hold a formal review meeting with Young People after **three months.**  Subsequent regular reviews should be held at individually agreed timescales (maximum three monthly) and should include the Activity Agreement Coordinator when appropriate. The Review meetings must assess progress and discuss what next steps should be taken, including changing or adding to current provision. A review must also be carried out when an Activity Agreement comes to an end. Copies of review documents should be passed to the Activity Agreements Coordinator.

**Summary of Actions**

1. EMA applied for as soon as it is clear an Activity Agreement is the appropriate route – even before the agreement has been drawn up or providers contacted. Young Person should be supported to do this if required.
2. Activity Agreement drawn up, eligibility evidenced, coordinators informed and providers contacted so provision can be put in place with agreed start dates.
3. Activity Agreement plan submitted to coordinator this may be done electronically but pages requiring a signature must be printed off to be signed and passed to the coordinator
4. **Safety checks must be carried out before any work placement can be undertaken as mentioned elsewhere in this document.**
5. Paperwork processed and entered on database; this will trigger EMA payments (when the Young Person has been approved by EMA Unit as eligible)
6. EMA processed and payments backdated to start date of Activity Agreement(period may be restricted).