

Raising of the Participation Age Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Raising of the Participation Age (RPA)?

The Government is increasing the age at which all young people are required to remain in learning.

From 2013, young people completing Year 11 of school will need to remain in learning for a further academic year, leaving at aged 17 instead of 16. Those due to leave school in 2015 will need to remain in learning until their 18th birthday*.

| Due to Complete Year 11 | Must Stay In Learning Until |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2012 | June 2012 |
| 2013 | June 2014 |
| 2014 | June 2015 |
| 2015 | 18th birthday |

The RPA does not mean that young people have to stay in school, young people will be able to choose the best post-16 option for them. Options include:

- Full-time Education - school 6th form, a college or a Foundation Learning provider. Full-time is classed as at least 540 hours a year
- An Apprenticeship – a full time, paid job while receiving training for a recognised qualification

* Young people who achieve a level 3 qualification (which is equivalent to 2 A Levels) before their 18th birthday are exempt from RPA regulations, however, young people are advised to remain in learning until completion of their course.

- Work with Training – if employed, self-employed or volunteering full time (20 hours or more a week), young people must still be in learning for at least 280 hours a year, the equivalent of one day a week during term-time

2. Why is the Government changing things?

The Government wants to give all young people the opportunity to develop skills and qualifications that will open doors to future employment, help them make the most of their potential, and earn more over their lifetime.

Evidence shows that achieving qualifications at this age can help to boost a young person's prospects for life - for instance, young people with 2 or more A-Levels earn around 14% more than those without.

3. Does this mean all young people have to stay on at school?

No, Raising the Participation Age is not the same as raising the school leaving age. Young people will be able to choose the best post-16 option for them, and will be able to leave school after Year 11 if they want to. Options include:

- Full-time Education - school 6th form, a college or a Foundation Learning provider. Full-time is classed as at least 540 hours a year
- An Apprenticeship – a full time, paid job while receiving training for a recognised qualification
- Work with Training – if employed, self-employed or volunteering full time (20 hours or more a week), young people must still be in learning for at least 280 hours a year, the equivalent of one day a week during term-time

4. What happens if a young person has not made any choices by the time they leave year 11? Can they do nothing?

No, the purpose of raising the participation age is so that all young people stay in education or training until they are 18. This is to provide the young person with more time to develop the skills required for a successful career and working life.

5. What happens if a young person doesn't participate?

Leaving education early with few or no qualifications can severely limit a young person's choices later in life. There is a wealth of evidence which shows how staying in education longer can benefit young people. Not only are they more likely to get a job and earn more over their lifetimes, they are less likely to suffer from a range of health and social problems as well.

For young people who refuse to participate there are currently no penalties, however, Redcar and Cleveland Local Authority is responsible for tracking 16-17 year olds who are not participating and will take steps to try and ensure that everyone is enrolled in a suitable education or training place.

6. Are young people with special educational needs exempt from RPA duties?

The duty to participate applies to all young people and there is a wealth of evidence to suggest that young people can benefit from staying in education or training beyond the age of 16. In September 2012 the Government published proposals to improve the support provided to children and young people with SEN and to their parents. These proposals are being debated as part of new children and families legislation.

Young people who have a permanent disability or illness that prevents them from taking up education or training will be exempt from RPA duties.

7. Can young people still go straight into full time work?

Young people will still be able to work full time if they want to, or volunteer full-time or even set up their own business. Young People will still be participating as long as they are also doing part-time training which leads to an accredited qualification. Part-time training works out about one day a week (280 hours a year), but young people may be able to study flexibly, for example, in week long blocks.

8. What if a young person's employer won't let them train?

Getting a job after leaving school is a great next step and the Government wants to make it as simple as possible for businesses to employ young people. However, the evidence is clear that if a young person wants to work, the best thing for their future is to do some further training or study alongside that. Young people will have more qualifications and extra skills that will really set their career off on the right path. It will help them increase the amount they can earn and broaden their career prospects.

Employers know that training helps young people to become a better employee and we are confident that they will see the benefits to them as well as the benefits to the employee. Employers will not have to pay anything towards training, it will be paid for by the government.

9. Can young people still take a gap year?

The change in law means that young people need to stay in education or training until their 18th birthday (from 2015) or until they gain a Level 3 qualification (which is equivalent to 2 A levels). So young people will still be able to take a gap year after their studies.

10. How are schools supporting young people?

We know that making choices about education and training can be a challenge, so, from September 2012, there is a duty on schools to secure access to independent careers guidance for pupils in school years 9-11, which must:

- be presented in an impartial manner
- include information on the full range of post-16 education or training options, including Apprenticeships and
- promote the best interests of the pupils to whom it is given.

This will make sure that young people will receive support to help them make informed choices.

11. What does this mean for parents/carers?

The legal requirement to participate will be on the young person. This is because we know that, at 16, young people are starting to make and take responsibility for the decisions that affect their future.

Parents and families can help by preparing young people for the changes and talking to them about the benefits of staying in learning after they are 16. The vast majority of young people choose to stay on in learning after year 11 already,

because they understand the importance of gaining further education and qualifications.

12. Is there any financial support available?

Currently families can still claim Child Benefit whilst their teenager is in full time education up to the age of 18 and in some forms of training.

Young people may also be eligible for a 16-19 bursary from their school, college or training provider to help with educational costs.

13. Where can I find out more information on RPA?

More information on RPA is available at:

www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/tunedin

or you can speak to a Redcar and Cleveland Careers Adviser by calling the RPA Hotline on 01287 612323, Monday – Friday, 8:30am – 5:00pm.