

RPA



Continuing in learning: Information for PARENTS/CARERS

WHAT IS RPA?

RPA stands for **Raising the Participation Age**. The Government is raising the age at which young people need to continue in education or training. It isn't about raising the school leaving age and it doesn't mean young people can't get a job. It's all about **continuing in learning** – and young people have lots of choice about how to do this in the way that suits them best.

DOES RPA AFFECT YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER?

■ Are they already in Year 12?

They are too old to be affected by RPA, so these changes will not make any difference to them or you.

■ Are they completing Year 11 in 2013?

They will need to continue in education or training until at least the end of the academic year in which they turn 17.

■ Are they completing Year 10 in 2013 or later?

They will need to continue in education or training at least until their 18th birthday.

WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

Most 16 or 17 year olds already continue in some form of education or training so RPA is not a big change for them. But **ALL** young people should have the chance to develop the skills they need for adult life. **Continuing in learning** will give them as much chance as possible to get the qualifications, the knowledge and the practical skills they need to help them succeed. This is true whether they are thinking of going into further or higher education, going for an Apprenticeship, or looking for a job. There is evidence that getting qualifications at this age can help young people earn more over their whole lifetime – for example young people with two or more A Levels earn around 14% more than those without. Research has also suggested that, over the course of their career, those with an Apprenticeship earn £100,000 more than those without.

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

- **Studying full-time** This could be A Levels or other further education courses, and it could mean staying at the same school if it offers post-16 education, or moving to another school or college.
- **An Apprenticeship** Apprenticeships give young people the chance to train for an NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) while earning a wage and learning the skills for a particular type of job. The training part of an Apprenticeship means that they would be continuing in learning which is the idea behind RPA.
- **Study Programme** If a young person is not yet sure about continuing in full-time studying or going for an Apprenticeship, the new Study Programme may be their best option to move forward. If they are 16 or 17, they would have a mixed programme with at least one significant qualification, an internship or other sort of workplace experience, continued study of English and maths towards a good GCSE grade, and study skills and other development opportunities.
- **Full-time work or volunteering combined with part-time education or training** RPA still means young people can choose to get a job or do volunteering if they decide that is the best option for them. "Full-time" means for 20 or more hours each week. But they would have to continue in "accredited learning" alongside their employment or volunteering – this could be in work-based learning or by attending college as well as going to work. The training needs to be for at least 280 hours over a whole year. This is equivalent to about a day each week but it can be arranged flexibly to suit the young person and their employer or the place where they are volunteering.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW AS A PARENT OR CARER?

The legal requirement to participate – to continue in some form of learning – will be on your son or daughter. The Government want young people to take responsibility for the decisions that affect their own future.

What happens if my child 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 your child. Not only are they more likely to get a job and earn more over their lifetime, they are less likely to suffer from a range of health and social problems as well. Birmingham City Council 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 or employment.

Is financial support available for my child?

The Government has committed to fully-funding education and training places for all 16-19 year olds, and there is also financial help available for young people who are struggling with additional costs. The **16-19 Bursary Fund** can provide up to £1,200 a year to young people. Under the scheme, schools, colleges and training providers can offer bursaries to young people who are finding it difficult to pay costs like transport, meals or books and equipment. You can find more information at www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund

Are young people with special educational needs exempt from RPA?

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 special educational needs, and to their parents. These proposals are being debated as part of new children and families legislation.

WHERE CAN WE FIND OUT MORE?

Your son's or daughter's school is responsible for making sure everyone in Years 9, 10 and 11 have access to independent careers guidance, covering all these post-16 options. Check what the school is doing and encourage your son or daughter to ask them for the guidance they might need.

If you want to find out more about the different post-16 options that might be open to your son or daughter, use the **UCAS Progress** online course search which includes details of local courses for young people aged between 14 and 19 (or up to 25 for young people with a learning difficulty/disability). You can use this yourself and encourage your son or daughter to do the same. Go to www.ucasprogress.com

If you want to know more about RPA you can visit the Raising the Participation Age area of the **Department for Education** website at www.education.gov.uk/rpa

There is more information about the SEN reform proposals at www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/send/changingsen

To find out more about Apprenticeships, have a look at the **National Apprenticeship Service** website at www.apprenticeships.org.uk

The **Connexions Birmingham** website contains all sorts of useful information about all your son's or daughter's options and how to make the choice that is best for them. It has its own Parents and Carers section too. You can reach the website from www.birmingham.gov.uk/connexions

If they want somewhere else to go for impartial advice, young people can contact the **National Careers Service** at nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk or by phoning their helpline on 0800 100 900 – it's open between 8am and 10pm every day of the week.

Birmingham City Council email for queries: rpa@birmingham.gov.uk

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