

Raising the Participation Age (RPA) – Mythbuster

You're raising the school leaving age – school isn't right for everyone....

Raising the Participation Age is not the same as raising the school leaving age – that will stay the same. You will be able to choose the post-16 option that is best for you, and you will still be able to leave school after Year 11 if you want to. The choices available to you, under RPA, will be: full time education; work-based learning (such as an apprenticeship); or full-time work or volunteering alongside part-time training that leads to an accredited qualification.

...and you're stopping me working full-time.

No we're not – you will still be able to work full time if you want to, or volunteer full-time or set up your own business. This is one of the ways to participate, however you have to undertake part-time training which leads to an accredited qualification alongside this.

I'm 16 and I want to work. I know that I need to do some training alongside that, but now I'm worried that if I get a job my employer won't let me train and I'll be breaking the law.

Getting a job after leaving school is a great next step and the Government wants to make it as straightforward as possible for businesses to employ you. However, the evidence is clear that if you want to work, the best thing for your future is to do some further training or study alongside that. That will give you more qualifications and further skills that will really set your career off on the right path, and make sure that you maximise your future earning and employment prospects.

We know that employers recognise that training helps you to become a more productive employee and contribute to the success of their business, and so we are confident that they will see that it is in their interests as well as yours that you do access training. Employers will not have to pay anything towards this, as your accredited training will be paid for by the Government.

When you start your job, you'll want to discuss your working hours to ensure that you can fit your training alongside these. For a lot of jobs – especially the ones that young people often get in shops or restaurants – shift working is normal, so in that case you should be able to manage your work and study easily. It's also the case that a lot of employers provide good quality accredited training themselves – you should discuss this with your prospective employer.

I'll be forced to stay on in schools or college along with other students who do not really want to be in education.

RPA will not mean a large increase in numbers - the vast majority of young people already continue in some form of education post-16. At the end of 2010, 96.1% of 16 year olds were participating in education and work based learning.

We are not raising the school leaving age, so you won't be forced to stay in school or college. You'll be free to choose the option that is right for you – and your local authority is responsible for making sure you have the offer of a place in education or training that is appropriate for you.

I'm planning a gap year; does this mean I can't go?

The change in law means that you need to stay in education or training until your 18th birthday (from 2015) or until you gain a Level 3 qualification (which is equivalent to 2 A Levels). So you will still be able to take a gap year after your studies. We know that staying in education and training between the ages of 16 to 18 has huge benefits for

young people – such as increased earnings and better job prospects.

There aren't any consequences if I don't participate.

We want to encourage you to participate because you recognise the benefits it will bring – such as better job prospects and increased earnings over your lifetime - and that is why the vast majority of 16 and 17 year olds are participating in education or training. By changing the law, we are making sure that all young people have the opportunity to access the learning option that's right for them.

We have legislated to allow us to delay the enforcement duty against young people related to RPA, which would have meant you could be fined for not participating. We have done this because we want to give people time to adapt to the changes in the system. However, this enforcement is still set out in legislation and we will review the need for it on an annual basis from 2014. If it is needed, we can choose to use it.

You've got rid of Connexions – how can you claim to be helping to support me to participate.

We are giving schools more freedom and flexibility to determine the best use of resources for every pupil, including for careers guidance. We have changed the law to make schools responsible for providing independent careers guidance for their pupils, from September 2012. This is because we know your school is best placed to offer you the advice and support you need to decide what to do after Year 11. You can also make use of the young people's careers helpline and online resources.

We have also introduced the new 16-19 Bursary Fund which will provide £1,200 bursaries to the young people who most need it; such as those in care, teenage parents and those with a disability, amongst others. Schools and colleges will also have funds from which they can provide additional bursaries to anyone they believe needs the extra support to continue in post-16 education and training, for example those who need help meeting travelling costs.