

## Raising the Participation Age (RPA) – Myth Buster

### *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. You will be able to choose the best post-16 option 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:

- Study full-time in a school, college or with a training provider.
- Full-time work or volunteering combined with part-time education or training.
- An Apprenticeship ([www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)).

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

You will still be able to work full time if you want to, or volunteer full-time or even set up your own business. You will still be participating as long as you are also doing part-time training which leads to an accredited qualification. Part-time training works out as about one day a week, but you might also be able to study flexibly, for example, in week-long blocks. Talk to local colleges to see what's on offer, and ask your employer about how you can fit training around your work.

### *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 simple 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. You will have more qualifications and extra skills that will really set your career off on the right path. It will help you increase the amount you can earn and broaden your careers prospects.

Employers know that training helps you to be a better employee and we are confident that they will see the benefits to them as well as the benefits to you. Employers will not have to pay anything towards your training; it will be paid for by the Government.

When you start your job, you'll want to talk to your employer about how you can fit training around your working hours. Shift working is normal in a lot of jobs, so it should be easy to manage your work and study. Some employers also provide their own accredited training. It's always worth talking to your employer about the opportunities open to you as an employee.

### *I'll be forced to stay on in school or college along with other students who do not really want to be there.*

RPA will not mean a large increase in the number of students. The vast majority of young people already continue in some form of education post-16.

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. Your local council is responsible for making sure you have an offer of a place in education or training that is right for you.

### ***If I get a summer job, can I only apply for a part-time course at college?***

No, full-time employment is where you work for more than twenty hours a week for more than 8 weeks at a time. You can still fit a summer job or part-time job around your full-time studies.

### ***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 18<sup>th</sup> 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.

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

We want to encourage you to participate because of the benefits it will bring – this is the reason why the vast majority of 16 and 17 year olds already choose to continue 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 and improve their long-term prospects.

### ***You've got rid of Connexions – how will that help me to participate?***

We have changed the law to make schools responsible for providing independent careers guidance for their pupils. This is because we think 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 contact the **National Careers Service** for impartial advice at any time by visiting <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>. You can get advice from a trained adviser by contacting the helpline, which is open from 8.00am to 10pm, seven days a week on **0800 100 900**, or for text messages on **07766 413 219**.

### ***Is there any financial support to help me participate?***

We have also introduced the 16-19 Bursary Fund to provide £1,200 bursaries for young people who need the most help – for example, young people in care, teenage parents and those with a disability. Schools and colleges will also have funding which they can use to provide extra bursaries to anyone they think needs the support to continue their education – for example, those who need help with travel costs. Talk to your local schools and colleges to find out if you might be eligible. You can also find out more about the 16-19 Bursary Fund here: [www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund](http://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund).