

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.

Businesses won't want to employ me once these new burdens are placed on them.

Employing people from a young age allows employers to build a workforce best suited to their needs and the needs of their industry. Ensuring that you are undertaking learning alongside employment means that you are developing the skills and gaining the qualifications that will benefit you and your employer. Many employers are already offering training and Apprenticeships to young people, recognising the importance of young people continuing to learn and the benefits this brings.

The duties placed on employers (who are not already offering training) are straight-forward; they must check that you are enrolled in appropriate training before you start work and, if needed, they must agree reasonable hours of work to enable you to attend this training.

I'll be forced to stay on in school 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.

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 already. 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, 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 have decided to move away from services like Connexions because, in too many cases, they were ineffective in meeting the needs of young people. 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.