

Raising the Participation Age (RPA) - Information for Parents

What is RPA?

The government has changed the law so that from start of the 2013/14 academic year, all young people are required to continue in education or training:

- Until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17.
- From summer 2015 this will be until their 18th birthday.

The information here will help you to understand what this means for you and your child.

If your child completed year 11 in summer 2013 they need to continue in education or training until at least the end of 2013/14 ie the end of the academic year in which they turn 17.

If your child is going to complete year 11 in summer 2014 (or any later year) they will need to continue for longer - until at least their 18th birthday.

This does not necessarily mean staying in school; young people have a choice about how they continue in education or training post-16, which could be through:

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

Why have you changed things?

The vast majority of 16 and 17 year olds already continue in some form of education or training. However, the small group of young people not participating includes some of the most vulnerable. We want to give all young people the opportunity to develop the skills they need for adult life and to achieve their full potential.

What does this mean for me?

The legal requirement to participate is on your son or daughter. This is because we know that, at 16, young people are starting to make – and take responsibility for – the decisions that affect their future. The government is investing more than ever to provide fully-funded education and training places for all 16-19 year-olds who want to take them.

We know that you will be providing support and guidance to your child as they make these important decisions about their future, but there are also other sources of help. We have changed the law to make schools responsible for securing independent careers guidance for their pupils in years 9-11 (to be extended to years 8-13 from September 2013). This is because we think your child's school or college is best placed to secure the advice and support they need to help them decide what option is best for them. Your child can also contact trained advisers for impartial advice at the National Careers Service on 0800 100 900 (open from 8.00am to 10pm, seven days a week) – and they can use the web-chat service by accessing the website at <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>.

Your local authority is also responsible for making sure all young people have a suitable offer of a place in education or training and you can contact them directly for more information. You can find contact details for your local authority through the Gov.uk website: <https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council>

What happens if my child doesn't participate?

The law has changed, but there will be no action taken against any young people who don't participate. We want to encourage your child 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 have made sure that all young people have the opportunity to access the learning option that's right for them and improve their long-term prospects.

Your local authority is responsible for identifying and supporting 16-17 year olds who are not participating and will be working to ensure that young people are enrolled on a suitable education or training place.

Is financial support available for my child?

The 16-19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help with essential education-related costs like transport to their school or college, a lunchtime meal or any equipment they might need for their course. You can find out more about the 16-19 Bursary Fund: <https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund>

Where can I find out more?

More information on RPA is available here: www.education.gov.uk/rpa.