



Raising the Participation Age (RPA) – Myth Buster

The Government is 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.
- Work or volunteer full time combined with part-time education or training.
- An apprenticeship (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. This training is not only to ensure you have the most up-to-date skills to do well in your current job but also to help you develop the skills you will need to get promotion or apply for other jobs in future.

"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. (Evidence shows that if you get qualifications at this age, it can help you to earn more over your whole lifetime – on average, young people with 2 or more A-levels earn around 14% more than those without. RPA will mean that all young people are given the opportunity to learn and participate after age 16).

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. The Council is working with local employers to encourage them to offer training for young people including apprenticeships.

“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 and will help develop your skills so you can get the best out of employment in future.

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 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.

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

The Government wants to encourage you to participate because of the benefits it will bring – this is the reason why the vast majority of 16-17-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.

Where can I get help or advice on my options post-16?

Speak to your link Careers adviser in school or your teacher to set up an appointment with the Careers Adviser

Contact **Tower Hamlets Careers Service**, 35 Bow Road, London E3 2AD

– Tel: **020 7364 1401**

Web address: www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/careers-service

Email address: careers.service@towerhamlets.gov.uk

You can contact the National Careers Service for impartial advice at any time by visiting <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>.

You can also get advice from a trained adviser by contacting the helpline, which is open from 8am 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?

The Government has 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.

The Council is taking steps to extend the Mayor’s Education Award (MEA) scheme by a further year, up to the end of August 2014. This scheme allows Tower Hamlets students in schools and colleges to apply for a grant of £400 where they come from a low income family. The grant is paid in two tranches of £200 and is linked to attendance and behaviour. As a general rule students are expected to achieve 95% attendance, allowing for period of authorised absence. To find out more about the MEA scheme visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/careers-service and search for MEA.