
PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO 18 YEARS

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to review the requirements of the Raising of the Participation Age, to look at the impact locally and to detail the work being undertaken to meet the local authority's responsibilities.

Summary

2. The Education and Skills Act (2008) places a duty on all young people to participate in education and training until their 18th birthday. This is known as the 'Raising of the Participation Age' (RPA) and has a phased approach with young people being required to stay on in education and training until 17 years old by 2013 and 18 years old by 2015.
3. The act also places a duty on local authorities to 'promote the effective participation in education and training of all 16 and 17 year olds resident in their area'.
4. This report outlines the requirements of RPA, the current position regarding participation and the actions being undertaken to ensure that the local authority meets its requirements.

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that:-
 - (a) Children and Young People Scrutiny note the content of the report and the actions being undertaken.
 - (b) A further report is produced in January 2014 to monitor the impact of the actions undertaken by the local authority and the progress towards full participation.

Murray Rose
Director of People

Background Papers

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S17 Crime and Disorder	Increased engagement in education and training could have a positive impact on crime and disorder.
Health and Well Being	Increased engagement in education and training could have a positive impact on health and well-being.
Carbon Impact	There are no issues this report needs to address.
Diversity	There are no issues this report needs to address.
Wards Affected	This report does not impact on a particular ward, but Darlington as a whole.
Groups Affected	16 and 17 years olds and any employers of those young people.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Relevant to the education and skills outcomes of the sustainable community strategy.
Efficiency	This report does not identify any efficiency savings.

MAIN REPORT

Background

6. From summer 2013, young people will be required to continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17. From 2015, they will be required to continue until the end of the academic year in which they turn 18. This doesn't necessarily mean staying on in school. Young people will be able to choose how they participate post 16, which could be through:-
 - (a) Full-time education such as school, college, other training provider or home-education (a minimum of 540 hours per year).
 - (b) An Apprenticeship.
 - (c) Part-time education or training if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering for 20 hours or more a week.
7. The Education and Skills Act places duties on local authorities, in relation to RPA. Local authorities will be required to:-
 - (a) promote the effective participation in education or training of all 16 and 17 year olds resident in their area; and
 - (b) make arrangements to identify young people resident in their area who are not participating.
8. These complement the existing duties to:-
 - (a) Secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for all 16-19 year olds.
 - (b) Encourage, enable and assist young people to participate.
 - (c) Put processes in place to deliver the 'September Guarantee' and to track young people's participation. Local authorities will be supported by duties on learning providers to notify them when a young person leaves learning. This is currently done on a voluntary basis.

Current Situation

9. The Department for Education publishes details of local authority participation levels in June each year. The latest release in June 2012 shows data for the end of 2010 and in Darlington:-
 - (a) 93% (88% in 2007) of 16 year olds participated in education or training, this compares with a North East average of 93% and a national average of 96%.

- (b) 87% (76% in 2007) of 17 year olds participated in education or training, this matches the North East and national average of 87%.
 - (c) Participation in Darlington has been rising; this is particularly noticeable at Level 3 (A-Level) as GCSE results have risen and more young people have progressed onto Level 3.
10. This means that 2,220 16 and 17 year olds participated in education and training out of a cohort of 2,470. Conversely, 250 (10%) 16 and 17 year olds did not participate.
 11. It should be noted that participation data and NEET data are not directly comparable. Participation data looks at the whole year, whilst NEET data is a snapshot in time.
 12. There are a number of issues that have to be considered as part of the implementation of RPA. These include:-
 - (a) There has been no change to the statutory school age.
 - (b) In September 2012 the provision of information, advice and guidance to pre-16s regarding post 16 options moved from local authorities (Connexions) to schools.
 - (c) The number of 16-18 year old Darlington residents is projected to continue to decline each year up to 2018.
 - (d) Enforcement duties for local authorities, against young people who fail to participate, were written into legislation but have not been enacted. This will be reviewed in 2014.
 - (e) Enforcement duties for local authorities, where employers fail to ensure that young people they employ are participating in part-time education or training, have also not been enacted due to the current economic climate.
 - (f) We still do not have full clarity around how RPA will work with the results from RPA pilots still awaited and additional legislation due out in 'Spring 2013' and the first affected cohort leaving in June 2013.
 13. In addition the DFE are aware that at any one time a percentage of young people may have a 'reasonable excuse' for non-participation, but have left it up to local authorities to determine whether the excuse is 'reasonable'. This category could include those medically ill, in final stages of pregnancy, in custody etc. Locally, this could be aligned with the NEET category of 'not available to the labour market', or determined on an individual basis.

Actions

14. In line with the duty on local authorities to promote participation, the LA is disseminating information on RPA. There has been no national marketing

campaign by the DFE and there is no funding for RPA, therefore it is necessary to utilise existing communication channels. To date this has included:-

- (a) Encouraging schools to promote RPA through the 11-19 Partnership and its sub-groups, through newsletters to parents, letters to pupils and through staff in contact with the young people.
- (b) Making information available to council staff through articles in the Briefing, on the DBC website and targeted meetings with key groups.
- (c) Disseminating information on RPA more widely through Darlington Together, Interface, Secondary School Admission Booklets and external groups such as provider networks and the North East Chamber of Commerce.

15. The 16-25 Research Project commissioned by the Children's Trust found that the majority of the young people interviewed as part of the 11 focus groups in late 2011 were aware of the raising of the participation age. This indicates that the communication to date has been effective.

16. This promotion of RPA sits alongside existing work to increase participation (and skills levels) that is being undertaken by the local authority, schools, post 16 providers and other partners. This includes the work of:-

- (a) The Council's 11-19 Learning and Skills Team who lead on RPA and the statutory duty to ensure there is sufficient high quality education and training available, as well as acting as the link between the local authority, the 11-19 Partnership and post 16 providers.
- (b) The Early Intervention Team who have responsibility for engaging those young people who are not participating and for co-ordinating the September guarantee (ensuring the offer of a place in education or training for 16 and 17 years olds).
- (c) The Economic Regeneration Team and their work around the skills and employment agenda.

17. These teams work closely together with partners and utilise initiatives such as Skills4me (an ESF funded project), the Youth Contract, Troubled Families and Foundation for Jobs to encourage young people to participate in education and training and develop their understanding of local skills needs.

18. This partnership working is essential considering that a large number of the young people that are NEET often have multiple social issues that prevent them engaging in education and training. In July 2012:-

- (a) 35% of teenage parents were NEET
- (b) 25% of young offenders were NEET
- (c) 19% of looked after children were NEET

These percentages were even higher last year but have been reduced through local projects such as Skills4me.

Conclusion

19. The local authority in conjunction with its partners is on track for the implementation of RPA and to meet its duties regarding the promotion of RPA. However, there must be some recognition that 'promotion' may not be sufficient to ensure 'full' participation without any sanctions in place and considering the number of young people who currently go into employment without training.