
RAISING OF THE PARTICIPATION AGE (RPA) UPDATE

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the implementation of 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). RPA had a phased approach with young people being required to stay on in education and training until 17 years old from 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.

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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 were required to continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turned 17. From 2015, they are required to continue until their 18th birthday. 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, who are 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 are supported by a duty on learning providers to notify them when a young person leaves learning. This was previously done on a voluntary basis.

Current Situation

9. The Department for Education publishes details of local authority participation levels for March, June and December each year. The latest data (June 2014) shows that in Darlington:-
 - (a) 93.6% (*84% at the end of 2011*) of 16 year olds participated in education or training, above the North East average of 92.7% and a national average of 93.1%.

(b) 86.3% (76% at the end of 2011) of 17 year olds participated in education or training, above the North East average of 86.0% and a national average of 86.2%.

10. This means that 2,230 (89.9%) Darlington resident 16 and 17 year olds continued to participate in education and training out of a cohort of 2,480 (June 2014 data), up 5% against the June 2013 figure. Conversely, 250 16 and 17 year olds did not participate.
11. More recent NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) data for January 2015 shows that 96.37% of the Year 12 cohort and 88.56% of the Year 13 cohort were participating. Both higher than the June 2014 published figures. The NEET data is broken down as follows:

RPA Progress NEET Data – Jan 15 (Jan 14 Data in Brackets)	Year 12	Year 13
Cohort	1,213 (1,288)	1,233 (1,258)
Participating	96.37% (93.65%)	88.56% (86.25%)
Working Towards	0.33% (1.38%)	1.05% (1.03%)
Temporary Break from Learning	0.33% (0.24%)	1.14% (0.79%)
Not Known	0.08% (0.41%)	1.14% (3.10%)
Adjusted NEET	2.73% (4.99%)	6.65% (6.28%)
Adjusted NEET	33 (61)	81 (77)

12. The January 2015 NEET data (to Year 14 inclusive) for Tees Valley shows Darlington has the second lowest adjusted NEET figure across the five authorities at 7.1% (Tees Valley average 7.7%).
13. There are a number of issues that impact on 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) Enforcement duties for local authorities, against young people who fail to participate, were written into legislation but have not been enacted.
 - (d) 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.
14. In addition there is a small percentage of young people who may have a 'reasonable reason' for non-participation. This category could include those medically ill, in final stages of pregnancy, in custody etc.

15. To support schools in increasing participation the DFE now publishes annual destination data for all school leavers. The latest data published in January 2015, for 2011/12 KS4 leavers, shows that for 2012/13 88% of all Darlington school leavers went into a sustained education, employment or training. However this varies across schools:

School	Sustained Destination (2012/13)
Hurworth	94%
Carmel	93%
Longfield	89%
Hummersknott	88%
DSMS	83%
Haughton	83%
St Aidan's	81%
Darlington overall	88%
England overall	91%

16. Unfortunately, a perverse impact on the reduction in NEETS numbers has been the loss of a number of post 16 providers in Darlington such as NACRO, CfBT, JHP Training and S&D Training as the low numbers make training centres unviable. This has resulted in a much narrower post-16 offer particularly for those young people that require the most support and who cannot cope with a large college environment.

Actions

17. In line with the duty on local authorities to promote participation, the LA has co-ordinated the dissemination of information on RPA. There has been no national marketing campaign by the DFE and there is no funding for RPA.
18. 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 Teams who have responsibility for engaging those at risk of becoming NEET, 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, particularly through Foundation for Jobs.
 - (d) Work with providers to facilitate early identification of young people at risk of disengaging and quicker reporting of those who drop out of provision.

19. These teams work closely together with partners and utilise initiatives such as the ESF young engagement projects (ends July 2015), the Youth Contract (last recruitment March 2015), Troubled Families and Foundation for Jobs to encourage young people to participate in education and training and develop their understanding of local skills needs.
20. 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 January 2015 figures for Y12-Y14 (*January 2014 figures in brackets*) showed that:-
 - (a) 66.7% of teenage parents (54) were NEET (66.2%/49)
 - (b) 46.9% of young offenders (23) were NEET (39.0%/32)
 - (c) 29.6% of care leavers (8) were NEET (27.0%/10)

Conclusion

21. The latest NEET data indicates that participation is increasing at both Year 12 and Year 13 and is above North East and national averages. However, there remains a core of young people, often with complex social needs and a history of poor engagement in education, who continue not to participate in further education or training despite the potential economic benefits. To continue to increase levels of engagement is becoming more difficult due to the decreasing number of post 16 providers, the levels of support required and the absence of any sanctions on young people to engage.
22. At 89.1% participation, Darlington is in the top 32% of the 151 local authorities, where figures range from 73.3% to 97.7%, so is doing well overall. Particularly considering the higher levels of participation are where the job market for young people is much more buoyant (16 of the top performing 20 local authorities are in London and the South East) and that the highest participation in any of the North East local authorities stands at 90.1%.