

Raising the Participation Age (RPA) – what does it mean for your child?

Raising the Participation age came about from government legislation, introduced in 2013 to encourage young people to stay in 'education and training' until they are 18.

It's not quite the same as the school leaving age as it doesn't mean young people have to stay on at school. They will have a choice of what they can do.

Here are the options for young people that are defined as suitable 'education and training'.

One option is to study full-time at school, college or with a training provider. There has been a trend in recent years for many more young people to continue their studies. This further study has become important to get into further or higher education and the workforce, where higher skills are increasingly required.

The second option is full-time employment or volunteering (full-time is counted as more than 20 hours a week) but it must be combined with part-time study or training. This is where RPA is different from just raising the school leaving age. You can't just go and get any old job. It must be a job with training or the young person is not seen as fully participating.

The third option is an apprenticeship. Numbers of apprenticeships are increasing all the time and the government is committed to increasing the number of apprenticeships to 3 million by 2020.

You may think that apprenticeships are in traditional areas like engineering or catering at a fairly low level but there are many new apprenticeships at higher levels, some leading to degree level study such as the higher apprenticeship in legal services, finance, business, engineering and the media.

What are advantages for my child?

The legislation encourages young people to study and train to gain the higher skills that are needed in today's workplace. There are fewer low-skilled jobs so young people must be as well qualified and trained as possible to enter the labour force.

It will stop young people taking jobs with no prospects and there will be more options to get jobs with training as the government are investing in training and apprenticeships.

Who will help my child get a suitable education and training place?

Your local authority is ultimately responsible for identifying and supporting young people who aren't participating but your child may also get help from the careers advice service in their school or college.

Is there still a 'school leaving date'?

Yes, it's still called that but isn't strictly speaking a 'school leaving date'.

It is the last Friday in June of the year when your child turns 16 but it means that after this date young people have to find a job or volunteering placement with training, an apprenticeship, or a school or college place.

Will there be any financial help?

There is a 16-19 Bursary Fund to help young people most in need entering education or training. Some schools, colleges and training providers will also have some extra funding. For more information www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund

<https://www.gov.uk/know-when-you-can-leave-school>

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