Raising the Participation Age (RPA) – Information for Employers

What is RPA?

The Government has changed the law so that all young people will be required to continue in education or training:

- Until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 from summer 2013; and
- Until their 18th birthday from summer 2015.

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

Around 92% of 16 and 17 year olds already continue in some form of education or training. Many of these young people will also be working part-time – in the evenings, at weekends or in the holidays. Less than 2% of young people at this age are employed full-time and not taking any accredited training.

When the participation age increases, young people will need to continue their education in one of several ways. They can:

- Engage in full-time education in a school or college (and can do part-time work alongside);
- Undertake an Apprenticeship; or
- Do part-time training if they are working or volunteering for more than 20 hours per week.

For the final option, the training needs to be accredited and must be for a minimum of 280 hours over the course of a year – this is equivalent to around a day per week, but it can be taken flexibly.

What does this mean for me?

...as an employer of apprentices – There are no other changes to be aware of as Apprenticeships count as a valid route in themselves for young people to continue their education.

...as an employer of 16 and 17 year olds outside Apprenticeships – There will be no new legal duties on you, but your young employees will be required to take some part-time training alongside their work.

- The Government fully funds accredited training for 16-18 year olds. This includes training specific to your business needs as well as broader skills such as English and maths. Employers are also free to design and fund training programmes of their own and can work with awarding bodies to get these accredited or consider becoming an awarding body themselves. Find out more at: www.awarding.org.uk.

- Young people and businesses see the returns on this training for many years. Increasing the proportion of trained workers in an industry boosts productivity and studies have shown this adds more value than the increased cost of wages they receive (for example, increasing the proportion of trained workers by 5% leading to a 4% increase in valued added per worker, compared to a 1.6% increase in wages).
Many employers already encourage and support their younger full-time employees to train through an Apprenticeship or part-time study taken flexibly alongside their job. Your local council can provide further information about training opportunities in your area and information about Apprenticeships is available from the National Apprenticeships Service at www.apprenticeships.org.uk.

In response to employers’ feedback, the Government is improving vocational training on offer to young people. From September 2013, study programmes for young people will include: at least one qualification of substantial size and challenge; non-qualifications activity such as tutorial time and work experience where appropriate; and English and maths for those who do not have a GCSE at grade C or above.

You can find out more at our website and please feel free to email us with any queries at RaisingTheParticipationAge.MAILBOX@education.gsi.gov.uk.