

great
prospects



Raising the Participation Age Fact Sheet

A great place to live and work.

What is it? RPA means that every young person is now required to stay in some form of learning until they are 18 years old. When you leave Year 11, the options are:

- ✓ Remain in full time education e.g. school, college, home education
- ✓ Go on to work based learning e.g. Apprenticeship
- ✓ Full-time work alongside part-time learning leading to an accredited qualification
- ✓ Take up volunteering for 20+ hours and do this alongside part-time learning which leads to an accredited qualification
- ✓ Be self-employed, combining this with part-time learning leading to an accredited qualification

Is it the same as raising the school leaving age? RPA is not the same, the school leaving age remains at 16. The focus of RPA is on remaining in some form of learning, whether this is full time education, work-based learning, work or volunteering alongside an accredited qualification.

Why? It was introduced to increase the opportunity for every student to improve their life prospects and become economically active individuals. Evidence shows that achieving qualifications at 16 and 17 can help to boost a student's prospects for life – for instance, young people with 2 or more A-levels earn around 14% more than those without.

Who is responsible? You, the student are responsible for ensuring you remain in some form of learning until 18. You will be expected to make your own decisions about how you wish to do this and which route you want to take. Your school should support you in making these decisions and ensure you receive information, advice and guidance. Alternatively contact the Youth Support Service at Central Bedfordshire Council for more information.

Where can I find out more about the education and training opportunities? Schools have a legal responsibility to provide independent, impartial information, advice and guidance to Year 8 -13, so they should be able to tell you all about your training and education options. Youth Support Service and websites like UCAS, National Careers Service and Amazing Apprenticeships will provide information.

What counts as working? To be classed as working full-time, you will need to have had the job for 8 weeks or more, and work at least 20 hours a week. If your employment hours vary, employment of 40 or more hours over a 2 week period can be considered as meeting the RPA requirement for full-time work. Part-time work isn't affected by RPA. Full-time self employment will be classed in the same way as full-time employment.

What counts as volunteering? Volunteering is defined as working other than for financial reward. In terms of the number of hours you volunteer, the same criterion applies as for full-time work. Therefore a full-time volunteer needs to have volunteered for 8 weeks or more, and for 20 hours or more per week. If your volunteering hours vary, volunteering for 40 hours or more a week over a 2 week period is considered as meeting the RPA requirement for volunteering full-time. If you have a volunteering placement, some form of written agreement should exist between you and the provider you are volunteering for.

What happens if I am unable to access learning?

The duty to participate applies to all young people resident in England. However, the government recognises that there will be a small number of young people whom for medical reasons (or similar valid reasons) cannot fulfil this duty either in the short or long term. However, as a Local Authority we will always actively encourage and support young people to fully participate to ensure that they can achieve their full potential with regards to education, employment or training, as soon as they are able.

Youth Support Services, Central Bedfordshire Council
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Further information youth.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk