

Annex A: Raising Expectations: Staying in Education and Training Post 16

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The future of our society depends on the education we provide to our young people. We need to make sure that all young people start adult life with the skills, qualities and attributes they will need to make a success of their lives. Never before has it been as important as it is today for every young person to achieve a good level of skill – for young people themselves, for the economy and for society. As the Leitch Review makes clear, there will be many fewer jobs in future for those who lack such skills.
- 1.2 It is no longer a sensible option for a young person to leave education for good at 16 in order to seek work. The great majority of young people already do stay on beyond 16 and there is a risk that it will only be the more vulnerable and lower-achieving who drop out at 16. Yet they are precisely the group who have the greatest need to stay on – so that they can achieve useful skills which will prepare them for life. The time has come to consider whether society is letting these young people down by allowing them to leave education and training for good at 16, knowing that they are not adequately prepared for life.

The benefits of requiring participation

- 1.3 There are very significant benefits to young people from staying in education or training until at least the age of 18. They are much more likely to improve their qualifications and skills. This will be valuable to them financially because they will be more likely to be employed and to get jobs paying higher salaries. For example, on average a young person getting five or more good GCSEs earns more than £100,000 more over their lifetime than one who leaves learning with qualifications below level 2. There are also much broader benefits: they are more likely to be healthy and to have good social skills.
- 1.4 More young people staying on will also bring broader economic and social benefits. The Leitch Review shows just how important improving workers' skills is to the economy, as businesses face an increasingly competitive international environment. Increasing post-16 participation is a crucial part of increasing the skill levels of the workforce. And young people who remain in education or training are less likely to commit crime or behave anti-socially.
- 1.5 We already have a challenging aspiration to get to 90% participation in education or training among 17 year olds by 2015, and we are confident of reaching this. However, even 90% participation will not put us among the best performing countries in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
- 1.6 Getting beyond 90% requires a new and different approach. We must galvanise the whole education and training system to engage every young person up to the age of 16, preparing them to stay on, and to make available the right provision post-16 to keep them engaged and motivated to achieve. Raising the compulsory participation age could do this.

A new requirement to participate

- 1.7 We are clear that introducing compulsory participation for 16 and 17 year olds should not mean forcing them to stay in school or the classroom; we should recognise all forms of valuable learning, including work-based learning. And we are clear that participation is not enough in itself. The learning young people are doing must be valuable as a preparation for life, which means working towards recognised qualifications which are widely understood and provide a good basis for progression in further learning and to work.
- 1.8 The central proposal we want to consult on is that:
- all young people should participate in education or training until their 18th birthday;
 - participation could be at school, in a college, in work-based learning, or in accredited training provided by an employer;
 - in order to count as participating, young people would be required to work towards accredited qualifications; and
 - participation should be full time for young people not in employment for a significant part of the week, and part time for those working more than 20 hours a week.
- 1.9 We propose first to introduce a requirement to participate until age 17, then later to require participation until 18. We judge that the best moment to raise the participation age to 17 would be 2013. This is the first year in which we will have in place a national entitlement to the new qualifications we plan to introduce. It would mean that the extended requirement would first apply to pupils who start Year 7 in September 2008 – creating a clear expectation of continued participation for those young people right from the start of their secondary schooling. These proposals would apply to all 16 and 17 year olds resident in England.
- 1.10 In order to do this we need to make sure that four key things are in place:
- a suitable route for every young person, which engages them and enables them to progress and achieve;
- the right support for every young person to help them to make the right choice for them and enable them to access provision;
 - good engagement from employers to offer young people valuable training opportunities; and
 - a means of making sure that everyone does participate and benefit in practice.
- 1.11 We believe that all of these things can be done, so that the participation age can be raised in a way that genuinely benefits everyone and makes sure that we no longer have young people who leave education and training before they have prepared themselves for life.

A suitable route for every young person

- 1.12 A key requirement is to make sure that every young person is able to undertake a programme of learning that is engaging and valuable. This must mean that for every young person, there is an appropriate type of course available, whether theoretical, applied or occupationally specific, and that it is at an appropriate level of difficulty. We will make sure that this full range is available everywhere, and that each option can lead to further learning at a higher level and on to employment.
- 1.13 The first five new Diplomas will be available for teaching from 2008, and all 14 will be available everywhere at all levels from 2013. They will offer a mix of practical and theoretical study for those young people who prefer a more applied approach, and who want to gain an understanding of a particular employment sector. And for those who want to begin working and gain a qualification that will help them to advance quickly in a specific occupation, we will expand the number of Apprenticeships available.
- 1.14 The Foundation Learning Tier, which will be introduced from 2010, will bring a more coherent approach to qualifications and training below level 2, helping young people who are on these courses to progress.
- 1.15 Of course, young people will still be able to study for GCSEs and A Levels. We are also increasing access to the International Baccalaureate.
- 1.16 We will make sure that there are sufficient places on each of these routes to satisfy demand, so that every young person will be able to find an option that appeals to them. As part of this, we will make sure that we train new members of the workforce and build the additional facilities that will be needed.

Enabling all young people to participate

- 1.17 Making sure that there is a course available that will suit a young person is obviously essential. Equally important is to make sure that they receive the necessary guidance and support so that they can take up an option that suits them, stay in it and achieve well.
- 1.18 We will make sure that young people understand what they can choose to study and what impact different choices might have on their future, so that they are able to make an informed choice. This will include helping young people to experience the range of options open to them before they make a choice, to raise aspirations, widen horizons and increase understanding of what is available. The new standards for advice and guidance services being published in April this year will play an important part in this.
- 1.19 We will also ensure that no young person is prevented by financial constraints from participating. We propose to build upon Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) to ensure that those from low income backgrounds get the financial support they need, and also strengthen the link between financial support and progression, to provide an incentive to behave well and attain more. Alongside this, we will seek to ensure that all those currently eligible for benefits continue to get support.

- 1.20 We recognise that some young people will need extra guidance and support. As set out in the Youth Matters Green Paper, we will seek to create a system which provides integrated support services to every young person, and which helps young people who have particular barriers to participation to engage in learning, through the targeted youth support arrangements now being introduced.

Employers playing their part

- 1.21 Young people will still be able to work, as long as they are also engaged in education or training. We recognise that some young people want to start earning and that they can gain valuable knowledge and skills from employment. But we believe it is important for them to continue learning and achieving too. It will primarily be their responsibility to make sure that they do, but employers can also play an important role in helping to make sure that their 16 and 17 year old employees continue to learn.
- 1.22 Government currently pays for accredited training and will continue to support employers to get their training accredited where it meets requirements. We understand that not all employers, particularly those in small businesses, will be able to develop their own training schemes so we will continue to support employers to find training opportunities for their employees through Train to Gain.
- 1.23 Employers who do not want to provide or arrange training for their employees would be required to release young people from work to undertake training. This release would need to be for sufficient time for their employee to work towards an accredited qualification (around a day a week). We will consider how best to incentivise young people who wish to work to get into education or training first, and will consult with employers on their role in this.

Making sure that young people participate

- 1.24 Of course, we want young people to participate in education or training voluntarily. We will make sure the right provision is available and young people are offered the right support. But if this duty is to have the impact we want we will need to be clear that it can be enforced if necessary, as a very last resort.
- 1.25 A high quality, accurate registration system will enable local authorities and their guidance service providers to know what all young people in their area are doing and find out if they drop out. There will be a duty on providers to notify the system as soon as a young person drops out so that they can be re-engaged as soon as possible.
- 1.26 This will mean that when a young person drops out and the training provider has not been able to prevent this or re-engage them, the guidance service will get in touch with them immediately to help them to find an alternative place and resolve any issues there may be. If the young person still does not engage they would be given a final chance to fulfil their duty voluntarily.
- 1.27 If they still do not participate at this stage, we propose that the young person would be issued with an Attendance Order specifying the provision they must

attend, where and when. This would be a civil, not a criminal, process. Only on breach of this Attendance Order would there be a question of sanctions, through either a civil or a criminal process. We anticipate that it would be very unusual for things to get this far – and we will make sure that there is sufficient local flexibility to make sure that it would not happen inappropriately.

1.28 We believe that the successful implementation of these proposals could make a profound difference to the levels of education and skill in the population, to the benefit of young people and the nation as a whole. We want to encourage a wide debate about the proposals and to consult widely across England with all interested parties, to make sure that we have heard, understood and found ways to address all the issues.

1.29 This Green Paper relates to England only.