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To: Economic Development Cabinet Committee, 6th March

Subject: Raising Participation Age (RPA)

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

The Skills & Employability Service has worked with the Business Advisory Board to communicate the Raising the Participation Age (RPA). At present the communication of the RPA message through a variety of media is stalled, awaiting the publication of the Statutory Guidance for RPA.

1. Introduction

- 1.1** The Education and Skills Act 2008 places a duty on all young people to participate in education or training until their 18th birthday.
- From summer 2013, young people will be required to continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 (the current Year 10, aged 14-15). From 2015, they will be required to continue until their 18th birthday (the current year 9, aged 13-14).
 - RPA will take effect from the last day of the academic year in summer 2013.
 - This doesn't necessarily mean staying in school. Young people will be able to choose how they participate post-16, which could be through: full-time education, such as school, college or otherwise; an apprenticeship; part-time education or training if they are employed, self employed or volunteering for 20 hours or more a week.
- 1.2** The vast majority of young people in Kent, over 82% of learners in Year 12 (aged 16-17) and 13 (aged 17-18) already participate in full time education. A further 6% are in employment or training that satisfies the learning requirement of RPA, leaving 12% of the cohort requiring intervention.¹
A closer look at this cohort gives an indication of the scale and type of intervention required.²

¹ Connexions Kent Activity Survey Nov 2011

² Connexions Kent Activity Survey Nov 2011

Type of young person	Year 12 (Age 16-17)	Year 13 (Age 17-18)
NEET (Not in Employment, Education and Training)	677	1,233
In employment not meeting learning requirement	404	1,430
Not known	117	361
Totals	1,198	3,024

1.3 There are four key issues:

- The main issue for RPA will be engaging the older Year 13 age group
- There are over 1,800 young people in jobs that will not be permitted under RPA. How do we convert these to jobs with training? How do we ensure these jobs are not offered to 19 year olds and above in the future?
- There are a hardcore of young people who are NEET in Year 12 who be will looking for work based learning.
- Businesses understanding their role in supporting young people to meet the expectation for RPA of 280 Guided Learning Hours per year.

2. Progress to date

2.1 The Skills and Employability Service (S&E) has drawn up an RPA plan to identify key areas of work in order to support the introduction of RPA. One of the key areas is to work with employers to help them to understand their responsibilities. At the Business Advisory Board (BAB) Meeting in May 2012, a presentation was made on RPA. Subsequently the Skills & Employability Service met with 3 members of BAB to discuss how the RPA message may be communicated.

2.2 The amount of progress made so far has been limited because in Summer 2012 the Department of Education (DfE) produced the outcome of the RPA consultation which concluded that the proposed duties on employers for RPA should not be enacted at this time due to the existing economic conditions. The consultation said that in the autumn the DfE would produce statutory guidance for RPA. As yet the statutory guidance has not been published.

2.3 The outcomes of the meetings have been;

- Agreed information produced on www.kentchoices4u.com for all stakeholders to understand RPA as an expectation that rests on

- young people, but does not at present give employers any duties.
- Agreed a message to communicate RPA. This was shared with all schools in autumn 2012 through a variety of resources for schools to use with students and teachers.
- It was agreed that once the Statutory Guidance was published the S&E service would work with BAB to carry out an online consultation with employers to inform them of the RPA changes. However as yet the statutory guidance on RPA has not been published. We have only had sight of a draft in late December 2012. The key feature of the draft guidance for employers is that the proposed new duties on employers regarding RPA are not to be enacted because of the present economic climate.
- The RPA Consultation stated;

“We have therefore decided that **the duties on employers within the RPA legislation will not be commenced in 2013**. This will mean that employers will not be discouraged from hiring 16 and 17 year-olds by concerns about additional burdens or the possibility of fines. Those 16 and 17 year-olds who do work full-time will still be under a duty to participate in education or training part-time alongside. We know that employers recognise the benefits for the individual and their business of young people undertaking training and will want to support this, without the need to place additional duties on employers. We will work further with employers’ organisations and local authorities to make sure that this is clearly communicated and that employers have the information they need to understand the benefits of training for their young staff without the need for regulation. These duties will remain on the statute book and we will keep this under review, with the option to introduce the employers’ duties and enforcement in future if these are needed.”

(Raising the Participation Age (RPA) Regulations: Government response to consultation and plans for implementation. July 2012)

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 Once the Statutory Guidance for RPA is published the S&E service will work with BAB to communicate the RPA message.
- 3.2 At present the message of Raising the Participation Age is not getting through. The perception is that it means, Raising of the School Leaving Age (ROSLA). We have picked this up through a RPA Learner Voice survey in which 50% of respondents thought RPA was ROSLA, through our discussions with schools and by the message nationally presented in papers such as The Times and on the BBC website as that of ROSLA rather than RPA.
- 3.3 Therefore there is still work to be done to ensure the RPA message is fully understood. The key to this would be for the DfE to communicate a national message, but this is highly unlikely to happen.

3.4 A letter has been sent to Matthew Hancock the Skills Minister at the Department of Business, Innovation & Skills to express these concerns.

3.5 The Skills and Employability service will also communicate with schools in Term 4 to reinforce the RPA message. There will be further communication of the RPA message to employers as soon as the RPA Statutory Guidance is issued.

4. Recommendation

4.1 Members of the Economic Development Cabinet Committee are asked to DISCUSS and note the contents of this report.

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Background Documents:

Draft Statutory Guidance on Raising the Participation Age