

Important information on the employment of 16 and 17 year olds

Raising the Participation Age (RPA) will come into effect from summer 2013¹.

If your company employs 16 and 17 year olds full-time (for 20 hours or more a week and for eight or more weeks in a row), you may be subject to new duties.

What is RPA?

- The Government is raising the age at which young people are required to participate in education or training.
- From 2013, 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 2015, they will be required to continue until their 18th birthday.
- This does not necessarily mean staying in school and 16 and 17 year olds will still be able to work. They will be able to choose how they participate, which could be through:
 - Part-time education or training if they are employed, self employed or volunteering for 20 hours or more a week;
 - Full-time education, such as school, college or otherwise;
 - An Apprenticeship.

Continuing in learning or training post-16 will help ensure young people develop the skills they need to succeed and progress in their education and careers – contributing to a more highly trained and qualified workforce. This will benefit you, as the young people you employ will be developing the skills that matter to you and your business, as well as the country as a whole. Studies have found that raising the proportion of workers trained in an industry by 5 per cent is associated with a 4 per cent increase in value added per worker, compared to a 1.6% increase in wages².

What does this mean for you?

RPA will not affect you if you employ a 16 or 17 year old for less than 20 hours a week or less than eight weeks in a row. In fact, the RPA legislation won't affect most of the young people in employment, who in the main work in the evenings, on weekends or in the holiday periods, and then attend school or college full-time during the week.

RPA may affect you if you employ a 16 or 17 year old for 20 hours or more a week, and for eight or more weeks in a row. From 2013 you can either:

¹ RPA will take effect from the last day of the academic year in summer 2013 – young people choosing to participate through full time education, and with an offer of a place, will not be expected to participate until the September start date of their course.

² Dearden, L., Reed, H., and Van Reenen, J. (2000) 'Who Gains when Workers Train? Training and Corporate Productivity in a Panel of British Industries' CEPR Discussion Paper 2486

- provide training towards an accredited qualification³

Or:

- Check that the young person is enrolled in some part-time learning (which leads to accreditation) before they start work; and
- If needed, agree working hours that will allow the young person to attend the learning that they are enrolled in – but your business needs can be taken into account. In most cases, young people should be able to attend training during hours that will not affect your business.

- You will not be responsible for monitoring the young person's attendance at their part-time learning.
- You don't have to pay for the training or the wages of the young person while they are not at work.
- The young person's training should be at least 280 guided hours per year, but this can be taken flexibly to work around your business needs where possible.

We will be shortly consulting on the regulations underpinning RPA which will include considerations for small businesses.

More information is available at

<http://education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople/participation/rpa>

³ Training towards an accredited qualification means a course preparing people to take a qualification accredited by the qualifications regulator, Ofqual - see the list at <http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/>