

Raising Expectations: Staying in education and training post-16

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 14 June
2007

Your comments must reach us by that date.

THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online or offline response facility available on the Department for Education and Skills e-consultation website (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations>).

The information you provide in your response will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations, which allow public access to information held by the Department. This does not necessarily mean that your response can be made available to the public as there are exemptions relating to information provided in confidence and information to which the Data Protection Act 1998 applies. You may request confidentiality by ticking the box provided, but you should note that neither this, nor an automatically-generated e-mail confidentiality statement, will necessarily exclude the public right of access.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

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If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the Department for Education and Skills at e-mail: info@dfes.gsi.gov.uk:

Telephone: 0870 000 2288

e-mail: Raising.PARTICIPATION@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the Consultation Unit on:

Telephone: 01928 794888

Fax: 01928 794 311

e-mail: consultation.unit@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Which of the following best describes you:

<input type="checkbox"/> Young person under 18	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent or carer	<input type="checkbox"/> Teaching staff
<input type="checkbox"/> Professional working with young people	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational institution/learning provider (Please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> Governor
<input type="checkbox"/> Employer	<input type="checkbox"/> Local authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Head teacher / college principal / Leader of other educational institution
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)		

Please Specify: Charity working with young people outside the educational mainstream – including those excluded or disengaged from mainstream education, young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, young carers, teenage parents and young offenders. Provider of work-based learning, training, specialised and alternative education, as well as broader development opportunities to address underlying difficulties.

Chapter 2: The benefits of requiring participation

1 Do you agree that there is a case for introducing compulsory participation to age 18?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments: We welcome proposal to raise the age of participation in education or training to 18 years, but strongly oppose the use of compulsion to achieve this. Key points to consider:

- In our experience, many young people decide that education is not for them long before they reach 16 years; enabling them to make relevant choices at 14 may do much to pre-empt later disengagement. These proposals must be set in the context of wider reform of the 14-19 sector - to deliver a coherent system of education and training with much stronger vocational pathways.
- Given the long lead time for introducing the proposals, we urge you to raise the age of participation to 18 years in one go (rather than 17 years at first) – so that service planning, course design, funding arrangements etc are designed accordingly. This would also be simpler to communicate to young people and their parents.

Chapter 3: A new requirement to participate

In paragraphs 3.2 – 3.10 we set out our central proposal for a requirement to participate.

2 Do you agree that participation should include participation in school, college, work-based learning and accredited training provided by an employer?

X Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Yes. There need to be a wide range of options to engage all young people, including flexible packages combining elements of different routes (academic and vocational).

There must be a recognition that context - i.e. how and where education and training is delivered – matters greatly to those who have already been failed by or rejected the traditional school or college environment. The Green Paper places great hope in improved course content; but if the context is not right, you will not get these young people through the door.

An expansion of work-based learning as well as alternative and specialised provision, responsive to the needs of the individual, will be critical to engaging 'hard to reach' young people.

3 Do you agree that the requirement should include a requirement to work towards accredited qualifications?

X Yes No Not Sure

Comments:

Yes, accreditation is valuable in increasing young people’s motivation and the value they and others (such as employers) attach to their achievements. All young people need a clear route for progression – including those who have difficulties learning.

There is also a need for less formal learning opportunities (including tasters and volunteering) to re-motivate young people and help them to re-engage with formal learning – bridge-building for those who have been out of education and training for some years, or are severely disaffected. This might not be accredited, but should still have a clear focus on enabling progression.

The voluntary sector has much to offer in bridging this gap – reaching out to young people, building their skills and confidence and helping them to make informed choices about the opportunities on offer.

4 Do you agree that for those who are not in employment for a significant part of the week, participation should be in full time education?

X Yes No Not Sure

Comments:

Yes – but it must be recognised that education can take place in a wide variety of ways and settings: the workplace, alternative provision or volunteering may offer the most appropriate learning context for some.

In our experience, young people who have already spent months or years out of school or college are unlikely to engage readily in traditional learning environments.

5 Should full time education be defined for this purpose as at least 16 hours of guided learning per week?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No, should be more	<input type="checkbox"/> No, should be less
X Not sure		

Comments:

There cannot be a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, given the great diversity of young people's needs and aspirations – and the barriers to participation faced by some. For example, young carers or teenage parents will need greater flexibility to combine their caring responsibilities with continued education and training, as well as targeted support to enable them to engage.

6 Do you agree that a young person who is employed could participate part time?

X Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

There should be clear expectations about the need for young people to continue learning and clear duties on employers in support of this aim.

The requirement to continue in education and training must not result in those already working having to study in their free time or facing a reduction in income.

7 Is a minimum of 280 hours of guided learning per year appropriate for a young person who is employed?

x Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No, should be more	<input type="checkbox"/> No, should be less
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure		

Comments:

Yes – so long as there is a clear recognition that learning can take place outside the classroom and ‘on the job’ – as is the case in apprenticeships.

The central proposition outlined in 3.2 – 3.10 would require a young person to participate until their 18th birthday. An alternative described in para 3.11 would require a young person to participate until either their 18th birthday or they achieve qualifications at level 2, whichever is the earlier.

8 Which version of the policy do you prefer?

18th Birthday

18th Birthday or Achievement of level 2, whichever earlier

Comments:

Focusing on the expected level of achievement is preferred, as this sends a clearer message about the purpose of raising the age of participation: to equip young people with the learning and skills that they will need to thrive in the workplace and modern society.

Expecting them to achieve a certain level may be more motivating than requiring them to continue until a certain age.

Moreover, further qualifications (beyond level 2) may only be possible once they have gained some experience of their chosen profession.

Chapter 4: A suitable route for every young person

9 Do you agree that, taken together, the routes outlined in this chapter mean that there will be an appropriate and engaging option for all 16 and 17 year olds by 2013?

Yes No Not Sure**Comments:**

An expansion in vocational opportunities – valued by young people and employers alike – will be crucial to the delivery of this agenda. In particular:

- We welcome the emphasis placed on increasing work-based learning, apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships. This represents an ambitious expansion, which will require careful planning, targeted investment and partnership working across the 14-19 sector; the voluntary sector has much to offer, working with schools, colleges and employers. Expanding Entry to Employment and Foundation Level Tier opportunities will be particularly important.
- The Green Paper attaches much importance to the new Diplomas. These will need to be available to young people from 14 years onwards (not just 16+). Several of our projects have reported concerns about the way Diplomas are evolving – with perceptions that they are overly-academic, falling short in providing practical job training. Diplomas should offer more routes to achievement - allowing young people to combine general, academic and job-specific modules to match their interests and ability.
- We welcome the proposals for more ‘tasters’, which have an important role to play in re-engaging young people, motivating them and helping them to make informed choices.

Across all these options (and others discussed in the Green Paper) there must be sufficient flexibility to allow young people combine different elements of education and training to meet their particular needs. This points to the need for a modular approach with transferable accreditation, flexible funding and a commitment to learner-centred partnership working by providers.

Example 1: Barnardo’s Palmersville Training runs taster courses for year 10 & 11 students (120 in all) in North Tyneside. The year 10 students spend half a term in each of six vocational areas; in year 11, they focus on just one. At the end of this, they can choose to continue in school full-time, combine a part-time apprenticeship with school or follow a full-time apprenticeship. Palmersville also provides flexible alternative curriculum programmes for students who have rejected school or been excluded; and runs joint programmes with the local FE college, supporting young people to access college provision. The young people they work with face a wide range of barriers to learning including behaviour difficulties, learning

difficulties, mental health problems, substance abuse, housing difficulties and teen pregnancy.

Example 2: Paisley Youth Build works in partnership with local construction firms, providing accredited industry training, as well as developing core skills and providing support to address the personal, social and economic problems which create barriers to participation. Young people undertake a 9 month working and training placement – starting with 3 months of New Deal/Get Ready for Work provision, followed by 6 months of full-time paid work experience. They also offer a personal support programme and run a young builders club, which encourages integration into the community through activities such as sport. Outcomes are very positive.

10 Should there be requirements for young people who are training to do more than just an accredited occupational qualification? (for example, should they be expected to do functional English or maths and/or wider technical education?)

X Yes

No

Not Sure

If Yes, what requirements?

Comments:

Yes, it is important for young people to have core skills, relevant to any job and life in the modern world. This should include functional English and maths, IT competency as well as broader life skills.

However for those who rejected traditional education, this needs to be delivered in a way that is motivating and relevant – for example, by integrating it into work-based learning.

Chapter 5: Enabling all young people to participate

11 Do you agree financial support should still be provided to young people from low income households, if participation is compulsory?

X Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

This is very important, especially for young people who do not live with their parents, who often suffer financial hardship; and for those who face higher day-to-day costs, including young parents and young carers.

Ensuring adequate financial support has a critical role to play in enabling participation: conversely, failure to do so will lead to high levels of non-attendance.

12 What would be the right financial support arrangements for young people required to participate to age 18?

Comments: Points to address in reviewing financial support arrangements:

- Our experience suggests that financial incentives have a strong influence on attendance.
- There should be parity across the different routes – so that choices about the most appropriate pathway are not influenced by differing levels of benefits/allowances, as at present. This is also important because of the message it sends out about how valued each route is.

Example from one of our projects. Three young people supported by a Barnardo's project all work in the same factory. One is on a modern apprenticeship, receiving around £70 a week. One is doing an NVQ and on a full-time work placement, receiving £30 a week EMA. The third is employed on a temporary contract (no training) and receives the minimum wage.

- Our projects have reported many problems with the operation of both EMAs (re. complicated forms and need for parental cooperation) and benefits (re. forms and inefficient processing of applications by call centres, leading to delayed payments for young people who have no other source of income), creating barriers to access. Put simply, young people will drop out if they cannot pay their rent.

Example from one of our projects. Peter was doing an NVQ course in bricklaying. His relationship with his parents was so poor that they refused to complete the EMA application. Peter therefore did not receive

an allowance and dropped out to seek an unskilled labouring job.

13 Should we consider other incentives, such as withholding driving licences from 17 year olds who are not participating in education or training?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

We would encourage the use of POSITIVE incentives – financial and otherwise. Punitive incentives such as withholding driving licences may only create further barriers to access.

In our experience, financial incentives are the most powerful motivator. A dedicated youth/project worker (able to build up a trusted relationship and to access the necessary support to address underlying difficulties) can also play an important role in motivating a young person to participate.

14 Would the proposals outlined here about support and guidance be enough to ensure that all young people are able to participate, regardless of their personal circumstances?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Further consideration is needed about how to engage 'hard-to-reach' young people, with their many and diverse needs. There are significant numbers of young people who either rejected or were excluded from school and have spent months or years outside the educational mainstream. Some groups face particular barriers to learning - for example, young parents require flexible childcare and often, help with transport.

Example from a Barnardo's project: Sally is a young mother, who Barnardo's supports to attend college. There is a good crèche on site but it takes her 90 minutes to get there from home, using 2 buses. She and her 1 year old child spend 3 hours a day on the bus, with a 20 minute wait in an unpleasant bus station, early in the morning and again in the evening.

The Green Paper places much hope in improved information, advice and guidance. Our experience suggests that a more proactive, outreach model is needed – with a lead professional/youth support/project worker type role, actively reaching out to young people, building their confidence, making them aware of the opportunities available, advocating on their behalf and organising support where necessary. This will work best if there is on-going involvement, so that a trusted relationship can be built. Such workers could play a critical role during transitions back to education/training or between settings, continuing to remain in regular contact if a young person temporarily ‘drops out’ – as some will need to at times, due to other pressures in their life.

Chapter 6: Employers playing their part

15 Would the proposals outlined in this chapter provide employers with the right framework to help make sure all 16 and 17 year olds are participating in valuable learning, including those who want to learn as they work?

Yes
 No
 Not Sure

Comments:

There should be clearer duties on employers, to ensure that all play their part.

This cannot be taken for granted. For example, one of our projects reports that some of the young people they work with are training through job centre placements, having to work long hours for little money. They have concerns about how much training is provided and its quality - but young people are in a weak position to seek redress, because they risk losing both their job/placement and their income.

16 Given the benefits of a better skilled workforce, what responsibilities should employers have to encourage young people to participate in education and training?

Comments:

There should be clear duties on employers, to ensure that all play their part.

Chapter 7: Making sure young people participate

17 Do you agree that there should be a system of enforcement attached to any new requirement to participate, used only as a last resort?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Barnardo's strongly opposes the use of criminal sanctions to enforce participation. There are parallels with the 'ASBO' process – using civil orders which if breached, result in criminal proceedings. ASBOs have been used disproportionately against children and young people and may have contributed to the worrying growth in the number of young people now in custody.

Criminal sanctions (even if without a custodial penalty) are unlikely to motivate participation in education and training – and more seriously, run the risk of further marginalising and criminalising significant numbers of young people, reinforcing their disadvantage.

18 Is it right that the primary responsibility for attending at age 16 and 17 should rest with young people themselves?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

19 Do you agree that if a parent of a young person is helping them to break to law, it should be possible to hold them accountable as well?

Yes
 No
 Not Sure

Comments:

We strongly oppose the use of criminal sanctions, whether applied to the young person or their parents. There is little evidence to suggest that criminal sanctions for parents of truants have made an impact on attendance. It is highly unlikely that criminal sanctions would be any more effective if applied to parents of 16-18 year olds (as young people become increasingly independent as they grow older).

The focus should be on working with families – ensuring relevant education and training opportunities which will motivate young people and be valued by parents, and the necessary financial support to incentivise participation and to ensure that young people are not put under pressure to earn a wage, rather than continue their studies.

20 Is the process outlined in this chapter the right way to try to re-engage young people and enforce the requirement?

Yes
 No
 Not Sure

Comments:

We strongly oppose the use of criminal sanctions and we doubt their effectiveness as a means of engaging young people who have already rejected or been excluded from the educational mainstream.

Young people are legally required to attend pre-16 but we know that significant numbers choose not to – becoming persistent truants or being excluded.

The voluntary sector has an important contribution to make in engaging such young people and helping them to make the transition back to education or training. However, we do not believe that requiring participation through an attendance order would provide an effective basis for working with them. Rather, sensitive outreach, practical support, relevant learning opportunities and an inclusive ethos are required.

21 On breach of an attendance order, should criminal sanctions be pursued, or civil/administrative ones?

Criminal

Civil or administrative

x Not sure

Comments:

We strongly oppose the use of criminal sanctions (see question 17 response). We also have strong reservations about the use of civil or administrative ones which we doubt would be effective in ensuring compliance.

If the Government is determined to introduce sanctions of some sort, we would suggest that a system modelled on Individual Support Orders (which can accompany ASBOs) would be the best option. This would not need to be administered through the Courts (civil or criminal), but through local authorities. Local authorities could have a duty to ensure the provision of a panel to examine why a young person was not attending (which might include family issues) and to propose a programme to address the underlying difficulties – ensuring the necessary support - including a dedicated youth worker or similar to work closely with the young person - and an appropriate placement.

22 Please use this space for any general comments you would like to make.

Comments:

Barnardo's welcomes this consultation and the aim of raising the age of participation to 18 years.

This presents an important opportunity to take a radical look at our system of education and training for 14-19 year olds and to ensure that there are relevant and valued pathways for those who reject or are not suited to the traditional academic route. We urge you to revisit the proposals of the Tomlinson report – in particular, the need for parity of esteem between academic and vocational routes and a far stronger vocational offer.

Barnardo's – and the wider voluntary sector – have much to offer in re-engaging those outside the educational mainstream and enabling them to learn and achieve, working in partnership with employers, schools and colleges.

Young people have an important contribution to make - yet their voice is notably absent from the Green Paper. Young people themselves are best placed to shed light on what they want and need in terms of 14-19 options and support structures, as well as the question of incentives and/or sanctions. Barnardo's will be undertaking research with the young people supported through our projects to explore their views on barriers to participation and what has made a difference in enabling them to re-engage. We would be delighted to share the findings with you.

We would also be delighted to arrange for those working on the development of these proposals to visit our projects, to learn directly from their experience and to have the opportunity to talk to the young people there.

23 Please let us have your views on responding to this consultation (for example, were the number and type of questions about right? Was it easy to find, understand and complete?).

Comments:

The Green Paper raises the issue of barriers to participation for key groups of young people – including teenage parents, young carers, homeless young people and young offenders – but does not dedicate a question to this. This is an important omission.

Barnardo's will be undertaking research with the young people supported through our projects to explore their views on barriers to participation (described above, Q.22) which we would be delighted to share with you.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply x

Here at the Department for Education and Skills we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

xYes

 No

All UK national public consultations are required to conform to the following standards:

1. Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy.
2. Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.
3. Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.
4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.
5. Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator.
6. Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including

carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.

Further information on the Code of Practice can be accessed through the Cabinet Office Website: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/consultation-guidance/content/introduction/index.asp>

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 14 June 2007

Send by post to:

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Department for Education and Skills
1st Floor
Castle View House
East Lane
Runcorn
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WA7 2GJ

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