

Wirral Raising of the Participation Age

---

**1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The Education and Skills Act 2008 legislated to raise the age of compulsory participation in education or training to the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 from 2013 and to at least their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday from 2015. This was a response to the United Kingdom needing to develop a more highly skilled workforce to compete internationally in a fast changing global economy.
- 1.2 In addition there is the desire to create a fairer and more equal society by dealing with the consequences of leaving education to training at the age of only 16, recognising the strong correlation between being NEET and engaging in risky behaviour, having poor health and low income.
- 1.3 The government subsequently made clear its commitment to RPA in the 2012 Spending Review announcement, the White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching' and Departments for Education, Work and Pensions, and Business, Innovation and Skills strategy ***Building Engagement, Building Futures: Our Strategy to Maximise the Participation of 16-24 year olds in Education, Training and Work***. The *Building Engagement, Building Futures* strategy states, "...We are raising the participation age (RPA).....Young people will have a number of participation options including full-time education in a school or college, an Apprenticeship, or other full-time work alongside part-time education or training. We want young people to participate actively and voluntarily and so we will ensure that the education system has in place attractive options and the necessary support to make young people enthusiastic about learning.....young people will be under a duty to participate, but it puts the onus on the system to offer young people the tailored education and training programmes and targeted support they need to engage." (paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4)
- 1.4 The first cohort of young people who will be affected by the RPA legislation are already in secondary school. The first cohort who will be required to stay in education or training until the age of 17 are currently in Year 10. The first cohort that will be required to stay until the age of 18 are currently in Year 9.
- 1.5 Every subsequent cohort of young people including all young people currently in nursery and primary education will be required to stay in education or training until the age of 18.

**2.0 Introduction**

- 2.1 Following the publication of 'Lessons from the RPA Trials' (DfE, 2011) involving sixteen local authority areas, the 14-19 Team drafted a Wirral 14-19 RPA plan (see appendix 1.) to ensure the Council's statutory duty in respect of RPA will be met. The 14-19 RPA plan draws on the examples of best practice and lessons learnt from the local authorities that took part in the trails during 2010/11.
- 2.2 The plan has also been shaped and informed following the completion of the DfE ISOS Self Assessment Framework for Local Authorities and Partners.
- 2.3 Consultation took place with members of the 14-19 Social and Economic Wellbeing Outcome Group during January and March 2012.
- 2.4 The draft Wirral 14-19 RPA plan is split in to the following six sections:-

1. Understanding the cohort
2. Set local priorities and challenges
3. Manage transitions and tracking
4. Establish support mechanisms
5. Identifying and meeting provision needs
6. Communicating the messages

### **Understanding the cohort**

- 2.5 This section the starting point in terms of thinking about achieving full participation and is concerned with deepening our understanding of future cohorts of 16 and 17 year olds, how they are changing over time and where the future 16 and 17 year olds are in our current system.

### **Setting local priorities and challenges**

- 2.5 The question to ask now is what interventions will make the biggest difference to the chances of young people participating. Whatever the issues, the next step is identifying what actions or interventions could be taken that would help to address them. This section also sets out the governance arrangements for RPA.

### **Manage transitions and tracking**

- 2.6 In this section the plan is to start to identify the range of support and activity that already exists to support young people at each stage of their education. Starting with the support for support for young people in Years 8 and 9. Then focusing on the support that takes place whilst young people are studying for GCSEs or equivalents. Finally looking at what support is offered to young people who might be at risk of not participating post 16, for example, the new Council commissioned target information, advice and guidance service for young people aged 16 to 18 delivered by Connexions.

### **Establish support mechanisms**

- 2.1 The systematic identification pre and post 16 of young people at risk of becoming NEET through analysis of their data is a critical step which can complement schools / academies and providers' own identification of young people who might be at risk. This for Wirral will be measured by a risk of NEET indicator (RONI); models of which are currently being considered. The RONI will be used to engage in a debate and discussion with providers about a) whether the right young people have been identified for support and b) whether the support they are receiving is suitable to their needs. Experience detailed by the DfE from the RPA trials suggests that RONIs can be a helpful tool in checking that the right groups of young people have been identified and that those who may not be always the most obvious candidates for support are identified early enough for support to be given.

### **Identifying and meeting provision needs**

- 2.2 Getting the right offer and provision in place to meet the needs of all young people in Wirral is one of the biggest challenges in delivering RPA. Better understand our specific gaps and provision needs is essential if we are to have a chance of successfully filling them. We will also need to think creatively and imaginatively about how to secure changes in existing provision or establish new provision, at a time of significant resource pressures. This will involve working collaboratively with existing providers, potential new entrants to the market and other groups like employers.

### **Communicating the messages**

- 2.3 Although the final element of the Wirral 14-19 RPA plan – communicating the RPA message –underpins everything else that we need to do to deliver RPA. It comes

last in the draft plan in many respects it is one of the first things that we need to get actions agreed for.

### **Proposed RPA plan governance arrangements**

- 2.4 Appendix 2 details the draft proposed governance arrangements for the plan. The structure includes the 14-19 Social and Economic Wellbeing Strategy Group as the group that will monitor and manage the key objectives detailed in the 14-19 RPA plan. The structure also references two operational working groups that will work directly with stakeholders to deliver on elements of the plan but will also act as on a consultative basis regarding future developments, for example, responding to the current DfE consultation on RPA sanctions.
- 2.5 The Children's Trust Board will also receive regular updates regarding 14-19 RPA plan progress as part of 14-19 Social and Economic Wellbeing Outcome Group reporting structure.

### **3.0 Current Position**

- 3.1 It is intended that the Wirral RPA be a living document which is used to guide both major strategic decisions regarding learning provision, resources and operational day to day decision making. We are committed to ensuring the young people of Wirral receive the very best support on their journey from school or college into the world of work, so that they may continue to make a positive contribution to society and the local economy.
- 3.2 As stated in paragraph 2.3 consultation in respect of the plan has taken place with members of the 14-19 Social and Economic Wellbeing Outcome Group (January, 2012). The plan was then further refined.

### **6.0 Recommendations:**

- 6.1 That Wirral Children's Trust Board approves the Wirral 14-19 Raising of the Participation Age Plan and proposed governance structure.

### **Appendices:**

**Appendix 1: DRAFT 14-19 Raising of the Participation Age Plan (RPA)**

**Appendix 2: DRAFT 14-19 RPA Plan Governance Structure**

#### **Report Author:**

Name Paul Smith

Title Principal Manager (14-19 Strategy)

#### **Contact:**

Phone: 0151 346 6749

Email: [paulsmith@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:paulsmith@wirral.gov.uk)