

Raising participation in learning and LGA Hidden Talents campaign for wider reform

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

Significant changes are being made to national education and skills policy which will impact on councils' existing duties to support young people in learning and their new duty to promote Raising the Participation Age in compulsory learning, which is now one year off. This forms a key strand of the LGA's Hidden Talents campaign, jointly developed by this Board and the Economy and Transport Board.

This paper provides a basis for Board members to discuss the main issues in this workstream.

Recommendation

Members are asked to comment on the main issues within this workstream.

Action

To take forward members' recommendations, and keep Board members updated on developments.

Contact officer: Jasbir Jhas
Position: Senior Adviser
Phone no: 020 7664 3114
E-mail: jasbir.jhas@local.gov.uk

Raising participation in learning and LGA Hidden Talents campaign for wider reform

Raising the Participation Age

1. In September 2013, councils take on a new duty to promote Raising the Participation Age (RPA) in compulsory learning of all 16 and 17 year olds by 2013 and 2015 either through full-time education (school, college or home education); work-based learning (Apprenticeship) or part-time education or training if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering for more than 20 hours a week. It requires schools, councils, colleges and employers to come together to work towards full participation in each local area. A key challenge will be engaging young disengaged people - not in education employment and training (NEET).
2. The Department for Education (DfE) has developed pilot schemes for councils to test what works in local areas. It is now in its fourth and final year. A recent DfE commissioned report of councils' RPA preparedness revealed that:
 - 2.1. 67% had developed RPA strategies.
 - 2.2. Good engagement levels with schools and FE, but engaging employers, Job Centre Plus, parents and carers has been challenging.
 - 2.3. 43% believe a lack of work based learning is a challenge.
 - 2.4. 33% identified tracking of young people as a problem.
 - 2.5. 37% feel identifying appropriate provision for vulnerable groups is a challenge.
3. Under original RPA proposals, employers were required to check a young person is enrolled on a course before employing them, and arrange work to fit around training. Councils would have had to enforce this, and could fine employers if they failed to discharge these duties. Following a DfE consultation, Ministers decided not to commence the employer obligation. It remains in statute, and its introduction may be reviewed at a later stage but this decision makes councils' engagement with employers more challenging.
4. The LGA will seek to influence guidance (expected in autumn) and regulations before they are laid before Parliament in early 2013.
5. Underpinning RPA are other council duties these include; to encourage, enable or assist participation, track young people's progress, support vulnerable groups and those not in education, employment and training (NEET), and secure enough suitable learning for young people up to 19. **From September, DfE will publish quarterly performance tables by local authority on all of these.** This is likely to raise media attention to councils' efforts to work towards full participation.

Youth Contract

6. Despite councils' statutory duties on RPA and to reengage disengaged young people, the Government decided to nationally contract the £126m 16-17 year old NEET Youth Contract provision to private companies and charities, instead of enabling councils to locally commission it. The LGA and Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) challenged their proposals calling for the provision to be locally commissioned and enable it to be integrated with RPA activity. The devolved Youth Contract into some City Deals was a welcome step, but the approach should have been adopted across all areas. We continue to engage with DfE to ensure that they encourage successful providers to work closely with councils.

16-19 reforms

7. Shifts in Government policy make councils' ability to discharge these duties difficult. For instance for councils to effectively plan for RPA in local areas, they must provide sufficient places for 16-19 year olds. Yet they have little influence on how provision is commissioned in local areas. Further still, funding on a lagged learner model passes directly from the Education Funding Agency to providers. Councils are keen to have an increased role to allow them to effectively discharge their statutory duties.
8. In July, the Secretary of State announced that from September 2013, a new Study Programme will be introduced for all 16-19-year-olds in post-16 education, the aim being that they follow a richer mix of study to maximise their progression into work and further/higher education. This will be accompanied by reforms to the associated funding formula, whereby institutions would be funded 'per student' rather than per qualification. **A Ministerial working group will consider how the reforms should be implemented. The LGA will be represented on this group.**

Education Select Committee inquiry into careers guidance

9. Schools' new duty to secure careers education information advice and guidance for Year 9-11 commences in September. This role was previously undertaken by councils, and so they are supporting them to take on this duty. The LGA has commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to work with a range of councils and schools to capture how this is working in local areas, and findings will be available in October.
10. Councils retain the duty to support those not in education, employment or training as they will not be in receipt of careers guidance from a learning institution. Guidance suggests they will also support the "most vulnerable young people" and those at risk of disengagement, funded through Early Intervention Grant.
11. The LGA submitted written evidence to the Education Select Committee's inquiry into careers guidance for young people, and will aim to give oral evidence to the Committee. Our response, approved by lead members, focuses on the following:

Item 5

- 11.1. LGA work to influence the statutory guidance to schools support for impartial CEIAG, and the extension of it, to enable all young people to navigate through, and make decisions about learning pathways in their local area;
- 11.2. council led approaches to support schools take on their new CEIAG duty;
- 11.3. councils' NEET re-engagement strategies including use of careers guidance;
- 11.4. the wider contribution made by councils to support raising the participation age.

Hidden Talents Campaign

- 12. One of the LGA's priorities is to ensure councils are recognised as central to economic growth. As part of this, our Hidden Talents campaign seeks to demonstrate that councils are best placed to identify and support the most disengaged young people, not in education, training or employment focusing on ways in which we can improve the offer to young people from early years to young adulthood with the importance of place. The campaign is jointly managed by the Economy and Transport and Children and Young People Boards. Our work on RPA and post-16 education and training fits in directly with this work.

The challenge

- 13. Our research shows the number of young people not in employment, education or training for more than 12 months is growing at a faster rate than any other and has doubled in four years to 260,000. While some national approaches work for young people, too many address spikes in youth unemployment, without effectively reaching the most vulnerable group who are getting left further behind. In addition, action must be taken to address the skills mismatch. Last year more than 94,000 people completed hair and beauty courses despite there being just 18,000 new jobs in the sector. At the same time, fewer than 40,000 people trained to fill around 72,000 new jobs in the building and engineering trades.

The solution

- 14. The LGA is calling for a community budgeting approach to bring services together around the most disengaged young people. From the 33 current funding streams, the LGA has identified the six most suitable for pooling, creating a budget of £1 billion a year. Councils and their local partners to be enabled to support 260,000 "core - needs" back into work and learning, at a potential contribution of almost £4,000 for each person. We will seek a greater role for councils in commissioning school, further education, and apprenticeship provision.

Campaign activities

- 15. The LGA is working with councils to demonstrate innovative work taking place to bring together services around the most disengaged young people. This activity has been developed over the summer, and will culminate in a report, to be launched in the autumn.

Item 5

16. Other activity under the campaign not covered elsewhere in this report includes:
- 16.1. ongoing publicity through national and trade media;
 - 16.2. written and oral evidence to the Work and Pensions Select Committee into youth unemployment and the Youth Contract;
 - 16.3. cross-party Parliamentary roundtable jointly with the Prince's Trust, bringing together local authorities and Parliamentarians;
 - 16.4. ongoing meetings and events to engage with Ministers, parliamentarians and partners, business groups and the third sector;
 - 16.5. LGA conference *Raising ambition, achieving potential: the council role in education and training* on 4 December 2012 and a Hidden Talents session during the National Children and Adults Services Conference on Thursday 25 October.