

New Opportunities: fair chances for the future

**Cross-government review of financial support
for 16 – 18 year olds**

Call for evidence



HM TREASURY



department for
children, schools and families



DWP Department for
Work and Pensions

Over the last decade there have been significant improvements in the support available for young people, in the learning opportunities open to them, and the quality and range of learning provision on offer. More young people than ever before are participating in learning and achieving skills and qualifications that will prepare them for further success in learning, work, and life.

Young people starting year 7 this academic year will be staying in education or training until they are 18. The legislation to raise the participation age to 17 by 2013 and 18 by 2015 gives every young person the opportunity to choose a route which suits them best – an apprenticeship, Foundation Learning, Diplomas, A levels – in school sixth forms, colleges or in the work place. We need to support them in making those choices, so they can progress on the basis of their own talent and hard work.

In the White Paper *New opportunities: fair chances for the future*, published in January 2009, we announced a cross-government review of financial support for 16-18 year olds. Working across a number of government departments – Department for Children, Schools and Families, HM Treasury, Department for Work and Pensions and Communities and Local Government – we are considering what kind of support young people will need from 2013 in order to ensure that young people can participate in the way that suits them, and that learning choices are not hampered or constrained purely because of their economic circumstances.

We have said that the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and Care to Learn childcare support will continue when we raise the participation age. Through this review we will consider whether any changes should be made to improve current arrangements from 2013 to ensure that the whole financial support system is as effective as possible. We want a system that: ensures fair access by removing financial barriers to participation; that is simple, transparent and accessible; that supports young people to progress in education, training or work; that comes with clear responsibilities and conditions; and offers value for money.

The review will build on the extensive evidence that we have about what works. It will also be informed by specific research that the DCSF has commissioned into barriers to participation in education and training. The research aims to provide quantified evidence on the nature and extent of barriers to post-16 participation and restrictions on post-16 choices experienced by young people. There will be a particular focus on financial and transport-related barriers and restrictions, but a range of other potential barriers (for example lack of information, lack of interest, peer pressures, confidence, curriculum) will also be explored. The research will provide evidence and a valuable insight into the barriers, both financial and otherwise, which young people may face in staying on in different learning options.

The views of stakeholders are an important part of the review. What young people think is a vital part of the evidence we need to consider. We plan to talk to young people and also welcome input from schools, colleges, providers of learning and training, local authorities, Connexions services, the voluntary

sector, parents, those working with young people and other groups with an interest. This note is a call for evidence which will help us answer some key questions, and inform our approach to future spending reviews. Those questions are:

- 1) How does raising the learning participation age change the rationale and role for financial support and incentives? Does the current system fit with a changed rationale?
- 2) Are the arguments any stronger or different for incentivising or supporting 16-18 year olds compared to younger students?
- 3) We have said we must remove financial barriers to participation and choice. What are the key barriers?
- 4) What conditions should be met in return for financial support or incentives?
- 5) Where the purpose of financial support is to provide an incentive, should it be provided to parents in respect of 16-18s, or – given that the duty to participate is on the young person – should support be directed to the young person?
- 6) Some financial support is provided to families of 16-18 year olds, such as Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit, to help parents meet the costs of dependent children and to tackle child poverty. Recognizing they have different aims, how well do they also encourage participation? How could they be better linked to participation?
- 7) How should existing anomalies in the system be addressed (for example the inconsistency in the provision of free school meals to post - 16s in school sixth forms, but not those other forms of post-16 provision)?
- 8) Do we need to focus initiatives on the more vulnerable groups that will need the most support for RPA to be delivered? How can we identify them?
- 9) What support arrangements would be best for meeting the needs of young people living independently? For example, is Jobseekers Allowance still an appropriate way of addressing the support needs of 16 and 17 year olds in hardship?
- 10) What is the evidence that financial incentives would be an effective way to influence and enhance choices and behaviour, versus other initiatives for engaging a diverse mix of young people?
- 11) How can the value for money of current arrangements be improved?

How to comment on the review

You can email your comments to:

16-18Financial.SUPPORTREVIEW@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk

Alternatively, please write to:

16-18 financial support review
Department for Children, Schools and Families
W4D, Moorfoot
Sheffield
S1 4PQ

Timetable of key dates

- Comments to be received by Friday 18th December 2009;
- Review and final research report will be published spring 2010.