

Raising Expectations: Staying in education and training post-16 Consultation Response

→ The Prince's Trust responses are in plain text.

We are a charity working with disadvantaged young people (also a learning provider). This submission includes the views of 186 young people with whom we work.

The Trust submitted a DVD that reflects the views of 24 young people from London who have taken part in The Trust's xl clubs for Year 10 & 11 pupils at risk of exclusion. We ran several focus groups (of 137 young people) in xl clubs across the UK (Yorkshire & Humber, North East & South East) and we consulted with 25 Prince's Trust supported small businesses in relation to employing young people.

Chapter 2: The benefits of requiring participation

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

Not sure. There is a case for encouraging participation to 18 to ensure more young people improve their skills and qualifications, therefore improving their employability. However, we feel that the priority should be for all 16 year olds to be encouraged and supported to achieve Level 2 and that raising the compulsory age to 18 will simply prolong the process and potentially lower the aspirations of some students. More money should therefore be invested pre-16, including reducing class sizes. The experience of The Prince's Trust xl clubs shows that working in smaller groups is very successful in engaging young people back into education and learning new skills.

We feel that much more thought needs to be given to enforcement. Existing proposals for enforcement will criminalise young people, resulting in an alienation of the hardest to reach young people and their families.

The Prince's Trust primarily works with young people up to the age of 25 and with the new focus on 16-18 year olds we are concerned that resources for over-18 adult learners could be limited and would like assurance that funding would not be cut for this age group.

We asked over 130 young people who have taken part in The Trust's xl clubs for Year 10 & 11 pupils at risk of exclusion what they thought about the idea of making young people stay in education or training until 18. The feedback was fairly balanced with some feeling it was a good idea to 'save resources around unemployment, giving you a chance to improve if you have not done well enough the first time round'. Others could see both positives and negatives but felt that the choice should be theirs. Others felt it was 'not fair taking away choice' and that 'school is cr*p' and 18 was 'too old' one group said 'pupils don't even come to school very often now [Year 10] so what makes you think they are going to stay in school until 18?' another said 'this is just the Government trying to pi*s off young people again'.

Of a smaller sample of 24 young people (who participated in the DVD) their responses were:

42% (10) thought it was a good idea

24% (6) could see both positives and negatives

21% (5) thought it was a bad idea

However, when the compulsion element was reiterated many came up with negative comments such as: 'they can't make us!', 'not fair, some young people already have their lives mapped out', 'it's too long to be at school', 'we're pleased it won't happen when we're still at school' but others said 'for our kids they won't know any different'. Positive comments were: '18 is an adult

benchmark for being mature', 'it will promote health and fitness', 'gives you a chance to experience other things'.

We also asked the wider group (over 130 young people) why they thought people dropped out of school at 16 or why they didn't finish a course they had started. The main reasons given were:

- 1) to get a job or earn money
- 2) because they were bored, hated school, were lazy or didn't care

Other reasons were cited including: feeling mature enough to leave, not wanting to be in with 11 year olds, family issues (including to have a baby/get married/to care for relative), bullying, exploring new things, freedom, peer pressure and pressurised to stay on, dislike of their course or the people on it, feeling that GCSEs were enough, lack of sleep.

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?

Yes. Participation should include these options but should also include employment related training programmes run by the voluntary sector. For example The Prince's Trust Team programme helps develop key skills and qualifications. Team is a 12 week personal development programme for 16-25 year olds, the majority unemployed, to develop their confidence, motivation and skills to help them find work. The programme is made up of various elements including a one-week residential, a community project and work experience. In 2005/6 8,802 took part in the programme in over 300 locations across the UK. 71% of unemployed participants find work or enter full time education or training after completing the programme.

The Prince's Trust already works with employers on our Get Into programme introducing young people to industries and specifically Apprenticeships. 36% of young people who took part in the Get Into Programme in 2006-7 were 16-17 year olds and were therefore keen to learn and develop skills whilst in work. Of these over 50% are in work after 3 months.

In these proposals, programmes run by the voluntary sector are only referenced in the enforcement section which simply labels the voluntary sector as picking up the pieces. We should be considered as a valid learning and employment related training provider from the start.

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

No. The Prince's Trust believes that all young people have potential and talent and aims to raise their aspirations for education. Young people should be encouraged and supported to work towards accredited qualifications. However, in the minority of cases and where it is clear they will not achieve certain qualifications, they should not be set up to fail and their talents should be channelled more practically (e.g. employment).

We are concerned that by forcing young people to try and achieve qualifications we could be setting them up to fail and in the process de-motivate and discourage them.

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?

Yes. However, clarification is needed in defining 'significant part of the week' so that the young person is not over-burdened with both work and education.

Part-time work can often complement education or training and young people should not be forced to choose one or the other. The right balance needs to be struck for young people who are suited to working but who would also benefit from continued learning. Having a job can be an important part of a young person's career plan or they may have financial commitments e.g. to their family.

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

Not sure. Consideration needs to be given to the balance of hours in education and hours available for work and how this will impact on a young person's eligibility for benefits. Consistency between all areas of learning and the benefits system is critical.

The 16 hours rule causes all sorts of problems. The sudden jump from being able to claim benefits to not when young people work more than 16 hours does not encourage them to move beyond this. Above is the answer, to look at the combination of work and learning and get the balance right for the young person. As long as they are moving forward through a combination of work and learning.

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

Yes. See comments at question 4.

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

Not Sure. It is less about the number of hours for guided learning and more about appropriate skills training as an entitlement to the young person/employee. And also as above the amount of time that they are working needs to be taken into consideration as well.

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 or Achievement of level 2, whichever earlier. Allowing young people to participate either until their 18th birthday or they have achieved Level 2 gives them more choice. It also encourages young people to achieve earlier.

However, if this option is adopted we would strongly recommend that entitlement for under-19s to free provision up to First Level 3 continues to be a national policy. We would also support increased access to free First Level 3 for all adults.

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?

Not Sure. Whilst these proposals are the ideal scenario, we are concerned this chapter raises expectations beyond the capacity of the system/sector to deliver. Young peoples' preferences cannot be guaranteed, as individualised learning programmes will be determined by local/accessible networks. The proposals talk in depth about choice but we are concerned this will not be reflected in reality.

The extent of choice needs to be very clearly communicated so that young people are very clear about what is available to them and the implications of the choices they make. Proper guidance on communication of choice is critical, especially for young people with special educational needs.

In terms of choice, diplomas do not cover all sectors so will only be relevant for certain young people. Appropriate guidance will be needed to show young people how they can transfer the skills they have learnt through diplomas as local employment may not match the specific skills they have learnt on their diploma. All diplomas should have core functional skills incorporated so that skills are more transferable, thereby opening up more employment opportunities for young people.

In terms of Pre-Apprenticeships, The Prince's Trust already runs a programme called Get Into... which should be considered as a pre-apprenticeship option. Get Into... offers unemployed 16-25 year olds an intensive training programme in a specific sector so that they can develop practical skills and move into employment in that area. Courses have included: Get Into construction; retail; customer care; cooking; rural trades and more. At the end of the course The Trust invites possible employers for young people to meet, then offers follow up support to enable participants to get into a job in that sector.

Another voluntary sector employment related training programme which could be included is The Prince's Trust's Team programme. Team is a 12 week personal development programme for 16-25 year olds, the majority unemployed, to develop their confidence, motivation and skills to help them find work. The programme is made up of various elements including a one-week residential, a community project and work experience. In 2005/6 8,802 took part in the programme in over 300 locations across the UK. 71% of unemployed participants find work or enter full time education or training after completing the programme.

Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme – The Trust welcomes measures to provide extra support at Key Stage 4, however we should not be dumbing down but providing dedicated support to allow this age range to catch up at a different pace. The Prince's Trust's xl programme can add value as an engagement/re-engagement tool: xl clubs are a team-based programme of personal development based in schools for pupils aged 14-16 'at risk' of truanting and under-achievement. Clubs aim to improve attendance, self-esteem, motivation and social skills and enable young people to take part in a community project. By engaging young people back into education we are helping them to increase their basic skills and reduce their likelihood of getting into crime. In 2005/6 13,886 pupils took part in xl in more than 621 schools across the UK.

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?)

Yes. Functional skills should be embedded across all training and occupational learning and skills.

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?

Yes, it is absolutely critical as it is a further two years where they may not be earning. Financial support (including EMAs and Hardship Allowances) is crucial for those young people from low income households or who have left home or care and have to become self-sufficient. In order to

have access to choices – support for transport costs should also be included separately from EMAs – this will be particularly important for accessing Apprenticeships not available in the immediate locality.

In terms of changing financial incentives from attendance to behaviour & attainment as a deciding factor on receipt of the EMA bonus, we feel this will just add an extra burden on teachers in terms of their role and relationship with their pupils. It also introduces an unnecessary punitive element which is wholly subjective. Basing receipt of the EMA bonus on attainment could also put off pupils with low self esteem.

In terms of stopping financial support to a young person who has dropped out of learning, we feel this decision should be made on a case by case basis and left to the local provider in consultation with key partners e.g. Connexions, social worker and family circumstance. The danger of stopping payments is the young person could spiral into debt and poverty.

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

EMAs with additional financial support for transport and access to benefits dependent on living and domestic circumstances.

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

Withholding a driving licence is not an incentive and would prevent some young people (particularly the rurally isolated) from accessing education or training. Driving is also a skill and should be recognised as such. Taking away a driving licence could also restrict a young person's employability where driving is a requirement of the job.

In consultation with pupils in Year 10 & 11 who are taking part in The Prince's Trust's xl programme of the wider group (over 130 young people) we asked them what would encourage them to stay in education or training after 16. The main reasons given were:

- money or EMAs
- more choice/activities/better courses
- felt that the incentive of staying in school to better their education/career prospects was incentive enough

Other suggestions included making driving lessons compulsory, more in-touch teachers, doing part-time work/school, more school trips, better quality food, being a role model, support from teachers & parents, not wanting to disappoint family, making it more fun, guaranteed job and no school uniform.

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?

Not Sure. It is currently not clear how the information, advice and guidance (IAG) standards will be invested in, in relation to availability, consistency and quality. Clearly this is the key to ensuring all young people have equal access to the right advice. Advice needs to be young people centred. We are concerned that if local authorities are delivering IAG then it could become inconsistent and may negatively impact on certain areas, particularly deprived areas. It is also unclear how lead

professionals will be identified and how IAG standards will be monitored – more clarification is required here. We asked our young people (over 130 young people) who they would trust to give them advice on study options and who might support them if they were having problems with their studying, they said: teachers/tutors, friends and family, ‘Experienced people’ including Connexions and youth workers, mentors, work placement adults and the Police. We would also suggest that to complement more formal advice, some young people could become role models offering advice to younger pupils.

We also asked them what kind of information they felt they would need to make the right choices and that told us: leaflets/information packs that are easy to read; better facilities to do your work and study; Internet access; talks with people who are already doing a job; information on courses and what you have to do to pass; information on what you get out of it at the end; what happens if you leave early; and open days/taster days.

When asked whether all the choices were too many/too confusing the response was mixed with some saying there are too many choices that aren’t clearly explained and others saying there weren’t enough choices when leaving school and choices were limited by geographical location.

Tasters (5.11) are a good idea and The Trust already delivers a suitable programme ‘Get Into’ as referenced at question 9 and could be considered as an accredited provider.

We support in principle Activity Agreement Pilots (5.26) as they act as a positive incentive for young people (as opposed to negative incentives like taking away driving licences). However, these are short term solutions and we would like to see investment in the longer term.

We believe that the concept of transition mentors (5.35) is a good one – from Prince’s Trust experience, we know that consistent advice from a trusted advisor is important to young people and we have volunteers who provide mentoring support to young people in a variety of ways, for example during key transition stages in their lives, such as leaving care or prison or when starting a business.

We agree that implementing improvements for young people in care and their education (5.39) is important before introducing a requirement to participate. Young people in care can be very vulnerable, for example unaccompanied asylum seeking children who are less likely to be cared for beyond the age of 16/17 and who have fewer school places available to them.

Supporting childcare for young mothers (5.45) to enable them to continue education or training is critical. However, six weeks off to have a baby is clearly not enough time it should be more in line with maternity leave practices for those in employment, with them re-entering education at a later date. School age fathers also have educational and emotional needs and this should be addressed to instil responsibility.

Discretion is critical for young homeless people (5.47) and each case should be assessed case by case.

Education or training for young people in custody and those serving community sentences (5.48/5.50) is crucial to their rehabilitation and to prevent re-offending. We believe that the Government should guarantee a minimum number of hours of education or training for young people in custody or serving community sentences. Young offenders have also fed back to us that consistency of education/training is important across the country as they are so often moved from one young offenders institution to another.

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?

Not Sure. We are concerned that these proposals could have a negative impact on small businesses (particularly those that are supported by The Prince's Trust with start-up loans and/or grants). If they have to release 16-18 year olds for one day a week to complete education/training this may put them off employing this age range. It could also pressurise employers to outsource to an older age range or even overseas. This could also result in older people ending up in more menial jobs with restricted options for their career progression.

Despite this concern, we spoke to 25 Prince's Trust supported businesses about the proposals. The majority said they wouldn't be put off employing 16-18 year olds if they had to release them for training one day a week. However, this was on the proviso that they didn't have to pay for the actual training or their day off to attend training. They would also be unhappy if the young person had to have additional time off for studies, exams etc. They felt that employing people who were receiving related training would be good for the organisation and could minimise their training costs.

We believe it could be a good option for young people to choose evening study, however this could lead to more pressure on them to complete both a full week's work as well as studying.

Helping employers become accredited training providers or develop contracts of apprenticeship should be free from red tape and as simple as possible, particularly for very small businesses. The communication to businesses of the implications of getting involved in this (e.g. time and money) is also crucial. We would also question the sustainability of supporting all employers to find training opportunities for employees through Train to Gain.

When we asked the 25 businesses what they felt about developing accredited training, many were not interested as they felt it would be too much work and would cost too much in the long run (particularly in relation to time). Those that were interested felt that support with time and money was crucial.

The Connexions advisor pilot brokerage service should be young people led, not employer led. This will avoid employers dictating career and training choices for their employees.

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

It would be a positive step to make it compulsory for businesses to ensure that young people were offered further learning and qualifications in job. Obviously the danger would be that businesses would not employ 16-17 year olds if it was going to cost staff time and money. And as we highlighted above, this would be a particular problem for small businesses.

But in terms of young people's progression it would mean for example that those who go into entry level jobs on Get into would be encouraged onto the next rung of the ladder. All employers should be given clear and concise guidance on how to encourage and develop their young employees, and perhaps ensuring young people were offered further learning and qualifications should be compulsory for companies of a certain size.

We also think further clarification is needed on how the obligations would be imposed and how compliance could be monitored.

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?

No – this simply criminalises young people and will further alienate the most disadvantaged young people. It sends out the wrong message to young people and puts a negative onus on education and training when it should be seen as an opportunity and not a threat. Disaffected young people need to be approached in a positive way and shown the benefits of re-engaging rather than threatening them.

We do, however believe that tracking young people's development could be good through the CCIS, but that much more thought needs to be given to how the system will work without criminalising young people.

The CCIS proposals need to be clarified in terms of who is responsible for the system and who will have access to it and will be obliged to use it. Having too many organisations inputting data could result in inconsistent interpretation/use of the system as well as duplication so specific training will be required, free of charge.

When we asked over 130 young people what should happen to people who don't stay in education if it were compulsory they suggested:

'Work at home, get a job, personal tutors, residential unit, use 16-17 as a catch up year'. 'Go on xl [Prince's Trust programme], others didn't feel anything should happen to them – 'nothing, it's their choice'.

When we asked them about punishment, the response was fairly mixed. One group said 'don't think they should be punished because if you're over 16 you should be treated like an adult'. They also said it would encourage people to break the law and questioned how it would be enforced and how they would accommodate so many new offenders.

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

Yes. But without criminalising them. Clear incentives need to be given that will encourage young people to engage, such as EMAs, travel allowances and access to benefits.

One focus group of young people from Yorkshire & Humber felt that 'Young people should be responsible for their actions not parents.'

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

Not Sure. This step would be to criminalise more people, and as above echoing the young people's thoughts, The Prince's Trust does not believe prosecution or legal punishment of parents is a positive step forward.

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

No. We strongly believe that imposing negative threats on young people is not the way to encourage them to achieve. Criminalising young people in this way will simply drive the most disadvantaged and disenfranchised into a life of crime and cost not only themselves but society at

large. At a time when the prison population is at capacity, criminalising a whole new section of society is not the way forward. Young people should be shown the benefits of staying in education through encouragement and incentives.

Proposals for withdrawing financial support if young people refuse to participate could also result in alienating the hardest to reach and sending them into a downward spiral of poverty and crime. We are also strongly against proposals for Fixed Penalty Notices as these will be unaffordable to the poorest in society and plunge them further into debt.

More money should be invested in providing tailored and consistent one to one support and clear encouragement, where advisors spend time working with the young person to overcome barriers to participation.

In principle we support the credit and qualifications framework (7.19) enabling people to carry credit from completed units with them – this is especially important for young people in custody, those in care, refugees and asylum seekers, and migrants.

Where a young person is not participating (7.20) a holistic view needs to be taken by considering, amongst other things, bullying, mental health/general health problems, family problems, childcare issues, drug/alcohol misuse or whether they have chosen the wrong course.

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

Neither. We do not support attendance orders. Both have the potential to ultimately criminalise the young person.

Name Emma Langbridge

The Prince's Trust

Address: 18 Park Square East, London, NW1 4LH