

Local Members' Interest

## **Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee 19 December 2013**

### **Impact of the 16-19 Bursary Fund on the participation of 16-18 year olds in education and training**

#### **Recommendation**

1. That the Committee notes and considers the positive trends in participation of young people since the introduction of the Bursary Fund.

#### **Report of Cabinet Member for Learning & Skills**

### **Summary**

#### **What is the Select Committee being asked to do and why?**

2. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members on the trends in participation that have occurred since the introduction of the 16-19 Bursary fund that replaced the Education Maintenance Allowance.
3. This report provides an update on participation in education and training 11 months on from the last report and summarises the findings of the first year of the independent national evaluation of the 16-19 Bursary Fund.
4. The introduction in September 2013 of RPA placed statutory duties on the local authority that require it to “support, enable and assist” young people’s participation and also to secure “sufficient suitable education and training to meet the reasonable needs of young people under the age of 19 (or under 25 if subject to a learning disability assessment)” and the bursary fund provides support for young people to do so.

### **Report**

#### **Background**

5. The Government provides funding to tackle disadvantage both through the Education Funding Agency’s (EFA) funding formula and through support to help young people meet the costs of participating in education and training post-16, principally through the 16-19 Bursary Fund. The 16-19 Bursary fund is allocated by the EFA and is administered directly by schools, colleges and other approved training providers.
6. In 2013/14, providers received 16-19 Bursary Fund allocations for discretionary bursaries only. The funding for vulnerable student bursaries are held centrally by the EFA’s Learner Support Service and providers will draw down this funding on demand throughout the academic year.

7. The Bursary fund seeks to target those young people who face a real financial barrier to participation. It consists of a guaranteed award to the most vulnerable groups (Young People in care, care leavers, or disabled young people in receipt of Disability Living Allowance and Employment Support Allowance). In addition, providers are able to make discretionary awards based on their own published policy and criteria for other learners who most need financial support to enable them to participate and providers can supplement these bursaries if they are able to do so.
8. The 16-19 Bursary Fund was introduced in September 2011 and so far data collection has been dependent on voluntary data returns by Providers. Although useful to the EFA as a predictor of demand for vulnerable group bursaries in particular, the voluntary nature of the returns means that they give an incomplete picture and renders them inappropriate for evaluation purposes and as a result there are no plans to publish this data.
9. The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned the independent social research institute NatCen Social Research to evaluate the 16-19 Bursary Fund over three years. The first year report published by the DfE in May 2013 found that income related criteria are used to issue bursaries and they were used mainly for transport costs and educational equipment. The report also found that providers thought the fund was targeted at greatest need and it was flexible enough to meet individual need, although this flexibility could lead to unequal levels of bursary support and that common policies across providers could mitigate this and it is not allowed within the guidance on use of the funds.
10. Since EMA ceased there are reports that local providers have continued to pay some learners up to £30 per week or provide other support such as a free bus pass or providing a free laptop. Some Providers are also extending the eligibility and producing their own additional scheme to support a wider cohort of learners in addition to those that qualify via the 16-19 Bursary Fund. Within Staffordshire there have been no reports of providers that have identified a general shortfall of funds to meet demand for the guarantee bursary.
11. As part of the work with the looked after children cohort, the County Council has worked with Colleges to identify learners that are eligible for Bursary Fund to ensure that this vulnerable group gets the relevant support to ensure that they remain in education.

## **Raising the Participation Age (RPA)**

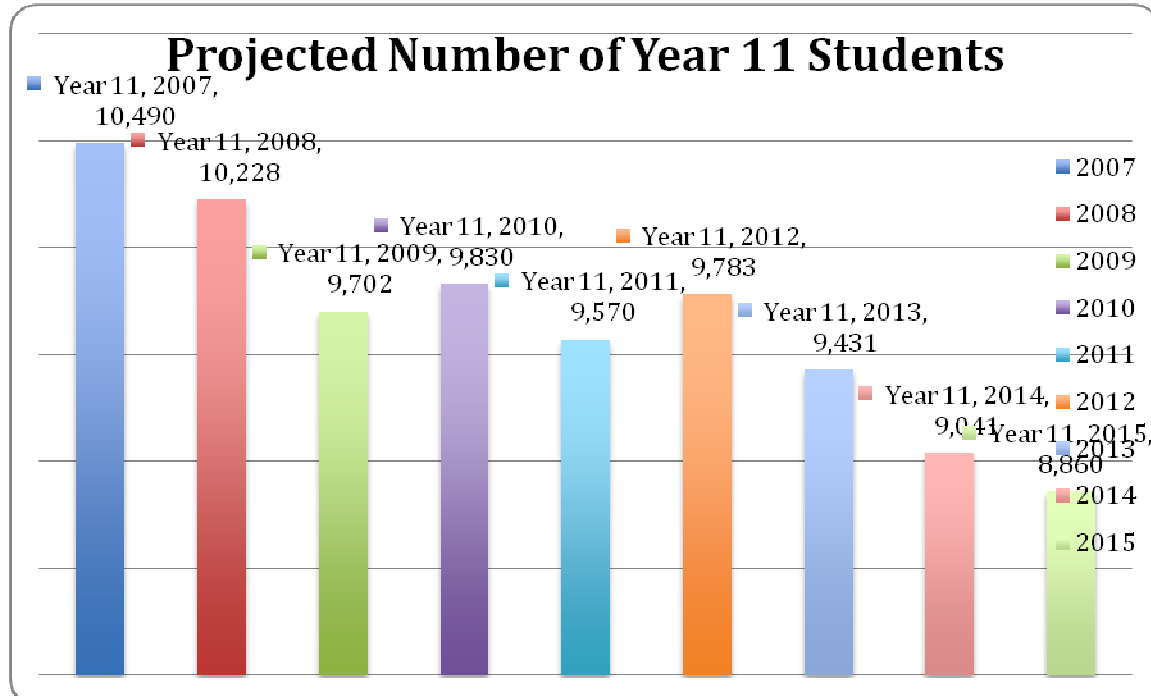
12. RPA started in August 2013 and duties are placed on the Local Authority (LA) that require young people to stay-on in education or training to the age of 17 in 2013 and 18 by 2015. Achieving full participation of young people in education or training until age 18 requires all parts of the education system to play a role. The County Council has commissioned a range of activities from the Entrust Careers and Participation Service (CaPS) - to meet the LA requirements and duties for RPA. From August 2013, the County Council has a duty to:
  - promote the effective participation in education or training of all 16 and 17 year olds resident in their area;
  - establish mechanisms and processes to identify young people resident in its area who are not participating.
13. RPA has specific definitions of what counts as participation and how it applies to young people in meeting this duty. The duty applies to all young people in England (from 28 June 2013) until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17; and from 26 June 2015, to their 18th birthday. Participation is defined through as through full-time education, an apprenticeship or through full-time employment with part-time education or training.
14. The impact of the national changes made regarding the duties to provide appropriate careers advice and guidance for young people in Staffordshire is key to supporting RPA. The Education Act 2011 introduced a statutory duty on schools, academies and other providers in England to secure access to independent, impartial careers guidance for their pupils in years 8–13. The duty came into force in September 2012 for year 9-11 and was extended in September 2013 to cover years 8 and 13.
15. The Education Act 2011 sets out the duties of local authorities in relation to careers guidance and this is limited to supporting and assisting vulnerable young people and those at risk of disengaging with education or work. The statutory responsibility under section 68 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requiring local authorities to encourage enable and assist the participation of young people in education or training, remains unchanged. The service that is commissioned from Entrust supports this duty.
16. National research published by DfE (Barriers to participation in education and training Thomas Spielhofer, Sarah Golden, Kelly Evans, et al. Research Report, June 2010) has shown that for the majority of young people (86%) they do not experience any barriers to participating post-16. The main barriers and constraints experienced by young people relate to finance, transport, availability of provision and their knowledge and awareness of the post-16 options available to them.

17. Young people who live in rural areas have significantly increased odds of experiencing transport as a barrier or constraint than similar young people who do not live in rural areas. Finance is significantly more likely to be experienced as a barrier or constraint by young people who are NEET, those in jobs without training and teenage parents. The research suggests that there is an issue around the amount and nature of IAG available to some young people. A substantial minority of young people, particularly those with Learning Difficulties/Disabilities, teenage parents, and young people in jobs without training or who are NEET feel that they have not received enough support and information, and do not feel prepared for their future when completing Year 11.

**Participation Trends in Staffordshire**

18. In producing this report a request for data and information from the EFA on the take-up of bursaries was made. However, the EFA has stated that the NatCen Social Research report provided is the only evaluation available at present as there has been a poor response rate of the bursary data returns resulting in no information being published. The EFA have confirmed there will be a Year 2 evaluation report published in the Summer 2014 and it is intended that analysis of year-end Bursary management information returns should be included in that report.

19. The cohort of 16-18 year olds has been reducing and is indicated by the chart below that shows a general decline in young people that will flow into post 16 education at year 12 and 13.



20. From the data below in Table 1 of participation of young people aged 16 and 17 rates remain high. In 2011, there was a fall in the participation rate that has since been reversed based on provision 2012 data. Provisional data for 2012 shows participation at 89.2% in Staffordshire which is higher than the national rate of 88.4% for England and the West Midlands rate of 87.4%

**Table 1: Participation of 16-17 year-olds in Staffordshire**

Year	Education Full-time	Part-Time Education	Apps/WBL	Education Part-time	Population	Participation %
2012	14,905	N/A	1,570	16,475	19,041	89.2
2011	15,720	1,210	1,100	18,030	21,280	84.7
2010	16,510	1,470	1,200	19,180	21,590	88.8
2009	16,940	1,100	1,310	19,350	21,940	88.2

Source: 2009-11 taken from DfE statistical first release February 2013 and based on end year data at December. 2012 is provisional data taken DfE statistical first release October 2013 and excludes numbers in part-time education.

21. Bursary allocations to schools, colleges and training providers for 16-18 year olds is given in Table 2 below. In the second year bursary funding increased in the County as EFA had held back funds in the first year of operation to manage any transition issues. In 2013/14 the EFA took over operation of guaranteed bursaries and held funding back to allocate on an application basis accounting for the reduction in funding.

**Table 2: EFA allocation of 16-19 Bursary Funds**

Staffordshire Providers	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
	Bursary Fund	Bursary Fund	Bursary Fund
College	£1,086,800	£1,606,071	£1,411,519
Independent Providers	£67,450	£36,227	£31,956
Academies	£62,320	£214,559	£256,220
Schools	£388,360	£507,095	£398,725
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£1,604,930</b>	<b>£2,363,952</b>	<b>£2,098,420</b>

Source: EFA National Office

22. From the information available locally and nationally it is not possible to determine direct cause and effects of changes from the EMA to the Bursary Fund and levels of participation. What is clear is that generally participation levels are high in the County and remain above regional and national averages. Once data is published on RPA and on Bursary take-up next year it may be possible to offer a more precise estimate.

### Link to Strategic Plan

23. The aims and ambition of the trust support the County Councils Strategic Plan in supporting jobs, skills and prosperity and raising the attainment and achievement of young people and adults through education and training as set out below:

- Outcome 1: Staffordshire's economy prospers and grows, together with jobs, skills, qualifications and aspirations to support it.

- Outcome 5: Staffordshire's children and young people can get the best start in life and receive good education so that they can make a positive contribution to their communities.
- Outcome 7: Staffordshire's people and communities can access, enjoy and benefit from a range of learning, recreational and cultural activities.

### **Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity**

24. This report is an update from the March 2012 Education Scrutiny Committee report and the January 2013 Prosperity, Skills and Education Select Committee report that evaluated the impact of the Government's introduction of the 16-19 Bursary Fund following its withdrawal of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

### **Community Impact**

25. The Bursary Fund supports the participation of young people in education and training, particularly some of the most vulnerable. Effective use by education providers will ensure that young people who would benefit from support of the fund will be in a better position to participate in education and training.

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