

### Executive Summary

Overall, young people were in favour of staying in education or learning up to the age of 18 years: 57% thought this was a good idea. There were higher levels of support amongst parents/carers with two-thirds (66%) thinking that this was a good idea.

When it came to identifying the most appealing learning option for young people between the ages of 16-18 (including full-time employment with or without training, volunteering, full-time education inside or outside of school and apprenticeships), the most popular choice was staying in full time education in school. Perhaps surprisingly, a higher number of young people (46%) selected this option than parents/carers (36%), whilst parents/carers were keener on full time employment with training and apprenticeships than young people.

Such a positive endorsement of the proposal from the majority of the young people surveyed is encouraging, and indeed underlines the importance of involving the views of these key stakeholders – i.e. young people – in scoping the offer.

However, young people also pointed out that success depends on an education system that meets the needs of all of it's users:

*It is an awful long time to be in school, people may find it boring and drop out. (Female, 15yrs, in school)*

*If it wasn't right for them they would have been wasting their time and put themselves under unnecessary pressure. (Female, 16yrs, in school)*

Young people also pointed out that there is a cost implication to staying on in school until the age of 18 as the potential to earn is greatly reduced. Indeed, both young people and parents/carers indicated that providing a cash allowance such as the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) would be the most effective way of encouraging young people to stay in learning. The opportunity to gain more qualifications and knowing more about the benefits of staying in learning were the next most popular options.

Other interesting findings at this interim stage are that a large majority of young people and parents/carers felt that volunteering should count as 'participating' and that young people who are doing voluntary work should not be classed as not in education, employment or training (NEET). Most young people and parents/carers surveyed also felt that school was the best place to learn employability skills, although the workplace came a close second.

## Background

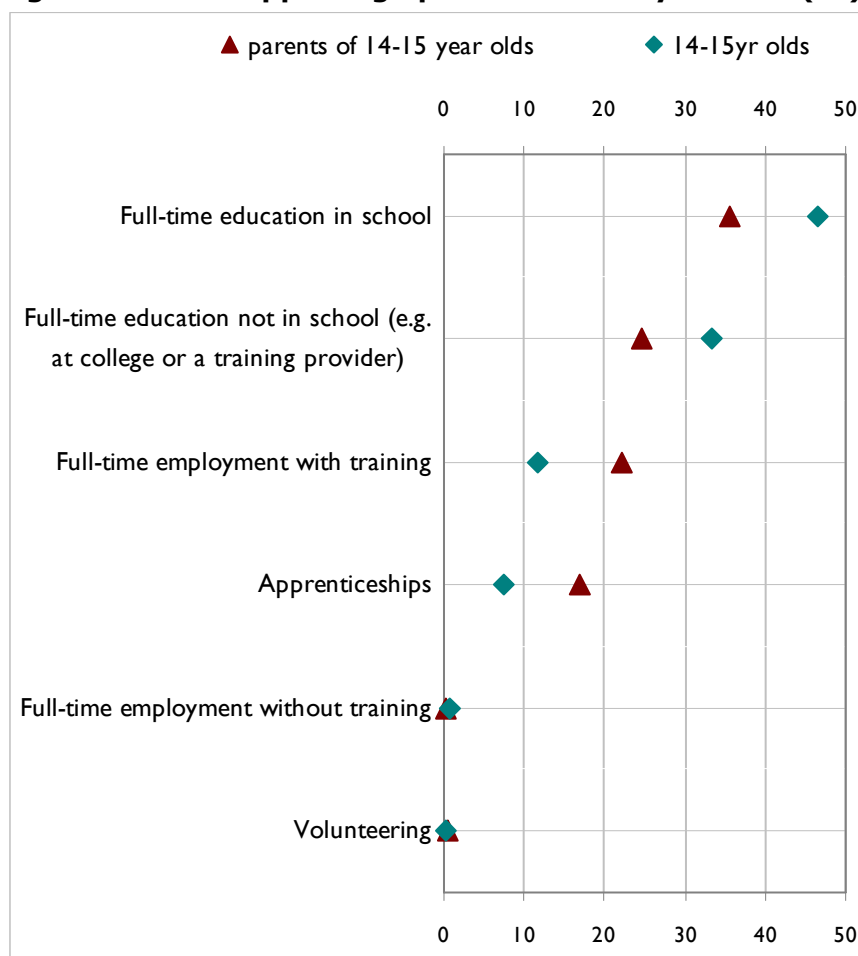
The National Youth Agency, in partnership with the Local Government Association, is undertaking a piece of scoping research to explore the Coalition's plans to raise the participation age of young people from 16 to 18 by 2015. This will be the first time the participation age has been raised in almost 40 years, and as such, represents a significant change to the current education system.

So far the views of around a thousand young people and around nine hundred parents/carers from across the country have been gathered through an online survey. The research, once complete, will be disseminated across Local Authorities to support their planning for an attractive and engaging offer to young people.

## Most appealing option for 16-18 year olds (14-15 year olds)

There were around 300 young people aged 14-15yrs completing the survey who were asked which option was most appealing to them between the ages 16 and 18 years. The same question was asked of parents of 14-15yr olds and the responses are shown in Figure 1, below.

**Figure 1 – most appealing option for 16-18 year olds (%)**



The overall picture here is that being in full time education at ages 16-18 was much more appealing to young people than parents thought whilst conversely, employment and apprenticeships were less popular amongst young people than parents thought.

Just under half (46%) of 14-15yr olds would like to be in full-time education between the ages of 16 and 18, compared with 36% of parents who thought this was the case. This patterns was replicated for full-time education *not* in school, with a third (33%) of young people highlighting this as the most appealing option, compared to a quarter (25%) of parents who thought this would appeal most to their children.

Conversely, parents overestimated how appealing full-time employment with training and apprenticeships would be.

Of those who indicated they wanted to be in full-time employment aged 16 to 18 years, most indicated that this was because they wanted to be earning money and felt that they would still be learning through the work they did.

*... many teenagers aged 16-18 would like to get stuck in and earn for themselves and by training as well would help improve their skills (14yr old female)*

*You would be earning money but at the same time you would be learning all the skills you need to do your job really well. The training would also be more of a hands-on, practical approach. (15yr old female)*

#### Staying in education or learning up to the age of 18

Overall, young people were in favour of young people staying in education or learning up to the age of 18 years: 57% thought this was a good idea. Female young people and young people from BME groups were significantly more likely to think this was a good idea.

There was higher levels of support amongst parents with two-thirds (66%) that thought this was a good idea. Those parents whose children were currently doing an apprenticeship were less likely to think this was a good idea compared to parents of children at college who were more likely to think it was a good idea.

Three-quarters of young people (76%) felt that volunteering should count as 'participating' and that young people who are doing voluntary work should not be classed as not in education, employment or training (NEET). Female young people were significantly more likely than males to hold this view.

A higher proportion of parents held this view (85%) and this was higher still for parents in part-time employment.

### Benefits and disadvantages of staying in learning up to the age of 18 years

Respondents were asked an open-ended question about what they thought the benefits and disadvantages would be of staying in learning up to the age of 18 years.

Most young people thought the benefit of staying in learning up to age 18 was that young people would be better educated, including a more in-depth knowledge of specific subjects, more qualifications and be better prepared for university and for working life.

*A-levels, new friends (if they go to a different college), more chances to grow as a person. (Male, 16yrs, at college)*

*Allows them to specialise at a later date or opens up higher education opportunities. (Male, 19yrs, at university)  
Better qualifications, wider circle of friends and better work and communication skills. (Female, 19yrs, not in work or learning)*

The main disadvantages for young people staying in learning up to the age of 18 years tended to focus on young people staying at school or college and the perception of this being compulsory. Many respondents commented that not everyone is 'academically minded' and many would prefer to gain experience in the workplace or take up an apprenticeship.

*It is an awful long time to be in school, people may find it boring and drop out. (Female, 15yrs, in school)*

*If it wasn't right for them they would have been wasting their time and put themselves under unnecessary pressure. (Female, 16yrs, in school)*

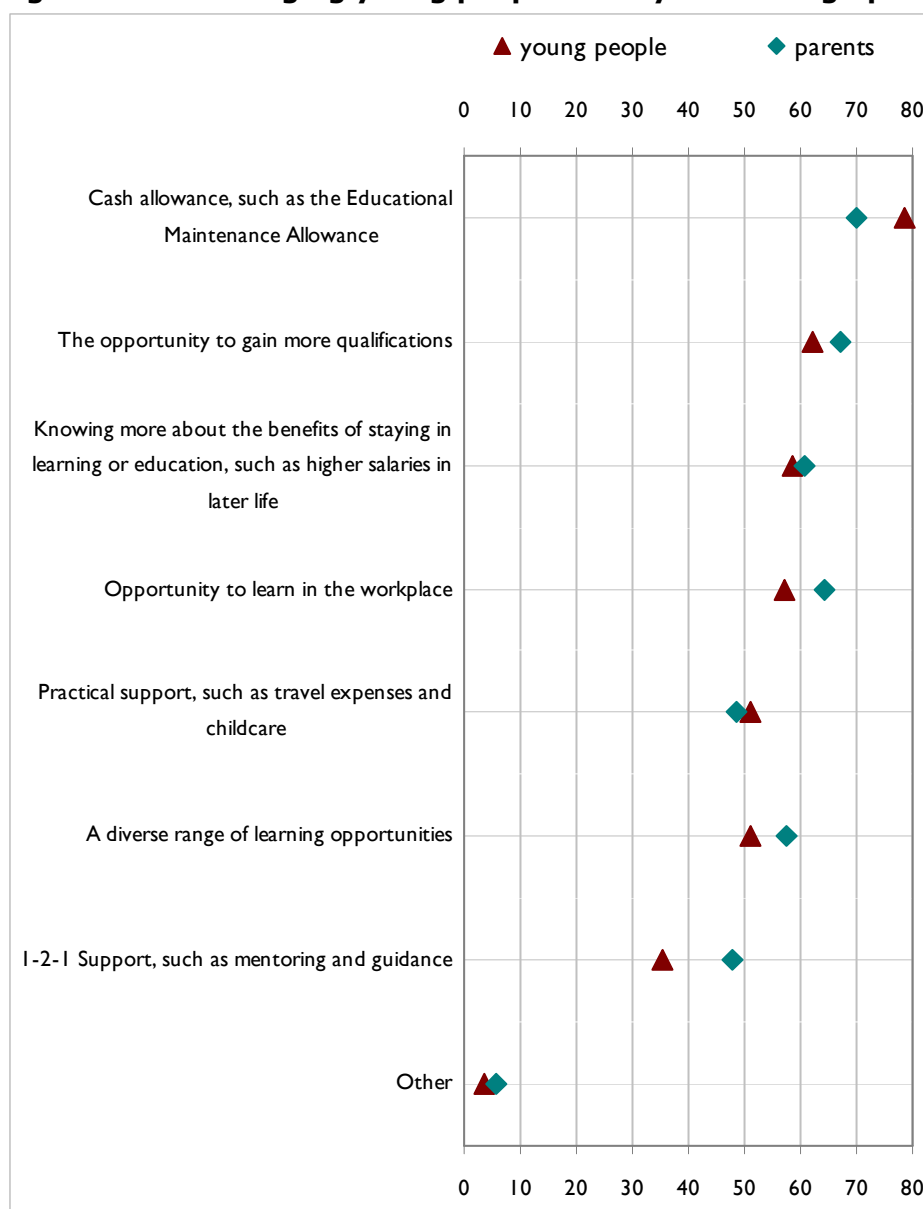
The issue of cost 'to the taxpayer' and of young people 'losing out on earning money' were common responses.

*They may hate it and want to earn money straight away. It can be embarrassing to 'sponge' off 'mommy and daddy' at the age of 18!!  
To reward student... all should get EMA!! (18 year old female in college part-time and working part-time)*

### Encouraging young people to stay in learning up to the age of 18 years

Figure 2, below, shows a broadly similar pattern of responses from parents and young people with regards to how best to encourage young people to stay in learning up to 18 years old.

**Figure 2 – encouraging young people to stay in learning up to 18 years**



The most popular option for encouraging young people to stay in learning was to provide a cash allowance such as the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA). This was seen as the most popular option by both young people (79%) and parents (70%). Amongst young people, younger respondents (14-15yrs) were more likely to choose this option than older young people (16-18yrs). Amongst parents, those currently 'not in work or learning', those in part-time learning and those who were themselves in full-time employment between the ages of 16 and 18 were more likely to go for the cash incentive as the best way to encourage young people to stay in learning.

The opportunity to gain more qualifications was the next most popular option (62% of young people, 67% of parents) followed by knowing more about the benefits of staying in learning (59% of young people; 61% of





## Appendix 1 – Meta data

### Survey of young people

An online questionnaire was conducted in October 2010 with a random sample of young people from across England ( $n=970$ ). Respondents were drawn through opportunity sampling using a database of over 37,000 young people. Of those completing the survey:

- 48% male; 52% female
- 11% had a caring responsibility (110 people)
- 27% were from a Black or Minority Ethnic group (253 people)
- 4% described themselves as having a disability (43 people)
- 2% were living in care or had recently left care (21 people)
- 1% were parents (9 people)
- Just over two-fifths (41%) were involved in volunteering

### Survey of parents

An online questionnaire was conducted in October 2010 with a random sample of parents from across England ( $n=872$ ). Respondents were drawn through opportunity sampling using a database of over 6,000 parents/carers. Of those completing the survey:

- 40% were in full-time employment and 23% worked part-time; 33% were not in work or learning
- 65% had 1 child; 30% had 2 children and 5% had 3 or more
- 72% were parents/carers of children in school; 42% had children in college/training; 18% had children who were employed and 8% had children who were NEET; 5% other; 4% doing apprenticeships