

The Impact of Care to Learn: tracking the destinations of young parents funded in 2008/09, 2007/08 and 2006/07

Executive Summary

October 2010

i For information

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2008/09 Care to Learn supported 8,000 young parents to continue their education by covering the costs of childcare while they undertook a programme of learning.¹ By doing this it improved the education levels and opportunities of young parents and therefore reduced the risk of their remaining entrapped in a cycle of poverty.

The main focus of this report is from a survey conducted in early 2010 of 1,728 young parents who had received Care to Learn funding in the 2008/09 academic year. These 1,728 young parents represent 22 per cent of all young parents who received Care to Learn funding in 2008/09, and responses have been weighted back to be representative of the overall population. All findings of sub-groups have been significance tested to ensure that only statistically significant differences are reported.²

In addition, this report presents longitudinal findings of the current activities of those who received Care to Learn funding in 2006/07 and 2007/08 academic years, and findings from qualitative interviews conducted with key stakeholders in three case study areas, some young fathers who received Care to Learn, and some young parents who applied for Care to Learn but did not take up the funding.

Key findings in this report include:

- Care to Learn was crucial in allowing young parents to continue their education;
- Those young parents who stay in education after the original course funded by Care to Learn often progress to higher level learning; and
- Care to Learn has an important role in reducing the proportion of young parents who are NEET. This is notable both in the short term (in the year after Care to Learn was originally received), but also in the medium term (the reduction in NEET was sustained 40 months after Care to Learn was originally received).

Background of Care to Learn and characteristics of young parents receiving Care to Learn in 2008/09

Care to Learn was rolled out nationally in 2004/05 with the aim of narrowing education inequalities and increasing the number of mothers aged 16-19 in education, employment and training (EET).

The proportion of young parents receiving Care to Learn has increased since 2006/07, when 14 per cent received it, to 16 per cent in 2007/08 and 2008/09.³

¹ The final number of people receiving Care to Learn in the 2008/09 academic year was over 8,000, although the end of year figure had not been finalised when the sample was drawn.

² Significance is measured at a cut-off of 95 per cent significance in a two-sided test. Pearson's Chi-Square has been used to test significance on cross-tabulations.

³ Numbers of young parents receiving Care to Learn are taken from the YPLA, and numbers of young mothers from DfE/DH estimates. However, the figures for the number of young mothers for 2008 onwards are estimates, and therefore take-up rates in these years are indicative only.

Fifty per cent of those who received Care to Learn funding in 2008/09 were aged 17 or 18 at the start of the 2008/09 academic year, and a further 22 per cent were 19 years old. Eighty per cent were lone parents, and 71 per cent were receiving Income Support. In terms of ethnicity, 78 per cent were white, seven per cent were black African, seven per cent of mixed ethnicity, and four per cent black Caribbean. A higher proportion of young parents living in London were from ethnic minority backgrounds when compared to young parents in other parts of England. Ninety per cent lived in urban areas with only nine per cent living in rural areas.⁴

The impact of Care to Learn for 2008/09 learners⁵

Care to Learn continues to have an important role in allowing young parents to continue their education. Seventy-seven per cent of young parents receiving Care to Learn funding in 2008/09 said that without Care to Learn they would not have been able to go on the course. This has increased since the 2007/08 cohort, when 73 per cent reported this. Only two per cent of those receiving funding in 2008/09 said that Care to Learn made no difference, and that they would have gone on the course even without Care to Learn; this is the same proportion who reported Care to Learn made no difference in previous evaluations of the 2007/08 and 2006/07 cohort.

In total, 64 per cent of young parents had completed the course they started in the 2008/09 academic year, only 17 per cent had dropped out, and the remainder (19 per cent) were still on their course.

Encouragingly, three quarters of young parents (75 per cent) had gained a qualification or a partial qualification from the course supported by Care to Learn in 2008/09. The national Further Education (FE) success rate⁶ in 2008/09 was 81 per cent, whilst 76 per cent of those funded by Care to Learn at a FE college had gained a qualification. Given that 19 per cent of young parents were still on their course, and therefore may yet gain qualifications, it seems clear that the success rate for those funded by Care to Learn is comparable to the national average for all learners. This represents a significant achievement given that young parents are combining learning with childcare responsibilities.

⁴ It was not possible to classify whether one per cent of young parents lived in rural or urban areas, due to invalid postcodes.

⁵ See chapter 6.

⁶ The success rate is calculated as the number of learners achieving the qualification divided by the number of those starting, excluding any learners who transferred onto another qualification. Post-16 Education & Skills: Learner Participation, Outcomes and Level of Highest Qualification Held, http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/8D25DE64-8FA6-49B1-B482-14D10CDBB8B1/0/Post_16_Education_June_2010.pdf, last accessed 06/07/2010.

Destinations of young parents⁷

For young parents who received Care to Learn funding in 2008/09, the most common activity in early 2010 (circa 16 months after starting their Care to Learn funded course) was learning (63 per cent). In addition, 10 per cent were in work, four per cent were about to start a course, and seven per cent were looking for work. A further 14 per cent were at home and looking after their child.

Of those who were at home and looking after their child, nearly half (47 per cent) reported that they wanted to do so, which suggests that they were not doing so because they were unable to find work or a course of learning, or because they could not afford childcare.

For those who received Care to Learn funding in 2007/08, learning was also the most common activity in early 2010 (circa 28 months after starting their Care to Learn funded course), with 50 per cent in some form of learning. In addition, 17 per cent were working and another 17 per cent were at home, looking after their baby and not looking for work.

For those who received funding in the previous academic year, 2006/07, 44 per cent were in learning, and 22 per cent were working in early 2010 (circa 40 months after starting their Care to Learn funded course).

Care to Learn and NEET⁸

The proportion of all young mothers (not just those on Care to Learn) aged 16-19 that are in employment, education or training (EET) has risen, from 22.2 per cent for the period 1997-99, to 32.9 per cent for the period of 2007-09. Nevertheless, this suggests that 67.1 per cent of all young parents were NEET on average between 2007 and 2009.

Care to Learn has a large and sustained impact on the likelihood of young parents to be NEET. Before starting learning in the 2008/09 academic year, 69 per cent of all young parents receiving Care to Learn had been NEET, in line with national figures. However, by the time of the interview in early 2010, only 27 per cent were NEET, suggesting that Care to Learn is an effective way of reducing the proportion of young parents who are NEET.

The youngest parents were less likely to be NEET circa 16 months after starting their Care to Learn funded learning, with only 15 per cent of those young parents aged 15 or younger being NEET, compared to 29 per cent of those aged 19 years old. However, younger parents were also less likely to have been NEET before starting their course, in the summer of 2008. This is likely to be in part a reflection of the fact that the youngest parents were still in compulsory education.

⁷ See chapter 6 for more detailed findings about destinations for those young parents receiving Care to Learn funding in the 2008/09 academic year, and chapter 7 for findings about destinations for those receiving Care to Learn funding in both the 2007/08 and 2006/07 academic years.

⁸ See chapter 6 for more detailed findings about NEET rates for those receiving Care to Learn funding in the 2008/09 academic year, and chapter 7 for findings about NEET rates for those receiving Care to Learn funding in the 2007/08 and 2006/07 academic years.

Furthermore, young parents aged 16 to 18 who received the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) were less likely to be NEET circa 16 months after starting their Care to Learn funded learning. Only 24 per cent of those who were also receiving EMA were NEET in the summer of 2010, compared to 33 per cent of those who were not receiving EMA.

Longitudinal findings from previous cohorts of young parents who received Care to Learn funding in 2007/08 and 2006/07 suggest that this reduction in NEET is not just over the short term, but the medium term as well. The proportion of young parents funded in 2007/08 who were NEET increased slightly from 22 per cent circa 18 months after starting Care to Learn funded learning, to 33 per cent circa 28 months after starting Care to Learn funded learning. However, this is still half the proportion who were NEET before receiving Care to Learn funding (65 per cent).

Similarly, the proportion of young parents funded in 2006/07 who were NEET has remained stable at around three in ten around 18, 30 and 40 months after receiving Care to Learn funding. These results for the 2006/07 and 2007/08 cohorts demonstrate that Care to Learn helps maintain a sustained reduction in NEET over the medium term.

Learning progression⁹

Of those young parents receiving Care to Learn funding in 2008/09 who were in learning early in 2010, nearly half (48 per cent) were studying on a new course that was not the same as the course they were doing during the 2008/09 academic year. Taking all young parents into account, and not just those who continued in learning, this suggests that 32 per cent of all young parents receiving Care to Learn funding in 2008/09 used Care to Learn as a stepping stone to undertake further learning.

Of those who were in learning and studying a new course that leads to a qualification, three in five (60 per cent) were undertaking learning at a higher level than the course they originally received funding for in the 2008/09 academic year¹⁰, suggesting that Care to Learn helps learning progression of these young parents.

Five per cent of young parents who received Care to Learn funding in 2008/09 were at university in early 2010. The proportions of young parents from the earlier cohorts were higher; of those receiving funding in 2007/08 12 per cent were at university, and 20 per cent of those who received funding in 2006/07 were at university in 2010. Again, this demonstrates how Care to Learn helps these young parents to progress beyond the learning that Care to Learn itself had funded.

⁹ See chapter 6 for more detail of learning progression for those receiving Care to Learn funding in the 2008/09 academic year, and chapter 7 for those receiving Care to Learn funding in both the 2007/08 and 2006/07 academic years.

¹⁰ This is based only on those for whom it was possible to attribute a course level to both courses.

Take up of Care to Learn¹¹

The main barriers to take-up of Care to Learn that stakeholders reported were the result of local circumstances rather than any aspects of Care to Learn itself. In particular, stakeholders noted that there was a lack of suitable learning provision, particularly short courses with flexible hours. In addition, it was noted that there was often a lack of childcare provision, particularly for babies aged below two years old, and a general lack of childminders. The attitudes of young parents were also mentioned, specifically that they may not want to continue their education, or want to leave their child in childcare. The level of Care to Learn payments were not mentioned as a barrier to take-up, and the application process for Care to Learn was rarely mentioned.

For those young parents who did not want to continue their education, possibly because they had previously had bad experiences in school or did not have the confidence, it was found that short courses teaching Foundation level 'life skills' were a good way of building young parents' confidence, helping them back into mainstream education.

Take-up was highest in the case study area which had the best network of frontline staff. In this area there was a designated teenage parent Connexions adviser who was co-located and in constant contact with the teenage pregnancy midwife and health visitor, and this provided a clear and effective referral network. In the low and medium take-up areas, although there were designated teenage parent Connexions advisers, other links, particularly with midwives, were less strong. All three areas had strong networks of staff providing a strategic lead for Care to Learn in the locality, although this did not seem to have a strong positive effect on take-up.

The main reasons for young parents not to take up Care to Learn after having applied for it, were that their personal circumstances had changed or they had decided not to undertake the learning they had previously applied for, for example because they wanted to spend more time with their child.

Care to Learn: access, provision and funding¹²

More than nine out of ten (93 per cent) of all young parents found it easy to find out about Care to Learn and 90 per cent reported that it was easy to apply. The main channels through which young parents found out about Care to Learn were Connexions advisers and college student support staff.

Most young parents undertook training at an FE college (72 per cent), with nine per cent at a sixth form or sixth form college, and seven per cent at a school. The majority of courses lasted for a year or more, and the most common level of course was Level 2 (35 per cent), followed by Level 3 (26 per cent) and Level 1 (17 per cent).

¹¹ See chapter 2.

¹² See chapters 4 and 5.

The most common form of childcare supported by Care to Learn funding were day nurseries, that were not on the same site as the young parent's school or college, with the second most common being a registered childminder.

Almost all young parents (96 per cent) reported that Care to Learn covered childcare costs for all the time they were at their learning provider, 79 per cent said it covered all their time travelling between childcare and learning providers, and 71 per cent said it covered all their time undertaking private study.

Care to Learn also provides financial support to cover the additional costs of travelling between home and the childcare provider. In total, 22 per cent of young parents received some support towards travel costs and 17 per cent received all the travel costs they applied to Care to Learn for.

The proportion of young parents for whom Care to Learn has covered all of their childcare costs when at their learning provider has remained stable over the previous three cohorts. However, the proportion for whom Care to Learn has covered all of their time doing private study, and the additional costs of travelling between home and their childcare provider, has slightly declined. This is likely to be the result of the Care to Learn maximum rate of funding not having changed since the 2007/08 cohort, and a gradual shift away from using (normally cheaper) childminders to (normally more expensive) day nurseries. Nevertheless, the fact that only 15 per cent of young parents had reached their weekly maximum of Care to Learn funding (£175 in London, £160 elsewhere) suggests that the level of funding is about right.

Recommendations¹³

Based on the findings from this research, we propose the following recommendations (see Chapter 9 for further discussion):

1. Continue Care to Learn funding
2. Maintain and monitor the amount of funding
3. Maintain the current (2008/09) eligibility criteria
4. Increase awareness and marketing for some groups of young parents
5. Continue to promote good practice among support workers and stakeholders

¹³ See chapter 9.

Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT
0845 337 2000
ypla.gov.uk

© YPLA 2010
Young People's Learning Agency

Extracts from this publication may be reproduced for non-commercial educational or training purposes on condition that the source is acknowledged and the findings are not misrepresented.

This publication is available in electronic form on the Young People's Learning Agency website: ypla.gov.uk

Publication reference: YPLA-G-97/2010