Learner Journeys
Research – Care to Learn

March 2010

Of interest to staff and stakeholders with an interest in Learner Support
Further information

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Executive Summary

1.1 Background

This survey was commissioned to determine the impact of the financial assistance available to learners on participation, retention, achievement and progression. Its main aim was to understand how well the funding provided by the LSC is helping learners with regard to the four stages of their learning, including finding out about the course and making the decision to take-up a course; actually taking up a course and staying on it to the end; completion of a course and achieving qualifications; and moving on to further learning.

Overall, 1,047 interviews (out of a total of 10,688 across all Learner Support schemes) were conducted amongst learners receiving Care to Learn funding.

1.2 Engagement

Care to Learn has a positive impact on engagement in learning. Three-quarters of learners (76%) who knew about Care to Learn before deciding to do their original course may not have done the course if the funding had not been available.

Most learners (87%) found it easy to find out about Care to Learn.

Learners funded through the Care to Learn scheme have other financial concerns, which are not remedied through the scheme. Whilst childcare costs are a particular issue, learners also have significant levels of concern about other costs, including general living expenses.

Fewer than half of learners received general advice or guidance about financial support for learning. Clearly there is scope for wider access to advisory services.

1.3 Retention and persistence in learning

The retention rate for Care to Learn learners was estimated by the survey to be 81%. (The retention rate is the proportion of learners who complete their course whether they achieve the qualification or not.) An overall National Further Education retention rate of 87% (achieved in both 2005/06 and 2006/07) forms a reasonable benchmark for the Care to Learn rate. Given the relatively difficult circumstances of these learners, the disparity is modest and might well have been more pronounced if Care to Learn funding had not been available.

Care to Learn has a positive impact on retention. More than two-thirds of completers (70%) feel that they could not have finished their course without the funding. Three-fifths of those who are still on the course (60%) say that they would be at risk of dropping out without the funding.

The main reason for early leaving is a change in personal circumstances. However, financial issues are a significant factor and more than a third (35%) of early leavers report that financial issues influenced their decision to leave their course.

Amongst those who left the course before completion, transport and general living costs are the most frequent cause of financial problems whilst in learning. Overall, fewer than 2% of learners funded by Care to Learn left early because of childcare costs.
1.4 Achievement

The success rate for Care to Learn learners was estimated by the survey to be 70%. (The success rate is the number achieving the qualification as a percentage of those starting the course.). An overall National Further Education success rate of around 77% (based on rates of 76% in 2005/06 and of 77% in 2006/07) forms a reasonable benchmark for the Care to Learn figure. Again, given the circumstances in which learners supported by Care to Learn funding learn, the difference is not great and may have been greater if this funding had not been received.

Nearly all those completing their original course (87%) achieved a qualification. A large majority agrees that Care to Learn funding helped them to achieve a qualification.

The proportion of learners with an NVQ equivalent qualification increased significantly following their Care to Learn funded course. Furthermore, the proportion of learners having a Level 3 qualification or above is significantly greater after completing the course for which learners received Care to Learn funding.

1.5 Learning progression

Around half the learners who are no longer on their original course have progressed into, or registered for, further learning and, of these, most (79%) are learning at a higher level.

Of those who failed to complete their original learning and have not progressed, 75% said they would have considered more learning if more financial support had been available.

Around half of those who are either still on or have completed their further learning have received some financial assistance. Thus, around half have continued learning without financial support.

Financial support received for further learning is most likely to have been Care to Learn funding again.

All of the learners who did receive further financial support for learning and achieved a qualification report that the financial support has helped them to achieve more qualifications.

Around a quarter of those achieving a qualification from their further learning achieved a Level 3 qualification for the first time; and a further third gained an NVQ equivalent qualification where before they had none.

1.6 Employment progression

The great majority (95%) of learners believe that the funding they received helped them progress in their work/career. Of these a high proportion (71% overall) feel it helped a great deal.

Those who achieved a qualification from their original course are particularly likely to report a very positive impact on career and employment progression.

Following learning, learners are more likely to be in employment or to be actively seeking employment, but the gains are modest in scale. Much new employment is part-time, inactivity has not reduced greatly, and the proportion of those who are unemployed has risen.

1.7 Personal and social benefits

The perceived benefits of undertaking learning supported by Care to Learn are wide-ranging and encompass a number of personal and social gains (including, for example, greater purpose in life, improved generic and social skills, increased interest in work and greater self-confidence).
1.8 Conclusions

The research provides evidence of the positive impact of Care to Learn funding.

- Care to Learn funding has a significant positive effect on engagement, retention, attainment and learning progression.

- Information on Care to Learn funding was easily available to its recipients. (However, the survey was, of course, only of Care to Learn recipients. We did not survey young people who are eligible for Care to Learn but did not receive funding, but further research has been commissioned by the LSC to explore the needs of more disadvantaged learners and non-learners and will cover issues around access to IAG amongst those not in learning.)

- Care to Learn retention and success rates are around 91% of corresponding national FE rates in each case. However, given the relatively difficult circumstances of the client group, this may be regarded as a strength.

- In addition to learning benefits, virtually all Care to Learn-funded participants achieve and acknowledge social or personal benefits which may lead to future progression and development.

Issues to consider in the further development of Care to Learn

- There may have been some historic weakness in the scope of provision of information, advice, and guidance on learning opportunities and on the funding available to support take-up of those opportunities. For example, before their courses, fewer than half of these learners had received general information, advice and guidance about the range of funding which might be available to them. Clearly there is scope for improvement in this area. Subsequently, though Care to Learn clearly has positive impacts on retention, for a minority, there remains a need for continuing support and guidance if early leaving is to be reduced to a minimum. This may need to link Care to Learn to other forms of financial support including discretionary funding which is able to respond to individual needs and circumstances.

- Learning supported by Care to Learn is not very effective (at least in the short term) in greatly increasing the number of learners who subsequently got a job. Where increases did occur, they were exclusively in part-time work. However, this may reflect two extraneous factors. Firstly, the practical difficulties of simultaneously managing full-time work and caring for a child. Secondly, the financial considerations inherent in the balance of available wages, childcare costs, and benefits once learning ceases. It may not reflect anything inherent in the Care to Learn-supported learning itself. Rather, these findings reinforce the importance of guidance, towards the end of courses, on employment options and on continuing support with childcare.
2 Background

2.1 Background

In February 2008, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) commissioned BMG Research to undertake a survey to determine the impact of the financial support schemes available to learners. The main aim of the research is to understand how well the funding provided by the LSC is helping learners on their courses, with the focus on four key stages of learning comprising:

- Finding out about a course, including making the decision to take-up a course;
- Actually taking up a course and staying on it to the end;
- Completion of a course and achieving qualifications;
- Moving onto further learning; and the impact of funded learning on career and personal development.

More particularly, learners were asked a range of key questions relevant to each of the four key stages of learning and beyond:

- **Engagement/Participation**: Is the funding helping to raise interest in taking up learning? Is it encouraging people to take-up learning, who might not have been able to if the funding was not there to help them?
- **Retention**: Does the funding help learners to stay on a course until the end? Does it help prevent learners from dropping out, such as learners who might have had to stop learning to earn money if the funding was not there to support them?
- **Achievement**: Does the funding help learners complete their course and achieve a qualification, or achieve a higher qualification than they might have if the funding wasn’t there?
- **Progression**: Does the funding encourage learners to think about future courses, or has it encouraged them to try for a promotion, or take on more responsibility at work, or take-up other learning for personal development/interest?

The survey methodology, which involved a complex sample structure based on funding scheme and year of funding, was tailor-made to serve the aims of the survey and provide an appropriate level of detail with regard to the findings. As a result of the specific approach undertaken, findings from the survey cannot be compared with any other research or evaluation undertaken in the past.

2.2 Methodology

10,688 interviews were conducted with learners in several of the LSC’s financial support schemes (including Education Maintenance Allowance, Adult Learning Grant, and others) over three academic years.

A stratified random sample was drawn by funding scheme, the year in which funding was received, and the gender and age of learners. Where the sample was relatively small by year of funding, contacts were maximised. Where sufficient sample was provided to achieve minimum targets, quotas were set.

Within the overall total, 1,047 interviews were conducted amongst *Care to Learn* recipients. [The Care to Learn programme supports young parents in learning by contributing to the costs of their childcare while they learn. More information about Care to Learn can be obtained via the following]
weblink:  http://caretolearn.lsc.gov.uk. Interviews were undertaken by telephone with recipients living across England.

The following table shows the number of contacts and number of interviews achieved by year of funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005/06</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
<th>2007/08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of contacts</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>1,216</td>
<td>2,918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved interviews</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of interviews</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note on figures: All percentages charted throughout this report are using data to one decimal place. However, data is presented as whole integers. Thus, rounding numbers which are added to or subtracted from each other may result in slight discrepancies. For example: 70% plus 27% equals 97% but the numbers used are actually, 69.8% (which rounds up to 70%) and 26.6% (which rounds up to 27%), which, when added together equal 96.4% (which rounds down to 96%). Furthermore, where there are two percentages presented side by side which look like they should be identical but the ‘bars’ are slightly different lengths the actual percentages differ by tenths of a percent. For example: 4% could be within the range 3.5% to 4.4%.

2.3 Sample profile

All interviewees were parents or carers of children and virtually all were female (only 2 of the 1,047 respondents were male).

Three-quarters of Care to Learn respondents (76%) are currently aged between 16 and 18 and most of the remainder (24%) are aged between 19 and 21. Only 5 respondents are aged over 21.

The majority of respondents received funding in 2007/08 (77%). Around a fifth (19%) received funding in the previous year (2006/07) and just 4% received funding in 2005/06.

9% of Care to Learn respondents represented an ethnic minority group. This compares with 23% across all funding schemes and 14% amongst 16-19 year olds in England1.

5% of respondents have a long standing illness, disability or infirmity. This compares with 10% across all funding schemes.

Most respondents (80%) are single, with a further 1% who are separated, divorced or widowed. The majority of the sample (81%) are, therefore, ‘lone parents’.

11% of all respondents received funding with London weighting.

1 Annual Population Survey
3 Engagement

Key findings

Survey statistics on engagement with Care to Learn suggest that the effect of Care to Learn on encouraging young people to participate in learning is very positive. Firstly, the funding appears to exert reasonable leverage in that three-quarters (76%) of learners might not have done the course if the childcare funding offered by Care to Learn hadn’t been available to them including 4 in 10 who would certainly not have done so.

Then, the survey shows that the funding broadly hit its target group – those young parents who had concerns about the cost of childcare. Thus, though those parents not unexpectedly, had concerns about other financial costs of going on a course, concern about the cost of childcare was most frequent, affecting 8 out of 10 of respondents.

Thirdly, information on Care to Learn funding seems to be reasonably widely available. 65% of learners were aware of the funding before enrolment and over 9 out of 10 said they found it easy to find out about the funding.

There may be a little more concern that, whilst specific information making learners aware of Care to Learn appears to have been reasonably accessible, fewer than half of learners (42%) report that they received more general information or advice (mostly from Connexions, schools, and colleges) about the different types of funding available to support learning. There may be some under-reporting affecting this figure, because of elapsed time or because IAG was received but in a ‘light touch’ way which didn’t strongly register with learners. However, the figure, reflecting back on learners’ experiences over the last 3 or 4 years is, perhaps, simply consistent with government recognition that guidance services for young people have not been delivered to the best possible standards in recent history and that reform was necessary. More reassuringly, whilst the proportion recalling that they received information and advice may be lower than desirable, virtually all those who did receive it found it to be helpful.

3.1 Impact of funding on course take-up

Three-quarters of learners (76%) who heard about Care to Learn funding before deciding on their course feel they probably or definitely would have not done the learning without it (72% of those receiving London weighting):
Younger learners who were aged between 16 and 18 and not in education or training prior to taking up the course (those classified as ‘NEET’) are more likely to feel that they \textit{definitely would not} have done the course without the funding being available (45%, compared with 38% of the total sample).

### 3.2 Reasons for taking up the course

Few learners give just one reason for taking up a course. When prompted with a list of possible reasons, the one most frequently selected is that of ‘to gain a qualification’ (95% of all learners). Only slightly fewer cite ‘to gain new skills or improve your skills’ (90%), ‘to help you get a new/better job or improve your career prospects’ (89%) and/or ‘for personal interest/enjoyment’ (87%). When respondents were asked to identify just one \textit{main} reason, then ‘to gain a qualification’ was the reason most frequently given:
Wanting to get a new/better job or to improve career prospects becomes a more frequent reason for participation as learners get older. Although gaining a qualification remains the main reason for learning take-up overall, it is less likely to be cited as such by slightly older learners, those aged 19 or over. As might be expected, these differences suggest that the focus of learner participation moves more clearly towards employment with increasing age and maturity.

### 3.3 Financial concerns before starting the course

Given that these learners were registered with Care to Learn, it is to be expected that childcare costs would be a particular concern for learners contemplating taking a course. However, general subsistence was a concern for two-thirds of learners (increasing to three-quarters of those with London weighting), whilst around half were concerned about affording course materials or transport to and from the course:
3.4 Information on funding

Most learners (63%) found out about Care to Learn funding before starting the course (65% of those with London weighting).

The proportion is significantly higher amongst learners who registered on a course in 2005/6 (85%). It is also significantly higher amongst learners who were not in work (67%, compared with 52% of those in work). This latter difference may suggest that providers or agencies which help unemployed or inactive people into employment or training are transmitting awareness of Care to Learn with reasonable effectiveness.

Just over a third of learners (36%, 1% did not know) found out about the funding after deciding to do the course.

The majority of learners (87%) found it easy to find out about the funding (83% of those with London weighting). Only very small proportions found it fairly (4%) or very difficult (2%). (6% replied that they found it neither easy nor difficult and 1% could not give an answer.)

3.5 Information, advice or guidance on funding

Only a minority of learners (42%) reported receiving information, advice or guidance (IAG) about the different types of funding available. The proportion is lower amongst those with London weighting (38%).

The most frequently reported source of IAG was Connexions. This is particularly likely to be reported as a source by 17 year olds (56%) and those not in work prior to the course (54%).
One in four learners (25%) reported a teacher or other staff at a local college as a source, rising to one in three of 19 year olds (36%): 

The information, advice and guidance received is highly rated, with 98% finding it useful (including 74% rating it as very useful). (95% of those with London weighting.)
Key findings

If the leverage of Care to Learn in getting learners into learning is reasonably positive, the support scheme has an even more positive effect on helping people to stay on their course. Seven out of ten of those who completed say they would not have completed without it; and most of the rest of those who completed say that they would have had to struggle without the support. Only 4% said that the funding had made no difference to them.

Care to Learn is estimated to generate a retention rate of 81% for its supported learners. (The retention rate is the proportion of learners who complete their studies whether they are awarded the qualification or not.) The national retention rate for all students in Further Education was stable, at 87%, in both 2005/06 and 2006/07 (Book of FE Facts, dcsf, 2008). This latter statistic seems a reasonable benchmark against which to consider the 81% retention rate for Care to Learn supported learners. Though the Care to Learn rate is clearly somewhat lower, it is achieved by learners who face particular challenges in completing their courses and for whom the rate might be significantly lower if Care to Learn funding was not available. The difference in rates is also a reminder of the extra support, both financial and non-financial, which these learners need to enable them to stay on a course.

Furthermore, of the one in five (19%) who left early, only one in ten of these people spontaneously gave a financial reason for leaving their course early. Even on prompting, this proportion rose only to one in three (35%). And amongst those who gave a financial reason, childcare costs accounted for only a quarter. Putting these proportions together suggests that, amongst all learners supported by Care to Learn, Care to Learn restricted childcare costs as a factor leading to young parents leaving early to, at most, 2% of all supported learners.

Consequently, when early leavers were asked what might have helped them to complete, more said more time or more guidance and tutor support than mentioned more money; and where money was mentioned, it was more likely to be money for course materials or transport than for childcare. This latter finding suggests that a minority of those receiving Care to Learn funding may also need further information and assistance in respect of transport and other costs of learning in order to minimise early leaving.

4.1 Value of funding to completing/staying on the course

Amongst both those who have completed their course and those who are still on it, the majority feel that Care to Learn funding has been essential or important to seeing the course through. Findings on this question are summarised in the figure below:
The proportions are slightly lower amongst receiving London weighting (95% of those that have completed and 92% of those still on the course, compared with the Care to Learn sample averages of 97% and 95% respectively).

4.2 Early leaving

The majority of those no longer on the course for which they received funding completed the course (81%). The remainder (19%) left their course early (17% of those receiving London weighting).

The main reasons for leaving the course before completion concern changes of circumstance and the difficulties some learners experienced in combining learning with family and work commitments.

Fewer than one in ten early leavers (9%) *spontaneously* stated that they could not afford to continue the course or that financial issues prevented them from continuing. However, when prompted, more than a third of early leavers (35%) reported that money issues influenced their decision to a significant extent (39% of those receiving London weighting):
Transport costs are most likely to be reported as the cause of financial difficulties (42% of those citing financial concerns). A further third (33%) reported general living costs, with fewer reporting childcare and course materials and books (25% and 17% respectively).

In terms of what might have helped them to complete their course, more time to study was the most frequently selected option (by 52% of early leavers), particularly by those previously in work or in learning (64% and 62% respectively). The next most frequently selected option was that of receiving more individual guidance or support from the tutor (44% of early leavers).

Amongst those receiving London weighting, more financial support to cover the costs of transport and more time to study are equally significant (39%), with other ways in which they could have been helped to complete the course cited by fewer than a third of these learners.

The figure below is based on all early leavers.
4.3 On-going or further financial assistance

Just under a quarter of those learners still on a course (23%) have received further financial assistance.

This is most likely to be support to meet transport costs (43% of those getting further financial assistance, but just 27% of those receiving London weighting), whilst more than a quarter of learners (27%; 20% of those receiving London weighting) needed it for course materials. Slightly fewer learners (22%; 27% of those receiving London weighting) received further financial assistance for childcare and 16% received it to cover study fees (20% of those receiving London weighting).
5 Achievement

Key findings

Again, it appears that, at least in the eyes of these young learners, there was little ‘deadweight’ in Care to Learn support. 98% said that it helped them to achieve a qualification (including 80% for whom it was ‘a great help’).

And achievement was significant. Overall, even including learners who left early, the proportion with Level 1 or no recognised qualifications fell from 59% to 44% and the proportion with ‘Level 2 and above qualifications’ rose from 38% to 53%.

Care to Learn is estimated by the survey to generate a success rate of 70%. (The success rate is the number achieving their learning aim as a percentage of those starting the course.) The overall national success rate for all students in Further Education was 76% in 2005/06 and 77% in 2006/07 (Book of FE Facts, dcsf, 2008). These latter figures seem reasonable benchmarks against which to compare the 70% success rate for learners supported by Care to Learn. Though the Care to Learn rate is somewhat lower than the national average rates, as was the retention rate discussed earlier, it is achieved by learners in circumstances which are typically more difficult and the difference might have been significantly greater if Care to Learn funding had not been available to them.

5.1 Achievement of qualifications

Nearly 9 in 10 (87%) of learners who completed their course were able to achieve a qualification (86% of those receiving London weighting). (Of those achieving a qualification: 26% achieved at Level 1, 39% at Level 2, 24% at Level 3, and 1% at Level 4. A further 10% received a qualification without an NVQ equivalence, that is, below Level 1.) The proportion of completers achieving a qualification is fairly constant over time (85% in 2007/08 and 2006/07, and 91% in 2005/06).

Learners are overwhelmingly positive about the contribution that the funding made to their achievement of these qualifications. 80% feel the funding helped ‘a great deal’ and a further 18% consider that it helped ‘a fair amount’. (The proportion is identical amongst those receiving London weighting.)

The proportion who feel that the funding helped a great deal/a fair amount is high even amongst those who would still have done the course without the funding (96%) or for whom (in their view) the funding made no difference to the likelihood of completion (83%).

The qualifications which were achieved are set out in more detail in the following figure:
A comparison of the NVQ equivalence of learners’ qualifications before and after the original course for which they received funding shows a significant increase in qualification levels. The proportion without a qualification with any NVQ equivalence fell from 34% to 18%. There was a small increase in the proportion with Level 2 equivalent qualifications and a significant increase in the proportion of learners with Level 3+ equivalent qualifications (from 3% to 15%).
Figure 9: NVQ equivalence before and after original course for which received funding (all respondents)  Base: 1,047
6 Learning Progression

Key findings
There is clear evidence that participation in Care to Learn supported learning also encourages progression to further learning beyond the original course:

In total, over half (51%) of the learners surveyed have either taken up further learning (22%) or are registered for a further course (29%). Of the remainder, half say that they definitely intend to progress on to a further course. This means that, overall, three-quarters (76%) of Care to Learn recipients report that they have learned or are now learning further, they are registered to learn, or they intend to register to learn. Of all Care to Learn recipients interviewed only a quarter have either not undertaken further learning or have no intention of doing so.

85% of those who have completed this further learning got a qualification.

79% of people who have taken up or registered for further learning have learned, are learning, or will learn towards a higher qualification than that at which their Care to Learn course was targeted.

There is clear evidence, too, that financial support is important to this progression. Of those who have undertaken further learning, 51% have received financial support, with a second round of Care to Learn funding being the key support for nearly two-thirds of these. Virtually all of these people report that funding was critical to this further participation (82%) or that they would have struggled without it (14%).

Where Care to Learn learners who left early have not gone into further learning, lack of access to financial support appears to have been a significant constraining factor.

The findings on learning progression are clearly positive. The learning which it originally supported has led or will lead to a very substantial level of participation in further learning (mostly at a higher level). And, again, financial support to learning, particularly renewed access to Care to Learn for these young parents, is shown to be important to this further participation.

6.1 Learning progression

22% of those no longer on the original course for which they received Care to Learn funding report that they have taken up other learning since leaving the original course. Those who have completed their original course are twice as likely as early leavers to have gone on to further learning (25%, compared with 12%).

A further 29% of learners no longer on their original course have registered for further learning but not yet begun it. Again, the proportion is twice as high amongst those who completed their original course, than amongst those who left early (33%, compared with 16%).

Thus, more than half the learners no longer on the original course (51%) have taken up or registered for further learning, increasing to 63% of those receiving London weighting.

As with achievement of qualifications, the propensity to take-up or register for further learning increases over time. This is shown in the chart below, which shows progression by year of funding:
6.2 Level of further learning

The great majority (79%) of the 51% of learners who have taken up or registered for further learning, undertake learning at a higher level than their Care to Learn-supported course (the proportion is identical amongst those receiving London weighting). The proportion is significantly higher amongst those who completed their original course than amongst those who left their course early (83%, compared with 39%).

Generally, those learners who left the original course early or who failed to achieve a qualification from their original course are less likely to have progressed, as shown in the following figure:
6.3 Funding of further learning

Around half (51%) of those that have taken up further learning have received further financial assistance. The proportion is lower amongst those receiving London weighting (42%). This is most likely to have involved further Care to Learn funding:

Table 1: Schemes from which learners have received funding for further learning (where received further financial assistance)  *Base = 76  *Base = 150 (where taken up further learning and still on it/completed it)

| Received funding for further learning* | 51% |
| Did not receive funding for further learning* | 49% |
| Care to Learn | 63% |
| Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) | 26% |
| Discretionary funds – for childcare | 12% |
| Discretionary funds – for transport, books and learning materials | 9% |
| Adult Learning Grant | 3% |
| Residential bursary or grant | 1% |
| Other grants for learners including student loans/bursaries | 12% |
| Don’t know | 7% |
One in six learners (16%) who have received funding for further learning has also received other financial assistance, in addition to that from one of the schemes in the previous table.

Where further financial assistance (from any source) has been received, it is most likely to help with buying course materials and/or paying for childcare (both 42%), transport (33%) or for general living expenses, such as accommodation (25%).

The majority (82%) of those who have completed a further course of learning and received funding to support that further study feel they could not have completed the course without that funding. The proportion is lower amongst those receiving London weighting (75%). A further 14% feel they could have completed the course but would have struggled financially.

Similarly, the majority of those who are still on the further course and receive funding (70%) feel they would not still be on the course without it (25% of those receiving London weighting). This proportion is higher amongst those who were qualified below Level 2 prior to their original course (88%, compared with 66% of those who were better qualified). Most of the remainder feel they would still be on the course without the funding but would struggle financially (26%).

### 6.4 Impact of Care to Learn on learning progression

Care to Learn funding has a strong influence on progression into further learning. Most learners (90%) feel that the funding has helped them move on to further learning. This includes 67% who feel the funding helped them a great deal (76% of those receiving London weighting):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent to which funding has helped learners to move on to further learning (all respondents)</th>
<th>Base = 1,047</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A great deal</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A fair amount</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very much</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of those not yet registered for a future new course, 50% definitely intend to go on to a further course, increasing to 62% of those receiving London weighting.

### 6.5 Achievement from further learning

Nearly all learners (98%) still in further learning report that they are aiming to achieve qualifications from this further learning.
The majority of learners (85%) who have completed a further course have achieved a qualification from it. As a result of qualifications achieved from their further course, the proportion of these learners (that is, those who have gone on to further learning and achieved a qualification from it) who are now without an NVQ equivalent qualification has fallen (from 48% to 15%) and three in ten are now qualified at level 3 or above:

![Figure 13: NVQ equivalence before and after further learning (where achieved a qualification on further course) Base = 33 Caution: small sample base](image)

All learners who achieved a qualification from their further learning and received funding whilst on the course believed that the funding helped them to gain the qualification.

### 6.6 Take-up of further learning by early leavers

The majority (75%) of those who dropped out early from their original course because of financial issues and who have not taken up or registered for another course, said that they would probably or definitely have considered doing more learning had more financial support been available. This suggests that lack of financial support (or knowledge of its being available) has had a significant negative impact on the extent to which these learners were able to progress into further learning. Please note that these findings should be treated with caution as they are based on a small base of 40 learners.
Figure 14: Impact of further financial support on take-up of further learning (where left original course early for financial reasons and have not taken up further learning)  Base = 40  Caution: small sample base

- Definitely would have considered further learning: 48%
- Probably would have considered further learning: 28%
- Might or might not: -15%
- Probably not considered it: -8%
- Definitely not considered it: -3%
Key findings

As Care to Learn is designed to encourage teenagers with children to participate in learning, and as the majority of those surveyed did not have a Level 2 qualification before they started their original course, we would not expect to see a significant proportion of Care to Learn recipients entering into full-time employment after finishing their course.

However, there are some positive findings relating to the effect of Care to Learn on employment progression.

Comparing the status of learners pre- and post-learning, we can see that the level of economic inactivity (i.e., not seeking work or looking after family) has fallen a little (from 37% to 33%).

The level of employment has risen somewhat (from 9% to 14% with all the increase coming from increased part-time employment). However, more people are unemployed (up from 10% prior to course, to 18% after the course), which cancels out the increase in employment.

These findings indicate that, where Care to Learn recipients are able to enter employment, they feel that the funding helped. However, this group of young people will need further support if more of them are to realise the benefits of their learning and the qualifications gained and progress into employment.

7.1 Extent to which funded learning helped career progression

Learners who completed a funded course are very positive about the contribution that the funding has made to progress in their career. Overall, 95% of these learners feel it has helped them at least ‘a fair amount’ (92% of those receiving London weighting), including 71% who feel it has helped ‘a great deal’.

The proportion who feel that the funding has helped ‘a great deal’ to progress their career, either now or in the longer term, is particularly high amongst those who received funding in 2005/6 (85%), reflecting the fact that career progress is likely to become more evident over time. Learners who achieved a qualification from their original course are more likely to feel that the funding has helped them progress in their career ‘a great deal’ than those who did not (73%, compared with 57%).

7.2 Employment status: before and after the original course

The following figure compares the working status of learners before and after the original course for which they received funding:
There has been a modest increase in the proportion of learners now in employment. This increase is virtually all accounted for by the proportion now in part-time work. However, this is offset by the increase in the proportion of recipients who are registered unemployed. Overall, fewer learners are now economically inactive.

Three-quarters of all those in full or part-time employment after the course (75%) are in a permanent job. This represents a slight but not significant increase in the proportion of learners with a permanent job prior to the original course (66%).

### 7.3 Financial benefits

More than a fifth of learners (22%) report that their annual personal income has increased since they started their original course (19% of those receiving London weighting).

Three-quarters of learners (75%) who were in employment both before and after the learning and who report an increase in their personal income were able and willing to provide an estimate of the size of the increase. The average (mean) increase in income amongst those in employment both pre- and post- learning is nearly £4,000 per annum.
7.4 Career progression

The majority of learners (85%) who are now in work following completion of a funded course feel their career benefited in at least one way. These benefits are summarised in the figure below:

Mean increase in personal annual income (based on 78 responses) = £3,939
The majority of learners selected every item in a list of possible benefits which resulted from undertaking the course for which they received funding. This shows that benefits of learning are wide-ranging and widely perceived. As can be seen in the figure below, 99% of learners recognised at least one benefit from their learning. Only one in a hundred said they gained none of the benefits.

Figure 18: Benefits experienced, prompted, multiple response (all respondents)  Base = 1,047

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting a better idea about what you want to do in your life more generally</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and developing skills that will be of benefit to current or future work</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving your teamwork, communication and social skills</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing interest in work</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying career aims</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming more enthusiastic about learning</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having more self confidence</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping better with daily life</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving your social life</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming more interested in involvement in community or voluntary activities</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefiting in some other way</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learners who failed to complete their original course or who did not achieve a qualification from it are less likely to report some of these benefits. However, those who did not achieve a qualification were as likely as those who did to feel that they have gained self-confidence and made improvements in their teamwork, communication and social skills.

Whatever impacts Care to Learn has on achievement of qualifications (significant), and on employment progression (more modest), it is quite clear that Care to Learn participation significantly improved learners’ morale and sense of direction, which may then have a positive impact upon their future employment prospects.
Key indicators based on Care to Learn survey responses are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely/probably would not have done course without Care to Learn</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned about childcare costs before course</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to access information on Care to Learn</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received IAG on funding available</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where received, IAG was helpful</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retention</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion who completed (Benchmark for all in FE in England = 87%)</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding important or essential to completion</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding important or very important to achievement of a qualification</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of starters who achieved a qualification (Benchmark for all in FE in England = 77%)</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Progression</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion who had undertaken further learning or have registered to do so</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of those who have undertaken further learning who have received financial assistance to support that learning</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of those in employment following Care to Learn funded learning (change from pre-learning in brackets)</td>
<td>14% (+5% points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of those in learning following Care to Learn funded learning (change from pre-learning in brackets)</td>
<td>34% (-11% points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of those unemployed or inactive following Care to Learn funded learning (change from pre-learning in brackets)</td>
<td>51% (+4% points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion reporting a positive personal or social ('soft') benefit from Care to Learn funded learning</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on these indicators, the research provides evidence of the positive impact of Care to Learn funding.

- Care to Learn funding has a significant positive effect on engagement, retention, attainment and learning progression.

- Information on Care to Learn funding was easily available to its recipients. (However, the survey was, of course, only of Care to Learn recipients. We did not survey young people who are eligible for Care to Learn but did not receive funding, but further research has been commissioned by the LSC to explore the needs of more disadvantaged learners and non-learners and will cover issues around access to IAG amongst those not in learning.)

- Care to Learn retention and success rates are around 91% of corresponding national FE rates in each case. However, given the relatively difficult circumstances of the client group, this may be regarded as a strength.

- In addition to learning benefits, virtually all Care to Learn-funded participants achieve and acknowledge social or personal benefits which may lead to future progression and development.

Issues to consider in the further development of Care to Learn

- There may have been some historic weakness in the scope of provision of information, advice, and guidance on learning opportunities and on the funding available to support take-up of those opportunities. For example, before their courses, fewer than half of these learners had received general information, advice and guidance about the range of funding which might be available to them. Clearly there is scope for improvement in this area. Subsequently, though Care to Learn clearly has positive impacts on retention, for a minority, there remains a need for continuing support and guidance if early leaving is to be reduced to a minimum. This may need to link Care to Learn to other forms of financial support including discretionary funding which is able to respond to individual needs and circumstances.

- Learning supported by Care to Learn is not very effective (at least in the short term) in greatly increasing the number of learners who subsequently got a job. Where increases did occur, they were exclusively in part-time work. However, this may reflect two extraneous factors. Firstly, the practical difficulties of simultaneously managing full-time work and caring for a child. Secondly, the financial considerations inherent in the balance of available wages, childcare costs, and benefits once learning ceases. It may not reflect anything inherent in the Care to Learn-supported learning itself. Rather, these findings reinforce the importance of guidance, towards the end of courses, on employment options and on continuing support with childcare.
10 Appendix

10.1 Sample error

As with all quantitative research, the sample size is subject to a level of statistical reliability at various levels.

To give an indication, a finding of 50% on a base size of 1,047 interviews has a confidence interval of +/-3.0% at the 95% level. That is to say that if the survey returns a finding of 50% for a particular question there is a 95% probability that the “true” figure (amongst all those learners in the population, not just those interviewed) will lie within +/-3.0% (i.e. between 47% and 53%) of that finding.

When looking at sub-groups within a sample this confidence interval increases. So for example, when looking at a sub group like those that registered for a course in 2006/07 (with a base size of 202 interviews in this study) statistical confidence is reduced further still (to around +/-6.9% in this case, ignoring the small population correction).

To give an indication of the effect of sample size on statistical reliability:

- A sample size of 100 would have a confidence interval of +/-9.8%
- A sample size of 500 would have a confidence interval of +/-4.4%
- A sample size of 1,000 would have a confidence interval of +/-3.1%

Note that where a small population (relative to sample size) is sampled, as in the case of the present study (where around a quarter of all eligible learners were interviewed) statistical reliability is increased. Given this, and the relatively limited availability of sample, a larger sample size for the population surveyed for this project would be impractical and unnecessary but should be considered if the scope of the survey were to be increased.