Funding from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is helping young parents to turn their lives around, research reveals today. The Care to Learn scheme, which provides support and childcare costs so that young mums and dads can continue to study has, according to independent research, made a significant difference to thousands of people’s lives.

Almost 90 per cent of parents on Care to Learn would not have returned to the classroom without it*. The independent report published by the Institute for Employment Studies shows that Care to Learn is persuading large numbers of young parents to remain in, or return to learning, as well as to achieve qualifications.

*88 per cent of the sample said that they would not have gone on a course without the support of Care to Learn funding. The researchers interviewed a third of the total number of parents who received funding in the academic year 2004-05, (1,000 of the 3,666).

- At the start of 2004, 39 per cent of the sample had no qualifications. One year later this had fallen to 20 per cent.

- 70 per cent of the young parents in the survey continued with their learning at the start of the following year; while 92 per cent were studying towards accredited qualifications including 27 per cent at Level 2 (equivalent to five good GCSEs) and 14 per cent at Level 3 (equivalent to A level).

- Respondents were asked what they saw themselves doing in three years’ time. Nearly two-fifths said that they would be working, a quarter at university and one-tenth studying but not at university. Four per cent said they did not know and only one per cent thought that they would be bringing up their children full time.
Participation, supported by Care to Learn, continues to grow, and the LSC expects around 7,000 young parent learners to benefit in the current academic year.

Trevor Fellowes, the LSC’s Director of Learner Support said:
“It is clear from this report that an overwhelming number of young parents would not have gone on a course without the support offered by Care to Learn. By helping young parents return to learning and gain the qualifications they need, we help not only them and their children but also our society as a whole.”

Phil Hope MP, Skills Minister said:
“It is vital that young parents continue in education or training and develop the skills and qualifications they will need for success in life. The Care to Learn scheme provides the support that they need to do that. A wide range of courses are available, at all levels. I urge all young parents who have given up on learning to think again, and ask your local Connexions service for advice.”

Author of the report, Sally Dench, said:
“Care to Learn has enabled many young parents to get good qualifications, while increasing their confidence and improving their ability to compete in the labour market.”

Kate Copley, Policy Director Targeted Programmes for the LSC, said:
“Help with childcare costs is a key factor in helping young parents into learning and this detailed independent report highlights the considerable impact that Care to Learn is already having.”

Care to Learn funds the costs of childcare and associated transport costs for young parent learners and is an important part of the Government’s Teenage Pregnancy strategy. Young parents can choose their preferred method of childcare (for example, nursery, childminder or workplace crèche) while they study. The childcare must be OfSTED registered. Funds are paid direct to the provider of that childcare.
Learning and Skills Council:
The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England’s young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Young Parents thinking about returning to learning can visit the Care to Learn website at: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/caretolearn/ or they can phone a special helpline: 0845 600 2809.

Professional Support Workers should phone: 0161 234 7269

LSC Website: www.lsc.gov.uk

Hard copies of the report can be obtained from: www.employment-studies.co.uk/pubs

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Notes to Editors

- Care to Learn provides support to young parents who are aged 20 or younger when their learning starts. Support is available until the young parent finishes their studies, provided they remain in continuous learning.
- “Impact of Care to Learn: Tracking the Destinations of Young Parents Funded in 2004/05” is available on the LSC website at: www.lsc.gov.uk/publications
- Currently parents can claim a maximum of £155 per child per week (and £170 per child if in London). Childcare costs are paid directly to the childcare providers (day nursery, child minder, college nursery or crèche, for example) and the travel costs are paid to the learning provider to distribute to the young parent as appropriate.
- In 1999, the Government launched the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy which set out to halve the rate of conceptions amongst under 18s; set a firmly established downward trend in the under 16s conception rates by 2010; and, to minimise social exclusion experienced by teenage parents.
- Care to Learn, combined with family and childcare tax credits for young parents in employment – will contribute towards the PSA target doubling the numbers of young people in education, training and employment from the present figures of 30 per cent to 60 per cent by 2010.
- Between August 2003 and the end of July 2004, Care to Learn supported 2,393 young parents with their childcare and travel costs against a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target of 2,000. The LSC exceeded the 3,500 target from August 2004 to July 2005, by helping over 3,600 young parents into learning.
- The interview sample was selected randomly from the whole sample. Respondents from a range of backgrounds and of various ages were interviewed.
- The Institute for Employment Studies is an independent, apolitical, international centre of research and consultancy in human resource issues. It works closely with employers in the manufacturing, service and public sectors, government departments, agencies, and professional and employee bodies. www.employment-studies.co.uk
- Sally Dench BA, PhD is a Senior Research Fellow at IES with more than 25 years experience of employment research.
- Qualifications framework - Level 2 qualifications: GCSEs at A* to C or equivalent. Level 3 qualifications: A levels or equivalent.