



Education
Funding
Agency

Care to Learn Guide for 2013/14

May 2013

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Introduction

1. This guide provides information to all those involved in the delivery of the Care to Learn scheme in the 2013/14 academic year. It provides general information about the eligibility criteria for the scheme which has been set by the Education Funding Agency (EFA).
2. This guide does not attempt to offer definitive advice for every situation; stakeholders who require further or more detailed help and advice should contact the Learner Support Service (LSS) who administer the scheme on behalf of the EFA. The 'Further Information' section below provides useful telephone numbers, e-mail and website addresses.

Care to Learn in 2013/14

3. Care to Learn is intended to help enable young parents under the age of 20 to continue in, and return to learning after the birth of a child by assisting with the costs of childcare and associated travel (up to £160 per child per week or up to £175 per child per week in London).
4. Young parents must complete and submit a new application for each year that they want to claim Care to Learn funding even if their course runs for more than one year.
5. Stakeholders are encouraged to communicate the availability of financial support for childcare via Care to Learn to young people to help them make more informed decisions about their options.

Important: Care to Learn payments can only be backdated to the start of the young parent's course or learning programme if their application is received **within 28 days of the course start date**. For applications received outside of this timeframe, payments will begin from the Monday of the week the application was received.

Eligibility for Care to Learn

6. In order for a young parent to receive support from Care to Learn, they, their learning provider and childcare provider must all meet the eligibility criteria for the scheme set out below.

Age

7. The young parent must be **aged under 20 years old on the date they start their course or learning programme**. Young parents who become 20 during their course will continue to be funded to the end of that specific course or learning programme, i.e. to the end of the same course at the same level.

Main carer for the children

8. The young parent must be the **main carer for the child(ren) for whom they are claiming Care to Learn**. If a young parent loses custody of their child(ren), even temporarily, the Learner Support Service must be told immediately. Care to Learn may be claimed by the mother or the father of the child as long as:

- The other parent is unable to provide childcare, e.g.: they are also in learning or are absent; and
- The other parent is not claiming Child Tax Credits.

Living and studying in England

9. Only young parents who are **both living and studying in England** are eligible for Care to Learn.

10. A London weighting applies to the scheme. The London-weighted maximum is £175 per child per week (compared with a maximum of £160 outside London). Eligibility for London weighting is determined by the young parent's home address and applies to the following Boroughs:

- Barking & Dagenham, Barnet, Bexley, Brent, Bromley, Camden, Croydon, Ealing, Enfield, Greenwich, Hackney & City of London, Hammersmith & Fulham, Haringey, Harrow, Havering, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston-upon-Thames, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Newham, Redbridge, Richmond-upon-Thames, Southwark, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Wandsworth and Westminster.

Residency

11. To be eligible for Care to Learn, a young parent must meet the following **residency criteria**:

- Be a British citizen; or
- A national of a country within the European Economic Area (EEA) or the child of a Swiss national or Turkish migrant worker.

12. Where a young parent indicates that they are a migrant from a country that is outside the EEA, they will be eligible for Care to Learn **ONLY** if one of the following immigration conditions applies:

- Asylum seekers aged under 18
- Asylum seekers aged 18 or over **ONLY** if they are a care leaver aged 18 or 19; if they are they must send an original letter from their local authority that shows their address and confirms they are a care leaver with their application
- Refugee status
- Humanitarian Protection
- Discretionary Leave
- Indefinite leave to remain
- Indefinite leave to enter
- Limited leave to remain

- Limited leave to enter
- Leave outside the rules

13. Young parents are not required to submit evidence of their residency status with their application. However, where they confirm they are a migrant from outside the EEA, the EFA may request evidence and/or may carry out checks with the UK Border Agency (UKBA) to confirm their immigration status. Supporting evidence may be requested from the young parent if any issues are identified. Stakeholders should be aware that the evidence requested may include:

- ID card for foreign nationals (issued to those granted leave to remain in the UK) a) as a student; b) on the basis of marriage/civil partnership/unmarried couple and c) as dependents of those in category b).
- Appropriate vignette or sticker in their passport (issued to foreign nationals granted leave to remain in any other category).
- Application registration card (ARC) and standard acknowledgement letter (SAL) issued to people who claim asylum or make a claim under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Learning provider and the course/learning programme

14. As long as young parents meet the Care to Learn eligibility criteria, there are no requirements for course length, duration or level. Examples of courses **eligible** for Care to Learn include:

- School and college courses including Foundation Learning, 14–19 Diplomas, GCSEs, AS-levels and A2-levels.
- Non-accredited day sessions and short courses within the community such as First Aid, Healthy Eating, Parenting etc.
- The Access to Apprenticeship pathway on which young people begin their training in advance of securing a paid Apprenticeship with an employer.
- Further education (FE) courses in a higher education (HE) institution including Access courses and diplomas.
- Foundation HE courses where they are followed at an FE institution, e.g.: BTEC Diploma.

15. **However, some exclusions on the types of learning do apply.** Courses that are **not eligible** for Care to Learn include:

- Privately funded learning, for example, at an independent school or other institution where students are required to pay tuition fees.
- Voluntary work that is not a required part of an agreed course or learning programme.
- Apprenticeships, because apprentices are paid by their employer.
- HE courses in an HE institution or FE institution, including courses leading to a first degree, HND, HNC, Diploma in HE, Foundation Degree or Initial Teacher Training.

Study time and work experience placements

16. Young parents can claim Care to Learn for independent study time which is required as part of their course, e.g. to complete coursework, undertake revision or homework. The amount of independent study time which is required must be agreed between the young parent and their learning provider.

17. Care to Learn will support time needed to undertake work experience placements, provided that they have been clearly identified as an integral part of the course.

18. The costs associated with independent study time and work experience placements will form part of the Care to Learn weekly maximum amount (£160 per child per week and £175 per child per week in London).

Childcare provision

19. Childcare provision must be **registered with Ofsted** for it to be eligible for Care to Learn funding. It must be registered in one of the following ways:

- On the Ofsted Early Years Register.
- On the compulsory and/or voluntary part of the Ofsted General Childcare Register.
- Offered by Ofsted registered schools, i.e.: breakfast and after school clubs.

20. Support for specialist provision on the Care Quality Commission's register may also be granted on a case-by-case basis if general childcare provision is not suitable for the child.

21. The childcare provider must provide evidence of being registered with Ofsted, or, in the case of a school providing childcare, their unique reference number (URN).

22. Where a childcare provider is related to the child, the childcare provider must, **in addition to being registered with Ofsted**:

- live apart from the child; **and**
- be providing registered childcare services for other children to whom they are not related.

The Care to Learn application process in 2013/14

23. **Young parents must choose a learning provider and childcare provider before applying for Care to Learn.** The student, learning provider and childcare provider details are all collected on one application form. All three parts of the form must be completed before the form is returned to the Learner Support Service for assessment.

24. Once all three parts of the application form have been fully completed and all the required evidence has been obtained and is included.

25. The young parent should send the completed application form to the Learner Support Service in the pre-paid envelope provided. Should the pre-paid envelope be lost, the address for applications is below:

Freepost RSLX-CAZR-RHLY

Learner Support Service
Birmingham B24 9FD

26. We recommend that the young parent supplies details of their support worker (if they have one) on the application form. If necessary, the support worker can then be contacted by the Learner Support Service if required to help deal with any queries.
27. Support workers, childcare providers and learning providers are encouraged to contact the provider helpline on **0300 303 8610** at any point during the completion of the application form if they are unsure about what information or evidence is required.
28. Stakeholders are also asked to encourage young parents to contact the student helpline on **0800 121 8989** if they need help in completing the application form. Calls to the student helpline are free from a landline; calls from a mobile will be charged but young parents can request a call back to minimise the cost.
29. Young parents will normally receive a reply within three weeks of submitting their Care to Learn application form. If they do not hear from the Learner Support Service within this timeframe they should contact the helpline on **0300 303 8610**.

Application packs can be obtained by young parents by calling the Learner Support helpline on **0800 121 8989**.

Learning providers and other stakeholders can order application packs to distribute to young parents by calling **0845 602 2260** quoting reference **EFA-C2L-2013/14**.

Assessment of the application form

30. The Learner Support Service will carry out an assessment of the young parent's application to determine their eligibility for Care to Learn. These checks will ensure the childcare provider, learning provider and course are eligible for the scheme, and that the childcare hours claimed are reasonable in comparison with the learning hours entered.
31. **Care to Learn payments cannot be made until all information from the young parent, learning provider and childcare provider has been received and approved.** Where an incomplete application form is submitted, the Learner Support Service will write to the relevant party to request the missing information. A copy of any correspondence will also be sent to the young parent's support worker, if one is listed on the application form.
32. The following information must be supplied before any Care to Learn payments can be made:

From the childcare provider:

- business name, address and contact details.
- childcare dates and fees.
- a copy of their Ofsted registration certificate - if this has not been submitted earlier in 2013/14 or in 2012/13.
- bank or building society account evidence - if this has not been submitted earlier in 2013/14 or in 2012/13.

From the learning provider:

- provider name, address and contact details.
- course name, level and length. This must be the full course length, for e.g.:
 - if the student is studying a two year NVQ course starting on 5th September 2013 and ending on 19th July 2015 these dates should be entered on the application form.
 - if the student started a two year NVQ course (at the same level) on 6th September 2012 which ends on 20th July 2014 these dates should be entered.
 - if the student studied a course at Level 1 last year and is progressing to Level 2 this year, even if this is in the same subject, this is considered to be a **new** course and the dates for the new course **only** should be entered.
- number of hours of learning each week.
- details of any travel costs the young parent wishes to claim.
- bank or building society account evidence (to pay travel costs and the administration payment) - if not submitted earlier in 2013/14 or in 2012/13.
- confirmation that the existence of the child(ren) to be cared for has been verified.

Other sources of childcare support and Care to Learn

33. From September 2013, local authorities will have a duty to secure 15 hours of early education for 130,000 two year olds from lower income families. Two year olds will be eligible if their family meets the criteria for free school meals or if they are defined as 'looked after'. Parents of all three and four year olds are entitled to 15 hours of funded early education a week for 38 weeks of the year for their child(ren). Young parents may apply for Care to Learn support to cover any extra hours (over and above their free entitlement) to complete their course **but it is expected that young parents should access this entitlement before applying for funding from Care to Learn. As such this point is explicitly referenced in the declaration on the application form.** Local Authorities will be able to provide further information about free early education in their area.

34. Childcare Tax Credits are also available for parents (lone or couples) who meet the eligibility criteria to provide help with childcare costs. Any childcare hours being requested for Care to Learn payments must not already be being funded from Child Tax Credits. **Again, this point is explicitly referenced in the declaration on the application form.**

Confirmation of eligibility

35. Once the young parent's application has been processed and approved, the Learner Support Service will send a letter confirming Care to Learn eligibility to the young parent and the childcare provider. The letter includes a payment plan which confirms the amount that will be paid each week for childcare and the dates between which childcare costs will be paid. Where the young parent intends to use more than one childcare provider, a payment plan will be sent to each childcare provider. The combined amounts on each plan will not exceed the Care to Learn weekly maximum amount (up to £160 per child per week or up to £175 per child per week in London).

36. The letter confirms that eligibility for Care to Learn covers the whole or remainder of the academic year, enabling the young parent to complete one course and embark on

a new one within the same academic year without being required to submit a new application (as long as the eligibility criteria continue to be met). However, any changes must be notified to the Learner Support Service as they may impact on the dates and costs set out in the payment plan.

37. The letter will also confirm the amount to be paid for additional travel costs, if applicable (see paras 50 to 52 for more detail).

38. If the young parent is not eligible for Care to Learn, the Learner Support Service will send a rejection letter to explain this. A copy will also be sent to their support worker if one is listed on the application form.

Late applications and backdated claims

39. If the Learner Support Service receives the application within 28 days of the start of the course or learning programme, payments will be backdated to the start of the course or learning programme. **If the application is received after the 28 day period, payments will begin only from the Monday of the week the application was received by the Learner Support Service.**

The administration of Care to Learn in 2013/14

Payments

40. If the young parent is assessed as eligible for Care to Learn, payments for childcare will be made directly to the childcare provider by the Learner Support Service. Payments for the young parent's travel costs will be made directly to the learning provider by the Learner Support Service.

41. All payments will be made securely by the Banks Automated Clearing System (BACS).

Childcare payments

42. Care to Learn will pay towards the cost of childcare up to a maximum of £160 per child per week (up to a maximum of £175 per child per week if the young parent's home address attracts London weighting, detailed in para 9). The funds will be paid directly to the childcare provider each month in advance. **Childcare providers should note that no Care to Learn payments can be made until all the information required from the young parent, learning provider and childcare provider has been received by the Learner Support Service.**

43. Care to Learn will support childcare hours in reasonable excess of learning hours to allow time for travel between the learning provider, childcare provider and any independent study time undertaken, within the maximum weekly amount.

44. Retainers can be paid to childcare providers for the time between the end of one learning period and the beginning of another (for e.g. during half term break). A summer retainer, to keep the childcare place open over the summer holiday period, **must** be applied for separately before the end of the summer holiday period. **Summer retainer forms for 2013 which are received by the Learner Support Service after 2 September 2013 will not be paid** (see paras 59 to 61 for more detail).

45. Deposits of up to £250 per child can be paid to the childcare provider if required. The amount of deposit will be deducted from the first month's childcare payment. In the unlikely event that the first month's childcare payment is insufficient to support the deduction of the full deposit, the balance will be deducted from the second month's childcare payment. The childcare provider cannot have the deposit offset against the final weeks of the payment plan.

46. Registration fees charged by the childminder, up to a maximum of £80 per child, will be funded through the scheme. Such fees are not deducted from future childcare payments.

Childminder network/broker payments

47. A one-off £100 childminder network/broker payment will be made for each application which is supported by a network/broker that results in a young parent starting their chosen course or learning programme. This is dependent on that network/broker providing at least three of the five services listed below:

- Brokerage, in terms of providing a list of available childminders. This would also involve using knowledge of the childminder and their arrangements to explain alternative provision to the young person.
- Matching, to help the young parent identify a suitable childminder who meets their needs and is convenient for travel, etc. This may involve visits and discussions.
- Agreeing terms and conditions for the childminding that meet the young parent's needs. These would go beyond price alone and include issues such as timing, drop off and collection, diet, routine and behavioural issues. It may also extend to agreeing flexibilities for study, vacations, deposits, retainers, etc. This will ideally be set out in a formal written agreement.
- Using briefings, arranging training and working with childcare providers to meet the needs of young parents.
- Retaining an ongoing interest in the young parent for the duration of the course and assisting where possible in any change of arrangements.

48. In addition, the network/broker must be recognised by their local authority, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, or Family Information Service, or the National Childminding Association.

49. The childcare provider is asked on the application form to make a formal declaration about whether they have been supported by a childminding network/broker service.

Travel payments

50. Young parents may claim for travel costs that are necessary to take their child(ren) between childcare and home where those costs are in addition to their normal travel costs from home to college. Travel costs will not be paid where the childcare takes place on the same site as the learning. The total of the childcare and travel costs must not exceed the weekly maximum amount of £160 per child per week (or up to £175 per child per week in London).

51. Learning providers are asked to confirm that any travel costs requested by the young parent are reasonable, based on their local knowledge. If the amount of travel

being claimed seems excessive, the Learner Support Service will request additional information from the learning provider.

52. Travel payments are made to the learning provider. The learning provider should reimburse the travel payment to the young parent, or use it to arrange transport for the young parent, as appropriate.

Learning provider administration payments

53. A one-off payment of £80 will be made to learning providers for each new young parent accessing Care to Learn to support the provider's administrative costs for the attendance monitoring requirements of the scheme (see paras 55-57). Only one payment per young parent per academic year will be issued. Payment will be made following confirmation from the learning provider that the young parent is in attendance.

Attendance monitoring

54. Payments for childcare will only be made while the young parent is still attending their course and the child is still in childcare. **Both the learning provider and childcare provider are required to complete and return monthly attendance monitoring forms which will be sent to them by the Learner Support Service.** Learning providers will complete the Learner Attendance Monitoring form (LAM) and childcare providers the Childcare Attendance Monitoring form (CAM).

55. Young parents and their child(ren) are expected to attend their respective provision for all the hours stated in the application form, but there may be occasions where this is not possible, for e.g. because of illness or family emergency. For that reason, there is no required level of attendance set for Care to Learn. Learning providers should use their discretion to assess whether a young parent is still attending their programme of learning, considering the number of and reasons for absences to decide whether or not reasonable attendance has been met **Failure by learning providers or childcare providers to complete and submit attendance monitoring returns will result in childcare and travel payments being withheld.**

56. Learning providers and childcare providers should notify the Learner Support Service immediately if the young parent has stopped attending their course or has removed their child from childcare.

Changes of Circumstance

57. The Learner Support Service must be notified immediately if any of the following circumstances change:

- childcare arrangements – for e.g. hours of childcare provided, fee rates, new or additional childcare provider(s), additional child.
- learning arrangements – for e.g.: hours of learning, course, new or additional learning provider(s).
- travel costs between childcare and home – increase, decrease or the young parent wishes to claim these for the first time.
- childcare provider/learning provider bank details.

- young parent's personal details.

58. Change of Circumstance forms are available to young parents, learning providers and childcare providers on request from the Learner Support Service.

Summer Retainers

59. Where study lasts for more than one academic year, or where the young parents is progressing onto a further course or to University, a summer retainer can be paid to enable the childcare place to be kept open over the summer holiday period.

60. To be eligible for a summer retainer in 2013 the young parent must be:

- on a course or learning programme that has lasted for six weeks or more in the 2012/13 academic year
- on a course that finishes no earlier than 25 May 2013.
- continuing with the same childcare provider they used in the 2012/13 academic year
- have been using the childcare provider for a minimum of six weeks.

61. The Summer Retainer form is included in the application pack that is sent to all returning students. The form must be completed and returned to the Learner Support Service before the end of the summer holiday period (original forms only, photocopies are not acceptable). **Summer retainer forms for 2013 which are received by the Learner Support Service after 2 September 2013 will not be paid.**

Audit requirements and overpayments

62. Learning providers and childcare providers are expected to retain accurate, robust and up-to-date records on attendance and funds received in order to ensure the effective reconciliation of payments.

Care to Learn overpayments

63. Recovery of Care to Learn overpayments made as a result of error or fraud will take place as follows:

- Care to Learn payments that have been made as a result of fraudulent activity will be recovered. This includes all childcare payments, including deposits, registration fees, retainers (including summer retainers), travel payments, learning provider administration payments and broker fees.
- Where overpayments have been made as a result of error by the young parent, learning provider or childcare provider, recovery action may be taken. Each case will be considered on an individual basis.

Complaints and appeals

64. All complaints and appeals must be made in writing to the Learner Support Service whose address is set out in paragraph 26.

65. If the complaint/appeal concerns operational processes or a complaint about customer service, it will be dealt with by the Learner Support Service in the first instance. If the complaint/appeal is about Care to Learn policy, the Learner Support Service will refer it to the EFA's Young People's Directorate for a response.

66. In the event that the complainant is dissatisfied with the way in which their appeal has been dealt with, they may write directly to the EFA's Young People's Directorate:

Student Support, EFA
2 St Paul's Place
125 Norfolk Street
Sheffield S1 2FJ

67. In the event that they are still dissatisfied with the way in which their appeal has been dealt with, the complainant may refer to the Department for Education's Complaints Procedure. For more information please see the website at <http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/complaintsprocedure/>

Sources of further information

68. For learning providers, childcare providers and providers of information, advice and guidance etc.:

- **Phone:** Learner Support Service provider helpline: **0300 303 8610**
- **E-mail:** C2L@efalearnersupport.co.uk
- **Website:**
<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/executiveagencies/efa/studentsupport/a00203090/care-to-learn>

69. For young parents:

- **Phone:** Learner Support Service learner helpline: **0800 121 8989** (calls are free from a landline, charges from mobiles will vary depending on individual tariffs but young parents can request a call back to minimise the cost)
- **Website:** www.gov.uk/care-to-learn/overview



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