



Education
Funding
Agency

Care to learn

Guide for the 2014 to 2015 academic year

May 2014

Contents

Introduction	3
A summary of Care to Learn in the 2014 to 2015 academic year	4
Care to Learn eligibility	5
Age	5
Main carer for the child(ren)	5
Living and studying in England	5
Residency	6
Learning provider and the study programme	7
Study time and work experience placements	7
Childcare provision	8
The Care to Learn application form and process	9
Assessment of the application form	10
Other sources of childcare support and Care to Learn	11
Confirmation of eligibility	11
Late applications and backdated claims	12
The administration of Care to Learn	13
Payments	13
Childcare payments	13
Childminder network/broker payments	14
Travel payments	14
Learning provider administration payments	15
Attendance monitoring	15
Change of Circumstances	16
Summer Retainers	17
Audit requirements and overpayments	18
Care to Learn overpayments	18
Complaints and appeals	19
Sources of further information	20

Introduction

1. This guide provides information to all those involved in the delivery of the Care to Learn scheme in the 2014 to 2015 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 [Sources of Further Information](#) section below provides useful telephone numbers; e-mail and website addresses.

A summary of Care to Learn in the 2014 to 2015 academic year

3. Care to Learn is intended to help enable young parents under the age of 20 to continue in, and return to education after the birth of a child by providing funding for childcare whilst the young parent is engaged in a study programme and is therefore not able to provide care for their child. Care to Learn can also assist with the cost of associated travel costs. The scheme can provide up to a maximum total amount of support of £160 per child per week or up to a maximum of £175 per child per week in London.
4. Care to Learn will only fund childcare provision that is registered with Ofsted.
5. Young parents, their learning provider and their childcare provider must all meet the eligibility criteria set out at paragraphs 9 to 26 to receive Care to Learn.
6. Young parents must complete and submit a new application form for each academic year they want to claim Care to Learn funding, even if their study programme runs for more than one year.
7. Young parents are encouraged to apply for Care to Learn before the start of their study programme or as soon as possible after they start. It is important that young parents are aware that payments can only be backdated to the start of their study programme if their application is received within 28 days of the start date. Payments for any applications received outside of this timeframe will begin from the Monday of the week in which the application was received.
8. Stakeholders are encouraged to tell young parents about the availability of financial support for childcare through Care to Learn to help them make more informed decisions about their options.

Care to Learn eligibility

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

Age

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

Main carer for the child(ren)

11. The young parent must be the main carer and in receipt of Child Benefit 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 education or are absent; and
- the other parent is not claiming childcare paid through Tax Credits

Living and studying in England

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

13. 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

14. 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

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

- they are an Asylum seeker aged under 18
- they are an Asylum seeker 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
- they have Refugee status
- they have Humanitarian Protection
- they have Discretionary Leave
- they have Indefinite leave to remain
- they have Indefinite leave to enter
- they have Limited leave to remain
- they have Limited leave to enter
- they have Leave outside the rules

16. 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 Home Office 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 sticker or stamp in their passport (issued to foreign nationals granted leave to remain in any other category)
- application registration card (ARC) issued to people who claim asylum or make a claim under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights

Learning provider and the study programme

17. As long as young parents meet the Care to Learn eligibility criteria, there are no specific requirements for the length, duration or level of the study programme. The following therefore gives examples of study programmes which are eligible for Care to Learn and is not an exhaustive list:

- school and college study programmes including Foundation Learning, 14–19 Diplomas, GCSEs, AS-levels and A2-levels
- non-accredited day sessions and short programmes within the community such as First Aid, Healthy Eating, Parenting etc.
- Traineeships for young people not currently in a job/who have little work experience but whom providers and employers believe have a reasonable chance of being ready for employment or an Apprenticeship within six months.
- further education (FE) study programmes 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

18. However, it is important to note that the following are not eligible for Care to Learn:

- privately funded education, 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 study 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

19. In any instances where a young parent is still looking after their child, for example, whilst they are undertaking a study programme with a childcare provider, this is outside the scope of Care to Learn funding.

Study time and work experience placements

20. Young parents can claim Care to Learn for independent study time which is required as part of their study programme, 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.

21. Care to Learn will support time needed to undertake work experience placements, but only where these have been clearly identified as an integral part of the study programme

22. 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

23. 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 Early Years Register with either Ofsted or a childminder agency
- on the compulsory and/or voluntary part of the General Childcare Register with either Ofsted or a childminder agency
- offered by Ofsted registered schools, i.e.: breakfast and after school clubs

24. 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.

25. 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). From 1 September 2014 childminder agencies can register with Ofsted on behalf of the childminders they represent and will be required to provide evidence of their Ofsted registration.

26. 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 form and process

27. In the 2014 to 2015 academic year, Care to Learn application forms and guidance notes to help students fill in the forms are available to download from: [Care to Learn application form](#).

28. In order to submit an application, the young parent should print off the application form and complete Young Parent Details Part A ensuring that they have read the Privacy Notice and Student Declaration. The young parent should pass to their learning provider to complete Part B and to their childcare provider to complete Part C.

29. It would be appreciated if providers could provide assistance to young parents who are unable to print out a copy of the application form themselves.

30. Once the application form has been fully completed, signed and dated (where applicable) and all the required evidence has been obtained and is included, the young parent should send the completed application form (in an A4 envelope) to the Learner Support Service. The address for applications is:

Freepost RSLX-CAZR-RHLY

Learner Support Service

Birmingham B24 9FD

31. It is important all parties: young parent, learning provider and childcare provider are fully aware of the content of the relevant Declarations before submitting the form. Care to Learn applications must not be submitted without the young parent's knowledge. The young parent's section of the application form may be completed on their behalf by, for example, a support worker, but in all cases the young parent must be aware that a Care to Learn application for their childcare costs has been submitted.

32. We recommend that the young parent supplies details of their support worker (if they have one) on the application form. The support worker can then be contacted by the Learner Support Service, if necessary, to help deal with any queries.

33. 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.

34. 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.

35. 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 **0800 121 8989**.

Assessment of the application form

36. 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 study programme are eligible for the scheme, and that the childcare hours claimed are reasonable in comparison with the hours entered for the study programme.

37. 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.

38. The following information must be supplied before any Care to Learn payments can be made:

From the childcare provider or childminder agency:

- 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 the 2014 to 2015 academic year or in the 2013 to 2014 academic year
- bank or building society account evidence - if this has not been submitted earlier in the 2014 to 2015 academic year or in the 2013 to 2014 academic year

From the learning provider:

- provider name, address and contact details
- study programme name, level and length. This must be the full study programme length, for e.g.:
- if the student is studying a two year NVQ programme starting on 1 September 2014 and ending on 17 July 2016 these dates should be entered on the application form
- if the student started a two year NVQ programme (at the same level) on 2 September 2013 which ends on 17 July 2015 these dates should be entered
- if the student studied 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 study programme and the dates for the new study programme only should be entered
- number of hours in the study programme 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 the 2014 to 2015 academic year or in the 2013 to 2014 academic year
- confirmation that the existence of the child(ren) to be cared for has been verified

Other sources of childcare support and Care to Learn

39. Local authorities have a duty to secure 570 hours a year of government funded early education over no fewer than 38 weeks of the year for all three and four-year-olds and eligible two-year-olds. Two-year-olds are eligible if their family meets the criteria for free school meals, or if they are looked after. From September 2014 a two-year-old will be eligible for an early education place if they meet any one of the following criteria:

- a) They meet the eligibility criteria also used for free school meals;
- b) Their families receive Working Tax credits and have annual gross earnings of no more than £16,190 per year;
- c) They have a current statement of SEN or an Education, Health and Care plan;
- d) They are entitled to Disability Living Allowance;
- e) They are looked after by the local authority; or
- f) They have left care through special guardianship or an adoption or residence order.

40. It is expected that young parents should access this entitlement before applying for funding from Care to Learn. Young parents may apply for Care to Learn for support to cover any extra hours (over and above their funded early education entitlement) to complete their study programme. This point is explicitly referenced in the Declaration on the application form.

41. Local authorities will be able to provide further information about government funded early education in their area.

42. 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

43. 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).

44. 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 study programme 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.

45. The letter will also confirm the amount to be paid for additional travel costs, if applicable (see paras 58 to 60 for more detail).

46. If the young parent is not eligible for Care to Learn, the Learner Support Service will send a refusal 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

47. If the Learner Support Service receives the application within 28 days of the start of the study programme, payments will be backdated to the start of the study 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

Payments

48. If the young parent is assessed as eligible for Care to Learn, payments for childcare will be made directly to the childcare provider or childminder agency 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.

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

Childcare payments

50. 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 13). The funds will be paid directly to the childcare provider or childminder agency each month in advance. Childcare providers must 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.

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

52. Retainers can be paid to childcare providers for the time between the end of one study programme 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. Any summer retainer forms for 2014 which are received by the Learner Support Service after 1 September 2014 will not be paid (see paras 67 to 69 for more detail).

53. 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.

54. Registration fees charged by the childminder or childminder agency, 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

55. A one-off £100 childminder network/broker payment will be made for each application which is supported by a network/broker or childminder agency, if they are acting in the capacity set out below, that results in a young parent starting their chosen study programme. This is dependent on that network/broker or childminder agency 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

56. In addition, the network/broker or agency must be recognised by their local authority, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, or Family Information Service, or the Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years.

57. 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 or a childminder agency acting in this capacity.

Travel payments

58. 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 education. 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*).

59. 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.

60. 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

61. 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 62 - 65). 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

62. Payments for childcare will only be made while the young parent is still attending their study programme 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).

63. 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 example, 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 study programme, considering the number of and reasons for absences to decide whether or not reasonable attendance has been met.

64. Failure by learning providers or childcare providers to complete and submit attendance monitoring returns will result in childcare and travel payments being withheld.

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

Change of Circumstances

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

- childcare arrangements – for example, hours of childcare provided, fee rates, new or additional childcare provider(s), additional child
- study arrangements – for example, hours of education, change of study programme, 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

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

Summer Retainers

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

69. To be eligible for a summer retainer in 2014 the young parent must be:

- on a study programme that has lasted for six weeks or more in the 2013 to 2014 academic year
- on a study programme that finishes no earlier than 30 May 2014.
- continuing with the same childcare provider they used in the 2013 to 2014 academic year
- have been using the childcare provider for a minimum of six weeks

70. A copy of the Summer Retainer form will be sent to all prospective 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 or scans are not acceptable). Summer Retainer forms for 2014 which are received by the Learner support Service after 1 September 2014 will not be paid.

Audit requirements and overpayments

71. 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

72. 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

73. All complaints and appeals must be made in writing to the Learner Support Service whose address is set out in paragraph 30.

74. 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.

75. 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, follow the link to the [Department of Education - Complaints Procedure](#)

Sources of further information

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

- **Phone:** Learner Support Service provider helpline: **0300 303 9610**
- **E-mail:** C2L@efalearnersupport.co.uk
- **Website:** www.gov.uk/care-to-learn

77. 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:** Care to Learn



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