

Nearly half of young parents struggle to pay for the essentials

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Nearly half of young parents struggle to pay for the essentials. Credit: University of Bath

Over 177,000 young parents across England, aged 25 and under are struggling to cope financially, putting more children at risk of poverty, according to The Next Chapter report released by UK charity, Action for Children today.

The report found that young parents earn significantly less than their non-parent peers, despite having the additional costs of raising children which is on average, £8,400 per year. It further shows that young parents have an average income of £14,820 compared to a UK national average of £26,300. Single parents who are 25 and under survive on as little as £14,300.

Over the course of 12 months, a young parent will earn £1,300 less than young people who do not have children. This is worrying given the negative impact of financial hardship on children's physical and mental health.

Action for Children is specifically calling for:

- Care to Learn to be extended to all primary caregivers up to the age of 25 years
- work coaches in Job Centres to be trained to meet the specific needs of young parents to give them the best chance of finding suitable and well-paid employment
- the government to review its working-age benefits freeze in light of the impact on children and families.

Sir Tony Hawkhead, Chief executive of Action for Children, said:

"There is very little up-to-date research that looks at the lives of teenage parents across the UK and even less so on the 'forgotten ages' between 20 – 25 years-old. With the growing expectation that parenthood comes later in life, young parents can come up against both negative attitudes and government policy that does not meet their needs. Our report focuses on the estimated 177,000 young parents across England who are not getting the necessary help to support themselves or their children."

Research indicates on average it costs parents more than £8,400 per year to raise their first child and this is higher for single parents at more than

£11,430. Previous research showed that over half of younger parents aged 19 to 24 are living in poverty.

Action for Children commissioned the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Bath to undertake analysis of the Next Steps study (see note 2) to better understand the characteristics and life outcomes of young parents aged up to 25.

Today's report shows that young parents in England are more likely to be working in low-skilled jobs, trapping them and their children in a cycle of poverty. This is partly because of their struggle with education as only 11% have been to university, compared to 45% of those without children. Earlier this month, the TUC revealed that 40% of low-paid young parents who ask for flexible working arrangements are 'penalised', receiving fewer hours, worse shifts and even losing their jobs.

The knock-on effect shows that young parents (59%) are significantly more likely to claim benefits due to limited work opportunities and child care restraints compared to 10% of non-parents. In addition, one third of young parents (33%) are in 'skilled' work, compared to over half (51%) of [young people](#) overall.

Sir Tony added: "Although the teenage pregnancy rate has reduced significantly over the last 20 years because of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, the story cannot stop there. Teenage mums and dads tend to come from disadvantaged backgrounds struggling with issues such as education, work, money, housing, poor mental health as well as the conflicting strains and joys a new baby can bring. Not only that, but our new research demonstrates that young parents between the ages of 20 and 25 struggle with similar difficulties, yet are eligible for less support.

"We are calling on the Government to urgently review the support available to young parents and support them through the complex

challenges they face, giving them the best chance of finding well-paid employment. More effective support is needed if young parents and their [children](#) are to have the best possible start in life."

More information: The Next Chapter: Young people and parenthood:
www.actionforchildren.org.uk/we/the-next-chapter/

Provided by University of Bath

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