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Young mums outside employment, education and training

DRAFT – PLEASE DO NOT QUOTE WITHOUT AUTHORS PERMISSION

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ABSTRACT

Being outside of employment, education and training is associated with the persistence or even intensification of various forms of disadvantage, one of which is early pregnancy and parenthood, (Coles et al. 2010). This paper argues that young mums are sometimes driven towards certain education and training pathways that are not always wholly appropriate and tailored to the needs of the individual, rather they are classified as a young mum, and thus 'at risk' and so are set on certain pathways that may lead them to experience further exclusions. Young mums (aged post 16) do experience specific barriers to re-entering education, training and employment sectors such as practical, emotional and financial challenges around organising childcare, and experiencing feelings of powerlessness and loneliness. This paper argues that supporting young mums back into meaningful, secure education, training and employment environments and provisions, will in the long run, afford them greater independence and consequently secure a better start in life for them and their children.

KEY WORDS Motherhood, Pregnancy, Education, Employment, NEET, Exclusion.

INTRODUCTION

I know I'm doing it all by myself already. I'm here twenty-four seven doing the bottles; doing the washing up; doing the, you know, not happy side to being a mum (Hailey interview transcript 18/11/11).

Teenage mums inhabit an ambiguous and conflicting space within education, training and employment discourses, policies and institutions. On the one hand they are targeted, defined and perceived as 'at risk' of exclusion from education and work, and yet on the other they are actively rejected and steered away from being included within specific sectors within them. This paper hopes to reveal teenage mums as active agents; capable of making informed decisions about their and their child(rens) future life paths. Indeed those in this paper are exposed as responsible young adults that occupy one of the key signifiers of adulthood – being a mother.

Some authors have exposed the barriers some pregnant and mother school girl's experience when trying to engage with education (Osler and Vincent, 2003; Vincent, 2012). This paper focuses on those who have left compulsory school leaving age and are officially defined as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). After a brief review of the available literature, an outline of the project and methodology are described. A

select number of young mum's story's are then explicated, with a specific focus on one, Hailey, to reveal, in detail, the specific barriers these young mums experienced when trying to re-engage in employment, education or training. Conclusions deduce that current pathways for 16-21 year old NEET (not in education, training or employment) mums may lead to a further reproduction of young mums experiencing bouts of unemployment and underemployment. Those without parental support are rendered even more vulnerable and susceptible to experiences of further exclusion from education and employment.

CONTEXT

Current literature on young mums that focuses on schoolgirl pregnancy, motherhood and education reveals that in the past, schools have been known to actively usher pregnant school girls out of sight and out of mind (Carabine, 2001). Until recently, young mothers have been viewed as not being expected for education to continue (Vincent, 2012). And indeed there continues to be little expectation for them to embark on further training, education or employment once they are no longer of compulsory school age and have been officially defined as NEET.

Young mums are viewed as highly vulnerable in education and employment policy, media and practitioner discourses. With the combination of (the sometimes assumed) lack of educational qualifications and the demands of being a mum, education and employment opportunities are thought to be severely restricted (DCSF, 2007). Compared to their peers, teenage mums are less likely to finish their education, less likely to be employed or occupy well paid jobs and are more likely to be homeless, experience poor mental and physical health and thus increasingly likely to be bringing their children up in poverty (Hobcraft and Kiernan 1999). Thus they are viewed as both a cause and solution of social exclusion (Vincent, 2012).

Interestingly an analysis of the UK teenage pregnancy statistics reveals that the number of teenage mums has remained fairly consistent since the 1970's (Duncan, 2007; Selman, 2003). Yet as Vincent (2012) clearly points out, the moral panic that has defined teenage pregnancy in the UK as a 'problem' has derived from the fact that current teenage birth rates are higher in the UK and have remained fairly static when compared to other Western European countries, whose teenage birth rates have decreased during the late 1980's and early 1990's (SEU, 1999; ONS, 2011).

The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) report outlines the causes of teenage pregnancy and sets the scene for a crisis that has ensued in the UK. Although no clear singular cause of the 'problem' was identified three factors were fore fronted, they included low expectations; ignorance and mixed messages. Vincent (2012) explains that the report construes teenagers who become pregnant as 'expected to have low educational and employment aspirations, to believe they will end up on benefits anyway, and to have little hope or expectation of a better future. That is, they are considered as having the wrong ambitions, motivation and aspirations.' (p4). Furthermore, young mums are left to manage the 'mixed messages' that involve the media constantly exposing sexually explicit messages but yet at the same time expect them to remain sexually innocent. Adult sexuality is both

celebrated and demonised (Vincent, 2012). Rendering the more challenging issues around social inequality related to class, gender and race, as well as those attributed to teenage sexuality and relationships unquestioned in explanations and analysis of teenage pregnancy and motherhood (Kehily, 2005; Vincent, 2012).

Prevention of early motherhood is a policy priority for the UK (Wilkinson et al 2006), The launch of the national Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (1999) in the UK aimed to break the cycle of social exclusion by preventing teenage pregnancies from occurring in the first instance and if they did pursue, to provide support for young mothers in (re-)engaging into education, employment or training, with the aim of them becoming socially included (Vincent, 2012). This ten year strategy aimed to get 60% of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers into education, employment or training (EET). Although this aim wasn't achieved, the number of teenage conceptions did decline after the implementation of the strategy in 1999. Under 18 conception rates fell by an average of 2.0% per year between 1998 and 2003; there was a rise of 7.5% in abortions and a fall in births of 10.6%. The change in the number of conceptions was greater in deprived and more rural areas and those with lower educational attainment. The change was also greater in localities where services and access to them were poorer, but greater where more strategy-related resources had been targeted, (Wilkinson et al 2006). Figures from the Office for National Statistics show conceptions in under-18's fell to 34, 633 in 2010 compared with 38, 259 in 2009, indicating a drop of 9.5%; with pregnancies in under-16's also reducing by 6.8% (Roberts, 2012). Despite these reductions, there remain fears about the UK's current teenage pregnancy rates and young mums out of work statistics, amidst concerns that the current UK coalition government has reduced the number of resources targeting teenage mums (Williams, 2011).

THE PROJECT

Data is drawn from a Leverhulme funded ethnography that explored 27 NEET young people's experiences as they moved in and out of various forms of education, training and employment. The aim of the project was to explore the young people's individual pathways; understand the barriers they faced to re-engaging or entering education, training or employment spheres and analyse their support structures. The research was based in the North of England across two neighbouring Local Authority's, both of which experienced higher than the national average NEET levels. The project was based on a broad range of young people, all, but one of which experienced periods of being NEET during the field work duration. Eleven were male, including one father of two pre-school aged children (5 years and below), and the rest were female. A 'snowballing' technique was used to gain access and identify the participants via a variety of means and sources including parenting classes; Looked After Care Team practitioners; Youth Offending Teams; housing association organisations; charities; schools; colleges and education and training provisions, as well as word-of-mouth (see Russell, 2013 for further details).

The main corpus of data included 343 hours of participant observation field work data collected from November 2010 to February 2013. The research was led by the young people, in that they largely dictated when and where fieldwork took place, with some giving more time than others. A further 79 interviews were conducted; including 57 with young people (recorded and transcribed) plus 2 unrecorded and 20 others with their parents;

employers; training staff and support practitioners and professionals. Photographs were taken by the researcher and the young people to depict their daily routines, special activities and events and feelings of inclusion and exclusion. Photographs taken by the young people were used as a form of interview probing in subsequent young people interviews. All young people were interviewed as least once, with some being interviewed up to five times depending upon their circumstances, preferences and life events. Documents detailing provision curriculums; career advice booklets and childcare provider information were also obtained. Observation notes and minutes of meeting documents from the local NEET strategy group meeting were also obtained and analysed, as were local and national NEET statistics. As is customary in ethnographic research, all data was analysed and triangulated where possible; analytical themes included; feelings of exclusion and inclusion; trajectory decisions and destinations; agency and structure elements; effectiveness of support structures; home; residence; education; training provision; employment patterns; family and peer influences and individualised pathways and support structures.

This paper chiefly focuses on one young mum's story, to reveal, in detail her experiences of being a pregnant student and teenage parent. It also draws on data from nine of the twenty-seven participant sample, as these young women experienced pregnancy and early parenthood throughout the fieldwork duration. It is important to note that only three young women, all of which were accessed via a parenting group actually had children and/or were known to be pregnant while gaining access – i.e. they were not chiefly selected for being young mums, they were selected for being NEET. All nine women were aged between 16 years and 19 years when fieldwork commenced. Three of the girls already had pre-school aged children, including one female who had two children, and the rest were pregnant upon our first meeting or during the field work timeframe. Seven of the young women were White and the remaining two were of Asian descent. Time was spent in these girls' homes; their parents' homes; training provisions and parenting classes where applicable and their trajectories followed over a longitudinal basis. All participants and their associated institutions are given pseudonyms throughout this paper to protect their identity.

MEETING HAILEY – BECOMING A PARENT AND ENGAGING WITH EDUCATION

Hailey was sixteen years of age and around 4 months pregnant when we first met. She was attending a foundation level employability course, 'Moving Up', which ran Monday through to Thursday 10am until 4pm, although students often left earlier in practice. This sixteen week course was aimed for learners below Level 1 and was ASDAN accredited. Hailey was directed by connexions to a ten week parenting class course after leaving her A Level courses at college upon finding out about her pregnancy. After completing this she was asked by staff on the parenting course whether she would like to participate with the 'Moving Up' programme. Hailey thought this would be a good idea, as it wasn't too demanding academically or time/energy wise and she was told by staff that it would be a good thing for her to do to help her re-engage in the education, training or employment environment once she felt ready after baby had been born. Also she was able to complete the programme before baby's arrival.

Hailey had completed her compulsory schooling and gained 10 GCSEs A* to D grade. These included CC in English, B in Science and C in maths. She then attended college to study ICT, graphics illustration, accountancy and psychology A level. She claims to have found it difficult to concentrate and cope with once

she fell pregnant and so subsequently left in November 2010, safe in the knowledge that her tutor had reassured her that a place would remain open for her upon her return after baby's imminent arrival.

She accessed connexions to review her options and was directed to a teenage parent connexions support worker who informed her about the parenting classes she subsequently completed.

Hailey had decided to spend around 12 months at home to care for her daughter before she arrived. She lived with her mum and had a volatile relationship with the father, who, according to Hailey was still around but not entirely supportive in terms of childcare arrangements, emotional or financial support. He spent the majority of Hailey's time at home, unemployed and out of training and education. He lived with his parents down the road from her and had completed the 'Moving On' course with her before their daughter's arrival.

Hailey dreamt of living in her own house with her daughter and her partner. She aimed to be the primary breadwinner and always spoke of becoming an accountant or working in business – this was one of her long term goals. (All data taken from field notes 03/03/11- 23/11/12 and five interviews conducted with Hailey during this time).

When Lilly her daughter was around one year old, Hailey applied to return to her college in the hope of studying her previous A Level choices. Despite her tutor 'reserving' her a place this was not meant to be, the topics she originally did were not all available for study and required higher entry grades compared to before. Her mum provided a source of support, walked into the college with her and demanded she be given a college place to study something relevant. Hailey explained what course she enrolled on below in the following interview transcript.

LR Last time I spoke to you, you were applying for places at College to do law.

H Yeah law and accountancy but I couldn't do that.

LR Why not?

H I didn't have the grades because they made them higher to what I expected.

LR The last time I spoke to you, you said that you'd got on the course.

H Yeah but then they said I couldn't do it so I'm doing business and finance services or something like that.

LR And are those A Levels?

H Yeah.

LR So is that a compromise for you? Would you have preferred to have done law?

H I would have preferred to do law and the accountancy because it was what I want to do but I didn't have the right grades.

LR So just take me through when you were at College before and what happened and why you left?

H Well I did art graphics, ITC, psychology and accountancy but I stopped going because I were pregnant and I knew I couldn't do my exams even if I stayed to do my AS Levels. I would have had to leave at April time because of health and safety.

LR Would they make you leave because you were getting close to giving birth?

H Yeah because it's health and safety just in case people bump into you and stuff.

LR So you left because of the pregnancy and that's how you started on the 'Moving Up' course which finished and then you had Lilly but you've done nothing since and that is near enough a year now.

H Yeah nearly a year but I wanted to spend it with Lilly because I don't like putting her in places.

LR But you're starting to feel that you want to do something now?

H Oh God, yeah. I really want to do an apprenticeship because it's experience which you need for a job and they are more likely to take you on after and you get money because I don't want to be on benefits for the rest of my life. (Interview 04/05/12).

There are a number of issues Hailey's story highlights in terms of the barriers she had to overcome to re-engage with education after having a baby at age sixteen. Like many in her position she experienced a disruption in her education and broke away from her original plans to pursue a parenting class and subsequent foundation level employability course. Furthermore, Hailey had parental support, from both mother and father despite them being divorced and living hundreds of miles apart from one another. Hailey lived with her mum and was offered emotional and financial support during the field work period. Indeed it was her mum her fought for her college place upon her re-engagement with A/AS Levels. She also saw her dad on a regular basis; he lived in the South of England with Hailey's step family, and was a constant source of emotional and practical support. He offered Hailey's partner paid employment in his business at one point and, like her mum actively encouraged her to re-engage with education and think about her future life path. Hailey was invited to reside at her father's but declined as she was concerned about leaving her mum - her one and only sibling (brother) had recently left to go to University at this point and felt more 'at home' in the Northern locality.

DISRUPTED EDUCATION

It is well documented that pregnant teenagers are directed out of mainstream education and training and into more 'appropriate' provision, despite recent policy attempts to socially include them (Vincent, 2012). In Hailey's story the fact that she was referred by connexions to a parenting class and then on to a foundation level employability programme despite her relatively high GCSE grades, arguably led her on a pathway that acted as a form of educational and social exclusion that made returning to suitable provision after the baby had been born more problematic. Questionably this was not wholly appropriate for Hailey given her academic ability, indeed many on the course were there to improve their maths and English skills – something she had no requirement to do since she had adequate levels already. On reflection Hailey did not rate the 'Moving Up' course and she felt it gave her no skills, experience or knowledge to help her enter college, re-engage with A Level courses and help her achieve her long term career aim of becoming an accountant or working in business or law.

Hailey, like other mums talked about the need to leave mainstream education provision due to 'health and safety' reasons. The field note extract below taken from observation field note data in parenting support class in a local sure start centre illustrates how some young women may be directed into certain provisions due to their pregnancy and young mum status rather than their suitability.

USHERING PREGNANT TEENAGERS OUT OF EDUCATION

Jodie fell pregnant in year 10 at school. She talks to the group and explains that when was 28 weeks pregnant she went to 'pregnant school'. She goes on to explain that her mainstream school said she could no longer stay there due to health and safety reasons. Jess, another young mum says she went to a 'pregnant school' too – the two talk about how the teachers there are not properly qualified and complains about them teaching content below their ability. Jodie says she did leave with some GCSEs but she can't remember what in. Jodie has two children by different dads, she was living with Jack Alisha's dad who Linda (the programme coordinator) says she refers to as the 'sperm donor' but they have broke up over the weekend.

Jodie and Katie, another mum recollects memories of a programme they both attended after compulsory school leaving age, 'employability training'. Jess says she finished the training, Katie says she didn't as she had morning sickness and found the staff unsympathetic. (Field notes 02/02/11).

Feelings of not being able to cope in current provisions, not adhering to health and safety regulations and having to deal with unsympathetic staff members regarding their pregnancy related absences were common themes discussed amongst the young women in this study. Some felt thrown out of current provision whilst others talked about no longer attending, and so actively removed themselves from provision due to the reasons listed above. Such findings are concurrent with the literature that reveals many young mothers and pregnant schoolgirls actively withdraw from education and so remain 'hidden' from mainstream schooling, subsequently facilitating the chances of young mums experiencing further marginalisation from education, training, employment spheres and indeed society (Vincent, 2012).

Engaging with employment and education is not just a question of trying to pull oneself out of the repetitive cycle of low pay no pay (Shildrick et al 2012) but it relates to the benefits that the social aspect of feeling included and having an identity other than 'mum' can bring.

LR Is the social aspect of college good as well?

H Yeah I've got my little group and we all stick together. Every Tuesday we have, like, an early lesson but then we have, like, two hours free and so we will go for something to eat on that Tuesday and that is like a little ritual now. It's quite nice. (Interview 12/10/12).

The local connexions service itself revealed how teenage parents can be clumped together as an 'at risk' category that can set them on a pathway that may not be wholly appropriate. The pregnancy and young parent co-ordinator (PC) explains that despite the

NEET category being a real 'mixed bag' – inclusive of NEET parents in terms of social background, academic ability and work preferences, they can be directed to certain programmes.

LR So are young people identified as potentially at risk of becoming teenage parents?

PC They are potentially identified within schools as being at risk – not just of pregnancy but alcohol, drugs, crime and things like that. And it's also identifying the young people who are not attending school.

LR So do all those at risk factors tend to go hand in hand or not always?

PC They seem to do; there seems to be a pattern. I mean my role was to support teenage parents but then it was such a new post and it became obvious that they needed support before they were pregnant. So that's how my role has kind of developed: not so much prevention because that is somebody else's work but I'm supporting them once they are pregnant and the strategy within our area is to give the young person choices. (Interview 08/10/10).

CULTURAL CAPITAL

The presence or lack of cultural capital seemed key to many of these young women's lives and experiences of inclusion, exclusion and (re) engagement or not into the worlds of education or work. Cultural capital came in the form of a variety of means, for different young women; access to it eased transitions and engagement possibilities, while lack of it was detrimental to these young women's participation in education, training and/or employment. Hailey for example was comparatively rich in her cultural capital in terms of parental support, but like all but one of the other young mums in this study felt unsupported by their partner/the child's father.

Hailey was fortunate enough to benefit from parental support. This was continual and from both parents, despite them being divorced and living geographically apart. Right from the start Hailey talked about how her mum and dad expressed concerns about her pregnancy and the effect this may have on her education and future life.

LR How did you get on at school?

H I didn't really like school but I enjoyed, like, meeting people and talking to my friends. I actually really did enjoy art and ICT.

LR And then straight after that you went to college to study accountancy, psychology, art graphic illustration and ICT at A Level. So what happened there?

H I found out that I were pregnant and then I stopped after two or three months of going.

LR So you started in September 2010 and stopped just before Christmas. Was it your decision to leave?

H Yeah.

LR And what did your mum and dad think about it?

H Well my dad weren't too bothered but my mum was more bothered because she cared more about my education really which I can understand but my decision was made. I found that I couldn't concentrate

and I were getting behind with all my work and it was, like, extra stress that I just didn't need and so I decided to leave. (Interview 24/03/11).

Interestingly, Hailey said it was her decision to leave college once she found out about the pregnancy, however in an earlier interview she mentioned health and safety issues also. How far the decision was hers or she was effectively pushed out is unclear as this occurred before field work commenced, however what is apparent is the complex mix of rationale she and her college gave for her removal from college. Hailey's pregnancy was planned after she had experienced a miscarriage. She was anxious about informing her parents as she knew they would express concerns about her education. Both her parents expressed the importance of Hailey continuing her education once Lilly was born and this helped Hailey think about her long term plans, feel supported and gain motivation to re-enter college after about a year's leave. Furthermore her mum went into college when she re-applied for her course and was informed she no longer fit the criteria to fight for her place and right to an education. Without this source of support it is uncertain whether Hailey would have got on the A/AS Level courses at this particular college. Her mum also helped in refocusing her attention and improving Hailey's confidence.

LR How did you reach the decision to drop the economics?

H Well I fell ill a few weeks ago and I missed, like, four and a half hours of economics because if you miss a day that's like four hours or something and they managed to cover a whole unit and I were already a unit behind and I were also behind on my business because it was our first assignment and nobody knew how to do it so I think I was about a week late for my assignment and I said that I couldn't catch up on both and I spoke to one of my friends and they said that all you need really is three A Levels at a good standard. So I thought I'm better off concentrating on getting distinctions in my business which is what I want to do to, go to university instead of just doing an AS Level in economics which I would have to drop in the second year anyway because we are only allowed to do three A Levels.

LR Did you talk through that with your mum and dad?

H Well I talked to my mum and she said as long as nobody at college had told me that I wasn't good enough to do it because she didn't want me thinking that I wasn't good enough or capable of doing it, but if I felt like it was going to be a better option for me then I should do it. (Interview 10/12/12).

Like most of the other teenage mums in this study, Hailey felt unsupported by her partner/child's father, both emotionally and practically. Hailey certainly expressed a desire to work and become financially independent. Peter, Lilly's father on the other hand seemed less motivated.

H I'm not sure that he (Peter) wants to work and if it came to that it would be better if I went out to work because I'm more interested in working because I know we need it whereas Peter is like 'oh we've got loads of money; it doesn't matter'. (Interview 24/03/11).

Childcare or lack of it is a major barrier for mums returning to work or engaging with education or training. Hailey and Peter had a turbulent relationship after Lilly, their daughter was born. After a period of 6 months or so Hailey came to realise that she needed to organise childcare herself if she was to get on, Peter was unreliable and she described him as never really having a strong work ethic. Her parents encouraged her to

'cope' on her own, explaining that she couldn't rely on Peter and had to organise childcare independent from him. This decision was reached after a number of let-downs.

LR So you had Lilly and you're now a mum so what does that feel like?

H It has its upside and its downside. Just being with Lilly and everything I don't mind it. I don't have owt against being a mum; it's just doing it alone because my partner's crap. I've not got the right support from him. I've got the support from my mum and I do enjoy being a mum. It's just the fact of being all alone with no one else to talk to. (Interview 18/11/11). – Lilly around 6 months old here.

In the same interview she later described Peter and his role as a father, and touches upon the turbulent relationship she had with Peter's parents. The strength and continuity of grandparent relations was also a key theme evident in many of the young mum's experiences of early motherhood - with some acting as a real source of support, while others facilitating feelings of uncertainty about their new role as a mum and actually acting as a source of contention, frustration and stress.

LR Are you sleeping in the day?

H No. I can't sleep at all. I've got too much going on in my head; my brain will not stop thinking. I'll lay in bed and me brain is just so active just thinking about everything in so much detail that I can't sleep.

LR What are you thinking about?

H Peter mostly and how the relationship is going and stuff like that. With his ex-girlfriend and that – he went back to his ex-girlfriend when we had our first little break and he spent a whole day at his ex-girlfriend's and then I went to the cinema with, like, my eighth time ex and Peter's mum found out and she weren't that happy. Peter didn't tell her but he spent the whole day at his ex-girlfriend's house and then his mum stopped me from going up to her house. And Peter and me talked about this and I said that I'd rather hate his mum than hate him. But I haven't been up there for, like, two weeks now. If she wants to see Lilly then she can come down here because I can't be bothered with all the stress that I get from going up there. But I know he's lying to me about talking to his ex-girlfriend and it's just driving me mental. I was just thinking about it two days ago and my brain would not shut up and I were thinking about making a Facebook account and getting the pictures from Bimbo or something and then talking to him to see if I could trick him. But part of me wants to know. I'd rather know than him doing it behind my back. But part of me says he would and part of me says that he wouldn't.

LR How often are you seeing him?

H Well I've seen him Tuesday night, Wednesday and today – Saturday.

LR So not every day?

H No. But we did used to see each other every day and now we don't and he don't talk to me hardly so it's just making me think. And he's always on his bloody computer as well.

LR Are you putting pressure on him to come round or is he just not wanting to come round?

H No I have to ask him or get him to, like, drop stuff. At the moment he's got Monday – snooker; Tuesday – pool; Wednesday – football; Thursday – snooker. Friday is his only night that he don't do owt. Saturday – football and Sunday he's gaming or whatever on the computer. And this week he were working so there was not time for me so I had to make him drop football. But if I ask him to drop football on a Wednesday I have to argue with him because he just says he's not going to see me because he enjoys playing football and he's going to do it. That's his excuse. And I say 'yeah Peter I appreciate that you do like doing it but don't you like spending time with your daughter?' Then he says 'ok then I'll come by'.

LR How do you think he's dealing with the whole fatherhood thing?

H Crap! He said it were superb and brilliant at first but now he can't be bothered.

LR Do you think reality has set in?

H Yeah or either the fact that he's just bored. I don't know. He's one of them people that if he's with people he likes then he don't want to leave them but as soon as he's gone away he just forgets about you, that's his kind of thing.

Feelings of powerlessness, isolation and loneliness were consistent with other mums in the study. Katie a member of the parenting group at the local sure start centre expresses some of these commonalities in the following interview.

LR So how did you find out about the group here?

K My family nurse.

LR And you've just come ever since. Have you found it useful?

K Yeah it gets me out of the house. I meet new people and make new friends and Lucas gets to socialise with other children.

LR Do you see any of the other mum's outside of the group?

K Not really, no. I sometimes bump into some in town.

LR Do you think you'll carry on coming to this group?

K For as long as I can, yeah.

LR What would stop you from coming?

K Normally it's when you turn twenty but they said I could stay on for a bit longer to make the numbers up.

LR Have you tried any other groups?

K No.

LR Is that a scary thing for you? Do you just like it here?

K I don't really like meeting too many people. I've just recently started a computer course down at the Sure Start Centre but that's alright because there are people from my own estate which I know sort of – well I know one of them because she is now pregnant. In small groups I'm alright; it's big groups I don't like. (Interview 25/05/11).

Hailey too talked about feeling excluded from going to certain baby and toddler groups in her local community. She lived in a predominantly Asian community and felt as though she was being judged as a 'white trash' mum when she went out with Lilly, subsequently further cementing her feelings of isolation, loneliness and exclusion. Lack of confidence/judgement from others was a constant concern of Hailey's in terms of being pregnant, signing on and being a teenage mum.

H I feel like I have low confidence really. I'm a bit, like, cautious about my work and things like that. I feel I don't want to be judged by other people and I think about what people might think about me and the way I dress so I try not to stand out. (Interview 24/03/11).

In Hailey's case, a desire to better oneself and get out of the house acted as a motivator for her to engage with employment and education. Ironically this was further facilitated by her lack of support from Peter. Hailey described Peter as quite domineering at points in their relationship – something that fuelled her feelings of loneliness and powerlessness. Again this was a common theme experienced by other mums in the study. Hailey described below the barriers she faced with getting out of the house.

H I had to give netball up so that Peter could play snooker, because no one would be able to look after Lilly if I did netball. So I don't get to do much! (...) Peter won't let me go out. He doesn't like me going out with my mate.

LR Why's that?

H If they're boys then, apparently, I'm doing them all. So I can't talk to them because I started talking to an old friend that I used to be at school with and Peter accused me of doing him. I said that I was only talking to him; he's only a friend. So I'd rather live without the hassle to be fair. He don't like none of my mates though.

LR So who do you spend most time with? Who do you see the most of?

H Me mum or, when Peter decides to come down. I see my mates about once every two weeks or something but that's about it.

LR Have any of your friends got children?

H Yeah one of them has a baby but we're never free to, like, see each other. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday my friend's at college and so the baby goes to child minders. Thursday and Friday other people have him of a night so she's got two nights off. Then an ex-boyfriend has the baby on a Saturday night so she has the whole weekend off and then she picks him up on Sunday. And I'm like 'I'm here twenty-four seven every week and every day of the week'. (Interview 18/11/11).

Peter did gain some temporary work via his brother but this was inconsistent and did not bring in a steady wage. This frustrated Hailey and was a constant source of tension between the two. Added to this was the fact that he was an added financial drain on her resources. In poverty stricken circumstances money matters, Hailey understood the importance of this, she tried to save money for Lilly, to buy her new clothes, nappies and other essentials and felt frustrated at Peter's apparent lack of financial management skills.

H The money he (Peter) gave me the other day was what he owed me. I gave him money to go gaming at the weekend and that cost me eighty quid. I had to pay for his computer to get fixed and that cost me seventy-five quid and so, basically, I said to him 'you are paying me back for that or I'm breaking your computer because half of it is mine'.

LR But you're getting child benefit?

H Yeah.

LR And do you get anything else?

H I get child benefit and income support but income support goes straight to my mum for board.

LR So what's the plan – that Peter gets a steady job? Is that what you're hoping for?

H I'm hoping that he gets some work. He just needs a job that is steady instead of not knowing when he's going to be working. And he needs to know how much he is being paid every week or every month because he just doesn't know. And like this week he says 'oh I might be home by about six or half six' and that's no good to me.

LR So what's he done since leaving 'Moving Up'?

H Sit on his bum and not even look for a job. And then we went down to my dad's and he said there were no work there but my dad took time off to be with Lilly and that and with his baby. And then we came back and Peter had that job with Scotty for a week and he had a couple of days off because he didn't feel too good because he had a chest infection and then he worked a couple of more days and then he had this week. So he's had about two weeks of work this month.

LR And that was through his brother?

H Yeah.

LR Is he looking for work on his own?

H No. I said to Peter print some of your CVs out and go round and you can hand them out but he said he weren't going to do it because he didn't like doing that. So I said 'do you expect them to walk up to you and go "hello"?' It don't work like that because there are about two million people that are unemployed so you've got to fight for it. And he just says he can't be arsed.

LR So how is he living then?

H He borrows money and he keeps borrowing money that he doesn't have but he'll have to pay it back some time. So he's probably paying off his mum with the money that he got from his last job. So his whole weeks work will be used in paying back other people. So I said to him 'how much do you think you should be paying for Lilly a week?' and he goes to me 'I'll just pay for what she needs'. So is he going to pay for her food, her nappies – everything?

LR Do you think that he doesn't understand how much all these things cost?

H He just thinks that money grows on trees. I bought him a fifty-five quid hoody because he would not stop nagging me and we were getting on and I said to him 'look Peter I'm not going to spend money on that' and he said I were tight but I did buy it for him. And I took him to the cinema that week as well. But I'm just tight whenever I don't give him money. He's like a little baby! It's like caring for two babies. I've got to worry about him with his chest infections and stuff like that although he doesn't care about it. So I'm there ringing up doctors and that so he goes to see them and I have to give him money so he's not losing out or stuff. I have to ring him up in the morning to get him down here to see his daughter. I just wish he could get up himself and come down and surprise me. It's not the fact that I'm nagging him for me but it's for Lilly because I know that if I hadn't had a dad around that often I would have felt awful. It's not nice. So I'm saying to him 'do you want her to feel that it's all her fault that you're not around?' Because I used to think it were my fault for my dad not always being there. I could only see him once every two weeks on a weekend. But Peter doesn't care; he just wants to do what he wants. So I told him to do what he wants to do but I'm going to be the one who watches Lilly grow up and I'll be the one who sees her first step and everything. But he says that he'll always be her daddy, but I say 'no you won't because you're never bloody here!' I give up!
(Interview 18/11/11).

DIFFICULTIES RE-ENGAGING WITH WORK

Hailey was offered a job in a fish and chip place when Lilly was around 10 months old but was unable to accept it due to her lack of childcare support from Peter, and the cost and inflexibility of it. It was only when she could access state financial aid was she able to re-engage with education – which partly drove her decision to re-enter education and not work or an apprenticeship scheme.

LR What do you think it's like for young people out there trying to find work now?

H If they put their minds to work they could do it. If they really wanted it they could do it; they've got to be motivated. But it will be harder though because there are loads of people who are unemployed and many of them have lots of experience. But if you wanted a job – and not caring what it was – then I think you can still do it.

LR Do you want a job if you can do it?

H I got offered a job in a chip shop and it were good money – like six pounds an hour – and I would have been better off but Peter didn't give me the help I needed with child support. It was working from ten in the morning 'till seven at night, but then you had to tidy up and that so by the time I got home it were about eight o'clock. (Interview 23/05/12).

FINANCIAL PRESSURES

Finances and benefits play a large part in dictating what young mums can and cannot engage with. Benefits and specifically the nature, availability and sum of childcare assistance specifically effect NEET young parents upon their (re)engagement. Hailey revealed how finances largely dictated her experiences of being a young mum from the moment she started to think about her residency arrangements during her pregnancy. Decisions needed to be negotiated with her mum (who she lived with and whom worked full time) and acted as a concern and barrier to re-engagement – especially when childcare costs and logistics came into play.

LR Tell me about your benefit status at the minute? You were getting EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance)

H Yeah.

LR But that would stop anyway, wouldn't it?

H That's going to stop next week but as soon as I leave here my mum loses my child tax.

LR So she is getting that because you're still dependent and living at home.

H As soon as I leave here I've got to claim income support and give it to my mum to help with the bills and the food.

LR How did you find out about that?

H At Christmas there was a Job Seekers person that came in and she were telling us about income support and child benefit and stuff like that so I used that information and I talked to my mum about her financial state and I said I would give my income support to her because she's letting me stay here basically. I've told Peter that he might have to be the stay at home dad and I'll go out to work. (Interview 24/03/11).

Money and lack of it was a constant worry for Hailey and her mum – this contributed to her lack of ability to get out and do things, but also motivated Hailey to go out and do something with her life.

LR What does your mum do?

H She's a support assistant but it's a pretty poor wage so me and my mum always talk about money because we have so little and it's always a struggle at the end of the day. She's been getting money for me but I'm no longer a dependent child so she's just got a letter saying she owes them about seven hundred quid back because there was a mix up. So she has to owe that back and the boiler keeps going wrong so she has to keep paying more on that. So she keeps saying it's going to be, like, no Christmas.

LR So you're coping but it's a struggle?

H Yeah. I try not to think about it every day but it is hard and I said to my mum the other day 'do you want to go out for a meal or some place?' but I can't really go out because I don't have the money. I can go out for a walk because that doesn't cost money but by the time my mum gets home, at half four, it's dark so I can't go for a walk with my mum. (Interview 18/11/11).

Financial concerns and the viable options available to her in terms of education and returning to work were an issue upon her return to college and contributed to her decision to return to education. By returning to college she received 'Care to Learn' childcare assistance that enabled her to engage with the A/AS Levels course, something she wouldn't have received had she tried to enrol on an apprenticeship course – which is something she had considered in the past.

LR Is the nursery provision paid for?

H Yeah Care to Learn pay. They give one hundred and sixty a week and it's a hundred and seventy so I've got to pay the other ten pounds a week but I haven't heard nowt from them so I'm hoping that they'll let me have it for a hundred and sixty but I'll find out if I get a letter from them. I've worked it out and, for a year, I'll have to pay about four hundred and fifty quid.

LR How did you hear about Care to Learn?

H I went to Connexions and asked them to see what I could do.

LR Are you get anything else other than Child Benefit?

H The Child Benefit is all part of Income Support.

LR So you can still get Income Support?

H Yeah. That's one benefit of doing this rather than doing an apprenticeship.

LR Or a job?

H Well you can get a job and get more money than what I'm getting on benefits easy.

LR Do you reckon?

H Yeah. You can get paid six pounds an hour, can't you? At college I start at nine and finish at four so that's, like, seven hours which is ... forty-two quid for a day and that's my Income Support for a week. So it would be beneficial.

LR But then you might have to pay for your child care.

H Yeah I would have to pay for my child care then but I would be able to save a hundred and seventy pounds a week.

LR Child care is expensive, isn't it?

H It's still cheaper here though than down south. If I were to go and live with my dad it's about fifty quid a day for a nursery and I wouldn't be able to get that paid for me. (Interview 12/10/12).

Hailey again reiterated her motivation to work, and so goes against current media and policy discourses that reveal teenage mums as lazy, benefit dependant people who rely too heavily upon the state. It remains to be seen whether or not Hailey will achieve her aim of going to university and gaining a secure, well paid job, but her intent and actions certainly revealed her motivation and desire to do so.

CONCLUSIONS

Mums of post schooling compulsory age experience specific work, education and training pathways, barriers and motivations to (re) engagement. Each young mum experiences and manages these barriers differently, indeed in some instances, like in Hailey's, feelings of lack of support from the father can actually act as motivators to participate in education, training or employment. Related to this is the nature of the young mum's personal circumstances and access to cultural capital in the form of partner, parent and grandparent emotional, financial and childcare support. Those who lack this rely more heavily on state intervention and support and arguably find it more difficult to (re)engage.

Many of the young mums described feelings of exclusion from certain mainstream education and training provisions and felt, on reflection that such courses were socially helpful in helping them prepare to be a young mum and manage the experiences of actually being a parent, but did not always fit their academic abilities and facilitate their chances of securing long-term sustainable goals such as gaining secure paid employment. This repetitive cycle arguable leads to further marginalisation and exclusion for some young mothers trying to re-engage with work or education, especially if they lack cultural capital. Hailey for example understood over time that foundation and L1 qualifications would not help her achieve her long term goal of becoming an accountant or working in law or business. Individualised pathways that take into account the financial, emotional and practical support a young mum has or has not got access to are required to help young mums obtain independence and break the cycle of social exclusion.

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