



Thriving Young Families Education and Employment

Through our partnership with Hand Heart Pocket we are investigating what works for at-risk young parents and their children to thrive, and evaluating the effectiveness of integrated service delivery.

Our transformative approach to backing vulnerable young families wraps support around a young family tailored to their needs, goals and hopes for the future.

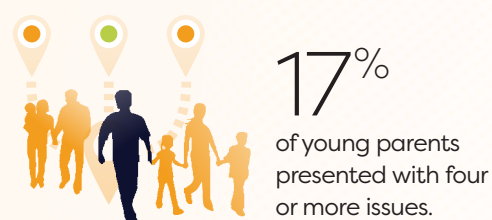


Issue: Disengagement from education and employment



Early parenthood can disrupt participation in education: especially for teenagers: and impact on their long-term education outcomes, employability and earning capacity.^{1,2} Consequently, young parents face higher welfare dependency and increased likelihood of intergenerational transmission of disadvantage to their children.³

When they first commenced with Thriving Young Families



Purpose

Linking young parents with education, employment and activities to improve their work readiness is an important focus area. Parenthood can be highly motivating for young people as they seek to give their children a better life.^{4,5}

Our part-time Education and Employment Mentor works with individual parents to capitalise on this motivation, helping young parents set goals and find ways to achieve them and build economic security.

¹Hoffmann, H., et al. (2019). "Everyone My Age Doesn't Know What It's Like": A Mixed-Method Study of Young Mothers and Social Support in Australia.

²Bradshaw, P., et al. (2014). The Experiences of Mothers Aged Under 20: Analysis of Data from the Growing Up in Scotland Study.

³Ricks, N. (2016). The Strengths Perspective: Providing Opportunities for Teen Parents and their Families to Succeed. Journal of Family Strengths, 15(1).

⁴Arai, L. (2003). Low Expectations, Sexual Attitudes and Knowledge: Explaining Teenage Pregnancy and Fertility in English Communities. Insights From Qualitative Research. Sociological Review, 51(2), 199-217.

⁵Butler, K., et al. (2010). Experiences and Aspirations of Younger Mothers.

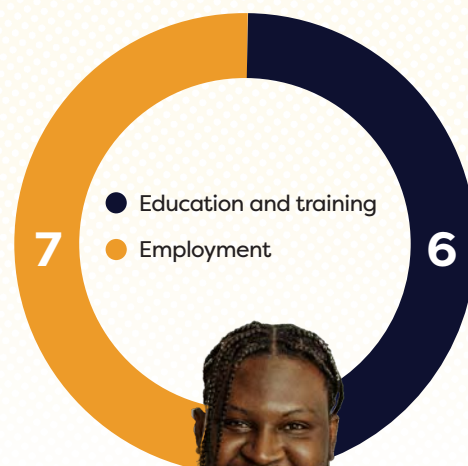
Participant goals

The focus on education and employment is the newest component of the program, established in early 2022. So far, 13 participants have taken up the opportunity to engage with our dedicated Education and Employment Mentor, with momentum steadily building.

While some participants (especially young dads) want a job immediately so that they can better manage their financial and housing situation and provide for their families, many are not yet work ready. As such, a big part of the program is to plant the seed of education and employment, to help young parents explore their goals and to encourage them that it is okay to have aspirations and to want to have a career. For many participants that is not something they had considered before.

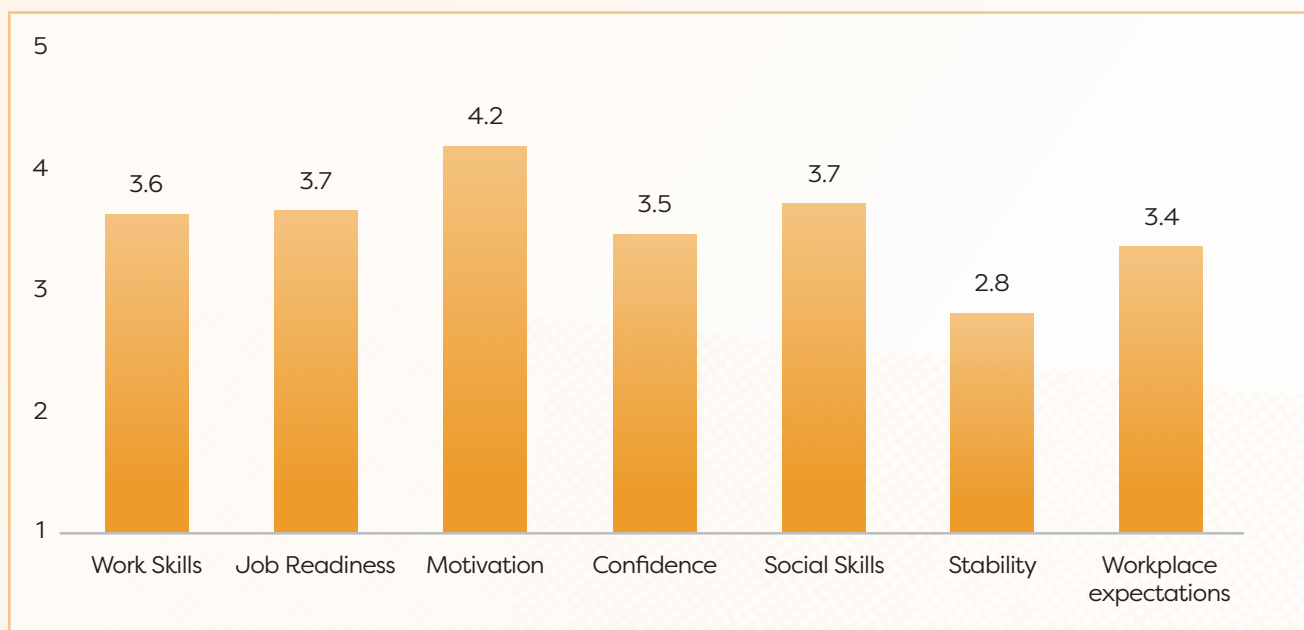
Our approach is not KPI driven. It is less about getting people into a job just for the sake of it and more about setting them up to pursue and achieve their goals now and in the future. We do parallel planning with young people, working towards both immediate and long-term goals simultaneously. For example, one young dad was recently supported to secure a job to pay the bills now, whilst still pursuing his goal of running a business one day.

Current participants are pursuing a mix of education and employment goals.



Work readiness

An initial work readiness assessment shows that young parents who have taken up the opportunity to work with the Education and Employment Mentor are highly motivated (rating this aspect of work readiness 4.2 out of 5). However, for many their home situation was fairly unstable, with a lot going on in terms of housing, financial and relationship stressors. They were also unsure of what would be expected of them in a workplace and some had limited confidence about doing well at work.



Priorities

The Education and Employment Mentor works with young people based on where they are at.
This means helping young people to:

1. address barriers

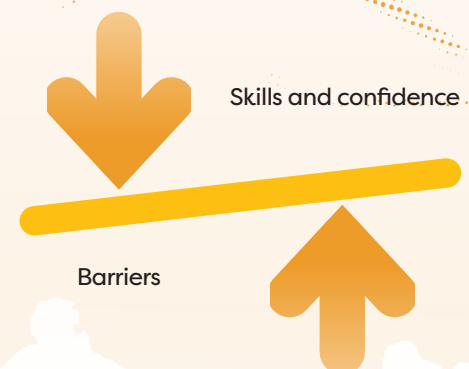
Young parents face multiple barriers which hinder their return to education or entry into the workforce, including personal barriers, such as a lack of skill, substance use, and poor mental health, and structural barriers, such as discrimination, lack of child care and transportation options, poor training services, and unhelpful employment advice.⁶ The program identifies specific barriers faced by each young person and works through them together to find solutions and explore options.



2. build skills and confidence

Many young people lack the confidence and skills to prepare for work. They may not know how to fill out a job application let alone what might be expected of them in an interview situation.⁷ The program takes time to build skills and confidence by role playing interviews and debriefing with young parents, so they feel prepared.

**Confidence
and
communication
Interview skills
Careers goals
Job search**



⁶ Kuskoff, E., & Mallett, S. (2016). Young, Homeless, and Raising a Child: A Review of Existing Approaches to Addressing the Needs of Young Australian Parents Experiencing Homelessness.

⁷Spence, R., & Vogl, G. Turning Points: Evaluation of Red Cross Young Parents Program. Centre for Research on Social Inclusion, Macquarie University.

Employability skills workshops

To help build interest and readiness for employment, Thriving Young Families teamed up with YFS' Spark and ParentsNext programs to design a series of workshops, created to give participants the confidence and skills to job search effectively.

Topics include:

- Confidence and communication
- Resume, cover letter and selection criteria
- Interview skills
- Careers goals
- Job search tips

So far these have been well received, although attendance has been inconsistent. We continue to work to build engagement.



Early outcomes



While it is still early days, we have seen young people participating in the program make progress towards education and employment and improve work readiness. Based on Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) data, young parents' perception of life satisfaction improved, particularly in the following areas:

62% felt their standard of living has improved

54% felt they were achieving more in life

73% felt their future security improved.

Early learnings

A stronger focus on mentoring, coaching and career planning seems to suit young parents better than a strict focus on education and employment outcomes. As young people, they are still developing and learning about who they are and what they want for themselves and their families. Helping them to explore and expand their ambitions and build the foundational skills needed to work towards and achieve their goals sets them up for the future.

Having a holistic focus and being part of a multi-disciplinary team that can provide long term support means that education and employment aren't addressed in isolation. The team can work together to address existing and emerging barriers and help build the supports around young parents that they will need as they pursue their goals. For people with high complexity and multiple barriers, employment services work best as part of a package of wrap-around support.⁸

⁸ YFS. (2022). *Working for Women: Spark Women's Employment Mentoring Program Interim Evaluation Report*. YFS Ltd: Logan.



E: yfs@yfs.org.au W: www.yfs.org.au

yfslogan

For more information please contact
communications@yfs.org.au

YFS Ltd is a company limited by guarantee
Human Services Quality Framework accredited
AS/NZS ISO 9001



YFS acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's first peoples and the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we meet and work.



<https://handheartpocket.org.au/>