

Activity Agreement Pilots Quantitative Evaluation

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National Centre for Social Research



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*Activity Agreement Pilots
Quantitative Evaluation*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Activity Agreement Pilots

The Activity Agreement Pilot (AA) is an initiative aimed at testing the effectiveness of conditional financial incentives along with intensive support and brokerage of tailored activities in re-engaging young people aged 16 -17 who had been NEET for at least 20 weeks immediately prior to starting an Activity Agreement. The 2005 Budget announced an allocation of £60 million to the pilot, to support and encourage disengaged young people back into education, employment (preferably with learning) or training. The pilot was overseen by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and delivered by the Connexions service in eight pilot areas in England. Each of the 8 pilot areas implemented one of three variants of the pilot, which differed in the level of the weekly payment available to the young person and in one variant a payment to the parent. The pilots began in April 2006 and initially ran for two years.

An Activity Agreement is a personally negotiated contract between a Connexions Personal Adviser and the young person. It is an individually tailored and agreed programme of activities designed to break down barriers to participation and identifies specific steps that the young person will take to move into education, employment (preferably with learning) or training. Whilst participating, young people received one-to-one support and advice and a weekly allowance - paid only if the young person fulfilled their weekly agreement.

The evaluation of AA

The evaluation of AA is being carried out by a consortium comprising the Institute for Employment Studies (IES), the Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick (CEI) and the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). The evaluation has three strands:

- **a quantitative evaluation**, using surveys of young people to measure the impact of the pilots in comparison to a number of control areas
- **a programme theory element**, focusing on testing some key aspects of the policy to identify what works, what does not and the reasons for this.
- **a process evaluation**, examining the ways in which the pilots have been set up and delivered and the main issues associated with their implementation; and

This report presents the key findings from the quantitative evaluation which was conducted by NatCen.

The quantitative evaluation

The principal objective of the quantitative strand of the AA evaluation was to measure the effectiveness of AA in increasing young people's participation in employment, education and training. It also included softer measures indicating 'distance travelled' towards this outcome. Underpinning the outcomes data, this strand also provides an insight into the experiences of young people on the AA programme, exploring their motivations for taking part, the activities they did, and the roles of personal advisers and the AA allowance in sustaining their engagement on the programme.

What difference did AA make?

The quantitative evaluation measured the impacts of AA by comparing participants with a comparison group of NEET young people with similar characteristics who lived in areas where AA did not operate. By comparing outcomes for AA participants with those for the comparison group, it was possible to infer what difference AA made, that is how many young people had outcomes that would not have otherwise happened.

The largest change that AA participation brought about was that many more NEET young people undertook personal development activities than otherwise would. With AA, around 30% of participants report doing some personal development activities (based on a description of this type of activity used in the interview) in the 12 month period after first becoming NEET. This would be just 4% without AA.

Beyond this, the impacts of AA were more modest. Around 17% of AA participants entered paid work without training in the 12 month period after first becoming NEET. This percentage would have been higher, at around 27% in the absence of AA. So AA appeared to delay some young people's entry to paid work in the short term.

A small percentage of AA participants (around 3%) entered work-based training as a direct result of AA, and around 7% took up training towards a qualification who otherwise wouldn't have.

The short-term (i.e. three month) post-participation impact of AA was to generate an approximate 13 percentage point shift in outcomes: away from non-activity or employment in jobs without training and towards work-based training and studying. This was a small, but nevertheless, positive impact.

Associated with these small impacts on employment and education outcomes, AA also had a small, but positive impact on attitudes. Across a range of measures, between 5% and 10% of participants demonstrated more positive attitudes towards education, employment and the future in general as a result of their participation.

Asking AA participants directly what the impact of AA has been on them the picture is rather more positive. One plausible interpretation is that AA helps young people to attain positive outcomes even if AA is the determining factor in only a minority of cases.

What was the rate of take-up of AA?

The evaluation estimated that the take-up of AA among long-term NEET young people (the 'eligible population') was 19%. Thus, the 26% impact on participants' take-up of personal development activities would imply an impact of about 5% on personal development activities for the eligible population.

The take-up rate was higher in Variant 2 areas (25%), where the weekly allowance for participants was £30, than in Variant 1 (15%) and Variant 3 areas (17%) where the allowance for participants was lower (£20). (In Variant 3 areas, a £30 allowance was also paid to parents.) Therefore, AA had the greatest impact on the eligible NEET population in Variant 2 areas because of the higher estimated take-up rate.

Who took part in AA?

AA participants who responded to the survey were more likely to be male (58%) than female (42%). 87% were of White ethnic origin and there were similar proportions of participants who were Black (5%) and Asian (4%). Nearly all participants (96%) classified themselves as single and 83% were living with their parents. A minority were living with a partner (3%) or with others (9%). Only 9% had children, most of whom were living with them.

Of the participants who were living with their parents, a little over half (58%) had parents who had no qualifications post-16 years of age. The most common occupational classification of participants' parents was routine and manual occupations (37%).

Less than two thirds of participants (63%) reported that they attended school regularly in their final year. 23% did not attend regularly and 14% did not attend at all. The main reasons for poor attendance were truancy (47%) and exclusion (24%).

Participants varied widely in their GCSE attainment but overall had much lower levels of attainment than the national average. Only 14% achieved 5 GCSEs at A*-C grade.

Among young people who had heard of AA, those in Variant 2 areas where the weekly allowance was highest, at £30, were more likely to take part than those in other areas.

Compared to NEET young people who did not participate in AA, participants were younger, more likely to be male and living with their parents, and less likely to have children.

Why did young people take part in AA?

When young people were asked why they took part in AA, the two most common reasons cited were to make progress towards finding a job (36%) and to have something to do (35%). A quarter of young people said that they took part to support their education, one-fifth thought it would provide useful experience and 19% said that they took part for the money. So there was a range of motivating factors, with finding a job the most prominent among them¹. Other participants sought experience that would be a first step in the direction of finding a job, such as gaining new skills and meeting people.

Although the AA payment was mentioned by some participants as a reason for taking part in the programme, it was among the less commonly mentioned reasons. When asked to give a retrospective view on the role of the payment, three quarters of participants said that they definitely or probably would have taken part without it. So only a minority of participants said that the payment had been a primary motivating factor.

Among eligible young people who decided not to take part in AA, the main reason given was the positive one that they were doing or planning to do other things (26%).

What did they do on the programme?

AA participants typically took part in a range of activities while on the programme and had positive views of the activities they took.

In a classification of activities undertaken on AA into three broad groups, job-related activities were most common (taken by 72% of participants), followed by personal development activities (taken by 64%) and college-based activities (taken by 61%).

¹ The importance of finding a job resonates with the 'menu of choice' theory in Focused Study 3.

Among the activities undertaken by participants, work experience placements were distinctive in that they tended to last longer and were delivered to individuals on their own rather than as part of a group. Activities of this type were among those rated most positively by participants. 86% of participants of these activities said that they would be helpful for their plans for the future.

Basic skills training was also rated very positively. 85% of participants who took this training said that it would be helpful for their plans for the future.

Personal development activities varied considerably in their content and the time commitment they required but most were also rated positively. 79% of participants who attended these types of course said that they were helpful for their plans for the future.

Participants engaged in sport and outward bound activities were least likely to rate these as being helpful for future plans (44% did so). However, 77% of participants on these courses rated them as good and they gave particularly positive ratings for the leaders of the activities.

How important were the personal advisers?

The research confirmed that participants had very regular contact with their personal advisers and valued this form of individual support.

81% met their personal adviser at least once a week and the average length of session was just under an hour. Face-to-face meetings were supplemented by telephone contacts, particularly when meetings were less frequent.

91% of AA participants said that they found the support of their PA helpful.

Meetings with personal advisers were used for planning ahead and reviewing the activities of the previous week, help with looking for a job or college course and general mentoring, support or advice.

How long did participants stay on AA?

Although AA was designed to provide up to 20 weeks of support to participants, there was flexibility in the amount of time that participants stayed on it². Only about two out of five participants stayed for the full 20 weeks.

Among participants who left AA before the 20 weeks was up, about one in three left for the positive reason of taking up work or studying while a further one in six said that they had completed the programme. The remaining half of early leavers left early for more negative reasons such as not enjoying the activities or other aspects of the package.

Participants who were involved in personal development activities stayed on the programme longer, on average, than those doing job-related activities, which is likely to be explained by those participants needing a greater level of support.

² This reflects the findings of the process evaluation that young people 'tended to leave the programme earlier than 20 weeks'.

What did participants and their parents think of the AA?

Most AA participants had positive views of the activities they took part in and felt that they had benefited from them. A range of benefits of participation were mentioned with the most common being gaining in experience/confidence (31%), help with job preparation (26%), the advice or support from Connexions (21%), having something to do (19%), getting qualifications or skills (18%) and getting help to find an education course (17%). This range of benefits would appear to reflect the flexible and responsive characteristics of support under AA.

Parents of participants, who were interviewed if the young person still lived in their family home, also perceived the programme to be valuable. 71% of participant's parents thought that their son or daughter's contacts with Connexions had been helpful for making decisions about and preparing for future activities.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the main findings were:

AA achieved a small, but positive, increase in young people's involvement in positive activities during the first 12 months after they became NEET. The largest shift was in the proportion of young people reporting involvement in provision that met the description of personal development activities given in the interview: the findings suggest that 26% participants reported these activities who would not have done without AA. About 3% of participants entered work-based training and 7% of participants took up a qualification who would not have done without AA. On the other hand, take up of paid work without training was *lower* (by about 10 percentage points) than it would have been without AA. Overall, just 29% of AA participants had done none of the activities measured (personal development activities, work-based training, other paid work, voluntary work or studying for a qualification) in the 12 months since becoming NEET compared with 42% of similar young people in comparison areas.

AA delivered a small, but positive, impact on the incidence of positive outcomes in the short-term. Among young people who completed AA within 9 months of first becoming NEET, the short-term impact of the programme (three months after leaving) was to generate a 13 percentage point positive shift in outcomes: away from non-activity or employment in jobs without training and towards work-based training and studying.

AA also achieved a small positive impact on young people's attitudes towards the future and learning. AA participants had slightly more positive views than the comparison group about how their activities in the past year would help them in the future. They were less likely to say that their confidence had worsened in the past year and they had slightly more interest in learning. These short-term impacts on attitudes showed potential for longer-term impacts in the quality of activities taken up.

The take-up rate among the eligible long-term NEET population was between 19% and 44%. The take-up of AA among the 'eligible population' was 19%. However, fewer than half (44%) of the eligible population said that they had heard of AA. Of these 44% who had heard of AA, 44% took up an agreement. Therefore, over half of those eligible for AA were not aware of the programme. This will have limited the impact of AA on the whole target eligible population.

The synthesis report for the evaluation of AA cross-references these quantitative findings with the process evaluation's evidence about implementation and delivery issues and the programme theory element's focused studies (Hillage et al, 2008).

1 INTRODUCTION

The Activity Agreement Pilot (AA) is an initiative aimed at testing the effectiveness of conditional financial incentives along with intensive support and brokerage of tailored activities in re-engaging young people aged 16 -17 who had been NEET for at least 20 weeks immediately prior to starting an Activity Agreement. The 2005 Budget announced an allocation of £60 million to the pilot, to support and encourage disengaged young people back into education, employment (preferably with learning) or training. The pilot was overseen by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and delivered by the Connexions service in eight pilot areas in England. Each of the 8 pilot areas implemented one of three variants of the pilot, which differed in the level of the weekly payment available to the young person and in one variant a payment to the parent. The pilots began in April 2006 and initially ran for two years.

An Activity Agreement is a personally negotiated contract between a Connexions Personal Adviser and the young person. It is an individually tailored and agreed programme of activities designed to break down barriers to participation and identifies specific steps that the young person will take to move into education, employment (preferably with learning) or training. Whilst participating, young people received one-to-one support and advice and a weekly allowance - paid only if the young person fulfilled their weekly agreement.

DCSF, formerly the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), commissioned an evaluation of AA, carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES), the Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick (CEI) and the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). This consortium has evaluated AA alongside the related Learning Agreement Pilot (LAP) which is aimed at young people in jobs without training. The evaluation has three related strands: a quantitative evaluation, a programme theory evaluation and a process evaluation.

This report presents findings from the quantitative evaluation of AA, carried out by NatCen using quantitative data from a survey of eligible young people in pilot and comparison areas. It includes the findings from a follow-up survey of AA participants.

1.1 The Activity Agreement Pilot (AA)

Policy aims and context

The Government published its long term vision for a single, coherent system of financial support for 16 to 19 year olds in *Supporting Young People to Achieve*, alongside the 2004 Budget. The report launched a consultation including how to extend support and incentives to young people engaged in positive activities beyond formal education and training.

The following year, in the *14-19 Education and Skills White Paper (2005)*, the government outlined its aspiration for 90 per cent of 17 year olds to be participating in education and training by 2015, an increase of 15 per cent. The Activity Agreement policy was one of the measures designed to help meet this goal.

The stated aims of the Activity Agreement policy were:

“Re-engaging ‘long-term’ NEET by recognising and incentivising action that equips them to engage, and stay engaged, in appropriate learning and work”
and

“Testing the most effective financial support regime at engaging the most disaffected 16-17 year olds (those who have been NEET for 20 weeks) and informing the long-term direction of reform of financial support for 16-19s” (AA guidance notes; DfES, 2005).

In addition to these aims, the programme theory evaluation set out to identify the theories which underpin the policymakers’ design of the programme (Simm et al, 2006). It found the following views of the main aims of AA and Learning Agreement Pilot policies among key policy stakeholders:

- Creating a more comprehensive and less divisive system of financial support for young people.
- Reaching and engaging the hardest-to-reach young people.
- Encouraging more young people into learning or training, or helping them to progress towards it.

Building on these existing policy concerns, the *Leitch Review of Skills*, published in December 2006, projected a sharp decline in the number of low-skilled jobs in the economy by 2020 (HM Treasury, 2006). Following this, the government announced its plans, in the 2007 *Raising Expectations: staying in education and training post-16* Green Paper, to raise the age of compulsory participation in education to 17 from 2013 and eventually to 18 (DfES, 2007). The Green Paper makes clear the government’s commitment to ‘learn from the lessons of Activity Agreements pilots’ in helping to develop future policy around participation. The commitment to raise the participation age was enshrined in the Education and Skills Act 2008. The policy focus around AA has therefore evolved from one of testing the impact of financial incentives into one of encouraging engagement within the context of raising the age of participation.

AA variants and payments

The three variants of AA were implemented in eight areas, known as the ‘pilot areas’, of which four were also implementing variants of the Learning Agreement Pilot. Under each variant, eligible young people were entitled to a weekly payment (Activity Allowance) of either £20 or £30. Under Variant 3 there were also payments of £30 a week to parents (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 AAP variants and areas

	Variant description	Areas
Variant 1	£20 per week to young person	Kent & Medway Tyne & Wear West Yorkshire*
Variant 2	£30 per week to young person	Central London Cornwall & Devon* Greater Merseyside
Variant 3	£20 per week to young person and £30 per week to parent	Greater Manchester* London East*

*Areas also implementing Learning Agreement Pilot variants.

While the different payment models embodied in each variant were all ‘nominally incentives to engage in the programme’ they were designed to act via different incentive and support mechanisms:

- ‘The £20 per week variant is ‘designed as an ‘incentive’ (similar to [Education Maintenance Allowance] EMA), set at a lower amount to complement existing financial support for those who already have it’.
- The £30 per week variant is ‘designed as a ‘support’ model with a higher allowance designed to mimic an extension of JSA’.
- The combined young person and family payment variant is ‘designed as an ‘incentive and support’ model mimicking the package of financial support available to young people in full-time education from low-income households (support in the form of stable Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit paid to the parent and responsive incentive (EMA) paid to the young person)’.

(Simm et al, 2006, citing AA guidance documentation issued to Connexions).

Activity Agreement allowance payments could be paid, for a maximum of 20 weeks. Agreed short breaks of less than three weeks were allowed, but there was a non-payment sanction for absence from agreed activities which young people were told about when negotiating their agreement with their personal adviser. The process evaluation has found that most young people in fact tended to leave the programme between 12-15 weeks (Maguire et al, 2007).

Eligibility requirements

To be eligible for AA, young people needed to be aged 16 or 17 and not be in any form of employment, education or training, although they could be participating in personal development activities if not receiving a wage or allowance. To start on AA, young people must have had a continuous period of being NEET for 20 weeks or more (which could date from when they left school) immediately prior to starting an Activity Agreement. Those eligible for AA are therefore the group of ‘long-term NEET’ young people.

Young people in receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance were not eligible for the programme. Under variants with a weekly payment of £20, young people in receipt of Income Support (because they were lone parents or disabled) were eligible to receive the Allowance payments. Under the £30 payment variant, young people in receipt of Income Support were not eligible to receive Allowance payments although they were able to participate in AA without receiving payments. Similar rules applied to care leavers.

One-to-one support and activities

In all variants young people were offered one-to-one support from an individual Connexions Personal Adviser (PA), with whom they agreed a personally negotiated contract (the Activity Agreement) outlining a personalised plan of agreed activities to be undertaken by the young person each week. The young person’s participation in the activities was monitored weekly by the PA, and their receipt of the weekly Activity Allowance payment was contingent on their attendance at the agreed activities and monitoring sessions.

The principles set out as guiding the programme of Activity Agreement activities developed for each young person were that it should be *personalised*, focused on the *engagement* of the young person, present a *challenge* and be underpinned by *flexibility*. The planned activities could be aimed at enabling the young person’s engagement, development or successful exit from the programme and could include both existing mainstream provision

and provision that was specially commissioned. The activities might have been of a number of different types, including assessment and monitoring by the PA, personal development activities aimed at developing key skills to raise self-esteem and social and interpersonal skills, study skills including basic skills, employability skills, and activities aimed towards moving the young person towards education, employment or training (DfES, 2005).

The AA extension

The pilots were originally funded to run to March 2008. From April 2008, the programme was extended to further trial some approaches to raising post-16 participation in education and learning. In addition to the existing arrangements, three new elements were introduced:

- Model 1: 13 and 20 week AAs - involves testing of an earlier intervention at 13 weeks.
- Model 2: AAs for those previously in receipt of EMA - targeted at those young people who had been receiving EMA immediately prior to their referral and offering an AA after an interval of 6 weeks.
- Model 3: Vulnerable groups AAs - aimed at fast tracking target groups into AA after 5 weeks (the groups are carers, Gypsies, Roma or Travellers, the homeless, looked after young people, refugees and asylum seekers, substance misusers (in treatment), those supervised by YOT and young people who have learning difficulties).

The quantitative research covered in this report took place before the extension pilots began.

1.2 The evaluation

The three strands of the evaluation of the Activity and Learning Agreement (ALA) pilots, commissioned by DCSF, are:

- **a quantitative evaluation**, using surveys of young people to measure the impact of the pilots in comparison to a number of control areas
- **a programme theory element**, focusing on testing some key aspects of the policy to identify what works, what does not and the reasons for this
- **a process evaluation**, examining the ways in which the pilots have been set up and delivered and the main issues associated with their implementation

The quantitative evaluation collected quantitative survey data in AA and Learning Agreement Pilot areas as well as in comparison areas where the pilots were not being implemented, in order to produce a robust estimate of their impact. Its overall objective was to measure the effectiveness of AA and Learning Agreement Pilot programmes, and of their variants, in increasing young people's participation in education and training. As well as seeking to measure any increased involvement in education and training, the strand's findings also included softer measures indicating 'distance travelled' towards this outcome. By collecting data directly from young people meeting AA eligibility criteria, and where possible from their parents as well, the quantitative evaluation also allows their experiences and views of AA to be described.

1.3 Research design and methodology

Overall quantitative evaluation design

The quantitative evaluation of AA was designed to produce an estimate of the impact of the programme on participants by comparing their outcomes with those of a matched comparison population. The key research question was whether AA participants experienced better outcomes on average than comparable long-term NEET young people who lived in non-pilot areas. The objective was to produce separate impact estimates for each of the three variants, as well as for AA overall.

The key measures of impact would be based on the activity status of young people, with positive outcomes defined as involvement in paid work, training or education activities (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 AA outcome and success measures specified by DCSF

Outcome (Bold indicates primary measure success)	Comments
NEET (20+ weeks)	Progress needs to be judged by identifying progress through completion of Activity Agreement and changes in behaviours and attitudes.
NEET (after period in other)	Possible progress - depends on activities engaged in and changes in behaviours and attitudes.
JWT	Success
E2E	Success
Job - with employer funded training	Success - additional measures would be type and level of training and any achievement
Job - Apprenticeship	Success
Job - plus p/t (related or unrelated) ed. & training	Success - additional measures would be type and level of training and any achievement.
Part-time education	Success - need to assess impact of not being in employment and changes in behaviours and attitudes.
Full-time education	Success - additional measures would be type and level of education and any achievement

The evaluation was designed to allow for impacts of AA measured across the whole of the eligible NEET population to be estimated, by comparing outcomes for NEET young people in pilot areas with similar NEET young people in comparison areas. The main difficulty with this approach relates to interpretation. The impact measurements may be lower than expected because they apply to the eligible population rather than to programme participants. A second problem arises from defining the 'eligible population'. Appendix D explains how the criteria for eligibility varied between DCSF guidance and the evaluation study.

Because of these difficulties, we investigated, at analysis stage, whether we could use the evaluation data to generate robust estimates of impacts on participants rather than on the eligible population. Appendix D explains the test of robustness which validated this approach. The outcomes for participants were compared with those for a matched comparison group of NEET young people in non-pilot areas to identify the impact of AA on participants.

Sample design

The original sample design specified 4,000 interviews to be carried out in pilot areas (divided evenly between the three AA variants) and 4,000 in comparison areas, these being the numbers that would allow impacts of about 5 percentage points to be detected as statistically significant. In the event, lack of eligible sample in a number of areas meant that 3,331 full productive interviews were achieved in pilot areas and 2,291 in comparison areas.

Sample records were provided by Connexions in each pilot and comparison area on a three-monthly rolling basis. The process of ensuring eligibility and preparing the sample for the survey is outlined in Appendix G.

In order to gather accurate data on family background and to establish parents' views of young people's activity choices and involvement with Connexions, wherever an interviewed young person lived with a parent or parents, their parent became eligible for interview. A parent was interviewed directly wherever possible but where this was not achievable the young person was asked a set of proxy questions about their parent or parents' level of education and employment status. Direct parent interviews were carried out in the case of 58% of interviewed young people who lived with a parent and proxy parent interviews with a further 31%.

Timing of AA participation and interviews

The eligible population for AA was the group of young people who had long-term NEET status, that is, they had been NEET for 20 weeks or more ('NEET 20'). However, for the purposes of the quantitative evaluation, young people were regarded as eligible if they became NEET while aged 16 or 17 and remained NEET for at least 15 weeks ('NEET 15'). This alteration was made because it was thought likely that Connexions would start approaching young people to invite participation in AA from when they were around NEET 15. Expecting to take part in the pilot, such young people may, from that point in time, have had a reduced incentive to pursue participation in education, employment and training activities for themselves.

In order to accrue sufficient numbers for impact analysis it was decided to interview young people in pilot areas who became NEET 15 during the first 15 months of the programme's operation, between April 2006 and June 2007. These young people started their periods of NEET status between January 2006 and March 2007, and were divided into five 'flow' sample groups, each defined by the three-month period during which its members started their period of NEET status.

In addition, young people who started their NEET period before January 2006 and remained NEET on 1 April 2006 when AA launched were also included in the survey sample. This was because it was thought very likely that Connexions would approach this 'stock' of young people for involvement in the programme in the early phase of its operation. The same groups of young people were defined as eligible for the survey in seven comparison areas.

Survey interviews were carried out between January 2007 and March 2008, using a mixture of face-to-face and telephone interviewing. Fieldwork was designed so that young people in the flow groups were interviewed approximately a year after first becoming NEET. This design was based on the model, specified by DCSF, whereby young people who had participated were interviewed 12 weeks after ending their involvement with AA, after allowing 20 weeks from the start of the NEET period to become eligible for the programme, and 20 weeks for the duration of involvement with the programme. This model assumed that young people began their involvement with AA around the earliest point at which they were eligible

for it. In reality, some young people began their AA involvement after more than 20 weeks from the start of the NEET period and some stayed on the AA programme past 20 weeks.

To reflect this, the impact analysis investigated participation in activities during the year since becoming NEET and also the current activities of participants who had left AA 3 months prior to the interview. It should be noted, however, that the quantitative evaluation was not designed to measure the longer-term impacts of the programme, that is those beyond the first year to 18 months after young people first became NEET. To do this, the research would need to have extended beyond 2008.

The follow-up ('wave 2') survey

Of the AA participants who responded to the survey, 450 were re-contacted and invited to take part in a follow-up (or 'wave 2') survey. The selection was made from participants interviewed in quarters 1-4 (quarter 5 respondents were not included). Prior to selection being made, the sample frame was stratified by variant and period of interview to ensure that all variants and all four periods were covered. Participants were sampled disproportionately by variant to ensure that all variants were covered equally. With a response rate of 51%, 229 young people took part.

The purpose of the wave 2 survey was to examine the experiences of participation in AA in more detail than space allowed at the first interview. For example, respondents were asked about the types of activities they undertook while on AA and evaluated them according to different criteria. The wave 2 interview also offered an opportunity to investigate the current attitudes and activities of former AA participants some time after the end of the programme. The interval between the wave 1 and wave 2 interview ranged from 15 weeks to 68 weeks (the mean interval was 42 weeks). The wave 2 interviews were carried out in April and May 2008, after the end of the main fieldwork period. The findings from the wave 2 survey are integrated into this report.

Appendix G contains brief details of the survey's sampling process and fieldwork, as well as weighting and analysis methods.

1.4 The report

Report structure

The findings from the analysis of quantitative evaluation data are reported as follows:

- **Chapter 2** describes the characteristics of participants and compares them with non-participants.
- **Chapter 3** presents participants' experiences of the AA programme.
- **Chapter 4** presents the findings from the analysis of the impact of AA on participants.
- **Chapter 5** discusses conclusions from the research and implications for the programme.

Some appendices provide further results tables and document aspects of the methodology:

- **Appendix A** provides results tables for the findings reported in Chapter 2 and 3.
- **Appendix B** provides results tables for the impact analysis reported in Chapter 4, broken down by variant and sub-groups of participants.
- **Appendix C** provides details of the propensity score matching used to match AA participants with similar young people in comparison areas.
- **Appendix D** compared two approaches to measuring the impact of AA: the *impact on participants* approach followed in this report and the *impact on the eligible population* approach that the evaluation was originally designed to use.
- **Appendix E** discusses the relationship between these impact measures and participation rate for AA, showing how this differs for the three variants of AA.
- **Appendix F** compares estimates of the NEET population that were derived from survey estimates and AA management information in order to assess how comparable they are.
- **Appendix G** provides further information about the sample design, fieldwork, weighting and analysis of the surveys of young people.

Reporting conventions

The report's findings are displayed in some tables within chapters and in Appendices A and B. Which sample members are included in each table, that is the composition of the table base, is described above it. Tables show both weighted and unweighted base sizes but it is the unweighted base sizes which show the number of individuals used in the analysis. In the tables accompanying Chapter 2 and 3 (the descriptive analysis), percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Percentages of less than 0.5% are shown as * and those calculated from unweighted base sizes of less than 50 are shown in square brackets e.g. [19%].

2 CHARACTERISTICS OF AA PARTICIPANTS

2.1 Key Findings

- AA participants were more likely to be male (58%) than female (42%).
- 87% were of White ethnic origin and there were similar proportions of participants who were Black (5%) and Asian (4%).
- 96% of participants classified themselves as single and 83% were living with their parents. A minority were living with a partner (3%) or with others (9%). Only 9% had children, most of whom were living with them.
- Of the participants who were living with their parents, a little over half (58%) had parents who had no qualifications post-16 years of age.
- The most common occupational classification of participants' parents was routine and manual occupations (37%).
- Only two thirds of participants (63%) reported that they attended school regularly in their final year. 23% did not attend regularly and 14% did not attend at all. The main reasons for poor attendance were truancy (47%) and exclusion (24%).
- Participants varied widely in their GCSE attainment but overall had much lower levels of attainment than the national average. Only 14% achieved 5 GCSEs at A*-C grade.
- Compared to non-participants, participants were younger, more likely to be male, living with their parents and to be single, and were less likely to have children.

2.2 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on the background characteristics and activities of AA participants before they became NEET. The chapter starts by explaining how the term 'participant' was defined for this report and then describes the profile of participants covering socio-demographic characteristics, parental education and employment, the young person's experiences of school and activities between leaving school and starting AA. Following this, we describe how participants differed in their background characteristics from similar young people who were eligible for AA but who did not participate in the programme.

2.3 Definition of participants

For the purpose of this report, 'AA participants' are defined as the young people living in pilot areas who agreed to take part in AA and who met at least one of the following criteria³:

1. took part in at least one AA activity,
2. were assigned a personal adviser, and/or
3. received AA payments.

³ There were 25 young people who reported at the wave 1 interview that they agreed to take part in AA but who subsequently did not meet any of these criteria for participation.

While recognising that this may differ from the definition of participants used by programme administrators, within the context of a survey, combining responses to a number of questions increases the reliability of the definition. By this definition, the number of participants who responded to the survey was 1,018 at wave 2 and 229 at wave 2.

Of the young people living in pilot areas who had heard of AA, those in Variant 2 areas, where the payment to participants was highest, were significantly more likely to take part in the programme than in the other areas. This suggests that the £30 incentive acted most effectively as a ‘hook’ to get young people involved by the mechanism identified in the AA programme theory report (Johnson et al, 2007).

2.4 Personal background characteristics

Participants were more likely to be male (58%) than female (42%). 87% were of White ethnic origin and there were similar proportions of participants who were Black (5%) and Asian (4%).

The majority of participants were aged 17 (59%) or 16 (36%) when they were interviewed, which was about a year after they became NEET, so most would have been aged 16 when they became NEET. Participants’ marital status reflected their age group with 96% of participants classifying themselves as single.

The ethnic profiles of participants were similar to the eligible population of NEET young people in pilot areas. However, participants were more likely than non-participants to be male and single and were significantly younger (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Personal characteristics

Base Description: NEET 15 young people eligible for AA

Characteristics	Participants	Non-participants	Total
	%	%	%
Sex			
Male	58	53	54
Female	42	47	46
Age when NEET 20			
16	36	26	28
17	59	63	62
18 ⁴	5	11	10
Ethnicity			
White	87	88	88
Asian	4	5	5
Black	5	3	3
Mixed race	3	3	3
Other	1	2	1
Marital status			
Married / civil partnership	0	1	1
Living with partner	4	8	7
Single	96	91	92
Other	1	0	0
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>637</i>	<i>2694</i>	<i>3331</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>1018</i>	<i>2313</i>	<i>3331</i>

⁴ The young people who were aged 18 at the time of interview were 17 when they became NEET and therefore met the age criteria for sample eligibility (see section 1.3).

As would be expected, given their age, the majority of participants (83%) were living with their parents. A minority were living with a partner (3%) or with others (9%). Only 9% had children, most of whom were living with them.

Compared to non-participants, participants were significantly more likely to be living with their parents and were less likely to have children (Tables 2.2 and 2.3).

Table 2.2 Household composition

Base Description: NEET 15 young people eligible for AA

Household characteristics	Participants	Non-participants	Total
	%	%	%
Household composition			
Living with parents	83	76	78
Living with partner	3	7	6
Living with others	9	10	10
Living on own	5	6	6
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>637</i>	<i>2694</i>	<i>3331</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>1018</i>	<i>2313</i>	<i>3331</i>

Table 2.3 Presence of children

Base Description: NEET 15 young people eligible for AA

Whether has children	Participants	Non-participants	Total
	%	%	%
Has children	9	17	15
- Lives with children	8	15	14
- Does not live with children	1	2	1
Does not have children	91	83	85
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>637</i>	<i>2694</i>	<i>3331</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>1018</i>	<i>2313</i>	<i>3331</i>

2.5 Family background characteristics

Of the participants who were living with their parents, a little over half (58%) had parents who had no qualifications post-16 years of age. 6% had a parent with a degree level qualification and 16% had a parent with another post-16 qualification (Table A.1).

The parents who were interviewed were asked about their qualifications in greater detail. Equal proportions had a level 2 qualification (23%) and a qualification that was equivalent to A-level or higher (23%). 36% of parents had no qualifications (Table A.2).

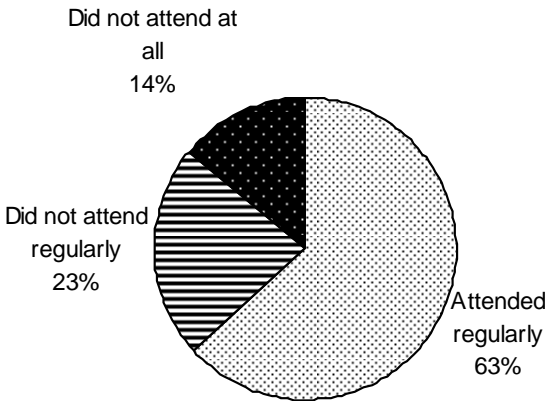
The most common occupational classification of participants' parents was routine and manual occupations (37%). One third (32%) had no current or recent job (Table A.3). When asked about sources of income, 62% of parents had income from paid work. A higher proportion (75%) reported receiving income from benefits (which includes Child Benefit) (Table A.4).

2.6 School attendance and GCSE attainment

Exploring the experiences of AA participants at school and in activities since leaving school highlights the diversity of their engagement in education and employment. Only two thirds of participants (63%) reported that they attended school regularly in their final year. 23% did not attend regularly and 14% did not attend at all (Figure 2.1). The results for non-participants were very similar⁵.

Figure 2.1 Attendance at school in Year 11 (W1)

*Base Description: Wave 1 participants
(weighted base=637, unweighted base=1018)*



Participants gave a wide range of reasons for their poor school attendance in Year 11. The main reason was truancy (47%), followed by exclusion (24%). Other reasons included illness (7%), moving out of the area (5%) and bullying (6%). Again, there were no significant differences between participants and non-participants on this measure (Table A.5).

Participants varied considerably in their level of GCSE attainment at school as shown in Table 2.4. As would be expected, overall levels of attainment were much lower than the national average. Compared to 62% of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs at A*-C level across the country, only 14% of AA participants reached this level. At the other end of the spectrum, 29% did not attain any GCSEs in their final year at school compared to 1% nationally.

⁵ 65% of non-participants attended regularly, 20% did not attend regularly and 15% did not attend at all.

Table 2.4 GCSE attainment of AA participants, non-participants and all young people at the end of Key Stage 4 in England 2006/7 (source: DCSF)

Base Description: Wave 1 participants and all young people

GCSE attainment	Participants	Non-participants	All young people in England
Overall attainment			
5+ GCSEs at A*-C	14	15	62
5+ GCSEs at A*-G (<5 at A*-C)	36	38	30
1-4 GCSEs at A*-G	17	16	7
No GCSEs attained	29	27	1
DK GCSE results	4	3	0
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>1018</i>	<i>2313</i>	<i>648,752</i>

Overall, participants achieved at a slightly higher level in English than in Maths with 20% and 16% respectively gaining A*-C grades. Female participants attained significantly higher English GCSEs than male participants, with 26% of women attaining grades A*-C compared with 16% of men. There were no significant differences according to sex in overall GCSE attainment or Maths GCSE grade (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5 GCSE attainment at school

Base Description: Wave 1 participants

GCSE attainment	Male	Female	Total
Overall attainment			
5+ GCSEs at A*-C	11	17	14
5+ GCSEs at A*-G (<5+ at A*-G)	37	34	36
1-4 GCSEs at A*-G	17	18	17
No GCSEs attained	28	27	29
DK GCSE results	7	4	4
English			
A*-C	16	26	20
D-G	43	35	39
Not attained	34	33	34
Missing	7	6	7
Maths			
A*-C	15	16	16
D-G	45	47	46
Not attained	32	31	31
Missing	7	6	7
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>371</i>	<i>266</i>	<i>637</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>550</i>	<i>468</i>	<i>1018</i>

2.7 Activities between school and NEET

Nearly two thirds of AA participants (63%) did not engage in any EET activities between leaving school and becoming NEET. This high proportion reflects the age profile of AA participants. Since the majority were aged 16 or 17 when interviewed, the window of opportunity for engaging in EET activities between leaving school and becoming NEET would have been short. Among those who did report some activity, most engaged in paid work (23%) and/or work-based training (26%).

Participants were significantly less likely to have engaged in EET activities between leaving school and becoming NEET than non-participants (37%, 41%) (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6 Activities since school before NEET period

Base Description: NEET 15 young people eligible for AA
Percentages do not add up to 100 since more than one answer could apply

Activities between school and NEET	Participants	Non-participants	Total
	%	%	%
Study for a qualification	6	6	6
Work-based training	26	34	33
Paid work	23	31	29
Voluntary work	7	5	5
Other courses	4	3	3
Any activity	37	41	40
No activity	63	59	60
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>637</i>	<i>2694</i>	<i>3331</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>1018</i>	<i>2313</i>	<i>3331</i>

2.8 Differences between participants and non-participants

Throughout this chapter, the background characteristics of participants have been compared with those of similar young people living in AA pilot areas who did not participate in the programme. There were a few characteristics that were associated with taking part in AA and that therefore need to be taken into account when looking at outcomes so that the true impact of AA participation can be isolated. Observing how participants differ from non-participants may also be useful for targeting the programme in the future.

Participants were significantly more likely than non-participants to be male (58% compared to 53%) and to be in the younger age group - 36% of participants were aged 16 compared to 26% of non-participants (Table 2.1). Participants were also more likely to be living with their parents (83%, compared with 76% of non-participants) and to be single which is unsurprising given that they were younger, on average (Table 2.2). Participants were less likely than non-participants to have children at the time of interview (9% compared with 17%) (Table 2.3). Since the ages of the children were not reported, it is not clear whether the presence of children made participation in AA less likely or whether non-participation increased the likelihood of having children.

Participants were significantly less likely than non-participants to have engaged in EET activities between leaving school and becoming NEET (37% compared to 41%). This is probably because they were on average younger and had therefore left school more recently (Table 2.6).

2.9 Conclusions

AA participants were predominantly White, lived with their parents and were aged 16 at the time when they became NEET. The majority were male. Compared with 16 to 18 year old NEET young people who did not take part in AA, participants were slightly younger and so had less experience of EET activities since school. They were less likely to have children.

There was a fair amount of diversity among participants in their school attendance, GCSE attainment and engagement in EET activities following school. This shows that participants embarked on the programme from different starting points along the road to engagement in EET activities and so were likely to require different forms of support and to take different routes through AA.

3 PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES OF AA

3.1 Key Findings

- The primary motivation for young people taking part in AA was related to finding a job (cited as a reason for taking part by 36% of wave 1 respondents and as the most important factor by 30% of wave 2 respondents).
- Three quarters of the respondents who received payments said they definitely or probably would have taken part without the payment. The AA payment was among the less commonly mentioned reasons for taking part (mentioned spontaneously by 19% of participants).
- Participants had regular contact with a personal adviser and said that this contact was helpful. 81% of participants who were in contact with a PA met that person at least once a week. 91% said that this contact was helpful.
- Although AA was designed to provide 20 weeks of support, there was quite a lot of variation in the amount of time participants spent on it. The average amount of time spent on the programme was 15 weeks. Of those who left the programme before 20 weeks, one-third did so in order to start a job or studying. Young people who were doing personal development activities tended to stay on the programme longer than those doing job-related activities, which is likely to be explained by those participants needing more support.
- In a classification of the activities undertaken on AA into three broad groups, more young people took part in job-related activities (72%) than in personal development activities (64%) or college-based activities (61%).
- More detailed analysis of the types of activities undertaken by participants showed that there was quite a lot of diversity in the way activities were delivered and their duration. However, all types of activities were rated positively by participants.
- Work experience placements were distinctive in that they tended to last longer than other activities and were delivered to individuals on their own rather than as part of a group. These were rated at least as positively as the other activity groups.
- Participants most commonly spent their AA allowance payments on travel and transport (62%), entertainment or leisure (61%) and clothes and shoes (58%).
- Participants mentioned a wide range of benefits of taking part in AA of which the most common were gaining in experience or confidence (31%), help with job preparation (26%), advice or support from Connexions (21%), having something to do (19%), getting qualifications and skills (18%) and getting help to find an education course (17%). This range of benefits would appear to reflect the flexible and responsive characteristics of AA.
- Parents of participants, who were interviewed if the young person still lived in the family home, also perceived the programme to be valuable. 71% thought that their son or daughter's contacts with Connexions had been helpful for making decisions about and preparing for future activities.

3.2 Introduction

The AA pilots were designed to prepare young people for engaging in EET activities by supporting them in three ways: regular meetings with a personal adviser, a financial incentive and activities tailored to their needs and interests. This chapter describes participants' experiences of each of these facets of the AA programme as well as motivations for taking part, time spent on AA and perceptions of the value of taking part.

As illustrated in Chapter 2 and the other strands of the evaluation, the young people who participated in AA were not a homogenous group and varied quite considerably in social background characteristics including attainment at school, family background and previous experience of work and training. In the analysis for this chapter, we explored the extent to which pathways through the AA programme varied according to background characteristics.

In each section, the findings were also compared by variant to identify whether experiences varied according to the level of payment made to young people and their parents (see Chapter 1). Differences by variant are only reported where they were significant and of interest.

The data come from three sources: the wave 1 interview with participants, the parallel interviews with the parents of some participants and the wave 2 follow-up interview with a sub-sample of participants.

3.3 Motivations for taking part in AA

The young people who participated in AA were asked at wave 1 to say what had motivated them to take part in the programme⁶. The two most common reasons cited were to make progress towards finding a job (36%) and to have something to do (35%) (Table 3.1). A quarter of young people took part to support their education and one-fifth thought it would provide useful experience or money. The main reason given by young people for *not* taking part in AA was a positive reason that they were doing or planning to do other things (26%).

Which of the two most common reasons (finding a job and having something to do) were mentioned by participants was related to their GCSE attainment. Participants with higher GCSE attainment were more motivated by help finding a job than by having something to do. In contrast, participants with low GCSE attainment (1-4 GCSEs at A*-G) were more likely to be motivated by having something to do (Table A.6).

Male participants were significantly more likely than female participants to say that they took part in AA for help in finding a job (Table A.6).

⁶ In the wave 1 interview, this was asked as an open question and the responses were later coded. At wave 2, respondents were asked about each factor coded at wave 1 in a separate question. Responses were therefore much higher and it did not make sense to compare the responses of follow-up respondents at both waves.

Notably, money was not the primary motivating factor for taking part in AA, a finding which is supported by the similarity in responses according to variant. Help in finding a job or course and having something to do were more important reasons for taking part in AA than the AA payment, regardless of the level of financial incentive (Table 3.1)⁷.

Table 3.1 Reasons for agreeing to take part in AA (W1)

Base Description: Wave 1 participants
Percentages do not add up to 100 since more than one answer could apply.

Reasons for taking part	
	%
Help finding job	36
Something to do / bored otherwise	35
Help with education	25
For experience	20
For money	19
Advice support from CXS	10
To meet new people	2
To build confidence	1
Other specific answer	3
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>637</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>1018</i>

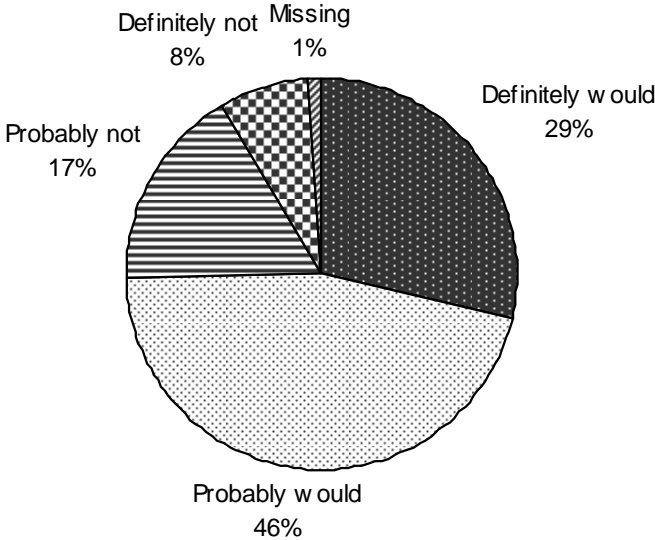
The AA participants included in wave 2 of the survey were asked a similar question. This time, they were asked whether each of the factors cited in Table A.7 were important in persuading them to take part. Since the reasons were pre-coded, responses were much higher than in wave 1. For almost every reason asked about, over 80% of respondents said that it was an important factor. This included help with looking for a job, the chance to attend courses and training and the chance to learn new skills. The notable exception was the ‘weekly payment’ which only 65% of respondents said was an important reason for taking part.

⁷ There were no significant differences according to AA variant.

Although the payments were cited as one of the reasons for taking part in AA, the importance of the payments appeared to diminish over time. Retrospectively, three quarters of the participants who received payments said they would have taken part in the programme even without the payments (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Whether would have taken part in AA without payment (W1)

*Base Description: Wave 1 participants who received payments
(weighted base=513, unweighted base=879)*



Of all the different reasons for taking part in AA, the most important factor for the wave 2 participants was to receive help in looking for a job (30%). To learn new skills was the most important reason for 20% of participants. Only 12% thought that the weekly AA payment was the main reason (Table A.8).

The responses from both waves of the survey concur in finding that young people were motivated to take part in AA by a number of reasons, with finding a job the most prominent among them⁸. Young people were also motivated by a number of other factors representing a first step in that direction, such as gaining new skills and meeting people. From the vantage point of having completed the AA programme, participants did not recall the AA payment as having been a primary motivating factor.

3.4 Contact with personal advisers

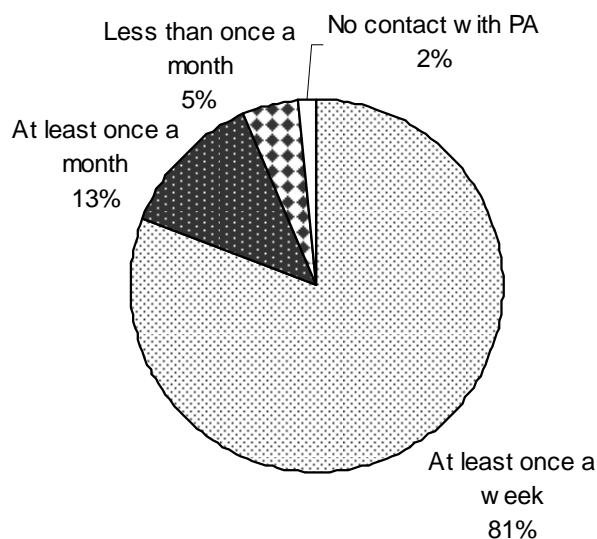
The majority of AA participants reported being assigned a personal adviser to support them on the programme (90%) (Table A.9). Of the remainder, the young people may not have recognised the term ‘personal adviser’ despite the description in the interview question. The basis for this hypothesis is that in the follow-up interview, 18 of the 22 young people who had said at wave 1 that they did not have a personal adviser confirmed that in fact they did.

Of those who reported that a personal adviser was assigned to them, nearly all met with them face-to-face at least once a month (94%), with 81% meeting at least weekly (Figure 3.2). Telephone was also an important means of communication with advisers. Two thirds of participants had weekly telephone contact with their advisers and a further 18% had telephone contact at least once a month (Table A.10).

⁸ The importance of finding a job resonates with the ‘menu of choice’ theory in Focused Study 3.

Figure 3.2 Frequency of meetings with PA (W1)

*Base Description: Participants who reported contact with a PA
(weighted base=574, unweighted base=948)*



A high proportion of young people communicated regularly with their personal adviser in person and by telephone. 72% of those who met with their adviser at least once a week also had telephone contact at least once a week. However, for a small minority, telephone was a useful substitute for face-to-face contact. Of those who met their personal adviser less than once a month, half had telephone contact at least once a month.

The frequency of personal adviser meetings was significantly associated with the regularity of school attendance in Year 11 (see section 2.6). Of those who attended school regularly, 82% met their personal adviser at least once a week and 96% met at least once a month. By contrast, of those who did not attend school at all in Year 11, 75% met their personal adviser at least once a week and 85% met at least once a month.

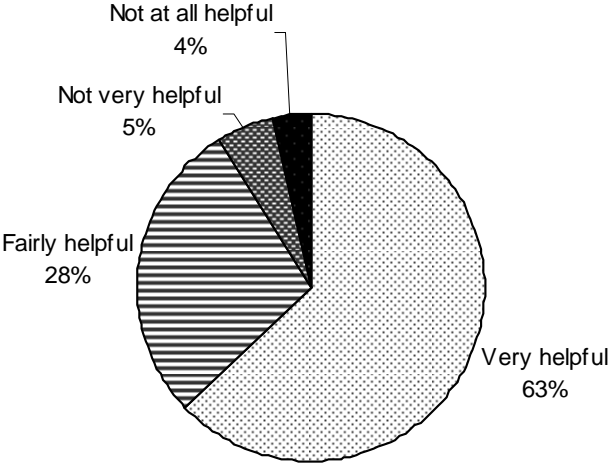
The participants who took part in the follow-up survey provided more detail about the contact with personal advisers. The length of typical meetings between participants and personal advisers varied widely from 1 minute to nearly 4 hours. The average length of a session was about 53 minutes. One quarter of participants (25%) said they would have liked more time to meet with their adviser.

According to participants in the follow-up study, the meetings with personal advisers were used for planning ahead and reviewing the activities of the previous week, help with looking for a job or college course and general mentoring, support or advice. Over 80% of respondents said their adviser meetings covered each of these topics on at least one occasion (Table A.11).

Participants rated the meetings very favourably - 63% thought they were very helpful and a further 28% thought they were fairly helpful (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3 Helpfulness of contact with PA (W2)

Base Description: Wave 2 participants who reported contact with a PA (weighted base=225, unweighted base=225)



3.5 Time spent on AA programme

The quantitative study was designed so that young people would be interviewed approximately one year after they became NEET, with the expectation being that most would have left the AA programme by this time⁹. The timing of programme completion in relation to the interviews for the study has implications for the impact analysis since some time needs to have lapsed in order for the young people to have had the chance to engage in activities following the programme.

By the time of the wave 1 interview, 83% of AA participants had left the programme¹⁰. At the wave 2 interview, almost all participants (98%) had left the programme (Tables A.14 and A.15).

Although AA was designed to provide 20 weeks of support to participants, the quantitative study concurs with other strands of the evaluation in detecting flexibility and variation in the amount of time young people spent on the programme (Maguire et al, 2007). At wave 2, 63% of participants had left AA before 20 weeks and 37% had continued for 20 weeks or more (Table 3.2). The average amount of time spent on the programme was 15 weeks.

Table 3.2 Whether participant finished AA before 20 weeks (Wave 2)

Base Description: Wave 2 participants

	Wave 2
Left before 20 weeks	63
Continued for 20 weeks or more	37
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	229
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	229

The amount of time spent on AA was significantly associated with gender and with the type of AA activities undertaken. Men were more likely than women to stay on the programme beyond 20 weeks (37%, 27%). Engaging in personal development activities was also associated with staying on AA for longer. 40% of those reporting personal development activities stayed on AA past 20 weeks compared to 34% of those doing job-related activities. This may reflect the greater need for support among young people who take part in personal development activities compared to those preparing for employment.

⁹ Young people were required to be NEET for 20 weeks before starting the AA programme and were then allowed to remain on AA for a further 20 weeks.

¹⁰ Possible explanations for young people still being on the programme at the time of interview include delaying entry into the programme (i.e. waiting beyond the qualifying period of being NEET for 20 weeks) or staying on the programme beyond 20 weeks.

Table 3.3 shows the reasons for leaving AA before 20 weeks. A third of those who left the programme before 20 weeks had a positive reason for doing so - either because they had started a job (18%) or had started studying (15%). Men were more likely than women to leave the programme to start studying¹¹.

A further 16% left before 20 weeks because they thought they had completed the programme. It is unclear whether this reason should be viewed positively (as an indicator that the young people were ready to move on to other activities) or negatively (as a sign that they had misunderstood the extent of what the programme offered).

Approximately a quarter of the young people who left AA before 20 weeks had negative reasons for doing so such as not enjoying the activities (15%), having problems with transport (3%) or the Connexions adviser (3%) or finding the money inadequate (2%). Women were more likely than men to say that they left the programme because they did not enjoy the activities (20% compared with 10%). However, men were more likely to give finding the money inadequate as a reason for leaving (4% compared with 1%).

Table 3.3 Reasons for finishing AA before 20 weeks (W1)

*Base Description: Wave 1 participants who had completed programme before 20 weeks
Percentages do not add up to 100 since more than one answer could apply*

Reasons for finishing AA	%
Started a job	18
Started studying	15
Did not enjoy / problems with scheme activities	15
No time for scheme	2
Problems with CXS adviser	3
Transport difficulties / too far away	3
Money not enough	2
YP believes completed AA	16
Other	26
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>353</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>569</i>

¹¹ 17% of men left the programme because they had started studying compared with 13% of women.

3.6 Participation in AA activities

The AA programme is designed to engage young people in a wide range of activities as a first step to preparing them for further education, training or employment. For the purposes of the survey, these activities were grouped as follows:

- Job-related: work-experience placements, work-related skills, work taster courses.
- Personal development: activities, courses or training not leading to a qualification, e.g., confidence-building, healthy living, sport/outward bounds, and specific skills development, e.g., drama.
- College-based: activities relating to going to college or doing formal qualification, basic skills.

Participants were asked about the kinds of activities they had undertaken as part of the AA. Taking responses to waves 1 and 2 together, 72% reported job-related activities, 64% did personal development activities and 61% reported college-related activities (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Activities undertaken on AA (W1 and W2)

Base Description: Wave 2 participants
Percentages do not add up to 100 since more than one answer could apply

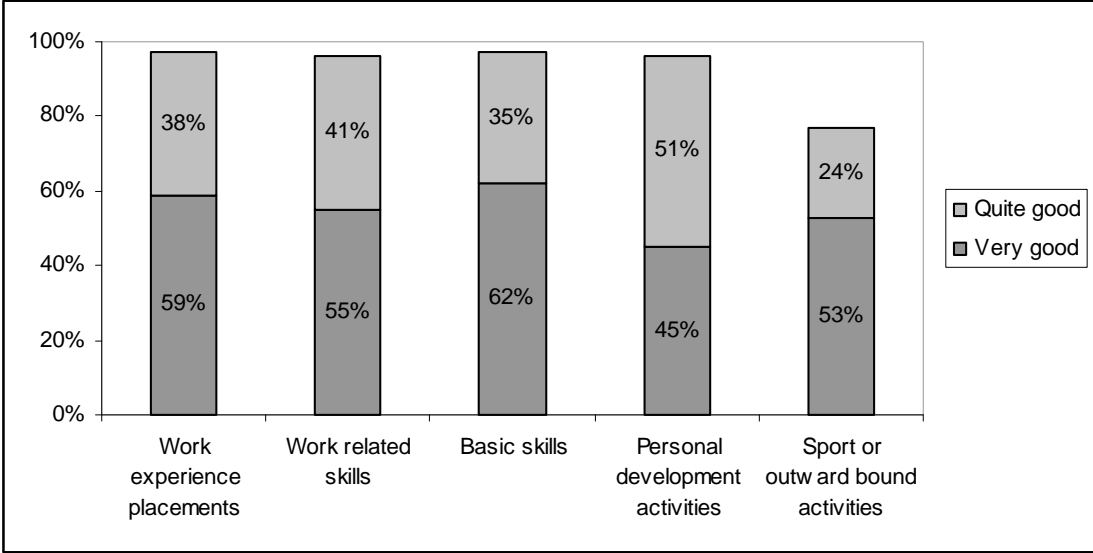
AA activities (broad groups)	Total
	%
Job-related	72
Personal development	64
College-based	61
Other	26
None	6
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	229
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	229

Of the 6% of participants who did not report participating in any activities, all but one said they were assigned a personal adviser with whom most had regular meetings or telephone calls. The programme theory strand of the evaluation (Focused Study 3) noted that for some young people their participation in AA was limited to personal adviser meetings, for example because they faced personal or structural barriers in doing the planned activities or because the engagement phase (in which young people and their advisers got to know one another) was protracted.

In the wave 2 interview, participants were asked to select up to three activities they had done as part of their AA to describe in greater detail. These were classified in the following categories: work experience, work-related skills, basic skills, personal development activities and sports or outward bound activities. All of these categories were rated positively by participants (Figure 3.4). Some key findings for each category are summarised below (see Tables A.21 - A.29).

Figure 3.4 Ratings of how good activities were

Base description: Activities selected for description by Wave 2 participants
(Unweighted bases for categories ranged between 33 and 69)



Work experience placements

This category comprised work experience placements and work taster courses and findings are based on the description of 33 activities. Compared with other activities, these required a bigger time commitment and were often more highly valued.

- They typically lasted for a number of weeks or for multiple days within a single week. Very few were limited to a single day (Table A.21).
- The majority of participants (58%) took the activity on their own, rather than as part of a group (Table A.24).
- Work-experience placements received the most favourable ratings when considering all the criteria by which participants assessed AA activities. 89% or more of participants gave positive ratings for the quality of the activity, the leader of the activity and how enjoyable it was. Moreover, most participants chose the most positive item on the rating scale, for example ‘very good’ rather than ‘fairly good’ (Tables A.25, A.26, A.28).
- 86% of participants said that these activities were helpful for their plans for the future (including 58% who said that they were very helpful) (Table A.29, Figure 3.5).

Work-related skills

This category comprised activities, courses or training to do with work-related skills, for example construction skills or guard training, and findings are based on the description of 33 activities. Compared with work experience placements, these activities generally involved a smaller time commitment and were not rated quite so favourably.

- The duration of these activities varied a lot: just under half ran over multiple weeks, while about a third were run in a single week and a fifth were run on a single day (Table A.21).

- Most participants (84%) did the activity as part of a group (Table A.24).
- 83% of participants said that these activities were helpful for their plans for the future (including 44% who said that they were very helpful) (Table A.29, Figure 3.5).

Basic skills

This category comprised activities, courses or training to do with basic skills, that is numeracy or literacy, and findings are based on the description of 69 activities.

- The duration of these activities varied a lot: more than half ran over multiple weeks, while about one-in-six were run in a single week and a quarter were run on a single day (Table A.21).
- Most participants (67%) did the activity as part of a group (Table A.24).
- 85% of participants said that these activities were helpful for their plans for the future (including 49% who said that they were very helpful) (Table A.29, Figure 3.5).

Personal development activities

This category comprised activities, courses or training to do with personal development, such as confidence-building and healthy living, and findings are based on the description of 68 activities. These activities differed from those covered above in that they were likely to have been undertaken by young people who were at a greater distance from employment and requiring more support.

- The duration of these activities varied a lot: 37% ran over multiple weeks, 25% were run in a single week and 38% were run on a single day (Table A.21).
- Most participants (87%) did the activity as part of a group (Table A.24).
- 79% of participants said that these activities were helpful for their plans for the future (including 38% who said that they were very helpful) (Table A.29, Figure 3.5).

Sport or outward bound activities

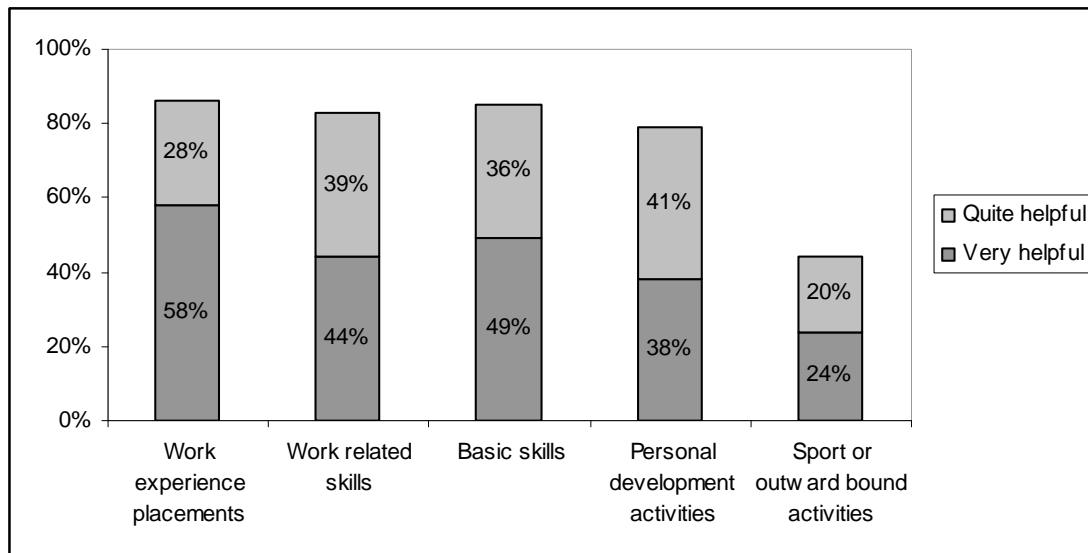
This category comprised activities, courses or training to do with sport or outward bound activities, including dance classes and adventure training, and findings are based on the description of 54 activities.

- These activities generally had either quite long duration (47% were spread over a number of weeks) or quite short duration (41% took place on a single day) (Table A.21).
- Nearly all participants (95%) did the activity as part of a group (Table A.24).
- For a minority of participants (30%), the location of the activity was rated as not convenient. This reflects the nature of sport and outward bound activities that often require specialist centres or specific outdoor locations (Table A.27).
- Participants rated the leaders of these activities particularly highly (73% rated them very good, 23% as quite good). This was the highest rated attribute for sports activities (Table A.26).

- On the other hand, sports activities were rated less favourably than other activities for being helpful for their future plans. Only 44% rated them as helpful (including 24% who said that they were very helpful) (Table A.29, Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5 Ratings of how helpful activities were for participants' plans for the future

*Base description: Activities selected for description by Wave 2 participants
(Unweighted bases for categories ranged between 33 and 69)*



These descriptions of activities at wave 2 indicate the diversity of young people's experiences on the AA programme and their relative position on the pathway towards engaging in EET activities. It is clear that for some young people, participation in the programme represents a first step in acquiring the personal skills necessary for employment or further education. By contrast, young people who had reached a higher level of attainment at school were closer along the path towards engaging in EET activities and were more likely to do job-related activities as part of their AA. For them, AA provided an opportunity to experience different kinds of work environments in preparation for applying for jobs.

3.7 AA payments and expenditure

AA payments

AA participants were entitled to a weekly allowance on condition that they completed their agreed activities for that week. (see Chapter 1, section 1.1). 81% of AA participants reported that they received such payments but 19% said they did not (Table A.30). More women than men reported that they had not received payments (25% compared with 15%).

The high proportion of participants claiming not to have received payments was a surprising finding and further analyses were undertaken to find out the status of these apparent non-recipients. Among the self-reported reasons for not receiving AA payments, ineligibility for payments due to benefit receipt or some other reason was given by 16% and 41% respectively, and problems doing agreed activities was reported by 18% (Table A.31). For some young people, there may have been a misunderstanding about the source of the AA payment. However, whatever the reason for reporting non-receipt of payment, the young people were participants in AA, reporting activities and/or adviser meetings.

Even among those who said they received weekly payments, more than a third had weeks when they did not receive their payments (35%). Among those who were paid irregularly, the main reasons were related to failure to comply with the requirements of the AA programme (Tables A.32 and A.33).

Expenditure

When asked how they spent their AA allowance payments, participants most commonly mentioned spending it on travel and transport (62%), entertainment or leisure (61%) and clothes and shoes (58%). Approximately one third of young people spent the money on food to eat at home (36%) and a similar proportion spent it on housekeeping, board or rent (39%) (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5 What participant spent AA on (W1)

Base Description: Wave 1 participants who received payments

Items	%
Travel and transport	62
Entertainment/leisure, including cigarettes / alcohol	61
Clothes and shoes	58
Housekeeping, board, rent	39
Food to eat at home	36
Paying into savings	19
Books or equipment for school / college	12
Paying off debts	10
Children	4
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>513</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>879</i>

At wave 2, 39% of participants said they spent money on their AA activities, which on average amounted to £13 a week. For the majority (90%), the money was spent on travel and for some (38%), travel costs were reimbursed, at least in part.

Where participants lived with a parent and gave their consent for their parent to be interviewed, the parent was asked questions about the AA payments. Most parents were aware of their son or daughter receiving payments (75%) (Table A.34). A minority of the parents who knew that their son or daughter had received payments reported that the young person made a contribution towards household costs (22%). Although the number of young people contributing towards household costs was low, the contributions were considered important by most parents to which this question applied (92%) (Tables A.35 and A.36).

Although parents living in Variant 3 pilot areas should have received a weekly payment, only 55% of responding parents reported receiving such a payment (Table A.37). This finding may be unreliable due to the small number of respondents to this question and it may be the case that the parent who was interviewed was not the one to whom the payment was made. Nevertheless, it suggests that the identification of the AA programme to parents was less strong than it was to young people. It is a concern that parents were uncertain about the source of payments or were unable to distinguish them from other benefits they might have received.

3.8 Perceived value of AA

When the young people reflected on the value of taking part in AA, the aspects considered useful resonated to some extent with the reasons for taking part in the first place. Two of the main reasons for choosing to take part in AA were for something to do and for help in finding a job and these were mentioned by 19% and 26% respectively as valuable aspects of taking part in AA.

There were also some unexpected benefits of participation, most notably gaining experience and confidence, mentioned by 31% of participants. This might be considered an important aspect of ‘distance travelled’ towards the more tangible outcomes of engagement in education or employment. Interestingly, the scheme payments were only mentioned by 14% of young people as a useful aspect of AA participation and this did not vary according to the level of payment (Table 3.6).

Table 3.6 Aspects of AA that were considered useful (W1)¹²

Base Description: Wave 1 participants
Percentages do not add up to 100 since more than one answer could apply

Value of AA	%
More experience / confidence	31
Help finding job / future career	26
Advice / support from Connexions	21
Something to do / bored otherwise	19
Qualifications / skills	18
Help to find education / course	17
Money, scheme payments	14
Meeting new people	5
Other specific answer	3
Nothing / not useful	12
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	637
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	1018

More men than women reported having something to do and avoiding boredom as a benefit of AA (23% compared with 14%). By contrast, women were more likely than men to highlight the advice and support of Connexions as a useful aspect of the programme.

There was a notable variation in the features found useful according to prior GCSE attainment. High attainers found AA more useful for finding a job, reflecting their motivation for taking part and their greater involvement in job-related activities on the programme. Low attainers, in contrast, were more likely to say that they acquired skills and qualifications as a result of AA. They were also more likely to say that they found nothing useful about participating in the programme (Table A.38).

Most parents had a positive perception of Connexions and their perceptions of the value were similar (in the aggregate) to those of participants.

¹² The proportions of participants rating different aspects of AA as useful may seem quite low, but this can be explained by the fact that the responses were pre-coded but not read out.

More than three quarters (76%) of parents thought that the young person's contact with Connexions had been helpful and, more specifically, 71% thought that the contact with Connexions had been helpful for making decisions about and preparing for future activities such as work or further education (Tables A.39 and A.40).

The views of parents as to the value of the Connexions scheme mirrored the views of the young people about AA with the main value perceived to be more experience or confidence (27%). Also of importance was the young person having something to do (18%) (Table A.41).

12% of parents and AA participants thought that nothing was useful about the programme but the young people and parents taking this view were not on the whole from the same families.

3.9 Conclusion

Participants' reports of their experiences of taking part in AA suggested that the programme met their needs in a number of ways.

Firstly, there was a reasonably good fit between young people's motivations for taking part in AA and what the programme offered. Finding a job was the main motivating factor for taking part in AA and job-related activities were undertaken by the majority of participants. Other motivations for taking part reported by participants, such as getting more education or training or improving experience and confidence, were also addressed by the activities that were provided.

Secondly, participants' views of what was motivating and valuable about the course supported the conclusion of other parts of the evaluation that beyond the initial 'hook', the AA payment receded in importance compared to other benefits of participation. The activities and support received were felt to be of greater importance and most young people felt that they would have taken part without the payment.

Thirdly, the individual support of personal advisers, which is a cornerstone of the programme, was well-received. Young people maintained regular contact with their PA while on the programme, both with meetings and phone contact, and this was one of the features of the programme that participants spontaneously mentioned as being useful.

Fourthly, while there was considerable diversity in the focus, duration and method of delivery of activities, participants' ratings of them were consistently positive. While our evidence does not allow us to assess whether young people were assigned to the most appropriate activities for their needs, this picture does suggest that customisation to individual needs worked reasonably well.

Among the mix of activities offered, work experience placements appeared to be distinctive in involving a longer time commitment and being experienced individually rather than as part of a group. Other strands of this research have identified that a lack of work experience placements was the most consistent gap across the areas. Where participants experienced this provision it was rated very positively, at least as highly as the other forms of activity delivered in the programme.

Finally, both participants and their parents were largely positive about how taking part in AA would be helpful for the future. Both participants and their parents felt that they gained experience and confidence through the programme.

4 THE IMPACT OF AA ON PARTICIPANTS

4.1 Key findings

- A key change that AA participation brought about is that many more NEET young people undertake personal development activities than otherwise would have. With AA, around 30% of participants reported doing some personal development activities (based on a description of this type of activity used in the interview) in the 12 month period after first becoming NEET. This would have been just 4% without AA.
- Beyond this the impacts of AA are more modest. Around 17% of AA participants entered paid work without training in the 12 month period after first becoming NEET. This percentage would have been higher, at around 27% in the absence of AA.
- A small percentage of AA participants (around 3%) entered work-based training as a direct result of AA, and around 7% took up studying towards a qualification who otherwise wouldn't have.
- The short-term (i.e. three month) post-participation impact of AA is to generate an approximate 13 percentage point shift in outcomes: away from non-activity or employment in jobs without training and towards work-based training and studying. This is a small, but nevertheless, positive impact.
- Associated with these small impacts on employment and education outcomes, AA also has a small, but positive impact on attitudes. Across a range of measures, between 5% and 10% of participants demonstrated more positive attitudes towards education and the future in general as a result of their participation, and 4% felt more confident than a year ago.
- Asking AA participants directly what the impact of AA has been on them the picture is rather more positive. One plausible interpretation is that AA *helps* young people to attain positive outcomes even if AA is the determining factor in only a minority of cases.

4.2 Introduction

In this chapter we turn to the question of whether the AA programme has been successful in changing the activities and attitudes of those taking up an agreement, measured in terms of changes in educational activities, employment activities and, more generally, attitudes towards work and training.

This question of impact has been looked at in two ways. Firstly, we have looked for evidence that AA changes the experiences of NEET young people over the one year period after they first become NEET. This primarily addresses the question of whether activities undertaken during time on AA are genuinely different to those that would occur under standard arrangements.

Secondly, we have examined whether, after finishing an agreement, there is any evidence that the subsequent activities and attitudes of young people are changed as a consequence of their participation. The timing of the evaluation means that these post-participation impacts can only be measured over a three-month period, but the findings nevertheless give important insights into the possible effectiveness of AA.

4.3 How impact is measured

To measure the impact of AA it is not sufficient to observe the pattern of behaviours for participants. It is also necessary to estimate what those behaviours would have been if AA had not been available, so that the 'added value' of AA can be assessed. In practice this means that participants have to be compared with a comparison group of young people who did not take up an AA.

The identification of a suitable comparison group is in many ways the most complex element of impact studies, and the selection, and assessment of the suitability of a comparison group is a technical exercise. The details of the approach used for this evaluation are included in Appendix C, but the basic idea behind the adopted method is that those taking up an Activity Agreement in one of the pilot areas have been matched to young people in non-AA comparison areas who had very similar characteristics to the AA participants. That is, the comparison group match the participant group in terms of characteristics such as sex, age, qualifications on leaving school, and employment and training undertaken since leaving school. The aim is to ensure we are comparing AA participants with a group of young people in non-pilot areas who are, on average, very similar to the AA participants but who experience standard services only.

Having identified a suitable comparison group, the measurement of impact is then straightforward: it is simply the rate of (positive or negative) outcomes for AA participants minus the rate for the comparison group. For example, if 14% of participants take up work-based training and 11% of the comparison group do, then the estimate of impact is three percentage points (that is, 14% minus 11%). The interpretation of the three percentage points is that 3% of participants take up work-based training who otherwise wouldn't have.

The evaluation of AA was carried out over a relatively short time period, and outcomes for participants were only captured for a period of one year after first becoming NEET, and just 32 weeks after becoming eligible for AA. This means that some of the impacts we have captured are essentially changes in behaviour whilst on an agreement, rather than changes once the agreement is over. These we have termed 'impacts on the experiences of NEET young people'.

As far as possible we have also attempted to calculate post-AA outcomes, but to do so we have had to restrict attention to those participants who took up an agreement relatively quickly after their 20th week of being NEET. And even for these we can only estimate impacts that happen in the period immediately after leaving the programme (up to three months). The post-AA impact on those who take up AA after many more than 20 weeks of being NEET is simply not known.

In the sections that follow we look, in turn, at the impacts of AA on educational and employment outcomes, and then on attitudes towards learning and work. Note that all outcomes are self-reported by young people during a survey interview, and some depend on quite detailed recall questions. So there will not always be an exact match between the outcomes we report on here and those recorded by programme staff.

Towards the end of the chapter (Section 4.8) we look at AA impact from the perspective of participants. In our smaller follow-up (Wave 2) survey of 229 participants, respondents were asked to reflect on their experience of AA and judge whether it had helped them in terms of their abilities and, for those having taken up training or employment since leaving AA, whether they considered AA to have helped with those activities.

The chapter is restricted to the key findings from the impact study. More detail on impacts, across sub-groups and pilot variants is given in Appendix B. Appendix E looks at the relationship between the impact on participants and the overall AA participation rate.

4.4 The impact of AA on the experiences of NEET young people

In this section we look at how the experiences of participants on AA during the 12 month period after first becoming NEET differ to the experiences of the comparison (or ‘standard arrangements’) group. The period covered includes the period on the Activity Agreement, so some of the differences between the participant and comparison group are directly attributable to AA activities.

The intention of the analysis here is to quantify the extent to which the experiences of AA participants over the one year period differed from what they would have been without AA. (The interpretation of the comparison group here is that it gives an indication of what the year since becoming NEET would have looked like for participants if AA had not been available.) A range of outcome measures were examined, reflecting as far as possible the range of experiences that AA might be expected to influence over the period:

- **Self-reported personal development activities.**

Survey respondents were asked whether they had done any courses or activities to do with skills or personal development. Examples were given to illustrate what was meant: confidence-building, basic skills activities such as writing skills, or skills for employment such as CV writing. Any activities that respondents recalled that took place within the one year reference period (that is the period since becoming NEET) have been included here.

We might expect that the definition of this category was less clear-cut and distinct than some of the others listed below and it would be plausible to hypothesise that respondents’ self-reports would underestimate their true level of involvement in these sorts of activities. Certainly, at the time of the Wave 2 interview, participants gave responses that suggested higher levels of personal development activity than the single question at the Wave 1 interview elicited (see Chapter 3). But because no members of the comparison group took part at Wave 2 we cannot make use of this extra information in the analysis reported in this chapter.

- **Work-based training.**

That is, Entry to Employment, Apprenticeships, the New Deal and other government supported training.

- **Other paid work**

Excluding those who entered work-based training, others who entered work in the one year reference period have been divided into four mutually exclusive categories according to the type of occupation (non-elementary or elementary¹³) and whether or not it had in-house training, as follows:

¹³ Elementary occupations are those occupations with a Standard Occupational Coding of 9 (summarised by the ONS as occupations that do not require formal educational qualifications but will usually have an associated short period of formal experience-related training). For the purposes of the evaluation we have defined in-work training as any work that includes training through classes, seminars or tutorials, or any work where the employer pays (in full or in part) for external study.

- those entering non-elementary occupations with in-work training;
- those entering elementary occupations with in-work training
- those entering non-elementary occupations with no in-work training;
- those entering elementary occupations with no in-work training.

- **Voluntary work.**

Self-defined by survey respondents

- **Studying for a nationally recognised education course**

Defined as study towards a qualification classifiable under the National Qualification Framework (NQF)

- **Studying for another qualification** that is not classifiable under the NQF.

- **None of the above** activities in the 12 month period.

Table 4.1 below shows the differences between the participant and comparison groups on each of these outcome variables. Significant differences¹⁴ between the participant and comparison groups are marked with an asterisk.

Table 4.1 Participation in education and employment related activities within 12 months of becoming NEET

Base Description: All participants

	Participants	Comparison group	Difference
	%	%	
Personal development activities	30.0	4.4	25.6*
Work-based training	14.3	11.0	3.3*
Other work - with in-house training	7.0	7.9	-0.9
<i>Of which:</i>			
<i>non-elementary occupation</i>	5.1	4.9	0.2
<i>elementary occupation</i>	1.9	3.0	-1.0
Other work - without in-house training	16.9	26.5	-9.6*
<i>Of which:</i>			
<i>non-elementary occupation</i>	8.7	13.3	-4.6*
<i>elementary occupation</i>	8.2	13.2	-5.0*
Voluntary work	7.2	5.5	1.7
Studying for NQF qualification	23.6	18.3	5.3*
Studying for other qualification	4.0	1.8	2.2*
None of the above in the 12 months	28.8	41.8	-13.1*
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	1013	1013	
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	1013	2291	

The most striking feature of Table 4.1 is the difference in the rates of personal development activities between the participant and comparison groups. In the comparison group, just 4% of young people described having done any personal development activities over the 12 month period since first becoming NEET: so it would appear that without AA very few of the AA participants would have had the opportunity to take part in this sort of activity. With AA, the rate increases to a self-reported level of 30%¹⁵.

¹⁴ That is, differences that on a statistical tests are shown to be significantly different to zero. We have based all tests on a 10% significance level rather than a conventional 5% test because most observed impacts are small yet the sample size is too small to allow for many of the smaller impacts to be detected with a 5% test. Using a 10% significance level does however increase the risk that some differences that are essentially due to sampling error are interpreted as real impacts.

¹⁵ Furthermore, given that we have evidence from the Wave 2 interviews that this 30% is in fact an underestimate, the difference between the groups may also be underestimated.

Conversely, we estimate that around 42% of participants would have done no activities from our outcomes list over the 12 month period without AA, whereas, *with* AA, this percentage is reduced to 29%.

Aside from personal development activities, the difference between activities with AA and the activities that would have happened in the absence of AA are much less pronounced. In our study 14% of participants reported undertaking work-based training in the 12 month period, but we estimate that 11% would have done so even in the absence of AA. The difference (3 percentage points) is not statistically significant.

There is some evidence that AA changes the employment characteristics of NEET young people:

- AA appears to deter a proportion of participants from entering paid work for which there is no in-work training. The percentage carrying out paid work without training was estimated at 17% for participants, and we estimate it would have been closer to 27% without AA.
- Similarly, fewer participants entered elementary occupations than otherwise would (10% rather than 16%).
- There may also have been a small increase in the numbers doing voluntary work as a result of AA (7% of participants reported doing some voluntary work, and we estimate it would have been 5% without AA - although the difference is not statistically significant).

The impacts on training are of a similar scale:

- Around a quarter (slightly under 24%) of participants reported they had undertaken studying towards an NQF qualification during the 12 month reference period. The percentage is lower in the comparison group (at just over 18%), suggesting that around 5% of participants took up NQF recognised study as a result of AA.
- In addition some young people who were not studying for an NQF qualification still reported they were doing some studying towards a qualification. For these types of studying the impact of AA is much smaller (4% of participants reported they were doing studying of this sort, and we estimate it would have been 2% without AA).
- Overall, the percentage of participants studying towards a qualification was 28%, compared to 20% in the comparison group.

To summarise, the main change in the experiences of young people that AA participation brings about is that many more undertook personal development activities than otherwise would have. In the absence of AA we estimate that many more of the participants would have done no activities at all in the 12 month period. In addition, around 10% more would have entered paid work without training in the absence of AA. In contrast, we estimate that a small percentage of participants (around 3%) entered work-based training as a direct result of AA, and around 7% took up study towards a qualification. Given that these impacts are measured on participants (that is, those who actively took up an Activity Agreement), the fact that the impacts on activities other than personal development are below 10% we interpret as positive, but modest success, since it means that activities were changed for less than one in 10 participants.

Appendix B shows Table 4.1 by sub-groups of participants (based on sex, age, qualifications on leaving school, and whether or not the participant lives with a parent or parents). There is some evidence that the impacts of AA differ by these sub-groups, although small sample sizes mean that moderate differences may exist that can't be detected statistically.

However, the results show that the impact on the take up of work-based training is greatest for those who leave school with the highest qualifications and among 16 year olds. There is also some evidence that AA increases the rate of formal study for young NEET women by about 10 percentage points, but much less so for young NEET men (at just 2 percentage points).

Appendix B also shows impacts by variant. The evidence of difference in impact is less clear-cut here, although the data suggests that the impact on work-based training is relatively high for Variant 1, offset, to a degree, by a greater impact on formal studying in Variants 2 and 3. It is possible that this is partly an area effect, reflecting a higher volume of opportunities for work-based training in Variant 1 areas relative to comparison areas¹⁶. There are very few differences between the impacts of Variants 2 and 3.

There is also evidence from elsewhere in the evaluation that the take-up of AA was greatest for Variant 2 (that is the variant that involves a £30 payment per week to young people rather than £20), although the calculation of take-up is complex and giving definitive rates is not straightforward. Nevertheless, given that Variant 2 appears to generate broadly *similar* impacts on participants to Variants 1 and 3, the fact that it had greater 'reach' than the other variants suggests that it is probably the most successful variant overall. The issue of participation rates is touched on in Section 4.7 and addressed in more detail in Appendix E.

In the next section we look at whether the differences in experiences in the 12 month period persist once young people complete their agreements.

4.5 The short-term impact of AA after participation

In order to look at whether AA changes outcomes for participants once they have completed their agreement, we have looked specifically at those participants who started and ended their agreement relatively quickly after first becoming eligible¹⁷ and for whom we have at least three months of follow-up data. This allows us to look at impacts after leaving AA for a three month period: that is, we can estimate the short-term impacts of AA. Note that we do not have data that allows us to generate longer-term impacts. The same range of outcome measures have been used, the results being shown in Table 4.2.

Note that restricting the sample to early participants reduces the sample size of participants quite considerably (from 1018 participants to just 321) so estimated impacts have to be large for us to be able to generate results that are statistically significant. In practice the estimated impacts are only moderate so there are very few 'significant' findings. Nevertheless, the general pattern of findings is at least indicative and we have reported on them at face value.

¹⁶ In two of the three variant 1 areas entries to work-based training were higher than average for *all* the NEET young people in our sample, and not just for those taking up an Activity Agreement. This suggests that there may simply be greater opportunities for work-based training in these areas relative to other areas.

¹⁷ That is, those completing an agreement within nine months of becoming NEET

Table 4.2 Participation in education and employment related activities for the 3 months post-participation

Base Description: Participants completing AA within 9 months of first becoming NEET

	Participants	Comparison group	Difference
	%	%	
Personal development activities	11.2	3.0	8.2*
Work-based training	16.3	10.3	6.0*
Other work - with in-house training	6.9	7.8	-0.9
<i>Of which:</i>			
<i>non-elementary occupation</i>	5.3	5.3	0.0
<i>elementary occupation</i>	1.6	2.5	-1.0
Other work - without in-house training	15.8	24.1	-8.3*
<i>Of which:</i>			
<i>non-elementary occupation</i>	9.6	14.4	-4.8
<i>elementary occupation</i>	6.2	9.7	-3.5
Voluntary work	5.2	4.7	0.5
Studying for NQF qualification	25.2	20.1	5.1
Studying for other qualification	6.4	4.7	1.7
None of the above in the 12 months	34.9	39.6	-4.7
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	321	321	
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	321	1082	

Contrasting Table 4.2 with Table 4.1, the clearest differences are in personal development activities: whereas participation in AA dramatically increased the rate of participation in personal development activities (with 30% of participants undertaking personal development activities), once the Activity Agreement was over the rate of these activities fell very considerably to just 11%. This suggests that Activity Agreements increase the rate of personal development activities during the lifetime of the agreements but much of this ceases post-participation. This is perhaps not surprising - if personal development during AA is seen as a means of triggering other, later, outcomes then the reduction in personal development activities after the end of the agreements is neither startling nor worrying.

In terms of the other activity outcomes, the key conclusions to be drawn from Table 4.2 are that:

- Following AA, around 51% of young people were found to be either in work with no training or doing none of the activities in our list (around 16% were in work with no training and 35% were doing no activities). In the absence of AA, we estimate this percentage would have been around thirteen percentage points higher at 64% (24% in work with no training and 40% doing no activities).

- This thirteen percentage point difference is largely accounted for by higher percentages of AA participants doing work-based training or study towards a qualification: 6% of participants are estimated to be doing work-based training in the three month period post-participation who otherwise would not have, and around 7% were undertaking study towards a qualification who otherwise would not have.

Overall, this suggests that the short-term (i.e. three month) impact of AA is to generate an approximate 13 percentage point shift in outcomes: away from non-activity or employment in jobs without training and towards work-based training and studying. This is, arguably, not a large impact, but it is nevertheless, positive.

4.6 The impact of AA on attitudes towards the future, learning and work

Although the main aim of AA is to promote and encourage positive activities among NEET young people, a secondary measure of success is that the attitudes of young people towards learning and work are changed as a result of participation. Indeed, if AA fails to impact on attitudes then, arguably, it will also fail in its broader aims.

A range of attitudinal questions were included in the Wave 1 evaluation survey. The same questions were asked of the comparison group as participants, so the responses given by the comparison group can be taken as indicative of the attitudes that participants would have held if AA had not been available to them.

The questions divide into four main groups, summarised in turn below.

The future and confidence

Around three quarters (76%) of AA participants felt that 'the things I have been doing in the last year will help me in the future'. This percentage was around 9 percentage points higher than in the comparison group: that is, without AA, only two-thirds (67%) would have felt so positive about the usefulness of the last year for the future.

Similarly, the proportion of participants who said that they felt less confident than a year ago was 3 percentage points lower than in the comparison group (15% compared with 18%), suggesting that AA improved participants' confidence.

There is some evidence that these improvements translated into clearer ideas about the future. Three-quarters of participants said they were clearer about what they want to do in the future now than a year ago, about 4% higher than in the comparison group.

Table 4.3 Attitudinal measures around the future, confidence, and independence*Base Description: All participants*

	Participants	Comparison group	Difference
Statement	% agree	% agree	%
I have clearer ideas about what I want to do in the future	75.0	71.2	3.8
I feel that the things I have been doing will help me in the future	76.4	67.4	9.0*
I feel less confident	14.8	18.3	-3.5
I feel more independent	85.9	85.3	0.6
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>1013</i>	<i>1013</i>	
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>1013</i>	<i>2291</i>	

Attitudes to learning

Table 4.4 shows participant attitudes to a range of statements about learning relative to the comparison group. The differences between the groups are fairly modest. In general, participants were slightly more positive than the comparison group in terms of openness to learning (the difference between the groups being about 5 percentage points). But the two groups were equally ambivalent about the usefulness of learning for employment.

Table 4.4 Attitudes to learning*Base Description: All participants*

	Participants	Comparison group	Difference
Statement	% agree	% agree	%
I'm not interested in doing any learning	14.0	19.6	-4.6*
Learning is only worth doing if there is a qualification at the end of it	57.5	59.4	-1.9
You need to have qualifications in order to have a job worth having	56.3	55.2	1.1
The skills you need at work can't be learned in a classroom situation	38.7	44.8	-6.1*
I couldn't afford to continue studying after year 11	19.5	27.7	-8.2*
Earning money is more important to me than staying on in education	46.5	44.9	1.6
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>1013</i>	<i>1013</i>	
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>1013</i>	<i>2291</i>	

Attitudes to work

We did not find AA to have had an impact on attitudes to work more generally. In particular, there is no evidence that AA has had any impact on the percentage of young people who would prioritise jobs with training over jobs with higher pay.

Table 4.5 Attitudes to work

Base Description: All participants

	Participants	Comparison group	Difference
Statement	% agree	% agree	%
In looking for a job I am more concerned to find one with training than one that pays best	56.3	56.3	0.0
I am prepared to take any job I can do	69.2	69.7	-0.5
Once you've got a job it's very important to hang on to it even if you don't really like it	67.0	68.3	-1.3
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>1013</i>	<i>1013</i>	
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>1013</i>	<i>2291</i>	

Overall, the impact on attitudes to education and the future seems to be broadly in line with the impacts on learning and employment. The impact on positive *attitudes* to work is, however, lower. In the short term, AA changes behaviour and attitudes towards education and the future for around 5-10% of participants.

4.7 The relationship between impact and AA participation rates

The evaluation study was initially designed to allow for impacts of AA measured across the whole of the eligible NEET population to be estimated, with outcome data being collected both for non-participants in pilot areas as well as participants. However, we have concentrated on impact on participants in this report, primarily because impacts measured on those directly affected by a programme are easier to interpret.

Nevertheless, the interpretation of the impacts on participants we have presented in this chapter have to be judged alongside the 'reach' of the programme: a programme that has modest impacts on participants but that has high take-up being, arguably, more effective than a programme with high impact on participants but low take-up.

The take-up or participation rate for AA has proved however, rather difficult to estimate, a full discussion of the issues being covered in Appendices E and F. Based on the NEET young people selected for the survey, we estimate the AA take-up rate to be about 19%. However, this is probably an under-estimate, because some of the survey population will no longer have been eligible when approached by programme staff about participation.

Nevertheless, taking the 19% participation rate at face-value, this suggests that if AA changes the behaviours and attitudes of about 10% of participants, then the AA pilot programme overall changed behaviours and attitudes for around 2% of all long-term NEET young people in the pilot areas (that is the programme brought about change for 10% of the 19% participants). In other words, around two in every 100 eligible NEET young people in pilot areas experienced a change in outcomes as a result of the introduction of the pilot.

4.8 Participants' perceptions of impact

In this final section we look at how AA participants themselves perceive that the programme has helped them. Questions on self-assessed impact were asked during the follow-up survey of participants (which took place, on average, 9 months after the Wave 1 interview), and covered impacts on skills, confidence and awareness of opportunities, followed by some specific questions on whether AA helped with employment and educational activities.

The questions asked of participants were of two types. Firstly all respondents were read a series of statements about the impact of AA (such as 'Taking part in the scheme has given me new skills'), and asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed with each statement. These questions were followed by a series of more specific questions about whether AA helped with recent employment or educational activities. For instance, those who had had a spell of paid work since ending their Activity Agreement were asked whether their Activity Agreement helped in their getting that work.

Note that just over a fifth (22%) of participants reported doing no activity from the pre-coded 'activity list' between ending their AA participation and being interviewed. That is, they reported no activities in terms of paid work, work-based training, other training or personal development, or voluntary work. These 22% were not asked about the impact of AA on their activities.

The bullet points below summarise the responses participants gave to the questions.

- On general skills and confidence, participants reported very favourably on AA: 76% agreed that the scheme had given them new skills, and 73% reported that they were more confident after doing their Activity Agreement.
- On training, most participants (76%) thought that AA had made them more aware of future training opportunities.
- On employment aspirations, somewhat fewer participants perceived an impact of AA, although the majority were still positive: 62% agreed with a statement that they had clearer ideas about the sort of job they wanted to do as a result of AA.

These self-reports of impact are rather more positive than the impact estimates generated from the comparison group study and reported on in Section 4.6 above. It is plausible that respondents attributed to AA some change that would have occurred irrespective of AA. Nevertheless, these findings stress how positively participants judged their AA experience.

Having said that, on the questions about whether AA specifically helped with activities, the responses were slightly less positive, with the exception of those entering training leading to a qualification. They do, nevertheless, suggest slightly greater impacts of AA than those derived from the comparison study:

- Around 54% of the participants had done some paid work since finishing their Activity Agreement, and about 30% of those said that AA had helped them to get this work.
- Around 14% reported doing work-based training since finishing AA, and of these just over one half (52%) of those said that AA had helped with their involvement in that.
- 38% reported having done some education or study leading to a qualification since leaving AA. This elicited the most favourable response to AA, with 72% of those saying that AA had helped them to do this.

- A small percentage of participants (11%) said they had done other training or personal development, and 40% of these said that AA had helped.
- Finally, a minority (13%) said they had done voluntary work, and AA was only thought to have assisted with this for a quarter of the 13%.

The questions asked of participants are not designed to be strictly compatible with the impact estimates based on the comparison sample approach. The questions focus on whether AA 'helped' with activities:- participants were not asked to judge whether they would have undertaken the activity *at all* without the AA. In contrast, the comparison group approach focuses on starker binary 'activity/non-activity' contrasts - that is would the activity have taken place if AA was not available?. So the fact that the impact attributed to AA by participants is greater than that found from the formal comparison study is not necessarily surprising.

Piecing the evidence together, the comparison study suggests that AA actually *changes* the outcomes of individuals in a minority of cases, but the larger impacts self-reported by participants suggest that AA may have *assisted* rather more young people to attain positive outcomes even though some of these outcomes would have been reached irrespective of AA.

4.9 Conclusions

In this chapter we have presented estimates of the impact of AA on the experiences of AA participants over the year since first becoming NEET, alongside estimates of the impacts in the three month period after participation.

The main change in the experiences of young people that AA participation brings about is that many more undertake personal development activities than otherwise would do.

These personal development activities under AA contributed to a higher overall level of positive activities than for the comparison group. In the absence of AA we estimate that around 42% of young people would have done no activities from our list at all in the 12 month period, compared to just 29% for AA participants.

Around 10% more young people would have entered paid work without training in the absence of AA. In contrast, a small percentage of participants (around 3%) entered work-based training as a direct result of AA, and around 7% took up studying towards a qualification.

As might be anticipated, in the three month period immediately after ending the Activity Agreement the level of involvement in personal development activities fell dramatically. But looking across a wider range of outcome measures, we estimate that the short-term (i.e. three month) post-participation impact of AA is to generate an approximate 13 percentage point shift in outcomes: away from non-activity or employment in jobs without training and towards work-based training and studying. This is a small, but positive, impact.

Associated with these impacts on employment and education outcomes, AA also has small, but positive impacts on attitudes. Across a range of measures, between 5% and 10% of participants demonstrated more positive attitudes towards education and the future in general as a result of their participation, and 3% felt more confident than a year ago.

Asking participants directly what the impact of AA has been on them the picture is rather more positive than the comparison study suggests. Taking these assessments as accurate it suggests that AA may *help* young people to attain positive outcomes even if AA is the determining factor in only a minority of cases.

5 Conclusions

This section sets out the main conclusions of the quantitative evaluation of the Activity Agreement pilots. The evaluation used a robust comparison design, whereby the experiences of participants in AA areas were compared with the experiences of similar young people in areas where standard support arrangements applied. This allowed estimation of the impact or 'added value' of AA on outcomes for young people. As the programme of research focused on the first year after young people became NEET, only short-term impacts of participation could be assessed.

AA achieved a small, but positive, increase in young people's involvement in positive activities during the first 12 months after they became NEET. The largest shift was in the proportion of young people reporting involvement in provision that met the description of personal development activities given in the interview: the findings suggest that 26% participants reported these activities who would not have done without AA. About 3% of participants entered work-based training and 7% of participants took up a qualification who would not have done without AA. On the other hand, take up of paid work without training was *lower* (by about 10 percentage points) than it would have been without AA. Overall, just 29% of AA participants had done none of the activities measured (personal development activities, work-based training, other paid work, voluntary work or studying for a qualification) in the 12 months since becoming NEET compared with 42% of similar young people in comparison areas.

AA delivered a small, but positive, impact on the incidence of positive outcomes in the short-term. Among young people who completed AA within 9 months of first becoming NEET, the short-term impact of the programme (three months after leaving) was to generate a 13 percentage point positive shift in outcomes: away from non-activity or employment in jobs without training and towards work-based training and studying.

AA also achieved a small positive impact on young people's attitudes towards the future and learning. AA participants had slightly more positive views than the comparison group about how their activities in the past year would help them in the future. They were less likely to say that their confidence had worsened in the past year and they had slightly more interest in learning. These short-term impacts on attitudes showed potential for longer-term impacts in the quality of activities taken up.

Beyond this, it seems likely that AA helped people to achieve positive outcomes even if it was the determining factor in only a minority of cases. The justification for this conclusion is that the proportion of participants attributing benefits to their involvement in AA was somewhat higher than the level of short-term impacts found in our comparison study. Most participants felt that AA had improved their skills and confidence. They felt that it had made them more aware of future training opportunities and had given them clearer ideas about what sort of job they wanted to do in future. Where participants had taken up a positive activity, many said that AA had helped them to get it (30% of those getting a job, 52% of those getting work-based training and 72% of those starting study for a qualification).

The take-up rate among the eligible long-term NEET population was 19%. Thus, the 26% impact on participants' take-up of personal development activities would imply an impact of about 5% on personal development activities for the eligible population.

The take-up rate was higher in Variant 2 areas (25%), where the weekly allowance for participants was £30, than in Variant 1 (15%) and Variant 3 areas (17%) where the allowance for participants was lower (£20). (In Variant 3 areas, a £30 allowance was also paid to parents.) Therefore, AA had the greatest impact on the eligible NEET population in Variant 2 areas because of the higher estimated take-up rate.

Participants' reports of their experiences of the programme indicated that it had operated broadly as intended:

- **The payments were effective in encouraging young people to take part in AA.** However, participants' retrospective judgement was that it was one of the less important factors and 75% said that they would have taken part without it. It seems likely that the importance of the payment had receded for many young people once they became engaged in activities. The weekly model of payments appeared to have operated successfully in most cases.
- **The individualised support of Personal Advisers was an integral and highly valued part of the package.** Participants had regular, substantial meetings with their PA that covered a wide range of advice and support. Nearly all young people found the help of their PA to be useful.
- **The programme delivered a wide range of activities that appeared to be customised to the needs of participants.** Participants stayed on the programme for a variable amount of time and the activities they took part in varied considerably in their focus, duration and method of delivery. While our evidence does not allow us to assess whether young people were assigned to the most appropriate activities for their needs, the ratings given to provision were consistently positive, which suggests that customisation to individual needs worked reasonably well.
- **Most participants completed the programme.** The length of time participants spent on the programme varied considerably, reflecting flexibility in delivery to meet individual needs. Nearly 40% stayed for at least the nominal 20 weeks and these participants had greater involvement with personal development activities, suggesting a greater need for support. Among the 63% who left before 20 weeks, only half left for negative reasons while half left because they had completed their planned activities or were taking up a job or training. The average length of time spent on the programme was about 15 weeks.
- **Work placements had an important role.** Other strands of the evaluation have identified that many pilot areas had gaps in the provision of work placements. Where young people took part in such placements, they tended to rate the experience it gave them very highly (at least as highly as the other forms of activities). Placements differed from other activities in typically having a longer duration and being delivered on an individual basis rather than to groups of young people.

Male and female participants had slightly different experiences of AA. Male AA participants showed more motivation towards getting help with looking for a job and tended to stay on the programme longer than women. Overall, AA had a greater impact on NEET young women than on NEET young men in terms of engaging in positive activities. AA increased the rate of studying for an NQF qualification among NEET young women by 10 percentage points (compared to an increase of just 2% for NEET young men).

There was little variation in the performance of the programme for the variants of AA. However, estimates of participation rate were highest for Variant 2, which had the highest payment to the young person. NEET young people in Variant 2 areas, where the payment to the young person was highest (at £30), were significantly more likely to take part in AA than those in the other areas. Variant 3, where there was a second payment to the parent, appeared to perform no worse than Variant 1. Moreover, most parents in all areas were positive about their son or daughter's support from Connexions, even if they did not necessarily know much about the AA, so there was no indication that payment to the parent improved participation.

Key questions that the research could not answer are whether the outcomes achieved by young people under AA were of better quality or would lead to longer-lasting engagement with positive activities than those they would have achieved without the programme. Young people's positive views about the value of their participation in AA suggests that the programme's individualised support may have helped them to make better decisions about what activities to take up. However, it would require a longer programme of research to answer this important question.

Appendix A Results tables for Chapters 2 and 3

The tables in this appendix relate to Chapters 2 and 3. The reason for presenting these tables in the appendix rather than in the main body of the report is to improve the readability of the commentary. References are made to these tables in the relevant sections of the report.

The tables pertaining to Chapter 2 (Tables A.1 - A.5) show figures for the NEET young people living in pilot areas who were eligible for AA, broken down by participants and non-participants. The differences between participants and non-participants in these appendix tables are not significant.

The tables relating to Chapter 3 (Tables A.6 - A.41) are about different aspects of AA participation and therefore present figures only for AA participants. In each case, the title of the table indicates whether it is based on responses to wave 1 or 2.

Table A.1 Highest education level of either parent: summary

Base Description - NEET 15 young people living with parents

Highest level of parental education	Participants	Non-participants	Total
	%	%	%
Degree-level qualification	6	6	6
Post-16 qualification*	16	21	20
No post-16 qualifications	58	56	57
Missing	20	17	18
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>531</i>	<i>2052</i>	<i>2583</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>864</i>	<i>1772</i>	<i>2636</i>

*Includes parents reported by young people in proxy interviews to have stayed on at school after 16.

Table A.2 Highest education level of either parent: detailed (where parent interview conducted)

Base Description - NEET 15 young people living with parents where a parent interview was conducted

Highest level of parental education	Participants	Non-participants	Total
	%	%	%
Degree-level qualification	7	7	7
Other HE qualification	3	6	5
A-level equivalent	13	16	15
Apprenticeship	5	6	6
Level 2 qualifications	23	22	22
Level 1 qualifications	7	9	9
Other	5	3	4
None	36	30	31
Missing	0	1	1
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	295	1183	1478
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	460	938	1398

Table A.3 Highest socio-economic classification of most recent occupation of either parent

Base Description - NEET 15 young people living with parents

Highest socio-economic classification	Participants	Non-participants	Total
	%	%	%
Managerial and professional occupations	7	8	8
Intermediate occupations	8	9	9
Routine and manual occupations	37	36	36
No current or recent job	32	32	32
Missing	16	14	15
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	530	2052	2582
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	862	1770	2632

Table A.4 Sources of parental income

Base Description - NEET 15 young people living with parents where a parent interview was conducted

Sources of income	Participants	Non-	Total
	%	participants	
Paid work	62	64	64
Occupational pension	1	1	1
Benefits	75	73	73
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	301	1201	1502
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	482	979	1461

Table A.5 Reasons for lack of school attendance

Base Description - NEET 15 young people who didn't attend school regularly or at all in Year 11

Percentages do not add up to 100 since more than one answer could apply

Reasons for lack of attendance	Participants	Non-	Total
	%	participants	
Educated at home	2	3	3
Excluded	24	31	29
Truancy	47	43	44
Illness	7	6	6
Moved area / living abroad	5	3	3
Pregnancy / childcare	3	2	2
Alternative education	4	5	4
Bullying	6	4	4
Personal reasons	3	3	3
Unable to get a place at school	0	1	1
Other answer	8	7	7
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	233	948	1181
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	347	782	1129

Table A.6 Reasons for agreeing to take part in AA by GCSE attainment and sex of participant (W1)

Base Description: Wave 1 participants

Percentages do not add up to 100 since more than one answer could apply.

	5+ GCSEs at A*-C	5+ GCSEs at A*-G	1-4 GCSEs at A*-G	No GCSEs	Male	Female	Total
Help finding a job	40	41	31	32	38	33	36
Something to do / bored otherwise	37	33	45	31	34	37	36
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>							637
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>							1018

Table A.7 Reasons considered important for taking part in AA (each reason individually prompted) (W2)

Base Description: Wave 2 participants

Percentages do not add up to 100 since more than one answer could apply.

Reasons for taking part	Total
	%
To learn new skills	95
To attend courses and training	94
Help with looking for a job	93
For one-to-one support or advice from Connexions	89
Something to do / to get out of the house	85
To take part in enjoyable activities	83
To meet new people	79
For weekly payment	65
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	229
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	229

Table A.8 Most important reason for taking part in AA (W2)*Base Description: Wave 2 participants*

Reasons for taking part	Total
	%
Help with looking for a job	30
To learn new skills	20
Something to do/to get out of the house	13
For one-to-one support or advice from Connexions	12
For weekly payment	12
To meet new people	6
To attend courses and training	5
To take part in enjoyable activities	2
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>229</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>229</i>

Table A.9 Whether assigned a PA (W1)*Base Description: Wave 1 participants*

Assigned a PA	Total
	%
Yes	90
No	9
Don't know	1
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>637</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>1018</i>

Table A.10 Frequency of contact with PA by telephone (W1)*Base Description: Wave 1 participants who reported contact with a PA*

Frequency of contact	Total
	%
At least once a week	64
At least once a month	18
Less than once a month	9
No contact with PA	8
Missing	*
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>574</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>948</i>

Table A.11 Content of discussion with PA (W2)*Base Description: Wave 2 participants who reported contact with a PA*

Content of discussion	Total
	%
Discuss options for jobs / studying in future	95
Discuss the activities of previous week(s)	92
Plan activities for the next week(s)	89
Get general mentoring, support or advice	89
Get help with looking for a job	88
Get help with looking for a college course	84
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	225
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	225

Table A.12 Whether young person signed an Activity Agreement (W2)*Base Description: Wave 2 participants*

Whether signed agreement	Total
	%
Yes	68
No	14
Missing	18
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	229
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	229

Table A.13 What was in the Activity Agreement (W2)*Base Description: Wave 2 participants who recalled signing an AA*

Content of agreement	Total
	%
An agreement to do certain activities	37
Money related	9
Help to get a job	2
Personal details	1
Other	3
Can't remember	17
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	157
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	167

Table A.14 Whether participant still on AA at Wave 1*Base Description: Wave 1 participants*

Whether still on AA	Total
	%
Yes	16
No	83
Missing	1
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>637</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>1018</i>

Table A.15 Whether participant still on AA at Waves 1 and 2*Base Description: Wave 2 participants*

Whether still on AA	Wave 1	Wave 2
	%	%
Yes	15	2
No	85	98
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>168</i>	<i>229</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>229</i>	<i>229</i>

Table A.16 Time spent on programme (W1)*Base Description: Wave 1 participants who had completed programme by W1 interview*

Time on programme	Total
	%
up to 5 weeks	27
5 to 9 weeks	15
10 to 14 weeks	13
15 to 19 weeks	12
20 to 24 weeks	19
25 to 29 weeks	7
30 weeks and over	7
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>527</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>887</i>

Table A.17 Reasons for finishing AA before 20 weeks (W2)*Base Description: Wave 2 participants who had completed programme before 20 weeks**Percentages do not add up to 100 since more than one answer could apply*

Reasons for finishing AA	Wave 2
	%
Started a job	22
Started studying	11
Didn't enjoy, problem with activities	22
Problems with CXS adviser	3
Transport / travel difficulties	3
Money not enough	1
YP believes completed AA	1
Other	21
Missing*	1
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>144</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>127</i>

Table A.19 Time spent each week on AA activities (W1)*Base Description: W1 participants who reported activities*

Time spent on AA activities	Total
	%
1 to 10 hours	62
11 to 20 hours	21
21 to 30 hours	7
31 to 40 hours	3
41 to 50 hours	1
Missing	7
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>597</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>953</i>

Table A.20 Whether happy with choice of activities (W2)*Base Description: Wave 2 participants*

	Total
	%
Yes	88
No	11
Missing	1
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>229</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>229</i>

Table A.21 How often young people took part in the selected activity (W2)*Base Description: Activities selected for description by Wave 2 participants.*

	Work experience placements/ taster	Work-related skills	Basic skills	Personal development	Sport / outward bound activities
	%	%	%	%	%
Just once, for a day or part of day	11	21	24	38	41
On a number of days in one single week	38	34	16	25	13
Over a number of weeks (even if not every day)	51	45	60	37	47
1-5 weeks	27	2	28	13	28
6-10 weeks	7	25	17	11	7
11-15 weeks	8	14	1	4	7
16-20 weeks	10	2	10	9	5
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	40	37	65	53	51
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	33	33	69	68	54

Table A.22 Hours per week young people took part in the selected activity (W2)*Base Description: Activities selected for description by Wave 2 participants.*

	Work experience placements/ taster	Work-related skills	Basic skills	Personal development	Sport / outward bound activities
	%	%	%	%	%
1-10 hours	13	37	51	33	40
11-30 hours	25	8	1	3	7
Over 30 hours	13	0	3	0	0
Not applicable - course lasted less than one week	49	55	45	63	53
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	40	37	65	53	51
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	33	33	69	68	54

Table A.23 Attendance of young person in the selected activity on the days the activity was planned to happen (W2)

Base Description: Activities selected for description by Wave 2 participants.

	Work experience placements/ taster	Work-related skills	Basic skills	Personal development	Sport / outward bound activities
	%	%	%	%	%
every day or nearly every day	78	69	51	52	42
more than half the days	10	0	17	4	2
half the days	0	9	3	3	9
less than half the days	1	1	4	3	1
Not applicable - course only lasted a day	11	21	24	38	41
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>54</i>

Table A.24 Whether young person did selected activity alone or as part of a group (W2)

Base Description: Activities selected for description by Wave 2 participants.

	Work experience placements/ taster	Work-related skills	Basic skills	Personal development	Sport / outward bound activities
	%	%	%	%	%
Did activity on their own	58	16	33	13	5
Did activity as part of a group	42	84	67	87	95
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>54</i>

Table A.25 Young person's rating of selected activity (W2)*Base Description: Activities selected for description by Wave 2 participants.*

	Work experience placements/ taster	Work-related skills	Basic skills	Personal development	Sport / outward bound activities
	%	%	%	%	%
very good	59	41	62	45	53
fairly good	38	55	35	51	24
not very good	3	0	4	4	13
or not at all good	1	5	0	0	9
very / fairly good	97	96	97	96	77
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>54</i>

Table A.26 Young person's rating of leader of selected activity (W2)*Base Description: Activities selected for description by Wave 2 participants.*

	Work experience placements/ taster	Work-related skills	Basic skills	Personal development	Sport / outward bound activities
	%	%	%	%	%
very good	67	55	65	56	73
fairly good	27	33	23	36	23
not very good	1	10	3	0	0
or not at all good	4	2	0	0	0
very / fairly good	94	88	88	92	96
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>54</i>

Table A.27 Young person's rating of the convenience of location of the selected activity (W2)

Base Description: Activities selected for description by Wave 2 participants.

	Work experience placements/ taster	Work-related skills	Basic skills	Personal development	Sport / outward bound activities
	%	%	%	%	%
very convenient	40	62	56	57	42
fairly convenient	42	35	37	24	27
not very convenient or not at all convenient	18 0	3 0	5 1	11 8	11 19
very / fairly convenient	82	97	93	81	69
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>54</i>

Table A.28 Young person's rating of how enjoyable the selected activity was (W2)

Base Description: Activities selected for description by Wave 2 participants.

	Work experience placements/ taster	Work-related skills	Basic skills	Personal development	Sport / outward bound activities
	%	%	%	%	%
very enjoyable	63	49	41	37	56
fairly enjoyable	26	43	51	48	25
not very enjoyable or not at all enjoyable	11 1	8 0	7 2	15 0	11 7
very / fairly enjoyable	89	92	91	85	81
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>54</i>

Table A.29 Young person's rating of how helpful the selected activity was for future plans (W2)

Base Description: Activities selected for description by Wave 2 participants.

	Work experience placements/ taster	Work-related skills	Basic skills	Personal development	Sport / outward bound activities
	%	%	%	%	%
very helpful	58	44	49	38	24
fairly helpful	28	39	36	41	20
not very helpful	12	14	11	10	8
or not at all helpful	2	3	4	12	47
Very / fairly helpful	86	83	85	79	44
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>54</i>

Table A.30 Whether participant received weekly payment from CXS (W1)

Base Description: Wave 1 participants

Whether received payments	
	%
Yes	81
No	19
Missing	*
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>637</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>1018</i>

Table A.31 Reasons for not receiving AA payments (W1)

Base Description: Wave 1 participants who did not receive payments

Reasons for no payments	
	%
Problem doing agreed activities	18
Problem meeting CXS worker	4
Problems with bank account	2
Not eligible, receiving benefits	16
Not eligible, other reason	41
Payments stopped, no reason given	22
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>122</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>137</i>

Table A.32 Any weeks without payment during AA (W1)*Base Description: Wave 1 participants who received payments*

Any weeks without payment	
	%
Yes	35
No	64
Missing	*
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>513</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>879</i>

Table A.33 Reasons why payments stopped (W1)*Base Description: Wave 1 participants whose payments were irregular*

Reasons payments stopped	
	%
Problems undertaking agreed activities	29
Problems meeting CXS adviser	18
Problems with bank account	17
Other specific answer	32
No reason given for stopped payments	7
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>180</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>291</i>

Table A.34 Whether parents aware of young person receiving payments (W1)*Base Description: Interviewed parents whose son/daughter received AA payments*

Whether parent aware of payments	
	%
Yes	75
No	16
Don't know	9
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>270</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>426</i>

Table A.35 Whether young person made contributions towards household (W1)

Base Description: Interviewed parents whose son/daughter received AA payments of which parents were aware

Whether young person made contributions	
	%
Yes	22
No	78
Don't know	*
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>202</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>326</i>

Table A.36 How important parents found contributions (W1)

Base Description: Interviewed parents whose son/daughter made contributions to household with AA payments

How important were contributions	
	%
Very important	62
Quite important	30
Not very important	6
Not at all important	2
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>63</i>

Table A.37 Whether parents in Variant 3 areas received payments (W1)

Base Description: Interviewed parents in Variant 3 areas

Whether parent received payments	
	%
Yes	55
No	44
Missing	*
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>96</i>

Table A.38 Aspects of AA found useful by GCSE attainment (W1)*Base Description: Wave 1 participants**Percentages do not add up to 100 since more than one answer could apply.*

	5+ GCSEs at A*-C	5+ GCSEs at A*-G	1-4 GCSEs at A*-G	No GCSEs	Total
Got skills / qualifications	13	16	26	20	19
Help finding job / future career	33	30	14	25	26
Nothing / not useful	5	10	16	13	11
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>					637
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>					1018

Table A.39 Parent's view of how helpful Connexions was to young person (W1)*Base Description: Interviewed parents who were aware that son/daughter had had contact with CXS over last year.*

How helpful	%
Very helpful	42
Quite helpful	34
Neither helpful nor unhelpful	7
Quite unhelpful	7
Very unhelpful	9
Missing	1
Very / quite helpful	77
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	290
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	462

Table A.40 Parent's view of how helpful Connexions was to young person's future (W1)

Base Description: Interviewed parents who were aware that son/daughter had had contact with CXS over last year.

How helpful	
	%
Very helpful	37
Quite helpful	34
Neither helpful nor unhelpful	10
Quite unhelpful	8
Very unhelpful	10
Missing	1
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>290</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>462</i>

Table A.41 Parent's view of most useful aspect of Connexions scheme (W1)

Base Description: Interviewed parents who reported that son/daughter had had contact with CXS as part of a scheme.

Value of AA	
	%
More experience / confidence	27
Something to do / bored otherwise	18
Help finding job / future career	7
Help to find education / course	6
Money, scheme payments	5
Qualifications / skills	5
Advice/support from CXS	5
Could study and do job together	1
Nothing / not useful	12
Other specific answer	11
Missing	4
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>164</i>
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>279</i>

Appendix B Results tables for impact analysis

Tables B.1 to B.5 in the following pages document the estimated impacts of AA by the three variants of AA (Table B.1) and then by sub-groups of participants. These sub-groups are defined in terms of:

- sex (Table B.2)
- age at the time of being AA eligible (that is, NEET for 20 weeks) (Table B.3)
- whether lived with parents (captured at the time of the Wave 1 interview) (Table B.4)
- and qualifications on leaving school (Table B.5).

The tables follow the format of Table 4.1 of Chapter 4 and document impacts of AA on the experiences of NEET young people over the 12 month period since first becoming NEET. The impacts include changes that took place during an Agreement.

The aim of the sub-group analysis is to establish whether AA had more, or different, impact on some groups of NEET young people than on others. However much of the analysis within groups is hampered by small sample sizes. So, many apparent differences in impact across sub-groups will not be significant on a formal statistical test. But some apparent differences and trends across groups do arise, and these are commented on below.

Differential impacts by variant

In terms of variant, Variant 1 stands out as having an apparently different pattern of impact compared to Variants 2 and 3. In Variant 1 for instance, around 10% more participants entered work-based training than in the comparison group (relative to an overall AA impact of just 3%). Similarly, somewhat fewer participants in Variant 1 entered other types of work (with or without in-house training) than did so in the comparison group or in other variants. For instance 14% of participants in Variant 1 entered work without training, compared to 17% overall.

Whether these differences for Variant 1 are a genuine 'Variant 1 effect' is difficult to disentangle. Entries to work-based training were certainly higher than average for participants in Variant 1 across all three of the pilot areas offering Variant 1. They were particularly high for Tyne and Wear, which suggests that this may be to some extent an area effect, reflecting the way in which AA was delivered in that area rather than the way that Variant 1 as a whole was delivered. The reason for the difference is unclear.

Differential impacts by sub-group

Sex

Table B.2, suggests that AA had a greater impact on NEET young women than on NEET young men. Without AA, around 47% of women would have done none of the activities in our list, compared with 29% of participants. This impact of 18% compares with an impact of only 9% for young men. In part, this is because women had a greater take-up of personal development activities. But a key component is that AA increased the rate of studying for an NQF qualification among NEET young women by 10 percentage points (compared to an increase of just 2% for NEET young men).

Age at NEET 20 weeks

Table B.3 shows impacts divided by age. Those aged 18 when they became eligible for AA are included with the 17 year-old group as the sample size of 18 year-old participants is very low.

Comparing 16 and 17 plus year olds, there is some evidence that the impact of AA on entries to work-based training was greater for 16 year olds than for 17 year olds (a 7 percentage point impact for 16 year olds compared to a 1% impact for 17 year olds). This association is reversed for work without training. A plausible explanation is that AA was more successful in moving 16 year olds out of work without training into work-based training.

There is also some evidence that 17 year olds were more likely to take up voluntary work as a result of AA than 16 year olds.

Whether living with parents

Around 17% of AA participants were not living with their parents at the time of the Wave 1 interview. For this group the greatest difference in the pattern of impacts is that the impact of AA on studying rates appears to have been particularly large. That is 17% of those not living with parents started study towards an NQF qualification who otherwise would not have. For those living with parents the impact is just 3%.

Qualifications on leaving school

In terms of qualifications when leaving school (table B.5), there are no marked variations in the impact of AA, although the data suggests that for work-based training the impact of AA is highest for those with the highest school-leaving qualifications (an impact of 8% for those with 5 or more grade A-C GCSEs, compared to 1% impact of AA for those with no grade A-Cs).

Table B.1 Participation in education and employment related activities within 12 months of becoming NEET, by variant

Base Description: All participants

	Variant 1			Variant2			Variant 3			All variants		
	Participants	Comparison group	Difference	Participants	Comparison group	Difference	Participants	Comparison group	Difference	Participants	Comparison group	Difference
	%	%		%	%		%	%		%	%	
Personal development activities	31.1	1.9	29.1*	30.9	6.9	24.1*	27.7	3.0	24.6*	30.0	4.4	25.6*
Work-based training	20.3	10.3	10.0*	11.7	10.9	0.8	12.6	11.9	0.7	14.3	11.0	3.3*
Other work - with in-house training	4.6	7.8	-4.5	7.2	7.4	-0.2	9.1	8.6	0.5	7.0	7.9	-0.9
<i>Of which:</i>												
<i>non-elementary occupation</i>	3.9	4.8	-0.9	5.6	4.6	1.0	5.4	5.3	0.1	5.1	4.9	0.2
<i>elementary occupation</i>	0.7	3.0	-3.0	1.6	2.8	-1.2	3.7	3.3	0.4	1.9	3.0	-1.0
Other work - without in-house training	14.3	26.5	-12.3*	17.9	27.7	-9.9*	18.3	24.7	-6.6	16.9	26.5	-9.6*
<i>Of which:</i>												
<i>non-elementary occupation</i>	7.9	15.1	-7.2*	9.7	12.7	-3.0	8.3	12.6	-4.6	8.7	13.3	-4.6*
<i>elementary occupation</i>	6.4	11.4	-5.1*	8.2	15.0	-6.9*	10.0	12.1	-2.2	8.2	13.2	-5.0*
Voluntary work	4.0	6.7	-2.6	8.5	5.2	3.3*	8.1	4.7	3.4	7.2	5.5	1.7
Studying for NQF qualification	22.4	19.7	2.7	22.4	17.8	4.6*	26.6	17.8	8.8	23.6	18.3	5.3*
Studying for other qualification	3.5	1.3	2.2	4.4	2.3	2.1	3.9	1.4	2.4	4.0	1.8	2.2*
None of the above in the 12 months	30.2	42.1	-11.9*	28.5	40.5	-12.0*	27.8	43.7	-16.0*	28.8	41.8	-13.1*
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	293	293		507	507		213	213		1013	1013	
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	293	2291		507	2291		213	2291		1013	2291	

Table B.2 Participation in education and employment related activities within 12 months of becoming NEET, by sex

Base Description: All participants

	Men			Women			All		
	Participants	Comparison group	Difference	Participants	Comparison group	Difference	Participants	Comparison group	Difference
	%	%		%	%		%	%	
Personal development activities	24.4	4.0	20.4*	37.9	5.1	32.9*	30.0	4.4	25.6*
Work-based training	15.8	13.4	2.4	12.2	7.8	4.5	14.3	11.0	3.3
Other work - with in-house training	8.6	8.6	-0.1	5.0	6.8	-1.8	7.0	7.9	-0.9
<i>Of which:</i>									
<i>non-elementary occupation</i>	5.6	5.3	0.3	4.4	4.3	0.1	5.1	4.9	0.2
<i>elementary occupation</i>	3.0	3.3	-0.4	0.6	2.5	-2.0	1.9	3.0	-1.0
Other work - without in-house training	19.5	28.4	-8.9*	13.4	24.0	-10.6*	16.9	26.5	-9.6*
<i>Of which:</i>									
<i>non-elementary occupation</i>	8.8	11.6	-2.8	8.7	15.7	-7.1*	8.7	13.3	-4.6*
<i>elementary occupation</i>	10.7	16.8	-6.1	4.7	8.3	-3.5	8.2	13.2	-5.0*
Voluntary work	7.2	5.5	1.7	7.2	5.4	1.8	7.2	5.5	1.7
Studying for NQF qualification	21.0	19.1	1.9	27.3	17.2	10.1*	23.6	18.3	5.3*
Studying for other qualification	5.5	0.8	4.7*	1.9	3.1	-1.1	4.0	1.8	2.2*
None of the above in the 12 months	28.9	38.0	-9.2*	28.6	47.1	-18.5*	28.8	41.8	-13.1*
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	547	547		466	466		1013	1013	
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	547	1209		466	1082		1013	2291	

Table B.3 Participation in education and employment related activities within 12 months of becoming NEET, by age (at NEET of 20 weeks)

Base Description: All participants

	16			17 plus			All		
	Participants	Comparison group	Difference	Participants	Comparison group	Difference	Participants	Comparison group	Difference
	%	%		%	%		%	%	
Personal development activities	31.4	5.8	25.7*	29.2	3.5	25.7*	30.0	4.4	25.6*
Work-based training	18.8	12.2	6.7	11.8	10.6	1.2	14.3	11.0	3.3
Other work - with in-house training	7.0	5.4	1.6	7.1	8.9	-1.8	7.0	7.9	-0.9
<i>Of which:</i>									
<i>non-elementary occupation</i>	6.0	3.0	3.0	4.6	5.5	-0.9	5.1	4.9	0.2
<i>elementary occupation</i>	1.0	2.4	-1.4	2.5	3.4	-0.9	1.9	3.0	-1.0
Other work - without in-house training	13.2	27.0	-13.3*	19.1	26.9	-7.7*	16.9	26.5	-9.6*
<i>Of which:</i>									
<i>non-elementary occupation</i>	5.6	11.6	-6.0*	10.6	14.7	-4.1*	8.7	13.3	-4.6*
<i>elementary occupation</i>	7.6	15.4	-7.3*	8.5	12.2	-3.6*	8.2	13.2	-5.0*
Voluntary work	3.4	7.9	-4.5	9.4	4.2	5.1*	7.2	5.5	1.7
Studying for NQF qualification	25.2	22.0	3.2	22.7	17.1	5.6*	23.6	18.3	5.3*
Studying for other qualification	3.1	1.2	-1.9	4.5	2.2	2.3*	4.0	1.8	2.2*
None of the above in the 12 months	25.5	40.4	-14.9*	30.6	42.1	-11.6*	28.8	41.8	-13.1*
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	302	302		711	711		1013	1013	
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	302	602		711	1568		1013	2291	

Table B.4 Participation in education and employment related activities within 12 months of becoming NEET, by whether live with parents (at time of outcome interview)

Base Description: All participants

	Live with parents			Do not live with parents			All		
	Participants	Comparison group	Difference	Participants	Comparison group	Difference	Participants	Comparison group	Difference
	%	%		%	%		%	%	
Personal development activities	29.3	4.5	24.8*	33.7	4.0	29.7*	30.0	4.4	25.6*
Work-based training	14.9	11.7	3.2	11.3	7.1	4.2	14.3	11.0	3.3
Other work - with in-house training	8.4	8.3	0.1	0.9	5.8	-4.9*	7.0	7.9	-0.9
<i>Of which:</i>									
<i>non-elementary occupation</i>	6.1	5.0	1.1	0.3	4.3	-4.0*	5.1	4.9	0.2
<i>elementary occupation</i>	2.3	3.3	-1.0	0.6	1.5	-0.9	1.9	3.0	-1.0
Other work - without in-house training	18.4	28.1	-10.3*	12.5	17.8	-5.5	16.9	26.5	-9.6*
<i>Of which:</i>									
<i>non-elementary occupation</i>	9.6	13.8	-4.8*	7.3	10.3	-3.0	8.7	13.3	-4.6*
<i>elementary occupation</i>	8.8	14.3	-5.5*	5.2	7.5	-2.3	8.2	13.2	-5.0*
Voluntary work	6.9	5.8	1.1	8.5	3.5	5.0	7.2	5.5	1.7
Studying for NQF qualification	22.8	19.7	3.1	27.3	10.7	16.6*	23.6	18.3	5.3*
Studying for other qualification	4.3	1.8	2.5*	2.3	1.8	0.5	4.0	1.8	2.2*
None of the above in the 12 months	27.7	38.6	-10.9*	34.2	59.1	-24.9 *	28.8	41.8	-13.1*
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	<i>844</i>	<i>844</i>		<i>169</i>	<i>169</i>		<i>1013</i>	<i>1013</i>	
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	<i>859</i>	<i>1775</i>		<i>154</i>	<i>516</i>		<i>1013</i>	<i>2291</i>	

Table B.5 Participation in education and employment related activities within 12 months of becoming NEET, by qualifications on leaving school

Base Description: All participants

	No GCSEs			No grade A-C GCSEs			Less than 5 A-Cs			5 or more A-Cs		
	Participants	Comparison group	Difference	Participants	Comparison group	Difference	Participants	Comparison group	Difference	Participants	Comparison group	Difference
	%	%		%	%		%	%		%	%	
Personal development activities	29.5	4.2	25.3*	32.7	4.0	28.7*	29.2	3.8	25.4*	31.6	6.6	25.0*
Work-based training	11.3	10.6	0.7	13.7	9.6	4.1	15.6	12.6	3.0	21.1	13.3	7.8
Other work - with in-house training	2.5	3.7	-1.2	10.8	7.9	2.9	6.1	10.3	-4.2	10.9	12.5	-1.6
<i>Of which:</i>												
<i>non-elementary occupation</i>	1.3	1.1	0.2	7.5	4.7	2.8	5.1	8.0	-2.9	8.6	7.2	1.4
<i>elementary occupation</i>	1.2	2.6	-1.4	3.3	3.2	0.1	1.0	2.3	-1.3	2.3	5.3	-3.0
Other work - without in-house training	10.8	21.5	-10.7*	17.4	29.9	-12.5*	19.9	27.5	-7.6	26.0	31.6	-5.6
<i>Of which:</i>												
<i>non-elementary occupation</i>	3.3	7.8	-4.5	8.0	12.8	-4.8	11.2	18.5	-7.3*	19.5	18.2	1.3
<i>elementary occupation</i>	7.5	13.7	-6.2	9.4	17.1	-7.7*	8.7	9.0	-0.3	6.5	13.4	-6.9
Voluntary work	3.6	1.5	2.1	8.2	4.4	3.8	9.3	9.3	0.0	9.4	8.3	1.1
Studying for NQF qualification	15.2	10.4	4.8	25.8	17.0	8.8*	23.9	22.2	1.7	37.8	28.2	9.6
Studying for other qualification	2.5	1.4	1.1	5.6	4.0	1.6	4.5	0.3	4.2*	3.2	1.5	1.7
None of the above in the 12 months	42.2	56.8	-14.6*	18.5	38.2	-19.7*	27.7	34.9	-7.2	15.2	29.1	-13.9
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>	296	296		290	290		256	256		138	138	
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>	252	514		283	669		284	666		159	359	

Appendix C Details of propensity score matching

Propensity score matching is a tool which is becoming more widely used in evaluating the impact of programmes. The idea is quite simple. In the case of AA, each participant in a pilot area is matched to an individual (or a weighted combination of individuals) from a comparison area (or areas), thus creating a matched comparison sample. The aim is to ensure that participants are matched to comparators sharing similar observable characteristics. This ensures we are comparing participants with a group of similar respondents in comparison areas. The impact of the programme can then be calculated as the difference in outcomes between the pilot and matched comparison samples.

For AA we have used the method of “kernel” matching. Rather than matching each participant with a single member of the comparison area group, kernel matching involves matching each participant to several members of the comparison area group but using a weighted sum with more weight being placed on those comparators with the most similar characteristics to the participant.

The first step in the matching process is to decide which variables are to be used to define the characteristics to be matched on. For matching to be successful it is crucial that as many predictors of outcomes as possible are used. We have included data of five types: demographic data on the respondent, geographical data based on the respondent’s place of residence, data on the respondent’s most recent school, data on the respondent’s previous experiences, and a variable indicating whether the respondent was from the stock or flow sample (that is was NEET for at least 20 weeks when AA was launched, or who became eligible after the start of AA). A list of variables used is shown in Table C.1.

Table C.1 Participation in work-related activities within 12 months of becoming NEET, in pilot and comparison areas

Variable source	Variables
Demographic	Gender Age at NEET 20 Ethnicity
Area-related	Overall IMD Scores IMD Score on the Employment Domain Urban / Rural Indicator
School-related	Proportion of pupils with 5 or more GCSEs at A-C Proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals
Previous experience	Attendance at school in Year 11 Any qualifications studied since school Qualifications of a known type studied since school Any paid work since school Any training since school Any personal development course since school Any volunteering since school GCSE grades at school (English and Maths) Age of leaving Year 11
Stock/Flow	Stock

Note that because the number of variables in this table is large it is not possible to match participants to comparison area respondents with the exact same profile of characteristics. Instead a 'propensity score' is generated which represents the probability that an individual from the participants and comparison area 'pool' is in fact a participant. The predictors of this probability are the variables from the table. Matching on this probability ensures that, overall, the profile of participants and the matched comparison sample is reasonably similar across the full range of variables, even if the individual matches are inexact.

To generate a 'propensity score' the variables were entered into logistic regression models to model the differences between participants and comparison area groups. Three separate models were generated (one for each variant) and the predicted probabilities became the propensity scores. The sample was then weighted (using kernel matching) so that each age-sex group in the comparison areas had the same propensity-score profile as the sample of participants. (Matching within age-sex groups ensured that the two samples had identical age-sex profiles¹⁸, and they had similar (albeit not identical) characteristics on all the predictors in the model¹⁹.)

The success of the matching can be measured by comparing the weighted participant and comparison groups pre- and post-matching. Table C.2 shows this comparison on several variables.

The table show that the propensity score model considerably improved the match. It corrected the age/sex distribution and improved the match on a range of variables. The matched comparison sample is very similar to the sample of participants.

Note that matching comes at the cost of a reduction in statistical power. Propensity score matching can lead to a reduction in effective sample size and the loss can be quite large when the two groups to be matched are very different. Here the groups were noticeably different on certain characteristics: young people in comparison areas tended to have better GCSE qualifications and live in less deprived areas than participants. As a result, although the matching process improves the match in the profiles of the two samples, there was some reduction in effective sample size and we have relatively little statistical power to detect small impacts. This is particularly noticeable in subgroup analyses, when the sample sizes mean that even quite moderate impacts can not be detected as statistically significant.

¹⁸ There were four age-sex groups: boys 16 and under, boys 17 and over, girls 16 and under, girls 17 and over.

¹⁹ When respondents in two groups are very different propensity score matching will sometimes fail to find a match. This occurred with five participants, who were omitted from the analysis.

Table C.2 Comparison of weighted participant sample with comparison areas sample, pre- and post-matching

Variable	Weighted pilot areas sample	Comparison areas sample (pre-matching)	Comparison areas sample (post-matching)
DEMOGRAPHIC			
Sex			
Male	58.3	52.8	58.3
Female	41.7	47.2	41.7
Age at NEET 20			
16 or under	36.2	28.0	36.2
17 or over	63.8	72.0	63.8
Living with Parents	83.3	77.5	84.4
Ethnicity: White	87.0	87.3	89.0
AREA-RELATED			
IMD			
Lowest Quintile (Least deprived)	1.5	9.8	3.8
2 nd Quintile	5.5	13.5	4.9
3 rd Quintile	12.0	20.2	10.7
4 th Quintile	21.8	27.5	20.9
Highest Quintile	59.7	29.0	59.7
IMD (Employment)			
Lowest Quintile (Least deprived)	2.5	10.3	3.5
2 nd Quintile	5.8	16.6	6.2
3 rd Quintile	8.6	18.1	11.0
4 th Quintile	21.7	25.6	19.0
Highest Quintile	61.4	29.5	60.3
IMD (Education)			
Lowest Quintile (Least deprived)	3.5	9.0	4.4
2 nd Quintile	7.8	15.5	9.6
3 rd Quintile	14.3	19.9	12.2
4 th Quintile	26.0	25.3	26.1
Highest Quintile	48.3	30.3	47.7
Urban area	94.9	86.2	95.3

Variable	Weighted pilot areas sample	Comparison areas sample (pre-matching)	Comparison areas sample (post-matching)
SCHOOL INFORMATION			
A to C grades			
Under 35%	20.1	13.0	18.3
35% to 50%	23.7	25.7	25.8
Over 50%	33.1	41.7	34.0
Missing	23.0	19.7	22.0
% Free School Meals			
0-10	14.6	31.8	18.7
10-20	19.5	24.9	16.3
20-30	17.5	13.2	22.5
30+	25.7	10.5	21.1
Unknown	22.8	19.6	21.5
Pupils' GCSE Attainment			
Overall			
No GCSEs	29.1	22.4	28.6
GCSEs at D-G only	28.6	29.2	27.1
Less than 5 GCSEs at A*-C	25.2	29.1	25.8
5 or more GCSEs at A*-C	13.4	15.7	15.1
Missing	3.7	3.6	3.4
English Language A*-C	19.9	24.4	20.6
Maths A*-C	15.6	19.1	17.9
EXPERIENCE SINCE SCHOOL			
PD courses	4.4	3.8	6.0
Any paid work	22.7	31.1	22.2

Appendix D Impact on participants and impact on the eligible population

The evaluation of AA was originally designed to allow for impacts of AA measured across the whole of the eligible population. That is, outcomes for eligible long-term NEET young people in pilot areas were to be compared to outcomes for similar NEET young people from comparison areas. After making sure that the pilot area and comparison area groups were matched on baseline characteristics, any differences in outcomes between the two groups would be attributable to AA. This method gives an impact measured across a population, rather than an impact on those who took up an Activity Agreement.

An alternative approach was to concentrate only on measuring the impact of the programme on those who actually took up an Activity Agreement. Under this scenario those taking up an AA are identified and matched to similar NEET young people in other areas. Their outcomes are then compared.

Both approaches have their difficulties. The second of these approaches (impact on participants) is often criticised because there is a risk of self-selection bias. What this means in this case is that participants, who have self-selected to take up an agreement and who may be more motivated than other NEET young people, will be matched to young people in other areas for whom we have little or no information on their motivation levels. If motivated participants are matched to less motivated young people then the impact of AA may be over-estimated.

However the impact on the 'eligible population method' (that is, the method chosen for the evaluation) also has difficulties, although these are more to do with interpretation than method. The principle difficulty is that, by comparing all of the eligible population in AA areas with all of the eligible population in comparison areas, the impact of AA is diluted. This is because the eligible population in AA areas is made up of two groups: participants, who will experience an AA impact, and non-participants for whom the AA impact will be zero.

A second difficulty is that, to interpret an 'impact on the eligible population' approach, there has to be agreement about what the eligible population represents. As is described in Appendix F, reaching agreement on this issue is rather difficult. The evaluation study adopted a very strict definition of eligibility, based on being NEET for at least 15 weeks at particular points in time. (The decision to use a 15 week threshold rather than 20 weeks was based on the concern that some of those NEET for 15 to 19 weeks may change their decisions about activities knowing that they could take up an AA within a short period.) Connexions staff, in contrast, were able to use a more natural definition of eligibility, with, in particular, eligibility being defined at the time of contact rather than on a pre-specified date.

Because of these difficulties we investigated, at the analysis stage, whether we could use the evaluation data to generate robust estimates of impacts on participants rather than impacts on the eligible population.

Fortunately, if data to support an 'impact on the eligible population' is generated then it is possible to test the robustness of a move to an 'impact on participants' as long as one key assumption is made: that is, that the programme (in this case AA) has no impact on non-participants. What this means is that, for those who were eligible for AA (under the evaluation definition) but who did not take an agreement up, did not change their behaviour as a consequence. This seems a reasonable assumption: even if some did change their behaviour we can reasonably expect the rate of change to be very small.

The test of robustness then has three steps:

1. Generate an estimate of impact on participants from the impact on the eligible population analysis;
2. Generate a separate impact on participants by generating a distinct comparison group specifically for participants (this new comparison group being taken from the large pool of eligible NEET young people in comparison areas);
3. Compare the two estimates.

As an illustration:

Step 1

- From an impact-on-the-eligible population analysis we estimated that 9.6% of NEET young people in AA pilot areas had undertaken personal development activities, as had 4.5% in comparison areas (after matching the samples). So the impact on the eligible population was estimated at 5.1 percentage points (pp);
- The take-up of AA in pilot areas (taking the evaluation sample as the denominator) was estimated at 19%. So, with the assumption of no impact on non-participants, we can assume that the 5.1pp overall impact was generated by the 19% of participants. This means that the impact on the participants must have been about 27pp ($5.1/0.19$). That is, 27% of participants must have been doing personal development activities who otherwise wouldn't have in order to generate the 5.1pp impact measured across the whole population.

Steps 2 and 3

- By directly matching participants to a comparison group we found that 30.0% of participants had taken part in personal development activities, as had 4.4 of the matched comparison group (see Table 4.1 of Chapter 4). Subtracting the two gives an impact on participants of 26%. In this instance the two methods of estimation give almost identical measures of impact on participants.

Although very promising in this instance we checked that the two approaches gave very similar estimates of impact on participants across a range of outcome variables, and although we found some variability between the two approaches, the impact on participants approach appeared to give similar findings overall, and, if anything, gave results that were more stable (across, sub-groups for instance) than the impact-on-the-eligible approach.

Note that were we to have simply used Step 1 in the approach described to generate all the estimates of the 'impacts on participants' we would not have been able to carry-out the sub-group analysis on those who participated early (see Chapter 4). Adopting Step 2 (that is, generating a comparison group for participants) allows for considerably more flexibility in analysis.

Appendix E The relationship between impact and the participation rate

The impact estimates of Chapter 4 reflect impact on participants only. Arguably, to judge the overall success of AA there are two questions that need to be addressed:

- Does AA change outcomes for those who take up an agreement? (Which is the question we have addressed); and
- Is take-up of AA sufficiently high that it is worth the overall investment?

The second of these questions is relevant because a programme with modest impacts may still be seen as successful if large numbers of the eligible population take it up. That is, modest impacts spread across a large number of people can still add up to a marked population change. In contrast, a programme with higher impacts but low take-up may, overall, have less impact on the population.

In practice it has proved very difficult to generate definitive estimates of take-up of AA, so making an assessment on how AA impacts across all the long-term NEET population is problematic. The samples used in the evaluation survey were those young people identified by Connexions as being NEET for at least 15 weeks at a fixed point in time (see Section 1.3 for the rationale for concentrating on NEET of 15 weeks rather than 20). Of these a degree of uncertainty about the reporting of dates by respondents means that narrowing down the samples to those who had been NEET for at least 20 weeks is difficult.

Even were we to identify those NEET for at least 20 weeks, it is still not the case that all would be offered an Activity Agreement, since Connexions staff may have approached the Young Person at a time when they were no longer eligible. So, those recorded as 'eligible at time of contact' by Connexions staff is likely to be a smaller pool than were eligible for the survey (perhaps considerably smaller).

However, based on the broad survey definition of eligibility, we estimate that around 19% of eligible young people took up an AA. The take-up rate was particularly high for Variant 2, at 25%, compared to 15% for Variant 1 and 17% for Variant 3.

One way to reduce the eligibility pool is to restrict it to young people who, in the evaluation survey, said they had heard of AA. This is 44% of the sample. Of these 44%, 44% took up an agreement, the rates by variant being 37% for Variant 1, 52% for Variant 2, and 40% for Variant 3.

The table below summarises the figures (and demonstrates the range of uncertainty in the estimates).

Table E.1 Take-up rates for AA

	Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 3	Overall
	%	%	%	%
Take-up rate based on total survey sample	15	25	17	19
Take-up rate based on those having heard of AA	37	52	40	44

Taking the most positive impact study finding of Chapter 4, that around 26% of AA participants undertook personal development activities because of their participation in AA who otherwise wouldn't have, these participation rate figures suggests that somewhere between 5% (i.e. 26% of 19%) and 11% (26% of 44%) of long-term NEET young people would be expected to undertake additional personal development activities if AA was to be rolled-out nationally.

Looking at the variants, the impacts on personal development were given in Table B1. Using the same logic as above, we can estimate from these that the impact of AA measured across the whole of the eligible long-term NEET population is:

- For Variant 1 impact on participants = 29%; impact on eligible NEET population between 4% and 11% overall
- For Variant 2 impact on participants = 24%; impact on eligible NEET population between 6% and 12% overall
- For Variant 3 impact on participants = 25%; impact on eligible NEET population between 4% and 10% overall

This suggests that, measured as the impact across all the eligible NEET population Variant 2 is the most successful. This is entirely due to the fact that Variant 2 has the highest estimated take-up rate (however measured).

Appendix F The NEET population: comparison between survey estimates and AA management information

Overview

This appendix details how the eligible NEET population was defined for the survey and compares survey-based estimates of this with AA Management Information (MI). The reason for making this comparison was to check that the evidence from these two sources was broadly comparable.

The comparisons showed that survey-based estimates of participation were broadly comparable with MI data overall. Although the rate of correspondence varied somewhat from area to area, it was noted that there were a number of legitimate reasons for discrepancy (which are considered in a section below). Allowing for these factors, it was felt that the observed degree of correspondence between these two data sources was satisfactory and this comparison did not raise any substantial concerns about the methodology.

How the eligible NEET population was defined in the survey

The eligible NEET population was identified using the following steps:

- Connexions partnerships provided NatCen with anonymised lists of young people who were classified as being NEET for 15 or more weeks ('NEET 15+') in the qualifying period²⁰. This sample (henceforth referred to as the 'initial sample') comprised a 'stock' sample of young people who were classified NEET 15+ when the programme began on 1 April 2006 and 'flow' samples of newly eligible young people that were provided on a quarterly basis for the following 15 months to July 2007. Overall, 28% of the initial samples was from the stock and 72% was from flow samples.
- Samples of young people to be contacted for interview ('survey samples') were drawn from the initial samples on a quarterly basis, using a systematic random method. Connexions partnerships administered opt-out mailings for young people in the survey samples with the result that a small proportion (less than 5%) withdrew prior to fieldwork. Young people who had no addresses or telephone numbers were also excluded.
- The remaining survey samples of young people were contacted by telephone or face-to-face and 45% agreed to take part in an interview. Response levels are summarized on Table 1 below.
- Young people who agreed to be interviewed were asked some questions to assess NEET status retrospectively. This was a necessarily simplified form of eligibility assessment that was appropriate to the short time available to introduce the study in a telephone interview. The following questions were used:

²⁰ It was decided to use NEET 15+ as the target population for the evaluation as this point in time would be expected to precede the decision to participate. If NEET 20+ were used then there would be a greater risk that the qualifying population would be inflated in the pilot areas by young people who were putting off another activity in order to qualify for the programme, a factor which would not be replicated in control areas. By using NEET 15+ it was hoped to maximise the comparability of the pilot and control samples.

- Over the last 12 months, have you had a period of time when you were not doing a paid job, were not in a work-based training scheme and were not studying for a qualification?
- (If yes) And did the period when you were not doing any of the activities I mentioned last for 3 months or more?

Thirty-one per cent of young people responded negatively to this question and so were screened with no interview being taken.

- The remaining 69% of young people confirmed that there had been a period of at least three months in the past year when they had been NEET. These 'eligible' young people were the sample for analysis (minus a handful of cases where the interview was incomplete).

Table 1 - Survey response in AA pilot areas

	Number	% of issued sample	% of interviews attempted
Issued survey sample	11,525	100%	
Of which:			
Could not be contacted	4,357	38%	
Refused to be interviewed	2,021	18%	
Agreed to be interviewed	5,147	45%	100%
Of which:			
Screened out	1,583		31%
Interviewed	3,564		69%
Full eligible interviews for analysis	3,535 ²¹		

How numbers in the initial samples compared with MI data

The MI data does not contain numbers for the eligible population of NEET 20 young people so an alternative measure had to be found for comparisons with the initial sample for the survey. The number of new starts on AA was judged to be the most suitable measure to use as this was a key output for the MI for all areas.

Table 2 below presents a comparison between the initial samples for the survey (row a in the table) and the number of new starts from the MI (row b). Figures are shown for the period covered by the survey sample, that is April 2006 to August 2007²². We have shown numbers for each pilot area.

At the bottom of the table we have shown the number of starts as a percentage of the initial sample (row c).

²¹ The number of respondents in pilot areas was subsequently reduced in analysis to 3,331 when it transpired that some respondents were aged 18 and over when they became NEET.

²² We have taken the period to August 2007 because the last young people who were identified as NEET 15+ in July 2006 would have become NEET 20 at about the end of the following month.

Table 2 - Comparison between initial sample for survey and the number of starts on the AA from MI, April 2006 to August 2007

	Total
a. Initial sample for survey	40,071
b. Number of starts in the period (MI)	7,290
c. Number of new starts in the period as a % of initial sample (= b/ a)	18%

The figures show that the number of new starts was considerably smaller than the initial sample, an average of just 18%. The proportion ranged between 9% and 35% across the eight pilot areas.

It was expected that the number of starts from the MI would be somewhat lower than the initial sample for the survey and there were a number of reasons why young people who were classified as NEET 15+ would have been assessed as not eligible or not suitable for the programme at NEET 20. Moreover, as the MI showed, in many cases young people were offered a place on the programme but did not take it up. Also, it was expected that some of the AA starts from the later months of the initial sample would have fallen in later periods of the MI and so be missing from this comparison.

How participants were defined in the survey

Lacking MI data for participation at an individual level, it was necessary to use the survey interview to ask respondents whether they had taken part in the programme. As this was a retrospective interview, conducted in most cases at least 20 weeks after the young person had ended the programme, if they had been a participant, there was some risk of this information being misreported. The interview therefore asked about the study in a series of steps.

Respondents were first asked if they had heard of the AA and 44% said that they had²³.

Those young people who had heard of the AA were then asked “*Did you agree to take part in the scheme?*” and 20% said that they did²⁴.

²³ The question was as follows: “I would now like to ask you about a scheme or programme that Connexions runs, that you might have been asked to take part in. The scheme or programme that Connexions runs is called an ‘Activity Agreement’ “Have you ever heard from Connexions about their Activity Agreement scheme?”

(IF NOT HEARD OF SCHEME) I'd like to tell you a bit about this scheme. The Activity Agreement scheme aims to help young people get into work, training or education with support from a Connexions adviser. An Activity Agreement runs for 20 weeks and is like a mini-contract between the young person and Connexions. The young person undertakes activities which are planned together with their Connexions adviser and they meet every week to review the activities. If the young person completes their planned activities, they receive a weekly payment {textfill: {in parent payment areas} and their parents receive a payment too}.

Can I just check, have you ever heard from Connexions about this scheme or programme. Please tell me if you have heard of a scheme that works in the way I have described even if you don't recognise the name ‘Activity Agreement’?

²⁴ This proportion of 20% differs from the figure of 19% given in the report because the latter figure used a special weight designed to equalize the samples of each variant, so that the proportion for AA as a whole was derived equally from the three variants.

How survey-based estimates of the number of participants compared with MI numbers

To check the survey data for participation against the MI data, the total number of participants in the period of the survey data was estimated (this was the estimated number of participants there would have been if we had been able to interview everyone in the initial sample). This was a crude estimate which assumed that the likelihood of sampled young people being interviewed was unrelated to their likelihood of being an AA participant. The resulting numbers are shown on Table 3 below.

This survey-based estimate of the total number of eligible population for AA in this period was obtained by multiplying the initial sample for each area (row a in the table) by the eligibility rate among those who agreed to an interview (d). This eligible population was then multiplied by the proportion of respondents who reported agreeing to take part in AA (f)²⁵ to get an estimate of the total number of participants (g). This survey-based estimate of participants was then divided by the number of AA starts recorded in the MI data (b) to show it as a percentage (h).

This comparison showed that the number of participants suggested by the survey data was about three quarters of the number of starts in the MI on average. There was, however, considerable variation in this proportion between the areas.

- For three areas the survey-based estimate of participation was higher than the number of starts in the MI.
- For three areas the survey based estimate of participation was approximately 80% of the number of starts in the MI.
- For the other two areas the survey-based estimate was much lower than the MI starts (less than 40%).

This pattern suggested that there were a variety of causes of discrepancy between the two figures and that they operated to differing degrees in different pilot areas.

Table 3 - Estimated total number of participants based on survey data and comparison with number of starts in the MI, April 2006 - August 2007

	Total
Survey data	
a. Initial sample for survey	40,071
d. Survey eligibility rate	69%
e. Estimated total eligible population in area (= a x d)	27,649
f. Proportion stating that they agreed to take part in AA (survey)	20%
g. Estimated total participants (agreeing to take part definition) in area (= e x f)	5419
MI data	
b. MI number of starts	7290
h. Estimated participants from survey as % of number of MI starts (= g / b)	74%

²⁵ Weighted data were used so the effects of disproportionate sample of different sample groups were controlled for.

Hypotheses to explain discrepancies between survey-based estimates of participation and MI numbers

The following hypotheses may be advanced to explain discrepancies between survey-based estimates of participation and the MI data:

- The MI figures may include additional participants who were not present in the NEET 15+ samples provided for the survey. These would include any young people who were classified as eligible at NEET 20+ without having been previously monitored as NEET 15+.
- The survey's eligible population will include some individuals who were not present in the MI data because they were excluded at an earlier stage of processing, having been assessed as ineligible or unsuitable for the programme.
- There may have been some non-measurable bias in response to the survey whereby AA participants were more or less likely than non-participants to be reached or to agree to an interview when reached.
- Some AA participants may have been screened out of the survey interview because they reported (whether correctly or incorrectly) that they had not been NEET for at least three months in the last year²⁶. On the other hand, some young people who will have been assessed as ineligible by AA programme administrators will have been screened in to the survey.
- Some AA participants may not have recognized AA from the descriptions presented in the interview and so will have been incorrectly classified as non-participants. (This factor might have varied across the areas, depending on the strength of the branding used for AA). It is also possible that some non-participants will have been classified incorrectly as participants but this seems less likely.
- There may have been errors in the compilation of the survey sample or the MI data which caused discrepancies between them.

Most of these hypotheses would tend to reduce the size of the survey-based estimates compared with the MI data for starts. We therefore conclude that the overall trend of difference between these two measures is in the direction that we would expect.

While the survey-based estimates of the number of participants seem reasonable, we note that the participation rates that these data imply (about 19% overall) were regarded as lower than expected. Some of the explanations for this are likely to be the same as those given above, for example the expectation that young people will tend on balance to under-report participation. The survey population would include a number of young people who would have been assessed as ineligible for AA by programme administrators (using more thorough assessments than would be feasible in a telephone interview). In addition, the survey population would include young people who were not targeted by administrators as being suitable for the programme. This last category might include young people who were planning to take up a different activity when they were assessed for the AA programme. Similarly, young people who were in receipt of benefits would be included in the survey sample but might not be regarded as strong prospects for AA participation by administrators, unless the agreement only option was being pursued.

²⁶ Piloting of the study had established that young people found the screening question difficult to answer. Although the wording was improved to reflect learnings from the pilot, it was not expected that this would completely resolve respondents' difficulties in answering this kind of complex question over the telephone. Nonetheless, it was felt to be appropriate to continue to screen out young people who reported themselves to have been ineligible rather than devote significant resources to interviewing this group.

Appendix G Survey methodology

Sampling process

The sampling process had the following stages:

- Sample records were provided by Connexions in each pilot and comparison area on a three-monthly rolling basis. Connexions identified, from among their records of all NEET young people in their area, those meeting the survey's eligibility definitions for each of the NEET 15 flow groups as well as the stock group. These records were passed to NatCen in an anonymous format.
- NatCen then carried out a de-duplicating exercise so that the same young person did not appear in more than one sample group (and also removed duplicates between AA evaluation and Learning Agreement Pilot evaluation samples), and then undertook initial sample selection for each area.
- After the bulk of the sample was selected from among all eligible young people, additional cases in pilot areas were selected from among those known to have been participating in AA. This was done in order to ensure that the survey contained sufficient numbers of AA participants to allow detailed analysis of experiences of the programme.
- These selected individuals were then invited, in a letter sent by their local Connexions, to take part in the evaluation while being given the option to opt-out if they preferred not to be contacted. The contact details of the young people who did not opt out were passed to NatCen for contacting as part of the survey.
- At the beginning of the survey interview, young people were asked a set of brief screening questions to establish that over the 12 months prior to interview they had in fact been NEET for a period of at least 3 months (used as a near equivalent of 15 weeks). If their answers indicated that they did not in fact meet the NEET 15 eligibility criteria they were dropped from the sample.

Survey fieldwork

The survey was designed to be conducted by telephone interviewing. This meant that only young people for whom telephone numbers could be obtained were included in the survey sample; it also restricted the length of the main young person's interview to under 30 minutes (which was felt to be the maximum length that was consistent with obtaining good response and data quality).

The main survey instrument was designed to collect a detailed activity history for the young person, to allow their activity outcomes to be measured, as well as a measurement of 'distance travelled' towards concrete outcomes, based on attitudinal measures. Data on experiences of making activity choices, Connexions and, if applicable, AA, were collected, as well as data on the young person's demographics, family background, school experiences and other factors that might affect impacts ('confounders') and would need to be controlled for. The questionnaire was designed following desk research, an expert panel and a series of qualitative interviews with young people. In addition a questionnaire for interviewing young people's parents (designed to take around 10 minutes) and a follow-up interview questionnaire were developed.

The follow-up survey instrument was designed to collect more detailed information about experiences on the AA programme as well as up-to-date information about current activities and attitudes towards learning and employment.

Main interviews were carried out by a mixture of computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) and computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) by NatCen interviewers, all of whom received a personal briefing from a member of the research team. Telephone was the principal mode used, with face-to-face interviewing being also used in peak quarters when the volume of interviewing exceeded the limited capacity of CRB-cleared telephone interviewers²⁷. Thus, telephone interviewing was the sole mode of interview from fieldwork launch in January 2007 to June 2007 while face-to-face interviewing was used for a sub-sample thereafter until the end of fieldwork in March 2008.

The allocation of sample to mode was controlled so as to be as even as possible across affected areas and programme variants except that all fieldwork in London and Essex, where field capacity was lowest, was allocated to telephone. A subset of the telephone interviewing group that was used from January 2008 onwards was home-based telephone interviewers who carried out telephone interviewing from an appropriate workspace within their homes.

For the follow-up survey, 450 participants were issued for interview and 232 follow-up interviews were achieved (52%)²⁸.

For all modes the questionnaire used was essentially the same, with only minor adjustments necessitated by the mode. In this way it was hoped to minimise any effects due to the mode of interview.

Interview data were subject to a number of logic and range checks which were built in to the computer-assisted interviewing (CAI) software. Data from questions which allowed verbatim answers were coded into codeframes by trained NatCen coders, and respondents' answers on their qualifications and occupations were also coded.

Weighting and analysis

Two types of weights were created to minimise biases in the data. Design weights were calculated to correct for different sample selection probabilities due to the differing size of the eligible population in each area, and the over-sampling of known AA participants. Non-response weights were constructed to minimise bias from differential response rates between different groups within the survey population. These two types of weights were combined, and then scaled. Most of the analysis in this report, which compares or combines the different AA variants, uses weights which are scaled so that each of the three variants is given an equal weight. Differently scaled weights were produced for analysis involving a single variant only.

Although, as explained in Chapter 1 (section 1.3), the evaluation design aimed to interview young people at approximately one year after they first became NEET, due to the complex nature of large-scale survey fieldwork, precise control of the timing of interviews was not possible and a number of interviews were carried out sometime before or after that point in time. In order to maximise the consistency of the analysis, outcomes in this report which feed into the impact estimates are restricted to activities within a 12-month period of becoming

²⁷ DCSF required that all interviewers should be CRB-cleared. Whereas CRB routinely provides clearances for face-to-face interviewers, it is currently unwilling to provide clearances for telephone interviewers. As NatCen had previously obtained clearances for a number of telephone interviewers before the CRB clarified its policy, it was able to use those interviewers for the research but could not replenish them.

²⁸ The number of completed interviews was subsequently reduced to 229 for analysis when it transpired that some young people were aged 18 and over when they became NEET.

NEET, although it should be noted that outcomes for young people interviewed 'early' were measured before the full 12 months. (For the purposes of outcome measurement the stock group are treated as becoming NEET at the earliest possible date of becoming NEET of the first flow group, i.e. 1 January 2006). Participants who had left AA 3 months prior to the interview were analysed separately in order to detect short-term impacts after some time had passed.

In addition to the impact analysis, the background characteristics of AA participants were described and compared with non-participants. This analysis identified differences which may indicate selection effects and which were therefore taken into account when assessing impact. Descriptive analysis was also used to compare experiences of AA reported by programme participants within each variant.

All of the impact estimates and the differences identified through descriptive analysis were tested for statistical significance. Impact estimates are reported as findings if they are significant at the 90% level in a formal statistical test of difference; results from the descriptive analysis are only commented on if they are significant at the 95% level. In addition, the p-value associated with impact estimates is given. The p-value is the probability that a result *is* due to random chance and is the inverse of the significance level: thus a significant result at the 95% significance level will have a p-value of less than 5%, a result at the 99% significance level will have a p-value of less than 1%, and so on.

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