

# Learner Journeys Research – Overarching Report: Comparison of all Schemes

March 2010

Of interest to staff and stakeholders with an  
interest in Learner Support

## Further information

Learning and Skills Council  
**National Office**

Learner Support  
The Straddle  
Victoria Quays  
Wharf Street  
Sheffield S2 5SY

[www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

---

# LSC Learner Journeys Research – Overarching Report: Comparison of all Schemes

**Prepared for: LSC**

**Prepared by: June Wiseman, Director, Emma Parry, Account Manager**

**March 2010**

---



**Produced by BMG Research**

© Bostock Marketing Group Ltd, 2010

[www.bmgresearch.co.uk](http://www.bmgresearch.co.uk)

Registered in England No. 2841970

Registered office:

7 Holt Court North  
Heneage Street West  
Aston Science Park  
Birmingham  
B7 4AX  
UK

Tel: +44 (0) 121 3336006

UK VAT Registration No. 580 6606 32

Birmingham Chamber of Commerce Member No. B4626

Market Research Society Company Partner

ESOMAR Member (The World Association of Research Professionals)

British Quality Foundation Member

Market Research Quality Standards Association (British Standards Institute) BS7911 for Market Research -  
Certificate No. FS76713

Investors in People Standard - Certificate No. WMQC 0614

Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS) Member Company

Registered under the Data Protection Act - Registration No. Z5081943

The BMG Research logo is a trade mark of Bostock Marketing Group Ltd

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	1
1.1 Background .....	1
1.2 Engagement .....	1
1.3 Retention and persistence in learning .....	2
1.4 Achievement .....	2
1.5 Learning progression .....	2
1.6 Employment progression .....	3
1.7 Personal and social benefits .....	3
1.8 Conclusions .....	3
2 Background .....	5
2.1 Background .....	5
2.2 Strands of the Learner Support Programme: What they are and how they are delivered .....	5
2.3 Methodology .....	7
3 Engagement .....	10
Key findings .....	10
3.1 Impact of funding on course take-up .....	10
3.2 Reasons for taking up the course .....	11
3.3 Financial concerns before starting the course .....	12
3.4 Information on funding .....	13
4 Retention and Persistence in Learning .....	15
Key findings .....	15
4.1 Value of funding to completing/staying on the course .....	15
4.2 Early leaving .....	17
4.3 On-going or further financial assistance .....	19
5 Achievement .....	20
Key findings .....	20
5.1 Achievement of qualifications .....	20
6 Learning Progression .....	22
Key findings .....	22
6.1 Learning progression .....	22
6.2 Level of further learning .....	23

6.3	Funding of further learning.....	24
6.4	Impact of original funding on learning progression.....	26
6.5	Further learning by early leavers .....	27
7	Employment Progression .....	29
	Key findings.....	29
7.1	Extent to which funded learning helped career progression.....	29
7.2	Employment status: before and after the original course .....	30
7.3	Financial benefits.....	31
7.4	Career progression.....	31
8	Personal and Social Benefits .....	33
9	Overview .....	34
10	Appendix .....	37
10.1	Sample error.....	37



## Executive Summary

### 1.1 Background

This survey was commissioned to determine the impact of the financial assistance available to learners on participation, retention, achievement and progression. Its main aim was to understand how well the funding provided by the LSC is helping learners with regard to the four stages of their learning, including finding out about the course and making the decision to take-up a course; actually taking up a course and staying on it to the end; achieving qualifications; and moving on to further learning.

Overall, 10,688 interviews were conducted across all Learner Support schemes.

### 1.2 Engagement

The 'leverage' of programme funding on engagement in learning varies widely between programmes. This undoubtedly reflects the extent to which issues addressed by the funding are obstacles to learning.

Leverage is strongest for two childcare support programmes. 65% of Care to Learn learners and 80% of 6th Form College Childcare learners said they would definitely or probably not have learned without the funding.

Leverage on engagement is weakest for Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and Adult Learning Grant (ALG). Only 8% and 15% (respectively) of learners supported by these programmes say they would definitely or probably not have learned without the funding. This reflects the fact that EMA and ALG is intended to provide additional financial support for learners. The amount of funding involved tends to be relatively small and is designed to supplement other financial resources rather than be the sole means of support. Their function as an incentive to take-up learning will be very limited as a result.

Learners in all schemes engaged for a mix of reasons including wanting to gain a qualification, to lay a foundation for higher level learning, or to improve employment or career prospects.

Learners had a wide variety of financial concerns prior to taking up their supported courses. Concerns about general living expenses were widespread. However, for those supported by childcare schemes, the cost of childcare was the primary concern.

The proportions of learners who knew funding was available before they started their courses ranged from 33% (in the case of ALG) to 80% (in the case of EMA).

The great majority of learners – at least seven in ten – reported information on funding as easily available. Information on EMA was most frequently available (94% of recipients said it was 'easy to find out about'). Information on the Residential Support Scheme (RSS) was least frequently available (68% said it was 'easy to find out about').

However, fewer than half of learners in most schemes had received formal information, advice and guidance which alerted them to the funding. The main source of advice for most schemes was College staff but the main source of advice on EMA was school staff and on Care to Learn was Connexions. As one would expect, the propensity to cite different sources is strongly linked to the age and situation of learners before the learning and dependent on learners' environments prior to the learning.

### 1.3 Retention and persistence in learning

Support funding has a widespread impact on retention. The majority of learners saying that the funding they received facilitated their take-up of learning to a great extent. Only minorities of learners said that funding made no difference to whether or not they completed, ranging from zero to 17% for most schemes.

Even amongst EMA learners, who are most likely to feel the funding made no difference to whether they completed or not, more than two-thirds (71%) feel they could not have completed the course or would have struggled to do so without the funding.

In practice, actual completion rates ranged from 81% (Care to Learn) to 93% (of those funded by ALG). Completion rates were broadly comparable with, or in excess of, a national benchmark of 87% completion for all Further Education (FE) learners in England (2005/06 and 2006/07).

Financial issues were a significant part of the decision to leave early in fewer than half of cases of early leaving from most programmes.

More financial support would therefore have helped some learners to stay in learning but more tutor support, more study time, and better quality of teaching would more frequently have been key factors persuading early leavers to stay in learning.

### 1.4 Achievement

Most supported learners who completed their courses achieved a qualification. The lowest proportion doing so was 87% for those funded by Care to Learn.

Across all the funding schemes high proportions of those who achieved a qualification said that the funding they received helped a 'great deal' or a 'fair amount' towards this outcome. The lowest proportion saying one or other of these things was 87% (amongst recipients of EMA). Nearly all those in receipt of Care to Learn and 6th Form College Childcare (98% in each case) said that the funding helped at least 'a fair amount'. Again, this is a reflection of the extent to which issues addressed by the funding are considered obstacles to learning. Childcare to enable individuals the time for learning can be expensive but is essential.

The learning funded by the schemes was responsible for raising the proportions of supported learners with at least Level 2 qualifications by up to 35% (in the case of 6th Form College Childcare) and for reducing the proportions with no qualifications (with any NVQ equivalence) by up to 22% (in the case of Discretionary Funding - 20+ Childcare). EMA had least effect on either of these measures.

### 1.5 Learning progression

Learning progression beyond the originally-funded learning is significant. Around a quarter to a third of learners has already taken up further learning and further significant proportions have registered for further learning.

In around 80%-90% of cases, this further learning is directed to a higher level qualification than was their originally-funded course.

A majority of this further learning has been further assisted financially, most usually by 'other grants for learners'.

Again, this further funding is widely reported by learners as being important to completing the further learning.



The majority of early leavers from their originally-funded courses report that they would have considered re-engaging in learning (where they had not already done so) if more financial support had been available.

## 1.6 Employment progression

Most learners – at least 85% in respect of each scheme – who completed their original learning and who are now employed, report that that learning helped them to progress in their careers.

The funded learning helped moderate proportions of funded learners to progress into employment. At the time of the survey, between 14% of learners (in the Care to Learn case) and 58% of learners (in the Residential Bursaries case) were in employment. Additionally, the proportions in learning at the time of survey ranged from 18% (Residential Bursaries) to 50% (RSS).

However, negative outcomes (being unemployed or ‘inactive’ at the time of survey) ranged from 11% (in the case of RSS) to 57% (in the case of 6th Form College Childcare).

Where learners were in work both before and after supported learning, average increases in annual earnings ranged from around £3,000 (for EMA) to around £8,100 (for RSS).

## 1.7 Personal and social benefits

The perceived benefits of undertaking learning supported by these schemes are wide-ranging and encompass a number of personal and social gains (including, for example, greater purpose in life, improved generic and social skills, increased interest in work and greater self-confidence).

## 1.8 Conclusions

Overall, the survey has shown that funding support to learning has positive impacts:

- For most schemes, the availability of funding is important to learner *participation*. For all schemes, funding is important to *completion* for at least 7 in 10 supported learners; and funding is important to the *achievement of qualifications* for at least 9 in 10 support learners.
- Funding for *childcare* had particularly strong effects on engagement, retention, and achievement.
- Retention of, and achievement by, supported learners is good and mostly compares well with benchmarks for all Further Education in England despite the disadvantageous circumstances of these learners.
- Information on most schemes was reported as being readily available and where information, advice, and guidance has been received, it was virtually always perceived as helpful.
- Funded learning has led or will lead to *further* learning for a majority of people in a majority of schemes.
- Funded learning has led to a positive outcome (being in work or education or training at the point of survey) for substantial proportions of supported learners (over 7 out of 10 cases in respect of EMA, ALG and RSS).
- Virtually all learners reported one or more (and usually many) personal or social benefits from funded learning.

However, a number of issues are raised by the data which need to be considered in the further development of support-to-learning funds:

- Findings suggest that significant proportions of learners do not recall receiving formal information, advice, and guidance on the availability of the funds. This does not suggest that learners have not actually received any. Many may have received informal information, advice and guidance and failed to identify it as such, whilst others may simply not recall receiving it. However, the survey evidence highlights the need to further verify the extent of availability of formal information, advice and guidance and to heighten the profile of this element of the support, both in terms of its availability and whilst it is being delivered, so that learners have a better level of awareness and recall of the process.
- In respect of EMA and ALG the proportions of people who said they would have undertaken the learning whether the funding was available or not were very substantial. Though many more learners said that these programmes were important to *completion*, EMA had the lowest proportion of those saying this, and ALG had a particularly low proportion of learners who actually completed. The figures suggest that there may be some deadweight in the distribution of these funds. However, EMA and ALG are designed to ease financial burdens for those in receipt of them and we cannot be sure how difficult some learners would have found it and how it would have affected achievement rates in reality if they had not been in receipt of the funding.
- Generally, employment rates for young people in England are not high. The Labour Force Survey for mid-2008 reports that 43% of 16-19 year olds and 76% of 20-24 year olds were in employment. However, employment rates for ex-learners in all schemes were generally below these benchmarks. Of course, those who were supported to learn are not typical. By definition, they have financial constraints which may be associated with other employment disadvantages (such as residence in areas of high unemployment) and, for some schemes, by the continuing demands of childcare. The statistics suggest, however, that continuing support to learners (following the financial support they received whilst learning) is necessary if ex-learners are to achieve parity of employment status and prospects with workforce averages.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 Background

In February 2008, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) commissioned BMG Research to undertake a survey to determine the impact of the Learner Support schemes available to learners.

The main aim of the research is to understand how well the funding provided by the LSC is helping learners on their courses, with the focus on four key stages of learning comprising:

- Finding out about a course, including making the decision to take-up a course;
- Actually taking up a course and staying on it to the end;
- Achieving qualifications;
- Moving onto further learning; and the impact of funded learning on career and personal development.

More particularly, learners were asked a range of key questions relevant to each of the four key stages of learning and beyond:

- **Engagement/Participation:** Is the funding helping to raise interest in taking up learning? Is it encouraging people to take-up learning, who might not have been able to if the funding was not there to help them?
- **Retention:** Does the funding help learners to stay on a course until the end? Does it help prevent learners from dropping out, such as learners who might have had to stop learning to earn money if the funding was not there to support them?
- **Achievement:** Does the funding help learners complete their course and achieve a qualification, or achieve a higher qualification than they might have if the funding wasn't there?
- **Progression:** Does the funding encourage learners to think about future courses, or has it encouraged them to try for a promotion, or take on more responsibility at work, or take-up other learning for personal development/interest?

The survey methodology, which involved a complex sample structure based on funding scheme and year of funding, was tailor-made to serve the aims of the survey and provide an appropriate level of detail with regard to the findings. As a result of the specific approach undertaken, findings from the survey cannot be compared with any other research or evaluation undertaken in the past.

### 2.2 Strands of the Learner Support Programme: What they are and how they are delivered

#### ***Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)***

- EMA supports young learners from low income households to continue in learning post 16.
- The learning provider records weekly attendance and notifies the HAPB whether the learner should receive their payment. Payments are then made by the HAPB directly to the learner's bank account.

### ***Adult Learning Grant (ALG)***

- ALG helps low skilled, low income adults with the costs of their learning. It has been designed to allow learners to combine full-time learning with full-time or part-time employment, where they wish to do so. It is an entitlement programme.
- The learning provider records weekly attendance and notifies the HAPB whether the learner should receive their payment. Payments are then made by the HAPB directly to the learner's bank account.

### ***Care to Learn (C2L)***

- Care to Learn supports young parents in learning by contributing to the costs of their childcare while they learn.
- Regular attendance monitoring is made of the learning provider and the childcare provider by the HAPB, who pays the childcare provider directly.

### ***Residential Support Scheme (RSS)***

- RSS provides financial support for accommodation costs to those students who need to study away from home.
- Payments are made by the HAPB to the college in termly instalments. The college checks that the applicant is in attendance before using the funds to pay the landlord directly.

### ***Dance and Drama Awards (DaDA)***

- Dance and Drama Awards enable the most talented individuals to train to become actors, dancers, and stage managers, regardless of their family income.
- The initial Award is paid by the LSC directly to the (independent) learning provider. The income assessed student support fund operates on an entitlement basis, with payments being made by the HAPB to the learning provider in termly instalments.
- The learning provider checks that the applicant is in attendance before making payment to the learner.

### ***Sixth Form College Childcare***

- This is an income-assessed support for parents aged 20+ in learning at a sixth form college or school sixth form, by contributing to the costs of their childcare while they learn.
- Regular attendance monitoring is made of the learning provider and the childcare provider by the HAPB, who pays the childcare provider directly.

### ***Free Childcare for Training and Learning for Work***

- This scheme was rolled out nationally in April 2009 and provides help to families where the parent wishing to enter into learning is either workless or works for less than 16 hours per week with the cost of childcare while they are in learning.

### ***Hardship***

- Previously known as Learner Support Funds (LSF); discretionary funding is allocated to learning providers to support those learners most in need with the costs of learning (e.g. books, equipment).

**20+ Childcare**

- This is a discretionary funding, allocated to learning providers, to support learners in Further Education with childcare.

**Residential Bursaries**

- Residential Bursaries provide financial support for accommodation costs to those students who need to study away from home.
- It is discretionary funding, allocated to specialist learning providers, to respond to the residential nature of specialist provision.

**Professional Career Development Loans**

- Professional Career Development Loans are commercial bank loans to help individuals pay for vocational education and learning.
- Applications are made directly to the chosen bank and any loan agreement reached is between the applicant and that bank. The bank performs its own credit check.
- Fees payments are made directly to the learning provider by the bank when the learning provider confirms that the applicant has started on the course. Payment to cover other course costs and living expenses are made directly to the applicant.

**Local Authority-led Transport Partnerships**

- Resource made available to Local Authorities to support the development of strategic and innovative solutions to home/ college transport issues.
- Funding allocations are made to Local Authorities by LSC National Office and the Local Authorities must use this funding to make real and sustainable progress in improving transport support and services. The details of how this may be done are at the Local Authorities' discretion.

**2.3 Methodology**

10,688 interviews were conducted with learners who had been assisted by the LSC Learner Support schemes in three academic years, 2005/06, 2006/07, and 2007/08. The schemes that were in the scope of the survey included:

- Care to Learn
- Education Maintenance Allowance
- Adult Learning Grant
- Discretionary Hardship Fund
- Discretionary Funding - 20+ Childcare Fund
- Sixth Form College Childcare
- Residential Support Scheme
- Residential Bursaries

A stratified random sample was drawn by funding scheme, the year in which funding was received, and the gender and age of learners. Where the sample was relatively small by year of funding,

contacts were maximised. Where sufficient sample was provided to achieve minimum targets, quotas were set.

The following table shows the number of contacts and number of interviews achieved by year of funding within each scheme. For some schemes, weighting factors were applied in order to adjust for over- or under- representation of some demographic factors and to ensure that the data accurately reflected the profile of learners across academic years:

		2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Care to Learn	Number of contacts	184	1,216	2,918
	Achieved interviews	41	202	804
	% of interviews	4	19	77
Education Maintenance Allowance	Number of contacts	68,079	135,350	119,345
	Achieved interviews (unweighted)	884	909	2,014
	% of interviews (unweighted)	23	24	53
	Achieved interviews (weighted)	1,090	1,358	1,359
	% of interviews (weighted)	29	36	36
Adult Learning Grant	Number of contacts	7,897	9,084	19,023
	Achieved interviews (unweighted)	490	490	1,025
	% of interviews (unweighted)	24	24	52
	Achieved interviews (weighted)	461	622	922
	% of interviews (weighted)	23	31	46
Discretionary Hardship	Number of contacts		128,000	150,000
	Achieved interviews (unweighted)		995	1,005
	% of interviews (unweighted)		50	50
	Achieved interviews (weighted)		920	1,080
	% of interviews (weighted)		46	54
Discretionary Funding - 20+ Childcare	Number of contacts		48,900	17,000
	Achieved interviews (unweighted)		1,014	334
	% of interviews (unweighted)		75.2	24.8
	Achieved interviews (weighted)		1,000	348
	% of interviews (weighted)		74.2	25.8

		2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
6th Form College Childcare	Number of contacts	-	168	402
	Achieved interviews	3*	14	65
	% of interviews	4	17	79
Residential Bursaries	Number of contacts		255	199
	Achieved interviews		126	73
	% of interviews		63	37
Residential Support Scheme	Number of contacts	323	234	305
	Achieved interviews	58	57	85
	% of interviews	29	29	43

\* Although no contacts were received from this year, during interviewing it became apparent that learners received funding during this period.

Findings in relation to each of these programmes have been presented in individual reports. This report pulls together key findings from those reports in order to offer a comparative overview and to come to some general conclusions.

It should be noted that each of the different funding schemes offer something different to learners and as a result the learners receiving support from each of the schemes will vary in profile, particularly by age and economic circumstances. Thus, comparisons should be considered in the context of each individual scheme and the overall profile of its recipients.

In considering study findings, it should be noted that percentages used to generate graphs are using data to one decimal place. However, data is presented in the graphs as whole integers. Thus, rounding numbers which are added to or subtracted from each other may result in slight discrepancies. For example: 70% plus 27% equals 97% but the numbers used are actually, 69.8% (which rounds up to 70%) and 26.6% (which rounds up to 27%), which, when added together equal 96.4% (which rounds *down* to 96%). Furthermore, where two percentages are presented side by side which look as though they should be identical but the 'bars' are of slightly different lengths, the actual percentages differ by tenths of a percent. For example: 4% could be within the range 3.5% to 4.4%.

Where data is based on no more than 20 cases (unweighted) it is suppressed in figures and tables.

## 3 Engagement

### Key findings

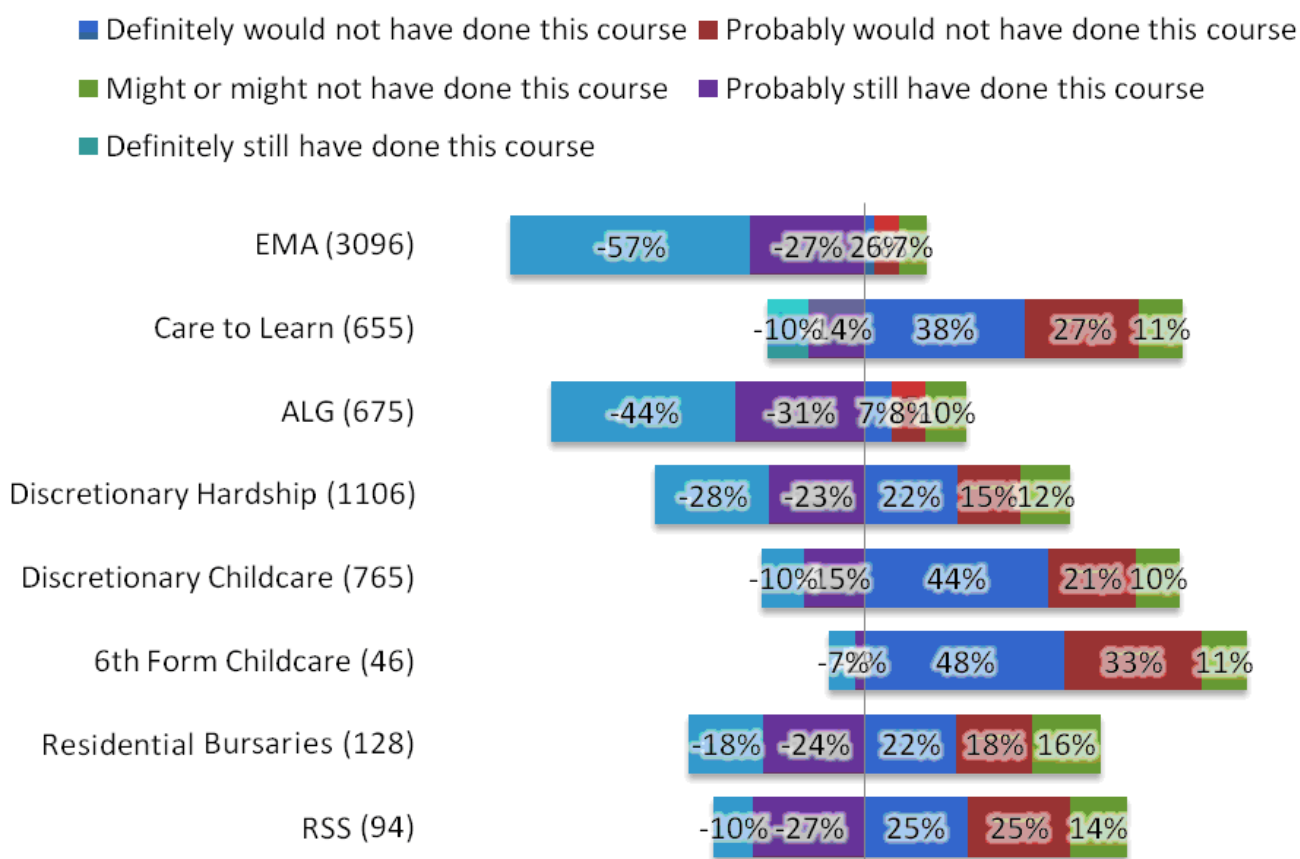
- The ‘leverage’ of programme funding on engagement in learning varies widely between programmes.
- Leverage is strongest for two childcare support programmes. 65% of Care to Learn learners and 80% of 6th Form College Childcare learners say they would definitely or probably not have learned without the funding.
- Leverage on engagement is weakest for EMA and ALG. Only 8% and 15% (respectively) of learners supported by these programmes say they would definitely or probably not have learned without the funding.
- Learners in all schemes engaged for a mix of reasons including those of wanting to gain a qualification, to lay a foundation for higher level learning, or to improve employment or career prospects.
- Learners had a wide variety of financial concerns prior to taking up their support courses. Concerns about general living expenses were widespread. However, for those supported by childcare schemes, the cost of childcare was the primary concern.
- The proportions of learners who knew funding was available before they started their courses ranged from 33% (in the case of ALG) to 80% (in the case of EMA).
- The great majority of learners – at least seven in ten – reported information on funding as easily available. Information on EMA was most frequently available (94% of recipients said it was ‘easy to find out about’). Information on Residential Support was least frequently available (68% said it was ‘easy to find out about’).
- However, fewer than half of learners in most schemes recall receiving formal information, advice and guidance which alerted them to the funding, although they may have received informal information, advice and guidance which they failed to recognise and recall. The main source of advice for most schemes was College staff but the main source of advice on EMA was school staff and on Care to Learn was Connexions.

### 3.1 Impact of funding on course take-up

There is clear evidence (see Figure 1) that funding schemes which subsidise childcare costs have the greatest impact on course take-up. This is particularly the case for learners studying at 6<sup>th</sup> form college level. This undoubtedly reflects the extent to which, potentially, childcare responsibilities, where they exist, have to be taken into account when considering taking up any learning (or any activity outside the home). Funding schemes which are designed to alleviate general financial difficulties, such as EMA and ALG (and, as such, are accessible to a wider range of learners with varying degrees of need), tend to have lesser impact on whether learners take-up a course or not:



**Figure 1: Impact of funding on course take-up (where heard about funding before deciding on course) Sample bases in parentheses**



### 3.2 Reasons for taking up the course

Few learners give just one reason for taking up a course. When prompted with a list of possible reasons, the one most frequently selected by learners in all funding schemes is that of ‘to gain a qualification’. Slightly fewer cite ‘to gain new skills or improve your skills’, ‘to help you get a new/better job or improve your career prospects’ and/or ‘for personal interest/enjoyment’. When respondents were asked to identify just one *main* reason, then ‘to gain a qualification’ was the reason most frequently given across all funding schemes, whilst being helped to progress to a higher level course was next most likely to be selected. Broadly, a blend of wanting to get a qualification, wanting to be able to progress to further study, and wanting a better job or career prospects account, as would be expected, for most of the participation assisted by the support schemes:

**Table 1: Main reason for course take-up, prompted (all respondents) \*denotes less than 0.5%**

<i>percentages</i>	Care to Learn	EMA	ALG	Discretionary Hardship	Discretionary Funding - 20+ Childcare	6th Form College Childcare	Residential Bursaries	RSS
To gain a qualification	37	35	28	29	26	28	30	30
To allow you to take-up a higher level course	12	22	25	11	10	20	4	14
To gain new skills or improve your skills	9	9	10	17	21	11	17	14
To help you get into work	8	3	3	7	9	10	7	6
For personal interest/enjoyment	7	10	10	13	7	6	19	13
To help you get a new/better job or improve your career prospects	6	12	15	11	13	17	12	18
To help you get a better paid job	6	4	5	5	5	5	3	2
To meet other people/make new friends	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	1
To build self-confidence	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	0
It was relevant to your job	1	2	1	2	2	0	6	3
Was on offer at a time that suited you	1	*	*	*	*	0	1	1
To get more satisfaction from work	*	*	*	*	*	0	1	1
To keep up with/help out with the kids (schoolwork)	*	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Was on offer at local college	*	*	*	*	0	0	0	0
<i>Sample bases</i>	<i>1,047</i>	<i>3,807</i>	<i>2,005</i>	<i>2,000</i>	<i>1,348</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>199</i>	<i>200</i>

### 3.3 Financial concerns before starting the course

Learners assisted by the various funding schemes have varied financial concerns. These are concerns prior to starting the course and not whilst on it. Thus, where learners are assisted by childcare subsidies the cost of childcare is the most significant concern. In other schemes, learners are most concerned about general living expenses but also have significant concerns about being able to afford books and materials and transport:

**Table 2: Proportion of respondents who were concerned (very/fairly) about financial issues before starting the course**

Being able to afford...	percentages	Sample bases	Books and materials	Transport	General living expenses	Childcare	
						Sample Bases (have children)	%
Care to Learn		1,047	53	47	68	1,047	81
EMA		3,807	51	45	63	81	26
ALG		2,005	63	57	75	276	44
Discretionary Hardship		2,000	57	48	59	650	32
Discretionary Funding - 20+ Childcare		1,348	60	47	62	1,348	68
6th Form College Childcare		82	59	34	60	82	88
Residential Bursaries		199	56	46	67	-	-
RSS		200	71	65	83	-	-

### 3.4 Information on funding

More than half of learners found out about most of the funding schemes before starting their course. This proportion is lowest for ALG (33%) and RSS (47%). Those who had difficulty in finding out about funding are very much in the minority. However, those who recall receiving information, advice and guidance about the funding are also in a minority (albeit to a lesser extent). With the exception of learners in the Residential Bursaries and EMA funding schemes, fewer than half of learners recall receiving information, advice and guidance on funding:

**Table 3: Summary of information on funding (all respondents)**

percentages	Sample bases	Found out about funding before starting course	Easy to find out about it	Difficult	Received information, advice and guidance on funding
Care to Learn	1,047	63	87	6	42
EMA	3,807	80	94	3	51
ALG	2,005	33	83	10	41
Discretionary Hardship	2,000	55	77	11	38
Discretionary Funding - 20+ Childcare	1,348	57	74	13	32
6th Form College Childcare	82	56	83	10	38
Residential Bursaries	199	64	83	6	55
RSS	200	47	68	16	42

It is likely that the proportion of learners receiving less formal information, advice and guidance and failing to recall it as a result is higher but we are not able to quantify that within this survey.

For most funding schemes, *college* teachers or staff are the most frequently reported sources of IAG. Amongst EMA-funded learners, *school*-based teachers or staff are more frequently cited sources, whilst those registered for Care to Learn funding are most likely to report their source of IAG as *Connexions*.

Across all funding schemes, wherever information, advice and guidance has been received it is highly rated, with no more than one in twenty of recipients failing to rate it as useful.

## 4 Retention and Persistence in Learning

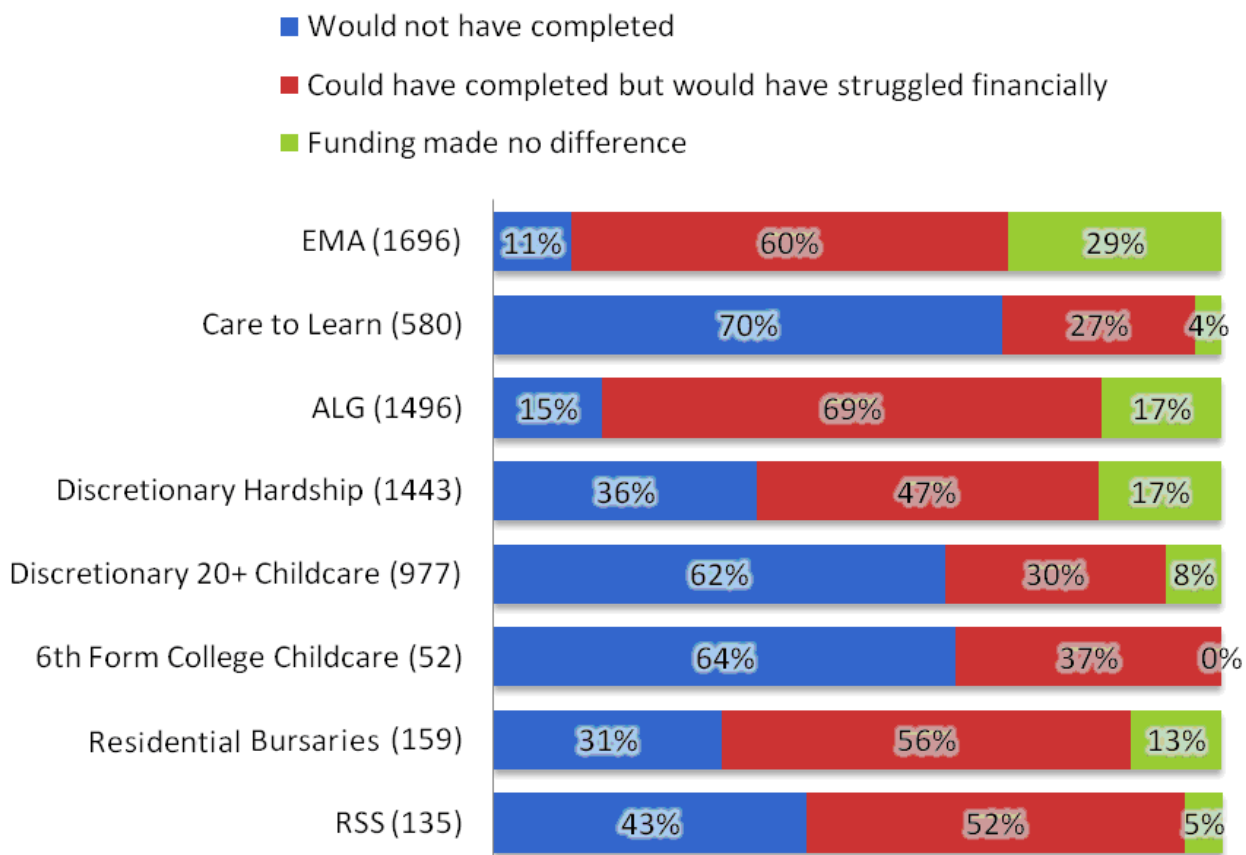
### Key findings

- Support funding has a widespread impact on retention. The proportions of learners who said that funding made no difference to whether or not they completed ranged from zero to 17% for most schemes.
- However, 29% of those who had received EMA said it had made no difference to whether they completed their course or not.
- In practice, actual completion rates ranged from 75% (of those funded by ALG) to 91% (of those funded by RSS). Completion rates were broadly comparable with, or in excess of, a national benchmark of 87% completion for all FE learners in England.
- Financial issues were a significant part of the decision to leave early in fewer than half of cases of early leaving from most programmes.
- More financial support would therefore have helped some learners to stay in learning but more tutor support, more study time, and better quality of teaching would more frequently have been the key factors persuading early leavers to stay in learning.

### 4.1 Value of funding to completing/staying on the course

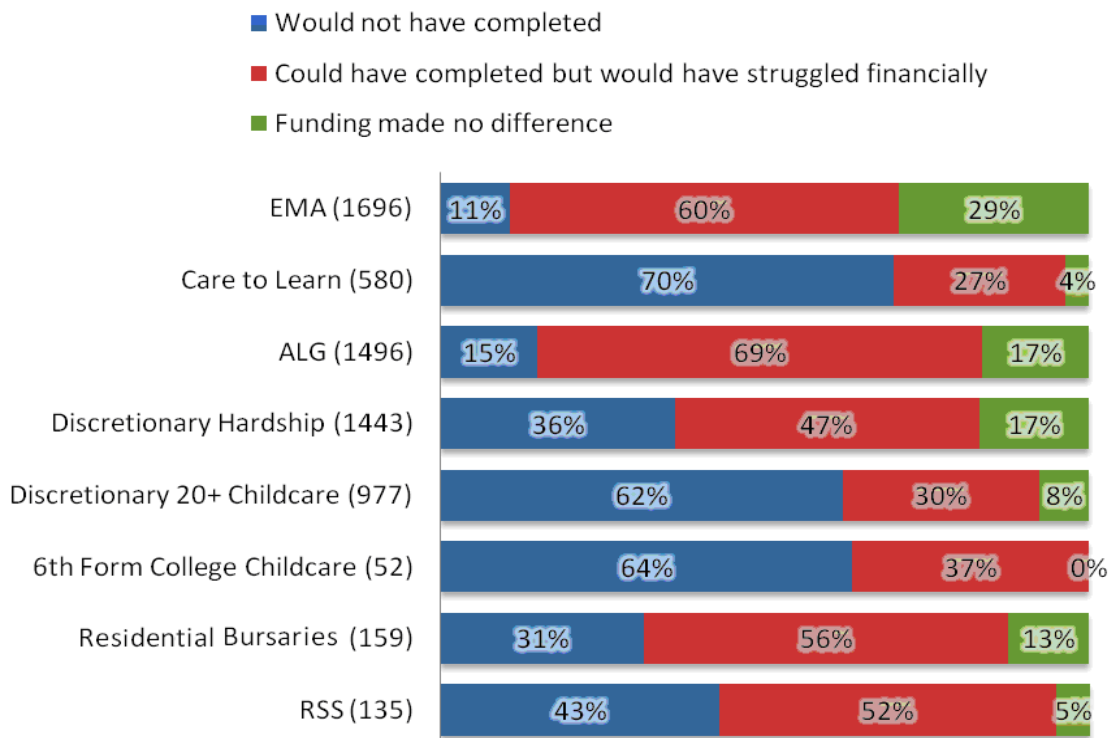
Across all funding schemes, the funding was significant in easing learners' financial difficulties. In the cases of childcare funding schemes, the *majority* of those who completed the course feel they would not have done so without the funding. In all other schemes, the majority of respondents reported that they 'could have completed but would have struggled financially'. Across all the schemes the funding made no difference to completion for only a minority of learners, although this proportion is relatively high amongst EMA-funded learners (29%). Findings on this question are summarised in the following figure:

**Figure 2: Statements that best describes learners’ feelings about the funding received (where completed the course) Sample bases in parentheses**



Responses to a similar question amongst those *still on their courses* show a similar pattern, with the majority across all schemes feeling they would at least struggle financially without the assistance. Again, learners receiving subsidised childcare are most likely to report that funding is essential to their staying in learning. Other assisted learners (who are still in learning) tend to respond more frequently that they would *struggle* without financial assistance rather than that they would not actually complete. The findings relating to learners still in learning are summarised in the following figure:

**Figure 3: Statements that best describes learners' feelings about the funding received (where still on the course)**  
**Sample bases in parentheses**



## 4.2 Early leaving

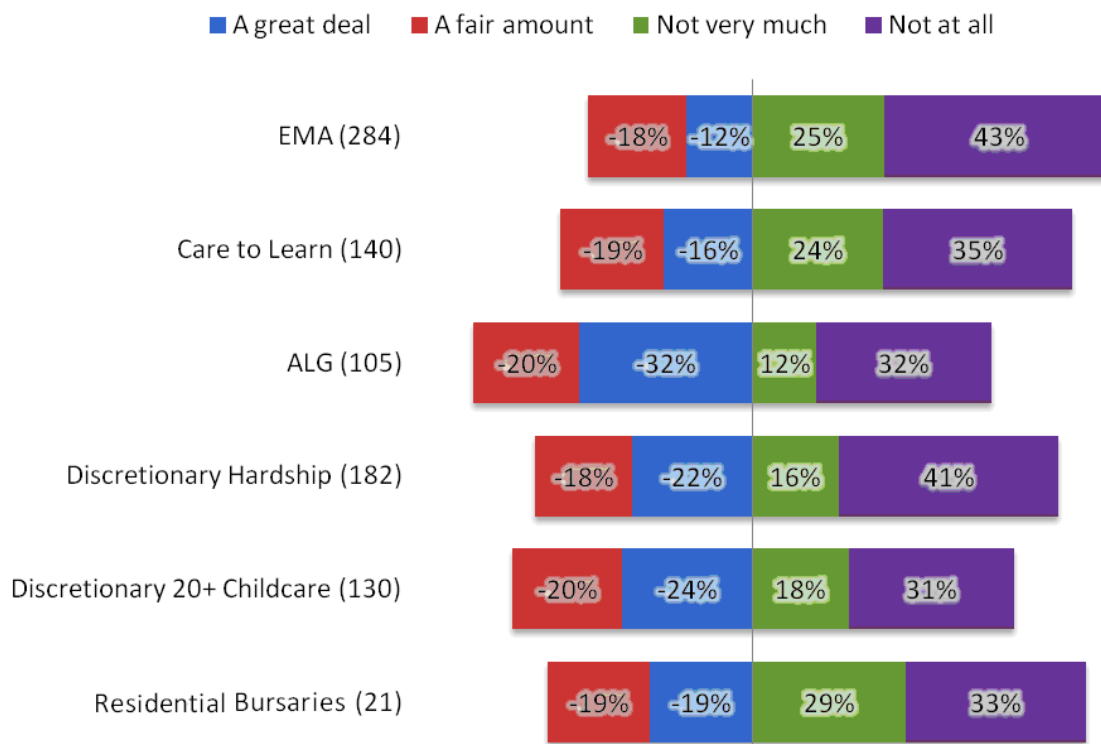
In all funding streams, the majority of those no longer on the courses for which they received funding *completed* the course. The lowest rate of completion is amongst Care to Learn learners (81%); followed by EMA-funded learners (86%). The highest rate of completion is evident amongst ALG-funded learners (93%).

The remainder of learners, ranging from 19% of Care to Learn learners down to just 7% of ALG-funded learners *left their course early*.

The main reasons for leaving the course before completion concern changes of circumstance and, amongst those learners with childcare concerns, the difficulties some learners experienced in combining learning with family and work commitments. For other learners without childcare issues, a feeling that the course was not right for them or did not hold their interest sufficiently was a more significant reason for leaving before completion.

Very few early leavers *spontaneously* cited financial issues as having prevented them from continuing. However, when prompted, higher proportions of early leavers reported that money issues influenced their decision to a significant extent. This ranges from around 3 in 10 of EMA-funded early leavers to 8 in 10 of RSS-funded early leavers. Between these extremes, around 40%-50% of early leavers assisted by the other schemes reported that financial problems were at least partially responsible for their non-completion. These findings are summarised in the following figure:

**Figure 4: Extent to which money issues influenced their decision to leave the course (where did not complete the course) Sample bases in parentheses**



General living costs and transport costs were most likely to be reported as the specific areas of financial difficulties faced by early leavers from all the funding schemes.

When asked what might have helped them to complete their course, *more time to study* and *more individual guidance or support from a tutor* were the two most frequently selected options. However, more financial support, particularly with regard to covering the costs of course materials and transport, is something which between three or four in ten learners feel would have helped them to complete their course.

The following table summarises these findings:



**Table 4: Ways that learners may have been helped to complete their course, prompted, multiple response (where did not complete the course)**

<i>percentages</i>	Care to Learn	EMA	ALG	Discretionary Hardship	Discretionary Funding - 20+ Childcare	Residential Bursaries
<b>More individual guidance or support from the tutor</b>	44	43	44	41	48	38
<b>More time to study</b>	52	40	40	42	49	24
<b>Better quality of teaching</b>	31	39	40	37	37	24
<b>More financial support to cover cost of course materials</b>	43	36	36	40	41	33
<b>More financial support to cover costs of transport</b>	38	34	38	35	34	33
<b>More financial support to cover costs of childcare</b>	31	1	7	10	40	5
<b>Something else</b>	16	15	23	20	17	14
<b>None</b>	16	22	19	18	18	24
<b>Don't know</b>	1	2	3	2	3	10
<i>Sample bases</i>	140	284	105	182	130	21

### 4.3 On-going or further financial assistance

The proportion of learners still in learning who have received *further* financial assistance varies widely. Those receiving childcare subsidies, particularly those in receipt of Discretionary Funds for Childcare (52%), are most likely to have received further financial assistance. The proportion is as low as 5% amongst EMA-funded learners and 7% of those receiving ALG or Discretionary Funds for Hardship. 19% of those registered on the 6th Form College Childcare scheme, 21% of those receiving a Residential Bursaries, 23% of Care to Learn learners, and 33% of other RSS-funded learners have received further assistance.

The nature of *further* financial assistance varies by funding scheme. Those already in receipt of financial assistance towards childcare are most likely to receive further assistance with childcare costs. Amongst other learners, transport costs tend to be the focus of further financial assistance in a higher proportion of cases than course costs, but amongst EMA-funded learners and those in receipt of Discretionary Funds for Hardship, difficulties with transport and course costs are equally likely to be the reasons for further assistance.

## 5 Achievement

### Key findings

- Most supported learners who completed their courses achieved a qualification. The lowest proportion doing so was 87% for those funded by Care to Learn.
- High proportions of those who achieved a qualification said that the funding they received helped a ‘great deal’ or a ‘fair amount’ towards this outcome. The lowest proportion saying one or other of these things was 87% (amongst recipients of EMA). Nearly all those in receipt of Care to Learn and 6th Form College Childcare (98% in each case) said that the funding helped at least ‘a fair amount’.
- The learning funded by the schemes was responsible for raising the proportions of supported learners with at least Level 2 qualifications by up to 35% (in the case of 6th Form College Childcare) and for reducing the proportions with no qualifications (with any NVQ equivalence) by up to 22% (in the case of Discretionary Funding - 20+ Childcare).

### 5.1 Achievement of qualifications

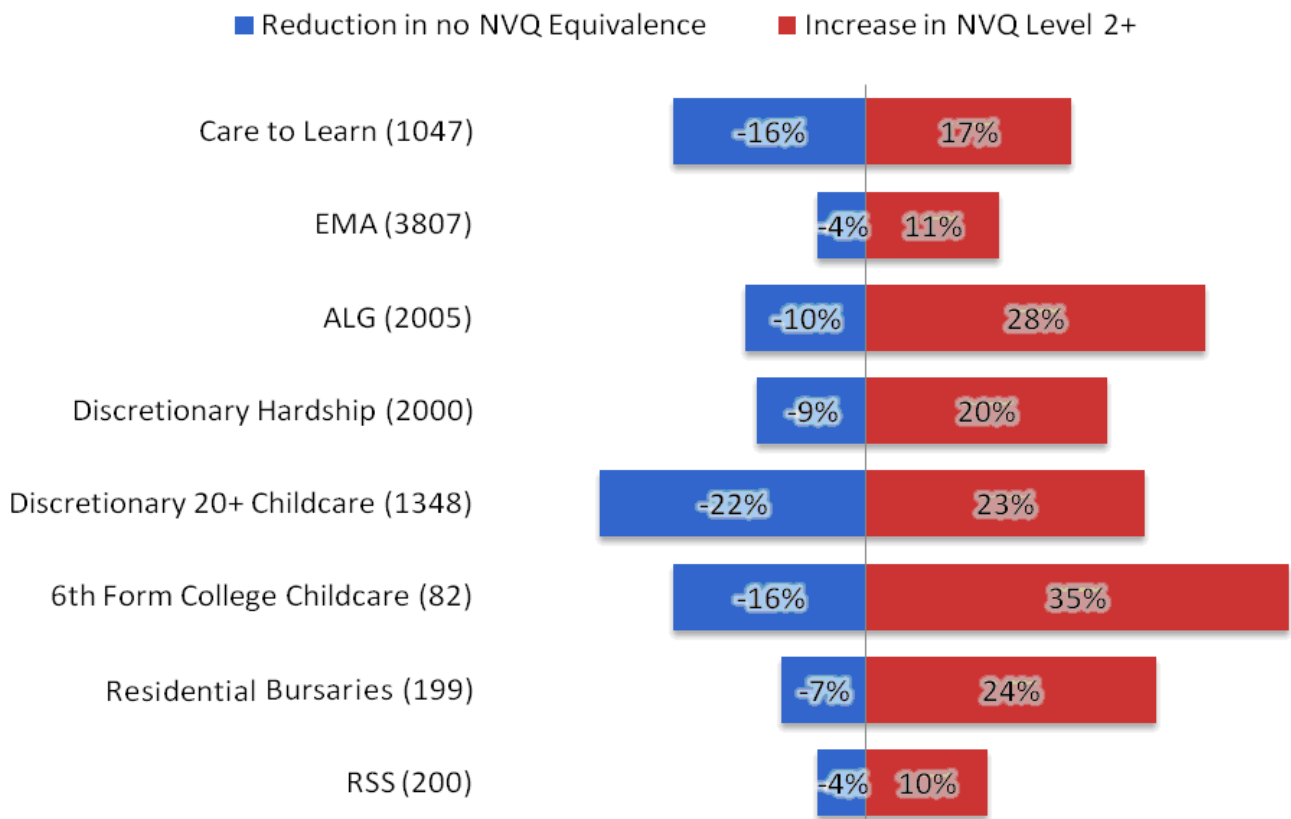
Amongst those learners who have completed their funded course, most achieved a qualification. The proportions who did so are shown below. Percentages in brackets then show the proportions of those achieving a qualification who said that the funding they received helped ‘a great deal’ or a ‘fair amount’ towards this outcome:

• Care to Learn	87%	(80% helped a great deal; 18%, a fair amount);
• EMA	95%	(37%; 50%);
• ALG	97%	(43%; 45%);
• Discretionary Funding - Hardship	88%	(58%; 32%);
• Discretionary Funding - 20+ Childcare	88%	(74%; 20%);
• 6th Form College Childcare	94%	(78%; 20%);
• Residential Bursaries	97%	(67%; 27%);
• RSS Other	96%	(72%; 25%).

Thus, learners are overwhelmingly positive about the contribution that the funding made to their achievement of qualifications. It is only the *extent* to which the funding contributed that varies between funding schemes. Learners who received funding from EMA and ALG (who, as already noted, less frequently report funding as having a strong impact on their taking up and staying in learning) are less likely to report that the funding helped them ‘a great deal’ but the majority of these still feel that it helped at least ‘a fair amount’.

Significant increases in qualification levels are evident when comparing the NVQ equivalence of learners’ qualifications before and after the original courses for which they received funding. The proportions without a qualification with any NVQ equivalence have fallen across all funding schemes and there have been increases in the proportions with Level 2 equivalent qualifications. The former effect is greatest for schemes to assist with childcare costs. The latter effect is greatest for the 6th Form College Childcare and ALG schemes. EMA has only a modest effect on both measures:

**Figure 5: Gains in NVQ equivalence after original course for which received funding (all respondents) Sample bases in parentheses**



## 6 Learning Progression

### Key findings

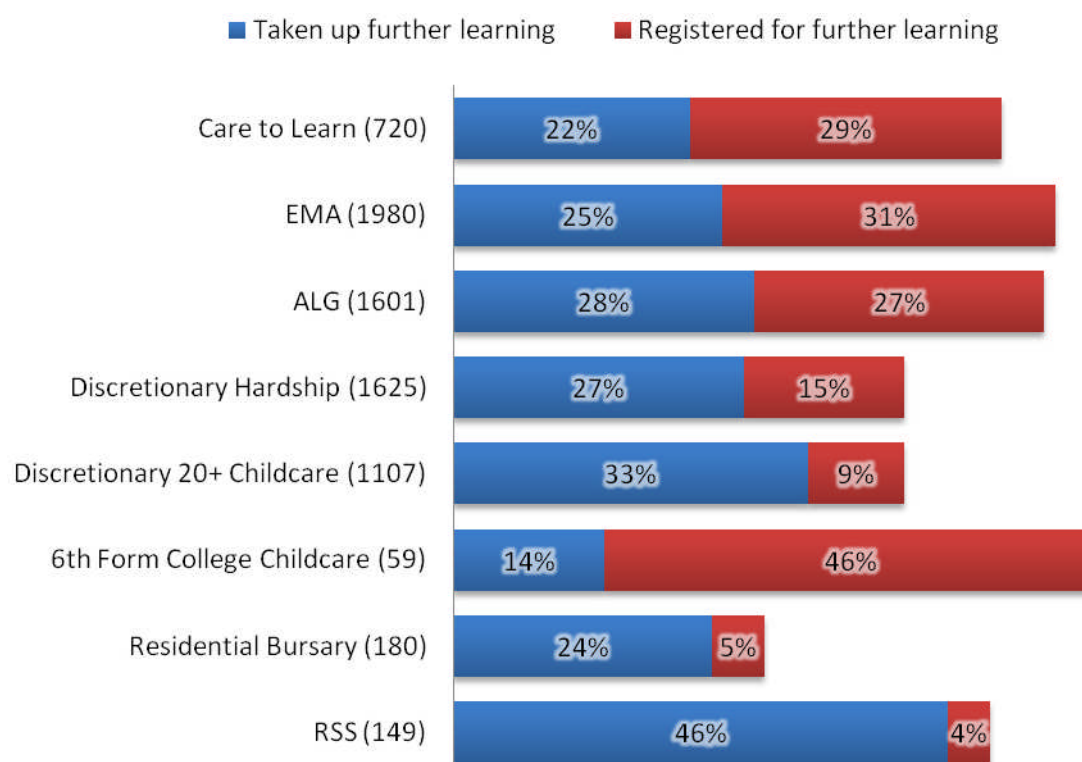
- Learning progression beyond the originally-funded learning is significant. Around a quarter to a third of learners have already taken up further learning and further significant proportions have registered for further learning.
- In around 80%-90% of cases, this further learning is directed to a higher level qualification than was their originally-funded course.
- A majority of this further learning has been further assisted financially, most usually by 'other grants for learners'.
- Again, this further funding is widely reported by learners as being important to completing the further learning.
- The majority of early leavers from their originally-funded courses report that they would have considered re-engaging in learning (where they had not already done so) if more financial support had been available.

### 6.1 Learning progression

Around a quarter of those no longer on the original course for which they received funding report that they have taken up other learning since leaving the original course. This proportion varies by funding scheme and is particularly high amongst RSS recipients but is lower than average amongst those receiving 6th Form College Childcare funding.

The proportion of learners who have registered for further learning but not yet started it also varies, but, for the most part, the two figures (for those who have taken up or registered for further learning) sum to between 50% and 60% of those no longer on their original course:

**Figure 6: Proportion of learners that have taken up/registered for further learning (where no longer on the original course) Sample bases in parentheses**

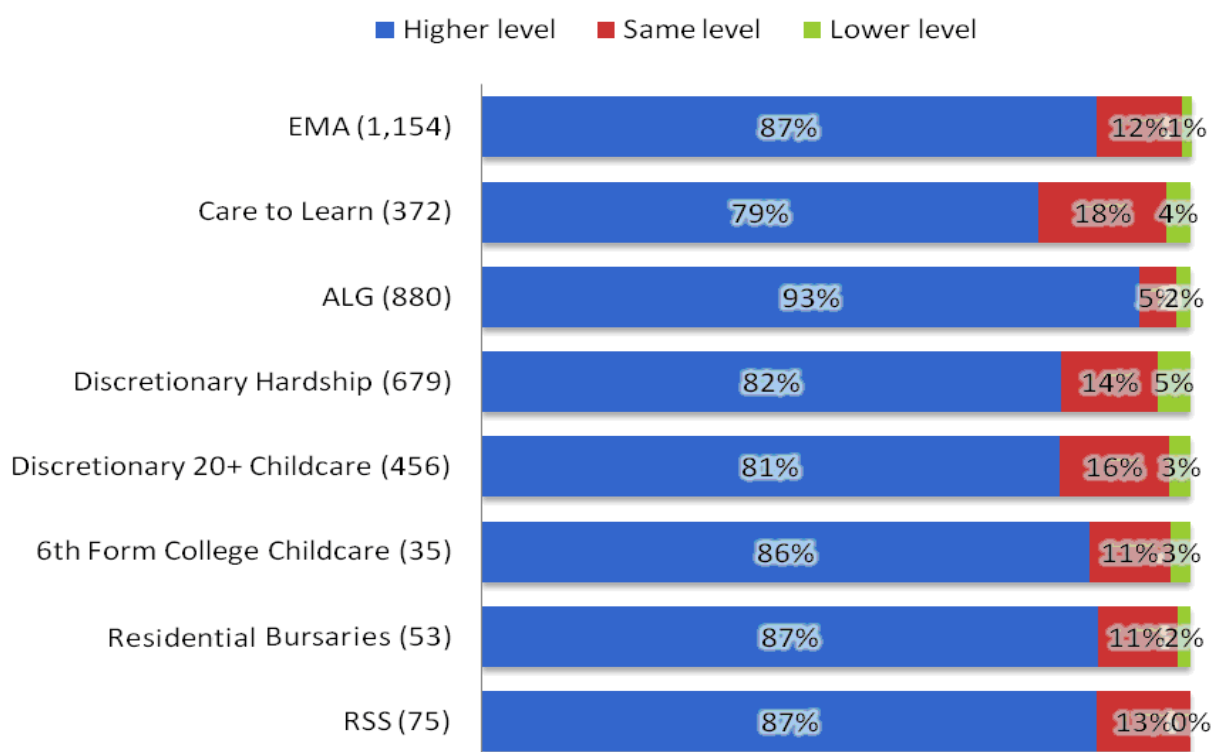


## 6.2 Level of further learning

The great majority of learners who have taken up or registered for further learning, undertake learning at a higher level than their original funded course.

This is summarised in the following figure:

**Figure 7: Level of further learning (where taken up/registered for further learning) Sample bases in parentheses**



### 6.3 Funding of further learning

Learners who have taken up further learning are more likely than not to have received further financial assistance. The proportions in further learning receiving further funding are shown in the following table:

**Table 5: Proportions of those undertaking further learning who received further funding**

<i>percentages</i>	Care to Learn	EMA	ALG	Discretionary Hardship	Discretionary Funding - 20+ Childcare	Residential Bursaries	RSS
<b>Received funding for further learning</b>	51	60	62	55	53	62	74
<b>Did not receive funding for further learning</b>	49	40	38	45	47	38	26
<i>Sample bases (where taken up further learning and still on it/completed it)</i>	150	453	420	429	343	42	65

Sources of further funding are shown in the following table. It can be seen that Care to Learn-assisted students are particularly likely to get continued assistance from Care to Learn and 6th Form College Childcare-assisted students are also particularly likely to get further assistance from their original programme. For most other schemes the further assistance received is from 'other grants':

**Table 6: Nature of further funding by original funding scheme**

percentages Sources of further funding	Original Scheme						
	Care to Learn	EMA	ALG	Discretionary Hardship	Discretionary Funding - 20+ Childcare	Residential Bursaries	RSS
Care to Learn	<b>63</b>	0	0	0	1	0	0
Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)	26	38	2	16	4	12	19
Discretionary funds – 20+ Childcare	12	0	2	4	34	0	0
Discretionary funds – for transport, books and learning materials	9	6	4	29	20	4	6
Adult Learning Grant (ALG)	3	0	10	8	12	8	0
Residential bursaries or grant	1	0	0	0	2	19	10
Other grants for learners including student loans/bursaries	12	<b>55</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>73</b>
6th Form College Childcare scheme	0	0	1	1	3	0	0
Residential support scheme (RSS)	0	2	5	<0.5	2	15	6
Don't know	7	9	4	15	7	19	0
Received other financial assistance in addition to schemes above	16	5	6	3	7	8	19
Sample bases (where received further financial assistance)	76	265	265	239	178	26	48

Footnote: The most frequent sources of further funding are shown in bold; sources can add to more than 100% because some individuals received more further funding from more than one source.

This additional financial assistance is of significant value to learners. A majority of those in further learning (subsequent to their original course) feel that they would have struggled without it. In the cases of those originally receiving childcare-related funding, further financial assistance was deemed by four in five learners to be essential to completion of their further learning. The table below shows the proportions who *could not have completed* their further learning without further funding and the proportions who would have *struggled* without it:

**Table 7: Effect of further funding on further learning (subsequent to original scheme)**

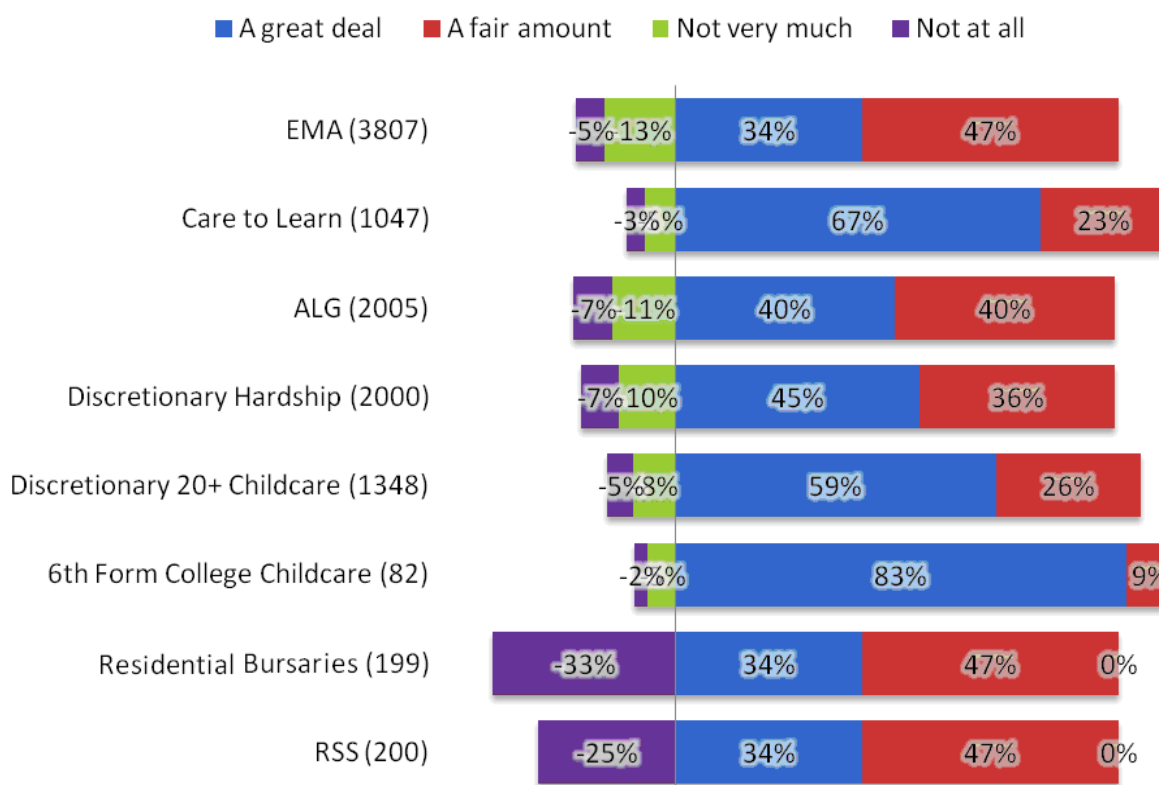
	% could not complete	% would have struggled	% Total
Care to Learn	82	14	96
EMA	15	57	72
ALG	26	54	80
Discretionary Hardship	54	43	97
Discretionary Funding - 20+ Childcare	82	16	198
6th Form College Childcare	25	75	100
Residential Bursaries	75	25	100
RSS	43	29	72

#### 6.4 Impact of original funding on learning progression

Survey findings suggest that the majority of learners credit the original funding they received with helping them to move on to further learning:



**Figure 8: Extent to which funding has helped learners to move on to further learning (all respondents) Sample bases in parentheses**

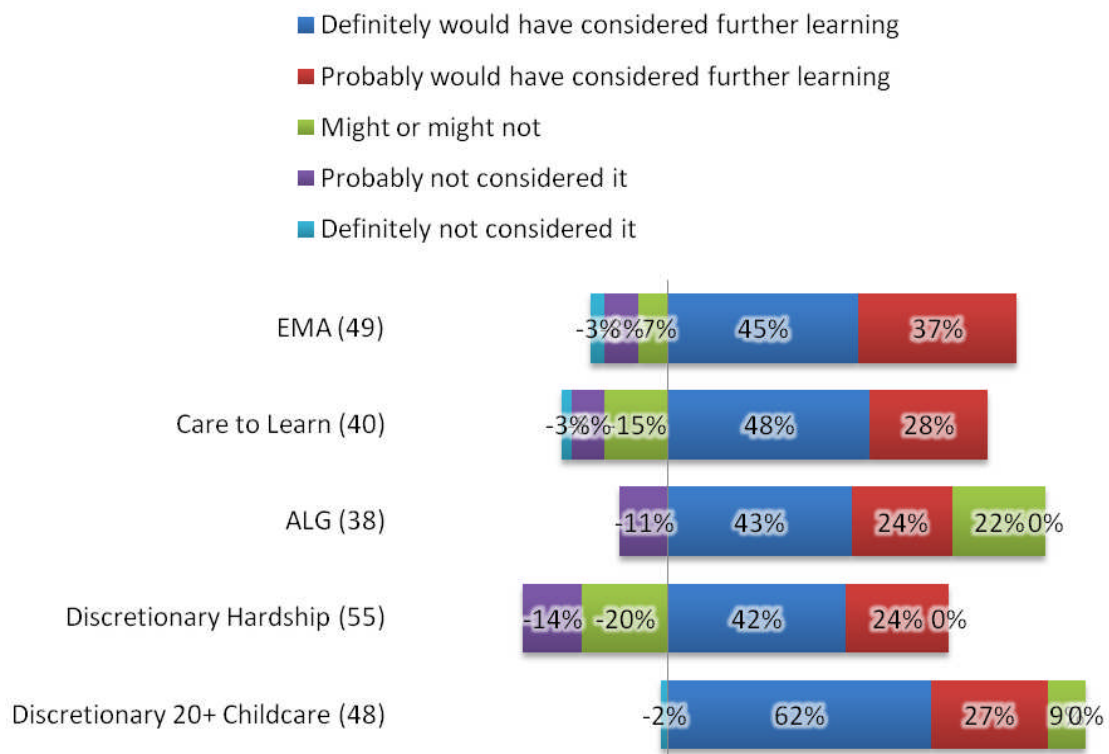


Overall, there are few differences by funding scheme, but particularly high proportions of Care to Learn- and 6th Form College Childcare-supported learners feel the original funding they received has helped them a great deal in this respect. Again, this is a reflection of the fact that childcare responsibilities as obstacles to undertaking learning (or indeed, any activity outside of the home) are difficult to overcome by means of anything other than financial assistance.

## 6.5 Further learning by early leavers

The majority of those who dropped out early from their original course because of financial issues and who have not taken up or registered for another course, said that they would probably or definitely have considered doing more learning had more financial support been available. This suggests that lack of financial support (or lack of knowledge of it being available) has had a significant negative impact on the extent to which these learners were able to progress into further learning:

**Figure 9: Impact of further financial support on take-up of further learning (where left original course early for financial reasons and have not taken up further learning) Sample bases in parentheses (caution low sample bases)**



## 7 Employment Progression

### Key findings

- Most learners – at least 85% in respect of each scheme – who completed their original learning and who are now employed, report that that learning helped them to progress in their careers.
- The funded learning helped moderate proportions of funded learners to progress into employment. At the time of the survey, between 14% of learners (in the Care to Learn case) and 58% of learners (in the Residential Bursaries case) were in employment. Additionally, the proportions in learning at the time of survey ranged from 18% (Residential Bursaries) to 50% (RSS).
- However, negative outcomes (being unemployed or ‘inactive’ at the time of survey) ranged from 11% (in the case of RSS) to 57% (in the case of 6th Form College Childcare).
- Where learners were in work both before and after supported learning, average increases in annual earnings ranged from around £3,000 (for EMA) to around £8,100 (for RSS).

### 7.1 Extent to which funded learning helped career progression

Learners who completed a funded course and are now employed are very positive about the contribution which funding has made to progress in their career. Across all funding schemes more than 4 in 5 now-employed learners feel that it has helped them to progress in their career:

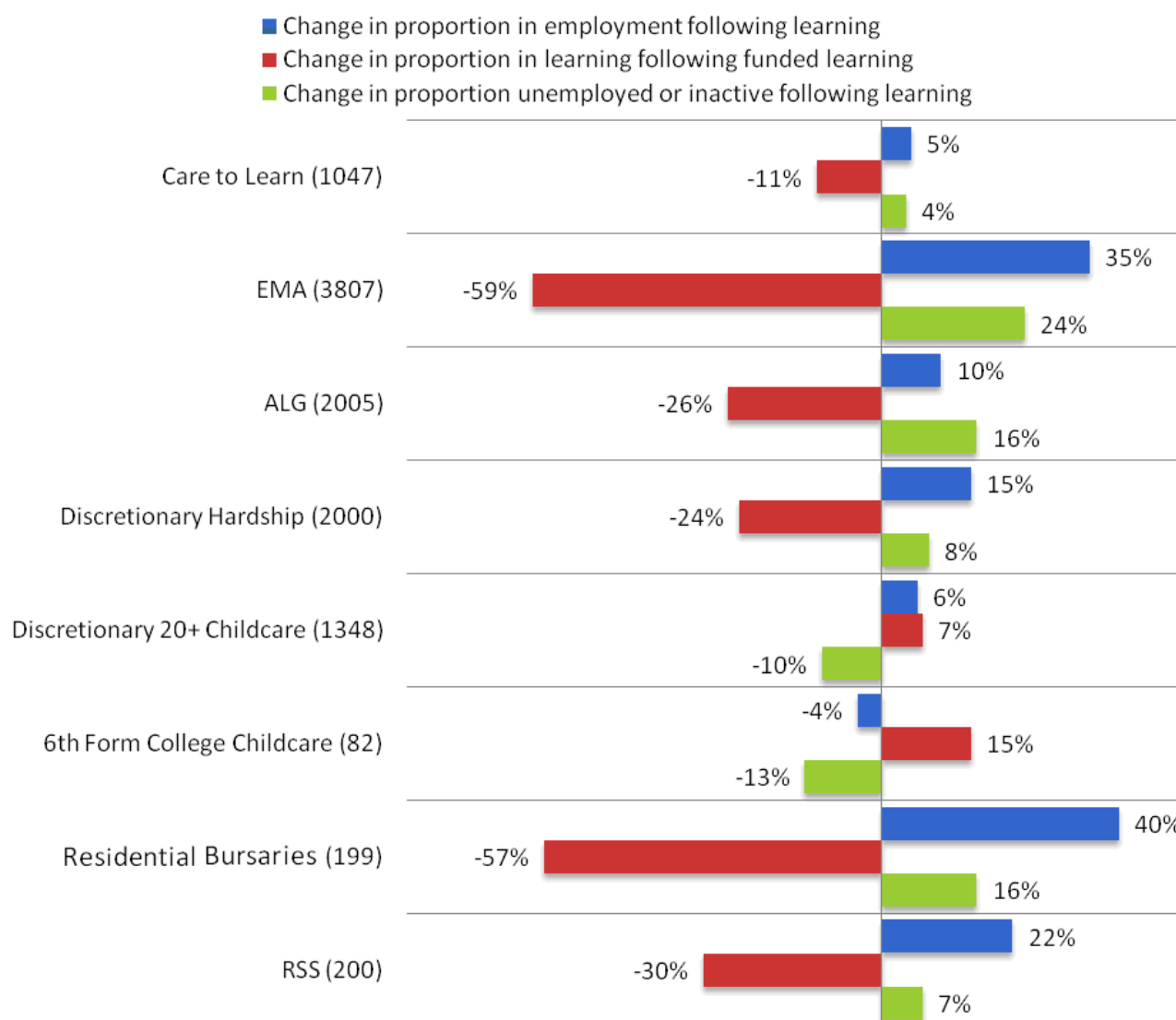
**Table 8: Perceived effect of funding on learners’ career prospects**

	% helped ‘a great deal’	% helped ‘a fair amount’	% Total
<b>Care to Learn</b>	71	24	95
<b>EMA</b>	37	48	85
<b>ALG</b>	43	43	86
<b>Discretionary Hardship</b>	60	31	91
<b>Discretionary Funding - 20+ Childcare</b>	79	19	98
<b>6th Form College Childcare</b>	79	19	98
<b>Residential Bursaries</b>	54	38	92
<b>RSS</b>	72	20	92

## 7.2 Employment status: before and after the original course

Supported learning, for many, particularly younger, people takes place prior to their seeking work for the first time. The proportions of those in learning after the supported learning tend, therefore, to be *lower* than they were before the learning – as younger people move out of their full-time education in school or college; and the proportions of those in employment after the supported learning are *higher* than prior to the learning for most of the schemes. However, unemployment or inactivity can also be a post-learning destination for those who are unsuccessful in finding work. This is particularly the case for young learners supported by Education Maintenance Allowance – for whom movement into inactivity or unemployment is significant:

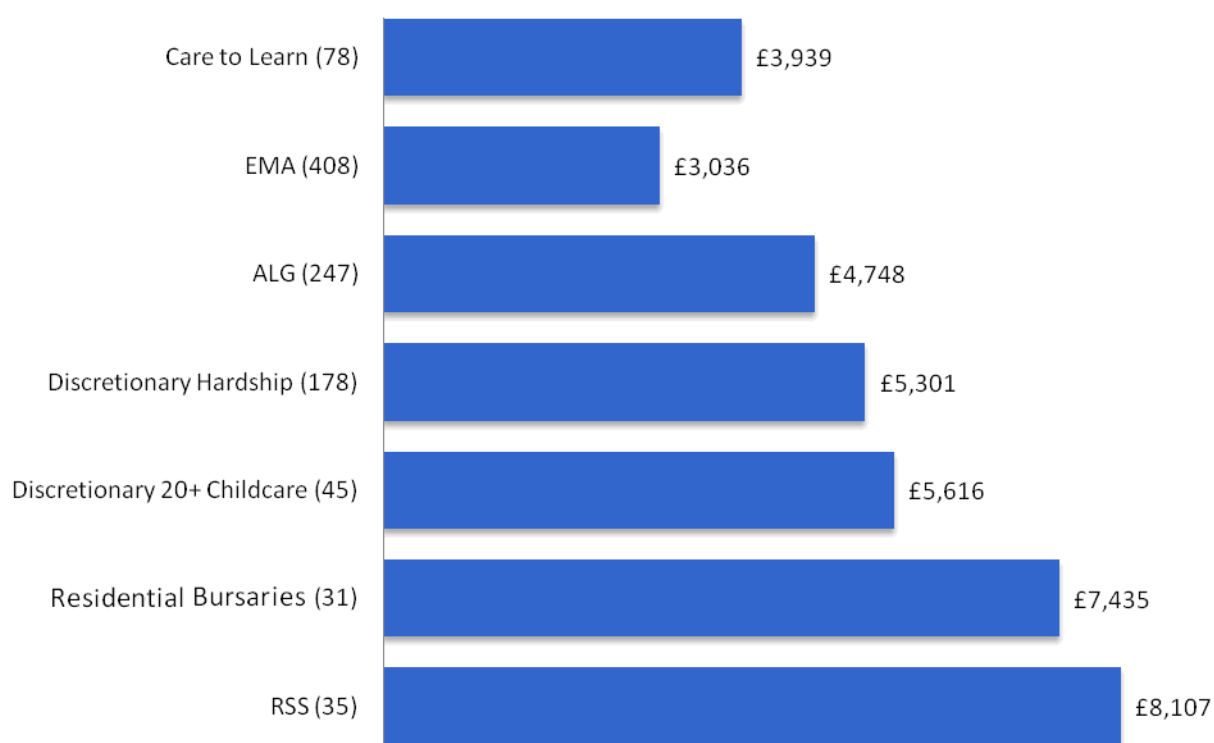
**Figure 10: Change in employment status following funded learning (all respondents) Sample bases in parentheses**



### 7.3 Financial benefits

The following figure compares the average (mean) increase in income for supported learners who were in employment both pre- and post- learning for each funding scheme. The data suggests that the greatest income benefits accrue for those supported by the Residential Support Scheme and are least for those supported by EMA:

**Figure 11: Approximate mean increase in annual personal income (where in work before and after learning, report that their annual personal income has increased and provided a response) Sample bases in parentheses**



### 7.4 Career progression

The majority of learners who are now in work following completion of a funded course feel their career benefited in at least one way. These benefits are summarised in the following table. It can be seen that one or more career benefits was recognised by 75%-90% of assisted learners who are now employed:

**Table 9: Career benefits experienced, prompted, multiple response (where completed any funded course and in work)**

<i>percentages</i>	Care to Learn	EMA	ALG	Discretionary Hardship	Discretionary Funding - 20+ Childcare	6th Form College Childcare	Residential Bursaries	RSS
<b>Moved into a job with better pay</b>	47	36	36	34	42	40	34	62
<b>Found a permanent job for the first time</b>	46	35	26	27	27	30	39	38
<b>Moved to a job with more responsibilities or prospects</b>	45	40	38	38	48	10	45	64
<b>Obtained more responsibilities or prospects in an existing job</b>	44	49	40	40	42	40	66	52
<b>Obtained better pay in existing job</b>	38	37	33	34	33	10	46	32
<b>Moved back into work after being out of work</b>	33	20	23	27	45	40	33	35
<b>Experienced any other career benefits</b>	11	7	8	6	7	0	4	8
<b>None of these</b>	15	26	31	30	25	10	8	12
<i>Sample bases</i>	<i>101</i>	<i>783</i>	<i>760</i>	<i>607</i>	<i>287</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>87</i>

## 8 Personal and Social Benefits

The majority of learners selected every item in a list of possible personal and social benefits which resulted from undertaking the course for which they received funding – benefits of learning are wide-ranging and widely perceived. As can be seen in the table below, more than 95% of learners recognised at least one benefit from their learning. No more than 1 in 25 said they gained *none* of the benefits in the table:

**Table 10: Benefits experienced, prompted, multiple response (all respondents)**

<i>percentages</i>	Care to Learn	EMA	ALG	Discretionary Hardship	Discretionary Funding - 20+ Childcare	6th Form College Childcare	Residential Bursaries	RSS
<b>Learning and developing skills that will be of benefit to current or future work</b>	89	87	89	85	89	92	85	94
<b>Improving your teamwork, communication and social skills</b>	89	85	87	84	86	89	87	91
<b>Getting a better idea about what you want to do in your life more generally</b>	91	85	88	81	85	93	79	89
<b>Increasing interest in work</b>	87	85	85	78	84	90	83	92
<b>Becoming more enthusiastic about learning</b>	86	83	87	83	87	89	78	81
<b>Having more self confidence</b>	85	83	84	82	85	88	83	84
<b>Coping better with daily life</b>	78	82	77	71	73	68	80	81
<b>Clarifying career aims</b>	86	81	85	75	81	85	80	86
<b>Improving your social life</b>	71	81	73	68	69	66	80	82
<b>Becoming more interested in involvement in community or voluntary activities</b>	62	63	58	59	64	66	65	64
<b>Benefiting in some other way</b>	11	3	3	4	4	9	2	2
<b>None</b>	1	2	1	4	2	1	4	1
<i>Sample bases</i>	<i>1,047</i>	<i>3,807</i>	<i>2,005</i>	<i>2,000</i>	<i>1,348</i>	<i>82</i>	<i>199</i>	<i>200</i>

## 9 Overview

Key indicators based on survey responses are:

	Care to Learn	EMA	ALG	Discretionary Hardship	Discretionary 20+ Childcare	6th Form College Childcare	Residential Bursaries	RSS
<b>Engagement</b>								
Definitely/probably would not have done course without the scheme	65%	8%	15%	37%	65%	80%	40%	49%
Easy to access information on the scheme	87%	94%	83%	77%	74%	83%	83%	68%
Received IAG on funding available	42%	51%	41%	38%	32%	38%	55%	42%
Where received, IAG was helpful	98%	97%	96%	96%	97%	100%	92%	92%
<b>Retention</b>								
Proportion who completed (Benchmark for all in FE in England = 87%)	81%	86%	75%	89%	88%	88%	88%	91%
Funding important or essential to completion	96%	71%	83%	83%	92%	100%	87%	95%
<b>Achievement</b>								
Funding important or very important to achievement of a qualification	98%	87%	88%	89%	94%	98%	94%	97%
Proportion of starters who achieved a qualification (Benchmark for all in FE in England = 77%)	70%	81%	90%	79%	78%	83%	86%	87%



	Care to Learn	EMA	ALG	Discretionary Hardship	Discretionary 20+ Childcare	6th Form College Childcare	Residential Bursaries	RSS
<b>Progression</b>								
Proportion who had undertaken further learning or have registered to do so	51%	56%	55%	42%	42%	59%	29%	50%
Proportion of those who have undertaken further learning who have received financial assistance to support that learning	51%	60%	62%	55%	53%	75%	62%	74%
Proportion of those in employment following funded learning (change from pre-learning in brackets)	14% (+5% points)	38% (+35% points)	45% (+10% points)	33% (+15% points)	24% (+6% points)	17% (-4% points)	58% (+40% points)	40% (+22% points)
Proportion of those in learning following funded learning (change from pre-learning in brackets)	34% (-11% points)	37% (-59% points)	27% (-26% points)	27% (-24% points)	26% (+7% points)	24% (+15% points)	18% (-57% points)	50% (-30% points)
Proportion of those unemployed or inactive following funded learning (change from pre-learning in brackets)	51% (+4% points)	25% (+24% points)	28% (+16% points)	37% (+8 points)	48% (-10% points)	57% (-13% points)	24% (+16% points)	11% (+7% points)
Proportion reporting a positive personal or social ('soft') benefit from funded learning	99%	98%	99%	96%	98%	99%	96%	99%

These indicators show that funding support to learning has positive impacts:

- For most schemes, the availability of funding is important to learner *participation*. For all schemes, funding is important to *completion* for at least 7 in 10 supported learners; and funding is important to the *achievement of qualifications* for at least 9 in 10 support learners.
- Funding for *childcare* had particularly strong effects on engagement, retention, and achievement.
- Retention of, and achievement by, supported learners is good and mostly compares well with benchmarks for all Further Education in England despite the disadvantageous circumstances of those learners.
- Information on most schemes was reported as being readily available and where information, advice, and guidance was received, it was virtually always perceived as helpful.
- Funded learning has led or will lead to *further* learning for a majority of people in a majority of schemes.
- Funded learning has led to a positive outcome (being in work or education or training at the point of survey) for substantial proportions of supported learners (over 7 out of 10 cases in respect of EMA, ALG and RSS).
- Virtually all learners reported one or more (and usually many) personal or social benefits from funded learning.

However, a number of issues are raised by the data which need to be considered in the further development of support-to-learning funds:

- Findings suggest that significant proportions of learners do not recall receiving formal information, advice, and guidance on the availability of the funds. This does not suggest that learners have not actually received any. Many may have received informal information, advice and guidance and failed to identify it as such, whilst others may simply not recall receiving it. However, the survey evidence highlights the need to further verify the extent of availability of formal information, advice and guidance and to heighten the profile of this element of the support, both in terms of its availability and whilst it is being delivered, so that learners have a better level of awareness and recall of the process.
- In respect of EMA and ALG the proportions of people who said they would have undertaken the learning whether the funding was available or not were very substantial. Though many more learners said that these programmes were important to *completion*, EMA had the lowest proportion of those saying this, and ALG had a particularly low proportion of learners who actually completed. The figures suggest that there may be some deadweight in the distribution of these funds. However, EMA and ALG are designed to ease financial burdens for those in receipt of them and we cannot be sure how difficult some learners would have found it and how it would have affected achievement rates in reality if they had not been in receipt of the funding.
- Generally, employment rates for young people in England are not high. The Labour Force Survey for mid-2008 reports that 43% of 16-19 year olds and 76% of 20-24 year olds were in employment. Employment rates for ex-learners in all schemes were generally below these benchmarks. Of course, those who were supported to learn are not typical. By definition, they have financial constraints which may be associated with other employment disadvantages (such as residence in areas of high unemployment) and, for some schemes, by the continuing demands of childcare. The statistics suggest, however, that continuing support to learners (following the financial support they received whilst learning) is necessary if ex-learners are to achieve parity of employment status and prospects with workforce averages.

## 10 Appendix

### 10.1 Sample error

As with all quantitative research, the sample size is subject to a level of statistical reliability at various levels.

To give an indication, a finding of 50% on a base size of 1,047 interviews (for learners receiving Care to Learn) has a confidence interval of +/-3.0% at the 95% level. That is to say that if the survey returns a finding of 50% for a particular question there is a 95% probability that the “true” figure (amongst all those learners in the population, not just those interviewed) will lie within +/-3.0% (i.e. between 47% and 53%) of that finding.

When looking at sub-groups within a sample this confidence interval increases. So for example, when looking at a sub group like those that registered for a course in 2006/07 (with a base size of 202 interviews in this study) statistical confidence is reduced further still (to around +/-6.9% in this case, ignoring the small population correction).

To give an indication of the effect of sample size on statistical reliability:

- A sample size of 100 would have a confidence interval of +/-9.8%
- A sample size of 500 would have a confidence interval of +/-4.4%
- A sample size of 1,000 would have a confidence interval of +/-3.1%

Note that where a small population (relative to sample size) is sampled, as in the case of the present study (where around a quarter of all eligible learners were interviewed) statistical reliability is increased. Given this, and the relatively limited availability of sample, a larger sample size for the population surveyed for this project would be impractical and unnecessary but should be considered if the scope of the survey were to be increased.

Learning and Skills Council  
National Office

Learner Support  
The Straddle  
Victoria Quays  
Wharf Street  
Sheffield S2 5SY

[www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

© LSC March 2010  
Published by the Learning and Skills Council

Extracts from this publication may be reproduced for non-commercial educational or training purposes on condition that the source is acknowledged and the findings are not misrepresented.

This publication is available in electronic form on the Learning and Skills Council website: [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

Publication reference: LSC-P-NAT-100549