Youth Trainees: Early Leavers Study

Opinion Research Corporation International

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1   Introduction

The research had three main aims: to test the feasibility of using existing data sources on the former Youth Training (YT) to improve estimates of early leaving from YT and other work based training; to identify common characteristics of those leavers who leave early; and to compare characteristics of those leaving YT early with those who complete their period on YT but do not achieve their planned outcome.

1.2   Background

The research was exploratory and intended to highlight policy issues to do with the delivery of YT programmes. This research addressed the issues behind, and the definition of, early leaving. The data used for analysis were supplied by DfEE for the year 1992/93 (the most recent available when the project began) and covered all YT2 and YT follow-up survey information.

1.3   Definitions of Early Leaving

The definition of early leaving used in this report related to unsuccessful non-completion of a training programme by YT trainees. The exploratory analysis of the data showed that the available data sources could be used to develop better measures of early leaving from YT. One measure considered, Index 6, was used as the basis for further quantitative work. However, the characteristics of early leavers were similar whichever one of the ten definitions was used.

1.4   Characteristics of early leavers

1.4.1 Main findings

Females, trainees aged 17 and those with non employed status had the greatest propensity to leave the scheme early. Employment status also showed as a very important factor in the modelling.

With the exception of those schemes which lasted over two years, the shorter the course, the lower the incidence of early leaving. Twenty one percent of trainees on schemes that last up to three months leave early compared to 55 percent of those on schemes between one and two years in length.

In terms of destinations, after both three and six months early leavers were more likely to be unemployed and less likely to be in a full-time job than their counterparts who completed the course.

Most common reasons for leaving early, according to responses on the follow-up questionnaire, were getting a job, not earning enough money, not being happy with the way the programme was run and not receiving the requisite training.

1.4.2 Key factors

A number of multivariate statistical techniques were then used to identify 'important' factors which influenced certain attitudes and outcomes and highlight any common characteristics for particular groups of trainees.

At a personal level, items shaping attitudes and outcomes, apart from trainees' age and sex, were whether the trainee had qualifications prior to joining a programme and whether they had a special training need.

Considering scheme characteristics, the most significant were the status of the trainee on the first day of training; whether trainees received regular staff feedback; whether they agreed a training plan and whether they were studying for qualifications.

1.4.3 Modelling

The aim of the modelling was to determine, if possible, which personal circumstances and external factors characterise early leavers.

Two approaches to modelling were used: first to consider models that could predict whether a participant would be an early leaver from the information collected on the YT2 form and second to incorporate the information gathered from the YT leavers follow-up questionnaires to determine the characteristics of early leavers.

The variables which are best at predicting early leaving are employment status at the start of training, planned length of stay on training and trainees' anticipated level of NVQ. Changes in the overall early leaving rate are most sensitive to changes in the rate for these three characteristics: in particular for trainees with non employed status, studying for NVQ level two or planning to stay between one and two years.

Although the model is of limited use at local level and it was constructed using only one year's data, it does produce some useful pointers, in the form of tables of early leaving rates, for targeting particular groups of trainees to encourage greater numbers to complete.

1.5   Qualitative Analysis

Ten focus groups with trainees and a series of a face-to-face interviews with training providers and the Careers Service were conducted in late 1995 and early 1996. The principal aim was to provide further insight into the processes leading to early leaving and by doing so answer some of the questions raised by the quantitative work. Views of training providers and Careers Service staff were also elicited for the first time.

1.5.1   Main Findings

Careers advice provided by schools was a key issue; with the main criticism centring on the provision of advice, its quality and, in particular, the preference given to academic education over vocational courses.

There was general lack of information and literature on YT available for making decisions. This was recognised by trainees, training providers and the Careers Service.

Trainees' decisions to join YT were largely based on the ability to obtain qualifications and work experience whilst begin paid. Others joined for more negative reasons including the feeling that there was no alternative or that there was no other way to claim benefits.

The selection criteria for trainees varied considerably between providers. Some took on all trainees regardless of ability, whilst others had stringent recruitment procedures and rejected most applicants. In general, providers who selected trainees had lower early leaving rates. This questions the desirability of 'open door' policies.

Training providers often had difficulties obtaining employer placements. This was attributed to the image of YT trainees; the low awareness of the scheme and the poor calibre of trainees. Criticisms resulted from problems with securing placements;   the length of time trainees had to wait; inappropriate placements and the general lack of choice.

Poor quality off the job training did not appear to be a key reason for early leaving, particularly in the trainee was on day release and had limited contact with the training establishment. However it remains a central issue given the function of the programme in general.

A good experience at placement was crucial to the perceived success of the scheme and a key determinant of completion. The negative aspects centred

on the type of work given, the lack of training and the general treatment of youth trainees by both employers and workplace colleagues. A lack of contact with training providers on placement tended to exacerbate problems.

Obtaining a job was a major reason for early leaving, often as a result of financial hardship. For those not encountering financial difficulty, the low allowance only became a factor one the trainee became dissatisfied.

Other reasons for early leaving included poor careers advice, lack of support from providers, poor experience on placement and personal reasons.

Young trainees who were trainee status with fewer qualifications were a group most likely to leave early.

It was apparent that completers tended to have more positive outcomes than their contemporaries who left early. Higher proportions of completers were employed by their placement employer or were working at different employers in related jobs. This was apparent despite many leavers ending their programme early to start, what were often, temporary jobs.

The opportunity to gain a qualification whilst working and earning money was seen as the most positive aspect of the scheme. The impact on personal development and communication skills was also particularly important. Major negative aspects were: the level of allowance; the scheme's image; the quality of training; the level of guidance and support and the general flexibility of the programme.

Both the quantitative and qualitative work have raised several policy issues which are addressed in charter seven.

1.6   Policy issues

The policy issues arising from the study cover two specific areas:

- measuring early leaving and data quality
- internal factors relating to the programme

1.6.1 Measures of early leaving

This research has raised many questions concerning the definition of early leavers but has also established several useable working definitions. Further work is needed to resolve the problems of missing information from the YT2 and YT follow-up questionnaire data. Imputation and reweighting may be used. This is discussed in more detail in section 4.5.

1.6.2 Internal Factors

Trainees were often dissatisfied with the quality of the introductory literature available about schemes and, once a programme had begun, the advice and support they received. The Careers Service and training providers were also critical of the literature, and this influenced directly problems providers had in securing the correct numbers of placements.

2

GENERAL METHODOLOGY

2.   **GENERAL METHODOLOGY**

The general aim of the research was to establish the nature and extent of early leaving from YT programmes at the time of the research with quantitative techniques initially and then a qualitative approach to explore further the issues raised from the original analyses. The study was completed over a year and two phases: broadly the quantitative work was completed in phase I and the qualitative aspects in phase II. This report covers both aspects of the research.

The aims of the study were to:

      i.   look at the feasibility of using existing data sources on YT to improve measures of early leaving from YT

      ii.   identify common characteristics of those leavers who leave early

      iii.   compare the characteristics of those leaving YT early with those who complete YT schemes but do not achieve their planned outcome

      iv.   draw out policy implications for the Department based on these findings.

In order to undertake this study, data were made available for all leavers from the 1992-93 financial year, the most recent full financial year available at the start of the research. This year was considered a representative period by the Department in terms of leavers. This information related to that collected via YT2 forms as well as responses to a follow-up questionnaire sent to trainees six months after leaving. Copies of both of these documents can be found in the annex.

The exploratory analysis of the data showed that available data sources could be used to develop better measures of early leaving from YT. Several different measures were analysed, but for simplicity one - "index 6" - was chosen as the basis for the further quantitative analysis on the characteristics and factor associated with early leaving. Please note that index 6 and therefore the rates quoted are indicative only.

Following on from these analyses further investigate work was carried out using two multivariate techniques: Chi-Squared Automatic Interaction Detection (CHAID) and logistic regression. These two approaches, which are discussed in charter four, provided similar findings. The CHAID analyses were used to detect interactions between different variables (trainee characteristics) and their impact on leaving rates. The technique was appropriate because of the largely categorical data (gender, ethnicity employment status etc). The logistic modelling aimed to investigate the possibility of providing 'actuarial style' tables of early leaving rates. This would allow particular groups of individuals who are likely to leave early to

be identified as training programmes begin, and be provided with additional support early in their programme.

The aims of the qualitative phase of the work were to investigate the reasons for early leaving in more depth than possible with the existing data sources, and to examine in more detail issues raised by the quantitative phase.

In particular it looked at the impact on early leaving of:

i.   experience on placement;

ii.   advice and guidance;

iii.   trainee and course characteristics.

The research also examined ingredients for success; problem areas; measures to reduce the incidence of early leaving; and funding issues. Training providers, Careers Service staff and trainees were all interviewed.

Three regions were used for the interviews: the North West, West Midlands and Eastern regions. Nine face-to-face interviews with providers were conducted across the regions and designed, in such a way, to represent the breadth of the training provider network. Six Careers Service staff with particular responsibility for YT were also interviewed.

Trainees' opinions were sough using group discussions, and 85 trainees attended the ten groups held at venues across the three regions between December 1995 and January 1996. The discussions were recorded, with participants' permission.

3

EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS

3.   EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS

3.1   Defining early leaving with indices

'Early leaver' has an intuitive meaning for most readers which we might describe as a trainee having left before the end date of a course and having failed to achieve the course aim. This is the general approach used in this research, but this chapter describes how that general aim was translated onto the available data sources to derive the different measures of early leaving that were considered.

One of the key issues investigated was how to deal with those trainees who currently count as early leavers although they are not a final leaver from the programme but have simply switched training providers. Neither of the two available data sources give this information unambiguously. The follow-up questionnaire allows the respondent to indicate 'I wanted to join another Training Programme' (Q2). However this falls short of claiming that such a programme commenced, or that it was necessarily a YT form of programme. The YT2 form provides an indicator for leavers who enter into further education or training (ie leaving YT) as well as moving to another YT provider.

The only way to establish, with a reasonable degree of accuracy, how many leavers joining another Training Programme or having the relevant leaver code have actually joined another provider would have been to carry out a matching operation using YT2 'start' and 'end' data. However, this could not be achieved because 'start' data were not available.

The recording of training provider identification numbers (contract numbers) is currently being reviewed by the DfEE. It is of particular interest to TECs who do not record their own management information. Further, some recent research has allowed leavers who are so called 'provider hoppers' to be identified. This is discussed further in chapter seven under policy issues.

The other issues considered were how to treat success of early leavers on the programme (ie achieving NVQs or meeting the objectives in the training plan), the effect of considering different reasons for leaving (eg finding a job), and the effect of how far in advance of the expected end date the trainee had left.

The term early leaving implies the existence of an anticipated leaving date. This is the expected leaving date in section 2 (Q14) of the YT2 form in the annex. Initial approaches to early leaving hinged on whether a trainee left four weeks or more before their anticipated completion date. Four weeks was used here as some trainees certainly complete their course before their expected leaving date. Further investigations were made of the groups that left at least eight weeks ahead of schedule (index 1aa). There is no prescribed time prior to an expected end date that a trainee must leave to be an early leaver. Four week was used as it seemed

sensible, if to an extent arbitrary. All the measures of early leaving discussed excluded trainees who had left because of injury or death.

However, the amount of time a trainee left before he/she was expected to cannot, on its own, be sufficient to assess the success of YT schemes. The views of the trainees themselves were important and, as later definitions stipulate, so were the achievements and consequences of the period of training. Index 1a was the same approx as index 1, but only using the respondents to the follow up questionnaire. The respondents represent about one third of all leavers during 1992/93. Other research for individual TECs using leavers' surveys suggest that a response rate of 33 percent is quite typical.

As the period of time that a trainee left before their planned date is in a sense arbitrary in determining early leavers, the views of the trainees on early leaving were also sought and used in Index 2.

Index 2 requires one condition for early leavers in this context that the trainee replied 'yes' to question one on the questionnaire "Did you leave your last training programme before you were due to finish?"

Index 3, for the first time, tackles the issue of excluding trainees leaving one provider to join another programme. The index uses index 2 but removes those that said in the follow up questionnaire that they left to join another training programme.

Index 4 defines early leavers as those who leave at least four week earlier than planned and identify themselves as early leavers from the follow up questionnaire.

Index 5 is a composite of indexes 3 and 4. It relates to those leavers who left more than four week early and acknowledged on the questionnaire that they were due to finish but excludes any of these trainees who had left early as the 'wanted to join another training programme' (Q2).

The indices discussed so far have been detailed in a table which is shown in figure (a).

Figure (a): Characteristics of early leavers by indices 1 to 5

	Left more than 4 weeks early	Left more than eight weeks early	Responded to the follow up questionnaire	Did you leave your last tp before you were due to finish? (Q1)	Didn't leave to join another training programme (Q2)
1	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
1a	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
1aa	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
2	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
3	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
4	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
5	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓

Across all indices, in figure (b), the rates for females are higher than for males. This is not simply explained by higher response rates (to the follow up questionnaire) as index 1 does not depend on the follow up questionnaire.

Health problems seem to make little difference to leaver rates across all indices, and amongst ethnic categories Blacks frequently have the highest leaver rate.

Trainees who are 17 have the highest leaver rate regardless of index, and amongst special needs categories those with literacy and numeracy needs repeatedly have the highest incidence of early leaving.

There are marked differences between trainees with employed and non employed status and across difference planned lengths of stay irrespective of index. These trainee characteristics emerge from the multivariate analysis (charter four) as being important determinants of early leaving. Fuller detail is provided in figure (b).

These definitions are the forerunners of the final definition of the early leavers index and, as such, comparisons between different groups are more important than the figures themselves.

Figure (b): Comparison of early leaver rates by index

	1	1a	1aa	2	3	4	5
Overall	66	63	64	58	53	48	42
Sex							
Male	64	60	62	56	50	45	39
Female	70	67	67	61	56	51	46
Health problem							
Yes	68	63	65	60	54	48	43
No	66	63	64	59	53	48	43
Ethnic Group							
White	66	63	63	58	53	47	42
Black/African/Caribbean	79	76	76	67	58	59	51
Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi/Sri Lanka	74	72	71	62	55	52	45
None of these	77	76	73	66	59	58	51
Prefer not to say	64	63	61	56	51	46	42
Age (Start of scheme)							
16	65	62	62	58	52	48	42
17	75	72	72	67	62	56	51
18	60	55	57	44	42	33	31
19+	48	46	44	29	27	19	18
Status on First Day of Training							
Employed	58	56	56	46	42	37	34
Non employed	84	82	81	78	69	71	61
Special Training Need identified							
A	61	55	51	66	58	43	38
B	78	72	76	67	60	58	51
C	76	71	74	67	60	58	51
Non-endorsed	65	63	63	57	52	48	42
L	93	100	93	86	71	82	67
N	94	93	91	87	80	84	76
Combination	86	83	82	81	72	72	63
Trainee has a Credit							
Yes	82	80	80	73	65	66	58
No	78	77	76	72	64	64	56
Planned Length of Stay (Grouped)							
Up to 3 months	28	25	12	59	52	21	19
Over 3 and up to 6 months	46	41	39	53	47	33	29
Over 6 months and up to 1 year	56	52	52	49	44	38	34
Over 1 and up to 2 years	72	68	70	61	55	56	50
Over 2 years	62	59	60	47	42	42	38

3.1.1 Further indices

The definition of Index 5 includes trainees who left the programme before they were due to finish, regardless of whether they had achieved their intended outcome. Index 5aa looks at the effect of removing those trainees who meet their training plan, while Index 5a looks at the effect of excluding those who left early and achieved their plan, or were in employment three months later.

Index 6 was the final measure looked at, and was the index used for the subsequent multivariate and CHAID analyses. It was derived as follows: the base group were those trainees who left more than four weeks before they were due to finish AND said they left their training programme before they were due to finish. From the base group two groups were excluded:

- those who gave as their reason for leaving early that they were joining another training programme AND were on another training programme three months later; OR

- those who achieved their full qualification whilst on the programme.

For the needs of this research Index 6 was adopted. Index 6 is derived from Index 4, ie those leavers who left at least four weeks early and said that they left early when responding to the follow up questionnaire; or if they had they weren't on another training programme three months later (source Q20 FUS); or they didn't achieve a qualification from that spell on YT (source YT2 Q24).

Figures (c) and (d) provide further clarification.

**Figure (c): The basis of index 6**
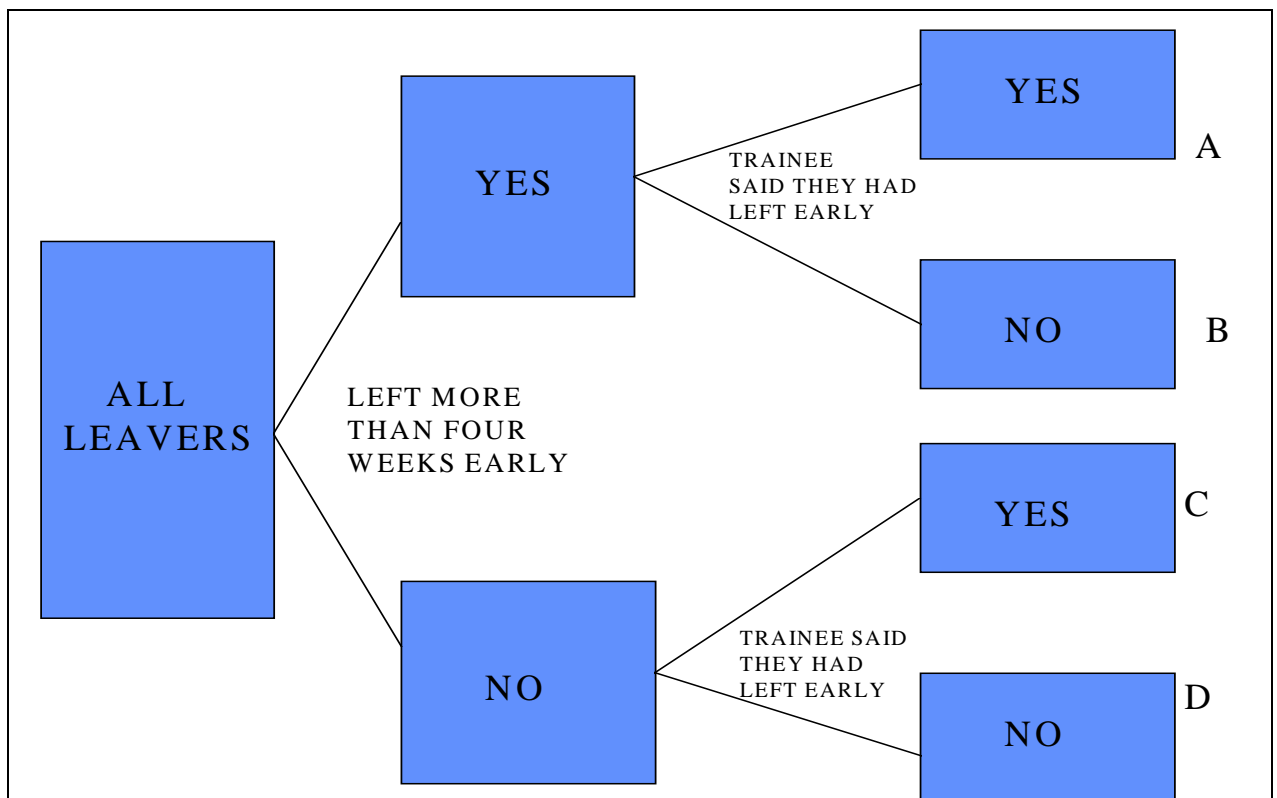
Considering group A, an early leaver under index 6 can only be so if they are in group A. However, not everyone in group A is an early leaver under index 6.

There are three determining factors which indicate whether members of group A are early leavers. Two are based on questions in the follow up questionnaire and one on the YT2 form.

1.   What were your main reasons for leaving? I wanted to join another TP. (FUS Q2)

2.   Did you achieve a qualification from your last spell on YT? (YT2 Q24).

3.   What were you doing three months after leaving your training programme? On another TP three months later? (FUS Q20).

Figure (d) Omissions from Category A early leavers for index 6
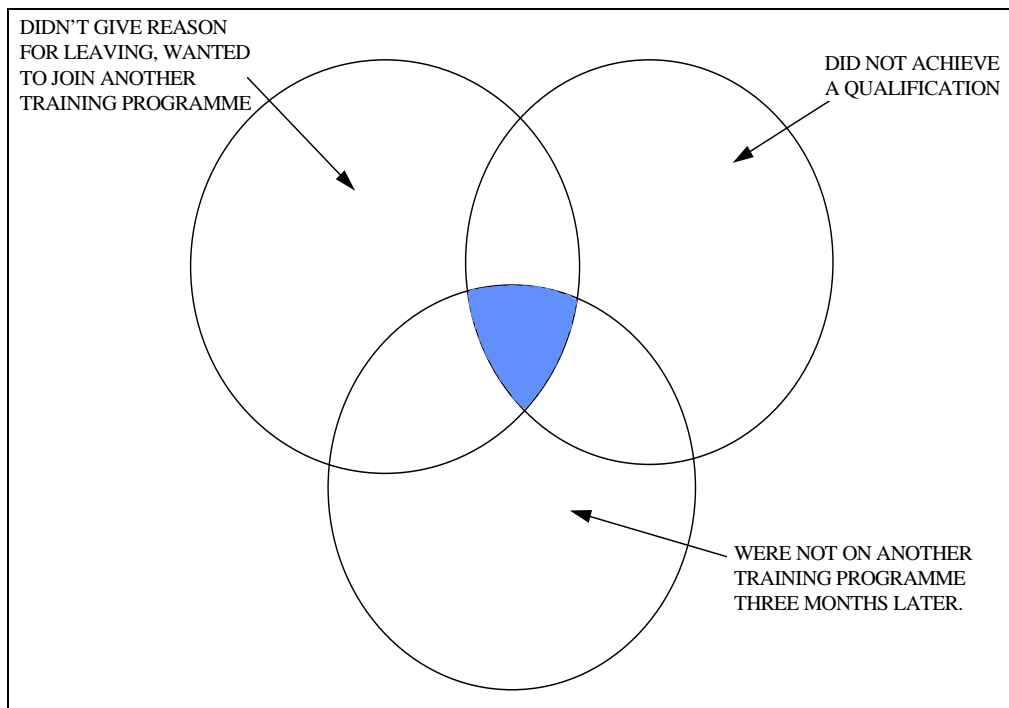
The shaded area represents those in group A who are early leavers under index 6. If a trainee answered 'no' to all of the three questions (the shaded area) they were an early leaver. Answering 'yes' to one or more of the questions meant they were not an early leaver under index 6.

Index 6 provides a reasonable estimate of unsuccessful early leaving as it allows for those switching providers and does not treat those who have achieved a full qualification from their spell on YT, even if they left before they were due to complete, as an early leaver.

Figure (e): Early leaving rates (percentages) by indices 5a, 5aa and 6.

	5a	5aa	6
Overall	19	33	43
Sex			
Male	19	31	40
Female	20	36	46
Health problem			
Yes	23	33	43
No	19	33	43
Ethnic Group			
White	19	33	43
Black/African/Caribbean	33	41	53
Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi/Sri Lanka	28	36	47
None of these	30	41	53
Prefer not to say	23	35	43
Age (Start of scheme)			
16	18	32	43
17	26	41	50
18	15	25	31
19+	7	15	18
Status on First Day of Training			
Employed	13	27	35
Non employed	30	48	63
Special Training Need identified			
A	22	31	39
B	28	39	51
C	27	40	52
Non-endorsed	18	33	44
L	43	57	57
N	42	58	76
Combination	38	51	65
Trainee has a Credit			
Yes	29	46	61
No	27	44	58
Planned Length of Stay (Grouped)			
Up to 3 months	12	17	21
Over 3 and up to 6 months	18	25	32
Over 6 months and up to 1 year	18	29	37
Over 1 and up to 2 years	25	42	55
Over 2 years	17	32	41

The trends that were apparent for indices 1 to 5 are repeated for indices 5a, 5aa and 6 as shown in figure (e).

Males appear to have a greater propensity to complete the scheme than females. Using index 6, 40 percent of males were classified as early leavers compared to 46 percent of females. Similarly those trainees classified as white completed more often than those from an ethnic background.

With regards to the age of the trainee at the start of the scheme, those aged 17 had a higher leaving rate, 50 percent, than those of other ages.

There is a large difference in the early leaving rates dependent on the status the trainee has on their first day of training. Sixty three percent of those with non employed status leave early compared to just 35 percent of those who are employed. This illustrates a huge contrast between these two groups and, is evident in the modelling section where, this variable is a major determinant of early leaving. Whether a trainee has a credit or not appears to have no direct influence on early leaving rates; 61 percent of those who possess one leave early compared to 58 percent of those without one. (All trainees now have access to a training credit, which was not the case for those trainees included in this data).

Forty four percent of trainees who were not identified as having special training needs left early; this is in contrast to those with a literacy or numeracy need for whom 57 percent and 76 percent respectively were early leavers.

Except for those schemes which lasted over two years it is seen that the shorter the course, the lower the incidence of early leaving. Twenty one percent on schemes that were planned to last up to three months leave early compared to 55 percent of those on schemes planned between one and two years in length.

At the request of the Department, this was the index that was analysed for the rest of the research. Future references to early leaving refer to early leavers under index 6.

It is worth noting here too that index 6, in a sense, relates to identified early leavers amongst respondents to the questionnaire. Missing information on a respondent means they are a non early leaver. However, future analysis would probably exclude 'not stated' respondents.

3.2   Exploratory analysis using index 6

3.2.1 Comparison of YT2 and Follow-up Survey Trainee Characteristics

In order to see whether there was any bias inherent in the sample of respondents to the follow-up questionnaire, tables were constructed.

Of the 275,000 trainees who left their scheme during 1992/93, around 91,000 returned follow-up questionnaires. Considering the profile of those responding or not, the distributions of personal characteristics were reasonably similar. The one major disparity related to the trainees' sex: 59

percent of those leaving were male, compared to only 52 percent of those who responded to the questionnaire.

3.2.2 Regional Comparisons of Early Leaving

At a regional level the incidence of early leaving ranges from the lowest in the Eastern region to the highest in London. There seems to be no geographical pattern in regional differences of early leaving rates.

Figure (f) Difference in early leaving by region from overall rate
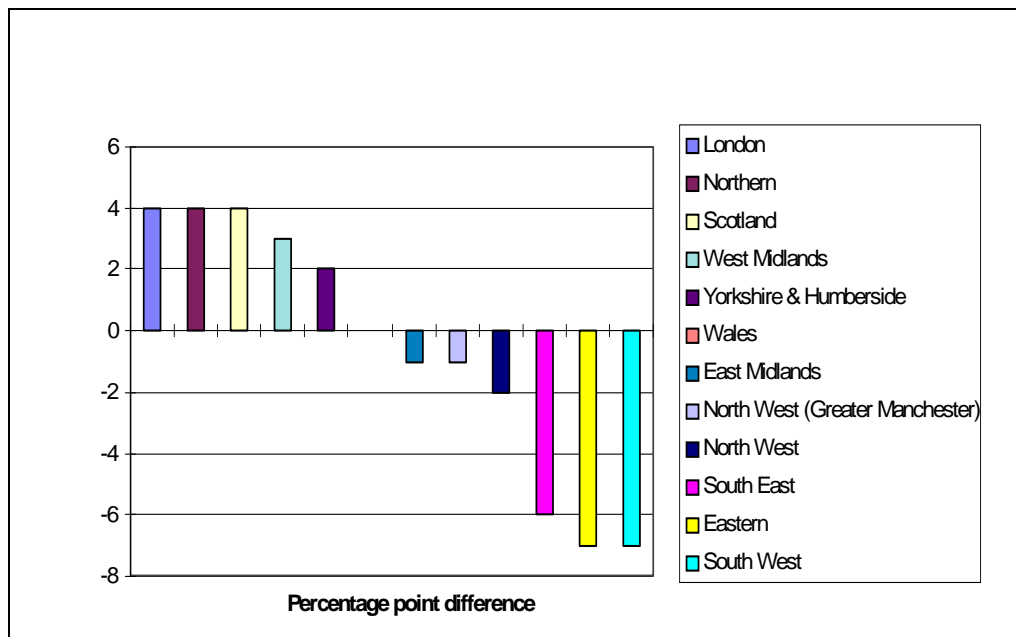
We have not shown results for individual TECs as there are only a few leavers recorded in some TEC areas. However, as figure (f) shows, early leaving rates varied considerably between TEC regions.

3.2.3 Length of Time Spent in Training

The graph below shows a comparison between the planned and actual length of stay for trainees responding to the follow-up questionnaire.

The actual length of stay for trainees' periods of training relates to their time with a provider rather than on programmes as a whole. This applies to the details shown in both figure (g) and figure (h).

Figure (g): Length of time spent in training
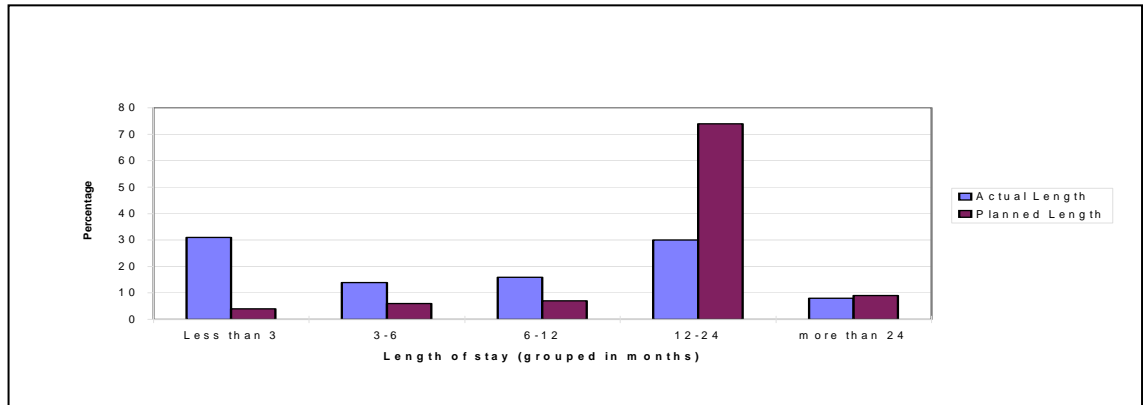
Nearly three quarters of trainees were on schemes which were planned to last between one and two years. However, this is not reflected in the actual distribution of the length of st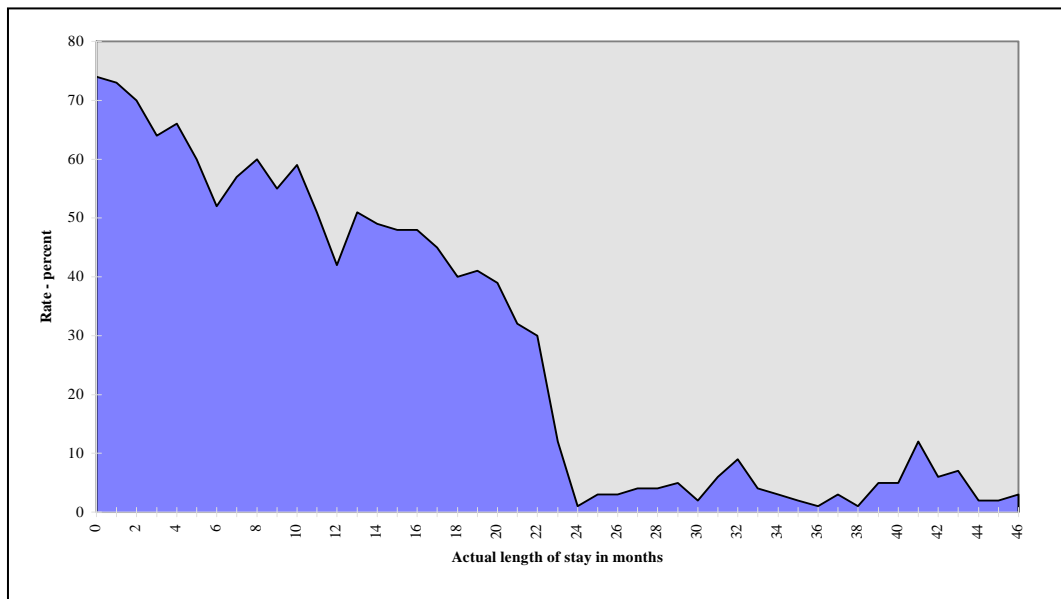ay with a provider. As figure (g) shows only 30 percent actually stages for between one and two years - a similar proportion stayed for only up to three months.

Figure (h): Percentage of leavers who are early leavers by length of stay

Within the first ten months of YT a high proportion of scheme leavers have in fact left early. Between 10 and 12 months there is a sharp decline, perhaps due to a high proportion of schemes ending after one year. After a sharp rise the next month, there is then a steady decline which becomes sharper after 22 months until, at 24 months, there are barely any early leavers. From then on, the rate of early leaving is generally below 10 percent. The numbers of trainees actually staying more than 26 months is only about one percent of respondents to the questionnaire.

3.2.4 Comparison of status three and six months after leaving

Both three and six months after leaving, the most common outcome for a trainee was full-time employment. However, a sizeable proportion were unemployed.

It was of interest to see whether, during this period after leaving, a trainee's circumstances changed dependent on whether they had left early or not.

Figure (I): Whereabouts of leavers as a percentage of all leavers

	Index 6			
	Early Leaver		Non-Early Leaver	
	3 Months	6 Months	3 Months	6 Months
Full time job	30	29	58	55
Self-employed	1	1	1	1
Part-time job	6	5	4	4
Unemployed	35	35	21	22
Training Programme	12	13	7	7
Full-time course	8	9	5	6
Something else	7	7	4	5

The table in figure (i) shows that early leavers are more likely to be unemployed and less likely to be in a full-time job than non-early leavers. The changes between three and six months are relatively small.

Within the three month period, employment rates dropped by one percentage point for early leavers and three percentage points for non early leavers.

The proportion of early leavers on another training programme or on a full-time course at college rose slightly in both instances. For trainees who were not early leavers, attendance at college also increased minimally during these three months, whilst attendance on another training programme remained unaltered.

3.3 Attitudes

As the characteristics of those responding to the follow-up questionnaire reflected quite closely those who had left the scheme that year, it was decided that just the subset of trainees who responded to the follow-up questionnaire should be used for the further analyses.

3.3.1 Demographic Profile of Questionnaire Respondents

The sample responding to the questionnaire was fairly evenly split between the sexes. A similar proportion of respondents, six percent, were from the ethnic minorities compared with all leavers. These are similar percentages to the ethnic minority population at large, and the 16-19 year old school leavers in particular. Very few respondents had a health problem that affected the type of work that they could do.

Overwhelmingly, participants were aged 17 or under when they started the scheme and about 60 percent were 16. One in five had been on YT before or had used a Youth Credit.

Only nineteen percent had employed status at the start of training. This factor was to become important for further analysis.

The most common types of occupation intended for training (both planned and provided) were clerical, sales and secretarial placements.

Twenty six percent of respondents had a special training need identified, with 12 percent felt to have no realistic prospect of achieving an approved qualification at level 2 NVQ standard.

Seventy nine percent had studied for a vocational qualification whilst they were on their scheme; about half having gained either a whole NVQ/SVQ or a credit towards one.

3.3.2 General Attitudes

Amongst early leavers the most common known reasons for leaving were: not getting enough money; getting a full-time job; being unhappy with how the training programme was run; and not getting the training that was needed. Relatively few early leavers left because they felt they had learnt enough to help them get another job. The main reasons for leaving early are in figure (j) below and relate to all respondents who said they had left early. (Multiple responses were allowed).

Figure (j): Main reasons for leaving
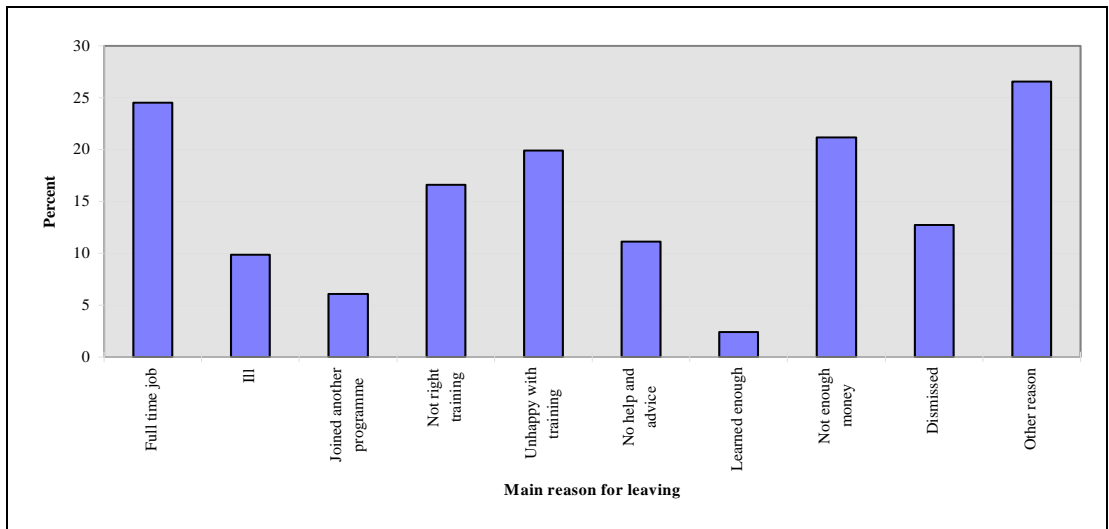
A similar proportion of early leavers and non early leavers found the training programme fairly useful. Markedly fewer early leavers found the training programme very useful.

An apparent anomaly is that three quarters of early leavers had been given advice by the Careers Service compared with under 60 percent of non early leavers. This is addressed in the qualitative research (chapter six) and under policy issues (chapter seven).

Less surprisingly, only half of early leavers were regularly told by staff how they were getting on. The corresponding figure for non early leavers was 70 percent.

3.3.3 Qualifications

Three out of four trainees had qualifications before they started the training programme. However, only three out of five trainees had tried for a qualification during their last programme. This compares with 79 percent of trainees who had responded to the questionnaire (see 3.3.1).

Most (75 to 80 percent) leavers achieved a part or full qualification during their training. There were marked differences between early leavers and non early leavers in response to these questions.

3.3.4 Status Three Months After Leaving

Three months after having left the training programme 46 percent had a full-time job. Thirty percent of respondents had a job with the employer who ran the training programme, 16 percent with a different employer or HM Armed Forces, 27 percent were unemployed, 9 percent were on another training

programme, 6 percent had started a full-time course at college/training centre, 5 percent had started a full-time course at college/training centre, 5 percent had a part-time job, 1 percent were self employed or on an Enterprise Allowance Scheme (EAS) and 6 percent were doing 'something else'. The destinations of early leavers are compared to those of non early levers in figure (k) below.

Figure (k): Whereabouts three months after leaving training programme
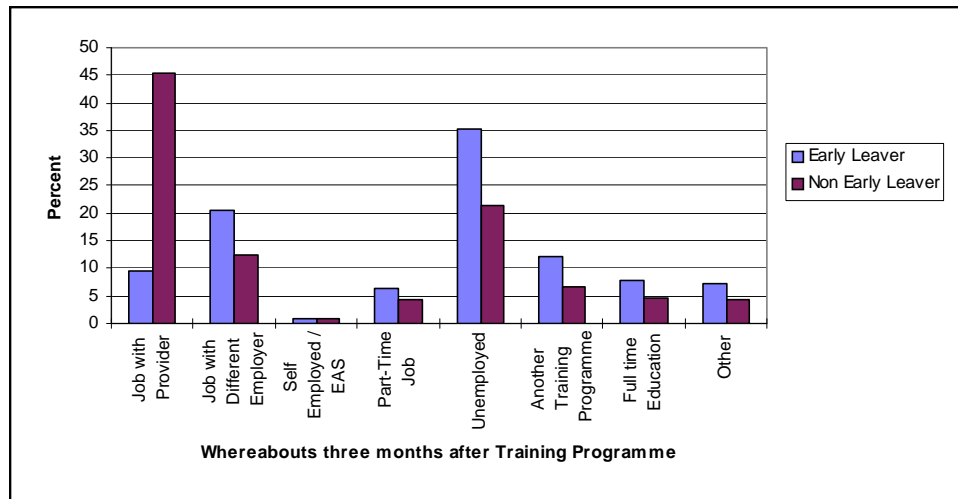
Thirty five percent of early leavers, compared to 21 percent of non early leavers, were unemployed three months after leaving the training programme. Similarly, only 30 percent of early leavers compared to 57 percent who completed their programme, were in a full-time job at this time.

Of those who were employed three months after leaving: 17 percent said they were receiving training from their employer, 31 percent from a college or training centre, 37 percent from a supervisor or training officer and 7 percent from another source. Twenty five percent who were employed three months after leaving were not receiving any type of training.

3.3.5 Status at Follow-Up

Over half of the respondents were doing something different six months after leaving than they were three months before; one notable difference being that 39 percent were now unemployed - an increase of 12 percentage points from three months earlier. Forty two percent of non early leavers, were unemployed six months after leaving.

3.3.6 Scheme Start-Up

Twenty seven percent of respondents indicated that they had agreed an Individual Training Plan with their employer or training organisation - 21

percent of early leavers, compared to 32 percent of non early leavers. Of those that had agreed a training plan, 52 percent felt they had met all the objectives agreed in the plan, 36 percent felt they had met some of them and 12 percent felt they had not met any of the objectives. However, 62 percent of those who completed their programme felt they had met all their objectives compared to 32 percent of those who left early.

Fifty seven percent of respondents indicated that they did not agree a written career or training plan before they started their training programme. Of the 21 percent of trainees that had, 70 percent felt that it had been at least fairly useful in helping them to decide about a job or some training and 53 percent that it had helped them talk about training with their employer or training organisation. Early leavers were again less positive than their counterparts.

3.3.7 Ways the training programme helped

Since leaving the training programme, 22 percent of respondents had started to study for some form of higher level qualification - 19 percent of early levers compared to 24 percent who completed their programme. Of those who had started studying, 59 percent felt that the higher level qualification built on the qualifications gained on the training programme, although this differed between 38 percent of early leavers and 72 percent of non early leavers.

Figure (l): Helpfulness of the programme since leaving
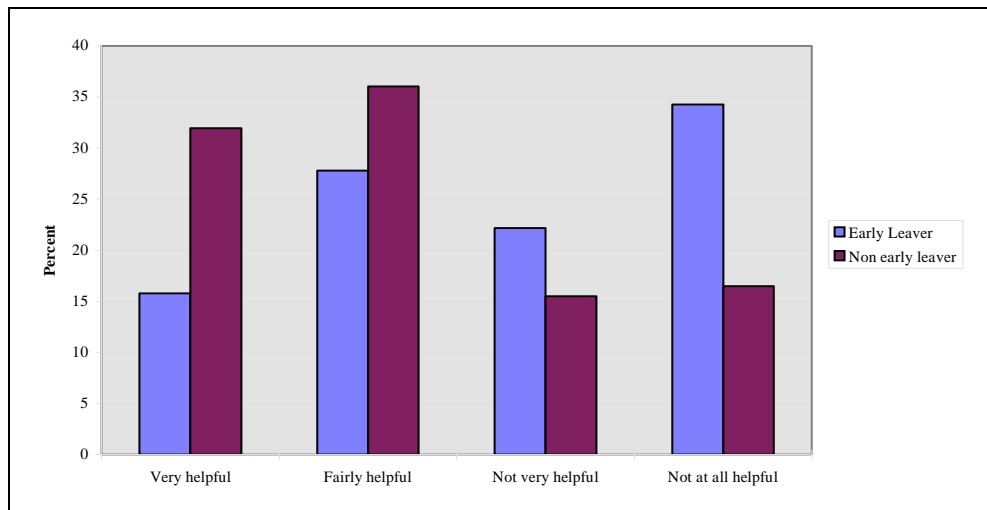
Eighty percent of respondents felt that the training programme had been at least fairly helpful in helping them to get on better with people, 78 percent felt that it had helped them become more confident and 77 percent that it had helped in increasing their understanding of 'what jobs are like'. In contrast, fewer (57 percent) respondents felt that the training programme had been at least fairly helpful to them since they had left.

As would be expected, early leavers were generally more negative towards their programme than other trainees, as shown in figure (l). Only 44 percent of early leavers compared to 68 percent of non early leavers felt that their time on the programme had been helpful since they left.

4

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

4.   MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

4.1   Introduction

The multivariate analysis was used to identify common characteristics of trainees with high early leaving rates, and try to establish which information says most about a trainee's propensity to leave early.

The tables discussed in chapter three are revealing but, without endless cross-tabulations, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the different characteristics of participants are inter-related. A method to examine these possible inter-relationships is to use a multivariate analytical technique called CHAID (Chi-Squared Automatic Interaction Detention). This segments or partitions the whole population, in this case the follow-up questionnaire respondents, into smaller groups.

The segmentation is done by splitting the original group into sub groups and noting these groups' early leaving rates. These groups are statistically the 'best' predictors of early leavers. However, the theory behind the technique is perhaps not as important, nor indeed as formidable, as the output, which, in the form of a 'tree', is easy to interpret. The trees for these analyses are at the end of section 4.2.

Logistic modelling was used to establish predictors of early leaving with the aim of establishing early leaving rates for different groups in the form of 'actuarial-style', look-up tables. This work is discussed in section 4.3.

4.2   Segmentation using CHAID

This section gives more detail on the multivariate statistical analyses undertaken. The aim of this analysis was to explore the inter-relationship between and within sets of variables and to identify 'important' items which influenced certain attitudes and outcomes, by highlighting any common characteristics for particular groups of trainees.

Briefing, it was found that attitudes towards the programme and the status of a trainee after leaving, are highly dependent on whether the trainee left early or not.

The CHAID analysis centred on two approaches. The characteristics of trainees are varied and can be split into two broad categories, 'personal' and 'programme' or 'scheme'. Personal characteristics are peculiar to individual trainees, are irrespective of their programme, and include age, ethnicity and previous qualifications. Scheme characteristics relate to an individual's programme.

At a personal level, the important items, apart from the trainee's age and sex, that shape attitudes and outcomes are whether the trainee had qualifications prior to joining the programme and whether they had a special training need or not.

The most important scheme level items appear to be: the employed status of the trainee on the first day of training; whether trainees received regular staff feedback, whether they agreed a training plan and whether they were studying for qualifications. One item that is relatively important, but in a negative sense, is whether the trainee received help and guidance from the Careers Service.

As one of the pre-requisites of using CHAID is the provision of a reasonably 'clean' dataset, some observations were excluded from the analyses. Proportions reported in this section may therefore differ slightly to those reported from the full data.

The split between personal and scheme characteristics are listed below:

Personal Characteristics:

SEX	:	Sex (Male, Female)
ETHNIC Group	:	(White, Black/African/Caribbean, Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi/Sri Lankan, Other)
AGEGRP	:	Age Group (16, 17, 18, 10+)
DISAB	:	Disability affecting work (Yes/No)
YTBEF	:	On YT before (Yes/No)
BREGION	:	TEC region
STSPND2	:	Special Training Needs category (as specified in the YT2 guidance notes recoded to either Yes or No)
ICITY	:	Inner city region (Yes, No)
INDEX6*	:	Early Leaver (Yes, No)
Q10	:	Prior Qualifications (Yes, No)

* Excluded as a predictor from personal characteristic trees

Scheme

STSTAT	:	Status at start (Employed, Non employed)
PLOSGRP	:	Expected duration of scheme (Up to 3 months, over 3 and up to 6 months, over 6 months up to 1 year, over 1 and up to 2 years, over 2 years)
STNVQ	:	Studied for NVQ/SVQ (Yes, No)
BREGION	:	TEC region (as specified for personal characteristics)
ICITY	:	Inner city region (Yes, No)

Whether received help and advice from:

Q4	:	Careers Service (Yes, No)
Q6	:	Staff (Yes, No)
Q8	:	Regular feedback from staff (Yes, No)
Q12	:	Try for any qualifications (Yes, No)

Whether received:

Q17	:	NROVA pack (Yes, No, Don't know)
Q18	:	NRA pack
Q34	:	Training credit items (Yes, No)
Q37	:	Agree written plan with careers teacher (Yes, No, Don't know)
Q40	:	Agree training plan with employer/training organisation (Yes, No, Don't know)

INDEX 6*
* Excluded as a predictor from personal characteristic trees

4.2.1 Propensity to leave Early

Scheme Characteristics (figure (m))

Forty three percent of trainees are identified as early leavers ranging from 28 percent of those whose planned length of stay is under 6 months to 55 percent for those whose planned length of stay is one to two years. Over 60 percent of trainees plan to stay between one and two years and this large group also has the highest early leaving rate.

For those with a planned length of stay of 1-2 years the next most influential variable is the status of the trainee. Fifty percent of trainees with employed status left early compared to 79 percent of trainees with non employed status.

These two variables, which are highest in the tree, are the most important predictors of early leaving. This was also evident from the modelling work (section 4.3.).

For trainees with non employed status on schemes which are planned to last 1-2 years, there is a further variable that influences early leaving relating to whether the trainee tried for a qualification whilst on the programme: 71 percent of such trainees who did try for qualification left early compared to 87 percent who did not tray for a qualification.

Groups for whom certain information is missing have early leaving rates that are lower than the overall rate.

The main points are:

Planned length of stay and employment status at the start of training are key predictors of early leaving.

Some groups have very high early leaving rates most notably those with a planned length of stay of between one and two years and non employed status. This group also accounts for more than a quarter of all trainees.

Figure (m) : Early Leavers (Scheme characteristics)

```
                            ┌─────────────┐
                            │   index6    │
                            │ 1: 43.14%   │
                            │ n=81353     │
                            └─────────────┘
                                 plosgrp
        ┌───────────┬───────────┼───────────────┬───────────────┐
  ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐   ┌──────────┐    ┌──────────┐
  │    12    │ │    3     │ │    4     │   │    5     │    │    .     │
  │1: 27.66% │ │1: 37.30% │ │1: 55.34% │   │1: 41.67% │    │1: 1.69%  │
  │ n=5538   │ │ n=4769   │ │ n=52126  │   │ n=6545   │    │ n=12375  │
  └──────────┘ └──────────┘ └──────────┘   └──────────┘    └──────────┘
     -1-          -2-          ststat          -8-            ststat
                           ┌─────┴─────┐             ┌─────────┴─────────┐
                     ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐   ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
                     │    E     │ │    N     │  │    .     │   │    EN    │ │    .     │
                     │1: 49.72% │ │1: 79.11% │  │1: 34.96% │   │1: 2.64%  │ │1: 0.97%  │
                     │ n=4222   │ │ n=22658  │  │ n=25246  │   │ n=5296   │ │ n=7079   │
                     └──────────┘ └──────────┘  └──────────┘   └──────────┘ └──────────┘
                        -3-          q12            q4            -9-         -10-
                              ┌───────┴───────┐   ┌──────┴──────┐
                        ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
                        │    Y     │ │    N     │ │    Y     │ │    N     │
                        │1: 70.58% │ │1: 86.74% │ │1: 42.13% │ │1: 24.99% │
                        │ n=10698  │ │ n=11960  │ │ n=14682  │ │ n=10564  │
                        └──────────┘ └──────────┘ └──────────┘ └──────────┘
                           -4-          -5-          -6-          -7-
```
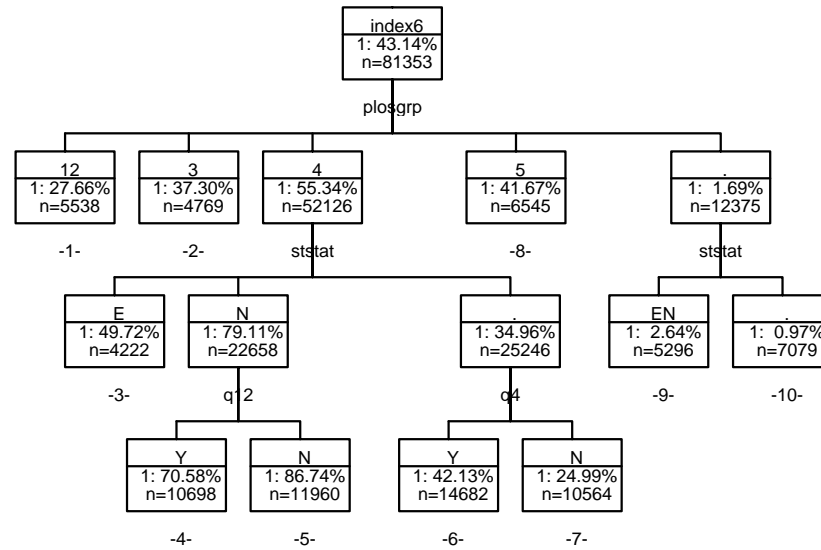
Abbreviations

Label:	Description	Categories			
Index 6	Early Leavers/non early leavers	1:	Early leavers		
PLOSGRP	Planned length of stay	12	less than 6 months	5	25 months plus
		3	6-12 months	.	Missing
		4	12-24 months		
STSTAT	Employment status at start of training	E	Employed	.	Missing
		N	Non employed	EN	Employed/non-employed
Q12	During your last training programme, did you try for any qualification	Y	Yes	N	No
Q4	Did you receive advice from the careers service?	Y	Yes	N	No

4.2.2   How useful was the Training Programme as a whole?

Personal Characteristics (figure (n))

Seventy five percent of respondents felt that the training programme was at least fairly useful. The best predictor of whether a trainee thought this or not was whether the trainee was an early leaver: 62 percent of early leavers found the programme at least fairly useful compared to 84 percent of those who completed the scheme. A lot of trainees who had left early still found the course helpful.

For early leavers the next most important predictor was the trainees' sex with females finding the programme more useful than males. For non early leavers, whether the trainee had a special training need is the next most

important predictor: those with special needs found the programme less useful than their counterparts.

Whether the trainee had qualifications prior to starting the scheme is also an important predictor; those possessing qualifications generally found the programme more useful than those without any.

The group of trainees finding the scheme most useful were trainees who did not leave early, had no special training needs identified and had qualifications prior to starting (88 percent of whom found it at least useful). This is in contrast to only 54 percent of male early leavers with special training needs who found the programme useful.

The main points are:

A lot of early leavers found the training programmes useful.

Gender has a bearing on a trainee's assessment of the use of their programmes. Typically, females found the programmes more useful.

Generally, those with a previous qualification also found the programme more useful than those without and, further, trainees with special training needs also found the training less useful than those without.

Figure (n): How useful was the training programme as a whole? (Personal characteristics)
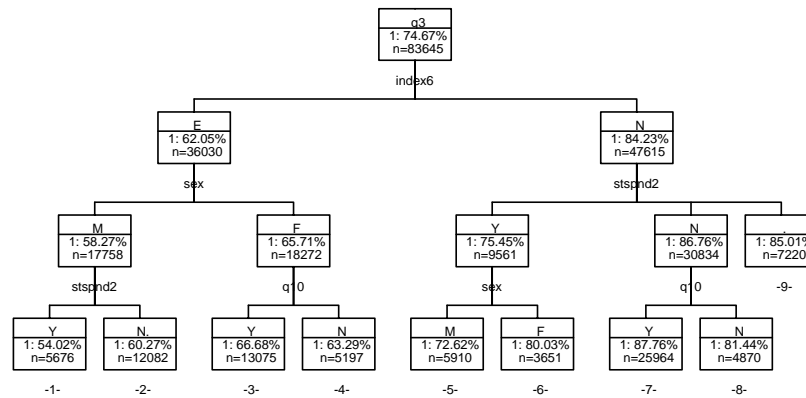
Abbreviations

Label	Description:	Categories:	
Q3	How useful was the training programme as a whole	1:	Very/fairly useful
Index 6	Early leaving	E	Early leaver
		N	Non-early leaver
Sex	Gender	M	Male
		F	Female
stspnd2	Special training needs identified	Y	Yes
		N	No
		.	Missing
Q10	Before you started your last minute programme, did you have any qualifications?	N	No

4.2.3 Status Three months after Leaving

Scheme Characteristics (figure (o))

Three months after leaving, 53 percent of trainees were doing something that constituted a positive outcome, the best predictor of which was the trainee's status on their first day of training. The contrast was apparent with 71 percent of trainees with employed status compared to 37 percent of those with non employed status achieved a positive outcome.

For employed trainees the next best predictor of their status three months after leaving was whether they received help from the Careers Service (Q4): 62 percent who did compared to 80 percent who did not eventually achieved a positive outcome.

Whether the trainee left early or not was the next best predictor for those trainees with non employed status; those not leaving early were more likely to achieve a positive outcome.

The main points are:

Employment status and early leaving are key determinants of a trainee getting a positive outcome.

Advice from the Careers Service and feedback from staff during training both appear to have a bearing on trainees ultimately having a positive outcome. Conversely, advice from the Careers Service had an apparent negative effect whereas feedback from staff generally encouraged positive outcomes.

Figure (o) : Positive outcome three months after leaving (scheme characteristics)
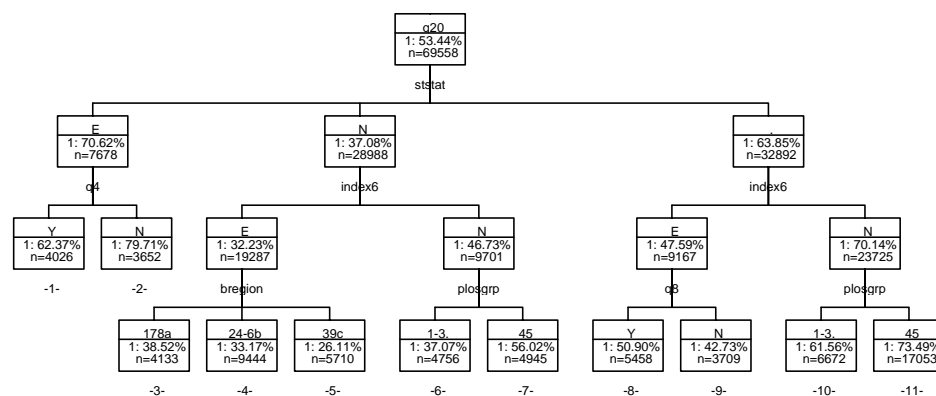
Abbreviations

Label	Description:	Categories:	
Q20	What were you doing 3 months after leaving?	1:	Positive outcome
STAT	Employed status at start of training	E	Employed
		N	Non-employed
Q4	Did you get advice from the Careers Service	Y	Yes
		N	No
Index 6	Early leaver	E	Early leaver
		N	Non-early leaver
bregion	TEC regions	Different regions	
plosgrp	Planned length of stay	1-3.	12 months or less and missing
		45	over 12 months
Q8	Were you told regularly, by the staff who were training you, how you were doing?	Y	Yes

4.2.4 Progression Towards Intended Career

Scheme Characteristics (figure (p))

The best predictor of whether trainees felt that they had progressed to their intended career was whether they had left early or not. Non early leavers were much more likely to progress to their intended career than other trainees.

For those trainees who had left early the next best predictor was whether they were regularly told how well they were doing by the staff training them; 42 percent of early leavers who were regularly told felt they had progressed to their intended career compared to 28 percent who were not told.
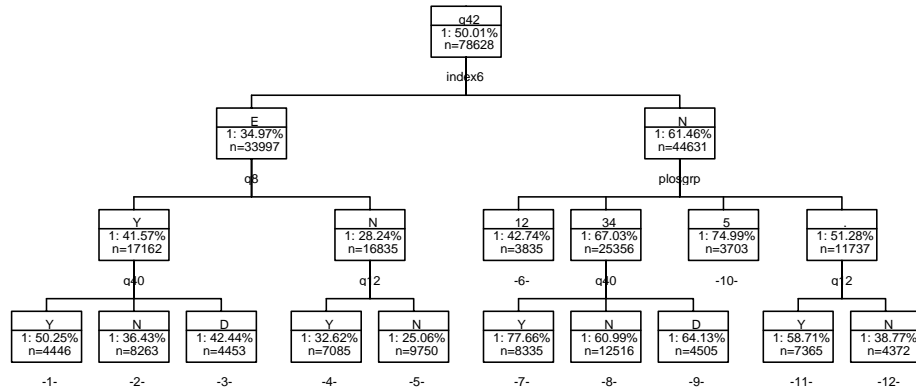
For non early levers planned length of stay was the next best predictor; generally the longer the duration of the training, the more likely the trainee was to state that they had progressed to their intended career.

The main points here are:

Early leaving has a detrimental effect on a trainee's progress towards their intended career.

Feedback from staff during training and agreeing a training plan with the employer improved the chances of early leavers progressing toward their intended career.

Figure (p) : Progression towards intended career (scheme characteristics)

```
                          q42
                        1: 50.01%
                        n=78628
                         index6
          ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
          E                                  N
       1: 34.97%                         1: 61.46%
       n=33997                           n=44631
          q8                              plosgrp
    ┌───────────┐            ┌──────────┬──────────┬──────────┐
    Y           N            12         34         5          .
 1: 41.57%   1: 28.24%   1: 42.74%  1: 67.03%  1: 74.99%  1: 51.28%
 n=17162     n=16835     n=3835     n=25356    n=3703     n=11737
    q40         q12         -6-        q40        -10-       q12
 ┌────┬────┐  ┌────┐              ┌────┬────┐           ┌────┐
 Y    N    D  Y    N              Y    N    D           Y    N
1:50.25% 1:36.43% 1:42.44%  1:32.62% 1:25.06%  1:77.66% 1:60.99% 1:64.13%  1:58.71% 1:38.77%
n=4446 n=8263 n=4453  n=7085 n=9750  n=8335 n=12516 n=4505  n=7365 n=4372
 -1-    -2-   -3-     -4-    -5-      -7-    -8-    -9-      -11-   -12-
```

Abbreviations

Label	Description:	Categories:	
Q42	Did you progress to your intended career?	1	Yes
Index 6	Early Leaver	E	Early Leaver
		N	Non-early leaver
Q8	Were you told regularly by the staff who were training you, how you were doing?	Y	Yes
PLOSGRP	Planned length of stay	12	less than 6 months
		34	6-24 months
		5	more than 24 months
		.	missing
Q40	Did you agree an individual training plan with your employer or training organisation?	Y	Yes
		N	No
		D	Don't know
Q12	During your last training programme did you try for any qualifications?	Y	Yes
		N	No

4.2.5   Understanding of Jobs

Scheme Characteristics (figure (q))

Again, the provision of feedback from staff, either through regularly telling the trainee how well they were doing or by giving help and advice, is seen to be an important factor in shaping trainees' attitudes. Only 50 percent of trainees who did not receive either type of feedback felt that the programme helped them to understand jobs better.

Other important variables relate to whether the trainee had agreed a written plan with their careers teacher or careers officer, an Individual Training Plan with their employer or training organisation, and whether they were given a National Record of Vocational Achievement pack (NROVA).

Ninety three percent of trainees who had been told regularly how well they were doing, and had agreed a training and a written plan, felt that the programme helped to improve their understanding of jobs. This compares to only 46 percent of those who received no staff feedback and did not agree a written plan with their careers teacher or careers officer.

The main points here are:

Feedback from staff and agreeing training plans provide trainees with a better understanding an what jobs are like. However, the training on its own provided a good deal of appreciation of jobs.

Figure (q) : Understanding of jobs (scheme characteristics)

Abbreviations

Label :	Description :	Categories :		Label :	Description :	Categories :	
Q45	Did your training programme help you understand more about what jobs are like?	1:	Yes	Q37	Did you agree a written plan for your future career and training aims with your careers teacher or careers office?	Y NB YD	Yes No and don't know Yes and don't know
Q8	Were you told regularly, by the staff who were training you, how you were doing?	Y N	Yes No				
Q6	While you were on your training programme were you given any help and advice by the staff who were training you?	Y N	Yes No		At any time during your training were you given a NROVA pack?	Y ND	Yes No and don't know
Q40	Did you agree an individual training plan with your employer or training organisation?	Y N D	Yes No Don't know		Early leaver	E N	Early Leaver Non-early leaver

4.2.6 Helpfulness of Programme Singe Leaving

Scheme Characteristics (figure r))

The best predictor for attitudes towards the usefulness of the scheme was whether the trainee was told regularly how well they were doing.

For those who were told regularly how well they were doing, the next most influential variable was whether the trainee left early or not. Fifty six percent of trainees who left early felt the scheme was helpful compared to 77 percent of trainees who completed their course.

For those who were not told regularly how well they were doing, the next most influential variable was whether they were given any help and advice by the staff who were training them; 47 percent of those who were given help and advice thought the scheme was helpful compared to 25 percent of trainees who were not given help.

The main points are:

Feedback and advice during training are important if trainees are to find the scheme helpful after leaving.

Agreeing a training plan and early leaving were also important determinants of the programme being helpful.

Figure (r) : Helpfulness of programme since leaving (scheme characteristics)
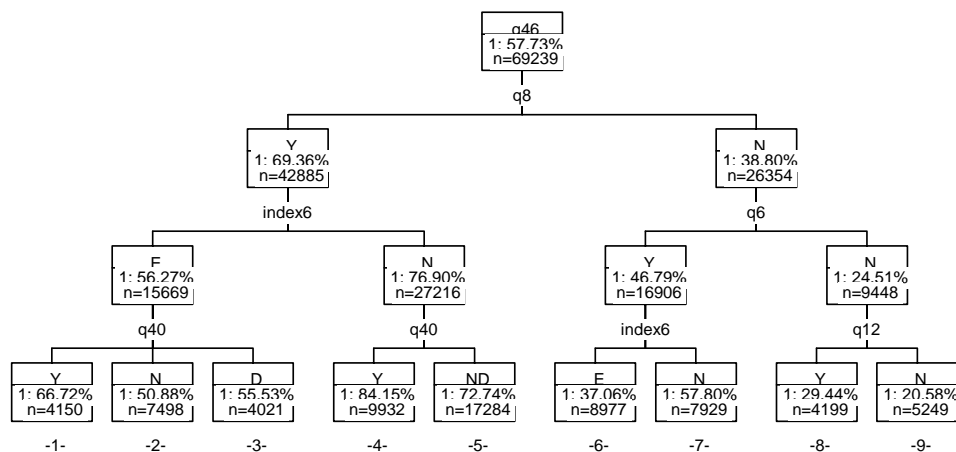
Abbreviations

Label	Description:		Categories:
Q46	Has the time on your training programme been helpful to you since you left?		
Q8	Were you told regularly, by the staff who were training you, how you were doing?	Y	Yes
		N	No
Index 6	Early leaving	E	Early leaver
		N	Non-early leaver
Q6	While you were on your Training Programme, were you given any help and advice by the staff who were training you?	Y	Yes
		N	No
Q40	Did you agree an individual training plan with your employer or training organisation?	Y	Yes
		N	No
		D	Don't know
		ND	No and don't know
Q12	During your last training programme did you try for any qualifications?	Y	Yes
		N	No

4.3   Multivariate Analysis: Modelling

4.3.1 Introduction

The aim of the modelling was to determine which personal circumstances and external factors characterise early leavers, using Index 6. This work was also seen as exploratory.

4.3.2 Approaches

From a practical standpoint, two approaches to the modelling were most sensible. The first was to consider models that could predict whether a participant would be an early leaver from the information collected on the YT2 form. The aim was to produce actuarial-style tables which illustrate the differing propensities for participants to leave training early. These rates would be in more detail than the tables already provided - so for example, it would be possible to compare 16 year olds who have employed status with sixteen year olds who haven't; or to contrast the difference between NVQ levels and the standard occupational classifications. The benefits or this would be twofold. These tables might, if reproduced at a local level, enable training providers or registrars completing the YT 2 form to identify entrants who were likely early leavers from training schemes and then monitor their progress early on and offer extra support.   Additionally, and more importantly, it would allow a better understanding of the causes of early leaving and establish some policy recommendations.

The second approach was to incorporate the information gained from the questionnaires returned by leavers to determine what characterises early leavers. The objective was to predict early leaving, with this information and that from the YT2 form, and decide if factors such as 'the absence of

advice from the Careers Service' had a bearing on early leavers. The questionnaire gave some feedback on participants' views of YT and this could be used to understand further the reasons why participants leave early.

4.3.3 Methodology

The dataset for the modelling was reduced from the original 275,000 records to a little over 90,000 because the work was based on index 6, which by definition meant that the follow up questionnaire had to have been returned. Further, some of the individual's information on the YT2 form or questionnaire was missing. So whilst 90,000 trainees returned the questionnaire many of the 90,000 did not answer all of the questions. As a consequence most of the modelling was done on between 20,000 and 25,000 records depending on which predictive variables were being used. Imputation was not used. Logistic modelling was used because data were categorical. The approach to the modelling has, because of the nature of the data, been quite complex in interpret.

4.3.4 Modelling from the YT2 data

Information that is available on an individual as youth training begins:

AGEGRP	available from the date of birth and start date of training and then grouped
ANTNVQ	anticipated NVQ level for which the trainee is studying
BREGION	which of the twelve regions did the participant come from
CREDIT	whether the trainee has a credit or not
DISAB	disability status
ETHNIC	ethnic group
ESOL	English/Welsh language need identified
ICITY	in inner city or not
PLANSOC	planned standard occupational classification, these have been reduced from the original 25 categories to 7 according to the listings at the end of the chapter
PLOSGRP	planned length of stay on training
SEX	male/female
STSPND2	special training need identified
STSTAT	employment status at start of training - either employer or non employed
YTBEF	been on youth training before

4.3.5 Findings from YT2 modelling

As expected, not all the above variables help predict whether someone will be an early leaver or not. In fact, the YT2 model requires only eight of the fourteen variables above to predict, as best it can, whether someone will be an early leaver or not. This can be interpreted as prioritising which of the variables are best at predicting an early leaver given that an individual is an early leaver. The eight variables, in order of predictive ability, are STSTAT, PLOSGRP, ANTNVQ, PLANSOC, AGEGRP, ICITY, BREGION and YTBEF. However, when judging a model by minimising its possibility of making an error, very little is lost, in terms of predictive capability, by only choosing three of the eight variables above.   These are STSTAT< PLOSGRP and ANTNVQ. These variables are not necessarily independent of each other or of the other variables that are being omitted from the model. For example, STSTAT may be determined by AGEGRP and PLANSCO. However, from the point of view of trying to predict early leavers this is not a major concern. STSTAT, PLOSGRP and ANTNVQ can be seen as the best predictors amongst variables chosen from the YT2 form. The presence of PLOSGRP in this set of predictors in unsurprising as planned and actual lengths of stay are, in a sense, correlated.

The following table (figure(s)) shows the percentage of early leavers tabulated across the three key variables for predicting early leavers. As the participants have been broken down into a lot of detail, the number of trainees in parts of the table are relatively small and this can make rates appear exceptionally high when only a few people in a category left their training early. In the table, where the number of people in a particular category is twenty or less the rate has been replaced by a dash.

Figure(s) : Early leaving rates by NVQ level, planned length of stay and employment status

	Anticipated NVQ level				
Planned length of stay	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**Not known**
Less than 3 months					
Employed	-	2	0	-	14
Non employed	25	16	-	-	26
Not known	-	6	-	-	12
3 - 6 months					
Employed	-	9	2	0	18
Non employed	39	40	-	-	53
Not known	13	5	7	-	18
6 - 12 months					
Employed	-	30	12	7	8
Non employed	66	68	60	-	66
Not known	27	21	7	3	21
1 - 2 years					
Employed	74	59	25	19	40
Non employed	80	81	56	-	77
Not known	43	36	19	14	37
2 years plus					
Employed	-	52	29	31	15
Non employed	69	68	58	-	54
Not known	32	29	28	16	27
Not known					
Employed	-	4	11	15	1
Non employed	0	1	12	-	0
Not known	1	0	5	11	0

For both employed and non employed status trainees, participants are generally more likely to leave early the longer their planned length of stay, regardless of their NVQ level. As shown in figures (t) and (u).

Figure (t) : Early leaving rates for employee YTs by planned length of stay and NVQ level
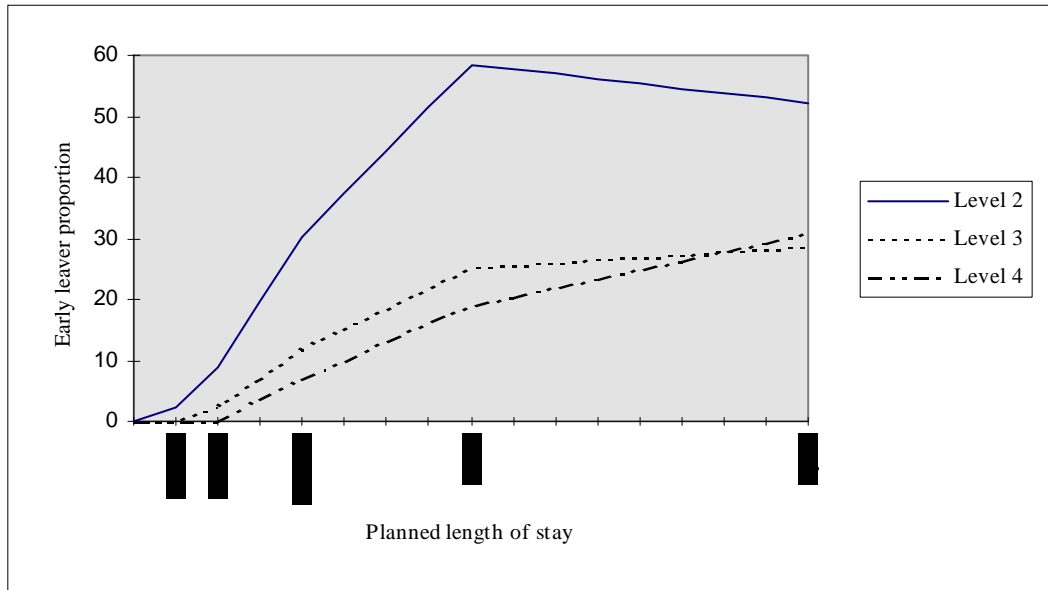
Earlier analysis shows that, overall, the early leaver rate for those with non employed status is higher than these with employed status. From the table this is true, pretty much, for all NVQ levels and across all course durations. Regrettably, the employed status at the start and end of training is information that is not available for around half the trainees, and this has clouded the issue of employment status somewhat. However, for the trainees where information is available, very few appear to have changed their employment status whilst training.

Figure (u) : Early leaving rates for non employed YTs by planned length of stay and NVQ level
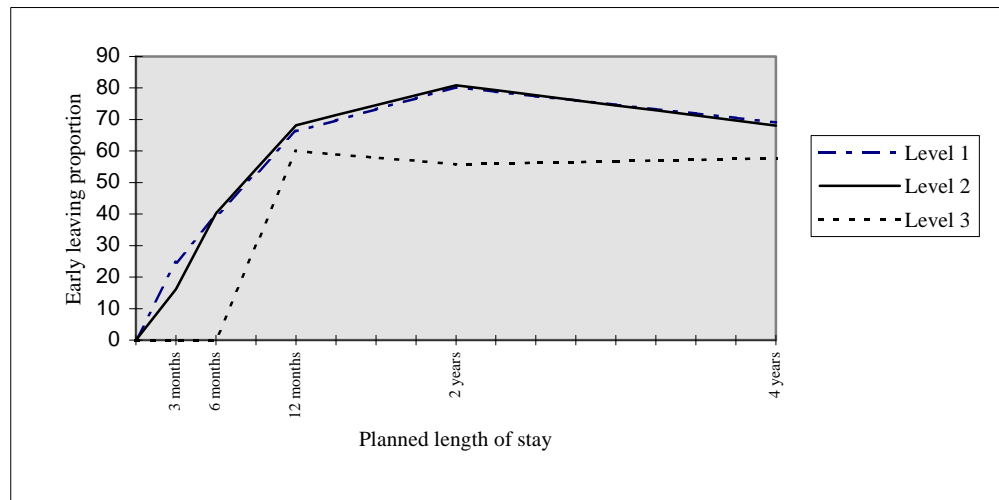
The most common level of NVQ is level 2 for a duration of between one and two years. Over 40 percent of respondents to the questionnaire fit into this category, and hence reducing the early leaving rate for this group will have the biggest influence in reducing the overall leaving rate. Further, the rates amongst this group are some of the highest - four out of five trainees with non employed status, doing a NVQ level 2 for between one and two years, leave early.

Because of the different characteristics of leavers, changes in the early leaving rate for some groups have a much more marked effect on the overall rate than others. The table in figure (v) reflects this. The first column shows the effect on the overall rate if the rate for one type of leaver fell by ten percentage points whilst all other aspects of early leavers remained the same. For example, if the early leaving rate for those with employed status at the start of training fell from 35 to 25 percent (a fall of ten percentage points) then the overall rate would fall by only one percentage point from 43 to 42 percent. The second column shows what would happen to the overall rate if a particular rate was halved and everything else stayed the same. Using the previous example again, if the rate for employed trainees was halved from 35 percent to 17.5 percent then the overall rate would fall by two percentage points to 41 percent.

Figure (v) : Changes in overall early leaving rates after rate reductions for groups of trainees

	percentage point change in the overall rate when	
	particular rate is reduced by ten percentage points	particular rate is halved
Status at start of training	eg 40% to 30%	eg. 40% to 20%
Employed	1	2
Non- employed	4	13
Unknown	5	6
Anticipated NVQ level		
One	1	2
Two	6	13
Three	1	2
Unknown	2	4
Planned length of stay		
Less than three months	0	0
Three to six months	1	1
Six months to a year	1	1
One to two years	6	18
More than two years	1	1

As illustrated by the modelling of the YT2 data, changes in the overall early leaving rate are most sensitive to changes in the rate for non employed status trainees, trainees doing NVQ level 2 and trainees whose planned length of stay is between one and two years.

Considering the enormous varieties of trainees, courses and occupations, and the fact that the model covers all twelve geographical regions, it is advantageous, for producing look up tables, that only three variables are needed to adequately explain many of the incidences of early leaving. However, the table was constructed using only one year's data and conditions may be appreciably different now. Further, this work was exploratory and will need to be revisited as the definition of an early leaver evolved from index 6.

Imputation techniques with this work have not so far been used. The disadvantage of this has been the reduction in the number of 'clean' records for modelling, and the possibility that these records contain a response bias. The advantage was that the model was built on 'true' data and not dependent on largely imputed values for many observations.

If the Department are to take this work further they may consider the use of 'neutral networks' to attribute missing values once the issue of response bias

has been resolved. This is discussed further under policy issues (chapter seven).

The model is of limited use at a local leave, but it does provide some useful pointers for targeting particular groups of YTs to encourage more of them to complete their training. It also raises some questions that existing or new policies might address.

- What can be done to reduce the early leaving rate of trainees studying for NVQ level 2? This is the most common planned NVQ level of achievement but not, by any means, the only level aimed for.

- Employed status affects early leaving rates regardless of NVQ level and planned length of stay.

- Is the burden of 1-2 years training coupled with employment, either as a trainee or an employee, too much for younger trainees to cope with?

These were all issues that fed into the qualitative research (chapter six).

4.3.6 YT2 form/questionnaire modelling

Models using the questionnaire data on its own, or to supplement the information on the YT2 form, have, as already outlined, had a slightly different aim to the YT2 modelling. Some of the questions relate to the attitudes of YT leavers that may contrast the views of early and non early leavers.

The questions that are of particular interest are listed below.

Q3   How useful to you was the Training Programme as a whole?
Q6   While you were on the Training Programme, were you given any help and advice by the staff who were training you?
Q7   Following Q6, how useful was this?
Q8   Were you told regularly, by the staff who were training you, how you were doing?
Q9   Following Q8, how useful was this?
Q16   At any time during your training were you given a National Record of Vocational Achievement pack (NRA)?
Q17   Did you use and update your NRA pack during your Training Programme?
Q18   Were you given a National Record of Achievement pack (NRA) when you left school or during your Training Programme?
Q19   Did you use and update your NRA pack during your training programme?

4.3.7   Findings from YT2 and questionnaire modelling

Responses to these questions are unlikely to be good predictors of early leaving by themselves, because responses to attitudinal questions depend on several different underlying factors, such as gender and age. Further, many of the questions have only two options available. Because of the large amount of missing information on these variables, some recoding was done to allow more records to be included in the models. The models that were tested using only the nine questions listed above to predict early leaving were, in general, unacceptably inaccurate, and were little better than deciding whether someone was an early leaver by tossing a coin. However, it was apparent that the questionnaire data were more helpful in assessing non early leavers.

These problems mean that the responses to the questions needs to be augmented with YT2 data before modelling with them.

When constructing a model using the questions above, and the three key variables from the YT2 modelling discussed in the previous section, only 4,5000 records were useable for modelling. After recording the number of records was, a much more desirable, 33,000 records.   The model that emerges with this information contains, in order of predictive ability, the variables Q3, PLOSGRP, STSTAT, ANTNVQ, Q9, Q16, Q18, Q7, Q19, Q8 and Q6. The only variable not included in the model was Q17. In terms of predictive ability not much is lost by considering the model which only includes Q3, PLOSGRP, STSTAT and ANTNVQ. These are the three variables from the YT2 model and the question "How useful was the Training Programme as a whole"/ This is not surprising as 41 percent of non early leavers found the programme very useful as opposed to only 19 percent of early leavers. Clearly, participants' views of the programme will also influence their decision to stay for the duration of their course or not, and, in terms of predicting early leavers this information is more helpful than the other variables STSTAT, ANTNVQ and PLOSGRP. However, this information is, of course, only available when a trainee has left their programme.

Returning to the complete model, questions 9 and 16 are the next best predictors of early leaving and these questions concern the feedback from training staff that was given to youth trainees, and whether they received a NROVA. Further, more of the non early leavers found the programme very useful than did early leavers.

Using questionnaire data in a model re-inforces the credibility of the predictors, STSTAT, ANTNVQ and PLSOGRP that emerged from the earlier work. However, what is also apparent is that there is something of a

contrast in the views expressed by early and non early leavers on their returned questionnaires. There may be tangible things that trainers can do that might reduce the early leaving rate - in particular those suggested by questions 9 and 16 - give more feedback to trainees and made sure NROVA packs are issued early on in participants' courses. A wider discussion of this has already been provided in section 3.2 (General Attitudes). Frequencies of the responses to those questions highlight the differing attitudes between completers and early levers and raise some further questions regarding the role of the Careers' Service and of the trainers, in addition to those raised by the findings of this section of the modelling work.

4.3.8   Further sensitivity analysis (for YT2 information not included in 4.3.5)

The table below (figure (w)) is similar to the one earlier in the chapter which covered employment status, planned length of course and anticipated NVQ level.

Figure (w) : Changes in overall early leaving rates after rate reductions for groups of trainees

	Change in the overall rate when	
	particular rate is reduced by ten percentage points	particular rate is halved
	eg 40% to 30%	eg 40% to 20%
Age		
16	6	14
17	3	7
18	0	1
19+	0	0
Not known	0	0
Credit		
Yes	1	2
No	4	11
Not Known	6	9
Special Training Need Identified		
A	0	1
B	1	3
C	1	2
Non-endorsed	6	14
Language	0	0
Numeracy	0	0
Combination	0	0
Not known	1	2

The early leaving rate for 17 year olds is, at 50 percent, the highest amongst the age groups. However, the table above shows that the most impact on the overall early leaving rate would be caused by reducing the rate for 16 year olds, because over 60 percent of the YT leavers in 1992/93 were 16.

4.3.9 Disaggregated models

The same variable that predict early leavers amongst the whole population apply to smaller groups (eg North and South, males and females).

4.3.10 Males/Females

Separate models for males and females are based on less than 12,000 records. However, both confirm the findings of the overall YT2 model. For males, the model includes the same eight variables, STSTT, PLOSGRP, ANTNVQ, PLANSOC, AGEGRP, BREGION, ICITY and YTBEF (in order of predictive ability), as the main model. Further, it prioritises STSTAT, PLOSGRP and ANTNVQ as the most important in determining males' incidence of early leaving. The reliability of the model, in terms of making the correct prediction, is about the same as the main model and similarly little is lost, in terms of predicting, from using only the three variables STSTAT, PLOSGRP and ANTNVQ.

The position for females is much the same. The only difference in the eight variables is that YTBEF is replaced by ESOL, the language indicator, and the order of entry is now PLOSGRP, STSTAT, AGEGRP, PLANSOC, ICITY, ANTNVQ, BREGION and ESOL. This model has low probabilities of making incorrect predictions and the most influential variables are PLOSGRP, STSTAT and AGEGRP - which replaces ANTNVQ. PLANSCO and ICITY are also more deterministic for this model than ANTNVQ. However, the information that helps predict early leavers for males and females is essentially much the same.

4.3.11 Regional variations

Yorkshire and Humberside had the most leavers who had returned the questionnaire during 1992/93 and the early leaving rate for the region was 45 percent. There were only 3,4000 records with which to do the analysis and early leaving was best described by STSTAT, PLOGSGRP, ANTNVQ - the three that emerge from the main model and AGEGRP and SEX. Using the South East, a region where the early leaver rate is one of the lowest across the country, makes no difference to which variables the modelling process selects as the best predictors. Again PLOSGRP, STSTAT, and ANTNVQ are the most important with PLANSCO and AGEGRP.

The findings that employed status, planned length of course and anticipated NVQ level are the best, if not the only, determinants of early leaving apply regionally and to both males and females.

4.4   Policy issues for measuring early leaving

4.4.1   Policy issues

There are several issues arising from the exploratory analysis and modelling in Chapters 3 and 4. The following are issues surrounding the data that need to be addressed before finalising a definition or definition of early leaving.

4.5   Measuring early leaving and data issues

Defining early leaving

The measurement of early leaving and the uncertainties relating to its definition need to be further worked through and agreed. For example, the question of how to relate an agreed definition to the available data needs further consideration, and how to treat particular groups eg. Preparatory trainees or those who leave early as a result of pregnancy.

Measuring early leaving with the available data

Once a final definition of early leavers has been established, the problems of missing data need to be addressed. The high numbers of incomplete records have created problems with nearly all aspects of the quantitative research. There are several issues to address: a possible response bias; the need for, and suitability of, reweighting; imputation of missing values; and the calculation of rates using only complete trainee records.

It is most important to assess the extent of a response bias, as any definitive measurement of early leaving is likely to depend on the follow up questionnaire being returned. The imputation of missing values may well be appropriate and the Government Statistical Service Methodology (GSS(M) working party have produced a document on imputation best practice. This will provide some further guidance, particularly resulting from the 'neural networks'.

Imputation

With any follow up surveys and administrative procedures, the data collected will always contain some missing information and, as already discussed, the GSS(M) procedures may assist with handling incomplete records. However, imputation was not used in the modelling because of concerns about prediction with what was essentially imputed, rather than genuine data. If the modelling is taken further (to establish likely early leavers) after the assessment of non-response bias, then modelling with imputed data could be considered. For the moment the use of imputation, to incorporate incomplete records, in the measurement of early leaving needs to be considered.

Leavers who are 'provider hoppers'

Trainees who transfer training providers soon after starting a programme are not commonly viewed as early leavers. Identification of leavers who are provider

hoppers, as they are sometimes known, is possible when starter and leaver information is available from YT2 forms. Recent research into this for one TEC revealed that around nine percent of leavers are false leavers. Removal of these individuals from analyses increased the TEC's NVQs/100 leavers key statistic by between two and three percentage points. However, this national research was based only on leaver data so provider hoppers were removed on the basis of answers to Q2 in FUS. Looking at the different indices in this research, trying to remove the provider hoppers make a difference of about 5 percentage points.

To progress this type of work rigorously would necessitate the recording of individual training providers identification (contract) numbers. This would also provide TECs with the facility to research closely the performance of individual providers. However, a study using start and end dates on national data could establish the extent of the practice, and its effect on early leaving rates or non-achievement.

Questionnaire

The response rate (approximately 30 percent) is disappointing, although similar to other leaver surveys conducted for TECs. What is of more concern is the extent to which the views, experiences and whereabouts of non-respondents differ from the trainees who replied. Consideration of this group, through further research, is advisable. This is an extension of non-response bias issues already mentioned.

Two issues that are traditionally associated with low response rates to questionnaires are their length and relevance to the potential respondent. With the changing structure of youth training, a revision and shortening of the questionnaire may be necessary. Further, the current information obtained is not always useable. For example, Q4 'At any time have you been given help and advice by the Careers Service?' does not give any information about the timing of this advice. There may be an additional problem if respondents are confusing school careers teachers with the Careers Service.

5

DESK RESEARCH

5. DESK RESEARCH

5.1 YT Early Leavers - Comparison of TEC studies

This section provides information and summaries of previous research into early leaving from youth training programmes conducted on behalf of a number of TECs. It should be borne in mind that there have been a number of changes to the programme since many of the reports were conducted - for example the introduction of Youth Credits and NVQs.

5.1.1 Introduction

confirming some of the findings from the national data. Although the studies focused on a variety of issues, certain core findings can be identified. There were a number of personal characteristics which appears to increase the propensity to leave early - age, academic capability, presence of special needs and qualifications achieved. In terms of course characteristics, pre-programme guidance, the length of the course, contact with the training provider and the quality of training were particularly important.

The most common reasons for leaving courses were: gaining employment; the level of allowance; the nature of work given on placement; disagreements with training providers or employers and personal circumstances. In several studies, early leavers were asked to cite what would have encouraged them to stay. The three most common responses were improved training, increased allowances and the provision of more interesting work experience.

One finding, common to the majority of studies, was that on leaving the programmes, trainees that had left early tended to obtain fewer positive outcomes than their counterparts who completed the programmes. This was also evident from the national data. Typically, a higher proportion of early leavers were unemployed and, if employed, were more likely to be working on a part time or casual basis in jobs without training.

A variety of definitions for early leaving were used in the studies which depended fundamentally on whether trainees left their programmes earlier than intended. Some studies excluded individuals who left a short time before their course was due to finish or had transferred to an alternative course.

5.1.2 Support and consultation

Support for trainees, from both training provides and employers, was a key element in trainee retention levels. Early leavers were more likely to feel the

advice and guidance they received was inadequate than those who completed their course.

Many early leavers felt that they were not given enough information on their options after leaving school. The provision of information was a key determinant of satisfaction levels and completion rates. A number of studies singled out school Careers Services for particular criticism in this respect. Many trainees complained about the lack of information, levels of pay, methods of training delivery and the organisation of the scheme prior to starting. One TEC study questioning the choice of occupations available to trainees found that 34 percent had been given little or no choice in their type of employment.

Once on the course many trainees expressed a sense of workplace isolation and complained of poor supervision. Others appeared to have a low expectation of getting a job at the end of the course: stating experience or qualification as the main motivation for joining the scheme. It is perhaps unsurprising then, that if an opportunity to get a job arose during the programme, trainees were likely to leave.

Most studies found that the first six months were crucial, with the highest number of drop-outs during this period. The first four to six weeks were particularly important, as this was a period of readjustment for trainees. Support and advice were found to be essential during this time. As many early leavers exhibited similar characteristics, support could be concentrated on specific groups.

For example, trainees who had non employed status had a high propensity to leave, as did those with low academic aspirations or capabilities. Trainees who left early were typically working towards lower level qualifications and those who started their courses with no qualifications were least likely to obtain qualifications through the programme or complete the course.

The length of the programme also had an impact on the leaving rate and generally, the leaving rate rose as the length of course increased.

Few studies concentrated on the personal characteristics of the early leavers, although DfEE statistics suggest that sex and age were distinguishing factors. A study conducted on behalf of one TEC also found that younger trainees were more likely to leave early, with the leaving rate rising dramatically amongst 16 year olds. A study for another TEC had similar findings.

5.1.3 Reasons for leaving

There were a number of recurrent themes in the reasons given for leaving programmes before completion. One of the most significant explanations was that the trainees obtained a job whilst on the programme. Although this could usually be perceived as being a positive outcome, some trainees stated that they took temporary or casual work as a result of financial hardship on the scheme. There was a tendency for trainees to link getting a job with the need for more money, indicating that the decision as often made as a result of financial pressures. This was confirmed by the correlation between the increase in the early leaving rate and the availability of seasonal work. A number of destination surveys found that many early leavers were in fact working in jobs with no training, suggesting that the work itself was semi-skilled or unskilled.

Experiences whilst on placement, particularly the type of work given and the level of interest exhibited in training by employers were also key. Mundane work and the lack of opportunities for training and development were commonly cited as reasons for leaving. One study found that many trainees felt that they were "dogsbodies", and that the training received had been minimal. Unsurprisingly, those trainees who were not given the opportunity for work experience were also more likely to leave early.

A study by one TEC gave trainees the opportunity to state what may have encouraged them to stay on the programme - 35 percent cited better/more training and 16 percent more interesting or relevant work experience. Other studies found that the scheme generally was a poor alternative to employment.

Other reasons for leaving early were changes in personal circumstances (eg ill health) or that the trainee wanted a change. Many trainees who expressed dissatisfaction with their placements stated that little was done to provide them with an alternative placement and concluded that there was no option but to leave YT.

5.1.4 Destinations of early leavers

Many early leavers stated that they had not received any guidance or job search help after leaving YT. Most research found that early leavers were more likely to be unemployed than their fellow trainees who had completed the course and a higher proportion of early leavers were also attending further education courses.

For trainees who moved to employment, continued contact with the training provider could be important given that many move to positions without training. It is possible for trainees to continue their training through the new employer or evening classes.

5.1.5 Recommendations

There were a number of common conclusions and recommendations that were apparent from the results of the studies:

- support from training providers was a key area of concern, with an emphasis on the need for advice and guidance at the pre-programme stage, the use of 'taster' or introductory courses and regular contact on placement. Contact should be increased during the first few months a trainee is on a course and support concentrated on particular groups identified as being likely to leave early - lower achievers, unqualified trainees, those with non employed status.

- a number of suggestions were made based on the allowances paid to trainees. These included a bonus system, with increases once training milestones were reached, and supplementary funding for hardship cases.

- the promotion of structured training plans for trainees was also recommended, combined with raisin the awareness of employers about their training obligations and improving the quality of training provided.

- the introduction of random checks on training providers and colleges by independent inspectors was also suggested as a form of quality control. Similar visits could be arranged to placement employers.

6

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

6.   QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

6.1   Introduction

The investigation of early leaving from YT using national start/leaver data provided a basis for analysis of the extent and characteristics of early leaving, profiles of early leavers and information on underlying reasons behind this.   These data provided some evidence and insight into the processes leading to early leaving and the relative important of various factors involved in this decision.   Several issues were raised, which were further explored by the qualitative research.   One key factor for investigation was the high number of early leavers giving 'other' as their reason for leaving early.

The main aims and objectives were to analyse the impact on early leaving of the following:

- experience on placement

- advice and guidance

- trainee and course characteristics.

The research also examined:

- ingredients for success

- problem areas

- measures to reduce the incidence of early leaving

6.2   Methodology

6.2.1 Group discussions

A series of ten group discussions with current and former youth trainees were conducted - four in the North West, four in the West Midlands and two in the Eastern region.   Although, 85 trainees attended the groups (of the 150 who had initially confirmed their attendance);   57 at the six groups in December 1995 and 28 at the four in January 1996.

Details of trainees, from completed YT2 forms, were supplied by the DfEE. Trainees with a range of personal and course characteristics were selected to ensure that factors such as employment status and anticipated level of NVQ could be explored.   There was a mix of current trainees, completers and early leavers.   The breakdown of attendees is provided in figure (x).

A total of 2,000 trainees were sent a letter of introduction, explaining the aims of the group discussions and their involvement.   They were then asked

to attend and offered the incentive of a £20 payment for doing so. The trainees who committed to attending were sent a letter of confirmation and a map. Trainees attending the groups arranged for January had a telephone reminder as they had received the letter several weeks previously.

Figure (x) : participating trainees

	SEX		STATUS	
	Male	Female	Employed	Trainee
TOTAL	42	43	32	53
West Midlands	25	16	10	31
North West	14	19	17	16
Eastern	3	8	5	6

	Current Trainee	**Completer**	**Early Leaver**	**Achiever**
TOTAL	31	24	30	22
West Midlands	16	13	12	12
North West	12	7	14	6
Eastern	3	4	4	4

The groups were all held at hotels with central location to ensure that they were easily accessible to the trainees. The discussion were tape recorded, with the permission of the participants, in order for their responses to be accurately reported.

6.2.2 In-depth interviews

Other people have an important influence on a trainee's experience of YT. The Phase One research highlighted that two key groups were training providers and the Careers Service (CS). In total nine face-to-face interviews were conducted with providers. They were selected in order to provide a cross-section of the training provider network. Size of programme, types of courses and the extent of early leaving were all considered.

The type of organisations had an impact on perception of the scheme. Some provided training, whilst others acted as 'facilitators' by recruiting trainees and securing placements. The facilitators saw themselves as recruitment agents for the scheme and tended to act on employer demand and selected trainees on the basis of industry requirements.

Two CS contacts were interviewed in each region. In order to obtain a range of opinions, officers at different levels within the Service were interviewed. The chief executive or the assistant head of services was interviewed to discuss policy issues. Senior careers officers and placements officers, who

had particular responsibility for YT, were also contacted to explore more day-to-day issues.

The discussions took the form of semi-structured interviews and typically lasted ninety minutes.

6.3   KEY FINDINGS - Recruitment

6.3.1 Introduction

The following chapter provides details from the qualitative research, giving some evidence and insight into the processes leading to early leaving and the relative importance of various factors involved in this decision.

The recruitment of youth trainees should be seen against a background of falling rolls (for example, in 1995 one in eight of the age group went onto a YT programme, compared with one quarter in 1990). There has been a corresponding increase over the period in the proportion of young people staying on at school sixth forms or in further education.

6.3.2 Schools Careers Advice

Trainees were asked their opinions on the careers advice received at school. This was particularly important in determining why they joined YT, their knowledge of alternative option and their ambitions generally.

Some trainees clearly felt that they received good advice from their school CS.   Positive aspects were one-to-one discussions with an advisory, development of a careers action plan and use of computer software for careers guidance. Training provider visits to schools were well received but relatively rare. Only one trainee had been invited to an open day, held by a training provider.

However, the overall impression of the advice received was largely negative and this had a bearing on early leaving. There were criticisms, centring on the provision of advice, its quality and, in particular, the preference given to academic education over vocational courses.

Some trainees complained about the small amount of time allocated to careers advice. A common belief was that there were too few lessons, which were too often in the pupil's lunch hour. Many trainees felt that, as it was voluntary, the importance of attendance was not emphasised. It was seen as *'a time for messing around'*.

A fairly common reason for not attending the careers sessions was that trainees did not know what they wanted to do in the future. Many felt that if they had no definite careers plan, the careers advisors would not be able to help them. A high proportion of trainees appeared to by-pass school careers advice totally, and often had no associated documentation, such as a careers action plan.

Some trainees felt that their school pushed them into joining the sixth form or local college and that there was a bias against practical, vocational courses. A significant minority felt that academic pupils were given preferential treatment, with YT portrayed in a negative light. One trainee stated that at her school all 'non-academic' women were advised to do YT schemes in hairdressing or beauty salons regardless of their interests.

CS personnel and training providers were concerned that the increase in the rate of staying on may mean that some pupils take inappropriate courses. There were numerous examples of trainees who were advised to stay on at school, against their judgement, leaving after a few months.

According to trainees, parents, in particular, saw YT as having a bade reputation and tried to encourage their offspring to stay on at school. There was a fear of giving up education.

There was a general lack of information and literature on YT courses. Young people had to approach the training provider direct, with nothing provided in advance or to school, where there was a captive audience. In addition, training providers felt that some schools restricted certain types of careers information to people who express an intention to leave. This can categorise young people before an informed decision can be made and tends to limit YT to 'lower calibre' individuals.

Several training providers expressed the opinion that 'A' levels were only beneficial if the young person was intending to go on to university, otherwise the CS should be advising them to do more vocational training, like YT. In practice, they felt that options were not always fully explored.

6.3.3 Careers Service

Officers at the CS all cited their neutrality on advice to young people, stating that they tend to discuss occupational areas and then explored how they can work towards this. They tended not to advocate just a job but either a training course or employment that had a training component.

Trainees often felt that they received more useful advice from the CS. However, there was again a lack of information and literature available for

making decisions. Training providers also felt information was poorly disseminated. The quantitative analysis found that the early leaver rate was generally higher for trainees who had contact with the Careers Service. This may be explained by the fact that the YT2 questionnaire does not specify when the trainee saw the Service (which might have been when they were thinking of leaving the programme). In addition trainees with employed status (who were less likely to leave early than non employed trainees) are often directed to the scheme by their employer and have no direct contact with the CS.

Training providers were, on occasions, quite critical of the CS and felt that they were pressurised to select trainees faster because of the guarantee scheme. This impacted on their recruitment procedures and the retention of trainees. They felt there was some conflict of interest: the CS was interested in meeting their targets for numbers on the scheme, whereas providers were more concerned with the quality of the trainee.

The CS was also described as being 'insular' and 'out of touch' with both the industry and the level of support required by trainees. Training providers criticised the CS for giving young people unrealistic expectations, which, one on the scheme, are unfulfilled and prompt trainees to leave. 'Set in their ways' was another common description, although some also commented that this may change with the recent privatisation.

There appeared to be a particular problem with the more practical courses like engineering and mechanics. It was felt by providers (and acknowledged by one CS) that trainees were not made fully aware of what the courses involved. For example, engineering requires many different areas of competence, which are difficult to fully explore. Trainees were not always made fully aware that they were going to be trained in a very different occupation to their actual programme.

There were numerous examples of trainees joining the course, only to realise that it was inappropriate. One trainee joined a course in mechanical engineering to discover that it did not cover his main interest - car mechanics. This was a major reason for early leaving.

6.3.4 Decision to join YT

Some young people were already employed prior to starting the course. Their employers had been approached directly and offered the opportunity to participate in the scheme and benefit from training at a subsidised rate. This was not true in all regions and the trainees were unclear whether it was the TEC's initiative.

Other trainees had applied for jobs and, at the interview, were told that the job offer was contingent upon their agreeing to joining a YT programme. Both groups were less likely to leave the scheme early as they either had a permanent job or were likely to have one in the future.

For other trainees, the decision to join YT was largely based on the ability to obtain qualifications and work experience whilst being paid. Many trainees disliked school and wanted to do something more practical. They often associated college with their experience of school and, therefore, did not want to attend on a full-time basis.

In many cases, YT was seen as the only way of getting a job in the future as a large proportion had left school with no qualifications.

"YT is good for getting experience, which is what most employers want".

The CS was influential in the decision to start YT, but recommendations and anecdotes from friends or family were also important.

There were also more negative reasons for joining the scheme. Trainees commonly felt that there was no alternative to the scheme as they could not get a job. As 16 and 17 year olds were unable to claim benefits if they did not join, some trainees felt that they had been coerced into participating. Unsurprisingly, those who joined through lack of other choices were likely to leave early.

6.3.5 Methods of selection

Trainees tended to choose their training provider on the basis of CS advice. The CS was generally critical of the quantity and quality of available literature, feel that young people had little information and were, therefore, unable to make an informed choice. The literature tended to provide brief overviews of provision but excluded details of course content and structure, and of YT procedures generally.

The selection procedures used by providers varied dramatically. Some took on all trainees regardless of ability, whilst others had stringent selection criteria and rejected a large proportion of applicants. In general, providers who selected had lower early leaving rates. They were able to single out individuals who had a proven interest in the occupational area and had appropriate skills. For example, one company asked photographic processing candidates to demonstrate a proven desire to get into a trade by producing a portfolio. Others required potential trainees to complete a series of assessments. A provider who experimented by waiving their procedures

noted a corresponding rise in their early leaving rate of around ten percentage points.

6.4   KEY FINDING - Training providers

6.4.1   Trainees' first impressions

There was a general view that training providers made the schemes appear to be better than they were. One trainee stated that her provider:

"made it sound really good and exciting...that it would provide skills training".

There were many cases of trainees being promised practical experience and a job at the end of the placement, and neither materialised.

The inductions given by the providers varied in both length and content, depending on the length of time it took to arrange a placement and the number of trainees taken on. Some trainees received no formal induction, just an interview with a provider. Others had week long inductions with the provider while they waited for a placement.

Trainees were critical of inductions not covering basic details and being badly presented. For example, many trainees arrived at their placement not knowing their holiday entitlement, working hours or level of wages and travel expenses.   Furthermore, many inductions were not done in an imaginative way, with little to hold the trainees' interest.

6.4.2 Placement allocation

Training providers often had difficulties obtaining employer placements. One Chamber of Commerce cited problems in spite of having a 'captive' audience in their 5,000 plus members. This was attributed to the image of YT trainees, the low awareness of the scheme and the poor calibre of trainees. The latter had been exacerbated by the high proportion of young people who stayed on at school. Further, some companies already had their own training schemes in place.

Thos facilitators with selective recruitment procedures had fewer problems with companies expressing an interest in the scheme. This had the added benefit that the provider was able to be more selective about the companies they used and were able to rule out those who were financially insecure or unstable.

The main criticisms of providers resulted from problems of securing placements: the length of time trainees had to wait; inappropriate placements and the general lack of choice. All three were key to the retention of trainees on the scheme.

The CS also complained that it took providers too long to find placements and that the young person may opt for an alternative, less appropriate course or job in the meantime.

Trainees acknowledged that it could be difficult for providers to secure placements and remarked that they were 'lucky' to obtain one. However, some felt that the providers placed undue pressure upon the trainee to accept unsuitable placements because of their concerns over funding (ie the fact that it a trainee was not on placement, the allowance was paid by the provider). There was cynicism about this, particularly when trainees, who anticipated problems, were told to 'try it out'.

Problems were caused by the mismatch of college work and placements. In some cases trainees' placements were completely unrelated to their college training or interest. This partly stemmed from trainees being ill-informed about their placement. There were examples of trainees being told the time and location of an interview but given no further information about the company or job,

6.5   KEY FINDINGS - Programme components

6.5.1 Off-job training

Trainees received training away from their placement at a variety of providers, most commonly at a local college on either day or block release. Some providers were also responsible for the 'off-job' training themselves. Other trainees had all their assessment and work towards the NVQ done in-house at their placement.

Many of the colleges had a series of quality procedures, often being Investors in People (IiP) and working towards Preferred Supplier Status. Training staff increasingly had be qualified to Training and Development Lead Body (TDLB) standards. However, there was a disparity between the standard of the resources and facilities of the off-job training. Those trainees who cited good experiences pointed to the courses being practical, relevant to their work place, with good equipment and individual attention from the trainer.

The most common complaints were about the lack of quality training and interest from tutors. In many cases, trainees were given workbooks and

simply told to work through them, with no formal teaching. Trainees cited examples of tutors not turning up to college on a regular basis or even learning their names.   The day-release from college was commonly perceived as being a break from work and there were many examples of trainees being told to go early or just sitting round playing cards.

Poor quality off-job training did not appear to be a key reason for early leaving, particularly if the trainee was only on day-release and had limited contact with the training establishment. However, it remains an important finding, as one of the main functions of the programme as a whole is to provide quality training for young people. In addition, if other elements were going badly, it increased the disillusionment with the course. Sometimes it prompted the trainee to opt for in-house assessment rather than attending day-release.

Clearly, poor quality of training became an important factor in the decision to leave if trainees were on block release or waiting at college until a placement was allocated. Some trainees were told that the college aspect of the course was pointless and it would be more useful for them to be out on placement.

Some trainees commented that their courses at college improved as people dropped out. After the first year, those trainees who were not interested had left the scheme. This reduced class sizes and improved tutors' ability to teach.

6.5.2 Placement experience

A good experience at an employer placement was crucial to the perceived success of the scheme and a key determinant of completion.

In general trainees who worked at larger companies and with employed status tended to have better experiences. Smaller companies knew less about YT and vocational qualifications and were less likely to provide structured training. Employed trainees were more motivated generally.

There were a number of positive comments about placements, with one trainee commenting that:

'You never hear the good things, only the bad'.

Trainees who had had positive experiences cited the existence of training plans, allocated supervisors and regular progress reviews. Quality training at the workplace was very important, particularly if it allowed trainees to obtain greater levels of responsibility. Many trainees stressed they had to be

assertive in order to progress, which explains partly why more intelligent and articulate trainees were more likely to complete the course successfully.

The negative aspects of YT placements centred around the type of work given, the lack of training and the general treatment of youth trainees by both their employer and colleagues.

Trainees who had had a bad experience tended to feel that they were exploited by the scheme. They were given menial jobs and were treated as 'dogbodies'. Trainees were frequently given cleaning to do (although most companies employ cleaners) and were asked repeatedly to make the tea.

The majority of trainees acknowledged that they were willing to start at the bottom and do menial jobs but became disillusioned when this did not change throughout their placement.

'I may as well have stayed in bed for a year'.

Most trainees did not have job descriptions and few had placement training plans. The training in-house tended to be very poor and, in many cases, trainees did not have specified training supervisors. This created conflicting demands and difficulties in not knowing which work to prioritise.

A common complaint was employers lack of information about YT in general. Further, little information on health and safety and general terms and conditions was provided and there was a lack of interest in trainees' progress towards vocational qualifications. Employers were unwilling to allocate time for trainees to do college work at their employers, although it may have been directly relevant to the workplace. This meant that trainees felt pressured by the amount of work and commented that the colleges and employers did not acknowledge the demands placed upon them.

Many trainees felt that they were not treated with respect by their employers.

'YT trainees should be grateful for what they get'.

They were seen as being 'free labour' with no associated value. Some companies thought they were not worth investing in, as in many cases trainees were school leavers with no qualifications.

There was a tendency for YT trainees to be overlooked in favour of inexperienced university graduates. They felt that they were always seen as a trainee and their talents and skills were underestimated as a result. Even employed trainees expressed the belief that they would have to move companies in order to progress their career.

'No matter what you do, you can't do it as well as them'.

The mismatch of placements and trainee programmes has been mentioned previously. Further problems arose as employers often did not have sufficient work for trainees to do in their preferred area. For example, one trainee doing a course in mechanics worked at a garage and spent his placement, learning nothing relevant to his course.

A training provider in the construction industry commented that they had little control over the quality of training as it depended on the local economic conditions and the nature of the company's work. The recession resulted in companies winning less work and, therefore, being less able to provide stimulating and challenging work experience.

No guarantee of a job at the end of most courses caused problems. Some employers continually took youth trainees year after year but never actually employed any of them. The majority of trainees knew of companies that did this and it was thought that this contributed to the poor image of the scheme. Trainees believed that the training provider knew of this but did not act to address the problem.

6.5.3 Contact and support procedures

Providers had responsibility under TEC requirements to ensure that placements complied with Health and Safety regulations. Many providers combined the review with trainee visits. Individual TECs operated in slightly different ways in that some differentiated by occupation. One TEC classified occupations by perceived risk. High risk occupations in terms of health and safety, like construction and engineering, had more frequent reviews.

Most trainees were told at their initial training provider interview that they would receive regular visits whilst they were at their placement. These ranged from once a week to once ever three months. Some providers were extremely conscientious, visiting the placement every few weeks and being constantly available in the case of any queries. Positive comments were made about providers who ensured that three-way reviews were possible, with time allocated to see the trainee alone. However, for many trainees, this was not the case. Trainees gave examples of only being visited when they failed to completed the timesheets or of just being sent questionnaires. There was a general feel that once the provider had got them a placement they tended to be forgotten about.

There were examples of trainees requesting help and being promised an alternative placement but it never actually materialising. Many of those, who went ahead and found themselves college places or jobs, would not have left the programme had they transferred placements.

It was felt that training providers were anxious to placate employers who offered placements. This meant that they were loathe to respond to trainees' problems by confronting the employer. The scarcity of placements also restricted the ability of training providers to transfer trainees to a different employer.

6.6 KEY FINDINGS - Trends in early leaving

6.6.1 Reasons for early leaving

Some of the more successful training providers, with the lowest rates of early leaving, stated that the main reason for early leaving was trainees obtaining another job. This was attributed to the training schemes being highly regarded by employers and that trainees were then well-placed to get a new job. It was thought that promising trainees often get some experience and then move to a better alternative.

However, trainees often left to obtain full-time jobs as a result of financial necessity. The trainee was often the only wage earner in the family and pay was the major motivation for work regardless of the nature of the task and training received. Most trainees felt that the current level of allowance assumes some measure of parental support and, in many cases, this was not forthcoming.

The CS also commented that it was difficult to instil any sense of long term perspective in the trainees. Consequently, there was a tendency to move to a job with a higher remuneration, and not consider that the training may have longer term benefits and lead to better pay.

For those who had not encountered financial difficulty, the low allowance and ability to be higher paid elsewhere only became a factor once the trainee had become dissatisfied. If, for example, a trainee was experiencing problems with a placement, the pay was a further decisive factor in early leaving. The low allowance provided no incentive to stay if a trainee encountered problems.

The level of allowance was cited by all groups interviewed (trainees, CS and training providers) as a factor in early leaving. There were numerous comments that the allowance should be increased to ensure trainees felt that

the scheme was valuable and rewarded hard work. This would improve retention rates and also the overall image of the scheme.

The fact that in order to receive hardship allowance at 16 or 17 years, young people had to register on YT meant that they felt 'press ganged' into the programme. Basic problems like having no permanent accommodation also contributed to the likelihood of early leaving.

Training providers identified the guarantee scheme as a source of problems. CS have an obligation to place all school leavers who leave in the summer by January 1st. If they leave later than the summer, they must be placed within eight weeks. Services had different methods to enable them to comply with the Government Guarantee. For example, one used a 'catch-all' scheme operated by one of the training providers, in which trainees could sample different courses. They were able to stay on the scheme for a further 13 weeks, during which efforts were made to secure placements. This, in practice, meant that relatively high numbers of trainees left early as they rapidly became disillusioned with the scheme.

Other reasons for early leaving which have been identified previously in the report are listed below:

- poor careers advice

- lack of support from training providers

- placement experience - eg inappropriate placements; lack of training; monotonous work; lack of progress reviews; lack of job guarantee; poor treatment by employer or colleagues

- personal reasons *eg pregnancy or personality clashes*

6.6.2 Characteristics of early leavers

Status

Status was one of the key determinants of early leaving in that those with trainee status were less likely to complete their courses than their counterparts with employed status. Employed status was perceived as being a more secure position, with a greater likelihood of a job at the end of the placement. Employed status trainees were more likely to stay as they tended to be the more capable employees (as they are specifically selected by the employer). They were also more likely, and able, to voice concerns about problems and make their case for a more suitable placement or more challenging work.

However, discussions with providers revealed the issue of status to be less clear cut. Employed status trainees at some providers were often no more likely to become employed than those with trainee status. Providers benefit from the funding system if trainees are 'trainee status' until toward the end of the course when they become 'employed status'. Also remaining as 'trainee status' can have benefits for the trainee, in that terms and conditions (ie number of hours worked and holiday allowance) are stipulated and trainee expenses can be claimed.

Academic

Trainees with prior qualification and those working towards qualifications at higher levels were most likely to complete the course. More able trainees were more likely to perform better at employer placement interviews and, therefore, secure more challenging work. Consequently, they were also more likely to have employed status.

Trainees working towards NVQ level 3, for example, tended to be those who had completed level 2 ahead of schedule and were performing well on the programme. They were also more likely to be kept on at the end of the placement, having been trained to supervisory level.

Types of courses

From the group discussions with trainees, mechanical and engineering courses appeared to have a relatively high drop out rate. This was partially attributed to poor careers advice at the start of the course, with many trainees stating that they were unsure of the course components. This was also recognised by several training providers, who criticised the advice provided by the CS.

Retailing was also a problem occupational area, with none of the trainees interviewed who had started a retailing course having completed it. Early leaving tended to be attributed to lack of training and monotonous work.

According to one training provider, business administration had a high early leaving rate. This was because it was seen as a 'catch-all' course, in other words trainees who are unsure about their future career are directed towards administration. Alternatively, because of the higher numbers on the course, trainees tended to have less support than those on other courses. However, from the group discussions the early leaving rate from business administration did not appear to be particularly high.

Age of trainee

The trainee's age at the start of the course was an important factor in early leaving. Younger trainees were seen by providers as being more likely to leave early, as it was often difficult to impress upon them the importance of qualifications. The regulation on the qualification for hardship allowance were also a factor. Trainees aged 16 or 17 years could only receive income by joining the scheme and were, therefore, less motivated.

Several providers commented that they had begun to restrict entry to trainees who were 18 and over in an attempt to improve the quality of applicants, (they would be more likely to have stayed on at school) and to reduce the rate of early leaving.

Gender of trainee

The phase one research suggested that males were less likely than females to leave early. However, most of the providers and the CS personnel interviewed suggested that, in their experience, a higher proportion of males left early than females. A number of reasons were put forward, including the fact that they were more likely to be on courses that had associated poor careers advice. Alternatively, males were thought to be more unsettled generally and more likely to be influenced by their peers.

Special needs trainees

According to training providers, trainees with extreme special needs (for example a disability) were unlikely to leave programmes early. Trainees with behavioural or emotional problems were thought to have the highest drop out rate.

6.7   KEY FINDINGS - Destination of trainees

Some providers passed on details of early leavers to the CS automatically but this was the exception rather than the rule. The CS followed this up wherever possible, but were hindered by a lack of resources. One CS routinely contacted trainees after a year but this had been stopped because of the paperwork and time burdens.

One provider contacted all early leavers asking their reasons for leaving and inviting them back onto a course. They found that a significant number returned at this stage. Those trainees who had built up some sort of relationship with a training provider tended to be contacted. However, a large proportion of those that did leave early were never contacted and asked the reason for leaving. They tended not to let the provider know of their decision in advance, having contacted them in

some cases whilst they were at the placement and received no help. They therefore did not receive any advice from the provider and were not directed back to the CS.

Employers tended not to know the destinations of early leavers, although some did help completers find jobs. An example was given on an employer who, due to financial difficulties, was unable to keep the trainee on but instead paid for driving lessons so he would be able to find alternative work more easily. Others gave trainees time off to attend interviews and helped them find suitable job advertisements.

From the group discussions it was apparent that completers tended to have more positive outcomes than their counterparts who left early. Completers were more likely to continue working at their employers, which partly explains why employed status trainees were more likely to complete than those with trainee status. Higher proportions were also working at different employers in related jobs. Conversely, early leavers were more likely to be unemployed or in further education. This was generally because they had failed to get a qualification and were looking for an alternative method of doing so.

6.8   KEY FINDINGS - Positive aspects

Most trainees felt that the opportunity to gain a qualification whilst working and earning money was the most positive aspect of the scheme. The money was seen as being fair if training was provided and given that trainees were learning at the same time.

Trainees liked the combination of the practical and course based design of the scheme (although this was countered by the fact that it did not always work in practice). It was useful in allowing trainees to experience an occupation and helping them decide what they wanted to do in the future.

According to one training provider, NVQs had helped increase the retention of trainees. Some trainees felt that they were important as employers were now taking vocational qualifications more seriously.

It also enabled trainees to obtain experience in jobs that they would otherwise be unable to enter. This could be useful as it was sometimes preferred to academic qualifications at job interviews and in some cases, trainees felt that it had helped them get a job directly.

The impact of the scheme on personal development and communication skills was also particularly important. Many trainees stated that their confidence increased as a result of their work placement and they felt equipped to deal with adults in a working environment. Even trainees who had had a poor experience on placement

cited this as a benefit. It provided an opportunity to learn how companies operated, gave trainees some responsibility and helped them develop self-discipline.

6.9   KEY FINDINGS - Negative aspects

6.9.1   Rate of allowance

The level of allowance was criticised by all three respondent groups. Although it was acknowledged that the rate should be lower than the average wage on account of the associated training, it was still believed to be too low by trainees, training providers and the CS.

Linked with financial issues is the relationship between joining the scheme and the provision of the hardship allowance. For 16 and 17 year olds, the only way that they can receive any benefits is to join the YT scheme. This system, unsurprisingly was criticised by trainees, but also by the CS and training providers generally.   The fact that the provision of hardship allowance is linked to registering on YT clearly has an impact on early leaving as trainees felt that they were given no choice but to join the schemes. This has implications for early leaving because trainees often have to join schemes before they have other basic needs met (like accommodation).

6.9.2   Image of the scheme

The low level of allowance and the link of the hardship allowance both have implications for the image of the scheme. Trainees were often seen as 'cheap labour' by employers and consequently under-valued. The fact that some felt that they had no choice but to join the scheme affected their motivation and meant that in some cases they fitted the stereotypical image of the YT trainee. The poor image of the scheme was perpetuated as a result.

Trainees commonly identified a stigma attached to YT and a general lack of respect as a result.

'Even if you have experience, its whether your employer would let you use it'.

This manifested itself in trainees being given monotonous jobs and being treated badly by employers and colleagues. Even employed status trainees felt that they were perceived differently to the employees and they found it difficult to progress within the organisation. They were always seen as the 'trainee', despite of being invested in and trained effectively.

The CS and training providers' consensus was that the name changes had not helped as the programmes were still generally perceived as being YT. Most of the respondents to the study still referred to the programme as YT. One interviewee at the CS stated that although the allowance had recently been increased locally, it was a lost opportunity in marketing terms as it could have been publicised together with the new name. Those working with YT have perceived the changes as just a 'repackaging' rather than improvement in content or substance.

Youth Credits had made little initial impact in the early stages. Although they were supposed to increase choice, the lack of choice in some occupational areas and the fact that in some cases there was only one training provider, limited their effectiveness. One Careers Officer commented that the opportunities were unchanged, it was just repackaged and resulted in more bureaucracy.

6.9.3 Guidance and support whilst on course

From the group discussions, it was apparent that there was a general lack of communication from the training provider about the scheme initially and later whilst on the course. Guidance and support was particularly important as many trainees felt isolated on placement.

6.9.4 Flexibility of the scheme

CS and training providers felt that the general inflexibility of the scheme was a negative factor. YT funding is only available for approved, whole qualifications (rather than units) and they do not necessarily match specific jobs (eg childcare). Some trainees use up their allocation of funding by working towards a qualification and then are not able to go to a different provider who may be able to get them a job.

The system is not particularly flexible in that it cannot be used for customised training where traditional methods are not appropriate and cannot be used for those on part-time courses.

6.9.5 Reaction to local labour market

Some respondents in the CS felt that the scheme was not sufficiently related to the prevailing situation in the local labour market. For example, there may be a skill shortage of motor vehicle technicians in the locality but a general lack of training opportunities in this occupational area. The system

was not sufficiently flexible to allow for training to be targeted at these areas.

6.9.6 Role of YT

There was some confusion on the part of training providers concerning the exact role of YT. There was a question over whether the scheme has a social function in that it provides a guaranteed training place for all young people that request it. High early leaving rates are partially a function of this policy, with some training providers unable to restrict availability of places. Those that can introduce rigorous selection procedures are able to filter out trainees from high risk groups and select more capable young people who are more likely to succeed.

The 'open door' policy left training providers vulnerable to trainees continually leaving early. However, selection would precipitate concerns about elitism and also the creation of a 'sub-class' of young people who would be refused training on the grounds that they would be unlikely to obtain a qualification or employment.

6.10 KEY FINDINGS - Suggested improvements to YT

By trainees:

- **amend system of funding**

Most trainees thought that the rate should be higher than the equivalent job-seeking allowance and incorporate some sort of incentive or bonus scheme. Over-time and travel expenses should be paid, with allowances for equipment and clothing (eg overalls). Many trainees thought that the government should pay trainees at the minimum rate but this should be increased by the employer whilst on placement. The rate should depend on the type of job and the earnings of colleagues in similar positions.

- **improve careers advice**
- **improve level of support and guidance from training providers**
- **effectively monitor placements**

By the Careers Service:

- **effective monitoring of trainee destinations**

Many trainees who left early were not contacted (other than through the follow-up questionnaire) to see why they had left or to invite them to join an alternative scheme. Both training providers and the CS felt that this would be sensible but lacked the resources to do so.

- **improve the image of the scheme**

The scheme would benefit from positive publicity and is not helped by the fact that many of the employers who provide quality training and placements do not refer to the scheme as being YT. They, instead, claim funding from the TEC and run schemes under YT guidelines but refer to trainees as 'apprentices'.

Some commentators have identified the need to improve the status of the scheme by attracting school leavers from across the entire ability range.

- **increase knowledge and awareness of NVQs**

- **increase number of employed status placements**

- **amend hardship allowance regulations**

One Careers advisor suggested the introduction of a 'breathing space' during which the young person received some income but was not immediately forced onto YT. This was not a small scale problem, with one CS giving an example of 60 of the 250 trainees who had recently signed up being on income support, with no fixed accommodation.

By training providers:

- **reduce funding to schools/increase YT funding**

This would allow them to spend more time with trainees and obtain quality placements and monitor them more efficiently. Training providers felt that they had good individual working relationship with TECs but in practice they had inflexible procedures.

The system of annual contracting caused problems as it made financial planning for what were largely two year courses difficult.

6.11   KEY FINDINGS - Methods suggested by training providers to minimise early leaving

- *monitor patterns of early leaving*
- *increase allowances*
- *increase contact*

- *facilitate transfers between placements*
- *implement a stringent recruitment procedures*
- *improve induction*
- *encourage repeat business with employers*
- *improve the level of communication with colleges*
- *improve in-house assessment*
- *implement a better tracking system for those trainees who leave early*
- *offer incentive payments to trainees on completion*

7

POLICY ISSUES

7.   POLICY ISSUES

Policy issues that have arisen from the two phases of the research have, in some cases, already been discussed at the end of Chapter 4. These relate, in particular, to the measurement of early leaving and data issues. The issues discussed here are to do with factors relating to delivering YT.

7.1   Careers Service

The research raises some issues regarding the role of the Careers Service. There is an apparent anomaly: a higher proportion of early leavers than non early leavers have had contact with the Careers Service. The possible reasons behind this are varied. Careers Service staff may deal with the more difficult placements, and as stated already, it is unclear when the contact with the Careers Service takes place. Another explanation could be that employed status trainees with the lowest early leaving rates are perhaps less likely to have had contact with the Careers Service.

7.2   Selective training providers

The impact of providers selecting their trainees can only be properly assessed if the information is held on the Department's database. If this becomes an issue more information will need to be gathered to support the qualitative evidence in the report.

7.3   High risk groups

The multivariate analysis has identified trainee characteristics associated with high early leaving rates. It has also been possible to assess how a reduction in the early leaving rate for these trainees would reduce the national rate. This would enable groups to be targeted for particular attention which would produce a measurable reduction in the overall early leaving rate. However, targeting particular groups may change circumstances in other categories of trainees and diminish the benefit to early leaving rates nationwide. An example of this might be TECs being encouraged to provide additional support to trainees who were, according to analysis, very likely to leave early. Training providers might then decide not to accept or place any of these trainees as they would be likely to finish schemes prematurely.

7.4   Internal factors relating to the programme

There are a number of issues that relate to the organisation of the scheme and the resultant problems.

7.4.1 Lack of information/literature

There was a general lack of information and literature on the programme. Trainees felt that they were not given basic information regarding terms and conditions and the pros and cons of programmes. The Careers Service and training providers both felt that the other should provide more literature, or that more detail should be supplied by TECs.

7.4.2 Securing sufficient numbers of placements

The lack of information contributes to the problems experienced by training providers of securing sufficient numbers of placements. It was generally felt that employers did not know enough about the opportunities afforded by the programme and had limited awareness of National Vocational Qualifications. Providers and the Careers Service were also concerned about the poor image of the scheme, which discouraged the participation of both trainees and employers. (This is discussed further in 7.3).

Generally employers tended to respond better to facilitators who implemented stringent recruitment procedures. They were better able to guarantee high calibre trainees and so encourage repeat business. Facilitators also tended to have lower rates of early leaving, as they were able to reject trainees considered unlikely to achieve or complete courses. Generally, they responded to industry demand rather than trainee supply. However, there are implication for the scheme in general if 'open door' policies are removed.

7.4.3 Support and guidance

Support and guidance on placement was a key concern for trainees because monitoring procedures were inadequate. Regular visits and close supervision by training providers were influential in retaining trainees. Providers were often accused of providing insufficient support to trainees and were unable to be selective or react to problems by transferring trainees. The monitoring of off-job training was also problematic. Although this was often not a cause of early leaving, poor off-job training did worsen the image of the scheme.

7.4.4 Regulations

The guarantee, introduced to ensure places on training programmes, precipitated some early leaving. Training providers and the Careers Service were pressurised to place trainees, and placements were allocated which were either unsuitable or better assigned to preparatory training. Similarly,

as 16 and 17 year olds could only receive an allowance by registering on a scheme, many of the younger trainees were not motivated and therefore prime candidates for early leaving.