

Train to Gain Learner Evaluation: Report from Wave 1 Research

May 2008

Of interest to everyone involved in
improving skills and learning opportunities
in the workforce across England

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Executive Summary

Introduction

1 The Train to Gain service, managed by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), provides businesses with impartial, independent advice on training through a network of skills brokers across England. Train to Gain also publicly funds some training for employees. The service was launched nationally in August 2006, and by the end of June 2007 some 119,153 learners were undertaking training that was publicly funded by Train to Gain. At the time of reporting, the policy enables learners to receive full funding for a first Level 2 and a basic skills qualification. In three areas – Greater London, the North West and West Midlands – partial funding is offered to support the achievement of a first Level 3 qualification. Learners whose work and existing skills allow them to bypass Level 3 and go straight on to study at Level 4 also receive part funding.

The evaluation

2 Ipsos MORI and the IES were commissioned by the LSC to conduct the learner element of an evaluation of Train to Gain, in accordance with an overall evaluation framework. This report covers the findings from the first wave of a series of four telephone surveys of 7,500 Train to Gain learners that form part of the ongoing employee evaluation. These surveys take place at six-monthly intervals over two years. In addition to the survey findings, the report includes analyses of the learner data based on the most recent available data (end of June 2007) at the time of the research and the findings from 100 qualitative interviews with learners who receive full funding for their qualification (Skills for Life and/or Level 2 learners), as well as interviews with 40 learners who receive part funding towards their Level 3 qualifications. (Those learners whose work and existing skills allow them to bypass Level 2 and go straight on to Level 3 also receive full funding.)

- 3 The findings from this wave were available prior to the publication of *A Plan for Growth* (November 2007) and they influenced the writing of that document. *A Plan for Growth* can be found on the Train to Gain website at www.traintogain.gov.uk.

Main messages

- 4 The main messages to emerge from the first wave of the series of four telephone surveys of Train to Gain learners and the face-to-face qualitative interviews described above are as follows.
- Satisfaction with the training received through Train to Gain is high, with 77 per cent of Train to Gain learners either extremely or very satisfied with their experience. Satisfaction is significantly higher among those who had received a pre-training assessment.
 - Train to Gain has attracted a higher proportion of older learners than generally receive training at work – three Train to Gain learners in ten are aged over 45, while as a rule only 20 per cent of this age group receive any training (Newton et al., 2005). Furthermore, it has attracted a slightly higher proportion of learners from a black or minority ethnic group than exist in the working population as a whole.
 - Some 66 per cent had some form of pre-entry discussion about their training needs, and 60 per cent had an assessment to identify their skills gaps. However, 18 per cent had neither.
 - By far the biggest driver of participation was the opportunity to achieve a qualification (93 per cent). Other motivations included a desire on the part of learners to improve their skills for their current job and to improve their standing in the labour market.
 - Some 74 per cent of learners felt the training was benefiting both them and their employer. Specific benefits included greater awareness of the tasks they carried out at work and greater confidence in their ability to learn and handle difficult situations.

- Of those people who had completed a qualification through Train to Gain, 73 per cent reported that they had gained skills that help them do their current job better, and 81 per cent reported that they had gained skills that would help them do a better job in the future. Some 43 per cent of people who had completed their training reported having received a pay rise, and 30 per cent reported having had promotion.
- Some 70 per cent planned to stay with their current employer for the foreseeable future.
- In all, 69 per cent hoped to continue studying for further qualifications. Interest in further learning increased among those who had had a discussion about their progression options.

Detailed findings from wave 1 of the evaluation

Employers are key to getting learners involved in Train to Gain

- 5 In the survey, 74 per cent of learners reported that they had first found out about the opportunity to take a qualification through Train to Gain from their employer.
- 6 Employers also played a key role in getting learners involved in Train to Gain: 40 per cent of learners felt their involvement had been a joint decision between them and their employer, and 39 per cent felt their employer had initiated their involvement. A smaller group, 21 per cent, felt that they themselves had taken the initiative to become involved.
- 7 The qualitative research revealed that there may be scope for more learners to become involved. In a small number of instances, learners felt that more of their colleagues might have started training if they had been approached by their employer or a training provider, rather than having to initiate it in response to information made available through the workplace.

Characteristics of Train to Gain learners

- 8 An analysis of the LSC's learner records shows that:
- Train to Gain learners were fairly evenly split by gender (51 per cent were men and 49 per cent were women);

- 12 per cent were from a black or minority ethnic group (one percentage point higher than in the eligible population at large);
- most (62 per cent) were at least 36 years old, and 31 per cent were older than 46 (generally workplace training is most common among younger age groups);
- 6 per cent declared a disability – a proportion that is lower than among the general working population;
- a third (35 per cent) worked in personal service occupations, while the remainder worked in a range of occupations (e.g. 6 per cent were managers, 12 per cent had a skilled job and 11 per cent were in an elementary occupation);
- four in five had been with their employer for at least a year;
- three-quarters had left school at or before the age of 16; and
- although the learner records suggested that 1 per cent of learners were qualified to Level 2 or above at the start of their training, in the survey 19 per cent said they had a prior qualification at Level 2 or higher.

Learners are encouraged by their employer to develop their skills

9 Half (51 per cent) of learners in the survey said they could have studied for their qualification earlier. However, when this group was asked why they had not done so, 19 per cent said that their employer had not previously offered the opportunity; 16 per cent had not thought about doing it before; 14 per cent had not known that the opportunity existed; and 13 per cent said that funding had been a barrier.

Learners have a choice about whether or not to train

10 Most (62 per cent) of the learners whose employer had, in whole or in part, taken the lead in getting them involved in the training felt they had had a great deal or a fair amount of choice over whether or not to get involved. However, 23 per cent of this group (9 per cent of all learners in the survey) did not think they had had any choice at all.

Learners sign up to gain a relevant qualification

- 11 The key driver for getting involved in Train to Gain was the importance of having qualifications (93 per cent). In the qualitative interviews, learners reported that other motivations for signing up had been a desire to improve their skills for their current job and to improve their standing in the labour market. Learners whose Level 3 qualifications were part funded were more likely than those in receipt of full funding to focus on career progression with their current employer as a reason for starting their studies.

Two learners in three have a discussion before they start, and six in ten have a pre-training skills assessment

- 12 As the first stage in their involvement in Train to Gain, 66 per cent of learners had been involved in a discussion about their job and the skills that they used, and 60 per cent had had a pre-training assessment. Of those who had an assessment, 27 per cent were signed off some of the units of their studies and 26 per cent were either put on a different level of training or on training for a different qualification altogether.
- 13 Overall, 68 per cent of the learners had their training and assessment arranged for the whole of the qualification syllabus, and 18 per cent had their training and assessment adapted to cover only the parts of the qualification they needed.

Learners think their training and assessment is of good quality

- 14 Just over half the learners (54 per cent) were engaged with a further education (FE) college, and 46 per cent were with an independent provider. In the qualitative research, most of the learners (in both sectors) considered their training and assessment to be of high quality. The factors involved in their assessment of quality included having an individual learning plan (ILP) against which to measure progress and understand the next steps. Learners reported how important it was to know when their training provider staff would be coming to see them, and also to know that, if circumstances demanded (due to individual or business needs), the training and assessment sessions could be rearranged. Learners also valued the positive personal relationship that they had established with their training providers.

Very few learners had left their course early

- 15 Of the learners who were surveyed, 3 per cent had left their training early, mainly for job change and/or personal reasons. Of this group (186 learners in total), 44 per cent had left their employer, 28 per cent said they had dropped out because they had not had enough time to do the training and 19 per cent reported that changes to their personal circumstances had led to their withdrawal. Some 9 per cent were unhappy about the quality of the training they had received. (Learners were able to offer more than one reason for their withdrawal from the course.)

As well as gaining a qualification, four in ten completers have received a pay rise

- 16 In order to establish what it is that learners gain as a result of training, the responses of learners who had just started their experience were compared with those of learners who had completed their studies (22 per cent of learners surveyed had completed their learning). While 93 per cent of both groups said that they had hoped to gain/had actually gained a qualification, there were significant differences in responses to other categories.
- 17 At the start of their training, learners were hoping for material gains, in the form of better pay (62 per cent) or promotion (45 per cent). Among those who had completed their course, the proportion that said they had received such gains was lower – 43 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively, although this may simply reflect the time it can take for such outcomes to filter through. While not all of these pay rises may be directly attributable to the training, learners who took part in the qualitative interviews (e.g. in the care sector) did say that they had received increments because they had gained their qualification.

Both learners and their employers benefit from the training

- 18 Generally speaking, learners felt that the training would benefit them and their employer equally (74 per cent reported that this was the case). Of the others, 18 per cent thought it would benefit them as individuals and 4 per cent thought the benefits would be reaped solely by their employer.

- 19 How learners got involved in Train to Gain affected who they thought would benefit. Learners who had initiated the training themselves were more likely to report that the benefit would accrue only to them (26 per cent, compared with 14 per cent of the joint- or employer-initiated groups).

Learners feel more aware and confident in learning and their work as a result of their learning

- 20 During the qualitative interviews, learners spoke about what they felt they had gained from their involvement in Train to Gain. The benefits they identified largely linked to increased awareness and confidence. The awareness gains focused on greater understanding of the skills and tasks in their work, which led to improved work performance. This also led to a greater awareness of the value of the work they did. Confidence gains were linked to their ability to learn and to cope with difficult situations at work.

Once they have completed their course, learners want to progress

- 21 Of the learners surveyed, 69 per cent of those who had completed their qualification wanted to go on to do further learning, and 40 per cent of this group had been involved in a discussion about further training options. Those who had had a discussion about their learning progression were more positive that they would take part in further learning than were those who had not (77 per cent, compared to 63 per cent reported that they were very or quite likely to progress to further learning).

Almost eight learners in ten are either extremely or very satisfied with their overall Train to Gain experience

- 22 Overall, Train to Gain learners were very happy with their experience: 32 per cent said they were extremely satisfied, 45 per cent were very satisfied and 17 per cent were fairly satisfied. Some 7 per cent of learners were dissatisfied to some extent.

Having an early advisory discussion and/or a skills assessment can improve satisfaction levels

- 23 Satisfaction levels were significantly higher among learners who:
- had had a pre-entry discussion about their training or a pre-training skills assessment (a mean score of 6.1 out of 7, compared to 5.6 out of 7)

among the group that had not received prior discussion and assessment);
and

- felt that they had had a great deal of choice over whether to do the training (a mean score of 6.1, compared to 5.6 in the group that had had no choice over whether to participate).

24 The qualitative interviews showed that the reasons for their high satisfaction were linked to the benefits learners had reaped as a result of learning: knowledge and skills; confidence and competence; achievement of a qualification and what this demonstrated in terms of a positive attitude to personal and professional development. The qualitative interviews also showed that having received some information, advice and guidance (IAG) and an ILP at the outset of learning contributed to feelings of satisfaction on completion.

Conclusion: good-practice factors

25 A set of 'good-practice' factors in Train to Gain delivery emerges from this first wave of the evaluation.

- **Support for learning in the employing organisation:** providing a positive approach, support and resources to help learners complete their training.
- **Raising awareness and encouraging learning participation:** learners look for encouragement from their managers to sign up to learning.
- **Impartial pre-entry information, advice and guidance:** important to maximise learner satisfaction and completion. Information provided should cover, as a minimum: the purpose of the pre-entry assessment; what training could be relevant; where and when it will take place; what it involves; and how the qualification will be assessed.
- **Pre-entry assessments:** Skills for Life assessment ensures that learners can work effectively towards their qualification. The Assess–Train–Assess model tailors qualifications to the individual's skill gaps.

- **Individual learning plan:** provides a schedule for training and a record of progress for learners.
- **Support to learn:** learners appreciate support feedback and encouragement from training providers to help them complete their qualification.
- **Celebration and acknowledgement on completion:** if employers celebrate qualification completion, learners have a greater sense of achievement.
- **Information, advice and guidance about future learning opportunities:** those who receive post-qualification IAG about further learning opportunities are more positively disposed to entering further learning.

The evaluation methodology

- 26 The wave 1 telephone survey of 7,500 individuals engaged in publicly funded learning through Train to Gain took place between late March and early May 2007. The sample was broadly representative of the 45,000 learners who were undertaking such training at the end of February 2007.
- 27 Qualitative interviews were conducted, in person, with 100 of the learners who were receiving full public funding for their qualification, in order to follow up on issues raised in the survey and to gather information about their ongoing experiences. In addition, 40 interviews were conducted with learners whose Level 3 qualifications were part funded. This group was sampled from the individualised learner record (ILR) data (since there were too few of them to enter the survey when the sample was drawn). These interviews again covered early parts of the learning process, as well as the ongoing training experience.

Where next for the evaluation?

- 28 In the next wave of the survey, learners contacted in the first wave will be followed up, in order to gain a more detailed understanding of how their training operates in practice, including the schedule and pace of learning,

learners' support needs and their satisfaction with different elements of the Train to Gain process. In addition to this longitudinal group, the survey will recruit a new group (representative of Train to Gain ILR data at the end of June 2007) to explore the early part of the process again, and to assess any changes in practice six months on.

- 29 Future waves of the evaluation will explore quantitatively what learners gain as a result of their training, the longer-term impact on learners' attitudes to skill development and work, and their subsequent employment and learning experiences. A further strand of qualitative work, following the third wave of the survey, will again gather richer detail of the learner experience. The evaluation will provide a final report in spring 2009.

Introduction

30 This report presents the data gathered in the first wave of the Train to Gain learner evaluation and is based on analysis of the individualised learner record (ILR) and a survey of 7,500 fully funded learners. In addition, qualitative interviews were undertaken with 100 fully funded learners, as well as with 40 learners who had part funding for Level 3 qualifications.

Train to Gain

31 The Train to Gain service, managed by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), provides businesses with impartial, independent advice on training through a network of skills brokers across England. Train to Gain also publicly funds some training for employees. Through Train to Gain, employers can access training at all levels in order to meet their business needs. The costs and the amount of public subsidy available depend on the nature of the business, the skills needs and the existing qualifications of the employees involved.

32 For example, the LSC will fund Skills for Life training, first full Level 2 qualifications (i.e. approved qualifications that are equivalent to five general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grades A* to C) for people who are not already qualified at that level, and Apprenticeships. If a learner's current job responsibilities and existing skills allow it, they may bypass Level 2 and move straight on to Level 3. For this group of learners, the studies are fully funded by the LSC.

33 In addition, in three regions – the North West, West Midlands and Greater London – the LSC will part fund training towards Level 3 qualifications (employers provide the remainder of the necessary funding for training). In the North West and West Midlands, this offer supports progression from Level 2, and employees of private and voluntary sector organisations with a staff of up to 250 are able to access part funding. In Greater London, the part funding is focused on the needs of women and women returners (women who are returning to the labour market after a six-month continuous absence) who may or may not already hold a Level 2 qualification; the

criterion regarding employer size is not applicable in this region. In a way that is similar to the full-funding scenario, learners whose existing skills and current job responsibilities allow it may bypass Level 3 and move straight on to a Level 4 qualification.

- 34 As well as acting as a gateway to LSC-funded training, skills brokers can point employers to other provision (e.g. at different levels, such as higher education, or provision that is supported through different funding streams, such as the European Social Fund).
- 35 The main aims of the Train to Gain policy are to:
- raise skills levels among the workforce;
 - make vocational training provision more 'demand led'; and
 - improve the quantity and quality of vocational training on offer to employees.
- 36 In the longer term, Train to Gain is designed to facilitate the development of a more active and efficient training market – one that does not need skills brokers to act in a market-making function.

The Train to Gain learner journey

- 37 For a learner, the Train to Gain journey starts with the engagement of their employer. This may be initiated either by a skills broker or by a training provider. If a skills broker leads on engagement, they initially approach employers to assess their skill development needs and to carry out an organisational needs analysis (ONA). Following the ONA, a tailored training package is developed and a selection of appropriate training providers is identified. The employer chooses one, and that provider becomes the employer's contact for the training. Should multiple training needs be identified by the ONA, more than one training provider may be involved.
- 38 The skills broker will identify funding options, and individual employees who are suitable for support through Train to Gain are identified by the training provider and the employer. Each employee is then given an initial assessment by the training provider, including advice and guidance about the types and forms of training available. The employee and training

provider then work through the course, and the learner gains a qualification and acquires new skills, which, in turn, will enable them to improve their work performance and their potential future employability and career.

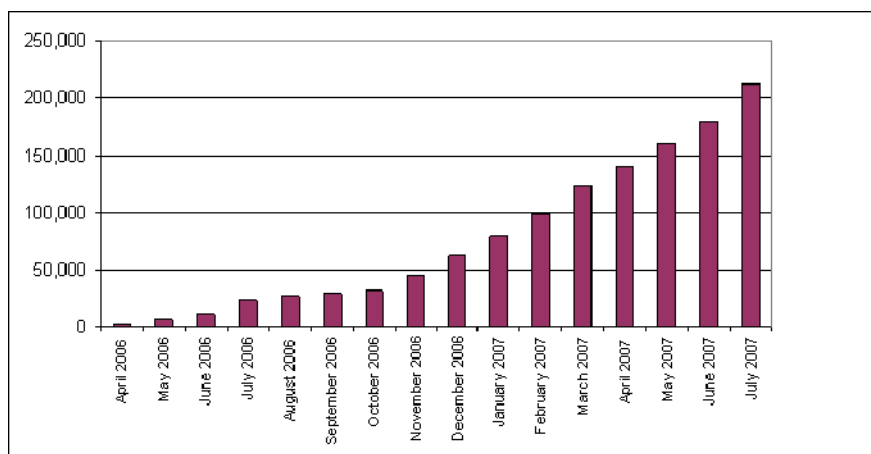
- 39 If the employer is engaged by a training provider, the skills broker is informed. However, the provider-led route means that there may not be an ONA. Beyond this, the learner journey is the same.

Progress in the first year of operation

- 40 The Train to Gain service was fully launched in August 2006. The latest information (as of December 2007) indicates that 179,740 learners had started a full Level 2 course by the end of June 2007, including 24,098 who had started before the full launch of Train to Gain in August 2006. A further 17,670 learners had started Skills for Life courses (3,009 before August 2006) (see Figures 1 and 2).

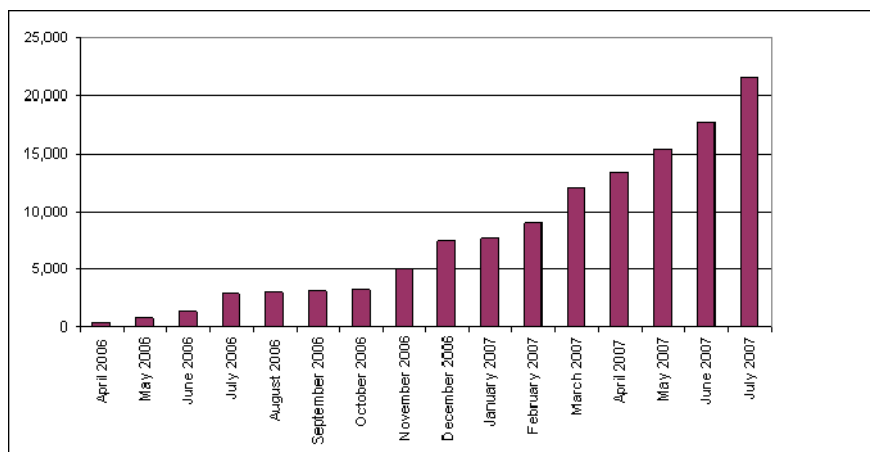
- 41 In this report, all the analyses of the learner data are based on a set of records drawn from earlier in the year, which showed that, at the end of June 2007, 119,153 individuals were registered for Train to Gain fully funded provision and 642 were registered for part-funded Level 3 qualifications.

Figure 1: Full Level 2 starts



Source: Train to Gain Period 16 (final) Performance Report, August 2007

Figure 2: Skills for Life starts



Source: *Train to Gain Period 16 (final) Performance Report, August 2007*

The evaluation

42 Learners' involvement with Train to Gain is being evaluated by Ipsos MORI and the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) on behalf of the LSC, in accordance with an overall evaluation framework developed with the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS – formerly the Department for Education and Skills) and other interested parties. The evaluation of Train to Gain has a number of strands, including the perspectives of employers and skills brokers. The evaluation data reported here focuses on learners participating in training supported by Train to Gain (i.e. fully funded Level 2 or Skills for Life qualifications, or part-funded Level 3 qualifications). (Other learners may have their training facilitated through Train to Gain, but when the evaluation was designed the decision was taken to use the LSC's individualised learner record (ILR) as a sample frame, and this restricted the sample to LSC-supported learners and to information either on the ILR or provided by learners during the interview.) The aims of evaluation include:

- examining the key characteristics of the learners who have been engaged with the service;
- identifying the main elements of the training process, as experienced by learners and, in particular, the extent to which the Assess–Train–Assess approach is being followed;

- measuring learners' satisfaction with all the key aspects of Train to Gain and the training provided through it;
- assessing the factors affecting qualification completion and drop-out; and
- examining the subsequent employment experiences of learners who have completed their training, as well as assessing their perceptions of the impact the training has had on them and their workplace.

43 Learner evaluation started in autumn 2006, although the main-stage fieldwork commenced in March 2007. This report represents the output from the first wave survey and qualitative interviews with 100 fully funded learners and a further 40 part-funded learners.

Method

44 The evaluation comprises both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The qualitative research aimed to enrich the quantitative data with further insights from learners. In addition, information not covered by this wave of the survey was also collected. In this section, details of the survey activity are provided, and these are followed by details of the qualitative research approach.

Survey design

45 The survey element comprises four waves of quantitative research with learners. The research is conducted by telephone, and the design encompasses longitudinal and cross-sectional samples. There is a six-month gap between each wave of the survey. The longitudinal element involves following up the first wave of respondents on three subsequent occasions (i.e. interviewing them four times in all). In wave 2 and the following waves, the survey sample achieved is topped up to 7,500 with a new sample of learners drawn at random from new Train to Gain participants on the ILR database, providing a new cross-sectional element to the design each time.

- 46 The first wave of the survey concentrates on early experiences of Train to Gain – for instance, how learners found out about the opportunity to take up training and what information, advice and guidance they received. Future waves of the survey will explore the experience of training and the time it takes to complete, the difficulties and experiences of early leavers, and, for those who complete their studies, the impacts and benefits of training.

Sample size and structure

- 47 The target number of interviews for the first wave survey of participants was 7,500. In addition, there was a target of 1,500 interviews among employees taking part in part-funded learning (the part-funded Level 3 learning is being offered in three areas: North West, West Midlands and Greater London (where it focuses on women only)). However, take-up of the part-funded learning was slower than anticipated, and by spring 2007 the sample was still insufficient for a survey to be conducted with this group. Therefore, the decision was instead taken to conduct qualitative interviews with 40 learners from this group. The intention is to include part-funded learners in subsequent waves of the survey.
- 48 As the contracting arrangements are managed regionally, it was envisaged that the sample for the main survey would be stratified by region, with a minimum of 500 interviews per region. However, almost all the 24,000 or so eligible participants at the time the sample was drawn were included in the initial sample and were potentially available for interview (see Table 1).

Table 1: Breakdown of leads provided

	N	%
Total sample	45,447	100
- Learner withheld permission to contact	12,940	28
- No (valid) telephone numbers	5,921	13
- Duplicate records	1,853	4
- Respondent opted out	188	*
- Used in pilot	172	*
- Learners receiving part funding	131	*
Total sample available for fieldwork	24,208	53

* less than 0.5 per cent

Source: Based on ILR data, end February 2007

49 The sample frame was the ILR data provided at the end of February 2007 (period W06) which comprised 45,447 registered learners facilitated through Train to Gain by the end of February 2007. Of these learners, 32,507 gave permission for contact for research purposes (i.e. code 3 or 9 at variable L27). The sample was reduced further to 24,208 after the removal of learners with incomplete/missing telephone numbers, duplicate records, participants contacted for the pilot survey, and part-funded Level 3 learners. Less than 0.5 per cent of the learners opted out of the survey.

Pilot

50 Prior to the main survey, the questionnaire was piloted among 116 participants (172 calls were made to generate the pilot sample) in December 2006. The objectives of the pilot were to check:

- the questionnaire's comprehensibility;
- the questionnaire routing;
- the interview length.

51 As in the main stage, all those selected to take part were sent a letter notifying them of the survey and giving them the opportunity to opt out.

52 Overall, the interviewers and respondents who took part in the pilot found the questionnaire relatively straightforward. The average questionnaire

length was on target at 15 minutes. Some changes were made to improve the routing and question wording.

Response rates

53 The valid response rate was 63 per cent. A detailed breakdown of the response rate is presented in Table 2. Notes about the different categories are provided below.

Table 2: Breakdown of leads provided

Final sample status	Total sample used (N)	Total sample used (%)	Valid sample (N)	Valid sample (%)
Achieved interviews	7,500	36	7,500	63
Sample still live/active	1,456	7	1,456	12
Respondent quit interview	167	1	167	1
Refusal	2,283	11	2,283	19
Unable to take part (e.g. language needs)	69	0	69	1
Ineligible (e.g. respondent says survey not applicable to them)	330	2	330	3
Other reasons (e.g. training not started yet)	119	1	119	1
Total valid sample			11,924	0
Invalid sample				
Bad telephone/no answer	8,553	41		
No longer at address	247	1		
Total	20,724	100		
Sample not used	3,484			
Total sample available	24,208			

Source: Based on ILR data, end February 2007

Notes:

1. Sample still live/active/Sample not used. This group was called, but with no definite outcome (for instance, individuals were unable to participate in the survey at the time they were phoned). However, fieldwork was completed without having to re-contact them. This group is different from the sample that was never used, in that the former is included in response-rate calculation, whereas the latter is not.
2. Bad telephone. These are telephone numbers on which interviewers were unable to get through. These do not get counted towards response-rate calculation.
3. Ineligible. This group contained people who said the survey was not relevant to them because they had not done any training. It may be that they were signed up for training but, for whatever reason, withdrew – although they did not recall this when interviewers spoke to them.
4. Other reasons (e.g. training not started yet). The ILR shows the enrolment date, although the start of training may be delayed.

Comparison of the sample frame and sample achieved with the learner population

- 54 The learners who would participate in the survey were sampled from ILR data drawn at the end of February 2007. The profile of the sample achieved was broadly similar to that of the population from which it was drawn (i.e. the 45,000 or so records, including those who had not given permission to be contacted; Table 3).

Table 3: Differences between the ILR, sample frame and survey populations (per cent)

		ILR population	Sample frame	Achieved sample	Difference frame/achieved
Gender	Male	48	43	35	-13
	Female	52	57	65	13
Age (31 Aug 2005)	16–18	0	1	0	0
	19–20	4	4	1	-3
	21–24	8	8	7	-2
	25–59	85	86	88	3
	60+	2	2	4	2
Disability/learning difficulty	Yes	8	7	8	0
	No	86	88	89	2
	Missing	6	5	4	-2
Ethnicity	White	86	88	91	4
	Non-white	10	9	7	-3
	Any other	1	1	1	-1
	Missing	2	2	2	0
Notional NVQ level	Entry/ Level 1	1	1	1	0
	Level 2	94	93	93	-1
	Level 3	5	6	6	1
	Level 4 or higher	0	0	0	0
Region	National	3	7	7	4
	East of England	7	5	7	0
	East Midlands	8	6	6	-3
	Greater London	5	3	3	-2
	North East	10	8	8	-2
	North West	19	21	21	2
	South East	9	12	12	3
	South West	7	9	9	2
	West Midlands	20	20	20	0
	Yorkshire & Humberside	14	9	9	-6

Note: based on the end of February 2007 ILR data.

Source: ILR data, end February 2007, wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

- 55 The main variation is that the sample achieved has a higher proportion of female learners than the learner population at the end of February 2007. Some 65 per cent of those interviewed were women, compared with 57 per cent of the sample potentially available for interview and 52 per cent of all learners signed up at this time. Responses to the survey did not vary significantly by gender, so there has been no correction for this potential source of bias.
- 56 Analysis of the survey data did not identify any significant variation by type of course between the Train to Gain population and the survey sample.
- 57 The strongest difference by region between the survey sample and ILR population was in Yorkshire and Humberside. Learners in this region formed 9 per cent of the survey sample, but 14 per cent of the ILR population. However, as responses generally varied little by region, it was not necessary to re-weight the data to correct any imbalance in the achieved sample.
- 58 The make-up of the sample in future waves will continue to be monitored, in order to ensure that it does not introduce a source of bias.

The qualitative interviews

Recruitment of the qualitative interview sample

- 59 There were two types of learners in the sample frame for the qualitative interviews: those whose qualifications were fully funded and those whose Level 3 qualifications were part funded.

Learners whose qualifications were fully funded

- 60 The fully funded learners were selected through the survey, as this allowed the evaluation to obtain their prior consent, as well as to follow up particular characteristics. Thus, in the first wave, the results from the survey were examined to identify learners who:

- had agreed to take part in further research;
- had been involved with learning through Train to Gain for some time, i.e. had completed or were nearing completion of their qualification, so that they would review their whole experience and be able to offer their perspectives on the impact of the training; and

- covered a spread of regions, occupations and workplaces – it was not the intention to gain a representative sample, but rather that the interviews should take place with a cross-section of Train to Gain learners, including between seven and twelve in each of the LSC regions involved in Train to Gain.

61 Further to this, the sample aimed to capture a cross-section of learners by age, ethnicity, gender, disability and prior qualification. In total, 100 learners who received full funding for their studies were interviewed in summer 2007. Their characteristics and the differences between the qualitative sample and the survey sample are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Differences between the survey and qualitative interview sample – learners receiving full funding for their qualifications

		Sample for survey %	Qualitative interviews (n=100)	Difference between survey and qualitative interviews
Gender	Male	43	45	2
	Female	57	55	-2
Age (31 Aug 2005)	16–18	1	0	-1
	19–20	4	3	-1
	21–24	8	8	-0
	25–59	86	82	-2
	60+	2	5	1
Disability/learning difficulty	Yes	7	7	-0
	No	88	93	5
	Missing	5	–	-5
Ethnicity	White	88	80	-8
	Non-white	9	20	11
	Any other	1	–	
	Missing	2	–	
Notional NVQ level	Entry/Level 1	1	–	
	Level 2	93	96	3
	Level 3	6	4	-2
Region	East of England	5	8	3
	East Midlands	6	9	3
	Greater London	3	15	12
	North East	8	14	5
	North West	21	6	-17
	South East	12	13	0
	South West	9	7	-3
	West Midlands	20	17	-5
	Yorkshire & Humberside	9	11	1

Source: ILR data, end February 2007, wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

Learners whose Level 3 qualifications were part funded

- 62 Due to the small number of them, it was not possible to include learners who were part funded for Level 3 qualifications in the first wave of the survey. To ensure that their experiences were captured in this wave, 40 qualitative interviews were conducted with this group. Originally it had been envisaged that learners who were part funded for Level 3 would be involved in the survey and there would be follow-up qualitative interviews with around 20 of them. However, since they were not represented in the survey, these learners were sampled directly from the ILR. Only learners who had agreed to be available for contact (i.e. code 3 or 9 at variable L27) when they signed up to their course were included in the sample frame.
- 63 The research sought to capture between 10 and 15 learners in each of the LSC regions involved in part funding learners for Level 3 qualifications, and it covers a cross-section of learners by age, ethnicity, gender, disability and prior qualification. Table 5 shows the proportions achieved in the survey interviews and the numbers (with percentages in brackets) of follow-up interviews conducted by IES researchers. The last column in the table gives the percentage point difference.

Table 5: Differences between the ILR population and qualitative interview sample – learners who are part funded for Level 3 qualifications

		ILR population %	Qualitative interviews (n=40)	Difference between population and qualitative interviews %
Gender	Male	37	15 (37%)	0
	Female	63	25 (63%)	2
Age (31 Aug 2005)	18–25	16	2 (5%)	-11
	26–35	29	13 (32%)	3
	36–45	31	11 (28%)	-3
	46–55	17	8 (20%)	3
	56 +	7	5 (12%)	5
Disability/learning difficulty	Yes	3	0	-3
	No	97	40 (100%)	3
Ethnicity	White	85	26 (65%)	-20
	Non-white	11	14 (35%)	24
	Missing	2	–	–
Notional NVQ level	Level 3	96	38 (95%)	-1
	Level 4	3	2 (5%)	2
Region	Greater London	15	13 (32%)	17
	North West	37	13 (32%)	-5
	West Midlands	48	14 (35%)	-13

Source: Based on ILR data, end June 2007

Time and place of qualitative interviews

64 Individuals were contacted and offered an interview at a time and place of their choosing. If a learner expressed a preference for the interview to take place at their workplace, they were asked to seek their employer's permission. In the event, the large majority of learners were interviewed at home.

Coverage of the qualitative interviews

65 The qualitative interviews were conducted by researchers with knowledge of the erstwhile employer training pilots (ETPs) and their successor, Train to Gain, and who were, therefore, able to spontaneously follow up interesting

lines of inquiry. Topic guides for each of the interview types were developed in conjunction with the LSC and covered the learners' views on:

- their motivations for taking part in Train to Gain;
- their experience of the Train to Gain process;
- the qualification for which they registered (form and content, time taken and pace, and resulting outcomes);
- the support received from their training providers, assessors and employers;
- any barriers encountered in trying to complete their qualifications; and
- the difference the learning had made to performance at work, attitudes to current or future work, and future learning.

66 To ensure that the data generated was fully captured, the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Reporting

67 Care needs to be taken when interpreting the qualitative results, as they do not provide an indication of the extent or magnitude of a trend or issue but do serve to illuminate its nature and/or complexity. However, for clarification, the following conventions have been used in describing the volume of interviewees who reported a particular finding (although, due to the nature of qualitative research, these must only be considered as purely indicative). 'Large numbers' and 'the majority' are used where more than eight in ten of the group that made a related point were of a particular opinion. 'Most' refers to clusters of between six and eight out of ten of the learners expressing a view. 'Many' learners is used when between a third and a half of learners note a particular point; 'some' is used for around a fifth to a third of learners. 'A few' is used to indicate that between five and twenty learners have expressed a particular view, and 'a handful' where around five learners make the point. A couple indicates that only one or two learners shared a particular view or experience.

Finding Out and Signing Up

68 The learner survey asked respondents how they heard about Train to Gain. The results are reported in this section, which then examines the key characteristics of learners involved in training through Train to Gain, drawing on data from the learner survey and the LSC's learner records. The findings about how learners get involved with, and sign up for, their training are then discussed, with reference to survey and qualitative interview data.

Key findings

69 The main findings are as follows.

- Most learners (60 per cent) were aware of Train to Gain as a brand, mainly through their employer, and 38 per cent said they knew at least something about the service. Among those aware, Train to Gain was viewed mainly as a programme for employees to get skills and qualifications at work.
- An analysis of the LSC's learner records shows that:
 - Train to Gain learners were fairly evenly split by gender (51 per cent were men and 49 per cent were women);
 - 12 per cent were from a black or minority ethnic group (one percentage point higher than in the eligible population at large);
 - most (62 per cent) were at least 36 years old, and 31 per cent were older than 46 (generally workplace training is most common among younger age groups);
 - 6 per cent declared a disability – a proportion that is lower than among the general working population.
- The survey found that a third (35 per cent) worked in personal service occupations, while the remainder worked in a range of occupations (e.g. 6 per cent were managers, 12 per cent had a skilled job and 11 per cent were in an elementary occupation). Four in five had been with their employer for at least a year.

- Three-quarters had left school at or before the age of 16. Although the learner records suggested that only 1 per cent of learners were qualified to Level 2 or above at the start of their training, in the survey 19 per cent said they had a prior qualification at Level 2 or higher.
- Just over half the learners (54 per cent) were engaged with a further education (FE) college, and 46 per cent were with an independent provider.
- Half (51 per cent) of the learners in the survey said they could have studied for their qualification earlier. However, when this group was asked why they had not done so, 19 per cent said that their employer had not previously offered the opportunity, 16 per cent had not thought of doing it before, 14 per cent had not known that the opportunity existed; 13 per cent said funding had been a barrier; and 6 per cent had not needed the skills before.
- Four learners in five first found out about the opportunity to gain a qualification through their employer, while the rest found out from a training provider or a colleague. Once aware of the opportunity, 40 per cent thought their involvement had been jointly initiated with their employer, 39 per cent felt their employer had taken the lead and 21 per cent said they had taken the initiative.
- Where the employer had, in whole or in part, taken the lead, 62 per cent of the learners felt they had had a choice over whether to get involved, though 23 per cent did not think they had had any choice at all.
- Level 2 learners wanted to take their qualification to improve their skills to do their current job and gain a qualification (which could help them get another job if they needed to). Level 3 learners were more interested in learning to progress within employment (with their current or a new employer).

The Train to Gain brand

Awareness of the Train to Gain brand

- 70 In the survey, all learners were asked about their knowledge of the Train to Gain brand, and 60 per cent said they were aware of the name 'Train to Gain'. In this group, 29 per cent knew 'just a little about it', 22 per cent 'have heard of it but know nothing about it', 7 per cent knew 'a fair amount' and 2 per cent 'knew it very well' (see Table 6).
- 71 Awareness of Train to Gain declined steadily with age, from 62 per cent of the 19 to 25 age group, to 47 per cent of the oldest age group (56 years and above). Awareness also varied by occupation, being highest in the managerial, professional, associate professional and technical, and administrative and secretarial groups (at between 64 per cent and 69 per cent). Among learners who worked in an elementary occupation or as machinery operatives, awareness was at its lowest (55 per cent and 54 per cent, respectively).

Table 6: Awareness and knowledge of Train to Gain

	Number	%
Never heard of it	3,014	40
Know just a little about it	2,173	29
Have heard of it but know nothing about it	1,621	22
Know a fair amount about it	535	7
Know it very well	141	2
Don't know	16	–
Total	7,500	100

Base = all respondents.

N = 7,500

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

Source of information about Train to Gain

72 Learners who had some awareness of Train to Gain were asked how they had heard about it (Table 7). The majority (53 per cent) said that their source of information had been their employer (manager or supervisor, HR or training department). Far less frequently, their colleagues had told them about it (13 per cent). Some 12 per cent had heard about Train to Gain through training providers or college staff, and 6 per cent had seen advertising on the television. (The survey preceded the launch of the Big Skills Campaign by the LSC and DIUS in July 2007.)

Table 7: Source of information on Train to Gain

	Number	%
From a manager/supervisor/HR or training department	2,376	53
From a colleague	568	13
Training provider/college/college staff/assessor	516	12
TV advertisement	245	6
From friends or relations	168	4
Radio advertising	129	3
Advert in local or national newspaper	117	3
Information pack sent by post direct to learner at home or work	115	3
From union/union learning representative	86	2

Base = all those who were aware of Train to Gain. Multiple responses given. Only top responses shown.

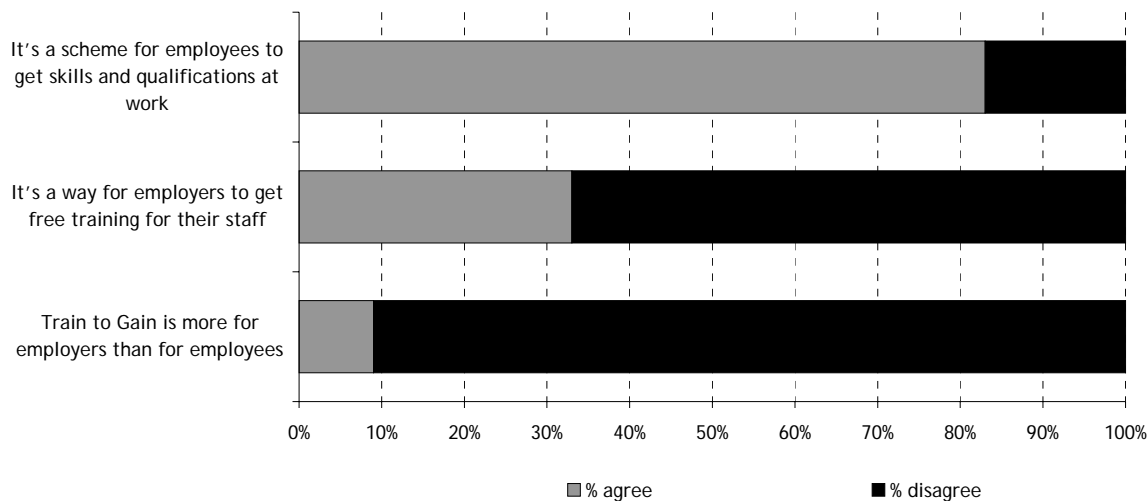
N = 4,470

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

Understanding of Train to Gain

73 The learners with some knowledge of Train to Gain were read three statements about the way in which it operated, and were asked whether or not they agreed with them. Figure 3 shows that agreement was highest (at 83 per cent) for the statement that Train to Gain was ‘a scheme for employees to get skills and qualifications at work’. Some 33 per cent of learners agreed that Train to Gain was ‘a way for employers to get free training for their staff’ and 9 per cent agreed that ‘Train to Gain is more for employers than for employees’.

Figure 3: Statements about Train to Gain



Base = all those who were aware of Train to Gain.
N = 4,470

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

Who is learning through Train to Gain?

74 The individualised learner records (ILR) of those funded through Train to Gain were analysed to get an understanding of their key characteristics. This analysis is reported below.

Gender

75 Slightly more men than women were fully funded for learning: 51 per cent, compared to 49 per cent (see Annex A, Table 1). Analysis of the Labour Force Survey (LFS – spring 2006, English regions only) based on working adults not already qualified to Level 2 shows that 51 per cent were women. In the final year of the employer training pilots (ETPs) (Hillage et al., 2006), the gender split was slightly in favour of women (51 per cent), although their participation had followed a declining trend across the three years of the evaluation.

76 In the North West and West Midlands, 57 per cent of the learners who were part funded for Level 3 qualifications were women. Analysis of the LFS based on people working in these regions and already qualified to Level 2 shows that women made up 61 per cent (LFS, spring 2006, North West and Mersey and West Midlands only).

Ethnicity

77 Analysis of the ILR showed that 86 per cent of all learners were white and 12 per cent were from a black or minority ethnic (BME) group (Annex A, Table 1). According to the LFS, within the eligible population, 89 per cent of individuals were white and 11 per cent were from a BME group. Train to Gain is attracting a slightly larger proportion of BME learners than would be suggested by their prevalence in the population, and this is mirrored across most regions (Table 8).

Table 8: Black or minority ethnic participation in Train to Gain

	Eligible population		Learner population	
	N	%	N	%
East of England	48,764	7	1,242	12
East Midlands	47,271	8	1,551	12
Greater London	361,861	35	4,048	39
North East*	–	–	327	3
North West	67,978	9	1,700	7
South East	94,070	9	1,650	10
South West	26,008	4	639	6
West Midlands	109,799	11	3,704	15
Yorkshire & Humberside	46,293	7	2,021	9
Total	811,407	11	17,349	12

Note: eligible population estimate based on LFS, spring 2006; adult (19+) employees with qualifications below Level 2; in North West & West Midlands employees with Level 2 qualifications, in Greater London women with Level 2 qualifications.

* The BME sample in the LFS in the North East region is too small to analyse separately and therefore is not shown.

Source: LFS, spring 2006, ILR data, end June 2007

Age

78 The age profile of learners tended to be older adults: 31 per cent of the fully funded learners were between 36 and 45 years old, and a further 31 per cent were older than 45 (Annex A, Table 2). Some 12 per cent were aged between 19 and 25. In the ETPs, the proportion of 19- to 25-year-olds was 16 per cent at the end of the third year of the evaluation.

- 79 Among learners who are part funded for Level 3 qualifications, 60 per cent were aged between 26 and 45, and 24 per cent were aged over 45. Younger adults (aged between 19 and 25) formed 16 per cent of these learners.
- 80 Generally, workplace training is most likely to be undertaken by younger employees. Analysis shows that, while some 40 per cent of younger workers have received training, there is a marked decline for older age groups – for instance, 20 per cent of those aged between 56 and 59 received some form of training (i.e. not just training that would lead to a qualification), and this declined to 12 per cent of those aged between 60 and 64 (Newton et al., 2005). This data suggests that Train to Gain is picking up older than average workplace learners.

Disability

- 81 Individuals with disabilities formed 7 per cent of the fully funded learner population, and 3 per cent of those part funded for Level 3 qualifications (Annex A, Table 3). This is far less than the 12 per cent present in the overall (Great Britain) working population (by the Disability Discrimination Act definition). In the ETPs the proportion of learners with disabilities remained consistent throughout the three years at 5 per cent.
- 82 Some 4 per cent of the Train to Gain learners declared that they had a learning disability (2 per cent considered their disability to be moderate, and 1 per cent were dyslexic).

Employment status

- 83 Almost all the learners surveyed were currently working (98 per cent). The remainder had left the employer with which they had originally signed up for learning and were unemployed or inactive in the labour market when the survey took place (see Annex B).

Occupation

- 84 The survey showed that 35 per cent were employed in personal service occupations (which includes healthcare, childcare and animal care, and leisure services such as leisure and travel occupations, as well as people employed as hairdressers, housekeepers and caretakers; Annex B, Table 5). Some 12 per cent worked in skilled trades, 9 per cent were employed in

professional or associate professional roles and 6 per cent worked as managers. These proportions are higher than those in the final year of the ETPs. Overall, 11 per cent worked in an elementary occupation, and a further 11 per cent worked as process, plant or machine operatives. Both these proportions are smaller than in the ETP population.

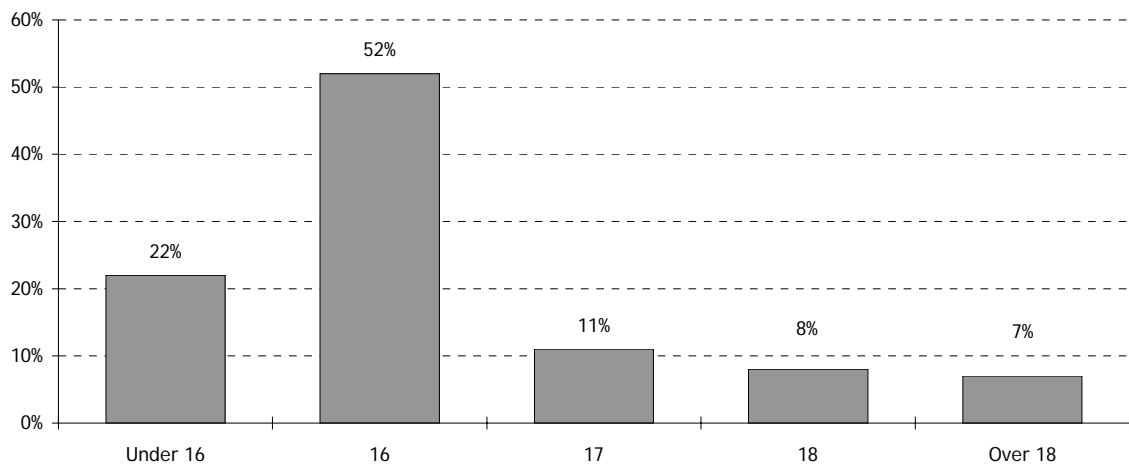
Length of time in job

- 85 Among the learners who were surveyed, 61 per cent had worked for their employer for between one and seven years, 18 per cent had joined their current employer within the last year and 1 per cent had been with their employer for 22 years or more.
- 86 Among the group that had joined their employer within the last year, 46 per cent had previously worked for a different employer doing a different job, and 34 per cent had worked for a different employer doing the same sort of job. Some 12 per cent had previously been unemployed or had not worked for more than six months, and 2 per cent had been in full-time education.

Educational background

- 87 The survey data presented in Figure 4 shows that 52 per cent of the fully funded learners had left school when they were 16 years old, and 22 per cent had left school at 15 years of age (this is likely to relate to the age profile of learners, as many would not have been entitled to leave at that age). Some 11 per cent had stayed in full-time education until they were 17, and 8 per cent had stayed until they were 18 years old. Overall, 7 per cent of the learners had stayed in full-time education beyond the age of 18.
- 88 The qualitative interviews with learners who were part funded for Level 3 studies found that many had left school at 16, a few had gone on to take part in the Youth Training Scheme, and quite a few had been to college or university. Data for comparison with that presented in Figure 4 will be collected for these learners in wave 2 of the survey.

Figure 4: Age at which learner left full-time education



Base = all respondents.

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

Provider type

89 Overall, 54 per cent of Train to Gain learners were engaged with a public training provider (e.g. an FE college) and 46 per cent were with an independent provider (see Annex A, Table 5). The proportion varied slightly by region – for example, 60 per cent of learners were with public providers in the South East, compared to 46 per cent in the North East.

Prior qualification

90 The ILR data indicated that 97 per cent of the fully funded learners were not qualified to Level 2 prior to starting. The starting level was unknown for 3 per cent of learners, and less than 1 per cent of learners already held a qualification at Level 2 or higher prior to signing up.

91 Learners in the survey were asked for their previous level of qualification using the same question wording as in the Labour Force Survey (see Table 9). Some 68 per cent of the fully funded learners said that they either had no qualifications, or held qualifications lower than Level 2; 19 per cent said that they were already qualified to Level 2 or above; and for 13 per cent it was not possible to ascertain their prior educational level due to lack of response or insufficient detail.

Table 9: Highest (previous) qualification level held by learners surveyed

	Number	%
No qualifications	2,576	34
Below Level 2	2,536	34
Level 2	1,020	14
Level 3	231	3
Level 4	152	2
Level 5+	1	–
Not known	984	13
Total	7,500	100

Base = all respondents

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

92 Survey data is not yet available for learners who are part funded for Level 3 qualifications, although the ILR data for this group (see Table 10) shows that all have qualifications below Level 3. In the qualitative research, eight learners said that they held a degree or postgraduate-level qualification or vocational qualifications equivalent to Level 3 or higher.

Table 10: Highest attainment recorded on ILR for part-funded Level 3 learners

	Frequency	%
No qualifications	131	20
Below Level 2	94	15
Level 2	368	57
Not known	49	8
Total	642	100

Source: ILR data, end June 2007

Access to training at work

93 In the survey, 87 per cent of learners strongly agreed or tended to agree that they had the ‘same access to training as anyone else’, and 84 per cent agreed that they had been ‘encouraged by my employer, manager or supervisor to develop new skills’. Although still a majority, rather fewer agreed that ‘it is/was always easy to get training at my workplace’ (69 per cent).

- 94 The training that was previously available was explored with learners during the qualitative interviews, and some mentioned that they felt it had become easier to access training in recent years. By and large, learners were generally positive about their company's approach to training.

I think it's very good and I think it's improved in the last two years that I've been there. When I first joined there was nothing for someone like me, but now there is quite a bit.

Fully funded learner at a large fostering agency

They've got involved in training to a great extent and it's accelerating.

Learner part funded for Level 3 at a large construction company

- 95 Those who were part funded for Level 3 qualifications seemed more likely to use words such as 'excellent' to describe training at their employer, perhaps because they had already studied to Level 2 at work.

If there is any training we do it ... training at our surgery is excellent because we try to give the best service.

Learner part funded for Level 3 at a small healthcare centre

- 96 A few learners had found it more difficult to access training, and it appeared that their employer did not place much value on training. For some fully funded learners, their national vocational qualification (NVQ) was the only training their employer had offered.

I can honestly say, hand on heart, I have been trained for nothing because you tend to know in a factory environment you are, like, at the lowest part of the working majority and you are just told to go and do things and training doesn't seem to be hugely important.

Fully funded learner at a large manufacturing company

- 97 Some learners described how the employee had to be proactive to benefit from any training opportunities offered through work (particularly developmental training). They either had to request specific training, from a

manager or the personnel department, or else put themselves forward when their employers offered training to all the individuals in a specific role. This created competition for training places.

Past training to meet legal requirements

98 In the survey, 50 per cent of the learners reported that they had done some sort of training related to their job in the previous year. The qualitative interviews suggested that much of this training did not lead to nationally recognised qualifications, but instead was to ensure that employers met legal requirements and safety standards. This included health and safety, manual handling and first aid.

There's a lot of mandatory training we have to do ... the odd occasion you'll get something like this on the internet which will come up on our training matters, but it is rare. Mandatory training yes, but something like this NVQ, no.

Learner part funded for Level 3 at a small care home

Access to qualified training

99 The learners in the survey were all asked whether they could have done their qualification at an earlier stage, and 51 per cent felt they could have. The proportions saying this were **highest** in personal service and professional occupations (at 60 per cent and 59 per cent, respectively) and **lowest** in sales and customer service occupations, and process, plant and machine operative occupations (at 39 per cent and 38 per cent, respectively).

100 When asked why they had not done their qualification sooner, learners mentioned a wide range of reasons (see Table 11). Many centred on the timing of the training – i.e. 'was not offered before' (19 per cent); 'did not need these skills before' (17 per cent); 'did not want to do the training before now' (4 per cent). Funding was a barrier for 13 per cent, either because they were not able to pay for it personally (10 per cent) or their employer had not been willing to pay for it (3 per cent).

Table 11: Reasons for not doing training earlier

	Number	%
Was not offered before now	584	19
Did not need these skills before	503	17
Never thought of doing it	483	16
Did not have any time to train at work	461	15
Did not know training/qualification existed	421	14
Could not afford to pay for it myself	311	10
Not interested in it	266	9
Have done something similar before	109	4
Did not want to do the training before now	135	4
Employer would not pay for me to do it before now	81	3
Employer would not give me time off work for training	62	2

Base = all those who said they could have done the training earlier. Multiple responses given.

N = 3,825

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

Getting involved in Train to Gain

Finding out about the qualification

101 In the survey, all learners were asked where, or from whom, they had first heard about the opportunity to do their qualification. Table 12 shows only those categories that gained 2 per cent or more agreement.

Table 12: Where learners first heard about their qualification

Source	Number	%
Employer, manager or supervisor	5,570	74
Training provider or member of college staff came to workplace	527	7
HR/personnel or training manager	397	5
Other work colleague (non-supervisory)	270	4
At a college or other learning centre	141	2

Base = all respondents. Table shows only those categories with more than 2 per cent agreement.

N = 7,500

Source: *Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007*

- 102 Overall, the most frequent source of information about qualifications was the workplace. For 74 per cent of learners, their employer, manager or supervisor had told them about the opportunity to register for learning. A further 5 per cent had found out from other staff in their organisation (such as training managers or HR personnel). Information passing between colleagues accounted for 4 per cent of responses.
- 103 Training providers and college staff were the source of information for 7 per cent of learners. Other responses such as the internet, the union learning representative or union member, skills broker or general publicity each accounted for less than 1 per cent of responses.
- 104 The qualitative interviews suggested that learners who had recently undertaken a course (mainly learners whose Level 3 qualifications were part funded) often heard about their qualification through a training provider with whom they had previously studied.

Our teacher on the NVQ 2 did mention about the NVQ 3 when she knew what position we were in ... so we came back to the office and mentioned it and then the manager sorted it out.

Fully funded learner at a small care service training provider

My trainer ... he contacted me and I said I was interested, they had a vacancy and I said yes.

Learner part funded for Level 3 at a medium-sized security firm

- 105 The qualitative research also suggested that the learners who were part funded for Level 3 qualifications were more likely than the fully funded learners to have asked their employer for the opportunity to train at the next level.

When I finished that course, because my head was in a bit of a learning curve, I approached my boss here and said get me on the NVQ 3 please.

Learner part funded for Level 3 working in a small care home

- 106 For both types of learner, however, it was more common for employers to advertise the qualifications, but to offer only a limited number of places on a 'first come first served' basis. This created an element of competition for course places, but it also meant that only learners who were confident enough to put themselves forward got the opportunity to register.

Originally I wanted to go on the ECDL course, but I couldn't get on it. This one came up and I was asked if I'd go on this one ... some courses are harder to get on than others because quite a few want to do it. Other courses there's not so many want to do it and you can get on them.

Fully funded learner working in a large healthcare organisation

The carers got sent a text from the office ... a number places available on the NVQ, first come first served. Luckily that day I was at home and put my name down immediately, but there could have been others that wanted to do it because there was a limited amount of places they may have missed out. I've spoken to people since then they said they wanted to do it, but hadn't. Maybe it was because they've not been given enough encouragement.

Fully funded learner working in a medium-sized care home

Choosing the training

107 As part of the survey, all learners were asked to consider how they came to be taking part in their training (Table 13). The response categories offered a range of options, with some initiated by the employer and some initiated by the learner. Employers had asked 60 per cent of the learners if they were interested in taking part, while 54 per cent of the learners said they had put themselves forward.

Table 13: How learners came to be taking part in training

	Number	%
Employer asked if I was interested	4,510	60
I put myself forward when I found out about the opportunity	4,023	54
My employer told me I would do it	2,304	31
I requested this training	2,167	29
My employer asked for volunteers	2,013	27
I progressed automatically to this training from a lower qualification	1,231	16

Base = all respondents. Multiple responses given, only top responses shown.
N = 7,500

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

- 108 Analysing the pattern of responses in Table 13, three distinct groups of learners can be identified:
- those whose **training had been initiated jointly** by themselves and their employer (for instance, the employer had asked for volunteers and the learner had put themselves forward) accounted for 40 per cent of learners;
 - those whose **training was initiated by their employer** (i.e. the employer had asked for volunteers, had asked if the learner was interested or had told them they would be doing the training, but the learner had not actually requested the training or put themselves forward) accounted for 39 per cent of respondents; and

- those whose **training was self-initiated** (i.e. the learner had put themselves forward for training or had requested it, and their employer had not approached them) accounted for 21 per cent of the sample.

109 Those learners whose training had been initiated by their employer were asked how much choice they had had about whether or not to get involved. Table 14 shows that, while 62 per cent of this group had a great deal or a fair amount of choice, 23 per cent reported that they had had no choice at all (9 per cent of respondents overall).

Table 14: Amount of choice over whether or not to do the training

Amount of say	Number	%
A great deal	1,124	40
A fair amount	608	22
A little	366	13
None at all	656	23
Don't know	62	2
Total	2,816	100

Base = employer-initiated training only.

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

- 110 The group that reported having had no choice was a little more likely to be male (45 per cent of learners who said they had no choice were male, while 35 per cent of all Train to Gain learners were male), but did not differ in other personal characteristics. Their occupations were broadly similar, too, although more worked in a skilled trade (18 per cent, compared with 12 per cent overall), and fewer worked in sales and customer services (3 per cent, compared with 9 per cent overall).
- 111 The qualitative research included some learners who did not feel that they had had a choice. The reasons they gave for their lack of choice included that their manager had registered them without asking, or that being qualified had been stipulated when they had applied for their job.

When they first interviewed for the posts they said that the requirement was an NVQ 2. As soon as they gave us the post they said that the requirement was an NVQ 3.

Learner part funded for Level 3 in a large public-sector organisation

- 112 A few learners told us that, although they had had a choice, they felt that if they did not do the qualification it might damage their standing with their managers.

If you want to get on you have to do these things.

Fully funded learner working in a small residential home for people with
mental health issues

I did feel a bit like perhaps you wouldn't be respected so much if you didn't do it.

Fully funded learner working in a fostering agency and taking an
NVQ in business administration

Reasons for signing up

- 113 The qualitative interviews revealed some differences in the reasons for signing up between the fully funded learners and those who were part funded for Level 3 qualifications. Fully funded learners often said that they were learning because:

- they wanted to get a qualification:

For my own self I thought it's about time I did start to get some qualifications.

Fully funded learner in a care company

- they wanted to improve at their **current** job (although some were looking to progress or move jobs):

To improve efficiency. More efficient working, hopefully learn new methods of doing things.

Fully funded learner in a large manufacturing company

- they felt that gaining a qualification would improve their standing in the labour market:

If there's going to be job cuts and I'm not on the same level it'll be, well you haven't got the same level as so and so, so that puts them in front of you.

Fully funded learner in a large manufacturing company

- 114 In contrast, learners who were part funded for Level 3 qualifications seemed more likely to focus on personal career benefits as reasons for learning. They frequently mentioned progressing at work (either within their current organisation or moving to another organisation). They were also more likely to say that they 'liked learning' or 'wanted a challenge'.

It will help me move into similar general management roles, rather than being limited to HR.

Learner part funded for Level 3 at a medium-sized manufacturing company

I like the questions and thinking 'what the heck does that mean?' ... I like the challenge, I like the paperwork. I enjoy paperwork and coursework, love it.

Learner part funded for Level 3 at a medium-sized care home

Information, Advice and Guidance and Pre-learning Assessments

115 The survey asked learners about what had happened to them as they started their learning. In particular, it asked them about whether they had taken part in some form of information session, e.g. so that they could make an informed choice about whether a course might be appropriate and, if so, which one. This is referred to in this section as a 'pre-entry discussion' and would include any information, advice and guidance (IAG) received by the learner. The survey also asked learners whether, once they had chosen their course, they had had a skills assessment (to assess whether they had basic skills requirements and/or to ensure that their learning plan was adapted to focus on their particular skills gaps). This is referred to in this section as a 'skills assessment'.

Key findings

116 The main findings are as follows.

- According to the learner survey, 66 per cent of the learners had some form of pre-entry discussion about what training, if any, they might need, and 60 per cent had an assessment to identify their precise skills gaps, so that their training could be adapted to their needs. Just under half (46 per cent) had both and 19 per cent only had a discussion and 14 per cent only an assessment. A fifth (18 per cent) said they had neither.
- Among those who had a skills assessment, 27 per cent were signed off some of the units of their training, and 26 per cent were either put on a different level of training or on training for a different qualification altogether.
- Learners who had a skills assessment were more likely to have their training adapted to their needs than were those who did not have an assessment.

Requirements for information, advice and guidance within the Train to Gain policy

117 The purpose of IAG in Train to Gain is to:

Ensure that the right individuals undertake the right learning and development activities, with the right levels of support and so achieve the right outcomes in terms of maximising their own productivity, employability and progression prospects within the organisation.

LSC, 2007, p7

118 Within Train to Gain, the training provider has the lead responsibility and funding to provide relevant support to learners at the pre-entry stage and during the programme (LSC, 2007). The *Requirements for Funding Train to Gain* (version 3, 2006/07) state that there should be a general pre-entry information session for employees interested in training, providing details of the learning available. This can be delivered on a group or an individual basis. Additionally, individuals willing to participate should have the option of a one-to-one session with a training provider (LSC, 2007).

Prior discussion

119 All learners in the survey were asked a number of questions about the IAG that they received prior to starting the training. First, they were asked whether or not anyone had talked to them about their current job and its required skills (as part of a pre-entry discussion). Some 66 per cent reported that this had happened.

120 The proportion that had had a prior discussion did show some variation by occupational group, with the highest proportions being recorded in personal service occupations (74 per cent) and the lowest proportions in sales and customer service occupations (59 per cent), process, plant and machine operative occupations (59 per cent) and administrative and secretarial occupations (53 per cent).

121 The group that had had pre-entry IAG was then asked who had led this (Table 15). Learners had either spoken to the training provider (50 per cent)

and/or to their employer (49 per cent). As a result of their discussion, 68 per cent said they had been told which qualification would be most suitable.

Table 15: Who spoke to you about your current job and required skills, prior to doing the training?

Source	Number	%
Training provider or college staff/assessor	2,468	50
Employer, manager or supervisor	2,391	49
Union learning representative/union staff member	27	1
HR/personnel or training manager	297	6
Colleague	35	1
Skills broker	22	1

Base = all those who had been spoken to prior to the training. Multiple responses given.

N = 4,897

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

A group session is common

- 122 The qualitative research suggested that those who received information about the course usually got this through a group session (particularly fully funded learners). This was usually delivered after they had already expressed an interest in learning or had signed up to the course.
- 123 Most pre-entry discussions worked well: they helped to reassure learners and increase their confidence about learning. One learner, whose job as a football steward required an NVQ, described the group information session held with the training provider. He said the training provider had used slides and videos to explain the sorts of things that would be covered by the course and he found this very useful. Another learner also described how the training provider had explained what the course was about, what would be expected and how questions would be presented and should be answered, i.e. the format of the NVQ.

One-to-ones were more likely where learners had an established relationship with their training provider

- 124 Quite a few learners who were part funded for Level 3 qualifications had a previous relationship with training providers and seemed particularly well

informed about what their Level 3 qualification would entail. These learners also mentioned that there had been a one-to-one interview or discussion with the training provider as part of their enrolment on the Level 3 course. None of the fully funded learners mentioned a one-to-one discussion.

- 125 A few of the fully funded learners explicitly said that they would have liked an individual information session and more extensive information. A few felt it would have been beneficial for their manager to have been involved.

It would have been nice to be able to sit, speak to somebody, then right this month we're going to do this ... but there's been nothing ... it was so rushed.

Fully funded learner working for a medium-sized taxi firm

It was mainly about what the course involved, not in relation to whether it was suitable to my employment. I think it's a shame that my employers never really discussed it with me, what relevance it was going to have.

Fully funded learner working for a large fostering agency

Skills assessment

- 126 Following the questions about pre-entry IAG, all the learners in the survey were asked whether they had received an assessment of their pre-existing skills prior to starting their qualifications. Some 60 per cent reported that they had (a little lower than the proportion saying that they had received pre-entry IAG).
- 127 Having a skills assessment showed less variation by occupational group and qualification subject than for the pre-entry discussion, although those in care-related learning were more likely to have had a skills assessment than those in other subject areas (64 per cent of those in care subjects, compared with 58 per cent in other subjects). Occupational group differences ranged from 63 per cent for managers and senior officials, personal service occupations, and sales and customer service occupations

to 57 per cent in associate professional and technical occupations and 55 per cent in elementary occupations.

- 128 The learners who had had a skills assessment were then asked who had carried it out. For 78 per cent, the skills assessment and the initial pre-entry discussion had been carried out by the same person. Among the group whose assessment had been carried out by someone different, 73 per cent reported that it had been led by a training provider or college staff/assessors, and 20 per cent reported that they had been assessed by their employer or manager.

Learners' experiences of skills assessment

- 129 In the qualitative research, fully funded learners talked more frequently about Skills for Life tests than any assessment of skills gaps in relation to their course. In contrast, learners who were part funded for Level 3 qualifications more frequently spoke of assessment of their job role prior to their course starting.
- 130 The qualitative research suggested that most of the learners had found their skills assessment relatively easy and often beneficial. Some learners understood that the Skills for Life assessments had been to see whether they needed any additional support.

It helped me to see what were coming in the NVQ. Not the maths and English, they were just to see what I was like. The questions about the teaching assistants were good questions, similar to the ones in the NVQ.

Fully funded learner, working in a school

I had to do a written English test and Maths. Unfortunately I failed on the Maths one, but it helped her to know which category to put me into.

Fully funded learner working in a small retail organisation

- 131 However, some learners, particularly those studying for part-funded Level 3 qualifications, said that they had found the pre-assessments rather too easy and questioned their worth and purpose. These learners felt that the tests were not suitable for working adults.

The front page was a shopkeeper dishing out sweets and coins and stuff ... you go into a shop and there's a lollipop 6p, how much would it cost for 4 ... we started, we all looked at each other and wondered what sort of people do they think they're training here.

Learner part funded for Level 3 who worked for a medium-sized construction company

What happened as a result of an assessment?

- 132 In the survey, learners who had been assessed were asked about any consequences of their skills assessment. Table 16 shows the results and also the variation in terms of who carried out the assessment. Employers were significantly more likely than training providers to have identified areas in which training was needed (44 per cent, compared with 35 per cent). An assessment by an employer was also significantly less likely than one carried out by a training provider to lead to the learners reporting that nothing had happened (26 per cent, compared to 30 per cent).
- 133 Overall, 38 per cent had been told that they needed training in some areas. Of those, 92 per cent had been told which aspects of the qualification they would be trained in and assessed on. Almost as many (84 per cent) had received a personal development plan (which equates to 18 per cent of all respondents). A further 12 per cent had been informed that they had no training needs at all. It is interesting that, of this group, more than half (58 per cent) were in the process of learning – despite having been told that they had no learning needs. It may be that they required only assessment to complete their qualification. Of this group, 30 per cent had already completed their learning, 8 per cent were waiting to start and 5 per cent had dropped out.

Table 16: Consequences of the prior assessment

Action taken	Overall		Employer assessment only	Training provider assessment only
	No.	%	%	%
They identified some areas in which I needed training	1,655	38	44	35
They arranged a formal assessment of my skills	1,475	34	34	33
I was signed off from some units of the qualification	1,158	27	25	26
I was put on a different level of the qualification	831	19	20	19
I was put on a different qualification altogether	313	7	9	6
Nothing	1,224	28	26	30

Base = overall column is all those who had received a prior assessment, other columns are those receiving assessment solely by employer/manager/supervisor, or training provider/college staff. Multiple responses given.

Source: *Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007*

134 The qualitative research suggested that, where learners had a skills assessment of their job role (usually learners who were part funded for Level 3 qualifications), this had helped to tailor their studies.

He turned around and said ‘right, you will need that module, that module and that module’ ... So I think I had 10 modules by the time I was finished, but some people might only have had 7.

Fully funded learner in a warehousing company

At the beginning the assessor asked what your job entailed and then he picked out the relevant task for your actual NVQ.

Fully funded learner in a large manufacturing company

135 There were a small number of examples where a lack of assessment prior to starting had led to problems further down the line. One learner, working for a large public-sector organisation, had received information from a colleague but no assessment from the training provider. He embarked on a Level 3 qualification, but had to drop down as ‘my job didn’t cover enough of the basics’.

Relationship between pre-entry discussion and skills assessment

136 It is the intention of the Train to Gain policy that learners should receive both a pre-entry discussion (i.e. IAG) **and** a skills assessment. The extent to which the learners surveyed received either or both is shown in Table 17. This shows that 46 per cent had received both IAG **and** an assessment, although 18 per cent had received neither. This latter group were most likely to be older men whose employer had initiated their involvement in the training, and were least likely to be in personal service occupations working towards a care-related qualification and to be learning with an independent provider.

Table 17: Relationship between pre-entry discussion and skills assessment

	Number	%
Pre-entry discussion only	1,404	19
Skills assessment only	1,065	14
Both pre-entry discussion and skills assessment	3,411	46
Neither	1,379	18
Don’t know	241	3
Total	7,500	100

Base = all respondents.

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

137 There was no correlation between whether the training was initiated by the learner or the employer and whether the training had been arranged for all or only some parts of the qualification. However, those receiving a skills assessment, or an assessment **and** a pre-entry discussion, were significantly more likely to report tailored training than those who had received simply a pre-entry discussion or no IAG or assessment at all (Table 18). Those who had received no assessment or IAG were significantly more

likely to say that they were unaware of whether or not their training had been tailored.

Table 18: Extent of training arranged following prior IAG

	Overall		Pre-entry discussion only	Skills assessment only	Both pre-entry discussion & assessment	Neither
	No.	%	%	%	%	%
Training arranged for the whole of the qualification	5,125	68	71	64	70	65
Training arranged for only some parts of the qualification	1,377	18	17	20	20	16
Don't know	998	13	12	16	10	19
Total	7,500	100	100	100	100	100

Base = overall column is all respondents, bases vary for other columns.

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

Effects of a lack of pre-entry information or discussion

138 Learners who said during the qualitative research that they had not received any pre-entry discussion or information about the course often seemed less confident than those that had. A fully funded learner who was working at a school said that, before starting the course, 'all I knew [was that] it was just an NVQ on cooking, that's as far as I knew'.

139 Where training providers did not provide IAG, some learners sought information from colleagues who had previously done the qualification. This was not always helpful, as the content of modules had since altered or colleagues had said that it would be particularly easy or difficult and this had not been the learner's experience. Unsurprisingly, these learners mentioned that they would have liked more information.

I knew other people who had done it. Everyone said it was easy. I would have liked somebody to have given me an idea of what it involved.

Fully funded learner at a small childcare training provider

- 140 A few learners who had not had information prior to starting the course reported that this had affected how they felt about starting. Some felt their training provider was not approachable, while others were anxious about the commitment required.

I had no information beforehand so I was anxious about how much work it would involve, about the cost of having to buy materials or books, and about the length of time it would take up.

Learner part funded for Level 3 in a medium-sized charity providing advice and support to teenagers

- 141 A learner who was part funded for a Level 3 qualification (working for a medium-sized construction company) said that, because IAG was not made available, some colleagues were unable to decide whether the training would be valuable for them and so had not signed up.

Experiences of Training

142 Survey respondents were asked about their learning experiences (i.e. the combination of training – involving direct inputs from tutors – and assessments of competence). The results are reported in this section. It covers the qualifications in which learners are involved, as well as how these are delivered and assessed. There then follows an examination, which draws heavily on the qualitative interviews, of support needs, the nature of any difficulties experienced and learners' assessments of the quality of their learning experience.

Key findings

143 The main findings are as follows.

- The vast majority (93 per cent) of fully funded learners were studying towards an NVQ (23 per cent for health and social care qualifications), 5 per cent of the fully funded learners were studying for a Skills for Life qualification alongside their NVQ, and 1 per cent were studying for a Skills for Life qualification on its own. Some 6 per cent had 'jumped' Level 2 and were studying for a Level 3 qualification.
- Of the 642 learners signed up for part-funded Level 3 qualifications, 26 per cent were studying for a health and social care qualification. Meanwhile 3 per cent had 'jumped' Level 3 and were studying at Level 4.
- The qualitative interviews with learners suggested that most of the training and assessment took place at work. However, there was considerable variation in whether learners received paid time at work to study for their qualifications and the amount of time they spent learning at home.
- Learners often said in the qualitative interviews that they saw their assessor once or twice a month and that this pace suited them well. Problems with the pace of learning were associated with information gaps (e.g. through a lack of information, advice and guidance (IAG), a training schedule or a learning plan) or staff gaps (e.g. unexpected changes to assessor mid-course).

- Learners valued having supportive training providers and assessors (i.e. they are contactable, approachable and understand the job and business needs). They also liked to feel part of a group or to have the support of their colleagues. Employer support was seen by many as crucial. Few reported any particular difficulties during their training.
- By the time of the survey, 12 per cent of the learners had successfully completed their qualification. The qualitative research found that completers had a strong sense of determination and were strongly motivated by the desire to gain the qualification, mainly for reasons of personal achievement. If completers had one gripe, it was that their certificate took a long time to arrive.
- Some 3 per cent of the survey sample had left their training early, mainly for job change or personal reasons (63 per cent), although 25 per cent said they had dropped out because they had not had enough time to do the course, and 17 per cent had been unhappy about the quality or the relevance of their course.
- Most learners felt that the training and assessment they had received was of good quality. Factors associated with good quality include: having an individual learning plan (ILP) (linking to a pre-entry IAG discussion); having a training provider with a positive attitude, who was encouraging and gave feedback; good communication with training providers about schedules and learner support; and having a training provider who understood the nature of the work and the learner's specific job role, and who was responsive to individual and business needs.

The qualifications being taken by Train to Gain learners

Fully funded learners

144 In total, 118,412 learners had signed up for fully funded courses by the end of June 2007. Of these, 93 per cent were studying for NVQ qualifications. Table 19 shows the qualifications taken by at least 2 per cent of these learners. Some 23 per cent were studying for health and social care qualifications, 8 per cent were studying for customer service qualifications and 4 per cent were taking the performing manufacturing operations NVQ.

Table 19: Main qualification subjects being studied by fully funded learners

	N	%
NVQ in Health and Social Care	27,026	23
NVQ in Customer Service	9,490	8
NVQ in Performing Manufacturing Operations	5,082	4
NVQ in Team Leading	4,243	4
NVQ for IT Users (iTQ)	4,065	4
NVQ in Business and Administration	3,862	3
NVQ in Plant Operations	3,777	3
NVQ in Business-Improvement Techniques	3,623	3
NVQ in Cleaning and Support Services	3,436	3
NVQ in Distribution, Warehousing and Storage Operations	3,390	3
NVQ in Construction Operations	3,010	3
NVQ in Food and Drink Manufacturing Operations	2,879	3
NVQ in Retail Skills	2,704	2

Base: courses with more than 2 per cent of learner population registered.

Source: ILR data, end June 2007

- 145 Among the fully funded learner population, 93 per cent were studying for an NVQ or equivalent. A further 5 per cent of learners were studying for a combination of NVQ or equivalent and Skills for Life subjects, and 1 per cent were studying for a Skills for Life qualification on its own (Annex A, Table 7).
- 146 Among learners who were studying for Skills for Life qualifications, 60 per cent were taking literacy, 38 per cent were registered for numeracy and 0.1 per cent were registered for language skills.

147 As was noted previously, fully funded learners may be in a position to study at Level 3 because of the nature of their work and their experience. This analysis shows that 6 per cent of the fully funded learners had ‘jumped’ to Level 3 qualifications.

Learners who are part funded for Level 3 qualifications

148 By the end of June 2007, 642 learners were registered for part-funded Level 3 qualifications. Of these, 26 per cent were engaged in health and social care qualifications (Table 20). Qualifications in children’s care learning and development and in management each accounted for 12 per cent of part-funded Level 3 learner registrations.

Table 20: Main qualification subjects of learners who are part funded for Level 3 qualifications

	N	%
NVQ in Health and Social Care	166	26
NVQ in Children’s, Care Learning and Development	78	12
NVQ in Management	76	12
NVQ in Accessing Operations and Rigging	46	7
NVQ in Business and Administration	42	7
NVQ in Occupational Work Supervision	31	5
NVQ in Construction Site Supervision	28	4
NVQ in Advice and Guidance	23	4
NVQ in Vehicle Maintenance and Repair	21	3
NVQ in Customer Service	19	3
NVQ in Construction Site Management	17	3
NVQ in Fenestration Installation and Surveying	14	2
NVQ in Oral Healthcare: Dental Nursing	14	2

Note: only courses with more than 2 per cent of learners are listed.

Source: ILR data, end June 2007

149 The ILR data also showed that 97 per cent of the learners who were part funded were registered for courses at Level 3, although 3 per cent had ‘jumped’ this level and were registered for courses at Level 4.

Experiences of training and assessment

Where the training and assessment take place

150 For the majority of the learners who took part in the qualitative interviews, training and assessment took place at work. The training provider visited them according to a schedule agreed with the learner and/or employer. A smaller group of learners attended college or training centres for some or all of the training required for their qualification. This was often supported by workplace visits – mainly for assessment.

Free training ... but conditions may be attached

151 The training delivered through Train to Gain is free to the learner, although employers are required to contribute to the training costs of learners who are part funded for Level 3 qualifications. Some learners expressed how pleasing it was to be able to access free training.

Because it's free ... If I had to pay even £200, I would have to think very hard because I work very hard for that money and I would think I could spend it on my family so I would think twice about doing it.

Fully funded learner at a large manufacturing company

152 However, for a few learners at Level 2 and Level 3, their employer had attached conditions to their participation. (While this is not part of Train to Gain policy, there is nothing to stop employers from attaching conditions to the funded training, should they so wish.) They either required staff to stay with the organisation for a set period of time following completion, or expected staff to make a contribution to course costs in the event that they leave the course early. The opinions of learners about these conditions varied: some were unconcerned; some supported the condition, realising that an investment had been made which deserved loyalty. A small number felt they had signed a 'contract' on an unfair basis.

They [my employers] say if you drop out we're liable for £150 if we quit or didn't do what they expect on completion. It's a good idea... They do put a lot of money into training.

Learner part funded for Level 3 at a small care home

The learning experience through Train to Gain

153 The extent of training and assessment appears to vary considerably: for example, in construction Level 2 qualifications often seem to involve only a few contact hours, whereas with health and social care there appear to be considerable demands in terms of the number of units and the length of time required for the qualification.

I started the qualification in January and I think it takes 18 months to complete, so I'm about a third of the way through.

Learner part funded for Level 3 in a small childcare training provider

Time at work and at home

154 The qualitative interviews revealed a very mixed picture of time spent at work and at home on qualifications, and of learners' satisfaction with this. The Train to Gain policy encourages employers to provide time at work for study, and, where wage compensation is claimed by employers, the learner is entitled to time off. (Skills Brokers and/or training providers advise employers about their funding entitlement; in essence, companies with fewer than 50 employees may claim wage compensation for time spent by employees on training and assessment.) It was, however, thought unlikely that learners would know whether their companies claimed wage compensation, and therefore this was not discussed.

155 Learners who were able to do most of what was required for their qualification at work and whose time while training was paid were, unsurprisingly, happy with this.

They've given you the time to concentrate on the course and not expect you to fit it in with other work ... [otherwise] you wouldn't be able to do it. So when you get 3 hours it is 3 hours completely off the job.

Fully funded learner in a large manufacturing company

Our job was covered in order for us to carry out the NVQ work. They provided space for us to work with the assessor.

Fully funded learner in a medium-sized manufacturing company

- 156 Some learners, though, worked additional hours to ensure that they suffered no loss of pay as a result of studying at work. Whether this was a problem depended on the expectations that had been created.

I went in early ... I did all my work and then went [to college]. We wouldn't have got paid otherwise ... if you didn't go in they [the employer] had to find someone else to cover calls, which was causing them problems.

Fully funded learner in a medium-sized care company

Although they want you to do the qualification, they don't allow you the extra time ... they don't put any time aside to do the course because they say it is for our benefit.

Fully funded learner in a large call centre

- 157 Among those who studied for their qualification mostly at home, there were also mixed feelings. For some this had been the expectation from the start; but a similar number had not anticipated the extent of personal time required, and other commitments meant that they found their training more of a struggle.

It's fitted in outside work, they haven't had to give me any time off to do this course.

Fully funded learner in a medium-sized care home

It is taking over home on a certain day. If I've got a deadline then I will be upstairs typing away on this computer when I should be downstairs doing something else, like washing and ironing.

Fully funded learner in a medium-sized business services company

- 158 The nature of some learners' jobs meant that it was difficult to study during working hours. This was particularly the case in health and social care occupations, where clients' needs necessarily took priority.

... at work I couldn't do it. Our [clients'] challenging behaviour sometimes can be really high We have challenging behaviour every day, without fail. So it can be stressful. Sometimes you think it's nice and quiet now, I'll just get it out. Back in my bag, what's the point? That was what it was like.

Learner part funded for Level 3 in a large company working with adults
with learning disabilities

Assessment

- 159 Assessment for the NVQ (and equivalent) qualifications tended to involve an assessor observing the learner performing relevant tasks at work, together with the compilation of a portfolio of evidence. Most learners had no difficulties with this, although a few were anxious about the observation aspect. For some, the amount of written work required was problematic.

It's a bit off-putting somebody watching you, [but] if I'm doing it wrong they're going to pick me up on it. It's better to be told than carry on doing things wrong.

Fully funded learner in a medium-sized care company

It's been a lot of writing, typing. You have all these questions and you have to answer them or put them into a statement and then flick over and then you have to do another statement and you answer questions. Then you have to get a witness statement and if the witness won't do it, you've got to do it. There's an awful lot of writing to do.

Fully funded learner in a medium-sized business services company

- 160 Most of the learners who had an assessor drawn from their workplace felt that this was a supportive arrangement: benefits included ease of contact and ad hoc mentoring. However, some felt that their employer-assessor did not have sufficient time to help them with the qualification. In contrast, training provider-assessors could, in some cases, be insensitive to business needs.

At the course a friend got left behind because she didn't ... the staff there didn't really understand that they were using an 'NVQ' language that was hard for non-British nationals to get to grips with. My experience was better because my assessor-mentor was my Deputy Head and we met every week about the NVQ, but I could also just drop in to see her if I needed ... She was so helpful, really fantastic. I'm lucky because others didn't have this kind of support.

Fully funded learner working as a teaching assistant

... a big struggle with management, a big struggle with witness statements. That's the biggest ... There's too many questions. The managers don't want to do it. Nobody has got the time to do it.

Fully funded learner in a small nursing home

[The assessor] coming every week ... sometimes did bother the care home manager if I was really busy ... A few times she sent [the assessor] away and told her we were too busy to do any training today.

Fully funded learner working as a domestic assistant in a
medium-sized care home

- 161 Learners said that they wanted an assessor who understood the needs of their job and how things should be done. A small number questioned whether their training provider staff really had sufficient knowledge.

The guy who came in, we use files to file metal and we didn't have [safety] handles on, he started shouting, 'you shouldn't be doing

that'. He came in the next day with reams of paper for everybody. I said 'it's funny how you stand there and shout at me about using a file' but he watched another of the guys using a foot guillotine [without] the guard down and never said a word ... because he didn't know about that. He knew about the handles on the file but not the foot guillotine guard.

Fully funded learner in a large manufacturing company

Training and assessment or assessment only

162 A few (around one in ten) learners appeared to be following 'assessment-only' routes, for example having only a relatively few meetings with their assessors, who assessed various areas of competency but did not impart any learning through the provision of advice or learning materials. The examples encountered were mainly from the construction sector and involved fully funded learners. The following quote, from a different quarter, illustrates the frustration that learners in this position felt about their experience.

It's not as if it's been a qualification I'm taking. I know she's observing me but I'm supposed to be doing a customer service course. What am I supposed to be learning? ... I haven't learnt anything from it.

Fully funded learner in a medium-sized taxi company

Pace and level of qualifications

Pace

163 By the end of June, the ILR showed that 12 per cent of the fully funded learners and 6 per cent of those who were part funded for Level 3 had completed their qualifications (Table 21).

Table 21: Status with learning

	Still learning		Completed		Early leaver		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Fully funded learners	101,131	85	13,740	12	3,541	3	118,412
Part-funded Level 3 learners	600	94	37	6	5	1	642

Source: ILR data, end June 2007

164 Among the fully funded learners, the time required to complete the qualification was most frequently nine months (although some learners had completed it in under two months). In the qualitative interviews, learners reported this range of experience in terms of ‘pace’.

165 Most learners spoke of meeting their assessors once or twice a month, and most were happy with this. They gained regular feedback and updates on their progress. However, for a few the experience was rather erratic, often because a schedule or ILP had not been agreed.

Very good. She [the assessor] explained. She’ll go through the unit and any questions she’ll tell me what evidence I need. If I don’t do enough on a question she’ll say you need to do a bit more on this. There’s not enough in your answer to cover the question. She’s very thorough. She’s real good.

Fully funded learner in a medium-sized school

She [the assessor] would come on different days, it was a bit of a nightmare, and I had to rearrange my holidays so they fitted around hers. I regretted starting it.

Fully funded learner working as a domestic assistant in a medium-sized care home

166 The qualitative research suggested that only a few learners had experienced personal problems that affected the pace of their qualification. More frequently, it was factors associated with training providers and assessors that appeared to have a stronger influence.

- 167 These issues clustered around an **information gap**: the learner had little information about what was involved in the qualification, when the training provider or assessor would visit, or how long the course would take. Secondly, the pace would be slowed when **training providers or assessors changed** during the course of the training.
- 168 A few learners indicated that they would have appreciated greater control over their portfolio, in order to help them to understand their progress.

- Information gaps:

I don't know [how much longer it will take]. I usually get told at work, 'by the way, such and such date this week, you've got the next stage of the IT training course'. We don't have set out, certain dates, certain times. We don't have a full itinerary.

Fully funded learner in a large manufacturing company

Portfolio wise, explain to you in the actual portfolio e.g. what are you going to cover? Because you don't get examples, you just get an explanation of what they're expecting of you and you think, as in what sense?

Learner part funded for Level 3 working for a small organisation in the transport sector

- Staff gaps:

I haven't seen my assessor ... she [the original one] was leaving, so they sent somebody else in, but she was leaving too. So we're waiting for the new one to come in and I haven't seen her yet. They did pop in to take these [the portfolio] but I didn't have mine here that day. I didn't know they were coming ... So I haven't finished it. I've had it for a long time.

Fully funded learner in a medium-sized care organisation

Not sure. When my new assessor came out to me she wasn't sure either. They took my file away in January. I haven't seen it since

then ... The lady I had before never told me how far I got with anything ... I'm at a loss as to where I am [with the qualification].

Learner part funded for Level 3 in a childcare organisation

Level

169 Most learners who took part in the qualitative research said that they felt able to meet the requirements of the level of the qualification for which they had registered. Often learners who were part funded felt ready to make the transition to Level 3 as a result of prior study. A few in this group, however, expressed anxiety about their ability. Their concern would often be overcome by supportive training providers/assessors (training provider staff).

I had a bit of a fear. I said to him ... 'I really don't know if I can do this' ... I was thinking I don't know if I can get it done, I wanted to. He talked me round, he said, 'let's set it out, let's start the first one and then' ... I'm okay now.

Learner part funded for Level 3 in a medium-sized security company

Support needs and provision of support

Support from training providers and assessors

170 Support from training provider staff is very important, and learners generally felt that they had received good support. This appeared to relate to their personal interaction with the training provider staff – their training provider or assessor was readily available by telephone or email if they had any problems. In addition, being able to discuss the requirements of the qualification and having an ILP to refer to were also an important factor in how well supported learners felt.

Brilliant. So funny, laid back, helpful. She gives you loads of confidence. 'You can do it.' Very supportive, gave me her home phone number and I could have rung her and asked for help. She was very supportive.

Fully funded learner in a small childcare company

- 171 A small number of learners who took part in the qualitative interviews had a disability (these were all fully funded). One of them mentioned how well his assessor had supported his learning disability.

Very good. I said at the beginning I'm dyslexic, I struggle with reading and writing. He said that's no problem. I can come, you tell me what you want to put down and I'll write it down ... Very good because some people are funny about that.

Fully funded learner in a small care home

Learning resources

- 172 During the qualitative interviews, some learners (around one in five) said that the learning resources they received had supported their experience. This included access to e-learning training and support materials, or recommendations for books. Similar numbers felt that they could have had better access to learning resources.
- 173 The quality of learning resources was questioned by some learners who had received them. In the case of e-learning, a few said that they would have liked print-outs from each session to re-read away from the screen. Where books were recommended, learners wanted these to be specific to their qualification.

Support from colleagues and group support

- 174 Support from colleagues was reasonably important, and during the qualitative interviews most learners mentioned that colleagues had encouraged them. Others who shared their learning experience with a group of colleagues felt that the group provided an additional form of support.

Your colleagues are an extension in a way. It's nice to give them a ring. It sheds light on how I think I ought to be doing it. If both of us weren't sure there's always the tutor.

Learner part funded for Level 3 at a small care home

If you had a difficult child on a day you're having an assessment, somebody else would take that child away to keep it so it's easy for

you to manage the situation ... if you didn't have that kind of support it would be very difficult.

Fully funded learner in a large healthcare organisation

- 175 Some learners worked in groups during training and/or assessment sessions (often at training centres or colleges) and for these, one-to-one contact was important. For a few learners, the amount of one-to-one support felt insufficient and they believed that increasing this would have improved their experience.

If they'd come down for a one-to-one and there were some things I didn't understand because once you're at college you're in a group and they just show you the once. If you've got a problem ... they would have come over if you'd asked them ...

Fully funded learner in a small catering company

Support from employers

- 176 Learners' views of support from their employers varied considerably, with some not requiring a great deal, and others feeling it was more important. Generally the qualitative research revealed that the extent of support learners felt that their employers had offered related to the employers' attitudes to training.

- 177 For some, their employer was very positive, approachable and saw the benefits of training. Some employers also celebrated the achievements of learners.

Anything to do with training they're positive, and if there's something there you can do or you want to do they're all for it as far as training is concerned, the more the better is the company's point of view.

Fully funded learner in a large facilities management company

They [the employer] have been fine – by getting in touch with the [training provider] ... to see if there have been any problems and to sort out an awards ceremony for the cleaners, put it in the staff

bulletin, news magazine, which is a big boost for the cleaners because we never get recognised.

Fully funded learner in a large school

- 178 A small group of learners mentioned situations in which their employer was creating a barrier to the training.

[From my employer] there was no encouragement or anything. To be honest, I don't think he liked [the training provider] being around, he was stopping our work. But I don't think that he actually understood that by [the training provider] coming around he was actually helping himself and his workforce.

Fully funded learner in a small manufacturing company

The attitude [of my employer] from the beginning, they wouldn't return phone calls [from the training co-ordinator]. Looked at the co-ordinator as being more of a pain.

Fully funded learner in a medium-sized warehousing company

- 179 When learners changed job, more often than not their new employers (if they knew about the training) were supportive of them if they wished to continue with their qualification – although in most cases learners had changed occupation, and so would not be offered time off for training.

Factors that appear to promote completion

- 180 By the end of June 2007, the individualised learner record (ILR) showed that 13,740 fully funded learners (12 per cent) had completed their qualification, as had 37 learners who were part funded for Level 3. The proportion of completers in the survey was higher than this, at 22 per cent. By the time of the qualitative interviews, 57 out of the 100 fully funded learners who took part had finished their qualifications. Ten learners who were part funded for Level 3 qualifications had also finished. (The qualitative interviews took place between three and four months after the survey.) What was common to these completers (and to those who were close to completion but still learning) was their personal determination to finish. They were motivated by

the desire to achieve the qualification. A handful felt that their determination had helped them overcome any difficulties with their training.

Determination. I've never done anything like that before – at school I suppose, but that was years ago.

Fully funded learner in small care home

My aim was just to finish the course and see if I can better myself.

Fully funded learner at a large care agency

181 Many completers had received detailed IAG before starting, as well as regular feedback during the course. The reliability of training provider staff in turning up at the agreed time, or in telephoning and rearranging the meeting in good time, was also mentioned as a factor in completion. Similarly, assessors who understood learners' jobs and work but who were also responsive to learners' requirements, as well as to changing business needs, were considered to have supported completion.

The way it's all set out, everything's been right, from being introduced to the [training provider], to being assessed, to doing the course, to finishing the course. Everything's gone absolutely fine.

Fully funded learner at a small engineering company

Certification is slow

182 Very few of the learners who had finished their qualifications had received their certificate by the time of the qualitative interviews. Most were not too concerned about this, although it did impact a little on their sense of personal achievement. However, a few mentioned that the delay was disappointing, either from a personal point of view or because they would receive a pay rise once the certificate arrived.

My gripe is that I have still not received the certificate and I was told this would only take 10–15 days. It's been 2–3 months now ... I would like the confirmation and the certificate as 'proof'.

Fully funded learner at a medium-sized distribution company

I'm waiting for the certificate. It takes about 8 months. My NVQ 2 did, 8 months. And we won't get our pay rise till we get the certificate. [The training provider] does letters for Level 2s to say they'd passed, but they don't do it for Level 3 and that's a bit wrong. As soon as NVQ 2s get their letter, they get their pay rise from the company. So we're still working at our rate, even though we've passed. It isn't fair.

Learner part funded for Level 3 in a large company working with adults with learning disabilities

Difficulties experienced and learners who pull out

Reasons for leaving training prior to completion

- 183 The ILR data available at the end of June 2007 showed that 3,541 fully funded learners (3 per cent) had left their course without completing it. Five learners who were part funded for Level 3 qualifications had left early. Within the survey, 3 per cent of the respondents had left their course early. These respondents were asked their reasons for dropping out. Table 22 shows that the main reasons revolved around a change of job (44 per cent) or a change in personal circumstances (19 per cent).
- 184 However, 25 per cent of the learners said that they had had insufficient time (either at work, 17 per cent, or at home, 8 per cent) to complete their qualification. A further 8 per cent each said that they thought the quality of their training had been poor or the qualification was not relevant to their job, and 5 per cent had simply lost interest. Other reasons given (by less than 5 per cent of respondents) included: 'wasn't learning anything new', 'changed my mind about what I wanted to do' and 'assessor/training provider stopped coming to workplace'.

Table 22: Reasons for leaving course early/not completing it

	N	%
I left the employer I originally signed up for training with	77	44
My personal/domestic circumstances changed (e.g. moved house, illness, pregnancy, bereavement)	32	19
I did not have enough time at work to do the training	28	17
Quality of training/qualification was poor	16	9
I did not have enough time at home to do the training	13	8
Qualification was not relevant to my job	13	8
Lost interest	8	5

Base = all who did not complete training. Multiple responses given. Only responses above 5 per cent shown.

N = 225

Source: *Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007*

185 In the qualitative research, four fully funded learners and one part funded for a Level 3 qualification had quit their learning. There were no particular patterns discernible in their reasons for leaving, although some of their reasons suggested that greater action by training providers might have helped.

- **Fully funded learner in a large utilities firm:** assessor was absent for a long period during the training. While the need for the absence was understood by the learner (due to a bereavement), they lost interest in the qualification in the intervening period.
- **Fully funded learner at a large sports facility:** missed the last assessment session of the qualification due to illness and had received no information about alternative options to achieve the qualification.

Other difficulties experienced by learners

186 The large majority of learners had experienced few, if any, problems. If they mentioned any during the qualitative interviews, they tended to be minor and had been easily overcome through the support offered by their training provider, employer or colleagues.

- 187 A few learners spoke of personal difficulties that had made their training experience harder. Whether this had any impact on their learning experience depended on their relationship with their training provider and the format of their training. For most, their training was resumed once they returned to work (in itself, this tended to be the larger hurdle).
- 188 Quite a few, on the other hand, had problems at work or with some aspect of their training. The work-related difficulties tended to be a lack of time to complete the qualification at work, or a lack of support from employers.
- 189 Difficulties with the qualification were often connected to the relationship with training provider staff, or to an information gap in terms of content or schedule. For a few learners (five cases out of 140 interviews) their difficulties related to their **portfolios going missing** for some reason. This seemed to happen when their assessor had changed during their studies.

One lady is annoyed with it. They lost her paperwork. She's upset about it. She's done 8 units. Because Mark's [her training provider] left the job, they [the organisation] can't find the paperwork.

Fully funded learner at a small care home

Format and language of the NVQ makes it difficult

- 190 One issue that was noted by many learners who had experienced minor difficulties with their training was the format and language of the NVQ. This sometimes related to the way the portfolio was cross-referenced or the extent of repetition within it, or sometimes the learners simply found the questions and text too wordy.

I was a bit wary in the initial stages as it was the first time I had done any vocational learning. When I first read the guidance notes I was like 'What?!' I found it quite difficult to understand. The assessor really helped me to see the wood for the trees.

Learner part funded for Level 3 at a small restaurant

Quality of the training and assessment

191 Overall, the learners reported that the training and assessment they had received was of good quality. The qualitative research suggested that a number of factors underpinned their view. These included feeling able to contact the provider if they required additional support, and receiving regular feedback about their progress. The factors behind learners' positive quality rating of their learning experience are summarised in Table 23. If more than one of these factors was absent (e.g. poor information and little feedback, or providers not being flexible and not providing good support) then learners generally reported a more negative experience.

Table 23: Factors underpinning the quality of the training and assessment

Factor	Positive description
Learning plan and schedule	Learner receives information about what the training will cover and when and where it will be delivered. An action plan is agreed at each meeting with training provider staff
Positive attitude, encouragement and feedback	Learner receives regular feedback on progress, is encouraged and supported to progress. Delivery style ensures that the learner is treated as an adult
Good communication: support and training schedule	Training provider staff supply contact details and have good communications with learners to enable training schedules to be rearranged when necessary
Flexible and responsive to learners' and employers' business needs	Training provider staff understand that individuals and businesses sometimes require some flexibility – training may need to adapt to these
Good understanding of work and job roles	Learners are confident that training provider staff understand needs of their job
Support and referral	Training providers support learners (encouragement, feedback, attitude) and refer learners on to services (e.g. support services for learning disabilities) where appropriate

Source: *Qualitative interviews with learners, summer 2007*

Many expected their qualification to be more difficult than it was

192 Unsurprisingly, learners who had received pre-entry information and/or a discussion (see section on information, advice and guidance and pre-learning assessments) usually felt well informed. During the qualitative research, they said that they had known what to expect from the NVQ. Some learners who were part funded for Level 3 qualifications and who had

taken an NVQ previously said that this had helped them to know what to expect.

- 193 Whether or not they had received pre-entry IAG and/or a skills assessment, many learners, particularly those who were fully funded, expected their qualification to be more difficult than it was. Most were pleased about this, although in some cases learners had also expected to learn more.

I was impressed, I thought it was going to be a lot harder than it actually was.

Fully funded learner, working as a cleaner in a residential
nursing home

I thought there'd be more reading up. As well as, there's been one observation, that's not an NVQ is it? I thought there was going to be some kind of learning process.

Fully funded learner working for a medium-sized taxi company

I want new skills ... how can I motivate my staff or learn new skills and I don't feel I've got that from this.

Learner part funded for Level 3 working for a medium-sized
clearance company

- 194 While most learners reported that they had no particular anxieties about the course, there was a small group that did (affecting both types of learner and including some who had received some initial IAG). The things they were apprehensive about included:

- learning again or 'going back to the classroom';
- the workload associated with their qualification and balancing this with work and other commitments (particularly learners who were part funded for Level 3 qualifications):

I wanted to make sure I could manage the workload having to work full time as well. That was my main concern.

Learner part funded for Level 3 working at a large college

- being observed:

I was really nervous when I first started, in case I did something wrong, like the way I was cleaning carpets, and I would look stupid.

Fully funded learner working as a domestic assistant in a small care home

- their literacy and numeracy skills, e.g. fearing the qualification involved 'too much writing'.

195 The factors identified by the learners stress the importance of detailed IAG prior to the start of learning, to set appropriate expectations and reduce any anxieties learners might have.

Most learners reported that their qualification was relevant to their work

196 A large number of learners said in the qualitative interviews, whether or not they had received information and/or assessment, that their qualification was very relevant to their work.

It covers exactly the type of thing I do every day.

Fully funded learner in a large financial services company

It's very relevant. A lot of what I learned we'd already covered anyway. There were some things we hadn't, but most of it was either common sense or things you do every day.

Fully funded learner in a large manufacturing company

Attitudes Towards Learning and Work

197 The survey asked learners to respond to a series of statements about their attitudes to learning and work in general. The aim was to draw a baseline at an early stage, to see whether their attitudes and motivations changed when they were surveyed towards the end of their training or after they had finished their qualifications. At this stage, the results mainly represent a benchmark, from which change in subsequent waves of the research may be measured.

Key findings

198 The main findings are as follows.

- While learners generally thought that their current job suited their skills and abilities well, 72 per cent felt that they could do something more challenging, although 26 per cent sometimes found their current job a bit of a struggle.
- Overall, 28 per cent felt that their skills were a lot or a little higher than required for their job.
- The learners in the survey had a generally positive attitude to learning and training in their workplace. For example, they recognised the importance of qualifications (mean score 4.2 on a scale of 1 to 5 – see next paragraph), as well as the importance of the right experience (mean score 4.0). Early leavers (3 per cent of the survey sample) were less positive than other learners about their learning and work experiences and about their employer's approach to training and development.

What do learners think of work and learning generally?

- 199 The learners in the survey were presented with a number of different statements that related to their job and their feelings towards learning and training. For each statement, they were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed, rating this on a scale of 1 to 5, where: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = tend to disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = tend to agree and 5 = strongly agree.
- 200 From the responses, a mean score was calculated, and this is shown in the graphs and tables below. The higher the mean score, the greater the agreement with the statement – i.e. mean scores of between 4 and 5 show an overall agreement with the statement, mean scores of around 3 show a neutral response overall, and mean scores of between 1 and 2 show disagreement overall.

Attitudes towards job at the time of starting the training

- 201 First of all, the learners surveyed were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with a series of statements about the level of difficulty of the job they were doing at the start of the training (Table 24). Some 93 per cent agreed (either strongly or tending to agree) that their job suited their skills and abilities; 72 per cent felt that they could cope with a more challenging job; and 26 per cent felt that their job was sometimes a bit of a struggle.

Table 24: Statements about suitability of job level

	Mean score	% Agreeing
In terms of the skills and abilities I have, my job suits me well	4.5	93
I can do a more challenging job than the one I am doing	3.8	72
Sometimes I find my job a bit of a struggle	2.2	26

Base = all respondents. Mean scores range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

- 202 There were few clear trends in the personal characteristics of learners who reported that their job was a struggle or that they could do more challenging work. However, it appears that those who found their job ‘a bit of a struggle’

were slightly more likely to be from black or minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds, to have a disability, to be young (19 to 25 years old) or middle-aged (36 to 45 years old), or to work in personal service occupations. Those who said they could 'do a more challenging job' appeared slightly more likely to be male.

Attitudes towards current skill levels and needs of the job

203 Learners were then asked for their perspective on four statements concerned with their current skills and how these related to the skills needed for their current or most recent job (Table 25). The highest agreement of 42 per cent was with the statement 'my skills match the needs of my job'. Some 31 per cent of the learners said that, as their job had changed, they needed to develop new skills. However, 28 per cent reported that they felt over-skilled for their job, with 18 per cent agreeing that their skills were 'a little higher than needs of job' and a further 10 per cent agreeing that their skills 'greatly exceed needs of job'.

Table 25: How current skills relate to current job (per cent)

	%
Skills greatly exceed needs of job	10
Skills little higher than needs of job	18
Skills match needs of job	42
Job changes require new skills	31
Total	100

Base = all respondents.

Source: *Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007*

204 The findings showed little variation by ethnicity or age, but men were more likely to report being over-skilled (34 per cent) than were women (24 per cent). There was also some variation by occupation, ranging from a high of 35 per cent for those in elementary occupations to a low of 20 per cent among those in professional occupations and personal service occupations in terms of over-skilling.

Attitudes towards the importance of learning

205 Learners were then asked how they and their employers felt about the importance of training and holding qualifications (Figure 5). This shows that

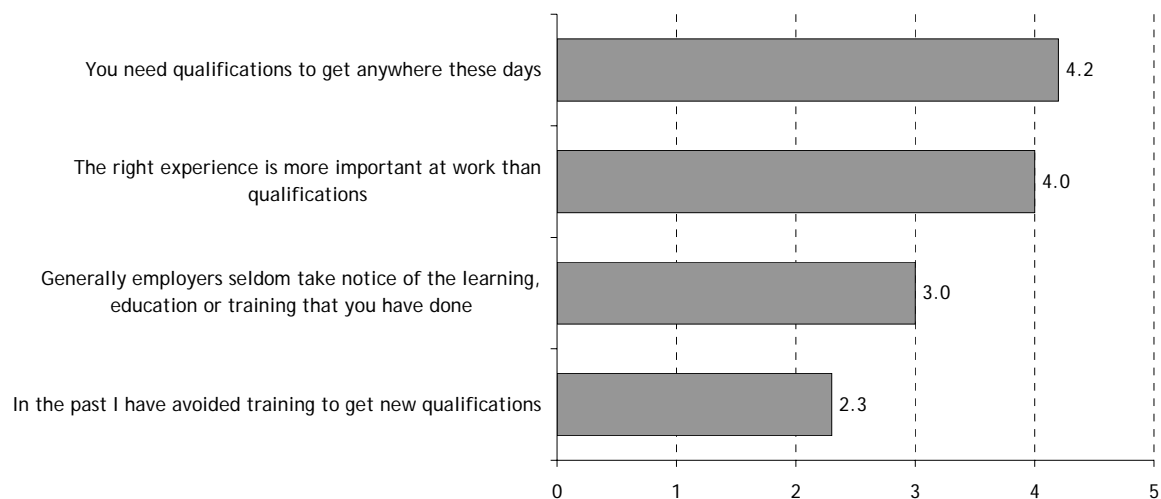
agreement was highest for the statement that ‘you need qualifications to get anywhere these days’, with a mean score of 4.2. However, the agreement was also high that ‘the right experience is more important at work than qualifications’, with a mean score of 4.0.

206 Responses to the statement ‘generally employers seldom take notice of the learning, education or training that you have done’ were neutral, with a mean score of 3.0.

207 With a mean score of 2.3, responses to the statement that ‘in the past I have avoided training to get new qualifications’ were tending towards the negative.

208 Current learners, as well as those who had completed their course, were more likely than those who had quit their course to agree that ‘you need qualifications to get anywhere these days’. The mean score for current learners was 4.3, for completers it was 4.2, and for those waiting to start it was 4.1. Early leavers still tended towards agreement, with a mean score of 3.9.

Figure 5: Importance of training and holding qualifications (mean scores)



Base = all respondents. Mean scores range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

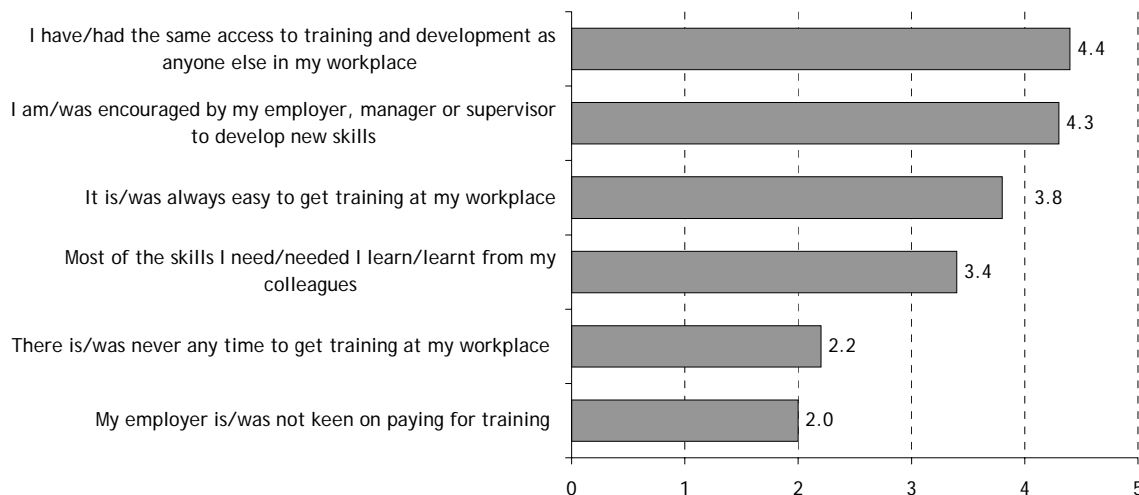
209 BME learners were significantly more likely than white learners to agree that ‘you need qualifications to get anywhere these days’ (mean scores of 4.5 and 4.2, respectively). BME learners were also more likely to agree that ‘employers seldom take notice of the learning, education or training that you

have done' (a mean score of 3.5, compared with a mean score of 2.9 among white learners). There was no variation by ethnicity for the remaining statements, or by other characteristics such as age or gender for any of the statements.

Attitudes towards learning and training in the workplace

- 210 Figure 6 shows the attitudes towards learning and training in the workplace, and provides a generally positive picture. Overall, learners agreed that they have had the 'same access to training and development as anyone else' in the workplace (mean score of 4.4). They also agreed that they have been encouraged by their employer, manager or supervisor to develop new skills (mean score of 4.3).
- 211 A slightly lower score, though still positive, was recorded for the statements that 'it is always easy to get training' in the workplace (mean score of 3.8) and 'most of the skills I need I learn from my colleagues' (mean score of 3.4).
- 212 Disagreement was recorded among all learners for the statements that there was 'never any time to get training' in the workplace (mean score of 2.2) and 'my employer is not keen on paying for training' (mean score of 2.0).

Figure 6: Attitudes towards learning and training in the workplace (mean scores)



Base = all respondents. Mean scores range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

- 213 Mean scores were largely consistent across various subgroups, although younger respondents were significantly more likely than older ones to agree that they learnt all the skills they needed from colleagues (for example, the younger age group of 18 to 25 had a mean score of 3.8, which decreased with age until it reached 3.2 for the oldest age group of 56 and above).
- 214 There were some differences, too, by gender, with women significantly more likely to report that they were encouraged by their employer (mean score of 4.4, compared with 4.1 among men) and that it was easy to get training in the workplace (mean score of 3.9, compared with 3.5 among men).
- 215 The most notable differences, however, were evident during comparison of groups at different stages of their learning. Current and prospective learners and those who had completed their course were more likely than those who had quit to say that they had received encouragement from their employer. The mean score for those who were still learning was 4.3; for completers it was 4.2; and for those about to start it was 4.1. Early leavers tended towards agreement, with a mean score of 3.8.
- 216 Although all groups generally disagreed with the statement that ‘my employer was not keen on paying for training’, the non-completer group disagreed less strongly, with a mean score of 2.5 (compared with scores of between 2.0 and 2.1 for the other groups).

Attitudes towards future career intentions

217 The final set of statements related to future career intentions. Table 26 shows that 70 per cent planned to stay with their current employer for the foreseeable future, and 6 per cent were planning to leave as soon as possible.

Table 26: Future career intentions

	Number	%
I plan to stay with my current employer for the foreseeable future	5,032	70
I am likely to stay with my current employer for at least another year	1,043	15
I plan to leave my current employer as soon as the opportunity arises	439	6
I am likely to leave my current employer within the next year	430	6
I expect to have to leave my current employer within the next year due to redundancy or relocation	248	3
Total	7,192	100

Base = all those in employment.

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

218 Older learners in the survey showed greater commitment to staying with their employer for the foreseeable future, with 78 per cent of those aged 56 and above agreeing with this statement. Commitment levels declined steadily by age, with 48 per cent for the youngest age group (those aged 19 to 25 years).

219 Current and prospective learners, and those who had completed their course, also showed higher levels of commitment than did those who had quit. Their scores ranged from 67 to 71 per cent, while among early leavers it was 55 per cent. A higher proportion of those who had quit learning intended to leave their employer either when the opportunity arose or within the next year, and expected to leave due to redundancy or relocation (Table 27).

Table 27: Future career intentions by learner status (per cent)

	About to start	Still learning	Early leaver	Completed learning
I plan to leave my current employer as soon as the opportunity arises	8	5	14	7
I am likely to leave my current employer within the next year	6	6	9	7
I am likely to stay with my current employer for at least another year	15	15	12	15
I plan to stay with my current employer for the foreseeable future	68	71	55	67
I expect to have to leave my current employer within the next year due to redundancy or relocation	3	3	10	4
Total	100	100	100	100

Base = all those in employment.

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

Early Outcomes

220 This section explores the benefits and outcomes learners hoped to gain from their learning experience. It also looks at those learners who had completed their qualifications, and whether their hopes had been fulfilled. Learners who had completed their course were also asked whether they intended to go on to further learning, and about their satisfaction with their Train to Gain experience overall.

Key findings

221 The main findings were as follows.

- When they started their training, those learners who responded to the survey were looking to gain a qualification (93 per cent), acquire skills to do a future job (88 per cent) and/or do their current job better (86 per cent). Similarly, nearly all completers (93 per cent) said that gaining a qualification had been the key benefit. Slightly fewer completers reported that they had actually gained skills that would fit them for a future job (81 per cent) or that helped them do their current job better (73 per cent). Improved pay and promotion prospects were less commonly cited benefits for both starters and completers.
- Eight learners in ten thought that they and their employer would share equally in the benefits of the training, while 13 per cent thought that they would be the sole beneficiary.
- In the qualitative interviews, learners said that they had become more aware of why they did particular tasks at work and how they could do these better. They reported that they had become more confident in dealing with difficult or unsafe situations.
- Overall, 69 per cent of completers in the survey wanted to go on to do further learning. Four learners in ten had discussed further training options. Those who had received information, advice and guidance (IAG) on progression were more positive that they would take part in further learning than those who had not (77 per cent, compared to 63 per cent).

Factors affecting a learner's inclination to undertake further learning include: their employer's attitude towards training, the age of the learner, their family commitments and their career ambition.

- Learners were generally very happy with their learning experience: 32 per cent said they were extremely satisfied, 45 per cent were very satisfied and 17 per cent fairly satisfied.
- Satisfaction levels were significantly higher among learners who had had a pre-entry discussion about their training or a skills assessment. Similarly, learners who had had some choice over whether to engage with the training were significantly more satisfied with their experience than were those who had had no choice at all.

Potential and actual gains from training

222 In the survey, two groups of learners were asked a similar question about the outcomes of training.

- Those who were currently learning, or were waiting to start, were asked what they hoped to gain from the training.
- Those who had completed their learning were asked what they had gained as a result of training.

223 Table 28 compares the results between these groups and shows that agreement was high for most of the outcomes. Although the two groups were composed of different learners, and therefore the responses were likely to vary a little, the order was relatively consistent.

224 The results of this analysis show that 93 per cent of both groups felt **the qualification** itself would be of benefit; 88 per cent of learners anticipated that they **would gain skills to help them with a future job**, while 81 per cent of completers reported having received such skill gains. Some 87 per cent of learners anticipated gaining **skills that would be attractive to future employers** (88 per cent of completers reported this). Finally, 86 per cent of learners anticipated that they would gain **skills to improve their**

performance in their current job. Rather fewer completers agreed with this than had agreed with the other benefits (73 per cent).

225 The greatest gaps between anticipated and actual outcomes were evident in the outcomes of **better pay** (62 per cent anticipated, but 43 per cent actual), and **promotion** (45 per cent anticipated, 30 per cent actual). However, it may simply be the case that material outcomes take some time to filter through after completion. To put this in some context, by the end of the evaluation of the employer training pilots (ETPs), 31 per cent of learners who had completed their qualification and stayed with their current employer in the same job reported that they had received a pay increase.

Table 28: Outcomes of training – anticipated and actual (different bases)

Outcome	Anticipated		Actual	
	N	%	N	%
A qualification	5,280	93	1,532	93
Skills to help me to do a better job in the future	5,008	88	1,327	81
Skills that will look good to future employers	4,917	87	1,450	88
Skills to help me do my current job better	4,884	86	1,205	73
The chance to learn something new	4,698	83	1,281	78
Improved self-confidence	4,493	79	1,273	78
Skills to help me do a different job in the future	3,659	65	1,025	63
Better pay	3,508	62	702	43
A promotion	2,536	45	492	30
None of these/nothing	29	1	17	1

Base = the 'anticipated' columns represent all those currently in learning or those waiting to start; the 'actual' columns represent all completers. Multiple responses given.

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

226 In both groups, less than 1 per cent of learners felt that they had not gained, or were not likely to gain, any of the outcomes. Although the numbers are too small to draw definitive conclusions, learners who felt that they had not gained (or were not likely to gain) any benefits tended to have had little or no choice about whether to do the qualification.

227 The gains resulting from learning were further explored in the qualitative interviews. All the above outcomes were mentioned, but improved self-confidence was a particular feature of many responses. Modest pay increases and/or job security were also frequently mentioned. The delay between completion and the manifestation of material benefits was likewise illustrated.

We will be [receiving work-related benefits], once the certificate's come. Or the letter saying it's all gone through ... I've been told you do get a pay rise.

Fully funded learner in a medium-sized nursing home

Who gains from the training?

228 Learners in the two groups noted above were asked a similar question about who was thought to benefit from the training.

- Those who were currently learning or were waiting to start were asked who they **anticipated would benefit**.
- Those who had already completed their learning were asked who they felt **had benefited** (Table 29).

Table 29: Who benefits from the training – anticipated and actual (different bases)

	Anticipated		Actual	
	N	%	N	%
You only	733	13	287	18
Your employer only	105	2	61	4
Both you and your employer equally	4,632	83	1,214	74
Neither you nor your employer	102	2	67	4
Too early to say/don't know	14	1	13	1
Total	5,586	100	1,642	100

Base = the 'anticipated' columns represent all those currently in learning or those waiting to start, and who are currently in work; the 'actual' columns represent all completers.

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

- 229 While responses differed a little between the two groups, the majority of both types of learners felt that the benefits of learning would be shared equally between learner and employer (83 per cent anticipated this, while 74 per cent reported this was actually the case). Some 13 per cent of current learners anticipated that only they would benefit, while 18 per cent of the completers thought this. Overall, 2 per cent of learners anticipated that only their employer would benefit and 2 per cent felt no one would benefit. Among the completer group, the figure for these two categories was higher, at 4 per cent.
- 230 Table 30 shows the findings for who gains from the training, according to whether the learning was initiated by the learner or by their employer. Those whose training was initiated jointly are excluded. This analysis shows that self-initiated learners were more likely than the employer-initiated group to report that only they benefited from the learning (26 per cent, compared with 14 per cent).

Table 30: Who benefits from the training – anticipated and actual (different bases) according to who initiated the training (per cent)

	Self-initiated learners only		Employer-initiated learners only	
	Anticipated	Actual	Anticipated	Actual
You only	17	26	13	14
Your employer only	1	2	3	6
Both you and your employer equally	81	69	81	75
Neither you nor your employer	1	2	3	5
Too early to say/don't know	–	1	–	1
Total	100	100	100	100

Base = the 'anticipated' columns represent all those currently in learning or those waiting to start, and who are currently in work; the 'actual' columns represent all completers.

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

231 Learners who had had a prior discussion and/or a prior assessment were less likely than those who had not to report that neither they nor their employer had benefited from the training (4 per cent of those in receipt of pre-entry IAG and/or assessment, compared to 10 per cent of those who had neither).

Training develops awareness and confidence

232 During the qualitative interviews, learners were asked whether the training had made any difference to the way they did their job. The response to this question was mixed, with some saying that it made no difference and others describing how it had made them more aware and/or more confident. However, those who initially said that they had gained nothing often went on to describe an increase in awareness and/or confidence.

Awareness

233 During the qualitative research, learners tried to explain that, although on the surface little had changed in how they did their job, their increased awareness had improved the quality of their work.

I'm more conscious of what I'm doing. Before I just used to do things without thinking, but now I know what I'm trying to achieve and why things need to be done in a certain way.

Learner part funded for Level 3 at a small restaurant

- 234 Two types of awareness were described. The first was an awareness of their tasks and their role, which enabled them to do their job better. These learners described how they now performed tasks more quickly or in a more organised way. Sometimes increased awareness made them more compliant with health and safety procedures, because they better understood the underlying principles. Others developed better awareness of the needs of customers or their clients.

But it does make you feel more confident because you are learning something every single time you go ... even though you think you know it you are just learning it in a better way and it is sort of like an easy wake-up call.

Fully funded learner at a large health organisation

I never used to ask what they wanted to wear, but now because you read about their independence and choices, now I'm constantly saying what do you want to put on in the morning ... one man he's always in jogging trousers and T-shirts and now he's started wearing shirts a lot and wants proper dress trousers because he's got the option. I think it opens your eyes up to think I was treating them all the same.

Fully funded learner in a small residential home for people with
mental health issues

- 235 Second, learners gained an awareness that their work was skilled (which they previously had not realised), and this often led them to value their job more. This awareness in turn influenced their motivation and/or confidence, again with positive outcomes for their job.

You just do your job, you don't think these are skills you've got. It has opened my eyes to the skills I've already gained ... Just proof of what I'm doing. I don't feel I'm gaining any extra knowledge. At the end I'll have a certificate to say I can do the role I'm doing.

Learner part funded for Level 3 working for a medium-sized clearance company

I pay more attention to what I'm doing now. Because we do it every single day without thinking about it but it's actually quite a skill. When they walk out of that room it looks so much better than when they walked in and it smells better. You take more pride in it. I do.

Fully funded learner working for a large health and social care supplier

For years I think these school dinner ladies and cooks and things, you kind of fell into it because it was easier to work around the children, but you weren't thought of as much. But now with the qualifications behind you, it makes it yeah, you are part of the society that have qualifications and things like that.

Fully funded learner with a small care employer

236 Although many spoke about learning to do the same things better, some learners reported gaining new skills and consequent job enrichment.

It taught me a lot. Some of the things my tutor will say I already do, but I don't know what it is called. Then some things I don't do at all ... It's about looking at yourself, self assessing. You're doing this, do it well, you're not doing this, you'd better start doing it.

Learner part funded for Level 3 working in a small information, advice and guidance service

Confidence

237 Confidence was noted very frequently when learners spoke in the qualitative research about what difference the training had made to the way they did

their job. Some reported an improvement in general confidence. Sometimes this helped to counteract previously bad experiences of learning.

I didn't have a lot of confidence before, but it's building up now. Before I was a bit hesitant and I always used to ask for reassurance from the other girls – am I doing this right? Is this ok? – but now I realise that's not the case.

Learner part funded for Level 3 in a small childcare training provider

I didn't get any grades at school, so it's really good that I've got a certificate now.

Fully funded learner working for a medium-sized hotel chain

238 Others reported being more confident in dealing with difficult situations, for example incidents that might arise in their job. They also felt more able to challenge superiors when asked to do something unsafe.

It's made me a lot more confident. I'm more relaxed with situations. If I'm going to a client and know something could happen I used to be quite nervous, but now I feel in control. It's boosted me up.

Fully funded learner for a medium-sized company providing
care in the community

It gave me the confidence to do the job I'm doing and if I'm asked to do something that I know isn't right, I've got the confidence to say that's not right.

Fully funded learner working in a small residential care home
for the elderly

Most learners want to go on learning

239 In the survey, learners who had already completed their learning were asked about their plans for further learning. Overall, 69 per cent felt it was likely that they would progress in learning over the next three years. This group was also asked whether anyone had spoken to them about the further

learning they might do, and 40 per cent reported that they had received progression IAG.

240 Table 31 shows the relationship between progression IAG and the likelihood of undertaking further learning. Some 77 per cent of those who had had a discussion of further learning options thought it was either **very** or **fairly likely** that they would do more learning. The likelihood of further learning among the group that did not receive progression IAG was 63 per cent.

241 In relation to who had initiated the learning, 53 per cent of the self-initiated group reported that they were **very likely** to continue at a higher level, compared with 30 per cent of those whose training was initiated solely by their employer.

Table 31: Likelihood of working for a higher-level qualification in the next three years

	Overall		Whether been spoken to about further training options	
	N	%	Yes %	No %
Very likely	650	40	51	32
Fairly likely	472	29	26	31
Fairly unlikely	223	14	11	15
Very unlikely	214	13	7	17
Too early to say	52	3	3	3
Don't know	31	2	2	2
Total	1,642	100	100	100

Base = completers only.

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

242 During the qualitative interviews, a few learners spoke about the need for a short break before starting on another qualification.

I said, let me do my NVQ 2 first. Get that one out of the way and then I'll consider; I'm sure I'd love to, but I just said, just let me get this one first.

Fully funded learner working in a care home for people with learning disabilities

243 More often, though, the learners did not have a clear idea of what type of further training they would take up, but they were confident that they would

engage in some further training. Learners whose qualifications were fully funded often reported that the learning had had a transformational effect, giving them confidence to do more.

It's mainly I'm eager to do more courses now actually and I actually can do them. Again with me I think it's a confidence thing. Really it's like being back at school and nobody wanted to be at school. But now I've got into it I'm quite happy. It's like anything really. So it's given me that.

Fully funded learner employed as a home support worker

244 More conscious or specific thoughts about further training fell into the following categories. Learners wanted to:

- improve their basic skills;
- go to university or get a degree, either to do a particular course like teaching or simply to reach a particular level:

I'll feel happy when I have a degree, that's my aim.

Learner part funded for Level 3 working in a housing service

- move into another area of work, having identified a route into that work, e.g. a fully funded customer service worker in a large retail firm sought to move into office work, and so wanted to learn about Word and Excel before applying for new jobs;
- learn about using computers;
- find out about a particular area relevant to their current work, e.g. a fully funded senior care worker in a large care company wanted to get training in dementia, because she had some clients who were developing dementia;
- move on to the next level in the area of their current or recent NVQ, to build the area of learning further.

245 However, many (between a third and a half) fully funded learners were not actively seeking further learning. Their attitude was still positive, although their approach would be to sign up should a course 'come up'.

No, if it came up I'd give it a shot.

Fully funded learner in a medium-sized construction company

246 An insight into why some employees do not actively pursue further training through their employer is revealed by the following exchange between an interviewer and a learner. This learner believed that training opportunities were employer driven.

Interviewer: How likely are you to sign up to doing further learning in the next three years?

Learner: I don't know. If it gets offered to me I'll do it.

Interviewer: What if it's not offered?

Learner: I'll probably ask, but if they're not going to offer it, they won't let us do it.

Fully funded learner working in a medium-sized glass
manufacturing firm

Reasons for wanting to participate in further learning

247 The desire to undertake further learning appears to be driven by two considerations. The first is if the work environment is very training oriented (especially in the construction or care work sectors, where legislation requires trained workers) and courses are seen as part of the job. The second is if the individual is intrinsically interested in training and learning.

Training's always ongoing. There's always more courses to do and more areas where you have to improve. One thing about construction is the training never stops, it's always, boys with certain qualifications to do the job.

Learner part funded for Level 3 working as a site manager in a large
construction firm

I'll do more learning, whether it's in this field or another. I think I'm a bit like my sister who's a qualification junkie.

Fully funded learner in a residential home for adults with mental health difficulties

248 The role of training providers also appeared very important, with some learners mentioning very proactive training providers.

The way the college works, once they've got you on one thing they usually push it to the next thing.

Learner part funded for Level 3 working in an administrative role in an FE college

249 There was an interesting range of responses to this: some learners felt slightly pressurised by enthusiastic training providers who encouraged them to sign up for further learning, although a few felt more support could have been offered.

It's too early. Once I've handed in my portfolio.

Learner part funded for Level 3 working at a large college

Early leavers still want to continue learning

250 Those learners who did not complete their course were asked in the survey how likely they were to sign up for further training in the future (Table 32).

Table 32: Likelihood of signing up for future training

	Number	%
Very likely	78	42
Fairly likely	35	19
Fairly unlikely	24	13
Very unlikely	41	22
Too early to say	5	3
Don't know	3	2
Total	186	100

Base = all those who left the training without completing it.

Source: *Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007*

251 Among these learners, 61 per cent felt that it was either **very** or **fairly likely** that they would undertake more learning in the future, despite failing on this occasion. This proportion was only a little lower than that for learners who had completed their course (69 per cent).

252 The early leavers in the qualitative research indicated that they would value the opportunity to return to learning, although the small number interviewed seemed overall less positive than the group in the survey. (It may be that certain types of early leavers were more willing to speak about their experiences in depth.)

Yes, other training would be helpful. You always learn from it and need it some time during your life.

Fully funded learner at a large sports facility

My boss and her boss and the training manager [have talked to me about further learning]. We've got an actual lady employed just to deal with all the training that the employees need and she's outstanding ... very, very helpful especially when you're changing what you want to do.

Fully funded learner working as a chef at a small school

Barriers to further learning

253 During the qualitative research, quite a few learners, when asked about further training and particularly work-related training, felt that they were **too old** or **too close to retirement** to participate. There was little to suggest that the age barrier was externally imposed by the employers or training providers.

Too old ... I think about finishing work in about 18 months, 2 years anyway.

Fully funded learner working in a small nursing home for the elderly

I'm a bit old to do too much. If I was younger, definitely. Given the fact that there are only 8 years of work ... definitely if I was younger and thought I had a longer working life ahead of me I would consider it.

Fully funded learner in a large food manufacturer

254 Another barrier that they mentioned was **childcare and family commitments**. Often, though, this was phrased positively by learners with older children, who mentioned that they now had time for learning.

Nothing major, but if you are a family person it takes a lot of time. With a family and work you don't have enough time for a qualification.

Learner part funded for Level 3 working as a shop floor manager in a food distribution group

I can't think of anything, no. I've had my kids; they've gone out the way, not at home, so it's time for me now!

Fully funded learner in small, residential home for adults with learning disabilities

255 Several learners associated further work-related learning with **promotion**, although if they did not want the promotion, they did not want the associated (i.e. Level 3) training.

The next stage for me would possibly be managing sites or something like that, but I am not interested in it ... As long as I am fit and healthy I will stay with what I am doing.

Learner part funded for Level 3 working in a large construction firm

256 Finally **financial constraints** were mentioned as a barrier to participation. This was especially true for those considering university courses.

Financial. If I was to do a degree it would cost a lot of money, time. I've got children, it's difficult to get that balance.

Learner part funded for Level 3 at a small care home

Overall satisfaction with the training or qualification

257 Overall, those who had completed their qualification expressed high levels of satisfaction in the survey, with 32 per cent noting that they were **extremely satisfied** with their training and 62 per cent saying they were **very satisfied** or **fairly satisfied**. A group representing 4 per cent of learners expressed a negative response (see Table 33).

Table 33: Overall satisfaction with the training

	Number	%
Extremely satisfied	532	32
Very satisfied	734	45
Fairly satisfied	271	17
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	44	3
Fairly dissatisfied	26	2
Very dissatisfied	15	1
Extremely dissatisfied	20	1
Total	1,642	100

Base = completers only.

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

- 258 To illustrate the extent to which satisfaction levels varied across different subgroups of learners, their responses were turned into scores, which ranged from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 7 (extremely satisfied). From the responses, a mean, or average, score was calculated. The higher the mean score, the greater the satisfaction with the training overall: mean scores of between 5 and 7 show an overall satisfaction with the training, mean scores of around 4 show a neutral response overall, and mean scores of between 1 and 3 show dissatisfaction overall.
- 259 On this basis, the satisfaction levels of various groups of learners discussed in the report were analysed (Table 34). Most subgroups score close to the overall mean score of 6.0, denoting high satisfaction.
- 260 However, learners who had received either an assessment or pre-entry IAG were more satisfied than those learners who had had neither. The mean score for learners receiving IAG was 6.1 out of a possible 7, and for those who were assessed, the mean score was 5.9. The mean score for those who had had neither was 5.6.
- 261 Similarly, those who had had a great deal of choice over whether to participate were significantly (confidence levels of 95 per cent) more satisfied (mean score 6.1) than those who had had a small amount of say (mean score 5.7) or those who had had no choice at all (mean score 5.6).

Table 34: Satisfaction with training (mean scores) by subgroup

Overall		Mean score
Type of training provider	Independent	6.1
	FE college	5.9
Who initiated the learning	Self-initiated	6.2
	Employer-initiated	5.9
	Both self- and employer-initiated	6.0
Level of learning¹	Level 1 or below ²	5.9
	Level 2	6.0
	Level 3	6.0
Subject area	Care-related	6.0
	Other	5.9
Amount of prior discussion or assessment	Discussion only	5.9
	Assessment only	6.0
	Both discussion and assessment	6.1
	Neither	5.6
Amount of say over whether to do the training or not	A great deal	6.1
	A fair amount	5.9
	A little	5.7
	None at all	5.6

Base = completers only. Mean scores range from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 7 (extremely satisfied).

¹ Very small numbers of Level 1 and Level 3 learners

² Includes Skills for Life learners

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

262 During the qualitative interviews, learners explained the reasons for their high satisfaction levels. These were partly because the training had been relevant to their jobs and, in sectors where qualification was a legislative requirement (or likely to become one), learners were, in part, satisfied with the opportunity to gain the accreditation. Other reasons included:

- the knowledge and skills they had developed and associated gains in confidence and competence:

I just think you just gain a lot more knowledge and experience from it. I've gained a lot of confidence in it as well, because it's just made my eyes open and given me something to actually work on and really get in it. You know, obviously, because I really enjoy my job anyway, so it's just like further parts to that, really.

Fully funded learner in a small care company

If you're doing the job you might as well get the recognition and getting the qualification improves your confidence.

Learner part funded for Level 3 in a medium-sized care home

- that the qualification had validated that they had certain skills and this would be attractive to future employers:

If you want to further your career or get a better job, then yes, I would [recommend the qualification]. If you're not happy in what you're doing and you want to leave and go on to bigger and better things it's what you have to do ... get a qualification that will help you get a better job.

Fully funded learner in a medium-sized business services company

It's just a useful tool to have. If you were doing this role in 5–6 years and you'd been a manager then when you go to the next job you've got proof. I managed this many staff ... if you've got a certificate to say you can manage.

Learner part funded for Level 3 working for a medium-sized clearance company

- gaining a qualification while working demonstrated to employers a positive attitude to personal and professional development:

I have been quite happy, especially as I now have a certificate to present to an employer and keep in my files. I can say that although I worked in a factory, I did not waste my time. I was earning money and studying at the same time. I can say I studied NVQ for 6 months.

Fully funded learner at a large manufacturing company

- the personal achievement associated with completion of qualifications:

I'm satisfied. Because I've been wanting an NVQ for so long because I messed about when I was young ... the NVQ's been good.

Fully funded learner in a cleaning company

- the value placed on receiving funded learning:

Not many people pay you to go on a course; once you get it you should take advantage.

Learner part funded for Level 3 working for a small organisation in the transport sector

263 Among the learners who were part funded for Level 3 qualifications, there was a greater awareness that having qualified workers was important to employers for legislative reasons, or to demonstrate competency and good practice for contracts (e.g. in construction).

264 The qualitative research also suggested an age and/or experience dimension to some learners' satisfaction. This group was no less satisfied, but felt that the value of qualifying would be more for younger or less experienced workers than for them.

I would say 'go for it', especially if you are a younger person, get as many qualifications as you can. The more qualifications you have got the more chances you will get these days. Years ago you didn't need it but today you need qualifications and to be enthusiastic then you are in.

Fully funded learner in a large manufacturing organisation

265 Where learners expressed any dissatisfaction, this often linked to a lack of IAG at the outset. For some, no one had explained the value of the qualification and what difference it might make. Others simply felt it was too easy to be of benefit. However, a small number were also dissatisfied with the format of the NVQ.

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If they actually came out and they taught you how to do something. It is always beneficial to learn but you are not helping anyone really by proving what you are already know.

Learner part funded for Level 3 in a large construction company

Conclusions

- 266 This report has analysed the findings from the first wave of the Train to Gain learner survey and the first round of qualitative interviews. Further surveys will track learners' involvement with the service and their subsequent training and employment behaviour. As well as drawing a baseline of learners' views on training and employment, the first wave of research covered learners' initial involvement in the training. A fifth of the learners had completed their course and most were very satisfied and thought that their skills had improved as a result.
- 267 It is interesting to note the profile of the learners taking part, as the policy intends individuals with low skills to be particular beneficiaries. Most had left school at 16 or earlier; over three-quarters had either had no or only low qualifications. More than half worked in personal service, process and elementary occupations, where low levels of qualifications and skills predominate. The qualitative research highlighted one issue that may increase participation in Train to Gain: if employers approach learners with information about courses rather than just advertising a course in the workplace and leaving learners to put themselves forward.
- 268 The research has highlighted aspects of the process that may warrant attention, for example the variation in learners' initial experiences. Half of the learners involved in Train to Gain had had a discussion about their training needs **and** some form of skills assessment prior to signing up to their training. Both were significant to learners' outcomes. Those who had had a pre-training discussion and an assessment were more satisfied than those who had had neither (although the latter were still generally satisfied with their learning).
- 269 Two-thirds of the learners had been involved in a pre-entry discussion, and among those who were fully funded, group information sessions were common. It was more likely for learners whose Level 3 qualifications were part funded to think that a one-to-one approach was important.
- 270 The qualitative interviews suggested that, once they had embarked on their training, learners benefited from having an individual learning plan (ILP),

which enabled them to know what they would be doing and when, and to track their own progress. Having control over their portfolio also helped learners better understand their progress and the value of the qualification.

271 Where the training was working well, learners mentioned that training provider staff were good communicators, easily contactable and readily approachable. In these ways, training provider staff supported learners through any difficulties experienced.

272 Drawing together the themes that emerged in the survey analysis and the qualitative interviews, a set of 'good-practice' factors emerges in Train to Gain delivery. These reflect how the policy is intended to operate.

- **Support for learning in the employing organisation:** A positive approach to training, with systems that allow all training needs to be identified, rather than simply mandatory training opportunities. Learners benefit from having an employer who is interested in, and who acknowledges, their learning, and who provides learners with adequate time and resources to complete their qualification.
- **Raising awareness and encouraging learning participation:** Learners would prefer greater outreach and encouragement from managers within their organisation to sign up to learning. This would entail a personal invitation to enter the training, rather than the general advertising, which then means that the learners themselves must request the training.
- **Pre-entry information, advice and guidance:** The research has identified the importance of information advice and guidance (IAG) from an impartial source. This sets realistic expectations of the qualifications. The analysis suggests that the minimum coverage of information should be:
 - **what is involved** – the number of modules to be undertaken, when and where the learning will take place, the mode of assessment;
 - **how the learning will be assessed** – the nature and purpose of pre-entry assessment, etc.;

- where group information sessions are offered, there should also be an **opportunity for an individual session** and, within this, signposting for further IAG services for individuals who want more in-depth help (to aid career planning and to support career transition).
- **Pre-entry assessments:** A Skills for Life assessment ensures that learners are able to work effectively towards their qualification. However, the test should be designed for working adults. The best-practice Assess–Train–Assess model, which accredits prior learning and assesses the job role and the learner’s skills, ensures that the qualification is tailored to an individual’s skill gaps.
- **Individual learning plan:** The ILP provides a focus, as well as a record of progress for learners. It ensures that learners understand when and where the training and assessment will take place, and how frequently. This enables learners (and employers) to accommodate their qualification more easily. Ideally, opportunities will exist for training to be rearranged (if required), facilitated through good communications with training providers.
- **Support to learn, regular feedback and encouragement:** Learners appreciate the support of training providers. This is perceived as the training provider taking an andragogy approach to delivery, as well as providing regular feedback and encouragement.
- **Celebration and acknowledgement on completion:** If employers celebrate and acknowledge the achievements of learners, this leads to greater feelings of success.
- **IAG about future learning opportunities:** Completers who had received post-qualification IAG from their training provider about further learning opportunities were more positively disposed to entering further learning. Fully funded learners particularly required IAG about the opportunities to progress.

Annex A: The Characteristics of the Train to Gain Learner Population

Table 1: Gender and race

	Female		Male		White		BME		Not known		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Fully funded learners											
Not given	1,233	26	3,565	74	4,287	89	467	10	44	1	4,798
East of England	6,234	59	4,273	41	8,884	85	1,242	12	379	4	10,507
East Midlands	5,358	43	7,101	57	10,683	86	1,551	12	225	2	12,459
Greater London	6,296	60	4,174	40	5,691	54	4,048	39	731	7	10,470
North East	5,636	49	5,949	51	11,039	95	327	3	219	2	11,585
North West	11,520	50	11,552	50	20,791	90	1,700	7	578	3	23,072
South East	7,806	48	8,413	52	14,013	86	1,650	10	554	3	16,219
South West	5,940	55	4,902	45	9,983	92	639	6	220	2	10,842
West Midlands	12,924	53	11,463	47	20,269	83	3,704	15	412	2	24,387
Yorkshire & Humberside	9,213	42	12,897	58	19,642	89	2,021	9	446	2	22,110
<i>Total</i>	<i>72,160</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>74,289</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>125,282</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>17,349</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>3,808</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>146,449</i>
Part-funded Level 3 learners											
Greater London	92	94	6	6	25	37	32	48	2	3	8
North West	74	31	163	69	165	98			2	1	1
West Midlands	236	77	71	23	261	88	27	9	6	2	2
<i>Total</i>	<i>402</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>240</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>451</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>11</i>

Source: ILR data, end June 2007

Table2: Age

	19–25		26–35		36–45		46–55		56+		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Fully funded learners											
Not given	748	16	1,419	30	1,389	29	861	18	381	8	4,798
East of England	1,157	11	2,583	25	3,299	31	2,436	23	1,032	10	10,507
East Midlands	1,442	12	3,072	25	3,803	31	2,833	23	1,307	11	12,459
Greater London	1,178	11	3,104	30	3,110	30	2,186	21	892	9	10,470
North East	1,530	13	2,496	22	3,721	32	2,807	24	1,029	9	11,585
North West	2,690	12	5,649	25	7,496	33	5,129	22	2,108	9	23,072
South East	1,782	11	4,161	26	5,045	31	3,700	23	1,531	9	16,219
South West	1,418	13	2,596	24	3,262	30	2,401	22	1,165	11	10,842
West Midlands	3,093	13	6,297	26	7,669	31	5,208	21	2,120	9	24,387
Yorkshire & Humberside	2,845	13	5,723	26	6,999	32	4,629	21	1,914	9	22,110
<i>Total</i>	<i>17,883</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>37,100</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>45,793</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>32,190</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>13,479</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>146,449</i>
Part-funded Level 3 learners											
Greater London	10	10	37	38	28	29	16	16	7	7	98
North West	19	8	62	26	83	35	52	22	21	9	237
West Midlands	71	23	90	29	87	28	41	13	18	6	307
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>189</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>198</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>642</i>

Source: ILR data, end June 2007

Table 3: Disabilities

	Physical and learning disabilities				Learning disability				Not given		Total N
	Disabled		Not disabled		Learning disabled		Not learning disabled		N	%	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Fully funded learners											
Not given	319	7	4,376	93	243	5	4,450	93	105	2	4,798
East of England	1,353	13	9,005	87	393	4	9,944	95	170	2	10,507
East Midlands	507	5	9,602	95	311	3	9,784	79	2,364	19	12,459
Greater London	689	7	9,287	93	390	4	9,564	91	516	5	10,470
North East	383	3	10,896	97	199	2	11,066	96	320	3	11,585
North West	1,150	5	21,048	95	731	3	21,426	93	915	4	23,072
South East	769	5	14,946	95	389	2	15,310	94	520	3	16,219
South West	753	7	9,610	93	529	5	9,796	90	517	5	10,842
West Midlands	2,374	10	21,298	90	1,534	6	22,077	91	776	3	24,387
Yorkshire & Humberside	1,050	5	20,670	95	575	3	21,115	96	420	2	22,110
<i>Total</i>	<i>9,347</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>130,738</i>	<i>93</i>	<i>5,294</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>134,532</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>6,623</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>146,449</i>
Part-funded Level 3 learners											
Greater London	2	2	96	98	1	1	96	98	1	1	98
North West	7	3	223	97	3	1	227	96	7	3	237
West Midlands	7	2	289	98	5	2	291	95	11	4	307
<i>Total</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>608</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>614</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>642</i>

Source: ILR data, end June 2007

Table 4: Highest prior attainment recorded on ILR

	Not known		No qualifications		Qualifications below Level 2		Level 2 qualifications		Qualification above Level 2		Total N
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Fully funded learners											
Not given	57	1	2,587	54	2,150	45	4	0			4,798
East of England	78	1	6,109	58	4,311	41	9	0			10,507
East Midlands	517	4	8,595	69	3,328	27	16	0	3	0	12,459
Greater London	1,172	11	5,489	52	3,748	36	58	1	3	0	10,470
North East	775	7	6,752	58	3,872	33	147	1	39	0	11,585
North West	489	2	14,124	61	8,350	36	108	1	1	0	23,072
South East	646	4	9,582	59	5,983	37	8	0			16,219
South West	150	1	6,219	57	4,433	41	33	0	7	0	10,842
West Midlands	116	1	12,776	52	11,219	46	270	1	6	0	24,387
Yorkshire & Humberside	225	1	15,713	71	6,067	27	76	0	29	0	22,110
<i>Total</i>	<i>4,225</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>87,946</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>53,461</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>729</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>146,449</i>
Part-funded Level 3 learners											
Greater London			11	11	33	34	54	55			98
North West	45	19	77	33	33	14	82	35			237
West Midlands	4	1	43	14	28	9	232	76			307
<i>Total</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>131</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>368</i>	<i>57</i>			<i>642</i>

Source: ILR data, end June 2007

Table 5: The training providers that learners are engaged with

	Public training provider		Independent training provider		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
Fully funded learners¹					
Not given			4,146	100	4,798
East of England	6,257	64	3,542	36	10,507
East Midlands	6,596	54	5,524	46	12,459
Greater London	6,215	59	4,255	41	10,470
North East	5,159	46	5,952	54	11,585
North West	13,129	60	8,636	40	23,072
South East	8,412	66	4,268	34	16,219
South West	5,118	54	4,391	46	10,842
West Midlands	12,346	52	11,326	48	24,387
Yorkshire & Humberside	10,626	50	10,819	50	22,110
<i>Total</i>	<i>73,858</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>62,859</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>146,449</i>
Part-funded Level 3 learners¹					
Greater London	76	78	22	22	98
North West	188	81	44	19	237
West Midlands	128	43	168	57	307
<i>Total</i>	<i>392</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>234</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>642</i>

¹ External institution coded to private training provider; third sector training providers coded to independent training provider.

Source: ILR data, end June 2007

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Table 6: Course framework

	Agriculture		Construction		Engineering		Manufacturing		Transportation		Management & professional		Business administration		Retailing & customer service		Leisure, sport & travel		Hospitality		Hair and beauty		Health, care & public services		Media and design		Not given		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Fully funded learners¹																													
Not given			1,651	38	103	2	109	3			213	5	374	9	506	12	2	0	52	1			492	11			808	19	4,310
East of England	126	1	494	5	183	2	737	8	317	3	857	9	773	8	1,193	13	32	0	358	4	3	0	3,086	33			1,102	12	9,261
East Midlands	83	1	3,152	30	232	2	1,218	12	363	3	481	5	652	6	835	8	3	0	422	4	9	0	2,378	23	8	0	693	7	10,529
Greater London			748	8	228	3	4	0	507	6	700	8	951	11	1,265	14	352	4	311	4	2	0	3,140	35			674	8	8,882
North East	15	0	1,318	16	323	4	615	7	190	2	582	7	370	4	1,153	14	27	0	126	2	3	0	3,191	38			481	6	8,394
North West	133	1	2,229	14	410	3	663	4	814	5	1,213	7	1,425	9	1,796	11	523	3	325	2	18	0	5,679	34			1,326	8	16,554
South East	42	0	3,083	21	90	1	1,634	11	312	2	1,011	7	855	6	1,530	10	125	1	609	4	12	0	4,549	31	10	0	1,073	7	14,935
South West	48	1	781	9	121	1	696	8	296	3	878	10	656	7	949	10	296	3	801	9	7	0	3,153	34			499	5	9,181
West Midlands	20	0	1,086	6	269	1	1,838	9	1,118	6	2,581	13	1,668	9	4,749	24	477	2	1,443	7	16	0	3,267	17			1,116	6	19,648
Yorkshire & Humberside	60	0	2,301	14	800	5	1,528	9	613	4	2,420	15	1,009	6	3,090	19	63	0	649	4	20	0	3,385	20			780	5	16,718
Total	527	0	16,843	14	2,759	2	9,042	8	4,530	4	10,936	9	8,733	7	17,066	14	1,900	2	5,096	4	90	0	32,320	27	18	0	8,552	7	118,412
Part-funded Level 3 learners																													
Greater London											16	16	22	22	6	6							31	32			23	24	98
North West			91	38	17	7					10	4	7	3	2	1							68	29			42	18	237
West Midlands	4	1	6	2	17	6					57	19	28	9	16	5	9	3	2	1	5	2	158	52			5	2	307
Total	4	1	97	15	34	5					83	13	57	9	24	4	9	1	2	0	5	1	257	40			70	11	642

¹ Only learners registered to courses by July 2007.

Source: ILR data, end June 2007

Table 7: Single or combination qualification uptake; level of qualifications – fully funded learners

	Type of qualification						Level of qualification						Total N
	NVQ or equivalent ONLY		NVQ or equivalent AND Skills for Life		Skills for Life ONLY		Below Level 2		Level 2		Level 3		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
East Midlands	10,107	96	229	2	193	2	105	0	9,848	98	576	3	10,529
East of England	8,555	92	582	6	124	1	76	1	8,757	94	428	6	9,261
Greater London	8,238	93	485	6	159	2	122	1	8,102	91	658	7	8,882
North East	7,961	95	404	5	29	0	34	0	7,646	91	714	9	8,394
North West	15,361	93	762	5	431	3	255	2	15,297	92	1,002	6	16,554
South East	14,119	95	731	5	85	1	30	0	13,916	93	989	7	14,935
South West	9,073	99	74	1	34	0	21	0	8,632	94	528	6	9,181
West Midlands	18,380	94	1,236	6	32	0	25	0	18,526	94	1,097	6	19,648
Yorkshire & Humberside	15,742	94	898	5	78	1	50	0	15,998	96	670	4	16,718
National	4,019	93	39	1	252	6	250	6	3,858	90	202	5	4,310
Total	111,555	94	5,440	5	1,417	1	968	1	110,580	93	6,864	6	118,412

Source: ILR data, end June 2007

Table 8: Level of courses taken by learners who are part funded for Level 3 qualifications

	Level 3		Level 4		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
Greater London	98	100	0	0	98
North West	220	93	17	7	237
West Midlands	302	98	5	2	307
Total	620	96	22	3	642

Base: learners on NVQ or equivalent courses.

Source: ILR data, end June 2007

Annex B: The Characteristics of Learners in the Survey and the Qualitative Interviews

1 This annex outlines the main characteristics of the survey sample achieved and of the sample achieved for the qualitative interviews.

Learning status

- 2 In the survey, all learners were asked a series of questions to confirm that they were eligible to take part. They were asked:
- whether they had, since April 2007, started a training course that would lead to a qualification;
 - whether they were about to start a training course during work time that would lead to a qualification;
 - whether they were about to start job-related training in their own time that would lead to a qualification; or
 - whether they were currently doing any other learning or training, during work time, that would lead to a qualification.
- 3 They were also asked about their progress with the training, including whether they had already finished, or had decided not to continue. From these responses, each of the learners was classified as 'about to start', 'still learning', 'early leaver' and 'completed learning'. Most (70 per cent) were part way through their course (Table 1).
- 4 Of those who had stopped training, either because they had completed the course or because they had chosen not to continue, most (80 per cent) had done so less than three months before being interviewed (Table 2).

Table 1: Learning status of respondents

Status	Number	%
About to start	456	6
Still learning	5,216	70
Early leaver/non-completer	186	3
Completed learning	1,642	22
Total	7,500	100

Base = all respondents.

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

Table 2: When learner had stopped training

How long ago	Number	%
In the last 2 weeks	393	22
2–4 weeks ago	331	18
1–3 months ago	743	41
More than 3 months ago	361	20
Total	1,828	100

Base = completers and early leavers only.

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

- 5 The qualitative interviews took place between two and three months after the survey. The sample for the interviews with fully funded learners was designed to reflect their learning status at the point of the survey, although learners who had yet to start or had only recently started were excluded from the sample frame, since they would have little experience to discuss. By the time of the interviews, many of those who were still learning when they were surveyed told us that they had since completed their qualifications (Table 3).

- 6 The large majority of the learners who were part funded for Level 3 qualifications were still learning at the point when the sample for the interviews was designed. The sample frame for this group was drawn from the individualised learner record (ILR) and there were no exclusions by the recorded start date. Table 4 shows the self-reported status of their qualifications of the learners whose Level 3 qualifications are part funded.

Table 3: Learning status at time of interview – fully funded learners

	Completed	Early leaver	Still learning	Total
East Midlands	5	1	3	9
East of England	7		1	8
Greater London	8	1	6	15
North East	8		6	14
North West	3	1	2	6
South East	7		6	13
South West	4	1	2	7
West Midlands	9		8	17
Yorkshire & Humberside	6		5	11
Total	57	4	38	100

Source: Wave 1 qualitative interviews, summer 2007

Table 4: Learning status of the part-funded Level 3 learners

Region	Completed	Still learning	Total
Greater London	0	12	12
North West	8	5	13
West Midlands	2	13	15
Total	10	30	40

Source: Wave 1 qualitative interviews, summer 2007

Personal characteristics

7 The survey collected data on the personal characteristics of learners, such as gender, ethnicity, health status, age and region of domicile. The key features of the sample are as follows.

- Some 65 per cent were female.
- Some 91 per cent of respondents gave their ethnicity as white/white British. Slightly over 3 per cent of respondents were Asian/Asian British and slightly less than 3 per cent were black/black British. Chinese or other ethnic background and mixed heritage backgrounds accounted for less than 1 per cent each. Ethnicity for the remainder was not recorded.
- Overall, 8 per cent of respondents considered that they had a learning difficulty, disability or health problem. Disabilities recorded by the respondents included medical conditions such as epilepsy, asthma or diabetes (112 respondents), visual impairments (53 respondents), multiple disabilities (33 respondents) and

disabilities affecting mobility (27 respondents). Respondents included those with moderate learning difficulties (137 respondents), dyslexia (115 respondents) and multiple learning difficulties (nine respondents).

- The largest populated age band was the 36 to 45 years group, which accounted for 36 per cent of the learners, followed by 46 to 55 years, which accounted for 27 per cent. The remainder of the respondents were aged: 18 to 25 (8 per cent); 26 to 35 (19 per cent); and 56 and above (10 per cent).
- The largest proportion of learners came from the LSC region of the North East (23 per cent). Other respondents came from: West Midlands (17 per cent), South East (12 per cent), South West (11 per cent), East Midlands (9 per cent), North East (9 per cent), East of England (7 per cent), Yorkshire and Humberside (6 per cent) and Greater London (5 per cent). The origin was unknown for the remainder.

Characteristics of the fully funded learners who were interviewed for the qualitative work

- 8 In the qualitative work, the gender split for the fully funded learners was slightly rebalanced so that 45 men were interviewed. Twenty of the fully funded learners interviewed were from black or minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds and seven had a physical or learning disability. In terms of their age, 40 learners were in the 36–45 age band, and 24 were aged between 46 and 55. Fifteen of the learners were in the 26–35 age band, eleven were in the 18–25 age band, and 10 learners were aged 56 and above.
- 9 The sample was originally designed to reflect the regional spread of learners in the survey. However, the sample achieved is slightly different (Table 3). In part, this is because learners' addresses were quite dispersed within the regions; also learners cancelled interview appointments or were not at home at the appointed time. These factors combined with the fact that research was conducted simultaneously in two or more regions in most weeks of the fieldwork period. This meant that it was not always possible to reschedule appointments, and so the quota was raised elsewhere.

Characteristics of the learners part funded for Level 3 qualifications who were interviewed for the qualitative work

10 The sample frame for the learners who were part funded for Level 3 qualifications was the ILR data drawn in July 2007. The research aimed to sample similar numbers in each region. The regional spread of the interviews is shown in Table 4. In terms of their personal characteristics:

- in Greater London all 12 were female, 10 were BME, none had a disability. One learner was aged between 18 and 25, four were in the 26–35 band, three each were from the 36–45 and 46–55 age bands, and one was older than 55;
- in the North West, three of the 13 learners were women, all were white, and none had a disability. No learners were aged between 18 and 25, but three learners were interviewed from each of the other age bands;
- in the West Midlands, 10 women and five men were interviewed. Four of these learners were BME, but again none had a disability. One learner was aged between 18 and 25, another was older than 55. Six were in the 26–35 age band, five were aged between 36 and 45, and two were in the 46–55 age band.

Occupation and work

11 The vast majority (98 per cent) of respondents were currently working. Table 5 indicates the occupational group of the respondents and shows a wide range of occupations represented. The single largest occupational group was personal service occupations (which include healthcare, childcare and animal care, and leisure services such as leisure and travel occupations, as well as people employed as hairdressers, housekeepers and caretakers), which accounted for 35 per cent of the respondents.

Table 5: Occupational group (current or most recent occupation)

	N	%
Managers and senior officials	421	6
Professional occupations	193	3
Associate professional and technical occupations	427	6
Administrative and secretarial occupations	557	7
Skilled trades occupations	911	12
Personal service occupations	2,601	35
Sales and customer service occupations	654	9
Process, plant and machine operatives	834	11
Elementary occupations	847	11
Other/not known/unemployed	55	1
Total	7,500	100

Base = all respondents.

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

- 12 Some 18 per cent had only joined their current employer within the last year, and a majority (61 per cent) had been with their current employer for between one and seven years. At the higher end, 1 per cent of respondents had been with their current employer for 22 years or more.

- 13 Eight in ten (80 per cent) of those who had only joined their current employer within the last year reported that they had previously been working, either for a different employer doing the same sort of work (34 per cent), or for a different employer doing a different kind of work (46 per cent). Some 12 per cent had previously been unemployed or not working for a period of more than six months, and 2 per cent had previously been in full-time training or learning.

- 14 In the survey, 50 per cent of the learners reported that they had done some sort of training related to their job in the previous year.

Train to Gain learning activity

15 The vast majority of respondents were doing NVQ or equivalent learning only, with 2 per cent doing Skills for Life only, and the remaining 5 per cent doing both (Table 6). A wide range of subject areas were represented, but nearly 31 per cent of learners were doing training in a care-related area.

Table 6: Level of current course and subject area

		N	%
Subject of current learning	Care	2,358	31
	Customer services	611	8
	Team leading	326	4
	Administration	310	4
	IT	274	4
	Performing manufacturing operations	227	3
	Retail	217	3
	Teaching assistants	211	3
	Cleaning & support	178	2
	Other	2,788	37
	Total	7,500	100
Single or combined learning aims	NVQ or equivalent only	6,984	93
	NVQ or equivalent and Skills for Life	392	5
	Skills for Life only	123	2
	Not known	1	–
	Total	7,500	100

Base = all respondents.

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

16 The only relevant quota applied to the qualitative interviews related to the course being studied, although this in turn relates to occupation. Health and social care courses accounted for 23 per cent of the fully funded learners and 25 per cent of those part funded for Level 3 qualifications. The total number of interviews with learners taking these courses was 32. Only one of the learners interviewed was only taking a Skills for Life qualification.

Relationship between current and prior learning level

17 There appears to be no significant relationship between the level of learning undertaken by Train to Gain learners in the survey and their prior qualification level (Table 7).

Table 7: Highest previous qualification level held, by level of current learning (per cent)

Prior qualification level	Train to Gain learning		
	Below Level 2	Level 2	Above Level 2
No qualifications held	37	35	27
Below Level 2	34	34	35
Level 2	13	13	17
Level 3	4	3	3
Level 4	1	2	1
Level 5+	0	0	0
Not known	10	13	17
Total	100	100	100

Base = all respondents.

Note: very small numbers of learners below and above Level 2.

Source: Wave 1 learner survey, spring 2007

Annex C: Bibliography

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