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Learner Journeys Research – Residential Bursaries

March 2010

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

Further information

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LSC Learner Journeys Research – Residential Bursaries

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Background

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

Overall, 199 interviews (out of a total of 10,688 across all Learner Support schemes) were conducted amongst learners receiving *Residential Bursaries*.

1.2 Engagement

Residential Bursaries have a degree of positive impact on engagement in learning. Two-fifths of learners (40%) who knew about the bursary before deciding to do their original course may not have done the course if the funding had not been available.

Most learners (83%) found it easy to find out about Residential Bursaries.

Learners funded through Residential Bursaries have significant levels of concern about general living expenses, the cost of transport and course materials.

More than half the learners received general advice or guidance about financial support for learning. However, with nearly half not receiving such advice or guidance there is still scope for wider access to advisory services.

1.3 Retention and persistence in learning

The retention rate for learners receiving Residential Bursaries was estimated by the survey to be 88%. (The retention rate is the proportion of learners who complete their course whether they achieve the qualification or not.) An overall National Further Education retention rate of 87% (achieved in both 2005/06 and 2006/07) forms a reasonable benchmark for the Scheme's retention rate.

The funding has a positive impact on retention. A third of completers (31%) feel that they could not have finished their course without the funding. More than two-fifths of those who are still on the course (42%) say that they would be at risk of dropping out without the funding.

The main reasons for early leaving were feeling that the course is not right for them and changes in personal circumstances. However, financial issues are a significant factor and more than a third (38%) of early leavers report that financial issues influenced their decision to leave their course.

Amongst those who left the course before completion, general living costs are the most frequent cause of financial problems whilst in learning.

1.4 Achievement

The success rate for learners supported by Residential Bursaries was estimated by the survey to be 86%. (The success rate is the number achieving the qualification as a percentage of those starting the course.). An overall National Further Education success rate of around 77% (based on rates of 76% in 2005/06 and of 77% in 2006/07) forms a reasonable benchmark for the Scheme figure.

Nearly all those completing their original course (97%) achieved a qualification. A large majority agreed that Residential Bursaries helped them to achieve a qualification.

The proportion of learners with an NVQ equivalent qualification increased following their funded course. Furthermore, the proportion of learners having a Level 3 qualification or above is significantly greater after completing the course for which learners received Residential Bursaries.

1.5 Learning progression

More than a quarter of the learners (29%) who are no longer on their original course have progressed into, or registered for, further learning and, of these, most (87%) are learning at a higher level.

Of those who failed to complete their original learning and have not progressed, 33% said they would have considered more learning if more financial support had been available.

More than three-fifths of those who are either still on or have completed their further learning have received some financial assistance. Thus, more than a third has continued learning without financial support.

Financial support received for further learning is most likely to have been other grants, including student loans and bursaries (other than Discretionary Hardship funding).

All of the learners who did receive further financial support for learning and achieved a qualification report that the financial support has helped them to achieve more qualifications.

All those achieving a qualification from their further learning achieved a Level 3 qualification for the first time.

1.6 Employment progression

The great majority (92%) of learners believe that the funding they received helped them progress in their work/career. Of these a high proportion (54% overall) feel it helped a great deal.

Following learning, learners are more likely to be in employment. Much new employment is full-time, inactivity has reduced considerably, and the proportion of those who are unemployed has risen slightly.

1.7 Personal and social benefits

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

1.8 Conclusions

The research provides evidence of the positive impact of Residential Bursaries.

- Residential Bursaries have a significant positive effect on engagement, retention, attainment and learning progression.
- Information on Residential Bursaries was easily available to its recipients. (However, the survey was, of course, only of Bursary recipients. We did not survey young people who are eligible for Residential Bursaries but did not receive funding. However, further research has been commissioned by the LSC to explore the needs of more disadvantaged learners and non-learners and will cover issues around access to IAG amongst those not in learning.)
- The Residential Bursaries retention rate exceeds the national FE rate and the success rate significantly exceeds the national FE rate.
- In addition to learning benefits, virtually all Residential Bursaries-funded participants achieve and acknowledge social or personal benefits which may lead to future progression and development.
- The majority of participants consider that the funding they have received has helped them progress in their work or career. This is supported by the fact that there has been an increase in employment following the learning and that much of the new employment is full-time.

Issues to consider in the further development of Residential Bursaries funding

- There may have been some historic weakness in the scope of provision of information, advice, and guidance on learning opportunities and on the funding available to support take-up of those opportunities. For example, before their courses, little more than half of these learners had received general information, advice and guidance about the range of funding which might be available to them. Clearly there is scope for improvement in this area. Subsequently, though Residential Bursaries clearly have positive impacts on retention, for a minority, there remains a need for continuing support and guidance if early leaving is to be reduced to a minimum. This may need to link Residential Bursaries to other forms of financial support including discretionary funding which is able to respond to individual needs and circumstances.
- Subsequent to Bursaries-supported learning, around a quarter of learners are unemployed or inactive. These circumstances may reflect difficult economic circumstances (and the unemployment rate may not be greatly different from the average rate for the age group in England as a whole). However, these findings reinforce the importance of guidance, towards the end of courses, which identifies employment or further educational or training options and encourages learners to pursue them.

2 Background

2.1 Background

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.2 Methodology

10,688 interviews were conducted with learners in several of the LSC's financial support schemes (including Education Maintenance Allowance, Adult Learning Grant, and others) over three academic years.

A stratified random sample was drawn by funding scheme, the year in which funding was received, and the gender and age of learners. Where the sample was relatively small by year of funding, contacts were maximised. Where sufficient sample was provided to achieve minimum targets, quotas were set.

Within the overall total, 199 interviews were conducted amongst Residential Bursaries recipients. [Residential Bursaries are for learners aged 16 or over who are 'ordinarily resident' in England who cannot find the course they want to study on within a 'reasonable daily travelling distance' from home. Bursaries are offered by colleges and are not available on all courses or at all colleges. More information about the scheme can be obtained via the following weblink: <http://learnersupport.lsc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/1A093211-FB43-4320-94BA-1AF411FFCAC6/0/QuickRefGuideResidentialBursaryFundmdgc.pdf> Interviews were undertaken by telephone with recipients living across England.

The following table shows the number of contacts and number of interviews achieved by year of funding:

	2006/07	2007/08
Number of contacts	255	199
Achieved interviews	126	73
% of interviews	63	37

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

2.3 Sample profile

Just over half the learners in receipt of Residential Bursaries (56%) were male. Just 4% were parents or carers of children.

Three-quarters of recipients (78%) were aged between 16 and 18, with one in ten aged between 19 and 21 and a similar proportion, in aggregate, aged over 21 (5% aged between 22 and 25 and 7% aged 26+).

The majority of respondents received funding in 2006/07 (63%). The remainder (37%) received funding in the most recent completed academic year (2007/08).

5% of Residential Bursary recipients represented an ethnic minority group. This compares with 23% of leavers across all funding schemes and 14% amongst all 16-19 year olds, 16% of all 20-24 year olds and 10% of all 26+ year olds in England¹.

25% of respondents have a long standing illness, disability or infirmity. This compares with 10% across all funding schemes.

Most respondents (89%) are single. A further 9% are married/living with a partner, and 1% are separated, divorced or widowed. Only 2% of the sample are 'lone parents'.

¹ Annual Population Survey

3 Engagement

Key findings

Survey statistics on engagement with Residential Bursaries suggest that they have a positive effect in encouraging people to participate in learning. Firstly, the funding appears to exert reasonable leverage in that over half (56%) of learners might not have done the course if the funding hadn't been available to them including, two in ten who would certainly not have done so.

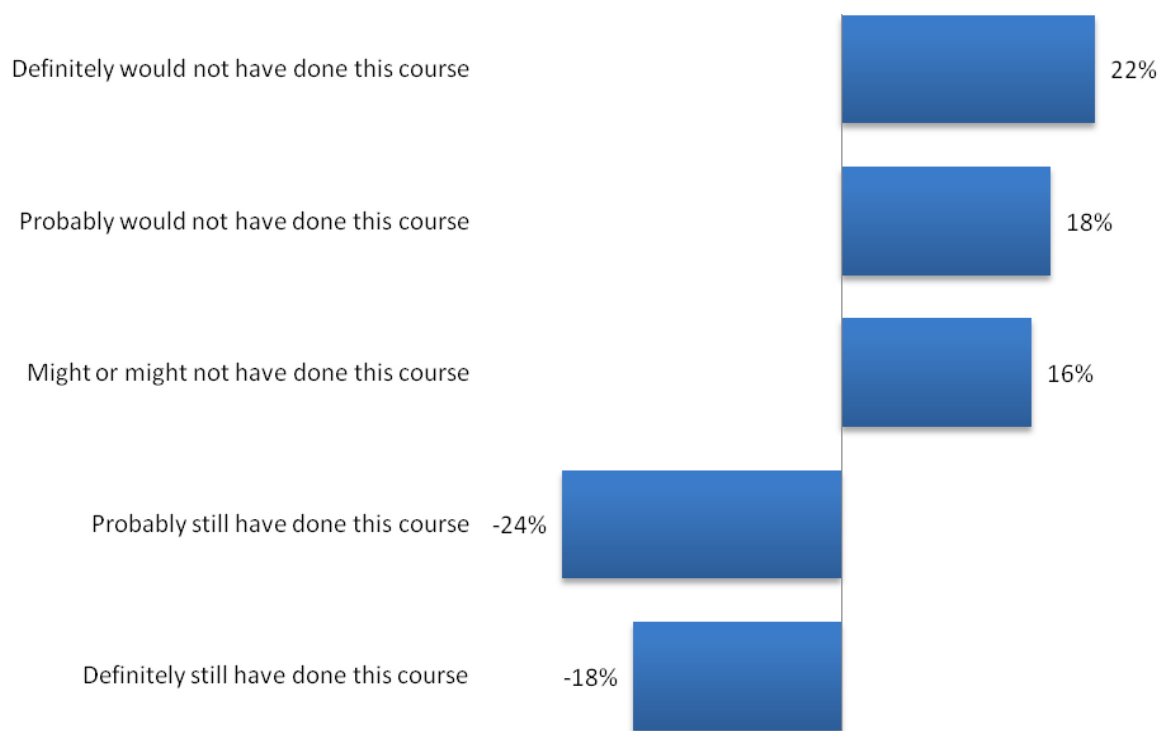
Information on Residential Bursaries seems to be reasonably widely available. 64% of learners were aware of the funding before enrolment and over eight out of ten said they found it easy to find out about the funding.

There may be a little more concern that, whilst specific information making learners aware of Residential Bursaries appears to have been reasonably accessible, only a little more than half of learners (55%) report that they received more general information or advice (mostly from Connexions, schools, and colleges) about the different types of funding available to support learning. There may be some under-reporting affecting this figure, because of elapsed time or because information, advice or guidance (IAG) was received but in a 'light touch' way which didn't strongly register with learners. However, the figure, reflecting back on learners' experiences over the last two or three years is, perhaps, simply consistent with government recognition that guidance services have not been delivered to the best possible standards in recent history and that reform was necessary. More reassuringly, whilst the proportion recalling that they received information and advice may be lower than desirable, virtually all those who did receive it found it to be helpful.

3.1 Impact of funding on course take-up

Two-fifths of learners (40%) who heard about Residential Bursaries before deciding on their course feel they probably or definitely would have not done the learning without it:

Figure 1: Impact of funding on course take-up (where heard about funding before deciding on course) Base = 128



Learners not in education or training prior to taking up the course (those classified as 'NEET') are more likely to feel that they *definitely would not* have done the course without the funding being available (35%, compared with 22% of the total sample).

3.2 Reasons for taking up the course

Few learners give just one reason for taking up a course. When prompted with a list of possible reasons, the one most frequently selected is that of 'to gain new skills or improve your skills' (98% of all learners). Only slightly fewer cite 'to gain a qualification' (95%), 'for personal interest/enjoyment' (91%), and/or 'to help you get a new/better job or improve your career prospects' (89%). When respondents were asked to identify just one *main* reason, then 'to gain a qualification' was the reason most frequently given:

Figure 2: Main reason for course take-up, prompted (all respondents) Base = 199



Wanting to gain new skills or improve their skills is a more frequent reason for participation amongst older learners (those aged 26 or above). Although gaining a qualification remains the main reason for learning take-up overall, it is less likely to be cited as such by somewhat older learners, those aged 20 or over. As might be expected, these differences suggest that, with increasing age and maturity, the focus of learner participation moves away from the need to gain initial qualifications and towards improving general ability and employability.

3.3 Financial concerns before starting the course

Given that these learners were registered for Residential Bursaries, it is to be expected that general subsistence costs would be a particular concern for learners contemplating taking a course. Around half were concerned about affording course materials and fewer than half were concerned about transport to and from the course (possibly at the beginning and end of terms). Only a quarter of the very small number of learners who are parents or carers were concerned about being able to afford childcare:

Figure 3: Extent to which respondents were concerned about financial issues before starting the course (all respondents) Base = 199 Base (where have children) = 8 (caution: low sample base)



3.4 Information on funding

Most learners (64%) found out about Residential Bursaries before starting the course.

The proportion is higher amongst learners who registered on a course in 2007/08 (69%). It is also higher amongst learners who were not in work (81%, compared with 60% of those in work). This latter difference may suggest that providers or agencies which help unemployed or inactive people into employment or training are transmitting awareness of Residential Bursaries with reasonable effectiveness.

Just under a third of learners (30%) found out about the funding after deciding to do the course (with the remainder, 6%, being unsure).

The majority of learners (83%) found it easy to find out about the funding. Only very small proportions found it 'fairly difficult' (6%) and none found it 'very difficult'. (7% replied that they found it neither easy nor difficult and 4% could not give an answer.)

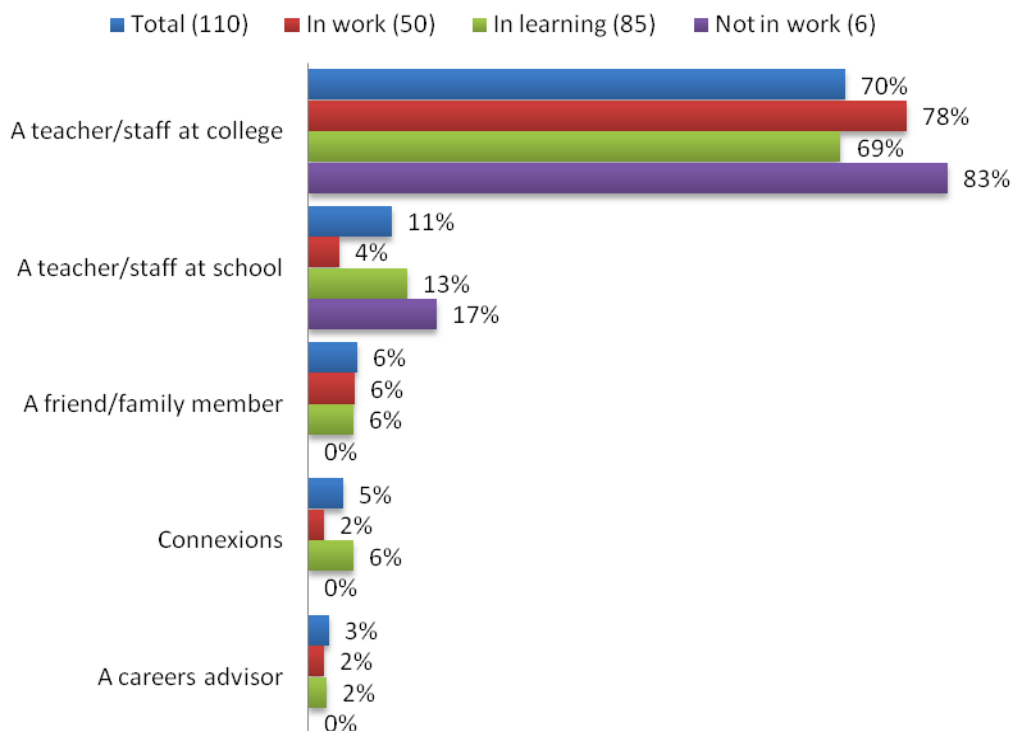
3.5 Information, advice or guidance on funding

More than half the learners (55%) reported receiving information, advice or guidance (IAG) about the different types of funding available.

The most frequently reported source of IAG was a teacher or other member of staff at a *college* (70%). This is particularly likely to be reported as a source by those aged 18 or over.

One in nine learners (11%) reported a teacher or other member of staff at *school* as a source, rising to more than a quarter of 17 year olds:

Figure 4: Most frequently cited sources of information, advice or guidance, by prior status (those receiving IAG) Figures in parentheses are sample bases



The information, advice and guidance received is highly rated, with 92% finding it useful (including 53% rating it as very useful).

4 Retention and Persistence in Learning

Key findings

Residential Bursaries have a positive effect on helping people to *stay on their course*. Three out of ten (31%) of those who completed say they would not have completed without it; and a further 56% of those who completed say that they would have had to struggle without the support. Only 13% said that the funding had made no difference to them.

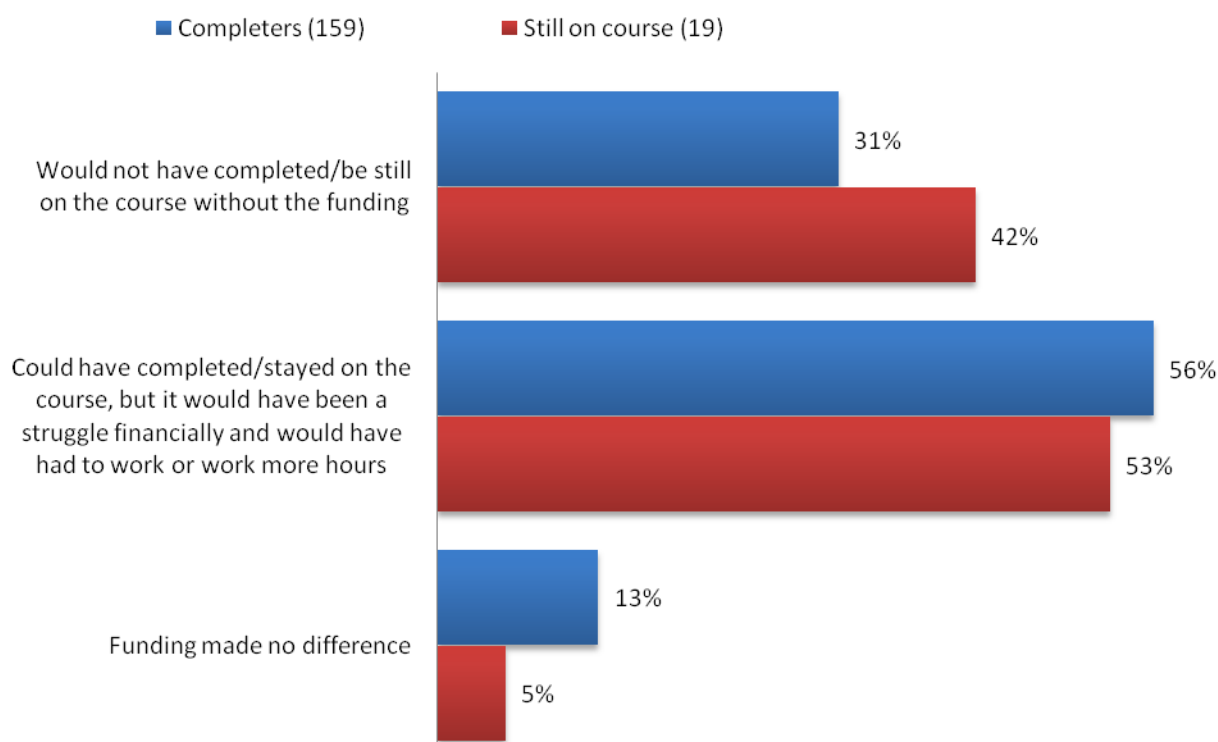
Residential Bursaries are estimated to generate a retention rate of 88% for its supported learners. (The retention rate is the proportion of learners who complete their studies whether they are awarded the qualification or not.) The national retention rate for all students in Further Education was stable, at 87%, in both 2005/06 and 2006/07 (Book of FE Facts, dcsf, 2008). This latter statistic seems a reasonable benchmark against which to consider the 88% retention rate for Residential Bursaries-supported learners. Residential Bursaries appear to achieve a level of retention which is comparable with the national average rate for a group of learners who have underlying difficulties in financing their learning.

Furthermore, of the one in eight (12%) who left early, only one in ten of these people spontaneously gave a financial reason for leaving their course early. Even on prompting, this proportion rose only to around one in three (38%). These statistics suggest that, at a maximum, Residential Bursaries restrict early leaving where financial reasons were involved to only 5% of learners receiving Residential Bursaries.

4.1 Value of funding to completing/staying on the course

Amongst both those who have completed their course and those who are still on it, the majority feel that the Bursaries they have received have been essential or important to seeing the course through. Findings on this question are summarised in the figure below:

Figure 5: Statements that best describes learners' feelings about the funding received (where completed or still on the course)
Bases in parentheses



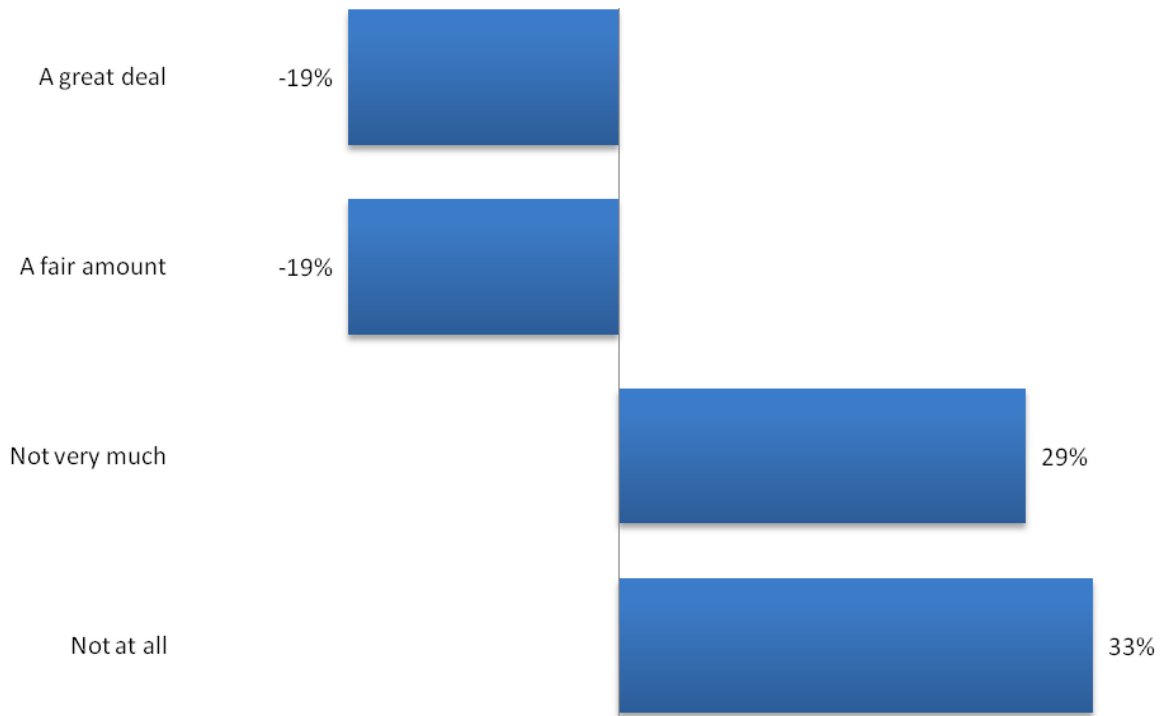
4.2 Early leaving

The majority of those no longer on the course for which they received funding completed the course (88%). The remainder (12%) left their course early.

The main reasons for leaving the course before completion concern the learner’s losing interest in the course, getting a job, changing circumstance, and feeling that the course was not the right one for them.

One in ten early leavers (10%) *spontaneously* reported that they could not afford to continue the course or that financial issues prevented them from continuing. However, when prompted, more than a third of early leavers (38%) reported that money issues influenced their decision to a significant extent:

Figure 6: Extent to which money issues influenced their decision to leave the course (where did not complete the course) Base = 21

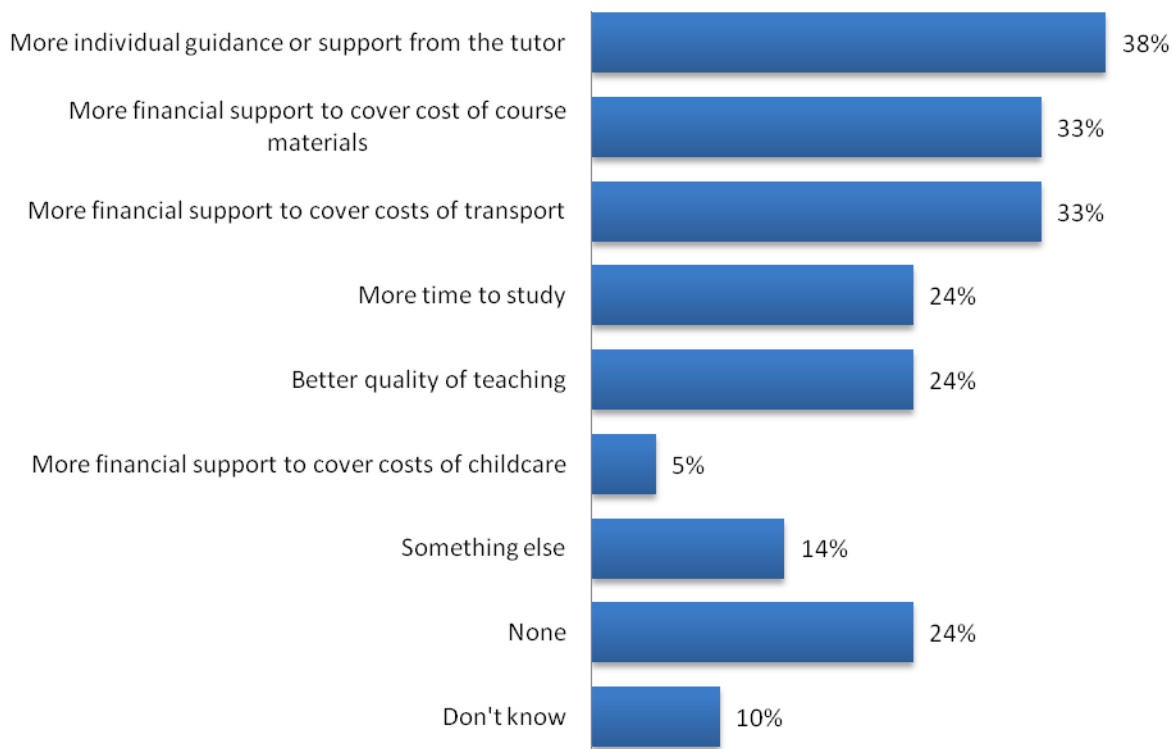


Only two early leavers spontaneously said that financial concerns were involved in their decision to leave early. Both of these identified general living costs as a cause of financial difficulties. One of them additionally reported transport costs (possibly relating to travel to and from the course at the beginning and end of term).

In terms of what might have helped early leavers to complete their course, more individual guidance or support from the tutor was the most frequently selected option (by 38% of early leavers). The next most frequently selected options were more financial support to cover the cost of course materials and to cover transport costs (33% selected each of these options).

The figure below is based on all early leavers.

Figure 7: Ways that learners may have been helped to complete their course, prompted, multiple response (where did not complete the course) Base = 21



4.3 On-going or further financial assistance

A fifth of learners still on a course (21%) have received further financial assistance.

This is most likely to meet the cost of course materials (42% of those getting further financial assistance), whilst more than a quarter of learners (26%) needed it to fund transport costs. One in six learners (18%) received further financial assistance for course costs and fees and 11% received further assistance with the costs of accommodation. The same proportion received it to cover daily living expenses.

5 Achievement

Key findings

In the eyes of learners, there was little 'deadweight' amongst those receiving Residential Bursaries. 94% said that it helped them to achieve a qualification (including 80% for whom it was 'a great help').

And achievement was significant. Overall, even including learners who left early, the proportion with Level 1 or no recognised qualifications fell from 41% to 17% and the proportion with 'Level 2 and above qualifications' rose from 59% to 83%.

Residential Bursaries are estimated by the survey to generate a success rate of 86%. (The success rate is the number achieving their learning aim as a percentage of those starting the course.) The overall national success rate for all students in Further Education was 76% in 2005/06 and 77% in 2006/07 (Book of FE Facts, dcsf, 2008). These latter figures seem reasonable benchmarks against which to compare the 86% success rate for learners supported by Residential Bursaries. It appears that Residential Bursaries generate a success rate, for a group of students with underlying financial difficulties, which exceeds the national rate.

5.1 Achievement of qualifications

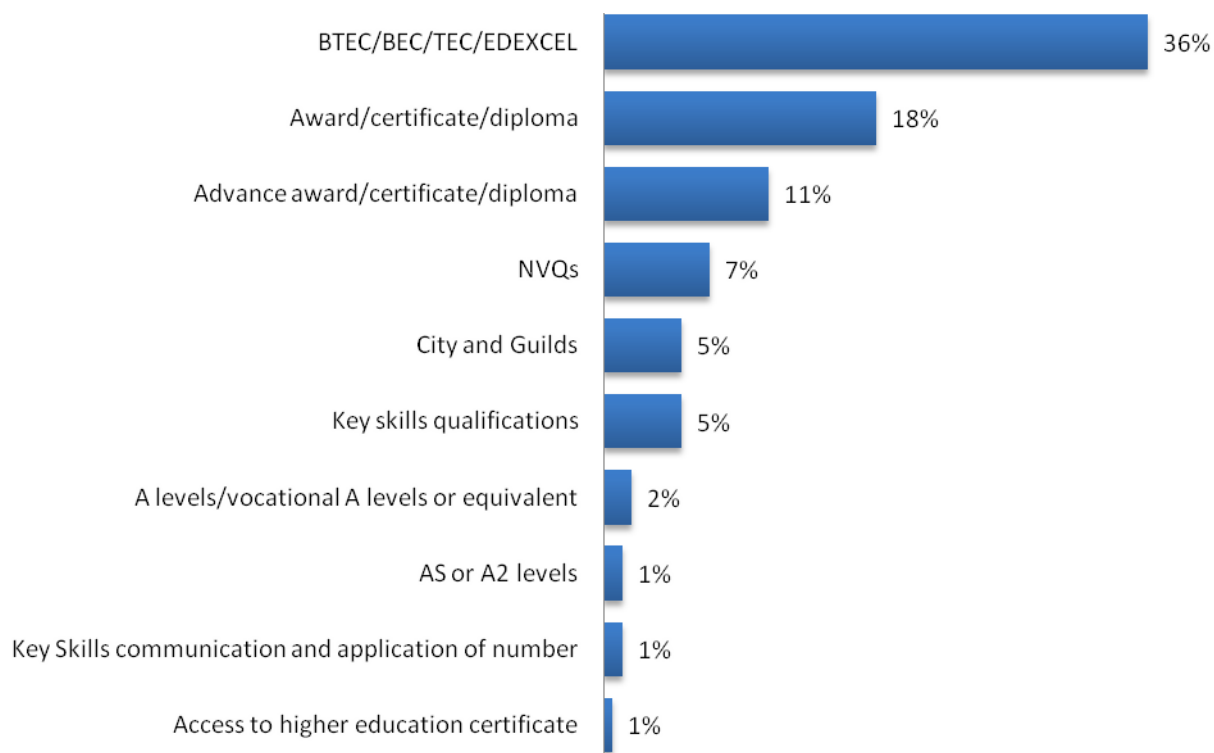
Nearly all learners (97%) who completed their course were able to achieve a qualification. (Of those achieving a qualification, 10% achieved at Level 1, 29% at Level 2, and 49% at Level 3. A further 12% received a qualification without an NVQ equivalence (that is, below Level 1.) The proportion of completers achieving a qualification is fairly constant over time (98% in 2007/08 and 96% in 2006/07).

Learners are overwhelmingly positive about the contribution that the funding made to their achievement of these qualifications. 67% feel the funding helped 'a great deal' and a further 27% consider that it helped 'a fair amount'.

The proportion who feel that the funding helped 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' to their achievement of qualifications is high even amongst those who would still have done the course without the funding (all of them) or for whom (in their view) the funding made no difference to the likelihood of completion (63%).

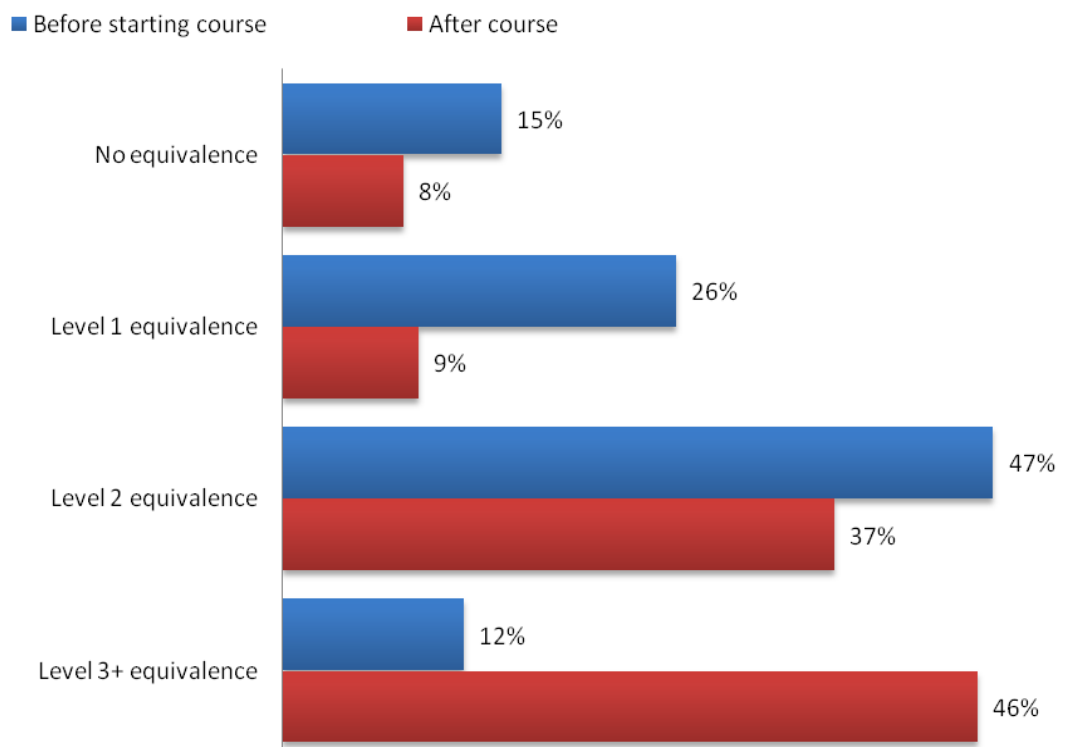
The qualifications which were achieved are set out in more detail in the following figure:

Figure 8: Qualifications achieved from the funded course (where achieved any qualifications) Base = 154



A comparison of the NVQ equivalence of learners' qualifications before and after the original course for which they received funding shows a significant increase in qualification levels. The proportion without a qualification with any NVQ equivalence fell from 15% to 8%. There was a significant increase in the proportion of learners with Level 3+ equivalent qualifications (from 12% to 46%):

Figure 9: NVQ equivalence before and after original course for which received funding (all respondents) Base: 199



6 Learning Progression

Key findings

There is evidence that participation in learning supported by Residential Bursaries encourages progression to further learning beyond the original course:

29% of learners have *taken up* further learning and 5% are *registered* for a further course.

85% of those who have completed further learning got a qualification from that learning.

6.1 Learning progression

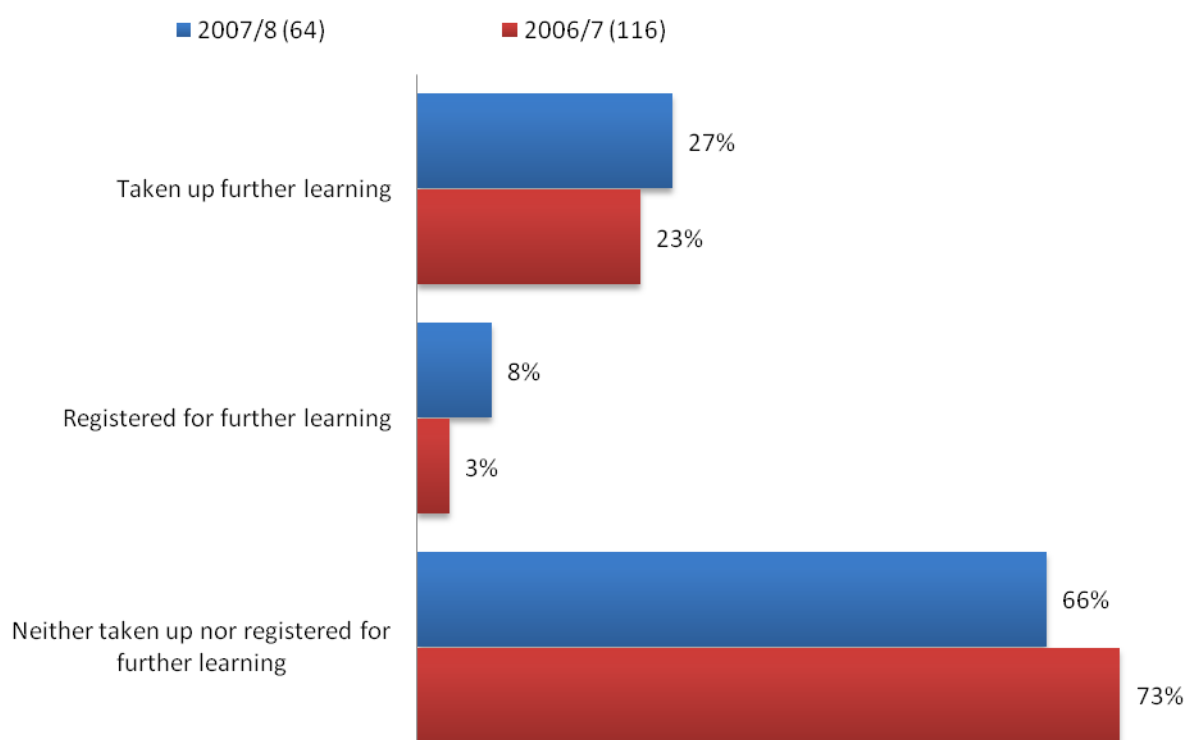
24% of those no longer on the original course for which they received Residential Bursaries report that they have taken up other learning since leaving the original course. Those who completed their original course are slightly more likely than early leavers to have gone on to further learning (25%, compared with 19%).

A *further* 5% of learners no longer on their original course have registered for further learning but not yet begun it. This time, the proportion is the same regardless of whether or not they completed the original course.

Thus, over a quarter of the learners no longer on the original course (29%) have taken up or registered for further learning.

The propensity to take-up or register for further learning is slightly higher amongst more recent recipients of the funding. This is shown in the chart below, which shows progression by year of funding:

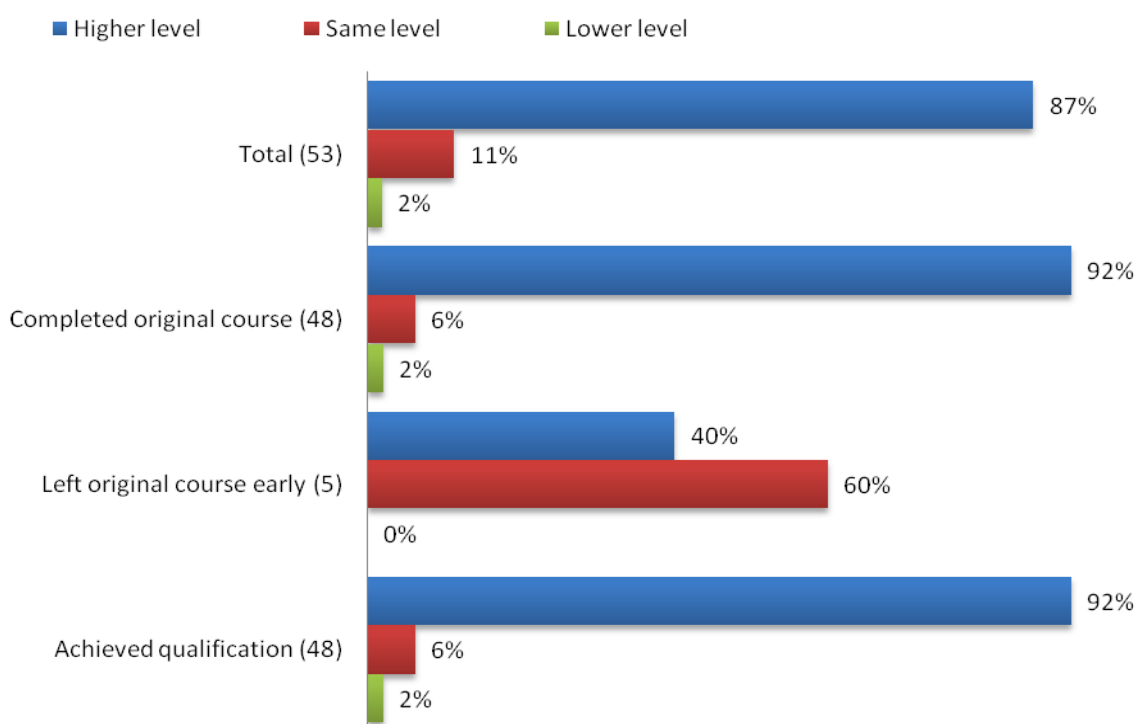
Figure 10: Status of learners with regard to take-up of further learning by year of funding (where no longer on the original course)
 Figures in parentheses are sample bases



6.2 Level of further learning

The great majority (87%) of the 29% of learners who have taken up or registered for further learning, undertake learning at a higher level than their funded course. The proportion is significantly higher amongst those who completed their original course than amongst those who left their course early (92%, compared with 40%) and it is higher than average amongst those who achieved a qualification, as shown in the following figure:

Figure 11: Level of further learning (where taken up/registered for further learning) Figures in parentheses are sample bases



6.3 Funding of further learning

More than three-fifths (62%) of those who have taken up further learning have received further financial assistance. This is most likely to have involved other grants such as student loans or bursaries:

Table 1: Schemes from which learners have received funding for further learning (where received further financial assistance) Base = 26 *Base = 42 (where taken up further learning and still on it/completed it)

Received funding for further learning*	62%
Did not receive funding for further learning*	38%
Other grants for learners including student loans/bursaries	50%
Residential bursary or grant	19%
Residential support scheme	15%
Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)	12%
Adult Learning Grant	8%
Discretionary funds – for transport, books and learning materials	4%
Don't know	19%

Fewer than one in ten learners (8%) who received funding for further learning also received *other* financial assistance, in addition to that from one of the schemes in the previous table. This represents just two learners. One of these received other assistance with accommodation costs and one with course costs or fees.

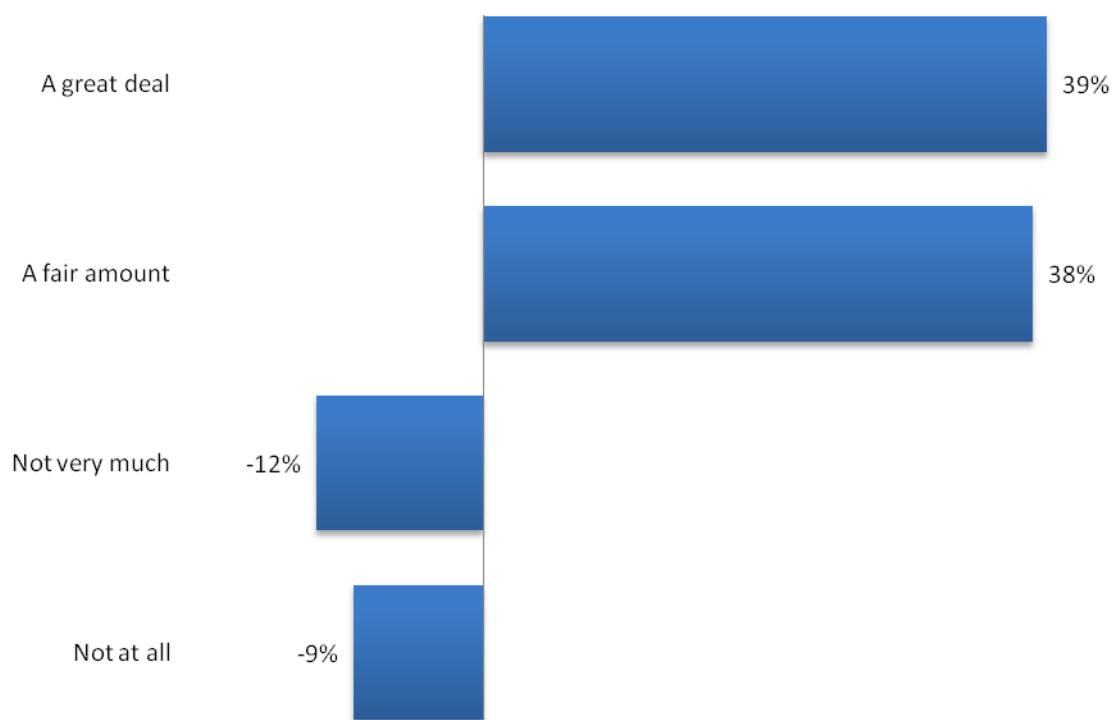
The majority (75%) of those who have *completed* a further course of learning and received funding to support that further study feel they could not have completed the further course without that funding. The remaining 25% feel they could have completed the course but would have struggled financially.

Similarly, more than half of those who are *still on the further course* and receive funding (59%) feel they would not still be on the course without it. Most of the remainder feel they would still be on the course without the funding but would struggle financially (32%).

6.4 Impact of Residential Bursaries on learning progression

Funding through Residential Bursaries has a strong influence on progression into further learning. Three-quarters of learners (77%) feel that the funding has helped them or will help them to move on to further learning. This includes 39% who feel the funding helped them a great deal:

Figure 12: Extent to which funding has helped learners to move on to further learning (all respondents) Base = 199



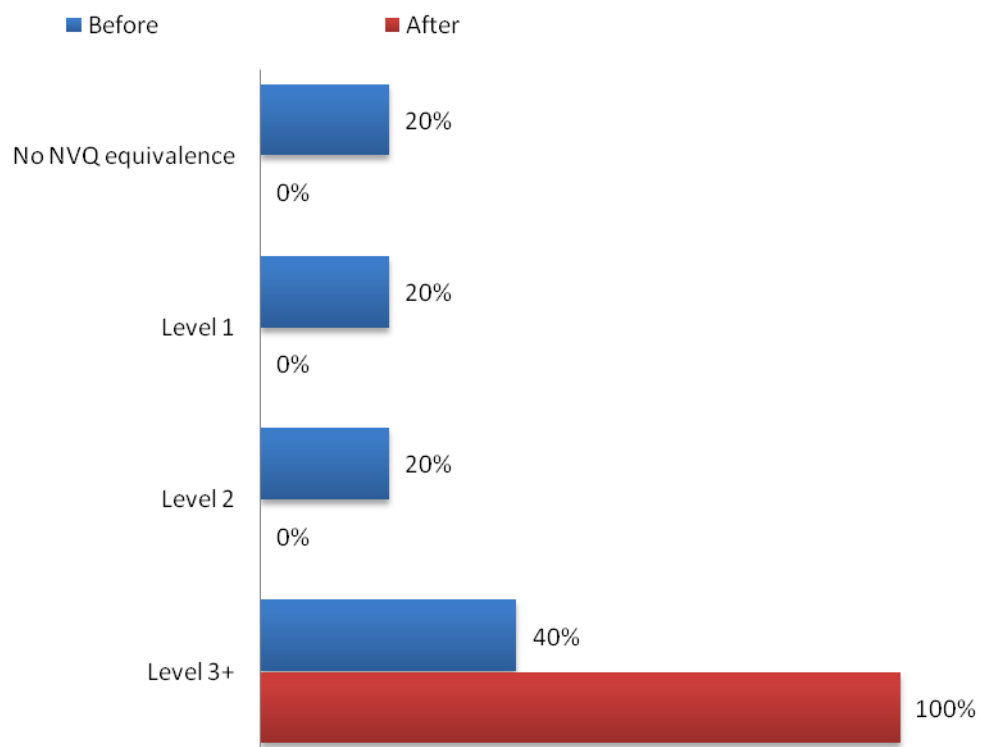
Of those not yet registered for a future new course, 18% definitely intend to go on to a further course, and a further 20% will probably do so.

6.5 Achievement from further learning

All learners *still in* further learning report that they are aiming to achieve qualifications from this further learning.

The majority of learners (83%) who have *completed* a further course have achieved a qualification from it. However, this proportion is based on only six people in the sample of whom five (83%) of the six then achieved a qualification. The effect of this on change to the highest level of these five respondents' qualifications is shown in the next chart. In this case, because of the small numbers, each 20% in the chart represents just one person. It can be seen, however, that all five respondents now has a Level 3 qualification:

Figure 13: NVQ equivalence before and after further learning (where achieved a qualification on further course) Base = 5
 Caution: small sample base

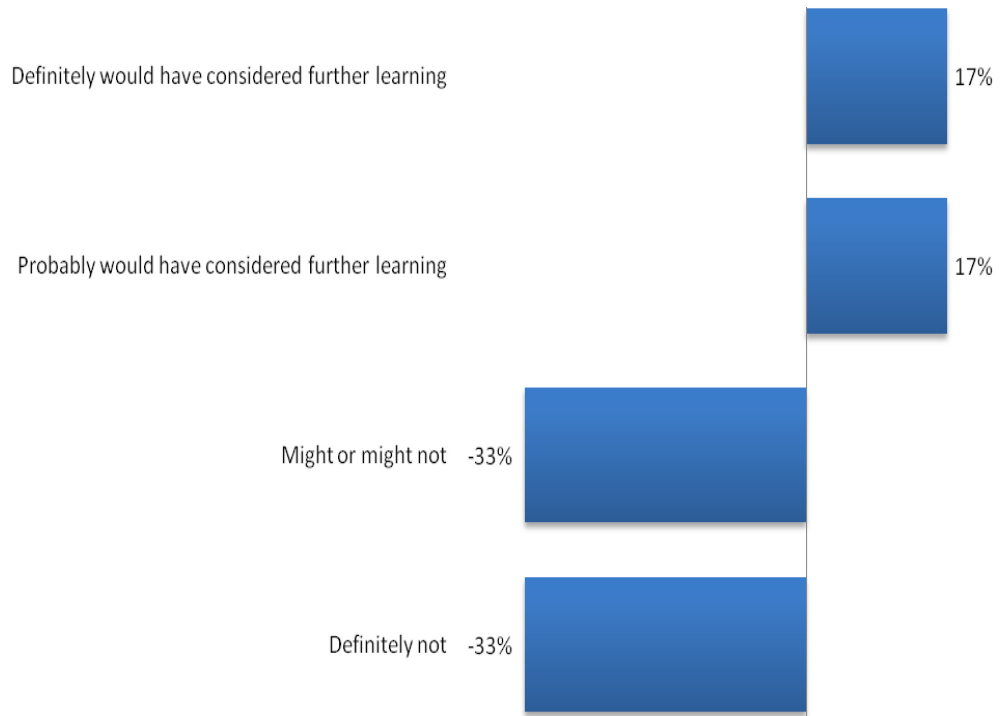


All learners who achieved a qualification from their further learning and received funding whilst on the course believed that the funding helped them a great deal to gain the qualification.

6.6 Take-up of further learning by early leavers

Two out of the six learners in the sample who dropped out early from their original course because of financial issues and who have not taken up or registered for another course, said that they would *probably or definitely* have considered doing more learning had more financial support been available. Two others said more financial help *might or might not* have helped them to go back into learning whilst the remaining two were *definite* that more financial help would still not have had this effect:

Figure 14: Impact of further financial support on take-up of further learning (where left original course early for financial reasons and have not taken up further learning) Base = 6 Caution: small sample base



7 Employment Progression

Key findings

Residential Bursaries assist people to move, via further learning and qualifications, into employment. The analysis of the survey indicates that the employment rate of participants rose from 18% before the funded learning to 58% afterwards. Concomitantly the proportion in pre- and post-education fell from 75% to 18%. In total, therefore, Residential Bursaries had a positive outcome (in work or education) for 76%.

More negatively, 24% of participants are unemployed (15%) or inactive (9%) after this support had ended. However, the unemployment rate is broadly comparable with the 14% national rate for 16-24 year olds (mid-2008, Annual Population Survey) and may, in part at least, reflect the growing economic difficulties at the time at which the survey was undertaken.

7.1 Extent to which funded learning helped career progression

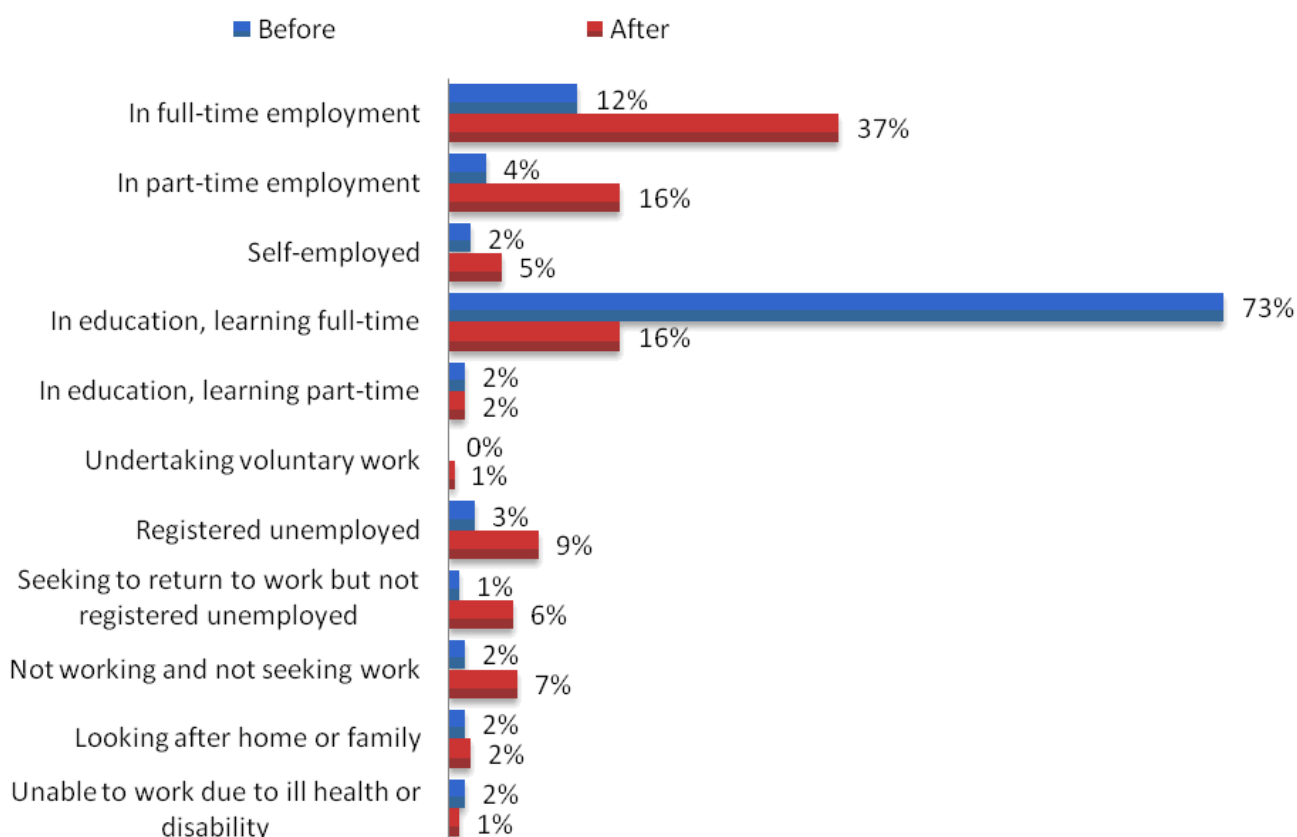
Learners who completed a course assisted by Residential Bursaries are very positive about the contribution that the funding made to progress in their career. Overall, 92% of these learners feel it has helped them at least 'a fair amount', including 54% who feel it has helped 'a great deal'.

The proportion who feel that the funding has helped 'a great deal' to progress their career, either now or in the longer term, is particularly high amongst those who received funding in 2006/07 (59%), reflecting the fact that career progress is likely to become more evident over time.

7.2 Employment status: before and after the original course

The following figure compares the working status of learners before and after the original course for which they received funding:

Figure 15: Employment status: before and after the funded course (all respondents) Base = 199



There has been an increase in the proportion of learners in employment or self-employment - from 18% previously to 58% now. This gain is offset to some extent by an increase in the proportion of recipients who are unemployed or inactive - from 8% to 24%.

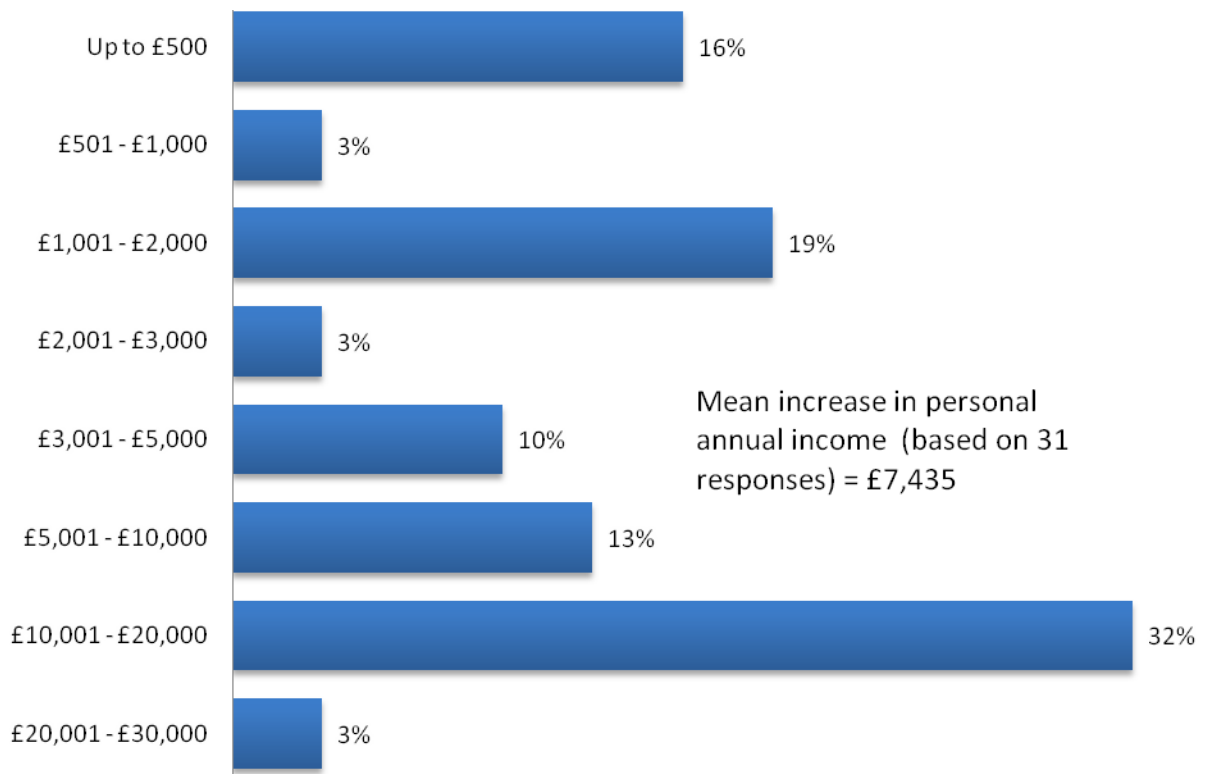
Over two-thirds (69%) of all those in full- or part-time employment after the course are in a permanent job. This is a higher proportion than prior to the funded learning when 61% (of the smaller number) of people who were then in employment, were in full-time employment.

7.3 Financial benefits

Around two-fifths of learners (41%) report that their annual personal income has increased since they started their original course.

Nearly all the learners (94%) who were in employment both before and after the learning and who report an increase in their personal income were able and willing to provide an estimate of the size of the increase. The average (mean) increase in income amongst those in employment both pre- and post- learning is nearly £7,500 per annum.

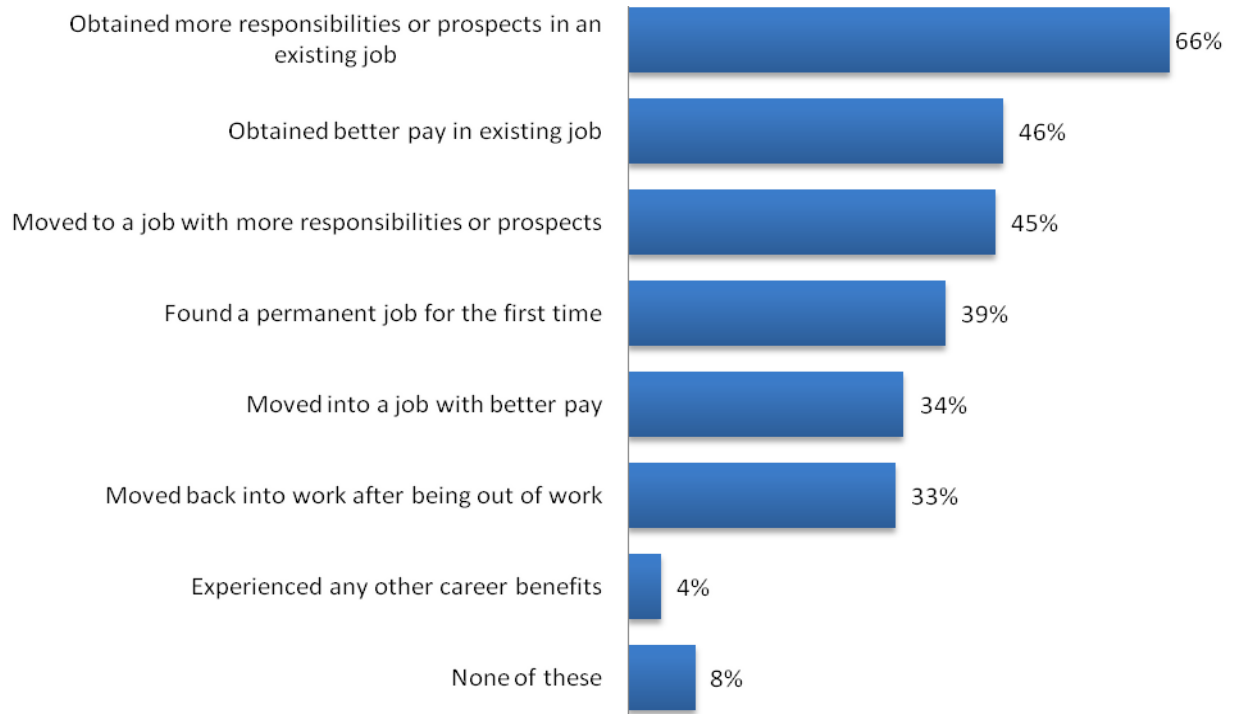
Figure 16: Approximate increase in annual personal income (where in work before and after learning, report that their annual personal income has increased and provided a response) Base = 31



7.4 Career progression

The majority of learners (92%) who are now in work following completion of a funded course feel their career benefited in at least one way. These benefits are summarised in the figure below:

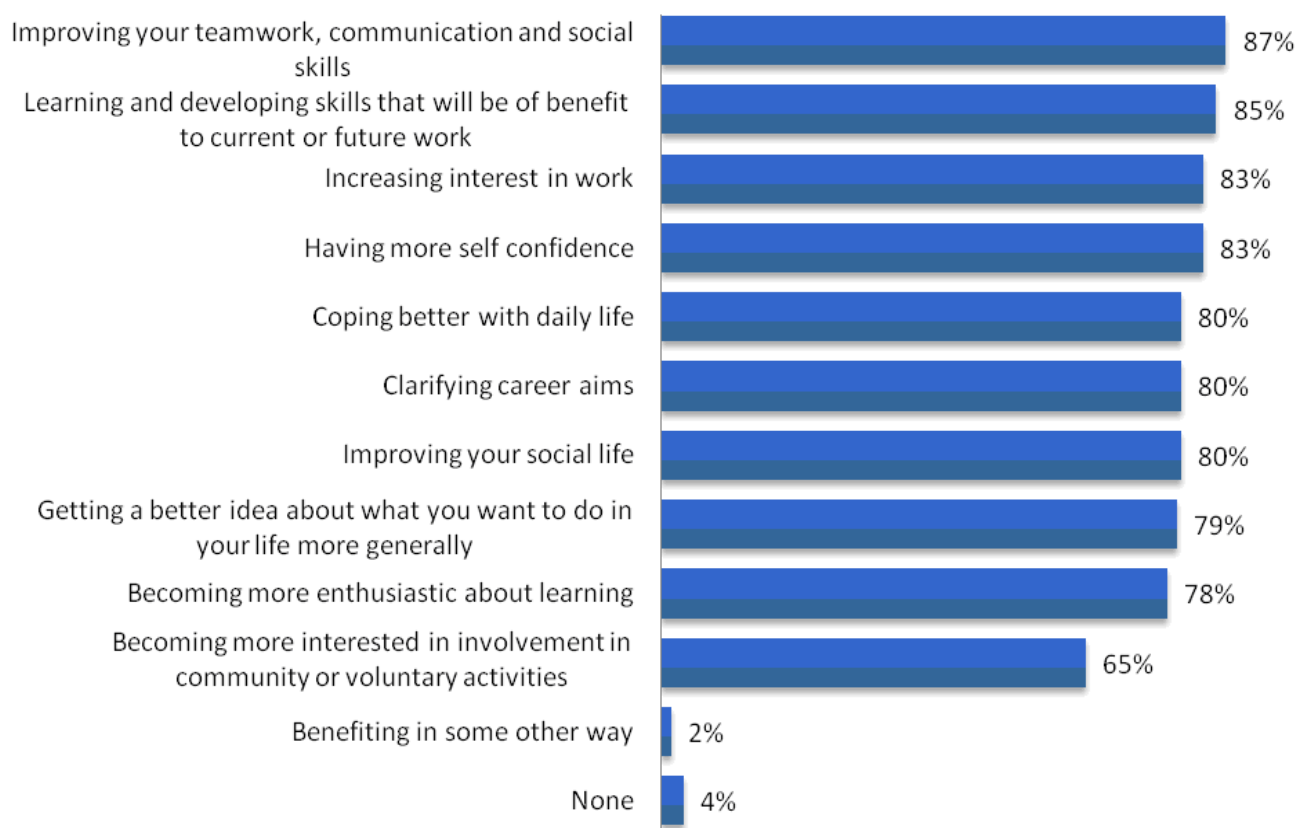
Figure 17: Career benefits experienced, prompted, multiple response (where completed any funded course and in work) Base = 98



8 Personal and Social Benefits

The majority of learners selected every item in a list of possible benefits which resulted from undertaking the course for which they received funding. This shows that benefits of learning are wide-ranging and widely perceived. As can be seen in the figure below, 96% of learners recognised at least one benefit from their learning. Only seven learners said they gained none of the benefits in the figure:

Figure 18: Benefits experienced, prompted, multiple response (all respondents) Base = 199



Learners who failed to complete their original course or who did not achieve a qualification from it are less likely to report some of these benefits. However, those who did not achieve a qualification were as likely as those who did to feel that they have made improvements in their teamworking, communication and social skills.

Whatever impacts Residential Bursaries have on achievement of qualifications and on employment progression, it is quite clear that participation significantly improved learners' morale and sense of direction, which may then have a positive impact upon their future employment prospects.

9 Overview

Key indicators based on Residential Bursaries survey responses are:

Engagement	
Definitely/probably would not have done course without the Residential Bursaries	40%
Concerned about having enough money whilst on the course	67%
Easy to access information on Residential Bursaries	83%
Received IAG on funding available	55%
Where received, IAG was helpful	92%
Retention	
Proportion who completed (Benchmark for all in FE in England = 87%)	88%
Funding important or essential to completion	87%
Achievement	
Funding important or very important to achievement of a qualification	94%
Proportion of starters who achieved a qualification (Benchmark for all in FE in England = 77%)	86%
Progression	
Proportion who had undertaken further learning or have registered to do so	29%
Proportion of those who have undertaken further learning who have received financial assistance to support that learning	62%
Proportion of those in employment following the funded learning (change from pre-learning in brackets)	58% (+40% points)
Proportion of those in learning following the funded learning (change from pre-learning in brackets)	18% (-57% points)
Proportion of those unemployed or inactive following the funded learning (change from pre-learning in brackets)	24% (+16% points)
Proportion reporting a positive personal or social ('soft') benefit from the funded learning	96%

Based on these indicators, the research provides evidence of the positive impact of Residential Bursaries funding.

- Residential Bursaries have a significant positive effect on engagement, retention, attainment and learning progression.
- Information on Bursaries funding was easily available to its recipients. (However, the survey was, of course, only of Residential Bursaries recipients. We did not survey young people who are eligible for Residential Bursaries but did not receive funding. However, further research has been commissioned by the LSC to explore the needs of more disadvantaged learners and non-learners and will cover issues around access to IAG amongst those not in learning.)
- The Residential Bursaries retention rate exceeds the national FE rate and success rate significantly exceeds the national FE rate.
- In addition to learning benefits, virtually all Bursaries-funded participants achieve and acknowledge social or personal benefits which may lead to future progression and development.

Issues to consider in the further development of Residential Bursaries

- There may have been some historic weakness in the scope of provision of information, advice, and guidance on learning opportunities and on the funding available to support take-up of those opportunities. For example, before their courses, little more than half of these learners had received general information, advice and guidance about the range of funding which might be available to them. Clearly there is scope for improvement in this area. Subsequently, though Residential Bursaries clearly have positive impacts on retention, for a minority, there remains a need for continuing support and guidance if early leaving is to be reduced to a minimum. This may need to link Residential Bursaries to other forms of financial support including discretionary funding which is able to respond to individual needs and circumstances.
- Subsequent to Bursaries-supported learning, around a quarter of learners are unemployed or inactive. These circumstances may reflect difficult economic circumstances (and the unemployment rate may not be greatly different from the average rate for the age group in England as a whole). However, these findings reinforce the importance of guidance, towards the end of courses, which identifies employment or further educational or training options and encourages learners to pursue them.

10 Appendix

10.1 Sample error

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

To give an indication, a finding of 50% on a base size of 199 interviews has a confidence interval of $\pm 6.95\%$ at the 95% level. That is to say that if the survey returns a finding of 50% for a particular question there is a 95% probability that the “true” figure (amongst all those learners in the population, not just those interviewed) will lie within $\pm 6.95\%$ (i.e. between 43% and 57%) of that finding.

When looking at sub-groups within a sample this confidence interval increases. So for example, when looking at a sub group like those that registered for a course in 2006/07 (with a base size of 126 interviews in this study) statistical confidence is reduced further still (to around $\pm 8.7\%$ in this case, ignoring the small population correction).

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

- A sample size of 100 would have a confidence interval of $\pm 9.8\%$
- A sample size of 500 would have a confidence interval of $\pm 4.4\%$
- A sample size of 1,000 would have a confidence interval of $\pm 3.1\%$

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

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