

Further Education Leavers Survey 2015

December 2015

Issue No: 1

Date of Publication:

16th December 2015

Theme:

Children, Education and Skills

Issued by:

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The Further Education Leavers Survey 2015 (FE Leavers Survey) is the first annual survey to assess the destinations and potential benefits to students on completing and achieving a regulated qualification at a Further Education College in Northern Ireland.

Destinations and potential benefits to students were assessed approximately six months after FE Course completion and achievement.

The findings indicate a range of FE Leaver destinations, which includes progression into employment or further learning. Responses from students also indicate a range of benefits across sub groups of all FE Leavers.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Six months after completing their FE Course the percentage who said their main activity was paid or self-employment increased from 38.0% to 47.5%.
- Most of FE Leavers, now in learning, continued their learning at a FE College (73.3%), while almost one quarter (24.2%) had progressed to university.
- Almost all respondents (94.3%) said that their course probably/definitely had a positive impact on them.
- Almost four fifths of respondents (78.7%) agreed that they would be more likely to undertake further learning and training at a higher level.

Reader Information

Purpose	Monitor and report on the destinations of students and potential benefits after completing and achieving a regulated qualification at a Further Education College in Northern Ireland during 2013/14.
Authors	Nicoli Morrison, Stephen McGonagle, Laura Smyth.
Publication Date	16 th December 2015.
Reporting Period	2 nd February to 8 th May 2015. Approximately six months after completing and achieving a regulated qualification in the academic year 2013/14.
Publication Issue	1
Statistical Quality	Information detailed in this release has been quality assured prior to release.
Target audience	Department for Employment & Learning (DEL), Directors of FE colleges in Northern Ireland, Board members of FE colleges, educational professionals, academics, media and members of the public interested in the FE sector.
Further copies from	analyticalservices@delni.gov.uk
Internet address	https://www.delni.gov.uk/topics/del-statistics-and-research/statistics
Price	Free
Copyright	This publication is Crown copyright and may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium. Any material used must be acknowledged, and the title of the publication specified.
Feedback	<p>The report has been pragmatically designed to provide the information required by the key stakeholders. To improve the utility of the report, feedback from interested parties continues to be welcomed, for example, what works well/ what does not, where too much/too little information and/or explanation is provided. Where possible, this will be built-into future survey design and reporting process. If you would like to contact the Statistics & Research Branch (Tertiary Education):</p> <p>Department for Employment and Learning Adelaide House 39-49 Adelaide Street Belfast BT2 8FD</p>
Acknowledgement	SRB, DEL, would like to thank all the FE Leavers who took part in the survey. Without your help this report would not have been possible.

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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from the Department for Employment and Learning's (DEL) first annual survey of leavers from Further Education (FE) Colleges in Northern Ireland (NI). The focus of the survey was to assess the destinations of students and potential benefits of completing and achieving a regulated qualification at an FE College.

Each year thousands of students leave FE colleges across NI having completed and achieved a regulated qualification. Of the leavers who had completed and achieved their regulated qualification in the academic year 2013/14, a random representative sample were invited to take part in a short telephone interview with trained interviewers, approximately six months after leaving a FE College. Questions were asked about how they had heard about their course, their reasons for taking the course, their main activity before their course, their main activity six months after completing their course, and their attitudes towards potential non-economic benefits from their achievement.

Summary of Key Points:

Achievement of a regulated qualification from a FE College facilitates progression into employment...

The percentage who said their main activity was paid or self employment had increased from 38.0% before the FE Course to 47.5% six months after. While most (67.9%) of those FE Leavers now employed were also employed before the FE Course, nearly a quarter (22.5%), started out in some form of learning, 5.7% had been unemployed and 3.8% were classed as 'Other' before they started the FE Course, indicating progression into employment.

... and also progression into further or higher education.

Over a third (34.1%) of FE Leavers were in learning six months after leaving FE. This was a decrease from 42.5% of those in learning prior to the course starting.

While the majority (82.1%) were in some form of learning before the FE Course, nearly a tenth (9.8%) started out in employment, 4.8% from 'other' activities and 3.8% were unemployed before they started the FE Course, the latter groups indicating progression into learning.

Most of the FE Leavers now in learning continued their learning at a FE College (73.3%), while almost one quarter (24.2%) had progressed to university. Of the FE Leavers in further learning, the majority (81.4%) were studying towards a qualification at a higher level than the course completed in 2013/14. The largest group were now studying towards a degree level qualification (30.1%). The majority of FE Leavers in learning (60.4%) said they probably/definitely could not have done their current learning or training without the FE Course they completed and achieved in 2013/14.

For those FE Leavers who were already in employment, there was some progression within the workplace...

The majority (68.8%) of those remained in employment after completing their FE Course stated they were using the skills and knowledge acquired to some extent. This is encouraging as they are utilising skills learned from the FE Course and using it in their job.

In relation to earnings, for those FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course, a higher proportion were earning £400 or more a week (21.2%) when compared to those in employment after (16.2%). This would indicate that those already established in the labour markets are starting to progress up the pay bands either through natural increment or potentially from gaining additional qualifications from FE. In addition, nearly a third (30.7%) stated they were on a higher wage than before the course and only 8.4% on a lower wage.

....and additional benefits for those who stayed with the same employer.

Almost two thirds (62.7%) said they were now better at their job, while 39.8% felt they would not have been better at doing their job without the course they completed in 2013/14.

Over a quarter (29.3%) said they did have more responsibilities and of these, nearly half (45.2%) felt they would not have been doing a job with more responsibility without the course they did in 2013/14.

Just over a tenth (12.2%) said they had been promoted and of these, over half (55.3%) felt they would not have been promoted without the course they did in 2013/14.

Irrespective of destination after leaving FE with a regulated qualification, there are positive non-economic benefits to the individual.....

Most FE Leavers (94.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that their course had a positive impact on them. Nearly four-fifths (79.4%) reported that the course they completed had boosted their confidence. Three quarters (74.5%) reported making new friends/meeting new people. Two thirds (66.2%) reported an increase in self-esteem.

Over four-fifths (85.1%) agreed that as a result of completing their course they have become more enthusiastic about learning. Almost three-quarters (71.2%) of respondents agreed that as a result of completing their course they had a better idea of what they wanted to do in their life. Over three-fifths (61.9%) agreed that the course they completed had improved their quality of life.

Over four fifths (85.3%) agreed that as a result of their course they were more likely to undertake further learning and training. Just over three quarters (78.7%) agreed they were more likely to do so at a higher level.

.... and would recommend a FE Course to a friend.

Almost all (98.1%) of those in employment after their FE Course said they would recommend completing a further education course to a friend.

Abbreviations

BMC	Belfast Metropolitan College
CITBNI	Construction Industry Training Board Northern Ireland
CSU	Central Survey Unit (of NISRA)
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
FE	Further Education
NI	Northern Ireland
NIE	Northern Ireland Executive
NISRA	Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
NRC	Northern Regional College
NWRC	North West Regional College
SERC	South Eastern Regional College
SRB	Statistics and Research Branch
SRC	Southern Regional College
SWC	South West College

Commonly Used Terms

FE Colleges	This includes the six FE Colleges in Northern Ireland (BMC, NRC, NWRC, SERC, SRC and SWC).
FE Course	A regulated qualification completed and achieved at a FE College in the 2013/14 academic year.
FE Leavers	The FE Leavers who completed and achieved a regulated qualification during the 2013/14 academic year at a FE College in NI.
FE Leavers in Employment	The 1, 834 FE Leavers in paid or self-employment after their FE Course.
FE Leavers in Learning	The 1,315 FE Leavers in learning after their FE Course. This includes 55 individuals in training.
FE Sector	Includes the six FE Colleges in Northern Ireland.
Six Months After FE Course	Approximately six months after FE Course completion and achievement
Statistically Significant	Through a statistical technique the results/differences have been proven to be statistically significant indicating a 'real' difference would appear in the population of interest and have only occurred by chance within the sample. Results are tested as the 95% level which implies that there is only a 1 in 20 possibility that these differences have occurred by chance.
Stratification Variables	These are the variables used to ensure the FE Leavers Survey sample (the 6,023 individuals invited to take part in the survey) was representative of the population of interest (the 42,738 individuals who achieved and completed at least one regulated qualification from a FE College in the Northern Ireland in the 2013/14 academic year). The five variables included: FE College, Age Band, Gender, Mode of Attendance (Full-/Part Time) and Level of Course.
Unemployed FE Leavers	The 293 FE Leavers unemployed and looking for work after their FE Course.

Section One: Background & Introduction

1.1 About the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)

The **vision** of the Department is a dynamic, innovative and sustainable economy where everyone achieves his or her own full potential.

The Department's **aim** is to promote learning and skills, prepare people for work and to support the economy.

The **purpose** of the Department is as a key contributor to the delivery of the Northern Ireland Executive's vision of a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society. It is responsible for policy, funding, corporate governance and service delivery across the spectrum from employment through training, careers advice, further and higher education, research and innovation, all underpinned by employment rights.

To deliver activities the Department work with a diverse range of partners including:

- The six Further Education colleges,
- The Higher Education Institutions,
- The Labour Relations Agency,
- Construction Industry Training Board Northern Ireland (CITBNI),
- Ulster Supported Employment Limited,
- The voluntary and community sector, and
- The business community.

For additional information on the Department:

<https://www.delni.gov.uk/>

<https://www.delni.gov.uk/publications/del-annual-report-201415>

1.2 Further Education in Northern Ireland: Policy and Operational Context

Further Education (FE) in Northern Ireland (NI) is provided through six multi-campus colleges:

- Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC),
- Northern Regional College (NRC),
- North West Regional College (NWRC),
- South Eastern Regional College (SERC),
- Southern Regional College (SRC) and
- South West College (SWC).

These six FE colleges are free-standing incorporated bodies and are the main providers of further education and training in NI. These six colleges play a central role in up-skilling and re-skilling the population via a broad range of courses which can lead to a regulated qualification. The courses offered cover a wide variety of subjects and levels which range from entry level up to level 8.

The Minister for the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) has responsibility within the Northern Ireland Executive (NIE) for the NI FE colleges. He is also accountable to the NI

Assembly (NIA) and Assembly's Committee for Employment and Learning, which undertakes a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department for Employment and Learning and plays a key role in the consideration and development of legislation.

For additional information on Further Education in Northern Ireland:

<http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/further-education>

1.3 Why has this survey been carried out?

The Northern Ireland Economic Strategy requires the Executive to rebuild the economy in the medium term by improving employment opportunities and promoting jobs.

A key strand of this strategic approach within Further Education is monitoring the performance of FE Colleges in terms of the quality and relevance of the curriculum to the needs of the NI economy and the learner. In particular it is hoped that information on the destination of leavers following successful completion of a programme of study will provide evidence of the relevance of this learning in achieving positive outcomes. It is hoped that this research will inform that process in a positive way by measuring the impact and outcome of the student's learning in terms of progression into further learning and employment. The research will also form a key part of the underpinning evidence for future policy development and development of the FE curriculum through the information it can provide on:

- The progression of learners to and within employment,
- The progression of learners to higher levels of study,
- The development of skills required within the workplace, and
- The relevance of course to outcomes.

Therefore, there is a need to identify what happens to students once they leave their further education courses.

1.4 FE Leaver Research in England, Scotland & Wales

For information on FE Leaver data in England, Scotland and /or Wales:

<http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/16213/1/121102scopingfedestinationsdataen.pdf>

1.5 How to Use this Report

The FE Leavers Report 2015 is divided into three main sections:

Section 1:	Background and Introduction
Section 2:	Methodology
Section 3:	Main Findings

The Main Findings are divided into four sub-sections:

[Section 3.1](#) provides a summary overview of how FE Leavers heard about their FE Course, their reasons for doing their FE Course, their main activities before and after their FE Course, and non-economic benefits of doing their FE Course.

The remaining sections present findings by the main activity of FE Leavers approximately six months after completing their FE Course

[Section 3.2](#) presents findings for the FE Leavers who progressed to [Employment](#).

[Section 3.3](#) presents findings for the FE Leavers who progressed to further [Learning](#)

[Section 3.4](#) presents findings for the FE Leavers who were [Unemployed](#)

Each section of the report should be read in conjunction with the [Methodology](#), and particularly section 2.9 ([Interpretation](#)). Findings from this report should also be read in conjunction with annual FE data publications. These publications provide additional information about the students enrolled on regulated FE Courses in the 2013/14 academic year. Annual FE Activity publications are available at: <https://www.delni.gov.uk/publications/further-education-activity-fe-colleges-northern-ireland-201415>

This report provides an overview of the findings from Northern Ireland's first survey of the FE Leavers who completed and achieved a regulated qualification during the 2013/14 academic year at a FE College in NI.

Please note that the following terms are used throughout the report to abbreviate phrases:

- 'FE Leavers' will be used to describe the FE Leavers who completed and achieved a regulated qualification during the 2013/14 academic year at a FE College in NI;
- 'FE Course' will be used to denote a regulated qualification completed and achieved at a FE College in the 2013/14 academic year;
- 'Six Months after FE Course' will be used to denote approximately six months after FE Course completion and achievement.

[Statistically significant](#) findings are denoted by '*' in the tables. Within the text any differences between proportions of FE Leavers for the main activities before and after the FE Course or between FE Leavers sub groups are reported when they have found to be statistically significant at the 5% level, i.e. there is only a 1 in 20 possibility that these differences have occurred by chance.

Additional information on definitions and technical aspects of the survey are available in the [Annex A](#) (Definitions) and [Annex B](#) (Technical Notes).

Section Two: Methodology

2.1 Origins

In September 2014, the [Statistics and Research Branch \(SRB\) of the Department for Employment and Learning \(DEL\)](#) commissioned [Central Survey Unit \(CSU\) of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(NISRA\)](#) to conduct a follow-up survey of individuals who completed and achieved at least one regulated qualification course at a FE College in the 2013/14 academic year.

2.2 What?

The FE Leavers Survey was designed to capture information on the destinations and potential benefits to FE Leavers on completing and achieving a regulated qualification at a FE College in NI. Of particular interest were:

- Progressing into employment or further learning,
- Improving employment prospects, earnings and promotion, and
- Potential non-economic benefits to the individual.

2.3 Pilot

The FE Leavers Survey 2015 was informed by a pilot study. The pilot study was conducted in June 2014 and provided an opportunity to both test the survey design and to address any issues encountered by interviewers when conducting the survey. This resulted in some minor amendments and refinements to the survey. The pilot also affirmed the use of a telephone interview with interviewers using an electronic version of the questionnaire technique.

2.4 Who?

The population of interest included all individuals who had completed and achieved at least one regulated qualification during the 2013/14 academic year at one of NI's FE Colleges. In the 2013/14 academic year 42,738 individuals achieved at least one regulated qualification.

As the population was too large to interview each individual, a representative sample of 6,023 was selected to take part in a telephone interview. This sample was randomly selected and representative of the population of interest across five stratification variables. These variables are: FE College, Age Band, Gender, Mode of Attendance (Full/Part Time) and Level of Course.

Table 1 provides a profile of all respondents for each of the stratification variables. This table also compares the proportions of survey respondents to the population of interest, across the stratification variables.

Table 1: *Comparison: Stratification variables proportions for the population of interest (42,738) and survey respondents (3,861)*

Variable	Variable Categories	Respondent Profile		Comparison with the Total FE College population of Interest	
		Survey Respondents	%	% of Population of interest (n=42,738)	Percentage point difference
College	Belfast Metropolitan College	889	23.0	23.2	-0.2
	Northern Regional College	541	14.0	14.1	-0.1
	North West Regional College	609	15.8	16.4	-0.6
	South Eastern Regional College	517	13.4	14.6	-1.2
	Southern Regional College	783	20.3	19.4	0.9
	South West College	522	13.5	12.4	1.1
	Total	3,861	100.0	100.0	0.0
Gender	Female	2,143	55.5	53.4	2.1
	Male	1,718	44.5	46.6	-2.1
	Total	3,861	100.0	100.0	0.0
Age (years)	19 and under	1,592	41.2	41.9	-0.7
	20-24	543	14.1	15.3	-1.2
	25 and over	1,726	44.7	42.8	1.9
	Total	3,861	100.0	100.0	
Mode of Attendance	Full-Time	944	24.4	24.0	0.4
	Part-Time	2,917	75.6	76.0	-0.4
	Total	3,861	100.0	100.0	0.0
Level of Course	Entry Level	298	7.7	8.2	-0.5
	1	374	9.7	9.8	-0.1
	2	1,587	41.1	42.4	-1.3
	3	1,192	30.9	29.8	1.1
	4 and above	410	10.6	9.8	0.8
	Total	3,861	100.0	100.0	0.0

Please note that 25 (0.1%) individuals whose age was unknown in the population of interest has not been included in this table.

2.5 How?

Interviews with selected FE Leavers were conducted over the telephone. Interviewers entered responses into an electronic version of the questionnaire. This information was collated by CSU and passed to DEL for analysis.

2.6 When?

All telephone interviews were conducted approximately six months after course completion (2nd February - 8th May 2015). The interview workload was spread evenly over the three months. Over this period approximately 2,000 cases were allocated to 70 CSU interviewers. Each month, during the fieldwork period, CSU sent out letters to randomly selected respondents. The letter contained background information about the survey and let them know that an interviewer would be phoning them to invite them to take part in a brief telephone interview.

2.7 Response Rates

The overall response rate was 72.5%. For surveys of this nature (telephone) a response rate of this level is considered excellent.

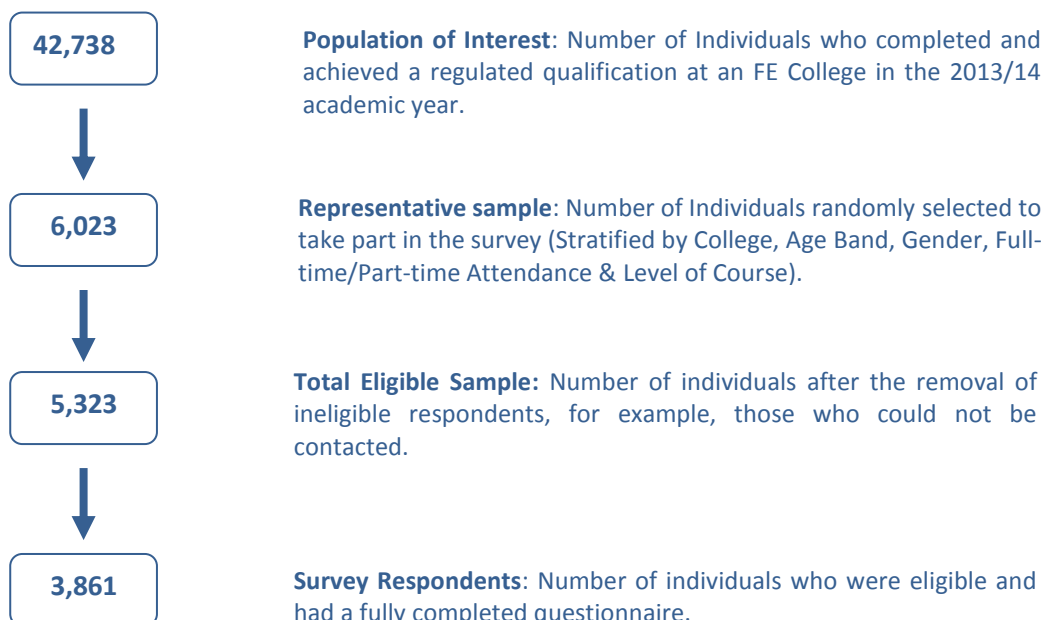
To calculate the response rate any individuals with an invalid phone number were subtracted from the representative sample (n=6,023) and any ineligible cases are removed also, leaving a Total Eligible Sample of 5,323 (see Box One). The final response rate is calculated as follows:

$$(3,861 / 5,323) \times 100 = 72.5\%$$

2.8 Weighting

Weighting of the responses was not required. Any differences in the distribution between the two groups were not considered large enough to justify weighting the data.

Box 1: Population of Interest to Survey Respondents



2.9 Interpretation

When interpreting the findings presented it is important to be aware of the following points:

- Individuals in FE Colleges can enrol and achieve on multiple courses simultaneously. The methodology used to determine the population of interest was to select the highest level of qualification achieved for each individual, which resulted in 42,738 individual FE Leavers.
- Although the sample (n=6,023) was designed to be representative of the 2013/14 FE College Leavers population, there is variation in the total number of responses provided for some questions. This affects the statistics derived from the survey when trying to infer patterns within the population of interest. To assist interpretation, Certain tables in the supplementary tables file online present an upper and lower limit for each statistic. The upper and lower limits indicate the range of values for which there can be 95% confidence that the real value in the population of interest will occur.
- Comparison of percentages should be considered with caution when base numbers (the number of valid responses to a particular question) are small. Base numbers (n=) are included in charts and tables.

- Inferences/statements about the population of interest can be made because the profile of survey respondents by the stratification variables (FE College, Age Band, Gender, Mode of Attendance and Level) was broadly similar to the profile of the population of interest (Refer to Table 1) i.e. the 42,738 individuals who had completed and achieved a regulated qualification in the 2013/14 academic year.
- Any differences in proportions across the options within the stratification variables or the main activities before and after the FE Course were tested through a variety of statistical techniques, to establish if the differences were statistically significant. Some differences are included only for descriptive purposes and to illustrate trends. These will be identified in the text as not significant/non-significant or no 'real' change.
- Due to rounding to one decimal place, some totals may add to more than 100.0%; differences reported may not equate to the difference between the figures two figures shown in the text; and summing of proportions may not equate to the value reported.
- If the same questions were to be asked of the same individuals at a different time point their responses may be different.
- The reader is reminded that complementary data is available in excel and comma separated value (CSV) files online and the annual FE Activity publication is available at:
<https://www.delni.gov.uk/publications/further-education-activity-fe-colleges-northern-ireland-201415>

Section Three: Main Findings

3.1 All FE Leavers - Six Months after their FE Course

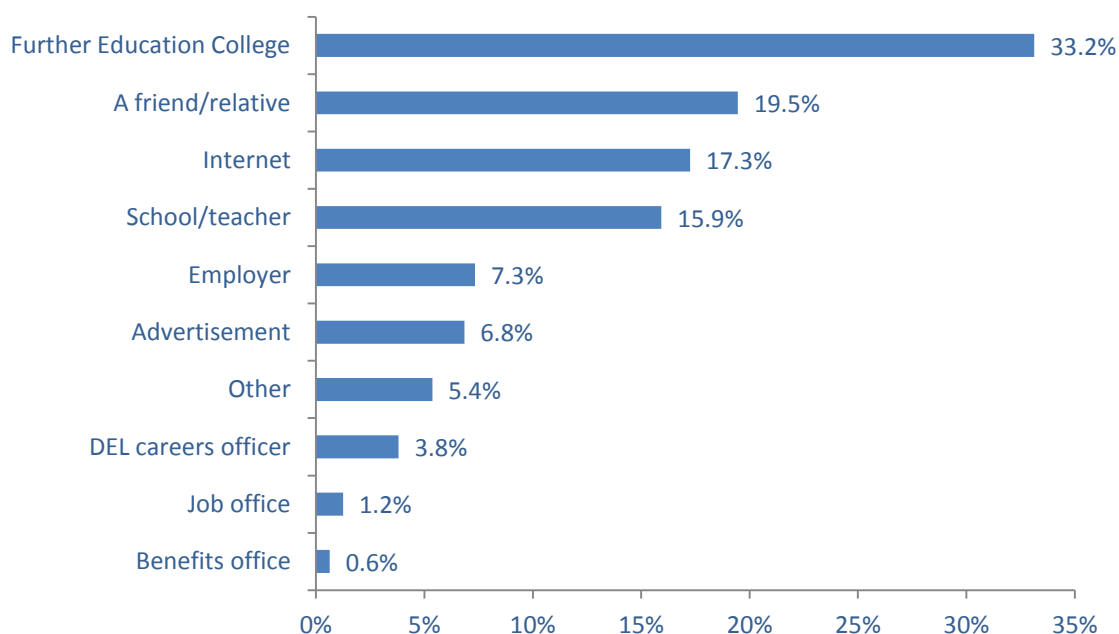
This sub-section provides analysis of all FE Leavers who took part in the FE Leavers Survey and includes:

- How they heard about the FE Course they recently completed,
- Main reasons for doing their FE Course,
- Main activities before and six months after their FE Course, and
- Perceived non-economic benefits of the FE Course to the individual.

How did individuals hear about their FE Course?

Respondents were asked how they had heard about their course and could provide as many responses to this question as they wanted. The top three ways of hearing about their course were through the 'FE College' itself (33.2%), through 'a friend/relative' (19.5%) and via the 'Internet' (17.3%) (Figure 1 and Table A01).

Figure 1 All FE Leavers: How individuals heard about their FE Course



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.
n = 3,856.

Recommend an FE Course to a friend?

Almost all (98.1%) of FE Leavers said they would recommend completing a further education course to a friend. This could influence the reason for completing the course in the near future. The level of recommendation is consistent throughout all of the sub groups within the FE Leavers (Table A60).

In terms of how they heard about the course, there was some variation across FE College, Gender, Age Band, Mode of Attendance and Level (the stratification variables).

FE College:

Across all FE colleges the most common way an individual heard about the course was through the college itself ranging from 29.3% in BMC to 42.0% in SERC. In four of the six colleges the top three methods of hearing about the course were the same as for the entire FE sector. Only in SRC and SWC did hearing about the course through 'School/teacher' appear in the top three, while the 'Internet' was the 4th most common in these two colleges. The 'Job Office' and 'Benefits Office' options were the least common responses in all 6 colleges (Table A01).

Gender:

There was a similar pattern within both genders, with around one third of males (34.0%) and females (32.5%) hearing about their course through the 'FE College'. Hearing about the course through 'School/teacher' (18.4%) appeared in the top three for males, with the 'Internet' as the 4th most common (Table A02).

Age Band:

Those aged '20 and over' had the same top three most common ways of hearing about the course as all FE Leavers with through the 'FE College' being the top response. For those aged '19 and under' 'School/teacher' was most common response (33.8%), while the 'Internet' was the 4th most common way to hear (13.9%) (Table A03).

Mode of Attendance:

Across both full (34.9%) and part time (32.6%) the most common response was hearing about their course through the 'FE College'. In relation to full time a 'School/teacher' (26.9%) was the 2nd most common response, while 'a friend/relative' was the 2nd most common for part time (19.5%). The 'Internet' was 3rd for part time (17.3%), while 4th for full time (17.2%) (Table A04).

Level:

The most marked variation was by the level of course studied. For those who had studied at entry level the most common method of hearing about the course was through 'a friend/relative' (40.5%). This indicates that word of mouth is more important to those at the lowest level of qualification. For those who studied at Level 1 and above, the most common way to hear was from the 'FE College', ranging from 28.6% at Level 1 to 45.3% for Level 4 and above. There was also variation amongst the 2nd and 3rd most common responses. Proportions of those who heard about their FE Course via their 'School/teacher' ranged from 8.1% at Level 4 and above to 18.7% at Level 3. For those who heard via the 'Internet' responses ranged from 9.1% at Entry Level to 23.1% at Level 3 (Table A05).

Main reasons for undertaking the course in FE

The three most popular reasons for undertaking the course in FE were 'learning something new/gaining new skills' (64.0%), 'personal interest in the course' (60.4%) and to 'improve job prospects or get a new job/career' (58.6%). Over half (50.3%) of respondents also said to 'gain a qualification' (Table 2).

Table 2 *All FE Leavers: Main Reasons for Undertaking FE Course*

Reason	%
To learn something new / gain new skills	64.0
I have / had a personal interest in the course	60.4
To improve my job prospects or get a new job / career	58.6
To gain a qualification	50.3
To go on to further or higher learning	40.4
Because it was at a time / place that suited me	35.1
To meet new people and build my self confidence	31.8
To improve my ability to do my current job	21.7
To get more job satisfaction	20.3
Because I did not have to pay for it	18.3
To increase my income	16.8
To improve my job security	16.0
To get a promotion	7.8
I was required to attend course by my employer	7.2
It was mandatory	4.8
To help / support my children / grandchildren with homework	2.9
Other reason	1.8

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.
n = 3,860.

Across the stratification variables there was some variation:

FE College

In five of the six FE colleges the most common reason for undertaking the course was to 'learn something new / gain new skills', ranging from 58.5% in BMC to 79.8% in SWC. The only exception was in SERC where the most common reason was 'I have / had a personal interest in the course'. The top three responses were consistent across five of the six colleges in comparison to the FE sector. Only in SRC did the reason to 'gain a qualification' (62.5%) appear in the top three responses (Table A07).

Gender

There were no notable differences between males and females; both had the same pattern as the overall FE sector (Table A08).

Age Band

As with Gender, the three most common reasons for undertaking a course were the same as in the FE Sector (Table A09).

Mode of Attendance

There were no notable differences between full and part time; both had the same top three responses to the reason for undertaking the course as the overall FE sector (Table A10).

Level

Some notable differences amongst the responses were that the reason to 'learn something new/gain new skills' ranged from 60.0% for those who had studied at level 3 up to 80.2% for those who studied at entry level. Also the reason 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job/career' ranged from 36.6% at entry level to 69.9% for those who studied at level 4 and above (Table A11).

‘Main Activity’ before and six months after FE Course

Those who completed the FE Leavers Survey were asked about their main activity before and six months after their FE Course. ‘Main activity’ was described to the individual as the activity they spent the most time doing.

Before attending a course at a FE College in Northern Ireland, the highest proportion of students had been in employment (38.0%), a further 28.4% had been ‘students at school’ and 13.4% were ‘students at college/university’. The proportions for the remaining activities are presented in Table 3 below.

Approximately six months after completing their FE Course, almost half (47.5%) of FE Leavers were in employment, with a further 31.1% at college/university. Those at school decreased from 28.4% to 1.6% (Table 3).

This analysis starts to give an impression of the ‘flows’ of FE Leavers from school to college/university and from college/university into employment with the changes in the proportions of individuals in these main activity categories.

Table 3 *All FE Leavers: Main activity before and six months after completing FE Course*

Main Activity	Before Completing Course		Six Months After Completing Course		Change
	Count	%	Count	%	%
Paid work for an employer/Self-employed	1,469	38.0%	1,834	47.5%	9.5%*
On a scheme/training scheme (e.g. Apprenticeships)	29	0.8%	55	1.4%	0.7%*
A student at school	1,095	28.4%	61	1.6%	-26.8%*
A student at college/university	518	13.4%	1,199	31.1%	17.6%*
Unemployed and looking for work	304	7.9%	293	7.6%	-0.3%
Voluntary or unpaid work	36	0.9%	53	1.4%	0.4%
Other	410	10.6%	366	9.5%	-1.1%
Total	3,861	100.0%	3,861	100.0%	

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

$n = 3,861$.

* indicates that change in proportions are proven to be statistically significant at 5% level.

Please see Table A14 for confidence intervals and upper and lower boundaries for each percentage.

To simplify, and for ease of analysis and interpretation, the 7 main activities listed above have been grouped together as follows:

- ‘Paid work for an employer/Self-employed’ into **Employed**,
- ‘On a scheme/training scheme (e.g. Apprenticeships)’, ‘A student at school’ and ‘A student at college/university’ into **Learning**,
- ‘Unemployed and looking for work’ into **Unemployed**, and
- ‘Voluntary or unpaid work’ and ‘Other’ into **Other**.

Table 4 provides the numbers and proportions of FE Leavers within each of four activities before and after the FE Course.

This indicates there has been an increase of 9.5 percentage points in the proportion of FE Leavers classed as 'Employed' and a decrease of 8.5 percentage points in the proportion of those in some form of 'Learning'. For those categorised as 'Unemployed' and 'Other' no real change in the proportions was observed over time (Table 4).

Table 4 *All FE Leavers: Grouped Main activity before and six months after completing FE Course*

Main Activity	Before Completing Course		Six Months After Completing Course		Change
	Count	%	Count	%	%
Employed	1,469	38.0%	1,834	47.5%	9.5%*
Learning	1,642	42.5%	1,315	34.1%	-8.5%*
Unemployed	304	7.9%	293	7.6%	-0.3%
Other	446	11.6%	419	10.9%	0.7%
Total	3,861	100.0%	3,861	100.0%	

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

n = 3,861.

* indicates that change in proportions are proven to be statistically significant at 5% level.

Changes in proportions of those 'Employed'

FE College:

Across all FE colleges the proportion of FE Leavers in employment increased. Of particular note is that SRC went from 39.3% to 53.9%, SWC increased from 37.0% to 49.2% and NRC increased from 35.7% to 47.1%. Only at NWRC was the increase non-significant (Table A15).

Gender:

For males and females the proportion of FE Leavers in employment increased. Of particular note is that the proportion for males increased by 11.7 percentage points, from 34.6% to 46.3% (Table A15).

Age Band:

Younger students (aged '24 and under') were more likely to move into employment. For those aged '20 to 24' the increase was 6.6 percentage points (from 46.4% to 53.0%). For those aged '19 and under' it changed by a much higher level of 19.5 percentage points (from 7.0% to 26.4%). For those aged '25 and over' the increase was non-significant (from 64.1% to 65.2%) (Table A15).

Mode of Attendance:

Full-time increased by 16.7 percentage points (from 14.1% to 30.8%), while part-time increased by 7.1 percentage points (from 45.8% to 52.9%) (Table A15).

Level:

Level 2 increased by 11.4 percentage points (from 37.8% to 49.2%). Levels 1 and 3 each increased by 9.6 percentage points (Level 1 from 40.9% to 50.5% and Level 3 from 33.3% to 42.9%). Level 4 and above increased by 7.1 percentage points (from 49.0% to 56.2%) (Table A15).

Changes in proportions of those 'Learning'

FE College:

Four of the six FE colleges had decreases in the proportion of FE Leavers in 'Learning', ranging from 10 percentage points in NRC (44.2% to 34.2%) to 13.5 percentage points in SRC (42.7% to 29.1%). Although BMC decreased by 2.7 percentage points (from 36.4% to 33.7%) and NWRC decreased by 3.6 percentage points (from 42.2% to 38.6%) these changes were not significant (Table A15).

Gender:

For males and females the proportion of FE Leavers in 'Learning' decreased. For males it decreased by 11.4 percentage points, from 49.8% to 38.4% (Table A15).

Age Band:

Only for those aged '19 and under' was there a large decrease in the proportion of those in 'Learning' of 24.2 percentage points from 88.1% to 63.8%. For those aged '25 and over' there was actually an increase of 3.4 percentage points, going against the trend of the FE sector (from 3.3% to 6.7%) (Table A15).

Mode of Attendance:

Full-time decreased by 16.8 percentage points (from 77.4% to 60.6%), while part-time decreased by 5.8 percentage points (from 31.2% to 25.5%) (Table A15).

Level:

Level 2 decreased by 11.2 percentage points (from 43.4% to 32.2%). Level 3 decreased by 9.0 percentage points (from 55.1% to 46.1%) (Table A15).

Changes in proportions of those 'Unemployed'

While there was no 'real' change in the proportion unemployed before (7.9%) and after (7.6%), there was significant movement into and out of unemployment by individuals (Table A15). While 40.8% of those unemployed before remained unemployed, over half either moved into employment (34.5%) or into learning (16.4%) (Table 5).

Within age band there was some change of note. Only for those aged '19 and under' was there an increase in the proportion of those unemployed of 3.3 percentage points from 3.5% to 6.8%. For those aged '25 and over' there was a decrease of 2.7 percentage points, from 10.5% to 7.8% (Table A15).

Movement across Main Activities

Table 5 illustrates the movement of FE Leavers across the four activities by showing their main activity before their FE Course and their destination six months after their FE Course.

While the majority of students remained in the same activity category six months after completing their FE Course, nearly a third (1,117, 28.9%) changed their activity (Table 5).

In particular, Table 5 shows that:

- 1,246 (32.3%) remained 'Employed',
- 1,080 (28.0%) remained in 'Learning',
- 124 (3.2%) remained 'Unemployed',
- 294 (7.6%) remained as 'Other', and
- 1,117 (28.9%) have changed their main activity.

Table 5 *All FE Leavers: Summary Movement in Main Activity*

Main Activity Before	Main Activity After				Total
	Employed	Learning	Unemployed	Other	
Employed	1,246	129	38	56	1,469
Learning	413	1,080	105	44	1,642
Unemployed	105	50	124	25	304
Other	70	56	26	294	446
Total	1,834	1,315	293	419	3,861

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

n = 3,861.

Non-Economic Benefits

All respondents were asked a series of questions about the non-economic benefits of their FE Course. Box 2 provides an overview of these findings.

Box 2 All FE Leavers: Non Economic Benefits

Positive Impact? (n=3,856)

Most FE Leavers (94.3%) agreed that their course had a positive impact on them; with almost three quarters (73.7%) saying their course definitely had a 'positive impact' on them (Table A46).

Those who completed a course at 'Level 3 and above' were more likely to state that it definitely had a positive impact than those who completed a course at a lower level: Entry Level 65.8%, Level 1 68.3%, Level 2 70.0%, Level 3 78.8%, Level 4 and above 84.1% (Table A47).

Gain from Learning? (*more than one response could be provided*) (n=3,856)

Nearly four fifths (79.4%) reported that the course they completed had 'boosted their confidence'.

Nearly three quarters (74.5%) reported 'making new friends/meeting new people'. Two thirds (66.2%) reported an 'increase in self-esteem' (Table A48).

Those aged '19 and under' were more likely than those aged '20 to 24' to state 'Encouraged me to take part in voluntary or community activity' (30.7% compared to 24.5%) and 'I made new friends/meet new people' (78.5% compared to 74.2%).

While those aged '25 and over' were more likely to state 'Enabled me to help my child(ren) with their school work' (15.5%) and 'Helped me with my health problems/disability' (8.1%) than those aged '24 and under'.

Those at South West College were more likely to state that their course had 'Helped me do something useful with my spare time' (60.4%) and 'Helped me to keep active' (53.5%) than those in any of the other five FE colleges (Table A49).

Enthusiasm about Learning? (n=3,855)

Over four fifths (85.1%) agreed that as a result of completing their course they have become 'more enthusiastic about learning' (Table A50).

Better Idea What To Do in Your Life? (n=3,854)

Almost three quarters (71.2%) of respondents agreed that as a result of completing their course they had got a 'better idea of what they wanted to do in their life' (Table A52).

When the strongly agreed and agreed percentages are combined, with the exception of South Eastern Regional College, those at Northern Regional College (64.0%) were less likely to agree to the statement than those from the other colleges. The number of respondents who completed a course at 'Level 3 and above' and strongly agreed / agreed with this statement was higher than those who completed a course at a lower level: Entry Level 44.8%, Level 1 56.8%, Level 2 69.4%, Level 3 81.0%, Level 4 and above 81.9% (Table A53).

Improved Quality of Life? (n=3,855)

Over three fifths (61.9%) agreed that the course they completed had 'improved their quality of life' (Table A54).

Undertake Further Learning & Training? (n=3,855); At a Higher Level? (n=3,850)

Over four fifths (85.3%) agreed that as a result of their course they were more likely to 'undertake further learning and training' (Table A56). Just over three quarters (78.7%) agreed they were more likely to do so at a 'higher level' (Table A58).

Summary for all FE Leavers

The most popular way individuals **heard about their FE Course** was through the 'FE College' itself (33.2%). This would indicate that people contact the college directly to find out about course. The second most common way was through 'a friend/relative' (19.5%) and given that nearly all FE Leavers would recommend a FE Course to a friend, this is likely to increase, and therefore word of mouth is an important factor. The third most common method was via the 'Internet' (17.3%). With modern technology it is unsurprising this is a popular way of hearing about education. There are variations according to FE college attended, age, gender, mode of attendance and level studied, indicating that some methods are more popular for specific groups of people.

Examining the **reasons for undertaking the course** indicates that three of the top four reasons are employment related, namely 'gain a qualification' (50.3%), 'to improve their job prospects' (58.6%) or 'gain a new skill' (64.0%). This could imply that individuals value the course they are undertaking in FE in trying to progress towards employment. Another common reason was having a 'personal interest in the course' (60.4%). Again there is variation across the stratification variables indicating the reasons are different for different groups.

In terms of changes in the proportions of the **main activity** of individuals, there was an increase of 9.5 percentage points in those FE Leavers classed as 'Employed' and a decrease of 8.5 percentage points in the proportion of those in some form of 'Learning'. For those 'Unemployed' and within 'Other' there wasn't a real change in the proportions of individuals in these categories. Although it is acknowledged that other factors influence these changes, it appears that gaining a regulated qualification through the FE sector could have improved the employment and further learning prospects of FE Leavers. The findings provide an impression of the 'flows' of FE Leavers from school to college/university and from college/university into employment. There are some variations according to FE college attended, age, gender, mode of attendance and level studied, which implies that specific groups of individuals are more or less likely to change their main activity.

There are high proportions of FE Leavers stating they have obtained a range of perceived **non-economic benefits**. This indicates that not only can a regulated qualification provide an individual with employment and further learning opportunities but also give additional benefits, which can be carried on through to other activities in life.

3.2 FE Leavers in Employment Six Months after their FE Course

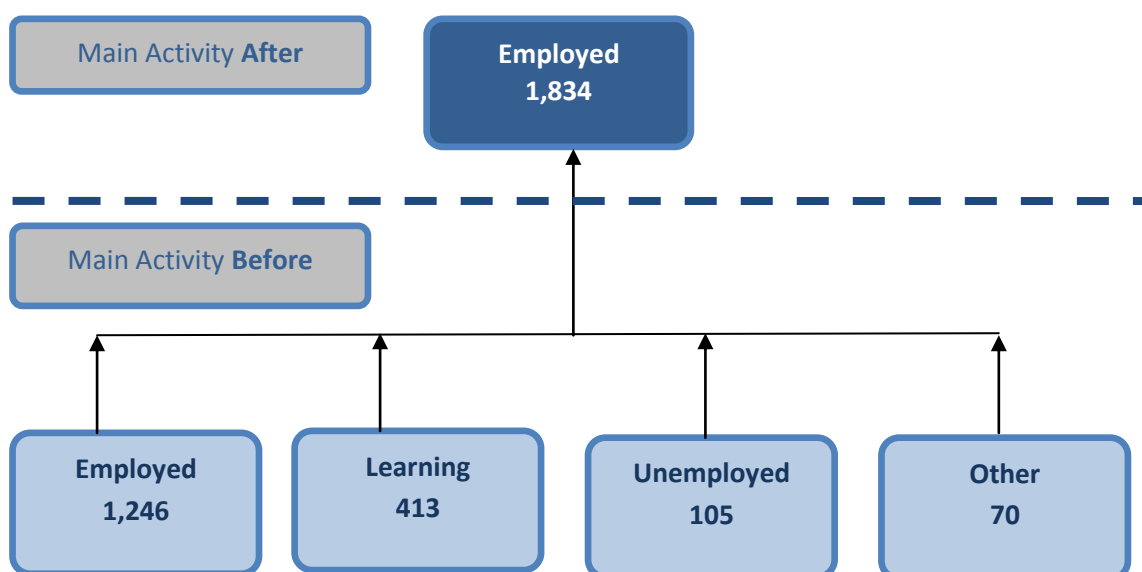
This section presents findings for the FE Leavers in employment (paid & self-employed) six months after their FE Course. After an overview of their main activities before their FE Course, this section will examine how FE Leavers in employment heard about the course, the reason for undertaking the course, if they are using the skills and knowledge acquired from the course, the subject area they had studied in, if their job is in the same subject area as their course, earnings, the location of their work, characteristics of employment, whether they felt the course made a difference in gaining or staying in a job, and the perceived non-economic benefits reported by these FE Leavers.

Overview of Employed FE Leaver Main Activity before their FE Course

Of the 1,834 FE Leavers in employment six months after achieving a regulated qualification:

- 1,246 (67.9%) had previously been 'Employed',
- 413 (22.5%) had previously been in 'Learning',
- 105 (5.7%) had previously been 'Unemployed', and
- 70 (3.8%) had previously been categorised as 'Other'.

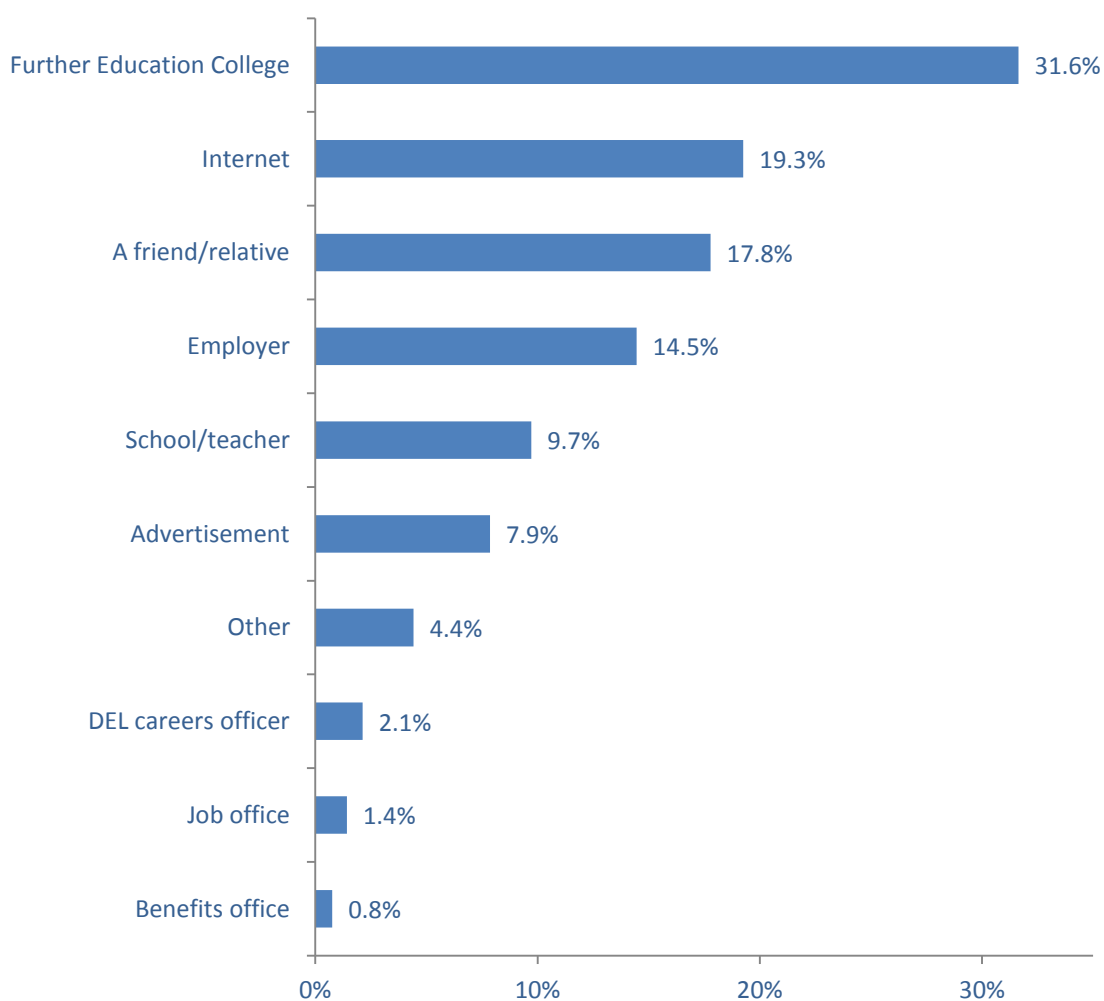
Chart 1 *FE Leavers in Employment (1,834): Main activity before*



How did individuals hear about their FE Course?

Respondents were asked how they had heard about their course and could provide as many responses to this question as they wanted. The three most common ways of hearing about their course were through the 'FE College' itself (31.6%), through the 'Internet' (19.2%), and through 'a friend/relative' (17.8%) (Figure 2 and Table A06).

Figure 2 *FE Leavers in Employment: How individuals heard about their FE Course*



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.
n = 1,833.

Main reasons for undertaking the course in FE

The three most popular reasons for undertaking the course in FE were to 'learn something new/gain new skills' (63.4%), 'improve job prospects or get a new job/career' (61.9%) and 'personal interest in the course' (58.3%) (Table A6).

Table 6 *FE Leavers in Employment: Main Reasons for undertaking the course in FE*

Reason	%
To learn something new / gain new skills	63.4
To improve my job prospects or get a new job / career	61.9
I have / had a personal interest in the course	58.3
To gain a qualification	48.2
To improve my ability to do my current job	35.2
Because it was at a time / place that suited me	34.9
To go on to further or higher learning	30.6
To meet new people and build my self confidence	29.1
To get more job satisfaction	26.6
To improve my job security	23.0
To increase my income	20.9
Because I did not have to pay for it	16.2
To get a promotion	11.9
I was required to attend course by my employer	11.4
It was mandatory	5.5
To help / support my children / grandchildren with homework	3.5
Other reason	1.4

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.
n = 1,833.

Using Skills and Knowledge Acquired in Course?

Over two thirds (68.2%) stated they were using the skills and knowledge acquired at least to some extent; in particular 34.8% said 'To a great extent' (Table A20).

Subject area

Nearly half (43.4%) of the FE Leavers in employment had studied one of three subjects: 'Health, public services and care' (15.6%), 'Retail and commercial enterprise' (14.7%) and 'Information and communication technology' (13.1%) (Table 7).

Is the job in the same subject area as the course?

Over half (56.6%) had studied a course in the same subject area as their current job: 'Construction, planning and the built environment' had the highest proportion (80.0%) of FE Leavers in a job in the subject area they recently qualified in, while the lowest was in 'Social sciences' with 5.9% (Table 7).

Table 7 FE Leavers in Employment: Subject Area Studied & if Job in the Same Subject Area

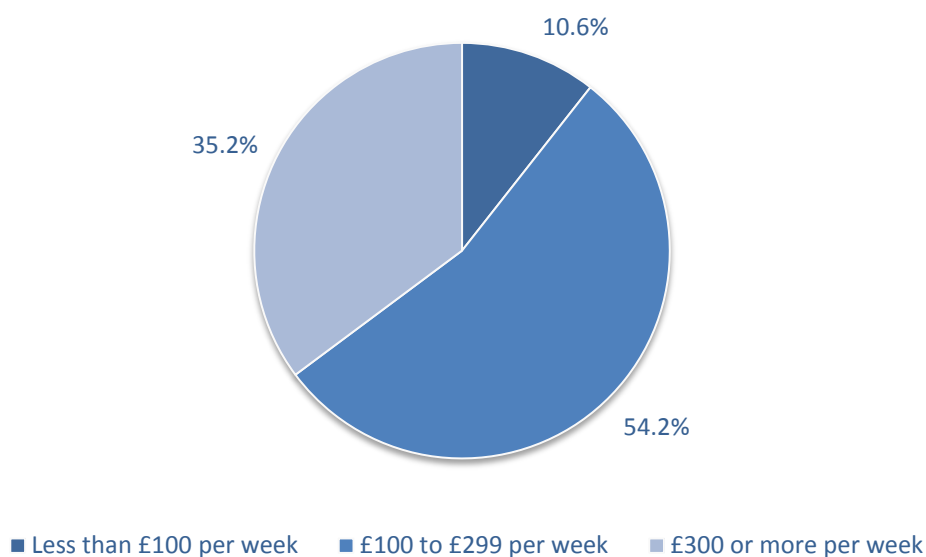
Subject Area	% of Subject Area	% job within same subject area
Health, public services and care	15.6	72.7
Retail and commercial enterprise	14.7	60.2
Information and communication technology	13.1	48.3
Preparation for life and work	11.9	39.3
Business, administration and law	11.3	69.1
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	7.9	77.1
Languages, literature and culture	7.0	26.6
Construction, planning and the built environment	5.2	80.0
Arts, media and publishing	3.2	25.9
Leisure, travel and tourism	3.0	41.8
Education and training	2.6	78.7
Science and mathematics	2.5	31.1
Social sciences	0.9	5.9
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	0.7	58.3
History, philosophy and theology	0.4	14.3
Unknown	0.2	75.0
Total	100.0	56.6

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.
n = 1,834.

Usual take home pay

For FE Leavers in employment, over half (54.2%) were earning between £100 and £299 per week and over a third (35.2%) were earning over £300 per week. Putting these figures into context, analysis in the [2015 NI gross weekly pay](#) indicates an average of £442.90 - only 16.2% of those FE Leavers in employment were earning £400 or more per week (Figure 3 and Table A30). Interestingly, when examining across gender, there is a higher proportion of males (21.0%) earning more than £400 per week compared to females (12.4%) (Table A30B).

Figure 3 FE Leavers in Employment: Pay bands



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

n = 1,688. Please note that pay information was not available for 8.0% of this sub-group.

Where did they Work?

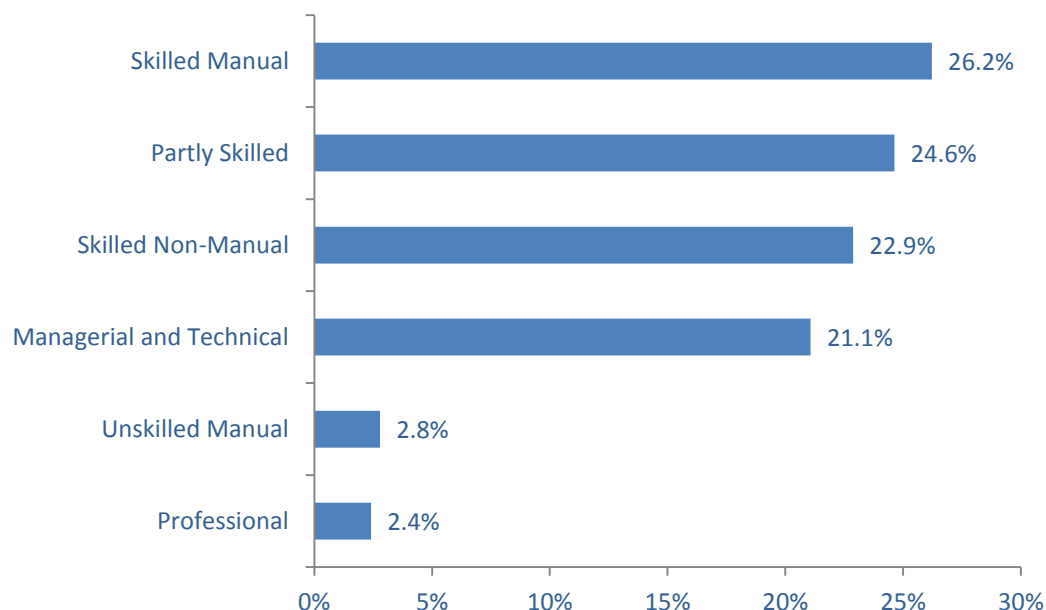
Most of the FE Leavers were in employment in Northern Ireland (95.1%). Of those remaining, 3.9% were working in the Republic of Ireland; 0.8% in England, Scotland or Wales and 0.2% overseas. It would appear that the majority of FE Leavers work where they were living during the course. This is consistent across all subgroups within those in employment (Table A17).

Paid or Self-Employed?

The majority (90.5%) of the FE Leavers who were in employment six months after their course were in paid employment as opposed to being self-employed (9.5%) (Table A16).

National Statistics Socio Economic Classification

For almost all of those in employment, their jobs have been classified as either: 'Skilled Manual' (26.2%), 'Partly Skilled' (24.6%), 'Skilled Non-Manual' (22.9%), or 'Managerial and Technical' (21.1%) (Figure 4 and Table A18).

Figure 4 *FE Leavers in Employment: National Statistics Socio Economic Classification*

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

n = 1,827.

Got/stayed in employment without course?

Just over a quarter (25.6%) of the FE Leavers who were in employment six months after their course said they probably/definitely would not have got or stayed in their job without the FE Course (Table A19).

Working Pattern?

Nearly three quarters (70.4%) of the FE Leavers who were in employment six months after their course said they were working full time (defined as 30 hours or more per week), while 29.6% were part time (Table A23). When examining by gender it indicates that there are higher proportions of males (84.0%) working on a full time basis compared to females (60.0%) (Table A23B).

Box 3 FE Leavers in Employment: Non Economic Benefits

Box 3 provides an overview of these findings for FE Leavers in employment six months after completing and achieving their course.

Positive Impact? (n=1,830)

The majority of FE Leavers in employment (94.1%) said that their course had a 'positive impact' on them (with almost three quarters (73.4%) saying their course definitely had a positive impact on them) (Table A46).

Gain anything from Learning? (n=1,830)

The three most popular responses included: 'boosting their confidence' (77.4%), 'making new friends/ meeting new people' (70.2%) and 'increased self-esteem' (63.3%) (Table A48).

Enthusiasm about Learning? (n=1,831)

Over four fifths (83.0%) of FE Leavers in employment agreed that they had become 'more enthusiastic about learning' as a result of completing their course (Table A50).

Better Idea What to Do in Your Life? (n=1,831)

Nearly two thirds (65.7%) of this group agreed that as a result of their FE Course they had a 'better idea what to do in life' (Table A52).

Improved Quality of Life? (n=1,831)

Nearly three fifths (57.1%) of the FE Leavers in employment stated that completing their FE Course had 'improved their quality of life' (Table A54).

Undertake Further Learning & Training? (n=1,831); At a Higher Level? (n=1,827)

Over four fifths (81.8%) agreed that as a result of their course they were more likely to 'undertake further learning and training' (Table A56). Just over three quarters (75.1%) agreed they were more likely to do so at a 'higher level' (Table A58).

Summary for FE Leavers in Employment

There were 47.5% of FE Leavers in employment six months after completing and achieving at least one regulated qualification from a FE College in the 2013/14 academic year. This compares to 38.0% of those in employment prior to the course starting, indicating that people have progressed into some form of work.

The majority (67.9%) were previously in employment before the FE Course. However, nearly a quarter (22.5%) started out in some form of learning and 5.7% were unemployed before they started the FE Course, indicating progression into employment.

The majority of FE Leavers in employment after the FE Course are aged 25 years and over (61.3%) and had studied on a part time basis (84.1%) (Table A61). These results are not surprising as those in employment are likely to be older and considering the majority (67.9%) of those in employment after the FE Course were already employed before the FE Course, they potentially would have to study on a part basis to fit it in with their work life.

The three most common ways this sub group **heard about the course** are through the 'FE College' itself (31.6%), the 'Internet' (19.3%) and via 'a friend/relative' (17.8%).

In terms of the **reason for undertaking the course**, the three most common reasons are 'to learn something new / gain new skills' (63.4%), 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job / career' (61.9%) and 'I have / had a personal interest in the course' (58.3%).

The majority (68.2%) of FE Leavers in employment stated they were **using the skills and knowledge acquired** at least to some extent. This is encouraging as they are utilising the learning from the FE Course in their job.

Over half (56.6%) of this sub-group had **studied a course in the same subject area as their job**, with some variation across subject area, ranging from (80.0%) in 'Construction, planning and the built environment' to 5.9% in 'Social sciences'. This indicates that the subject area studied may influence whether they are likely to work in a similar area.

In terms of **job characteristics**, most of the FE Leavers in employment worked in Northern Ireland (95.1%). The majority (90.5%) were in paid employment and on a full time basis (70.4%). The type of job was fairly evenly spread across the classification of jobs with the proportion in Managerial and Technical (21.1%), Skilled Non-Manual (22.9%), Skilled Manual (26.2%), and Partly Skilled (24.6%) all fairly similar.

It is interesting to note that just over a quarter (25.6%) felt they probably would not have **got, or stayed, in their job** without the FE Course. It is encouraging that FE Leavers place this level of value on the FE Course. Although the majority felt obtaining the course did not matter in terms of employment, it could be down to the fact that the majority of this group were employed beforehand.

In terms of **earnings** for this group, in comparison to the average weekly pay of £442.90 in Northern Ireland ([2015 NI gross weekly pay](#)), only 16.1% of those FE Leavers in employment had earnings of £400 or more per week. It may be that those coming from FE into employment could be at an earlier stage in their career path and it will take time for the earnings per week figure to grow towards the NI average.

Analysing the responses to the perceived **non-economic benefit** statements, indicates that the three most common gains for FE Leavers in employment were 'Boosted my confidence' (77.4%), 'I made new friends/meet new people' (70.2%), 'Increased my self-esteem' (63.3%).

Almost all (94.1%) of the FE Leavers in employment said the course they completed in 2013/14 had a 'positive impact' on them. Over four fifths (83.0%) agreed that as a result of completing their course they have become 'more enthusiastic about learning'. A similar proportion (81.8%) agreed they were more likely to 'undertake further learning and training' and 75.1% agreeing they were more likely to do so 'at a higher level'. Almost two thirds (65.7%) agreed they had gotten a 'better idea about what they wanted to do in their life'. Over half agreed their quality of life had improved (57.1%).

FE Leavers Employed before and six months after Sub-Group

Of the 1,834 FE Leavers 'Employed' after their FE Course, 1,246 (67.9%) had also been employed before their FE Course. Of these 1,246 FE Leavers, 1,105 had previously been in paid employment, while 141 had been self-employed.

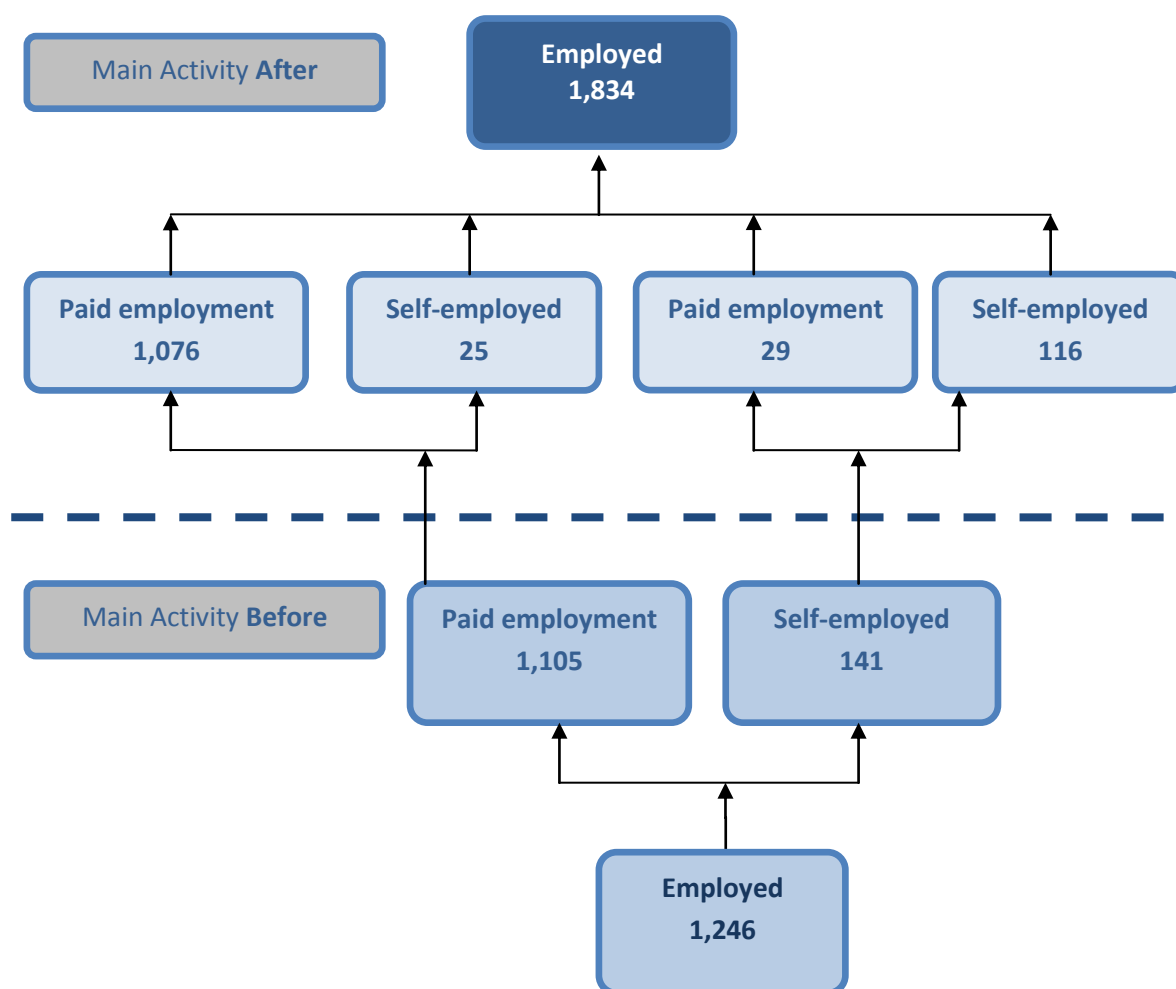
Of the 1,105 who were previously in paid employment:

- 1,076 said they were still paid employment
- 25 said they were now in self-employed

Of the 141 who were previously in self employment:

- 116 said they were still self-employed
- 29 said they were now in paid employment

Chart 2 *FE Leavers Employed Before and After (1,246): Main activity before*



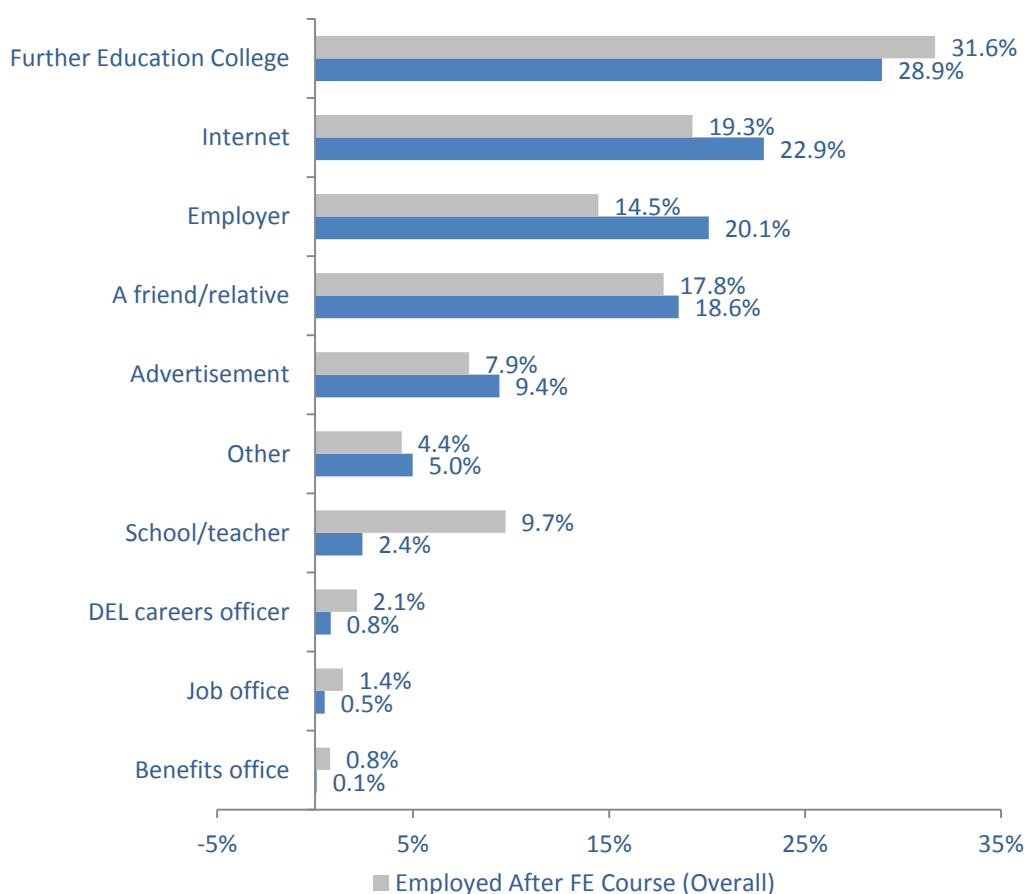
In terms of the 1,246 FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course the following section of the report focuses on: how they heard about the course, the reason for undertaking the course, if they are using the skills and knowledge they acquired from the course, the subject area they had studied in, if their job is now in the same subject area as the course, earnings, job characteristics, whether they felt they would have got or stayed in the job, and if it has changed and the perceived non-economic benefits for this group. Where permitting, the responses from this sub group (employed before and after) are compared to all FE Leavers in employment after.

How did individuals hear about their FE Course?

Respondents were asked how they had heard about their course and could provide as many responses to this question as they wanted. The three most common ways of hearing about their course were through the 'FE College' itself (28.9%), through the 'Internet' (22.9%) and through their employer (20.1%).

FE Leavers employed before and after their course and all FE Leavers in employment had the same four most common ways to hear about the course: through the 'FE College' itself, the 'Internet', through their employer and via 'a friend/relative'. However, it is interesting to note that a higher proportion of those FE Leavers in employment before and after heard about the course through the 'Internet' (22.9% compared to 19.3%), their employer (20.1% compared to 14.5%) and less through their 'School/teacher', 'Job Office' or a 'Benefits Office'. Given this subgroup were already in employment, the differences in how they heard about the course are not surprising as those not in employment before the FE Course are more likely to attend Job or Benefits Offices where they might be able to find work (Figure 5 and Table A06).

Figure 5 *Comparison: FE Leavers Employed Before and After and all FE Leavers in Employment - How individuals heard about their FE Course*



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Employed Before & After FE Course n = 1,245; In Employment After n=1,833.

Main reasons for undertaking the course in FE

The three most popular reasons for the FE Leavers employed before and after their FE Course were to 'learn something new/gain new skills' (63.0%), 'improve job prospects or get a new job/career' (57.1%) and a 'personal interest in the course' (55.6%).

There are differences when comparing those in employment before and after their FE Course to all FE Leavers in employment after their course. Those in employment before and after the course were more likely to state the following reasons: 'to improve my ability to do my current job' and 'I was required to attend course by my employer', all of which are specifically job related reasons. In terms of all FE Leavers in employment after their course, they were more likely to indicate the following reasons: 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job / career', 'to go on to further or higher learning' and 'to gain a qualification' (Table 8).

Table 8 *Comparison: FE Leavers Employed Before and After and all FE Leavers in Employment - Main Reasons for Undertaking FE Course*

Reason	Employed Before & After (%)	In Employment after (%)
To learn something new / gain new skills	63.0	63.4
To improve my job prospects or get a new job / career	57.1	61.9
I have / had a personal interest in the course	55.6	58.3
To gain a qualification	44.6	48.2
To improve my ability to do my current job	41.7	35.2
Because it was at a time / place that suited me	33.6	34.9
To get more job satisfaction	28.1	26.6
To go on to further or higher learning	26.8	30.6
To meet new people and build my self confidence	26.3	29.1
To improve my job security	25.5	23.0
To increase my income	19.7	20.9
I was required to attend course by my employer	14.0	11.4
Because I did not have to pay for it	13.3	16.2
To get a promotion	12.3	11.9
It was mandatory	5.4	5.5
To help / support my children / grandchildren with homework	4.1	3.5
Other reason	1.6	1.4

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Employed Before & After FE Course n = 1,246; In Employment After n=1,833.

Using Skills and Knowledge Acquired in Course?

Over two thirds (68.8%) stated they were using the skills and knowledge acquired at least to some extent; in particular 33.6% said 'To a great extent'. This is similar to the findings for all FE Leavers 'Employed' after their FE Course (Table A20).

Subject area

Nearly half (43.8%) of the FE Leavers employed before and after their course had studied one of three subject areas: 'Retail and commercial enterprise' (14.7%), 'Health, public services and care' (14.6%), and 'Information and communication technology' (14.5%) (Table 9).

Is the job in the same subject area as the course?

Over half (57.9%) had studied a course in the same subject area as their current job. 'Education and training' had the highest proportion (79.5%) of FE Leavers in a job within the subject area they recently qualified in, while the lowest was in 'Languages, literature and culture' (25.7%). For History, philosophy and theology and Social sciences no one ended up in a job related to these subject areas after studying in 2013/14 (Table 9).

Table 9 Comparison: FE Leavers Employed Before and After and all FE Leavers in Employment - Subject Area Studied & if Job in the Same Subject Area

Subject Area	Employment Before and After		In Employment After (Overall)	
	% of Subject Area	Job within same subject area (%)	% of Subject Area	Job within same subject area (%)
Retail and commercial enterprise	14.7	59.9	14.7	60.2
Health, public services and care	14.6	75.3	15.6	72.7
Information and communication technology	14.5	51.4	13.1	48.3
Business, administration and law	13.4	71.9	11.3	69.1
Preparation for life and work	8.7	44.0	11.9	39.3
Languages, literature and culture	8.4	25.7	7.0	26.6
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	8.3	77.9	7.9	77.1
Construction, planning and the built environment	3.5	75.0	5.2	80.0
Arts, media and publishing	3.2	30.0	3.2	25.9
Education and training	3.1	79.5	2.6	78.7
Science and mathematics	3.0	36.8	2.5	31.1
Leisure, travel and tourism	2.2	40.7	3.0	41.8
Social sciences	1.2	0.0	0.9	5.9
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	0.5	50.0	0.7	58.3
History, philosophy and theology	0.2	0.0	0.4	14.3
Unknown	0.2	66.7	0.2	75.0
Total	100.0	57.9	100.0	56.6

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Employed Before & After FE Course Subject Area n = 1,246;

Employed Before & After FE Course Job in same Subject Area n=1,245;

In Employment After Subject Area n=1,834;

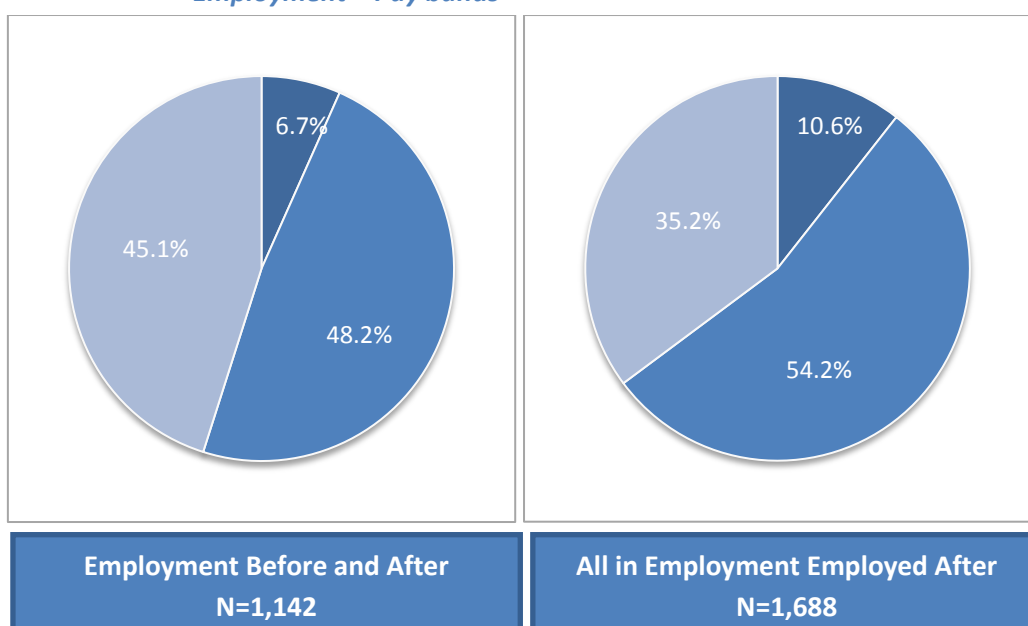
In Employment After Job in Subject Area n=1, 833.

When comparing FE Leavers employed before and after to all FE Leavers in employment after, there is no difference in the overall proportion of those in a job related to the subject studied. However, there are differences across some of subject areas. These are presented in Table 9.

Usual take home pay

For those FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course, nearly half (48.2%) were earning £100 up to £299 per week and 45.1% were earning over £300 per week. In comparison to the [2015 NI gross weekly pay](#) (£442.90), just over one fifth (21.2%) of those FE Leavers in employment before and after were earning £400 or more per week. For all FE Leavers in employment after the equivalent figure is lower at 16.2%. This is likely a result of being established in employment and already earning at a certain level as opposed to just starting out in employment and being at the lower end of pay bands (Figure 6 and Table A30).

Figure 6 Comparison: FE Leavers Employed Before and After and all FE Leavers in Employment – Pay bands



Key:

■ - Less than £100 per week ■ - £100 to £299 per week ■ - £300 or more per week

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Please note that pay information was not available for 8.3% of this sub-group.

This sub group were also asked if their current pay was higher, lower or the same as before course. Nearly a third (30.7%) who responded stated that their pay had increased after the course. It is not clear if this is a natural increment or as a result of obtaining a regulated qualification (Table A31).

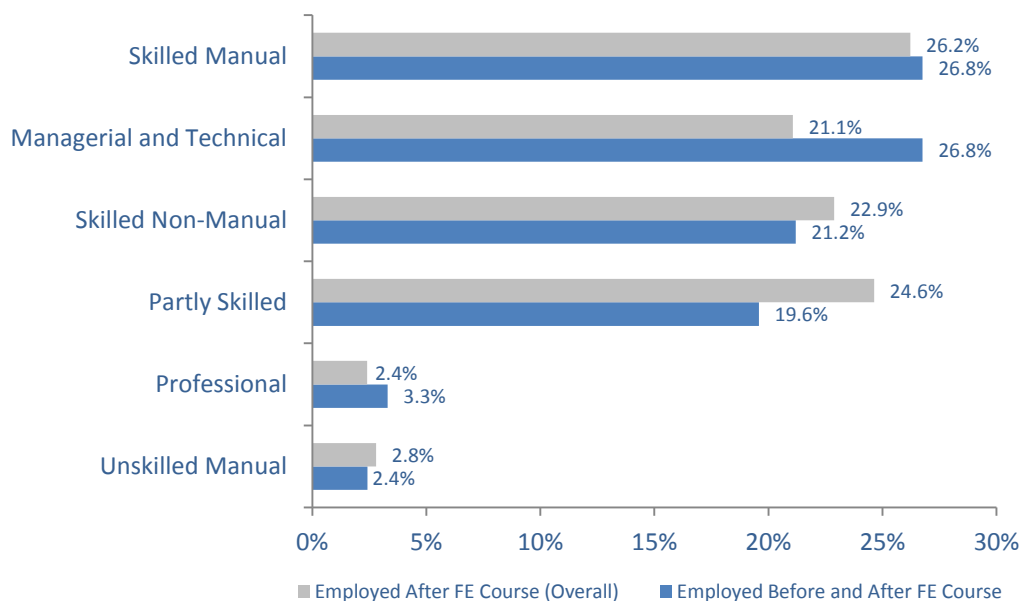
Paid or Self-Employed?

The majority (88.1%) of the FE Leavers who were in employment before and after their FE Course were in paid employment as opposed to being self-employed (11.9%). This group, employed before and after their FE Course, has a higher proportion of individuals in self employment compared to all FE Leavers in employment (9.5%). This could be as a result of picking up experiences through their working environment, then learning a new skill through FE and taking the decision to start out in self-employment (Table A16).

National Statistics Socio Economic Classification

There was a higher proportion of those in Managerial and Technical type jobs (26.8% compared to 21.1%) for those in employment before and after than FE Leavers in employment after, while less for the Partly Skilled (19.6% compared to 24.6%) (Figure 7 and Table A18).

Figure 7 Comparison: FE Leavers Employed Before and After and all FE Leavers in Employment - National Statistics Socio Economic Classification



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Employed Before & After FE Course n = 1,246; In Employment After n=1,827;

Got/stayed in employment without course?

Nearly a fifth (18.5%) of FE Leavers who were in employment before and after their FE Course, said they probably/definitely would not have got, or stayed in, their job without the FE Course. This is 7.1 percentage points less than the 'Employed' after group (25.6%). A potential reason for this is that they are already established in work and fewer people felt the course had an effect on staying in their job or not (Table A19).

Working Pattern?

Nearly three quarters (75.6%) of the FE Leavers who were in employment before and after their course said they were working full time (defined as 30 hours or more per week), while 24.4% were part time. FE Leavers employed before and after their course had a higher proportion (75.6%) working full time compared to all FE Leavers in employment (70.4%) (Table A23).

Box 4 FE Leavers Employed before and after: Non Economic Benefits

Box 4 provides an overview of these findings for FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course.

Positive Impact? (n=1,245)

The majority of this sub-group of FE Leavers said that their course 'probably' or 'definitely' had a 'positive impact' on them (94.6%). Of particular note in that nearly three quarters (73.8%) said their course 'definitely' had a positive impact on them (Table A46).

Gain anything from Learning? (n=1,245)

The three most popular responses included 'boosting their confidence' (75.5%), 'making new friends/ meeting new people' (66.6%) and 'increased self-esteem' (61.5%) (Table A48).

Enthusiasm about Learning? (n=1,246)

Over four fifths (83.5%) of FE Leavers in this sub-group agreed that they had become 'more enthusiastic about learning' as a result of completing their course (Table A50).

Better Idea What to Do in Your Life? (n=1,246)

Three fifths (60.2%) of this group agreed that as a result of their FE Course they had a 'better idea of what to do in life' (Table A52).

Improved Quality of Life? (n=1,246)

Just over half (51.6%) agreed that completing their FE Course had 'improved their quality of life' (Table A54).

Undertake Further Learning & Training? (n=1,246); At a Higher Level (n=1,243)

Over four fifths (84.3%) agreed that as a result of their FE Course they were more likely to 'undertake further learning and training' (Table A56). Just over three quarters (76.4%) agreed they were more likely to do so at a 'higher level' (Table A58).

Summary for FE Leavers Employed before and after

The three most common ways the FE Leavers employed before and after **heard about their FE Course** were through the 'FE College' (28.9%), the 'Internet' (22.9%) and their 'Employer' (20.1%).

FE Leavers employed before and after their course and all FE Leavers in employment had the same four most common ways to hear about the course: through the 'FE College' itself, the 'Internet', through their employer and via 'a friend/relative'. However, it is interesting to note that a higher proportion of those FE Leavers in employment before and after heard about the course through the 'Internet' (22.9% compared to 19.3%), their employer (20.1% compared to 14.5%) and less through their 'School/teacher', 'Job Office' or a 'Benefits Office'. Given this sub group were already in employment, the differences in how they heard about the course are not surprising as those not in employment before the FE Course, are more likely to attend Job or Benefits Offices, where they might be able to find work.

The three most common **reasons for undertaking the course** are 'To learn something new / gain new skills' (63.0%), 'To improve my job prospects or get a new job / career' (57.1%), and 'I have / had a personal interest in the course' (55.6%).

There are differences when comparing those in employment before and after their FE Course to all FE Leavers in employment after their course. Those in employment before and after the course were more likely to state the following reasons: 'to improve my ability to do my current job' and 'I was required to attend course by my employer', all of which are specifically job related reasons. In terms of all FE Leavers in employment after their course, they were more likely to indicate the following reasons: 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job / career', 'to go on to further or higher learning' and 'because I did not have to pay for it'.

The majority (68.8%) of this group stated they were **using the skills and knowledge acquired** at least to some extent. This is encouraging as they are utilising what they have learned from the FE Course in their job. These findings are similar to all FE Leavers 'Employed' after their FE Course.

Over half (57.9%) of this sub-group had **studied a course in the same subject area as their job**. When comparing FE Leavers employed before and after to all FE Leavers in employment after, there is no difference in the overall proportion of those in a job related to the subject studied. However, there are differences across some of subject areas

In terms of **job characteristics**, the majority (88.1%) were in paid employment, while 11.9% were self-employed. This group of FE Leavers employed before and after has a higher proportion (11.9%) of individuals in self employment than all FE Leavers in employment (9.5%). This could be as a result of picking up experiences through working then learning a new skill through FE and starting out in self-employment afterwards.

Over one quarter (26.8%) of the FE Leavers employed before and after their FE Course were in Managerial and Technical type jobs, which is a higher proportion than all FE Leavers in employment after (21.1%). Just under one fifth (19.6%) were in Partly Skilled job types, which is a smaller proportion than all FE Leavers in employment after (24.6%).

Nearly a fifth (18.5%) of FE Leavers who were in employment before and after their FE Course, said they probably would not have **got, or stayed in, their job** without the FE Course. This is 7.1 percentage points less than all FE Leavers in employment after (25.6%). A potential reason for this is that they are already established in work and fewer people felt the course had an effect on staying in their job or not.

In relation to **earnings**, over half of this group (54.1%) earned between £200 & £399 per week. A further 9.7% earned between £400 & £499 per week. Nearly one third (30.7%) of the FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course stated they were on a higher wage than before the course; for 8.4%, the pay was lower.

In comparison to the [2015 NI gross weekly pay](#) (£442.90), just over one fifth (21.2%) of those FE Leavers in employment before and after were earning £400 or more per week. For all FE Leavers in employment after the equivalent figure is lower at 16.2%. This is likely a result of being established in employment and already earning at a certain level as opposed to just starting out in employment and being at the lower end of pay bands.

Analysing the responses to the perceived **non-economic benefit** statements, indicates that the three most common gains for FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course were 'Boosted my confidence' (75.5%), 'I made new friends/meet new people' (66.6%), 'Increased my self-esteem' (61.5%).

Almost all (94.6%) of the FE Leavers in employment said the course they completed in 2013/14 had a positive impact on them. Over four fifths (83.5%) agreed that as a result of completing their course they have become more enthusiastic about learning. A similar proportion (84.3%) agreed they were more likely to undertake further learning and training and 76.4% agreeing they were more likely to do so at a higher level. Just over three fifths (60.2%) agreed they had gotten a better idea about what they wanted to do in their life. Just over half (51.6%) agreed that their quality of life had improved.

FE Leavers in Paid employment before and six months after and stayed with the same employer Sub-Group

Of the 1,246 FE Leavers employed before and after their FE Course, 1,076 (86.4%) had stayed in paid employment (as opposed to being self-employed).

Of these 1,076 FE Leavers:

- 845 said they had stayed with same employer,
- 229 said their employer had changed
- 2 it is unknown as no response to the question.

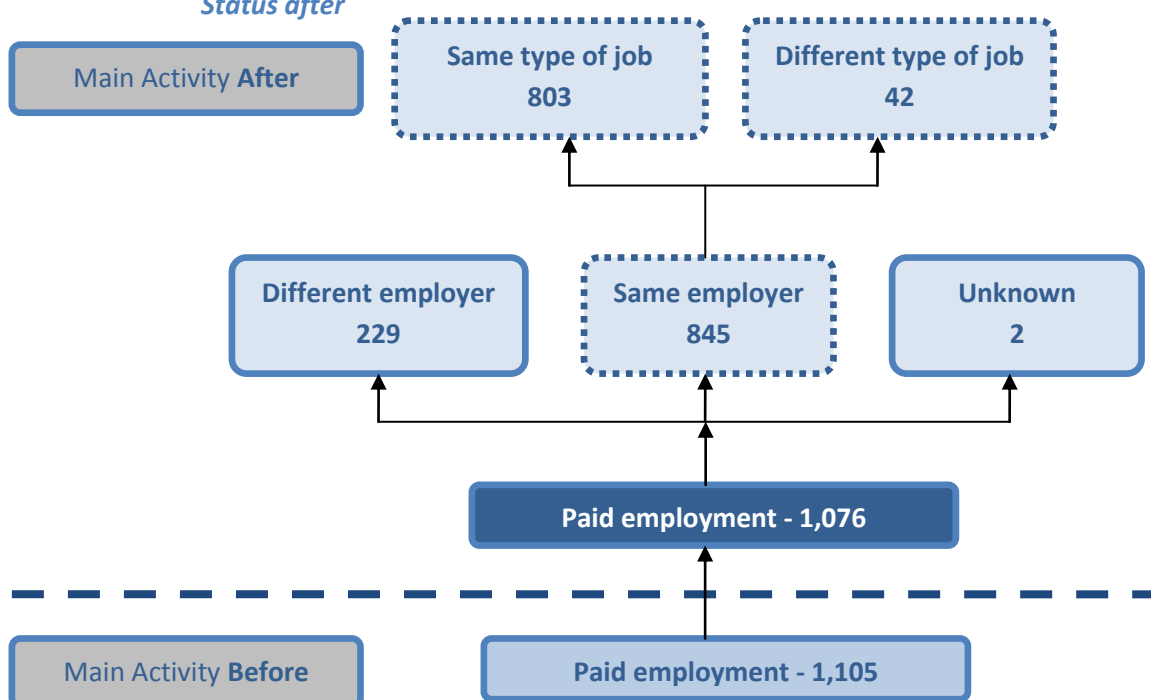
Of these 1,076 FE Leavers who had stayed in paid employment, 845 stayed with the same employer after their FE Course.

Of these 845 FE Leavers:

- 803 said their job type had stayed the same,
- 42 said their job type had changed.

For the 845 FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course and who had stayed with the same employer, this section of the report focuses on: whether they felt they would have got or stayed in the job, earning information, and the progression within employment circumstances dependent if the type of job changed or not. Where permitting, the responses from this sub group (employed before and after and who had stayed with the same employer) are compared to all FE Leavers in employment after.

Chart 3 *FE Leavers in Paid Employment Before and After (1,105): Employer & Job Status after*



Got/stayed in employment without course?

Just over a tenth (13.8%) of FE Leavers who were in employment before and after their course and who had stayed with the same employer, said they probably would not have stayed in their job without the FE Course. This is 4.7 percentage points less than all those who were employed before and after (18.5%), irrespective of whether their employer changed. A potential reason for this is that they were already established in their workplace and fewer people felt the course had an effect of either staying in their job or not (Table A19).

Usual take home pay

There was no difference in the pay band allocation of earnings per week between those employed before and after and those who also stayed with the same employer. However, the survey findings do indicate that fewer of those who stayed with the same employer stated they were on higher wages after the course (24.4%), compared to FE Leavers employed before and after (30.7%). While a higher proportion said their wages had stayed the same (69.1% compared to 60.9%) (Table A30 and A31).

Progression within employment circumstances

Better at job?

Respondents were asked if they felt they were better at doing their job since they completed their course, compared to before they started their course. Almost two thirds (62.7%) said that they were now better at their job (Table A24). Of those who said they were now better at their job, nearly two-fifths (39.8%) said they probably/definitely would not have been without the course (Table A25).

Increased responsibility?

Respondents were asked if they were doing a job with more responsibilities since they completed their course, compared to before they started their course. Over a quarter (29.3%) said they did have more responsibilities (Table A26). Of those who said they were now doing a job more responsibilities, nearly half (45.2%) said they probably/definitely would not have been without the course (Table A27).

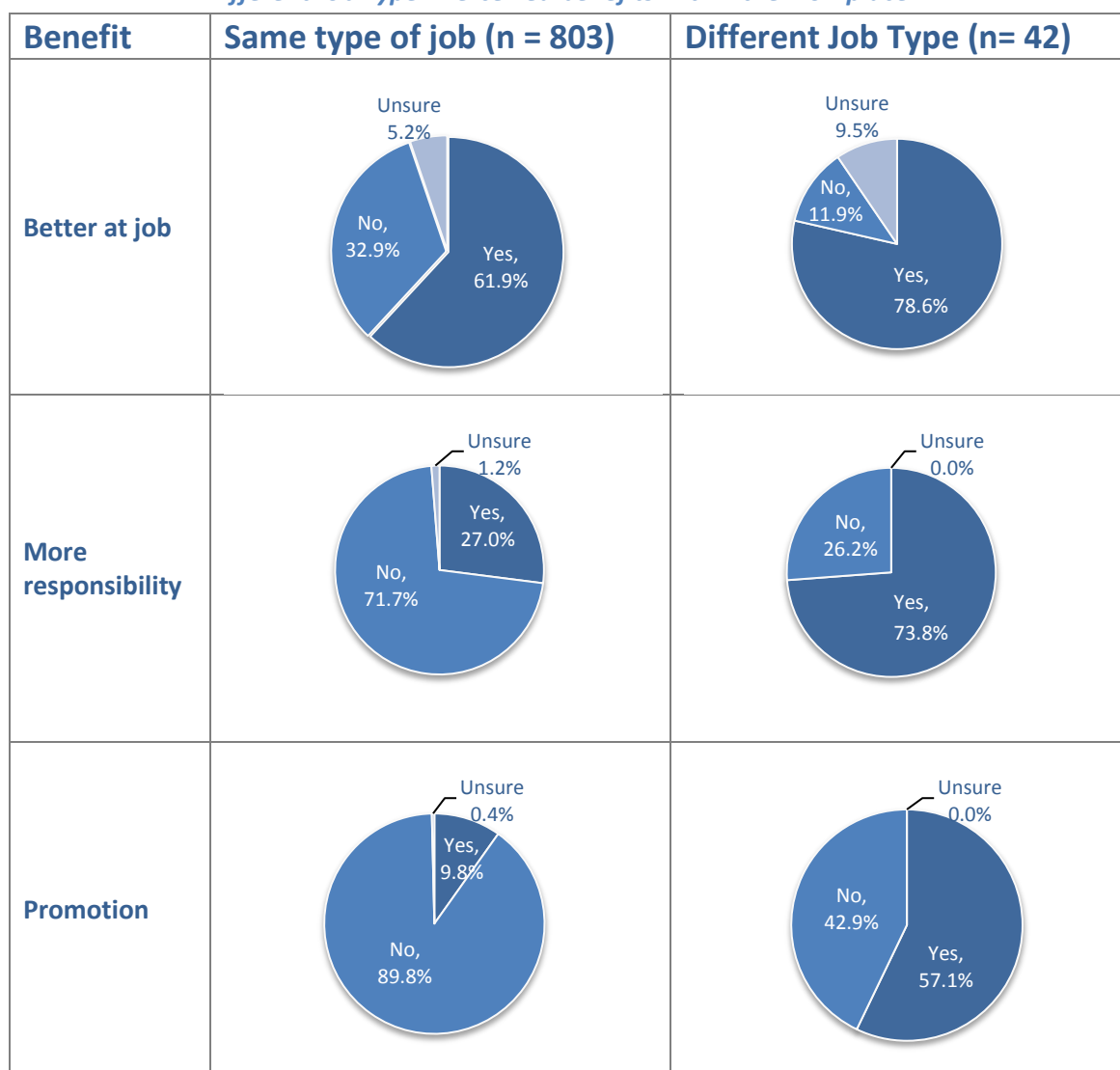
Promotion?

Respondents were asked if they had been promoted after they completed their course. Just over a tenth (12.2%) said they were promoted (Table A28). Of those who said they were promoted, over half (55.3%) said they probably/definitely would not have been without the course (Table A29).

Same/Different job?

For FE Leavers who stayed with the same employer before and after their course, the analysis indicates greater benefits for those in a different job type, compared to those who stayed in the same type of job (Figure 8). A higher proportion of those who were in a different job type said they were better at their job (78.6%) compared to those in the same type of job (61.9%). More of those who changed job type said they were now doing a job with more responsibility (73.8%) than those whose job type did not change (27.0%). In regard to promotion, a higher proportion of those who changed job type after their FE Course said they were promoted (57.1%) compared to those who stayed in the same type of job (9.8%) (Figure 8, Tables A24, A26 and A28).

Figure 8: *Comparison: FE Leavers in Paid employment before and after by Same Job vs. Different Job Type - Perceived benefits within the workplace*



Summary for FE Leavers Employed before and after and stayed with same employer

This section examines those FE Leavers who were in employment before and six months after leaving FE and stayed with the same employer, either doing the same job or a different type of job.

A lower proportion (13.8%) of FE Leavers who were in employment before and after their course and who had stayed with the same employer, said they probably would not have **stayed in their job** without the FE Course. This is 4.7 percentage points less than all those who were employed before and after (18.5%), irrespective of whether their employer changed. It seems that those already established in their workplace do not think that the FE Course will have as much of an effect on either staying in their job or not

In relation to **earnings**, the survey results show that over half of this group (54.5%) earned between £200 & £399 per week. A further 16.5% earned between £100 & £199 per week.

There was a lower proportion who stated their pay was higher since before the course for those in employment before and after and stayed with the same employer (24.4%) compared to those in employment before and after (30.7%). Also, there was a higher proportion indicating they are on the same wage for those who stayed with the same employer (69.1%) than those in employment before and after (60.9%). This would potentially indicate that those who changed employer were earning more since they started the course. It seems that for those who stay with the same employer undertaking a FE Course does not seem to have much effect on wages, in the short term anyway (the period between before and 6 months after their FE Course), as a higher proportion stated their wages stayed the same.

Across some of the possible **progressions in employment**, the findings demonstrate that it made more of a difference to those who changed their job type than those who stayed in the same job, with higher proportions across all the progression benefits obtained within their employment.

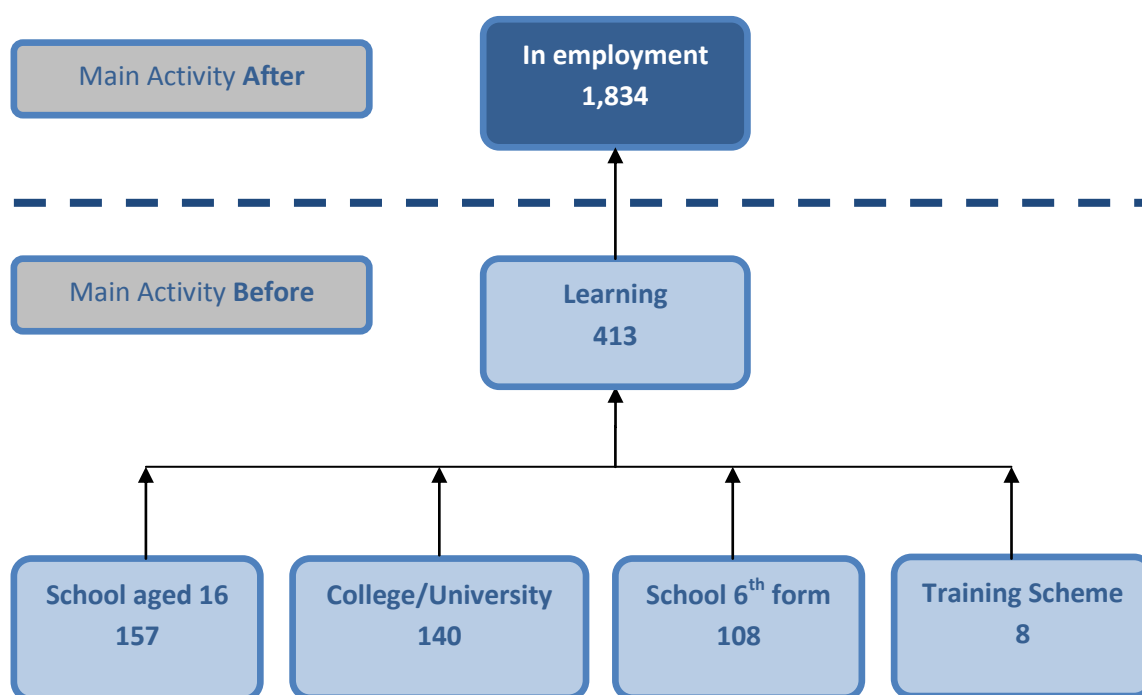
FE Leavers in Learning Before and Employed After Sub-Group

There were 413 FE Leavers in learning before, that moved into employment after their FE Course. This section focuses on: how they heard about the course, the reason for undertaking the course, if they are using the skills and knowledge they acquired from the course, the subject area they had studied in, if their job is now in the same subject area as the course, earnings, job characteristics, and the perceived non-economic benefits for this group. Where permitting, the responses from this sub group (learning before and employed after) are compared to all FE Leavers in employment after.

Of the 413 FE Leavers in learning before and employed after their FE Course:

- 157 said they were previously at school and aged 16 or below,
- 140 said they were previously at college or university,
- 108 said they were previously at school in sixth form, and
- 8 said they were previously on a scheme/training scheme.

Chart 4 *FE Leavers in Learning Before and Employed After (413): Main Activity Before*

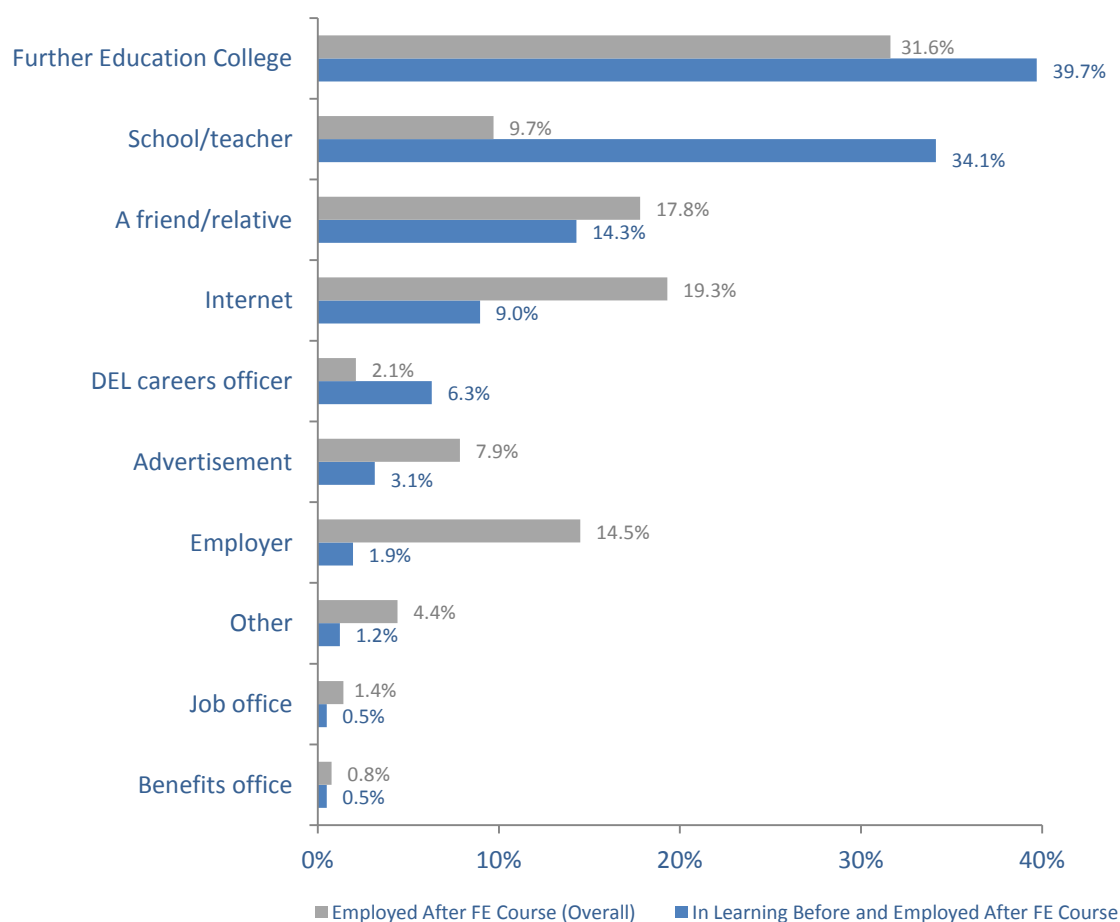


How did individuals hear about their FE Course?

Respondents were asked how they had heard about their course and could provide as many responses to this question as they wanted. The three most common ways of hearing about their course were through the 'FE College' itself (39.7%), through a 'School/teacher' (34.1%), and through 'a friend/relative' (14.3%).

Compared to all FE Leavers in employment after their FE Course, there are higher proportions stating they heard about the course via a 'FE College' (39.7% compared to 31.6%), a 'School/teacher' (34.1% compared to 9.7%) and a 'DEL careers officer' (6.3% compared to 2.1%), for this sub group. Given these FE Leavers were previously in learning, it is possible they were in attendance at a FE college or a school and consequently heard more through these avenues. There are lower proportions of the FE Leavers in learning before and employment after who heard about the course through an Advertisement (3.1% compared to 7.9%) and through a 'Benefits Office' (0.5% compared to 0.8%) (Figure 9 and Table A06).

Figure 9 *Comparison: FE Leavers in Learning Before and Employed After and all FE Leavers in Employment - How individuals heard about their FE Course*



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Learning Before & Employed After FE Course n = 413; In Employment After n=1,833.

Main reasons for undertaking the course in FE

For FE Leavers in learning before and in employment after their FE Course, the three most popular reasons for undertaking their course were to 'improve job prospects or get a new job/career' (67.6%), 'personal interest in the course' (67.1%), and to 'learn something new/gain new skills' (63.7%).

All FE Leavers in employment after their FE Course were more likely to state job related reasons such as: 'To improve my ability to do my current job' (35.2% compared to 23.7%) and 'I was required to attend course by my employer' (11.4% compared to 6.5%). FE Leavers in learning before and in employment after were more likely to indicate a mixture of personal and job related reasons (Table 10).

Table 10 *Comparison: FE Leavers in Learning Before and Employed After and all FE Leavers in Employment - Main Reasons for Undertaking FE Course*

Reason	In Learning Before & Employed After FE Course (%)	In Employment After (Overall) (%)
To improve my job prospects or get a new job / career	67.7	61.9
I have / had a personal interest in the course	67.2	58.3
To learn something new / gain new skills	63.8	63.4
To gain a qualification	59.2	48.2
To go on to further or higher learning	42.0	30.6
Because it was at a time / place that suited me	37.6	34.9
To meet new people and build my self confidence	36.2	29.1
To get more job satisfaction	26.0	26.6
To increase my income	24.8	20.9
To improve my ability to do my current job	23.8	35.2
Because I did not have to pay for it	23.3	16.2
To improve my job security	19.4	23.0
To get a promotion	12.9	11.9
It was mandatory	6.8	5.5
I was required to attend course by my employer	6.6	11.4
To help / support my children / grandchildren with homework	1.5	3.5
Other reason	0.2	1.4

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Learning Before & Employed After FE Course n = 412; In Employment After n=1,833.

Using Skills and Knowledge Acquired in Course?

Nearly two thirds (65.9%) of those previously in learning and now in employment stated they were using the skills and knowledge acquired at least to some extent; in particular 37.3% said 'To a great extent' (Table A20).

Subject area

Just over half (52.1%) of the FE Leavers in learning before and employed after their course had studied one of three subject areas: 'Preparation for life and work' (19.4%), 'Health, public services and care' (18.2%), and 'Retail and commercial enterprise' (14.5%) (Table 11).

Is the job in the same subject area as the course?

Just over half (53.3%) of this sub-group had studied a course in the same subject area as their current job. 'Construction, planning and the built environment' had the highest proportion (84.4%) of FE Leavers in a job within the subject area they recently qualified in, while the lowest was in 'Arts, media and publishing' (20.0%). For 'Science and mathematics' and 'Social sciences' no one ended up in a job related to these subject areas after studying in 2013/14 (Table 11).

Table 11 *Comparison: FE Leavers in Learning Before and Employed After and all FE Leavers in Employment - Subject Area Studied & if Job in the Same Subject Area*

Subject Area	Learning Before and Employed After		In Employment After (Overall)	
	% of Subject Area	Job within same subject area (%)	% of Subject Area	Job within same subject area (%)
Preparation for life and work	19.4	31.3	11.9	39.3
Health, public services and care	18.2	61.3	15.6	72.7
Retail and commercial enterprise	14.5	58.3	14.7	60.2
Construction, planning and the built environment	10.9	84.4	5.2	80.0
Information and communication technology	8.7	36.1	13.1	48.3
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	8.2	73.5	7.9	77.1
Leisure, travel and tourism	5.6	43.5	3.0	41.8
Business, administration and law	5.1	66.7	11.3	69.1
Arts, media and publishing	3.6	20.0	3.2	25.9
Languages, literature and culture	1.9	50.0	7.0	26.6
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	1.5	66.7	0.7	58.3
History, philosophy and theology	1	25.0	0.4	14.3
Science and mathematics	0.5	-	2.5	31.1
Education and training	0.5	50.0	2.6	78.7
Social sciences	0.2	-	0.9	5.9
Unknown	0.2	100.0	0.2	75.0
Total	100.0	53.3	100.0	56.6

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Learning Before & Employed After FE Course n = 413; In Employment After n=1,834.

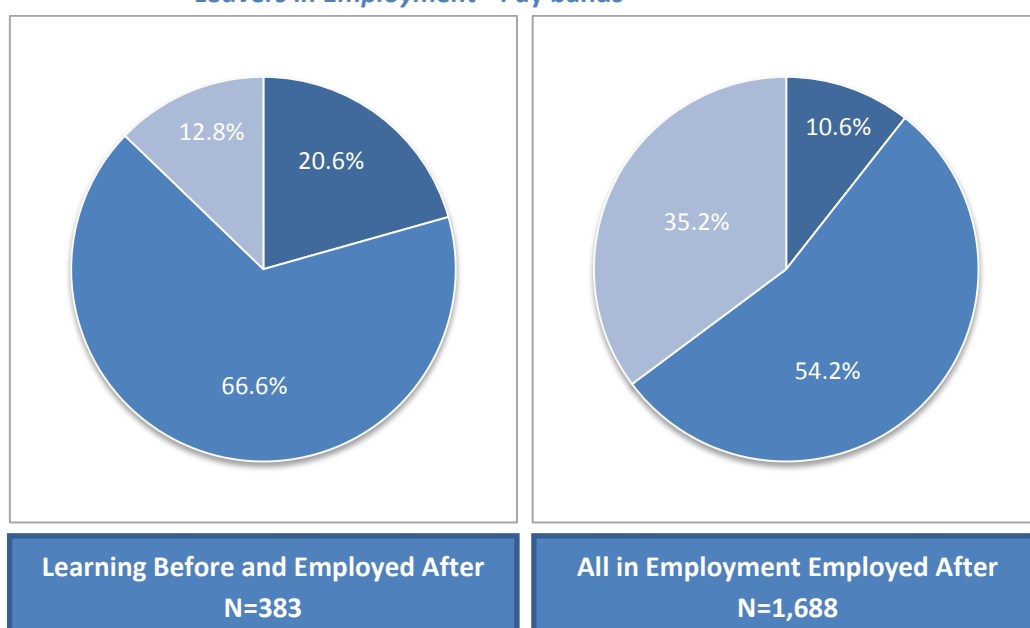
When comparing FE Leavers in learning before and employed after to all FE Leavers in employment after, there is no difference in the overall proportion of those in a job related to the subject studied. However, there are differences across some of subject areas. These are presented in Table 11.

Usual take home pay

For FE Leavers who had moved from an activity of learning into employment, just over one third (34.2%) were earning £100 up to £199 per week, while 32.4% were in the £200 up to £299 per week pay band.

For those moving from learning into employment there are lower proportions earning £300 or more a week (12.8%) when compared to all those in employment (35.2%). It is likely that it takes time to go up through the ranks within a career and starting out in employment the wages are not as high compared to those already in employment (Figure 10 and Table A30).

Figure 10 Comparison: FE Leavers in *Learning Before and Employed After* and *all FE Leavers in Employment* - Pay bands



Key:

■ - Less than £100 per week ■ - £100 to £299 per week ■ - £300 or more per week

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Please note that pay information was not available for 7.3% of this sub-group.

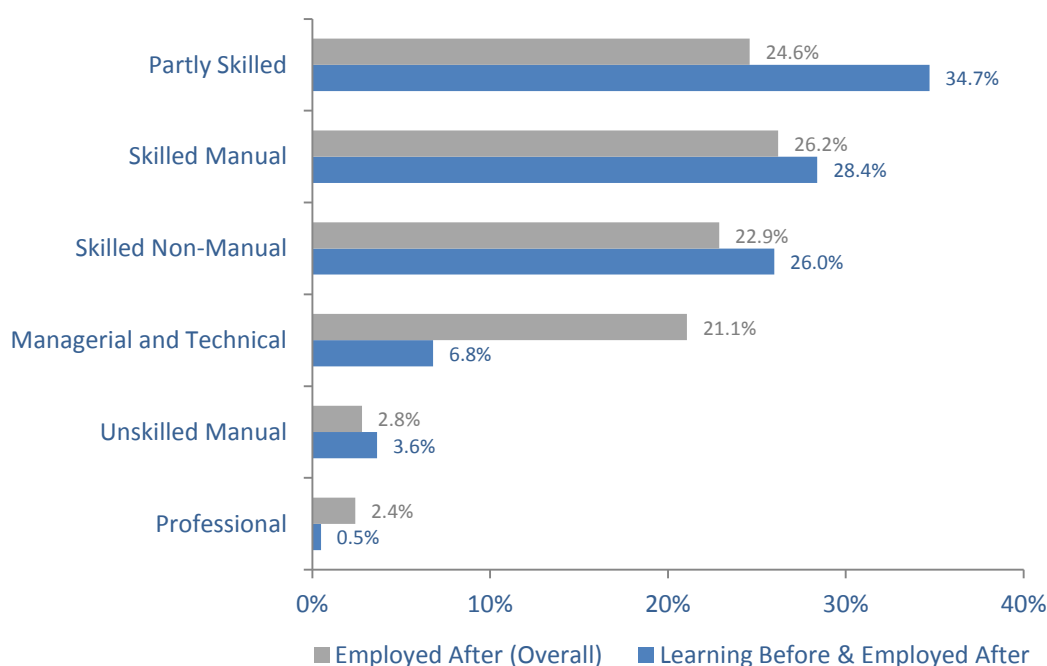
Paid or Self-Employed?

The vast majority (95.9%) of the FE Leavers who had progressed from learning to employment six months after their course were in paid employment, with 4.1% self-employed. This compares to 90.5% in paid employment and 9.5% self-employed amongst all FE Leavers in employment after their FE Course (Table A16).

National Statistics Socio Economic Classification

There was a higher proportion of FE Leavers in learning before and employment after their FE Course in 'Partly Skilled' jobs compared to all FE Leavers in employment after (34.7% compared to 24.6%). In conjunction with this, there were fewer individuals at the higher skilled jobs for those in learning before and employment after (for Managerial and Technical 6.8% compared to 21.1% and for Professional 0.5% compared to 2.4%) (Figure 11 and Table A18).

Figure 11 Comparison: FE Leavers in *Learning Before and Employed After* and all FE Leavers in Employment - National Statistics Socio Economic Classification



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Learning Before & Employed After FE Course n = 412; In Employment After n=1,827.

Got employment without course?

A two fifths (40.7%) of the FE Leavers who were in 'Learning' before and in employment six months after their course said they probably/definitely would not have got their job without the FE Course. This is a much higher proportion than FE Leavers in employment after (25.6%) and likely indicates the feeling an individual has in moving from learning to being employed (Table A19).

Working Pattern?

There were more of FE Leavers moving from learning into employment working part time (37.9%), compared to all FE Leavers in employment after (29.6%). Less of FE Leavers who had been in learning and employment after (62.1%) were in full time work compared to all FE Leavers in employment after (70.4%) (Table A23).

Box 5 FE Leavers in Learning before and Employed after: Non Economic Benefits

Box 5 provides an overview of these findings for FE Leavers in learning before and employed after their FE Course.

Positive Impact? (n=410)

The majority of this sub-group of FE Leavers said that their course had, at least, probably had 'positive impact' on them (91.7%). Of particular note, over two thirds (70.7%) said their course definitely had a positive impact on them (Table A46).

Gain anything from Learning? (n=410)

The three most popular responses included 'boosting their confidence' (80.7%), 'making new friends/ meeting new people' (78.0%) and 'increased self-esteem' (65.4%) (Table A48).

Enthusiasm about Learning? (n=410)

Four fifths (80.0%) of FE Leavers in this sub-group agreed that they had become 'more enthusiastic about learning' as a result of completing their course (Table A50).

Better Idea What to Do in Your Life? (n=410)

Four fifths (80.5%) of this group agreed that as a result of their FE Course they had a 'better idea what to do in life' (Table A52).

Improved Quality of Life? (n=410)

Just over two thirds (68.8%) agreed that completing their FE Course had 'improved their quality of life' (Table A54).

Undertake Further Learning & Training? (n=410); At a Higher Level (n=410)

Just over three quarters (76.1%) agreed that as a result of their FE Course they were 'more likely to undertake further learning and training' (Table A56). Nearly three quarters (72.4%) agreed they were more likely to do so at a 'higher level' (Table A58).

Summary for FE Leavers in learning before and employed after

For FE Leavers in learning before and in employment after their FE Course, the three most common ways to **hear about the FE Course** were: through a 'FE College' (39.7%), a 'School/teacher' (34.1%), and via 'a friend/relative' (14.3%).

Compared to all FE Leavers in employment after their FE Course, there are higher proportions stating they heard about the course via a 'FE College' (39.7% compared to 31.6%), a 'School/teacher' (34.1% compared to 9.7%) and a 'DEL careers officer' (6.3% compared to 2.1%), for this sub group. Given these FE Leavers were previously in learning, it is possible they were in attendance at a FE college or a school and consequently heard more through these avenues.

The three most common **reasons for undertaking the FE Course** were: 'To improve my job prospects or get a new job / career' (67.6%), 'I have / had a personal interest in the course', (67.1%) and 'To learn something new / gain new skills' (63.7%).

All FE Leavers in employment after their FE Course were more likely to state job related reasons such as: 'To improve my ability to do my current job' (35.2% compared to 23.7%) and 'I was required to attend course by my employer' (11.4% compared to 6.5%). FE Leavers in learning before and in employment after were more likely to indicate a mixture of personal and job related reasons.

The majority (65.9%) of this group stated they were **using the skills and knowledge acquired** to at least to some extent. This is encouraging as they are utilising what they have learned from the FE Course in their job.

Over half (53.3%) of this sub-group had **studied a course in the same subject area as their job**. When comparing FE Leavers in learning before and employed after to all FE Leavers in employment after, there is no difference in the overall proportion of those in a job related to the subject studied. However, there are differences across some of subject areas.

In terms of **job characteristics**, the majority (90.5%) were in paid employment, while 9.5% were self-employed.

Over one third (34.7%) of this group were in Partly Skilled jobs, which is a higher proportion than all FE Leavers in employment after (26.2%). For FE Leavers in learning before and employment after there was almost another third (28.4%) in Skilled Manual jobs and over one quarter (26.0%) in Skilled Non-Manual job types. In comparison with all FE Leavers in employment after, there were fewer individuals at the higher skilled jobs for FE Leavers who were in learning before and employment after (for Managerial and Technical 6.8% compared to 21.1% and for Professional 0.5% compared to 2.4%).

A two fifths (40.7%) of the FE Leavers who were in 'Learning' before and in employment six months after their course said they probably would not have **got their job** without the FE

Course. This is a much higher proportion than FE Leavers in employment after (25.6%) and likely indicates the feeling an individual has in moving from learning to being employed.

In relation to **earnings**, two thirds (66.6%) of this group were earning between £100 & £299 per week. A further 20.6% were earning less than £100 per week. For those moving from learning into employment there are lower proportions earning £300 or more a week (12.8%) when compared to all FE Leavers in employment (35.2%). It is likely that it takes time to go up through the ranks within a career and starting out in employment the wages are not as high compared to those already in employment.

Analysing the responses to the perceived **non-economic benefit** statements, indicates that the five most common gains for FE Leavers in learning before and employment after their FE Course were 'Boosted my confidence' (81.9%), 'I made new friends/meet new people' (75.2%), 'Increased my self-esteem' (70.5%), 'Helped me to do something useful with my spare time' (57.1%) and 'Helped me to keep active' (34.3%).

Almost all of the FE Leavers in learning before and employment after said the course they completed in 2013/14 had a positive impact on them (91.7%). Over four fifths (85.7%) agreed that as a result of completing their course they have become more enthusiastic about learning. A similar proportion (81.9%) agreed they were more likely to undertake further learning and training and 74.0% agreeing they were more likely to do so at a higher level. Almost three quarters (71.4%) agreed they had gotten a better idea about what they wanted to do in their life. Over two thirds agreed that their quality of life had improved (68.6%).

FE Leavers Unemployed Before and Employed After Sub-Group

This section provides an overview of findings for the 105 FE Leavers who were unemployed before and in employment six months after their FE Course.

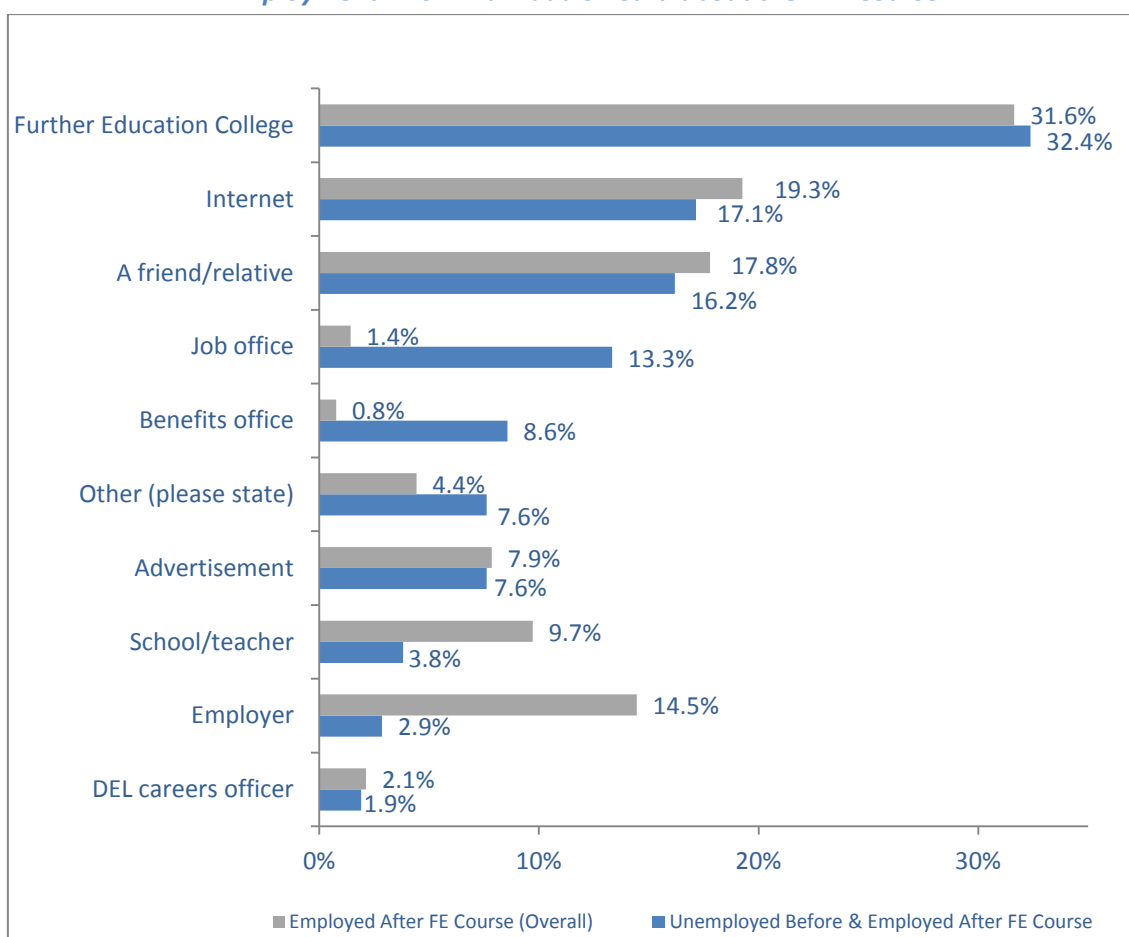
For the 105 FE Leavers unemployed before and employed after their FE Course, this sub-section provides details on: how they heard about the course, the reason for undertaking the course, the subject area they had studied in, if they are using the skills and knowledge they acquired from the course, if their job is now in the same subject area as the course, earnings, job characteristics, and the perceived non-economic benefits for this group. Where permitting, the responses from this sub group (unemployed before and employed after) are compared to all FE Leavers in employment after.

How did individuals hear about their FE Course?

Respondents were asked how they had heard about their course and could provide as many responses to this question as they wanted. The three most common ways of hearing about their course were through the 'FE College' itself (32.4%), through the 'Internet' (17.1%), and through 'a friend/relative' (16.2%).

Compared to all FE Leavers in employment after, this sub group had higher proportions stating they heard about the course via the 'Job Office' (13.3% compared to 1.4%) and via the 'Benefits Office' (8.6% compared to 0.8%). Given this sub group were unemployed before the FE Course, it makes sense they visited a Job or Benefits Office and were directed towards a FE College. Conversely, lower proportions of FE Leavers unemployed before and in employment after heard about the course through an employer (2.9% compared to 14.5%) and through a 'School/teacher' (3.8% compared to 9.7%) (Figure 12 and Table A06).

Figure 12 *Comparison: FE Leavers Unemployed & Employment After and all FE Leavers in Employment - How individuals heard about their FE Course*



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Unemployed Before & Employed After FE Course n = 105; In Employment After n=1,833.

Main reasons for undertaking the course in FE

The three most popular reasons for undertaking the course in FE were to 'improve job prospects or get a new job/career' (83.8%), to 'learn something new/gain new skills' (62.9%), and 'personal interest in the course' (55.2%).

There are some differences in terms of the proportions stating certain reasons when comparing this sub group to all FE Leavers in employment after the course. Those unemployed before and employed after were more likely to state the reason: to 'improve my job prospects or get a new job / career'. The opposite is true for the following reasons as lower proportions for this sub group stated to 'get more job satisfaction', 'improve my ability to do my current job', 'improve my job security' and 'I was required to attend course by my employer' compared to all FE Leavers in employment. These are all reasons associated with people already in employment (Table 12).

Table 12 *Comparison: FE Leavers Unemployed Before and Employed After and all FE Leavers in Employment - Main Reasons for Undertaking FE Course*

Reason	Unemployed Before & Employed After %	In Employment After (%)
To improve my job prospects or get a new job / career	83.8	61.9
To learn something new / gain new skills	62.9	63.4
I have / had a personal interest in the course	55.2	58.3
To gain a qualification	43.8	48.2
To go on to further or higher learning	33.3	30.6
Because it was at a time / place that suited me	32.4	34.9
To meet new people and build my self confidence	29.5	29.1
To increase my income	21.0	20.9
Because I did not have to pay for it	21.0	16.2
To get more job satisfaction	15.2	26.6
To improve my ability to do my current job	13.3	35.2
To improve my job security	12.4	23.0
To get a promotion	5.7	11.9
It was mandatory	2.9	5.5
Other reason	2.9	1.4
I was required to attend course by my employer	0.0	11.4
To help / support my children / grandchildren with homework	0.0	3.5

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Unemployed Before & Employed After FE Course n = 105; In Employment After n=1,833.

Using Skills and Knowledge Acquired in Course?

Nearly two thirds (65.9%) of this sub group stated they were using the skills and knowledge acquired at least to some extent; in particular 37.3% said 'To a great extent'. This is broadly similar to the findings for all FE Leavers in employment after their FE Course (Table A20).

Subject area

Just over half (52.4%) of FE Leavers unemployed before and employed after their course had studied one of three subject areas: 'Preparation for life and work' (21.0%), 'Information and communication technology' (16.2%) and 'Retail and commercial enterprise' (15.2%) (Table 13).

Is the job in the same subject area as the course?

Half (50.5%) of this sub-group had studied a course in the same subject area as their current job. Table 13 illustrates the proportions across the subject areas. 'Social sciences' and 'Construction, planning and the built environment' had the highest levels (100.0% and 80.0%, respectively) of this sub-group of FE Leavers in a job within the subject area they recently qualified in. While of those who qualified in 'Arts, Media and Publishing' and 'Science and mathematics' no one was working in this subject area now (Table 13).

Table 13 *Comparison: FE Leavers Unemployed Before and Employed After and all FE Leavers in Employment - Subject Area Studied & if Job in the Same Subject Area*

Subject Area	Unemployed Before and Employed After		In Employment After (Overall)	
	% of Subject Area	Job within same subject area (%)	% of Subject Area	Job within same subject area (%)
Preparation for life and work	21.0	54.5	11.9	39.3
Information and communication technology	16.2	52.9	13.1	48.3
Retail and commercial enterprise	15.2	68.8	14.7	60.2
Health, public services and care	10.5	63.6	15.6	72.7
Business, administration and law	9.5	30.0	11.3	69.1
Languages, literature and culture	7.6	25.0	7.0	26.6
Construction, planning and the built environment	4.8	80.0	5.2	80.0
Leisure, travel and tourism	4.8	40.0	3.0	41.8
Science and mathematics	3.8	0.0	2.5	31.1
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	1.9	50.0	7.9	77.1
Arts, media and publishing	1.9	0.0	3.2	25.9
Education and training	1.9	50.0	2.6	78.7
Social sciences	1.0	100.0	0.9	5.9
Total	100.0	50.5	100.0	56.6

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Unemployed Before & Employed After FE Course n = 105; In Employment After n=1,834.

Please note there no FE Leavers Unemployed before and employed after on courses within the subject areas 'Agriculture, horticulture and animal care' or 'History, philosophy and theology'.

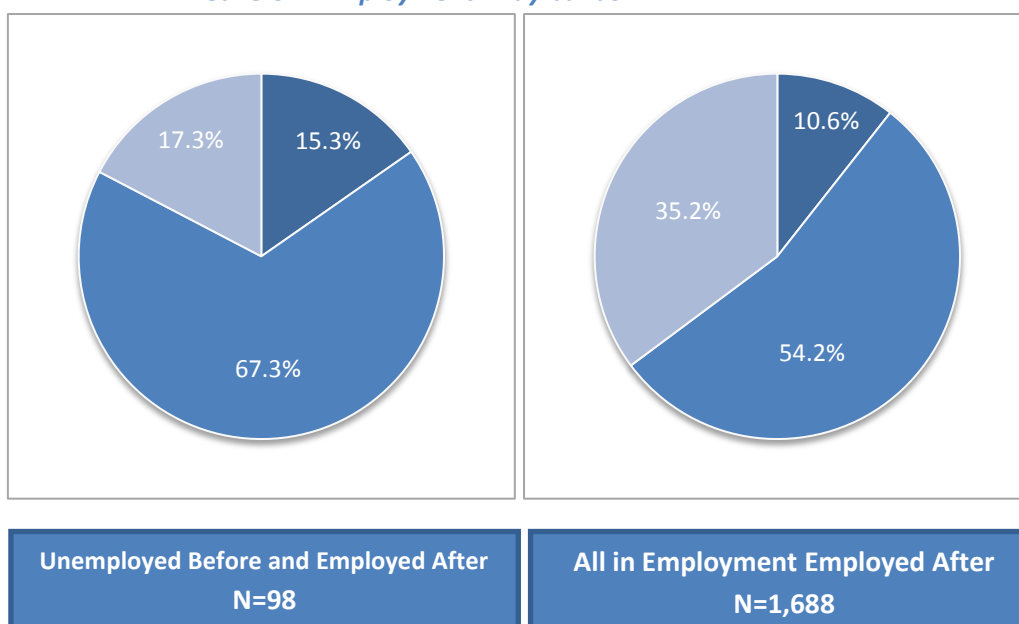
When comparing FE Leavers unemployed before and employed after to all FE Leavers in employment after, there is no difference in the overall proportion of those in a job related to the subject studied. However, there are differences across some of subject areas. These are presented in Table 13.

Usual take home pay

For FE Leavers who had moved from 'unemployment' into 'employment', just over a third (34.7%) were earning £100 up to £199 per week, while 32.7% were in the £200 up to £299 per week pay band.

For this group of those moving from unemployment into employment there are lower proportions earning £300 or more a week (17.3%) when compared to all FE Leavers in employment (35.2%). It is likely that it takes time to go up through the ranks within a career and starting out in employment the wages are not as high compared to those already in employment (Figure 13 and Table A30).

Figure 13 Comparison: FE Leavers Unemployed Before and Employed After and all FE Leavers in Employment - Pay bands



Key:

■ - Less than £100 per week ■ - £100 to £299 per week ■ - £300 or more per week

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Please note that pay information was not available for 6.7% of this sub-group.

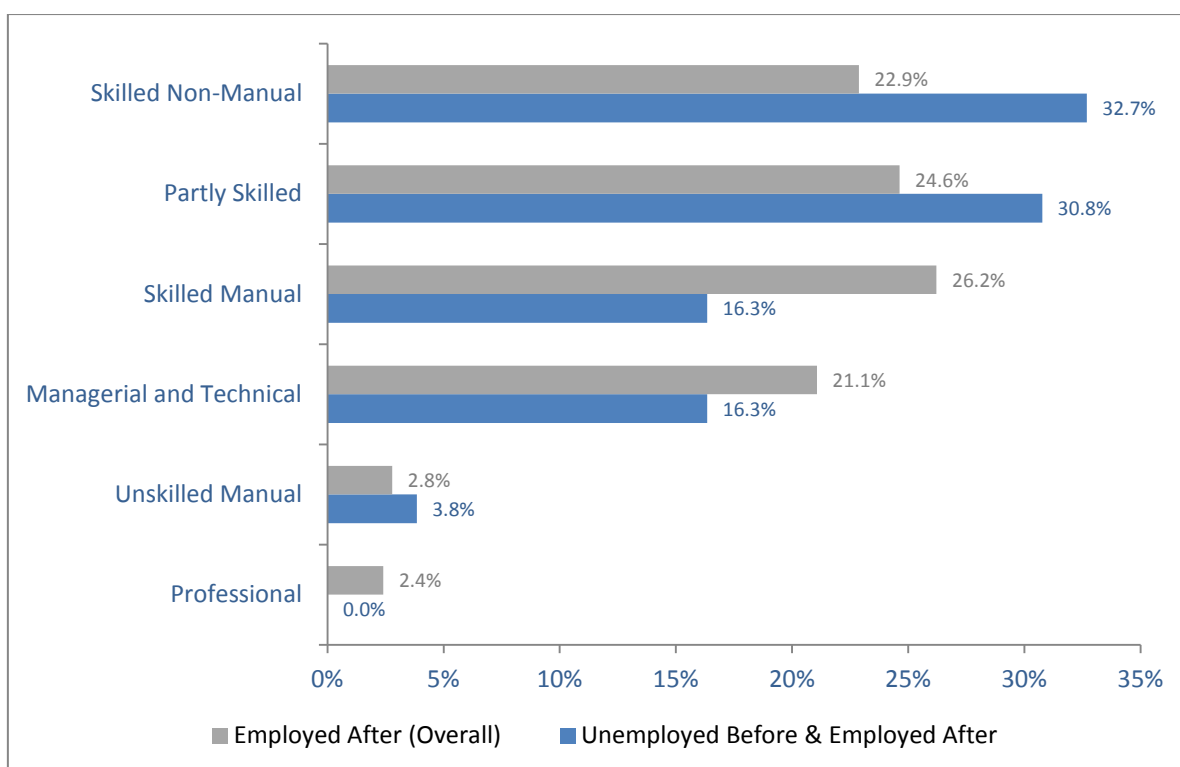
Paid or Self-Employed?

The vast majority (95.2%) of the FE Leavers who had progressed from unemployment to employment six months after their course were in paid employment, with 4.8% self-employed. This compares to 90.5% in paid employment and 9.5% self-employed amongst all FE Leavers in employment after their FE Course (Table A16).

National Statistics Socio Economic Classification

For FE Leavers unemployed before and in employment after, nearly a third (32.7%) had their jobs classified as Skilled Non-Manual and Partly Skilled (30.8%). These are higher proportions than all FE Leavers in employment after (22.9% and 24.6%, respectively) (Figure 14 and Table A18).

Figure 14 *Comparison: FE Leavers Unemployed Before and Employed After and all FE Leavers in Employment - National Statistics Socio Economic Classification*



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Unemployed Before & Employed After FE Course n = 104; In Employment After n=1,827.

Got employment without course?

A third (33.3%) of the FE Leavers who were unemployed before and in employment six months after their course said they probably/definitely would not have got their job without the FE Course. This is a much higher proportion than FE Leavers in employment after (25.6%) and likely indicates the feeling an individual has in moving from unemployment to being employed (Table A19).

Working Pattern?

There were more of FE Leavers moving from unemployment into employment working part time (37.5%), compared to all FE Leavers in employment after (29.6%). Less of FE Leavers who had been unemployed and employment after (62.5%) were in full time work compared to all those in employment after (70.4%) (Table A23).

Box 6 FE Leavers Unemployed Before & Employed After: Non Economic Benefits

Box 6 provides an overview of these findings for FE Leavers unemployed before and employed after their FE Course.

Positive Impact? (n=105)

The majority of this sub-group of FE Leavers said that their course had, at least, probably had 'positive impact' on them (94.3%). Of particular note, over two thirds (74.3%) said their course definitely had a positive impact on them (Table A46).

Gain anything from Learning? (n=105)

The three most popular responses included 'boosting their confidence' (81.9%), 'making new friends/ meeting new people' (75.2%) and 'increased self-esteem' (70.5%) (Table A48).

Enthusiasm about Learning? (n=105)

Over four fifths (85.7%) of FE Leavers in this sub-group agreed that they had become 'more enthusiastic about learning' as a result of completing their course (Table A50).

Better Idea What to Do in Your Life? (n=105)

Nearly three quarters (71.4%) of this sub group agreed that as a result of their FE Course they had a 'better idea what to do in life' (Table A52).

Improved Quality of Life? (n=105)

Just over two thirds (68.6%) agreed that completing their FE Course had 'improved their quality of life' (Table A54).

Undertake Further Learning & Training? (n=104); At a Higher Level? (n=104)

Over four fifths (81.9%) agreed that as a result of their FE Course they were 'more likely to undertake further learning and training' (Table A56). Nearly three quarters (74.0%) agreed they were more likely to do so at a 'higher level' (Table A58).

Summary for FE Leavers unemployed before and employed after

The three most common ways of FE Leavers who were unemployed before and employed after the course, **heard about the FE Course** were through the 'FE College' itself (32.4%), the 'Internet' (17.1%) and via 'a friend/relative' (16.2%).

Compared to all FE Leavers in employment after, this sub group had higher proportions stating they heard about the course via the 'Job Office' (13.3% compared to 1.4%) and via the 'Benefits Office' (8.6% compared to 0.8%). Given this sub group were unemployed before the FE Course, it makes sense they visited a Job or Benefits Office and were directed towards a FE College. Conversely, lower proportions of FE Leavers unemployed before and in employment after heard about the course through an employer (2.9% compared to 14.4%) and through a 'School/teacher' (3.8% compared to 9.7%).

The three most common **reasons for undertaking the FE Course** were: 'To improve my job prospects or get a new job / career' (83.8%), 'To learn something new / gain new skills' (62.9%), and 'I have / had a personal interest in the course' (55.2%).

FE Leavers unemployed before and employed after were more likely to state the reason: to 'improve my job prospects or get a new job / career' (83.9%) than all FE Leavers in employment after (61.9%). The opposite is true for the following reasons as lower proportions for this sub group stated to 'get more job satisfaction', 'improve my ability to do my current job', 'improve my job security' and 'I was required to attend course by my employer' compared to all FE Leavers in employment. These are all reasons associated with people already in employment.

The majority (65.9%) of this group stated they were **using the skills and knowledge acquired** at least to some extent. This is broadly similar to the findings for all FE Leavers in employment after their FE Course. This is encouraging as they are utilising what they have learned from the FE Course in their job.

Just over half (50.5%) of this sub-group had **studied a course in the same subject area as their job**. When comparing FE Leavers unemployed before and employed after to all FE Leavers in employment after, there is no difference in the overall proportion of those in a job related to the subject studied. However, there are differences across some of subject areas.

In terms of **job characteristics**, the majority (95.2%) were in paid employment, while 4.8% were self-employed. This group of unemployed before and employed after has a higher proportion of individuals in paid employment (95.2%) than all FE Leavers in employment (90.5%). This is likely to be as a result of being inexperienced in a working environment and early in their career pathway and unwilling to try and be self-employed.

Almost one third (32.7%) of this group were in Skilled Non-Manual jobs with a further 30.8% were in Partly Skilled job types. These are higher proportions than all FE Leavers in employment after (22.9% and 24.6%, respectively).

In relation to **earnings**, just over two thirds (62.9%) of this sub group were earning between £100 and £299 per week. A further 16.2% were earning less than £100 per week.

For this group of those moving from unemployment into employment there are lower proportions earning £300 or more a week (17.3%) when compared to all FE Leavers in employment (35.2%). It is likely that it takes time to go up through the ranks within a career and starting out in employment the wages are not as high compared to those already in employment.

A third (33.3%) of the FE Leavers who were unemployed before and in employment six months after their course said they probably would not have **got their job** without the FE Course. This is a much higher proportion than FE Leavers in employment after (25.6%) and likely indicates the feeling an individual has in moving from unemployment to being employed.

Analysing the responses to the perceived **non-economic benefit** statements, indicates that the five most common gains for FE Leavers unemployed before and in employment after their FE Course were 'Boosted my confidence' (81.9%), 'I made new friends/meet new people' (75.2%), 'Increased my self-esteem' (70.5%), 'Helped me to do something useful with my spare time' (57.1%) and 'Helped me to keep active' (34.3%).

Almost all (94.3%) of the FE Leavers unemployed before and in employment after, said the course they completed in 2013/14 had a positive impact on them. Four fifths (80.0%) agreed that as a result of completing their course they have become more enthusiastic about learning. Just over four fifths (81.9%) agreed they were more likely to undertake further learning and training and 74.0% agreeing they were more likely to do so at a higher level. Nearly three quarters (71.4%) agreed they had gotten a better idea about what they wanted to do in their life. Over two thirds agreed that their quality of life had improved (68.6%).

3.3 FE Leavers in 'Learning' Six Months after their FE Course

This section presents findings for the FE Leavers in 'Learning' six months after their FE Course. This section will provide an overview of their main activity before their FE Course, examine how they had heard about their FE Course and their main reasons for undertaking their FE Course. Also presented are findings on learner progression. This includes: where they did their learning, what they are studying (the qualification the learning is leading to, the level of learning compared to FE Course in 2013/14, whether the learning could be done without their FE Course, the mode of attendance for the new learning), whether the learning is in the same subject area as their FE Course in 2013/14, and the perceived non-economic benefits of their FE Course.

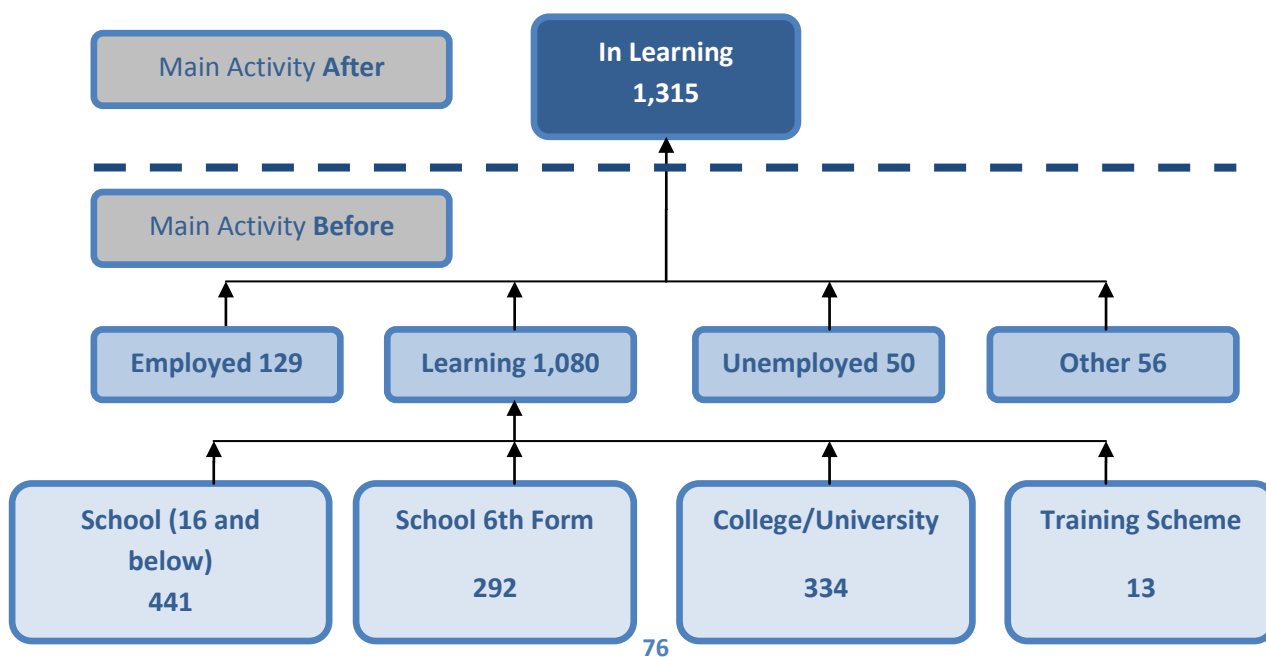
Overview of Main Activity before their FE Course for FE Leavers in 'Learning' After

From [Table 5](#) we know that of the 1,315 FE Leavers in this group:

- 129 (9.8%) had previously been 'Employed',
- 1,080 (82.1%) had previously been in 'Learning',
- 50 (3.8%) had previously been 'Unemployed', and
- 56 (4.3%) had previously been categorised as 'Other'.

Over half (55.7%) of FE Leavers in 'Learning' had been at school prior to their FE Course. This comprises of those who were at school aged 16 years and below (33.5%) and those who had come to the FE Sector from a school sixth form (22.2%). Approximately one quarter (25.4%) had come to their FE Course from college or university and 1.0% from a scheme or training scheme.

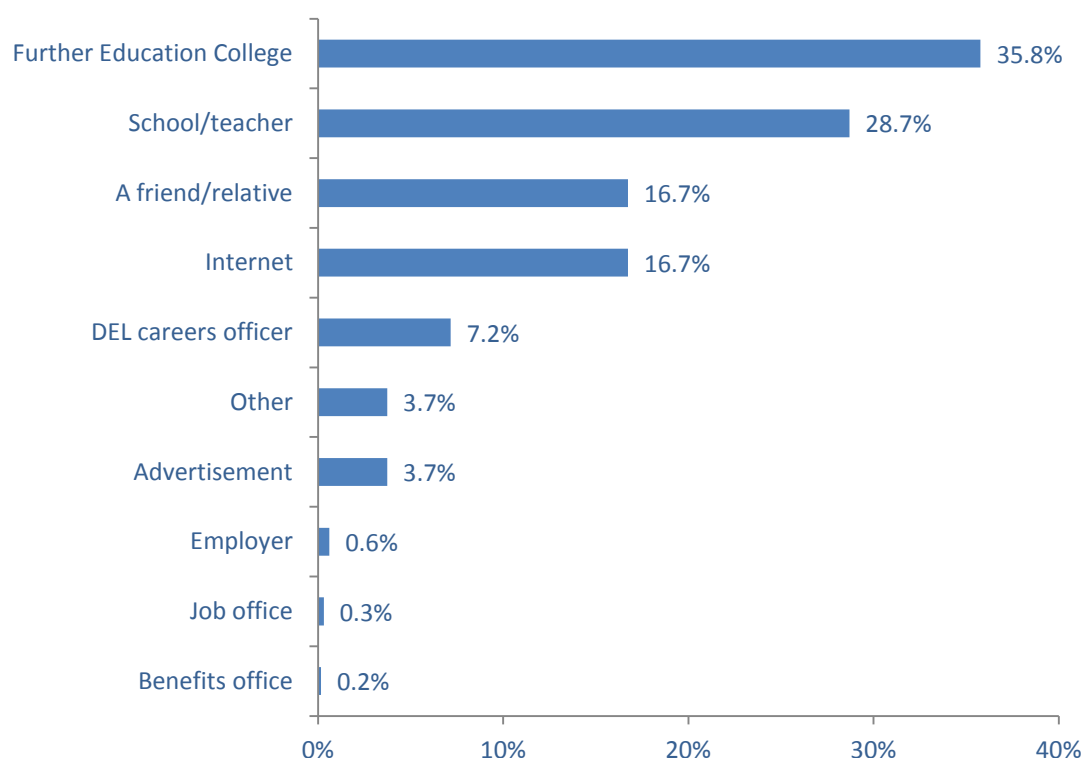
Chart 5 *FE Leavers in Learning (1,315): Main Activity Before*



How did individuals hear about their FE Course?

Respondents were asked how they had heard about their course and could provide as many responses to this question as they wanted. For the FE Leavers in 'Learning' the three most common ways of hearing about their course included the 'FE College' itself (35.8%), their 'School/teacher' (28.7%), and joint third, through 'a friend/relative' and the 'Internet' (both 16.7%) (Figure 15 and Table A06).

Figure 15 *FE Leavers in Learning: How individuals heard about their FE Course*



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.
n = 1,314

Main reasons for undertaking the course in FE

The three most popular reasons for undertaking the course in FE were a 'personal interest in the course' (62.3%), to 'go on to further or higher learning' (60.6%) and to 'learn something new/gain new skills' (60.4%) (Table 14).

Table 14 *FE Leavers in Learning: Main Reasons for Undertaking FE Course*

Reason	%
I have / had a personal interest in the course	62.3
To go on to further or higher learning	60.6
To learn something new / gain new skills	60.4
To improve my job prospects or get a new job / career	60.0
To gain a qualification	56.2
Because it was at a time / place that suited me	33.6
To meet new people and build my self confidence	33.5
Because I did not have to pay for it	19.7
To get more job satisfaction	15.4
To increase my income	13.6
To improve my job security	10.1
To improve my ability to do my current job	9.9
It was mandatory	5.0
To get a promotion	4.8
I was required to attend course by my employer	3.5
Other reason	1.5
To help / support my children / grandchildren with homework	0.5

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.
n = 1,315.

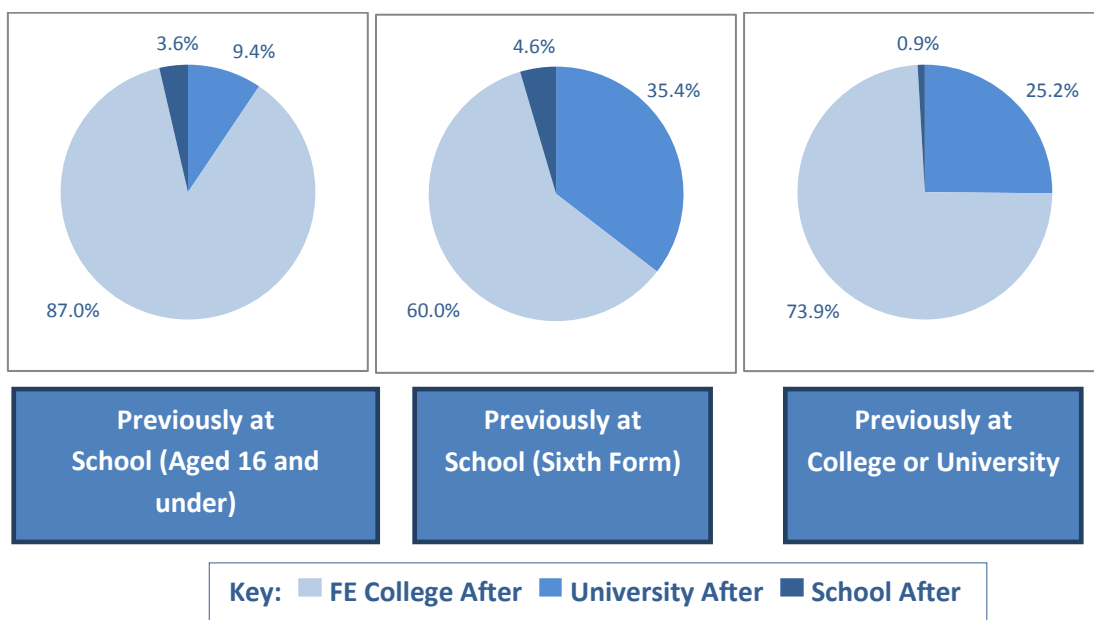
Learning Progression

Of the FE Leavers in 'Learning' six months after their FE Course, most continued their learning at a FE College (73.3%), while almost one quarter (24.2%) had progressed to university. Such findings point to the pivotal role of the FE Sector in the learning route for a range of individuals. Information on the 55 FE Leavers on a training scheme is excluded from this analysis as the location of the training scheme was not asked in the survey and is therefore unknown (Table A38).

Location of FE Leavers in learning before and after the FE Course

Most (87.0%) of those previously at school (16 and under), have a learning pathway of going from school to a FE College, and returning to a FE College to undertake additional learning. For those who had previously been at a school sixth form, three fifths (60.0%) returned to a FE College, while over a third (35.4%) progressing to university. The majority (73.9%) of those who had previously been at a college/university, returned to a FE College, while over a quarter (25.2%) went to university. The high proportion of individuals returning to FE might suggest the positive contribution the FE Sector has to the learner's possible progression to a higher level of study (see also [Studying at a Higher Level section](#)) or even potential future employment. Possible explanations for coming back to FE might include needing to obtain the relevant qualifications for entry to university or a change of career direction (Figure 16 and Table A39).

Figure 16 *FE Leavers in Learning Before and After FE Course: Location of Learners After FE Course*



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015

Notes: Main Activity Before FE Course: School (aged 16) n=414; School (Sixth Form) n=285; College or University n=330.

Studying at a Higher Level

Most (81.4%) FE Leavers who progressed to further learning were studying towards a qualification at a higher level than the course completed in 2013/14 (Table A35). Table 15 illustrates that regardless of the location of learning before and after their FE Course, the majority were studying towards a qualification at a higher level. Of particular note:

- Nearly all (ranging 97.6% to 100.0%) who progressed to university are studying at a higher level than in 2013/14,
- Almost three-quarters (74.4%) who were previously at school (aged 16 or under) returned to a FE College to study at a higher level than in 2013/14, and
- Just over three-quarters (77.2%) who were previously in sixth form at school returned to a FE College to study at a higher level than in 2013/14 (Table 15).

Table 15 *FE Leavers in Learning Before and After FE Course: Progression to Study at a Higher Level (by Location of Learning)*

Location of Learning BEFORE FE Course		Location of Further Learning Six Months AFTER FE Course		Further Learning at a Higher Level
Location	Count	Location	Count	%
School (Aged 16 or under)	414	School	15	86.7
		FE College	360	74.4
		University	39	100.0
School (Sixth Form)	285	School	13	92.3
		FE College	171	77.2
		University	101	99.0
College or University	330	School	3	66.7
		FE College	244	77.0
		University	83	97.6

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Studying at the Same Level

While 15.5% were now studying towards a course at the same level as in 2013/14, the reason for studying at the same level is not known (Table A35). Of the 191 FE Leavers in 'Learning' studying at the same level, almost three quarters (72.8%) were studying a course in the same subject area, while a quarter (25.1%) were studying a course in a different subject area. As already highlighted, such a side-step may indicate the need to repeat or improve exam results with a view to further progression of learning. It may also indicate a desire to change of direction in an individual's career path, or just reflect the personal interests of the learners (Table A42).

Qualification studying towards

The largest group of FE Leavers in 'Learning' after were studying towards a degree level qualification (30.1%). The second most popular group of qualifications included BTEC/BEC/TEC/EdExcel/LQL qualifications (23.3%). Information on the 55 FE Leavers on a training scheme is excluded from these findings. Those on a training scheme can do multiple qualifications at the same time as part of their programme of study. Consequently, those now on a training scheme were not asked about qualification type (Table A32).

Undertake additional learning without FE Course?

The majority of FE Leavers in 'Learning' (60.4%) said they probably/definitely could not have done their current learning or training without the FE Course they completed and achieved in 2013/14. Although this means that just over a third (36.9%) felt they did not need their FE Course to undertake the next qualification, in the absence of more information about each individual and their future progression, added value cannot be ruled out. As Box 7 demonstrates, FE Leavers in 'Learning' have indicated high levels of "non economic" benefits from undertaking the FE Course (Table A40).

Mode of Attendance

The majority (86.9%) of FE Leavers in 'Learning' previously attended a full-time course in 2013/14 (Table A33). Of those who continued to study full-time and in the same subject area, the majority (83.1%) did so at a higher level (Table A37). Findings also indicate that 81.8% of the FE Leavers in 'Learning' who had studied in 2013/14 on a part-time basis had changed their mode of attendance to become full-time students (Table A34). Such an increased investment of the individual's time towards learning may be a result of the successful completion of their regulated FE Course in 2013/14. Typically a full time course has certain entry requirements and potentially the part time course achieved in 2013/14 has facilitated the transition into the full time course.

Same Subject area as the FE Course?

Of the 1,260 FE Leavers in 'Learning' at school, college or university six months after their FE Course, almost three quarters (71.0%) progressed into 'Learning' in the same subject area as the FE Course they completed in 2013/14 (Table 16). Of the 894 FE Leavers who were studying in the same subject area as their FE Course most (83.1%) were doing so at a higher level (Table A37). Information on the 55 FE Leavers in training is excluded from these findings. As previously stated, this group can do multiple qualifications at the same time and each may have a different subject area so this group was not asked about the subject areas of their qualifications.

Table 16 illustrates that three subject areas accounted for nearly half (47.5%) of FE Leavers in 'Learning'. These included: 'Preparation for life and work' (21.6%), 'Health, public services and care' (14.0%), and 'Information and communication technology' (11.9%). Of these subject areas, only 'Health, public services and care' (84.1%) was in the top three of learners continuing to study in the same subject area. The two other subject areas with the highest proportions of continued learning were 'Engineering and manufacturing technologies' (89.6%) and 'Construction, planning and the built environment' (85.3%) (Table 16). Given that those entering into FE are young (41.2% of all FE Leavers aged '19 & under') (Table A61) and inexperienced (55.6% previously at school before FE) (Table A39) within professional & technical topics, progression through the levels (83.1% were at a higher level to 2013/14 within the same subject area) might be expected as individuals increase their knowledge of a particular topic (Table A37).

Table 16 *FE Leavers in Learning - Subject Area Studied & if course in the Same Subject Area*

Subject Area	% of Subject Area for sub-group (n=1,315)	% now studying in same subject area (n=1,260)
Preparation for life and work	21.6	53.6
Health, public services and care	14.0	84.1
Information and communication technology	11.9	69.4
Arts, media and publishing	9.7	82.5
Leisure, travel and tourism	8.7	75.9
Retail and commercial enterprise	8.1	64.4
Business, administration and law	5.9	79.2
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	5.5	89.6
Science and mathematics	4.7	72.6
Construction, planning and the built environment	3.0	85.3
Social sciences	2.8	73.0
Languages, literature and culture	2.3	34.5
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	0.8	63.6
History, philosophy and theology	0.7	44.4
Education and training	0.3	50.0
Unknown	0.2	100.0
Total	100.0	71.0

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015; n = 1,315, n=1,260.

Box 7 FE Leavers in Learning After: Non Economic Benefits

Box 7 provides an overview of these findings for FE Leavers in 'Learning' after their FE Course.

Positive Impact? (n=1,314)

The majority (95.1%) of FE Leavers in 'Learning' said that their course had a 'positive impact' on them. Of particular note, is that over three quarters (77.5%) said their course definitely had a positive impact on them (Table A46).

Gain anything from Learning? (n=1,314)

The three most popular responses included 'boosting their confidence' (82.4%), 'making new friends/ meeting new people' (77.8%) and 'increased self-esteem' (70.2%) (Table A48).

Enthusiasm about Learning? (n=1,314)

The majority (88.6%) of FE Leavers in 'Learning' agreed that they had become 'more enthusiastic about learning' as a result of completing their course (Table A50).

Better Idea What to Do in Your Life? (n=1,314)

The majority (87.1%) of this group agreed that as a result of their FE Course they had a 'better idea what to do in life' (Table A52).

Improved Quality of Life? (n=1,314)

Over two thirds (69.9%) of the FE Leavers in learning, stated that completing their FE Course had 'improved their quality of life' (Table A54).

Undertake Further Learning & Training? (n=1,314); At a Higher Level? (n=1,314)

The majority (92.3%) agreed that as a result of their course they were 'more likely to undertake further learning and training' (Table A56). The majority (89.7%) also agreed they were more likely to do so at a 'higher level' (Table A58).

Summary for FE Leavers in Learning after

There were 34.1% of FE Leavers in 'Learning' six months after completing and achieving a regulated qualification from a FE College in the 2013/14 academic year. This compares to 42.5% in learning prior to the course starting.

Table 5 shows that the majority (82.1%) were previously in some form of learning, before the FE Course. However, nearly a tenth (9.8%) started out in employment, 4.8% from 'other' activities and 3.8% were unemployed before they started the FE Course, the latter groups indicating progression into 'Learning'.

In terms of the profile of FE Leavers in 'Learning', over three quarters (77.3%) were aged '19 and under' and over two fifths (43.5%) studied on a full time basis and at Level 3 (41.9%). This possibly reflects this groups' intention to progress into further learning in the short-to-medium term.

The three most common ways this sub group **heard about the course** were through the FE College (35.8%), a 'School/teacher' (28.7%) and the 'Internet' or friend/relative (16.7% each). With many learners (82.1%) following a pathway of learning before, into FE, then into learning after to FE, these findings are not unexpected.

The three most common **reasons for undertaking the course** were: 'I have/had a personal interest in the course' (62.3%), to 'go on to further or higher learning' (60.6%), and to 'learn something new/gain new skills' (60.4%). This implies that those FE Leavers in 'Learning' seem to be keen to go onto further/higher learning than doing something else after the course.

Most of FE Leavers in 'Learning' **continued their learning** at a FE College (73.3%), while almost one quarter (24.2%) had progressed to university. The high proportion of individuals returning to FE might suggest the positive contribution the FE Sector has to the learner's possible progression to a higher level of study or even potential future employment.

This point is highlighted by the fact that the largest group of FE Leavers in 'Learning' were now studying towards a degree level qualification (30.1%). Additionally, of FE Leavers in 'Learning' the majority (81.4%) were studying towards a qualification at a higher level than the course completed in 2013/14. Coupled with this is the finding that the majority of FE Leavers in 'Learning' (60.4%) said they probably/definitely could not have done their current learning or training without the FE Course they completed and achieved in 2013/14. Possible explanations for the high level of repeat attendance of this group at FE might include obtaining the relevant qualifications for entry to university or a change of career direction, potentially with individuals using FE as a springboard into higher learning.

It is also encouraging to note that of the FE Leavers in 'Learning', even though almost three quarters (71.0%) progressed into learning in the same subject area they completed in 2013/14, the majority (83.1%) were doing so at a higher level. This indicates individuals are trying to progress through the levels within the specific subject area in an attempt to reach a sufficient level to potentially enter into employment.

Analysing the responses to the perceived **non-economic benefit** statements, indicates that the five most common gains for FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course were: 'Boosted my confidence' (82.4%), 'I made new friends/meet new people' (77.8%), 'Increased my self-esteem' (70.2%), 'Helped me to do something useful with my spare time' (49.0%), and 'Helped me to keep active' (38.7%).

Almost all (95.1%) of the FE Leavers in 'Learning' said the course they completed in 2013/14 had a positive impact on them. Over four fifths (88.5%) agreed that as a result of completing their course they have become more enthusiastic about learning. Most (92.3%) agreed they were more likely to undertake further learning and training and 89.7% agreeing they were more likely to do so at a higher level. Just over four fifths (87.2%) agreed they had gotten a better idea about what they wanted to do in their life. Over two thirds agreed that their quality of life had improved (69.9%).

3.4 FE Leavers Unemployed and Looking for Work Six Months after their FE Course

This section presents findings for the FE Leavers unemployed six months after their FE Course. The findings presented include an overview of the main activity before their FE Course, how they had heard about their FE Course, their main reasons for undertaking their FE Course, any employment in the six months after leaving FE, and the perceived non-economic benefits reported by these FE Leavers.

Overview of Unemployed FE Leaver Main Activity before their FE Course

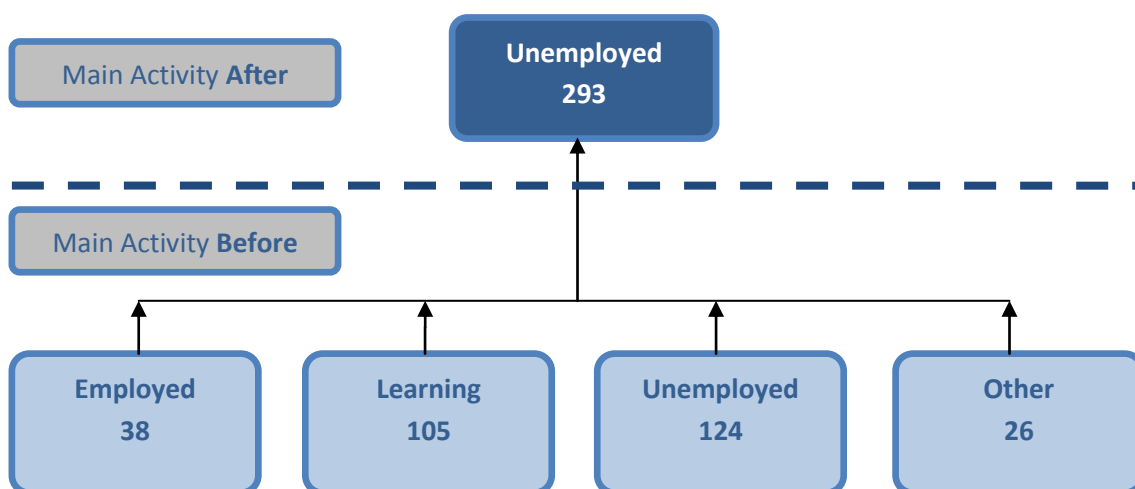
From [Table 5](#) we know that of the 293 FE Leavers in this group:

- 38 (13.0%) had previously been 'Employed',
- 105 (35.8%) had previously been in 'Learning',
- 124 (42.3%) had previously been 'Unemployed', and
- 26 (8.9%) had previously been categorised as 'Other'.

Not all those unemployed before their FE Course were unemployed after. Similarly, some FE Leavers moved from other activities into FE and then into unemployment after their FE Course.

Of all FE Leavers who took part in the survey only 3.2% were unemployed before and after their FE Course (Table 4). Given that this group of individuals have already engaged with a FE College during 2013/14 it is encouraging that they may, in the future, potentially undertake further education and/or training again.

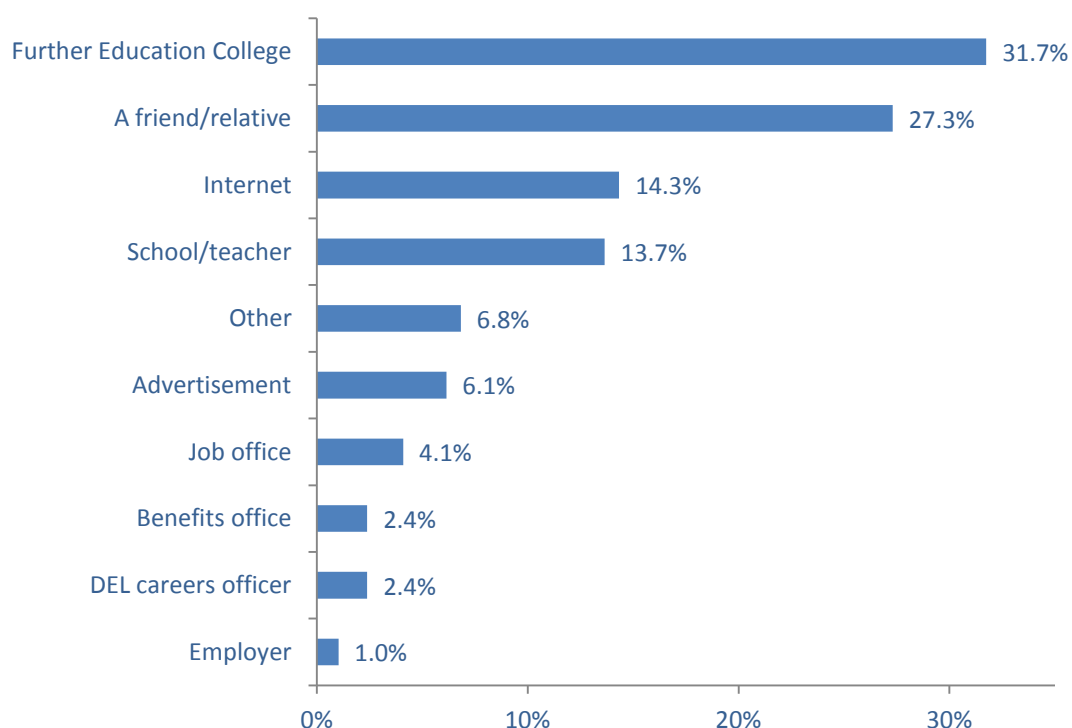
Chart 6 *Unemployed FE Leavers (293): Main Activity Before*



How did individuals hear about their FE Course?

Respondents were asked how they had heard about their course and could provide as many responses to this question as they wanted. For the unemployed FE Leavers the three most common ways of hearing about their course included the 'FE College' itself (31.7%), 'a friend/relative' (27.3%) and the 'Internet' (14.3%) (Figure 17 and Table A06).

Figure 17 *Unemployed FE Leavers: How individuals heard about their FE Course*



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.
n = 293

Main reasons for undertaking the course in FE

The three most popular reasons for undertaking the course in FE were to 'improve my job prospects or get a new job/career' (67.9%), 'learn something new/gain new skills' (66.6%) and 'personal interest in the course' (56.7%) (Table 17).

Table 17 *Unemployed FE Leavers: Main Reasons for Undertaking FE Course*

Reason	%
To improve my job prospects or get a new job / career	67.9
To learn something new / gain new skills	66.6
I have / had a personal interest in the course	56.7
To gain a qualification	53.2
To go on to further or higher learning	37.9
Because it was at a time / place that suited me	34.5
To meet new people and build my self confidence	33.4
Because I did not have to pay for it	22.5
To get more job satisfaction	17.4
To increase my income	16.7
To improve my job security	13.0
To improve my ability to do my current job	7.2
I was required to attend course by my employer	4.4
To help / support my children / grandchildren with homework	3.4
To get a promotion	3.1
It was mandatory	3.1
Other reason	0.7

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.
n = 293.

Any Employment since FE Course?

Of the 293 FE Leavers unemployed after their FE Course, most (83.6%) had no employment at anytime in the six months after their FE Course (Table A44).

Of the 48 (16.4%) who said they had some employment, just over half (51.1%) had been employed for ten weeks or less (Table A45).

Box 8 Unemployed FE Leavers: Non Economic Benefits

Box 8 provides an overview of these findings of FE Leavers unemployed after their FE Course.

Positive Impact? (n=293)

The majority (92.8%) of FE Leavers in learning said that their course had a positive impact on them. Of particular note, is that over three quarters (63.8%) said their course definitely had a positive impact on them (Table A46).

Gain anything from Learning? (n=293)

The three most popular responses included 'boosting their confidence' (85.3%), 'making new friends/ meeting new people' (79.5%) and 'increased self-esteem' (69.6%) (Table A48).

Enthusiasm about Learning? (n=293)

The majority (86.7%) of FE Leavers unemployed agreed that they had become more enthusiastic about learning as a result of completing their course (Table A50).

Better Idea What to Do in Your Life? (n=293)

The majority (71.2%) of this group agreed that as a result of their FE Course they had a better idea what to do in life (Table A52).

Improved Quality of Life? (n=293)

Over half (57.7%) of the FE Leavers unemployed, stated that completing their FE Course had improved their quality of life (Table A54).

Undertake Further Learning & Training? (n=293); At a Higher Level? (n=293)

The majority (82.9%) agreed that as a result of their course they were more likely to undertake further learning and training (Table A56). Over three quarters (77.1%) also agreed they were more likely to do so at a higher level (Table A58).

Summary for Unemployed FE Leavers

There were 7.6% of FE Leavers unemployed six months after leaving FE. Although, there was no 'real' change in the proportion unemployed before (7.9%) and after (7.6%), there was significant movement into and out of unemployment by individuals. Although 40.8% of those unemployed before remained unemployed, over half have either moved into employment (34.5%) or and into learning (16.4%).

The three most common ways this sub group **heard about the course** were through the 'FE College' (31.7%), through 'a friend/relative' (27.3%), and via the 'Internet' (14.3%). Of the unemployed FE Leavers 4.1% heard through the 'Job Office' and 2.4% through the 'Benefits Office'.

The three most common **reasons for undertaking the course** were: 'improve my job prospects or get a new job/career' (67.9%), 'learn something new/gain new skills' (66.6%) and 'personal interest in the course' (56.7%).

Of the 293 FE Leavers unemployed after their FE Course, a small proportion (16.4%) said they had **some employment** in the six months they left the course and of these, just over half (51.1%) had been employed for ten weeks or less.

Analysing the responses to the perceived **non-economic benefit** statements, indicates that the five most common gains for FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course included 'Boosted my confidence' (85.3%), 'I made new friends/meet new people' (79.5%), 'Increased my self-esteem' (69.6%), 'Helped me to do something useful with my spare time' (56.0%) and 'Helped me to keep active' (38.2%).

Almost all (92.8%) of FE Leavers unemployed after the FE Course said the course had a positive impact on them. Over four fifths (86.7%) agreed that as a result of completing their course they have become more enthusiastic about learning. Over four fifths (82.9%) agreed they were more likely to undertake further learning and training with 77.1% agreeing they were more likely to do so at a higher level. Almost three quarters (71.2%) agreed they had gotten a better idea about what they wanted to do in their life. Almost three fifths agreed that their quality of life had improved (57.7%).

Section Four: Annexes

Annex A Definitions

This section provides clarification on terms used within the report:

Academic Year:	<i>Defined by each college usually between August and the following July.</i>
Confidence Interval:	<i>As different samples can lead to different results, CI's are calculated boundaries within which the true value in the population is expected to fall.</i>
Course:	This refers to regulated qualification courses provided by an FE College.
Current main activity:	This is the main activity of the respondent at the time of the telephone interview. This is the activity the respondent spent the most time doing. If the respondent did more than one activity, they were asked to state the activity they did for most of the time.
Degree Level Qualification:	This includes foundation degrees, graduate membership of a professional institute or Post Graduate Certificate in Education or higher qualifications.
Further Education:	All provision delivered at a FE College.
In Employment:	<p>In Section Three analysis four categories are used to group the main activity of FE Leavers six months after completing and achieving their regulated qualification from a FE College: in Employment (Employed), In Further Learning (Further Learning), Unemployed and Looking for Work (Unemployed), and Other (all remaining categories: voluntary or unpaid work, work placemen, or something else).</p> <p>This includes FE Leavers in Paid or Self Employment.</p>
In Learning:	This includes FE Leavers who are students at school, at college or university and those on training schemes.
Level:	Each regulated qualification has a level between entry level and level 8. Qualifications at the same level are a similar level of demand or difficulty. The content and size of qualifications at the same level may be quite different.

<i>Other:</i>	<p>For further information on comparing qualifications across the UK, Ireland and overseas please refer the link: http://ofqual.gov.uk/help-and-advice/comparing-qualifications/ This includes any FE Leavers not included as 'In Employment' or 'In Further Learning' or 'Unemployed and Looking for Work'.</p>
<i>Regulated Qualification:</i>	<p>Any course at level 3 or below which offers a qualification and has a qualification code on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ) or any course which is at level 4 or above.</p>
<i>Statistically Significant:</i>	<p>'<i>Statistically Significant</i>' denotes a finding as being statistically tested to be significant at the 95% level, that is, the finding is a true reflection of the population interest and has not occurred by chance within the selected sample.</p> <p>Statistical techniques were used to test for significant differences in percentages between subgroups. Where a difference was identified and found to be statistically significant at the 95% level, it is reported as being significant.</p> <p>In the text 'statistical significance' is also denoted by 'significant'.</p>
<i>Unemployed</i>	<p>This includes FE Leavers unemployed and looking for work.</p>

Annex B Technical Notes

This section provides additional information to facilitate report interpretation:

1. Main Activity Before (full list provided to respondents):
 - Working or Self-Employed
 - On a scheme/training scheme
 - In voluntary or unpaid work
 - At school aged 16 or below
 - At school in sixth form
 - At a college or university
 - Unemployed and looking for work
 - Looking after the family or home
 - Travelling
 - Temporarily sick, injured or disabled
 - Long term sick or disabled
 - Something else (please describe)
 - Don't know or can't remember
 - Retired
2. Main Activity After (full list provided to respondents):
 - Paid work for an employer
 - Self-employed
 - On a scheme/training scheme
 - Voluntary or unpaid work
 - At student at school studying in sixth form
 - A student at college or university
 - Unemployed and looking for work
 - Work placement
 - Something Else
 - Spontaneous Only (difficulty deciding)
3. Percentages are rounded up to one decimal place.
4. Due to rounding to one decimal place, some totals may add to more than 100.0%, differences reported may not equate to the difference between the figures two figures shown in the text and summing of proportions may not equate to the value reported.
5. Base numbers are denoted in charts using the annotation n=.
6. The number of valid responses can vary across questions. For each section the number of respondents is indicated within brackets: findings should be considered in the context of the number of valid responses. For example, although 712 individuals were in unpaid work, unemployed or other after completing their course, only 695 answered the question

asking what they had done since completing their course (see page 6). Therefore any analysis is only based on those who responded to a specific question.

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