

Department for Work and Pensions

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Training participation by age amongst unemployed and inactive people

Becci Newton, Jennifer Hurstfield, Linda Miller, Karen Akroyd and Jonny Gifford

A report of research carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions

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Abbreviations

CROW	Centre for Research into the Older Workforce
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ES	Employment Service
EMDA	East Midlands Development Agency
ESF	European Social Fund
FTET	Full Time Education or Education
HE	Higher Education
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
IAP	Intensive Activity Period
IB	Incapacity Benefit
IES	Institute for Employment Studies
ILM	Intermediate Labour Market
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IS	Income Support
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
NALS	National Adult Learning Survey

NAO	National Audit Office
NDDP	New Deal for Disabled People
NDLP	New Deal for Lone Parents
NDPA	New Deal Personal Adviser
NDYP	New Deal for Young People
NHS	National Health Service
NIACE	National Institute for Adult Continuing Education
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OPCS	Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys
PALS	Pathways in Adult Learning Survey
SIBS	Short Intensive Basic Skills
SPA	State Pension Age
SSDA	Sector Skills Development Agency
SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualification
TAEN	Third Age Employment Network
WBLA	Work Based Learning for Adults
WDA	Welsh Development Agency
WFI	Work Focused Interview

Summary

This project examines the evidence relating to training by age amongst people who are currently unemployed or economically inactive. The focus is on all adults aged between 16 and the state pension age (SPA)¹, since encouraging training throughout life is important to ensuring the supply of skills required by the economy.

There are a number of programmes aimed at facilitating individuals' entry into, or return to, work. All have a training element, although the emphasis on this varies for different groups. The New Deal 50 Plus, for example, makes provision for a training grant of up to £1,500 for individuals who take up employment. For voluntary programmes such as New Deal for Disabled People, and New Deal for Lone Parents, training does not form a significant part of provision.

This summary presents findings of three strands of research: a review of the current evaluation and academic literatures; analyses of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2004, and National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) 2002, and 22 interviews with individuals from 16 organisations with in-depth knowledge that qualifies them to comment on relevant issues. These included government departments, regional agencies, and voluntary sector organisations such as the Third Age Employment Network, National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and Help the Aged.

Findings from the literature

The UK is facing a major demographic shift. Commentators predict that over the next twenty years, older people will form an increasingly large proportion of the working population. While the number of those aged between 25 and 39 is predicted to fall by around five per cent, the number of people aged between 50 and 65 is expected to increase by some 20 per cent (Hirsch, 2003; Urwin, 2004). The growing number of older workers and diminishing supply of young people is likely to challenge concepts of older workers' redundancy and retirement at or before SPA. The retention of older people in the labour market may also create greater job competition for young people with low-level skills, few/no qualifications and little work experience (Hasluck, 1998).

¹ Currently 60 for women and 65 for men, rising to 65 for both between 2010 and 2020.

At present, around thirty per cent² of those aged between 50 and SPA who could work, are economically inactive or unemployed, and a significant proportion of these claim state benefits. Large numbers are found in former industrialised areas such as Northern England, Wales and Scotland, where unemployment is high (Beatty and Fothergill, 2002). Across the UK however, the negative trend in the employment of older men, noted between 1975 and 1985, has slowed, and current figures indicate that the employment rate for older males is now higher than at any point since the mid-1980s (Taylor and Walker, 1997; Hotopp, 2005).

Other analysis³ shows that people with low qualifications are more likely to be without work than those possessing higher qualifications. Analysis of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) data shows that people with low qualifications are also less likely to be engaged with training.

Further, LFS analysis indicates that less than one-third of unemployed people are likely to have participated in training in the past 13 weeks. Far fewer – around ten per cent – inactive individuals have taken part in any training in the same period. These differences are likely to reflect the fact that inactive individuals are not subject to the same mandatory training requirements as are those in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) benefits.

It is clear in the evidence that, broadly, the same range of barriers to training (and work) affect each group in the unemployed and inactive community; however, the strength and impact of these varies between groups. These barriers can be categorised as follows:

- human capital (basic skills, qualifications, skills, job readiness and concept of self);
- work-related (time unemployed, work history, employer attitudes and regional economic factors);
- resource-related (health, care and care responsibilities, and structural barriers).

The evidence relating to human capital barriers suggests that those with low or no qualifications face the highest risks of unemployment and inactivity, and within this group those with basic skill deficits are most at risk. However, one of the greatest barriers is individuals' own concept of their skills and abilities. Older adults may feel threatened by the thought of trying to attain basic skills that they have survived without (Winterbotham *et al.*, 2002). The social stigma attached to the lack of basic skills can render people too embarrassed to admit they need such training.

There is evidence that some older people who are unemployed, particularly in areas of high employment, feel that they are employers' 'last choice' (Beatty and Fothergill, 2002). Young adults may have a sense of failure due to poor experiences in the

² DWP (2004) Older Workers: Statistical Information Booklet, spring.

³ p238, Labour Market Trends, May 2003.

education system particularly if they did not gain qualifications. If employers use qualifications as a proxy for skills in young recruits, this group similarly may feel they are viewed unfavourably by employers.

Employers seek a range of work-specific skills and qualifications, which vary in level with the type of job. However, some generic skills, such as communication, problem-solving and motivation are required for the majority of positions and thus have become a key area for training and support. A third report, to be published in autumn 2005, explores in greater depth the skills employers seek during recruitment. Such work-specific skills are sometimes seen as an indicator of job-readiness. However, their measurement is not an exact process: evidence suggests that training providers, Jobcentre staff and employers, disagree regarding the level of individuals' job-readiness which can lead to poor outcomes for participants, both in terms of their training experience and ability to cope with employment (Winterbotham *et al.*, 2002).

The barriers categorised as work-related tend to focus on employer perceptions and local labour market conditions. The length of time someone has been without work may be viewed by employers as an indicator of the individual's 'distance' from the labour market (Moss and Arrowsmith, 2003). An individual's concept of their skills may also be a factor: they may not fully understand the skills now required and have little idea of how their skills need to change to meet employers' needs. Work trials and placements help in overcoming such barriers, providing recent work experience as well as enabling the participant to develop a better understanding of the modern workplace.

The resource-related category includes barriers relating to the flexibility (or lack of it) that can be provided in the work environment. The extent to which tasks and the workplace itself can be adjusted are factors that impact on the opportunities for individuals, particularly those with health problems, to (re-)enter work. Those with care responsibilities also require greater flexibility in working hours and patterns. For these groups, there is evidence to suggest that training is often provided flexibly; it is on transition to the workplace that the individual may encounter barriers, with some employers reluctant to make adjustments to working time arrangements, particularly time to complete training (Lakey *et al.*, 2002).

Amongst people with disabilities, there is some evidence that the types of training provided do not focus sufficiently on the impairment, ie how to manage the condition and the support or adjustment available to facilitate access to work. This is unfortunate given that often it is their health condition that constitutes their greatest barrier to work. Evidence suggests that people with disabilities have skills and are job-ready so, rather than needing help to address some skills deficit, instead would be able to work if support was available to negotiate adjustments with employers (JRF, 1998).

There are funding, and perceived financial disincentives, to accessing training for many groups. Young people for instance, have particular concerns regarding the potential impact of training on their eligibility for state benefits (Lakey *et al.*, 2001). However, guidance from a personal adviser helps to overcome such apprehensions. If, however, the individual wishes to progress in training beyond Jobcentre provision, obtaining funding can be problematic, particularly for older adults. Evidence suggests that funding for intermediate and higher skills remains restricted based on age for older, unemployed people, eg Adult Learning Grants are available to fund training to gain a level 3 qualification, but only for those who can study full-time and who are under 30.

While various groups face common barriers, nonetheless there is considerable individual variation within each group, and for this reason individualised approaches are successful and valued by participants. All groups in the unemployed and inactive community favoured the assistance of a personal adviser to help guide them through the training and employment process, and specifically to help them deal with real and perceived barriers. The importance of the adviser's knowledge of the local job economy was stressed. The transition to work was also likely to be more successfully accomplished if support continued into the early stages of employment.

Trends in training

Analysis of the LFS demonstrated that the involvement of unemployed and inactive people in training is low: on average, fewer than one in ten reported receiving training in the past 13 weeks (LFS, spring 2004). Training participation also declines with age: four in ten young workless people had received training compared to one-fifth of those aged over 45.

Beyond age, there are few clear trends. Over the age of 25, women are more likely to have engaged with training than men are; however the converse is demonstrated in the youngest age group.

Over the age of 25, people from ethnic minority and black backgrounds are 20 per cent more likely to report training, although again in the youngest age group, those from white backgrounds are slightly more likely to report training.

People with health problems that affect the amount of work they can do are more likely to report training beyond the age of 25 than their counterparts whose health impairment does not pose limitations.

To help clarify the situation, we explored the factors that significantly impacted on the likelihood of training, while controlling for other factors. This revealed the influence of age: the likelihood of someone aged over 55 participating in training is 50 per cent less than for an adult aged 35 to 44.

Amongst ethnic groups, those from black, black British and mixed backgrounds are 16 per cent more likely to be involved in training than other groups, although there is no discernable difference between white and Asian groups.

People with higher qualifications are more likely to engage with training: someone who has no qualifications is 75 per cent less likely than someone with a degree, to have recently received training.

Recent learning is a predictor of training, particularly in the younger age groups: those who attained their highest qualification in the past two years, were two and a half times more likely to have received training than someone whose qualification was achieved more than two years ago.

Finally, analysis of NALS showed that the older a person is, the less likely they think it is they will be involved in training (or other learning) in the next three years. This reflects findings in the literature about over- or low confidence acting as a barrier for older people in accessing work and training.

Expert views about training

The interviews identified many barriers to participation in training programmes by people who are inactive or unemployed. These included a lack of access to information about what is available and the wider opportunities for training. Respondents discussed how the image of formal training negatively affected training motivation. While this affected all age groups, apprehension grew more entrenched with age.

Workless people were felt to have attitudinal barriers such as lack of confidence in their ability to learn, and an increasing lack of training motivation with age. Ill-health, and disability, also factored: a person unable to work due to ill-health can lose confidence.

The qualifying period for eligibility for training was seen as problematic as confidence and motivation are likely to decline as the period of worklessness increases. Flexibility of provision was an important factor affecting access. In addition, other barriers to access that were important were transport infrastructure, and in rural areas, a reluctance to travel outside the local area for either work or training.

A variety of issues were raised about the suitability of current training provision, including the difficulty of measuring client satisfaction since provision can be mandatory. Some respondents were critical of the priority given to basic skills training as this limited the opportunities for higher level skills development.

Others noted the difficulty in motivating clients to train in basic skills, and suggested a greater integration with technical skills development might help. The relative value of different qualification levels was discussed and it was felt, by some, that

intermediate qualifications were more likely to lead to increased financial remuneration; however lower level qualifications helped people to retain employment for longer periods of time.

There was greater consensus regarding the types of training employers value. Training that involved work experience was considered to be most attractive. Training providers who engage with employers and adapt their training to meet the changing needs of the local labour market were seen as effective.

The majority of respondents agreed that the age-segmented government training programmes would no longer be viable in light of the forthcoming age discrimination legislation. However, there was a strong view that new programmes should be aware of the needs of different age groups.

1 Training amongst unemployed and inactive people

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this project is to examine the evidence relating to the training of people in different age groups who are not currently in the labour force. While the UK faces a changing working population demographic, with older workers forming a larger proportion of the workforce than young people (Urwin, 2004), the focus is on all people between the age of 16 and state pension age (SPA), since encouraging training throughout working life is important to ensuring the availability of the range of skills required by the UK economy.

There are a number of programmes in the UK aimed at facilitating the entry or return of individuals into work. These programmes are a key element in the Government's Welfare to Work strategy. The New Deal programmes are targeted at specific groups in terms of age or activity status, eg New Deal for Young People (NDYP) is aimed at unemployed people aged between 18 and 24; whilst unemployed people aged 25 and over access New Deal 25 Plus. New Deal 50 Plus is aimed at getting older unemployed people back into work and is a voluntary programme. New Deal for Lone Parents and New Deal for Disabled People are also voluntary and do not contain the specific training element of other programmes however people on these (and other voluntary programmes) can be referred to training provision such as 'work based learning for adults' (WBLA).

In terms of the kind of training available, the New Deal 50 Plus makes provision for a training grant of up to £1,500 for individuals who take up employment. However, an evaluation carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) showed that there has been a low take-up of the grant for a range of reasons, including perceptions about being too old to train⁴. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is currently conducting pilot exercises to assess the impact of making the 'intensive activity period' (IAP) of the New Deal 25 Plus compulsory for older Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants (aged between 50 and 59). The IAP includes work-related training and has, until the pilots, been a voluntary part of provision for people in this age group.

Other programmes providing training support for unemployed or inactive people include the WBLA programmes in England, Scotland and Wales. The content of these programmes varies in the three countries but all include support for training relevant to improving work-related skills and employability. In England the programme is delivered by Jobcentre Plus, in Wales by the National Council, Education and Learning Wales, and in Scotland, Training for Work is the programme delivered by Scottish Enterprise through the Local Enterprise Company network and in partnership with Jobcentre Plus.

In this report, we set out the available evidence on the provision of, barriers to, and attitudes towards, training amongst people currently outside of the labour market. The main divisions within this population are those who are unemployed (those seeking employment and claiming JSA) and those who are economically inactive (aged between 16 and SPA and claiming other benefits such as Income Support (IS), who may or may not be seeking work eg lone parents or those who are sick or disabled). The main themes and issues under investigation are:

- attitudes towards training amongst unemployed or inactive people of different age groups;
- take-up of training opportunities on different programmes and the reasons for the level of take up;
- evidence relating to the impact of training on participants' entry or return to work;
- evidence from employers on the value of the training element of return to work programmes.

We have also examined published evidence on the following questions:

- Are employers' recruitment and training decisions affected by whether unemployed applicants of different ages have had pre-work training and, if so, of what nature and at what level?

⁴ Atkinson J et. al, New Deal 50plus: Sustainability of Employment, DWP 2003.

- To what extent does the availability of a training grant or other government financial support affect employers' commitment to progressing the skills of their recruits?

Where evidence relates to a specific group, such as to older people who are unemployed, rather than to unemployed and inactive people overall, this distinction is made in the report. Where finer detail is available, such as differences between groups who fall under the inactive category, we report this.

A previous study carried out by IES for the Age Partnership at DWP, 'Practical Tips and Guidance for Training a Mixed Age Workforce', was published in May 2005, and reviews training participation, and barriers to participation, amongst people who are currently employed⁵.

1.1.1 Methodology

This report is the culmination of three main strands of research activity:

- A review of the current evaluation and academic literatures. This included published evaluations of the range of New Deals and government programmes and policy and analysis drawn from government departments. Searches were also conducted of the academic journal databases (Ingenta and Zetoc) using combinations of key words such as: New Deal, unemployment and training, inactivity and training, age and training, basic skills, low skills, and employers and training. A number of searches were conducted of research institutes' websites who have particular interests in employment, training or age publications using the same keyword criteria. The project steering group, and the expert interviews below, also informed the identification of literature for review.
- Analysis of the UK Labour Force Survey 2004 (LFS) to review training amongst different age groups by a range of characteristics such as gender, location, ethnicity, disability and region; and National Adult Learning Survey, 2002, a GB-based survey, to assess learning intentions by age, amongst unemployed and inactive people.
- In-depth qualitative interviews with representatives of sixteen national organisations who have expertise in the areas of age, employment, unemployment and/or inactivity, disadvantaged groups, or government provision including DWP, Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Learning and Skills Council, Scottish Enterprise, Education and Learning Wales/Welsh Development Authority, and Third Age Employment Network. In total, 22 individuals were involved in interviews lasting approximately one hour covering the aims of this study, and a further one on employers' views. A topic guide (Appendix A), was used which covered:

⁵ Details can be found on the DWP Age Partnership website – <http://www.agepartnership.gov.uk>

barriers faced by workless people in obtaining training; attitudes of these groups towards different types of training provision; employers' views of the value of the training element of entry or return to work programmes; what employers look for when recruiting unemployed or previously inactive individuals; assessment of the quality of different return to/entry to work training programmes; and the sustainability of a case for age segmented training programmes such as New Deal 50 Plus, in the light of the forthcoming age discrimination legislation.

1.2 Structure of this report

The three main sections of the research are reported in Chapters 2 to 4. In Chapter 2 we review the academic and policy literatures to identify the issues as they apply to younger or older people in the unemployed or inactive communities, and to other groups within this community when appropriate, for example, lone parents or people with disabilities. The third chapter provides a statistical analysis of the current levels of training within the UK workless community, including factors that predicate involvement in training and development. In the fourth chapter we explore the issues and concerns reported in the interviews, and specifically the barriers and attitudes to training and work, the regional context, and the sustainability of the age segmented government programmes.

We conclude this first chapter with a discussion of current definitions of older and younger people, unemployment and inactivity.

1.3 Definitions of age, unemployment and inactivity

In our earlier report (Newton *et al.* 2005), we found evidence to suggest that most people consider 'older' to be around 15 years above their current age. We also found that, while there appears to be a consensus amongst statisticians and researchers regarding what constitutes an 'older worker' there is little in the way of formal definition. The consensus appears to be that the term 'older' refers to people aged 50 and over. We have adopted and worked with this definition in this and the previous report. These definitions fit with current government age segmentation within its programmes for the unemployed, eg, New Deal 50 Plus. Where any evidence is reported that varies from this definition, we have ensured that this is noted within the text.

The definition of 'young' people tends to be people aged up to 25 and this is a definition with which most policy-makers and authors agree. Again this matches with current government segmentation eg NDYP available to those up to the age of 25. Where authors vary from this definition, we note this difference in the text.

Amongst the unemployed and inactive community are some groups who are considered disadvantaged, eg people with disabilities and lone parents. Neither group can be considered homogenous as each contains a range of ages, as well as a range of personal circumstances that affect training participation and work

aspirations including, for lone parents, the age of their child. In the review of evidence the definitions adopted tend to comply with DWP thinking since the evidence base for each group is largely evaluation of government programmes. Where reports use a different definition, we note this in the text.

Consistent with our previous report we have used the term 'training' throughout this report. However, we note that this term is viewed by some to have limitations when considering the life-long learning agenda, since the term 'training' is usually understood to apply mainly to shorter and task-specific learning, rather than to broader development. We appreciate the distinction, and that self-motivated participation in further or higher education, or extramural learning could well communicate as much to an employer about an individual's attitude and motivation, as participation in a government-provided training programme would. However, since in most instances the evaluation literature focuses on government actions, we consider that training is considered the most appropriate term to use in this report. Our analysis of National Adult Learners Survey (NALS, 2002) however provides some insight into the likelihood of job-related and non-job-related training and learning amongst the unemployed and inactive communities.

A final point to note is the distinction between skills and qualifications. Individuals may have high levels of skills and knowledge but may yet be unqualified. While in many cases individuals may be able to demonstrate or prove their skills, through evidence of work performed in the past, or through a previous employer's reference, the absence of a qualification can lead to difficulties for individuals in being considered as an appropriate job applicant.

One of the reasons for making national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and, in Scotland (SVQs) assessment-based and not tied to a particular curriculum, was the view of the Government at that time that there were many skilled individuals in the working population who nonetheless were unqualified. It was considered to be unfair to expect such individuals to attend a course, which in many cases might merely duplicate what they already knew. Employers were also likely to be unwilling to release individuals for training they viewed as unnecessary, given an individual's existing skill level. For these reasons, NVQs were designed so that they could be awarded on the basis of an assessment of the individual's skill and knowledge demonstrated in the performance of their job. While some individuals (who were either new to the job or were currently working at a less skilled level) might need training to help them reach the standards of performance expected, more experienced individuals were expected in large part to be able to access these awards largely on the skills and knowledge they had acquired over a lifetime of work.

Academic qualifications in the past focused largely on developing, in the individual, a prescribed body of knowledge. However there were often criticisms from employers that graduates did not have the necessary skills required to be effective workers. This changed with the introduction of the *Enterprise in HE* funding initiative for universities (Employment Department, 1991), which led to a greater focus on the development of skills and to more efforts to identify and label the types

of skills that typically were developed in graduates. In recent years some sectors (eg community justice, nursing/care, and environmental conservation) have started to move to a dual-accreditation route in which graduates typically attain either some NVQ units or a whole NVQ in addition to a degree.

2 Findings from the evaluation and academic literatures

2.1 Unemployment and economic inactivity in the UK

The UK is facing a major demographic shift in the near future (Urwin, 2004⁶) as the evidence indicates that over the next twenty years or so older people will form an increasingly large part of the working population. The proportion of older people in the working population is expected to increase by one-fifth while the proportion of people aged between 25 and 39 is likely to fall by five per cent. This arguably challenges employer assumptions that older workers will automatically move into retirement once they reach state pension age (SPA). In turn, this is likely to create a greater barrier for young people with low skill levels, few or no qualifications, and little tangible work experience, who are likely to find themselves facing labour market competition from older, more experienced and often better qualified people (Atkinson and Williams, 2003).

At present, approximately just under 30 per cent of older people (aged between 50 and SPA) are economically inactive or unemployed⁷, with large numbers found in former industrialised areas such as Northern England, Wales and Scotland (Beatty and Fothergill, 2002). A significant proportion of these claim state benefits (Atkinson et al. 2003). Across the UK however, the decline of economic activity amongst older men, noted between 1975 and 1985, has shown a rise in subsequent years (Taylor and Walker, 1997; Urwin, 2004; Hotopp, 2005) such that the employment rate for older males is now higher than at any point since the mid-1980s.

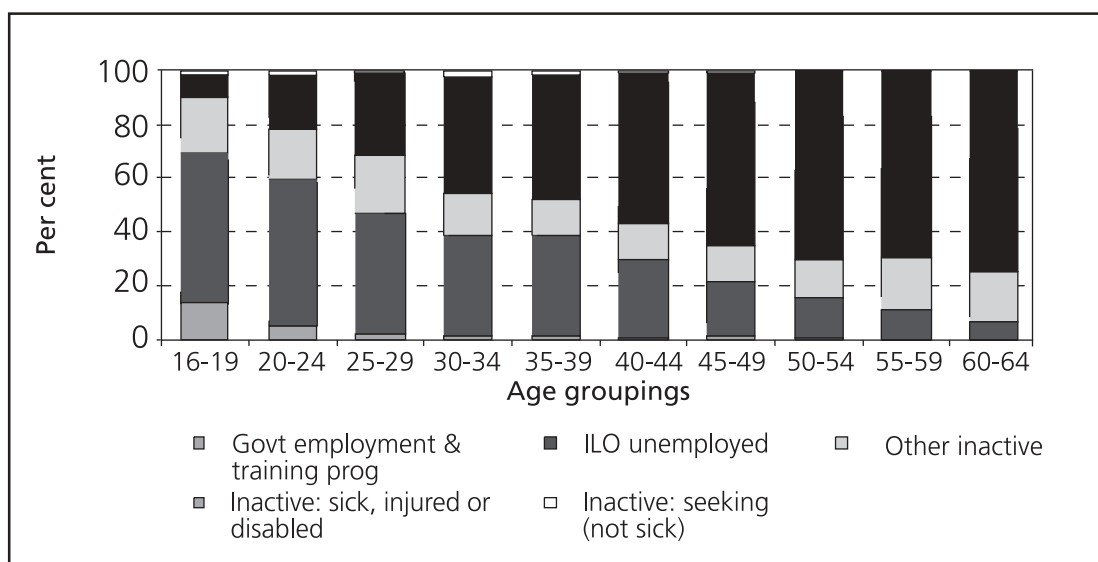
⁶ Based on analysis and modelling of data from LFS (2004)

⁷ DWP: Older workers: statistical information booklet, spring 2004

Figure 2.1 shows the status of those currently outside the UK workforce, taken from our analysis of the LFS. The figure shows that:

- only the youngest age groups have a visible proportion engaged in government employment and training programmes such as New Deal, at the point of survey, ie eight per cent of 16 to 24 year olds compared with one per cent amongst 45 to 54 year olds and 0.1 per cent amongst 60 to 64 year olds;
- there are higher levels of International Labour Organisation (ILO)-defined unemployment amongst young people, and this proportion declines with age;
- as ILO-defined unemployment declines, the proportion of workless people who are inactive through ill-health and are not seeking work increases;
- the proportion of inactive people seeking employment also declines with age.

Figure 2.1 Status, by age, of workless people at point of survey



Although it might be argued that some of these over-50s outside the workforce have taken up early retirement through choice, the Performance and Innovation Unit (2000) found that no more than 30 per cent of older workless people fell into this group. Amongst the remainder, large numbers were claiming financial support through sickness, disability or other state benefits. Indeed, the Third Age Employment Network (2003) has noted that many people aged over 50 who are without work live in considerable poverty.

Other analysis has shown⁸ that people with lower qualifications are more likely to be without work than those with higher qualifications. Fifty-one per cent of the population without qualifications are likely to be in employment compared with 91 per cent of those with a degree or equivalent. Our own analysis of data from the LFS

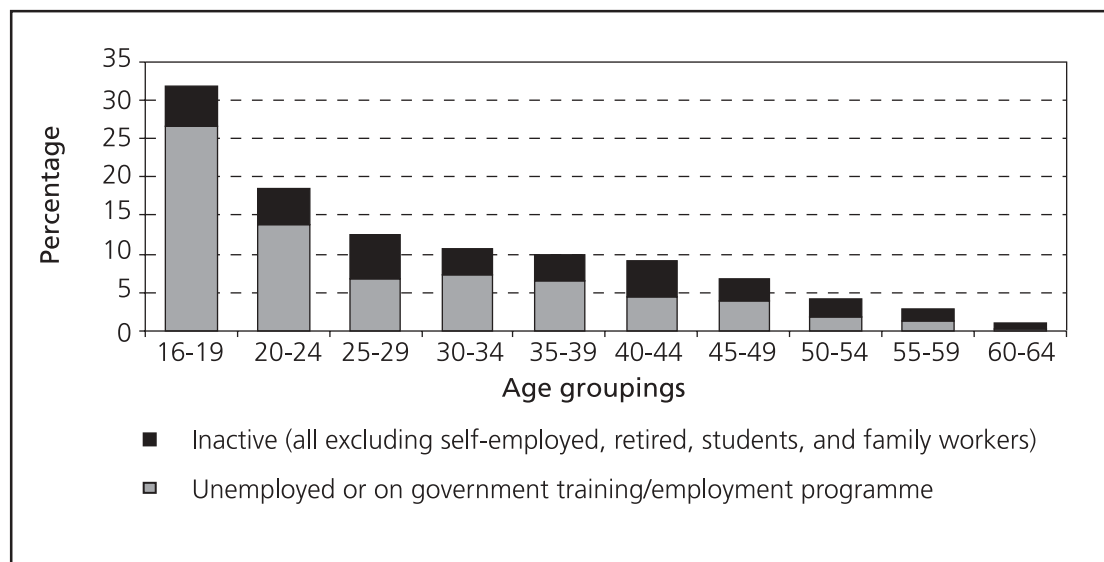
⁸ p.238, Labour Market Trends, May 2003

shows that people with low qualifications are less likely to be engaged with training; also, if an individual has recently achieved their highest qualification they are more likely to be in training.

Figure 2.2 shows training participation over the past 13 weeks amongst unemployed and inactive people, displayed separately for the various age groups, based on analysis of the LFS, 2004. For this analysis, people who are 'the ILO-defined unemployed'⁹ and 'those on government training programmes' have been grouped as unemployed, and no distinction has been made between the range of groups defined as 'inactive'.

For unemployed people, training participation declines rapidly beyond the age of 19. There is a 30 per cent mean likelihood of participation for the younger age groups compared with a mean likelihood of participation of just 13 per cent for older adults, (ie all those aged 25 to 64). In addition, inactive people are much less likely to engage with training than unemployed people. This is likely to reflect, to some degree, the non-mandatory nature of government employment and training provision for inactive groups.

Figure 2.2 Training participation in the past 13 weeks, in the unemployed and inactive community, by age



In comparison, for the employed population, LFS data indicates a similar decline in training participation by age during the same period. However, overall there is a larger proportion of workers by age involved in training when compared to unemployed or inactive adults. For instance, 40 per cent of young workers reported training, while for employees aged between 25 and 49 the rate is around one-third.

⁹ ILO-unemployed: people who have not worked more than one hour during the short reference period [of survey] but who are available for and actively seeking work.

For employed adults training declines after 50, and markedly beyond the age of 60 – around ten per cent of workers of this age reported training.

To help employed people to maintain their position in the labour market, and to (re-)engage unemployed and inactive groups with work, greater importance is being placed on training, with a particular focus on older adults. Hirsch (2003) in his examination of the employment and social environment of older workers, found factors that help them to remain in or re-enter the labour market, include policies to engage people in training and employment services; financial incentives such as wage subsidies; policy measures that encourage employers to treat older people fairly; and policy measures to make the workplace better suited to the needs of older workers (eg making down-shifting more worthwhile), or practices supporting occupational health.

The evidence we present in this report suggests that these factors apply to the range of different groups of the workless community; however, they may have varying levels of importance to the various groups¹⁰.

To recognise the differences between groups, the Government has instituted a number of actions that aim to address their specific needs, and support them into (or back into) employment. These include age-segmented programmes such as New Deal for Young People (NDYP), New Deal 25 Plus and New Deal 50 Plus as well as programmes segmented to reflect the needs of various different groups of disadvantaged people within the UK population, such as people with disabilities and lone parents. Training and learning are seen to be key ingredients in this support since the evidence suggests (National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), 2004; Snape *et al.* 2003) that, in general, people who engage in training and lifelong learning are more likely to be employed.

However, one exception to this general trend may be adult basic skills training. Jobcentre Plus basic skills training is split between basic employability training; these are longer courses of up to 26 weeks for those with the greatest need) and SIBS (shorter course for people with less need). For both types of course, employment outcomes appear to be poor. Despite basic employment training courses aiming to increase both basic skills and employability, an evaluation in which basic employment training participants were compared with a matched non-participant sample indicated that basic employment training had no effect on employment nor any effect on productivity or income, despite having a large impact on all basic skills and IT skills (Anderson *et al.*, 2003).

¹⁰ We expand on this in Section 2.4.2 which examines the evidence base about barriers to training and work.

With regard to SIBS, while job outcomes do not appear to be good, it should be noted that in many respects the role of SIBS, although funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), is primarily for reasons of social inclusion and equity rather than any job outcome aims. However, the evidence on this point appears contradictory. In the same year Anderson and Pires compared employment outcomes for lone parents who had attended either basic employment training, short job-focused training or longer occupational training (Anderson and Pires, 2003). They reported that lone parents who had received training in basic skills, ie had attended the basic employment training course, reported the most benefit, compared to clients registered on other courses under the work based learning for adults (WBLA) scheme. Anderson and Pires (*ibid*) suggest that the greatest barrier for this group in terms of employment, was basic skills, and through addressing this need, the basic employment training course had speeded their progression into employment.

It can be seen that the evidence concerning the impact of basic skills on employment is ambiguous at present, and so perhaps no conclusion in either direction can be drawn regarding this particular aspect of skills development. While noting such caveats regarding some adult basic skills training programmes, nonetheless it is reasonable to conclude that in general, training may be a factor in helping people gain entry to, or re-engage with work. However, the analyses show that training participation rates are particularly low amongst older unemployed or inactive people, despite the availability of programmes designed for their needs. To understand the reasons for low training participation amongst the various groups of workless people, in the later sections of this literature review we explore the factors underpinning training participation; the barriers different groups experience and perceive; and attitudes to training amongst unemployed and inactive people. We also provide a brief overview of employer and training provider attitudes to the training provision currently available for workless people. However, before doing so, it is appropriate to consider why there should be such an emphasis on training and skills amongst unemployed and inactive people. We now examine the changing skills climate in the UK to provide the context for these initiatives.

2.2 The skills agenda

A continuing concern of the Government remains the UK's poor performance in the international league table of qualifications. Despite recent improvements, the UK still has a lower proportion of the workforce qualified to level 2 (usually considered the lowest acceptable qualification level for a skilled workforce) than both Germany and France (Steedman, McIntosh and Green, 2004). At level 3 (usually taken as equating to 'advanced craft' level), the UK is slightly ahead of France but lags far behind Germany (Steedman *et al.*, *ibid*).

While similar proportions of UK workers within the age group 19 to 21 hold level 2 and 3 qualifications to workers of the same age in Germany and France, there remains a large sub-group of the older working population who lack any

qualification up to level 2. In addition, around one-fifth of the working population is believed to have basic skill deficits (Moser Group, 1999). It should of course be noted that these two groups (those with basic skill difficulties and those without qualifications) partially overlap.

Thus adult basic skill levels remain an area of particular concern. The policy document, *In demand: Adult Skills for the 21st Century* (Performance and Innovation Unit, Cabinet Office, 2001) noted that the relatively high proportions of the UK working population lacking basic and intermediate skills represented a particular problem for the nation, and recommended that tackling basic skills should be a top priority. Basic skill needs has been identified as one of the reasons why candidates may have difficulties completing NVOs and other vocational awards. The National Audit Office (NAO) identifies the same problem, specifying its extent and the wider impact on people's lives:

'Twenty-six million people of working age have levels of literacy or numeracy below those expected of school leavers... Low levels of literacy and numeracy can affect people's ability to interact with other people, bring up their children and hold down a job. Many are unemployed, on benefits or work in low-skilled employment.'

NAO, 2004

More recently, the white paper on skills has commented on the need to develop skills in adult learners. The Government has reaffirmed its commitment to improve the proportion of the adult population with qualifications, committing itself to a 40 per cent reduction in the number of adults in the workforce without a level 2 qualification by 2010. However, the Government has also acknowledged that it now needs to prioritise attainment of level 3 skills and qualifications. Two particular strands of its recent policy address the need to encourage adults to gain qualifications at these levels.

Any low-skilled adult will have an entitlement to government funding to train for a first full level 2, as announced in the Skills Strategy¹¹. However, if a low-skilled individual eligible for the entitlement at level 2 (aged over 19 or over, no upper age limit) is assessed as being capable of 'jumping' straight to level 3, the available funding may be transferred to support the achievement of the level 3 qualification. Although there is no restriction on which eligible qualifications the learner undertakes, regions will promote qualifications relevant to their local economic needs. In addition, the trial of Adult Learning Grants in nineteen Learning and Skills Council (LSC) areas encourages attainment of first level 3 qualifications, but only for adults aged up to 30 who can study full-time (450 hours of guided learning per year). Under this scheme, there is provision for all adults, including those older than 30, to study for funded first level 2 qualifications.

¹¹ The Government's skills strategy in England, *21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential*, DfES, June 2003

The 2005 white paper also proposes introduction or extension of provision to help adults gain access to development. These include extension of information, advice and guidance services, increasing support for adults to help them move from welfare to work and piloting a new skills coaching service for those in receipt of inactive benefits and those on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA).

These initiatives will be open to adults of all ages, provided they meet the criteria for joining the scheme. It is likely that, by implication, schemes available to those on JSA or other benefits will tend to include a larger proportion of older adults. The white paper notes that older learners are both more likely to not have qualifications and likely to need more support if they are to increase their skills and gain qualifications:

'In terms of both economic inactivity and low skills, older people fare worse than the population at large. Those aged over 50 tend to be less well qualified than those under 50. Nearly a quarter of over 50's have no qualifications, compared to ten per cent of under 50's. Older people with low skills are more likely to be claiming incapacity benefits' *DfES, 2005*

The Government views the National Employer Training Programme as one key route through which older employees will be helped to gain qualifications. In the 2005 skills white paper (DfES, 2005) it notes that evaluation of the Employer Training Pilots (Hillage and Mitchell, 2004; Hillage *et al.* 2005) indicates that those aged 56 or over are 21 per cent more likely to complete their training and achieve the target qualification than those in younger age groups.

The earlier white paper on skills (DfES, 2003) noted that older women are less likely to hold qualifications – and particularly intermediate (level 3) qualifications – than men are. Despite this, there were few proposals in the 2003 white paper to address this particular skills gap. The 2005 white paper commits itself to promoting equality of opportunity in skills and training, noting that certain groups – older workers, those on welfare benefits, and prisoners and older offenders – are more likely than the rest of the population to have low skills and few qualifications. Older women, as a specific group, appear to have been overlooked in the most recent provisions.

2.2.1 The range of skills

Before we review the barriers to training experienced by unemployed and inactive people, it is useful to understand the range of skills and qualifications levels that have become a focus for employment and progression. In Table 2.1 we present a hierarchy of commonly used skills categories, the foundation of which are listed first, and give a brief definition of each. We then give an overview of the kind of training that is available for different groups of unemployed and inactive people.

2.3 Government programmes and actions that offer training for the unemployed and inactive

The Government has produced a range of programmes that offer skill development to specific groups of unemployed and inactive people. These programmes are usually based on a broad definition of training, such as schemes to address employability skills or specific technical skills through to work trials.

In Table 2.2 we provide a summary of the range of programmes and actions, identifying the associated training elements and the barriers to training and work experienced by the different groups.

Table 2.1 Different skills types referred to in this report

Skill	Description
Basic skills	The ability to read, write and speak in English/Welsh and to use mathematics at a level necessary to function and progress at work and in society in general (Basic Skills Agency)
Core skills	Working with others, communication, numeracy and problem-solving
Key skills	Communication, application of number and information technology (IT), working with others, improving own learning and performance, and problem solving
Employability skills	Motivation, communication, problem solving, positive attitudes and behaviours, adaptability, and working with others
Soft skills	Teamwork, communication, problem-solving, leadership ability; and customer service orientation
Transferable skills	Communication, organisation, planning and research, working with and leading other people, dealing with conflict and problem-solving
Hard/technical skills	Occupation/job-specific skills
Intermediate skills	eg level 3 qualifications
Higher skills	eg level 4 qualifications and above (Degree or HE Diploma etc.)

Source: IES, 2005

There are overlaps between the different kinds of provision: cross cutting themes such as actions to address basic or employability skills, each of which require a different approach. Anderson *et al.* (2003) note this point in their examination of the labour market effects of the WBLA programme. Below we provide Anderson *et al.*'s (*ibid*) summary of training available, which provides a useful categorisation of the types of training programme available:

Basic employment training. Aimed at people who fall below the Basic Skills Agency entry level. Under WBLA, training typically lasts 26 weeks and aims to raise literacy and numeracy to entry level. Participants also receive support to develop the employability and basic occupational skills required by employers.

Short job-focused training. Full-time job-focused training, soft skills development, job search support and work placements, tailored to meet the needs of local employers, over a maximum of six weeks. Aimed at those who lack the specific work-related skills needed by employers but who are otherwise job ready¹².

Longer occupational training. Occupational training (often to qualification level) and soft skills acquisition and updating to meet needs of local employment market, and supported job search. The average duration of training is 14 weeks, although it is possible for participants to receive training for up to one year.

Other provisions include work-focused interviews (WFI) with a personal adviser to assess training needs, and help to develop self-confidence and a positive attitude towards work. Through WFIs, personal advisers can work with employers to facilitate and negotiate return to work.

WBLA is an England-only provision and in Wales, there are the Skill Build and Skill Build Plus programmes. Skill Build aims to build confidence, improve basic skills and allow progression to level 1 qualifications. It is available through Careers Wales for 16 to 18 year olds and through the Jobcentre Plus for those over 18. Skill Build Plus enables progression to level 2 and 3 qualifications and has options for on-the-job training. Both programmes offer some level of financial support to participants.

In Scotland, the Training for Work programme is the equivalent of WBLA. This programme, offered by Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, is open to adults aged 25 and over who have been unemployed for at least six months in the last year, and who are actively seeking work. Participants gain access to the programme through their local Jobcentre Plus which refers them onto Scottish Enterprise who deliver the programme. Training for Work develops vocational skills and is aimed at people who are close to the labour market but need an intervention to help them into work. Support for basic skills is provided by Jobcentre Plus.

Strategies that are new in England include Building on New Deal and New Deal for Skills. While these programmes have not yet been evaluated and so are not included in our review below, it is important at this point to understand the Government's new directions in terms of policy and provision.

The first of these is *New Deal for Skills*, announced by the Chancellor in March 2004. Rather than being a programme, the New Deal for Skills is a package of measures to support the movement of people from welfare into sustainable and productive employment. It is targeted at those for whom a lack of appropriate skills or qualifications is a barrier preventing them from moving into employment. It is targeted both at jobseekers and those on inactive benefits (Income Support (IS) or Incapacity Benefit (IB)) with the greater focus on those on inactive benefits. The New Deal for Skills is being developed jointly by DWP and DfES.

¹² Those who can move directly into work, ie it is considered that there are no 'supply-side' barriers to work.

The different elements of the New Deal for Skills include:

- offering a skills coaching service to provide information and advice for active and inactive benefit claimants for whom a lack of skills or lack of current skills is the barrier to employment. The trials of skills coaching started in April 2005 in eight Jobcentre Plus districts. DWP is in the process of evaluating these trials;
- exploring the concept of a 'skills passport' to ease the movement from welfare to work, to make individual entitlements more tangible and to build a record of skills and competencies gained to help transfer skills between jobs. Skills passports are currently being trialled alongside skills coaching;
- developing an adult learning option to enable those on benefits to take up the level 2 entitlement. This is the focus of the baseline survey and more details about the adult learning option are given below;
- investigating how to build on the Employer Training Pilots in a way that extends their benefits towards those looking for entry to sustainable, productive employment.

Table 2.2 Current government programmes and training elements reviewed in this report

Action:	Intended for:	The training element:	Barriers:
ND Young People	18–24 year olds who have been unemployed for six months or more	<p>Personal adviser support</p> <p>Gateway to Work course: Mandatory two-week course to increase ‘employability’; covers communication skills/team working/self presentation <i>etc.</i></p> <p>FTET (full time education or training) is also one of the four options within NDYP: to help people reach SVQ/NVQ level 2</p>	<p>Lack of confidence</p> <p>Lack of qualification and work history</p> <p>Fewer jobs without skills</p> <p>Increased risk of long-term unemployment & inactivity with multiple disadvantage</p>
ND 25 Plus	JSA claimants over 25, who have claimed JSA for 18 of past 21 months. Intensive Activity Period (IAP) is voluntary for those over 50; mandatory IAP for the 50-59 age group is currently being piloted	<p>Gateway stage (first 4 months) involves some training but only for basic skills; IT, numeracy, literacy. Mandatory entry to IAP if no job found during Gateway</p> <p>IAP provides training with labour market links eg short job-focused training and longer occupational training</p>	
ND 50 Plus	<p>Unemployed, aged 50 Plus (no upper age limit)</p> <p>Accessed on voluntary basis after 6 months of receiving work-related benefits</p>	<p>May have access to WBLA</p> <p>Otherwise, there is no training element as such</p> <p>A training grant is available once the person has found work</p>	<p>Lack of confidence, lack of qualifications</p> <p>Employer negative attitudes to: training older people, length of time unemployed, redundancy</p> <p>Limited horizons due to low expectations and low self esteem; anxiety about ability <i>or</i></p> <p>Over-confidence in ability – lack of any identification of training needs</p>

Continued

Table 2.2 Continued

Action:	Intended for:	The training element:	Barriers:
ND Lone Parents	Lone Parents (voluntary basis) Those on Income Support, or not working, or working less than 16 hours per week	Access to training is optional and is not intended as a significant part of provision for this group Training premium of £10/15 paid if relevant	Employer (and to a lesser degree) Training Provider lack of flexibility particularly clashes between work and study time Availability of flexible and appropriate childcare Age of child affects training and work aspirations
ND Disabled People	Aimed at helping people claiming incapacity benefit move into sustained employment Participation is voluntary but if people decide to participate they must register with a job broker for advice and guidance	WFIs Personal adviser support Nearly all registrants (those in contact with a job broker) discuss work and training issues Access to support for work preparation, condition management, and return-to-work tax credit	Employer stereotypes of workplace adjustment – adjustments may not be as expensive as they may suppose Maintaining employment versus training to gain employment Impairment-specific barriers
WBLA	Adults over 25 receiving JSA who have been out of work for over 6 months; Voluntary; Referral at Adviser discretion (other priority groups can be eligible)	Voluntary training element Basic employment training Short job-focused training Longer occupational training Training premium of £10	
Pathways to Work	Adults on Incapacity Benefits (and other qualifying benefits, eg Income Support with disability premium or those with severe disabilities claiming disability allowance) making new claims for Incapacity Benefit in 7 Jobcentre Plus pilot districts. Since February 2005, pilot provision has been extended to some existing claimants in pilot areas	A series of mandatory WFIs Personal adviser support Access to choices package (as well as other existing provision such as WBLA) which includes: NDDP; condition management programmes, specialist disability programmes such as access to work, work preparation courses; return-to-work credit NB: existing claimants in the pilot districts receive 3 WFIs and access to 'choices', and can be offered job preparation premium	

Source: IES, 2005

The second key future policy direction is 'building on New Deal', which aims to integrate the learning from the provision of the range of New Deal programmes, and is founded on the movement towards greater local flexibility, with less central prescription. District managers will make decisions about what employment programme provision is best suited to the needs of their local economy. The local provision will be drawn from a 'New Deal menu' based on knowledge of what has been effective in each of the New Deal programmes. The menu includes: employability skills; motivational assistance; skills training for local labour markets; work trials; career support and varying advice and guidance support – tailored to the individual's need.

This section has demonstrated the variety of programmes available to help unemployed and inactive people. However we have noted earlier that overall very few in this community are actively engaged with training. In the following section, we assess the barriers different groups experience that may prevent them from fully engaging with government (and other) training provision.

2.4 Barriers to training and work

A previous study by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) (Newton *et al.* 2005) found a range of barriers to training amongst workers of different ages, many of which overlap with the barriers faced by people outside the workforce currently. Amongst workless people, there is also an overlap between the barriers to work and the barriers to training. Authors (eg Burchardt, 2000) have noted that some barriers, such as low qualifications, are common to all groups, whereas others are specific to certain groups (eg impairment-specific barriers amongst disabled people). First, we consider those common barriers and second, review the evidence relating to common and specific barriers faced by particular groups.

2.4.1 Common barriers to training

As we have discussed, the emphasis of this report is on training participation in programmes to support (re-)employment. However, NIACE has broader concerns and has analysed learning participation amongst the UK adult population. Its report, *Adult Learning at a Glance* (2004), demonstrates that when learning is considered in its broadest form, the groups least likely to participate include unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers, people with low or no qualifications, unemployed people, part-time workers, older adults (especially those aged over 60), some ethnic minority groups, and people with learning difficulties or disabilities.

NIACE (2004) has also considered the nature of the barriers to learning amongst the adult population. It reports a series of *structural* and *situational* barriers, specifically: lack of time (work and domestic responsibilities); inability to meet direct costs of learning (eg fees) and indirect costs of learning (travel and learning resources); a lack of awareness of learning opportunities; a lack of accessible learning opportunities (near home) and insufficient affordable childcare. However, it considers that the strongest barriers to adult learning are cultural, attitudinal and dispositional, and these are described in Table 2.3.

The combination of the low levels of learning with the barriers to that learning, amongst those in the lowest occupational groups, the unemployed and those with low levels of qualification, begins to demonstrate what has to be done to engage workless people in training that will support their (re-)entry to work.

Table 2.3 Cultural, attitudinal and dispositional barriers to learning

Cultural	Learning perceived to go against social, gender or family norms
Attitudinal	Learning perceived as something narrow, formal and assessed; learning institutions believed to cater exclusively for other age and social groups; scepticism about the relevance and value of learning
Dispositional	Lack of confidence; fear of failure and exposing weaknesses; belief that one is too old to learn

Source: McGivney 2001 cited in NIACE, 2004

Snape *et al.* (2004), report findings from the Pathways in Adult Learning Survey (PALS) with comparative data from the National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) (2001) survey. Their work identified three drivers for engaging in vocational learning: skill gain, career development and improved work satisfaction. Of non-vocational drivers, the wish to improve knowledge and skills, to do something interesting, and curiosity about a subject were seen as key.

Our analysis of the academic and evaluation literature indicates that for many groups, advice and guidance is important in helping them to (re-)engage with training and work. This supports Snape and his colleagues' findings that learners who had received information, advice and guidance were 15 per cent more likely to continue to learn than were those who had not received information, advice and guidance.

The interviews undertaken as part of this project also acknowledge this need for individualised advice and guidance to help unemployed and inactive people make the transition to work and training. This can be especially useful where the advice is based on knowledge of the local economy and the types of training that can best support entry to it.

A further outcome of the PALS study was a demonstration of how involvement in learning can help drive further learning. Some 84 per cent of those learning at the time of the NALS survey had continued to learn in the two years prior to the PALS, in both vocational and non-vocational subjects. Snape *et al.* (*ibid*) report that these continuous learners tended to engage in a wider range of learning than non-continuous learners.

Drawing on evidence from our previous report, the current literature review, data analysis and discussions in the interviews, we provide a conceptualisation of the barriers to work and training experienced by most people (see Table 2.4) with any age dimension defined. We follow this with a brief overview of the findings for these barriers in the literature – and explore these in greater depth by age and other worklessness and disadvantage factors in the latter sections in this review.

Table 2.4 Common barriers to work and training, and the age dimension

Barrier	Effect for older people	Effect for young people
Human capital		
Basic skills: literacy, numeracy, SEAL* (formerly ESOL**)	Those with basic skills needs may be harder to engage; have hidden lack of basic skills and survived	Those with basic skills needs may be harder to engage
Qualifications	Possess few qualifications; longer time since they attained their highest qualification	Overall qualification levels are higher but greater inequity experienced by those with no qualifications
Skills	Inappropriate to employer needs	Employers use qualifications as a proxy for skills in this age group
Job readiness (employability skills)	Short-training interventions are suited to job ready people	Poor educational experience may have impacted on motivation to work.
Concept of self	Low confidence – too old to learn; over confidence – too skilled to need training	Low confidence – failed at school
Work-related		
Personal adviser	Gatekeeper to training – access depends on perceptions of job-readiness; knowledge of local job opportunities may increase likelihood to consider training	Gatekeeper to training – depends on perceptions of job-readiness; knowledge of local job opportunities may increase likelihood to consider training
Time unemployed	Distanced from needs of labour market; less convinced of benefits of training	Distanced from education and labour market; poor prior educational experiences
Work history	Unskilled work; redundancy &/or long-term unemployment	No previous work; lack of work-related skills
Employer attitudes (time unemployed; redundancy; negative stereotypes and myths)	Judged as distant from labour market; tarnished by redundancy; absenteeism, lack motivation, performance problems; don't deal with change, can't do IT; slow to learn; forgetful	Judged as distanced from labour market; erratic time keeping and unreliable, immature; lack motivation
Economic drivers – regional/area economy	In areas of high unemployment, employers can be more selective and do not choose older/ low qualified/low-skilled workers. Older workers perceive that they will not be first choice	In areas of high unemployment, employers can be more selective and do not choose low qualified young workers often preferring better qualified slightly older people

Continued

Table 2.4 Continued

Barrier	Effect for older people	Effect for young people
Resource-related		
Health	Link between age and disability. Manual, low-skilled work in past is likely to lead to health problems for older workers. Inactivity can lead to poor mental health outcomes: isolation, social exclusion and stigma. Workplace adjustment seen as a 'cost' by employers	Inactivity can lead to poor mental health outcomes: isolation, social exclusion and stigma
Care and care responsibilities	Elder-care responsibilities – may require greater work hours flexibility	Young people from social care backgrounds face disadvantage due to lack of consistent home/parental support. Some young people have parental/elder care responsibilities – may require greater work hours flexibility
Structural barriers	No funding; loss of housing and/or council tax benefit; information gap	Loss of housing and/or council tax benefit; information gap

* Speaking English as an additional language

** English for speakers of other languages

Source: IES, 2005

Human capital barriers

As we have noted above, people with higher levels of qualification are more likely to be employed (LFS analysis May 2003). They are also more likely to engage with training – even if they are currently without work (see Chapter 3 and Newton *et al.* 2005). Gasteen and Houston (2005), in their survey of 225 employers for the Scottish Qualifications Authority, found that employers use qualifications as an indicator of the skills that they expect individuals to possess on recruitment. They identify however, that there are variations to employers' use of qualifications, by sector, organisational size and occupation, which reflect differing recruitment, employment, and training practices between those sectors. The authors argue that important among the qualifications sought by employers are basic and core skills, a finding that echoes the earlier findings of Atkinson and Williams, (2003). The theme of what employers want constitutes the topic of the third report in this 'age and training' series, which is to be published in autumn 2005.

However, in the context of this report it is also important to note that qualifications and in particular basic skills play an important role in gaining access to training and work. The NAO report, *Skills for Life: Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy* identified a series of quite basic issues which, nonetheless, can constitute quite fundamental barriers to learning. These included: needing to recognise that they are able to improve their skills; being able to find out what learning opportunities exist and what courses are being offered in places which learners are able to readily access; or being able to organise their lives to include regular times in which to learn new skills.

The NAO report also identified that, amongst those with basic skills needs, there is a tendency to make efforts to hide, rather than address, this skills deficit. Older people also may not realise quite how poor their skills are (in comparison with current standards and expectations), while some may have developed coping strategies to reduce the impact of their lack of basic skills on their everyday life.

Barriers are exacerbated by poor experiences of learning in school, particularly relevant to young people, whose experience is more recent. Indeed poor prior educational experience leads to disengagement from learning more generally. However, this is likely only partly to explain the high drop-out rates from government programmes that address basic skills needs (NAO, 2004).

Beyond basic skills, employers seek a range of skills for which qualifications may act as a proxy, but which may in fact more often be developed through work and informal learning. Recent research points to a difficulty in effectively developing these skills amongst unemployed and inactive people. The sorts of skill deficits that employers perceive amongst older unemployed and inactive people included problems with time keeping, under-developed communication skills and organisational skills (Atkinson and Williams, 2003; Gasteen and Houston, 2005).

These job-related skills deficits have the potential to cause difficulties in meeting job performance requirements. Atkinson and Williams, (2003) have observed that 'employers' expectations of the job-readiness of recruits through...programmes [eg New Deal] have generally been higher than that demonstrated by the cohort of recruits' while Gasteen and Houston (2005) have reported similar findings among Scottish employers.

Employment-related barriers

There are practical and structural barriers to training for many unemployed and inactive people. Depending on the age of the individual, salient factors may include: the availability (or otherwise) of flexible care provision, transport (and the cost of transport where it is available), the flexibility of the training provision and the availability or otherwise of funding. Flexible provision is seen as a key issue. One of the recommendations made in the NAO (2004) report was that '*more providers need to engage in creative development of flexible learning that people want.*' (NAO, 2004).

Similarly, Atkinson and Williams (2003) found that problems outside of work could constrain the ability to participate in work for certain groups. These factors included the availability of childcare and transport; their personal finances; housing difficulties; care responsibilities; and health issues.

A number of evaluations have pointed to the role of the personal adviser in helping individuals gain access to training and subsequently to remain in employment (eg Lakey *et al.* 2002; Dench *et al.* 2004). Where personal advisers have good knowledge of the local employment market and can convince clients of the benefits of focusing on their training and skills development needs, this can have a positive impact on the perceived value of training. The provision of an adviser who can remain working with a client during the first weeks of entry to work, is also perceived as a factor in maintaining employment in some groups (eg young people), (Lakey *et al.* 2001).

Resource barriers

Atkinson *et al.* (2003) found that substantial numbers of New Deal 50 Plus clients, when returning to work, reported the emergence of health issues such as stress or tiredness, particularly those who went into full-time, manual jobs. However, adjustments to task or hours could help them overcome these barriers.

In contrast to this, many respondents also reported positive health and well-being effects such as an increase in mental health, confidence and self-esteem arising from participating in work, and also, increased fitness and feelings of general well-being (Atkinson *et al.* 2003).

Other barriers in this category relate to the funding of training including uneasiness, amongst client groups, about how training participation might affect their state benefits, (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1999; TAEN, 2003). Providing guidance on

this issue through a personal adviser, however, can help remove this particular barrier.

Colleges are often aware of the restrictions on claimants, and provide courses to reduce negative effects on benefits, eg ensuring that courses run over no more than 15 hours per week. To put this in context we should note that for those on JSA, job-search is their main activity thus any training has to be genuinely part-time to ensure this remains the case. However, funding for learning participation in further education (eg level 2 or 3 qualifications; Modern Apprenticeships), particularly for older people, remains complex: for example, as we noted in Section 2.2 above, while access to level 2 qualifications has been widened to all those in the adult population, level 3 funding is currently available only to those under 30.

Unsurprisingly, young parents and lone parents value help with childcare, to allow them to access either training or work. As eldercare responsibilities increase with age, support such as flexible hours or other provision may become important for older adults as well (Thomas and Griffiths, 2004).

The action of multiple barriers to work

In their study of the recruitment, retention and progression of low-qualified, low-status employees, Atkinson and Williams (2003) report that those going into low-status jobs often face strong and multiple barriers to gaining, retaining and advancing in employment. Berthoud (2003) modelled the action of multiple barriers on employment outcomes, based on analysis of the LFS between 1992 and 2000, and again, found that the more disadvantages an individual faces, the more likely they are to be without work.

Berthoud's analysis was based on a series of factors: family structure, skill level, impairment, age, labour demand and ethnic group. While the impact of these factors was largely additive in predicting variations in their risk of worklessness, taking account of specific pairs or triplet combinations of risk factors gave a closer prediction of the observed patterns of worklessness. Overall, his work demonstrates the more barriers they face, the greater the hurdles to unemployed and inactive people's engagement in training and work.

In the next sections we look at how the different barriers interact for different groups within the unemployed and inactive communities. We begin by reviewing the evidence relating to the barriers experienced by older workers. We then turn to the experiences of younger workers. Finally we assess the experiences of disadvantaged groups in the unemployed and inactive community, namely, disabled people and lone parents.

2.4.2 Barriers experienced by older people

As we have noted, training participation is low amongst older people and the up-skilling of the older workforce has become a major economic concern. Given the increase in economic inactivity by age, some of which is explained by ill-health, we

may assume that older workless people face a number of barriers to work and training.

Beatty and Fothergill (2002) explored some of these issues in their study of the 'detached male workforce'¹³. They interviewed a thousand workless men aged between 50 and 64 and found that a very large number were marginalised in the older, industrialised areas of Northern England, Wales and Scotland. These are areas in which unemployment is high, creating strong competition for jobs. Some 40 per cent of the interviewees had no formal qualifications, and this, in addition to their employment histories, meant that for many their skills were outdated for the current labour economy.

Other analysis (DWP, 2002) points to the effects of the industrial restructuring in the 1980s and 1990s on regional labour markets, and suggests a shift to incapacity benefits as an outcome for many workers following redundancy and an extended period of unemployment. The authors also note a cross-generational effect where young people in these areas were more likely to make an incapacity benefits claim.

Perhaps unsurprisingly then, in Beatty and Fothergill's (2002) study, health was reported as a barrier, limiting the kinds of work that could be considered by approximately half of the interviewees. Many felt that they would need particular forms of support (eg training and work adaptation) if they were to return to work.

Employers' negative attitudes towards older men, and particularly those with health problems, were felt, by respondents in the research, to be a considerable barrier since employers were seen as gatekeepers to the in-work support required. In addition, Beatty and Fothergill suggest that '*older workers themselves may even resist labour market reattachment because they know that where there is strong competition for jobs they are unlikely to be employers' first choice*' (Beatty and Fothergill, *ibid*).

In their qualitative evaluation of the WBLA programme since 2001, Winterbotham *et al.* (2002)¹⁴, found two age-specific attitudinal barriers: that many of the over 50s tended to feel it was too late in life to learn basic skills (literacy and numeracy) especially if they had managed to survive without them until now; and they were more likely to feel that they did not need basic employability skills training since they had extensive work experience.

Our previous work identified a similar attitude to training amongst older workers: the evidence suggested that they exhibited either lowered confidence in their ability to learn, or over-confidence that they did not need any training.

¹³ Men aged 50-64, who are economically inactive or have been unemployed for most or all of the previous six months; part-time workers are also included as they are considered detached from conventional full-time employment

¹⁴ Conducted in three waves between July 2001 and May 2002. It involved interviews with Employment Service (ES) staff; employers who had been involved in WBLA; and training providers.

Similarly, in an evaluation of the New Deal 50 Plus, Atkinson *et al.* (2003) found that many older trainees were sceptical about the intrinsic value of training under the New Deal. Many older clients felt that they were over-skilled for the available jobs, and thus did not see the relevance of training. New Deal 50 Plus clients who were seeking jobs requiring medium or high level skills found the available training was too basic. It is also worth noting a study by McNair (2004) of job transition amongst older people. He found that they are least likely to seek out, or be offered, support for job transition, a confidence factor that is likely to be similar for workless, older people.

However, in those cases where skills were developed, those New Deal 50 Plus clients who did develop skills that employers valued, were less likely to drop out from the training and also appeared to gain more inherent satisfaction from working (Atkinson *et al.* 2003). However, Atkinson and his colleagues found that, once in work, respondents reported little subsequent training, and any that had been provided did not help the further development of skills or abilities. The lowest skilled, who entered unskilled, low-paid, and sometimes physically demanding jobs, were less likely to remain in employment.

Other studies point to the importance of soft skills development and the need to increase self-confidence in older clients. *Skills for Life* (NAO, 2004) examined the issue of low numeracy and literacy, and the launch of the 'Skills for Life' strategy. It was found that older clients participating in the New Deal felt reassured in dealing with an adviser drawn from their own age group. Evaluation of the WBLA soft skills training scheme for older people indicated that the outcomes of the programme were increased confidence and more positive feelings about the job search process (Winterbotham *et al.* 2001).

Both Moss and Arrowsmith (2003) and the NAO report (2004) found that older clients favoured work trials, work sampling, and work experience, because they felt these helped build their confidence to return to employment. They preferred shorter trials of three to five days and felt this enabled greater understanding of the needs of employers, and of their own skills and abilities.

2.4.3 Barriers experienced by young people

As might be expected, young people experience the same generic barriers to work and training as do older adults, however often there is an age dimension to, or different level of importance of, the various factors. For example, Hasluck (1998) found that 18 to 24 year olds are disadvantaged by relative lack of work experience and work-related skills compared to older people; however, rising qualifications levels more generally mean that young people without qualifications now face even greater barriers to employment.

In addition, Hasluck (*ibid*) concluded that employer demand for young people had contracted at a faster rate than their supply, and demand for low qualified 16 to 18 year olds had declined considerably as they faced competition in the job market from better qualified slightly older people, and growing numbers of women in the working population.

Employer attitudes, particularly regarding the length of time spent unemployed or frequency of unemployment, can be a barrier to younger people's employment. Both duration and frequency of unemployment are perceived as having negative implications for work motivation, but perhaps more importantly, employers feel that there is an implied deterioration of human capital (Hasluck, 1998).

Lakey *et al.* (2001), in their study¹⁵ explored the impact of multiple disadvantages on the employment and training activity amongst young workless people. The responses of two gender-balanced groups of multiply-disadvantaged young people interviewed as part of two ES surveys of those eligible for the NDYP were compared. The authors found that changes in the labour market were tending to reinforce and deepen existing patterns of disadvantage. Many of the young people considered financial issues to be a barrier to undertaking training. More specifically, they were concerned that accessing training and/or employment might result in further financial hardship through the loss of means tested benefits (eg housing and council tax benefit).

Those young people who had previously been in care were particularly in need of support in accessing training and finding work, as one of the barriers they face, compared with other young people, is lack of family support. Where such extra support had been provided, it had helped to alleviate intrinsic barriers such as lack of confidence.

A particular barrier for young mothers in the Lakey *et al.* (*ibid*) study is the inability to find suitable, good quality, childcare, especially if they had no family support. Dench *et al.*'s (2004), evaluation of Care to Learn, a government pilot which provided childcare support to enable young parents to remain in or return to education, confirms that quality was an issue when selecting childcare, and if appropriate childcare provision could not be found this acted as a barrier to remaining in, or returning to, learning. However, once young parents were confident their child was in good hands, they were more able to focus on their own education needs.

For young people with multiple barriers to work, Lakey *et al.* (2001) found that while some young people benefited from training in specific aspects of job hunting, such as interview technique, not all felt that they needed such training. In general there was enthusiasm for work trials and 'on the job' training, but some young people were disenchanted because previous trial periods had not resulted in the offer of work.

¹⁵ Based on in-depth interviews with 49 multiply disadvantaged young people, and workers in 20 organisations which provide support to these young people

It is important that both training and support to enable young people to access training are provided flexibly to meet individual needs. Otherwise the ways in which the training and support is provided can themselves constitute barriers. Lakey *et al.* (*ibid*) found that training providers identified that support had to be easily accessible through drop-ins and outreach, and that qualifying time periods to enter support programmes should be avoided. Supporting young people beyond the transition into work was also seen as important.

In helping young people engage with work and work placements, the authors found that the relationship with a personal adviser (supplied through government programmes or not-for-profit/voluntary sector organisations) was key. The young people valued a trusted adviser speaking to an employer on their behalf. Some advisers felt that they could help counter employer discrimination against the groups they worked with, and through this means, help reduce this barrier.

Similarly, the young parents in the Care to Learn study (Dench *et al.* 2004) also reported that without a range of practical advice and support they would not be in learning. This support often needed to be intensive and offered on a one-to-one basis with the young person; however, such provision could help keep the young parent motivated and prevent them dropping-out of education.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1999) reviewed the effectiveness of a range of voluntary/not-for-profit sector employment and training schemes for homeless young people in London. This provided some insight into the attitudes and needs of young unemployed (and homeless) clients. The schemes included vocational guidance, a training facility and a job club, as well as housing and resettlement support. The report found that training schemes tended to focus on basic transferable work skills.

Clients reported that the characteristics of courses which they found to be particularly helpful and relevant to their needs included: working on a one-to-one basis or in small groups; flexibility in subject matter; having a 'non-classroom' atmosphere as many clients found the classroom alienating, and the offering of taster sessions on vocational courses. However a concern amongst these young clients was how participation in training might affect their benefit entitlement, in keeping with the findings reported by Lakey *et al.* (2001).

2.4.4 Barriers experienced by disadvantaged groups

Disabled people

Burchardt's study (2000) examines the position of disabled people of working age in the UK labour market. It is based on analyses of Waves 1 to 7 of the British Household Panel Survey, the OPCS Survey of Disabled Adults in Private Households, the 1996-97 Family Resources Survey, Disability Follow-Up and Households Below Average Income dataset, and LFS for 1984 to 1996. She notes that:

'Many of the factors behind economic exclusion for disabled people – such as low educational qualifications – are common to other groups in society. Inclusion will not be achieved until both the impairment-specific and more general barriers to participation are dismantled.'

She considers definitions of disability and notes that, while broader definitions tend to make problems seem more widespread, they serve also to understate the barriers that are faced by individuals who are more severely impaired. Of the generic barriers discussed above in this chapter, Burchardt argues that a smaller proportion of the disabled face these and that the impairment-specific barriers, especially for those with mental health problems or with locomotion impairment, are more problematic. Establishing the balance between impairment-specific and other barriers is central to the support of disabled people into training and work.

Similarly the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1998) had reported that:

'Although many disabled people do need help to prepare for work...in identifying skills and aptitudes...there is an over-emphasis on this stage of the employment process' and that, '[e]mployment projects do not always offer what disabled people want or need: too great a focus on training and entering work rather than sustaining employment.'

The support identified by the people with disabilities who had participated in the Rowntree study included a need for negotiation with employers on workplace adjustment (physical environment and task adjustment), and more flexible patterns of work.

The *New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) First Synthesis Report* (2004) draws together the findings from early research with NDDP participants. There is some evidence that job brokers are viewed as a barrier to training by certain disabled groups because of their differential prioritisation of access to training and employment-support programmes for those considered most 'job ready'. However, set against this, nearly half of the respondents also reported that the job broker had helped them feel more confident about working.

Other barriers cited in this study related to the local labour market: insufficient job opportunities (63 per cent of respondents) and discrimination from employers on the grounds of their disability (47 per cent). Similar to the older age groups, this perception of the labour market is likely to act as a disincentive to engage with work and training. In terms of the achievements of NDDP, the authors found the programme helped to some extent with soft outcomes such as improving confidence and self-esteem.

Lone parents

Lakey *et al.* (2002) evaluated the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) In Work Training Grant pilot, implemented from June 2000 to May 2001. The pilot tested the extent to which the 'in work training grant' helped lone parents (re-)enter the labour market by enabling them to train in the skills needed by local employers. It is

important here to note that training is not a key focus of government provision for lone parents (shown in Table 2.2) and therefore only a subset of those participating in NDLP were represented by this study.

For their study of the in work training grant, Lakey *et al.* (*ibid*) conducted interviews with 72 lone parents drawn from a wide range of ages, and explored their attitudes to work and training. The study also involved in-depth interviews with New Deal personal advisers (NDPAs) in the 15 pilot districts to explore the reasons for low take up of the in work training grant.

All the lone parents interviewed had returned to work during the pilot, and most had maintained employment. The authors found that the children's age influenced employment and training aspirations. Parents with younger children were more likely to take employment for which they judged themselves over-qualified, but those with older children were more likely to want to retrain.

Lone parents in this study particularly favoured work trials with employers who were able to offer flexible working patterns, such as part-time hours during the school day, or term-time work only. Their experience of training had often been much more positive due to the greater time flexibility, and variable syllabus, offered by training providers. However, inflexibility on the part of the employer meant that lone parents found it hard to fit in their training with work and parental commitments. This was exacerbated for those on courses which required attendance during day-time working hours.

Anderson and Pires (2003) examined the attitudes of lone parents who had participated in the WBLA between January 2002 and April 2002, ie a sub-set of all New Deal registered lone parents. This voluntary programme was designed to help out-of-work adults, with poor employability skills, move into sustained employment. The study focused on those who were eligible for the NDLP and claiming Income Support (IS), who had taken part in some element of the training provision ie short job-focused training, basic employment training or longer occupational training. The interviews took place after lone parents had undertaken training, to ascertain their attitudes to the usefulness of the training in helping them find work.

Overall, the interviews revealed that participants found the training useful in helping them find work, particularly if it had led to a qualification. The most frequently cited reason for this was increased self-confidence.

More recently, Thomas & Griffiths (2004) have evaluated the first 18 months of mandatory lone parent WFIs. This intervention aims to help lone parents move off benefits and into work. The study, based on qualitative interviews with both Jobcentre Plus staff and lone parent participants, along with a longitudinal survey of participating lone parents, found that respondents cited a wide variety of barriers to training and employment, including: having additional caring responsibilities (eg a disabled child, or elderly relatives), personal health problems or disabilities, and literacy and numeracy problems.

The authors found that the likelihood of customers discussing training at the WFI depended partly on the extent of the personal adviser's knowledge about local job opportunities and, based on this, where training could best be focused to enhance employability. The majority of training undertaken as a result of the WFI was in the area of IT and basic skills; although a small number of participants had undertaken unpaid work placements in the voluntary sector. The authors found evidence to suggest that work placements were found to be highly likely to lead to paid employment.

John *et al.* (2001) report the evaluation of a voluntary/not-for-profit pilot scheme at the Span Study Centre (SSC) in Bristol, also designed to provide support and training for lone parents. The study involved 151 lone parents taking part in the scheme, 97 per cent of whom were women, with an average age of 34. The scheme aimed to appeal to a cross section of lone parents in a multi-racial, disadvantaged area of the city. In keeping with the previous reports, respondents reported that the main benefits of the pilot were increased self-confidence, but also commented favourably on the social opportunities afforded by the training, and the value of receiving good careers advice.

However, in contrast to the other schemes, very few of these lone parents moved into work or further training as a consequence of taking part in the SSC pilot, despite the scheme appearing to provide the same perceived benefits as others reviewed above. This can be explained by the focus of the scheme, which allowed lone parents to explore a full range of options, including making a positive decision to put off work until their children were older, or choosing to retrain at a later date. Most parents in the study were fairly ambitious, wanting to retrain for professional roles. However, the costs of childcare were seen as a major barrier, and many respondents chose to defer retraining, often undertaking less skilled work in the meantime to fit in with childcare responsibilities.

2.4.5 Employer attitudes

A previous IES report (Newton *et al.* 2005) explored employer attitudes to the training of older workers and found that some were unwilling to train older workers because they viewed older workers as unable to learn and not adaptable to change. However, we found little hard evidence to support these employer assumptions regarding these performance and motivational characteristics.

Indeed, with regard to performance, Meadows (2002) noted that, except in a very limited range of jobs, work performance does not deteriorate with age, at least up to the age of 70. Furthermore, she concluded that the positive effects on performance of experience, interpersonal skills, and motivation generally offset the adverse effects of loss of speed, strength and memory. She also noted that older workers have the same ability as their younger counterparts to learn new skills, although they may need additional support mechanisms, or different training delivery processes to enable them to do this.

We reported evidence in our report about employees and training, that the NAO report (2004) suggests that most skills have a three to five year shelf-life, which Meadows (2003) identifies has decreased from seven to eight years. Based on this, we concluded that it is worth investing in training anyone who will stay with the organisation for at least that long. Given that a worker aged 50 may work for a further 15 years or more, and is less likely to change employer in that time (Meadows, 2003), the argument of lowered return on training investment must be discounted. Similarly, if a younger worker can see progression pathways in their organisation they may wish to develop their career with the company rather than move on.

In the third report for this series¹⁶, we move on to address this issue of the skills that employers seek on recruitment, and consider what influences their attitudes to in-work training and work progression. However, it is useful within the bounds of this report, to provide a summary of the findings from the documents reviewed for this report where these can provide some insight into employers' attitudes towards the training of unemployed and inactive clients. This encompasses government and voluntary sector provision as well as training for progression in the workplace.

However, as Anderson & Pires (2003) note, there is a paucity of evidence concerning employers' views of the various government training schemes. When discussing the outcomes from training (in terms of employment) on the WBLA scheme, the authors found that 'the desirability of the qualifications gained (or the levels of skills attained) from the employers' perspective is unknown'.

McNair (2005) has evaluated much of the literature about older people and employment issues and makes a similar point. However, he notes also that there is a need for research into employers' attitudes towards the recruitment and training of the over 50s:

'Policy-making needs to be better informed about how the older labour market works: about motivation of older workers, and of employers, about the behaviour of both, and the training and educational issues which may arise. This is a relatively unexplored territory...'

Winterbotham *et al.* (2001) in their evaluation of the WBLA scheme found that few of the employers interviewed had any awareness of the WBLA programme. Where employers had been directly involved, their views about the efficacy of WBLA were influenced by the quality of applicants they had employed through the programme. Employers looked first of all for employability skills such as good motivation and a positive attitude, rather than technical competency. The authors suggest that while employers may be willing later on to train their recruits in the hard/technical skills, at entry they expect recruits to possess good levels of employability skills.

¹⁶ To be published in autumn 2005

Johnson and Burden (2003) report similar findings in their study of young people and employability for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. This work built on the Bradford youth cohort study, undertaken by the Policy Research Institute (2002). The Johnson and Burden study collected data about the experiences, aspirations, and qualifications of a group of 3,000 young people in year 11 at school, with an aim of examining the transition between school and work. In addition to the quantitative evaluation, the study also undertook qualitative interviews with 30 young people who had recently started work; and 39 interviews were conducted with employers in the Bradford area between June and October 2001, to gain their views about the recruitment and induction process of young people.

These employer interviews revealed that the skills employers looked for can largely be described as soft skills, such as the ability to communicate, a mature attitude, smart appearance, motivation, willingness to learn, and enthusiasm. This employer attitude was consistent across most sectors and occupation groups.

Winterbotham *et al.* (2001) looked specifically at the role of work placements in WBLA. Work placements in WBLA usually last for six weeks. They found that there were essentially two types of employer willing to take people on work placements: those who did so out of a sense of altruism (mainly employers in the voluntary or public sector); and those who did so for more commercial reasons – for example, the work placement enabled them to ‘screen’ the applicant and incur less risk in the recruitment procedure. Overall, employers in the study felt that work placements had been a success and that they would be happy to recruit in this way in the future.

Although not directly related to the attitudes of employers to training *per se*, this is an important point. Moss and Arrowsmith (2003) found that employers’ perceptions about potential job applicants (or trainees) were influenced by how long the client had been unemployed. Their evidence demonstrates that some employers view long-term unemployment as synonymous with unemployable, and that they question the key employability competencies of these applicants. They found this was especially the case in areas of high employment.

2.4.6 Training provider and Jobcentre staff attitudes

The Winterbotham *et al.* (2002) study of the WBLA found that Jobcentre Plus staff and training providers felt that the success of the scheme depended on their knowledge of the local labour market, for example, knowing when employers plan to recruit and what skills are important in the local job market. Established knowledge and ongoing links with local employers helped to develop this understanding, and encourage the provision and uptake of work trials.

This mirrors the findings of other authors reported above, regarding the value placed by clients on having a knowledgeable adviser to guide them through training and into employment. Winterbotham *et al.* (*ibid*) argue this demonstrates the need to match training with local labour market need, to prevent people becoming involved in training just for training’s sake. The organisations involved in this study

also pointed to the need for clear purpose in the training provided to unemployed and inactive people, to ensure not only the best chance in the local economy, but to motivate the individual to fully participate in training.

In one geographic area, Winterbotham *et al.* (*ibid*) found that ES staff and training providers were working with large, regional employers to establish training courses tailored towards their needs. One short, job-focused training scheme comprised a two week work experience, similar to an induction process and which ran during shift hours, to get potential employees used to the time-keeping routine. The authors found tensions between training providers and ES staff's perceptions of the extent to which clients were ready to enter jobs. This echoes the tensions found by Anderson and Williams (2003) between employer and Jobcentre Plus staff perceptions of job-readiness.

Training providers who ran the short, job-focused training felt that clients were not job ready and so not in a position to benefit from the course, whereas the ES had referred these clients to the scheme on the basis of being job-ready. ES staff felt pressurised under the system: firstly, to categorise claimants as 'job-ready' or not; and secondly, based on this criteria and not their wider understanding of claimants' needs, refer them to the prescribed training programmes. In a separate study, Winterbotham *et al.* (*ibid*) also found advisers were frustrated because they were not able to offer training to people who were keen to undertake it, as they did not meet all of the criteria for entry.

The extent to which current training provision meets the needs of the more highly skilled was raised as an issue by Jobcentre Plus staff in Atkinson's study (2001). The New Deal advisers felt that they were unable to offer appropriate training to those seeking more senior positions.

2.5 Summary

This review of evidence set out to examine and clarify the barriers and attitudes to training (and work, where there is overlap) for the range of people who are currently unemployed and inactive. It is clear that, broadly, the same range of barriers affect each group in the unemployed and inactive community; however the strength and impact of these barriers varies between groups. Within groups, the evidence suggests that individualised approaches, such as the provision of a personal adviser to assess the individual's training and employment support needs, are particularly valued by client groups.

In general, the barriers to training and work can be categorised into three groups:

- human capital barriers;
- work-related barriers;
- resource-related barriers.

In the UK, the evidence suggests that those with low or no qualifications face the highest risks of unemployment and inactivity (Labour Market Trends, 2003). Thus, addressing basic skills needs begins the process of enabling (re-)entry to work.

However, one of the greatest difficulties in doing this is overcoming participants' reluctance: older adults may feel they have survived without these skills, or indeed have hidden this difficulty until now, and hence see no value in starting to learn now. They may also feel, perhaps with some justification, that they are not viewed positively by employers.

Young adults may have negative conceptions of themselves due to their failure to gain qualifications to date. Since employers use qualifications as a proxy for skills in younger recruits, they similarly may face being the employers' choice of last resort.

Employers seek a range of work-specific skills and qualifications on recruitment which vary, with the type and level of job; however, some skills, such as communication, problem-solving and motivation are required for the majority of positions and seen as a key concern for training and support interventions. These kinds of skills also may be seen as an indicator of job-readiness, although the evidence suggests that there is a tension in the perception of how far people are ready for work, amongst training providers, Jobcentre Plus staff and employers. Where clients are wrongly assessed as being job-ready this can lead to poor outcomes for participants in training and at recruitment.

The barriers categorised as work-related tend to focus on employer perceptions and local labour market conditions. The duration or frequency of unemployment particularly may be taken as an indicator of 'distance' from the labour market. This idea of 'distance' also relates to people's conceptualisation of their own skills and abilities, in that the potential recruit may have little idea of the extent to which their skills lack currency within the local labour market. The provision of work trials and placements can help in overcoming these barriers, providing evidence of recent work experience as well as enabling the participant to better understand the needs of the workplace.

The resource-related category includes barriers such as a lack of flexibility in work conditions such as task or workplace adjustment. Care responsibilities, whether child- or eldercare can lead to individuals requiring greater flexibility in working hours and patterns. There is evidence that more of the training for these groups is provided flexibly now; on transition to the workplace, however, some employers can be reluctant to make adjustments to working time arrangements to fit individuals' needs, so that the effect of this barrier (lack of flexibility) is greatest at this point.

Amongst people with disabilities, there are indications that the training provided does not focus sufficiently on impairment-specific barriers. In addition, the evidence suggests that disabled people may be psychologically closer to the labour market, and it is primarily their health condition that is the major barrier. For these individuals

there is a need for greater support to help negotiate with local employers rather than to address a personal skills deficit.

There are funding and perceived financial disincentives to accessing training for many groups. For instance, young people were concerned about the potential impact of participation in training on state benefits; however, provision of information and guidance from a personal adviser could help overcome this. Beyond Jobcentre Plus provision, obtaining funding to participate in further education can be problematic for some sectors of the community, with age limits in place for certain funding regimes for example, adult learning grants funding is available for level 3 qualifications only for those under the age of 30, although funding is available for level 2 qualifications for all adults.

Amongst all groups in the unemployed and inactive community, there was a tendency to favour contact with a personal adviser to guide them through the training and employment process, and specifically to deal with the barriers they experienced and/or perceived. The role of the adviser was felt to work best when the support remained in place throughout the transition to work.

Authors agree that the extent to which employers view the training provision as adequate work preparation for unemployed and inactive people is an under explored area. We will return to this issue in our third report for this Age and Training series.

3 Trends in training

In this chapter we explore the current evidence base for training participation amongst unemployed and inactive people of different ages. Our findings are based on a secondary data analysis using two major sources: the Labour Force Survey (LFS) (spring 2004) and the National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) (2002) and the analysis focuses on the relationship between age, training and factors affecting participation including work history, disability and qualifications.

3.1 Data sets and chapter structure

LFS is an UK-wide quarterly survey of 60,000 households (130,000 individuals). As well as offering a general demographic overview of the population, the survey also collects information on economic activity and the conditions of employment. For the purposes of this study, the LFS is able to provide us with some insight into the prevalence of training amongst people who currently are unemployed or inactive. We also review the extent to which the receipt of training is determined by age and, within age groups, by other characteristics. The LFS dataset for spring 2004 was used to provide comparable data to our previous report.

The LFS dataset shows the individuals' economic status classified at the point of survey. Those categories that are considered relevant to this study were those defined by LFS as:

- registered on 'government employment and training programmes';
- International Labour Organisation (ILO)-unemployed: people who have not worked more than one hour during the short reference period (of the survey) but who are available for and actively seeking work;
- economically inactive who are sick, injured or disabled, who may or may not be seeking work;
- economically inactive who are seeking work;
- 'other inactive', incorporating those who are economically inactive, not seeking work and not sick, injured or disabled.

Given the focus of the research, we have not included in the analysis those who are considered as being 'in work', specifically those in the 'employee', 'self-employed' and 'unpaid family worker' categories. Of LFS economically inactive groups, we did not include retired people since it is not possible to distinguish between those who have retired intentionally and those who retired on the basis of other considerations such as health. Full-time students were also excluded, as education was considered to be their prime occupation.

Any LFS cell sizes below 10,000 are judged by analysts to be unreliable since they are likely to be based on no more than 30 respondents to the survey. Where cell sizes in the analysis are below this acceptable threshold, cells have been marked with an asterisk.

The exclusions listed above, in the context of high levels of employment generally in the UK, have meant that it has not been possible to provide a very detailed analysis by age. For young people the data is sufficient to support an analysis of those aged between 16 and 24. Beyond this age group, the data is sufficient only to report in 20 year age groups.

The final part of this chapter uses the NALS (2002) to look at future intentions for work and other learning participation. NALS (2002) interviewed a representative sample of adults in England and Wales (ie from age 16 but with no upper age limit). The survey collected information about respondents' involvement in both taught learning and self-directed learning. They were also asked if they had undertaken either type of learning in the past three years, or since leaving continuous full-time education. With regard to economic status, NALS asks respondents to classify themselves as employed, unemployed, inactive *etc*. It is this classification that has been used to provide the analysis on future learning intentions amongst unemployed and inactive people.

We begin our analysis with an overview of unemployment and inactivity in the UK, by age. We then explore participation in training amongst the current unemployed and inactive community using the analysis of LFS.

Section 3.3 focuses on the factors that affect participation or non-participation in training and how these vary with age. This is based upon bivariate analysis and aims to establish whether there are differences in the relationship between training activity and age.

In Section 3.4 we explore the factors that significantly influence likelihood of training, once other individual factors have been taken into account, using multivariate analysis. In Section 3.5 we turn our attention to future learning intentions using an analysis of NALS. Section 3.6, presents a summary of our key findings from the data analysis. We begin our analysis with an overview of current worklessness and training in the UK.

3.2 Overview of unemployment and inactivity and training

In 2004, nearly 7.5 million adults were without work in the UK (Figure 2.2, Chapter 2). Overall, one in five was either ILO-unemployed or undertaking government employment and training; however as workless people age, they are much less likely to be in either of these groups.

Of those on government employment and training programmes, two-thirds are in the 16 to 24 age band, and participation in these schemes sharply declines beyond this age.

The proportion of people who are inactive rather than unemployed increases with age, particularly the numbers who are inactive and not seeking work, or who are health impaired. This decline in job-seeking activity is strongest beyond the age of 40.

3.2.1 Education or training in the past three months

Table 3.1 highlights the relationship between age, and work-related education and training. The youngest unemployed and inactive people, aged between 16 and 24, reported the most training activity, with 45 per cent having undertaken some training in the past three months.

Table 3.1 Training in past 13 weeks, by age and unemployment/inactivity status (row percentages)

	16-24	25-44	45-64
Government employment and training programme	72	17	*
ILO-unemployed	46	38	15
Inactive: sick, injured or disabled and Inactive: seeking work	17	44	39
Other inactive	37	43	20
Total	45	36	19
<i>Base: age group</i>	<i>197,801</i>	<i>155,477</i>	<i>81,920</i>

* Cell count below 10,000

Source: LFS, spring 2004

Between the ages of 25 and 44, training participation decreases to around one-third of the unemployed and inactive population. However, between the age of 45 and 64 that level of engagement reduces to around one-fifth of adults participating in any work-related training.

Of people on government employment and training programmes, young people reported high levels of training, with close to three-quarters having recently trained. This rate of participation declines sharply beyond the age of 25 with under one-fifth in the 25 to 44 age group undertaking training. Beyond the age of 45, the cell counts

are too low to provide an analysis although the data suggests that only around one in ten are likely to be involved in training. This finding may well reflect the low numbers of older adults required to undertake mandatory training under government provision.

Amongst the ILO-unemployed, the pattern of training follows the overall age and training trend, with a drop of eight per cent in participation beyond the age of 25, and more than a 50 per cent decline on this rate for those aged over 44.

Due to small cell counts, we have grouped those inactive people who are seeking work, with those who have health impairments who may or may not be seeking work. The findings here suggest a different pattern from the overall age trend. In this group, the older age groups reported more training than the young (around four in ten of people aged over 25). This may reflect access to the non-mandatory provision through, for instance, New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) although the small numbers of younger people in this group should also be noted.

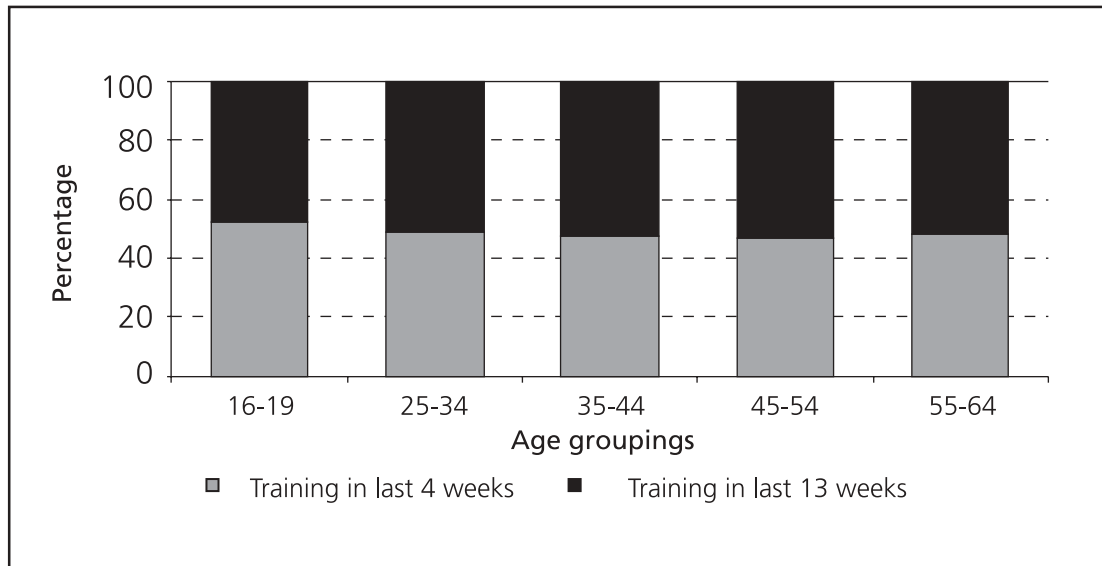
Those in the category 'other inactive', ie who are economically inactive, not seeking work and not sick, injured or disabled, also have a pattern of training that varies from the overall trend, although in this case less strongly. For this group, around four in ten adults participate in training up to the age of 44, although notably the rate of training participation increases by six per cent for those aged between 25 and 44 when compared to the youngest age group. For older inactive adults in this category, training participation halves, however it remains at a rate that is five per cent higher than their equivalent in the 'unemployed' category.

3.2.2 How recently training had been received

As well as asking about work-related education and training in the past three months, LFS focuses on the period of the previous four weeks. Figure 3.1 shows how much of the training received in the past three months had taken place in the past four weeks.

The figure shows that, similar to the findings relating to training amongst employed individuals, with unemployed and inactive individuals, the younger the age group, the greater the proportion of people who report receiving training recently, relative to the longer term. Overall, however, older unemployed and inactive people report more recent training than their working colleagues which may reflect to some degree mandatory participation in programmes which include training after 18 months of unemployment eg New Deal 25 Plus.

Figure 3.1 When training was received (past four weeks to 13 weeks)



3.2.3 Duration of training

Overall, around two-thirds of those included in this analysis were undertaking training that lasted over one year. However, people aged over 45 are slightly less likely (four per cent) to report short duration training than those who are aged under 25. Short duration training is most prevalent for unemployed and inactive adults aged between 25 and 44 with close to half engaged in such forms of training.

The provisions and aims of the New Deal and other programmes may have some influence here, with older client groups benefiting from different kinds of training, eg short, job-focused training rather than longer term skills development to support (re-) entry to employment.

Training that lasts between six and 12 months, was reported by just over one in ten adults. The decline in participation beyond the age of 45 appears sharp, and it is worth noting that the estimate is that less than 6,000 respondents (representing around 15 people in this LFS sample) were in this category. Again, participation rates are higher than the age trend for those aged between 25 and 44, although there is virtually no difference in the rate of this change by age between short and mid duration training, at around 15 per cent. Again, this is likely to reflect mandatory participation in government programmes.

Table 3.2 Duration of training, by age, unemployed and inactive people (row percentages)

	16-24	25-44	45-64	Column Total
Less than six months	29	46	25	21
Six months but less than one year	35	49	*	13
One year or more	58	27	15	66
Total	49	34	17	–
<i>Base: age group</i>	<i>137,533</i>	<i>95,026</i>	<i>48,714</i>	<i>281,273</i>

* Cell count below 10,000

Source: LFS, spring 2004

3.3 Training by age and other factors

The analysis of the evidence from LFS suggests that older workless people are less likely to participate in education and training. It is important, however, to understand the extent to which this lower rate of participation is the result of age or other factors that are associated with age.

For example, the duration of unemployment can determine access to some of the New Deal training programmes (eg, New Deal for Young People (NDYP), New Deal 25 Plus, New Deal 50 Plus) so this is likely to explain training rates more than age in the unemployed community.

Similarly, although we have observed that older people generally receive less training, we have treated them as a homogenous group. In the next sections, we review whether there are differences in the relationship between recent training activity and age, once other individual and situational factors are considered.

3.3.1 Gender

In contrast with the findings for training amongst employees, the gender and age pattern is not clear (Table 3.3). In the youngest age group, nine per cent more of the young men than the young women reported recently undertaking some work-related training. However, amongst people aged between 25 and 44, seven per cent more women reported that they had recently participated in training than men did. While training participation overall declines sharply after the age of 45 both for men and for women, at this age it appears that women are slightly more likely to report training (two per cent more women than men).

Table 3.3 Training in past 13 weeks, by gender and age, unemployed and inactive people (row percentages)

	16-24	25-44	45-64
Male	50	32	18
Female	41	39	20
Total	45	36	19
<i>Base: age group</i>	<i>197,801</i>	<i>155,477</i>	<i>81,920</i>

Source: LFS, spring 2004

3.3.2 Ethnicity

Table 3.4 shows the distribution of recent participation in training by age and whether respondents are white or belong to another ethnic group (due to lack of data to support a finer analysis by the different ethnic groups in the population).

Table 3.4 Ethnicity, age and training, unemployed and inactive (row percentages)

	16-24	25-44	45-64
White	47	32	21
Ethnic minority and black	41	52	*
Total	45	36	19
<i>Base: age group</i>	<i>197,801</i>	<i>155,477</i>	<i>81,920</i>

* Cell count below 10,000

Source: LFS, spring 2004

The data shows that for those in the youngest age group, the rate of reported training amongst people from white backgrounds is six per cent higher than for those from ethnic minority and black backgrounds.

For adults aged between 25 and 44 this pattern changes direction. There is a 15 per cent decline in training participation amongst white people however, those from ethnic minority and black backgrounds, buck the age trend: there is an increase in participation of 11 per cent, when compared to ethnic minority and black adults in the younger age group. In addition, for the 25 to 44 age group, those adults from ethnic minority and black backgrounds are also 20 per cent more likely to have reported training than their white counterparts.

Beyond the age of 44, there are too few adults from ethnic minority and black backgrounds to provide a reliable analysis. However the data suggests that the rate is likely to be less than ten per cent, indicating a sharper decline in training than for older adults from white backgrounds. We return to ethnicity in Section 3.4.4, where we explore the factors that significantly impact on likelihood of training.

3.3.3 Highest qualification

Amongst employees, within each age group, those who were more highly qualified reported higher rates of recent training participation. We would not expect this pattern necessarily to be mirrored amongst unemployed and inactive people since, as we have previously identified in our review, those with higher levels of qualification are more likely to be in employment, and if they are not, they have higher level training needs for which there may not be sufficient provision under government programmes.

Overall, and ignoring age, those with 'other' qualifications were most likely to report training (30 per cent), followed by those with GCSEs or no qualifications (21 per cent). Around one in ten of those engaged in training was qualified to degree or equivalent and higher education, although people with A levels appear less likely to report training (six per cent). However the data indicates some differences depending on the age of the unemployed and inactive person.

Table 3.5 Training in the past 13 weeks, by highest qualification and age, all unemployed and inactive (row percentages)

	16-24	25-44	45-64	<i>Total Column %</i>
Degree or equivalent and higher education	17	48	35	11
GCE A level or equivalent	48	33	19	6
GCSE grades A-C or equivalent	63	23	14	21
Other qualifications	45	43	12	30
No qualification	38	43	*	21
Total	45	36	19	–
<i>Base: age group</i>	<i>196,150</i>	<i>154,544</i>	<i>80,467</i>	<i>431,161</i>

* Cell count below 10,000

Source: LFS, spring 2004

For the 16 to 24 age group, close to half of those with either GCE A levels, or 'other' qualifications, and nearer to two-thirds of those with GCSEs, were recently involved in training. However the rate is closer to one-third for those without qualifications, and less than one-fifth for those with a degree or higher education.

Amongst adults aged between 25 and 44, close to one-half with a degree or higher education reported recent training. Four in ten of those with other or no qualifications in this age group reported training. The rate was lowest for those with GCSEs.

For those in the oldest age band, one-third with a degree or higher education had been engaged in training. One-fifth of those with GCE A levels reported training, although the rates of training participation for those with GCSEs and equivalent qualifications, and other qualifications are between 10 and 15 per cent. Notably there are too few adults of this age without qualifications who also report training to provide an analysis.

Looking across qualifications, as might be expected, those with degrees or higher education present a different pattern from the overall age trend. The rate of training is close to three times higher for mid-age adults when compared to young people and double for the oldest group when compared to the youngest. This may present greater learning orientation amongst these adults, or greater awareness of the need to keep skills up-to-date.

The sharpest decline in training by age is amongst those with GCSEs or equivalent and most notably between the youngest and mid-years age categories. The decline is less steep between the ages of 16 and 44 for those with A levels, other or no qualifications, however beyond the age of 45, the training rate drops considerably. We return to the impact of qualifications on training likelihood in the multivariate analysis reported in Section 3.4.

3.3.4 Time spent seeking work

People who reported they were seeking work, ie some inactive groups as well as ILO-unemployed and those on government employment/training programmes, were asked in the survey about how long they had been seeking work. An analysis of training participation by time spent seeking work is shown in Table 3.6. We should note here that cell counts are too low to provide an analysis matched to qualifying periods of unemployment for the New Deal programmes (eg six months for the youngest adults, 18 months for those aged between 25 and 49, and voluntary access to the New Deal 50 Plus following six months of seeking work).

Table 3.6 Length of time seeking work and training participation by age, unemployed and inactive (row percentages)

	16-24	25-44	45-64
Up to six months	55	34	11
Over six months	33	43	24
Total	47	37	16
<i>Base: age groups</i>	<i>105,586</i>	<i>82,850</i>	<i>36,130</i>

Source: LFS, spring 2004

As we have noted, younger workless people are more likely to report participating in training than are their older counterparts and the table shows that these individuals form over half of those receiving training in the first six months of seeking work, and around one-third of those seeking work for longer than six months. This finding may be partly explained by the New Deal provision for this group becoming mandatory after six months of unemployment.

For those aged between 25 and 44, training participation is nine per cent higher for those unemployed beyond six months, however access to mandatory training under the New Deal for those aged between 25 and 49 follows 18 months of seeking work which is likely to explain this finding. Similarly, there is a much greater

prevalence of training after six months of job seeking for adults aged over 45. The difference here is 13 per cent. Compared to the youngest age group, the population estimates are suggestive of a much higher proportion of older adults seeking work beyond 18 months, but still reporting training.

3.3.5 Regional perspective

Table 3.7 provides the regional context of training. Overall, the decline of training participation by age remains the key issue, however, some regional differences are indicated. To enable this regional analysis given low cell counts, we have grouped regions based on recommendations by the Office of National Statistics.

In London, just under one-fifth of workless people report receiving recent training (training received in the past 13 weeks), and, more widely, the rate in the South is similar. In the Eastern region, and in Wales and Scotland, the overall rate is lower than one in ten. In the Northern parts of England, there is a slightly greater prevalence of training (just over one in ten adults report training overall). In the Midlands the overall rate of training amongst people without work is 16 per cent.

Table 3.7 Training by age and UK region, unemployed and inactive (row percentages)

<i>region</i>	16-24	25-44	45-64	<i>All in</i>
North East and Yorkshire & Humberside	55	27	*	12
North West and Merseyside	54	31	*	10
East and West Midlands	39	44	17	16
Eastern	51	*	*	8
London	33	45	22	19
South East and South West	47	37	15	21
Wales	53	*	*	6
Scotland	44	35	*	9
Total	45	36	19	-
<i>Base: age group</i>	<i>190,026</i>	<i>152,505</i>	<i>79,007</i>	<i>421,538</i>

* Cell count below 10,000

Source: LFS, spring 2004

However, in London, just one-third of young adults report receiving training, which is low when compared with other regions, although young people in the Midlands are also less likely than those in other regions to be involved in training. The areas in which training participation is high for this age group are the North East, and Yorkshire and Humberside, and the North East and Merseyside.

Where training participation rates are low amongst young people (ie London and the Midlands), there appears to be a greater likelihood of training amongst those in the 25 to 44 age band. It is difficult to assess the situation for older adults across

regions since, in so many cases, cell counts are too low to allow reliable reporting. However, this may in itself suggest in these regions particularly low levels of training amongst older workless adults as we know from the evidence presented in the literature review, this population has a high concentration in Northern England, Wales and Scotland (Beatty and Fothergill, 2002).

3.3.6 Health/disability

As we have noted, disability can act as a barrier to work and partly underpinning this are employers' views of work adjustments (eg adaptations to the physical environment or tasks, or flexibility regarding working hours (Thomas and Griffiths, 2004)). Our analyses, however, suggest that people beyond the age of 25 who have a disability that affects the amount of work they can consider are more likely to report training than are those without these health limitations, except in the youngest age group (Table 3.8).

While low cell counts meant a reliable analysis was not possible, the data was also suggestive of greater training prevalence amongst those whose disability affected the kind of work that could be considered. The population estimates suggest that more people involved in training believe their disability affects the kind of work they consider, rather than the amount. This finding largely accounts for the low cell counts available to this analysis.

Overall, this pattern may suggest that, aside from barriers relating to their impairment (including employer attitudes), individuals with disabilities themselves have fewer self-erected barriers to job-related training than other unemployed or inactive individuals, and, it might be assumed, to work.

However the low numbers of respondents without such disabilities must also be noted and that respondents to these questions form just one-tenth of the unemployed and inactive community.

Table 3.8 Training by age, amongst unemployed and inactive people for whom health affects *the amount* of work they can do (row percentages)

	16-24	25-44	45-64
Health affects the amount of work that can be considered	16	46	38
Health does not affect the amount of work that can be considered	49	29	22
Total	30	38	31
<i>Base: age groups</i>	40,562	51,889	42,460

Source: LFS, spring 2004

3.4 The factors that impact on training participation

As we have seen, understanding the extent to which age or other factors affect training participation is complex, with few clear trends. Using binary logistic regression, we can measure the significance and the size of impact of a number of single variables while controlling for others.

We have conducted three regression analyses, the results for which are presented in Appendix B. Each is a binary logistic regression with a dependent variable of whether or not respondents had received training in the past thirteen weeks. The first regression (Table B.1) gives an overall picture of the effect of age (grouped into ten-yearly intervals) on the likelihood of receiving training whilst controlling for other significant factors.

The second regression (Table B.2) gives a more detailed analysis (using five-yearly intervals) of the likelihood of receiving training for the people aged between 45 and 54. This gives us an indication of any significant changes that occur around the age of 50, when the New Deal 50 Plus increases people's opportunities to access training, although as we noted earlier, entry to this programme is optional.

The third regression (Table B.3) shows the impact of age whilst controlling for whether respondents have recently attained their highest qualification. This enables us to determine whether the relationship between age and training is (partially) indirect, mediated by whether respondents have recently attained their highest qualification.

3.4.1 Overview of age

In regression one (Table B.1) the relative probabilities (Rel. p) demonstrate that, compared to someone in the 35 to 44 age group, and other factors in the equation being equal, the probability of having received training in the past three months is:

- 75 per cent higher for those aged 16 to 24;
- 33 per cent lower for those aged 45 to 54;
- 58 per cent lower for someone aged 55 to 59;
- 77 per cent lower for someone aged 60 to 64.

Controlling for other factors, there is no significant difference between the age groups 25 to 34 and the reference group, those aged 35 to 44.

This confirms the general picture provided in Figure 2.2 above, which shows that the largest drops in participation in training occur after the age groups 16 to 19 and 20 to 25, and that the smallest differences occur across the middle age groups, covering those aged 30 to 44.

3.4.2 The age group 45 to 54

As mentioned above, the New Deal 50 Plus increases people's opportunities to access training from the age of 50. It is thus pertinent to look at the differences that occur around the age of 50 in the uptake of training. Regression 1 is limited in this respect, as the age categories are ten-yearly and include the ages 45 to 54 as a single category. We thus conducted a second regression (Table B.2) which applies five-year age bands to the sub-group of those aged 45 to 54.

The results show that, other factors in the equation being equal, the relative probability of those aged 50 to 54 having received training in the past 13 weeks is 34 per cent less than for those aged 45 to 49. We can thus infer that there is a substantial drop in the likelihood of people out of work receiving training after the age of 50 (the odds of receiving training at this age are approximately one-third lower). Under New Deal 50 plus clients may have access to work based learning for adults (WBLA) at six months otherwise there is no training element as such (see Table 2.2 in Chapter 2).

3.4.3 How recently the highest qualification was attained

It might be considered reasonable to expect that those who are more recently out of education are more likely to receive training, since they feel more engaged with learning and are more likely to take up further training, ie recent learning as a predictor of current or future learning.

Another consideration is the entry to NDYP following six months of unemployment, a considerably shorter qualification period than for other age groups. This may help to explain why those aged 16 to 25 are so much more likely to have received training, as they are far more likely to have left education in the recent past (see Table 3.9).

Table 3.9 Highest qualification gained between one and two years ago

		Recent highest qualification (1-2 years)		Base
		Yes (%)	No (%)	
Age	16-24	53.5	46.5	5,296,177
	25-34	7.2	92.8	6,874,976
	35-44	5.7	94.3	7,724,555
	45-54	4.8	95.2	5,949,893
	55-59	3.9	96.1	2,696,718
	60-64	2.6	97.4	1,271,326
	65+	2.0	98.0	338,037
Total		13.9	86.1	30,151,682

Source: LFS, spring 2004

We can test these ideas by including in our regression analysis an independent variable of whether respondents have recently attained their highest qualification. LFS captures the date of the highest qualification, which we recoded into a binary variable, defining 'recent' as being between one or two years ago¹⁷. By controlling for this variable, we can determine whether the impact of age on training shown in regression one can be explained by when respondents left education.

The results of this, in Table B.3, show a significant, strong and positive relationship between whether people have received their highest qualification recently and the likelihood of them receiving further training. Other factors being equal, the odds of a person receiving training in the past three months are 2.4 times higher for those who received their highest qualification recently than for those who did not.

Compared with regression one, the impact of age is very similar, although slightly less powerful, for those aged 35 to 64. However, the significant and very strong relationship between the 16 to 24 age group and the 35 to 44 age group shown in Regression 1 now disappears completely ($p > 0.05$).

We can thus infer that for younger people not in work, how recently they achieved their highest qualification is a better determinant than age *per se* of how likely they are to take up training. This finding probably reflects the fact that among those aged 16 to 24, there is a general difference in the labour market position between those who have recently received their highest qualification and those who have not.

As Table 3.10 shows, about two-thirds (65 per cent) of those on government employment and training programmes have recently completed their highest qualification, and about two-thirds of the economically inactive (except those who are inactive and seeking employment) have not recently attained their highest qualification.

Table 3.10 Economic activity and recent highest qualification

	Recent highest qualification (1-2 years)		Base
	Yes (%)	No (%)	
Government employment and training programme	64.9	35.1	65,663
ILO-unemployed	53.7	46.3	351,725
Various inactive	31.3	68.7	273,348
Inactive: sick, injured or disabled	32.5	67.5	54,361
Inactive: seeking (not sick)	50.3	49.7	17,259
Total	45.1	54.9	762,356

Source: LFS, spring 2004

¹⁷ We excluded those who had achieved their highest qualification less than a year ago, so that the variable was not colinear with the dependent variable (whether received training in the past three months).

3.4.4 Ethnicity

For this analysis we have grouped mixed heritage ethnicity individuals with black and black British. Overall, ethnic origin has a significant impact on the likelihood of whether people who are out of work receive training ($p < 0.001$). Perhaps surprising is that those from non-white backgrounds are more likely to receive training than white ethnic groups, contrasting with the findings for employed people (see previous report).

The respondents who were most likely to receive training are those from black, black British and mixed ethnic groups, 16 per cent of whom received training in the past three months (see Table 3.11). Controlling for other factors, people from these groups are about 80 per cent more likely than white respondents to have received training in the past three months ($p < 0.001$).

Other factors being equal, there is no significant difference between the likelihood of white respondents and Asian or British Asian respondents receiving training ($p = 0.66$) or between white respondents and those from 'other' ethnic groups.

3.4.5 Highest qualification attained

Overall, the level of the highest qualification of a person not in work is a useful determinant of the likelihood that he/she receives training ($p = 0.003$): other factors in the equation being equal, there is a general positive relationship between the level of a person's education and the likelihood of their receiving training.

Table 3.11 Ethnicity by whether training received in past 13 weeks (weighted): row percentages

Ethnic group	Training received		Base
	Yes (%)	No (%)	
White	7.4	92.6	5,906,366
Asian or Asian British	8.5	91.5	464,214
Black, black British or mixed	15.6	84.4	254,372
Chinese	12.3	87.8	21,372
Other	12.5	87.5	143,622
Total	7.9	92.1	6,789,946

Source: LFS, spring 2004

Respondents who have three GCSE grades A to C (or equivalent) are 28 per cent less likely than those who have a degree to have received training in the past three months. Similarly, those whose highest qualification is less than three GCSE grades A to C, are 36 per cent less likely to have received training in the past three months. There is, however, no significant difference between a person who has a degree and one whose highest qualification is a higher education diploma or an A level ($p = 0.61$ and $p = 0.23$ respectively).

It should be noted that including the date of award for respondents' highest qualification in the analysis means that people with no qualifications are automatically excluded from the dataset. In Table 3.12 we therefore show the results of the analysis for the variable 'highest qualification' for which the date of award has been omitted, allowing individuals within the category 'no qualifications' to be included.

Once this is done, the variable becomes a far more powerful predictor of whether the person will have recently received training. However, this is likely to be a reflection of the substantial difference between those who do and do not have qualifications. Other things being equal, a person who is out of work and who has no qualifications is 75 per cent less likely than someone who has a degree but is also out of work to have received training in the past three months (see Table 3.12).

Table 3.12 Highest qualification attained by whether training received in past 13 weeks (weighted): row percentages

Qualification	Training received		Base
	Yes (%)	No (%)	
Degree or equivalent	12.2	87.8	486,819
Higher education	9.8	90.2	325,573
GCE A level or equivalent	9.6	90.4	1,094,941
GCSE grades A-C or equivalent	11.3	88.7	1,457,733
Other qualifications	9.7	90.3	1,150,494
No qualification	2.7	97.3	2,233,974
Total	7.9	92.1	6,749,534

Source: LFS, spring 2004

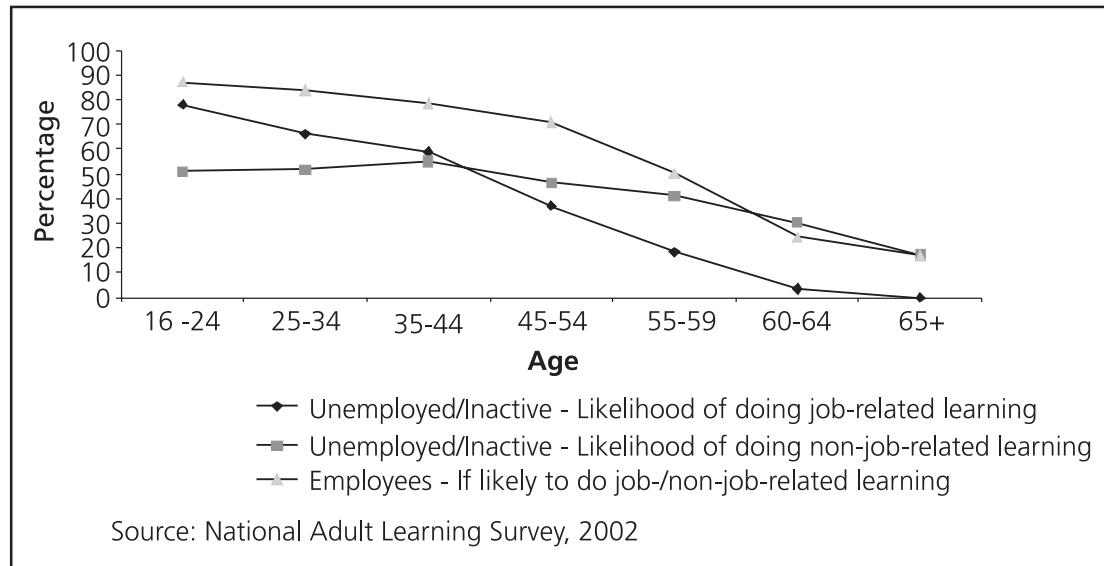
Among those with no qualifications, only three per cent received training in the past three months, compared to between ten and 12 per cent for each of the other groups.

3.5 Likelihood of undertaking training and other learning

NALS asks individuals whether they are likely to participate in work-related and or other learning in the next three years. Confirming evidence from LFS, and the literature review, the extent to which individuals considered it was likely they would participate in training declines with age (Figure 3.2)¹⁸.

¹⁸ Unemployed/inactive status is based on how respondents categorise themselves when shown a list of options.

Figure 3.2 Engagement in learning in the next three years, by age and employment status



Three-quarters of young people thought it likely that they would undertake some work-related training and half also thought they might participate in some other learning activity. Mirroring the results of training in the workforce, the older a person is, the less likely they are to think that they will be involved in training (or other learning).

There is a sharper decline for work-related learning than for other, wider life learning, which may reflect McNair's point about retirement or some of the other barriers discussed in our review, such as low confidence in the difference training might make to employability, although between the ages of 35 and 44, the likelihood of engaging in training or other learning is virtually the same.

Overall however, this analysis shows less of a training orientation amongst unemployed and inactive people when compared to the workforce (reported in Newton *et al.* 2005), particularly up to the age of 59.

3.6 Summary

This analysis of LFS showed that there are low numbers of unemployed and inactive people engaged in training currently: overall, less than one in ten reported recent training participation. In addition, training participation declines with age: over four in ten young workless people were engaged in training at the point of survey compared to one-fifth of those aged over 45. Amongst all age groups, where training was reported, for most it had happened within the past four weeks.

There are few clear trends in training compared with people currently in the workforce. Over the age of 25, women are more likely to have engaged with training than men; however, the reverse of this is true amongst young people.

Different ethnic groups appear to have slightly different patterns of training: participation is higher amongst young white people when compared to those from ethnic minority and black backgrounds. However, between the ages of 25 and 44 this pattern is reversed and strongly so: people from ethnic minority and black backgrounds are 20 per cent more likely to report training than those from white backgrounds.

People with higher qualifications tended to report training more than those with lower qualifications; however, people with no qualifications were also training, possibly reflecting the Government's focus on raising basic skills levels.

The impact of the different qualification periods by age for the New Deal programmes affected the rates of training when assessed by time seeking work: young people are more engaged in training during the first six months of unemployment; for those in the mid age group, and older adults, there is greater likelihood of training following six months of seeking work.

The extent to which an individual's health affects the amount of work they could consider, (and possibly the kind of work they could do), appears to have a relationship with their reported training participation. People with health limitations consistently reported more training than those without, except in the very youngest age group.

3.6.1 Factors that impact on the likelihood of training

Age has a significant impact on the likelihood of training: when controlling for other factors, the likelihood of someone aged over 55 participating in training is 50 per cent less than for an adult aged 35 to 44.

Amongst different ethnic groups, those from black, black British and mixed backgrounds are 16 per cent more likely to be involved in training than other groups, although there is no discernible difference between white and Asian groups.

People with higher qualifications are more likely to engage with training: someone who has no qualifications is 75 per cent less likely than someone with a degree, to have recently received training.

Recent learning is a predictor of training participation: those who had attained their highest qualification(s) in the past two years, were one and a half times more likely to have received training than someone who had attained their qualifications more than two years ago.

3.6.2 Likelihood of undertaking training and/or other learning in future

Finally, our analysis of NALS showed that the older a person is the less likely they think it is they will be involved in training (or other learning) which may reflect findings from our review of the evidence about the confidence (either over-confidence or low confidence) barrier for older people in accessing work and training. Alternatively, it may be related to the perceived relevance or value of learning/training in helping them to gain work.

4 Experts' views of training participation amongst unemployed and inactive people

In this section, we report the findings from in-depth qualitative interviews with individuals, drawn from organisations which have particularly in-depth knowledge or expertise that qualifies them to comment on relevant and salient issues. These organisations include government departments, regional agencies, and voluntary sector organisations.

Organisations and specific people were selected for this aspect of the research on the basis of recommendations from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Steering Group and from the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) research team. Sixteen organisations were selected to provide expert contribution to project, and in total, 22 individuals participated in this phase of the research. The organisations, from which interview respondents were drawn, are listed below.

- Centre for Research on Older Workers (CROW).
- Department for Education and Skills (DfES).
- Department for Work and Pensions – Jobcentre Plus.
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).
- East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA).
- Education and Learning Wales (ELWa).
- Employers' Forum on Disability.
- Employers' Organisation for Local Government.
- Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

- National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE).
- Scottish Enterprise.
- Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA).
- The Tomorrow Project (an independent charity undertaking a programme of research, consultation and communication about change in people's lives in Britain over the next twenty years).
- Third Age Employment Network (TAEN).
- Help The Aged.
- Welsh Development Agency (WDA).

The interviews lasted for around one hour and the scope was wide-ranging, including: the barriers faced by unemployed or inactive people in obtaining training; attitudes of these groups towards different types of training provision; employers' views of the value of the training element of entry or return to work programmes; what employers look for when recruiting unemployed or previously inactive individuals; assessment of the quality of different return to/entry to work training programmes; and the sustainability of a case for age-segmented training programmes such as New Deal 50 Plus, in the light of the forthcoming age discrimination legislation.

It should be stressed that our interviewees were specialists who usually had expertise in some, but not all, of the subjects covered. In the discussion below, we have drawn out some of the key themes that emerged from the interviews and identified, where relevant, any differences of viewpoint or emphasis. The interviews also informed the content of the literature review by identifying additional research reports.

In the next phase of this research project on age and training, we will examine, in depth, the question of what skills and attributes employers look for in potential employees and which they consider to be the most important. The material from the interviews relating to this issue will therefore be discussed in detail in the next report. For this report we have identified four main areas for examination:

- barriers to training for unemployed and inactive people, and how these barriers are affected by age and other characteristics including gender and disability;
- views on the suitability of existing training provision, and on any ways in which the current programmes could be improved;
- examples of training initiatives that were seen as effective in reaching unemployed or inactive people;
- the sustainability of age-segmented training programmes.

4.1 Barriers to training

As the literature review has shown, there is evidence of multiple barriers that affect participation in training programmes by people who are not currently in the labour force. Unsurprisingly, given the respondents' expertise and knowledge, many of the barriers highlighted below, strongly echo the findings from the literature review.

4.1.1 The information gap

As discussed earlier in this report, there are currently a wide range of government-funded training programmes targeted at unemployed people or those who are currently inactive. Some respondents considered that it was not easy for people to access the information they needed and that they might be directed onto a specific course without being aware of the full range of options. The interviewees from Scottish Enterprise also thought the information gap was greater for people who were inactive compared with those who were unemployed:

'The unemployed have to attend and prove availability and willingness to work. Whereas the inactive clients are signed off on a regular basis by their doctors...and some of the individuals have been inactive for in excess of ten, 12, 20 years. The level of understanding that they would have of the jobs market and job opportunities and what being in work actually means is much more difficult for that group because they have been out of it for so long.'

A similar point was made by the respondent from the DfES: 'People who have to come into the Jobcentre Plus on a regular basis will be informed of the training options. But there is no equivalent mechanism for regular contact with inactive groups and although there are sources of information, more self-motivation will be required to decide to ring the Learn Direct Helpline'.

The interviewee involved in DWP's Skills Strategy also believed that job seekers are more focused on getting training for employment, whereas people who are inactive are less likely to know where to get that training or to find out what would be the best option for them as an individual.

The interviewees from NIACE stressed the need to consider more broadly the needs of older people seeking work, rather than focusing narrowly on training to get them back to work. Some people may go to the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) with debt problems or to the GP with health problems, but underlying those problems there may also be issues relating to unemployment, housing, and/or relationships. So they favour an inter-agency approach which tries to reach people in a variety of ways by providing them with the information and guidance that addresses the range of issues they may be encountering at their stage of life. As one NIACE interviewee said, *'What the policy needs to do is be sufficiently permissive or flexible to allow interventions and start where people are and then design responses that reach the destination but don't prescribe the route.'*

4.1.2 Image of formal training

Running through many of the interviews was a feeling of concern about the division between formal training that was vocational and/or job-related and informal learning opportunities. Several interviewees believed that many unemployed or inactive people were put off entering a formal training programme. For young people this might be due to recent negative experiences within the educational system. For older people there were also barriers, as the interviewee from the WDA explained: *'The formal learning situation is...difficult because they have never in their life engaged in it and they are so far beyond it that to actually go back into would be a great humiliation.'*

The respondent from The Tomorrow Project believes *'there is too sharp a divide between vocational training and informal learning'*. He argues that motivating older people to learn requires offering a range of programmes that are not all narrowly vocational. A similar view was put by the interviewees from NIACE. They suggested that some people who were deterred by formal vocational training might be more easily reached initially through accessing informal learning opportunities. The interviewee from TAEN thought that some younger learners might also be deterred by formal learning environments but that *'a higher proportion of older people will have more barriers of fear and will not want to go to a college and take part in formal learning'*.

The ELWa respondent said that his organisation was looking at informal learning as a means of encouraging individuals to progress into employment. Defining informal learning as an activity that does not directly lead to a qualification, his organisation is working on a variety of community initiatives to encourage people to get involved in informal learning which may then be combined with more formal skills training. For young people, that might include projects around subjects such as media skills, to first draw them in and then build up their skills towards a qualification.

4.1.3 Attitudinal barriers

Individuals' lack of self-confidence and motivation to undertake training, was a barrier raised by many of the interviewees. It was argued that lack of confidence tended to increase the longer the period that someone was out of the labour market. Motivation to pursue training was seen as being affected by individual perceptions of the likely outcome of the training and whether it could lead to success in the job market. Individuals from groups, who were especially disadvantaged in the labour market, as reflected in high unemployment rates, were likely to be sceptical about their chances of obtaining a job. This would include disabled people who had been on Incapacity Benefit (IB) for some time.

Several respondents highlighted gender differences in motivation to attend training. Men were seen as more reluctant to start on a course than were women, and more likely to say they were too old to learn. In particular, men who had been made redundant after the age of around 50 were seen by the interviewee from CROW as especially vulnerable to lack of confidence. *'Self-confidence is the thing*

that is demolished so quickly. About 80 per cent of those [men] made redundant over the age of 50 never work again.' This is not because they are no longer employable but because some employers view someone who has been made redundant as inadequate in some way, and individuals come to internalise this negative image.

The interviewee from the SSDA identified lack of confidence as a barrier to acquiring IT skills for those who had been out of the labour market for a while.

'What I have picked up is that a lot of inactive people believe the work has moved on since they were last in work. I think if you look at IT for example, people often feel that they are no longer competent. The IT revolution has become something that people who have been out of the labour market feel is a huge hurdle because employers will expect them to have up-to-date IT skills.'

The Jobcentre Plus respondents also highlighted attitudinal and psychological barriers affecting older people: *'Some clients consider themselves retired, after a certain age.'* *'They've retired in their mind. Partly because they do not think there is an opportunity to do anything else.'* The interviewees did identify that New Deal 50 Plus is seen as having had some success in encouraging people over 50 to re-enter the labour market, some of whom take up self-employment opportunities.

4.1.4 Ill-health and disability

Disabled people and people with ill-health conditions face major barriers to returning to the labour market once they have a period of inactivity; together, they make up the largest group on out-of-work benefits, mainly on incapacity benefits.

One of the difficulties, according to the respondent from the Employers' Forum on Disability, is that once someone is unable to work for a health-related reason, a period of inactivity can both exacerbate the existing condition and lead to a loss of confidence. Early intervention is vital in these cases.

The New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) programme incorporates job broker services to work with disabled people to identify the support they require to get back into work. However, the Pathways to Work pilot targeted at people on IB has gone further in addressing the need for rehabilitation. A package of support for participants on the pilots has included a strong focus on rehabilitation with the National Health Service (NHS) working at a local level in partnership with Jobcentre Plus. Our interviewee had heard positive reports about the quality of the rehabilitation training that had been provided for participants on the programme. This anecdotal evidence is backed up by evidence from the seven Pathways to Work pilots pointing to high participation by disabled people and showing that the number of recorded job entries for people with a health condition or disability has almost doubled compared with the same period last year¹⁹.

¹⁹ Speech by Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, 15 March 2005.

4.1.5 Qualifying period for training

There was a general consensus that the longer people were unemployed, the more problematic the process of getting into, or back to, work might be. This led several interviewees to criticise the six-month wait to access some Jobcentre Plus programmes, including New Deal 50 Plus and work based learning for adults (WBLA). They questioned the Government's rationale that, because many people return to work in the first six months, public money would be better spent on supporting those who could not get back into work without additional training (ie those still unemployed after six months/qualifying period).

Some respondents argued instead that the qualification period lost precious time that could be used to reach the newly unemployed, identify their training needs and help them get another job. In addition to the loss of confidence over time, many individuals ended up taking low paid jobs for financial reasons within the six months, before they were eligible for the training programmes. These were often short-lived jobs with the result that they were back on unemployment benefit within a short period. These experiences of being in and out of work did little for their motivation. As the interviewee from Help the Aged put it:

'...if someone has just become unemployed or inactive, and is in desperate need of money to pay for food, then they may feel they cannot afford to wait six months until they become eligible for training. They may feel they need to take any job that comes along, regardless of whether it is part-time or low-skilled.'

4.1.6 Access barriers

The access barriers to training that were identified by the respondents took several different forms. Transport was frequently mentioned but, as well as constituting a physical barrier to accessing training or employment there may be a cultural aspect to this also. This was explained by the interviewee from ELWa who described how, despite good transport links in South East Wales, both young and old people living in the valley communities can be reluctant to travel outside a very limited geographical area, either for training or work.

The respondents from Jobcentre Plus also saw transport as a cultural barrier. Even in London, they pointed out, people can be reluctant to cross the river or go to another borough and are prepared to have their benefits disallowed rather than travel for training. Outside London, people may refuse to travel distances such as from Chesterfield into Sheffield or, more locally, from Clay Cross into Sheffield. The interviewees thought there was an age dimension to this and that younger people were more used to moving and using public transport than older people. For the older generation, caution, lack of knowledge and expense – even though they may get their travel expenses paid – all affected willingness to take up training opportunities outside their immediate area.

Other access barriers mentioned included: lack of flexibility in the timing of training to fit in with the needs of different clients; increased use of computers to deliver training which might disadvantage people who did not have access to them or were not familiar with them; and failure to make reasonable adjustments to enable the participation of people with different impairments.

4.2 Suitability of current training provision

Interviewees were asked a series of questions on the attitudes towards training held by unemployed and inactive groups, and also on the value and suitability of the current training for those groups. Questions were also asked about whether they had any evidence on employers' views about the value of the different training elements in the programmes.

These questions elicited a wide range of opinions. Here we highlight some of the main issues that were raised in the interviews.

4.2.1 Clients' views of training

The area of basic skills training was seen as one of the most difficult to motivate participants. As the Jobcentre Plus respondents said: *'It's a serious issue. People are very good at covering up basic skills issues. They will find all sorts of techniques to not expose the fact that they can't read or write'*. This view was echoed in the interview with the CROW respondent: *'There is for many, an issue about basic skills which is highly emotive and very embarrassing to admit to lacking those skills'*. There is known to be a high drop-out rate from basic skills training courses. It was suggested that basic skills training needed to be integrated with other forms of training or learning to remove the stigma associated with basic skills.

The focus on addressing basic skills needs was also seen as failing to provide for those with higher skill requirements thereby demotivating a group for whom training would be a benefit if it could be focused in the right way. The TAEN representative questioned the push to get individuals qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 2 when the evidence suggested that this had no impact on remuneration (Dearden *et al.* 2004). *'Why should they do a level 2 if this has no [financial] value? There is a problem with preaching the message of the benefits of gaining a qualification if there is actually very little value.'* The acquisition of more technical skills (level 3) appears to lead to an outcome in terms of increased pay. But there is no provision within the New Deal 50 Plus for funding to obtain that level of qualification.

However, the respondent from the LSC felt that level 2 qualifications were likely to help people to access and maintain longer term employment, and thus help them overcome the cycle of short-term, temporary working followed by spells of unemployment. However, this respondent also identified a need to ensure that training started prior to employment, could continue once employment was gained to ensure qualifications are achieved.

Several interviewees suggested that unemployed and inactive people valued training that focused on confidence building as well as basic or technical skills. This was an assessment of the experience works programme funded by EMDA of the interviewee there. Confidence building, through advice on giving presentations, attending interviews, building a CV and other skills linked to employability, were seen as crucial to the success of the programme.

One of the other dimensions of training that was thought by several respondents to be highly valued by clients was access to individual support, costly and labour intensive though that might be.

4.2.2 Employers' views of training

There was more of a consensus on the question of what types of training provision were particularly valued by employers. Employers were perceived as having a strong preference for job applicants who had taken part in some form of work-based training. Each government programme provides different types of pre-employment or work experience opportunities. The popularity of work trials amongst employers was widely cited by the respondents. In the case of disabled job applicants, employers were more likely to overcome any preconceptions about a disabled person if they had either been on a work placement or participated in training clearly relevant to the job:

'A lot of it comes down to ensuring that the training directly relates to their business. I think where a training package has been developed away from the local job market it starts to become devalued slightly. From what we are hearing, experience is still a core element and not all training is seen in that positive light. A lot of the members we talk to say things like work placements work for people with disabilities... If they can actually do the job, they are more likely to take them on than perhaps seeing a CV.'

Employers' Forum on Disability

A similar view was put forward by the interviewee involved in the DWP Skills Strategy:

'Lots of employers are saying that work trials are "the best kept secret" of Jobcentre Plus. Where Jobcentre Plus has worked closely with employers to come up with a tailored package then that is likely to be very successful, and the further the training is from the demand side, employers see it as being less relevant. Also where the training is close to the period of employment it is more successful, and less successful when it is completed ages in advance of employment. It needs to have currency.'

Another respondent from Jobcentre Plus suggested that work trials may be particularly effective in assisting people on incapacity benefit back to work. In areas where unemployment is low, people on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) may be able to get a job relatively easily without a trial. But in the same locality it can be more difficult for those who have been out of the labour market through illness to find a job, and for them work trials are a means of convincing employers that they can do the job.

The interviewee from the SSDA raised the issue of finding ways to encourage employers to provide work trials given the inherent responsibilities: *'Can the employer afford to provide the time, support, and mentoring that would actually make that a valuable experience because employers want people ready to employ... But if you do the training and get a qualification off the job, you haven't necessarily proved [to an employer] that you can deliver the work.'*

The importance of linking vocational training directly to the employers' requirements in the local job market was also highlighted by the interviewees from Scottish Enterprise. There is no work based learning programme in Scotland, but the Training for Work programme has similar objectives. It is a voluntary programme open to adults aged 25 plus who have been unemployed for at least six months and who are actively seeking work. Participants receive vocational training, which includes a period of work placement. The training can consist of a short, job focused course or longer training.

According to these interviewees, the most successful training providers for this programme are those who can actively engage with employers and who can adapt their training to meet the changing needs of employers. This approach is helpful in motivating trainees who may be deterred by the prospect of a 26 week course:

'What works is if there's an employer there and we can say to [the trainee] that there's a job at the local company down the road. And if you do this training then you have a good chance and we can even line up an interview for you. So to get around the scepticism about training, you have to focus on the realistic chance of a job at the end of it.'

4.3 Training initiatives

As discussed in the previous section, many of the interviews highlighted the importance of developing partnerships between local employers, training providers, Jobcentre Plus and in some cases community agencies. The Employers' Forum on Disability, for example, cited a successful recruitment project that had involved a partnership between Centrica and Jobcentre Plus and a training programme aimed at preparing disabled people to be job applicants²⁰. The respondents from Scottish Enterprise mentioned the New Futures Fund for vulnerable people aged 16 to 24 who were 'falling through the net' of New Deal and other training programmes. Instead of working with the mainstream training providers, the scheme works with local agencies, involved with groups such as homeless young people. The scheme ran from 1998 to 2005 and a wide range of agencies were funded to work with the young people to build their skills and confidence to prepare them for employment.

²⁰ Employers' Forum on Disability (2004), *Recruitment that Works, a Better Balance between Supply and Demand*.

One regional initiative that has been credited with considerable success in helping older people back into work is the 'experience works' initiative funded for three years by the EMDA. It was aimed at individuals aged over 45 and provided training, mainly through two further education colleges, to enable people to seek employment or improve their career prospects. According to the enterprise development manager in the Economic Development Team, two contributing factors to the success of the programme were the high level of individual support and the empathy of the people delivering the training: 'A lot of them had been through the experience of being made redundant themselves and they understood what the confidence building issues were that needed to be developed alongside the actual IT or other skills'.

The interviewee from the WDA highlighted the positive role that intermediate labour market (ILM) activities could play in providing a learning environment for economically inactive people. The Welsh Council for Voluntary Action, for example, has established a partnership between local authorities, public and voluntary sector organisations: North Wales Labour Market Intermediary. Funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), the project supports a network of non-profit social enterprises that provide temporary, subsidised employment to economically inactive people for periods of up to six months. To be eligible an individual has to have been out of work for at least six months. The WDA respondent saw the value of ILM activities as providing individuals with the kind of work experience that employers were looking for:

'It provides [the participants] with the "school of hard knocks" kind of essential, transferable skills learning that they need, and the employability skills that they need...People have help with job search and with CV building. They have all of that plus they are actually doing a job. From a government perspective there is a huge untapped potential for delivering this kind of support through the voluntary sector and through the social enterprise sector. My theory is that older and younger people would warm more to that kind of opportunity, than to some formalised delivery of training.'

What emerged from many of the interviews was that there was a role for new approaches and innovative training initiatives to address the barriers that deter many inactive and unemployed people from participating in formal training programmes.

4.4 Future of age-segmented programmes

All the interviewees were asked about the implications of the forthcoming age discrimination legislation for the future of training programmes that include age as a criterion for eligibility, such as the New Deal 25 Plus and 50 Plus and the New Deal for Young People (NDYP), for 18 to 24 year olds.

The Government has supported the European Employment Directive on Equal Treatment and made a commitment to introduce age legislation, covering employment and vocational training, before the end of 2006. The implementation period was designed to give time for full consultation with employers, individuals and expert groups and allow the development of clear and workable legislation. It is intended that employers be given sufficient time to familiarise themselves, and adapt their practices, before legislation is implemented.

Views have already been sought on a number of issues including: retirement age, recruitment, selection and promotion, pay and non-pay benefits, unfair dismissal, employment-related insurance and statutory redundancy payments, the consultation on which closed on 20 October 2003. There was also a further consultation on the draft age regulations that were published on 14 July 2005 that ended on 17 October 2005.

The final form of the legislation will not be known until the regulations have been agreed. However, the legislation will cover both employment and vocational training, and this is likely to include all learning and training that enhances employability, whether through government- or employer-funded programmes.

Most interviewees considered that age segmentation in the New Deal programmes would no longer be viable in the light of the proposed legislation. At the same time many of them took the view that there had been, and still was, a rationale for targeting particular types of provision at broad age groups. It was argued, for example, that the support and advice requirements of young people who may never have worked are quite different from those of people in their fifties who have been made redundant after working in the same industry for 30 years.

Some respondents believed that some programmes targeted at particular disadvantaged groups might still be legally justifiable on the basis that those groups required specific initiatives to address their disadvantage. However, despite this, it was generally agreed that eligibility for programmes should not be restricted on the basis of age or any other attribute. Instead they should be designed to be flexible enough to meet individual needs. This would prevent an individual being defined on the basis of an attribute that was not really relevant.

As the Jobcentre Plus interviewees highlighted, the current framework tended to rigidly demarcate client groups rather than responding to people as individuals: 'Just because you are disabled, doesn't necessarily mean you need specific provision designed for disabled people. You may need just exactly the same as somebody else, a small top-up'. Similarly, a lone parent may not need a tailored programme for lone parents but what would be essential would be the availability of childcare provision.

One interviewee from The Employers' Organisation for Local Government suggested that there could still be a role for the content, training materials and methods of delivery of training to be adapted where necessary for different age groups. Similarly, the LSC representative identified that while younger people might have

some soft skills but lack technical knowledge, someone in their fifties might have acquired lots of skills and have no need of an intensive programme. Within an umbrella programme, there could be a diversity of options. However, the interviewee at TAEN argued that to ensure particular age groups were not underrepresented in terms of take-up, it would be necessary to monitor the age profile of participants.

Overall, many interviewees saw the way forward as ending age-segmented programmes while ensuring that individual requirements (which might be age-related) were catered for within the programmes. This view is in line with the main thrust of some of the government's forthcoming programmes. There are no age limits in the New Deal for Skills, elements of which have been being piloted from April 2005, and it will include a new one-to-one skills coaching service to identify individual needs for support and training.

4.5 Summary

The interviews identified many barriers to participation in training programmes by people who are inactive or unemployed. These included an information gap, considered as a lack of access to information about what is available and particularly about the wider opportunities for training and its relevance for people to gain jobs. The respondents also discussed how the perceived image of formal training and the classroom environment negatively affected motivations to get involved in training for both young and old.

Workless people were felt to have attitudinal barriers such as lack of confidence in ability to learn and an increasing lack of training motivation as they neared retirement age. Ill-health, and disability, also factored in the barriers: if a person was unable to work because of ill-health, this can exacerbate their health problem but also lead to a loss of confidence.

The qualifying period for eligibility for training was seen as problematic similarly, as confidence and motivation are both likely to decline as the period of worklessness increases. In addition, access barriers were considered important in terms of transport infrastructure, and in some rural areas, a cultural reluctance to travel; and the flexibility of provision.

A variety of issues were raised about the suitability of current training provision, including the difficulty of measuring client satisfaction since provision is often mandatory. Some respondents were critical of the priority given to basic skills training as this limited the available opportunities for intermediate and higher level skills development. Others pointed to the difficulty in motivating clients to participate in basic skills training, and suggested a greater integration with technical skills development to encourage participation.

There was greater consensus on the types of training employers value most. Training that involved a core element of work experience was considered to be the most attractive to employers. Training providers who engage with employers and can adapt their training to meet the changing needs of the local labour market were seen as effective.

Interviewees gave examples of successful training initiatives outside the mainstream provision that were felt to be useful models of effective provision. These included intermediate labour market activities in Wales, as well as the experience works initiative in the East Midlands.

The majority of respondents agreed that the age-segmented government training programmes would no longer be viable in the light of the forthcoming age discrimination legislation. However, there was a strong view that programmes needed to ensure that they were flexible enough to cater for the needs of different age groups.

Appendix A

Discussion guide for expert interviews

The experts who contributed perspective and opinion to this project were interviewed for around one hour using the following topic guide. Not all of the experts had in-depth knowledge of each area covered in the guide so the focus of the interview was adapted to take account of their expertise. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the content analysed. The analysis is reported in Chapter 4 of the main report.

Age and training: the issues and barriers to participation for unemployed and inactive people - discussion guide

Introduction

Introduce Institute for Employment Studies, the project and clarify whether the project briefing the interviewee has received has been sufficient in explaining the aims of the research. Check if they have any questions about the focus of the project before the interview starts.

- To begin with, would you tell me about your role, your organisation, and the extent of your involvement with unemployed or inactive people, or age-related issues and barriers.
- From your knowledge and experience, are there any particular issues around the training that is available for unemployed or inactive people of different ages that you believe the research review should focus on?

Barriers to training (also barriers to work where there is overlap)

- Do you believe there are any barriers that make it more difficult for unemployed or inactive people to obtain training (compared to those in employment)?

Which barriers affect whom, multiple barriers and self-erected barriers

- Do you think any of these barriers are greater for either younger or older unemployed or inactive individuals? Do unemployed people of different ages experience different barriers?
- Apart from age, do you think that there are any other factors that affect participation by unemployed or inactive people in training – such as gender, ethnicity, family status *etc*?
- To what extent do you think unemployed/inactive individuals erect their own barriers to training (*probe on the nature and impact of the barriers*)?
- Are there any groups that you consider face multiple barriers to training? How do these barriers combine to affect the ability of unemployed/inactive people to train?

Attitudes to training amongst unemployed and inactive, and differences between the employed

- Do you believe there are any differences in the attitudes towards training held by unemployed or inactive people? Do these vary by age? (*ie comparing these two*). Has any particular experience led you to form this view? Are there any data or publications we should look at on this topic?
- Have you found that unemployed and/or inactive people are particularly attracted by any particular type(s) of training programme or opportunity? What appears to be preferred? Is there any variation in preference depending on the age of the individual or whether they are unemployed or inactive?
- (*If not volunteered as part of previous answer*): Do you have any idea why this is the case, *or* do there seem to be any reasons for people's preferences regarding the training that is on offer?
- Do you think that unemployed or inactive people see the back-to-work training programmes as being valuable? If not, what do they see as being the shortcomings of these programmes? Do you think this varies by age or does it vary by other factors *eg* employment history?

Impact of training on entry/return-to-work and quality of provision

- How well do Jobcentre Plus and training providers ensure that their programmes meet the needs of all clients (*eg* 50+ as well as disabled people or lone parents). To what extent are providers aware of the issues and barriers for different client groups? How does Jobcentre Plus take action to assure this? Do unemployed/inactive individuals ever comment to you on the value of the training element of return-to/entry-to-work programmes? Do responses to the training element vary by age group?

- Do you have any views on the types of training provider that offer return-to/entry-to-work training for unemployed or inactive people? What makes good quality return-to/entry-to-work training? (*Probe on content eg soft skills, technical skills, and qualifications*). How many providers meet this standard? How is this measured? Have there been any quality inspection reports or other evaluations of quality of provision that we should be aware of in this research? Does any type of provider seem better at providing training for different age groups? Why do you think this is the case?
- Are you aware of any evidence relating to the impact of training on participants' entry or return to work? Do some programmes seem more useful in this respect than others? (*If not volunteered: Why is this, do you think?*). How important a factor is age in the entry-to-work/return-to-work training? Are you aware of any data or publications that make this case?

Employers' views on the training offer, and progression to workplace training

- Do employers ever comment to you about the value of the training element of entry or return to work programmes? What are their views on the value of work trials/work experience in terms of assessing suitability to work. (*If not raised in previous answer*) Do you feel that there are particular types of training or qualification that employers look for when considering recruiting an unemployed individual? Do these vary with the age of the potential recruit?
- (*If not explicitly mentioned in response to main question*): Do you think unemployed/inactive people experience age discrimination from employers? What forms of discrimination face which groups?
- Do you believe that employers' recruitment decisions are affected by whether unemployed or previously inactive applicants have had pre-work training? Is there any evidence of the way in which decisions are affected? Is this at all levels of recruitment *or* at what levels do you think it is most prevalent? Does this apply just to recruits in certain age groups or across the board? Are you aware of any data or publications that make this case?
- Has your organisation conducted any research into the evidence that employers look for when recruiting unemployed or previously inactive individuals? Are employers influenced by whether unemployed or previously inactive individuals have undertaken a training programme since becoming unemployed/inactive? What types of training seem to be valued? Is there any difference in what is valued depending on the individual's age? Are employers influenced more by voluntary programmes than mandatory or is there no difference?
- Do you think that employers have any different attitude to developing (training) recruits who were previously unemployed or inactive, than those moving from a different employer or job role? Does age have any influence on their attitude to providing training either for those who have been unemployed or inactive, or those who have moved from another job?

- Do you find that there are sectoral variations in employers' views on recruiting unemployed or previously inactive individuals? Is there any difference in their attitudes towards recruiting unemployed applicants for jobs at different levels within the organisation or in different local labour market conditions (*eg* labour shortages)? Is pre-employment training seen as more or less important in those different situations? Is there any difference in what is valued depending on the individual's age?

Government programmes and sustainability

- Do you think that any particular government policies have been influential in getting unemployed or inactive people to take up training options? Is there anything that prevents current policies being more effective? If so, can you think of any way these policies could be made more effective?
- How sustainable are the age segmented programmes (*eg* New Deal 50+) given the upcoming age discrimination legislation?

Appendix B

Supplementary tables from the data analysis

Please note, we have not included in these analyses factors that did not have a significant effect on the likelihood of training, these were determined through the elimination process used in binary logistic regressions (backward likelihood ratio).

Throughout, gender did not have a significant impact on the likelihood to train and, in the second regression, ethnicity was also not a significant factor.

Appendix B.1 Binary logistic regression #1 (DV: training received in past 13 weeks; 0=no)

Variables in the Equation		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95.0% C.I. for EXP(B)		Rel p. (%)
								Lower	Upper	
Age in ten year groups	(reference: 35-44)			135.4	5	0.000				
	16-24	0.557	0.095	34.5	1	0.000	1.745	1.449	2.101	74.50
	25-34	-0.008	0.096	0.0	1	0.937	0.992	0.822	1.199	-0.76
	45-54	-0.400	0.117	11.7	1	0.001	0.670	0.533	0.843	-32.97
	55-59	-0.867	0.163	28.3	1	0.000	0.420	0.305	0.578	-57.98
	60-64	-1.484	0.326	20.7	1	0.000	0.227	0.120	0.429	-77.33
Basic economic activity	(ref: ILO unemployed)			597.5	4	0.000				-100.00
	Gov. empl.& training progr.	2.520	0.157	259.3	1	0.000	12.432	9.148	16.895	1143.17
	Various inactive	-0.905	0.078	134.3	1	0.000	0.405	0.347	0.472	-59.53
	Inactive: sick, injured or disabled	-1.369	0.115	142.4	1	0.000	0.254	0.203	0.319	-74.56
	Inactive: seeking (not sick)	0.004	0.206	0.0	1	0.986	1.004	0.670	1.503	0.35
Ethnic group	(ref: white)			29.0	4	0.000				-100.00
	Asian or British Asian	0.136	0.129	1.1	1	0.294	1.145	0.889	1.476	14.52
	Black, black British or mixed	0.586	0.134	19.0	1	0.000	1.796	1.380	2.337	79.61
	Chinese	0.126	0.488	0.1	1	0.796	1.135	0.436	2.955	13.46
	Other ethnic group	0.648	0.191	11.6	1	0.001	1.912	1.316	2.778	91.16
Highest qualification	(ref: Degree or equivalent)			136.8	5	0.000				-100.00
	Higher education	-0.060	0.168	0.1	1	0.722	0.942	0.678	1.309	-5.80
	GCE A level or equivalent.	-0.228	0.126	3.3	1	0.070	0.796	0.622	1.019	-20.38
	GCSE grades A-C or equivalent.	-0.399	0.119	11.1	1	0.001	0.671	0.531	0.848	-32.87
	Other qualifications	-0.486	0.126	14.9	1	0.000	0.615	0.481	0.787	-38.47
	No qualifications	-1.386	0.138	101.2	1	0.000	0.250	0.191	0.328	-75.00
	Constant	-1.357	0.121	125.6	1	0.000	0.258			-74.25

Source: LFS, spring 2004

Appendix B.2 Binary logistic regression #2 (DV: training received in past 13 weeks; 0=no)

Variables in the Equation		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95.0% C.I. for EXP(B)		Rel p. (%)
								Lower	Upper	
Age (45-54)	(reference: 45-49)	-0.413	0.194	4.5	1	0.033	0.661	0.452	0.967	-0.34
Basic economic activity	(ref: ILO unemployed)			101.4	4	0.000				-1.00
	Government employment and training programme	2.587	0.478	29.3	1	0.000	13.294	5.211	33.914	12.29
	Various inactive	-1.260	0.241	27.3	1	0.000	0.284	0.177	0.455	-0.72
	Inactive: sick, injured or disabled	-1.417	0.241	34.6	1	0.000	0.242	0.151	0.389	-0.76
	Inactive: seeking (not sick)	0.042	0.657	0.0	1	0.949	1.043	0.288	3.775	0.04
Highest qualification	(ref: Degree or equivalent)			40.3	5	0.000				-1.00
	Higher education	-0.509	0.389	1.7	1	0.190	0.601	0.280	1.288	-0.40
	GCE A level or equivalent.	-0.833	0.306	7.4	1	0.007	0.435	0.238	0.792	-0.57
	GCSE grades A-C or equivalent.	-0.591	0.296	4.0	1	0.046	0.554	0.310	0.990	-0.45
	Other qualifications	-0.949	0.329	8.3	1	0.004	0.387	0.203	0.738	-0.61
	No qualifications	-2.177	0.353	37.9	1	0.000	0.113	0.057	0.227	-0.89
	Constant	-0.987	0.263	14.1	1	0.000	0.373			

Source: LFS, spring 2004

Appendix B.3 Binary logistic regression #3 (DV: training received in past 13 weeks; 0=no)

Variables in the Equation	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95.0% C.I. for EXP(B)		Rel p. (%)	
							Lower	Upper		
Recent highest qualification (one to two years)	(reference: no)	0.886	0.104	72.7	1	0.000	2.426	1.979	2.975	142.63
Age	(reference: 35-44)			39.4	5	0.000				
	16-24	0.194	0.118	2.7	1	0.101	1.214	0.963	1.531	21.42
	25-34	-0.047	0.106	0.2	1	0.660	0.954	0.775	1.175	-4.56
	45-54	-0.309	0.129	5.7	1	0.017	0.734	0.570	0.946	-26.57
	55-59	-0.738	0.178	17.2	1	0.000	0.478	0.338	0.678	-52.17
	60-64	-1.103	0.330	11.2	1	0.001	0.332	0.174	0.634	-66.81
Basic economic activity	(ref: ILO unemployed)			413.4	4	0.000				
	Government employment and training programme	2.464	0.179	189.7	1	0.000	11.757	8.279	16.697	1075.74
	Various inactive	-0.831	0.087	90.8	1	0.000	0.436	0.367	0.517	-56.43
	Inactive: sick, injured or disabled	-1.223	0.128	91.0	1	0.000	0.294	0.229	0.378	-70.58
	Inactive: seeking (not sick)	0.046	0.220	0.0	1	0.833	1.047	0.680	1.613	4.74
Ethnic group	(ref: white)			18.5	4	0.001				
	Asian or British Asian	0.067	0.150	0.2	1	0.656	1.069	0.797	1.434	6.90
	Black, black British or mixed	0.591	0.148	16.0	1	0.000	1.806	1.351	2.413	80.56
	Chinese	0.170	0.502	0.1	1	0.734	1.186	0.444	3.170	18.59
	Other ethnic group	0.408	0.225	3.3	1	0.070	1.503	0.967	2.336	50.31
Highest qualification	(ref: Degree or equivalent)			16.0	4	0.003				
	Higher education	-0.089	0.173	0.3	1	0.609	0.915	0.652	1.285	-8.48
	GCE A level or equivalent.	-0.156	0.130	1.4	1	0.230	0.856	0.663	1.104	-14.45
	GCSE grades A-C or equivalent.	-0.333	0.124	7.2	1	0.007	0.717	0.562	0.914	-28.31
	Other qualifications	-0.445	0.130	11.7	1	0.001	0.641	0.496	0.827	-35.93
	Constant	-1.552	0.130	142.9	1	0.000	0.212		-78.81	

Source: LFS, spring 2004

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