

FE Learners Longitudinal Survey Wave Two Findings from Quantitative Research

Nick Coleman, Rachel Phillips & Hannah Carpenter
BMRB Social Research

Research Report

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*FE Learners Longitudinal
Survey Wave Two
Findings from Quantitative Research*

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Abbreviations and acronyms

DfES Department for Education & Skills

ESOL English for Speakers of Other Languages

FE Further Education

GLH Guided Learning Hours

LSC Learning and Skills Council

NALS National Adult Learning Survey

NQF National Qualifications Framework

Summary

Background

The Further Education (FE) Learners Longitudinal Survey examines the experiences and destinations of FE learners. Two waves of interviewing were carried out, the first around one year after completion of the course, the second two years after course completion. These findings are from the Wave Two survey¹.

The survey examines adult learners (19 or over) who took an FE course in 2003/4. The findings focus on learners who completed their course. The sample is also restricted to LSC-funded learners with a minimum of 30 guided learning hours.

In total, 4,032 interviews were conducted by telephone at Wave Two.

Characteristics of FE learners that completed their course

Overall, 39 per cent of learners who completed their FE course were studying below level 2, while 31 per cent were studying at level 2 (five per cent full level 2) and 19 per cent at level 3 (four per cent full level 3). Three per cent were studying at level 4 or above, while the remaining eight per cent were on 'other' courses (either with no qualification aim or where the qualification aim was unknown)².

Almost a third of FE learners (29 per cent) were qualified to level 4 or above before taking the FE course, and 57 per cent overall were studying at a lower level than their highest prior qualification. One in five (21 per cent) were studying at a higher level than their highest prior qualification ("progressors"). Learners who were not progressing their level of qualification were often older and with a higher income than progressors; however, non-progressors also included learners who could be considered "disadvantaged" (by earning less than £10,000 per year, being unemployed or having a long-term illness or disability).

The majority of learners were in paid work when they started the course (59 per cent). More specifically, 32 per cent were doing the course as part of a job, and this applied to the majority of learners studying at full level 2, full level 3 and level 4 or

¹ Findings from Wave One are covered in the report "FE Learners Longitudinal Survey Wave One: Findings from Quantitative Research, DfES Research Report 768"

² This information was taken from LSC administrative data. 'Other' includes both courses with no qualification aim and courses where the qualification aim was missing. Because of the way in which the LSC administrative data is structured it is not possible to split these two subgroups out.

above. Among those whose course was job-related, 19 per cent said it was compulsory.

FE course details

The majority of learners were on part-time courses (87 per cent), with full-time courses more common among those studying at full level 2, full level 3 and part level 3.

IT or computing was by far the most common subject studied by FE learners (25 per cent overall).

Whether learners increased their qualification level

One in four learners (24 per cent) had increased their highest level of qualification by the wave two interview and around one in eight learners (13 per cent) appeared to have increased their level of qualification *following* their original course through subsequent learning. This breaks down as three per cent who had attained level 2, five per cent level 3 and six per cent level 4 or above. Those originally studying at full level 2 (particularly those doing their first full level 2), part level 3 or below level 2 with no higher prior qualification were most likely to have increased their highest level of qualification through subsequent learning. Those whose *original* course progressed their qualification level were also more likely to increase their qualification level through *further* learning.

Further learning undertaken since course ended

In the wave one survey (around a year after completing the original FE course), 50 per cent of learners had gone on to start further education or training. By wave two (another year later), this proportion had risen to 63 per cent.

Those more likely than average to have started further learning were women, older learners and the retired, Black learners, and those originally on 'other' courses.

The additional courses were similar to the original FE courses, with a similar proportion involving a qualification (78 and 83 per cent respectively). Where the additional learning had finished, the majority said they had completed the course (86 per cent), and of these most said they achieved the qualification (88 per cent where a qualification was part of the course).

Around half paid towards the additional course, with 32 per cent saying they paid all of the fees. In general, learners who paid towards additional courses were also likely to have done so for the original course.

There was a strong feeling that the original FE course had assisted learners in moving on to further education or training (74 per cent agreed it had helped), particularly among those who were least well qualified to start with, as well as learners who originally studied at full level 2, 3 or level 4 or above. In terms of how the original course had helped, 29 per cent said that they *had* to do the course in order to move on to further learning or training. Those who studied at full level 2 or 3 were more likely than average to say this, although it was not just those originally aiming for qualifications – 26 per cent of those whose original course was not designed to lead to a qualification but had helped them move onto further learning, said they *had* to do their original course to move on.

Employment since FE course

The overall level of employment among FE learners remained similar, from immediately before the original FE course through to the wave two interview (61 per cent and 64 per cent respectively), with a similar split between full-time and part time work.

A third (32 per cent) of learners had started a new job at some point after completing their course, and at an overall level the profile of work being done was similar to the work being done at the time of, and prior to, the course.

Of those *working at the start of the course*, 31 per cent went on to start a new job after completing their course. Amongst this group, those most likely to have started a new job after completing it were: younger learners, those who studied at higher levels, and learners whose course had not been part of their job.

Compared with the work they were doing at the start of the course, work started after the course was more likely to be in the public sector, specifically in education and health/social work. There was also a slight shift towards higher level occupations. Self-employment was also higher, and take-home pay increased.

A third (33 per cent) of those who had *worked before but not during their course* had gone on to start a job after completing their course. For this group, those most likely to have started a new job after completing their course were: those who had been in work more recently, younger learners and (connected with this) learners who studied at full level 2 or 3.

In comparison with the work they were doing before the course, work started after the course was again more likely to be in the public sector, specifically education and health/ social work (this shift was more pronounced than that noted above for learners who were in work at the start of their FE course). There was a lower proportion of full-time positions, while mean hourly pay was unchanged. The increase in part-time work may be caused by people returning to work after starting

a family, and older people going part-time as they move towards or following retirement.

At the time of the original FE course, nine per cent of FE *learners had never worked*. Of these, 28 per cent went on to start a job after finishing their course. The remainder did not go into paid work after the FE course, despite the fact that 20 per cent said that their main reason for studying was to learn skills for a job.

Work related benefits gained from the course

A third of learners who had started a new job since the course said that the course helped them to get the job; this was highest among learners studying at full level 2 or 3, and was also higher among learners whose FE course aimed to progress their qualification level.

Respondents also acknowledged a number of work-related benefits from taking the original FE course, most commonly being able to do their job better, getting more satisfaction out of their work and learning new skills for an existing job. Overall, 30 per cent of learners of working age obtained a positive “work-related outcome” from the course (defined either as getting a job, earning more money, gaining promotion or setting up their own business). This was highest among learners studying at full level 2, full level 3 or level 4+ (53 per cent, 59 per cent and 58 per cent respectively).

It is possible to divide learners into four groups according to their intentions when doing the FE course:

- Those who did the course for work-related reasons and to progress their qualification level (17 per cent of all learners). This was the youngest group, and contained learners who were more likely than average to be studying for a full level 2 or level 3 (full or part). This group was the most likely to gain a positive work-related outcome (42 per cent).
- Those who did the course for work-related reasons but not to progress their qualification level (48 per cent of all learners). A third (33 per cent) of this group obtained a positive work-related outcome.
- Those who did not do the course for work-related reasons, but aimed to progress their qualification level (4 per cent of all learners); among those of working age, a quarter (24 per cent) gained a positive work-related outcome from the course.
- Those who did not do the course for work-related reasons or to progress their qualification level (31 per cent of all learners). Eleven per cent of

working age respondents from this group obtained a positive work-related outcome.

This confirms that learners who were progressing their qualification level were more likely than non-progressors to gain work-related benefits from their course. However, a proportion of non-progressors did gain important work-related outcomes, including one in eight who changed to a different type of work as a result of their course.

Skills and other benefits gained from course

Learners felt that they had gained a number of skills or benefits from taking the original FE course, and the majority of those who had done the course for particular reasons (e.g. to give skills for an existing job) said that it had provided the benefits they had sought in line with those reasons. The majority (81 per cent) of respondents said the course had encouraged them to do further learning, while just over half (54 per cent) said that the course had given them the opportunity to progress in education, and three in five (61 per cent) said it had helped them to gain better qualifications.

Many learners also said that the course had increased their confidence and self-esteem. Around four in five (78 per cent) said they had gained self-confidence and motivation, and a similar proportion said the course had made them feel better about themselves generally (82 per cent). Similarly high proportions of respondents also said the course had given them the confidence to tackle more things (79 per cent), had made them feel they are better at doing things (83 per cent) and had given them the sense they had more opportunities (76 per cent). These benefits were more likely to be mentioned by learners whose course was at a higher level than their prior qualification, and also by lone parents.

The social aspect of FE learning was also mentioned, with three-quarters (77 per cent) of respondents saying that the course helped them to make new friends or meet people, and a two-thirds saying it helped them to do something useful in their spare time (67 per cent).

Wider attitudes to learning

Around two in five FE learners said that they were very likely to go on to additional learning in the next two years (this was slightly lower than at Wave One), and this was higher where learners had already undertaken some more learning since the original FE course. Women and younger people were generally most likely to say they would continue with additional learning.

The main barriers that learners faced in carrying out further learning related either to cost (the cost of the training itself or the cost of living while learning), lack of time and family commitments. Costs were mentioned most frequently by those studying at higher levels (full level three or above), as well as younger people and women.

Help with costs or funding was also the main way that learners felt they would be encouraged to take part in further learning: 32 per cent of respondents said this was the thing that would be *most likely* to encourage further learning. In addition, learners mentioned learning at more convenient times or locations, advice on the learning available, learning which would improve employment prospects and learning that was more suited to their needs.

Learners generally acknowledged the importance of learning. Some learners, however, said that learning was difficult for them, and these were also the groups that acknowledged lower levels of self-esteem at the time of the survey: learners with a highest prior qualification below level 2, those with literacy problems and from non-white ethnic groups (and, related to this, those who had taken an ESOL course). Although these respondents were also likely to say the FE course had helped to improve their confidence, these findings remained very similar between Wave One and Wave Two, indicating that attitudes to learning had not changed. Therefore, these findings indicate that it remains a continuing challenge to help these individuals by encouraging participation in learning and training.

More generally, attitudes to learning, motivations and perceived benefits of learning remained very consistent between the two waves of the survey. This indicates that although FE learning is able to provide skills and can help to change circumstances (eg move people into work), more general attitudes are less liable to change over time³. The consistency of the findings between waves also suggests that change that occurs as a result of an FE course tends to happen within a year or so of completing the course, rather than over a longer time period.

³ It should be noted that both waves of the survey followed participation in the original FE course. It is possible that participation in the original course changed learners' attitudes; what we are examining here is the change resulting from additional learning or longer-term benefits from the original course.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and research objectives

The Further Education (FE) Learners Longitudinal Survey is designed to supplement the range of information that already exists and is used by the Department for Education & Skills (DfES) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to monitor and evaluate FE, and to inform policies. Whilst work has been done to examine participation in FE and there is existing information on the characteristics of FE learners, little information has been available on the destinations of FE leavers. The overall aim of this Longitudinal Survey is therefore to present new analysis about how FE learners participate and progress within and from learning and the influence this has on their attitudes, employment and income, and wider benefits. The two-wave survey tracks individuals typically over a period of 19-25 months and will therefore be able to assess medium-term, as well as short-term impacts.

The key objectives of the survey are to:

- analyse the nature of the destinations that FE learners take after learning, such as into employment, further learning or training, and the impact this learning has on their future learning participation;
- assess what impact learning has on socio-economic circumstances (employment status, income), particularly the cumulative impact of further learning on the individual's welfare;
- assess what impact learning has on wider outcomes such as health benefits and active citizenship.

The survey focuses on adult learners (aged 19 or over). While the full range of FE courses is covered, there is particular interest in learners studying for full level 2 and full level 3 qualifications, both "intermediate level" qualifications where the UK trails behind a number of major competitor countries. Specifically:

- improving the skills of low-skilled adults is linked to gaining a first full level 2 qualification, which is seen as a platform for employability and progression and is a key aim of the Skills Strategy
- Level 3 is seen as key to improving productivity for businesses and earnings for individuals.

This report provides the findings from the second wave of this two-wave study. The report from the first wave has been published in the DfES research report series⁴.

⁴ FE Learners Longitudinal Survey Wave One: Findings from Quantitative Research, Coleman N, Naylor R and Kennedy E, DfES Research Report 768

As well as including a detailed analysis of the Wave One findings, the Wave One report also includes information on the design of the survey as a whole.

The survey focused on learners who had completed their course, but there was also an interest in full level 2 and full level 3 learners who had failed to complete their course, so small samples of these were included. Findings on non-completers were covered in the Wave One report. Analysis throughout this Wave Two report focuses on people who completed their course in full.

1.2 Sample design

1.2.1 Sample population

The aim in designing the original sample was to obtain interviews with a representative sample of individuals aged 19 and over who had completed an FE course. The sample population was restricted to:

- learners who completed a FE course in England in the academic year 2003/4
- learners with a minimum of 30 guided learning hours (GLH) over that academic year. This ensured that the survey was examining the impact of substantial FE courses and that the sample was not swamped by the then very large numbers of short and “bite size” courses
- LSC-funded learners.

1.2.2 Sample selection

At Wave One, 15,171 learners were selected from a total of 851,836 eligible learners. Interviews were conducted with 6,909 of these learners. The Wave Two sample comprised all those who were interviewed at Wave One and who gave their permission to be re-contacted a second time: 6451 learners (93% of those interviewed at Wave One).

1.3 Questionnaire design and pilot survey

1.3.1 Content of the Wave Two questionnaire

The main areas covered by the questionnaire are:

- employment status and history since the Wave One interview
- learning participation since the Wave One interview
- benefits gained from the original FE course
- general attitudes to learning and barriers to further learning.

The Wave One questionnaire also included details of the original FE course, information on the respondent’s learning and employment history prior to and

immediately after the course, as well as background demographics.

Wave One interviews were conducted in respondents' homes, whereas at Wave Two the questionnaire was administered by telephone, using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). Interviews lasted 20 minutes on average.

1.3.2 Fieldwork period and completed interviews

Wave One fieldwork was carried out between 15 February and 13 July 2005, around 7-13 months after respondents had completed the original FE course. Wave Two fieldwork took place one year later (ie around 19-25 months after completing the original course), between 13 February and 14 May 2006.

In total, 4,139 interviews were completed at Wave Two, a response rate of 64% (see Appendix A for detailed response rates).

Further details about the fieldwork procedures are given in Appendix B.

1.4 Data preparation and weighting

Once the interviews had been conducted, they were automatically aggregated into a dataset. Open-ended responses were coded and tabulations of the data were produced and checked. Once the tabulations had been finalised, an SPSS file containing the data was produced.

Weighting was applied in order to ensure the representativeness of the sample. Firstly, the weights that had been applied to the Wave One data were also applied to the Wave Two data. A second weight was then added to correct the differing response rates among various sub-groups at Wave Two. Full details are provided in Appendix C.

1.5 Interpretation of findings

When interpreting the findings for this survey, the following issues need to be borne in mind:

- the survey is based on a sample only, rather than the total population, of FE learners. This means that all findings are subject to sampling tolerances. In the text of the report, differences are reported only when they are statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level.
- the survey was based on individuals on FE courses in the academic year 2003/4. As noted above, respondents were interviewed around 19-25 months after completing their course. As a result, the circumstances of the individuals concerned may be affected by the specific timing of the survey. Additionally, their answers are influenced by their recall of events.

- the percentages in the report tables do not always add up to exactly 100 for each column. In some instances this is because multiple responses are possible. In all other cases, where the column total may be 99 per cent or 101 per cent, this is simply due to rounding of individual percentages to the nearest whole number
- where data are similar for Wave One and Wave Two, this lack of aggregate change does not necessarily mean there has been no change at the individual level.

Table symbols

- * Less than 0.5 per cent
- 0 No observations
- Category not available
- .. Data not available

2 Learner characteristics and history

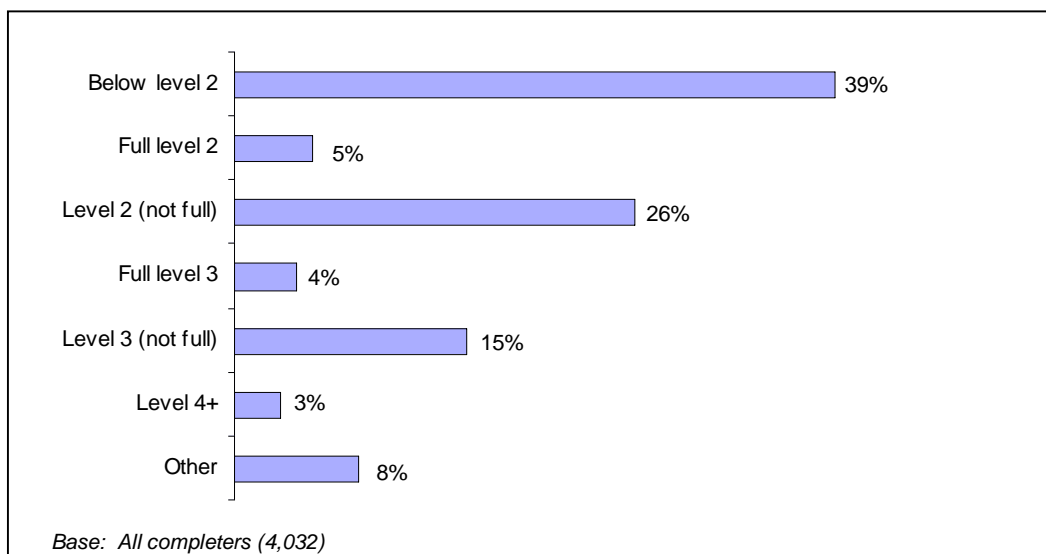
Details of the demographic characteristics of learners and their employment and education history prior to starting the original FE course were collected at Wave One of this research. This chapter looks at these findings for respondents who were interviewed at Wave Two, focusing on issues which are used later in this report for analysis. This therefore provides some context for the remainder of the report.

The Wave Two sample has been weighted so that its profile matches that of the Wave One sample. The analysis therefore provides a profile of FE course completers in 2003/04 with 30 or more guided learning hours⁵.

2.1 Level of original FE course in 2003/04

Chart 2.1 shows the NQF level at which learners were studying, as part of their FE course⁶. If they were taking more than one FE course, the designated level refers to the highest level being studied.

Chart 2.1: Level of FE course studied



⁵ The sample was restricted to learners with 30 or more guided learning hours in total.

⁶ This information was taken from LSC administrative data. 'Other' includes both courses with no qualification aim and courses where the qualification aim was missing. Because of the way in which the LSC administrative data is structured it is not possible to split these two subgroups out.

2.2 Demographic characteristics

2.2.1 Gender and age

Table 2.1 presents the relationship between course level, gender and age.

Table 2.1: Gender and age, by level studied

	Level studied							Total
	Below level 2	Full level 2	Level 2 (not full)	Full level 3	Level 3 (not full)	Level 4+	Other	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Gender								
Male	35	31	32	28	34	31	41	34
Female	66	69	68	72	66	69	59	66
Age								
Under 25	6	14	7	33	14	12	7	9
25-34	17	31	25	20	29	26	14	22
35-49	38	44	39	40	40	47	27	38
50-59	20	9	16	7	12	13	18	16
60+	19	2	13	1	5	2	35	15
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	<i>679</i>	<i>568</i>	<i>1121</i>	<i>527</i>	<i>670</i>	<i>122</i>	<i>345</i>	<i>4032</i>

2.2.2 Ethnic origin

A little over four in five completers were White (84 per cent), while five per cent were Black, seven per cent Asian and four per cent from a mixed or other ethnic origin.

2.2.3 Marital status and children

Among the total sample of completers:

- 64 per cent were married or living with a partner, while 12 per cent were widowed, divorced or separated
- 41 per cent had dependent children under 16 living in the household.

2.2.4 Health and disability

Table 2.2 shows whether respondents said they had any long-standing illnesses or disabilities.

Table 2.2: Long-term illness or disability, by level studied, gender and age

	Level studied							Total
	Below level 2	Full level 2	Level 2 (not full)	Full level 3	Level 3 (not full)	Level 4+	Other	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Long standing illness/disability	26	9	18	11	12	9	22	19
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	679	568	1121	527	670	122	345	4032

	Gender		Age					Total
	Male	Female	Under 25	25-34	35-49	50-59	60+	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Long standing illness/disability	22	18	10	13	17	29	32	19
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	1250	2782	352	830	1686	631	533	4032

Respondents were asked about long-term illness and disability at both the Wave One and Wave Two interviews. This allows us to compare responses, and assess the extent to which problems that are expected to be long-term do in fact remain a year later. This analysis shows that:

- The overall proportion of respondents who said they had a long-term illness or disability was very similar between the two waves (19 per cent at Wave One, 21 per cent at Wave Two).
- Although at Wave One 92 per cent of respondents who reported a long-term illness or disability said they expected it to last a year or more, only 74 per cent still reported a problem a year later in the Wave Two interview.

A summary of the findings across the two waves is shown in table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Long-term illness or disability at waves 1 and 2

	Total
	%
Illness/disability at both waves 1 and 2	14
Illness/disability at wave 1 only	5
Illness/disability at wave 2 only	6
No illness/disability at either wave	74

Base: All completers interviewed at wave 2 (4,032)

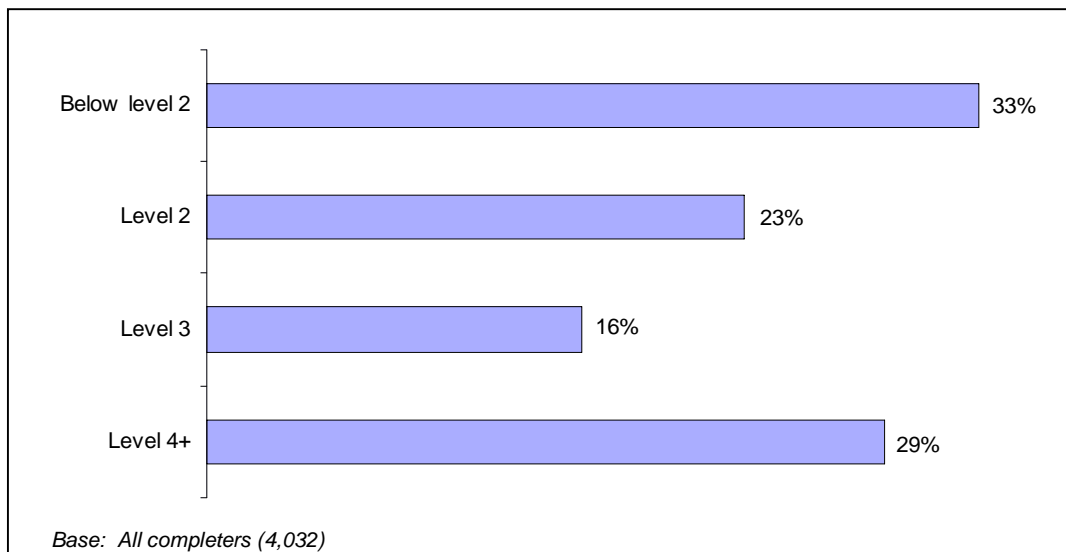
2.3 Qualifications

2.3.1 Highest level of qualification before FE course

This section examines the qualifications that learners had prior to their FE course (“prior qualification”). Chart 2.2 shows this in terms of the highest level attained. Initially, 23 per cent of learners were classified as ‘other’, i.e. they could not be allocated to a qualification level. These were respondents who were unable to provide sufficient information to allow the level of their highest prior qualification to be determined, as well as those who had non-UK qualifications and a small proportion who did not have any prior qualifications⁷. These cases have been re-allocated in the analysis⁸, to ensure that all respondents are allocated to a level for their highest prior qualification. Re-allocation was carried out as follows:

- 55 per cent allocated to level 1
- 35 per cent allocated to full level 2
- 10 per cent allocated to full level 3.

Chart 2.2: Highest level of qualification prior to FE course



⁷ Excluding those with no prior qualifications from the ‘other’ category does not have a statistically significant impact on the findings, as the proportion of learners who say they have no prior qualifications is so low (two per cent).

⁸ This is a standard procedure which has been agreed with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for the Labour Force Survey.

2.3.2 Relationship between prior qualification and level of course

We can examine the relationship between the learner’s prior qualification and the level of course being studied.

Table 2.4 shows, for each level of study, the proportion of learners whose prior qualification was lower, higher or at the same level as their course. Note that this analysis compares data from different sources: the highest level being studied by the learner is taken from the LSC administrative data, whereas the data on qualifications was provided by respondents as part of the interview⁹.

This shows that overall **21 per cent of completers had a prior qualification that was lower than the FE course** they were taking, i.e. they were aiming to “progress” their qualification level by taking the course.

Specifically:

- 43 per cent of full level 2 learners were studying for their first full level 2
- 59 per cent of full level 3 learners were studying for their first full level 3, and 29 per cent were ‘jumpers’, i.e. their prior qualification was below level 2.
- Among learners on courses below level 2, 37 per cent had a prior qualification that was also below level 2. Where learners had a higher prior qualification, they were often qualified to level 4 or above (in 40 per cent of cases where the prior qualification was higher).

Table 2.4: Proportion of learners whose prior qualification was at a higher, lower or the same level as their FE course, by level studied

	Level studied							Total
	Below level 2	Full level 2	Level 2 (not full)	Full level 3	Level 3 (not full)	Level 4+	Other	
Level of qualification at the start of the course	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Qualified at higher level	63	28	68	14	52	n/a	76	57
Qualified at same level	37	29	0	27	0	63	24	21
Qualified at lower level	n/a	43	32	59	48	37	n/a	21
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	679	568	1121	527	670	122	345	4032

⁹ The data on prior qualification includes the re-allocation of ‘other’ qualifications described in section 2.3.1. For the purposes of this analysis, a part level 2 is taken as lower than a full level 2 (similarly part level 3 is lower than full level 3). ‘Other’ courses are taken as being below level 2. Also note that where learners have a qualification below level 2 and are also studying below level 2, this is classified as studying at the “same level”, even though there may be a difference (eg qualification at level 1, course at elementary level 2); this is because there is no breakdown available below level 2.

2.4 Profile of “non-progressors”

Learners whose course was at a lower level, or the same level as their highest prior qualification can be termed “non-progressors”¹⁰. These make up 78 per cent of the total sample, and their characteristics are examined further here.

- A higher proportion of non-progressors than progressors were men (35 per cent compared with 30 per cent), although both groups were predominantly female.
- Non-progressors tended to be older than progressors (34 per cent were aged over 50). Correspondingly, non-progressors were more likely than progressors to be retired (14 per cent compared with 5 per cent).
- Non progressors were a little more likely than progressors to have a long standing illness or disability (22 per cent compared with 18 per cent). This is linked to their older age profile.
- Three in five (60 per cent) non-progressors were working at the start of their course, a similar proportion to progressors.
- Non-progressors who were working at the start of their course tended to be earning more: 16 per cent were earning at least £20,000 per year, compared with seven per cent of progressors. However, a proportion of non-progressors were on low pay (37 per cent were earning less than £10,000 per year).
- A small proportion of non-progressors were unemployed (five per cent), the proportion amongst progressors was similar.

¹⁰ It should be noted that the “non-progressor” group includes learners whose highest level of study and highest prior qualification were both below level 2 (26 per cent of the total non-progressor group). However, some of these learners may have been studying at a higher level than their prior qualification (eg studying at level 1 but qualified to elementary level 2); it is not possible to identify these learners separately. The exclusion of this 26 per cent of non-progressors does not affect the findings shown in section 2.4

2.5 Employment

2.5.1 Learners in work at the start of FE course

Overall, **59 per cent were in paid work at the start of their course**, including **32 per cent** who were **doing the course as part of a job**. Table 2.5 breaks this down according to the level studied.

One in five learners (19 per cent) who had said their course was part of a job said that it was compulsory.

Table 2.5: Whether FE course related to job doing at time, by level studied

	Level studied						
	Below level 2	Full level 2	Level 2 (not full)	Full level 3	Level 3 (not full)	Level 4+	Other
Whether course was part of a job	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	21	57	31	51	39	74	31
No (but in work)	29	19	28	18	32	16	24
No (not in work)	51	24	41	31	29	10	45
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	<i>679</i>	<i>568</i>	<i>1121</i>	<i>527</i>	<i>670</i>	<i>122</i>	<i>345</i>

The remaining 41 per cent of completers, who were not in work at the start of their FE course, break down as follows:

- Two per cent were working immediately before they started the course (ie they left work to start the course)
- A further 15 per cent had worked in the five years prior to the start of the course
- 17 per cent had not worked for at least five years prior to the course
- A further seven per cent had never been in paid work.

3 FE course details

This chapter examines the details of the original FE course. As in chapter 2, this data was collected at Wave One. Findings for respondents who were interviewed at Wave Two are included here, focusing on aspects that are used in the analysis in subsequent chapters.

3.1 Type of Course

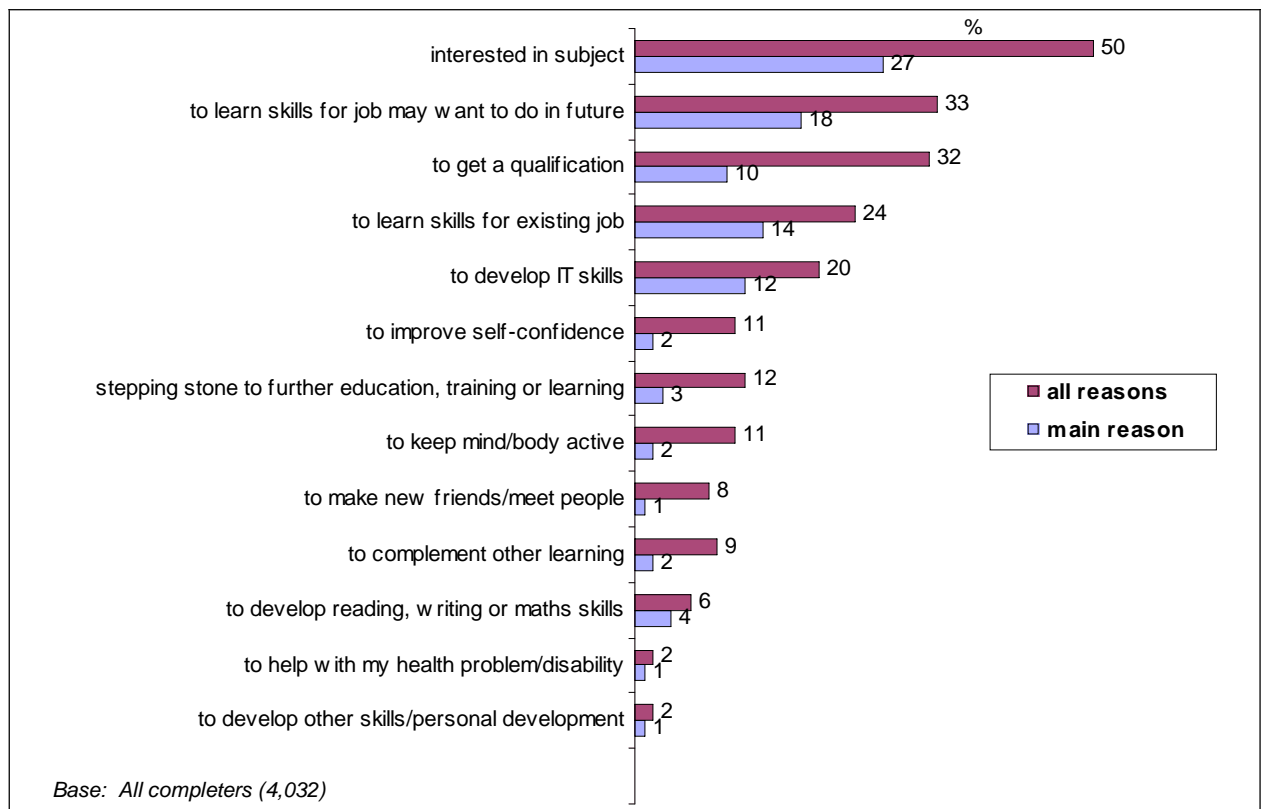
The majority of courses were part-time (87 per cent across the total sample). Learners on full-time courses comprise eight per cent studying full-time for a full year, and four per cent full-time for part of the year. Full-time courses were more common among learners studying at full level 2, full level 3 and part level 3.

As would be expected, a wide variety of subjects was being studied by FE learners. However, by far the most common subject studied was IT/computing (26 per cent).

3.2 Reasons for doing FE course

Learners were asked for the reasons they did their FE course. If more than one answer was given they were than asked for the main reason. Answers given by more than one per cent of respondents are shown in chart 3.1.

Chart 3.1: Reasons for doing FE course and main reason



A fundamental division in terms of FE learners' reasons for doing a course was whether the course was part of a job. Among those whose course was part of a job, the main reasons (other than to learn skills for that job) were to get a qualification, or to learn skills for a future job or career more generally. A third said that a reason for doing the course was interest in the subject, although this was more frequently a reason given by learners whose course was not part of their job.

3.3 Grouping learners by progression and reasons for doing the FE course

It is possible to divide learners into four separate groups, based on whether or not they aimed to progress their qualification level in their original course, and whether they were doing the course for work-related reasons (either to help them with an existing job, to help them to get a future job or help them with their career generally). This approach helps to establish a picture of different types of learners, and is also useful later in the report when we examine the benefits gained (sections 6.7 and 6.8).

The four groups are shown in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Proportions in different learner groups

Group Definition	Percentage of all completers	Percentage of completers of working age
	%	%
1: Did course for work-related reasons and to progress qualification level	19	22
2: Did course for work-related reasons, but not to progress qualification level	46	52
3: Did not do course for work-related reasons, but aimed to progress qualification level	5	4
4: Did not do course for work-related reasons or to progress qualification level	30	22
<i>Base: All completers; All completers of working age</i>	4,032	3,499

The characteristics of these four groups are as follows:

1. **Did course for work-related reasons and to progress qualification level:** 66 per cent of this group were in work at the start of the course, and they had the youngest age profile of the four groups (42 per cent were aged under 35). They had the lowest qualifications before the course (47 per cent were qualified to below level 2), and were more likely than average to be studying for a full level 2 (12 per cent), full level 3 (13 per cent) or part level 3 (31 per cent).

2. **Did course for work-related reasons, but not to progress qualification level:** 71 per cent of this group were in work at the start of the course, and received a relatively high hourly pay (23 per cent were paid £8 per hour or more during or before the course).
3. **Did not do course for work-related reasons, but aimed to progress qualification level:** just 37 per cent were working at the start of the course, while 25 per cent were retired. A relatively high proportion were qualified to below level 2 at the start of the course (39 per cent). This group were mostly studying for a part level 2 (63 per cent) or part level 3 (31 per cent).
4. **Did not do course for work-related reasons or to progress qualification level:** 33 per cent of this group were retired, with 39 per cent in work. Wage levels were relatively high (22 per cent were paid £8 per hour or more during or before the course). A high proportion (42 per cent) were qualified to level 4 or above, although the majority (62 per cent) were studying below level 2. A relatively high proportion in this group had a long-term illness or disability (29 per cent), linked to their older age profile.

It is worth noting that although the majority of learners did not take the course to raise their qualification level, 32 per cent overall said that gaining a qualification was a reason for doing the course. This indicates that gaining qualifications can be an important aspect of the course, even where the overall level is not increased.

3.4 Whether learners achieved qualifications on FE course

Virtually all completers who were studying at full level 2, full level 3, part level 3 and level 4 or above confirmed that the course was designed to lead to a qualification; this was lower among learners studying below level 2 (78 per cent), part level 2 (89 per cent) and on 'other' courses (49 per cent).

Most completers (90 per cent) also said that they had achieved the qualification (where the course was designed to lead to one), and this was similar across levels.

4 Skills and other benefits gained from the course

At Wave Two, respondents were asked the same questions they were asked at Wave One about the things they had gained from their original FE course. As well as looking at the Wave Two results in their own right, answers can be compared to Wave One answers to see whether respondents' opinions had changed over time.

At Wave Two higher proportions of respondents said they had gained each of the benefits asked about (with one exception), but the incidence of the benefits relative to one another, and the subgroup patterns remained similar. This increase between waves is therefore largely attributable to methodology¹¹ (Wave One interviews were carried out face to face and Wave Two used telephone interviewing). For example, only 39 per cent of respondents said they had gained improved or better qualifications from their original FE course at Wave One, but 61 per cent said this at Wave Two. This difference seems large, but when looked at in the context of the increase in the proportions of respondents giving other answers, the relative proportion of respondents giving this answer has remained similar.

Findings have been analysed by the reasons why respondents chose to do the course, and the things gained from the course often relate to these (for example respondents who had done a course to increase their self-confidence were most likely to say that they had gained self confidence and motivation from the course).

4.1 Gaining skills relevant to an existing job

Sections 4.1 to 4.3 focus on work related skills. These issues are picked up in more detail in sections 6.7 and 6.8, in relation to work undertaken since the FE course.

Overall 42 per cent of respondents said they had gained **skills that were relevant to a job they were doing at the time**, although this figure increases to 80 per cent when looking just at respondents who had done the course as part of a job.

Respondents whose course was part of their job and *compulsory* were more likely to say they had gained skills relevant to an existing job. Also, respondents in professional occupations and those in the education sector were more likely to say they gained skills relevant to an existing job.

¹¹ When looking at questions with answer lists from which more than one answer can be selected, higher proportions of respondents tended to select each answer using a telephone methodology compared with a face to face methodology. This is because, when using a face to face methodology, respondents were given a card with all the answers printed on and asked to select answers from the card, while using a telephone methodology, all answers are read out and the respondent is asked to say 'yes' or 'no' to each. This leads to answers being selected by a higher proportion of respondents using a telephone methodology.

Table 4.1: Proportion of learners who said they gained job-related skills relevant to an existing job, by level studied, age and whether course was compulsory

All whose course was part of a job	80		
Learners whose course was part of a job in the following sub-groups:			
Level studied		Age	
Below level 2	73	Under 25	76
Full level 2	86	25-34	76
Level 2 (not full)	78	35-49	81
Full level 3	85	50-59	85
Level 3 (not full)	84	60+	74
Level 4+	87	Whether course was compulsory	
Other	80	Yes, compulsory	86
		Not compulsory but part of a job	78
<i>Base: All completers whose course was part of a job (1,676)</i>			

4.2 Gaining skills relevant to a future job or career

Overall, a third of respondents said their course had given them skills that were **relevant to a future job or career**, and this rises to 39 per cent of those who said their main reason for doing the course was to learn skills for a job or career they may want to do in the future. Respondents who had specifically done the course to get a new job were more likely to say they had gained relevant skills.

In addition, respondents whose course was part of their job, those who had started a new job since the course, and Black and Asian respondents were more likely to say they gained skills relevant to a future job or career.

Fewer respondents said they had gained skills relevant to a future job or career at Wave Two than at Wave One. Possible reasons for this are that now it has been longer since respondents finished their FE course, more respondents had either started the future job or career they had gained skills for (and so no longer considered it a *future* job or career) or had ‘given up’ on the future job or career they were planning at Wave One, and so no longer thought the skills relevant.

Table 4.2: Proportion of learners who said they gained job-related skills relevant to a future job/career, by level studied and age

All who did the course to help them with a future job		36	
Learners who did the course to help them with a future job, in the following sub-groups:			
Level studied		Age	
Below level 2	30	Under 25	41
Full level 2	50	25-34	38
Level 2 (not full)	34	35-49	35
Full level 3	47	50-59	34
Level 3 (not full)	37	60+	18
Level 4+	51		
Other	33		

Base: All completers who did the course to help them with a future job (2,429)

4.3 Giving ideas for a career change or idea for preferred type of job

All respondents were asked whether the FE course had given them ideas for a career change or an idea of the type of job they would like to do. For 36 per cent of respondents this was the case and a further seven per cent of respondents said the course “maybe” helped in this way.

Table 4.3 shows findings by level studied, age and status at the start of the FE course. Respondents were more likely to say the course gave them ideas for a career change or preferred type of job if they had done the course to change to a different type of work (65 per cent), to get a new job (62 per cent), to set up their own business (64 per cent) or to help with work problems to do with health (61 per cent).

Respondents on more vocational courses were also more likely to say the course helped them in this way, as were learners whose FE course was aimed at a higher level than their previous qualification (49 per cent), particularly full level three ‘jumpers¹²’ (63 per cent). In addition, respondents whose course was not part of an existing job and non-White respondents were also more likely to say this.

¹² Level three jumpers are learners who lacked a level two qualification before their FE course, but gained a level three qualification from the course.

Table 4.3: Proportion of learners who said course had given them any ideas for a career change or of the type of job they would like to do, by level studied, age and status at start of FE course

Proportion of learners who said course had given them any ideas for a career change or of the type of job they would like to do			
Total	36	Age	
Level studied		Under 25	50
Below level 2	28	25-34	49
Full level 2	49	35-49	39
Level 2 (not full)	37	50-59	25
Full level 3	55	60+	10
Level 3 (not full)	47	Status at start of FE course	
Level 4+	48	In paid work	36
Other	26	Unemployed/ looking for work	47
		Looking after home	48
		Retired	9
		Other	42

Base: All completers (4,032)

4.4 Progressing in education and gaining qualifications

This section examines the extent to which learners felt the original course helped them to progress in education, specifically by:

- gaining the opportunity to progress in education/onto qualifications
- gaining improved or better qualifications
- encouraging them to do more learning.

Findings are shown in table 4.4. Findings are linked to the reason for doing the course, specifically where learners did the course as a stepping stone to further learning, to learn skills that would help them with a future job or career, or to obtain qualifications. Those studying at higher levels were also more likely to say the course helped them to progress and gain better qualifications, although findings were similar by level in terms of whether the course encouraged further learning. Learners who were likely to say they benefited in this way also included those who were unemployed, aged under 50 and Black (see table 4.4).

Groups that were more likely to say they had gained **the opportunity to progress in education or onto further qualifications** were learners studying sciences, maths, English or languages and lone parents. In addition, respondents who had done the course to improve self-confidence were more likely to say the course had allowed them to progress in this way.

Overall, 61 per cent said the course had enabled them to **gain better qualifications**. Looking at subgroups: people whose course was part of their job were more likely than average to say the course had helped them by giving them a qualification, as were respondents who had moved jobs since the course.

Most (81 per cent) learners who had completed their course said the experience had **encouraged them to do more learning**. Learners who had done the course to improve their self confidence were particularly likely to say this. In addition, respondents who had done the course to develop their reading, writing or maths skills were also more likely than average to say the course had encouraged them to do further learning.

Learners studying at level four or above were less likely to say the course encouraged them to do further learning. This reflects the fact that people doing the course as part of a job were also less likely to say this (76 per cent). The subject of the course also had an effect on whether it encouraged further learning. Figures were highest among learners who studied English language or communications, ESOL, humanities, sciences and arts and crafts.

Table 4.4: Proportion of learners who said course had helped them to progress in education/ qualifications, by key sub-groups

	Gained opportunity to progress in education/ onto qualifications	Gained improved/ better qualifications	Encouraged me to do more learning
	%	%	%
Total	54	61	81
Level studied			
Below level 2	48	56	82
Full level 2	70	76	79
Level 2 (not full)	55	62	81
Full level 3	73	75	82
Level 3 (not full)	66	72	83
Level 4+	73	79	74
Other	36	37	78
Age			
Under 25	73	73	83
25-34	64	71	83
35-49	57	67	80
50-59	46	51	79
60+	31	32	84
Status at start of FE course			
In paid work	56	63	79
Unemployed/ looking for work	60	71	87
Looking after home	63	70	88
Retired	28	27	83
Other	63	67	84
Ethnicity			
White	53	58	80
Asian	64	73	87
Black	71	81	93
Other	58	67	85
Main reason for doing course			
As stepping stone to further learning	82	84	88
To give skills for future job/career	67	76	84
Obtain qualifications	70	76	79

Base: All completers (4,032)

4.4.1 Comparisons by whether or not respondents had progressed their qualification

As one would expect, learners whose original course was at a higher level than their prior qualification were more likely than other learners to say they had gained the opportunity to progress in education, as well as gaining better qualifications, and they had felt encouraged to do more learning as a result of their original FE course. More specifically, first full level two learners, as well as first full level three learners

and level three jumpers, were more likely to mention most of these measures. These results are shown in table 4.5.

It is worth noting that a substantial proportion (57 per cent) of those who were not studying at a higher level than their previous qualification said they had gained better qualifications. This confirms that learners do not necessarily perceive better qualifications as moving up a level.

Table 4.5: Proportion of learners who said course had helped them to progress in education/ qualifications, by whether learners had progressed their qualification

	Gained opportunity to progress in education/onto qualifications	Gained improved/better qualifications	Encouraged me to do more learning
	%	%	%
Total	54	61	81
Original FE course higher than prior qualification (1386)	68	74	86
First full level two learners (306)	72	80	81
First full level three learners (319)	73	77	86
Level three jumpers (189)	74	79	86
Original FE course lower/same level as prior qualification (1386)	50	57	80

Base: variable

4.5 Improving skills

Almost all (95 per cent) respondents said the course had **improved their knowledge or skills** in the subject, and this was consistent across most subgroups. However, respondents whose course was compulsory were less likely to say the course had improved their knowledge or skills (89 per cent).

The proportion of learners who said the course had **taught them new skills** was higher amongst respondents who had done a course in IT or hairdressing/beauty, as well as learners who had taken the course to improve their IT skills.

The questionnaire also examined **specific skills**, and answers were closely linked to the courses being undertaken. For example, those who said they had gained literacy skills were generally those on English, ESOL or basic skills courses, and consequently learners studying – and qualified - at lower levels. Overall, 42 per cent said that they gained literacy skills from their course, 32 per cent numeracy skills, and 45 per cent IT skills.

Learners who said that they had gained **problem solving skills** and **team working skills** were more likely than average to be on vocational courses related to a job they were doing. Team working skills were also most frequently mentioned by younger learners (73 per cent aged under 25), and the same trend was apparent for problem solving skills (69 per cent aged under 25).

Respondents from non-White ethnic backgrounds were also more likely to say they had gained problem solving skills (68 per cent) and team working skills (76 per cent).

Table 4.6 shows findings analysed by the level studied. In addition, learners who were studying at a higher level than their prior qualification were more likely to mention literacy, numeracy, problem-solving and team working skills. In particular:

- First full level 2 learners were more likely (than others studying at full level 2) to mention literacy, numeracy, problem solving and team working skills
- First full level 3 learners were more likely (than others studying at full level 3) to mention literacy, IT, problem solving and team working skills. Full level 3 jumpers were also more likely to mention literacy, IT problem solving and team working skills.

Table 4.6: Whether FE course has taught new skills, by level studied

	Level studied						
	Below level 2	Full level 2	Level 2 (not full)	Full level 3	Level 3 (not full)	Level 4+	Other
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Taught new skills	89	80	88	86	88	87	75
Improved my knowledge/skills in the subject	93	96	96	96	96	94	96
Gained literacy skills	39	47	42	58	48	42	33
Gained numeracy skills	29	44	36	51	33	30	16
Gained IT skills	49	36	47	60	43	40	22
Gained problem solving skills	55	67	57	73	60	68	50
Gained team working skills	52	75	50	79	62	76	52
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	<i>679</i>	<i>568</i>	<i>1,121</i>	<i>527</i>	<i>670</i>	<i>122</i>	<i>345</i>

4.6 Self-esteem and confidence

Increasing self-esteem and confidence are often strong motivations to do an FE course, and this is reflected in the high proportions of respondents who said that the course helped them in this way. Findings are shown in table 4.7, analysed by level studied.

Most (78 per cent) respondents said they gained **self-confidence or motivation** from the course, and this was higher amongst learners studying hairdressing/beauty

therapy, performing arts, literacy/numeracy/basic skills, English or languages.

Among respondents who said they did the course to improve their self-confidence, 89 per cent said they did gain self-confidence and motivation, and 93 per cent said the course **made them feel better about themselves generally** (mentioned by 82 per cent overall). This was also more likely to be mentioned by respondents who did ESOL courses, and therefore those who were qualified at below level 2 before the course, and those in non-White ethnic groups.

In addition, being made to “feel better about themselves generally” was also more likely to be mentioned by learners who had done a course in arts and crafts, or health and fitness.

Two-thirds (67 per cent) said that the course **gave them confidence socially**, and three in ten (29 per cent) said that the course helped them to **deal with personal problems**. On these two items, sub-group patterns were similar to those saying that the course made them feel better about themselves.

Seven in ten (70 per cent) said they had gained **personal or social skills** from the course. This was consistent by level and demographic subgroups but was concentrated in particular subjects:

- Foreign languages, English language and communications, health/fitness and hairdressing/beauty.

The reason respondents did the course made a difference here. Gaining personal or social skills was more likely to be cited by those who had done the course because of interest in the subject (75 per cent) and those who did the course to make new friends or meet new people (84 per cent).

Most respondents (83 per cent) said the course **made them feel they were better at doing things**. Findings did not vary dramatically by course subject, but were higher in some practical and vocational subjects, such as IT, hairdressing/beauty therapy and health/fitness.

Course subject did not have a significant effect on the proportions of respondents who said they had gained the **confidence to tackle more things** (79 per cent), or that the course **gave them the sense they had more opportunities** (76 per cent). Respondents were more likely to say the course gave them the sense they had more opportunities or made them feel they were better at doing things if they had done the course to develop reading, writing or maths skills, or to improve self-confidence.

Just under half (46 per cent) of respondents said the course helped to **get them the services they needed**. This was consistent by most sub-groups, but was higher

amongst respondents who had taken ESOL or IT courses.

Table 4.7: Whether FE course has increases self-esteem and confidence, by level studied

	Level studied						
	Below level 2	Full level 2	Level 2 (not full)	Full level 3	Level 3 (not full)	Level 4+	Other
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gained personal/social skills	73	66	68	75	69	63	68
Gained self-confidence and motivation	79	79	77	84	79	80	73
Made me feel better about myself generally	82	83	84	82	82	77	75
Made me feel that I'm better at doing things	84	85	84	87	82	84	75
Gave me confidence socially	68	69	66	70	70	53	63
Gave me confidence to tackle more things	77	83	81	85	83	76	72
Helped me to deal with personal problems	31	33	28	34	29	17	26
Helped me to get the services I need	46	55	48	58	46	37	32
Gave me sense that I have more opportunities	73	84	77	87	82	84	62
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	<i>679</i>	<i>568</i>	<i>1,121</i>	<i>527</i>	<i>670</i>	<i>122</i>	<i>345</i>

Learners whose prior qualification was lower than their course were more likely to mention the various items, and this also applied specifically to first full level 2 and first full level 3 learners, level 3 jumpers and those studying below level 2 whose prior qualification was also below level 2.

Lone parents were more likely than average to mention certain benefits: feeling better about themselves generally, gaining confidence socially, feeling better at doing things, and gaining the sense of having more opportunities.

4.7 Network and community skills, and improving health

A wider group of impacts was also examined, covering network and community skills, and improved health. Findings are shown in table 4.8, analysed by level of course studied. As with other impacts, they were mentioned by more people at Wave Two than at Wave One (and this change can be at least partly attributed to the change in methodology).

Around three-quarters (77 per cent) of respondents said that the course had helped them to **make new friends or meet new people**, and this increased to 91 per cent of respondents who had done the course for this reason. Figures were also higher for certain subjects: foreign languages, arts and crafts, humanities, sciences and hairdressing/beauty therapy. Learners whose course was at a higher level than their previous qualifications were also more likely to say this, specifically first full level three learners and level three jumpers.

Two-thirds (67 per cent) of learners said their course **gave them something useful to do in their spare time**. This was highest amongst retired people (82 per cent) and respondents who were looking after the home or family (83 per cent). This was

also more likely amongst learners who had done the course out of interest in the subject, and those who had studied foreign languages, arts and crafts, sports/leisure or arts/media.

Just over a third (36 per cent) of respondents said the course **helped them to keep their body active**, but respondents who said they had done the course to keep their mind or body active were no more likely than average to say the course had done this. Those who had done the course to help with a health problem or disability, however, were more likely to say this. Those who had done courses in health/fitness or sports/leisure were more likely to say this.

A fairly small proportion (16 per cent) of respondents said their course had **helped them with a health problem or disability**, and this applied to 35 per cent with a long-term illness or disability, and more specifically 39 per cent with an illness or disability that affected the type or amount of work they could do. Learners who did the course to help with a health problem or disability were also more likely to say the course had done this (54 per cent). It was courses related to health and fitness or basic skills that were most likely to help in this way. Respondents with a long-term illness or disability were also more likely to say that the course helped them to make new friends/meet new people and to do something useful in their spare time.

A third (32 per cent) of learners said that the course **encouraged them to take part in voluntary or community activities**. The subjects where respondents were likely to say this were care work, health/social care, classroom assistance and hospitality/sports/leisure, indicating that some respondents were referring to work in the community (including as part of a job) rather than voluntary activities. In addition, respondents who had studied English/languages and particularly ESOL, were much more likely to say the course encouraged them to take part in voluntary or community activities.

Amongst people with financially dependent children living in the household, half (49 per cent) said the course **enabled them to help their children with their schoolwork**. This was higher among people who were not working. The subjects where respondents were likely to say this were generally those that were relevant to school subjects: maths, English, basic skills, ESOL and IT. In addition, this was more common amongst learners who did the course to develop reading/writing/maths skills or to improve self-confidence.

Table 4.8: Whether FE course has helped with network and community skills, and improving health, by level studied

	Level studied						
	Below level 2	Full level 2	Level 2 (not full)	Full level 3	Level 3 (not full)	Level 4+	Other
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Encouraged me to take part in voluntary or community activities	35	36	32	32	28	18	30
Helped me to make new friends/meet new people	77	73	74	85	83	78	71
Enabled me to help my child(ren) with their school work	54	36	54	44	42	31	41
Helped me to do something useful with my spare time	74	54	69	57	64	37	62
Helped me to keep my body active	38	48	34	41	32	16	39
Helped me with me health problems/disability	19	18	15	14	13	2	18
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	679	568	1,121	527	670	122	345

Note: figures for helping children with school work based on respondents with children aged under 18

4.8 Summary by level

This section summarises the detailed findings above according to the level studied, by showing items most frequently mentioned at any of the questions in this chapter. Learners of all levels were likely to say the course improved their knowledge or skills in the subject and taught them new skills. Table 4.9 below excludes these items, and shows the other items that were most frequently mentioned. This table shows a greater consistency across levels than was the case at Wave One.

Table 4.9: Summary of benefits gained from course, by level studied

Level	Factors mentioned most frequently
Below level 2	Made me feel better at doing things (84 per cent), made me feel better about myself generally (82 per cent), encouraged me to do more learning (82 per cent), gained self-confidence and motivation (79 per cent)
Full level 2	Made me feel better at doing things (85 per cent), gave a sense of having more opportunities (84 per cent), made me feel better about myself generally (83 per cent), gave me the confidence to tackle more things (83 per cent)
Level 2 (not full)	Made me feel better at doing things (85 per cent), made me feel better about myself generally (84 per cent), gave me the confidence to tackle more things (81 per cent), encouraged to do more learning (81 per cent)
Full level 3	Gave a sense of having more opportunities (87 per cent), made me feel better at doing things (87 per cent), gave me the confidence to tackle more things (85 per cent), made new friends/met people (85 per cent)
Level 3 (not full)	Gave me the confidence to tackle more things (83 per cent), encouraged me to do more learning (83 per cent), made new friends/met people (83 per cent)
Level 4+	Gave a sense of having more opportunities (84 per cent), made me feel better at doing things (84 per cent), gained job-related skills for existing job (81 per cent), gained self-confidence and motivation (80 per cent)
Other	Encouraged me to do more learning (78 per cent), made me feel better at doing things (75 per cent), made me feel better about myself generally (75 per cent), gained self-confidence and motivation (73 per cent)

Looking only at *skills* gained from the course rather than benefits in general, there were some differences between levels:

- Learners who had done full level three courses were particularly likely to have gained literacy skills (58 per cent), numeracy skills (51 per cent) and IT skills (60 per cent).
- Learners whose FE course was at full level two, full level three or level four or above were more likely than learners on lower or part level courses to have gained problem solving skills and team working skills.

5 Further learning and qualifications since the FE course

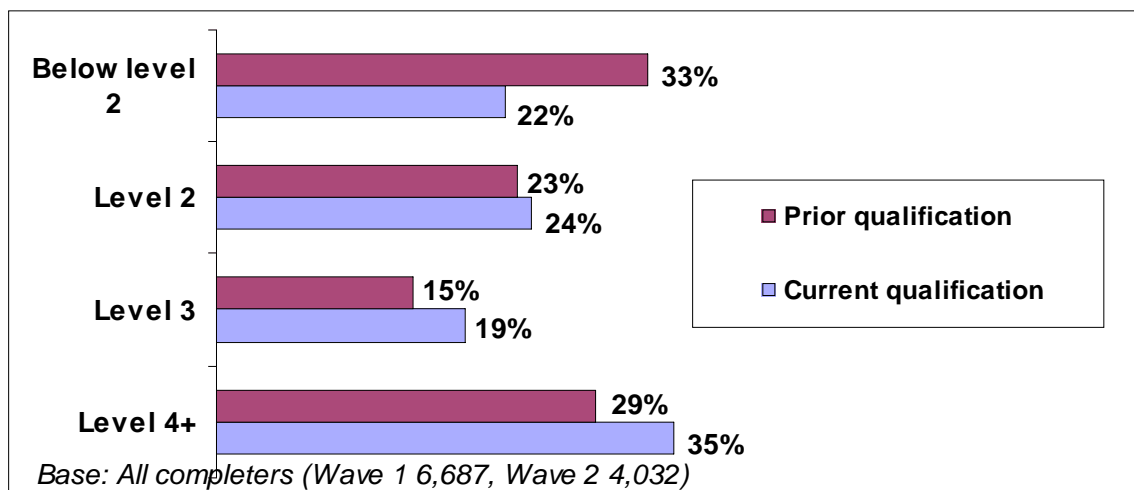
This chapter examines current qualifications and further learning undertaken following the original FE course. This takes into account the further learning started up to the time of the Wave Two survey, typically between 19 and 25 months after the end of the FE course.

5.1 Current qualifications

5.1.1 Whether highest level of qualification had increased

Chart 5.1 shows the highest level attained by the time of the Wave Two survey (“current qualification”) compared to the highest level of qualification held prior to the FE course (“prior qualification”).¹³ Since the start of the course, the proportion of learners qualified to below level 2 had fallen and the proportion qualified to level 3 or above had risen¹⁴.

Chart 5.1: Highest qualification held



Whilst this comparison indicates the overall profile of highest qualifications held by the FE learner population, it does not provide the full picture in terms of progression. In order to look at this it is necessary to examine each individual learner’s level of highest qualification at the time of the interview compared to prior to their FE course.

¹³ The data on prior qualification includes the re-allocation of ‘other’ qualifications described in section 2.3.1

¹⁴ This analysis is based on the respondent’s *perceived* highest qualification both at the start of their course and at the time of the Wave Two interview. The results should therefore be treated with a degree of caution.

By the time of the Wave Two interview, **a quarter of learners (24 per cent) held a higher qualification than they did at the start of their original FE course.**¹⁵

Chart 5.2 shows the proportion of learners who had increased their level of qualification, broken down by the level that they had attained.

As expected, it was those who progressed on the original FE course who were most likely to have increased their level of qualification (in 55 per cent of cases). However, other learners had also increased their qualification level by the Wave Two interview through additional learning and we will move on to look at this in more detail in the next section.

Chart 5.2: Percentage who had increased their level of qualification since the start of their FE course, including the level attained

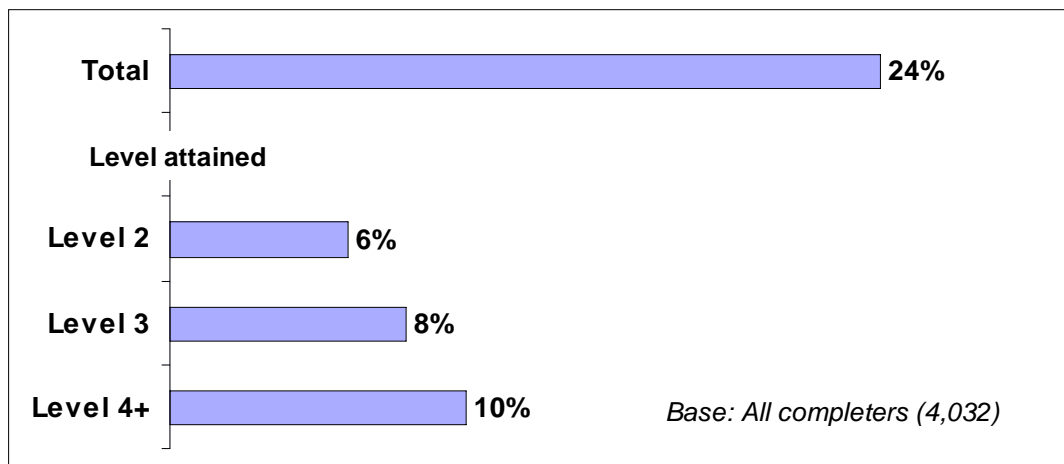


Table 5.1 shows that those who originally studied at **full level 2 or 3** (particularly those who were doing their first full level 2 or 3) were more likely than those who studied at other levels to have **increased their level of qualification** since the start of their course. This ties in with the results shown earlier, as those who studied at these levels were more likely than average to have been progressing.

¹⁵ This figure should be treated with caution as it relies on the accuracy of the responses provided by respondents. It is clear that some find the qualifications system confusing. For example, nine per cent of learners said their current qualification was *lower* than their prior qualification, which demonstrates that people are not always sure what their highest qualification is.

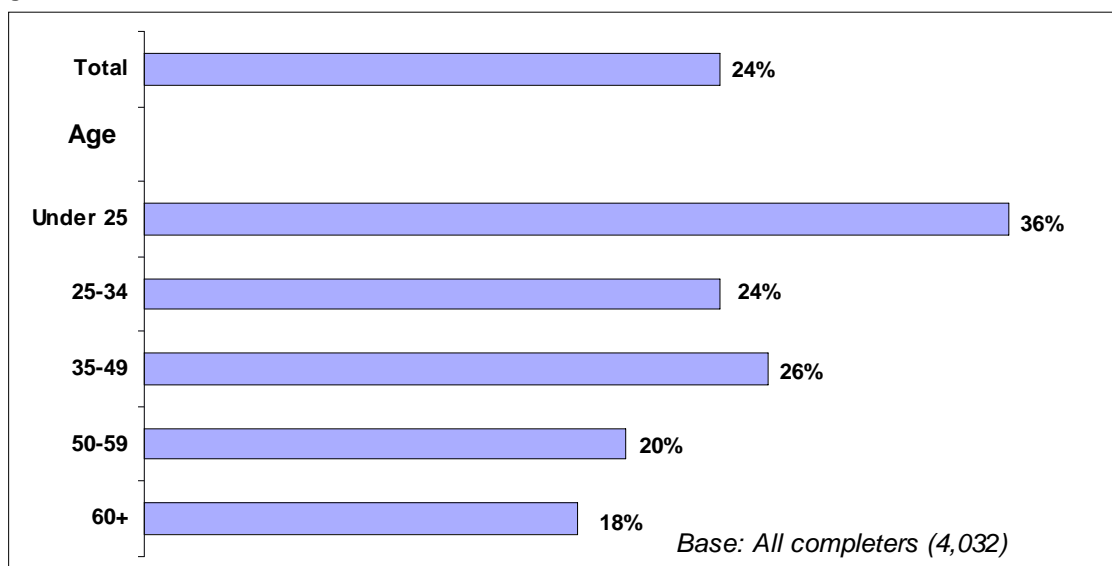
Table 5.1: Percentage who had increased their level of qualification since the start of their FE course, by level studied and within this, whether progressor or not

	Level studied							Total
	Below level 2	Full level 2	Level 2 (not full)	Full level 3	Level 3 (not full)	Level 4+	Other	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Increased level of qualification	19	48	22	50	30	29	19	24
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	679	568	1121	527	670	122	345	4,032

	Below level 2		Full level 2		Full level 3		Total
	Higher prior qualification	No higher prior qualification	First full level 2	Other full level 2	First full level 3	Full level 3 jumper	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Increased level of qualification	10	28	77	13	76	87	24
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	386	293	306	262	319	182	4,032

No difference was noted between men and women in terms of likelihood to have increased their level of qualification since the start of their FE course. There was also no difference in terms of ethnicity or whether or not the learner had a long-term illness or disability. Differences were noted however in terms of age, as shown in chart 5.3: **younger learners** were more likely than older learners to have increased their highest level of qualification since the start of their course. This follows on from younger learners being more likely to have progressed on the original FE course than older learners.

Chart 5.3: Percentage who had increased their level of qualification since the start of their FE course, by age



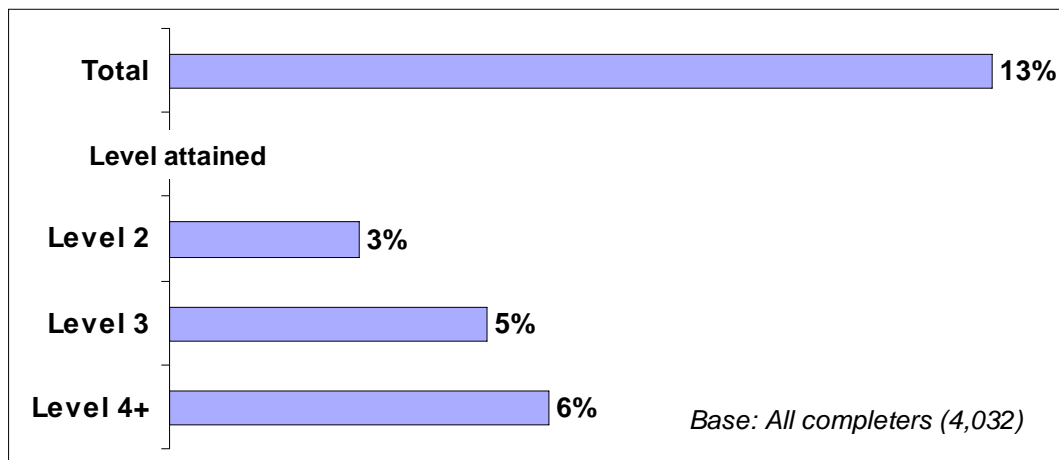
5.1.2 Whether highest level of qualification had increased as result of further learning

Given that we know learners' levels of current and prior qualification, their highest level of original FE study and whether they had gone on to do any further study, we can examine those who had increased their level of qualification to try to establish the cause of this. In order to do this we need to make the following assumptions for those who had **gone on to do further study**:

- if their current qualification level is the *same* as their original level of FE study, then their increase in level of qualification is a result of their *original FE course*;
- if their current qualification is *higher* than their original level of FE study, then their increase in level of qualification is a result of their *further study*.

On the basis of the assumptions above, around **one in eight (13 per cent)¹⁶ of learners appeared to have increased their level of qualification as a result of further learning**. Chart 5.4 shows the proportion of learners who increased their level of qualification, broken down by the level that they had attained.

Chart 5.4: Percentage who had increased their level of qualification through further learning, including the level attained



Those who originally studied at **full level 2** and **part level 3** were most likely to have gone on to increase their level of qualification following their FE course through

¹⁶ The reliability of this analysis is dependent on the answers given by respondents with regard to their highest qualification and there is clearly some confusion in this area. For example eight per cent of learners said their highest level of qualification had increased, but it was not clear why. Most of these were non-progressors (in terms of their original course) who had not done further study, or were progressors (in terms of their original course) who had not done further study but reported higher current qualifications than their original course.

further study (table 5.2), along with those who **originally studied at below level 2 and had no higher prior qualification** and those who **originally studied for their first full level 2**.

Table 5.2: Percentage who had increased their level of qualification through further study, by original level studied and within this, whether progressed on original course or not

	Original level studied							Total
	Below level 2	Full level 2	Level 2 (not full)	Full level 3	Level 3 (not full)	Level 4+	Other	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Increased level of qualification due to further learning	12	17	14	11	19	0	13	13
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	679	568	1121	527	670	122	345	4,032
	Below level 2		Full level 2		Full level 3		Total	
	Higher prior qualification	No higher prior qualification	First full level 2	Other full level 2	First full level 3	Full level 3 jumper		
	%	%	%	%	%	%		
Increased level of qualification due to further learning	6	17	23	9	13	16	13	
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	386	293	306	262	319	182	4,032	

It is not possible to analyse these sub-groups further given the small base sizes involved, but other sub-groups more likely than average to have increased their level of qualification as a result of further study are:

- Learners who had **originally studied care** (23 per cent), **health and fitness/yoga and meditation** (23 per cent), **health/social care and public services** (18 per cent), **humanities** (23 per cent) and **science** (27 per cent);
- Those with **lower prior qualifications** (25 per cent of those whose highest prior qualification was below level 2);
- Those aged **under 25** (19 per cent).

As table 5.3 shows, it was those who did their *original* FE course to progress their level of qualification who were most likely to go on to progress *following* their FE course. Those who were not doing their original FE course to progress their level of qualification (“non-progressors”) were less likely to do so, but nevertheless some did (6 per cent of those with a higher prior qualification than their original FE course and 16 per cent of those with the same level of prior qualification as their original FE course).

Table 5.3: Percentage who had increased their level of qualification through further study, by whether progressed on the original FE course or not

	Whether progressed on original FE course			Total
	Non-progressor		Progressor	
	Prior qualification higher than original course	Prior qualification same as original course		
	%	%	%	%
Increased level of qualification due to further learning	6	16	27	13
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	1,906	740	1,386	4,032

Compared to other non-progressors, non-progressors who went on to increase their level of qualification through further learning were *more likely* to:

- have **originally studied for a BTEC** (4 vs. 1 per cent) or **RSA/OCR** (10 vs. 6 per cent);
- have **originally studied to learn skills for a job they had at the time** (21 vs. 13 per cent);
- have **originally studied at low levels** (64 vs. 50 per cent below level 2 and 15 vs. 10 per cent 'other');
- have **low prior qualifications** (27 vs. 11 per cent below level 2, 21 vs. 14 per cent full level 2 and 31 vs. 17 per cent 'other');
- be **under 25** (12 vs. 8 per cent) and **White** (90 vs. 84 per cent).

And were *less likely* to:

- have **originally studied at part level 2 or 3** (11 vs. 21 per cent and 5 vs. 11 per cent respectively);
- be **25-34 years old** (14 vs. 21 per cent);
- have **originally studied ESOL** (0 vs. 4 per cent).

It is worth noting that there is not necessarily a link between the original FE course and the further learning that learners went on to do. However this does seem to be the case for some, with one in ten (11 per cent) of non-progressors who went on to increase their qualification through further study saying that they had done their original course as a stepping stone to further learning or training.

5.2 Further learning undertaken since FE course ended

The Wave One report gave an early indication of any further study undertaken by learners following the end of their main original FE course. However, for some learners the Wave One interview was carried out just seven months after the end of

their original course. Many may have been intending to do more learning, but may have not had chance to enrol on a course by that time. Similarly, many of those who *had* started further courses were still on them at the time of the interview. This section covers any further learning started following the end of the main original FE course up to the time of the Wave Two survey, and therefore provides a longer term picture of the issues covered in the Wave One report.

5.2.1 Whether went on to start any further learning

The proportion of learners who had started further study since completing their main original FE course rose from 50 per cent at the time of the Wave One interview to 63 per cent at the Wave Two interview.

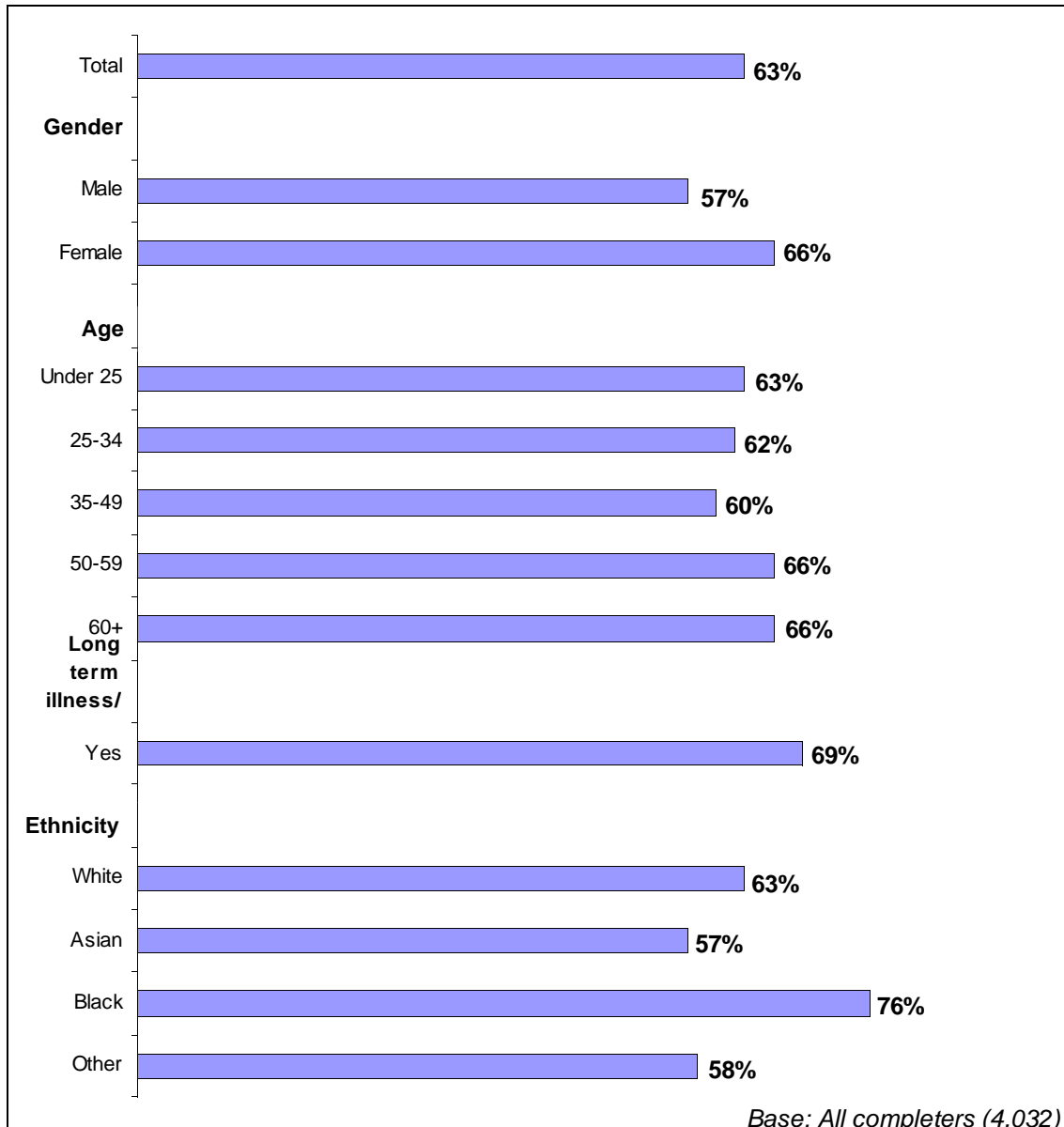
Among those whose **main reason for studying originally had been as a stepping stone to further learning**, most but not all (81 per cent) had started further learning by the time of the Wave Two interview.

In terms of the economic activity of the learner at the start of their original FE course, those who were **working** were less likely than average to have gone on to do a further course and connected with this, so were those whose **main original FE course was part of their job** (60 and 58 per cent respectively vs. 63 per cent on average). Conversely, those who were not working at the start of their original FE course, in particular those who were **retired** or **looking after the family/home** were more likely than average to have done further learning (69 and 70 per cent respectively vs. 63 per cent on average).

Other sub-group differences are shown in chart 5.5:

- **Female learners** were more likely than male learners to have started further learning after completing their main original FE course. In terms of age, it was **learners aged 50 or over** who were most likely to have done so. This can be linked to economic status at the start of the original FE course, as women were far more likely than men to be **looking after the family/home** and older learners were obviously more likely than younger learners to be **retired**; both of these two groups were more likely than average to have gone on to start further learning.
- Others more likely than average to have gone on to do further study were those with **long-term illnesses or disabilities** and **Black learners**. In contrast, **Asian learners** were less likely to have done so.

Chart 5.5: Percentage that had started further learning, by gender, age, illness/disability and ethnicity



Analysing by whether learners were progressing on their original FE course or not reveals no difference in terms of likelihood to have gone on to start further study. However, table 5.4 shows that differences can be noted in terms **level of original FE study**: those who originally did ‘other’ courses were most likely to have gone on to do further learning by the time of the Wave Two interview, while those who originally studied at **full level 2 or 3** were least likely. This ties in with age, in that those who originally did ‘other’ courses tended to be older than average, and older learners were more likely to have done further learning.

Table 5.4: Percentage that had started further learning, by original level studied

	Level studied						Total	
	Below level 2	Full level 2	Level 2 (not full)	Full level 3	Level 3 (not full)	Level 4+		Other
	%	%	%	%	%	%		%
Done further learning	61	56	62	57	66	64	73	63
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	679	568	1121	527	670	122	345	4,032

Differences can also be noted in terms of **main original FE subject studied**. Those who originally studied the following subjects were more likely than average to have gone on to do further learning:

- *Arts and crafts (73 per cent), foreign languages (71 per cent), humanities (72 per cent), mathematics (76 per cent) and sciences (86 per cent).*

Those who studied vocational subjects were less likely than average, specifically:

- *Engineering/technology/manufacturing (48 per cent), hospitality/sports/leisure/travel (49 per cent), IT/computers (58 per cent), classroom assistant (55 per cent) and construction (51 per cent).*

We can also examine the findings by whether learners said they were *likely* to do further learning at the Wave One interview (table 5.5). In terms of predicting actual participation it is most sensible to focus on respondents who said that they were ‘very likely’ to do further learning in the next two years. Among those that said this at Wave One, just under half had gone on start further learning by the time of the Wave Two interview (typically one year on). It is hardly surprising that learners who said they were ‘not very’ or ‘not at all’ likely to do further study were less likely than average to have started any further learning. It is interesting however that 12 and 17 per cent of these groups respectively *had* gone onto further study.

Table 5.5: Percentage that had started further learning (since Wave One interview), by likelihood of doing further learning in the two years following the Wave One interview

	Likelihood of doing further learning in next two years					Total
	Very likely	Quite likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	
	%	%	%	%	%	
Done further learning	44	27	16	12	17	32
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	1,915	1,129	293	383	219	4,032

5.2.2 Whether main further course was designed to lead to a qualification

The remainder of this chapter looks in more detail at the learners who went onto further learning following their original FE course.

Among those who had gone on to further study, **if the original course involved a qualification, it was likely that the later course would do so as well** (table 5.6)¹⁷. Similarly, those who had *not* originally studied for a qualification were less likely to do so on the additional course; however, a third did study for a qualification in the additional course despite not doing so originally.

Compared to those who had gone on to further study as a whole, this group (i.e. the 36 per cent that had not *originally* studied for a qualification but had gone on to do *further* study involving a qualification) were more likely to have originally studied below level 2 (or 'other'). They also had a predominantly young age profile (84 per cent were aged under 35). In terms of original subject studied, they were more likely to have been studying fashion / textiles and foreign languages.

Table 5.6: Whether further course was designed to lead to qualification, by whether original FE course was

	Main original FE course designed to lead to qualification		Total
	Yes	No	
Main further course designed to lead to qualification	%	%	%
Yes	86	36	78
No	13	62	21
<i>Base: All completers who went on to do further study (2,581)</i>	2,231	336	2,581

The overall pattern noted above is confirmed by the findings in chart 5.6. This shows a comparison of the further course with the original FE course, in terms of whether the course was designed to lead to a qualification. This shows that overall, and among learner sub-groups, **the proportions on courses leading to a qualification were similar between the original and further course**. Overall, a slightly lower proportion of further courses led to a qualification, compared with original FE courses. However, this is not surprising given that the original courses were all LSC-funded FE courses, whereas the further courses could be any "education or training courses" undertaken subsequently.

Sub-group patterns were as follows:

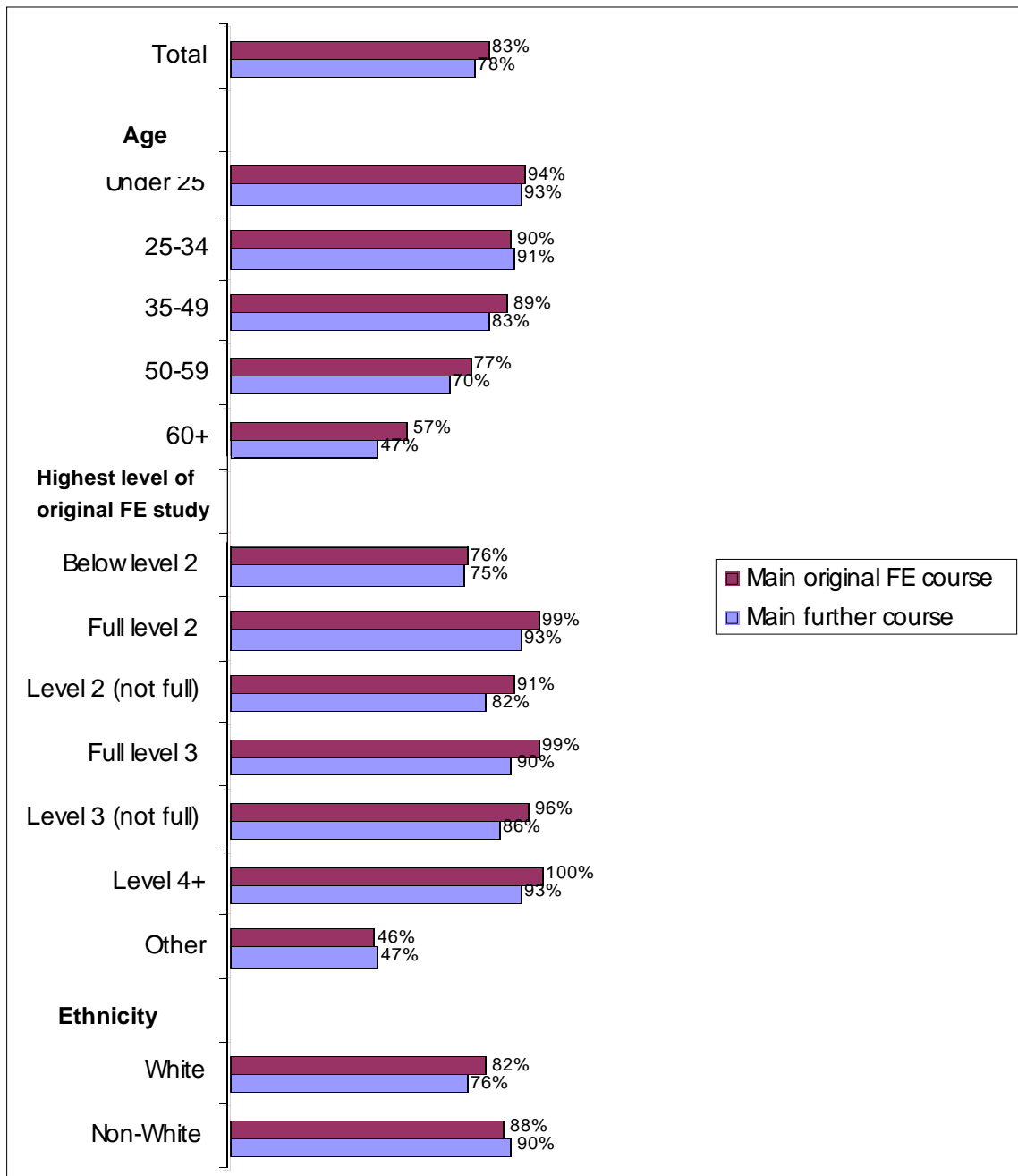
- No differences were noted by gender, but participation in courses designed to lead towards a qualification fell with **age**, and this was more extreme for further courses than for the original course.
- Those who had **originally studied at full level 2, full level 3 or level 4 or above** were most likely to have done further courses designed to lead to a qualification, as was the case for the original course.

¹⁷ If learners had started more than one further course they were asked about the course they felt was most important. Additionally, for those who had started further courses both by the time of the Wave One and Wave Two interview, the analysis is based on the most recent main course they told us about. For both of these reasons the analysis may not be based on the highest level course they went on to do.

- In terms of ethnicity, **White learners** were less likely than non-White learners to have done courses designed to lead to a qualification, and the difference was more extreme for further courses than the original course.

In addition, learners who **progressed on their original FE course** were more likely than average to have been doing a course designed to lead to a qualification, both in terms of their main original and main further course (94 and 87 per cent respectively).

Chart 5.6: Percentage whose course was designed to lead to a qualification, by age, original level studied and ethnicity



5.2.3 Whether learners achieved qualification on further course

The majority (89 per cent) of those who had completed their further course said that they had achieved the qualification (where the course was designed to lead to one). In terms of *original* level studied, the proportion achieving the qualification on their further course was slightly higher among those who studied at **full level 2 and 3**, and slightly lower among those who studied at **level 4 or above** (table 5.7).

Table 5.7: Percentage that achieved the qualification on their further course, by original level studied

	Level studied						Other	Total
	Below level 2	Full level 2	Level 2 (not full)	Full level 3	Level 3 (not full)	Level 4+		
	%	%	%	%	%	%		
Achieved qualification	89	94	88	92	87	<u>83</u>	87	88
	206	189	403	144	211	41*	78	1,272

Base: All who had completed their further course and it had been designed to lead to a qualification (1,272)

*caution: low base

Among those who had originally studied at full level 2 and 3, those who were studying for their *first* full level 2 or 3 were most likely to have achieved the qualification on their further course. Otherwise, there were no differences in terms of the relationship between original level studied and prior qualification.

5.2.4 Whether paid for main further course

Those who had started a further course were asked whether they paid for all or part of the course fees.¹⁸ Around half did not pay anything, whilst those who did pay were most likely to say they paid for all of the fees as opposed to just part of them (table 5.8).¹⁹

Learners were **more likely to have paid** for their further course if they had **also paid for their original FE course** (69 per cent compared with 27 per cent of those who did not pay for their original course). A detailed comparison of the further and original courses is shown in table 5.8.

¹⁸ This question was only asked at Wave Two and as such the results are only based on those who had started a further course following the Wave One interview.

¹⁹ These findings are based on respondent perception of whether they paid for all or part of their course fees. It may be that in some cases, respondents believed they had paid all of the fees when in fact they had only paid part of them, as they were unaware their course was subsidised.

Table 5.8: Whether paid for further course, by whether paid for original course

	Whether paid for original FE course			Total
	Paid for all of it	Paid for part of it	Did not pay	
Whether paid for further course	%	%	%	%
Paid for all of it	62	28	16	32
Paid for part of it	9	35	11	14
Did not pay	28	37	73	53
<i>Base: All completers who had started a further course since the wave 1 interview (1,320)</i>	430	175	708	1,320

Sub-group patterns were also similar between the original and further courses:

- Learners who originally **studied at a lower level** than their prior qualification were more likely to have paid for their further course (53 per cent compared with 39 per cent of other learners). This was particularly the case for learners who originally studied at below level 2 (56 per cent compared with 38 per cent).
- **First full level 2 learners** were less likely to have made a financial contribution to their further course fees than other full level 2 learners (29 per cent compared with 42 per cent). However, in contrast to the original FE course, there was no significant difference in terms of likelihood to pay between first and other full level 3 learners.

Related to this, learners were more likely to have made a financial contribution towards their further course fees if they were **retired** at the start of their original FE course (81 per cent) or working but not doing the course as part of a job (62 per cent).

Learners *less likely* to have paid for further courses were:

- Those who originally studied at full level 2, full level 3 or level 4+.

Table 5.9: Whether paid for further course, by original level studied, whether progressed on original course or not and status at start of original course

	Original level studied						Other
	Below level 2	Full Level 2	Level 2, not full	Full level 3	Level 3, not full	Level 4+	
Whether paid for further course	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Paid for all of it	30	27	32	31	33	16	47
Paid for part of it	17	8	11	4	12	8	17
Did not pay	52	65	56	65	55	76	35
<i>Base: All completers who had started a further course since the wave 1 interview (1,320)</i>	210	168	382	143	222	43*	152

	Whether progressed on original FE course				
	Non-progressor		Progressor		Total
	Prior qualification same as original course	Prior qualification higher than original course			
	%	%	%	%	
Whether paid for further course					
Paid for all of it	22	40	26	32	
Paid for part of it	20	13	9	14	
Did not pay	57	46	64	53	
<i>Base: All completers who had started a further course since the wave 1 interview (1,320)</i>	223	641	456	1,320	

	Status at start of FE course				
	In paid work	Unemployed/looking for work	Looking after home	Retired	Other
	%	%	%	%	%
Whether paid for further course					
Paid for all of it	33	19	19	57	25
Paid for part of it	10	21	15	24	17
Did not pay	57	60	66	18	55
<i>Base: All completers who had started a further course since the wave 1 interview (1,320)</i>	828	46*	160	154	132

*caution: low base

5.2.5 Amounts paid

Learners who had paid either all or part of their further course fees were asked for the amount they had paid. Those who were unable, or who refused, to give an exact figure were asked to give a range, after being prompted with banded figures. Raw and banded figures have been combined and displayed in two tables; table 5.10 represents those who paid their entire course fees and table 5.11 those who paid part.

Learners who paid their entire further course fees

Among those who paid the entire fee for their further course, the most common amount paid was in the range of £50 or less, given by one in five learners. One in ten paid £750 or more.

Table 5.10: How much paid for further course (if paid for all), by relationship between original level studied and prior qualification

	Relationship between original level studied and prior qualification			
	Same	Qualification higher than course	Course higher than qualification	Total
	%	%	%	%
Less than £50	33	17	8	18
£50 - £75	12	16	6	13
£76 - £99	4	10	9	9
£100 - £149	11	16	14	15
£150 - £199	-	9	16	9
£200 - £299	4	9	9	8
£300 - £499	1	6	10	6
£500 up to £750	19	7	11	10
More than £750 but less than £1000	-	1	2	1
£1000 or more	8	7	14	9
Refused/don't know	8	2	1	3
<i>Base: All completers who paid all further course fees (428)</i>	<i>61*</i>	<i>257</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>428</i>

*caution: low base

Learners who had **progressed on their original FE course** tended to have paid more for their further course than other learners. Conversely, those who had originally studied at the same level as their prior qualification tended to have paid the least for their further course.

Learners who paid part of their further course fees

Among those who paid part of the fees for their further course, the majority paid £75 or less (55 per cent). Just one in twenty paid £750 or more.

Table 5.11: How much paid for further course (if paid for part)

	%
Less than £50	43
£50 - £75	12
£76 - £99	2
£100 - £149	14
£150 - £199	4
£200 - £299	12
£300 - £499	3
£500 up to £750	3
More than £750 but less than £1000	1
£1000 or more	4
Refused/don't know	3
<i>Base: All completers who paid all further course fees (152)</i>	<i>152</i>

If we examine the amount that the same learners paid for their *original* courses²⁰, the amounts are similar, although learners tended to **pay slightly more for the further course than they did for the original course**, specifically:

- where learners *paid all of the fees* in both cases, they were more likely to pay £500 or more for the further course than the original course (20 per cent compared with eight per cent), while the percentage paying £75 or less was lower (31 per cent compared with 43 pr cent).

5.2.6 Reasons for doing further study

Those who had embarked on further study after completing their original FE course were asked why they had done so. These findings cover all learners who had been on additional courses up to the Wave Two interview; where learners had been on more than one further course, these findings relate to their most recent course.

Respondents were able to give more than one answer and, as chart 5.7 shows, a wide variety of reasons were given. The most common reason for starting further study was interest in the subject, mentioned by 43 per cent. The reasons for embarking on further study are very similar to those that relate to the original course.

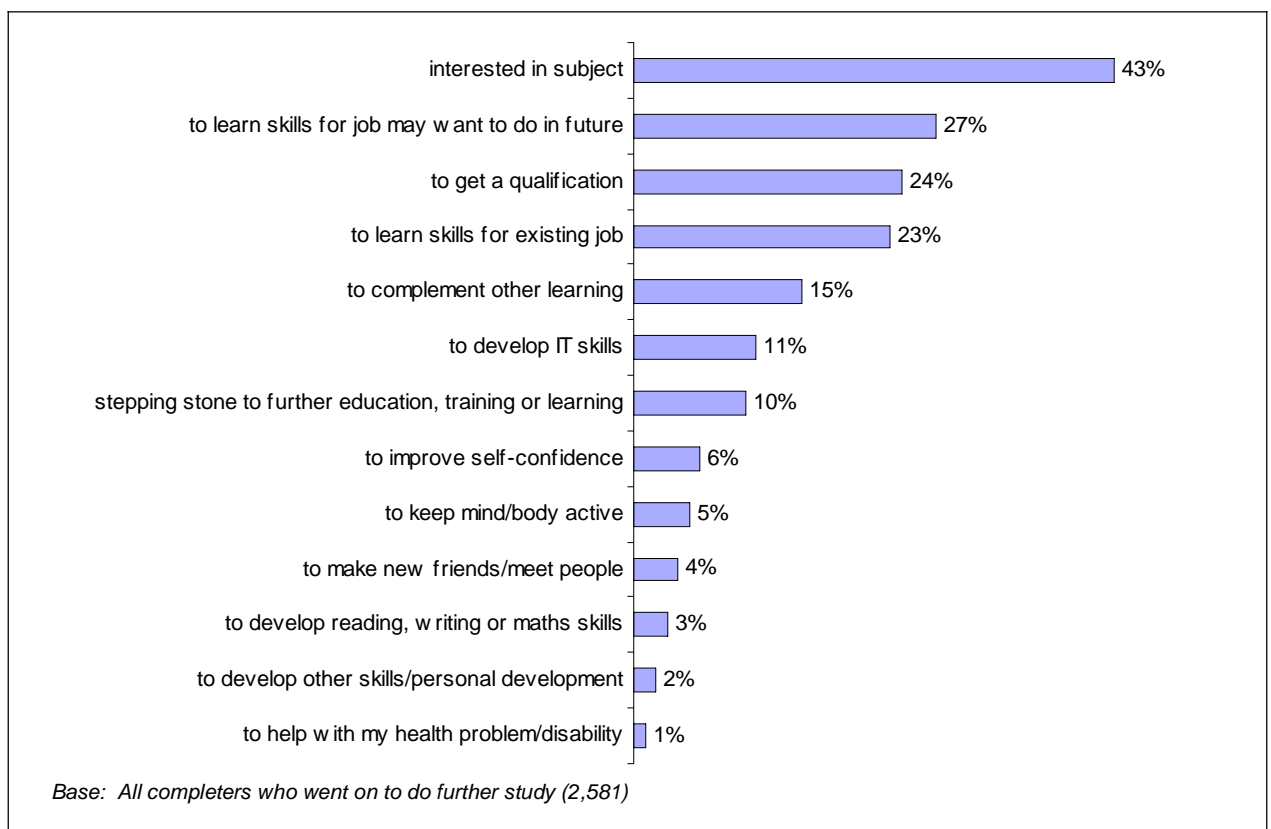
Sub-group patterns are as follows:

- Learners whose **original course aim was at lower levels** (below level 2 or 'other') were more likely than average to say they went on further courses out of interest in the subject.

²⁰ Analysis is limited to cases where the learner paid for all of the course fees in both the original and further course, or paid part of the fees in both the original and further course

- Those who originally studied at full level 2, level 3 (full or part) or level 4+ were more likely than average to say the further learning was to give them skills for a current or future job or to get qualifications.
- The same pattern applies to the relationship between the original course level and the highest prior qualification: those who were originally studying at a lower level than their prior qualification were more likely than average to cite interest in the subject; those who progressed on their original course were more likely than average to say they went on further courses for a future job or to get a qualification.
- A similar distinction applied to age: older learners tended to do further learning out of interest in the subject, younger learners for work-related reasons, to get a qualification or as a stepping stone to further learning.
- Black and Asian respondents were more likely than average to say that they had gone on to do further study to get a qualification (35 per cent and 36 per cent respectively) or to learn skills for a job they may want to do in the future (36 per cent and 49 per cent respectively).

Chart 5.7: Reasons for doing further study



5.2.7 Whether completed main further course

Where learners were no longer on their main further course (by the time of the Wave Two interview), they were asked whether they had completed the course or failed to complete it. The majority (86 per cent) said that they had completed their main further course. This is particularly high among learners whose **original course aim was full level 2 or who were originally on 'other' courses (93 per cent in both cases)**. It was also higher than average among:

- Those **qualified to level 4 or above** at the start of their original course (91 per cent)
- Those taking the further course **to learn skills for an existing job** (92 per cent).

It was lower than average among Asian learners (66 per cent) and those whose original course aim and highest prior qualification were both below level 2 (79 per cent). It also appeared to be lower than average for IT courses: just 70 per cent completed the course where they did it to develop their IT skills.

5.2.8 Whether original FE course helped learners move onto further study

Learners who had gone on to further study were asked whether they felt that their main original FE course had assisted them with this. Three-quarters (74 per cent) agreed that it had and the following groups were most likely to say that the original course helped them in this way:

- Learners who had **originally studied English language and communications** (86 per cent), **ESOL courses** (83 per cent), **engineering/technology/manufacturing** (88 per cent), **literacy or numeracy/basic skills** (86 per cent) and **science** (87 per cent);
- Those with **lower prior qualifications** (79 per cent of those whose highest prior qualification was below level 2);
- Learners who **progressed on their original FE course** (82 per cent);
- Those who had **gone on to increase their highest level of qualification through further study** (80 per cent);
- Those aged **under 35** (79 per cent).

In terms of level studied, table 5.13 shows that those who were originally studying at full level 2, 3 or 4+ were more likely than average to feel that their original FE course had helped them progress on to further learning.

Table 5.13: Whether main original FE course helped the move on to further learning, by highest level of original FE study

	Highest level of original FE study						Total	
	Below level 2	Full level 2	Level 2 (not full)	Full level 3	Level 3 (not full)	Level 4+		Other
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Helped	74	78	74	83	76	86	64	74
Did not help	26	22	26	17	24	14	36	26
<i>Base: All completers who went on to do further study (2,581)</i>	<i>434</i>	<i>314</i>	<i>735</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>452</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>263</i>	<i>2,581</i>

Where learners had started a new course since Wave One and said that the original course had helped them to move onto this new course, 29 per cent said that they *had* to do the original course in order to move onto further learning.²¹ The remainder said that they did not *have* to do their original course, but that it had helped them in other ways.

In terms of subject studied, those who had **originally studied care** were more likely than average to say that they *had* to do their original course to move on (40 per cent vs. 29 per cent). Conversely those who **originally studied IT/computing** were more likely to say that it was because the course had helped them in other ways (81 and 68 per cent respectively). No other significant differences were noted in terms of subject.

Also, it was not just those who were originally studying for qualifications who said they had to do their original course to move on to further learning. A quarter (26 per cent) of learners whose original course was *not* designed to lead to a qualification but had helped them move onto further learning said that they *had* to do their original course to move on.²²

²¹ This question was only asked at Wave Two and as such the results are based on those who had started a further course following the Wave One interview.

²² The small base size precludes further examination of this sub-group.

Table 5.14: Whether *had* to do main original FE course to move on to further learning, by highest level of original FE study

	Highest level of original FE study						Total	
	Below level 2	Full level 2	Level 2 (not full)	Full level 3	Level 3 (not full)	Level 4+		Other
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Had to do original course	29	40	25	46	30	53	20	29
<i>Base: All completers who had started further study since Wave One and said their original course had helped (954)</i>	154	129	270	109	163	34*	95	954

*caution: low base

Table 5.14 shows that learners were most likely to say that they *had* to do the original course before they could move on to further study if they were originally studying at **full level 2 or 3** (40 and 46 per cent respectively). In terms of age, it was those who were **aged under 35** (34 per cent) who were most likely to say that this was the case.

6 Economic activity since FE course

This chapter examines the economic activity of learners following their FE course. Again, this takes into account the activities undertaken up to the time of the Wave Two survey, typically between 19 and 25 months after the end of the FE course.

In section 6.1 we start by examining the current activity of learners at the Wave Two interview (i.e. whether they are in work, studying, retired, etc.) and compare this, at an overall level, to the activity of learners immediately prior to the start of their original FE course. While this does not give any information on progression, it does indicate the overall profile of economic activity among the FE learner population at both of these points in time.

Sections 6.2 to 6.6 look at the **learners who started a new job following their original FE course**. Section 6.2 examines the characteristics of this group as a whole, while section 6.3 looks at the type of work they moved into (including a comparison of this work with previous work learners had done).

Sections 6.4 to 6.6 then break down this group of learners (who started a new job following their course) according to their previous work experience:

- Section 6.4 focuses on learners who had also worked *at the time of* their FE course (in a different job). In addition, this section also covers a separate group: learners who stayed in the same job that they were doing at the start of the FE course;
- Section 6.5 focuses on learners who had worked *before* (but not during) their course and went on to start a new job after completing the course;
- Section 6.6 focuses on learners who had *never worked* prior to the course.

Towards the end of the chapter we look at the work related benefits gained from the FE course, among those who had worked at any point since completing the course (section 6.7/6.8). We finish by looking at job satisfaction (section 6.9).

6.1 Current activity

In total, 64 per cent of learners were in paid work at the time of the Wave Two interview, similar to the proportion in work immediately before starting the original course (61 per cent).

Table 6.1 shows the proportions in individual activities over the course of the study, which confirms a stable picture. The largest shift has been the decrease in respondents saying that their main activity is looking after the family or home (from

13 per cent immediately before the original FE course to six per cent at the Wave Two interview), while the proportion in education has increased (from three per cent to nine per cent).

Table 6.1: Change in economic activity

	Immediately before original FE course	At wave 1 interview	At wave 2 interview
	%	%	%
In work			
Full-time work (30 hours or more)	43	43	44
Part-time work (less than 30 hours)	18	19	20
Not in work			
School / college / university (full or part time)	3	8	9
Government programme (e.g. New Deal)	*	*	*
Voluntary work	1	2	2
Unemployed/looking for work	5	3	3
Looking after family and home	13	9	6
Permanently sick or injured	3	3	1
Retired	12	12	12
Not working for some other reason	2	1	2

Base: All completers (4,032)

Table 6.2 shows that the number of respondents in paid employment increased where the learner was **studying below level 2, at level 2 (full or part level) and at full level 3**. Among learners as whole, there was no difference according to whether learners were progressing their qualification level in their original course. However, among full level 3 learners, a greater movement into work was apparent for **first full level 3 learners and full level 3 jumpers** (showing an increase of nine and 14 percentage points respectively).

Table 6.2 also shows analysis by age and ethnicity. The numbers in paid work showed a larger increase than average among those **aged 25-49** and among those in **Asian and “other” ethnic groups**. There was no difference between respondents that had gone on to additional learning since the original FE course and those that had not.

Table 6.2: Change in economic activity, by highest level of original FE study, age and ethnicity

	Proportion in work		
	Immediately before original FE course	At wave 2 interview	Change
	%	%	±%
Total	61	64	+3
Highest level of original FE study			
Below level 2	52	56	+4
Full level 2	79	82	+3
Level 2 (not full)	61	66	+5
Full level 3	74	80	+6
Level 3 (not full)	73	71	-2
Level 4+	91	91	0
Other	57	53	-4
Age			
Under 25	61	64	+3
25-34	65	70	+5
35-49	71	77	+6
50-59	70	72	+2
60+	19	13	-6
Ethnicity			
White	63	65	+2
Asian	48	56	+8
Black	59	61	+2
Other	43	54	+11

Base: All completers (4,032)

6.2 Learners starting work, or starting a different job, after the FE course

In this section we examine all learners who **started a new job** after their original FE course. In the time between the original course and the Wave Two interview (around one and a half to two years), 32 per cent of all learners had started a new job. Of these, the majority had worked at some point before, either at the time of, or prior to, their course, as shown in table 6.3.

In terms of level of study, it was those who **studied at full level 2, full level 3 or level 4 or above** who were most likely to have started a new job.

Table 6.3: Proportion starting a new job since completing FE course, by level studied

	Level studied						Total	
	Below level 2	Full level 2	Level 2 (not full)	Full level 3	Level 3 (not)	Level 4+		Other
	%	%	%	%	%	%		%
Started new job since course	28	45	33	52	34	41	20	32
Started new job since course and...								
also worked at time of course (in a different job)	15	31	17	30	21	35	13	18
also worked before course (but not at time of course)	11	11	13	18	12	5	6	11
had never worked before	2	3	2	4	2	1	1	2
<i>Base: All completers (6,687)</i>	679	568	1121	527	670	122	345	4032

Given that many learners were *not* studying for work-related reasons (and indeed many were retired), it makes sense to restrict analysis to those who said they **went on the original course to help with a future job or career**. Overall, 42 per cent of those who took the original course for this reason had started a new job since the course. *Within* the group of learners who studied to help with a future job or career, certain sub-groups were more likely than average to have started a new job since the original course:

- Those **studying at full level 2 and full level 3** (50 per cent and 56 per cent respectively)
- Those **aged under 25** (54 per cent)
- Those who were **not doing the course as part of an existing job** (50 per cent, compared with 30 per cent whose course was part of a job)
- Learners who were **not working during the course but had worked in the past** (56 per cent, compared with 38 per cent who in work at the start of the course and 29 per cent who had never worked prior to the original course)
- Those studying construction courses (64 per cent) or engineering/technology/ manufacturing (54 per cent). Those taking ESOL or English language/ communications courses were less likely to have started work (although 36 per cent and 35 per cent respectively had done so).
- There was no difference by those who had/had not been on additional courses after the original FE course. It is possible that while the additional courses had increased the learner's employability, their presence on these courses had delayed their movement into a new job

There was also no difference in terms of the relationship between the level studied and highest prior qualification, other than among learners studying below level 2: here, those with a higher prior qualification were more likely to have started a new job than those whose highest prior qualification was also below level 2 (48 per cent compared with 39 per cent).

It should be noted in the above analysis that the FE course may/may not have had an influence on the learner starting work (even where the learner took the course in order to help them find a job in the future). These findings should be used more broadly to indicate the destinations taken by different types of learners. The perceived impact of the course in finding a job is discussed in section 6.7.

6.3 Comparison of jobs before, at start of and after the FE course

This section compares, at an overall level, the type of work started since the FE course with the type of work done both at the start of, and prior to, the FE course. While this does not give any information on progression, it does indicate the overall profile of work being done by the FE learner population.

Industry sector

Table 6.4 shows that the distribution of jobs started since the course by industry sector was similar to the profile of those jobs being done at the start of the course and, to a slightly lesser degree, the most recent work done prior to the course by those who were not working during it.

The most notable differences were the lower proportion that had started work in the **manufacturing** sector following the course, and the higher proportion in **health and social work**, compared with the proportion in this sector before the course started.

Table 6.4: Industry sector for work conducted before, at start of or after FE course

	Work before course	Work at start of course	Work started after course
	%	%	%
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	2	1	1
Mining and quarrying	1	*	*
Manufacturing	12	12	7
Electricity, gas, water	*	*	*
Construction	2	5	4
Wholesale, retail trade, repair	13	8	11
Hotels, restaurants	7	3	5
Transport, storage, communication	7	5	5
Financial intermediation	3	3	3
Real estate, renting, business activities	8	7	8
Public administration, defence, social security	9	12	7
Education	11	14	14
Health and social work	12	18	19
Other community, social, personal service	5	4	6
Private households	*	*	*
Unclassified	7	8	10

Base: All completers who worked before but not during their course (1,218); those in work at start of their course (2,634); those who had started work since their course (1,348)

Occupation

The jobs that were started after completion of the FE course were also broadly similar in terms of occupation to the jobs being done at the start of the course (and to a lesser extent the most recent work done before the course for those who were not working during their course).

Those who studied at full level 2 were more likely than average to work in skilled trades and personal service occupations after the course; those studying at full level 3 were also more likely to work in personal service occupations. Learners whose original course aim was higher than their prior qualification were more likely than average to work in sales and customer service following the course.

Table 6.5: Occupation for work conducted before, at start of or after FE course

	Work before course	Work at start of course	Work started after course
	%	%	%
Managers/senior officials	12	12	9
Professional	12	11	9
Associate professional and technical	10	14	15
Administrative and secretarial	17	14	15
Skilled trades	6	9	9
Personal service	10	18	19
Sales and customer service	10	7	8
Process, plant and machine operatives	7	5	5
Elementary occupations	14	9	9

Base: All completers who worked before but not during their course (1,218); those in work at start of their course (2,634); those who had started work since their course (1,348)

Hours and pay

The majority of those who started work after completing their FE course said their most recent job was full-time (61 per cent were working more than 30 hours per week), although this is slightly lower than those working at the start of their FE course or prior to this (69 per cent and 70 per cent respectively). One in five learners worked for 20 hours per week or fewer (this applies both to jobs started after the original course and previous jobs).

As shown in table 6.6, among those who gave an amount, levels of take-home pay for those who had started work following their course were generally:

- slightly higher compared with those who hadn't worked during their course but had worked before it

and

- slightly lower than those who were working during their course.

Table 6.6: Annual take home pay of learners in paid work before, at start of or after FE course

	Work before course	Work at start of course	Work started after course
	%	%	%
Less than £5,000	25	12	20
£5,000 - £9,999	34	29	27
£10,000 - £14,999	20	32	30
£15,000 - £19,999	9	15	13
£20,000 – £24,999	6	7	5
£25,000 - £29,999	3	4	2
£30,000 or more	4	3	3

Base: All completers in work before but not during their course who gave an amount paid (734); those in work at start of their course who gave an amount paid (2,073); those in work started since their course who gave an amount paid (1,074)

6.4 Learners in work at the start of their course who went on to start a new job after completing their course

Of those working at the start of the course, **62 per cent were still doing the same job** at the time of the Wave Two interview, while **31 per cent had started a new job** after completing the course. The remaining seven per cent had left the job they were doing at the start of the course, but had not started a new job by the time of the Wave Two interview.

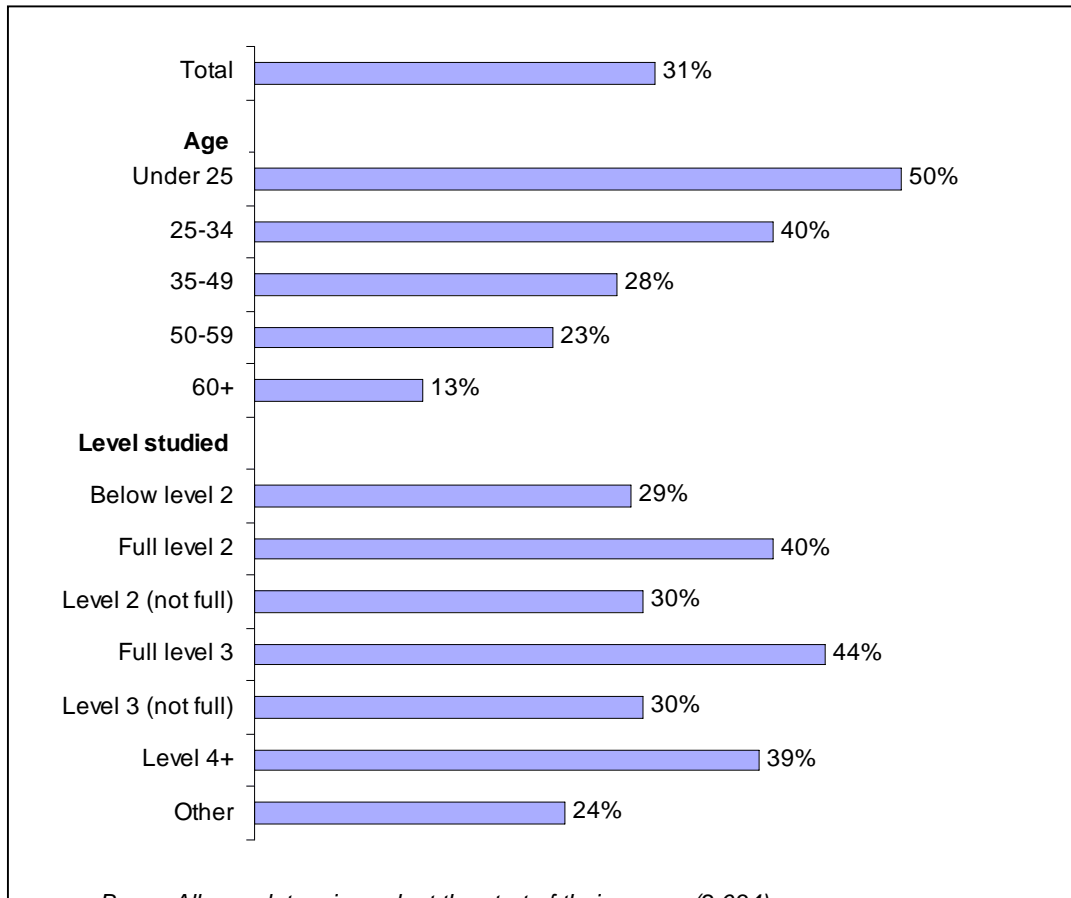
In this section we examine the profile of those who had moved to a different job, and compare their jobs they were doing at the start of and after the course.

Profile

The profile of learners who were in work at the start of the course and then started a new job subsequently is shown in chart 6.1. This shows that:

- **younger learners** were more likely than older learners to go on to start a new job at some point after completing their course
- those who **studied at full level 2, 3 or level 4+** were more likely than those studying at other levels to switch to a new job after completing their course (there were no differences between *first* full level 2 or 3 learners compared with others studying at full level 2 or 3).

Chart 6.1: Percentage of those working at the start of their course who started a new job after their course, by age and level studied

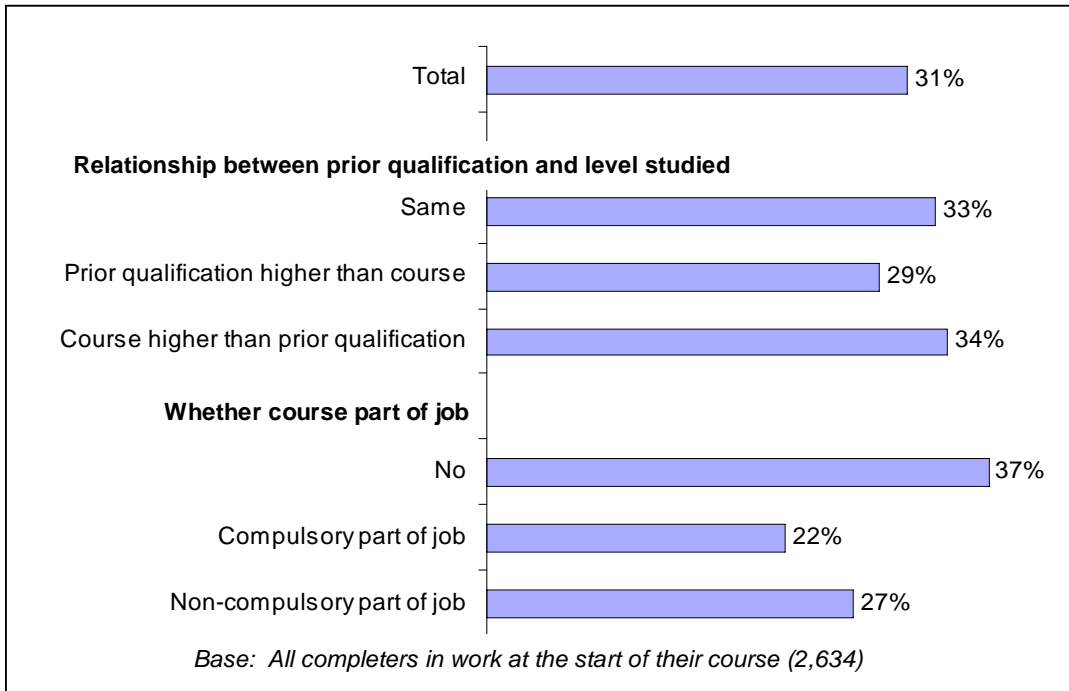


Base: All completers in work at the start of their course (2,634)

Looking at the relationship between level studied and prior qualification (Chart 6.2), those who were working at the start of the course and who were **studying at a lower level than they were already qualified** were less likely to move into a new job following their course (there was no difference between those studying at a higher level and those studying at the same level as their prior qualification).

Learners whose **course had not been part of their job** were more likely to have started a new job after completing their course than those whose course *had* been part of their job at the time (either compulsory or non-compulsory). This is connected to the main reason for doing the course, with the former group being more likely to have done their course to learn skills for a job they may have wanted to do in the future; those who had done their course for this reason were more likely than average to have moved into a new job following their course (42 per cent).

Chart 6.2: Percentage of those working at the start of their course who started a new job after their course, by relationship between prior qualification and level studied, and whether course part of job



Industry sector

There was a general shift towards the **public sector** among learners who were in work at the start of the FE course and then started a new job subsequently. Specifically, as table 6.7 shows, respondents were less likely to be working in manufacturing and the wholesale/retail/repair trade following their course than beforehand. Conversely, they were more likely than before to be working in **education and health/social work**.

A similar pattern can be observed among those who said that their **main reason for doing their course was to learn skills for a job they may want to do in the future**. Restricting the analysis to this group helps to show changes which are more likely to be linked to the FE course itself. The only differences were that this group were also more likely to be working in ‘other community, social and personal service work’ (six per cent after the course compared with three per cent at the start of the course) and less likely to work in hotels or restaurants (four per cent compared with seven per cent).

Table 6.7: Industry sector for those who were working at start of FE course and started a new job after

	Work at start of course	Work started after course
	%	%
Agriculture, hunting, forestry	1	*
Mining and quarrying	*	*
Manufacturing	15	9
Electricity, gas, water	*	1
Construction	4	6
Wholesale, retail, repair	12	8
Hotels and restaurants	5	3
Transport, storage, communication	5	4
Financial intermediation	3	3
Real estate, renting, business activities	8	8
Public administration, defence, social security	8	9
Education	10	13
Health and social work	18	21
Other community, social, personal service	3	5
Private households	*	0
Unclassified	8	10

Base: All completers who started work after course and also worked at start of course (837)

While table 6.7 indicates that at an aggregate level, the industry profile of jobs has not changed dramatically since the course, analysis of individual learners shows a greater level of change: among learners who were working at the start of the course and then changed jobs subsequently, 60 per cent moved into a different industry sector²³ (in cases where jobs could be classified at both points and therefore compared). Learners whose **original course aim was higher than their prior qualification** were more likely than average to change sectors, while those studying **below level 2** were less likely to change.

Occupation

A comparison of the work started after the course with the work done at the start of the course (for those that worked at both of these points) reveals a slight shift away from lower level occupations such as sales and customer service and elementary occupations, and a corresponding move towards higher level occupations such as professional, associate professional/technical and skilled trades. Table 6.8 shows the full breakdown by occupation.

²³ Industry sector defined as one of the major sector groups listed in table 5.6

Once again, the pattern is very similar among those who said that their **main reason for doing their course was to learn skills for a job they may want to do in the future**, although the shift to higher occupational groups is if anything slightly greater (just six per cent were working in elementary occupations after the course compared with 12 per cent at the start of the course).

There was also a **higher level of self-employment** among this group following their course (11 per cent were self-employed following the course compared with four per cent at the start of the course).

Table 6.8: Occupation for those in work at the start of their FE course and started a new job afterwards

	Work at start of course	Work started after course
	%	%
Managers/senior officials	12	11
Professional	8	10
Associate professional and technical	12	16
Administrative and secretarial	16	15
Skilled trades	8	10
Personal service	16	18
Sales and customer service	10	5
Process, plant and machine operatives	6	6
Elementary occupations	11	7

Base: All completers who started work after course and also worked at start of course (837)

Analysis of individual learners again indicates a greater level of change than is evident from the aggregate findings: where a comparison could be made, 59 per cent had shifted to a different occupational group. Learners whose **course was part of an existing job** were less likely to shift sectors when they changed jobs after the course.

Hours and pay

Learners who worked both after and at the start of the course (in a different job) were more likely to be working full time following the course than previously (72 per cent worked thirty hours a week or more following the course compared with 66 per cent at the start of the course).

Analysis by individual learners shows that the number who increased their hours is balanced by the proportion reducing their hours; this is shown in chart 6.3. Learners who were most likely to increase their hours were:

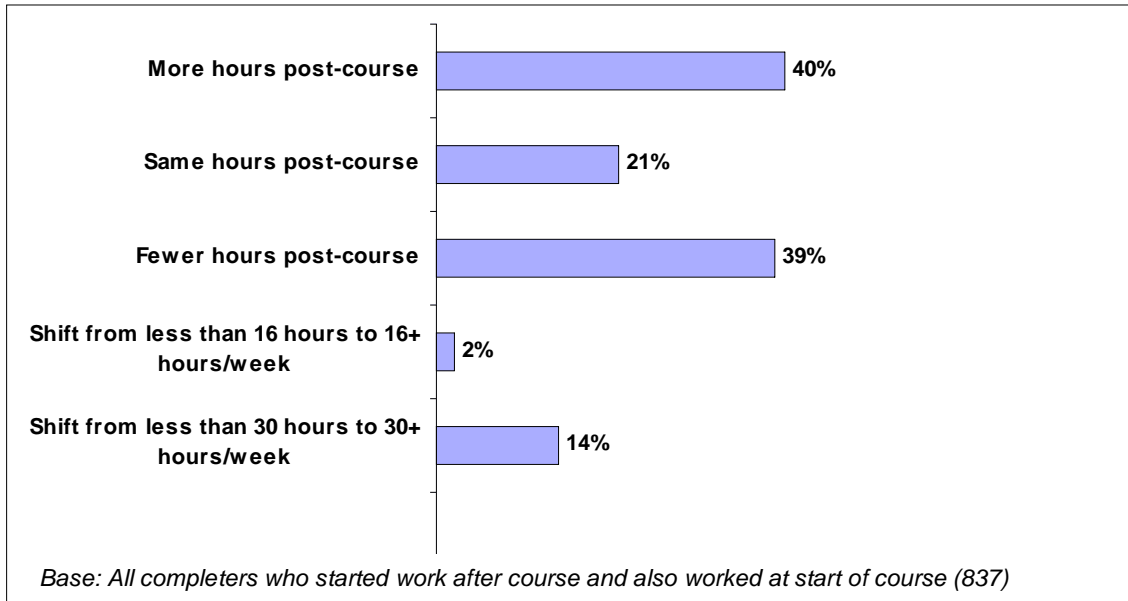
- those whose original course aim was **full level 2** (46 per cent)

- those whose original **course aim was higher than their highest prior qualification** (46 per cent).

In addition, those whose original course aim was **full level 3** were most likely to move from working **part-time to full-time** (less than 30 hours to more than 30 hours per week).

Those originally studying below level 2 were least likely to increase their hours when they changed jobs (30 per cent).

Chart 6.3: Changes in hours worked, among those in work at the start of their FE course who started a new job afterwards



Levels of take-home pay were slightly higher following the course, as shown in table 6.9. This reflects the slight shift towards higher level occupations (which tend to be more highly paid).

Table 6.9: Annual take-home pay, among learners in work at the start of their FE course who started a new job afterwards

	Work at start of course	Work started after course
	%	%
Less than £5,000	14	12
£5,000 - £9,999	32	23
£10,000 - £14,999	34	38
£15,000 - £19,999	11	14
£20,000 – £24,999	5	8
£25,000 - £29,999	2	2
£30,000 or more	3	4

Base: All who gave an amount paid for the job they did at the start of the course (679); All who gave an amount for the job they started after course (676)

The majority of individual learners increased their pay when they changed jobs after the course: 65 per cent increased their pay, while 33 per cent showed a decrease and the remaining two per cent stayed the same. These calculations have been made on the basis of hourly pay. Those most likely to increase their pay when they changed jobs were:

- **women** (68 per cent compared with 61 per cent of men)
- **younger** learners
- those originally **studying below level 2** (74 per cent)
- those whose **course aim was higher than their prior qualification** (74 per cent compared with 62 per cent of other learners).

6.4.1 Learners in work at start of their course who stayed in the same job

The majority of learners who were working at the start of the original FE course were still in the same job when interviewed at Wave Two (62 per cent). For these respondents, we can examine differences in hours and pay between the Wave One and Wave Two interviews (around a year apart).

Overall, the proportion working full-time was similar (70 per cent at Wave One and 72 per cent at Wave Two). While at the individual level there had been some change in hours, only four per cent of learners had moved from part-time to full time work (less than 30 hours to 30 hours or more per week), and two per cent had moved from less than 16 hours per week to 16 hours or more.

The majority of learners who had stayed in the same job reported an increase in pay between Wave One and Wave Two (68 per cent), and in 31 per cent of cases the increase was of at least £1 per hour.

6.5 Learners who worked before but not during their course and went on to start a new job after completing their course

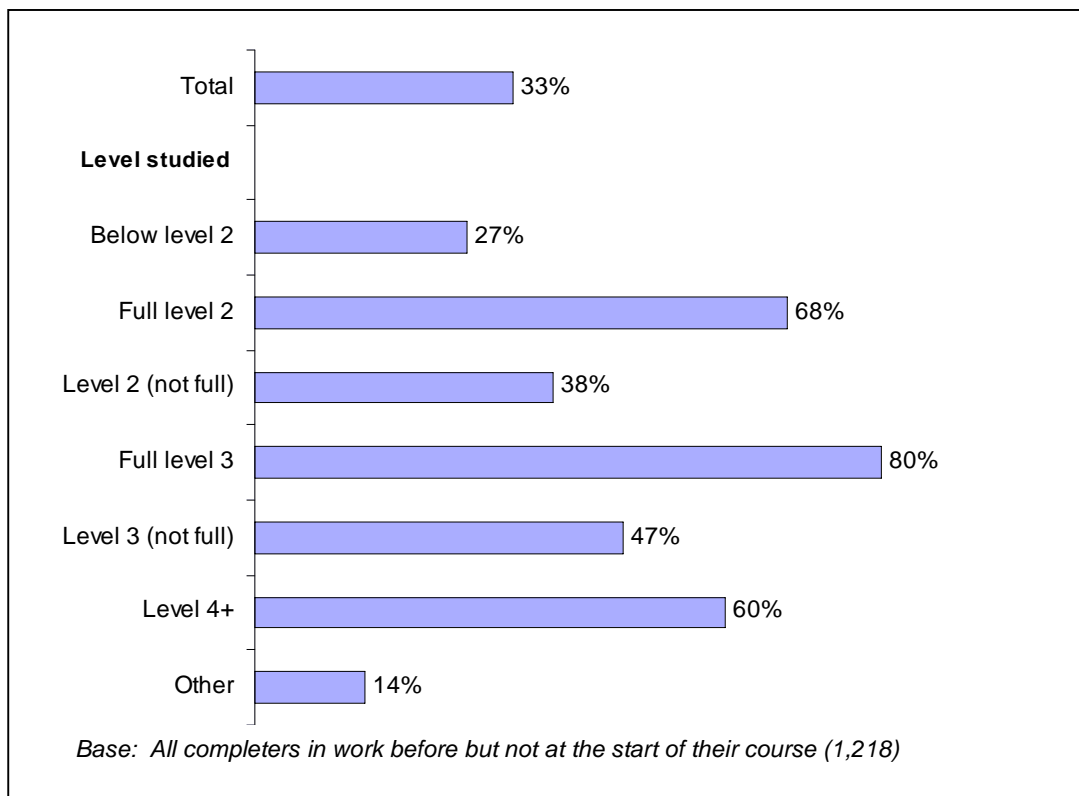
A third (33 per cent) of those who worked before but not during their FE course went on to start a new job after completing their course. In this section we examine the profile of these people and compare their jobs before and after the course.

Profile

Among learners who worked before, but not at the start of, their original course, there was considerable variation by level studied, in terms of the proportion of learners moving into work after the course. This is shown in chart 6.4.

Analysis by course subject indicates that learners were most likely to move into work if they were studying vocational subjects, specifically business/administration (65 per cent), engineering/technology/ manufacturing (62 per cent), care (57 per cent) and health/social care/public services (47 per cent).

Chart 6.4: Percentage of those working before but not during their course who started a new job after their course, by level studied



Further sub-groups analysis is restricted to learners who **took the original course to help them to find a job or develop their career**. Overall, 56 per cent of this group moved into work after the course. Sub-group variations were as follows:

- As with the overall findings, movement into work is highest among those with an original course aim of **full level 2 or full level 3** (67 per cent and 81 per cent respectively)
- Those studying below level 2 were far more likely to move into work if their highest prior qualification was higher than this (ie level 2 or above): 67 per cent compared with 40 per cent whose highest prior qualification was also below level 2
- Overall, there was no difference between learners whose course aim was higher than their highest prior qualification and those where it was lower
- Men were more likely than women to move into work (65 per cent compared with 52 per cent)
- Those aged under 25 (68 per cent) were more likely to start a job than older learners
- Those who took additional courses after the original course were less likely to have started a job (53 per cent compared with 63 per cent who had not done additional courses)
- Those who had been in work less than a year before the FE course were more likely to have moved into work than those with less recent work experience: 74 per cent, compared with 56 per cent who had not worked for between one and two years prior to the course, and 42 per cent who had not worked for three years or more).

Industry sector

There was a shift towards public sector jobs among learners who worked before their course and started a new job after completing it. The same pattern was identified for learners who were working at the start of the course (section 6.4.1), but the **shift is more pronounced** for this group.

Specifically, these learners were more likely to be working in **education and health and social work** following their course than beforehand. They were less likely to be working in manufacturing, wholesale/retail/repair and hotels/restaurants.

A similar pattern can be observed among those who said that their main reason for doing their course was to learn skills for a job they may want to do in the future.

Table 6.10: Industry sector for those who were working before but not during their FE course and started a new job after the course

	Work before course	Work started after course
	%	%
Agriculture, hunting, forestry	2	1
Mining and quarrying	0	*
Manufacturing	13	5
Electricity, gas, water	1	*
Construction	2	2
Wholesale, retail, repair	16	13
Hotels and restaurants	10	7
Transport, storage, communication	6	6
Financial intermediation	2	2
Real estate, renting, business activities	11	9
Public administration, defence, social security	8	6
Education	7	16
Health and social work	9	17
Other community, social, personal service	5	6
Private households	0	*
Unclassified	8	9

Base: All completers who started work after course and also worked at start of course (447)

Looking at change among individual learners, 71 per cent started a job in a different industry sector than when they working before the course (in cases where data allowed a comparison). A change in sector was more common among **women** and those whose **course aim was higher than highest prior qualification**, as well as where learners had undertaken **additional courses** (since the original FE course). It was less common among those studying below level 2.

Occupation

Comparing the roles that were started after the course with those before the course for those that worked at both of these points reveals a shift towards **personal service occupations** and away from manager/senior official roles. Table 6.11 shows the full breakdown by occupation.

The picture is very similar among those who said that their main reason for doing their course was to learn skills for a job they may want to do in the future.

Evidence of **higher levels of self-employment** exists for this group following their course (15 per cent said that they were self-employed following the course compared with 8 per cent prior to the course).

Table 6.11: Occupation for those who worked before but not during their FE course and started a new job after the course

	Work before course	Work started after course
	%	%
Managers/senior officials	14	6
Professional	6	8
Associate professional and technical	11	14
Administrative and secretarial	15	16
Skilled trades	6	8
Personal service	9	21
Sales and customer service	14	10
Process, plant and machine operatives	7	3
Elementary occupations	16	13

Base: All completers who started work after course and also worked before but not during (447)

The majority of individual respondents (69 per cent) had changed their occupational group since the course, and this was highest among **men** and **younger learners**.

Hours

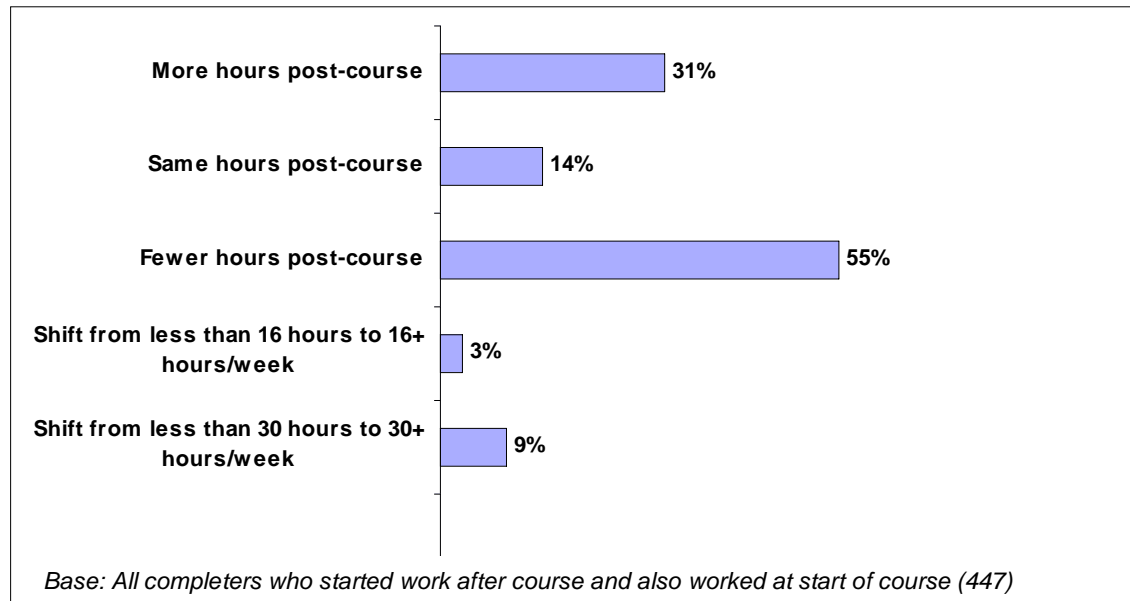
The proportion of **full time** positions was considerably lower following the course: 67 per cent of those who worked both before and after their course in a new job worked thirty hours a week or more before their course, compared with 47 per cent after completing their course. There was also a **higher level of non-permanent work** being done after the course compared with beforehand (25 per cent versus 19 per cent).

Chart 6.5 shows changes in hours on the basis of individual learners. This indicates that among learners who had worked before, but not during, the original FE course and then moved into work after the course, the majority **worked fewer hours than in their previous job** (55 per cent). Further analysis confirms that the changes in hours were substantive (eg 45 per cent reported a reduction of at least five hours per week, while 10 per cent showed a smaller shift). This suggests that many learners returning to work were either:

- learners who were fitting their hours to different circumstances, eg returning to work after having children; this group were more likely to have financially dependent children than those who had worked both *at the start of* and after their course; or
- older people going part-time and slowing down as they move towards retirement, or starting part-time work after retiring, to boost their income; this group had a higher proportion of 60+ year olds compared with those who had worked both *at the start of* and after their course.

Women were more likely than men to move into a job with reduced hours (59 per cent compared with 47 per cent). Reduced hours were also more common where learners started a job in a different occupation or industry sector than when they worked before the course. By contrast, those whose original course aim was full level 3 were most likely to move from part-time to full-time work (30 hours or more per week).

Chart 6.5: Changes in hours worked, among those who worked before but not during their FE course and who started a new job after the course



Pay

Among those who had worked at both points, take-home pay for jobs started after the course was very similar when compared to pay for jobs done before the course. The mean hourly wage was £6.66 after the course, compared with £6.64 before the course. However, as table 6.12 shows, there was a higher proportion earning less than £5,000 per year following the course; this reflects the greater number in part-time work.

Table 6.12: Annual take-home pay, among those who worked before but not during their FE course and who started a new job after the course

	Work before course	Work started after course
	%	%
Less than £5,000	23	32
£5,000 - £9,999	35	34
£10,000 - £14,999	22	19
£15,000 - £19,999	11	11
£20,000 – £24,999	5	2
£25,000 - £29,999	2	1
£30,000 or more	3	1

Base: All who gave an amount paid for the job they did before the course (311); All who gave an amount for the job they started after course (398)

On an individual level, the majority of learners had increased their pay in their new job (62 per cent), while 36 per cent said they were on a lower hourly wage than when they worked before. **A change in sector or occupational group is most likely to trigger a reduction in pay.**

6.6 Learners who had never worked prior to their course

At the start of the original FE course, nine per cent of learners had never worked. Of these, 28 per cent went on to start a job after completing their course. The small number of respondents (180) prevents sub-group analysis here.

The remaining 72 per cent of those who at the time of the original FE course had never worked did *not* go on to start a job after completing their course. This was despite 20 per cent of this group saying that their main reason for doing the course was to learn skills for a job.

Table 6.13 shows the current activity (as at the Wave Two interview) of those who had never worked at the start of the original course.

Table 6.13: Current activity

	%
Paid work	18
School / college / university (full or part time)	39
Government programme (e.g. New Deal)	1
Voluntary work	2
Unemployed/looking for work	5
Looking after family and home	23
Permanently sick or injured	3
Retired	3
Not working for some other reason	4

Base: All completers who had never worked at the start of the original FE course (180)

6.7 Work related benefits gained from the course

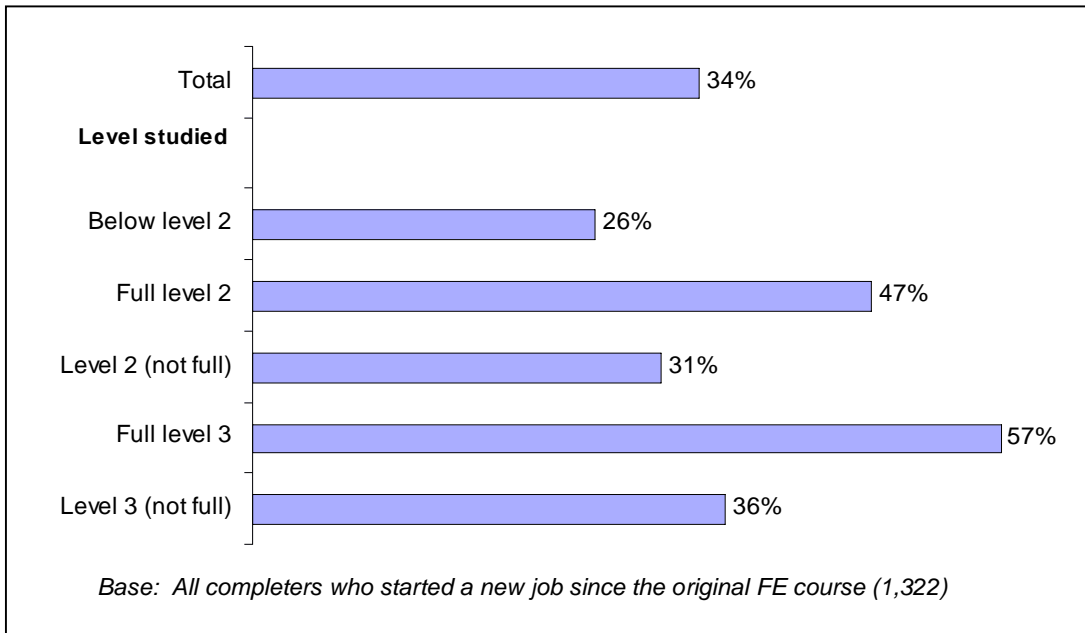
6.7.1 Getting a new job

Section 6.2 identified learners who had started a new job following their original FE course. This section examines the extent to which (according to the respondents' own perceptions) the FE course helped them to get the job.

Overall, a third of learners who started a new job since the course said that they got the job *as a result of* doing the FE course. This translates to 11 per cent of all FE learners and 12 per cent of all FE learners of working age. As shown in chart 6.6, the figures are highest among those whose original course aim was **full level 2 or full level 3**.

There were no differences according to whether the learner was working at the time of the original course or whether the course was part of a job.

Chart 6.9: Percentage of those who have started a new job since the original FE course who said that the course had helped them to get a new job



Note: findings are not shown for learners studying at level 4+ or “other” courses, as the base sizes are too small

Learners were more likely to say they got the job as a result of the course if their **course aim was higher than their prior qualification** (47 per cent), although other learners said that the course helped them to get a new job even where it did not raise their qualification level (30 per cent where the course level was the same as or lower than their prior qualification). There were no differences within full level 2 or full level 3, in terms of whether it was the *first* full level 2/3.

We can also analyse these findings by the four groups identified in section 3.3; findings are shown in table 6.14.

While the figures are higher among learners who did the original course for work-related reasons, other learners also said that the course helped them to find their job. These findings confirms that FE courses can be effective in helping learners into a new job even where the course is not primarily job-related or where it does not increase their highest qualification.

Table 6.14: Percentage of those who have started a new job since the original FE course who said that the course had helped them to get a new job, by learner group

	Percentage of all learners who completed their course
	%
Total	34
Group	
1: Did course for work-related reasons and to progress qualification level	47
2: Did course for work-related reasons, but not to progress qualification level	35
3: Did not do course for work-related reasons, but aimed to progress qualification level	48
4: Did not do course for work-related reasons or to progress qualification level	13
<i>Base: All completers who started a new job since the original FE course (1,348)</i>	

6.7.2 Gaining other work-related benefits

Respondents who had been in paid work at some point following their FE course (whether this was a continuation of a job they had done during the course or a new job they had started) were shown a list of work related benefits. They were asked to say which of these, if any, had happened to them as a result of doing the course.

Table 6.15 shows that **being able to do their job better**, **getting more job satisfaction** and **gaining new job skills** were most likely to be mentioned. These results are in line with the most frequently mentioned work-related benefits in NALS 2002 among adults aged 16-69 who had done taught learning in the past three years related to their current or future job (50 per cent developed new skills, 48 per cent were able to do their job better, 33 per cent got more job satisfaction).²⁴

Table 6.15 analyses findings in terms of whether the course was part of a job, and if so whether or not it was compulsory. This shows that:

- even **where the course was not strictly part of an existing job**, it could help them with their job or career; for example 47 per cent in this group said that the course helped them to do their job better
- where the course was **compulsory**, it was more likely to help the learner to earn more money, stay in the job and go on more training courses at work, when compared with non-compulsory courses
- where the course was **part of a job but not compulsory**, it was more likely to provide new skills for their job and enable learners to do their job better, compared with compulsory courses.

²⁴ Fitzgerald R, Taylor R & LaValle I (2003) National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) 2002 [Carried out by the National Centre for Social Research on behalf of the DfES] DfES Research Report 415

Table 6.15: Things which happened as a result of the FE course

	Total	Course was not part of job	Course was part of job & compulsory	Course was part of job & non-compulsory
	%	%	%	%
Was able to do my job better	61	47	74	81
Got more satisfaction out of my work	56	44	66	70
Learned new skills for my job I was doing at the time	51	35	67	72
Get given greater responsibility in job	34	26	48	44
Get to go on more training courses at work	31	24	49	37
Get asked to train other staff at work	25	17	34	35
Earned more money	25	23	34	27
Changed to a different type of work	20	24	12	16
Got a promotion	15	11	21	20
Stayed in my job which I might have lost without this course	14	11	32	14
Was able to deal with the work problems related to my health/disability	13	14	17	13
Set up my own/family business	8	10	3	7
<i>Base: All completers in paid work at some point following the course</i>	3018	1382	347	1289

The remainder of the sub-group analysis in this section is restricted to learners whose **original FE course was part of a job** they were doing at the time.

Table 6.16 shows the findings analysed by age. This shows that:

- Younger learners were more likely than older learners to have **earned more money, got greater responsibility, gone on more training courses or got a promotion** as a result of their course
- Learners aged 35 or over were more likely than younger learners to have gained **more satisfaction out of their work** as a result of their course.

Table 6.16: Things which happened as a result of the FE course, by age, among learners whose FE course was part of a job

	Age				Total
	Under 25	25-34	35-49	50+	
	%	%	%	%	%
Was able to do my job better	77	76	80	82	79
Learned new skills for my job I was doing at the time	70	67	72	73	71
Got more satisfaction out of my work	68	66	70	73	69
Get given greater responsibility in job	55	44	45	39	44
Get to go on more training courses at work	48	42	40	33	39
Get asked to train other staff at work	36	37	35	32	35
Earned more money	40	33	27	22	28
Got a promotion	30	22	20	18	21
Stayed in my job which I might have lost without this course	19	16	18	17	18
Changed to a different type of work	19	14	14	17	15
Was able to deal with the work problems related to my health/disability	15	9	14	16	13
Set up my own/family business	6	8	6	4	6
<i>Base: All completers in paid work at some point following the course and whose FE course was part of job at time (2,671)</i>	100	366	841	329	1636

Table 6.17 shows the work related benefits gained by **level studied**:

- Learners studying **below level 2** were similar to average on most measures, but were less likely to say they earned more money, stayed in the job which they might otherwise have lost, or gained responsibility in their job as a result of the course
- **Full level 2 learners** were more likely to report a number of benefits: earning more money, changing to a different type of work, being able to stay in the job, gaining responsibility, getting more training and giving training to other staff
- **Full level 3 learners** were also more likely than average to mention the different benefits, in particular earning more money, getting a promotion, being able to stay in the job, gaining responsibility and getting more training.
- Those whose original course aim was **level 4 or above** were more likely than average to say that they learned new skills for their job, earned more money, got a promotion, gained responsibility and were asked to train other staff.

Table 6.17: Things which happened as a result of the FE course, by level studied, among learners whose FE course was part of a job

	Level studied						Other	Total
	Below level 2	Full level 2	Level 2 (not full)	Full level 3	Level 3 (not full)	Level 4+		
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Was able to do my job better	79	78	79	85	81	83	71	79
Learned new skills for my job I was doing at the time	66	66	69	72	79	83	64	71
Got more satisfaction out of my work	69	71	69	65	75	72	58	69
Get given greater responsibility in job	34	59	37	57	50	61	46	44
Get to go on more training courses at	36	50	32	50	41	45	41	39
Get asked to train other staff at work	30	42	29	37	39	56	29	35
Earned more money	19	46	23	45	30	54	14	28
Got a promotion	18	28	18	34	19	38	8	21
Stayed in my job which I might have lost without this course	9	34	16	34	17	26	13	18
Changed to a different type of work	12	24	12	22	16	16	17	15
Was able to deal with the work problems related to my health/disability	15	19	9	16	13	7	19	13
Set up my own/family business	6	7	6	9	5	5	5	6
<i>Base: All completers in paid work at some point following the course and whose FE course was part of job at time (2,671)</i>	143	355	347	342	257	91	101	1636

Looking at the relationship between level studied and prior qualification (Table 6.15), those who **studied at a higher level than they were already qualified** (and whose course was part of their job) were most likely to feel that their work situation had benefited as a result of their course, in particular by:

- earning more money, being able to stay in their job, gaining responsibility and going on additional training.

However, as shown in table 6.18, learners who did not increase their qualification through the original FE course still reported a number of work-related benefits that they had gained. This includes 13 per cent who said the course helped them to change to a different type of work, even though it did not increase their highest level of qualification (note: this percentage is based on those whose course was part of a job; among *all* “non-progressors”, the figure is 12 per cent).

Because of the small base sizes, it is not possible to identify differences within level (eg for *first* full level 2 learners), with one exception: first full level 3 learners were more likely to say they got to go on more training courses at work than other full level 3 learners.

Table 6.18: Things which happened as a result of the FE course, by level studied/prior qualification, among learners whose FE course was part of a job

	Relationship between level of course and prior qualification			Total
	Same	Qualification higher than course	Course higher than qualification	
	%	%	%	%
Was able to do my job better	77	79	81	79
Learned new skills for my job I was doing at the time	64	72	73	71
Got more satisfaction out of my work	68	67	75	69
Get given greater responsibility in job	43	40	54	44
Get to go on more training courses at work	36	36	48	39
Get asked to train other staff at work	34	32	40	35
Earned more money	31	21	38	28
Got a promotion	24	17	25	21
Stayed in my job which I might have lost without this course	16	13	27	17
Changed to a different type of work	16	12	19	15
Was able to deal with the work problems related to my health/disability	14	13	14	13
Set up my own/family business	5	6	7	6
<i>Base: All completers in paid work at some point following the course and whose FE course was part of job at time (2,671)</i>	306	681	649	1636

6.8 Learners who obtained a positive work-related outcome

It is possible to summarise the findings outlined in section 6.7, in order to assess whether learners have obtained a positive work-related outcome from the FE course. We can do this by identifying any learners who said that the FE course helped them to do *one or more* of the following:

- get a job
- earn more money
- get a promotion
- set up their own business.

Overall, 30 per cent of FE learners of working age who completed their course can be said to have obtained a positive outcome in this way. Table 6.19 analyses this by their work status immediately before they started the course, and by level studied. This shows that learners were more likely to have gained a positive work-related outcome if they were **in work at the start of the original course**, and if they were **studying at full level 2, full level 3 or level 4+**. There

were no differences within full level 2 and 3 according to whether it was the *first* full level studied.

Table 6.19: Whether obtained a positive work-related outcome, by status immediately before the course and level studied

	Obtained a positive work-related outcome
	%
Total	30
Highest level of original FE study	
Below level 2	21
Full level 2	53
Level 2 (not full)	29
Full level 3	59
Level 3 (not full)	34
Level 4+	58
Other	18
Status immediately before original course	
In work	33
Not in work	24
<i>Base: All completers of working age (3,620)</i>	

We can analyse these results further:

- among those **in work** at the start of the original FE course: respondents were more likely to get a positive outcome if their course was **part of a job** (39 per cent), particularly where it was **compulsory** (42 per cent). A positive outcome was also more common among **younger learners** (46 per cent aged under 25).
- among those of working age but **not in work** immediately before the original FE course: positive outcomes were more common among **men** (29 per cent compared with 21 per cent of women), and those who were **unemployed and looking for work** (30 per cent). The figure was lower among those with a long-term illness or disability (14 per cent). Among those studying below level 2, positive outcomes were more common among those with a higher prior qualification (28 per cent); more generally positive outcomes were more common among those **qualified to level 4 or above** (32 per cent).

More generally, a positive work-related outcome was most common among learners studying:

- construction (66 per cent), engineering/technology/manufacturing (59 per cent), care (50 per cent) and business administration (47 per cent).

It was lower among some other vocational courses:

- hairdressing/beauty therapy (36 per cent), health/social care/public services (33 per cent).

Learners on less vocational courses were generally less likely than average to have gained a positive work-related outcome. Among those who did such courses, learners who studied the following subjects were most likely to have done so:

- IT/computing (27 per cent), ESOL (25 per cent), Maths (24 per cent), basic skills (21 per cent).

We can also analyse these results according to the four learner groups identified above. Findings are shown in table 6.20. This shows that while a positive outcome was most likely to be obtained where the learner did the course both for work-related reasons and to progress their qualification level, a proportion of learners in the other groups also obtained a positive work-related outcome. Overall, a positive work-related outcome was obtained by **39 per cent of those whose course aimed to progress their qualification level**, and by **26 per cent of those whose course did not progress their level**.

Table 6.20: Whether obtained a positive work-related outcome, by learner group

	Obtained a positive work-related outcome
	%
Total	30
Group	
1: Did course for work-related reasons and to progress qualification level	42
2: Did course for work-related reasons, but not to progress qualification level	33
3: Did not do course for work-related reasons, but aimed to progress qualification level	24
4: Did not do course for work-related reasons or to progress qualification level	11

Base: All completers of working age (3,620)

Looking at the sub-groups within each of the four learner groups:

1. **Did course for work-related reasons and to progress qualification level:** the proportion obtaining a positive work-related outcome was highest among **men** (49 per cent compared with 39 per cent of women) and those aged **under 25** (51 per cent). It was lower among non-white learners (30 per cent). Reflecting the general pattern, those studying **at full level 2, full level 3 and level 4+** were most likely to gain a positive outcome (55 per cent, 62 per cent and 67 per cent respectively), while those **in work at the start of the course** were more likely to obtain a positive outcome than those not in work (48 per cent compared with 30 per cent).

2. **Did course for work-related reasons, but not to progress qualification level:** once again, positive outcomes were more common among those studying at **full level 2, full level 3 and level 4+** (56 per cent, 57 per cent and 54 per cent respectively), and were more common among those **in work at the start of the course** (35 per cent compared with 29 per cent not in work).
3. **Did not do course for work-related reasons, but aimed to progress qualification level:** sub-group analysis is not possible for this group, because of the small number of respondents.
4. **Did not do course for work-related reasons or to progress qualification level: younger respondents** (21 per cent of those aged 35) were more likely to have gained a positive outcome, as were those in **non-white ethnic groups** (26 per cent). Among those studying **below level 2** (the majority in this group), a positive outcome was more common among those who had a **higher prior qualification** than those whose prior qualification was also below level 2 (12 per cent compared with six per cent). In this group, those who took the course to gain a qualification were most likely to gain a positive outcome.

6.9 Satisfaction with current work and future plans

Those in work at the time of the interview were asked how satisfied they were with their current job, and how long they expected to stay in it. Whilst the majority were satisfied with their current work, as table 6.21 shows, those whose current job was a continuation of work they were doing at the start of their FE course were slightly less satisfied than those who were in a job which they had started since completing their course.

Table 6.21: Satisfaction with current job

	Continuation of work done at start of course	Working at start of course, started new job after course	Not working at start of course, started new job after course
	%	%	%
Very satisfied	39	46	47
Fairly satisfied	44	39	35
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	8	7	10
Fairly dissatisfied	5	5	4
Very dissatisfied	4	3	3

Base: All completers currently working whose work is a continuation of work they did at start of FE course (1,633); All completers currently working and working at the start of the FE course who started a new job after the FE course ended (756); All completers currently working and not working at the start of the FE course who started a new job after the FE course ended (374)

Despite being slightly less satisfied with their current job, those whose current work was a continuation of work they were doing at the start of their FE course said they were likely to stay in their job longer than those who had started their job since ending their course (56 per cent said that they were likely to stay in their job five or more years). The contrast was strongest with those who had started a new job since the course but were not in work at the start of the course: only 34 per cent of this group expected to stay in the job for five years or more.

These findings reflect the amount of time already spent in the job and the nature of the job (permanent or temporary).

Table 6.22: How long expect to stay in current job

	Continuation of work done at start of course	Working at start of course, started new job after course	Not working at start of course, started new job after course
	%	%	%
Less than a month	1	1	3
One month but less than three months	2	4	5
Three months but less than six months	2	5	8
Six months but less than a year	5	6	7
One year but less than two years	10	10	13
Two years but less than five years	16	18	14
Five years or more	56	45	34
Don't know	8	11	15

Base: All completers currently working whose work is a continuation of work they did at start of FE course (1,633); All completers currently working and working at the start of the FE course who started a new job after the FE course ended (756); All completers currently working and not working at the start of the FE course who started a new job after the FE course ended (374)

7 Wider attitudes to learning

7.1 Likelihood of undertaking future learning

Most respondents (70 per cent) said (at their Wave Two interview) that they were at least quite likely to undertake further education or training courses in the next two years, and 42 per cent said they were very likely to do so. This is a slight reduction since Wave One when 47 per cent of respondents said they were very likely to do further learning in the next two years and 75 per cent said they were at least quite likely to do so.

Table 7.1: Likelihood of doing further learning: comparison between waves

	Wave One	Wave Two
	%	%
Very likely	47	42
Quite likely	28	28
Neither likely nor unlikely	8	5
Not very likely	9	12
Not likely at all	6	9
LIKELY	74	70
NOT LIKELY	15	22
Don't know	3	3
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	6,687	4,032

Respondents who had already moved onto additional learning since their FE course were much more likely than those who had not to say they were very likely to do further learning. Likelihood was also higher among:

- younger respondents (those aged under 50)
- Black respondents
- women
- lone parents
- those whose original FE course was in English language/communications, sciences, or hairdressing/beauty therapy or fitness/yoga/meditation.

It was clear that learners were also more likely to be considering further learning where the FE course had helped them to make a change related to their job, for example where it gave them an idea for a career change or helped them to get a promotion, changes which may have brought about the need for further training.

Table 7.2: Proportion of respondents in different subgroups who were very likely to do further learning

All completers	42		
Learners very likely to do further learning in the following sub-groups:			
Level studied		Age	
Below level 2	41	Under 25	48
Full level 2	42	25-34	47
Level 2 (not full)	42	35-49	44
Full level 3	39	50-59	36
Level 3 (not full)	46	60+	32
Level 4+	45	Gender	
Other	42	Male	40
		Female	43
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>			

A comparison of respondents' answers at Waves One and Two is shown in table 7.3. Overall, 33 per cent had become less likely to take up further education or training and 23 per cent had become more likely.

Among respondents who had said they were very likely to do further education or training at their Wave One interview, 41 per cent said at Wave Two that they were less than very likely to do so (although most of these were still quite likely to do further education or training). One potential reason for this is that respondents had already taken up the further training they were planning to do, and this was the case for a third of these respondents.

As well as respondents who had already started further learning, older respondents (those aged 60 or more) were more likely than average to say they were very likely to do further learning at Wave One, but less likely at Wave Two.

Table 7.3: Likelihood of doing further learning at Wave Two by likelihood at Wave One

	Likelihood of doing further learning at Wave One					
	Very likely	Quite likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	Don't know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very likely	56	36	26	17	18	29
Quite likely	26	35	30	22	16	24
Neither likely nor unlikely	3	6	11	7	7	14
Not very likely	7	13	17	28	26	19
Not likely at all	6	7	13	22	31	9
Don't know	4	3	4	5	2	5
<i>Base: All completers (4,032)</i>	1915	1129	293	383	219	93

Type of Learning Intended

Among respondents who said they were likely to undertake further training or education in the next two years, two-thirds said they would do a taught course that led to a qualification. Two-thirds also said that they would do a taught course designed to develop skills they might use in a job, and a third of respondents said they would do courses or instruction in driving, playing a musical instrument, in an art, craft, sport or practical skill. This is shown in table 7.4.

Of the people who said they were likely to do a course, the following sub-groups were more likely than average to say they intended to do a taught course leading to a qualification:

- younger respondents (those aged under 50)
- Black respondents
- those whose original FE course was compulsory and/or part of their job
- those whose original FE course was at a higher level than they were already qualified to: 77 per cent compared with 64 per cent of respondents whose course was at the same level or a lower level than previously qualified.

Older respondents (those aged 50 or more) were more likely to say they would take a course or instruction in driving, playing an instrument, in an art, craft, sport or practical skill. This is to be expected as two in five (39 per cent) older respondents who were likely to go onto further learning were retired, so tended to be doing

courses for their own enjoyment rather than to learn a skill that could be used in a job.

Table 7.4: Type of learning likely to do in the next two years

	%
Taught courses that lead to qualifications	67
Taught courses designed to develop skills that you might use in a job	67
Courses or instruction or tuition in driving, in playing a musical instrument, in an art or craft, in a sport or in any practical skill	35
Other answer	5
Don't know	5

Base: All completers who are likely to do further learning in the next two years (2,770)

Looking more closely at respondents who intended to take a taught course leading to a qualification, 21 per cent of these respondents said they would study for a degree and 13 per cent intended on doing an NVQ or SVQ; these were by far the most common qualifications mentioned.

Respondents with higher current qualifications (full level three or higher) were more likely than those with lower qualifications to say they intended to study for a degree or a diploma in higher education, while those with a full level two qualification were the most likely group to wish to take a NVQ or SVQ. Respondents whose highest qualification was below level two were the most likely to say that they wanted to take a computing course.

Isolating just the respondents who intended to go on to take a degree: as well as having higher qualifications than average, this group were also more likely than average to have taken an original course at a higher level than their previous highest qualification (32 per cent, compared with an average of 24 per cent).

Table 7.5: Type of qualification likely to do in the next two years

	Highest current qualification					Total
	Below level 2	Full level 2	Full level 3	Level 4+	Other	
	%	%	%	%	%	
A degree	10	9	28	30	12	21
NVQ/SVQ	15	27	17	5	12	13
Diploma in higher education	1	3	7	10	4	6
A levels	4	5	3	5	3	4
GCSEs	8	5	2	2	4	4
Teaching/education	2	3	2	5	5	4
City and Guilds	3	7	3	1	2	3
HNC/HND	1	2	3	2	2	2
Other higher education qualification below degree level	1	2	1	3	*	2
ECDL	1	3	*	1	3	2
Computing	8	2	1	2	1	2
Other	17	18	15	19	24	19
Don't know	37	21	20	22	34	25
<i>Base: All likely to study for a qualification in the next two years (1,886)</i>	124	330	465	675	292	1,886

7.2 Barriers to further learning

It is worth noting that this is a survey of adults who had completed an FE course, so this section reflects barriers perceived by learners who had completed courses, rather than those perceived by adults as a whole.

The most commonly mentioned barriers to learning were time (both in general and time off work), cost (of doing the training itself as well as the cost of living while training) and family commitments. This is shown in chart 7.1.

The **cost** of training was most frequently mentioned by:

- women
- younger respondents (those aged under 35)
- respondents who had already started additional courses since their FE course
- those whose original course was compulsory
- those who had studied at higher levels (full level three or above)
- respondents who had done their original FE course as a stepping stone to further education.

Similar subgroup patterns were observed for the cost of living while training.

A general lack of **time** was most frequently mentioned by:

- respondents who were working
- those aged 25 to 49
- those who had not already done additional courses
- respondents whose FE course was part of their job, and correspondingly those who had done their original course to learn skills for a current/previous job
- respondents whose original FE course was at a lower level than their highest prior qualification and correspondingly, those who were qualified to higher levels (full level three or above) before their FE course.

Not being able to get time off work was more likely to be a barrier for slightly different subgroups. Overall, this was cited as a barrier for six per cent of respondents, but this proportion was higher amongst:

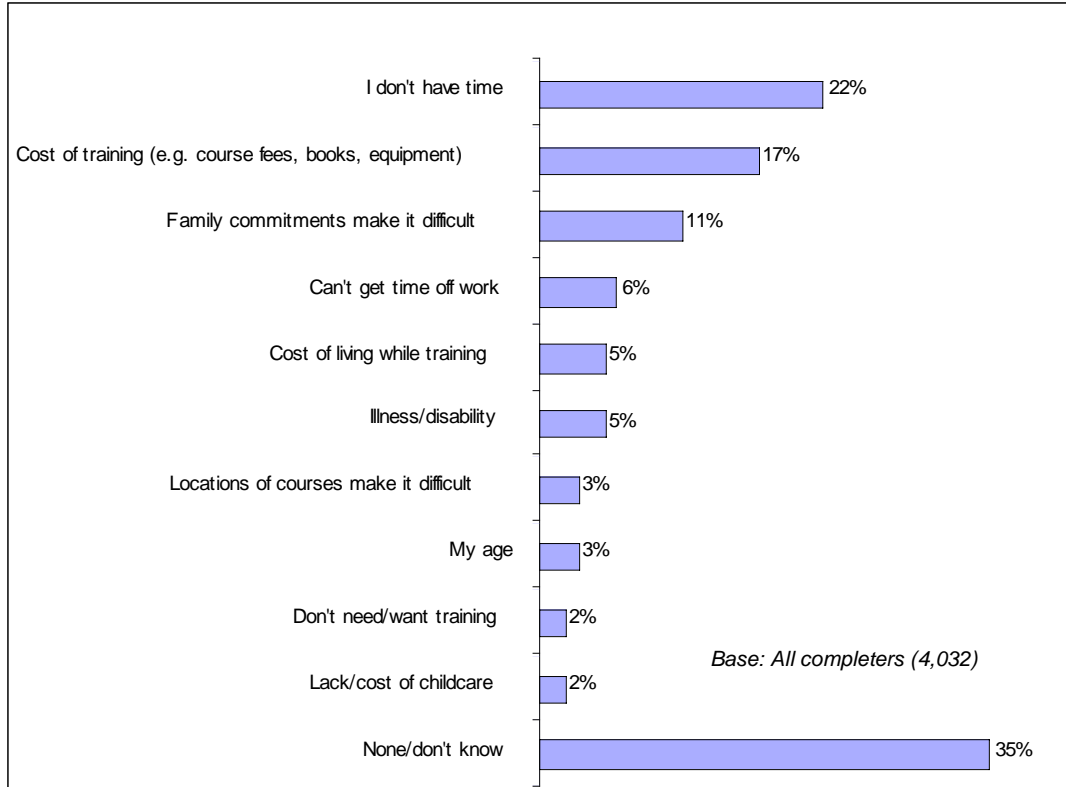
- men
- respondents aged 25 to 49
- respondents whose FE course had been compulsory and/or part of their job
- those with lower current qualifications (full level two or below) and, related to this, those in elementary occupations and process, plant and machine operatives.

Overall, **family commitments** were a barrier to further learning for 11 per cent of respondents, but this figure increases to 22 per cent when only looking at respondents with dependent children, and increases further to 35 per cent of respondents with children aged under five. Other subgroups more likely to cite family commitments as a barrier to work were:

- women
- respondents aged 25 to 50
- Asian respondents and (related to this) people taking ESOL courses
- respondents who were looking after the family or home
- respondents who had not started an additional course

- respondents whose FE course was at a higher level than their prior qualification
- those who had done their original FE course to get a qualification, to develop reading/writing/maths skills or to improve self confidence.

Chart 7.1: Barriers to further learning



For respondents who said the cost of training was a barrier to further learning (17 per cent of all respondents), the particular costs they found to be an issue can be examined further. Almost all of these respondents (95 per cent) said that course fees were a barrier.

Regression analysis that was done at Wave One showed that people who were most likely to say they would do further learning were the ones who mentioned cost was a barrier; and the same pattern applied at Wave Two. This indicated that some of these respondents were keen to take part in further learning, but may struggle to afford it. Alongside this, further analysis shows that half (50 per cent) of respondents who thought course fees were a barrier had either fully paid or contributed to the course fees for their FE course, and a further seven per cent had contributed to or paid fees for subsequent courses. This would suggest that, although course fees are seen as a barrier, they may not always be an insurmountable one.

Learners also mentioned the cost of books (37 per cent) and the cost of equipment (35 per cent) to be barriers to further education. Other costs, such as transport

costs, loss of earnings and the cost of exams, were mentioned by very few respondents.

Table 7.6: Cost barriers to further learning

	%
Course fees	95
Cost of books	37
Cost of equipment	35
Travel/transport costs	5
Cost of living	2
Loss of earnings/cost of time off work	2
Cost of exams	1
Other	3
Don't know	2

Base: All respondents for whom cost of training is a barrier (696)

7.3 Ways of encouraging further learning

Table 7.7 shows what respondents said would encourage them to do further learning. As well as being able to select as many of these factors as they wanted, respondents also selected which *one* would be most likely to encourage them to do further learning. As shown in the table most of the factors were agreed with by more than half of respondents.

Funding to help pay for learning was selected by the highest proportion of respondents. The subgroups in which higher proportions of respondents selected funding as the *most likely* thing to encourage further learning were as follows:

- those aged under 25
- respondents who had already started additional courses
- those whose original FE course was compulsory
- those whose original FE course had been at a higher level (level three or above), and correspondingly, those who current highest qualification was level three or above.

Having **learning organised at more convenient times** was mentioned most frequently by:

- women
- younger respondents

- those from non-White ethnic groups (and particularly Black respondents)
- respondents who were working at the time of their interview
- learners whose original FE course was higher than their prior qualification.

Time off work to do learning was mentioned by 68 per cent of those who were in work at the time of their interview. Looking just at those in work, this was highest among:

- younger respondents (aged under 35)
- those whose original FE course was compulsory
- those who originally studied at level 4 or above.

Still looking only at respondents who were working, 66 per cent said that **learning organised in the workplace** would encourage them to do further learning. Similar sub-group patterns were observed to those who were more likely to say time off work to do learning, with the addition that women were also more likely to say that learning organised in the workplace would encourage them to do further learning.

Learning which helped to improve their employment prospects was mentioned most frequently by:

- younger respondents, especially those aged under 25
- respondents from non-White ethnic groups, especially Black respondents
- those who had started a new job since their FE course
- respondents whose course was part of their job
- those whose original FE course was higher than their prior qualification

The same sub-group patterns were visible amongst respondents who said they would be encouraged by **learning which was more relevant to what they needed**.

Advice on the type of learning available was most frequently thought to encourage further learning by respondents who were unemployed at the time of their interview.

Learning organised in more convenient places was more likely to be mentioned by women, people aged under 50 and respondents from non-White ethnic groups (and especially Black respondents).

Other things that were considered to encourage further learning were relevant to specific groups of learners. Amongst respondents with dependent children, 48 per cent said that having **childcare available while learning** would encourage them to take up further learning, and ten per cent said this would be the most likely thing to encourage them.

Half (50 per cent) of respondents with a long-term health problem or disability said help with this would encourage them to do further learning, and this increases further (to 61 per cent) when looking only at respondents who said their health problem or disability limited the amount or kind of work they could do. **Help with a health problem or disability** was considered the *single* most likely thing to encourage further learning by nine per cent of respondents with a health problem or disability.

Overall, only 17 per cent of respondents said that **help with reading, writing or English** would encourage them to do further learning, but amongst people with literacy problems this figure increased to 62 per cent, and 21 per cent of this group said help in this area would be the *single* most likely thing to encourage them to do further learning.

There were subgroups that were more likely to mention all of the various ways of encouraging further learning:

- respondents who had said they were likely to undertake further learning in the next two years
- respondents whose original FE course had been at a higher level than their prior qualification

Respondents that could be considered “disadvantaged” (those from ethnic minorities, those with a long-term illness or disability and unemployed) were more likely than average to mention most of the ways of encouraging further learning, with the exception of funding and time (time off work/more convenient times). However, attitudes to funding may relate to their previous experiences (i.e. if previous courses were free they might expect future courses also to be free, and therefore not require additional funding).

As well as showing results from Wave Two (both all factors and most likely), table 7.7 shows results for Wave One. As the table shows, all ways of encouraging learning were more likely to be mentioned at Wave Two than at Wave One. This can be attributed to the change in methodology (from face-to-face to telephone interviewing). The ranking of responses are similar between Wave One and Wave Two, although learning relevant to respondents’ needs and learning to improve employment prospects were more common responses at Wave Two, while advice

on the type of learning and time off work were less common responses at Wave Two.

Table 7.7: Things that would encourage further learning

	All factors Wave One	All factors Wave Two %	Most likely Wave Two %
Funding to help you pay for learning	45	75	32
Learning organised at more convenient times	22	64	9
Learning which is more relevant to what you need	17	70	8
Learning which helped to improve your employment prospects	19	65	8
Advice on the type of learning you could do	22	61	8
Time off work to do learning	22	54	7
Learning organised at more convenient places	19	62	6
Learning organised in the workplace	14	53	6
Childcare available while learning	13	25	5
Help with reading, writing and/or English	7	17	3
Help with health problems or disability	5	21	2
Care for other dependents available while learning	3	21	1
Other answer	5	7	5
None	20	6	*
Don't know	2	*	3
<i>Base: All completers</i>	6,687	4,032	3,793

For respondents who said that advice on the type of learning they could do would encourage them to do further learning, the particular type of advice that would encourage further learning can be examined more closely:

- advice on the types of courses which are available (86 per cent)
- the cost of courses and any funding available (81 per cent)
- the level of course they should take (77 per cent)
- the types of course that can help with particular careers (76 per cent)
- the dates, time or locations of courses (75 per cent).

7.4 General attitudes to learning

A number of statements about learning were read out to respondents and they were asked to say how much they agreed with each. Table 7.8 shows the proportions who agreed or disagreed with each statement.

The majority of respondents agreed that **learning new skills is something that they will need to do throughout their working life**, although respondents aged 60

or more were less likely to agree with this statement. Those most likely to strongly agree with the statement were:

- respondents who had already started additional courses
- Black respondents
- lone parents
- respondents who were working at Wave Two, particularly those who had started work or a new job since their FE course
- respondents whose FE course had been compulsory
- respondents whose original FE course was higher than their prior qualification
- those whose original course was at part level 3 or level 4+.

Black respondents and those who had started an additional course were also more likely to strongly agree that they are **more likely to get a better job if they do some learning, training or education**. In addition, women were more likely than men to agree with this statement.

Three-quarters of all respondents strongly agreed that they **enjoy learning new skills**, and this was highest amongst:

- women
- younger respondents
- those who had already started additional courses
- Those with higher current qualifications (full level three or higher).

While the majority of respondents disagreed with the statement “**spending time learning is too much effort**”, respondents were more likely to agree with this if their original course and prior qualification were both below level 2, or if they were a first full level 2 learner. Agreement with this statement was also higher amongst non-White ethnic groups, and (related to this) respondents on courses in English or languages, particularly ESOL courses.

Non-White ethnic groups were also more likely to agree that they **hadn't got enough skills and experience to find the type of job they wanted**, as were:

- younger respondents (those aged under 50)
- lone parents

- unemployed respondents
- respondents who had started a new job after their course, and also started a new job since their Wave One interview (e.g. had started at least two new jobs since their course)
- learners who had done ESOL courses
- those whose original FE course was at a higher level or the same level as their prior qualification
- those whose highest current qualification was below level two.

People who were qualified to below level two were also more likely to agree with the statement “**school did not prepare me for the learning I need to do in my life today**”, as were Black respondents, respondents with a long-term health problem or disability, and *first* full level two learners. Men were also slightly more likely than women to agree with this statement. Respondents whose course was at the same, or a higher level than their prior qualification were more likely to with this statement than those whose course was at a lower level.

As might be expected, respondents who had already started additional learning since their original FE course tended to be positive about learning, they were more likely than average to agree that learning new skills is something they will need to do throughout their working lives, and more likely than average to strongly agree that they enjoy learning new skills and they are more likely to get a better job if they do some learning.

Non-White respondents (particularly those doing ESOL courses) often had a more negative attitude, agreeing that they didn’t have the right skills and experience to find the type of job they wanted, and that learning is too much effort.

Table 7.8 General attitudes towards learning

	Whether agree/disagree with statements		
	Agree	Disagree	Neither/no opinion
	%	%	%
Learning new skills is something that I will need to do throughout my working life	84	8	8
I am too old to learn new skills	8	89	3
School did not prepare me for the learning I need to do in my life today	46	43	11
I enjoy learning new skills	96	2	2
I haven't got enough skills and experience to find the type of job I want	27	54	19
You're more likely to get a better job if you do some learning, training or education	90	5	5
For getting jobs, knowing the right people is more important than the qualifications	37	44	19
Spending time learning is too much effort	13	81	6

Base: All completers (4032)

8 Conclusions

Learning and Progression

Overall, **one-fifth of FE learners were “progressors”** – i.e. they were aiming to progress their level of qualification by taking the course. Within full level 2 and full level 3 learners, 43 per cent and 59 per cent were progressors respectively (i.e. studying for their *first* full level 2/3).

The main differences in the profile of progressors and non-progressors were as follows:

- non-progressors tended to be older than progressors and were more likely to be retired;
- similar proportions of progressors and non-progressors were working at the start of their course, but non-progressors tended to earn more.

While many non-progressing learners have a relatively high income, there is a proportion of non-progressors who can be considered **“disadvantaged”**. Specifically, 22% of non-progressors had a long-term illness or disability, five per cent were unemployed, while over a third of those in work were earning less than £10,000 per year. It is also worth noting that over half of non-progressors said that their original course helped them to gain “improved or better” qualifications, even though strictly speaking it did not increase their overall qualification level.

In total, 13 per cent of learners had increased their qualification level through **further learning** (subsequent to their original course), with three per cent attaining level 2 and five per cent level 3 from further learning. Younger learners were particularly likely to go onto further learning that increased their qualification level.

If learners did their *original* course to progress their level of qualification, they were more likely to have increased their qualification level (again) through further learning. However, learners studying at low levels (below level 2 or not aiming at a NQF qualification) were as likely as other learners to increase their qualification level through *further* learning. This suggests that at least some learners who take FE courses at low levels (and which do not increase their highest level of qualification) do go on to take further courses that increase their highest level of qualification. This will include cases where:

- the lower level course was an entrance requirement for the higher level course the learner wished to take

- the lower level course was not an entrance requirement, but it increased the learner's skills and/or confidence sufficiently for them to enrol on the higher level course.

Economic outcomes

Where learners had started a new job since their original course, full level 2 and full level 3 learners were most likely to say that the **course had helped them to get a job**. In general, progressors were more likely than non-progressors to attribute getting the job to the course, but there were no differences within full level 2 or full level 3 in terms of whether it was the first full level 2/3.

Learners studying at full level 2 and 3 were also more likely than other learners to say they **gained various work-related benefits** from their course, specifically relating to earnings, training and responsibility. Progressors were also more likely than non-progressors to acknowledge these benefits, although there were no differences evident in terms of whether full level 2 or 3 learners were at their *first* full level.

There was evidence of re-skilling from the survey. Large proportions of progressors and non-progressors did the original course to help them with a future job or career. Among non-progressors these learners were most likely to be studying below level 2. One in eight non-progressors had actually **changed to a different type of work as result of the course**, by the time of the Wave Two survey.

In addition, among those studying below level 2, learners with a higher prior qualification were more likely to gain a work-related outcome, and more specifically to say that the course had helped them get a new job. These findings can be linked to those on job characteristics, to identify a group of learners who re-train and change careers. For these learners, the FE course can help them to get a new job although this can involve a reduction in hours and/or pay, and rarely increases their overall qualification level.

More generally, although work-related outcomes were obtained by smaller numbers of non-progressors compared with progressors, there were still substantial proportions who did obtain positive outcomes (eg a quarter of non-progressors of working age obtained an outcome related to finding work, increased earnings, promotion or setting up their own business).

Other outcomes

While only around a third of courses resulted in positive work-related outcomes, nearly all learners felt they had gained something from their course. Most had

gained **self esteem or self confidence**, and while this applied to people studying at all levels, it could be considered particularly important for people who had low or no qualifications before their course.

Progressors were more likely than non-progressors to say they had gained a number of benefits from the course. As well as improved qualifications, these included increased skills (eg basic skills, problem solving and team working skills), self-confidence and motivation.

Course fees

Analysis of the cost of course fees as a barrier to further learning showed that:

- people who mentioned cost as a barrier were also more likely to think they would do further learning in the next two years, indicating that some of these respondents were keen to take part in further learning, but may struggle to afford it
- equally, separate analysis showed that respondents who said cost was a barrier had often contributed to the fees in their original course, indicating that although a barrier to further learning, it may not always be an insurmountable one
- however, cost was equally likely to be mentioned as a barrier by progressors and non-progressors, indicating that increased course fees may deter these learners from enrolling.

Overall, this suggests that there is a delicate balance between cost and participation in learning: on the one hand, cost only becomes an issue once learners are reasonably interested in doing the learning; however, where costs do prevent people from taking up further learning, this is potentially excluding an enthusiastic group of learners, who would gain considerable benefits from taking it up.

Learning at Level 2 and Level 3

The DfES Skills Strategy focuses public subsidy on low-skilled learners to help them achieve a first full level 2 qualification. This is done through supporting both individuals (e.g. through learning entitlements and financial support) and employers (the Train to Gain programme). Train to Gain also features some regional trials of subsidising first full level 3 qualifications, and a level 3 entitlement for 19-25 year olds will be introduced from 2007/08.

It is therefore important to consider the findings in relation to learners studying for level 2 and level 3 qualifications. The diagrams below focus on these levels, with a summary of findings of:

- pre-course characteristics
- progression in level of qualification
- work-related outcomes.

The summary of key groups in the next chapter examines these findings in more detail.

FULL LEVEL 2 LEARNERS

Pre-course characteristics:

43% qualified at lower level -----	First FL2 learner	
29% qualified at same level	Other FL2 learner	
28% qualified at higher level		
FL2 LEARNERS:		Difference from average:
Male	31%	-3
Female	69%	+3
Under 25 yrs old	14%	+5
25-34 yrs	31%	+9
35-49 yrs	44%	+6
50-59 yrs	9%	-7
60+ yrs	2%	-13
Long-term illness/disability	9%	-10
In work at time of course	76%	+17
(First vs. other FL2 learners: no difference)		
Course part of job	57%	+25
(First vs. other FL2 learners: no difference)		
FIRST FL2 LEARNERS:		
25-34 yr olds less likely than other ages to be doing first FL2		
1 in 5 doing 'care' courses		
More likely than other FL2 learners to be studying to: improve self-confidence, make friends & meet people or develop IT skills		
Less likely than other FL2 learners to: pay for course		
OTHER FL2 LEARNERS:		
More likely than first FL2 learners to be studying to: gain qualifications or keep mind or body active		

Post-course outcomes:

<u>Qualifications / further learning</u>		Difference from average:
↑ level of qualification	48%	+24
(First FL2 learners)	77%	+53)
↑ level of qualification through further learning	17%	+4
(First FL2 learners)	23%	+10)
Any further learning	56%	-7

<u>Work related</u>		Difference from average:
Positive work related outcome*	53%	+23
% of those starting new jobs who said they got the job as a result of their course	47%	+13
% of those whose course was part of job & have worked since who feel they have, as a result of course:		
- greater responsibility at work	59%	+15
- earned more money	46%	+18
- changed to diff't type of work	24%	+9
- been able to keep job	34%	+16
- got more training at work	50%	+11
- trained other staff	42%	+7

* one or more of the following: got a job, promotion, earned more money or set up own business

FULL LEVEL 3 LEARNERS

Pre-course characteristics:

59% qualified at lower level - First FL3 learner
 29% qualified at below level 2 or less - FL3 jumper

FL3 LEARNERS:

		Difference from average:
Male	28%	-6
Female	72%	+6
Under 25 yrs old	33%	+24
25-34 yrs	20%	-2
35-49 yrs	40%	+2
50-59 yrs	7%	-9
60+ yrs	1%	-14
Long-term illness/disability	11%	-8
In work at time of course	69%	+10
<small>(First, jumpers & other FL3 learners: no difference)</small>		
Course part of job	51%	+19
<small>(First, jumpers & other FL3 learners: no difference)</small>		

FIRST FL3 LEARNERS:

Under 25 yr olds more likely than other ages to be doing first FL3

1 in 5 doing 'care' courses

More likely than other FL3 learners to be studying to:
 improve self-confidence, help with health problems/
 disability or because employer made it compulsory

Less likely than other FL3 learners to: pay for course

FL3 JUMPERS:

35-49 yr olds more likely than other ages to be jumpers

Less likely than other FL3 learners to: pay for course

1 in 5 doing 'care' courses

More likely than other FL3 learners to be studying to:
 improve self-confidence, help with health problems/
 disability or because employer made it compulsory

Less likely than other FL3 learners to: pay for course

FL3 JUMPERS:

35-49 yr olds more likely than other ages to be jumpers

Less likely than other FL3 learners to: pay for course

Post-course outcomes:

Qualifications / further learning

Difference from average:

↑ level of qualification	50%	+26
(First FL3 learners	76%	+52
FL3 jumpers	87%	+63)

↑ level of qualification through further learning	11%	-2
(First FL3 learners	13%	0
FL3 jumpers	16%	+3)

Any further learning	57%	-6
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Work related

Difference from average:

Positive work related outcome*	59%	+29
--------------------------------	-----	-----

% of those starting new jobs who said they got the job as a result of their course	57%	+23
--	-----	-----

% of those whose course was part of job & have worked since who feel they have, as a result of course:		
--	--	--

- greater responsibility at work	57%	+13
- earned more money	45%	+17
- got a promotion	34%	+13
- been able to keep job	34%	+16
- got more training at work	50%	+11
(First FL3 learners	53%	+14
FL3 jumpers	57%	+18)

9 Summary of key groups

This section provides a summary of the findings for the following groups:

- **Learners studying below level 2**, distinguishing between learners who are studying at a lower level than their highest prior qualification, and those with a highest prior qualification which is also below level 2;
- **First full level 2 learners**: learners with a course aim of full level 2 whose highest prior qualification was below level 2, part level 2 or 'other';
- **First full level 3 learners**: learners with a course aim of full level 3 whose highest prior qualification was below level 2, part level 2, full level 2 or 'other';
- **Level 3 'jumpers'**: learners with a course aim of full level 3 whose highest prior qualification was below level 2, part level 2 or 'other' (i.e. they miss out the full level 2).
- **Progressors**: learners aiming to progress their level of qualification

In each case, the analysis below compares the relevant group with other learners studying at the same level (e.g. first full level 2 learners are compared with other learners studying at full level 2), except for progressors who are compared with non-progressors.

9.1 Learners below level 2

Characteristics

Learners on courses below level 2 were split between those who had a higher prior qualification (i.e. level 2 or above) and those who did not. Where learners had a higher prior qualification, they were often qualified to level 4 or above (in 40 per cent of cases where the prior qualification was higher). The demographic profile of these two groups differed as follows:

- in terms of ethnicity, non-white learners were considerably less likely to have a higher prior qualification;
- those with a long-term illness or disability were also less likely to have a qualification at level 2 or above;
- older learners were more likely than younger learners to have a higher prior qualification;
- those who had a higher prior qualification were more likely to be in work at the time of the course.

FE course

There were differences in terms of the subjects studied: learners whose highest prior qualification was below level 2 were more likely to study literacy or numeracy basic skills, English language, ESOL and hairdressing or beauty therapy courses. Learners studying at a lower level than their highest qualification were more likely than average to be on arts and crafts and foreign language courses.

When asked for the reasons for doing the course, interest in the subject tended to be mentioned more frequently by learners whose prior qualification was higher than the course. Those with a highest prior qualification below level 2 were more likely than average to say they did the course for a future job or career, to get a qualification, to develop reading and writing or maths skills or to improve self-confidence.

Those studying below level 2 were less likely than average to be in paid work at the start of their course (49 vs. 59 per cent) and also to be doing their course as part of a job (21 vs. 31 per cent). Where they were, learners who were studying a course at a lower level than their highest prior qualification were more likely to say they did the course in their own (rather than the employer's) time.

Learners were more likely to have paid towards the FE course if they were studying at a lower level than their highest prior qualification (51 per cent compared with 29 per cent of other learners studying below level 2).

Attitudes to the course were similar to average among learners studying below level 2, and there were no differences according to highest prior qualification.

Benefits gained from the FE course

Learners studying below level 2 whose highest prior qualification was also below level 2 were more likely than average to say that the course:

1. encouraged them to take part in voluntary or community activities;
2. had helped them gain numeracy, literacy or IT skills;
3. enabled them to help their children with their school work;
4. had helped them in other ways in relation to their self-confidence and personal / health problems.

General attitudes to learning

Those who studied at below level 2 were no more or less likely than learners in general to say that they would be likely to undertake further education or training in the next two years, and there were no differences according to highest prior qualification. However, those whose highest prior qualification was below level 2

were more likely than average to agree that they hadn't got enough skills and experience to find the type of job they wanted, that school did not prepare them for the learning they needed in their life today and that spending time learning is too much effort. They also tended to express lower levels of self-esteem.

Further learning

The proportion of learners who were originally studying below level 2 who had actually gone on to start further learning was similar to learners in general (61 vs. 63 per cent) and there was no difference in terms of whether they had a higher prior qualification or not. Where they had gone on to further study, they were just as likely as learners in general to agree that the original course had helped them do so.

Whilst learners who originally studied at below level 2 were no more or less likely than learners in general to have *increased their level of qualification* through further learning, those who originally studied below 2 and had no higher prior qualification were more likely to have done so than those with higher prior qualifications (17 vs. 6 per cent).

Whether worked since FE course

Those who studied below level 2 were slightly more likely to be in work at the time of the Wave Two interview compared to at the start of the course. They were however less likely than average to have started a *new job* following their course and among those who had studied to help with a future job or career, it was those with a higher prior qualification who were more likely than average to have started a new job (48 vs. 39 per cent of those whose prior qualification was also below level 2).

Learners who studied at below level 2 who worked during or before their course and switched to a new job following the course were less likely than average to have changed to a different industry sector when they changed jobs. Additionally those who worked during their course and switched to a new job after the course were less likely than average to have increased their hours. They were however more likely than average to have increased their pay.

Work related benefits gained from the FE course

Learners studying below level 2 were less likely than average to have obtained a positive work-related outcome from their FE course (defined as one or more of the following: getting a job, promotion, earning more money or setting up their own business) (21 per cent vs. 30 per cent on average). Among learners in general, a positive work-related outcome was more likely if they had been in work at their start of their course or had done their course for work-related reasons. Those studying below level 2 were less likely than average to fall into either of these categories, and

among those that did not (i.e. who were of working age but were not working at the start of their course, or doing their course for work-related reasons) positive work-related outcomes were more common among those with a higher prior qualification (28 and 12 per cent respectively).

Learners studying below level 2 who had started a new job following their FE course were less likely than average to say that they had got their job as a result of their course. Furthermore, those studying below level 2 whose course was part of a job were less likely than average to feel that as a result of their course they had:

- been given greater responsibility in their job;
- earned more money;
- been able to stay in their job.

Because of the small base sizes it is not possible to identify differences between those whose highest prior qualification was also below level 2 and those who had a higher prior qualification.

9.2 First full level 2 learners

Characteristics

Overall, 43 per cent of full level 2 learners were studying for their *first* full level 2. Among full level 2 learners the proportion studying for their first full level 2 was similar between men and women. By age, 25-34 year olds were less likely than other age groups to be studying for a first full level 2.

The proportion of full level 2 learners in work at the time of the course was higher than average (76 vs. 59 per cent respectively) and there was no difference according to whether the learner was doing their *first* full level 2 or not.

FE course

Within the group of learners studying for full level 2, care courses accounted for a relatively large proportion of the courses done by *first* full level 2 learners (around one in five).

First full level 2 learners were more likely to say they did the course to improve self-confidence, make friends or meet people or develop IT skills than other learners studying for full level 2 qualifications. Others studying at full level 2 were more likely than those doing their first full level 2 to give gaining a qualification or keeping their mind and body active as a reason for doing the course.

The proportion of full level 2 learners doing their course as part of a job was higher than average (57 vs. 32 per cent respectively) but there was no difference according to whether the learner was doing their *first* full level 2 or not.

First full level 2 learners were less likely to pay towards the course than other full level 2 learners (29 per cent compared with 40 per cent).

Benefits gained from the FE course

First full level 2 learners were more likely than others with a course aim of full level 2 to say they had benefited from the FE course in a number of ways:

- gained better qualifications;
- gained literacy, numeracy, problem solving and team working skills;
- gained self-confidence or helped them feel better about themselves / deal with personal problems;
- enabled them to help children with school work;
- enabled them to keep their body active or helped with their health problems or disability;
- made new friends or met new people.

General attitudes to learning

The proportion of full level 2 learners saying they were very likely to undertake further learning in the next two years was the same as among learners as a whole. However *first* full level 2 learners were less likely to say this than other full level 2 learners.

Further learning

Whilst those who studied at full level 2 were less likely than average to have actually gone on to start further learning following their FE course, those that had were more likely than average to say that their main further course was designed to lead to a qualification and to agree that the original course they had done had helped them move onto further learning. There were no differences between first and other full level 2 learners in terms of any of these things.

Furthermore, learners who originally studied at full level 2 were more likely than learners in general to have *increased their level of qualification* through further learning, particularly those who were studying for their first full level 2.

Whether worked since FE course

Those who studied at full level 2 were slightly more likely to be in work at the time of the interview compared to at the start of the course and were also more likely than average to have started a *new* job following their course. (There was no difference

between first and other full level 2 learners.) Where new post-course jobs had been started, full level 2 learners were more likely than average to have:

- started work in personal service or skilled trade roles (reflecting the younger age profile of those learning at these levels and younger learners being less likely to work in higher level roles);
- also been in work during their course (in a different job).

Full level 2 learners who had worked during their course and started a new job subsequently were more likely than average to have increased their hours when they switched jobs.

Work related benefits gained from the FE course

Among learners in general, a positive work-related outcome (i.e. getting a job, promotion, earning more money or setting up their own business) was more likely if they had done their course for work-related reasons. The majority of full level 2 learners did their course for work-related reasons and as such, learners studying at this level were more likely than average to have obtained a positive worked-related outcome as a result of their course (53 per cent vs. 30 per cent on average). There was no difference however between those doing their first full level 2 or other full level 2 learners.

Learners studying at full level 2 who had started a new job following their original FE course were more likely than average to feel that they had got their job as a result of their course. Again there was no difference between first and other full level 2 learners in this respect.

Full level 2 learners whose course was part of a job were more likely than average to say that they had gained a number of work related benefits from their original FE course:

- greater responsibility in their job;
- earning more money;
- changing to a different type of work;
- being able to stay in their job;
- getting more training in their job;
- giving training to other staff.

Because of the small base sizes it is not possible to identify differences *within* level (e.g. for first full level 2 learners).

9.3 First full level 3 learners and full level 3 jumpers

Characteristics

Three in five full level 3 learners were studying for their *first* full level 3 (59 per cent), and 29 per cent were 'jumpers', i.e. their prior qualification was below level 2. The youngest age group (under 25) were most likely to be studying for their first full level 3, while those aged 35-49 were most likely to be full level 3 'jumpers'. There were no differences by gender.

Full level 3 learners were more likely than average to be in work at the start of their FE course (69 vs. 59 per cent), with first full level 3 learners, full level 3 jumpers and other full level 3 learners equally likely to be in work.

FE course

Within the group of learners studying for full level 3, care courses accounted for a relatively large proportion of the courses done by *first* full level 3 learners (around one in five).

Gaining a qualification was equally likely to be given as a reason for doing the FE course by first full level 3 learners and others studying at full level 3. First full level 3 learners were more likely to be doing the course because their employer had made it compulsory, as well as to do the course to improve their self-confidence or help with their health problems or disability.

The proportion of full level 3 learners doing their course as part of a job was higher than average (51 vs. 32 per cent respectively) but there was no difference according to whether the learner was doing their *first* full level 3 (including level 3 jumpers) or not.

First full level 3 learners were less likely than learners in general to pay towards the course (31 per cent compared with 44 per cent of FE learners) and full level 3 jumpers were even less likely (29 per cent).

When compared to others studying at full level 3, first full level 3 learners were just as likely to feel that the FE course had met their needs, although full level 3 jumpers were more likely than other full level 3 learners to say that the course had met their needs *completely*.

Benefits gained from the FE course

As one would expect, learners were more likely to say that the course had enabled them to gain better qualifications if they were studying at a higher level than their

prior qualification, and this applied specifically to first full level 3 learners and full level 3 jumpers.

A number of other benefits were mentioned more frequently by first full level 3 learners and full level 3 jumpers than others with a course aim of full level 3:

- the course encouraged them to do more learning;
- improved literacy, IT, problem solving and team working skills;
- improved self-confidence;
- improved personal or social skills;
- the course made them feel better about themselves;
- the course made them feel they had more opportunities;
- the course encouraged them to do voluntary or community activities;
- the course helped them make new friends or meet new people.

Full level 3 learners were more likely than learners at other levels to say that the course had given them ideas for a career change or the type of job they would like to do, and this particularly applied to first full level 3 learners.

General attitudes to learning

The proportion of full level 3 learners saying they were very likely to undertake further learning in the next two years was the same as among learners as a whole, and there were no significant differences between first full level 3, level 3 jumpers and other full level 3 learners on this measure.

Further learning

Learners who originally studied at full level 3 were less likely than average to have actually gone on to start further learning following their FE course, and this did not differ significantly between those who were doing their first full level 3, level 3 jumpers and other full level 3 learners.

Full level 3 learners who had gone on to do further learning were more likely than average to say their main further course was designed to lead to a qualification and full level 3 jumpers were more likely than other full level 3 learners to say this. In terms of whether the original course that they had done had helped them move onto further learning, full level 3 learners were more likely than average to agree that it had helped, although those who had done their first full level 3 were slightly less likely to agree than other full level 3 learners.

Even though they were less likely than average to have gone on to start further learning, those who originally studied at full level 3 were more likely than average to have *increased their level of qualification* through further learning and level 3 jumpers were more likely than other full level 3 learners to have done so.

Whether worked since FE course

While learners generally were as likely (or slightly more likely) to be in work at the time of the interview compared to at the start of their course, those studying at full level 3 were considerably more likely to now be working (and this applied particularly to those doing their first full level 3 and level 3 jumpers).

Those who studied at full level 3 were also more likely than average to have started a *new* job following their course, and those that had were:

- likely to have also worked before (either during their course or at some point before it), although 8 per cent of full level 3 learners who started a new job following their course had never worked before;
- more likely to have started work in personal service roles.

There was no significant difference between first full level 3 learners, level 3 jumpers and other full level 3 learners in terms of overall likelihood to have started a new job following the course. Those who studied at full level 3 and switched to a new job following their course were more likely than average to have moved from part time to full time work.

Work related benefits gained from the FE course

Among learners in general, a positive work-related outcome (i.e. getting a job, promotion, earning more money or setting up their own business) was more likely if they had done their course for work-related reasons. The majority of full level 3 learners did their course for work-related reasons and as such, learners studying at this level were more likely than average to have obtained a positive worked-related outcome as a result of their course (59 per cent vs. 30 per cent on average). There was no difference however between those doing their first full level 3 or other full level 3 learners.

Learners studying at full level 3 who had started a new job following their original FE course were more likely than learners at other levels to feel that they had got their job as a result of their course. There was no difference between first and other full level 3 learners in this respect.

Full level 3 learners whose course was part of a job were more likely than average to say that they had gained a number of work related benefits from their original FE course:

- greater responsibility in their job;
- earning more money;
- getting a promotion;

- being able to stay in their job;
- getting more training in their job;

First full level 3 learners were more likely to say they got to go on more training courses at work than other full level 3 learners.

9.4 Progressors

Characteristics

Learners were split between those whose course was at a lower level, higher level or at the same level as their highest prior qualification. Those whose course was at a higher level can be termed “progressors” – i.e. they were aiming to progress their level of qualification by taking the course. Those who were studying at the same or lower level than their highest prior qualification can be termed “non-progressors”. Just over one-fifth of learners (21 per cent) were progressors. The demographic profile of these two groups differed as follows:

- a higher proportion of non-progressors than progressors were men, although both groups were predominantly female;
- non-progressors tended to be older than progressors and were more likely to be retired;
- non-progressors were slightly more likely than progressors to have a long-standing illness or disability;
- similar proportions of progressors and non-progressors were working at the start of their course, but non-progressors who were tended to earn more.

FE course

It is possible to divide learners further into four separate groups, based on whether they aimed to progress their qualification or not and whether they were doing the course for work-related reasons. The characteristics of the four groups are as follows:

1. **Did course for work-related reasons and to progress qualification level:** 66 per cent of this group were in work at the start of the course, and they had the youngest age profile of the four groups (42 per cent were aged under 35). They had the lowest qualifications before the course (47 per cent were qualified to below level 2), and were more likely than average to be studying for a full level 2 (12 per cent), full level 3 (13 per cent) or part level 3 (31 per cent).
2. **Did course for work-related reasons, but not to progress qualification level:** 71 per cent of this group were in work at the start of the course, and

received a relatively high hourly pay (23 per cent were paid £8 per hour or more during or before the course).

3. **Did not do course for work-related reasons, but aimed to progress qualification level:** just 37 per cent were working at the start of the course, while 25 per cent were retired. A relatively high proportion were qualified to below level 2 at the start of the course (39 per cent). This group were mostly studying for a part level 2 (63 per cent) or part level 3 (31 per cent).
4. **Did not do course for work-related reasons or to progress qualification level:** 33 per cent of this group were retired, with 39 per cent in work. Wage levels were relatively high (22 per cent were paid £8 per hour or more during or before the course). A high proportion (42 per cent) were qualified to level 4 or above, although the majority (62 per cent) were studying below level 2. A relatively high proportion in this group had a long-term illness or disability (29 per cent), linked to their older age profile.

Benefits gained from the FE course

Progressors were more likely than non-progressors to say that the course had:

- given them the opportunity to progress in education;
- given them better qualifications;
- encouraged them to do more learning;
- helped them gain numeracy, literacy, problem solving or team working skills;
- made them feel better about themselves;
- given them the sense they have more opportunities;
- helped them in other ways in relation to their self-confidence and personal / health problems;
- helped them make friends or meet new people.

General attitudes to learning

Non-progressors were slightly less likely than progressors to say that they would be “very likely” to undertake further education or training in the next two years. Furthermore, among those who said they were likely, progressors were more likely than non-progressors to say that they intended to do a taught course leading to a qualification. Those who were intending to go on to take a degree were more likely than average to have been progressors.

In terms of barriers to further learning, those whose original course was at a lower level than their prior qualification were most likely to cite lack of time. Family commitments were more likely to be mentioned by progressors.

Progressors were more likely than non-progressors to strongly agree that *learning new skills is something that they will need to do throughout their working life*. Those who originally studied at the same or a higher level than their prior qualification were more likely than those who studied at a lower level to agree strongly that they *hadn't got enough skills and experience to find the type of job they wanted*.

Further learning

Analysing by whether learners originally studied at the same, higher or lower level than their prior qualification reveals no difference in terms of likelihood to have gone on to further study. Among those who had gone on to further study, progressors were more likely than non-progressors to agree that the original course had helped them do so.

Those who did their original course to progress their level of qualification were most likely to have **increased their level of qualification through further learning** (27 per cent of progressors). Non-progressors were less likely to have done so, but nevertheless some did (6 per cent of those who originally studied at a lower level than their prior qualification and 16 per cent of those who studied at the same level).

Whether worked since FE course

Learners in general were as likely (or slightly more likely) to be in work at the time of the interview compared to at the start of their course and the pattern was consistent irrespective of whether they originally studied at a higher level than their prior qualification or at the same or a lower level.

However, among learners who were working at the start of their course, those who originally studied at a lower level than they were already qualified were less likely to move into a new job following their course. Furthermore, analysis of the new jobs started among those who had also worked at the start of their course (in a different job) reveals that progressors were more likely than average to have changed sectors, increased their hours and increased their hourly pay. A change in sector was also more common among progressors when looking at learners who had worked before, but not during, their original course and who then started a new job subsequently.

Work related benefits gained from the FE course

A positive work-related outcome of the course can be identified for learners who said that the course had helped them do one or more of the following:

- get a job;
- earn more money;
- get a promotion;
- set up their own business.

Overall, a positive work-related outcome was obtained by 39 per cent of progressors and 26 per cent of non-progressors. Whilst a positive outcome was most likely to be obtained where the learner did the course both for work-related reasons and to progress their qualification level, a proportion of learners in the other of the four learner types identified earlier also obtained a positive work-related outcome.

Looking at the sub-groups within each of the four learner types:

1. **Did course for work-related reasons and to progress qualification level:** the proportion obtaining a positive work-related outcome was highest among **men** (49 per cent compared with 39 per cent of women) and those aged **under 25** (51 per cent). It was lower among non-white learners (30 per cent). Reflecting the general pattern, those studying **at full level 2, full level 3 and level 4+** were most likely to gain a positive outcome (55 per cent, 62 per cent and 67 per cent respectively), while those **in work at the start of the course** were more likely to obtain a positive outcome than those not in work (48 per cent compared with 30 per cent).
2. **Did course for work-related reasons, but not to progress qualification level:** once again, positive outcomes were more common among those studying **at full level 2, full level 3 and level 4+** (56 per cent, 57 per cent and 54 per cent respectively), and were more common among those **in work at the start of the course** (35 per cent compared with 29 per cent not in work).
3. **Did not do course for work-related reasons, but aimed to progress qualification level:** sub-group analysis is not possible for this group, because of the small number of respondents.
4. **Did not do course for work-related reasons or to progress qualification level:** **younger respondents** (21 per cent of those aged 35) were more likely to have gained a positive outcome, as were those in **non-white ethnic groups** (26 per cent). Among those studying **below level 2** (the majority in this group), a positive outcome was more common among those who had a **higher prior**

qualification than those whose prior qualification was also below level 2 (12 per cent compared with six per cent). In this group, those who took the course to gain a qualification were most likely to gain a positive outcome.

Those who had started a new job following their FE course were more likely to say that they had got their job as a result of their course if they were progressors. If we analyse by the same four sub-groups, while the figures are also higher among learners who did the course for work related reasons, other learners also said that the course helped them find their job. This confirms that FE courses can be effective in helping learners into a new job, even where the course is not primarily job-related or where it does not progress their qualification level.

Among learners whose course was part of a job, progressors were most likely to feel that their work situation had benefited as a result of their course, in particular by

- earning more money;
- being able to stay in their job;
- gaining responsibility and going on additional training.

Appendices

Appendix A	Response rates
Appendix B	Fieldwork procedures
Appendix C	Weighting

Appendix A Response rates

Table A1 shows the response rates from the Wave One survey.

Table A1: Wave 1 Response rates

	Number	Per cent of total	Per cent of total, excl ineligible	Per cent of total, excl ineligible, opt-out and not traced
Total sample	15171			
Opt-outs	1565	10		
Issued into the Field	13606			
Ineligible (screened out)	1540	10		
Not traced	2276	15		
Moved, new address not traced	1949	13		
Insufficient/incomplete address details / empty	296	2		
In prison / died	31	*		
Interviews	6922			
Full interviews	6909	46	51	71
Partial interviews (unusable)	13			
Unsuccessful	2868	19	21	29
Refusals	1053	7	8	11
No contact after 5+ calls	1031	7	8	11
Away/in hospital/ill	217	1	2	2
Other unproductive	567	4	4	6

* = less than 0.5 per cent

Of the 6,909 learners interviewed at Wave One, 6,451 (93%) gave their permission to be re-contacted a second time. Table A2 shows the response details for these 6,451 learners.

Table A2: Wave 2 Response rates

	Number	Per cent of total	Per cent of total issued	Per cent of total, excl out of scope
Total sample	6,451			
Opt-outs before fieldwork	18	*		
No contact details given at wave 1	90	1		
Issued into the Field	6343			
Out of scope	662			
Moved, unknown at number, died	233		4	
Error with telephone number	429		7	
Interviews	4,139		65	73
Unsuccessful	1,542		24	27
Refusals	966		15	17
No contact after 30+ calls	319		5	6
Unavailable during fieldwork	201		3	4
Respondent incapable of interview ²⁵	56		1	1

* = less than 0.5 per cent

²⁵ Where the respondent said they were incapable of being interviewed, this was because they were hard of hearing, too ill to take part, etc.

Appendix B Fieldwork procedures for Wave Two survey

Pilot survey

A pilot survey was conducted between 9 and 16 December 2005, in order to test the effectiveness of the questionnaire. Respondents from the Wave One pilot were re-contacted by telephone, thereby replicating the process to be used for the main fieldwork. In total, 23 learners were interviewed. The pilot exercise raised a small number of questionnaire issues to be addressed before the main stage fieldwork.

Fieldwork operation

All fieldwork was carried out by fully-trained telephone interviewers from the Operations Centre (TOC), which provides operational services to the Kantar Group of research companies in the UK, of which BMRB is part.

Briefing of interviewers

Before starting work on the main stage of the Wave Two survey, all interviewers and supervisors were briefed by the research team and field executives, as well as receiving a set of written instructions. The briefings covered:

- the background to the survey, the role of the DfES and the planned use of the survey findings;
- information about the sampling procedures and the importance of high response rates;
- how to introduce the survey and deal with sensitivities that might arise, including the importance of confidentiality;
- a detailed explanation of key questions on the questionnaire and topics covered;
- any questions that the interviewers or supervisors had for the researchers.

Advance letters

Advance letters were sent out to learners who were included in the Wave Two sample, to notify them that an interviewer would be contacting them. Although this was not an opt-out stage as such (since individuals had already given their permission to be re-contacted), 18 learners contacted BMRB at this stage to withdraw from the survey.

Managing and monitoring fieldwork

Interviews were conducted using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). The CATI system includes a centralised system for scheduling calls. This means that individuals are called at a range of different times and days in order to make initial contact, and that appointments can be scheduled efficiently.

All fieldwork is monitored by a supervisor. Monitoring equipment allows the supervisor and research team to listen in to interviews.

Telephone contact

For each individual in the sample, telephone numbers were available from a number of sources. The original LSC sample contained a telephone number for the majority of learners. In addition, during the Wave One interview, interviewers obtained:

- the respondent's landline and/or mobile number
- the telephone number of an alternative contact: a friend or relative that could be contacted if the respondent could no longer be contacted at the number they had given.

Finally, an automated telephone number search was carried out, using computerised versions of telephone directories.

The CATI system allowed the various numbers to be stored, so that if an individual could not be contacted on one number, an alternative number could be tried.

Supervision and quality control

Throughout the fieldwork, measures were taken to ensure high standards of interviewing. Our interviewer recruitment, training, quality control and supervision standards meet those stipulated by the market research industry's Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS), of which we are founder members.

Data protection

With regard to conducting the survey, BMRB ensured that it fully complied with the Data Protection Act of 1998 (and was registered for this purpose). BMRB asked respondents for their permission to link their survey data to data held by DfES or its partners.

Appendix C Weighting details

Wave One weights

At Wave One, weights were applied to correct for:

- the unequal probabilities of selection. These were calculated as the inverse of the selection probability and, as such, differed by type of course.
- Differential response rates. Data were weighted by region, gender, level of course, age and ethnicity.

These weights were also applied to the Wave Two data

Wave Two weights

Having applied the Wave One weights, we compared the profiles of the Wave One and Wave Two interviewed samples, to assess response bias at Wave Two. On this basis, we decided it was necessary to weight by level of course, relationship between level of course and prior qualification, whether done any further training since original FE course and ethnicity as these variables were related to both non-response and key survey variables.

Rim weights based on these variables were used in conjunction with the Wave One weight to weight the Wave Two data.

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