FE / WBL Early Leavers Research
Final Report

June 2006

Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Contents

knowledge management for the information age

Tables and Figures

knowledge management for the information age

Figures

Introduction

Improving retention and attainment in post-16 learning is one of the Department for Education, Learning and Skills' (DELLS) key priorities. Whilst learners who leave courses early, or who do not gain qualifications, may still gain useful skills from courses, early leaving implies that learning provision is not maximising it's the full potential. Improving retention and attainment, and targeting learning on those who will benefit most, will enhance the contribution to supporting the workforce and the economy.

In March 2006 Hoshin was commissioned to undertake research into early leaving from Further Education (FE) and Work Based Leaning (WBL) in Wales by the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS) of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). The research was designed to understand barriers to successful completion within FE and WBL and make recommendations for improvement.

Scope and Definitions

The research covered all Work Based Learning provision and Further Education. Sixth Forms and Adult and Community Learning (ACL) were not included in the research.

The analysis of learner records data covered learners with an expected leave date in the year to September 2005.

Work Based Learning

WBL consists of two strands covering five programmes:

Strand A encompassing:
- Skillbuild (previously known as Preparatory Learning)

Strand B encompassing:
- Skillbuild Plus (previously known as Skills Learning)
- Foundation Modern Apprenticeship (FMA)
- Modern Apprenticeship (MA)
- Modern Skills Diploma (MSD)

In Wales, learners on Foundation Modern Apprenticeships and Modern Apprenticeships are required to complete all aspects of their training framework to be classed as a completer. Each training framework consists of an NVQ, key skills and any technical certificates that the occupational sector requires. Any trainee who leaves their training programme before all three of these aspects are successfully completed is regarded as an early leaver. This has meant that WBL success rates in Wales tend to be lower than those reported in England where all achievements are counted as part of the success rate methodology.

Learners on Skillbuild and Skillbuild Plus in Wales are regarded as successful completers if they attain their key skills.

Further Education

Further Education was taken to include academic provision from degree level down to GNVQs, HNC, HND and so on. Within FE, students who complete their qualification aims and secure the award associated with the learning programme are regarded as completers.

A Note on Funding

The funding methodology creates the framework within providers are working, and this includes incentives for retention and achievement. At present (and for the period covered by the research) the procedures for contracting and funding are different for WBL and Further Education, although a uniform approach is coming in from 2006 onwards.

In brief, the funding methodology for WBL covers four areas:

- A payment for each learner who starts on a fundable WBL programme, up to the maximum volume stipulated on the providers' contract;
- On Programme Payments (OPP) for each learner on fundable programmes by month up to the maximum volume stipulated on the providers' contract and the maximum duration for funding for the occupational area;
- Outcome points for each fundable outcome (eg. qualification attained by a learner) up to the maximum volume of outcome points stipulated in the contract;
- Support Cost Payments to reflect additional costs incurred eg. in the areas of travel and childcare.

In brief, for FE funding allocations are based on actual delivery in the previous period. Each learner will attract a Recruitment Unit and Weighted Learner Units (depending on programme and widening participation criteria). Attainment Units reward attainment of qualifications. Units are converted to funding values up to a maximum contract value. Attainment payments equate to approximately 8% of the total.

The Welsh Assembly Government is currently developing and implementing the new National Planning and Funding System (NPFS). The planning element of the new system will strengthen the link between learning needs and learning delivery whilst the funding element will ensure that schools, colleges and training providers are funded on an equitable basis. Full harmonisation of funding, across all
Sectors of learning, is not anticipated until 2009/10.

Objectives

The objectives of the project were to:

- Understand and quantify drop out rates in FE and WBL
- Understand and quantify completion (attainment) rates
- Explain regional variations
- Highlight and explain variations by occupational/learning route and industrial sector
- Identify if any particular groups in society are more likely than others to drop out early or be a non-achiever
- Identify and understand barriers to completion in FE and WBL
- Identify and understand non attainment in FE and WBL
- Highlight provider variations
- Suggest ways to reduce drop out rates- identify best practice
- Suggest ways to improve attainment rates
- Make recommendations for future delivery
- Outline directions for any future research

Methodology

The project included quantitative and qualitative elements of research as follows:

- **Secondary Research.** Desk based research was undertaken to give a robust starting point in the exploration of barriers to successful completion within FE and WBL. The researchers completed a review of all the relevant literature, including sources on learning in Wales and the wider GB context. The main focus

within the secondary research was on identifying reasons for early leaving and patterns between programmes, sectors and population groups.

- **Analysis of Learner Data.** Key datasets include Work Based Learning Data and FE Data (from the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR)), Customer Satisfaction Surveys, and Leavers Surveys. The research used statistical techniques to quantify rates of non completion and attainment rates in FE and WBL, and analyse correlations associated with variations by region, population group, providers, and sectors of learning.

- **Interviews with Leavers.** In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with a sample of early leavers through a mix of telephone and face to face interviews (94 in total). The interviews explored reasons for leaving FE and WBL and other factors around attitudes to learning, use of Information, Advice and Guidance, influences and motivations and views on provision.

- **Face to Face Interviews with Stakeholders**. A small scale consultation exercise was undertaken with key stakeholders through face to face interviews. The consultations involved representatives of DELLS, Careers Wales and a selection of providers (10 in total).

This Report

This Report presents the findings of the research structured as follows:

- Section Two presents the findings of Secondary Research, which included a literature review of recent studies into early leaving from FE and WBL learning in Wales and the wider GB context.

- Section Three provides the results of quantitative analysis using key learner data sets. It describes patterns of early leaving and results of CHAID analysis into the factors associated with early leaving.

- Section Four sets out the findings of qualitative work with a selection of early leavers which took place during April 2006.

- Section Five reviews the results of interviews undertaken with stakeholders.

- Section Six draws together the key findings and conclusions and makes recommendations for providers, WAG and partners.

Findings of Secondary Research

Introduction

This section is based on secondary research comprising a literature review of recent studies into early leaving from FE and WBL learning in Wales and the wider GB context. The focus of the literature review was on identifying the reasons for early leaving from different types of learning, and collating the available evidence of differences in achievement rates between sectors and population groups.

The literature review covered Wales and the wider GB context.

The section begins with some general remarks, goes on to review the research evidence on completion rates and summarises the findings on reasons for non completion, including providing a discussion of findings for different groups and occupational sectors, where this is available.

The table contained in Annex 1 provides a summary of the scope and findings of the key research reports identified by the secondary research.

General Remarks

Definitions

Research into early leaving highlights the underlying complexity of the issues involved in relation to terms and definitions. For example, Kerka (1995) cautions against too rigid a definition: *"one or more cycles of attending, withdrawing, and returning - is typical of adults who must place the student role on the back burner temporarily. Counting them as dropouts would be misleading"*. Moreover, Hodkinson and Bloomer (2000) argue that much research on retention has been based on a series of false assumptions. These are:

Some people go through one or more cycles of attending, withdrawing and returning.

- that learners 'wants', needs and interests remain constant throughout the learning programme;
- that the causes lie within the influence of learning providers, and that learning on the learning programme must have been unsatisfactory in the case of early leavers;
- that the only appropriate time to change educational or career direction is after a learning programme has been completed. (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2000).

It is false to assume learners 'wants', needs and interest remain constant, or that the only time to change direction is after the learning programme.

Non completion of learning programmes is not necessarily associated with 'failure'. It is likely that some learners in FE and WBL transfer onto other programmes. More importantly, many learners achieve a great deal even though they may not 'complete' in the formal sense (Hall, 2002).

Non completion is not necessarily associated with 'failure'.

Fuller and Unwin (2003) note the "*complex empirical reality where individuals move in and out of education, employment and Modern Apprenticeship in varied and often erratic ways*".

Evidence presented as part of the Skillbuild evaluation showed that a number of learners are repeat entrants to the programme (in a survey of 404 leavers, 10% had started more than once, of which, half did so on more that one occasion. Anecdotal evidence from focus groups with learners suggested that this level was higher). Moreover: *"There were instances of learners entering the programme five or more times and not progressing into further learning or employment"*. (York Consulting Ltd, 2005). A key reason was identified

The Skillbuild evaluation showed this programme has many repeat entrants….

knowledge management for the information age

as the 16-18 Guarantee and lack of other options: *"in the existence of the Guarantee, and, in the absence of any other available appropriate provision, it appears that a proportion of learners are undertaking Skillbuild youth, without significant benefit to them – at least for the longer term"*.

The evaluation of Skillbuild has highlighted that in many cases, the fundamental question is not, "how effective is the programme at meeting its aims and objectives?" but to "what extent do the aims of the programme meet learner needs?". (In the case of the Skillbuild evaluation, it was concluded that: *"the aims and structure of the programme…are the key problem. The programme lays emphasis on 'vocational focus' however, for many young people, this is too narrow to be effective"*. (York Consulting Ltd, 2005)

…and is not meeting the wider needs of many young people.

The work of Martinez (1998) also identifies problems with the research into early leaving in that the views of teaching staff often conflict with those of the students. Therefore data collected from the provider through management information may not accurately reflect their learners. Also the system of recording 'one main reason' for student withdrawal leads to over-simplification as for most a range of factors will be involved.

Staff members views may not be the same as learners. In most cases a range of factors will be involved.

Funding and contracting issues have also been raised. For example, the funding system operated by Scottish Enterprise Network and the targets set were felt to encourage training providers to place an overemphasis on starts, rather than completions, and could encourage training providers to place young people on MAs who perhaps were not suitable for the programme (Gallacher et al, 2003).

Non Completion Rates

A series of reports have investigated the issue of non-completion, and the analysis suggests that:

- Around half of National Trainees and over a quarter of Modern Apprentices fail to stay in training to the *expected end date*. Overall, only a quarter of all trainees complete their full *training plan* whilst a third achieve *no recognisable output* from their participation (BMG, 2003).

Research shows that non completion rates vary by learning programme.

- Up to a fifth of Skillbuild learners fail to complete. In the evaluation of Skillbuild 72% of learners completed the course and 6% were still doing it (York Consulting Ltd, 2005).

- In FE over a third of enrolments do not result in qualifications, with big differences in retention and achievement between providers.

Research for some LLSCs in England have looked at rates of early leaving in the population, in terms of whether respondents have changed or dropped completely a course of study in the last 3 years. In Somerset, locally and regionally, 3% of all respondents were found to have done so, broadly distributed
across most employment status and occupational groups, with no disproportionate concentrations. This compares with 1.3% of all respondents who have done so in Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole) – slightly fewer than the regional average of 2.5% (BMG, 2003).

Population surveys (England) suggests around three in a hundred people have dropped out of courses in the last three years.

There is only limited research to date to enable any conclusions to be drawn on questions about differential retention rates between different programme and groups,

There is little evidence of the reasons for differences between

although a few studies have commented on these. Some broad brush conclusions from the research are outlined below:

programmes, although probable factors include:

- It is clear from the previous research that completion rates differ by sector of education. In particular, it is important to recognise the differences between the sectors of FE and Work Based Learning and the differences in the populations of learners which they serve. People undertaking Skills Build, or a Modern Apprenticeship, or other vocational education tend not to be the same as well qualified school leavers or adult access students attempting to improve their skills or gain entry to higher education. Personal circumstances and motivation/attitudes to learning will all vary greatly, and are likely to influence the persons chances of remaining in education long enough to complete.

…differences between different profiles of learners

- The research highlights that completion rates vary by industrial sector. For example, the evaluation of Modern Apprenticeships in Wales found the highest rates of early leaving were in public sector; distribution/hotels & catering; finance and business and other services. Some commentators have identified differences between 'traditional' industries (ie. production based) and service sectors (eg. West, 2004). There are differences in retention rates between subjects and there are some suggestions that the reasons for students withdrawing from courses may also differ between subjects.

…differences between industrial sectors and subjects

- In general there seem to be higher drop-out rates for lower levels of qualification. Some authors have suggested mature students are more likely to withdraw from university-level higher education than younger students, while in lower-level courses (including work-based training and non-advanced Further Education) younger students are more likely to withdraw than older students. One explanation for why younger students seem more likely to drop out of lower level qualifications is that these lower qualifications may well be catering disproportionately for groups of students who would not traditionally have undertaken any type of formal education or training.

…differences by level of qualification

- Previous studies have shown that drop-outs are more likely than those who stay in government supported training to have a poor record of compulsory schooling and poor GCSE results. Some commentators suggest poor GCSE results, playing truant at school and exclusion from school raised the probability of leaving, and that young people who had no full-time activity after leaving were particularly likely to have these characteristics (Payne, 2001). The National Satisfaction Survey for Wales suggests that early leavers from FE are more likely than current learners/finishers to have GCSE as their highest qualification, and to have left full time education at 16 (ELWa, 2004). Research in Scotland found that age does not seem to affect completion, although the capacity of the young person to undertake SVQ Level 3 training was seen as significant (Gallacher et al, 2004). However, BMG (2003) found that in a household survey, people who already possess very high level qualifications are as likely as those with few or none to have dropped out of a course.

…differences associated with prior education record and engagement in learning

- There is some evidence for a link between lower socio-economic groups and higher drop-out, some of which is based on qualitative research approaches. The National Satisfaction Survey for Wales suggests that early leavers from FE are more likely than current learners/finishers to fall into C2DE (skilled manual, semi-skilled and unskilled manual) socio-economic group (ELWa, 2004).

…differences linked to socio-economic groups.

- Some suggest that people in young age groups, and those studying on a full time basis, are more affected by financial difficulties or constraints (i.e. the youngest early leavers may be more likely than older people to leave training for this reason, as are

…differences associated with learners' financial

early leavers who had been studying full-time appear when compared with those studying part-time). Also, men, who are more likely to have been working, have been shown to be more likely to leave early due to a change in employment circumstances.

situation.

Some studies have tried to 'predict' whether learners will complete or not complete on the basis of correlations between factors (e.g. entry qualifications and progress). However, the evidence is inconclusive. For example, Martinez (1995) found only limited evidence to suggest that there might be any demographic indicators of likely student withdrawal (he concluded that *'previous educational attainment, social class, course choice and perhaps gender and ethnicity, may predispose some groups of students to leave early'* though it was possible that any such effects depended on mutual reinforcement between two or more demographic factors.

Studies which have tried to predict which groups are more likely not to complete are inconclusive.

Although some 'learner characteristics' were identified in the statistical analysis undertaken by LSC (2003), they could not be used to explain non completion rates. Ethnicity, disability and learning difficulties and locality of provision (home LSC of the learner is the same as the provider) were not identified as significant factors in retention and achievement.

Some people have challenged the notion that early leaving is in the control of learning provider organisations, and that retention rate measures are therefore not good indications of performance. Learners may choose to leave for 'good' reasons, for example:

Early leaving may not always be in the control of learning providers.

- their goals may have changed or they may have decided that they have learnt all that they need;

- there may be circumstances which are outside the control of the provider/institution such as financial concerns of learners;

- there may be circumstances which providers/institutions can help to address but may not be alleviated altogether, such as ill health or changes to personal circumstances.

Some commentators have suggested that the widening participation agenda is likely to result in increasing levels of non completion. For example, Hall (2002) points to the fact that 'open' education and training systems (such as Italy) have much higher drop-out rates than relatively selective systems (such as the UK has been). Therefore moves to 'open' post-compulsory education and encourage greater participation may bring greater numbers in to the system, but at the risk that a greater proportion than at present will drop out. Bloomer and Hodkinson (2000) contend that many of the factors that influence retention lie outside the control and even influence of colleges and therefore retention and qualification achievement are inadequate measures of provision. They conclude that: *"Widening participation and outcome-based measures of quality, such as retention rates and qualification achievement, are unhappy policy bedfellows"* (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2000). In particular, coping with disaffected young people who have a history of non-compliance with authority remains a serious challenge for many providers (PSI, 2001).

The widening participation agenda may result in higher drop-outs.

Financial and other incentives provided by some employers and training providers for young people who complete were not found to play a significant role in boosting completion rates (Gallacher et al, 2003).

Incentives to learning don't seem to make a significant difference.

Reasons for Non Completion

It is clear that in all sectors almost all researchers have found that no one reason can account for the non completion of learners: it is likely that a range of factors are at work. Martinez and Munday (1998) note that factors do not operate in isolation and that reasons for drop-out are *'complex, multiple and inter-related'*. Hall (2002) notes: *"it is the cumulative effect of these causes which eventually makes a learner decide that the costs of continuing outweigh the benefits of withdrawing"*. Moreover, Beach (2003) suggests that true reason for students leaving their course of study is often very difficult to determine. Traditional survey methods indicate that finance is the main obstacle given by early leavers when asked why they did not complete their course. However, the real reasons are usually identified some time later or through discussion with peers. Underneath these issues were further fundamental and well disguised origins for poor student retention associated with student abilities in basic literacy and numeracy.

Research confirms the complexity of the reasons for learners failing to complete.

Individual Learner Factors

Reasons for non completion have been identified at the level of the individual learner, the provider or institution, and the socio-economic and labour market level, and are distinguished by those relating to 'push' factors (i.e. barriers to learning), and 'pull' factors (i.e. incentives towards leaving). Factors in non completion at the level of the individual tend to be 'descriptive', in that the focus is on describing learners' position, problems faced and motivation/attitudes. Box 1 reviews reasons for leaving and the underlying factors identified in the research as being most crucial to non completion. These are discussed below.

Personal circumstances, experience of the course, place of study and attraction of alternative opportunities all play a part.

Several authors distinguish between learners for whom the programme was quickly identified as a bad decision or who lacked commitment from the start, and those who subsequently withdraw from training for other reasons.

Some authors distinguish people who drop out early from other leavers.

Figure 2.1: Reasons for Early Leaving and Contributing Factors		
	Reasons for leaving	**Contributory factors**
Push	Dissatisfaction/ambivalence about the course	• Mistaken choice of course ('wrong' course); • Lack of interest; • Lack of relevance to needs.
	Practical barriers to participating	• Distance to travel prohibitive; • Financial constraints; • Caring responsibilities; • Personal problems and health issues.
	Dissatisfaction with the learning environment,	• Poor treatment by teaching staff; • Lack of progress/not learning. • Bullying or harassment; • Feeling isolated or lonely.
	Difficulty coping or meeting the requirements of the course	• Requirements too demanding; • Poor quality of teaching; • Lack of time to study; • Long periods of non attendance/falling behind; • Lack of effort.

knowledge management for the information age

	To pursue an alternative route	• Employment more attractive than learning; • Lack of belief in the value of leaving to future career prospects; • Desire to earn money; • Perception that employment better option to training;
	Other commitments	• Need to spend more time at home/family; • Change in circumstances (eg. moving home); • Having a baby; • Caring responsibilities.
Pull		

Previous research has suggested that there is some evidence to indicate a tendency amongst respondents to under-report the importance of academic difficulties upon the decision to withdraw from learning (and this may also relate to survey bias due to higher rates of non-response to surveys amongst those with lower entry qualifications). There may also be issues about how early leavers attribute the reasons for leaving (some people may regard academic difficulties as having arisen ultimately due to a mistaken choice of course).

Academic problems tend to be under-reported by early leavers.

The evaluation of Modern Apprenticeships in Wales found that non completers were distinguished from completers by a range of factors (BMG, 2003). For example:

- A fifth (20%) of MA non-completers said that their social life distracted from training, compared to only just over a tenth (11%) of completers.

- Proportionally more completers of Modern Apprenticeship and National Traineeships travelled less than a mile to training compared with non-completers (15% against 9%). Non-completers tended to be more dependant on public transport (51%) compared to completers (34%). Over a fifth (23%) of non completers said it was not easy to get to and from training, compared to only 8% of completers.

- 40% of early leavers from Modern Apprenticeships and National Traineeships had experienced financial difficulties, compared to only 24% of completers.

- Around a quarter (24%) of non completers said family circumstances made it difficult to continue training, compared to only 7% of completers (BMG, 2003).

The evaluation of Modern Apprenticeships (Wales) concluded that early leavers had travel problems, financial difficulties, or family circumstances and social life that got in the way of learning.

Table 2.2: Modern Apprenticeships: Differences in Experience between Completers and non-Completers (percentages of each group giving negative reports)		
	% having negative position	
	Completers	**Non-completers**
I sometimes experienced financial difficulties while on the programme	24	40
My family circumstances made it difficult for me to continue with my training	7	24
Most of my school friends did the same training programme as me	70	75
I have health problems	4	5
The administration (form filling, etc.) took up too much of my time	12	15
The forms and administration were too complex	12	13

knowledge management for the information age

My training offered a good social life	27	39
My social life outside of training distracted me from my training	11	20
I got on well with other trainees	11	9
I felt that I was treated as an adult by my training provider/ employer	5	15
I knew how to get additional help with studying if I Needed it	9	19
The training facilities on my programme were good	7	13
I would encourage others to undertake a MA programme	7	15
It was easy for me to get to and from my training	8	23

* BASE = 220 COMPLETERS/NON-COMPLETERS
Source: BMG (2003)

Pregnancy has been identified as one of the main barriers to learning for young women, especially those in vocational provision. For example, some 10% of women apprentices gave pregnancy as their reason for leaving early in a study of Work Based Learning in five sectors in England (IFF Research Ltd, 2000).

Pregnancy is a barrier for female learners.

Provider/Institution Factors

There are measurable differences in retention rates between institutions, although there is disagreement about the extent to which this is due to institutional factors. Research looking at the LLSCs in England shows that whilst nationally there was little difference between full completion rates for advanced and foundation Apprenticeships (at 32 and 30 per cent respectively), at the LLSC level there was considerable variation (West, 2004). An overall pattern was revealed whereby areas which have low completion rates for one type of Apprenticeship tend to have a low completion rate for the other. However, this is not at all pronounced and there are plenty of examples of LLSCs having 'typical' completion rates for advanced Apprenticeship with great variations in completion for foundation apprenticeships. The opposite is also the case. West concludes that the:

Variation between providers (England) is probably linked to management practices….

> "*variation does not appear to be correlated to any strong degree, or often at all, with variation between LLSCs in terms of sector, age of trainees, labour market or patterns of participation in full-time education…..This appears to support the hypothesis that it is management practices, whether at the LLSCs or at providers, rather than extraneous factors which must explain the bulk of the differences we have observed in completion rate'*" (West, 2004).

Crossnan et al note the complexity of the factors which influence participation, non-participation and withdrawal but contend that: '*institutional factors emerge as very strong factors in understanding why students continue with their studies*'. In particular they cite relations with college staff and peer group support.

…and relations with staff, and peer group support.

Good Practice
Building good relations between staff and learners and putting in place peer group support can help to encourage learners who are thinking of terminating before the end of the learning programme to carry on in learning.

In Gallacher et al's review of research in England and Scotland (2004), training providers emerged as having a key role that affected completion or non-completion depending on: '*the quality of the training support offered*'. This can be affected by:

The quality of training

knowledge management for the information age

- Relationship between the apprentice and a training officer/assessor;
- Induction and recruitment responsibilities (often shared between employers and training providers);
- the level of information offered to young people about the nature and purpose of the programme they are undertaking.

support offered plays a part….

The report concluded that decisions of early leavers can be affected by trainee support mechanisms, or availability of other support (e.g. financial support) (Gallacher et al, 2004). The above project led to a review of quality assurance procedures, because of concerns that procedures were not appropriate and were failing to deliver a high quality training system. Reforms included measures to encourage training providers to take more responsibility for the development of their own organisation.

> **Good Practice**
> Better information on the learning programme, and a good induction process, have a key role to play in driving up completion.
> Early leaving links to recruitment as well as retention and achievement. Recruiters need to be encouraged to match potential learners to courses, and in practice this might require being more selective which will only work if the pressure to fill courses regardless of appropriateness to the learner is reduced.

Davies (2001) looked at differential 'achievement profiles' of different FE colleges in terms of the profiles of their student intakes. Results indicated that the 'worst achieving colleges' had student intakes with below average achievement, but that inter-institutional differences (of student profiles) appear to account for less than half of the variations in achievement rates between the best and worst achieving colleges, i.e. the major part of the inter-institutional differences were not explicable in terms of the student profiles. Davies felt that differences in institutional ethos, systems, procedures and practices, although geo-demographic or other factors not captured by student records or postcode analysis were the major factor.

…Along with institutional ethos, systems, procedures and practices.

Trainee surveys suggest that satisfaction with training depends more on the nature of the training than on the trainee's personal characteristics, and the quality of the training provided is an important factor in the decision to stay or to leave. For example, Davies (2001) in a review of FEDA studies on early leaving suggests that student background is less significant than their attitudes to their experience at college. He says *"a distinguishing characteristic of withdrawn students is their relatively lower satisfaction with the suitability of their course, quality of teaching and support for progression".* Whilst, financial, personal and employment-related problems were commonplace for early leavers, their incidence is not significantly greater amongst drop-outs and therefore they are not considered a key explanation for non completion.

Learners' experience of training is more important than personal characteristics.

Opinion Research Corporation International (1999) suggests that considering scheme characteristics, the most significant factors in early leaving were the status of the trainee on the first day of training; whether trainees received regular staff feedback; whether they agreed a training plan and whether they were studying for qualifications. Similarly, other research with young people suggests that those who stay in training were more likely (at age 16/17) than leavers to recall being given a training plan, to have received off-the-job and on-the-job training, to be aiming for Level 3 qualifications, and to say that they had got a place in education, work or training that they wanted (PSI, 2001).

Research suggests factors associated with delivery such as having a training plan and getting regular feedback influence decisions around early leaving…

Also, previous studies have suggested that young people who had left education found

….as does having

the decision to leave harder to reach if they had been highly motivated to participate in education, if they did not have a job or training opportunity to move into when they left, and/or if they were advised not to leave by other parties (National Centre for Social Research, 2003).

other options and advice from other parties.

Good Practice
Learners having a training plan, and getting regular feedback, is identified as a factor in leaving to better provider performance on early leaving.

A range of negative aspects of the provision were identified amongst non-completers in the MA/NT evaluation (BMG, 2003). Problems with the programmes included:

Early leavers from Apprenticeships (Wales) identify problems with the provision..

- Trainees having already covered some topics on another NVQ course;
- Absent course tutor – lessons missed;
- Too much theory content on the programme.

Interestingly, LSC (2003) suggests that early leavers may not themselves be directly aware of the relative importance of provider and provision characteristics to their decisions. Indeed, in this research provider and provision issues were not identified as factors by learners, although statistical analysis of the data suggested that the nature of provision may be the factor that tips the balance in a number of cases.

…and these probably contribute to early leaving alongside other factors.

Rural Issues

Studies into learning in rural areas (eg. Highlands and Islands in Scotland) point to particular issues for those living in remote a sparsely populated areas, where the range of provision it limited due to lack of economically viability in such areas (Gallacher et al, 2004)). Transport has been identified as a major issue for Modern Apprenticeships in rural areas and it is harder to match employers with appropriate young trainees: *'lack and frequency (of transport) can materially affect choices for young people and employers alike…greater difficulty in matching employer demand to the supply of young people'* (ATF, 2004).

Learners in rural areas have fewer options/choices.

Rural labour markets are characterised by low skill and insecure employment, and concentrated in small firms with often limited training opportunities. Research exploring youth unemployment in rural areas suggests that where the young person had to make long and complex journeys, employers could be wary about taking them on (Cartmel and Furlong, 2000).

Expectations and Learner Satisfaction

Learners Expectations

The issue of trainees' expectations and how these are managed is pertinent, and although it is difficult to develop objective measures about this, the importance of failure to meet expectations should not be underestimated. For example, Martinez and Munday (1998) believe that the results of their research suggest that students' initial expectations of college are a good predictor of drop-out (and that early withdrawal is linked to the quality of college facilities).

Lack of clear career direction, not getting their first choice option, and/or not being aware of what the course entails are all key factors in early leaving.

Research shows that lack of clear career direction, not getting their first choice option, and/or not being aware of what the course entails are all key factors which have been

knowledge management for the information age

shown to underpin learners' decision to leave.

Early leavers from FE involved in the National Learner Satisfaction Survey for Wales had more unmet expectations about what the course would involve compared to current learners/finishers. In particular, over a fifth of early leavers (21%) had unmet expectations relating to 'teaching styles and methods used in sessions', and 15% had unmet expectations regarding 'course content'. The main problems identified by FE early leavers were maintaining personal motivation and keeping up with the standard of work required (ELWa, 2004).

Early leavers have more unmet expectations than completers.

Survey data from the MA/NT evaluation shows that non-completers report a consistently less positive pattern of experiences compared to completers. They gave slightly lower importance and expectation ratings than completers but *very significantly* lower ratings as to whether their expectations were met or not. For completers, the reverse was true – the 'expectations very well met' figures are actually *higher* than their 'very high expectations' figure on all items. Of course, there may be some ex post rationalisation here – those who didn't complete may project negative views gained through their experience backwards on to the various ratings (BMG, 2003).

Early leavers from MAs (Wales) are less likely than completers to say their expectations have been met.

Table 2.3: Modern Apprenticeships: How well did the Programme meet Expectations? (percentages)						
	Very High Importance		Very High Expectations		Expectations Very Well Met	
	Completers	Non-Completers	Completers	Non-Completers	Completers	Non-Completers
The relevance of the training	62	60	41	36	45	27
The standard of the training facilities	56	54	45	41	51	26
The amount of training you received directly from an employer	60	52	38	40	55	28
Having an opportunity to learn new skills	62	59	52	38	54	31
Level of pay allowance you received whilst training	58	54	32	30	37	23
Where training is undertaken, e.g. being fairly local	58	50	45	38	52	34
Having an opportunity to develop your career	65	53	51	41	57	35
Being able to gain a full qualification	70	61	61	45	68	31
Being able to improve your self confidence	55	53	43	37	50	31
Being able to improve your communications skills	53	50	31	36	48	33
Being able to improve your numeracy skills	46	43	28	32	38	20
Being able to improve your working relationships with others	58	51	51	37	53	31
Being able to improve your computer skills	51	45	33	33	42	26
Being able to improve your own learning and development within the workplace	67	54	54	34	63	31
* Base = 220 completers/non-completers						
Source: BMG (2003)						

Feedback from the ex-learners of Skillbuild indicated that if their interests cannot be met by a provider, it is more likely that learners will either drop out, or not progress to further training after they do finish (York Consulting Ltd, 2000). Moreover, this research suggests that the expectations of what young learners would get out of the programme were not matching its primary aim - progression into higher levels of learning. Over

Young learners' expectations of Skillbuild don't always

40% of all learners thought that the programme would lead to a job, but only 14% thought it would lead them to further learning, which suggests that the programme is seen as a stop gap to employment. In fact many learners were found to move into employment from Skillbuild (around one in three) and the programme is likely to have supported this transition. However, it is likely that this employment is low skilled, low paid employment (York Consulting Ltd, 2005).

meet the primary aims of the programme.

Moreover, the evaluation of Skillbuild in Wales concluded that *"(Skillbuild) does not meet the need of those who are most disadvantaged".* Skillbuild predominantly focuses on developing skills to support employability, even though for some young people addressing a range of additional support needs should be the primary concern. The structure of Skillbuild does not provide for the level of intensive support required – especially for people who have significant basic skills problems and may also have a whole range of personal and social problems which impact on their ability to progress (York Consulting Ltd, 2005).

Some Skillbuild learners have unmet support needs.

Some commentators have pointed out that MAs face competition from the academic route (BMG, 2003), and, because of the emphasis on university education, MAs appear to young people and their parents as 'second best'. Research into attitudes to learning and training show that amongst many young people there is a preference for academic routes:

Apprenticeships suffer from competition from the academic route....

> *"The most obvious point in this data is the grip of the 'A' Level route, with 80% of pupils reporting this as their preferred option. The employment route (albeit mostly with the hope of associated training) is the second choice with vocational training in college or on a training programme being the main preference of only 6% of our sample....*
> *.....6th Form and College study prevails as the route into Higher Education and/or as the option which keeps career options open for longer, or simply as the higher-status choice.".*

One reason why a 'training programme' might be an infrequent preference might be simple ignorance that the programme exists. In the above survey 25% of school pupils said they hadn't heard of *Modern Apprenticeship* and 81%, hadn't heard of *National Traineeships*. Or could it be that Modern Apprenticeship and National Traineeship are *not well-understood*. Putting awareness and understanding figures together, BMG estimated that: *"fewer than 4 out of 10 Year 10 and 11 pupils have a reasonably good grasp of Modern Apprenticeship and perhaps only 1 in 100 has any real grasp of National Traineeship".* A further factor might be *negative* view of the programme.

...ignorance or negative views about vocational options...

BMG (2003) concluded that *"overall, the impression is of a programme which, particularly at National Traineeship level, fails to generate a high level of commitment amongst its participants".* Although the report also notes that there is an argument that a high level of non-completion is the 'natural' product of youthful uncertainty about career direction.

...and lack of commitment from participations.

Satisfaction

Early leavers from FE included in the National Learner Satisfaction Survey for Wales were less likely to say they were extremely or very satisfied than current learners/finishers (4% compared to 74% were extremely or very satisfied) (ELWa, 2004). However, one of the noticeable trends in much of the literature is the absence of a clear link between early leaving and dissatisfaction with learning. In fact, several studies have

The link between early leavers and satisfaction is unclear.

suggested that early leavers are reasonably satisfied with the provision, at least not significantly more dissatisfied than completers. For example, in the 2003 survey of Modern Apprenticeships and National Traineeships, early leavers were generally favourable about the provision, and proportionally more early leavers said that training facilities were good and they would encourage others to take a programme, compared to completers (BMG, 2003). IFF in their research into non-completion in five sectors also found that despite not finishing in learning, most non-completers generally felt positive about aspects of the MA experience. Most enjoyed the training (79%) and felt they learnt a lot (78%), and half said it has helped them in their career (IFF Research Ltd, 2000).

Table 2.5: Modern Apprenticeships: Learners Satisfaction with Training Provider (n=404)			
	Training Provider	Programme Developed	Approach to Monitoring of Progression
Very Satisfied	48%	49%	46%
Fairly Satisfied	39%	41%	41%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	6%	5%	8%
Fairly Dissatisfied	5%	3%	2%
Very Dissatisfied	1%	1%	1%
Don't Know	1%	1%	1%
Source: BMG (2003)			

The Role of Careers and Education Guidance

A major conclusion of FEDa research in England is that early drop-out is frequently connected with a failure of guidance or provision. McGivney (1996a) summarised her findings by saying: *"High non-completion rates indicate that some students do not acquire what they want or expect; that some are ill-advised (or not advised) and consequently make the wrong choice of course or institution; that some are intimidated or alienated by the institution or by course content and teaching styles, and that some experience problems that are potentially soluble given the right kind of intervention, guidance and support"*.

Research (England) suggests drop-out can be connected to a failure of guidance (perhaps up to a third).

Research for some LLSCs in England have looked at the subject of guidance, and how often early leaving could be associated with an implicit failure of guidance. Based on survey evidence, BMG (2003) conclude that in Somerset roughly 30-35% of early leaving was associated with an absence of effective guidance – respondents revealing that the course wasn't what they anticipated, had the wrong contents, was too hard or was too boring. In the Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset survey the corresponding figure was found to be around 25%. (nb. The remainder left because changes in individual circumstances caused them to leave early - they changed job or house or found work commitments too onerous). (BMG, 2003).

Good Practice
Drop out from courses is sometimes linked to a failure of guidance because learners do not feel the course is right for them. Making sure young people take advantage of good quality guidance, coupled with access to appropriate options, will help to reduce the numbers going into unsuitable provision.

BMG (2003) found that few of the non-completers (14%) had specifically been looking to do an MA or NVQs. Many had drifted towards the type of work they were doing while doing the MA. Almost half (45%) of non completers felt with hindsight they did not know enough about the MA when they started it. Most commonly they lacked

There is evidence to suggest that non completers on MAs

knowledge as to what training would involve and how long it will take. In part this may be due to the employer being new to MAs – in 37% of cases the non-completer was the employers' first MA trainee. (2000). Many relatively uncommitted to MAs, for example, relating to difficulty in understanding the relevance of key skills to the workplace. A quarter of MAs said their employer had had no discussion with them about what the MA involved (BMG, 2003).

(Wales) lacked knowledge about what was involved in the programme.

Studies on non-completion in England include a large study into Care, Hospitality, Retail, Motor and Electrotechnical MAs which found a lack of understanding on the part of apprentices about what the MA was and what it involved, and a similar lack of understanding amongst their employers, many of whom were new to MAs (IFF Research Ltd, 2000).

Some employers are new to MAs.

BMGs research with young people (BMG, 2003) highlights the significance of personal choice, backed up by a mix of influences in which parents, specialist careers advice, and school teachers play the more significant roles. A significant proportion of young people (45%) said that they could have had more or better information on post-GCSE options. Almost one in five (19%) said they could have used more information on which to base their post- GCSE choice and 15% said they definitely didn't have enough information (30% and 15% respectively for non-participants). Generally, the NT/MA group reports being *better informed* than is average for *non-participants* even though they saw 'professional' advice from teachers and careers advisors as less frequently important. Virtually all of the Cardiff respondents felt that, in retrospect, they did not receive enough advice and guidance about their post-16 choices. All remember careers lessons and interviews, but most feel that these were pointless unless you already had a clear career path in mind. However, there is some acknowledgement that they may not have been particularly receptive to the advice on offer (ie. They "*just didn't bother with it"* or said "*you had to have an idea what you want to do for it to be useful")*. Mid Wales respondents were more likely to feel that they had received enough advice and guidance, due to the sources of information used, i.e. after speaking to friends and relatives who had studied a similar course or knew about the programme. Interestingly, these factors didn't interrelate in wholly expected ways with where people actually ended up. For example, a higher-than average proportion of those who are now unemployed said that they had had a clear idea themselves of what they wanted to do whilst the highest proportion of those who hadn't much thought about it was found amongst those now studying in FE Colleges.

The MA evaluation raised issues about advice on post-16 choices in Wales

Framework Requirements and Sector Issues[1]

Apprenticeship Frameworks

Estyn (2004) comments that: "*A significant reason for (these) learners failing to complete the full framework is that they do not attain the key skills required by their training framework".* The report concludes that unless learners' abilities in key skills improve a great deal, Wales will not have the skilled workforce it needs to keep its place in the economy of Europe and the wider world. However, this report implies that the fault lies with providers rather than learners. Estyn's findings suggest that the main reasons for include poor planning and management of the training by providers, failure to raise standards and quality of training, lack of emphasis in developing key skills, and variation in employers' involvement in training and availability of off-the-job training.

Failure to achieve key skills is a key issue for achievement of Apprenticeship Frameworks

---

[1] nb. Before 2003, the achievement of an NVQ and three key skills on MA and FMA was used as the measure of framework completion.

Anderson and Metcalf (2003) found that the key skills element was viewed by some employers as irrelevant to MAs. Some Scottish research identify key skills as creating barriers to completion (although it was noted that in many cases much of this requirement was being completed on evidence of achievements in schools).

Some employers don't see the relevance of key skills.

Good Practice
Where standards and provision are good, learners start working on key skills early on, and these are assessed within a vocational context that enables learners to see their relevance and increases the pace at which they are achieved (Estyn, 2004).

Estyn (2004) also note that problems sometimes arise when a learners moves straight from level 2 to level 3 without the experience or job role to enable him/her to make good progress or achieve all the requirements of the occupational framework: *"Where this occurs, learners often become de-motivated and leave early"*.

Another potential barrier to full framework completion is lack of opportunities in the workplace for learners to achieve the full range of NVQ units and key skills needed to complete the occupational framework (Estyn, 2004). Problems identified included employers only encouraging trainees in those areas directly relevant to the business, or lacking the scope within their business activity to provide opportunities for learners to gain wider experiences.

Lack of opportunities in the workplace for learners to achieve the range of skills needed is also an issue.

Occupations/Sectors

In England the Adult Learning Inspectorate has commented: "(trainees) chance of receiving a good training or decent preparation for a career, is largely determined by the (economic) sector they enter". The conclusion is based on reflection on what training providers actually offer: "the standard of training which (trainees) experience is poor. In too many cases, they learn by what they can through 'sitting with Nelly' before being assessed, with widely varying levels of rigour" (Annual Report of the Chief Inspector, 2001-02). Estyn (2003) reports that about two-thirds of work based training was good or very good and only 14% of training programmes inspected generated poor standards in 2001-02. However, Estyn reflected that:

Standards have been shown to vary between occupational areas.

> *"There is still a big difference in standards from one occupational area to another. Trainees often reach high standards in engineering and foundation for work but their standards are often poor in health, care and public services, business administration, construction and, at times, in manufacturing. Most trainees work well, but their lack of basic skills slows their progress. Training providers do not give trainees credit for single units of work, so those who leave a programme before the end have nothing to show for their time in training. Only small numbers of trainees finish their training programme. We inspect training programmes again if we find that quality and standards are too low. Standards were still poor in almost half the programmes we inspected again'" (BMG, 2003).*

Construction, manufacturing, business admin, hospitality, health care and public services have low scoring providers.

Estyn (2004) provides data on the distribution of inspection grades awarded by occupational routes. The pattern is one of concentration of lower scoring providers in construction, manufacturing, business administration, hospitality, health care and public services.

Turmoil in the sector, increasing demands and falling academic attainment of entrants may account for low

Reflecting on low (and declining) assessment ratings, the Chief Inspector considered

that, inter alia, relevant factors might include:

marginal note: ratings.

- Turmoil associated with the coincidence of changes in funding, inspection and other institutional arrangements.
- A cumulative failure among providers to cope with years of reduction in government funding and increasing demands posed by the introduction of Modern Apprenticeship frameworks.
- Failing academic attainment among entrants to work-based learning as a result of rising staying-on rates at school and college.

Some sectors which recruit apprentices with low GCSE attainment can struggle to bring them up to the required standard (Apprenticeship Task Force, 2005).

Concerns have been raised about the appropriateness of the content of the framework between the sectors. The relationship of the framework to the level and content of the job roles has been highlighted as an issue in several studies. For example, BMG (2003) points out that the UK system is build on offering a single model for Apprenticeships across all sectors, which does not take into account the fact that not all sectors offer a substantial volume of skilled employment for which significant training is required. Major sectors such as retail, hospitality and social care, rely on relatively small numbers of skilled people, supported by part-time of casual staff in occupations requiring only modest skill levels. Employers in these sectors find the Apprenticeship model *"cumbersome and laborious in relation to the jobs on offer".* Trainees see the formal and off-the-job tested elements as unnecessary. Hogarth and Hasluck (2003) found that employers generally valued MAs for the structure of training that they provided, but that "*the quality and structure of training provided in relation to the engineering and construction MAs was incomparable to the less formal learning by doing oriented training provided in the other MAs studied in the research"* (ie. retail, business administration and hospitality).

marginal note: A single model for Apprenticeships doesn't take account of the demand for skills across different sectors.

marginal note: 'Newer' Framework sectors may lack opportunities/commitment by employers to offering range of experiences required.

In a review in Scotland, it was suggested that young people find it difficult to fulfil the requirements for the SVQs because of the type of work they do, especially in sectors such as retail and customer service. This raises questions about whether SVQs are set at the correct level, given the work which young people undertake in sectors such as retail and customer service (Gallacher et al, 2004).

Kodz et al (2000) found that some sectors value the MA more than others (more in motor vehicles, less in retail). Anderson and Metcalf (2003) found that 78% of employers thought that completion was very important, but there was a variation between frameworks on this matter (completion is seen as important in construction, but was less important in retail). LSC (2003) identifies concludes that *"Employers need to 'buy-in' to the spirit as well as the practice of Apprenticeship programmes in order for the programmes to be successful".* However, this research highlighted evidence that employer support for trainees varies significantly between sectors and geographically within sectors. Given the importance of the employer to Apprenticeship programmes, this report suggests that too little is known about participating employers (no employer information is collected on the learner records data for example).

marginal note: The value placed on learning varies between sectors.

Fuller and Unwin (2003) were concerned that a MA such as business administration: "*is not grounded in clearly defined occupational knowledge and skills, this makes it difficult to identify the jobs which business administration apprentices are being prepared for, and hinders the development of an appropriate vocational pedagogy".* The problem is that an occupational identity is not developed to help career progression.

marginal note: In some sectors occupational identity is not well developed.

knowledge management for the information age

Each sector presents its own opportunities and barriers in relation to Apprenticeship delivery, and vis a vis the requirement for on and off the job training. Engineering is probably the most 'straightforward' in that skill development is aligned to the Apprenticeship model (Apprenticeship Task Force, 2005). It is argued that in the non-traditional frameworks, all training is provided in-house, (as opposed to the traditional model of employer-release for the person to go to an FE college), which it is argued is more suited to the young people's learning needs and their own sector's development. However the importance of structured training, and the problems which were created by the absence of structured training, was emphasized as a factor, particularly by the young people (Gallacher et al, 2004).

Absence of structured training in some sectors is also an issue.

Fuller and Unwin (2003) pointed to: *"enormous variations between Apprenticeships in terms of… length of training; provision of on and off-the-job training; and range of qualifications included"*. Similarly, Gallacher et al (2004) highlight the "*the length and demands of the different MA frameworks, and arrangements for delivery"* as key issues.

Length of programme, delivery and range of qualifications included in the Framework varies widely.

Gallacher et al (2004) highlights the complexity of the pattern across the MA programme, and between frameworks which can be seen as both 'traditional' and 'non traditional'. The figures indicated that despite a difference in history of Apprenticeship and training between traditional and non-traditional frameworks, *"there is no evidence that this is producing major differences in completion"*. For example, MAs in construction and motor vehicles are generally considered to be well established, but this is not leading to significantly better completion rates than those found in business administration or customer service. In fact completion rates in retail distribution and hospitality have improved over time, possibly reflecting improvements in procedures associated with recruitment to MAs, to help ensure that the young people recruited are more likely to remain employed in the sector. They may also reflect developments within the framework and the delivery of the framework. Gallacher et al (2004) concluded that: *"A complex set of factors are at work here which include recruitment methods and labour turnover in the different sectors".*

The picture is complex, and sector Frameworks are developing over time.

Poor wages and conditions can lead to a low level of staff morale and contribute to high levels of turnover. Long working hours in the workplace was identified amongst non-completers in the MA/NT evaluation (BMG, 2003), although as a less commonly mentioned problem. Poor pay has also been highlighted as factor in early leaving (Fuller and Unwin, 2003).

Recruitment methods, labour turnover, pay and conditions also play a part.

Some of the studies in England have sought to identify differences between types of employers. For example, Anderson and Metcalf (2003) found that modern apprentices were "*comparatively concentrated among small employers"*. Sims et al (2000) found that the business culture of small or medium sized enterprises (SMEs) created barriers to take up of MAs rather than the value placed on this type of training.

Some reports have identified more problems in SMEs.

Good Practice
Improvements in recruitment procedures to Apprenticeship programmes probably help to drive up completion.

There are differences in who is participating in traditional and non-traditional frameworks, particularly in terms of gender. In particular, there are more males registered on 'traditional' frameworks). Non-traditional frameworks had a significantly higher percentage of non-completers (SQW, 2001b).

The profile of learners varies between sectors.

knowledge management for the information age

Tennant et al (2005) conclude that matching of learning with an individuals work situation and their personal circumstances is centrally important – which points to the need for flexibility in delivery as far as possible without creating confusion amongst learners and employers.

Flexibility is needed to match learning to the work situation and personal circumstances.

Good Practice
For employed learners, providers should aim to match learning with the work situation and personal circumstances of the individual. This requires flexibility, whilst still aiming for clarity and understanding in what is expected to happen.

Labour Turnover

Labour turnover is an important explanatory factor for non-completion in Work Based Learning provision. For example, ELWa analysis shows that the main reasons for leaving programmes early are: the trainee moves to a new employer; the trainee simply doesn't want to complete their training or walks out; or they are dismissed (ELWa, 2001). Similarly, although a wide variety of reasons were given by young people for non-completion in the study into Work Based Learning in five sectors, but the most common was getting a new job, typically for reasons of pay or better prospects, followed by the difficulty of combining the training with the workload of the job. Other reasons related to problems at work (such as being dismissed or made redundant) (IFF Research Ltd, 2000). In a study of MAs in Scotland, being made redundant and finding another job were among the top reasons given for early leaving, as was not liking the type of work being done. (However the reason for leaving was given as 'other' for a quarter of non-completers) (SQW, 2001).

Moving to a new employer is a key reason for leaving WBL.

In a study in five sector in England, most Modern Apprenticeship non-completers in a study were found to be working (86%) at the time of interview, usually for a new employer. A majority of these respondents had changed the type of work they were doing: *"confirming the fact that many of these young people were still experimenting in the labour market"* (IFF Research Ltd, 2000).

Some Apprentices are experimenting in the labour market.

LSC (2003) found that the buoyancy of the local economy was not a major component of the 'pull factor' of full-time employment unless leavers had extra financial commitments (e.g. families) or were unhappy about the quality or nature of their course.

Local economic factors alone do not explain early leaving.

The recent Apprenticeship Task Force report suggests that where apprentices can see a career route within an organisation, they are consequently more willing to stay with that employer. At the information technology company EDS, non-completion of the Apprenticeship was only 10-15% compared to a sector average of around 50%. Turnover for former apprentices was less than 5% in the first year, after completion and being appointed to a permanent job. This has been achieved by placing. Apprenticeships as part of an overall culture of continuing support, progressive salaries and opportunities for development (Apprenticeships Task Force, 2005). In some sectors, such as engineering, gaining 'license to practice' is a key motivation for completion. On the other hand, research in Scotland concludes that: *"for some, particularly in certain sectors, non-completion does not significantly affect career progression, or at least the ability to find work, and can still be viewed as a positive experience for those involved"*.

Apprenticeships are more likely to remain in learning if they can see a career route.

Kodz et al (2000) looked at occupational progression after completing a MA, interviewing 36 young people. The numbers involved were small but they found that in construction and motor vehicles sectors, progression to supervisory roles occurred only sometime after completion of the MA, and that in business administration MA

Some employers value work experience above qualifications.

knowledge management for the information age

completers are likely to move into specialist areas such as accounts. Generally they found that employers place more importance on work experience than the NVQ when considering a young person for progression.

Good Practice

Completion can be supported by encouraging employers to see Apprenticeships as part of the career route within their organisation, and to locate them within the procedures for staff support and staff development.

ELWa (2001) provides some insight into differences reasons given for non completion between sectors. This research covers Skill Seekers (encompassing National Traineeships, Modern Apprenticeships and Higher Modern Apprenticeships). Key findings include:

- Trainees on the IT, Retail and hospitality routes tend to leave through choice, to take up other employment elsewhere or go to FTE;

- Manufacturing operations trainees tend to leave through termination of their employment. It has been recognised that there are reasons for this, mainly due to head count issues in the industry, and many of the trainees either rejoin the employer at a later date or intend to complete under the 18-month rule;

- A large proportion of hairdressing trainees leave due to personal reasons or trainee choice;

- The meat industry has a large proportion of trainees leaving through choice and it is recognised that this is due to a difficulty and sometimes a lack of will for both trainee and employer to complete key skills in this industry.

Trainees in IT, retail and hospitality are more likely to leave through choice to go to another job, whilst people in manufacturing are more likely to loose their job.

Having a supportive workplace context emerged as a key theme from interview based datasets. Gallacher et al (2004) contends: *"Employers who took an interest in the training process and who understood the MA programme or where a key manager, for example, was particularly supportive, could be important in whether or not the MA was completed".* This suggests that a work culture in which training is prioritised and valued can have a positive impact on completion rates, along with the levels of support (including peer support). The National Learner Satisfaction Survey for Wales probed WBL learners about employer support: nearly 9 in 10 (88%) said they were satisfied with the support, consistent across most learner variables including age and gender. However, learners on health/social care were much less likely to say their employer allows them time to study, whilst those on management/business/law and ICT were most likely to say their employer allows them time to study (ELWa, 2004).

Completion is assisted if the learner has a supportive workplace….

Kodz et al (2000) felt that what was shared by those who made good progress with their employer was motivation and enthusiasm (and the MA could contribute to developing these). Kodz et al (2000) also felt that there was some evidence that doing the MA could lead some young people to take up further learning opportunities.

…and the employee and employer are well motivated.

Research by Fuller and Unwin (2003) concludes that employers are generally passive in the process and training providers play the key role. Employers' who feel dissatisfied with their level of involvement in developing the training plan and/or the content of the off-the-job training, tend to be more likely to be dissatisfied overall, and that these are key aspects in maintaining the participation of employers in MAs.

Employer involvement in Apprenticeships can be promoted by giving them an active role.

Good Practice

Developing a culture of learning in the workplace can help to reduce drop out. Learners who get a high level of support in the workplace from their managers, and where training is seen as important, are less likely to be early leavers.

Gallacher et al (2004) summarises the factors associated with completion in Modern Apprenticeships as:

1. the value accorded to the MA by young people, employers and occupational sector;
2. the understanding of young people and employers of what the MA is;
3. the way that the training is delivered and the location in which it is delivered;
4. job conditions such as pay, prospects, the security of the job, and the opportunities for receiving appropriate training or experience; and
5. personal issues.

Destinations

Studies suggest that non-completion of learning programmes affects the life chances of individuals. Therefore reducing rates of early withdrawal is highly desirable.
In terms of destinations for example, recent research suggests that after both three and six months early leavers were more likely to be unemployed and less likely to be in a full-time job than their counterparts who completed the course (Opinion Research Corporation International, 1999). Fuller and Unwin (2003) found that the majority of those leaving MAs are employed, but 11% become unemployed on leaving, most notably in traditional sectors such as construction and motor vehicles.

Non completion affects life chances: early leavers are less likely than completers to be in work.

Relative Importance of Different Factors

Although there is overlap between previous studies in the factors identified as being important to completion and achievement, there is little hard evidence of the relative importance of different factors to different groups. However, the results of previous studies provides some suggestions as to how the different factors breakdown cross the profile of early leavers.

On pre-entry and entry level learning programmes, early leavers group into those who don't continue in learning because of personal circumstances and issues, those who are dissatisfied with the learning programme and those who leave to take up alternative options. York Consulting Ltd (2000) provided statistics on the reasons identified for leaving Skillbuild: 5% left for personal reasons; 4% did not enjoy it; 3% got a job.

Early leavers from pre-entry/entry level programmes mainly leave for personal reasons, because they don't enjoy it, or to get a job.

Thornhill (2001) interviewed 235 early leavers from MAs in England. The reasons they gave (elided in some cases) are as follows:

Table2.6: Reasons for Early Leaving from MAs in England	
Training issues/poor support from provider/employer/not training expected	11%
Problems at work/ lost job/ineligibility/withdrawal of programme	16%
Illness and other personal issues	12%
Better prospects elsewhere/better pay	32%
Wrong initial choice	27%
Source: Thornhill (2001)	

Thornhill (2001) contends that existing research findings begin to display a pattern:

- 'Push' factors, either at work or at home, look as though they might account for up to a third of the prime reasons for leaving;
- Manifest quality of training/support issues look as though they might account for 10-15 per cent of reasons;
- It is difficult to disentangle the emergence of better prospects elsewhere and the realization that a 'wrong choice' had been made (they clearly inter-act with each other), but a plain wrong choice, is likely to account for at least 20 per cent of leavers. (West 2004).

On vocational programmes (England) around a third leave due to issue at work/home; 10-15% are unhappy with the programme; and 20% were on the 'wrong' course.

Summary of Key Findings

- Previous studies have highlighted, especially in FE, that it is not uncommon for adults to take part in several cycles of attending, withdrawing and returning to learning. Some have argued that this is to be expected, given that people's needs and circumstances are constantly changing. However, SkillBuild has been shown to have higher repeat entrants and there is an issue of progression from learning.

- In general, people leave education and training for a variety of reasons, relating to their experience of their course, their place of study, and the attraction of employment and training opportunities, rather than there being one dominant reason for their decision. Ultimately, at the level of the individual the decision to leave education and training is likely to be down to personal preferences and in some cases people may feel that nothing could be done to prevent them leaving. It should not be assumed that non completion always represents a 'failure': it can be a reasonable response to circumstances or even a positive choice. Feedback from early leavers through surveys shows that most enjoyed the training and benefited from it.

- There are differences in opinion as to the extent to which demographic and social factors play a part. Some people contend that the nature of the learner cohort is crucial in to explaining patterns of early leaving. In particular, there is an argument that widening participation to groups not traditionally associated with learning will serve to drive up failure rates. Other commentators contend that factors associated with the nature of the provision, particularly the quality and standards of the provider, are the differentiating factor.

- Poor career choice may explain higher early leaving amongst younger people since they are more likely to still be experimenting with career options. Financial pressures may be greater and young people can see learning as a second best option in the face of their desire to earn money. There is a debate about the impact of financial constraints as a barrier to learning. In surveys, only a minority (around one in 20) tend to cite this as a reason for early leaving. However, younger people in full-time training may experience financial problems more acutely. (Stakeholders certainly pointed to a tendency for some young people to chose paid work if the opportunity comes up for this, even if it is temporary or seasonal work. This is attributed to a natural desire to earn money).

- Previous studies suggest that financial, employment and personal related problems are not in greater incidence amongst early leavers. However, early leavers are distinguished from completers on Modern Apprenticeships by more having travel

hassles, financial difficulties, or family circumstances which made it difficult to continue in training, or social life getting in way of training.

- Based on surveys, it is likely that 10-20% of those who do not complete leave due to making a wrong initial choice. For some, failure to complete is connected with a failure of guidance. Previous studies of Modern Apprenticeships in Wales (BMG) suggest that learners/employers may not be adequately and fully informed to be able to make the right decisions about their learning. An important issue is the lack of understanding of vocational programmes, due to ignorance about the programme, or perceived preference for academic routes.

- Not being able to fulfil the requirements of the qualification is an issue. Problems for WBL here include not getting the range of experience required to achieve the full Framework, especially if certain aspects are not seen as relevant, or are less well supported by employers (eg. key skills elements). Falling academic standards amongst entrants to Work Based Learning as a result of rising staying-on-rates at school and college has meant that people on WBL have low skills to begin with and go on to fail to get key skills units as part of the framework, especially amongst providers who do not put enough emphasis on developing key skills.

- The appropriateness of the content of the framework between the sectors, and to the level and content of the job probably varies between sectors, given that Apprenticeship programmes are based on a single model with applies across all sectors, and which does not directly relate to the levels of skills that are actually required of in the job. In sectors such as retailing and customer service learners struggle to find the type of tasks to fulfil the requirements. However, they key issue is not just about the having opportunities to do the tasks involved, it is also about attitudes and perception of the relevance of the learning. Problems include employers only encouraging learners in areas directly relevant to the business, or lacking scope within the business activity to provide opportunities to gain wider experiences. Moreover, non completion is not such as significant factor in career progression in some sectors as opposed to others and therefore the potential rewards associated with learning are less. In service sectors such as retail and hospitality, unqualified and part-qualified learners are not constrained from moving up the career ladder or changing jobs.

- Previous research suggests, the sector framework affects the chances of the trainee getting a good quality training experience although some people have pointed to improvements in the quality of provision across all sectors. There are concentrations of low scoring providers in terms of inspection standards in construction, manufacturing, business administration, hospitality, health care and public services. Employers and employees in 'newer' sector frameworks have been accused of lacking understanding of Apprenticeships (care, hospitality, retail, motor vehicle, electro-technical).

- Labour turnover is an important explanatory factor for non-completion in Work Based Learning provision, including: moving to a new position, leaving the post or being dismissed.

- Previous research suggests that the nature and quality of provision has the strongest effect on early leaving, rather than particular barriers for different groups of learning, suggesting many problems could be overcome if providers are willing to address them. Where standards and provision are good learners are less likely to be early

leavers. Certainly, provider factors are shown to be important in whether people continue in learning – which include high quality experience in the first place, good relations between staff and students and willingness to accommodate individual trainees needs, including adapting to chances in circumstances.

Patterns in Early Leaving and Achievement in Wales

Introduction

The main source of information on people involved in learning in Wales is the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) which was developed to be the unified way in which learning providers submit data electronically. Because it is an administrative dataset completed by all providers and in relation to each individual learner, the LLWR is the most accurate and reliable source of learner data. The LLWR holds information on individuals in all post-16 learning in Wales including people on programmes in Further Education and Work Based Learning. The FE/WBL early leaving research project included extensive analysis of the LLWR, concentrating on identification of patterns of early leaving and attainment, and exploration of the relationships between the learner, provider and programme characteristics recorded on the LLWR.

The project included extensive analysis of the LLWR….

Analysis was limited to learners on programmes with an expected end date in an agreed range of dates over a 12 months period, in order to provide a cohort for which completion status for all records was available in the LLWR. The expected end date of a programme was taken to be the end date of the latest-ending learning activity in that programme. Analysis was limited to programmes ending on or after 1st September 2004 and on or before 1st September 2005.

….focusing on FE/WBL learners with an expected end date over the 12 months to September 2005.

Other sources of information on people involved in learning in Wales are provided through the cycle of survey exercises which have been administered as part of Welsh Assembly Government customer research strategy. These include:

- Work Based Learning Leavers Survey, fieldwork for which was conducted during May 2004 to February 2005. The dataset covers 1,205 respondents on Modern Apprenticeship, National Traineeship, Skillbuild and other Work Based Learning programmes.

We also looked at the results of WBL and FE leavers surveys and other information.

- FE Pilot Longitudinal Study. This was based on follow-up with FE leavers with surveys at 6 and 18 months after the learning has ceased. The dataset includes information on 541 Further Education learners collected through the first round questionnaire survey undertaken by NOP in 2003, and this was analysed as part of the early leavers research.

Additionally, Careers Wales have responsibility for monitoring the destinations of school leavers, and information from Careers Wales is also presented here. Careers Wales endorse young people into WBL provision under the Youth Guarantee. Careers Wales advisers have been tasked with working with young people on their options for education and learning, including those in need of support to be able to access employment, education or training. Amongst the options for this group are Skillbuild, a preparatory level programme, and Skillbuild+, a level one programme.

Reviewing the Evidence on Early Leavers

Two types of analysis were undertaken:

- Firstly we undertook frequency analysis to look at patterns in the rates of early

We analysed rates of

leaving, to highlight differences associated with characteristics of learners and provision and to compare the profile of early leavers and non achievers with those learners defined as having a successful outcome from learning.

- Secondly we investigated these issues using CHAID (Chi-Squared Automatic Interaction Detector) analysis in order to establish the factors relating to the observed trends. CHAID analysis indicates the characteristics that have the strongest associations with early leaving/non achievement and/or are associated with a larger proportion of early leavers/non achievers. Therefore CHAID is useful in pinpointing factors which influence different observed behaviour.

Information on the status of learners at the end of the learning was 'not known' for 12,500 learners with end dates during the study period. The 'unknowns' were taken out of the analysis because it was not possible to be sure whether they had completed the learning programme or not. There is also a loss in the learner totals included in the analysis due to the death of a small number of learners (89 people or around a half of one half per cent of the total cohort). These learners were excluded from the analysis.

Definition and Categorisation of Learners

WAG regard any learner who has not completed all the qualifications and other aims of their training programme as not being successful. Therefore, early leavers are defined as learners who terminate the learning programme before having achieved the requirements of it. The definition encompasses people who terminate learning before they have completed the learning programme, plus those who got to the end but who had failed to achieve the awards required to achieve the qualification. In order to perform all the analyses, learner records were split into groups using a number of criteria (see technical note). We then looked at patterns and characteristics of learners in the following categories:

1. WBL Programme Non Completers: This includes learners on all WBL programmes requiring Framework achievement in which the requirements of the Framework were not achieved.

2. FE Programme Non Completers: Defined as learners on FE programmes with a completion status which indicated they were not continuing in learning and which were non-achievers. (nb. some learners had LP39=1 (framework achieved). Since this indicated (intuitively) a successful programme, these were excluded from Non Completers (and so fell into group 5, FE completers)).

3. FE Programme Non Achievers: Learners on FE programmes with completion Status which indicated they had completed the LP, but which were completed, but for which at least one award was failed. The original intention for this group was that it would just include FE award-failing programmes which were completed, but the same logic applied as for FE Non Completers.

4. WBL Completers: Leavers on WBL programmes which were completed successfully. All WBL programmes not yet allocated to a group were considered as completers.

Margin notes:

early leaving by learner and provision characteristics, and used CHAID analysis to identify the key factors involved.

Learners with 'unknown' outcome and the small number who died while in learning were not included in the analysis.

Early leavers terminate the learning programme before achieving the requirements – including those who get to the end but fail to achieve the required award(s).

For the purposes of the analysis, learners were split into WBL and FE Non completers, and FE Non achievers. These were compared with WBL and FE Completers.

Figure 3.1: Defining Early Leavers and Non Achievers

First, LLWR Field LP41 (Completion Status) was analysed to arrive at four groups of programmes:
- Group A - For exclusion: this included LP41=05 (death) and 99 (unknown). All programmes in this group were excluded from the analysis entirely;
- Group B - Completers. This included just LP41=01 (Completion of LP);
- Group C - Non completers. This included those codes which indicated that the learner was no longer engaged in the programme, but had not completed:
  - ⇒ 02 failure (before end of LP)
  - ⇒ 04 health reasons
  - ⇒ 06 financial reasons
  - ⇒ 07 other personal reasons leading to dropping out
  - ⇒ 08 written off after lapse of time
  - ⇒ 09 exclusion/left in bad standing
  - ⇒ 10 gone into employment
  - ⇒ 11 other
  - ⇒ 14 gone into employment related to LP
  - ⇒ 15 gone into other employment
- Group D - Continuers. This included those codes which indicated that the learning programme was ongoing:
  - ⇒ 03 transferred to another provider
  - ⇒ 12 transferred to another LP at another provider
  - ⇒ 13 transferred to another LP at same provider

Second, LLWR Field LP17 (Type of Learning Programme) was used to arrive at two groups of programmes, WBL (codes less than or equal to 10) and FE (all other codes)

Third, LLWR Field LP39 (Framework Achievement) was used to arrive at three groups of programmes, Framework Achievers (LP39=1) and Non achievers (LP39=2) and others (LP39=2 or 9). Others here include those who didn't achieve because framework wasn't relevant, while Non achievers include those for whom framework was relevant, but who didn't achieve. For Apprenticeships, the guidance for providers states that 'achieved ' should only be recorded when every qualification, including all Key Skills and the Technical Certificate, has been achieved.

Finally, the Awards table was examined and awards with AW12 (result of award) equal to 'FAIL', 'NATT' or 'WDRN' were classed as failures; and any programme with at least one failing award was classed as an award failing programme. All others were classed as non-award-failing programmes. These groups were combined in order to give the five groups used for analysis.

5. FE Completers: FE programmes which were completed successfully. All FE programmes not yet allocated to a group were considered as completers.

For the purposes of reporting the results of our analysis of FE learners we have used the term non completers and non achievers to distinguish between the two types of early leaver. For WBL, non completers and non achievers are categorised together.

Rates of early leaving, non completion and non achievement are calculated as a proportion of all learners who had reached the end of the learning (ie. learners were excluded from the baseline if the Completion Status code indicated that they were continuing in learning (eg. transferred to another programme)).

The cohort included in the analysis totalled over 311,500 learners. This total is comprised of some 285,000 learners in Further Education and over 27,000 in Work Based Learning.

The analysis covered 311,500 learners (285,000 in FE and 27,000 in WBL).

For purposes of geographical analysis learners were categorised by region according to their home address. The largest share of the FE and WBL cohort included in the analysis is in South East Wales; this region accounts for over two fifths (44%) of all learners. North and South West Wales had just over a fifth share respectively of all learners. Mid Wales has the smallest share (6%).

South East Region has the most learners, whilst North Wales has the smallest share.

Figure 3.2: All Learners by Region
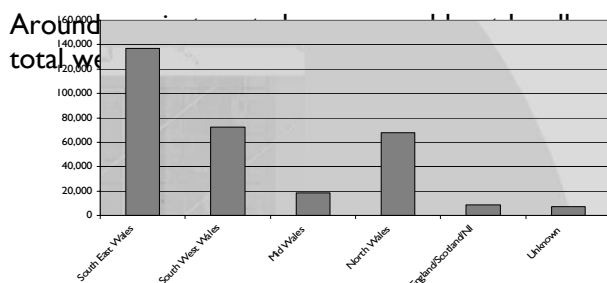
Around ~~a minority were assembled but locally~~ ted to a Welsh region (3% of the total we~~...~~ 2% had unknown location).

Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

knowledge management for the information age

Non Completion and Non Achievement: Main Findings

Overall early leaving across programmes in FE and WBL equates to around one in six of all learners (16%) not completing or not achieving the aims of their learning programme (not including those who transferred onto other programmes). The LLWR analysis clearly highlights the differences in rates of early leaving (including non achievement) between the programme areas. For learners in FE overall, some 15% fail to achieve the requirements of the learning programme, whilst in WBL over a quarter (28%) do not achieve the Framework. To some extent the difference in rates reflects the definition of achievement used: higher early leaving rates for WBL reflect the requirement to complete each of the separate elements of the qualification Framework in order to be considered successful.

Approximately one in every six learners in FE/WBL are early leavers. WBL has a higher rate of early leaving than FE.

Table 3.1: Early Leavers by Sector of Learning	All Learners	Early Leavers (Non Completers & Non Achievers)	
	No.	No.	%
Further Education	284,227	42,126	14.8%
Work Based Learning	27,222	7,501	27.6%
All (FE and WBL)	311,449	49,627	15.9%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05			

Within the various strands of WBL, the highest rates of early leaving are for Modern Apprenticeships and Foundation Modern Apprenticeships (41% of learners respectively), followed by Modern Skills Diploma (34% of learners). SkillBuild programmes have relatively low rates of early leaving compared to the other programmes, but even so over one in ten SkillBuild learners do not get to the end of the learning programme/do not achieve the requirements of it.

MA and FMA programmes have the highest proportion of early leavers (over a fifth of learners).

Table 3.2: WBL Early Leavers by Programme	All Learners	Early Leavers	
	No.	No.	%
Modern Apprenticeships	5,715	2,358	41.3%
Foundation Modern Apprenticeships	8,530	3,454	40.5%
SkillBuild Preparatory	8,123	838	10.3%
SkillBuild Level 1	3,583	458	12.8%
Modern Skills Diploma	779	263	33.8%
Other WBL	492	130	26.4%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05			

Some differences in the headline rates of early leaving can be seen across the four Welsh Regions. For WBL, the South East has the highest level of early leaving (29%). South West Wales and North Wales perform around the average for the sector, whilst Mid Wales has relatively fewer early leavers overall (22%).

South East has the highest early leaving from WBL of the four Welsh regions.

knowledge management for the information age

Figure 3.3: Early Leaving Rates by Region
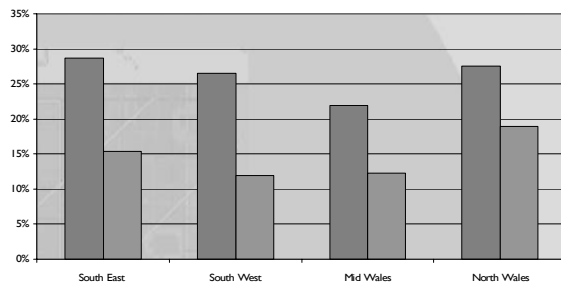
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

When non completion and non achievement are taken together, North Wales shows the highest rate of early leaving amongst FE learners (21%), well above the FE rates in the three other Regions, however, this is driven by learners' failure to achieve rather than significantly higher rates of non completion of programmes. At 13% the South East region has the highest proportion of FE learners terminating before the end of the learning programme, which is at least four percentage points above the rates of non completion in the three other Welsh regions.

Rates of early leaving from FE are high in North Wales region, due to high rates of non achievement. South East Wales has high FE non completion.

Further Education

Overview

Taking non completers and non achievers together, 15% of FE learners with expected end dates between 1st September 2004 and 1st September 2005 did not achieve the aims of their learning programme. This is in line with the results of the FE Follow-up Survey undertaken in 2003 which suggests that overall, around 17% of respondents who had undertaken Further Education did not complete the course.

15% of FE learners didn't achieve the aims of the learning programme….

Just over one in ten learners on FE courses failed to complete (10%), which represents around 29,000 people. A further 13,000 learners failed to achieve on completion (5%).

….10% did not complete, and 5% failed to achieve on completion.

In terms of people who leave before the end of the learning programme, rates of FE non-completion are highest in South East Wales (some 3% above the average rate for all learners). South East Wales accounts for the largest group (55%) of non completers (compared to 44% of all FE learners). At the same time, the rate of non achievement for those who do complete the learning programme is much higher than average in North Wales – over one in ten (11%) of FE learners in North Wales did not achieve on completion. Therefore, looking at non completion and non achievement together, North Wales has the highest rate of early leaving with around a fifth (19%) of all FE learners being unsuccessful. The South East has relatively low rates of non achievement for learners that completed the learning programme.

Non completion is highest is South East Wales.

The rate of non achievement on completion is high in North Wales.

Table 3.3: FE Non Completion/Non Achievement by Region							
	Total	Did not complete LP		Completed but did not achieve		All Early Leavers	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
South East	123,675	16,021	13.0%	2,952	2.4%	18,973	15.3%
South West	66,228	5,674	8.6%	2,205	3.3%	7,879	11.9%
Mid Wales	16,700	1,469	8.8%	572	3.4%	2,041	12.2%
North Wales	62,788	4,945	7.9%	6,953	11.1%	11,898	18.9%
All*	284,227	29,075	10.2%	13,051	4.6%	42,126	14.8%
*Includes learners in other areas and unknown region Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05							

There is wide variation in non completion of learning programme across FE sector

providers, ranging from under one percent to over a third of learners. Clustering providers by region and looking at the average rate across the colleges in each region (by college rather than numbers of learners), shows variation in the average for providers in each region: from 3% in Mid Wales; 8% in North Wales, 9% in South West Wales, and 12% in South East Wales.

Early leaving rates vary widely between FE providers.

Figure 3.4: Non Completion Rates of LP by FE College
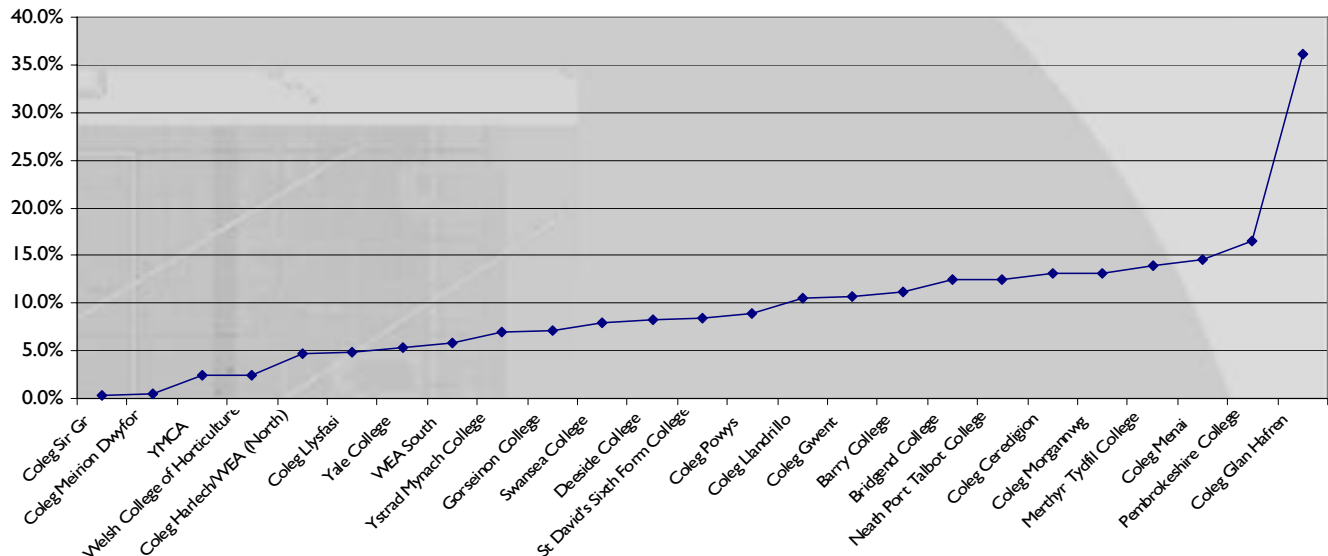
Attainment

In relation to the rate of attainment of Learning Aims in FE, our analysis found that Mid Wales has the lowest rate of achievement followed by South West and North Wales. South East Wales performs above the average. This analysis is based on achievement of awards by enrolments and therefore differs to the achievement rates by learners.

Table 3.4: Achievement of Qualification Aims (FE)					
	Qualifications Completed (successful or not)	Achieved	Partially Achieved	% Achieved	% Partially Achieved
South East	144,942	111,783	3,131	77.1%	2.2%
South West	77,384	55,350	1,038	71.5%	1.3%
Mid Wales	26,790	18,006	509	67.2%	1.9%
North Wales	87,817	63,161	1,735	71.9%	2.0%
Total	336,933	248,300	6,413	73.7%	1.9%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05					

Learners in North Wales tend to be enrolled on proportionally more awards than in the other regions (26% of North Wales learners having multiple qualifications compared to an average of 22% in the other three regions). The early leaver group includes people who completed but did not achieve any award on their programme. Therefore, the difference between the attainment rates and non achievement rates could be explained by the fact that if learners take more multi-award programmes in North Wales, the same rate of failure as other regions would lead to a higher number of learners classed

as completing but not achieving. Another explanation could be that recording practices differ (for example, in North Wales more people who fail might be recorded by providers are completing, ie. if a learner attends the last lecture but not the exam, it might be that in North Wales providers are more conscientious about registering the award as not attempted (which would then count as a fail in the LLWR)).

Reasons for Early Leaving

Based on information submitted by the learning provider and recorded on the LLWR, a large group of around 9,600 people were recorded as having personal reasons leading to non-completion (which equates to a third (33%) of non completers). Some 8% were known to have gone into employment or other employment. Some 6% left due to health reasons. 1% left for financial reasons. 3% failed to achieve before the end of the learning programme. Less than 1 in a hundred (0.4%) left in bad standing or were excluded. A significant proportion (8%) was recorded as being written off after lapse of time. However, by far the largest proportion of non-completers (40%) left for 'other' reasons (unspecified).

Two-fifths of FE non completers are recorded on the LLWR as leaving for 'other' reasons. 'Personal reasons' account for the next largest share of non completers.

The FE Follow-up Survey provides information on the learners' own perspective on reasons for early leaving:

- Well over one in ten (13%) of non completers said they weren't happy with the course.

- Over one in ten (11%) - of non completers said they left because the course was the 'wrong course for me'.

- Some 9% left because they got a job. Over a fifth (22%) of those working full time at the time of the interview left to get another job, as did 5% of those working part time.

- A further 9% of non completers left due to health reasons.

- Overall, 6% of non completers cited personal reasons.

- Overall a relatively small proportion (5%) of non completers fell behind and decided to quit.

- Overall 6% of respondents who did not complete put this down to poor quality teaching or the course being badly run. People who were not working at the time of the interview were more likely to leave because of these factors: 27% said they were not happy with the course and 36% felt the quality of teaching was poor.

Based on evidence from early leavers themselves, over one in ten FE early leavers left because they weren't happy with the course, and a further one in ten thought it was the 'wrong' course for them.

Overall around a further one in ten got a job.

Another approximately one in ten had health problems.

'Personal reasons', are the next most prevalent reasons for FE early leaving.

Based on the FE Follow-up Survey, only 44% of non completers were extremely or very satisfied with their learning experience, compared to 76% of completers. However, 31% of non completers were fairly satisfied (compared to 18% of completers). Only 17% of non completers were dissatisfied (compared with 7% of completers). 3% of non completers and 1% of completers were neither satisfied or dissatisfied. Respondents who indicated that they were indifferent/dissatisfied with learning, or only fairly satisfied, had the highest non completion rates (40% and 24% respectively). Satisfied learners are less likely than average to be a non completer.

Non completers in the FE Follow-up Survey were less likely than completers to feel the

FE respondents who are 'indifferent,

course was relevant to their needs. Only 59% wholly relevant and 29% partly relevant compared to 76% and 20% respectively for completers. 11% of non completers said the course was not very or not at all relevant to their needs, compared to 4% of completers. Rates of non completion were highest amongst respondents who felt that the learning was not wholly relevant to their needs (26%). Although the largest number of those who did not complete (59%) did feel learning was relevant to their needs.

'dissatisfied' or only 'fairly satisfied' with learning have the highest non completion rates.

Learner Characteristics

Gender

Female learners in FE have a slightly higher than average rate of non completion. The higher rate of non completion amongst women in FE means that the profile of FE non completers is slanted towards women (63% of non completers are women compared to 61% of FE learners in the cohort as a whole). However, proportionally fewer women who go on to complete failed to achieve compared to men, so overall the rates of unsuccessful learners are about the same between men and women.

Women in FE are more likely than men not to complete, but more men fail to achieve.

Table 3.5: Early Leaving/Non Achievement by Males/Females in FE							
	All	Did not complete LP		Completed LP but failed to achieve		All Early Leavers	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Female	174,283	18,193	10.4%	7,821	4.5%	26,014	14.9%
Male	109,944	10,882	9.9%	5,230	4.8%	16,112	14.7%
All	284,227	29,075	10.2%	13,051	4.6%	42,126	14.8%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05							

Proportionally more female than male early leavers left FE due to health and personal reasons. More male than female early leavers from FE did so because of going into employment, financial reasons, or 'other' reasons.

Female FE early leavers are more affected by health and personal reasons than males.

The FE Follow-up Survey suggests that men are more likely to be critical of the provision than women: 18% of male non completers said they weren't happy with the course compared to 10% of females). Being on the 'wrong course' was also more of a problem for men than women (15% of male non completers compared to 8% of females). At the same time 6% of men put leaving down to poor quality teaching compared to some 9% of women.

Some 3% of women non completers left because they became pregnant/had a baby. A further 5% of women had another change in personal circumstance. A relatively large proportion of women who did not complete cited 'other' reasons (14%) (compared to 6% of men). Some 7% of women left due to difficulties with childcare or family commitments (compared to 3% men). However, having responsibilities at home, such as children, does not appear to have a significant effect on propensity to be an early leaver.

Male early leavers are more likely to leave for employment reasons: Some 15% of males in the FE Follow-up Survey left because they got a job, but only 5% of females. 12% of men and 7% of women non completers left for health reasons.

Having family commitments does not appear to significantly affect early leaving.

Figure 3.5: Reasons for Leaving FE by Gender
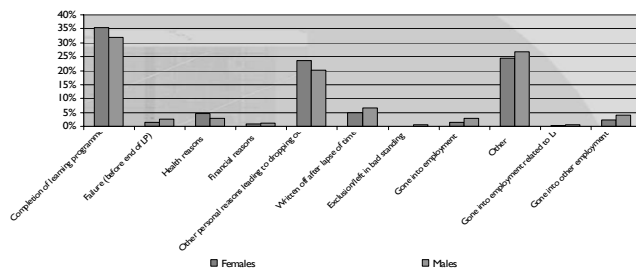
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

More women than men left due to work pressures: 5% of women said too much work caused them to leave, compared to 3% of men. However, financial pressures affected men most: 6% of men left for financial reasons but only 2% of women. Personal reasons apply fairly evenly across the board (6% of males and 7% of females left for personal reasons).

Falling behind and deciding to quit is more of a problem for men (9%) than for women (3%). At the same time, 5% of women non completers said the course was too difficult compared to only 3% of men.

Age

Younger age groups show a higher propensity towards FE non completion than older learners. FE learners aged 16 to 19 years have the highest non completion rate (14%), closely followed by the 20-24 year old group (13%). Similarly, amongst those who did complete the programme, a higher rate of failure to achieve on completion is associated with the younger age groups. Amongst those who took part in the FE Follow-up Survey, the rate of early leaving was as high as 30% amongst 16-18 year olds – much higher than the older age groups.

Younger age groups have the highest FE non completion and non achievement.

Table 3.6: Early Leaving/Non Achievement by Age in FE							
	Total	Did not complete LP		Completed LP but failed to achieve		All Early Leavers	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
16 to 19	46,283	6,563	14.2%	3,284	7.1%	9,847	21.3%
20 to 24	25,025	3,231	12.9%	1,182	4.7%	4,413	17.6%
25 & older	191,926	17,758	9.3%	7,615	4.0%	25,373	13.2%
All*	284,227	29,975	10.2%	13,051	4.6%	42,126	14.8%
*Includes learners for which age is unknown Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05							

Taking non completion and non achievement together, over a fifth of 16-19 year olds were unsuccessful in FE. Indeed young people account for a quarter (25%) of all FE early leavers (but only 18% of the FE cohort overall for which age is known). At the same time, the overall majority of learners are in the 25+ age group, and therefore in terms of the overall issue of early leaving the largest share of FE early leavers are aged 25+.

16-19 year olds account for a quarter of early leavers.

LLWR data suggests that early leavers aged 16-19 years are more likely than older age groups to fail on completion or before the end of the course. Proportionally more FE learners aged 20-24 than other age groups leave for personal reasons, or are written off after lapse of time. Older age groups (25+) are more likely than other age groups to leave for health reasons or 'other' reasons.

Personal reasons most affect 20-24 year olds. Health and 'other' reasons most affect older age groups (25+).

knowledge management for the information age

Figure 3.6: Reasons for Leaving FE by Age
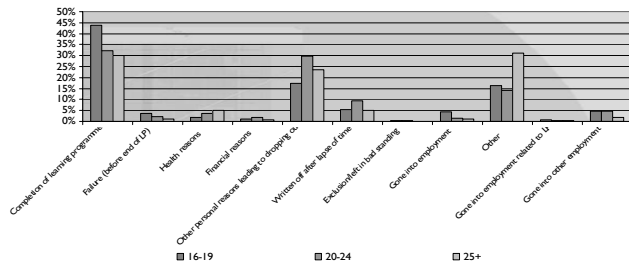
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

In the FE Follow-up Up Survey, younger learners aged 16-18 were more likely than other age groups to say they weren't happy with the course (15%). Being on the 'wrong course' was also more of a problem for younger age groups (15% of 16-18 year olds gave this as their reason for leaving). Young people were also most likely to give poor quality teaching as their reason for early leaving (11% of 16-18 year olds did not complete because of poor quality teaching or badly run course).

One in ten 16-18 year olds said they left FE because of poor teaching or badly run provision.

The 19-34 age group were most likely to leave due to getting a job (nearly a fifth (18%) of those aged 19-34 left because they got a job). Over a fifth (22%) of people aged 55+ in the FE Follow-Up Survey left for health reasons.

Nearly a fifth of 19-34 year old early leavers left because they got a job.

Ethnicity

Around one in twenty (5%) of the FE cohort were recorded as being of Non-White ethnic origin. Our analysis suggests that non completion and failure to achieve is more prevalent amongst non-White learners: as a group, 15% of non-White learners failed to complete and 7% of completers in this group failed to achieve. There are differences between ethnic groups. Learners of Black and Mixed ethnic origin have the highest non completion rates (18% respectively). The rate of failure to achieve is also relatively high amongst Black learners who do complete the learning programme (10% compared to an average of 5%). Learners of Asian and Chinese ethnic origin also display higher than average non-completion (14% and 13% respectively), and have failure rates on completion above those for White learners. The recent report into ethnic minorities in

Non White learners have higher early leaving from FE than those of White ethnic origin…

Figure 3.7: FE Early Leaving by Ethnicity
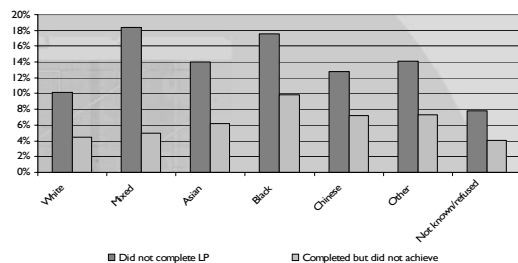
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

learning in Wales has highlighted the fact that learners from BME backgrounds are not a homogenous group; more research is needed into the potential barriers to participation, learning routes, and educational outcomes for different groups of BME learners (WAG, 2006).

….although there are differences between non White groups.

Prior Qualifications

FE learners with Level 1 and Level 2 equivalent qualifications prior to the learning programme are proportionally more likely not to complete than learners with higher or lower levels of qualifications, and these comprise the largest share of all learners. Indeed, learners with Level 1 or equivalent qualifications prior to the start of the programme account for a disproportionate proportion (36%) of all FE non completers, followed by people with Level 2 or equivalent qualifications (21%).

People with Level 1 and 2 qualifications are over represented in the FE early leavers group.

Table 3.7: FE Non Completion/Non Attainment by Level of Prior Attainment							
	Total	Did not complete LP		Completed LP but failed to achieve		All Early Leavers	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Pre-Entry Level/ Entry Level	684	66	9.6%	31	4.5%	97	14.2%
Level 1	9,935	1,317	13.3%	418	4.2%	1,735	17.5%
Level 2	30,697	4,130	13.5%	1,559	5.1%	5,689	18.5%
Level 3	13,584	1,476	10.9%	438	3.2%	1,914	14.1%
Level 4	10,459	1,129	10.8%	228	2.2%	1,357	13.0%
Level 5	2,721	218	8.0%	138	5.1%	356	13.1%
Not applicable/ Not known	216,147	20,739	9.6%	10,239	4.7%	30,978	14.3%
All	284,227	29,075	10.2%	13,051	4.6%	42,126	14.8%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05							

FE learners with Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications prior to the learning programme who go on to complete the programme have the lowest non achievement rates (3% and 2% respectively). Learners with Level 5 qualifications prior to the learning programme have the lowest levels of non completion by qualification level (8%), but Level 5 or equivalent learners represent only around one per cent of the FE cohort.

FE learners with high level qualifications are most likely to complete.

The results of the FE Follow-up Survey suggest that non completion in FE is higher amongst people who do not stay on in full-time education after school. Respondents to the FE Follow-up Survey who left full time education aged 16-18 had a rate of non completion of 18%, compared to 14% for those who left full time education aged 19+.

Evidence suggests that people who leave full time education at 16-18 are more likely to be early leavers.

Employment Status

Information on employment status at the start of the learning programme is available for just under 240,000 FE learners in our cohort (over four-fifths of the total). The largest

Figure 3.8: FE Non Achievement Rates by Employment Status*
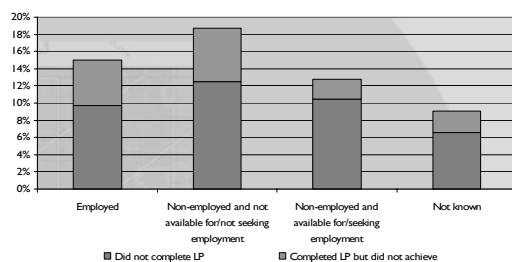
* Employment status at start of programme
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

group for which information is available were employed at the start of the learning programme (42%). Well over a third (37%) were not employed and not available/not seeking work at the start of the learning programme, and a further (21%) were not employed and available for/seeking work.

FE learners who are not economically active are more likely to be non completers and non achievers than those in work.

FE learners who were not employed and not available/not seeking employment at the start of the programme have a slightly higher than average propensity towards non-completion in FE. Indeed, some 13% of this group failed to complete (compared to 10% overall). Moreover, slightly more than average numbers of learners who were not available/seeking employment and who did complete the learning programme failed to achieve (6% compared to 5% across the board).

Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Some 7% of the FE cohort was recorded on the LLWR as being learners with disabilities (self-assessed), although this probably under-represents the true figure, and there is a

Many FE learners have unknown

knowledge management for the information age

FE and WBL Early Leavers Research: Final Report

large group of learners with unknown/not provided disability status information (23%). *disability status.* In relation to learning difficulties, some 3% were recorded as having a learning difficulty, although over half of all FE learners (51%) were in the 'not known' category.

Table 3.8: FE Non Completion/Non Achievement by Disability & Learning Difficulty							
	Total	Did not complete LP		Completed LP but failed to achieve		All Early Leavers	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No disability	198,244	21,093	10.6%	10,556	5.3%	31,649	16.0%
Disability	19,496	2,135	11.0%	985	5.1%	3,120	16.0%
No learning difficulty	130,499	13,105	10.0%	8,706	6.7%	21,811	16.7%
Learning difficulty	8,002	782	9.8%	571	7.1%	1,353	16.9%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05							

Overall the differences in non completion and achievement between people recorded as having a disability and learning difficulty and those recorded as not having a disability or learning difficulty are quite small. However, putting people with different types of disabilities together masks variation in the non completion rates for different groups of learners. Indeed, rates of non completion of FE courses are higher than average for learners with physical difficulty (16%), people with medical conditions (14%) and stroke/asphasia sufferers (14%). People with emotional/behavioural difficulties also have higher than average non completion rates (14%).

There is little difference between disabled and non disabled learners overall, but some groups of disabled learners have high rates of FE non completion...

Figure 3.9: FE Non Achievement Rates by Type of Disability*
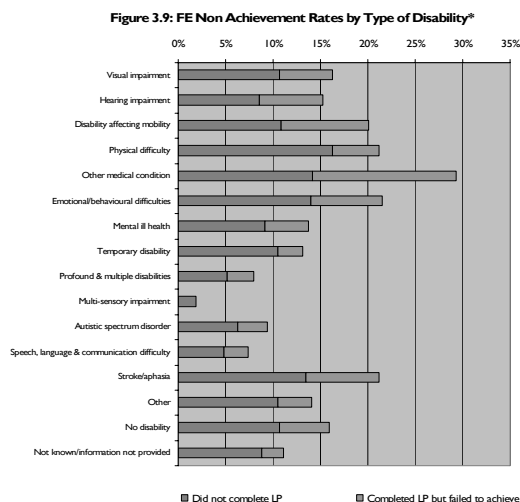
Non completion is slightly below the average for some groups of disability including hearing impairment, and mental ill health. People with profound and multiple disabilities have significantly below average non completion (5%), although this group represents only a very small proportion of all learners.

...including people which physical disabilities and those with medical conditions.
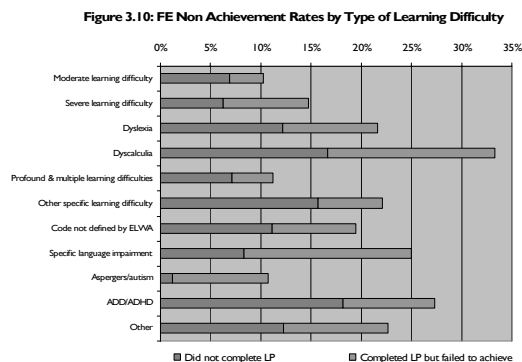
Figure 3.10: FE Non Achievement Rates by Type of Learning Difficulty

Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

In relation to learners with learning difficulties, well over a third (36%) were recorded as having a moderate learning difficulty, and for learners with moderate learning difficulty non completion is below average (7%). Around a quarter (26%) of learners with learning difficulty were recorded as having dsyslexia. Non completion is significantly above average amongst dyslexic learners (12%), as is the rate of failure to achieve (10%). People recorded as having ADD/ADHD have the highest rate of non completion (18%), and

Learners recorded as having dyslexia and ADD/ADHD have above average non completion.

knowledge management for the information age

the rates of failure are also relatively high for this group of learners (9%). However, non completion is relatively low for learners with autistic spectrum disorder/aspergers syndrome (1%), but this group has the highest rate of failure (10%). Caution is needed when looking at these results however as the cohort size is very small for these groups.

Early leaving is highest amongst learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability registered on a mainstream learning activity. Mixed delivery (ie. registration on a programme designed for LLDD and also mainstream provision) also comes out poorly when compared to specialist provision for learners requiring extra support.

Early leaving by learners with a disability or learning difficulty is higher from mainstream provision than specialist provision.

Table 3.9: Non Completion/Non Achievement by LLDD Group	Total	Did not complete LP		Completed LP but failed to achieve		All Early Leavers	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Learner with moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities and requiring an extra level of support, being registered on a learning activity designed for LLDD	6,185	564	9.1%	140	2.3%	704	11.4%
Learner with profound and/or multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities requiring one-to-one support and a high level of support needs, being registered on a learning activity designed for LLDD	6,984	814	11.7%	494	7.1%	1,308	18.7%
Learner with learning difficulties and/or disabilities registered on a mainstream learning activity	894	117	13.1%	112	12.5%	229	25.6%
Learner with moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities and requiring an extra level of support, being registered on a learning activity designed for LLDD and also being registered on mainstream provision	1,171	77	6.6%	140	12.0%	217	18.5%
Learner with profound and/or multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities requiring one-to-one support and a high level of support needs, being registered on a learning activity designed for LLDD and also being registered on mainstream provision	91	5	5.5%	9	9.9%	14	15.4%
All LLDD	15,325	1,577	10.3%	895	5.8%	2,472	16.1%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05							

Other Disadvantaged Groups

Only 6% of the FE cohort are categorised on the LLWR as being in a 'disadvantaged group', of which the largest proportion are people living in rural areas (6%), followed by lone parents (0.1%) and people returning to the labour market (0.1%). Rates of non completion are below average for learners disadvantaged by living in a rural area (8%), and for lone parents (9%), although those returning to the labour market are in line with the average (11%).

Learners in rural areas have relatively low rates of early leaving.

Lone parents and returners have relatively high non achievement.

Rural learners who complete the learning programme have very low rates of failure (2%), whilst failure rates for returners and lone parents are above the norm (6% respectively).

Literacy and Numeracy

Figure 3.11: FE Non Completion Rates by Level of Literacy and Numeracy Where Known*
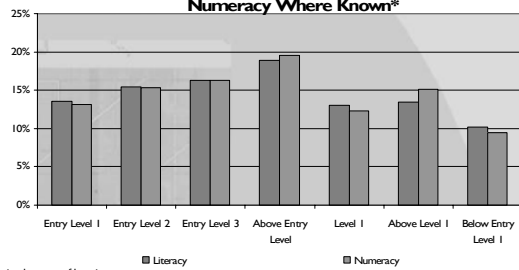
*Determined at start of learning programme
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

Some 7% of the FE cohort have an assessment for Literacy, and 6% have an assessment for Numeracy (around 18,000 learners). Non completion rates are highest for learners who were assessed as being at Above Entry Level but below Level 1 at the start of the learning programme. This group also

FE learners with below Level 1 basic skills have above average non completion and non achievement.

has poor non achievement rates, and learners in this group and those with Entry Level 2 and 3 basic skills are the most likely of all learners by level of basic skills to be non achievers.

Patterns of Early Leaving

Area of Learning

The pattern of FE provision is slanted towards general and vocational education courses.

Figue 3.12: FE Non Achievement Rates by Course
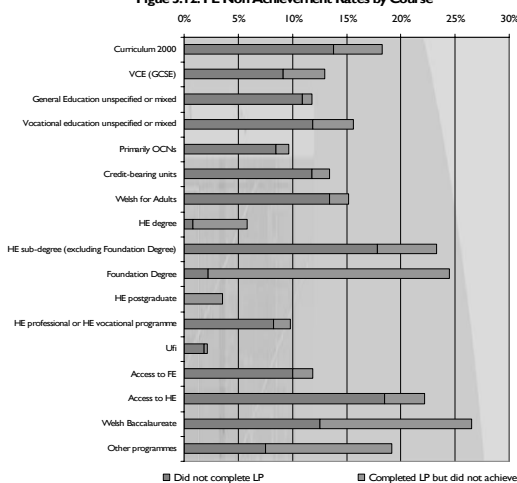
Four types of programmes accounted for over four fifths (84%) of all FE learners in the cohort included in our analysis: Vocational education (26%), Primarily OCNs (25%), 'other' programme (22%), and General Education (11%).

Rates of early leaving vary by course in FE. The Welsh Bacclaureate qualification show the highest proportion of unsuccessful learners, and this is due to high rates of non achievement.

Rates of early leaving vary by course in FE.

Welsh Bacclaureate, Foundation degrees and Access to HE courses have high rates of non achievement.

Lack of success is also significantly higher than the FE average on

Most FE learners are in general and vocational education, and 'other' programmes, and these have relatively high early leaving.

Foundation degrees, and this is mainly due to learners failing to achieve before the end of the learning programme. Relatively high numbers fail on Access to HE and other HE sub-degrees. For these courses the attrition rate is above 20%. The bulk of non achievement is due to people failing to complete to the end of the course. However these represent a small proportion of the FE cohort (less than 1%).

FE Non Achievement Rates by Area of Learning

Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

General Education and Vocational Education have slightly above the sector average rates of non completion (11% and 12%

respectively). 'Other' programmes have above average rates of failure. As these are large in terms of numbers, learners in General and Vocational education and 'other' programmes are over represented in the profile of unsuccessful learners. In fact, these three types of courses encompass two-thirds (67%) of all unsuccessful FE learners.

Level of Award

The Level of Award associated with the learning programme emerges as having some influence on early leaving; in terms of the proportion of enrolments. Pre-entry programmes are the biggest problem with nearly half of enrolments not being successful (19% non completion and 30% non achievement). However, only a minority of FE enrolments are at pre-entry level (around 1%). Entry level programmes perform much better with below average rates of non completion and non achievement by enrolments for

Pre-entry level programmes have high early leaving, but the numbers involved are small.

Figure 3.14: FE Non Achievement Rates by Level (excl HE)

Did not complete LP   Completed by did not achieve

Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

the sector.

Above Level 1, courses at higher levels of awards tend to higher rates of non achievement.

Level 1 and equivalent courses account for the bulk of FE enrolments; drop outs at Level 1 are about average for the sector, but non achievement on completion is an issue. For Level 2 and equivalent programmes there is a similar pattern. HE level programmes have rather high non achievement, but account for only a tiny proportion of all unsuccessful enrolments (less than 0.5%).

Duration of Learning Programme

As might be expected there is an association, up to a point, between non completion and the expected length of FE learning programme duration. For courses up to 24 months, the longer the course, the higher the non completion rate. Non achievement is highest for courses of 18-24 months expected duration.

Non achievement is highest for courses of 18-24 months expected duration.

Figure 3.15: Early Leaving by FE Course Duration

Did not complete LP   Completed but did not achieve
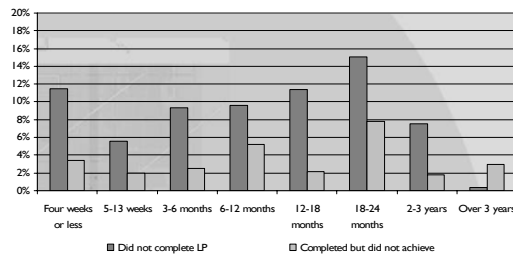
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

The exception is for courses over two years, perhaps reflecting the level of commitment required. The lowest non completion is for courses with an expected duration of over 3 years.

Amongst the profile of FE early leavers, 5% left within less than a week of starting. A further 9% left within 1 to 4 weeks of starting, and almost a quarter (23%) left within 5 to 13 weeks of starting. Therefore, well over a third of FE early leavers (26%) left within 13 weeks. A fifth of FE early leavers (21%) left within three to six months, and 31% within six to twelve months. Very few early leavers (13%) had been on the programme for over twelve months and of these the largest share (7%) had been on for eighteen to twenty-four months.

knowledge management for the information age

Occupational Area

Information on the occupational area associated with the learning programme is available for around 30,000 FE learners in the cohort (less than ten percent of the FE cohort). FE learners are spread across the major SOC groups, although the largest occupational areas in terms of learner numbers are Personal Service Occupations, Administrative and Secretarial and Associate Professional and Technical Occupations.

Table 3.10: FE Non Completion/Non Achievement by SOC							
	Total	Did not complete LP		Completed but did not achieve		All Early Leavers	
SOC	No.	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 Managers & Senior Officials	2,456	290	11.8%	229	9.3%	519	21.1%
2 Professional Occupations	3,305	489	14.8%	344	10.4%	833	25.2%
3 Associate Professional & Technical Occupations	3,833	586	15.3%	448	11.7%	1,034	27.0%
4 Administrative & Secretarial Occupations	3,940	605	15.4%	324	8.2%	929	23.6%
5 Skilled Trades Occupations	3,565	450	12.6%	314	8.8%	764	21.4%
6 Personal Service Occupations	4,357	774	17.8%	514	11.8%	1,288	29.6%
7 Sales & Customer Service Occupations	2,133	420	19.7%	167	7.8%	587	27.5%
8 Process, Plant & Machine Operatives	2,010	225	11.2%	106	5.3%	331	16.5%
9 Elementary Occupations	2,856	345	12.1%	355	12.4%	700	24.5%
Total*	284,227	29,075	10.2%	13,051	4.6%	42,126	14.8%

*Includes SOC not applicable/not recorded.
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

Analysis of these learners shows that learning programmes associated with Sales and Customer Service Occupations have the highest non completion, followed by Personal Service Occupations. Professional Occupations, and Associate Professional and Technical Occupations, also perform relatively poorly in terms of high non completion, plus programmes associated with these occupations have relatively high levels of non achievement.

Sales and Customer Service Occupations have the highest non completion, followed by Personal Service Occupations

Delivery Issues

The results of the FE Follow-up Survey suggests that getting the place of study right is much more of an important issue when it comes to non completion than the type of course the learner ends up on. Well over a quarter (29%) of respondents to the FE Follow-up Survey whose preferences were not met in terms of their first choice of place of study were non completers. However, respondents who did not get their first choice of type of course were less likely than average to be non completers (12% and 18% respectively).

FE learners who don't get their first choice of provider tend towards early leaving, but getting the first choice of course doesn't affect early leaving.

Mode of Attendance

In terms of patterns by types of delivery, two-thirds of FE learners in the LLWR cohort were on continuous day-time provision, just over a fifth of learners were on evening-time provision, and 12% at 'other' times.

Most FE learners are in continuous day-time provision.

knowledge management for the information age

Table 3.11: FE Non Completion/Non Achievement by Delivery							
	Total	Did not complete LP		Completed LP but failed to achieve		All Early Leavers	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Continuous, day	186,455	17,732	9.5%	8,214	4.4%	25,946	13.9%
Continuous, evening only	60,542	8,245	13.6%	1,024	1.7%	9,269	15.3%
Continuous, other	35,379	2,839	8.0%	3,738	10.6%	6,577	18.6%
Continuous, in the workplace	1,253	243	19.4%	69	5.5%	312	24.9%
Sandwich/Block release	598	16	2.7%	6	1.0%	22	3.7%
All	284,227	29,075	10.2%	13,051	4.6%	42,126	14.8%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05							

FE courses delivered in the workplace have the highest non completion rate (17%), although only less than one per cent of learners in the cohort had this delivery method (0.5%). The lowest rates of non completion in FE are for sandwich/block release courses (3%), although these course account for only a very small proportion of learners (0.2%).

FE non completion is higher on evening courses than daytime provision.

Evening provision has a significantly higher than average non completion rate (13%), although the failure rate is much lower than average (2%), which could reflect the different requirements of evening provision compared to full time learning.

Welsh Language

Just over 3,700 FE learners preferred learning using Welsh language (1%), and less than 1,000 preferred 'other' language (0.2%). FE learners whose preferred language of learning is Welsh are proportionally less likely than average to leave before the end of the learning programme (7%), whilst those preferring 'other' languages to English and Welsh have the highest rates of non completion (14%). FE learners preferring Welsh language delivery are also less likely than average to fail to achieve a qualification, whilst those preferring 'other' languages are most likely to fail (4% and 6% failed to achieve compared to 5% overall).

Relatively few in FE prefer Welsh language, but those who do are less likely to be early leavers.

Quality Indicators

When analysing rates of early leaving amongst clusters of learners according to how providers are rated by Estyn on the seven Estyn Key Questions for inspection, the most striking relationship appears to be between FE early leaving and the effectiveness of teaching, training and assessment measures. Better performing providers with the most effective teaching, training and assessment have the lowest rate of early leaving. The rate of early leaving increases the poorer the providers on this measure.

Providers with the most effective teaching, training and assessment have the lowest rate of early leaving…

As might be expected, providers which have favourable Estyn assessments in terms of achievement tend to do better in terms of having lower levels of early leaving (including non achievement). The relationship between early leaving and other quality indicators is less clear cut, although early leaving rates tend to be relatively low for providers with good quality of leadership and management.

…and those with good quality leadership and management.

Table 3.12: Early Leaving Rates For Learners by Estyn Inspection Areas				
	1 - Good with outstanding features	2 - Good features and no important shortcomings	3 - Good features outweigh shortcomings	4 - Some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
KQ1 How well do learners achieve?	5.1%	12.3%	19.4%	-
KQ2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	5.4%	14.8%	21.5%	-
KQ3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	11.7%	15.5%	12.5%	1.2%
KQ4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	15.8%	9.1%	21.5%	-
KQ5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	-	12.0%	14.9%	17.7%
KQ6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	-	15.3%	13.5%	17.7%
KQ7 How effective are leaders and managers in using resources?	16.9%	9.5%	26.5%	17.7%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05				

Socio-Economic Indicators

FE learners in the most densely populated areas have higher rates of non completion of learning programmes, whilst the pattern is reversed when looking at non achievement on completion. Overall, FE early leaving is highest in the most populated area (Cardiff).

FE early leaving is highest in densely populated areas.

Table 3.13: FE Non Completion/Non Achievement by Population Density							
	Total	Did not complete LP		Completed LP but failed to achieve		All early leavers	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0-99 cap/km2	63,730	5,136	8.1%	5,999	9.4%	11,135	17.5%
100-499 cap/km2	77,379	6,818	8.8%	3,857	5.0%	10,675	13.8%
500-999 cap/km2	102,811	10,631	10.3%	1,464	1.4%	12,095	11.8%
1000-1999 cap/km2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2000+ cap/km2	27,157	5,635	20.7%	1,429	5.3%	7,064	26.0%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05							

We categorised learners according to the level of deprivation in the district where they were located, measured by the percentage of LSOAs in the district that were in the most 10% most deprived in Wales (IMD 2005). Districts with fewer areas of extreme deprivation tend to have lower non completion, although achievement on completion is an issue. Districts which are most deprived have higher rates of non completion (about three percentage points above the average). However, non achievement amongst learners who do complete from these districts is low, suggesting that those who do make it to the end of the programme are committed to getting a good result.

The most deprived districts have the highest non completion, although achievement here is relatively good.

Table 3.14: FE Non Completion/Non Achievement by IMD Ranking*							
	Total	Did not complete LP		Completed LP but failed to achieve		All early leavers	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0 to 10%	134,005	10,788	8.1%	9,887	7.4%	20,675	15.4%
11 to 20%	125,964	15,981	12.7%	2,721	2.2%	18,702	14.8%
21+%	11,108	1,451	13.1%	141	1.3%	1,592	14.3%
*% of most deprived wards							
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05							

knowledge management for the information age

FE and WBL Early Leavers Research: Final Report

Learners located in areas with high unemployment, measured by the Benefit Claimant Rate, have higher rates of non completion than those in low unemployment areas. However, the levels of achievement by learners that complete do not vary much across the areas by different unemployment rates.

High unemployment areas have high non completion.

Table 3.15: FE Non Completion/Non Achievement by Benefit Claimant Rate							
	Total	Did not complete LP		Completed LP but failed to achieve		All early leavers	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 to 2%	91,146	6,393	7.0%	7,624	8.4%	14,017	15.4%
2 to 3%	164,289	19,851	12.1%	4,776	2.9%	24,627	15.0%
3 to 4%	15,642	1,976	12.6%	349	2.2%	2,325	14.9%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05							

Destinations Following Learning

Figure 3.16: Destinations of Early Leavers from FE (% of total)
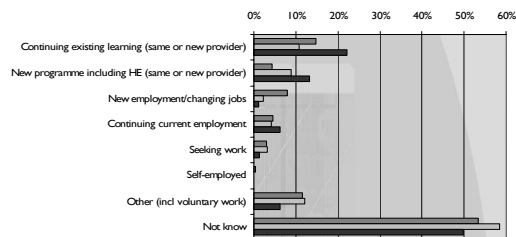
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

There is a high proportion of FE learners for which destination after leaving learning is unknown (around half of the LLWR cohort used in the analysis) – and this is true for completers as well as premature leavers. However, where information is available, it is evident that FE non completers are more likely than other learners to be in new employment/a change of jobs, or to be seeking work, but are less likely to be in the same job. FE non completers are also proportionally more likely to be classified as 'other' destination (this category includes voluntary work).

Destination after learning is non known for half of the cohort.

Fewer non completers than completers are working.

Non completers are more likely to be in a new job, seeking work, or 'other', but less likely to be in the same job.

Some minor differences in the destinations of early leavers can be observed by gender. In particular, proportionally more male early leavers were in new employment, other employment or seeking work following learning. There are more proportionally females than males with 'not known' destinations following learning.

More males than females go on to new employment or seeking work.

Patterns of destinations by age groups tend to reflect the different labour market patterns by age. Young people (16-19 years) are more likely than older age groups to be continuing in learning following completion of the FE programme. They are also more likely to be entering new employment, or seeking work, following learning. FE leavers in the 20-24 age group are more likely than other age groups to be continuing in the current employment, or 'other' destination.

In terms of employment, respondents to the FE Follow-up Survey, who had not completed Further Education were more likely to have moved jobs or companies. Indeed, only 30% of non completers were in the same job at the time of the interview, compared to 35% of completers. Proportionally more (29%) had gone onto other employment since leaving the course, compared to 25% of completers.

Younger age groups are more likely to continue in learning.

Respondents to the FE Follow-up Survey who were not available for work or unemployed at the time of the survey had the highest rates of non completion (35% and 29% respectively).

Early leaving rates are

knowledge management for the information age

Successful FE learners are more likely than non completers to be continuing in learning (same or new provider) or entering a new programme of learning immediately following the learning programme.

The results of the FE Follow-up Survey suggest that there are different career profiles and life paths between completers and non completers. One in ten (11%) of non completers are unemployed compared to 5% of completers, and 8% are looking after home and family compared to 2% of completers. However, that is not to say that most non completers are not working, In fact, 57% of non completers are in paid work, although this is below the level for completers (63%).

Respondents to the FE Follow-up Survey whose motivation for learning was to get a different job/better job had above average rates of non completion (22%), as did those whose motivation was to progress through their career generally (19%), or to further their education (19%). The lowest non completion rates were amongst respondents whose motivation for learning was learning skills for the job they were doing at the time (15%).

The majority (60% and 29%) of non completers in the FE Follow-up Survey said it was very or quite likely that they would undertake learning in the next three years (in 2003).

Work Based Learning

Overview

For WBL as a whole, well over a quarter (28%) of learners with expected end dates between 1st September 2004-1st September 2005 failed to complete the requirements of the programme, which equates to over 7,500early leavers. (This compares with the results from the Work Based Learning Leavers Survey which suggested overall 36% of the WBL Leavers Survey sample had left the training programme before it was completed).

Almost one in ten (9%) of early leavers from WBL were actually on the programme for less than four weeks. A further 17% left within between five and thirteen weeks of starting. 14% left within between three and six months. Well over a fifth of early leavers (22%) were in WBL for between six and twelve months, and almost two-fifths (39%) were in learning for over a year before they left the programme.

Amongst respondents to the WBL Early Leavers Survey, those on programmes which were not expected to lead to qualifications were much more likely to be in the early leaver group than respondents on programmes which lead to qualification Well over half (55%) of respondents connected with programmes without qualifications were early leavers, compared to around a third (35%) of those on programmes with qualifications.

Based on information submitted by the learning provider and recorded on the LLWR, 17% of unsuccessful leavers stayed on the programme to the end, but did not achieve the awards necessary to be classified as successful. Some 25% of respondents to the WBL Leavers Survey who had not completed the learning programme, said they had achieved all of their personal learning objectives. The largest group (51%) said they had achieved some of their learning objectives. However a significant proportion (16%) had not achieved any, and 7% didn't know.

particularly high amongst unemployed leavers.

FE learners who were motivated to learn by the prospect of a new job or career progression have high non completion.

Most non completers say they will undertake further learning.

Well over a quarter on WBL did not meet the requirements of the programme.

Of these 17% completed but did not achieve the necessary awards.

South East Wales accounts for over half of all unsuccessful learners on WBL.

knowledge management for the information age

For WBL as a whole, South East Wales comes out as the poorest performing region in terms of high non completion, and since this is the largest in terms of learner numbers, South East Wales accounts for over half (52%) of all unsuccessful learners from WBL during the study period. Mid Wales, although relatively small in overall numbers, has the lowest WBL early leaving rate.

Community First areas have high rates of early leaving.

This pattern reflects the findings of the Work Based Learning Leaver Survey. South West and South East Wales has proportionally more early leavers amongst this sample of learners (41% and 39% respectively) compared to Mid and North Wales (31% and 25% respectively). Respondents in the Community First areas had the highest early leaving rate (42%).

Table 3.16: WBL Early Leaving by Region			
	All in WBL	Did not complete/achieve LP	
	No.	No.	%
South East	13,605	3,906	28.7%
South West	6,213	1,648	26.5%
Mid Wales	1,638	359	21.9%
North Wales	4,719	1,301	27.6%
All Wales*	27,222	7,501	27.6%
*Includes learners outside Wales and Region unknown			
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05			

WBL providers are spread out on a continuum of early leaving rates from as low as less than 1% at one end the scale to nearly nine out of ten learners at the other. This suggests that approaches and practices towards early leaving varies widely across the spectrum of providers. Differences may also relate to clusters of providers according to the Frameworks sectors of learning in which they are working, although it was not possible to analyse this.

WBL providers vary widely in terms of early leaving rates.

Figure 3.17: Early Leaving Rates WBL by Provider

Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05
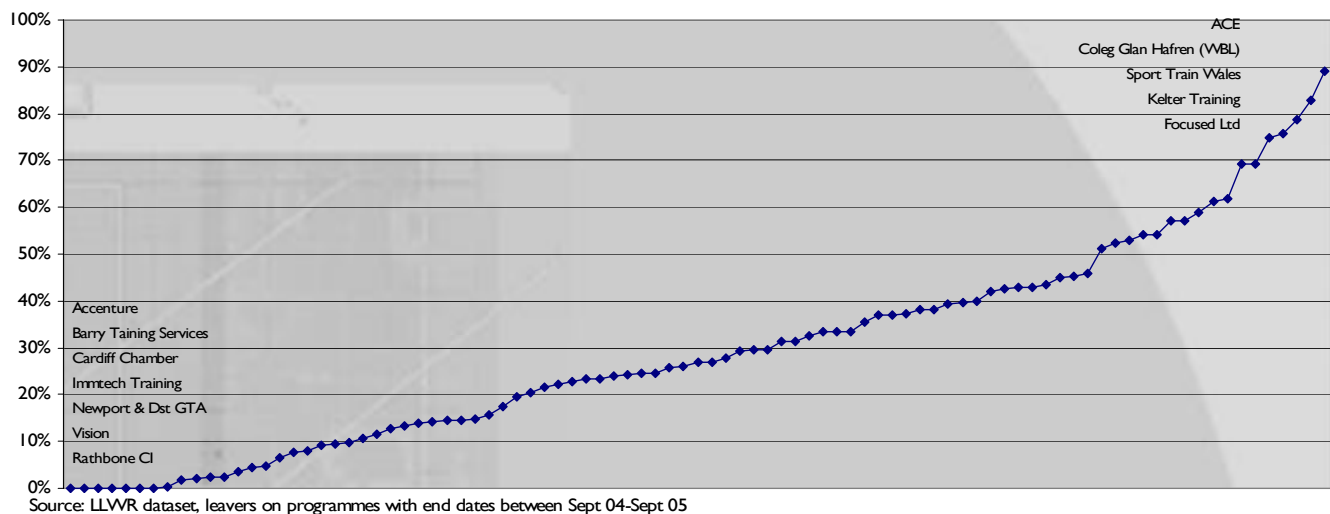
In terms of the profile of providers by the rate of early leaving for learners from that provider, the largest group (47%) have early leaving of a quarter of learners or less.

knowledge management for the information age

Table 3.17: WBL Providers by Early Leaving Rates		
	No. of Providers	%
Up to 25%	43	47.3%
26-33%	11	12.1%
34-50%	20	22.0%
51-66%	10	11.0%
67%+	7	7.7%
Total	91	100.0%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05		

Reasons for Early Leaving

Based on information submitted by the provider and recorded on the LLWR, amongst WBL learners who terminated learning before the expected end date, the largest group (29%) were categorised as having failed before the end of the learning programme. 12% left for personal reasons, 3% left for health reasons and just under a quarter (24%) left for 'other' reasons (not specified). 2% were excluded or left in bad standing and 2% were written off after lapse of time. Around one in ten (11%) terminated the learning programme due to a change in employment (of which 3% went into employment related to the learning programme).

Around 30% of early leavers were categorised on the LLWR as failing before the end of the programme. A quarter left for 'other' reasons.

Feedback from learners themselves through the WBL Leavers' Survey suggests reveals a different picture:

- The most prevalent reasons for learners leaving WBL before their training programme was complete was getting another job (33%). Some 32% leavers from Modern Apprenticeships said they left when they got a job elsewhere. Early leavers who felt they had achieved all of their learning objectives where proportionally more likely to give getting another job as a reason for leaving before completion (42%), compared to those who had not achieved any learning objectives (21%). Respondents in South East Wales were more likely than average to identify getting another job as a reason for non-completion (37%), followed by Mid Wales (35%). Learners in South West and North West Wales were less likely than average to give this as a reason (29% and 25% respectively). Leavers in Community First areas were more likely than those not in these areas to give getting another job as a reason for not completing (36% compared to 32%).

The largest group of WBL early leavers themselves said they left because of a new job.

WBL early leavers in South East Wales were more likely than average to leaver because they got another job.

- A further 3% of early leavers had lost their job, 3% said they had been made redundant/company closed down and 2% had changed position. Early leavers in North Wales were proportionally more likely that average to have lost their job or changed position (amongst early leavers in North Wales 8% and 5% respectively gave this as a reason for leaving learning).

Around a further 10% lost their job or changed positions.

- Quitting due to being on the 'wrong course for me' accounts for 11% of people who left their training programme before it was complete. A further 4% said they changed their mind/didn't enjoy it. Respondents display variation in the significance of wrong choice of course to early leaving by region: nearly a fifth (18%) of early leavers in South West Wales said that they had been on the wrong course, compared to only 2% in North Wales.

Over one in ten early leavers said it was the 'wrong course for them'…

- Personal reasons were the next biggest factor in the decision to leave before completion – given by 8% of early leavers included in the WBL Leavers Survey

8% of WBL early

sample. Respondents in Mid and South West Wales were more likely to say personal reasons led to early leaving than those in North and South East. Health reasons were cited by 5% of respondents who left before completion. Regional variations are not apparent, although respondents in Community First areas were more likely than average to cite health reasons (8%).

- Factors relating to the provider and the provision were also highlight by early leavers: Reasons for leaving included poor quality teaching (3%), course was badly run (5%), and tutor left/missing (1%). Leavers in South East Wales were twice as likely than those in North and South West Wales to say poor quality teaching prompted them to leave before completion.

- 'Too much work' accounted for 6% of WBL early leavers. Having too much work is less of an issue for leavers in Mid Wales (2%), but is a significant problem in the North (8%) and South East (7%). 'Lack of support from work' accounted for a further 3% of early leavers, again this was the biggest issue in Mid and North Wales. A further 3% left because of 'not having time/work time clashed with training time', including some 7% of early leavers in North Wales.

- Financial reasons (including cost of travel) were cited by 5% of early leavers included in the WBL Leavers' Survey, although no regional differences in financial concerns are apparent.

- Difficulties with childcare/family commitments led 3% of early leavers to quit. This reason was give by some 7% of leavers in North Wales – three times the rate in the other areas.

There are variations in the importance of different reasons for early leaving between different programmes. Some 14% of respondents who had not completed a Modern Apprenticeship said it was too much work, compared to only 6% overall. Some 15% of leavers from Skillbuild said it was the 'wrong course for me', compared to only 7% and 8% of leavers from Modern Apprenticeships and National Traineeships respectively.

Some 12% of early leavers from 'other' courses left because the course was badly run, compared to only 3% on Modern Aprenticeships and 4% on Skillbuild. 12% of early leavers from Skillbuild programmes left for financial reasons, compared to only 4% of those on Modern Apprenticeships.

Early leavers tend to have lower satisfaction ratings than learners who complete their programmes, overall and across all aspects of provision. Amongst WBL respondents, only two-fifths (42%) of early leavers were fairly or extremely satisfied, compared to 68% of completers. Moreover, 12% of early leavers were dissatisfied with their learning experience, compared to only 4% of completers.

Based on the WBL Leavers' Survey, early leavers from WBL tended to be particularly dissatisfied with the following aspects of their learning experience:

- Making your subject interesting or enjoyable for you;
- Understanding you and how you like to learn;
- Listening to your needs;
- The support given for example in improving your study techniques or time management;

leavers left for personal reasons, and 5% for health reasons.

Around one in ten felt the provider or provision was to blame; leavers in South East Wales were more likely to identify poor quality teaching as a reason to leave.

Having too much work, lack of support from work, or no time for training was a problem for around 12% of WBL early leavers.

5% had financial problems.

3% quit due to childcare or family commitments.

Leavers from Modern Apprenticeships are more likely to have problems with the workload.

Relatively high numbers left Skillbuild for financial reasons.

More WBL early leavers than completers are dissatisfied with provision, including understanding how they like to learn, levels of support, and use of

knowledge management for the information age

- Making good use of session times;
- The quality and availability of teaching materials used.

session times.

Learner Characteristics

Gender

Significantly more women in WBL were early leavers than men (the female rate is around 5 percentage points above the male rate). Women account for half of all unsuccessful learners (but are in the minority amongst WBL learners overall (46%)).

Proportionally more females than males in WBL are early leavers.

The WBL Leavers Survey suggests the influences on early leaving from WBL differ between men and women:

- Some 13% of women who left before completion said it was the wrong course for them (compared to 9% of men).

Reasons for early leaving tend to vary between male and female learners.

- Women learners are more likely to affected by caring commitments than men. Overall, difficulties with childcare/family commitments affected 5% of female early leavers in the WBL Leavers Survey compare to only 1% of men. Childcare/family commitments affect nearly one in ten (9%) of female leavers aged 25+.

- Financial reasons for leaving affected more women than male early leavers (6% compared to 4%).

- Female leavers were nearly twice as likely than average to leave for health reasons (9% compared to 2% of men), and some 17% of females aged 25+ left for health reasons (5% of males aged 25+).

- Women leavers are more likely to quit learning for reasons associated with the delivery: 5% of female early leavers identified poor quality teaching (compared to 2% of men) and 8% of females said the course was badly run (compared to 2% of men).

- Male early leavers were more likely to change jobs (35%) compared to women (31%), or have lost the job (4% to 1%). However women early leavers were more likely to say they had been made redundant/company closed down (4% of women compared to 2% men).

Table 3.18: WBL Early Leaving by Males/Females			
	Total	Did not complete/achieve LP	
	No.	No.	%
Female	12,114	3,755	31.0%
Male	15,108	3,746	24.8%
All*	27,222	7,501	27.6%
*Includes gender unknown			
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05			

Age

For WBL overall, non completion (including non achievement) is highest amongst learners in the 20-24 age group, and as a group more than two-fifths of 20-24 year olds in WBL were unsuccessful. Young people under 19 have the lowest overall WBL early leaving rate. This finding contradicts the evidence in the WBL Leavers Survey. Amongst

LLWR data suggests that under 19s have lower early leaving on WBL as a whole than

respondents to the WBL Leavers' Survey, younger age groups had a high propensity toward early leaving. Two-fifths (42%) of WBL leaver survey respondents aged 16-18 years were early leavers, compared to 29% of 19-24 year olds and 32% of 25+. Females aged 16-18 years were most likely to be early leavers (45%).

older people.

Table 3.19: WBL Early Leaving by Age			
	Total	Did not complete/achieve LP	
	No.	No.	%
16 to 19	14,629	3,311	22.6%
20 to 24	5,314	2,295	43.2%
25 and older	6,204	1,607	25.9%
All*	27,222	7,501	27.6%
*Includes age unknown			
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05			

In the WBL Leavers' Survey, young people aged 16-18 year who didn't complete were proportionally more likely to give 'wrong course' as a reason (13%, compared to 4% of 19-24 and 10% of 25+). Some 6% of 16-18 year old non-completers changed their mind/didn't enjoy it compared to only 3% of other age groups. Some 7% of females aged 16-18 years gave this as a reason (compared to 4% of males aged 16-18 years). Young people aged 16-18 years who left before completing were less likely than older age groups to get a job elsewhere (33% compared to 41% of 19-24 year olds).

Young early leavers are more likely than older age groups to say they were on the 'wrong' course, and are less likely to leave due to getting another job.

Amongst respondents to the WBL Leavers Survey, older leavers were more likely to leave for health reasons than younger age groups. Older leavers aged 25+ involved in the WBL Leavers Survey were more likely to say the course was badly run (10%) compared to only 3% of 16-18 year old early leavers.

Older people left for health reasons or because the course was badly run.

Ethnicity

Figure 3.18: WBL Early Leaving Rates by Ethnicity
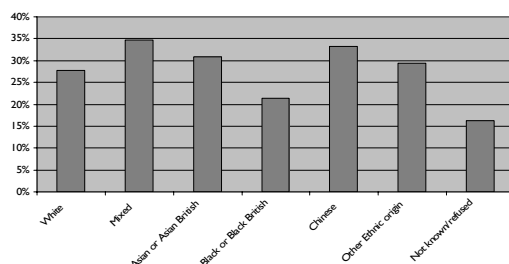
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

The majority (96%) of learners in the WBL cohort were of White ethnic origin. Only 2% were of minority ethnic origin (although 2% were categorised as ethnic origin non known/not recorded). The numbers of people of known non-White ethnic origin on the programme strands are low: some 1% on Modern Apprenticeships; 2% on Foundation Modern Apprenticeships and Modern Skills Diploma, 3% on SkillBuild Preparatory courses and SkillBuild Level 1. As a group non-White learners on WBL have a slightly higher propensity to be unsuccessful than White learners (29% of Non-White learners were early leavers compared to 28% of White ethnic origin). However, people of Black and Black British ethnic origin have lower than average early leaving.

Non White learners have higher early leaving than White on WBL, apart from people of Black and Black British origin.

Learners with Disabilities

Disabled learners (self-assessed) have significantly lower rates of early leaving from WBL than other learners, although the numbers involved are small (less than 4% of the overall WBL cohort were disabled learners).

Disabled learners have lower early leaving from WBL than other

This pattern reflects the findings of the WBL Leavers Survey, which also concluded that disabled learners are less likely to be early leavers. This survey also found that early leavers who are disabled are proportionally more likely to leave because of being on the 'wrong course' (18% compared to 10% non disabled). Leavers with a disability were much less likely to give getting another job as a reason for non completion compared to non-disabled leavers.

Proportionally more disabled compared to non disabled leavers say they were on the 'wrong' course.

Table 3.20: WBL Early Leaving by Disability Status (Self-Assessed)			
	All in WBL	Did not complete/achieve LP	
	No.	No.	%
No disability	21,050	6,067	28.8%
Disability	1,751	277	15.8%
Not known	4,421	1,157	26.2%
Includes learners outside Wales and Region unknown			
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05			

Destinations

Amongst respondents to the WBL Leavers' Survey, over a fifth (21%) of respondents who had not completed the learning programme were unemployed or non employed at the time of the survey compared to 15% of completers. Of those in work, 45% said their training was not related to their current job compared to 16% of completers (26% overall). A similar proportion (43%) said the training was not very or not at all useful to present job, compared to only one in ten of completers (10%).

WBL early leavers are more likely to be out of work compared to completers.

Early leavers included in the WBL Leavers' Survey were proportionally less likely than average to say they expected training would enable them to get a different job/better job (77% compared to 81% of respondents who had completed the learning). Similarly, only 85% of early leavers, compared to 90% of completers, said that they had expected learning to help them to progress through career generally. However, some 92% expected to gain new skills (and 94% of completers).

WBL early leavers are also more likely to be in a different job compared to completers although they are unlikely to have undertaken learning for this reason…

Only around a quarter (27%) of early leavers involved in the WBL Leavers Survey said training had helped them a lot in getting a different job/better job (compared to well over half (54%) of respondents who had completed learning). Indeed, early leavers were most likely to say the course had not helped at all (48% compared to 20% of completers).

…or to say training helped them to get a different job.

A quarter (26%) of early leavers said the course has helped them a lot to progress through their career generally, well below the rate for completers (63%). Furthermore, only a minority (43%) said it had helped them a lot to gain new skills compared to 70% of completers.

Well over two-fifths (43%) of early leavers said they would like to return to their training course. Over a third (36%) said they would want to change something about the learning – either a different subject (12%), a different type of course (19%), different provider (10%), or other aspect (7%). Of those who would like to return, the largest group (50%) said they were prevented by changing jobs or not having an employer to support them. Family time/care commitments would prevent 11% from returning to the course.

Changing jobs or not having an employer would prevent many WBL early leavers from returning to study.

FE and WBL Early Leavers Research: Final Report

Modern Apprenticeships and Foundation Modern Apprenticeships

Overview

Amongst all learners in our cohort, the rate of achievement on Foundation Modern Apprenticeships was 41%, above the Modern Apprenticeship full achievement rate of 34%. However, more Modern Apprenticeship learners at least got partial achievement of Modern Apprenticeships compared to Foundation Modern Apprenticeships (37% compared to 24%).

Well over two-fifths (43%) of early leavers on Modern Apprenticeships, and just under (39%) on Foundation Modern Apprenticeships achieved some qualifications within the Framework.

Around two-fifths of early leavers from Apprenticeships got some qualifications within the Framework.

Table 3.21: MA/FMA Full and Partial Attainment									
	Modern Apprenticeship					Foundation Modern Apprenticeship			
	Frame-works	Achievement (no.)		Achievement (%)		Frame-works	Achievement (no.)		Achievement (%)
	Total	Full	Partial	Full	Partial	Total	Full	Partial	Full	Partial
All Learners	4,485	1,544	1,660	34.4%	37.0%	7,072	2,866	1,672	40.5%	23.6%
Early Leavers	2,358	0	1,003	0.0%	42.5%	3,454	0	1,339	0.0%	38.8%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05									

South East Wales has above average early leaving on Modern Apprenticeships and Foundation Modern Apprenticeships. North Wales has the lowest early leaving, being around five percentage points below the average.

Early leaving from Apprenticeships is highest in South East.

Table 3.22: MA/FMA Early Leaving by Region						
	Modern Apprenticeship			Foundation Modern Apprenticeships		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve LP		Total	Did not complete/achieve LP	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
South East	2,842	1,232	43.3%	4,015	1,759	43.8%
South West	1,160	483	41.6%	1,752	711	40.6%
Mid Wales	352	147	41.8%	429	176	41.0%
North Wales	1,043	378	36.2%	1,971	681	34.6%
All Wales	5,397	2,240	41.5%	8,167	3,327	40.7%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05						

Learner Characteristics

Gender

Females on Modern Apprenticeship programmes are much more likely to be early leavers than males (some 46% of females did not complete compare to 36% of males). On Foundation Modern Apprenticeships, female early leaving slightly outweighs males but the difference is quite small.

Female Apprentices are more likely to leave early than men.

knowledge management for the information age

Table 3.23: MA/FMA Early Leaving by Males/Females						
	Modern Apprenticeships			Foundation Modern Apprenticeships		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
Female	2,890	1,338	46.3%	4,102	1,716	41.8%
Male	2,825	1,020	36.1%	4,428	1,738	39.3%
Total	5,715	2,358	41.3%	8,530	3,454	40.5%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05						

Age

Young people aged 16-19 years at the start of the learning programme on Modern Apprenticeships have lower early leaving rates than the older age groups, and the propensity to be an early leaver appears to increase with age. On Modern Apprenticeships, the 25+ group has the highest early leaving with nearly half (49%) of 20-24 Modern Apprenticeship learners being in the early leaver group. For Foundation Modern Apprenticeships, because of the nature of this programme, the 25+ age group is very small and in fact has below average rates of early leaving.

16-19 Apprentices have lower early leaving than older learners.

Table 3.24: MA/FMA Early Leaving by Age at Start of Learning						
	Modern Apprenticeships			Foundation Modern Apprenticeships		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
16 to 19	1,762	523	29.7%	5,080	1,985	39.1%
20 to 24	2,242	1,003	44.7%	3,129	1,376	44.0%
25 and older	1,710	832	48.7%	319	93	29.2%
Total	5,714	2,358	41.3%	8,528	3,454	40.5%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05						

Ethnicity

Figure 3.19: Early Leaving by Ethnicity (Apprenticeships)
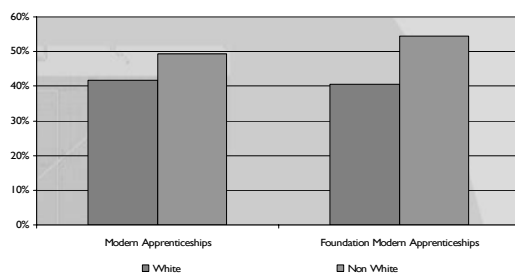
*Self assessed
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

As with WBL overall, proportionally more learners of non White ethnic origin on Apprenticeships are early leavers compared to White learners. This finding holds true across the different minority ethnic groups apart from those of Asian or Asian British origin on Modern Apprenticeships.

Proportionally more Non-White Apprentices are early leavers.

Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Figure 3.20: Non Achievement Rates for People with Disabilities* and Learning Difficulties (Apprenticeships)
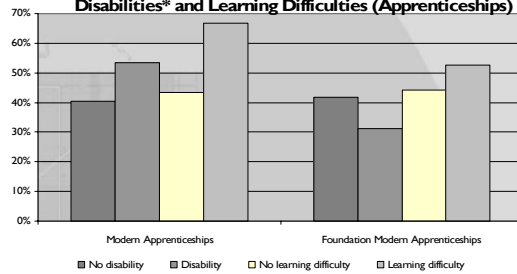
*Self assessed
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

Non completion rates on Modern Apprenticeships are higher for learners identified on the LLWR as having a disability, compared to learners with no disability, although disabled learners have below average non completion on Foundation Modern Apprenticeships. Learners with an identified learning difficulty have higher non completion compared to learners with no learning difficulty across the board. The numbers of learners in the LLDD category is low, raising access issues, and the information base is poor (information on disability is not known/not provided in relation to approximately a fifth of Apprenticeship learners and a third in relation to learning difficulties).

Disabled learners have higher early leaving on MAs but not FMAs.

Learners with learning difficulties have higher early leaving on both programmes.

Employment Status

Most people in the Modern Apprenticeship cohort were employed at the start of the programme (86%), as were a majority (72%) on Foundation Modern Apprenticeships.

Table 3.22: MA/FMA Early Leaving by Status Before Learning						
	Modern Apprenticeships			Foundation Modern Apprenticeships		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
Unemployed	306	70	22.9%	624	249	39.9%
Employed in same business	4,824	2,113	43.8%	6,004	2,477	41.3%
Employed elsewhere	75	32	42.7%	125	54	43.2%
In full-time education	203	62	30.5%	711	320	45.0%
Other (not classified as unemployed)	154	55	35.7%	584	254	43.5%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05						

For those learners who were employed at the start of the programme, rates of non completion are significantly higher than for non-employed learners (for learners on Modern Apprenticeship programmes the difference is some twenty percentage points). Learners who were classified as unemployed before learning account for only 3% of early leavers.

Employed people on Apprenticeships are more likely to be early leavers than non-employed.

Prior Qualifications

Figure 3.31: Non Completion by Qualifications Level Prior to Learning

Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05
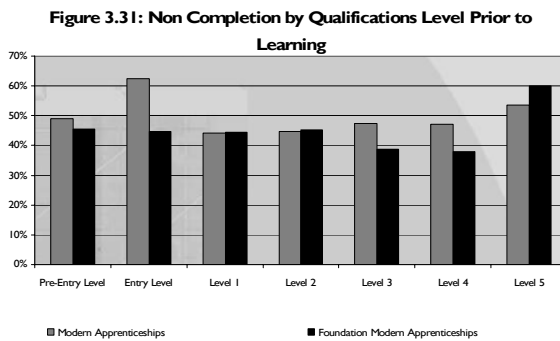
The LLWR provides information on the level of qualifications prior to learning for two thirds of the Foundation Modern Apprenticeship cohort (66%) and even more Modern Apprenticeship learners (70%). Analysis of these learners shows that people with lower levels of qualifications (Entry Level and Pre-Entry Level) have higher non completion rates than those with higher level qualifications up to Level 4. Those with Level 5 or equivalent qualifications have very high early leaving, especially on Modern Apprenticeships, but these are a very small group (only a handful of people). The largest share of early leavers from Modern Apprenticeships have Level 2 qualifications (36%) (as do 36% of unsuccessful Foundation Modern Apprenticeship learners).

People with lower levels of qualifications (Entry Level and Pre-Entry Level) tend to have higher non completion than those with higher level qualifications.

SMEs

Learners on Modern Apprenticeships and Foundation Modern Apprenticeships who are working in SMEs have relatively low rates of early leaving, especially on Foundation Modern Apprenticeships. People in employment with an employer which is not an SME have a higher propensity to leave prematurely. However, the biggest problem area, especially for Modern Apprenticeships, is people who are not employed at all, although this applies to only a minority of all Apprenticeship learners.

Apprentices with SMEs have relatively low early leaving.

Table 3.25: Early Leaving by SME Indicator Code						
	Modern Apprenticeships			Foundation Modern Apprenticeships		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
Employer is not an SME	1,885	758	40.2%	2,417	1,026	42.4%
Employer is an SME	3,232	1,289	39.9%	3,788	1,334	35.2%
Learner not employed	30	15	50.0%	813	345	42.4%
Not defined/not required	568	296	52.1%	1,512	749	49.5%
Total	5,715	2,358	41.3%	8,530	3,454	40.5%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05						

Patterns of Early Leaving

Occupational Area

There are wide variations in early leaving in relation to programmes associated with different occupational areas. Professional occupations have below average early leaving, although these do not account for large numbers of learners. Learners associated with Skilled Trade occupations also have relatively low early leaving. However, programmes associated with Process, Plant and Machine Operative occupations, and Sales and Customer Service Occupations have above average rates of early leaving.

Process, Plant & Machine Operatives, and Sales & Customer Service Occupations have above average rates of early leaving.

knowledge management for the information age

Table 3.26: MA/FMA Early Leaving by SOC	Modern Apprenticeships			Foundation Modern Apprenticeships		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
1 Managers and Senior Officials	616	339	55.0%	92	47	51.1%
2 Professional Occupations	376	67	17.8%	53	19	35.8%
3 Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	625	333	53.3%	529	194	36.7%
4 Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	629	251	39.9%	949	320	33.7%
5 Skilled Trades Occupations	1,177	309	26.3%	1,838	563	30.6%
6 Personal Service Occupations	1,309	605	46.2%	1,554	705	45.4%
7 Sales and Customer Service Occupations	617	312	50.6%	1,298	620	47.8%
8 Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	67	36	53.7%	1,321	559	42.3%
9 Elementary Occupations	133	64	48.1%	764	370	48.4%
X and 0	166	42	25.3%	132	57	43.2%
Total	5,715	2,358	41.3%	8,530	3,454	40.5%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05						

Sector Framework

Figure 3.21: MA/FMA Early Leaving by Sector Framework
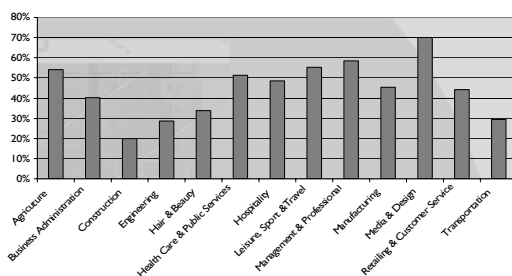
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

By Framework Sector, the highest levels of early leaving are associated with Apprenticeship Frameworks in the service industries such as Health Care and Public Services, Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Travel, Retailing and Customer Services. Frameworks in the Management and Professional sector also have above average early leaving rates. Construction programmes come out as having relatively low early leaving, although around a fifth of construction Apprenticeship learners are unsuccessful. Engineering Frameworks have below the average rates of non completion, as for transportation. Manufacturing Frameworks has higher non completion on Modern Apprenticeships than Foundation Modern Apprenticeships.

Sector Frameworks associated with service industries have highest early leaving.

The profile of learners on Apprenticeships varies across the sectors. Female learners are a majority in service sectors, especially Health, Care & Public Services, Hair and Beauty, Retailing and Customer Services. Male learners dominate in Construction, Engineering and Transportation. Female learners in male dominated sectors do relatively well in terms of early leaving, although the numbers involved are small. For example, early leaving by women from construction and engineering Apprenticeships is well below the average for all women. The highest rates of female early leaving are in Hospitality and Catering and Management and Professional sectors, Male rates of early leaving are highest in Leisure, Sport and Travel, Management and Professional, Health Care and Public Services, and Hospitality and Catering.

knowledge management for the information age

Table 3.27: Early Leaving by Sector Framework and Gender (MAs and FMAs)						
	Females			Males		
	All	Early Leavers		All	Early Leavers	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
Agriculture	115	40	34.8%	105	48	45.7%
Construction	18	3	16.7%	1,384	281	20.3%
Engineering	49	8	16.3%	1,305	343	26.3%
Manufacturing	334	139	41.6%	1,012	528	52.2%
Transportation	1	0	0.0%	91	22	24.2%
Management & Professional	294	160	54.4%	181	104	57.5%
Business Administration	1,274	517	40.6%	535	232	43.4%
Retailing & Customer Service	1,119	552	49.3%	660	357	54.1%
Leisure, Sport & Travel	117	44	37.6%	194	143	73.7%
Hospitality & Catering	457	246	53.8%	511	289	56.6%
Hair & Beauty	587	206	35.1%	45	20	44.4%
Health, Care & Public Services	1,504	815	54.2%	188	107	56.9%
Total	6,992	3054	43.7%	7,253	2,758	38.0%

*Includes other codes and code not defined
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

Figure 3.22: Reasons by Sector Framework (MA/FMA)

Reasons for non completion vary by sector.
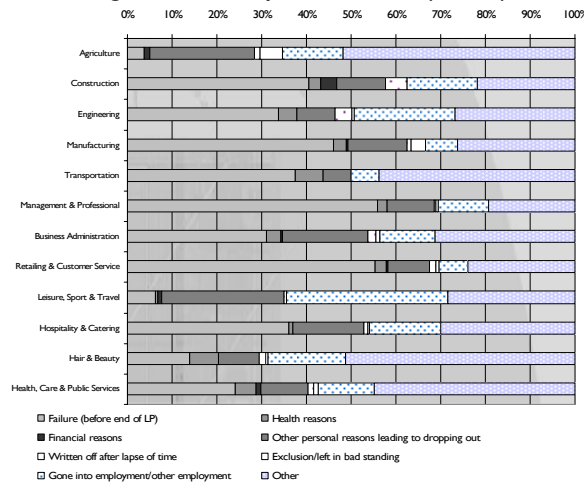
The importance of different reasons to non completion varies by sector (based on reasons recorded by providers on the LLWR). Over half of non completers of MAs and FMAs in Management and Professional and Retailing and Customer Services failed before completing the LP, as did two-fifths in Manufacturing and Construction. Proportionally more learners in Transportation, Hair and Beauty and Health, Care and Public Services had cited health reasons for non completion than other sectors. Other personal reasons accounted for around a quarter of non completers in Agriculture and Leisure, Sport and Travel.

Non completers of Apprenticeships in Leisure, Sport and Travel, Engineering Hospitality and Catering and Construction are most likely to go into employment/other employment.

Proportionally more non completers in Leisure, Sport and Travel, Engineering Hospitality and Catering and Construction went into employment compared to the other sectors.

The distribution of learners by Framework Sector is uneven across the four Welsh regions. Within the general pattern of reasons for leaving, there are some differences in the importance of different reasons for leaving recorded on the LLWR by Framework Sector and region.

Table 3.28: Regional Differences in Reasons for Leaving (MAs and FMAs)	
Agriculture	Largest numbers in agriculture are in North Wales (around three quarters of

knowledge management for the information age

	leavers from agriculture are in North Wales). Two fifths completed the learning programme, and this pattern is broadly, reflected across the four regions, although proportionally fewer completed in South East Wales. Almost a third in South East Wales (31%) left for personal reasons, highest of all the regions.
Construction	South East Wales has largest share, followed by South West Wales (these two regions account for vast majority of construction leavers). One in ten (10%) in South East Wales were counted as failing before the end of the learning programme, much higher than in other regions. Mid Wales has significantly higher completion of learning programmes than other regions. South West Wales had highest numbers going into employment.
Engineering	Half of leavers are in South East Wales, which has highest completion of learning programmes. Failure before the end of the learning programme is highest in Mid Wales.
Manufacturing	Over half of leavers are in South East Wales. Mid Wales region has fewest. North Wales has just under a fifth of manufacturing leavers and the highest rate of failure before the end of the learning programme. Relatively high proportions in Mid and North Wales left manufacturing for 'other personal' reasons.
Transportation	Almost three quarters of leavers are in North Wales. Most early leavers leave for 'other' reasons in all regions.
Management of Professional	South East and South West Wales account for the majority of Management and Professional leavers (well over half are in South East). Most leavers were counted as failing before the end of the learning programme. North Wales has relatively high proportions of Management and Professional apprentices failing before the end of the learning programme or going into employment.
Business Administration and Secretarial	Around two thirds of leavers are in South East Wales. Failing before the end of the learning programme and leaving for 'other' reasons are the most significant factors here. Relatively high in all regions leave for personal reasons. Many in Mid and North Wales went into employment.
Retailing and customer service	A quarter in Mid Wales left for personal reasons, although this region has the smallest numbers of leavers of all the regions. South East Wales has over half retailing and customer service leavers. Failure before the end of the learning programme and 'other' are important reasons for leaving here.
Leisure, Sport and Travel	Proportionally more than in other sectors when into employment, including those going into employment related to the learning programme. Well above average proportions when into jobs in South East Wales which accounts for over half of leavers. Mid Wales has small numbers and 'other' reasons for leaving are significant here.
Hospitality and catering	South West Wales has over a quarter of hospitality leavers, and going into employment (not related to the learning programme), is high for these leavers. This is also the case to a lesser extent in South East Wales which has over half of hospitality leavers.
Hair and Beauty	Relatively few were counted as failing before the end of the learning programme in all the four regions. Leaving for personal reasons is quite high in Mid Wales but less so elsewhere. 'Other' reasons are the most prevalent reasons for being an early leaver. In South East Wales, higher proportions of hair and beauty early leavers went into employment.
Health, care and public services	Compared to the overall profile, Mid Wales has relatively high numbers of health, are and public services leavers. Many leave to go into employment including employment related to the learning programme in North and Mid Wales. 'Other' reasons are responsible for much early leaving in South East and South West Wales.

Duration

Within the funding system for WBL, Apprenticeship programmes are restricted in terms of the duration of eligible funding which applies, according to the Sector Framework being followed. In general, early leaving rates are correlated to maximum duration of funding bandings, apart from Foundation Modern Apprenticeship Band C. Lower priority Frameworks with shorter eligible funding periods have higher early leaving, compared to higher priority programmes. The pattern holds true when looking at learning across the four Welsh regions in terms of early leaving patterns by MDEF bandings.

Lower priority Frameworks with shorter eligible funding periods have higher early leaving, compared to higher priority programmes.

Table 3.29: Early Leaving by Maximum Duration of Eligible Funding (MDEF)*						
	Modern Apprenticeships			Foundation Modern Apprenticeships		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No	No.	%
Band A	1,709	495	29.0%	3,091	1083	35.0%
Band B (	1,371	624	45.5%	1,452	694	47.8%
Band C	2,634	1,239	47.0%	3,987	1677	42.1%
*Modern Apprenticeship: For learners with no previous NVQ level 2 or 3 achievements in the same framework (recorded in LP50); MDEF is defined according to the priority banding of a framework sector (set by the Welsh Assembly Government). Priority (A) = 208 Median (B) = 182 Non-priority (C) = 156 Foundation Modern Apprenticeship: MDEF is defined according to the priority banding of a framework sector (set by the Welsh Assembly Government). Priority (A) = 104 Median (B) = 91 Non-priority (C) = 78 Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05						

However, the relationship between early leaving and the expected duration of the learning programme is less clear cut. For Apprenticeships lasting up to 3 years, short duration programmes (less than 6 months) have the lowest early leaving, and the propensity to be an early leaver increases with the expected length of the programme. For courses over 3 years duration, early leaving tends to fall off, although most programmes are not this long. The largest share of Modern Apprenticeship programmes are expected to last between 18-24 months and these programmes have above average non completion.

Propensity to be an early leaver increases with the expected length of the programme, for up to three year programmes.

Table 3.30: MA/FMA Non Completion by Expected Duration						
	Modern Apprenticeships			Foundation Modern Apprenticeships		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
Under 6 months	81	19	23.5%	281	95	33.8%
6-12 months	413	111	26.9%	1,951	943	48.3%
12-18 months	840	291	34.6%	2,821	1,110	39.3%
18-24 months	2,400	1,187	49.5%	2,110	800	37.9%
2-3 years	1,205	537	44.6%	1,137	426	37.5%
3-4 years	660	171	25.9%	195	68	34.9%
4-5 years	86	31	36.0%	24	8	33.3%
5+ years	28	11	39.3%	7	4	57.1%
Total*	5,715	2,358	41.3%	8,530	3,454	40.5%
*Includes 0 weeks and not applicable Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05						

Delivery Issues

Mode of Attendance

For Modern Apprenticeships programmes, delivery in the workplace is associated with higher early leaving than programmes with 'other' mode of attendance. The reverse is true for Foundation Modern Apprenticeships. In both types of provision, attendance outside of the workplace only applies to a minority of learners.

Table 3.31: MA/FMA Early Leaving by Mode of Attendance						
	Modern Apprenticeships			Foundation Modern Apprenticeships		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
In the workplace	4,737	2,046	43.2%	7,134	2,829	39.7%
Other	978	312	31.9%	1,396	625	44.8%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05						

Welsh Language

Figure 3.24: Non Completion Rates by % of Learning Activity Delivered Through the Medium of Welsh

Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05
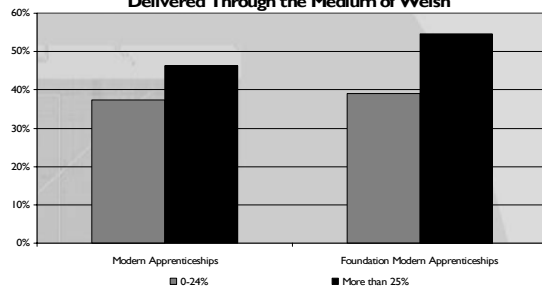
Apprenticeship programmes with none or less than 25% of the learning activities delivered through the medium of Welsh have lower early leaving than programmes containing more Welsh language delivery. However, the later apply to only a small minority (less than 1% of all learners).

Programmes with high Welsh language delivery have lower early leaving, but small numbers.

Quality Indicators

To an extent the lowest early leaving rates are associated with the best performing providers as measured by Estyn inspection areas.

Table 3.32: Early Leaving Rates MA and FMA Combined by Estyn Inspection Areas					
	1 - Good with outstanding features	2 - Good features and no important shortcomings	3 – Good features outweigh shortcomings	4 – Good features, but shortcomings	5 - Many important shortcomings
KQ1 How well do learners achieve?	38.35%	42.70%	45.22%	44.77%	55.32%
KQ2 How effective are teaching, training & assessment?	33.05%	40.40%	51.52%	44.98%	-
KQ3 How well do the learning experiences meet needs?	31.46%	43.53%	51.31%	56.76%	44.98%
KQ4 How well are learners cared for, guided & supported?	27.31%	32.50%	51.06%	55.32%	44.98%
KQ5 How effective are leadership/management?	45.45%	26.20%	45.11%	48.43%	55.32%
KQ6 How well do leaders/ managers evaluate & improve quality & standards?	45.45%	42.46%	43.67%	48.43%	55.32%
KQ7 How effective in using resources?	21.71%	44.66%	46.73%	64.21%	55.32%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05					

knowledge management for the information age

The lowest rates of early leaving are associated with providers which have the most effective teaching, training and assessment, that meet the needs and interests of learners, and have good systems for caring, guiding and supporting learners. There is a striking relationship between providers' effectiveness in using resources and early leaving: providers which are assessed as effectively managing resources have almost half the average early leaving rate.

The lowest early leaving rates are associated with the best quality providers.

Socio-Economic Indicators

The highest rates of early leaving from Modern Apprenticeships are associated with the most densely populated areas, and learners from the most densely populated area (Cardiff) are over-represented in the profile of early leavers. However, the largest share of early leavers comes from the more highly populated areas outside of Cardiff, such as Newport, Blaneau Gwent and Swansea.

Densely populated have higher early leaving from Apprenticeships.

Table 3.33: MA/FMA Early Leaving by Population Density					
	Modern Apprenticeships			Foundation Modern Apprenticeships		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
0 to 99 cap/km2	1,393	578	41.5%	2,174	865	39.8%
100 to 499 cap/km2	1,413	515	36.4%	1,942	710	36.6%
500 to 999 cap/km2	2,103	890	42.3%	3,496	1,507	43.1%
1000 to 1999 cap/km2	-	-	-	-	-	-
2000+ cap/km2	589	301	51.1%	712	319	44.8%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05						

Learners on both Modern Apprenticeships and Foundation Modern Apprenticeships living in districts with fewer highly deprived areas according to the IMD rankings have lower than average rates of early leaving. Learners in the least deprived areas are the largest group of all Apprenticeship learners.

Apprentices in least deprived areas are more likely to complete….

Table 3.34: MA/FMA Early Leaving by Multiple Deprivation Ranking					
	Modern Apprenticeships			Foundation Modern Apprenticeships		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
0 to 10%	2,795	1,091	39.0%	4,010	1,528	38.1%
11 to 20%	2,488	1,103	44.3%	3,860	1,681	43.5%
21+%	215	90	41.8%	454	192	42.3%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05						

The most deprived areas also have below average early leaving, although the numbers from these districts are relatively low, perhaps suggesting that those people from such districts who go on an Apprenticeship are generally committed to a successful outcome.

…as are people in the most deprived areas.

In general, lower rates of early leaving from Apprenticeships are associated with low unemployment areas, measured by Benefit Claimant rates. Early leaving increases with an increase in unemployment, especially for learners on Modern Apprenticeships.

Low unemployment areas have lower early leaving from Apprenticeships.

knowledge management for the information age

Table 3.35: MA/FMA Early Leaving by Benefit Claimant Rate						
	Modern Apprenticeships			Foundation Modern Apprenticeships		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
1 to 2%	1,532	571	37.3%	2,293	846	36.9%
2 to 3%	3,629	1,565	43.1%	5,262	2,245	42.7%
3 to 4%	337	148	43.9%	769	310	40.3%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05						

Destinations

A relatively large proportion of early leavers from Modern Apprenticeships entered new employment/changing jobs following learning, almost four times the rate for learners who completed the learning programme. The main difference between the destination of early leavers and completers is in the propensity to continue in learning: much fewer early leavers were continuing in a learning programme than those who were successful.

Early leavers are much more likely than completers to be in new employment following learning.

As might be expected the majority of Apprenticeship learners are employed at the end of the learning. However, amongst those who weren't, very high proportions of people were non completers, especially on Modern Apprenticeship courses. Indeed nine out of ten on Modern Apprenticeships (86%), and two thirds on Foundation Modern Apprenticeships (67%) who were not employed at the end of learning did not complete. This finding suggests that learners who do not have employment are very likely to be non completers, or put another way, lack of employment is a key reason for non completion, and suggests more attention needs to be paid to finding alternative mechanisms for people who loose or change jobs during the learning programme to go on to succeed in learning.

People who aren't in work are very likely to be early leavers…

…suggesting lack of employment is a key reason for non completion.

Figure 3.25: Destinations Following Apprenticeships

Table 3.36: MA/FMA Non Completion by Status at end of Learning Programme						
	Modern Apprenticeships			Foundation Modern Apprenticeships		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
Employed	3,855	1,955	50.7%	5,243	2,513	47.9%
Non-employed and not available for/not seeking employment	86	78	90.7%	211	172	81.5%
Non-employed and available for/seeking employment	173	146	84.4%	901	570	63.3%
Data not required	1,601	179	11.2%	2,175	199	9.1%
Total	5,715	2,358	41.3%	8,530	3,454	40.5%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05						

knowledge management for the information age

FE and WBL Early Leavers Research: Final Report

At the same time, there is also a movement the other way. For over a quarter (29%) of people on Modern Apprenticeships or Foundation Modern Apprenticeships who are unemployed at the start of the programme we can see a progression to employment by the time of finishing in learning. Proportionally more unemployed on Foundation courses got a job by the end compared to Modern Apprenticeships. The benefits of learning on moving from unemployed to employed are greatest for Foundation Modern Apprenticeship learners who complete. On Modern Apprenticeships proportionally more unemployed early leavers than completers were in work at the end.

29% of Apprentices who were unemployed at the start got a job. In fact, early leavers from MAs who were unemployed at the start were more likely to be in work than completers from MAs.

Table 3.37: Movement to Employment from Unemployment at Start of Learning						
	Modern Apprenticeships			Foundation Modern Apprenticeships		
	Unemployed at start of learning	Employed at end of learning	(%)	Unemployed at start of learning	Employed at end of learning	(%)
Completer	39	9	23.1%	711	218	30.7%
Early Leaver	53	14	26.4%	623	171	27.4%
All	92	23	25.0%	1,334	389	29.2%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05						

SkillBuild Preparatory and SkillBuild Level 1

Overview

Based on the LLWR analysis, the rate of early leaving from SkillBuild Level 1 (13%) is above that for SkillBuild Preparatory programmes (10%). This is below the level found in the WBL Leavers' Survey which suggested that respondents who had been on Skillbuild had a high rate of early leaving (45%), as did those on National Traineeships to a lesser extent (39%).

LLWR data suggests lower early leaving from SkillBuild than the WBL Leavers' Survey.

The patterns of early leaving from SkillBuild programmes present a very mixed picture, across the four Welsh regions. Learners on SkillBuild Preparatory and SkillBuild Level 1 courses are concentrated in South East Wales, and rates of early leaving are relatively high for learners living in South East Wales, especially on SkillBuild Level 1 programmes. North Wales has the highest rates of early leaving from SkillBuild Preparatory courses, but is slightly below average in terms of early leaving from SkillBuild Level 1 programmes. Mid Wales has exceptionally few early leavers from SkillBuild (accounting for only 2% of the total) but this is the smallest region in terms of overall learner numbers on the programmes. The South West performs poorly in terms of early leaving from SkillBuild Level 1, but is below average for SkillBuild Preparatory programmes.

Rates of early leaving a relatively high from Skillbuild in South East Wales but the picture is mixed.

Table 3.38: SkillBuild Early Leaving by Region								
	SkillBuild Preparatory			SkillBuild Level 1			SkillBuild (Preparatory + Level 1)		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
South East	4,182	468	11.2%	1,819	244	13.4%	6,001	712	11.9%
South West	1,985	166	8.4%	774	134	17.3%	2,759	300	10.9%
Mid Wales	431	12	2.8%	227	8	3.5%	658	20	3.0%
North Wales	1,077	159	14.8%	388	40	10.3%	1,465	199	13.6%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05								

knowledge management for the information age

Learner Characteristics

Gender

Overall, there is little difference between the behaviour of males and females in terms of early leaving from SkillBuild programmes. However, slightly more men on SkillBuild Level 1 were early leavers compared to women on SkillBuild Level 1 programmes.

Table 3.39: SkillBuild Early Leaving by Males/Females								
	SkillBuild Preparatory			SkillBuild Level 1			SkillBuild (Preparatory + Level 1)		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
Female	3,068	332	10.8%	1,412	162	11.5%	4,480	494	11.0%
Male	5,055	506	10.0%	2,171	296	13.6%	7,226	802	11.1%
Total	8,123	838	10.3%	3,583	458	12.8%	11,706	1,296	11.1%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05								

Age

No clear pattern emerges when looking at the different age groups on SkillBuild. Early leaving for both younger and older age groups is around the average for the programme. People aged 20-24 years have relatively low early leaving on SkillBuild Level 1 courses, and are therefore under-represented in the early leaver group, but the numbers of 20-24 year olds on Level 1 is relatively small (accounting for only 2% of learners).

Table 3.40: SkillBuild Early Leaving by Age								
	SkillBuild Preparatory			SkillBuild Level 1			SkillBuild (Preparatory + Level 1)		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
16 to 19	6,391	657	10.3%	1,978	261	13.2%	8,369	918	11.0%
20 to 24	69	9	13.0%	61	6	9.8%	130	15	11.5%
25 and older	1,641	172	10.5%	1,540	190	12.3%	3,181	362	11.4%
Total	8,101	838	10.3%	3,579	457	12.8%	11,680	1,295	11.1%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05								

Ethnicity

Figure 3.26: Early Leaving by Ethnicity (SkillBuild)
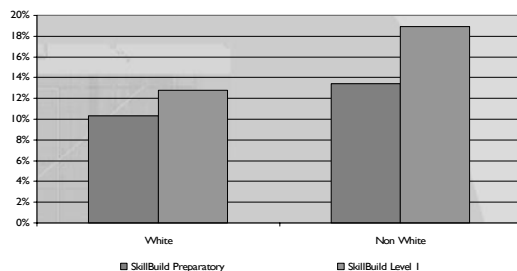
*Self assessed
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

Overall, SkillBuild learners of Non-White ethnic origin are more likely to be early leavers than those of White ethnic origin. The few learners involved of Mixed and Asian ethnic origin do particularly badly in terms of early leaving. However, Black learners do relatively well, although the numbers are small.

Non White learners do worse in terms of early leaving, but there are differences between groups.

knowledge management for the information age

Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

SkillBuild learners with a disability (self-assessed) do relatively worse in terms of early leaving than people with no disability, especially on SkillBuild Level 1 programmes. Learners with a learning difficulty have lower rates of early leaving than learners with no learning difficulty. The rate of early leaving by learners with a learning difficulty from SkillBuild Preparatory courses is particularly low.

Learners with disabilities have relatively high early leaving from Skillbuild, but those with learning difficulties have lower than average.

Figure 3.27: Early leaving by People with Disabilities* and Learning Difficulties (SkillBuild)

*Self assessed
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

Prior Qualifications

The highest rates of non completion are amongst learners on SkillBuild with Entry Level qualifications, especially for SkillBuild Preparatory training. Learners with Pre-Entry level skills also have above average non-completion, suggesting that many of those who are dropping out are the very people who the programmes are designed to meet.

Skillbuild learners with pre-entry & entry level are most likely to be early leavers.

Table 3.41: SkillBuild Early Leaving by Level of Prior Qualifications								
	SkillBuild Preparatory			SkillBuild Level 1			SkillBuild (Prep + Level 1)		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
Pre-Entry Level	803	99	12.3%	299	41	13.7%	1,102	140	12.7%
Entry Level	439	81	18.5%	213	24	11.3%	652	105	16.1%
Level 1	1,581	198	12.5%	883	129	14.6%	2,464	327	13.3%
Level 2	719	77	10.7%	527	61	11.6%	1,246	138	11.1%
Level 3	109	7	6.4%	152	21	13.8%	261	28	10.7%
Level 4	42	6	14.3%	107	8	7.5%	149	14	9.4%
Level 5	15	2	13.3%	29	2	6.9%	44	4	9.1%
Total*	8,123	838	10.3%	3,583	458	12.8%	11,706	1,296	11.1%
*Includes qualifications not known/not applicable Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05								

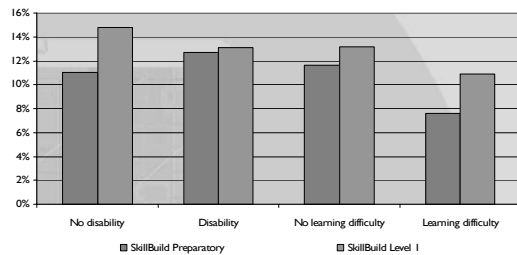The figures also suggest that some learners in Level 1 training are already above Level 1 in terms of their existing highest qualification levels (well over two-fifths). However, in general learners with higher level qualifications appear less likely to be early leavers.

Some on Skillbuild Level 1 are already above Level 1.

Course Characteristics

Mode of Attendance

Little difference can be observed in the rates of early leaving from programmes delivered in the workplace compared to other modes of attendance. Learners on SkillBuild Level 1 programmes delivered in the workplace are slightly over-represented in the profile of early leavers, but the difference is quite small.

Mode of attendance makes little difference to early leaving rates.

knowledge management for the information age

Table 3.42: SkillBuild Non Completion by Mode of Attendance						
	SkillBuild Preparatory			SkillBuild Level 1		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
In the workplace	3,264	335	10.3%	1,546	207	13.4%
Other	4,859	503	10.4%	2,037	251	12.3%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05						

Welsh Language

Figure 3.28: Non Completion Rates by % of Learning Activity Delivered Through the Medium of Welsh
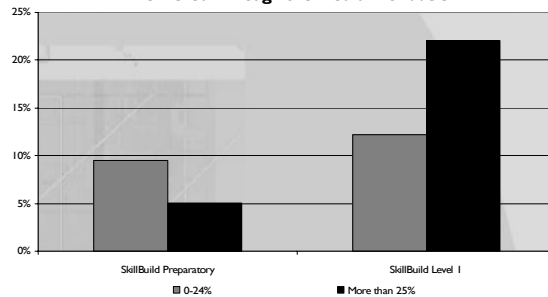
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

Learners on SkillBuild Preparatory courses with a high proportion of delivery using Welsh Language have better than average rates of early leaving, however this finding does not hold true for learners on SkillBuild Level 1 programmes. Overall, only 0.6% of SkillBuild learners were on programmes with more than 24% delivery through the medium of Welsh.

Early leaving is below average on Welsh language provision for Preparatory learning but not for Skillbuild Level 1.

Duration

In terms of course duration, learners on SkillBuild Preparatory course show a peak in early leaving on courses expected to last between 5-13 weeks. Programmes lasting longer than 13 weeks have below average rates of early leaving.

Longer Skillbuild programmes have below average early leaving.

Figure 3.29: Non Completion SkillBuild by Exepected Duration of LP
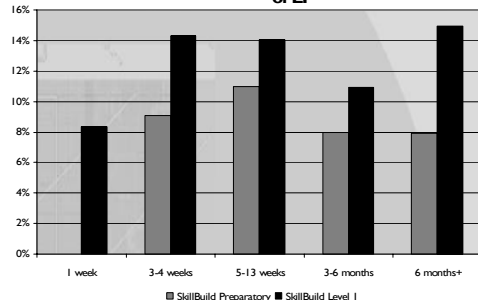
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

For SkillBuild Level 1, the highest non completion is for courses expected to last 3-4 weeks. The bulk of learners are on programmes expected to last 3-6 months (48%), and early leaving falls from these programmes. Learners on programmes which are expected to last more than six months (which account for two-fifths (39%) of learners, show a big increase in early leaving rates well in excess of the average rate.

Occupational Area

For learners on SkillBuild Level 1 programmes, the highest early leaving is found for Process, Plant and Machine Operative occupations, which have almost three times the average early leaving rate. Professional occupations also have high early leaving, although the numbers involved are small.

Elementary occupations show extremely low early leaving – only a handful of people –

Skillbuild Level 1 learners in process, plant and machine operative occupations have very high early leaving.

knowledge management for the information age

although this occupational area is not particularly large in terms of the overall pattern of provision. Associate Professional and Technical occupations, which is the largest in terms of learner numbers has below average rates of early leaving, as does Administrative and Secretarial which is the second largest. Learners on SkillBuild Level 1 programmes associated with Skilled Trades occupations, and Sales and Customer Service occupations, have above average early leaving and these occupations are over-represented in the overall profile of early leavers.

Early leaving from Skillbuild Level 1 is also high for skilled trades, sales and customer service occupations.

Table 3.43: SkillBuild Level 1 Early Leaving by SOC			
	Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%
1 Managers and Senior Officials	28	3	10.7%
2 Professional Occupations	41	8	19.5%
3 Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	857	89	10.4%
4 Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	734	69	9.4%
5 Skilled Trades Occupations	690	97	14.1%
6 Personal Service Occupations	403	38	9.4%
7 Sales and Customer Service Occupations	264	43	16.3%
8 Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	147	50	34.0%
9 Elementary Occupations	105	2	1.9%
0 and X	314	59	18.8%
Total	3,583	458	12.8%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05			

Socio-Economic Indicators

Figure 3.30: SkillBuild Early Leaving by Population Density

Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05
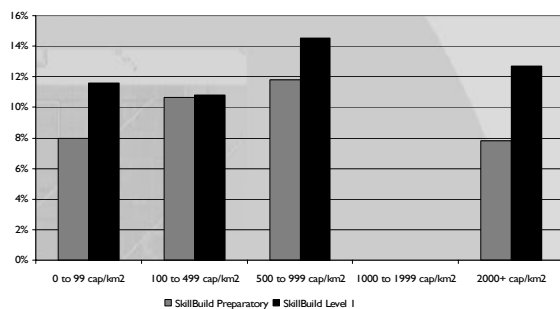
As for Apprenticeship programmes, early leaving rates from SkillBuild are highest for learners in the more highly populated areas outside of Cardiff. Early leaving is around the average rate in areas of very low population density and in the most densely populated area (Cardiff).

Early leaving is highest in the more populated areas outside Cardiff.

Districts with fewer areas of extreme deprivation do slightly better than more deprived areas in terms of Skillbuild early leaving rates, although the differences are not as big as for other types of WBL.

There are no significant differences in early leaving from Skillbuild between areas by deprivation indices.

Table 3.44: SkillBuild Early Leaving by Index of Multiple Deprivation Ranking									
	SkillBuild Preparatory			SkillBuild Level 1			SkillBuild (Preparatory + Level 1)		
	Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve		Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
0 to 10%	3,534	370	10.5%	1,497	177	11.8%	5,031	547	10.9%
11 to 20%	3,919	398	10.2%	1,876	253	13.5%	5,795	651	11.2%
21%+	599	66	11.0%	169	26	15.3%	768	92	12.0%
Total	8,052	834	10.4%	3,542	456	12.9%	11,594	1,290	11.1%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05									

knowledge management for the information age

Early leaving rates appear to be higher amongst learners in areas of higher unemployment, as measured by Benefit Claimant rates, especially on SkillBuild Level 1 programmes. Around one in six people on SkillBuild Level 1 in high unemployment areas

are early leavers, compared to one in ten in low unemployment areas. One explanation for the pattern is that in high unemployment areas people have to go on the programme in order to get benefits, but are not really committed to learning.

Figure 3.31: SkillBuild Early Leaving by Benefit Claimant Rate

Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

Unlike some of the other types of learning, the relationship between Estyn inspection

Early leaving from Skillbuild does not appear to link to provider quality indicators.

ratings and early leaving is not clear cut when looking at SkillBuild programmes, perhaps reflecting the fact that these are a relatively small part of what some providers are delivering, plus the range of providers is quite wide. Even highly rated providers have high early leaving rates, whilst some poorly ranked providers actually appear to do quite well in having relatively low early leaving.

Table 3.45: Early Leaving Rates by Estyn Inspection Areas				
	1 - Good with outstanding features	2 - Good features and no important shortcomings	3 - Good features outweigh shortcomings	4 - Some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
KQ1 How well do learners achieve?	15.9%	12.0%	9.5%	0.7%
KQ2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	15.5%	6.9%	8.6%	8.6%
KQ3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	9.3%	8.3%	10.1%	-
KQ4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3.0%	9.6%	9.0%	8.6%
KQ5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	25.0%	9.2%	11.2%	4.3%
KQ6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	25.0%	9.1%	11.3%	4.3%
KQ7 How effective are leaders and managers in using resources?	1.5%	13.2%	7.3%	3.6%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05				

Destinations

Proportionally more early leavers were seeking work/unemployed after SkillBuild, compared to completers. In fact overall, over two-fifths of early leavers were seeking work/unemployed (44%).

Skillbuild early leavers are more likely than completers to be unemployed.

For employed learners, early leavers are less likely than completers to be continuing in their current employment and more likely to be entering new/changing employment. More early leavers than completers are categorised as 'other' destination. There is also a much higher proportion of 'not known' destination amongst early leavers, and this is an issue for engagement of people in learning. Early leavers are much less likely than completers to be continuing in learning.

Skillbuild early leavers who are in work are more likely than completers to have changed jobs.

Table 3.46: Destinations after SkillBuild							
	SkillBuild Preparatory				SkillBuild Level 1		
	Completers		Early Leavers		Completers		Early Leavers
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Continuing learning (new/same provider including HE)	3,144	43.2%	141	16.8%	711	22.8%	23	5.0%
New employment/ changing employment	557	7.6%	96	11.5%	396	12.7%	81	17.7%
Continuing current employment	75	1.0%	13	1.6%	123	3.9%	12	2.6%
Seeking work / unemployed	2,075	28.5%	311	37.1%	1,279	40.9%	201	43.9%
Self-employed	9	0.1%	2	0.2%	7	0.2%	2	0.4%
Voluntary work	28	0.4%	1	0.1%	17	0.5%	0	0.0%
Other	660	9.1%	116	13.8%	325	10.4%	62	13.5%
Not Known	737	10.1%	158	18.9%	267	8.5%	77	16.8%
Total	7,285	100.0%	838	100.0%	3,125	100.0%	458	100.0%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05							

In terms of destination after learning, SkillBuild leavers who are most likely to be early leavers are those who went into self-employment, those entering new employment, 'not known' and 'other' destinations. Some 15% of those on SkillBuild Preparatory programmes who continued in the same employment were early leavers.

Theoretically any client may spend up to 13 weeks initially on Skillbuild, dependant on need e.g. someone may only need 4 weeks. In reality, most clients are endorsed for 13 weeks. Careers Wales use a measure of whether learners are still in training at the 11 week stage on Skillbuild and the 24 week stage on Skillbuild as an indicator of whether they are early leavers. In the Careers Wales Mid Glamorgan and Powys company area for the period 1.4.05 to 31.03.06, a total of 719 clients left Skillbuild Training prior to the 11 week review (undertaken by Careers Wales) and did not progress to level 1 training. During the same period the Company placed 1,988 clients into Skillbuild training.

Careers Wales follow-up Skillbuild learners at 11 and 24 weeks.

Table 3.47: Destinations from SkillBuild and SkillBuild+ Mid Mid Glamorgan and Powys				
	Skillbuild		Skillbuild+	
	No	%	No	%
Returned to college	58	8%	7	6%
Returned to school	45	6%	18	15%
Went into employment	72	10%	12	10%
Moved away	15	2%	3	2%
Custodial sentence	6	1%	-	0%
Pregnant/supporting a family	5	1%	-	0%
Sickness	10	1%	1	1%
Transferred to another Skillbuild or Skillbuild+ programme	29	4%	17	14%
Unemployed (includes those 18+ who transferred to Job Centre)	337	47%	51	41%
Not Known/Not replied	142	20%	14	11%
Total	719	100%	123	100%
Early leavers from training defined as: Skillbuild left before 11 week review; Skillbuild+ left before 24 week review. Source: Careers Wales Mid Glamorgan and Powys company area. 1.4.05-31.03.06.				

knowledge management for the information age

Follow-up suggests that of those who left before the 11 week review, 49 % were not engaged. A further 20 % had a Not Known destination (including non respondents). For young people placed into Skillbuild+, 110 clients left Level 1 training during the period prior to the 24 week review and did not progress to level 2 training. During the same period 246 clients were placed directly into Skillbuild + (ie. people placed directly into Level 1 training, not including transfers from Skillbuild to Level 1). Follow-up suggests that of the leavers 41 % were not engaged. A further 11 % had a Not Known destination (including non-respondents).

Evidence from Mid Glamorgan and Powys suggests that around two-fifths who leave before the 11 week review become disengaged from learning.

Modern Skills Diploma

Overview

Learners undertaking the Modern Skills Diploma have a relatively high rate of early leaving of over a third of all learners (34%), although early leaving from Modern Skills Diploma programmes is below the level for Apprenticeships (41%).

The regional pattern observed for WBL overall is borne out when the focus is on Modern Skills Diploma learners: South East Wales has the highest rate of early leaving. Mid and North Wales perform relatively well.

Over a third leave early from MSD. Early leaving from MSD follows regional patterns for WBL overall.

Table 3.48: MSD Early Leaving by Region			
	Modern Skills Diploma for Adults/Modern Skills Diploma		
	Total	Did not complete LP/Achieve Awards	
	No.	No.	%
South East	333	153	45.9%
South West	151	48	31.8%
Mid Wales	97	15	15.5%
North Wales	162	41	25.3%
All Wales*	779	263	33.8%
*Includes other/region not known. Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05			

The largest group of Modern Skills Diploma early leavers were recorded as having failed before the end of the learning programme (35% of early leavers). Around half as many again completed but failed to achieve the required Awards. (The failure rate equates to some 14% of those who did complete failing to achieve the required Awards). 'Other' reasons (unspecified) were given for a fifth (22%) of early leavers from Modern Skills Diploma. Personal reasons leading to dropping out were noted on the LLWR as an issue for 8% of early leavers, and health reasons for 6%.

Over a third of early leavers fail before the end of MSD.

Figure 3.32: Early Leavers from Modern Skills Diploma by Reasons for Leaving

Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

Learner Characteristics

Gender

Males are more likely to be early leavers than females on Modern Skills Diploma courses (3*% of males did not complete/achieve compared to 32% of females). However, males are in a minority in terms of the overall numbers of learners (36%). The vast majority (98%) of Modern Skills Diploma learners are over 25 years.

There are proportionally more male MSD early leavers.

Table 3.49: MSD Early Leaving by Males/Females	Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%
Female	498	157	31.5%
Male	281	106	37.7%
Total	779	263	33.8%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05			

Ethnicity

Figure 3.33: Early Leaving Modern Skills Diploma by Ethnicity
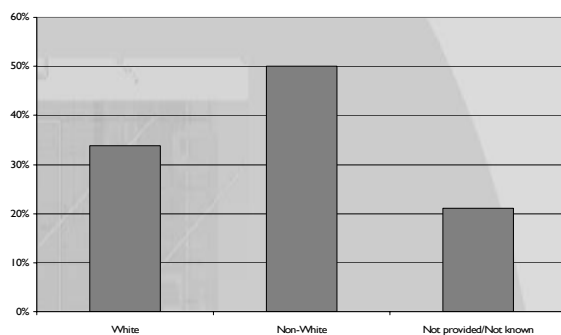
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

Rates of early leaving are much higher amongst Modern Skills Diploma learners of non White ethnic origin compared to White learners.

Moreover, only relatively few learners of minority ethnic origin are taking part (only 2% of all learners are of ethnic minority origin).

Early leaving is higher amongst learners of Non White ethnic origin.

Prior Qualifications

People with Level 3 qualifications have the lowest early leaving from Modern Skills Diploma, and this group probably makes up the bulk of all learners (around 44%).

Table 3.50: MSD Early Leaving by Prior Qualification Level	Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%
Below Level 1	34	9	26.5%
Level 1	25	12	48.0%
Level 2	105	45	42.8%
Level 3	231	80	34.6%
Level 4	98	42	42.8%
Level 5	27	14	51.8%
Not applicable/Not known	259	61	23.5%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05			

Course Characteristics

Duration

Modern Skills Diploma programmes of shorter than 18 months duration have below average early leaving and the shortest programmes (less than 6 months) have a rate well below half the overall rate for Modern Skills Diploma as a whole. However, learners on short duration programmes are in the minority: the largest proportion of Modern Skills Diploma learners are on programmes of expected 18-24 months duration, and these have above average early leaving rates.

Shorter programmes have fewer early leavers.

Table 3.51: MSD Early Leaving by Expected Duration			
	Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%
6-12 months	59	9	15.3%
12-18 months	86	23	26.7%
18-24 months	331	120	36.3%
2-3 years	218	82	37.6%
3+ years	80	28	35.0%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05			

Mode of Attendance

In terms of mode of attendance, four-fifths of learners (83%) were receiving learning in the workplace. Of the remainder, 13% were recorded as having continuous day delivery and 3% as continuous other type of delivery. Daytime delivery has slightly higher early leaving than workplace delivery (34% compared to 35%). The lowest rates of early leaving are for 'other' types of delivery (19%).

SMEs

Learners employed by an SME have slightly lower rates of early leaving than those whose employer is not an SME. The poorest performing in terms of early leaving are those where employer information is not required.

Learners in SMEs have low early leaving.

Table 3.52: MSD Early Leaving by Employer Size			
	Total	Early Leavers	
	No.	No.	%
Employer is not an SME	148	47	31.8%
Employer is an SME	546	160	29.3%
Learner not employed	3	1	33.3%
Not required/not defined	82	55	67.1%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05			

Area of Learning

Rates of early leaving rates by area show massive variations – from 0% on Business and Management to 100% on Construction. Some areas, like Construction have only a handful of learners making analysis of comparative rates of early leaving problematic. The largest programmes by learner numbers are Health care and Public Services followed by Management and Professional, for which around a third did not complete. Engineering

MSD early leaving varies widely by area.

accounts for about 30% of all learners and has a below average early leaving rate (26%).

Table 3.53: MSD Early Leaving by Area of Learning	Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%
Agriculture	17	3	17.6%
Construction	2	2	100.0%
Engineering	235	62	26.4%
Manufacturing	27	14	51.9%
Transportation	3	2	66.7%
Management & Professional	376	123	32.7%
Business Administration	93	26	28.0%
Retailing & Customer Service	57	23	40.4%
Leisure, Sport & Travel	45	41	91.1%
Hospitality	59	13	22.0%
Hair & Beauty	13	5	38.5%
Health, Care & Public Services	410	138	33.7%
Business and Management	59	0	0.0%
Catering	2	1	50.0%
Caring and Health	15	3	20.0%
Engineering	9	0	0.0%
Other general education	3	0	0.0%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05			

Quality Indicators

By Estyn inspection areas, providers with better inspection reports do not appear to do any better in terms of early leaving from Modern Skills Diploma programmes, than those with poorer inspection reports.

Quality indicators do not make a difference on MSDs.

Table 3.54: MSD Early Leaving Rates by Estyn Inspection Areas	1 - Good with outstanding features	2 - Good features and no important shortcomings	3 - Good features outweigh shortcomings	4 - Some good features, but shortcomings in important areas	5 - Many important shortcomings
KQ1 How well do learners achieve?	39.29%	18.52%	35.71%	6.38%	85.71%
KQ2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	26.09%	33.33%	30.61%		
KQ3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	25.00%	28.66%	21.43%	80.00%	
KQ4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	21.74%	28.71%	27.63%	85.71%	
KQ5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	48.48%	17.65%	44.78%	4.55%	85.71%
KQ6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	48.48%	26.83%	41.67%	4.55%	85.71%
KQ7 How effective are leaders and managers in using resources?	32.65%	31.15%	28.99%	0.00%	85.71%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05					

knowledge management for the information age

Socio-Economic Indicators

Figure 3.34: Modern Skills Diploma Early Leaving by Population Density
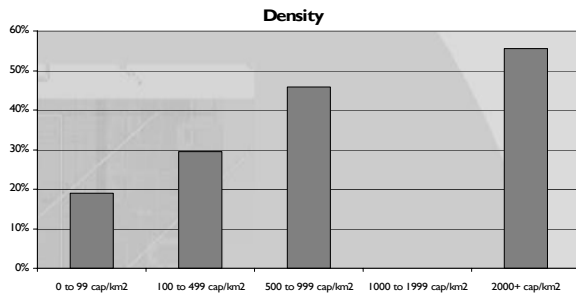
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

As with other types of provision, rates of early leaving from Modern Skills Diploma are correlated with the nature of the district in which the learner lives: more densely populated areas have higher rates of early leaving compared to sparsely populated areas. The highest rate of early leaving is for people living in the most densely populated area in Wales (ie. Cardiff).

More densely populated areas have higher early leaving.

…as do less deprived areas

Learners in the local authority districts associated with lower prevalence of disadvantage, containing fewer of Wales's most deprived wards, have below average rates of early leaving, and this group comprise the majority of all Modern Skills Diploma learners (54% of the total).

Table 3.55: MSD Early Leaving by IMD Ranking	Total	Did not complete/achieve	
	No.	No.	%
0 to 10%	405	99	24.4%
11 to 20%	321	149	46.4%
21%+	26	11	42.3%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05			

Figure 3.35: Modern Skills Diploma Early Leaving by Benefit Claimant Rates
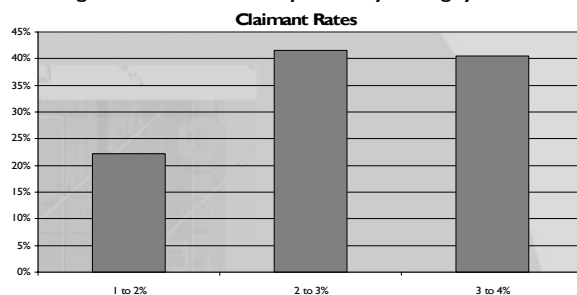
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

High rates of early leaving from Modern Skills Diploma are associated with areas of high unemployment, measured by Benefit Claimant rates. Learners living in districts where unemployment is less than 2% have significantly below average rates of early leaving from Modern Skills Diploma programmes.

Areas of higher unemployment have higher MSD early leaving.

Destinations

The largest group of both completers and early leavers from Modern Skills Diploma were continuing in the same employment. Completers are much more likely than early leavers to be continuing in learning. Although it only affects relatively small proportions of early leavers, loss of employment emerges as a factor associated with early leaving from Modern Skills Diploma: the majority (63%) of those who were entering new employment or changing jobs at the end of the learning programme were early leavers, as were 66% of those who were seeking work at the end of the programme, compared to only 38% of people who were continuing in the same job.

knowledge management for the information age

Figure 3.36: Destinations of Completers and Early Leavers from Modern Skills Diploma
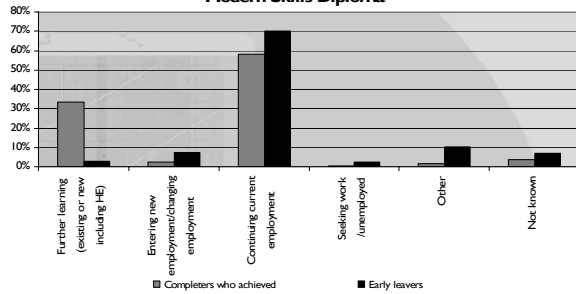
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05

By destination after learning, those most likely to be early leavers are people whose destination is seeking work/unemployed (66%), entering new employment/changing jobs (63%), or 'other' destination (76%) immediately following learning.

Importance of Different Factors in Learner Decisions (Results of CHAID)

Further Education

The CHAID analysis suggests that learner aptitude is a key explanatory factor for non completion in Further Education. In the first instance, the learners' level of Numeracy, determined at the start of the learning programme was identified, as having a first order effect on non completion rates in FE. Learners with below Entry Level 1 Numeracy are more likely to be non completers than other learners (in fact this group is twice as likely to be non completers, than learners with Level 1 or above Numeracy). FE learners who were screened for Numeracy and an assessment was not required, have a propensity towards high non completion if their level of Literacy is assessed as being below Entry Level 1.

Learner aptitude is a key explanatory variable for non completion in FE,

Within the cohort of learners with poor Numeracy determined at the start of the programme, living in a low unemployment area (home location in Authority with Benefit Claimant rates of 1-2%) have the most likelihood of non completion.

The age of the learner is a key variable in early leaving within the FE sector – there are distinct patterns associated with the different age groups. The propensity towards people being an early leaver decreases with the age of the learner and people in the 16-19 age group have the highest rates of early leaving. Higher early leaving associated with younger people probably reflects youthful uncertainty about career direction and fluid labour market patterns. Lower early leaving amongst older age groups probably reflects the fact that older people are more settled in their career choice and interests.

Age is another distinguishing feature…

…younger age groups have higher early leaving….

For young people in FE (16-19 year olds), the decision to be an early leaver or not is affected by the provider's effectiveness in use of resources (Estyn Key Question 7). There is more likelihood of 16-19 learners becoming an early leaver if they are with a provider that is assessed as having shortcomings in important areas in the use of resources.

Especially from providers who do not use resources well.

A similar picture emerges regarding the influence of provider quality on early leaving rates for 20-24 year old learners in FE. People aged 20-24 years old with FE providers with better Estyn assessments against use of resources tend to have lower early leaving rates. However, even amongst the group of better performing providers, 20-24 year old learners are more likely to be early leavers in high unemployment areas, compared to those in low unemployment areas.

20-24 year old learners in FE with providers with poor assessment in terms of use of resources are more likely to drop out in more populated areas, compared to more

knowledge management for the information age

sparsely populated areas. However, even in sparsely populated areas there are higher rates of early leaving from evening delivery programmes for those providers which do not use resources effectively.

Good Practice
Colleges that perform well in terms of the effectiveness of management staff in using resources have low early leaving.

For older age groups (25+) population density emerges as an issue in that more learners drop out in densely populated areas (2000+ cap/km2), compared to other areas. However, use of resources by providers is again linked to early leaving – learners with providers who do not use resources effectively are more likely to leave early than people with better performing providers. Poorer providers in highly populated areas have particularly high fall out from daytime courses, above the rate of early leaving from evening courses with these types of providers.

Older FE learners are more likely to be early leavers in populated areas, and from providers with poor use of resources.

In the most sparsely populated areas how well providers care for, support and guide learners (Estyn Key Question 4) is an important factor in early leaving, especially for evening courses. Poorer performing providers with shortcomings in important areas, in sparsely populated areas, have high drop out from evening courses (although learners on daytime courses tend to stick with the programme).

In sparsely populated areas, early leaving is linked to how well providers care for, support and guide learners.

Work Based Learning

In the first instance, the expected length of the learning programme has the most significant impact on WBL non completion. People on courses of up to 6 months expected duration, or between 6 months and one year, are much more likely to complete than those on longer courses. In fact, the best performing courses in terms of fewer non completers are 6-12 months.

Length of learning programme has most significant impact on WBL non completion.

Very short programmes (less than 4 weeks) also have a greater tendency towards high non completion. The tendency towards more non completion on these types of short duration programmes is associated with high rates of early leaving by unemployed learners from short courses (less than 4 weeks duration).

For programmes of over 6 months' duration, the type of financial support in place affects the likelihood of learners completing. People who get a trainee allowance are more likely to stick with the learning programme to the end.

Employment status emerges as the next most significant explanatory variable when looking at Work Based Learning. Employment status at the start of the programme is an important predictor of non-completion, followed by employment status of the end. Importantly, employed people are more likely to be non completers than those who are unemployed at the start of the programme. Moreover, employed people who loose their jobs and end up in the unemployed group at the end are most likely not to complete. This finding highlights the crucial impact moving from employed to unemployed can have in causing people to drop out of WBL. (nb. 85% of those who were employed at the start of the programme but unemployed at end were early leavers).

Employment status is the next most significant explanatory variable.

People who loose their job are unlikely to complete.

For those who are recorded as being employed at the beginning and end of the learning programme, provider quality measures are a significant factor in whether or not the person is an early leaver. Learners with providers with a poor assessment in terms of

Employed learners with providers with a poor assessment in caring

how learners are cared for, guided and supported (Estyn Key Question 4) have much higher propensity to early leaving – in fact amongst learners who were with providers with 'shortcomings in important areas' nine out of ten (90%) left early.

for, guiding and supporting learners have high early leaving.

Good Practice
High standards in procedures for caring, guiding and supporting learners are associated with better performance on early leaving.

However, the beneficial effect of care, guidance and support for learners does not apply evenly across the regions. Individuals with better performing providers on KQ 4 (Good with outstanding features, Good features and no important shortcomings) were more likely to be early leavers in South East and South West Wales, compared to Mid and North Wales. Although, in high early leaving areas, like South East Wales, older people were more likely to leave, whilst younger people, especially 16-19 year olds, were more likely to stick with the programme to a successful conclusion.

For people who are recorded as being not available for work/not seeking work at the start of the programme on Foundation Modern Apprenticeship Programmes, the propensity to be an early leaver is affected by the providers' effectiveness in the use of resources. The vast majority (88%) of learners with providers judged on KQ 7 as having shortcomings in important areas/many important shortcomings, were early leavers, although the overall numbers involved are small. Within the group with poorly rated providers, with shortcomings, people in full time education before starting are most likely to drop out.

Non employed learners have high early leaving, especially in South East and South West.

Learners who were non-employed and not available for/not seeking work before learning, have particularly high early leaving on Modern Apprenticeships and SkillBuild Level 1, especially in South East and South West Wales. In these areas, people aged 20-24 years tend to be more likely to be early leavers compared to those below 19 years, especially if they have already got higher level qualifications (Level 3).

Summary of Key Findings

Patterns of Early Leaving

- There are different patterns of early leaving associated with different types of programmes. This is because the target groups and requirements vary. Higher early leaving rates for Apprenticeships reflect the requirement to complete each of the separate elements of the sector Framework to be considered successful.

- The pattern of early leaving by reason is different between the different sectors of learning. In FE, the most prevalent reasons for non completion are not being happy with the course (13%), wrong choice (11%), going into a new job (9%), health reasons (9%). In WBL, the most prevalent reasons for early leaving are getting another job or loosing their current job (36%), wrong career choice (11%), not happy with the course (9%), and personal reasons (8%).

- Employment status emerges as a significant explanatory variable when looking at Work Based Learning. Employed people who loose their jobs and end up in the unemployed group at the end are most likely not to complete. This finding highlights the crucial impact moving from employed to unemployed in causing people to drop out of WBL. A range of situations can be envisaged: the employee gets a new job, most likely for reasons of better pay and/or prospects; moves out of the area; has problems at work, or is made redundant or sacked. (Previous analysis suggests

traditional manufacturing based sectors appear to be more affected by redundancies, whilst services experience high labour turnover through employee choice (ELWa, 2001).

- Our research aimed to identify if any particular groups in society are more likely than others to drop out early or be a non-achievers. The most striking conclusion is the difference between men and women. In FE women are more likely to be early leavers than men and young women (16-18 years) have the highest early leaving. Similarly, in WBL, women are also more likely than men to be non-completers.

- Age is another distinguishing feature of early leavers in FE – younger age groups (16-19 year olds) have highest rates. This probably reflects young people's uncertainty about career direction and some young people's preference for paid work.

- Cohorts of learners identified as a disadvantaged group such as being of ethnic minority origin, having a disability and learning difficulty, show higher than average rates of early leaving. However, patterns vary according to the nature of the disadvantage.

Figure 3.37: Patterns in Early Leaving by Learner Characteristics

Further Education	Work Based Learning
High	

(Further Education column, High)
- Young people 16-19
- Mixed ethnic origin
- Black ethnic origin
- Young people 20-24
- Economically inactive
- People with L1/L2 quals
- Women
- LLDD

(Work Based Learning column, High)
- Women
- 20+ years
- 25+ years (MAs)
- Mixed ethnic origin
- Chinese ethnic origin
- Employed people (MAs)
- Entry & Pre-entry qualifs

(Further Education column, Low)
- Men
- People with L4/L5 qualifications
- Unemployed and seeking work
- 25+ age groups
- People in rural areas

(Work Based Learning column, Low)
- Disabled learners
- People in rural areas

Low

- Length of the learning programme has the most significant impact on WBL non completion. This probably reflects that fact that the longer the course duration, the more that can change in learners' personal and employment situation. For programmes of over 6 months' duration, the type of financial support in place affects the likelihood of learners completing.

- In general people with lower prior level of qualifications, and those assessed as having poor literacy and/or numeracy have higher early leaving, suggesting that learner aptitude is important in retention and achievement levels. Learner aptitude is a key explanatory factor for non completion in Further Education, as measured by Literacy and Numeracy at the start of the programme. People with poor basic skills living in a low unemployment area (Benefit Claimant rates of 1-2%) have the most likelihood of FE early leaving. This might mean that some learners are not being guided into the most appropriate learning option for their abilities. (Stakeholders have pointed to a lack of 'pre-vocational' options for academically less able learners which would offer a high level of support. SkillBuild in particular was seen as not meeting the needs of

disadvantaged people who need additional intensive support, basic skills, and to address personal and social problems which impact on the learning).

- The CHAID analysis suggests that provider quality measures have a stronger influence on early leaving than learner characteristics. Continued improvements in this field may help to reduce non completion.

- Quality measures affect early leaving in FE, although the effects vary by the nature of the local area. The highest early leaving is from poor performing providers in terms of use of resources in highly populated areas. Poorer providers in highly populated areas have particularly high fall out from daytime courses, above the rate of early leaving from evening courses with these types of providers. In sparsely populated areas providers which do not use resources effectively, have high rates of early leaving from evening delivery programmes; daytime provision is affected but only to a lesser extent. This pattern probably reflects the more limited options available to people in sparsely populated areas.

- Early leavers tend to be less satisfied that completers with their learning experience. However, it is not as easy to say that early leaving is directly related to satisfaction with learning, since overall early leavers are not significantly less satisfied than completers, but it can probably make a difference: learners who are facing barriers to learning are probably more likely to become an early leaver if they are dissatisfied with aspects of the their provision.

Destinations from Learning

- Information on destinations tends to be poor for both early leavers and non completers (half of the FE cohort had unknown destination). However, the information that is available suggests that early leavers are more likely than completers to have had a change in circumstance. In FE there are different career paths between completers and non completers: the latter are more likely to be unemployed or looking after home.

- Four times the number of early leavers than completers from Modern Apprenticeships entered new employment/changed jobs at the end of learning. For around five percent on Apprenticehips the destination is negative; they end up seeking work/unemployed. People who change jobs or who are without work are very likely to be early leavers, suggesting more attention needs to be paid to finding alternative mechanisms for people who loose or change jobs during the learning programme to go on and succeed in training. Over two fifths of early leavers from SkillBuild end up seeking work/unemployed. (nb. The review of SkillBuild concluded that more needs to be done to follow-up SkillBuild leavers, as there is a particular issue of progression for this strand of WBL).

- Early leavers are much less likely than completers to have continuing in learning as a destination. However, early leavers do not appear to have been 'put off' learning to any great extent – in surveys the majority say they would have no problem returning to learning in the future of conditions enabled them to do so.

Regional Variations

- The South East Region of Wales has the highest rates of non completion in both Modern Apprenticeships and Foundation Modern Apprenticeships. This is also the dominant region in terms of learner numbers, which means that well over half of all non completers from Modern Apprenticeships and Foundation Modern Apprenticeships in the study period were in South East Wales.

- The South East is also the poorest performing region in terms of non completion of FE programmes, although for early leavers overall a compensating factor is the people who do stay to the completion of the learning programme have good attainment rates.

- Provider practices may vary between regions, for example in North Wales FE learners are enrolled on proportionally more awards so the same early leaving rate would mean higher non achievement.

- Population density is more strongly linked to early leaving than the economic indicators (benefit rate). High population areas are associated with higher early leaving, probably reflecting the wider range of choice of options and greater accessibility of more options in more populated areas. Lack of choice may mean learners stick with provision in rural areas, but the numbers in rural areas in learning are relatively low suggesting that those people who take up learning may be the more committed learners.

- Labour turnover is an important explanatory factor for non-completion in Work Based Learning provision. However, the buoyancy of the local economy does not appear to be a major component of the 'pull factor' away from learning, unless leavers have extra financial commitments (e.g. families) or are unhappy about the quality or nature of their course. In theory it is going to be easier for employees to find alternative employment when unemployment is low, but unemployment rates do not appear to be a significant factor in driving early leaving – the learners has to want to leave, or be dissatisfied with the training. If anything the evidence seems to be the other way – that high unemployment areas have higher early leaving, perhaps because learners are not committed to learning.

Feedback from Early Leavers

Introduction

This section provides the results of the interviews with early leavers conducted as part of the early leavers research. It is based on the sample of 94 interviewees completed during April 2006. Interviews were conducted using a mix of telephone and face to face to get a balance of depth and breadth of responses. The breakdown of the sample of interviews is shown in Annex 6. Very roughly by mode of attendance, the sample breaks down fairly evenly into three groups: full-time learners, part-time learners of less than 3 hours a week, and part-time learners of more than 3 hours a week.

The sample covered full time and part-time learners, and included a mix by type of provision/provider.

Three-quarters of our sample's experience was of college (including WBL delivered by colleges). Around 20% had been with a private training provider, and the remainder gave the provider type as 'other' (including distance learning).

Only around a fifth of the people we spoke to had gone straight into employment without training at the end of compulsory schooling. The majority had continued their education post-16: around a third had gone to college, a fifth had stayed on at school and a fifth had got a job with training. The remainder (less than one in ten) had another destination (eg. travelling or illness).

Broadly, in terms of the level of qualifications already achieved, around a fifth of our sample had achieved NVQ Level 1 or equivalent, a further fifth respectively had achieved Levels 2 and 3 or equivalent. A fifth had 'other' qualifications and the remainder had reached Level 4 or above.

The large majority – around three-quarters – did not achieve a qualification. Around a fifth achieved a part qualification or a module.

Most did not achieve a qualification.

The majority had gone on their first choice of course (approximately eight out of ten). A further one in ten had not had a choice or had not considered any other options. However the remaining one in ten had not got their first choice of course. Of these, three-quarters had left the programme within two months.

Time in Learning

The length of time interviewees had been on the course before they started to think about terminating learning ranged from *'just as it started'* to over two years, and some interviewees had completed the programme but had failed to achieve a qualification. A handful of these were still hopeful of doing so. The majority of people we spoke to had completed less than half of the learning programme. Around a quarter estimated that they had got through 10% or less of the course. However, a significant minority – around two in five- had got half way through or more.

Broadly, three groups could be identified…

Broadly, the sample can be characterised by:

- Learners who began a learning programme but found that they were unhappy with the arrangements for a range of reasons relating to the nature of the provision or their personal circumstances.

…those who were unhappy with the course/arrangements

….those who had a change in

knowledge management for the information age

- Learners who completed a substantial amount of their learning programme, but who then faced a change in conditions.

- Learners who completed the learning 'in good faith', but for a variety of reasons, often related to their provider or employment, they had failed to achieve.

conditions/circumstances

…and those who failed to achieve.

The vast majority of people interviewed did expect to complete the learning programme before they started it. Only one person we spoke to had expected from the start of the learning that they would not complete: this person on a college course leading to OCN qualification said that she was only interested in doing three out of the ten modules involved in the course.

The vast majority expected to complete when they started.

Most people quit the education or training programme at the point when they first started to feel they might not complete, however a handful stayed on longer. Some of these people who delayed leaving were facing problems with keeping up with the course, for example, due to English as a second language, or because of problems finding time to get through the workload due to competing pressures from work or home. Some felt they were not learning or were simply not enjoying it, but delayed leaving until they were sure of their decision.

Most people left when their issue with the learning programme first arose.

None of the people we spoke to said they were not committed to the learning before they started, although around a third were only 'reasonably committed' rather than 'very committed'. However, only one of these people did not complete because they lost the motivation to continue. All the others identified other reasons for not completing, and many mentioned a combination of factors which had prompted them to become an early leaver.

Most people were committed to learning at the start.

Reasons for Early Leaving

Wrong Course

About one in ten of the early leavers we spoke to clearly felt they had made a mistake with the choice of learning programme and left because of this. These people tended to drop-out fairly early on, especially if getting the qualifications was not seen to be particularly important to them. One person who was enrolled on a hairdressing course did not even start on the programme because they changed their mind about what they wanted to do. Others had attended for a few sessions (from one week to three months) but had found that the course was not what they were expecting, or had found another course which suited them better.

A tenth made the wrong choice. Learners who felt the choice of programme was a mistake left early on.

Some people felt they had received poor advice from a college or training provider. For this group, unless they felt they were able to get support from the provider to understand the programme and its relevance to them, their first reaction was to consider leaving, as in the case of BB.

Some felt they were poorly advised.

CASE STUDY AA
AA is 43 years old, living in North Wales and working as a foster carer. She enrolled on a computer course at college which was leading to ECDL and Level 3 GNVQ. Prior to enrolling she got advice during an open evening with a correspondent from the local college. At the time this was though to be a "*step up from a course I had done before*". However she left after three weeks: "*…wasn't suitable for what I was expecting. I wanted a course which included word processing*". AA concluded "*It just wasn't right for me. I wasn't learning anything*". However her main reason for leaving was "*…I felt unsupported, no*

confidence and wrong course". If support had been provided, BB said she might have stayed. AA recommends "*More support and help when students are finding things difficult…honest information at advice evenings and open nights…Listen to what students want instead of trying to fill spaces that are empty*".

Poor Learning Experience

Around a fifth of our sample were unhappy with the provision, and/or were struggling to cope with the demands of the course. Common amongst the first group were issues such as *"not achieving the modules", "teaching was not effective", "wasn't learning", "simply not enjoying it", "waste of time"*. Across the sample as a whole 20% said the learning programme turned out to be not what they expected although not all left for this reason. Others felt the requirements were too hard: *"didn't feel up to standard", "harder than expected", "too hard to pass"*. Across the sample as a whole, one in five said the course was too difficult.

A fifth had a poor experience of learning, or found it too hard.

Amongst the group who directly attributed early leaving to being unhappy with the course, several felt their unhappiness with the course was intensified by not getting support from tutors, and/or not having anyone to speak to about their problems. One man in his twenties doing woodwork at their local college commented: *"I was treated like a child…complaints were ignored… £300 for the course and once they had the money it seemed they didn't care"*. Overall across the sample as a whole around 15% of interviewees said they felt unsupported and unable to cope.

Lack of support from tutors was an issue.

Some people were motivated to leave because they felt the training was below their level of competence, as in the case of BB.

CASE STUDY BB

BB (now 23 years old) is a female living in South West Wales. She went to college after school and is qualified to NVQ Level 2. She works full time as a sales assistant. In 2005 BB enrolled on a Foundation Modern Apprenticeship learning about customer service, but did not achieve a qualification from this course. Her employer had suggested that she go on the training in conjunction with an advisor from the training provider (a private organisation). BB was also motivated to take part as she had friends on similar programmes.

After about a month BB started to thing about leaving: "*I felt I was not really learning anything new. I was going over old ground*". She left very soon afterwards: "*There didn't seem to be any point, I wasn't learning anything new*". Although BB commented that she was committed to learning at the start of the programme, she felt she did not have enough information about the course before she started, and would have liked more information: "*More about the course. If I had known about the content more, I would have realised it was covering things I already knew*". After BB decided to leave she spoke to the training provider: "*The tutor asked if I felt there was no point in it and when I spoke to her, she agreed with me*". However, BB would consider going on other training in future.

Some people we spoke to who had been enrolled into learning were simply not motivated by the course, or had other preoccupations in their lives which got in the way of their learning, as in the case of CC.

Some people were not motivated by the course.

CASE STUDY CC

CC is a male in South East Wales now aged 19 years, who had a year out after leaving school, and went onto a computer course with the local ITEC in September 2004. After 6 weeks he started to think about leaving: "*It wasn't for me and I wasn't enjoying it*". He

left in December 2004 because*: "I didn't enjoy it and I was travelling a long way and it wasn't worth it"*. CC spoke about some personal problems he was experiencing at the time: *"My gran died and I didn't feel bothered"*. Ultimately CC quit the course due to lack of interest. He commented: *"I just went home one day and couldn't be bothered to go back"*. Currently CC is unable to work due to illness.

Having mixed or large classes were identified as a factor in early leaving by a small number of FE learners. One person had dropped out of a BSL course after two classes were merged due to low numbers.

Some people said they had problems with other students (6% said they felt they didn't fit in with other trainees). However, only a handful directly attributed early leaving to their experience of other learners. This included a man on vocational qualifications in theatre and music at college who said: *"the students were too difficult to work with…because they were younger than me so I couldn't concentrate"*.

A small number had problems with the other learners.

Learning styles was apparent as an issue in some people's decision to leave learning, especially for people who were looking for practical experience to assist them in their employment, as is the case of DD.

Some wanted more practical-based learning.

CASE STUDY DD

DD is in his mid-forties and living in North Wales. In September 2002, he started an NVQ Level 3 at his local college to study Landscape Design one evening a week. DD already works in landscaping but wanted to improve his deign skills. After five weeks DD decided to quit realising it *"wasn't what I wanted… it was not fulfilling and I wasn't learning anything"*. The main problems were that the course was *"too theoretical"*. DD commented: *"with the nature of the course during evenings you cannot do practical work even though it is a practical course"*. DD felt there was no point in continuing *"there was not enough practical experience….I wanted more hands on…Was better out in the field than on the course"*. He did not discuss his decision to quit with the college because he was worried that the tutor would try to persuade him to carry on. However, since leaving DD has gone onto a full-time learning programme.

In WBL, the relationship between the learner and the tutor appears to be a key factor which has the potential to be a strength in motivating people to continue, or a weakness in driving them away, as in the case of EE. In WBL there is a clear need to ensure that the course content is up to date and relevant to the workplace, that tutors are competent, and ensuring learners are supported and that 'individual' personality clashes are minimised. In this case the learner felt she did not clear instructions as to what is needed, rather the tutor concentrated on the weaknesses of work submitted. However, this learner was also facing competing pressure from work due to a promotion and the combination of factors led to early leaving.

Relationships with tutors/trainers can be a key factor in the decision.

CASE STUDY EE

EE is in a full-time Assistant Manager position and has been with her current employer for some six years, moving up the ranks from an initial temporary position in administration. Having achieved a promotion to the Assistant Manager post, she felt further training in Business Administration would be a good idea, to supplement her NVQ Level 2 qualification: *"I wanted to do a good job, and I knew the previous manager had done qualifications….I was advised by XXX (private training provider) that because of my experience in the current role that a Level 4 management qualification would be the right one to do"*. However, EE started to consider leaving the training after about five months, and formally quit after seven months. One of the key factors behind her decision to quit was

knowledge management for the information age

the amount of time that the course was taking up. Firstly, tutor sessions were lasting up to three hours at a time: *"…it was ok at first because I was getting started but after the first few occasions I just couldn't free up that amount of time in bulk"*. Secondly, progress towards the qualification was slow going and EE felt that the tutor was to blame because he changed his mind about how the evidence required should be presented: *"…he kept saying he had found a 'better' way of doing the layout and cross-referencing but for me it was really frustrating because I kept making the changes and then he'd ask me to do it again…I felt I kept repeating myself without ever getting much further on…"*. Lack of time to complete the training coupled with lack of progress were the key factors in EE becoming an early leaver: *"…I'd read all the units and collected a lot of evidence so I knew I could do it….but 7 months into the qualification I still hadn't achieved even one unit and I just couldn't afford the time to carry on…"*. The poor relationship with the tutor appears to have contributed to the decision: *"…When I tried to explain that I couldn't free up the time to meet when he wanted to his attitude changed and he became difficult…I explained that I was covering for other staff and asked for flexibility on meeting times but he (tutor) was not prepared to give at all…"*. Unfortunately, the provider does not appear to have been willing to accommodate EE's work schedule, as although she spoke to another tutor and 'someone higher up' about the problems she was having, there was no response: *"…the most unsatisfying thing was that I did identify the problems and nothing happened….things could have been resolved if he (the tutor) had supported me…"*.

Good Practice
For programmes delivered in the workplace, providers need to be sensitive to the competing commitments of the learner. This requires some flexibility in approach. Providers need to ensure that the course content is up to date and relevant to the individual employment situation, and giving clear instructions as to what is needed. Providers need to focus on building good relationships and communication between staff and learners. This could include giving learners and option or range of tutors so that personality clashes are avoided.

Lack of progress/slow progress can lead learners to become discouraged.

Even when learners feel that they are on the 'right' programme for them, lack of progress or problems with the course can be a factor leading to disillusionment, and eventual disengagement. Failure to progress at a sufficient pace appears to be crucial to maintaining learners' motivation to succeed. Lack of progress was often a compounding factor in prompting a decision to become an early leaver (problems included *"going over old ground"*, *"simply not learning anything new"*, *"dragging on"*, *"could have learnt more at home"*. This appears to be a particular factor for learners who are not fully committed to the associated occupation/career route. One person lost motivation after the external assessor did not pass them through a module, even though he and his tutors thought he deserved to pass it.

Problems in the workplace can play a part.

For people who are enrolled on WBL that involves or leads to a job placement in a new workplace, then the working environment can be a factor in early leaving, as with FF.

CASE STUDY FF
FF is now 21 and lives in South East Wales. She started a NVQ Level 2 qualification in retail in 2004, at the time looking for "*more experience, more confidence and a qualification*". However she left after one month because: "*I didn't get on with the manager where they placed me*". FF was fairly negative about the experience of learning: *"it was muddled and confusing where I was supposed to be. I.e. on-job learning or classroom based"*. Her reasons for leaving were that *"The trainer and the employer I was placed with wouldn't listen to me"*. FF has gone on to become a self-employed pet shop owner.

Pressure of Work

One in five people said that they had left learning because of the problems of juggling learning with their work commitments, and often the situation was compounded by responsibilities within the family and at home, or having to travel. Work commitments affected learners across the board in FE and WBL and across the spectrum of courses. Time in learning for this group ranged from less than one month to one year. Type comments included: *"I realised I didn't have the time", "…I had my own business and didn't have any spare time", "too much workload", "It all got too much", "clashing with work and decided I just didn't really need it"*.

Around a quarter were not able to cope with a learning programme on top of other commitments.

One person was doing two courses and commented: *"the other course was related to my job and I couldn't manage both courses"*.

Across the sample as a whole, just under a quarter said they had problems fitting the course in with commitments at work. A third of interviewees said they had missed classes during their time on the learning programme due to being too busy at work.

Leaving due to Changed Circumstances

Once learners have made it through the first few months then it appears that their commitment can be secured for the long term unless something else happens to prompt them to leave.

A change in circumstances can have a big impact, especially going into another job.

Around one in eight of the people we spoke to had gone into another job during their time in learning, and said that this was factor in them becoming an early leaver.

Getting a promotion or changing jobs can affect learners at any stage in the training programme, and can be a precursor to early leaving, especially when combined with a lack of motivation for the training. The main problems are being in a job for which the learning is no longer relevant, or finding it hard to combine learning with increased responsibilities and workload.

Some people have pursued other career options alongside learning.

For some people learning is just one option available to them that they are trying out, or using as a stop-gap until something else comes along. This is particularly the case for unemployed people or young people at the start of their career. They may apply to several courses or several positions and take up the option of learning if they are waiting to hear the results. Case GG felt that the alternative option to continuing learning was too good to pass up.

CASE STUDY GG

GG is nineteen and living in South East Wales. After a spell in the 6th Form she started at college in September 2005 on a full time one year programme in beauty leading to NVQ Level 2. When she started in training FF said she was reasonably committed as being a beautician was a dream job for her. However, during the summer GG had applied for a job as a nursery assistant in the French Alps and was waiting to hear the result of this application. Although the workload was more than she expected, FF was enjoying the course and felt she was progressing well. GG was asked to attend an interview in France after being on the course less than a month, and in October 2005 was offered the position. GG said: *"I had two dreams and they both came at the same time…but going to France was a once in a lifetime opportunity!"*. GG has now returned to Wales and is considering signing up to the course this year: *"I would have loved to be able to complete it if I'd been able to and that's why I'm considering going back"*.

Several people felt that the experience of learning had helped them to progress in their career, and to that extent it had achieved a positive outcome. Case study JJ is an example of where a young person has progressed quickly through their career beyond the pace of the learning programme. This appears to be fairly common, especially for learners who were starting from a level of fairly high achievement in terms of their previous qualifications.

Learning has helped some to progress.

CASE STUDY JJ

JJ is a 22 year old male who works in agriculture in South West Wales. He stayed on at school post-16, and got A level qualifications. In March 2004, JJ enrolled on a Foundation Modern Apprenticeship motivated by *"the qualification to help with my job and hopefully help towards promotion…and my employer wanted me to do it"*. After 10 months JJ got a promotion to a Farm Manager position and moved areas. His training ended at this point: *"I got a better job and no longer felt the need to continue. Also I was about one and a half hours away"*. JJ was happy with the training: *"It fitted well around work and I had no problems with the timetable"*. JJ commented that: *"They (the provider) offered me an option of getting my training in my area"*, however he did not want to continue: *"I have too many work responsibilities at the moment"*.

Some people who change jobs are prevented from continuing by moving or not having an employer to support them. For a significant number it was worries over how to fit training in with an increase in workload and responsibility which were behind the decision not to complete.

One in twenty of our sample had lost their jobs whilst in learning and cited this as the reason for early leaving. All of these people were in Work Based Learning and all felt that early leaving was forced upon. The time spent by this group in learning ranged from three months to three years.

Some in WBL were forced to leave by losing their job.

Whilst, interviewees who had progressed in their job were fairly upbeat and positive about their experience of training, interviewees who had finished in learning due to redundancy or dismissal often expressed negativity and bitterness.

CASE STUDY KK

KK is in his early twenties in South East Wales. After school, KK enrolled on a three year MA sponsored by CITB working towards Level 3 in carpentry and joinery. After a few months KK was offered employment at XXX Window Co Ltd and went into full time work with classroom based training for one day per week at college. KK had an interest in woodwork and work based training was seen as *"a chance to prove myself…as well as earning some money"*. KK's training progressed reasonably well although KK felt the training was repetitive and *"too much theory and not enough practical work…."*. KK found the training to be *"mostly paperwork…they even had a paper on how to hit a nail in…most of it was pretty useless"*. However, although his motivation was starting to drop KK commented *"I knew I'd stick at it because I needed the money and I knew that if I got the certificates then I could work anywhere"*.

After thirty months in training, KK's employer laid him off work. By this time, KK has achieved a City and Guilds qualification Level 1. KK said: *"I told them (college staff) that I was being laid off and they just said 'alright then'…"*. At interview he expressed his bitterness and disappointment at being only 6 months away from completion and having gone a lot of the way towards Level 3: *"all wasted… very upset from being laid off…really disappointed…"*

KK said he would have carried on in training if he'd been able to find an alternative

---

employer but this option was not available at the time. KK commented: *"they (college) told me they would look for another placement but that it could take some time…I don't think they bothered…they never got back to me…".* KK said he had looked for work in a similar field but had been unable to get any. He felt this was down to not having achieved the Level 3 qualification: *"I have a mate who knew of a job but they wouldn't take me on as I've no certificates…".* After a spell of unemployment and various casual positions, KK is now working full-time in retailing. He feels he would not consider other training *"…I'm past training now. I need money because I'm trying to settle down with my partner".*

After changes at work, illness came out as the other big issue forcing a change of circumstance in people's lives, affecting around 8% of the sample. This was a particular problem for older learners and those in FE. Time in leaning ranged from two weeks to two years. One person said: "*I had some health problems and therefore a lot of hospital appointments and we had to miss a lot of the course. It became impossible to continue*". Another said "*Illness started up and I just couldn't cope*".

People in ill health are unlikely to continue.

Only three people gave concerns over finances as the direct cause of early leaving. These were all young men on full time courses at college. However, across the board a fifth of the sample said they had problems dealing with money pressures whilst in learning.

Few left specifically for financial reasons.

Caring/Family Issues

Over a quarter of interviewees said that whilst in learning they had problems fitting the course in with commitments at home.

A quarter found it hard to fit learning in with commitments at home.

Caring or family responsibilities were a direct cause of early leaving for about 5% of our sample to leave. These issues especially affected several of the female learners we spoke to who had been on Open College Network provision. For example, one person had to quit after her disabled son suffered a stroke. Another had to take time off from training due to caring for her sick brother-in-law.

For a number of people we spoke to, bereavement in the family had led to problems which had resulted in them not continuing in learning (around one in twenty interviewees mentioned bereavement as a primary or secondary factor in early leaving). Bereavement and illness, or bereavement and caring responsibilities, came together in several cases. One person decided to take a year off after a family member died. Another person took on extra caring responsibilities due to bereavement.

Failing to complete learning after becoming pregnant had affected three of the women we spoke to. All of these were on vocational courses and two had been in learning for over a year. These women had varying experiences of learning, including a negative experience in the case of LL.

CASE STUDY LL
LL lives in the South West and is currently 19 years olds. In September 2005 she began a FMA with the local college working towards the Btec Introduction to Health & Social Care at NVQ Level 1. After about a month LL dropped out: *"I was getting bullied in class because of being dyslexic and also being 16 weeks pregnant".* WW was disappointed with the experience but felt she did not want to continue: *"I'd had enough of the bullying because I had already put up with it for 6 years at school".* LL said she would like the opportunity to try again next year if she decided she wanted to do it. However, she would like to see *"more help for dyslexic people".*

Non Achievement of Qualifications

The majority of the early leavers consulted through the research had left learning without being accredited for a qualification. Only around one in five had got a qualification or were part qualified. Amongst the sample of people who had been on Modern Apprenticeships, however, some respondents were hopeful of completing in the near future.

Only one in five got qualifications.

A handful of people had not been entered into exams due to missing sessions towards the end of the course.

Some interviewees attributed failing to achieve qualifications to problems with their training provider, as in the case of a college who lost a person's work folder when a member of staff left their employment (*"when our teacher left the coursework was thrown away and they couldn't get it back…we only had two weeks to make it all up so couldn't complete"*). One person doing a three year beauty therapy course at college said she had been forced to stop after two years because the college *"forgot to put my name down for the 3rd year modules and there was no room"*. (This person plans to go back to the course next year).

Some people pointed to failures by learning providers.

In other cases, factors outside the learners control had intervened, including unfortunate circumstances or mishaps which had so far prevented them from submitting evidence towards the qualification, such as case MM.

CASE STUDY MM

MM had worked as a helper/labourer on a building site for a year before he decided he wanted to get qualifications: *"when I was younger I didn't want to go to college but then I realised I could earn more money if I learnt things"*. His employer agreed to release him for a day a week to go to college to do a Modern Apprenticeship City and Guilds in Electrical Installation up to Level 3. Although MM was not doing electrical work to begin with, as his training progressed MM was given more responsibility for electrical matters on site. MM was fairly happy with the course, although he felt that it was *"the same thing for three years, just in more and more detail"*. Also MM said *"I didn't see the point in doing key skills because its not what I want to do, but I did it because the college told me to"*. As the end of the programme approached BB said he found it increasingly stressful: *"there was only a few weeks left and we had to do the key skills and get a folder of work together all at the last minute…we'd wasted a lot of time and then it all seemed really rushed at the end"*. The main problem however was that MM was unable to submit his portfolio of evidence. At this time the two partners who ran the company where he was employed split, with one partner continuing in the business and the other setting up in competition. MM along with three other staff took up a job in the second company. His original employer had the folder and BB said he couldn't get it back: *"when I left he wouldn't give it to me because he thought it belonged to them…also I think he was being spiteful and didn't want me to finish"*. MM said he'd told his tutor of the problem and had considered getting the police involved. The tutor has said he would approach the original employer but MM did not hear the result, and the deadline for submitting portfolios passed. On a positive note, MM was given the folder back months later when his new employer visited the old premises. MM is now considering contacting the college to see if he can submit the evidence for accreditation.

Even without events such as this getting in the way, a general concern was that training providers leave the collation of evidence for work based skills to the last minute, which

Some on WBL felt they

puts extra pressures on learners in a short space of time. If the imperative to complete at the end of the programme comes at the wrong time for the individual, the pressure can mean the person decides to finish without completing.

were put under un-due pressure at the end to complete.

It was fairly common for interviewees on classroom based vocational programmes to complain about the balance of practical and 'academic' learning, including those who had completed. Some non-traditional learners feel they would have benefited from more support, as in the case of NN.

Some would have liked more support.

CASE STUDY NN

NN is 60 and lives in North Wales. She started a diploma in counselling in September 2004, and completed in May 2005 without achieving. NN felt the course was not right for her: "*Should have been made aware that it was a very academic course*". She was also dissatisfied with the experience of learning, rating it as 'poor': "*You never knew which class you were in, used to wander around and no-one available to help you. The computers also broke down*". The situation was compounded by personal issues as NN's mother died around this time. NN is now working as a Kinesio Therapist, and she commented: "*I suffered from depression after the course*".

NN was frustrated by her learning experience, she felt the course needed: "*A more efficient timetable so we knew where to be…Classes of reasonable size and availability*". NN feels she would have benefitted from more help and support for older students like herself who have been out of learning for a long time and are unfamiliar with the college environment. She recommends: "*…Student facilitator to assist non-academic students….Tutors properly trained to assist non-academic students*".

Good Practice

Avoiding the things that learners don't like: Repeating topics; Absent tutors, Lessons missed, Work missing; Too much theory on vocational programmes.

More support in college for non-academic students which could include peer support.

Only one person we spoke to had been dismissed from learning. This young man had been on a pre-vocational course after leaving school. He commented: "*I received five or six warnings about my behaviour and was told I would be kicked off if I did not sort out my temper/attitude. I was thrown out as the tutors were worried I would hurt someone*".

Only one person had been asked to leave learning.

Advice and Guidance

Just under half of our sample said they had received advice and guidance in relation to the learning programme, and of these the largest group had got advice directly from the college or learning provider involved. Only a minority felt they did not have enough information about the course before they started (less than a third). Amongst this group, the majority would have liked a better understanding of what the course would actually involve and the requirements placed on learners. Comments included:

Under half had received advice and guidance.

"*More information about the course. If I had known about the content more, I would have realised it was covering things I already knew*"

"*The amount of work required*"

"*Should have been made aware that it was a very academic course*

"*Should have been shown a sample of what the course entailed/More information needed about what the course entails*"

"*Grading and level of the course. I didn't understand them. I didn't know what would be

Most would have liked more information on what the course would actually involve and what is required of learners.

knowledge management for the information age

expected of me"

"I knew nothing about the paperwork/assignments involved. I didn't know what level maths I would need"

"Should be told about the amount of assignments given at one time"

"Paperwork horrendous…didn't understand I'd have to do that…wanted a practical course".

Over half had difficulty coping with coursework.

Other Factors

Most early leavers mentioned problems or issues with their training, although this was not necessarily the reason why they did not complete. The things that people did not like about learning programmes included: Repeating topics; Absent tutors, lessons missed, or work missing; Too much theory on vocational programmes; Inflexible providers for people juggling learning and a full-time workload.

Only less than one in ten did not identify any problems faced during the time of the programme. The most common problem was keeping up with the standards of work required which was mentioned by about two-fifths of the people we spoke to. Two-fifths of the sample said the workload of the learning programme had been more than they had expected. Over half of the sample had had some or a great deal of difficulty coping with coursework. Well over a third found it hard to maintain their personal motivation.

Common problems included keeping up with the standard or work, coping with coursework and maintaining personal motivation.

At the same time, most people were fairly happy overall with the provider and the arrangements for provision. Where criticism did arise it tended to focus on the following types of problems:

Criticisms with provision by early leavers focused on course organisation, timetabling, and quality of teaching.

- Poor organisation: comments included: *"sometimes it was muddled and confusing where I was supposed to be"; "we didn't know when the tutor was coming…if they turned up they did…it took four months after registering to get my work".*

- Unsuitable timetabling: *"not suitable with young children"; "periods too short";*

- Ineffective teaching: *"very limited tuition"; "I would have preferred it to be more intensive".*

Summary of Key Findings

- The most prevalent reasons for non completion of Work Based Learning were: Pressure of work (including having to cover for absent staff); Getting a promotion; Other options perceived as more attractive (eg. another job); Redundancy/Unemployment; Not being able to submit portfolio.

- The most prevalent reasons for non completion of FE were: Not being happy with choice of course; Illness; Extra caring responsibilities; No time to study; Pregnancy; Not making sufficient progress.

- Change in personal circumstances is a major barrier to continuing in learning. Even some people who would have continued are prevented from doing so by moving away, becoming ill. Pregnancy is a crucial barrier for a certain cohort of learners (and was mentioned as a big issue by some providers).

- Another key barrier to continuing in learning was the learner not being able to cope with the requirements of the course, and feeling that they are not going to pass and therefore there is little point in continuing. People on WBL who have trouble fitting learning with work probably fall into this category, and based on survey feedback this could be a high proportion of WBL early leavers.

- Poor treatment by teaching staff, or other learners, is not a prevalent issue across the board, but in individual cases it is important. Including the example of person who was bullied, and person whose tutor made her feel uncomfortable when work commitments meant had to cancel a supervision session.

- Ultimately to continue in learning, learners probably have to feel the course is benefiting them and that the effort of continuing is outweighed by the rewards of learning. So the equation is between the 'cost' implications of continuing (ie. the time involved, opportunity cost, effort required to meet the standard, financial costs involved in taking part) and the extent of positive benefits to attending (ie. the extent of usefulness of the course, quality of the teaching experience offered, other benefits eg. social benefits from taking part). When things change in their life, like getting another job, becoming ill or pregnant, the situation changes and motivation is reduced.

- Most people we spoke to had left without getting a full qualification, although around one in five had qualified or part qualified. Moving from employment can mean the learner is unable to continue, and could affect around a third of early leavers on WBL. Worryingly, feedback from learners suggests that providers may also contribute to the problem of learners not being able to fulfil the requirements of the qualification if they do not submit learners' portfolios for assessment (eg. the example of a college loosing student's work).

- Relatively few of the early leavers we spoke to were completely happy with the learning programme. Common problems included keeping up with the standard of work required, and maintaining personal motivation. The relationship between the learner and the tutor appears to be a key factor which has the potential to be a strength in motivating people to continue, or a weakness in driving them away. It might be expected that learning provider staff have a responsibility to encourage continuing in learning – but the survey of early leavers suggests that that they could put more effort in to resolve problems than have arisen in some cases, and be more accommodating to the needs of the individuals required.

Stakeholder Perspectives

Advice and Guidance Providers

Careers advice and guidance stakeholders highlighted underlying tensions which are driving up early leaving amongst young learners:

- **The existence of the Youth Guarantee coupled with lack of availability of training places.** For some young people the result is inappropriate referrals and lack of choice about learning routes. The knock-on effects to early leaving manifests in different ways: academically successful young people end up in preparatory provision with lower achieving learners and become disillusioned. Young people of lower academic achievement do not receive the individual level of support required. In some areas the situation is made worse by 'churn' in the system, ie. young people being recycled through several different providers without progressing.

- **Lack of consistency in the quality of provision offered, and existence of concentrations of poor quality providers.** Criticisms were made of the quality of the training centres and the overall professionalism shown by some providers. High turnover of staff was identified as a compounding factor, which is attributed to lack of job security and uncompetitive rates of pay especially for those working with disaffected young people. One aspect of poor quality provision is the issue of the availability of Assessors, who have a crucial role in making sure learners are fulfilling their potential of achieving qualifications.

- **Lack of effective employer engagement in provision for young people**. In pre-vocational provision, placement into jobs is key in order to offer young people the vocational experiences they need. Some young people become fearful of change if they spend too long in centre. Other people become demotivated by a failure to progress to a placement leading to dropping out. Lack of availability of employed status places limits young peoples options and young people are being referred to pre-vocational training when this is not the best route for them.

- **Lack of incentives for young people to stay in learning,** especially for those in non employed status learning. The option of a paid job attracts many young people away from pre-vocational learning.

Other problems are the lack of provision to deal with the high incidence of special needs, and problems with literacy/numeracy. Learners with additional needs are thought to be particularly likely to drop out but providers do not always have the flexibility to meet their individual needs.

Advice and guidance professionals stressed the need to make better use of the resources available for learners through Careers Wales to support learners who are at risk of dropping out. Currently, opportunities are being wasted due to lack of effective communication flows between providers and support workers/advisers.

Underlying tensions in provision for young learners are driving up early leaving, especially from Skillbuild.

Problems include poor quality provision, poor employer engagement, lack of incentives for learning.

Good Practice
Systems for monitoring attendance and performance are needed in order to highly people who are drifting away from learning and put in place support. This should include pastoral issues.

Careers Wales advisers have a role to play in working with young people who are at risk of dropping out, particularly on SkillBuild programmes which are designed to help with career decisions. This requires closer liaison between providers and Careers Wales advisers to identify people needing additional guidance support early on.

Views of Learning Providers

The providers consulted as part of the early leavers research regularly monitor and compile reports on people leaving FE and WBL training courses early, however the methods used tend to vary. Most record additional information beyond that which is supplied to ELWA for their own monitoring and performance needs. One provider is looking to introduce 'Exit Audits', another is planning a systematic survey of leavers. For some providers with a close relationship with relatively small numbers of learners, because they monitor their trainees closely they can name their trainees by memory and have a close understanding of their circumstances. One provider records the destinations of early leavers for six months, but this is said to be easy to do because they keep verbal or written contact with leavers, and leavers are often seen working close by. A key message was that every leaver is an individual story. Some people would like to see more record keeping within the LLWR about reasons – positive or negative – for early leaving.

Methods used by providers to monitor early leavers vary.

Good Practice
Where providers follow-up early leavers, they can help to keep people engaged in learning, and will get valuable information on reasons for early leaving to help their organisational development.

The consultation with providers strongly suggests that the increasing emphasis on driving up completion rates in WBL has led providers to take strategic decisions about delivery which is skewing the pattern of provision. For example, one provider said they had dropped courses in poor performing sectors in recent months, including courses in Care, Hospitality and Construction, where there is either a low requirement for courses in their district or there are high numbers of early leavers (these are considered low performance and low retention sectors). High levels of sub contracting in the construction industry were identified by one provider as the key factor in high levels of drop out.

Some providers have taken strategic decisions to minimise early leaving.

For the above provider, the reason for changing provision was that income from poor performing sectors does not make delivery cost-effective. Other providers were concerned about the impact of high rates of non completion on Estyn inspection and ELWa quality reports. For example, one provider had been put off from provision in the care sector because of historically low completion rates. Moreover, this provider is now only offering lower Level provision as a result of the emphasis on 50% completion targets in the PPR process.

Most providers distinguish between people who leave courses within the first two to three weeks of training commencing. Reasons identified for leaving in the first few weeks were associated with trainees not wanting to work in the area of learning/sector that they have chosen.

People who drop out early on are counted differently…..

At least one of the providers consulted during the project does not sign learners up to the programmes until after the first 13 weeks (and aims to certificate numbers of learners with key skills in the first 13 weeks), thus taking the first thirteen weeks out of

…some providers don't formally sign learners on until after 13 weeks.

knowledge management for the information age

the calculation of early leaving. Previously this provider estimates that 15-20% of leavers left within the first 13 weeks.

The provider consultations suggest that the funding structure can potentially have an impact on the recorded incidence of early leaving depending on the business model which the provider has decided to adopt. Where funding is mostly based on keeping people in learning and achievement of outcomes there is a business risk of taking people on who are likely to not complete. This is one of the reasons why some providers have stopped courses in low performing sectors. A key issue is lack of consistency in approaches between providers. For instance, some operate a 13 week pre-start system but others don't. This is not captured within the learner statistics. Another issue is that providers could recruit above the numbers required and then substitute learners on the programme for early leavers in order to make sure they have the maximum numbers required by the contract.

Other providers are increasingly aiming to provide a comprehensive interview at the start of training to make sure trainees know what will be involved and that they do want to train in a particular sector. Extended assessment and induction were also identified as very useful strategies in reducing early disengagement. Skills scans were identified as very helpful in this process.

Extended assessment and induction, including skills cans, are useful tools.

One provider had experienced poor ALI grades due to the poor completion rates and had completely turned this around by being much more selective and involving employers. However, given that all their trainees are over 19, this means that the focus is on people are in employment in jobs that would normally provide training, but its not being provided due to the selection procedures.

In WBL the requirements for framework completion is considered to have a huge impact on completion rates. Especially when combined with work pressures, since the amount of extra work required by WBL on top of full time work can be a large commitment for people and take time that many workers feel they do not have. As people are in employment there is often little motivation for people to complete.

The extra work for employed people implied by doing WBL is a key issue.

The issue was raised about the differences in requirements between the sectors. For example a provider offering Manufacturing and Engineering felt that the Framework at Management Level 3 were virtually impossible to achieve as they included a technical certificate which would take two years at college on a full-time basis or another equally onerous alternative. This provider has changed the emphasis from Level 3 to Level 2 because it is thought to be much easier to attain (or at least delivery of all aspects is within the control of the provider, without relying on others for delivery of technical certificates).

Requirements for technical certificates are a barrier in some sectors (eg. Management).

Some providers feel that too much importance is placed on Framework completion, especially since often learners fail to get one key skill but still get the NVQ. However, there is no consensus around the best way forward. Several providers want to keep the rigour of the Framework as this is an important standard of quality. However they would like to see more flexibility in how technical certificates and key skills can be delivered. Other providers want credit for the amount of learning delivered and outcomes achieved. Some providers are in favour of giving a measure of the distance that each candidate has to travel to completion of the Framework as the candidates come from a variety of different backgrounds.

Views are mixed on the requirement for WBL Framework completions.

If providers give learners credit for single units of work to those that leave before the

Key skills can be a

end, then early leavers will have more to show for their time in training. However, this is considered a costly option by most providers.

'turn off'.

Several providers commented that the requirements of key skills are a 'turn off' for some learners who do not see the relevance of them. The Basic Skills strategy is considered to have had a key impact. On the one hand, one issue is that GCSEs and A Levels are recorded as a Level 1 in the basic skills strategy assessment. These learners can feel patronised by having to pass key skills. On the other hand, less academically orientated learners may choose NVQs because they are put off by exams, and the requirements of key skills examinations was said to run against the objective of meeting the needs of this group.

Employers have a big impact…

A key conclusion of the consultations with providers was that employers have a huge impact on people leaving early, depending on the individual company though and how committed they are to training, especially where providers have placed a young person into a position with the employer. In relation to Work Based Learning, providers identified employers and a change in circumstances as the key factor underlying early leaving. For example, either trainees receive an offer of a better job at a different employer for more money that does not require them to train; or once a trainee is working for a company, the company withdraws them from the course because they do not want to release trainees to the training provider. (One person commented: *"people leave school to earn, not to learn"*).

…enthusiasm for WBL tends to wane over time.

Factors which foster higher retention of employed trainees include: better pay and working conditions, flexible employers that allow the trainees to attend college, opportunities for qualified staff to benefit from career progression. However in some cases, once the trainee is an employee for a few months many employers feel less committed to training and releasing the trainee to go to training as they are useful and needed at the company and do not want other staff to have to cover their work. Though some employers release people less and less as time goes on, which impacts training and eventually can lead to them leaving training altogether.

Lower paid occupations have more turnover in buoyant labour markets.

Getting commitment from employers is seen as crucial, as well as being able to offer a level of training that is appropriate to the trainee and his or her skills and job. In WBL 'Selling' the framework is a recurring issue, especially for provider who recruit employed learners. Some providers feel that offering learning within the restrictions of the overall framework is against the spirit of offering employers what they want. In any case appropriate marketing and information to providers is needed to makes sure employers understand what is involved and buy into it from the outset.

Some providers felt SMEs have higher early leaving.

Feedback from providers suggests that in more buoyant labour markets, those in lower paid occupational courses leave when offered more money (even if the job does not include training). This clearly affects the lower paid occupations more so than those with better prospects. So whilst there are problems in Care, Hospitality and Horticulture, such problems are largely unknown for Engineering. Indeed, in tight labour market conditions it could be that those who are least likely to find an alternative are also those who are least likely to finish early. In addition, in some industries (especially in Hospitality) a number of young people see a few years working abroad as more exciting and having better prospects than being in training.

Some early leavers move out of the area.

A range of reasons for early leaving were identified.

One provider suggests that rates of early leaving are higher amongst SME's or micro businesses, particularly since larger companies in some areas have their own training schemes. One provider suggests that early leaving is particularly high amongst learners

Providers working with socially disadvantaged

who work for a business that is owned or managed by a family member (perhaps because they are not managed as well as other trainees).

A small percentage of early leavers move from the area or from the country for personal reasons or to find better jobs. If someone's partner or boyfriend leaves the area many young people will follow them

Other factors in non completion mentioned as being particularly significant by providers include: personal issues (family breakdown/divorce, moving home); drug taking; behavioural issues such as swearing and aggression towards employers; poor time keeping, absenteeism without informing employers of the reason; commitments such as child care responsibilities, caring for older parents and family. One provider delivering in administration and finance mentioned high levels of sickness.

In some areas, there is the strong perception that providers are dealing with many social issues which are beyond their control. There is also the view that discipline problems are increasing and that these are partially to blame for the level of early leaving. In the face of lower funding coupled with a perception that academic standards are declining, one FE provider felt that courses attracting disaffected students are becoming unsustainable. However, if more resources were devoted to disengaged students, then more could be done to make sure drop out is minimised.

Providers whose target market is young people who are not already in jobs suggested that competition with colleges is an issue for them. Some leave WBL to go to college, if young people perceive this to be less work/ time required, and they do not have to work full time as well. On the other hand, some WBL providers complained that young people who fail to achieve in a 6th form or college after leaving school then more into WBL later on, but because they are two years older they have less time to complete an Apprenticeship framework which puts achievement at risk.

Feedback from providers did not identify trends in early leaving by demographic groups. No one group appears more likely to drop out than others. That said, key skills requirements have an effect depending on the level of academic ability. Also, completion rates vary between sectors and there are gender differences – many sectors are still gender oriented. Care, Retail, Hospitality retention rates are low to very low and employment in these sectors is dominated by females.

Pregnancy was identified as a key issue in early leaving by females by the majority of consultees working with non-traditional client groups. One provider estimates that 65/75% of female early leavers leave because of pregnancy.

groups felt they needed more resources.

No one group is identified as being more likely to drop out than another. Provision for disaffected young people needs more resources.

Some providers have high rates of leaving due to pregnancy.

Good Practice:
Areas of good practice identified during the interviews with providers focused on four main areas:

- Getting a high quality of initial assessment and identifying (and addressing) any issues early on.

- The support available to learners throughout the programme. For example, one provider who place young people in administration and finance provision said that a training advisor meets with trainees every week or at most every two weeks, this is not a trainer and it takes part aside from training to make sure things are going well, that the trainees needs are met and that they are comfortable at the company

(which helps to identify any problems as they emerge).

- Good communication between trainees, trainers and employers.

- Integrating key skills and technical certificates into the delivery process.

- Helping people to complete even after they have changed positions or moved on. For example one provider persuaded a young person's employer to work with them to complete the qualification even though this person left the post.

- Finding ways to remove barriers to getting learning. For example, one provider offered learning to care home staff in a hired venue at weekends when it did not prove possible to provide all the learning in the workplace.

Most providers try to follow, track and reengage early leavers, but this can be very difficult to do. One provider suggested they get only a 30% response to follow-up. One WBL provider offers £130 to help people wanting to complete their course.

Most providers follow-up and try to keep early leavers engaged.

Most providers feel that there is a 'natural' rate of early leaving – due to circumstances that are hard to influence such as changes to personal circumstances including moving away and falling pregnant. Providers tend to contend that through building good relationships with learner they can 'leave the door open' to them returning when conditions allow. Our impression is that most providers are willing to do this – ie. attempting to build a rapport and ongoing relationship with learners so they will feel able to come back, and course tutors take most responsibility for this.

Provider Performance Review (PPR)

The PPR process aims to raise standards and the quality of learners' experiences and ensure that only effective providers are funded. The PPR process is used to identify and address shortcomings, share good practice, and measure and report on quality across the post-16 sector. The process involves building up a comprehensive picture of each provider's performance, quality and standards, drawing on a wide range of interaction and evidence. PPR also aims to base evaluations on clear, published criteria so that all providers understand funders' expectations amd to ensure that judgements are evidence-based and to establish a consistent approach across the post-16 sector, in order to promote a 'level playing field' for all providers. PPR complements the work of Estyn and takes account of inspection outcomes in making judgements on provider's performance.

The PPR process is used to identify and address shortcomings and share good practice.

The PPR process involves a formal annual review of the performance, quality and standards of each provider carried out in autumn, followed by a focused interim review in spring which will focus on areas where concerns were identified in the main review. The reviews are undertaken by regional ELWa teams, and a judgement is the agreed by an all-Wales PPR panel to ensure a consistent approach across Wales. The reviews are based on evidence already submitted by providers including Self-assessment Reports, Quality Development Plans, inspection reports, GAELWa audits, data from the Lifelong Learning Wales Record, strategic plans, information from health and safety monitoring, and financial data.

The reviews are based on published performance measures and criteria; the aim is for all providers to know the standards they are expected to achieve, and the methodology

used to assess their performance. Providers that fail to meet a satisfactory standard overall will be required to develop action plans to address the shortcomings identified in the review. They will be subject to a follow-up review after six months to determine whether sufficient progress is being made. The outcomes of PPR will inform funding allocations to providers from 2006 onwards, and in future will be the option of restricted growth or withdrawal of funding where quality and standards in individual subject areas are below the quality threshold, or conversely rewards for providers with outstanding quality and performance, associated with requirements for dissemination of good practice.

PPR will inform funding allocations from 2006 onwards.

The PPR covers four areas of performance, including participation and responsiveness, and learner experiences and achievements. Provision teams draw together the evidence and evaluate it against the criteria and as a result identify a categorisation for each area of performance and set out the reasons for giving that categorisation, including strengths and shortcomings, drawing on dialogue with providers. The evaluation report is intended to give a clear overview of the provider's performance, highlighting particular strengths, shortcomings and action points.

The PPR evaluation report sets out action points for individual providers.

Factors Associated with Poor Performance

Negative aspects of participation and responsiveness identified by Estyn in provider inspections which impact on rates of non completion and achievement include:

A range of factors are associated with poor performance in terms of learner participation and provider responsiveness, relating to referral, systems, support, and teaching.

- Referral to inappropriate programmes leading to premature termination.
- Poor systems for support not embedded into the providers work or considered strategically at senior management level to inform future development plans.
- Learners having poor understanding of equality of opportunity. Gender inequality issues not always reinforced or promoted enough during progress reviews.
- Lack of effective procedures to support learners with additional learning needs. Procedures to support all learners with basic or key skill needs not fully effective.
- Weak individual learning plans lacking full detail.
- Review documentation not including enough detail of specific or measurable targets to help learners move forward in their learning.
- Key skills not embedded in individual training programmes and poorly understood by assessors. Late introduction of key skills and technical certificates which meant learners could not complete the qualification. Lack of clear strategy to help learners achieve the key skills required o complete their full framework. No key skills. Or assessor not familiar with key skills.
- Quality or training and learning in the workplace is poor.
- Lack of focus on aspects of vocational practice. Depth of knowledge not reflected within teaching and learning materials.
- Group work not well managed (lack of collaborative work). No evaluation of the effectiveness of the learner experience.
- Teachers not setting high enough expectations of students in preparation for lessons.
- Too little done to set different tasks for students who have varying needs. Too few opportunities for oral work.
- Learners reluctant to attend off the job training.
- Policies not always implemented, learners not always receiving support required. Lack of awareness of support services available.
- Learners not involved enough in sessions.

Summary of Key Findings

- Inappropriate referral due to lack of alternative options and poor quality of provision is an issue for young people in the Youth Guarantee target group. Opportunities are being missed for Careers Wales advisers to work with young people who are at risk of dropping out, particularly on SkillBuild programmes. This requires closer liaison between providers and Careers Wales advisers to identify people needing additional guidance support early on.

- Providers track early leaving and reasons for early leaving although they use differing methods to do this. Providers often have more information on early leavers which is not included in LLWR dataset.

- There has been suggestion in previous studies elsewhere in UK that the WBL funding system can encourage providers to place an overemphasis on starts, rather than completions, although this research suggests that providers in Wales are in fact very conscious of the priority given to completion and if anything are favouring provision where the chances of success are maximised.

- Providers can employ strategies which affect the recorded rates of early leaving. This includes giving learners an extended induction before they sign onto the programme so that those who are unsure are removed from the baseline. There is also an option of replacing early leavers on the system with someone who is continuing in learning. There is no consistent approach.

- Completion of the key skills element is likely to depend on the practices of the provider; those which recognise the importance of key skills and put effort into doing them early on in the learning programme are generally considered to get better results by providers we spoke to as part of the research. Completing the technical certificate element can be a greater barrier in sector frameworks which require extensive off-the-job attendance for the technical elements, particularly if there is limited choice as to where this can be done, including having to travel outside of the home area. Integrating key skills and technical certificates into the delivery process is generally considered to be best practice.

- Providers can help to improve early leaving through the support offered, having communication between trainees, trainers and employers, overcoming barriers to delivering learning and helping people to complete even after they have changed positions or moved on.

- Employers have a key impact in WBL – completion of programmes is fostered by good pay and working conditions, flexible approach, and opportunities for qualified staff to benefit from career progression. Getting commitment from employers is seen as crucial and requires appropriate marketing and information to make sure employers understand what is involved.

- Coping with disaffected young people remains a serious challenge for some providers, particularly those working in areas of social deprivation and disadvantage. Pregnancy disproportionally affects providers with young women learners.

- The PPR process is a vehicle for working with providers to improve retention, and has highlighted aspects associated with poor performance on early leaving.

knowledge management for the information age

Recommendations

A number of key elements of Best Practice have been identified throughout the report, especially for those involved in direct deliver of learning provision. The following sets out specific recommendations to address early leaving emerging from the research.

For Learning Providers

Quality of provision emerges as a significant factor in both early leaving and non-achievement, particularly when comparing the variation in achievement rates between providers. There are proven differences in early leaving rates between providers, and previous analysis suggests that these are most likely linked to the quality and standards of provision rather than the profile of learner groups. Therefore addressing quality is paramount. Continued improvements in quality and standards of provision are needed to help to reduce non completion.

Recommendations for learning providers on driving up quality have already come out through the PPR process. Examples of recommendations to individual providers identified through the PPR process to improve provider performance in terms of participation and achievement are given below:

Driving up quality of provision including implementing recommendations emerging from PPR.

- Provide formal diagnostic testing on entry, including diagnostics for learning difficulties and/or training staff to recognise learning difficulties such as dyslexia, and giving additional support to those who need it.

- Start work on key skills early in the programme, backed up by a fully developed basic skills/special needs assessment and assistance programme. Address learner needs arising from basic skills screening and other assessments. Plan and map key skills into training programmes. Appoint a basic skills tutors and integration of additional learning into learners' learning plans, or establish formal links with literacy and numeracy providers.

- Work with learners for up to thirteen weeks before formally registered as DELL funded learners to help the learner to understand the requirements and their choice of training programmes. Evaluate the initial assessment with a view to identifying and addressing basic skills deficits.

- Improve consistency of links between the workplace and off the job training. This could include transport of learners to a technical certificate test centre if few attend under their own steam.

- Further develop training plans to identify specific difficulties trainees likely to experience in training sessions. Review learner records to make sure residual and overlooked training needs are addressed. Put in place actions to strengthen the learner review process.

- Share good practice among training staff to ensure that standards of training and assessment are made more consistent. Appoint a quality manager (whose role would include planning and monitoring assessor contracts), NVQ standardisation meetings and tracking of key skills and technical certificates.

knowledge management for the information age

- Develop procedures for challenging and fast tracking more able trainees. Make sure ILPs are used effectively to monitor, support and set challenging targets including interim targets for learners.

- Review processes and planning of learning to involve employers and to use individual ILPs to better monitor and promote progress.

- Implement procedures and safeguards for the protection of vulnerable groups. Embed equal opportunities processes, increase learner awareness of equal opportunities and promote equality of opportunity. Monitor Equal Opportunities better.

Other elements of good practice have emerged from the research, crucial amongst these if early leaving is to be avoided if at all possible is monitoring learner attendance and performance closely and addressing problems when they arise. This could include close working in partnership with support and guidance providers, particularly Careers Wales Personal Advisers.

Closer working with Personal Advisers.

Marketing/Promotion

In the first instance, the research highlights the link between early leaving and the problem of the failure to meet learners' expectations. Not being fully aware of what the course entails is often linked in previous studies to dissatisfaction with the training and early leaving. The research suggests that there are issues around the level of information offered about the nature and purpose of the programme learners are undertaking. Moreover, early leavers often find themselves in a situation when they are unable to give the level of commitment to the learning programme that is required.

Providing information on what is involved and what is required of learners.

The key issue which needs to be addressed is making sure that potential learners have as full as possible information on what the course entails, and what is required of learners in terms of the extent of commitment which they would need to give in order to be successful.

Generally speaking, attitudes and understanding of Apprenticeships has been shown to be quite poor, although this may be improving. The problem for early leaving is a potential poor level of commitment to the learning programmes that are not valued by employers and employees. Apprenticeship programmes show great variation in early leaving by sector, reflecting differences in the propensity for learners to get all the requirements of the full framework, as well as termination before the end of the programme. Stakeholders strongly suggested that the nature and extent of support from employers is a key factor: employers and employees need to 'buy-in' to the spirit as well as the practice of Apprenticeship programmes in order for the programmes to be successful, and providers need to secure this 'buy-in' by promoting and marketing Apprenticeships appropriately.

Marketing Apprenticeships appropriately.

Encouraging employers to support Apprentices.

The research suggests that the standards expected from employers needs to be raised in order to support Work Based Learning. Apprenticeships are often see as being 'free' to employers, and some may not commit sufficient employee or management time to the process. Changing perceptions may be hard but WBL providers should aim to establish a clear employer agreement setting out responsibilities of the employer and the provider, including minimum entitlement to learning for all learners to ensure all learners had a consistent quality learning experience. Clarify obligations on employers in relation to NVQ requirements and to establish formal agreement between colleges and

Getting agreements with employers.

employers in relation to training requirements. The agreement should specify the framework requirements including key skills and technical certificates, and clarify the role and requirements of assessors during employer visits. In this way the commitment from employers could not only be made clearer but more exacting.

For DELLS

The PPR process is a key mechanisms and should continue to be used to discuss problem areas and potential solutions with providers. The appropriateness of different recommendations to individual providers need to be explored in detail and in collaboration with those providers.

Using PPR to drive up quality.

It could be argued that the importance of learner aptitude in retention and achievement levels means that some learners are not being guided into the most appropriate learning and employment routes for their abilities. Stakeholders certainly suggested that there were not enough options for the academically less and young people with additional support needs. DELLs should review the range of options available to the different target markets of learners, taking account of the numbers of contracted places and options in terms of providers, in different geographical areas of Wales. A review of programme design is also needed to highlight where learner needs are not currently being met.

Range of available learning options and programme design.

There are problems with the information base, and DELLS should adapt the LLWR to make it a more powerful tool for increasing our understanding of retention and achievement issues. The LLWR is a vital tool not least because it offers 100% coverage and avoids the margins of error associated with sample surveys. Changes are required in several areas.

Improving the information base.

Firstly information should be held on actual as well as expected end date so that early leavers can be more readily identified in the data. Collection of 'reason for leaving' information needs to be made more coherent. Continuing in learning and failing in learning fields should be separate from 'reason for leaving'. The list of reasons for leaving should be revised to better reflect reality.

There should be more emphasis placed on ensuring providers complete the LLWR record accurately and to reduce the number in the 'not known' categories. This includes in particular, destinations, disability, learning difficulty, ethnicity and the prior learning achievement field. Completion should be mandatory of efforts should be made to persuade providers to be much more rigorous in providing this information.

The LLWR is a system for paying providers and is currently of limited use as an 'in-year' attendance and performance monitoring system, or for tracking 'at risk' learners. We would recommend that DELLS works with providers to see how the use the provider-defined fields on the database as a ongoing monitoring system. Our research suggests that often providers have more information on early leavers than gets onto the LLWR because the system is considered to be too inflexible and overly complicated and time consuming.

Feedback from providers shows that they are developing their own systems for tracking and following up early leavers, but in isolation. This appears to be inefficient and also will lead to inconsistency in approaches. We recommend that DELLS works with providers to develop advice and guidance on how monitoring and follow-up should be implemented.

Better consistency in tracking and monitoring.

knowledge management for the information age

In relation to the above, ideally, the factors influencing learner outcomes should be measured not just against retention and achievement but also learner destinations and activities. Surveys of learners destinations and the nature of their activity (including area of learning or employment) should be undertaken at a number of points in time after leaving (e.g. 6 months, 1 year). The results should be shared between providers to help to provide evidence of 'positive' outcomes and/or the factors most associated with negative outcomes such as unemployment.

Partners

We recommend that DELLS works with Careers Wales partners to identify 'at risk' young people who are dropping in and out of learning. Poor course choice and limited options are a major factor for this group. The aim should be to work with Careers Wales to introduce an 'early warning system' for learners dropping out of programmes. The system should facilitate targeted work by Careers Wales advisers with individuals and learning providers. In practice this should mean working closely with the Careers Wales to devise one or two key questions to categorise the 'at risk' young people focusing specifically on target client groups, and agreeing procedures for regular reporting of the information.

Targeted assistance for 'at risk' groups.

Further research

There is little evidence to assess the effectiveness of steps taken by providers to address non completion. Further research is needed to identify the effectiveness of different approaches on early leaving, in particular:

Developing evidence of what works.

- pre-course guidance;

- induction programmes, orientation programmes, mentoring;

- continuing advice and support including pastoral support for learners.

knowledge management for the information age

Annex 1: Summary of Key Research Reports

a) Research in Wales Context				
Type of learning or Programme	Evidence on Completion Rates	Evidence of Reasons for leaving	Differences between groups/sectors	Methods and Sources
Skillbuild	72% completed (6% on course)	5% left for personal reasons; 4% did not enjoy it; 3% got a job.	N/A	Method: A representative sample of 404 learners were interviewed – sampling criteria was programme type (adult / youth) gender, region and start date. Source: York Consulting Ltd 2005
Foundation Modern Apprenticeships (FMA) and Modern Apprenticeships (MA)	Between 2001-2003 only 20% of FMA leavers and 27% of MA leavers completed their full framework. This represents 33% of all leavers from inspected MA programmes. 44% of leavers completed a full NVQ on the FMA programme and 60% of leavers on the MA programme achieving their full NVQ.	N/A	In only three occupational areas: agriculture, business administration and leisure, sport and travel, did over a third of leavers on the FMA programme complete their full framework. In the MA programme, only two occupational areas: agriculture and engineering, had over a third of leavers completing their full framework.	Method: Results of inspections Source: Estyn (2004)
Skill Seeker (North Wales) (Former National Traineeships, Modern Apprenticeships and Higher Modern Apprenticeships)	In 2000/01 25% of leavers completed their training plans; 31% completed part and 32% completed no qualification on their ITP (North Wales). Completion rates ranged from 8% for National Traineeships; 27% for Modern Apprenticeships and 57% for YCR.	Of part completers: 15% did not want to continue training 14% went to a new employer different SOC Of leavers with no qualifications: 14% did not want to complete their training 10% were dismissed or training terminated by the employer Overall, 8% went to new employer (different SOC), 8% left, resigned or walked out, and 7% did not wish to complete their training.	Concludes that trainees on the IT, Retail and hospitality routes tend to leave through choice, to take up other employment elsewhere or go to FTE. Manufacturing trainees tend to leave through termination of their employment (probably due to count issues in the industry) A large proportion of hairdressing trainees leave due to personal reasons or trainee choice, as do trainees in the meat industry.	Method: analysis of data from YP9 forms Source: ELWa (2001)
Modern Apprenticeships and National Traineeships	Rate of early leavers (2003-03) varies by region: North Wales (23%); Mid Wales (7%); South East Wales (47%); South West Wales (25%)	Suggests key discriminations between completers and non-completers include: level of financial difficulty, family circumstances, the distraction of outside social life, whether trainee was treated as an adult, if they knew where to go for help, if travel was difficult.	Rate of early leaving highest in public sector (32%); distribution/hotels & catering (23%); finance and business (15%) and other services (12%)	Method: Analysis of National Traineeship/Modern Apprenticeship Database Source: BMG (2003)
Government Supported Training		The quality of the training provided was an important factor in the decision to stay or to leave GST.	Drop-outs were more likely than those who stayed in GST to have poor GCSE results, to have played truant at school and to have been excluded from school.	Method: Cohort 9 of the England and Wales Youth Cohort Study (YCS) (16-18 year olds who finished compulsory education in summer 1997) Source: Payne (2001)
Post-16 learning (England and Wales)		Differences associated with different types of course or qualification.	Showed a wide variation in success rates associated with different qualifications. City and Guilds courses, NVQ levels 3 and 4 and GNVQ level 1 courses all carried a relatively high risk of being unsuccessful, while A levels, BTEC courses and higher level GNVQ courses carried a lower risk of the students being unsuccessful.	Method: data from cohort 8 of the England and Wales Youth Cohort study, derived from young people who reached school leaving age in summer 1995. Source: Payne (2000)
b) Research in Other Parts of GB				
	Completion Rates	Evidence of Reasons for leaving	Differences between groups/sectors	Methods and Sources
Government Supported	47% of young people on GST do not achieve a	Training issues/poor support from provider or		Method: interviews with 235 early leavers.

knowledge management for the information age

Training	qualification	employer/not training expected (11%) Problems at work/ lost job/ineligibility/ withdrawal of programme (16%) Illness and other personal issues (12%) Better prospects elsewhere/better pay (32%) Wrong initial choice (27%)		Source: Thornhill (2001)
Modern Apprenticeships in five sectors (Care, Hospitality, Retail, Motor and Electrotechnical)		Most reasons for leaving did not relate to the training itself. The most common reason was getting a new job (typically for reasons of pay of better prospects), followed by the difficulty of combining the training with the workload of the job. Other reasons related to problems at work (being dismissed or made redundant) or personal issues. 10% of women MAs gave their reason as becoming pregnant.	Found that 'reasons [for leaving] vary widely by age, gender and sector'. However, they did not give details of how they vary.	Method: 772 telephone interviews conducted with recent (2000) completers of MAs across five sectors: Care, Hospitality, Retail, Motor and Electrotechnical Source: IFF Research Ltd (2000)
Post 16 education	September 2003 – March 2004 a total of 663 Year 11 leavers going into Post 16 education were classified as 'early leavers' representing 4 per cent of the total number of young people in Year 12.	However, overall January has been identified as the month where young people are most at risk of leaving their courses, with the There most popular reasons were: to enter the labour market (47%); found employment (22%); transfer to another course and/or college (15%).		Method: Data from Personal Advisors on year 11 leavers in 2003 and year 11 leavers 2004 from mainstream, independent and special schools who progress to Post 16 Education. Source: Early Leavers Report 2003/04 - Cheshire and Warrington Connexions
WBL and FE in South East England	Nationally, 35% of enrolments on FE courses did not result in a qualification in 2001/2.	Three broad groups of factors found to be of primary importance: 1. The nature of provision and provider characteristics 2. Course choice and student decision making 3. Learner aptitude		Method: Literature Review, depth research with providers, learners and early leavers, and CHAID FE and WBL records Source: LSC South East England Early Leavers and Non-achievers
Further Education		Two or more factors usually affect a student's decision to withdraw. Different factors will affect different groups of students in different ways. . Early leavers tended to show less commitment to their programme of study and had sometimes chosen college for negative reasons, such as having a poor experience of school. The research showed that 'respondents who had withdrawn had a significantly lower opinion of the college than current students.'		Method: Review of previous research Source: Martinez (1995)
Further Education		Factors are complex, multiple and interrelated. students are more likely to drop out if they: - do not feel that they have been placed on the most appropriate course - applied to college late - find it difficult to make friends - find it difficult to settle in at the beginning of their course - are less satisfied (than current students) that their course is interesting are less satisfied with the quality of teaching - are less satisfied with their course timetable - are less satisfied with help either to get a job or to go to university	Found only limited evidence to suggest that there might be any demographic indicators of likely student withdrawal. There were some indications that 'previous educational attainment, social class, course choice and perhaps gender and ethnicity, may predispose some groups of students to leave early' though it was possible that any such effects depended on mutual reinforcement between two or more demographic factors.	Method: Questionnaires with 8500 students covering 33 colleges and interviews with 500+ students and college staff Source: Martinez and Munday (1998)

knowledge management for the information age

		are male - have difficult financial circumstances (older students) or family circumstances (younger students) - have their fees waived or reduced. Personal Circumstances are not as important as programme/college factors		
GNVQs in Further Education		Satisfaction levels in a number of course related issues are key to early drop out, in particular: - Induction and original course choice - Interest generated by the course - Quality of teaching (inc. staff-student relationships) - Support in progressing to higher level qualifications Course related issues have the greatest impact on non-completion. Personal issues are intermediate triggers for drop out. Although financial difficulties are a common trigger of student drop-out, in general withdrawal appears to result only in cases where students have doubts that they are on the right course, are concerned about the quality of the teaching and are unhappy with the support they are receiving for progression.		Method: Research by FEDA on non-completion of GNVQ courses, based on a survey of over 3000 current and withdrawn students. Source: Davies (1999)
Further Education		The most important factors are learner commitment, satisfaction with the course and motivation. Inability to cope with course demands, low levels of ability and poor language and key skills were also contributory factors. Teaching staff considered that inappropriate aspirations and poor course choice were key reasons for drop-out. Those students who withdrew from their courses tended to be less satisfied with their choice of course, the quality of teaching and tutorials, and the helpfulness of their teachers (and the college in general) in providing support, advice and feedback.	Drop out is more likely if students: - Are older or white - Applied late - Are on foundation or intermediate courses - Have low ability, poor language and key skills - Have poor records of attendance or behaviour	Method: survey of support for 835 students in 8 urban FE colleges Source: Barwuah, Green and Lawson (1997)
16-24 learning	Thirty-six per cent of those studied had been on some form of training programme, but 78% of these had failed to complete them.	Concludes that non-participation by these young people was a manifestation of 'a much wider social malaise', a major component of which was the lack of employment opportunities in their area.	There are connections between economic disadvantages, family unemployment and rejection of schooling and non-participation.	Method: study of 250 young people aged 16-24 living in peripheral housing estates in Sunderland. Source: Wilkinson (1996)
FE		For many dropping out is based upon a desire to follow a different career path. They do so for a wide variety of reasons, including changing interests, their experience at college, and outside influences. The students had complex and varying sets of 'needs' which were not amenable to any simple formulation.		Method: qualitative study of the college experiences of 49 FE students who were repeatedly interviewed over a period of three years. Source: Bloomer and Hodkinson (1999) in College Life: the voice of the learner, Further Education Development Agency (FEDA)
GNVQs in Further	74% of the GNVQ students completed their	Main reason for drop-out was that 'the course	Drop-out linked to prior low GCSE	FEDA (1998)

Education	full award or their first year (and were progressing to their second year), 16% had withdrawn before completion and 10% had only partly completed.	was not right for them', and dissatisfaction with the course (wrong course choice, lack of interest, poor teaching). The amount and timing of assessments, particularly portfolio assessments) was a major cause of dissatisfaction. 25% of non-completers had left because they had found employment.	attainment.	
Further Education and Higher Education		Distinguished reasons for early withdrawal from a course from those which lead to later withdrawal. Reasons for early withdrawal include: - frustrated expectation of course/ institution - inappropriate/rushed course choice - lack of preparedness or insufficient background knowledge of subject - workload and time commitment greater than anticipated - lack of academic skills such as essay writing, note taking - difficulties in settling in and integrating into social and academic life - lack of support from 'significant others'. Factors associated with later withdrawal include: - changes in personal circumstances - work-related factors - achievement of desired goals - financial problems - domestic commitments or problems - long duration of programme of study (leading to demotivation) - apprehension at returning to study after losing continuity - fear of or unpreparedness for examinations.	Reasons for withdrawal vary according to student group, the nature of the institution and the subject studied. Mature students are more likely than those of standard age to give non-academic reasons for leaving a course of study; students studying science or technology subjects are more likely to give academic or course-related [reasons] for withdrawing than those studying arts or humanities.	Method: survey of mature students in further and higher education Source: McGivney (1996)
Youth Training		Most common reasons for leaving early reported by trainees were that they 'obtained a job, they were not earning enough money, and they were not happy with the way the programme was run or they were not getting the training they wanted.' A good experience while on employer placements was critical to the perceived success of the programme and a key determinant of completion.	Females, trainees aged 17 and those with non employed status had the greatest propensity to leave the scheme early. Employment status showed as a very important factor in the modelling.	Method: study of early leavers from youth training schemes Source: Opinion Research Corporation International (1999)
Further Education		Found that students often left courses for a combination of reasons, and that 60% of these reasons were unrelated to the course or college. The most common were job changes and illness.		Method: study of 400 adult drop-outs from FE Source: Frank and Houghton (1997)
Further Education Colleges in London		Staff felt that retention problems were closely linked to the marketing success of their colleges in bringing in a wider range of students, and the pressure that colleges were under to recruit students. The staff felt (but		Method: views of FE staff in five London colleges. Source: Spours (1997)

		could not prove) that different courses had different retention rates and that those with the better rates tended to be at higher levels and have a clearer vocational focus while those with lower retention rates were at lower levels and were more 'generic'.		
A Level Students in FE	They found an overall attrition rate (based on the number of enrolments) of 19.6%.	Propensity to drop-out related more to the individual's decision about education than about particular courses.	Concludes that 'students' prior attainment at GCSE is a major explanation of the rate of drop-out and more important than the effects which may be attributable to the individual colleges'.	Method: analysis of 2648 A Level students in nine English Further Education, sixth form and tertiary education colleges. Source: Fielding, Belfield and Thomas (1998)
AMAs	Completion rates for the Advanced Modern Apprenticeship in England published by the Learning and Skills Council (July 2003) are calculated as the proportion of all leavers over the course of a year who completed the entire framework (therefore are calculated in the same way that the Scottish figures have been in this report). The overall completion rate is given as 26%.		The completion rates for individual frameworks include 33% for construction, 25% for 'business administration and management', 16% for 'retailing, customer service and transportation', and 19% for 'hospitality, sports leisure and travel'.	Source: Learning and Skills Council (2003)
Further Education (Scotland)		The study was not designed to provide a systematic investigation of issues associated with drop-out or withdrawal, but they were able to identify some factors which emerged from their interviews. Alongside the intrinsic motivation (or otherwise) of the students, these included external constraints such as finance, personal and family problems (including, for some, unstable or violent family situations), pregnancy and childcare problems, lack of suitable facilities for disabled students, and lack of appropriate provision (i.e. appropriate courses in a convenient location).		Method: study of participants and non-participants in four FE colleges in Scotland, involving 10 focus group interviews with 60 respondents plus 89 life history interviews. Source: Crossnan and Gallacher (2000)
Those aged 16-24 at the time of registering for the MA, and who were registered for a MA through a Local Enterprise Company. The sample covered 6 frameworks - Business Administration, Construction, Customer Service, Hospitality, Motor Vehicles and Retail Distribution.	Completion rates in Scottish Enterprise Network over this period remained relatively stable despite the large increase in starts. In 2000-01 48% of apprentices completed. There was a small rise to 51% in 2001-02, followed by a return to 48% in 2002-03.	Training providers emerged as having a key role that affected completion or non-completion depending on the quality of the training support offered. A good relationship between the apprentice and a training officer/assessor can be crucial to completion. Related to this is the level of information offered to young people about the nature and purpose of the programme they are undertaking. The nature and extent of training provided within frameworks emerged as a key issue associated with completion / non-completion. Personal problems were not reported as a primary reason for non-completion. This was also true of the role of incentives provided by some employers and training providers for young people who complete.	The figures here give an indication of the difficulties there would appear to be in some frameworks for those of a gender not traditionally associated with the sector to both start the MA and then complete it. For example, in construction, not only are females highly unlikely to register for a MA, but the non-completion rate is greater than for males. This pattern is repeated across the other frameworks. Age does not have any particular role to play in whether or not a young person completes their MA.	Method: The research deployed both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative analysis was based on datasets provided by Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Scottish Qualifications Authority. The qualitative data were gathered through interviews with key staff and interviews with former apprentices, both completers and non-completers. Source: Gallacher et al (2004)

knowledge management for the information age

Annex 2: Bibliography

Adult Learning Inspectorate, Annual Report of the Chief Inspector, 2001-02

Anderson, T, Metcalf, H, (2003), Modern Apprenticeship Employers: Evaluation Study, DfES, 14

Angharad, G & Cooper, C, SQW Ltd (2001), Employers' Use and Awareness of Vocational Learning Approaches, DfEE Report No 246

Apprenticeships Task Force Final Report, July 2005

Apprenticeship Task Force (2004), Rural and Regional Dimension Working Group, Factors Influencing Apprenticeships Participation in Rural Areas

Barwuah A, Green M, Lawson L (1997) Additional Support, Retention and Guidance in Urban Colleges, FEDA

Beach, I, (2003), Improving Retention and Achievement through Independent Learning, Paper presented at the Scottish Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Perth, 27-29 November 2003

Bloomer, M. and Hodkinson, P. (1999) College Life: the Voice of the Learner, FEDA Report, Vol 2 No 10

Bloomer, M. and Hodkinson, P. (2000) 'Learning Careers: continuity and change in young people's dispositions to learning', British Educational Research Journal, 6 (5), 583—597

Bostock Marketing Group Limited (2003), Evaluation of Modern Apprenticeships and National Traineeships in Wales: A report for the National Council for Education and Learning Wales, ELWa

Bostock Marketing Group Limited (2003), Individuals' Perspectives of Learning and Employment in Somerset, Learning and Skills Council

Cartmel, F. and Furlong, A. (2000) Youth Unemployment in Rural Areas. York Publishing Company

CRG (2003), Early leavers from training programmes for young people in Mid Wales

Crossnan, B. and Gallacher, J. (2000), Education for All? Further Education, Social Inclusion and Social Justice, Broadcast, 51 (Nov), 14—15

Delyth Morris (2001), Early Leavers from Training Programmes and Further Education Courses in Gwynedd and Ynys Mon, 2000-2001

Davies, P (1999), Student retention in Further Education: a Problem of Quality or of Student Finance?, FEDA

Estyn (2003), Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, 2001-2002

Estyn (2004), Barriers to Completion of Full Training Frameworks by Learners in Work-Based Training

ELWa (2001), An Analysis of Skill Seeker Leavers in North Wales

ELWa (2004), National Learner Satisfaction Survey for Wales 2003

ELWa (2004), National Learner Satisfaction Survey for Wales 2003: Further Education

ELWa (2004), National Learner Satisfaction Survey for Wales 2003: Work Based Learning

FEDA (1998) Non-completion of GNVQs. Research Report No 3

Fielding, A., Belfield, C.R. and Thomas, H.R. (1998) 'The Consequences of Drop-outs on the Cost-effectiveness of 16-19 Colleges', Oxford Review of Education, 24 (4), 487—511

Fuller, A & Unwin, L (2003), Creating a 'Modern Apprenticeship': A critique of the UK's Multi-sector, Social Inclusion Approach, Journal of Education and Work, 16(1):5-25

Frank, F. and Houghton, G. (1997) 'When Life Gets in the Way', Adults Learning, 8 (9), 244—245

Gallacher, J, Whittaker, S, Crossan, B, Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning, Glasgow Caledonian University and Mills, V, Scottish Centre for Work-Based Learning (2004), Modern Apprenticeships: Improving Completion Rates, Glasgow Caledonian University

Hall, J, (2001), Retention and Wastage in FE and HE: A Review, SCRE University of Glasgow

IFF Research Ltd (2000), Modern Apprenticeships: Exploring The Reasons For Non-Completion In Five Sectors. DfEE Report No 217

Kerka, S. (1995) Adult Learner Retention Revisited. ERIC Digest No. 166.

Knight, T and White, C, National Centre for Social Research (2003), The Reflections of Early Leavers and Second Year Participants on the Education Maintenance Allowance Scheme. A Qualitative Study, DfES Report No 411

Kodz, J, Tackey N D, Pollard, E, Dench, S, Tyers, C and Dewson, S (2000), Modern Apprenticeships and National Traineeships: Skills Utilisation and Progression, DFES

Learning and Skills Council (2003) Statistical First Release: ISR/SFR25

Martinez (1995), Student Retention in Further and Adult Education: the Evidence, FEDA

Martinez and Munday (1998) 9,000 Voices: Student Persistence and Drop-out in Further Education, FEDA

McIntosh, S, (2003), The early post-school experiences of the unqualified / low qualified: using the Labour Force Survey to map the 14-16 year old low-achievers, Paper presented at Mapping the 14-16 Year Old Demotivated Conference, May 16th 2003, Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics

McGivney, V. (1996), Staying or Leaving the Course: Non-Completion and Retention, Adults Learning, 7 (6), 133—135

Opinion Research Corporation International (1999), Youth Trainees: Early Leavers Study, DfEE Report No 81

Payne, J, Policy Studies Institute (2001), Work-Based Training for Young People: Data from the England and Wales Youth Cohort Study

Payne, J, Policy Study Institute (2000), Patterns of Participation in Full-time Education after 16: An Analysis of the England and Wales Youth Cohort Study, DfES Report No 307

Spours, K. (1997) 'Issues of Student Retention: an initial study of staff perceptions', Research in Post-Compulsory Education, 2 (2), 109—119

Tennant, R, Brown, R and O'Connor, W, National Centre for Social Research (2005), Level 2 Adult Vocational Learning – A Qualitative Study of Motivations, Experiences and Outcomes, DfES Research No RB664

Thornhill, P, PRISM Management Consultants (2001), A Study into Reasons for Younger Worker Drop-Out from Full NVQs/NVQ Units, DfES Report No 298

Unwin, L, and Fuller, A, (2003), Expanding Learning in the Workplace: Making more of Individual and Organisational Potential, NIACE

Welsh Assembly Government (2006), Ethnic Minority Research, Final Report

West, J. (2004), Improving Completion Rates in Apprenticeship: A Comparative and Numerical Approach, Centre for Labour Market Studies

Wilkinson, C. (1996) 'The Socio-Economic Determinants of Dropping-Out', Education Section Review, 20 (2), 23—28

York Consulting Ltd (2005), Evaluation of Skillbuild: Refine or Refocus?, ELWa York Consulting

Annex 3: Definitions

Early Leaver	Learners with a completion code which indicates that they terminated before the expected end of the learning programme or failed to achieve the requirements of the programme, not including learners that transferred to another learning options.
Non Achievers	Non achievers include those for whom framework/qualification was relevant, but who didn't achieve. Any programme with at least one failing award was classed as an award failing programme.
Non Completer	Outcome code indicates that they terminated before the expected end of the learning programme and did not meet the requirements of the award.
Training framework	Refers to the NVQ, specified key skills and technical certificate that the occupational sector requires, depending on the occupational area. MA and NT frameworks are determined by the SSCs (in conjunction with employers) and Awarding Bodies. Qualification levels are set within the framework, including levels of key skills.
Key skills	Key skills are: application of number; communications; information technology; improving own learning performance; working with others; problem solving. These are available up to level 3 and most at level 4 also. Key skills types and levels required to are determined by the occupation area. These KS types and levels are set and do not depend on the initial assessment of the young person. For example, if a young person is following a hairdressing NT, then they must complete a L2 NVQ, a communication L1 KS, IT L1 KS and Application of Number L1 KS.
Technical certificate	Formal qualifications which the learner studies alongside their NVQ and key skills and which evidence practical underpinning skills and knowledge required by the NVQ. An example is the basic food hygiene certificate for learners following a hospitality framework.
Modern Apprenticeship	Provide young people aged 16-24 with work-based training leading to qualification at NVQ Level 3 or above (cover occupational and key skills).
Skillbuild & Skillbuild Plus	Up to 13 week programmes aimed at people of all ages who are regarded to be either vocationally unfocussed, or in need of support to be able to access employment, education or training. The length of the programme can be shortened or extended at the discretion of Careers Companies or Jobcentre Plus. Skillbuild is a preparatory level programme and Skillbuild+ is a level one programme, open to people of all ages. Prior to August 2004, the programmes were organised as Skillbuild youth (16-18) and Skillbuild adult (25+).
Guarantee Group	The Government's Guarantee to young people that anyone under the age of 18 must be guaranteed a start on a training place within 8 weeks of them first applying.

knowledge management for the information age

Annex 4: Abbreviations

CEU	Credit Equivalence Units
DfEE	(former) Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
ELWa	(former) National Council for Education and Learning
FE	Further Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
HE	Higher Education
IAG	Information Advice and Guidance
FEDA	Further Education Development Agency
LEA	Local Education Authority
LLDD	Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
LLWR	Lifelong Learner Wales Record
LU	Learning Unit
MA	Modern Apprenticeship
MAIG	Modern Apprenticeship Implementation Group
MSD	Modern Skills Diploma
NFPS	National Funding and Planning System
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OPP	On Programme Payments
PPR	Provider Performance Review
PVT	Pre-vocational Training
QA	Quality Assurance
SME	Small or Medium-sized Enterprise
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SSB	Sector Skills Body
SSC	Sector Skills Council
SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualification
VQ	Vocational Qualification
WBL	Work Based Learning
WSLU	Weighted Student Learning Units

Annex 5: Stakeholder Consultations

Organisations represented:

Departments for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills
Careers Wales
Vale of Glamorgan Training Association
ACO Training
Cambrian Training Co
Mid and North Wales Training Groups
Swansea ITEC Ltd
Cardiff ITEC
Welsh College of Horticulture
North Wales Training Ltd

Annex 6: Sample Frame for Learner Survey

		No.	%
Method	Telephone	75	80%
	Face to face	19	20%
Region	Mid Wales	14	15%
	North Wales	43	46%
	South East Wales	18	19%
	South West Wales	19	20%
Gender	Male	44	47%
	Female	50	53%

Annex 7: Provider Performance Review Rating (2005)

Distribution of PPR Rating (2005): Participation and Recruitment

Sector	Lead Region	Providers No	Excellent No	% by area	Good No	% by area	Satisfactory No	% by area	Some concerns No	% by area	Serious concerns No	% by area
Further Education	Mid Wales	3			2	66.7%	1	33.3%				
	North Wales	7	2	28.6%	3	42.9%	2	28.6%				
	South East Wales	10	2	20.0%	6	60.0%	2	20.0%				
	South West Wales	5	1	20.0%	4	80.0%						
Total		25	5	20.0%	15	60.0%	5	20.0%				
Work Based Learning	Mid Wales	8			5	62.5%	3	37.5%				
	North Wales	29	2	6.9%	11	37.9%	13	44.8%	2	6.9%	1	3.4%
	South East Wales	49	2	4.1%	21	42.9%	22	44.9%	4	8.2%		
	South West Wales	23	2	8.7%	12	52.2%	7	30.4%	2	8.7%		
Total		109	6	5.5%	49	45.0%	45	41.3%	8	7.3%	1	0.9%
Grand Total		134	11	8.2%	64	47.8%	50	37.3%	8	6.0%	1	0.7%

Distribution of PPR Rating (2005): Learner Experiences and Achievement

Sector	Lead Region	Providers No	Excellent No	% by area	Good No	% by area	Satisfactory No	% by area	Some concerns No	% by area	Serious concerns No	% by area
Further Education	Mid Wales	3			1	33.3%	2	66.7%				
	North Wales	7	1	14.3%	6	85.7%						
	South East Wales	10	1	10.0%	3	30.0%	6	60.0%				
	South West Wales	5			5	100.0%						
Total		25	2	8.0%	15	60.0%	8	32.0%				
Work Based Lerning	Mid Wales	8		0.0%		0.0%	3	37.5%	3	37.5%	2	25.0%
	North Wales	29		0.0%	4	13.8%	5	17.2%	14	48.3%	6	20.7%
	South East Wales	49	2	4.1%	10	20.4%	14	28.6%	19	38.8%	4	8.2%
	South West	23		0.0%	3	13.0%	5	21.7%	11	47.8%	4	17.4%

knowledge management for the information age

	Wales											
Total		109	2	1.8%	17	15.6%	27	24.8%	47	43.1%	16	14.7%
Grand Total		134	4	3.0%	32	23.9%	35	26.1%	47	35.1%	16	11.9%

Annex 8: College Comparisons

	Total	Did not complete LP		Completed LP but did not achieve	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%
North Wales					
Deeside College	14,926	1,236	8.3%	113	0.8%
Coleg Llandrillo	16,833	1,771	10.5%	6,359	37.8%
Coleg Llysfasi	3,900	192	4.9%	7	0.2%
Coleg Menai	6,154	893	14.5%	189	3.1%
Welsh College of Horticulture	6,515	163	2.5%	166	2.5%
Yale College	18,618	998	5.4%	146	0.8%
Mid Wales					
Coleg Ceredigion	3,770	495	13.1%	312	8.3%
Coleg Harlech/WEA (North)	6,089	289	4.7%	325	5.3%
Coleg Meirion Dwyfor	3,123	15	0.5%	22	0.7%
Coleg Powys	7,068	633	9.0%	116	1.6%
South West Wales					
Coleg Sir Gr	11,308	43	0.4%	404	3.6%
Gorseinon College	3,709	263	7.1%	95	2.6%
Neath Port Talbot College	11,161	1,400	12.5%	1	0.0%
Pembrokeshire College	6,108	1,013	16.6%	1,472	24.1%
Swansea College	19,365	1,532	7.9%	286	1.5%
South East Wales					
Barry College	6,869	766	11.2%	314	4.6%
Bridgend College	12,575	1,564	12.4%	310	2.5%
Coleg Glan Hafren	10,913	3,946	36.2%	1,429	13.1%
Coleg Gwent	38,773	4,141	10.7%	549	1.4%
Merthyr Tydfil College	3,774	528	14.0%	1	0.0%
Coleg Morgannwg	14,427	1,901	13.2%	314	2.2%
St David's Sixth Form College	918	78	8.5%	1	0.1%
WEA South	8,680	502	5.8%	16	0.2%
YMCA	3,808	90	2.4%	22	0.6%
Ystrad Mynach College	9,044	635	7.0%	42	0.5%
Source: LLWR dataset, leavers on programmes with end dates between Sept 04-Sept 05					

FE College Non Completion and Achievement