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Research into Training for Young
Adults aged 19 to 24 who are Not in
Education, Employment or Training
(NEET)

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RESEARCH

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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

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Executive summary

Background

The high number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is a prominent feature of the challenging economic environment in the UK. Increasing young people's participation in learning, skills training and work is central to addressing this issue as well as stimulating economic growth and facilitating social mobility. The scale of youth unemployment is shaping current policy and practice.

The Department of Business, innovation and Skills (BIS) provided additional funding for training in the academic year 2011/2012 for young adults aged 19-24 who are NEET which will build on existing capacity in colleges and the third sector organisations. The funding was intended to allow providers to offer flexible vocationally-oriented programmes, personalised learning and individual intensive support with an emphasis on developing employability skills. Providers were expected to get participants to a point where they could undertake further training and progress into an Apprenticeship or other form of employment. BIS commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to carry out research to establish how well colleges and training providers were able to prepare learners for further learning, Apprenticeships and other work, and to highlight what further actions they might need to take to secure such outcomes in the future.

Key Findings

The research explored the nature of the recruitment strategies and provision, the perceived impact of the training programmes and the learners' journeys and attitudes to learning.

Nature of Recruitment and Provision

Further education (FE) and third sector organisations interpreted the purpose of the funding broadly to deliver provision for young people, 19-24 year olds, who are NEET to address their shorter-term needs, such as increasing their self esteem and confidence and their medium-term needs, for example to support them to progress either by achieving, or accessing, further qualifications or training. Ultimately the intention was to facilitate young people's progress and enable them to access sustainable employment in the longer-term.

Typically provision included a range of training including employability skills, basic or foundation skills, life skills and vocational courses offering technical skills training in different sectors. A focus on making the learning environment as realistic as possible to the world of work was a common feature of the training provided.

Third sector organisations were more likely to use the funding to develop new approaches to engage young adults while, in contrast, FE colleges were more likely to use the funding to enhance existing provision and to extend its availability by offering

more places to young adults. Providers' views indicated that there was a lack of clarity about meeting perceived funding criteria in terms of learner eligibility and, in the case of third sector organisations (who submitted application forms), meeting perceived funding conditions, such as when the funding should be used by and how it could be used. Further common explanation for all provider types would enable them to work with the minimal funding restrictions.

Partnership working was a key feature of the training provision. The evidence indicates that one focus of the additional funding was to help further develop partnerships. Partnerships were recognised to strongly facilitate the delivery of bespoke, bite-sized and responsive training and support, as elements can be shared with, or sub-contracted to, organisations with the relevant knowledge, skills and capacity. For example, Jobcentres and housing associations play a significant part in referring young adults to the training providers. Providers were mainly positive about their working relationships with partners. However, there were challenges reported with working with JCP. As, although partners welcomed the opportunity to further relationships, challenges were attributed to high staff turnover in Jobcentres, insufficient opportunities to share information, and inconsistent approaches to skills conditionality, referral and data sharing. Regular contact and the development of a shared agenda, both at the strategic and operational level, are important aspects in overcoming these challenges.

Effective approaches to reaching and recruiting young adults included through referral routes from partners and word of mouth. Social media was becoming more frequently used as a successful way of recruiting young people and Facebook and Twitter were used by about a third of providers. Challenges with recruitment included young people dropping out between referral and starting the course, provider websites in need of further development and reaching hard-to-reach groups.

Providing one-to-one, individualised support and offering short, interactive, practical courses that were varied in content were considered important to maintain learner engagement. In addition, adopting a flexible and varied approach to making courses relevant and ensuring they meet the needs of individuals and employers was commonly identified as an effective approach to help learners progress.

Employers played a key role in training provision. JCP and employers need to work together to deliver training tailored not only to the needs of local employers but also to young adults, for example combining work experience and a guaranteed interview. These relationships were seen to be enhanced by having provider staff who are released to work with partners.

The perceived impact of the training programmes

The provision was widely reported, by provider staff and learners, to have had a positive impact on learner confidence, aspirations, motivation to progress into employment and skills development. The learners particularly appreciated the personalised support provided by tutors. There was some early evidence of progression, with approximately one third of those young people who responded to a follow-up email survey reporting that

they had progressed to employment, apprenticeships, further education or voluntary positions.

Further impact of the additional funding was reported to be that providers had been able to extend their reach to more young adults and the planning and delivery of provision. There was also evidence that partnerships had been developed through the expansion of delivery organisations and the opportunity to build referral routes.

The learners' journeys

The learners came from diverse backgrounds and were at a wide range of educational levels. The majority had left school with qualifications and approximately one-third had completed at least one course subsequent to leaving school; just over a quarter had left school early with no or very few qualifications. Many were in need of further developing their basic literacy and numeracy skills, and on the whole, the majority appeared to lack self confidence and self esteem. All learners were looking for work either in the shorter or longer term.

The young adults in this study fell into the following groups according to their personal characteristics and their experiences: those facing multiple, complex barriers and not ready to progress; those facing multiple, complex barriers and ready to progress; those perceived to be able but lacking in direction; those perceived to be able and who have plans; and those who are well-qualified but cannot find a job. This segmentation analysis has facilitated a more in-depth understanding of this group of young adults and enables the provision of support to be shaped more closely to a young adult's needs.

The young adults participating in the training valued the one-to-one support, attention and interest shown in them by tutors and the direction and guidance provided. The evidence suggests that the tutors were successful in delivering the mentoring, careers guidance or the practical qualifications (either in literacy, numeracy or in vocational areas) that enhanced young people's confidence sufficiently to enable them to cope with establishing the most appropriate progression route for them.

Implications for policy and practice

Overall the evidence from this research shows that the learners reached through this programme are, on the whole, benefitting from, and appreciative of, this opportunity and, on completion, are more resilient and better able to plan a productive future.

In terms of the future, it is important that providers work with partners to achieve a common understanding of the requirements to facilitate the progression of young adults to further training or employment. Additionally, providers indicated that 'ring fenced' funding is needed both to stabilise funding for this age group (i.e. young people aged 19 to 24 who are NEET) and to enable provider plans to be formed and realised for this group of young people. Flexibility of funding is also important to ensure that providers can meet the needs of their local communities and the young adults they serve by providing appropriate programmes. It was pointed out that plans to continue this work are vulnerable as they are largely reliant, especially in the case of the third sector organisations, on the continuation of funding.

Furthermore, if providers are to meet the challenge of recruiting more young adults, they need to be able to secure the funding to create the capacity to learn from early experiences (with regard to, for example, how to recruit and engage these young adults and how to understand them better and provide the tailored careers education and guidance needed) and enhance future provision.

Young adults overwhelmingly appreciate flexible provision related to the world of work and the personalised, one-to-one support and interest shown in them. These features are essential to engage young adults, raise their levels of self-confidence and prepare them for further education, training (including apprenticeships) and employment. The further development of careers information, advice and guidance (with an emphasis on providing direction and 'road maps', in terms of, for example, more information on apprenticeship requirements and how to access them) to support young people and direct them to specific jobs and careers is necessary.

Although mindful of cost, providers could also consider follow-up strategies, such as keep-in-touch schemes both between providers and young adults and between the young adults so support networks can develop, for when young adults complete the training. Social media networks could facilitate these networks and, for example networks between learners would incur no extra cost. Similarly, providers would appreciate networking opportunities to exchange good practice, both in terms of ways to sustain the programmes and in terms of creative approaches that can be replicated.

Methodology

The overall aim of the evaluation was to establish how well providers were able to prepare young people, aged 19 to 24, who are NEET for apprenticeships and other work, and what additional actions they might need to take to secure such outcomes in the future. The research design comprised initial consultations and telephone interviews with stakeholders to gain a wide perspective on the contribution and value of the training programme. Fieldwork visits were conducted with 20 providers, including 70 interviews with staff in third sector organisations, further education (FE) colleges and adult education centres and 85 interviews with learners (including one focus group). Interviews were conducted between April and July 2012. In addition email follow-up interviews were conducted with 29 young adults.

1. Introduction

1.1 Policy background

The high number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is a prominent feature of the challenging economic environment in the UK. Increasing young people's participation in learning, skills training and work is central to addressing this issue as well as stimulating economic growth and facilitating social mobility. The policy landscape for training young people who are NEET is high profile and far reaching. The economic and social policy dimensions are linked: equipping young people to make successful transitions from education to work will improve social inclusion, enhance their wellbeing and maximise their contribution to the economy and society (Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations Commission on Youth Unemployment, 2011). Government policy responses are based on three principles (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2010b): skills can play a pivotal role in creating a fairer society; meeting skills needs is a responsibility to be shared by government, employers and citizens; and providers freed from bureaucratic control can respond more effectively to the skills needs of business and learners.

The scale of numbers of young people who are NEET and youth unemployment in particular, and related concerns about a lost generation, are shaping current policy discourse. One in five (21.5 per cent) young people aged 16-24 is unemployed (1.01 million), (ONS, 2012). Around 778,000 young people aged 19-24 (18.5 per cent) are NEET (DfE, 2012). The NFER's research (Sims *et al.*, 2001; Golden *et al.*, 2002; Spielhofer *et al.*, 2003) indicates that while some young people become NEET owing to lack of appropriate training courses and jobs, others have become disengaged for personal reasons. These include, but are not limited to, negative school experiences, lack of qualifications and low levels of literacy and numeracy, complicated lifestyles and challenging family circumstances, and low levels of confidence and self-esteem. Often there are multiple reasons for a young person becoming disengaged. An NFER study (Spielhofer *et al.*, 2010) found that the main barriers and constraints to participation in education and training relate to finance, transport, availability of provision and young people's knowledge and awareness of the options available to them. These barriers, which relate to 16 and 17 year olds, are echoed in findings on 19-24 year olds presented in this research report.

Young people who are NEET are not a homogenous group and there is considerable churn as they move in and out of courses and temporary jobs. However, they face increasing challenges in getting jobs because, as UKCES (2012) has noted, there are long-term structural as well as cyclical reasons for contractions in the youth labour market. NFER's segmentation analysis (Spielhofer *et al.*, 2009) showed that there are different sub-groups of 16 to 18 year old young people who are NEET: young people who are open to learning; undecided; and sustained. A study by the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (BIS, 2012 forthcoming) produced a NEET segmentation based on 'Learning Status' which comprised five groups: recent experience of being NEET; applied for a course; looking for learning opportunities; want to learn in the future; and no plans regarding learning. Further research (Allen *et al.*, 2012) endorses the view that young people, aged 16 to 24, described as NEET are not a homogenous group. They describe core or sustained young people who experience long-term disengagement; floating or 'at

risk' young people who may be dissatisfied with opportunities or are most vulnerable to economic downturn and shifting labour market requirements; and cyclical or in transition young people who are likely to re-engage in education, training and the workforce in the short term, and who tend to have a more positive outlook.

Driven by a vision to improve adults' skills as a contributor to economic performance, the coalition government has initiated system-level reform of training infrastructure, investment and provision in England. Equipping young adults with the type of experience, skills and qualifications which will enable them to gain employment and be a foundation for their career development is a key component of this reform agenda. The BIS strategy document, *Skills for Sustainable Growth* (BIS, 2010b) underlines the reason for focusing intervention on young adults: *'Young people suffered disproportionately from unemployment as a result of the recession, and those unemployed in their youth are more likely to be unemployed throughout their lives'* adding that *'skills have the potential to transform lives by transforming life chances and driving social mobility'* (p. 5). A related BIS strategy document, *Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth* (BIS, 2010a), identifies the following skills investment priorities: supporting young people's transitions to work; improving their functional levels of literacy and numeracy; and helping job seekers to gain relevant skills.

There has been further intensive government-led strategy development to assist young people who are NEET and to increase young adults' participation in education, training and employment. For example, the government's strategy for social mobility, *Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers* (HM Government, 2011b) highlights the importance of early intervention to prevent young people becoming NEET because being in this group at age 16-18 means that young people *'are more likely by age 21 to be unemployed, earn less, receive no training, have a criminal record and suffer from poor health and depression, compared with their peers who were in education or work between 16 and 18'* (p. 44). The strategy sets the policy direction by underpinning systemic reform with the following principle: access to learning and earning opportunities will be widened through the development of rigorous courses and qualifications *'that have real, widely recognised value, opening the doors to higher learning and work'* (p. 45). Endorsing the conclusions of the Wolf Review of Vocational Education (2011), the strategy states that improving the quality of vocational education is a priority because this is *'beneficial for social mobility, ensuring that young people on vocational routes, currently disproportionately drawn from disadvantaged backgrounds, are studying courses of real worth, rather than channelled into low impact, low value learning'* (p. 46). The government gives a commitment to reform the further education and skills system to give learners the funding, support and information they need to make the right choices for their future which is also promulgated by the BIS *New Challenges, New Chances* (2011) planning document.

The government's participation strategy, *Building Engagement, Building Futures* (HM Government, 2011a) sets out priorities to provide more effective pathways to education, training and employment. The strategy states the government's intention to provide *'a strong, rich offer of further learning from 18, both for those who wish to pursue higher education or higher training, and those who need to gain the skills required for employability'*. It emphasises that: *'We will put learners at the heart of the system and ensure they can access the training they need to get into work'* (p. 36). The measures being taken include reforming the Apprenticeship programme, giving colleges and training organisations more flexibility to respond to local needs, ensuring that qualifications meet

employer and individual needs and encouraging the Work Programme and skills providers to work together to assist young people *'who are least likely to find work because they don't have the skills and experience employers are looking for'* (p. 38).

A key feature of the participation strategy is the Youth Contract, a £1 billion investment over the next three years. The Youth Contract offers a variety of additional assistance for unemployed young people. The ministerial statement states that: *'We know that different young people need different types of support, so this package includes a range of measures to ensure that every 18-24 year old who finds themselves unemployed has the right support, at the right time, to help them find a job and move into employment'* (DWP, 2011, p. 1). The measures include:

1. 160,000 wage incentives to encourage employers to take on young people aged 18-24.
2. An additional 250,000 work experience or sector-based work academy places
3. Access to a careers interview with the National Careers Service within three months of a claim to JSA.

It is within this reform environment that BIS increased funding for training in the academic year 2011/2012 for young adults aged 19-24 who are NEET building on existing capacity in colleges and the voluntary and community sector. Providers were encouraged to offer flexible vocationally-oriented programmes based on the Foundation Learning curriculum, personalised learning and individual intensive support. With an emphasis on developing employability skills, the training was intended to prepare participants for further training and equip them to progress to an Apprenticeship (directly or through the Access to Apprenticeship pathway) or to employment.

Providers were expected to deliver some or all of:

- Job outcomes for participants including full-time and part-time employment.
- More individuals able to obtain and successfully complete an Apprenticeship.
- Provision focussed on progression with the expansion of units and awards required by employers, with
- Young people able to progress to full Level 2 qualifications, whether work-based or in college.
- Literacy and numeracy assessments for all young people, and the necessary provision for those that require it.

BIS expected providers to deliver personalised learning and support programmes for young people through enhanced engagement with the National Careers Service and third sector organisations to reach and enrol young people. The learning elements of the training could include:

- Consolidation of outreach engagement through flexible curriculum design and delivery which might start with small steps of learning to support adults to progress to formal skills training, and
- Formal skills training where appropriate units, awards and/or full qualifications directly related to the local labour market and local employers.

The support element could include:

- Work experience
- Counselling and mentoring support whilst on skills provision
- Confidence and self-belief coaching to achieve qualifications
- Individual/small group tutoring
- Basic skills assessment (mandatory for all potential learners unless they have been previously assessed).

The aims of the study and the research methods used are presented below.

1.2 Aims of the study and methodology

The overall aim of the evaluation was to establish how well providers were able to prepare learners for Apprenticeships and other work and learning, and what additional actions they might need to take to secure such outcomes in the future. More specifically the key objectives were to:

- evaluate the effectiveness of the provision in delivering its aims
- understand more about the young adults who participate in the courses and why they chose to participate
- develop BIS's evidence base about young adults aged 19-24 who are NEET.

Methodology

The research design comprised:

- Stakeholder consultations, including three face-to-face strategic consultations with representatives from BIS, the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) to provide insights into the policy impetus driving the establishment of the training programme for 19-24 year old young people who are NEET and the ambitions for its future development. Telephone interviews were also conducted with four organisations representing providers, learners and business, to gain a wider perspective on the contribution and value of the training

programme. The interviews were used to help refine the logic model which underpinned the development of the research instruments.

- Fieldwork visits with 20 providers, including those from third sector organisations, further education (FE) colleges and adult education services. Within each provider, interviews were conducted with a range of staff including strategic, operational and support staff. Narrative eliciting interviews were also conducted with young people participating in the courses.

Sample strategy

The sample frame for potential providers was identified through information provided by BIS detailing 25 third sector organisations and 166 FE and local authority providers that had been awarded additional funding. The sample was selected to ensure a representation of providers across different geographical locations and considered the amount of funding awarded and different sizes of provider.

In total, 70 interviews were undertaken with staff across 10 FE colleges and 10 third sector organisation providers (including two adult education centres that were suggested by local authorities). This included interviews with 20 strategic staff, 36 operational staff and 14 support staff (further details of the sample can be found in Appendix 1). Fewer interviews were undertaken with support staff across providers as in most cases, support was embedded into training courses.

In addition, 85 interviews were conducted with learners¹. We sought to gather the views from a cross-section of learners in terms of age, gender and type of young people who are NEET (i.e. those with fewer barriers who are open to learning or undecided or those with multiple barriers). Nonetheless, in most cases, although providers were tasked with recruiting a cross section of young adults, interviews were conducted with those young adults willing to talk to us, who possibly did not include those with multiple and complex barriers to participation.

Interviews were conducted between April and July 2012. The purpose of the interviews with providers was to explore what courses and support were being delivered and the perceived effectiveness. Wherever relevant, differences by third sector organisations and FE colleges were drawn out. The learner interviews sought to explore influences in their decisions to take the course and what they felt worked well and not so well in terms of their past and current education, employment and support.

Contact details and permissions were collected from young adults who were interviewed during case study visits. Those who wished to participate were sent an online follow-up survey to ask them about their current status and further reflections on their course. This survey was administered three to four weeks after their interview and consisted largely of closed-response questions. The survey was administered to 68 young adults by email and a further 14 by text message. A series of reminders were administered by email and text message and we received a total of 29 responses to the survey.

¹ This includes one focus group with seven learners.

1.3 Structure of the report

Chapter 2 explores the nature of the provision for young people, 19-24 year olds, who are NEET including the extent to which the course/support had changed as a result of the additional funding. Chapter 3 discusses the types of partnerships that have been developed or strengthened as a result of the provision. Chapter 4 examines the approaches that have been used to reach, recruit, engage, and maintain engagement of young adults in the training.

The learner journey is explored in Chapter 5, including their education and employment histories, how they found out about the course and the factors that have influenced their decision to take up the course. Views on learners' ideal future are also discussed. Chapter 6 outlines the perceived impact of the additional funding on young people who are NEET and on the provider. Learners' perceptions of the course and the support they have received and the impact of the course/support is also discussed.

Chapter 7 details plans to improve or develop the provision in the future, including support requirements. Finally, Chapter 8 summarises key findings and presents recommendations.

2. Nature of the provision

This chapter describes the nature of the provision funded by BIS. It begins by outlining the aims and objectives of the provision, as interpreted by providers. This is followed by a detailed exploration of the key features of the provision, followed by a consideration of the extent to which such provision has changed.

Key findings

- *Aims and objectives:* FE and third sector organisations interpreted the purpose of the funding broadly to deliver provision for 19-24 year olds which ranged from addressing their shorter-term needs to enabling them to access sustainable employment in the longer-term.
- *Features:* The funding was used to support a range of training including employability skills, basic or foundation skills, life skills and vocational courses offering technical skills training in different sectors. A focus on making the learning environment as realistic as possible to the world of work was a common feature of the training provided.
- *Changes:* third sector organisations were more likely to use the funding to develop new approaches to engage young adults while, in contrast, FE colleges were more likely to use the funding to enhance existing provision and to extend its availability by offering more places to young adults.

2.1 Aims and objectives of provision

Amongst both FE colleges and third sector organisations a wide variety of aims and objectives of this provision was reported ranging from those which focused on the shorter-term, or the more immediate, needs of 19-24 young people who are NEET, to those which focused on the longer-term outcomes which they anticipated for this group.

Across all types of providers the most common perception, was that this funding was aimed at supporting progression to further education or employment, closely followed by the need to increase young adults' employability and readiness for work amongst young adults. A small number considered the funding was to be used to address high levels of youth unemployment.

The one exception to the similarity between FE colleges and third sector organisations was that third sector organisations were more likely to consider that the funding also needed to re-engage 19-24 young people who are NEET in learning and provide support

for the additional needs of 19-24 young people who are NEET (or additional to that which is normally given) e.g. building their confidence in their ability to learn.

Employing the funding to experiment with, and test, new learning and training provision was only explicitly mentioned by a small number of providers. However, this perception is not borne out by the number which reported they have introduced new provision as a result of the funding. Six of the ten providers which indicated they had delivered new provision had introduced a new course(s) for this group of young people (see Section 2.3).

In contrast, a similar sized group of providers held the view that the funding was too restrictive. Perceptions of the limitations placed on the funding included the views that:

- it could only be spent on provision leading to the achievement of qualifications restricting the potential for innovation. For example, one FE college highlighted that it had not been able to use the funding for marketing or support outside the classroom (or otherwise ‘innovate’) based on its perception that the rule governing their Adult Single Skills budget was applicable to this additional funding (reported by two FE colleges)
- the overall length of time to deliver the provision was too short-term to offer work experience placements and still achieve the outcomes which were expected to be delivered under the contract (reported by a third sector organisation)
- it was perceived that specific eligibility conditions needed to be applied to the learners accessing the provision. For example, one provider perceived that, although NEET, those young people with a Level 2 qualification, or above, were ineligible to participate in the provision supported by this funding (reported by a third sector organisation).

2.2 Key features of provision

2.2.1 Focus of provision

The additional funding supported delivery of a wide array of training provision with foci and content ranging from any combination of employability skills, basic or foundation skills, life skills (sometimes also referred to as softer skills) and vocational courses (or units embedded in a course) offering technical skills training in different sectors.

The majority of provision built in some form of employability skills training with examples including how to search for jobs, writing job applications or CVs, career planning, preparation and skills for job interviews and/or in how to approach employers.

Vocational skills training (either as ‘taster’ courses or as a full qualification) was offered by most providers in a number of different sectors including: retail; hospitality; catering; beauty; health and social care; childcare; business administration; construction; horticulture, security and motor vehicle maintenance. This training was offered in the context of both new and existing provision as the following examples illustrate:

One provider has a business background [and] they usually deliver management qualifications and are interested in working in a similar way with this different group. [We] are interested to see how this business approach works, and whether clients will have different outcomes from those following more traditional paths.

[Strategic Interviewee]

[We have] extended our existing motor vehicle maintenance training to offer it to 19-24 year olds...this has given us the opportunity to work with people that we were having to turn away....

[Strategic Interviewee]

The basis of the course is the Level 2 technical certificate used in an apprenticeship in Business Administration

[Operational Interviewee]

There were few differences between the provision offered by FE colleges and third sector organisations and, where they existed, were more nuanced, than distinctive, variations. For example, third sector organisations placed a slightly stronger emphasis on improving learners' ability to engage with learning or developing their soft skills. Examples include:

- new provision such as a course on 'realising your potential' focusing on an appreciation of diversity and relationship building, linking personal development (such as building confidence) with the delivery of employability skills and offering a music course at the outset of the programme to enable learners to familiarize themselves with the learning environment and their peers in the group.
- building on existing provision to offer self-belief coaching and employment rights and responsibilities as part of the overall training package.

2.2.2 Types of qualification available

Almost all providers offered opportunities to gain either a qualification (at levels ranging from Pre-Entry to Level 2) or an industry-relevant certificate or licence. Qualifications commonly offered by both FE colleges and third sector organisations included Level 1 employability (or work skills) awards, a Forklift certificate or licence and a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card. In addition, both types of provider offered learners the flexibility to gain formal recognition of their achievements according to their ability and needs e.g. by enabling learners to pursue qualifications at award, certificate and diploma levels.

Subtle differences existed in the qualifications offered by either FE Colleges or third sector organisations. FE Colleges were more likely to offer qualifications linked to specific employment possibilities (such as jobs in security and construction sectors). In contrast, third sector organisations offered Level 1 qualifications in a greater range of vocational areas.

2.2.3 Duration of provision

The majority of training provision was characterised by providers as short, part-time courses or programmes with durations which ranged from one day to five months, according to providers. Common to the majority of providers was the offer of:

- flexible training which meant that course length depended on learners' ability and their level of need
- weekly attendance of no more than 16 hours per week to ensure learners could continue to receive Job Seekers' Allowance.

2.2.4 Method of delivery

The funding was used to support the use of various methods of delivery both in terms of the types and location of activity through which learning has been provided. Learning activities included working in groups or teams, project work, peer mentoring, role play, workshop sessions, talks from employers and, in the case of at least two providers, work experience placements.

Delivery in classroom settings was a common response although other, less traditional settings have been employed by providers. Examples included a church (chosen for its 'neutrality'), a self-contained centre focusing specifically on skills training for the unemployed (located on campus but physically separate to the main FE college buildings) and a dedicated vocational training centre.

Amongst several providers a common hallmark of delivery, irrespective of the type of provider, was the focus on making the learning environment as realistic as possible in relation to the world of work. Examples include delivering:

- learning in a simulated warehouse environment in which learners learn all the technical skills combined with visits to employers to see these skills being used for real
- interview training which requires learners to role play by dressing up on the day, taking turns to sit in front of an interview panel and answer a sequence of questions
- employability skills delivered in an FE college's shop facility based on the local high street
- practical, hands-on vocational training in motor vehicle maintenance provided in a garage setting.

Innovative approaches included two providers which decided to use volunteering as the vehicle for delivering, or embedding, learning by:

- setting up a volunteering charity to provide a specific environment in which to deliver learning

- bringing in employers to work with a group of young adult learners on a group project which included organising their own volunteer experiences and carrying out the volunteering.

A focus on facilitating progression specifically to apprenticeships did not appear to be an explicit focus across the case studies as a whole. However, there were some partial exceptions to this. In one instance, for example, a provider had chosen to employ an apprenticeship adviser to inform young people about apprenticeship opportunities.

2.2.5 Support

Almost all providers reported that they had been able to offer more personalised, one-to-one mentoring and pastoral support as a result of the funding and there are no distinctive variations between FE Colleges and third sector organisations in this respect. Most commonly, support was embedded in courses in various forms targeting different support needs ranging from:

- conducting pre-entry assessments to determine whether additional support was required to support learners with health-related barriers to learning
- supporting the learner to progress to employment by, for example, assigning a personal job coach to a learner to advise or guide them in their job choices and career planning
- offering additional levels of personal mentoring support to help them remain in their chosen learning programme such as support workers who mentor young adults with mental health issues.

2.2.6 Use of partners in delivering provision

There was minimal evidence that providers drew on existing partnerships to directly deliver learning and training provision (see Section 3 for more in-depth exploration of wider partnership working including examples of providing support to learners). In the few circumstances where this was the case all the arrangements varied as illustrated below.

- An FE college works in partnership with a voluntary sector partner organisation which oversees work experience placements for learners and, as part of this arrangement, learners are assigned a relationship manager for the duration of their course
- A tutor in an FE college works closely with an external, private-sector provider of ICT courses to jointly monitor learners' progress and attendance
- A third sector organisation received conceptual design and development support (such as the contribution of ideas and attendance at meetings) from the adult skills team in its neighbouring local authority with which it had an existing partnership
- Employers deliver talks on developments in industry as part of a back to work programme offered by a third sector organisations.

2.3 Effect of funding on learning and training provision

The additional funding for training for 19-24 young people who are NEET has led to a number of different changes in the learning and training provision offered by the case-study FE colleges and third sector organisations. In almost equal numbers, providers decided to either:

1. introduce new provision in the form of a new course for, or adopting a new approach to working with, this group of young adults; or
2. build on their existing provision to reach more learners by offering additional places or enhancing its relevance to 19-24 year olds.

As Table 1 below shows, there were differences between FE colleges and third sector organisations in this respect, based on the providers' own characterisation of the changes they have made to their provision. Third sector organisations were more likely to have used the funding to develop new approaches to engage young adults. In contrast, FE colleges were more likely to have used the funding to enhance existing provision and to extend its availability by offering more places to young adults. Two providers reported that they had made both types of change.

Table 1: Extent of changes to learning and training provision by type of provider

	Delivered new provision (n)	Enhancement, or extension, of existing provision (n)
Further Education Colleges	3	9
Third sector organisations	7	3
Totals	10	12

Note: Figures may not reflect sample of providers exactly as some providers have introduced new provision as well as enhancing or extending existing provision.

2.3.1 Motivation for change

Three reasons were commonly cited by providers as their motivation for the changes they made to their learning and training practices, only one of which was more likely to be cited by FE colleges. Specifically these reasons were that:

- they were already working with groups of young adults aged 19-24 years, were aware of the demand for provision in this age range and wanted to offer places on courses specifically for this group
- the recent increase in focus on youth unemployment meant they considered the funding as an opportunity to help young people get back into work

- they perceived the funding as an opportunity to maintain their ethos of being responsive to the needs of their local communities and/or employ their expertise in outreach work based on their history of trying to reach specific groups in the community. The majority of providers which identified this as a motivating factor were FE colleges.

Beyond enhancing learner confidence and overall readiness for progression, providers found it difficult to comment on the relative effectiveness of the learning and training provision they chose to deliver with the funding, partly due to the early stages in the delivery of the programme and partly due to finding it difficult to attribute effectiveness to the additional funding (see chapter 6 for more detail). However, one FE college provider stated that the changes it had made to its provision were based on its knowledge of what works with this group of young people, stating that:

We're running tried and trusted programmes that we know work with young people, so it's given greater opportunities for us to reach more.

[Strategic Interviewee]

2.3.2 Extent to which provision was targeted at different groups of 19-24 year old young people who are NEET²

A few providers highlighted a distinction between targeting their delivery and targeting their recruitment of specific groups of young people who are NEET. For example, although these providers indicated they had not targeted their learning and training provision, they had made efforts to target their engagement of specific groups of young people who are NEET. This included young people from particular ethnic minority communities and those young people who have learning difficulties and disabilities (one third sector organisation and one FE college provider, respectively). In relation to the latter group of young people, the provider explained the rationale for targeting recruitment as follows:

The outreach work is targeted on the hardest to reach outside the college setting which includes those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Our instinct is that we need something that is completely not to do with a course. There are a group of young people who are never going to come in as their first contact to do a course, there have to be other ways of doing things. But there isn't the funding to do that; everything is tied to a course. We've been doing this work for a long time, and we know it's an issue for this particular group.

[Strategic Interviewee]

² For the purposes of this study these groups are 'Open to Learning' (OTL), 'Sustained' and 'Undecided' young people who are NEET.

Partnership working, which is an important referral and delivery mechanism, is discussed in the next chapter.

3. Partnership working

This chapter examines how FE and third sector organisations worked with partners including referral organisations and employers. It also assesses the extent to which partnership working added value to the provision of training and support for this client group of young people.

Key findings

- The funding, used to introduce or extend programmes of training and support in partnership with other organisations, has facilitated enhanced partnership working across a number of organisations.
- Partners (such as JCP and housing associations) play a key role in referring learners to providers, preparing young adults to take up training opportunities and delivering programme content and support. Partnership working is key to addressing the holistic needs of young people.
- Partnership working strongly facilitates the delivery of bespoke, bite-sized and responsive training and support as elements can be shared with, or sub-contracted to, organisations with the relevant knowledge, skills and capacity.
- Providers were mainly positive about their working relationships with partners. Providers generally drew upon long established relationships with partners to recruit learners. While acknowledging the further development of relationships with Jobcentres that this programme provided, staff in around half of the case-study areas experienced challenges in working with JCP. They attributed these to high Jobcentre staff turnover, insufficient opportunities to share information, and inconsistent approaches to skills conditionality, referral and data sharing. Regular contact and the development of a shared agenda, both at the strategic and ground level, are important aspects in overcoming these challenges.
- Relationships with employers reflected the 'sector-based work academy' model, whereby providers, JCP and employers work together to deliver training tailored to the needs of local employers, combined with work experience and a guaranteed interview.
- Staff whose time has been allocated to work with partners reported that regular contact has enhanced understanding and referral routes. Given the role that partners play it is important that providers have the capacity they need, and the guidance, to further build effective partnerships with JCP,

third-sector organisations, public services and employers.

- Staff in the majority of institutions explained that they worked to develop and build upon new and existing links with partners, while interviewees in around a quarter of case-study areas specifically stated that partnership working had been enhanced as a result of the funding. Where staff were explicit about the link between the funding and partnerships, they reported that some of the funding had been used to subcontract services to other organisations, employ new staff, extend staff contracts or to enable existing staff members to perform a more outward-facing role.

3.1 The role of partners

Interviewees reported that third sector organisations and JCP were key referral partners. To a lesser extent, interviewees also reported that other training providers sign-posted young people to courses. Third sector organisations were reported to be particularly important in engaging ‘harder to reach’ young adults and preparing young people to access training opportunities. Commonly, these organisations were focused on family intervention work, health-related support or delivering housing advice.

The role of partners also extended to the delivery of training and support in some cases. Where there was involvement, third sector organisations tended to have a role in student mentoring and sign-posting to services. Their existing relations with young adults and their expertise in dealing with this clientele meant that they were ideally placed to take on this role.

One support staff interviewee at an FE college explained how typically partners were working together to ensure an holistic approach to support. She explained:

Somebody that goes to their appointment with their Jobcentre advisor is there to prove that they've made four job searches in the last two weeks ... It's not an advice session... they can't do the whole package. For example, they can't tell you about what childcare arrangements are available, or what's available if you have literacy difficulties... there's no element of the journey that looks at that whole picture. And that's what we can do and pull together all those different agencies to address those multiple barriers instead of the Jobcentre advisor who's making sure you're looking for a job.

In some cases, discrete parts of a programme of training and support, such as IT or employability skills were subcontracted to other training providers. In this way, it was clear that partnership working helped facilitate responsive ‘bite sized’, or unitised course delivery.

While some institutions managed work experience placements and information, advice and guidance (IAG) in-house, a few reported that these elements of the programme were contracted to JCP or organisations such as Triage, Maximus and Tribal. In one FE

College, Tribal were training all relevant staff to deliver impartial IAG. One college had developed a close link with a local online jobs' website, who advertised employment and training opportunities and, advertised their site through the radio. This effectively gave the college free marketing.

Staff were generally positive about their relationship with partners, attributing this to their long-standing nature; very often pre-existing partnerships were being extended or enhanced to fit with the needs of this programme, highlighting the flexible approach of organisations involved.

The relationship with JCP was, in many cases, proving more challenging, as discussed below.

3.1.1 Jobcentres

For all, the relationship with Jobcentres was of paramount importance, particularly given its role in referring young adults to programmes of training and support. Young people who are NEET must attend the Jobcentre regularly in order to receive JSA. Therefore, Jobcentre Advisors have unprecedented access to young adults and a key role in directing them to employment and training opportunities.

Staff in around half of the institutions explicitly stated that working with their local Jobcentre was a challenge, with one operational interviewee describing the partnership *'like turning a battleship'*.

Despite the issues presented below, many interviewees felt that their relationship with their local Jobcentres was improving and that this was a result of their persistence in building links, for example through the current programme. Indeed, operational staff tended to be more positive than strategic staff about 'distance travelled', perhaps a reflection of the effort they had personally made. The key issues that interviewees highlighted are below. The responses demonstrate the importance of partnership working to ensure that both parties are fully aware of the other's strategic direction and their latest operational developments, so that shared agendas can be established.

It is important to note that the following feedback reflects the perceptions of interviewees (it is also important to note that Jobcentre staff were not interviewed in this study). Key issues included:

- a perception that their local Jobcentre was not always referring enough candidates or those with the correct profiles to the programmes (a number of providers shared criteria with their Jobcentre such as the requirement that the young person referred is looking for work or has no Level 2 qualification). It is quite possible that this view was due to communication issues, which were a result of some of the following challenges
- a perceived lack of consistency of approach, in general, across Jobcentres. Given that Jobcentres have been given new freedoms to respond to local need, it is quite possible that this is one of the challenges that these new freedoms present

- the reported insufficient flow of information, such as referral documents and inconsistent approaches to data sharing (for example, on progression routes)
- the perceived insufficient extent to which individual Jobcentre Advisors 'buy-in' to the aims of the programme
- a perceived lack of flexibility in some Jobcentres to recurring client appointments that clash with learners' studies or work experience commitments
- a range of different interpretations of skills conditionality. One operational interviewee said 'many of them [the Jobcentre Advisors] say that they don't want to mandate the students as they will lose their benefits if they refuse the place. That seems to be a backward way of thinking about it.'

Interviewees considered communication with their Jobcentre as a critical means to overcome these challenges. They felt that this could sometimes be undermined by a high rate of staff turnover in Jobcentres and the lack of opportunity to fully brief all staff on the aims of their programmes. Further, the reported inconsistency of approach across Jobcentres and, indeed, across staff within Jobcentres, was seen to be a strategic failing of JCP (although it is important to note that Jobcentres have been given a mandate to work according to local need. It is possible that providers are not familiar with this direction and perhaps would benefit from more information in the future). In a few cases, interviewees felt that the challenges were a result of bureaucracy within individual Jobcentres.

Further sharing of changes in strategy would clearly dispel misconceptions. A couple of interviewees felt that the aims of their institution did not necessarily chime with that of JCP and that this would continue to undermine partnership working. For example, an operational interviewee said:

Jobcentres are very target driven to get x number of people into employment, so the college coming along to offer people other options is not helpful to them. There is a conflict between their targets and ours.

An operational interviewee in another college supported this view by saying:

You sense that Jobcentres have targets to move people on, to get them off the unemployment register. You have to be mindful that courses don't prevent them claiming benefits³.

In fact, individual Jobcentres no longer have targets set at a central level and so it may be important to update providers on some of the recent changes to the strategy and workings of JCP.

³ Students can continue to claim JSA where their courses are 16 hours or less a week.

Staff in one college had seen a dramatic change in the culture of their local JCP when a new manager was appointed. The strategic interviewee said, *'he was on the same page as the college really. He knew that we all had to work together. Staff there had always said that it wouldn't work because they'd never successfully worked with a college before. But he ensured a change of mindset and it's going really well now. I laugh at those days now because it was just so different'*.

Others who were also positive about their link with JCP emphasised the amount of time and effort that they have put into building the relationship; many visit their Jobcentre once or more a week to speak with staff or with young people. Of these, one college interviewee had set up a 'live link' between themselves and their local Jobcentre as a method of ongoing communication, while another had located its 'high street college shop' close to their local Jobcentre. In one third sector organisation, a Jobcentre Adviser visited once a month to see learners. This highlighted the importance of regular and close contact with partners in order to facilitate a positive relationship and consistent practice.

3.1.2 Partnerships with employers

Around half of FE providers gave specific examples of how their college was working positively and proactively with employers to deliver the courses. A common theme across case studies was the tailored short courses which met the needs of local employers. This approach reflects the Government 'sector-based work academies' initiative (although only one or two providers specifically made reference to this scheme). Sector-based work academies are one of the 'Get Britain Working' measures and are part of the wider Employer Offer⁴. They require training institutions, employers and the JCP to work together to deliver a programme that lasts for a maximum of six weeks and consists of three elements; pre-employment training; a work experience placement; and a guaranteed job interview. Young adults aged 18 years or older on JSA, and considered 'closer to the job market', are eligible to take part. Interviewees explained that this type of offer met the need of the local economy while providing students with real work experience to support their learning. Examples from our study of this in practice included:

- A two-week course set up at the request of a large hotel chain (who had a number of open vacancies) to prepare young people for hospitality and customer service roles. This included work experience with the hotel chain.
- A large department store asking one FE college to deliver a retail course and the college tailored the content to the needs of the store.
- A college seeking agreement from a large local supermarket to interview all 15 learners on their customer service course. This provided all learners with interview experience and resulted in 10 gaining employment.

⁴ For more information, see <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/sbwa-employer-guide.pdf>

- One college had recruited learners to a health and social care course with a first aid component. They had a guaranteed interview at the end of the course with a large private health company. This college also worked collaboratively with a security firm; the company delivers the technical security training whilst the college delivers employability skills.
- A college that was using the funding to enhance its Apprenticeship offer had organised an event for job seekers. Local employers were asked to attend, as long as they could offer at least one Apprenticeship placement to the young people.

Interviewees explained that partnerships with employers helped to ensure that the training and support matches the needs of the local economy. They reported that regular contact with employers facilitates this, and while some institutions have dedicated employer engagement teams, it was apparent that, in some cases, this task added to the existing role of tutors. They also highlighted the importance of local Labour Market Information as a source of intelligence about skills needs.

3.1.3 Strategic partnerships

Interviewees in a quarter of the case-study areas reflected specifically on the formalisation of partnership working through strategic groups. These often consisted of the local authority (LA), police, youth workers, training providers, JCP, representatives of third sector organisations and, in some cases, local businesses. Further to this, staff in one college explained that their LA had been proactive in developing a Partnership Position Statement which promoted common goals amongst partners and was recognised as good practice by Ofsted. This was described by a member of support staff as *'almost building a shared services approach...it's leading to some synergy'*. Interviewees also explained that strategic partnership boards (such as Employment and Skills boards) provide a good opportunity to share information about current provision for young people who are NEET and to reflect on the skills that young people are gaining. Staff in one of the LA case-study areas had started to pair up organisations who *'wouldn't normally work together'* and were encouraging partners to work together to cross-refer.

Staff whose time had been allocated to work with partners reported that it had made *'an incredible difference'*, explaining that regular contact had enhanced understanding and built on referral routes.

4. Effective approaches used to recruit and engage young adults

This chapter examines the type and effectiveness of approaches that have been used to reach, recruit, engage and maintain engagement of young adults in the training.

Key findings

- Effective approaches to reaching and recruiting young adults included through referral routes from partners and word of mouth.
- Social media was becoming more frequently used as a successful way of recruiting young people and Facebook and Twitter were used by about a third of providers in this study.
- Challenges with recruitment included young people dropping out between referral and starting the course, websites that needed development and hard-to-reach groups.
- Providing one-to-one, individualised support and offering short, interactive, practical courses that were varied in content were considered important to maintain learner engagement.
- Adopting a flexible and varied approach to making courses relevant and ensuring they meet the needs of individuals and employers was commonly identified as an effective approach to move learners towards progression.
- Incentives were frequently used to maintain engagement of young people including providing attendance-based rewards, free food, nursery classes and driving lessons.
- Barriers and challenges to engaging young people included young people's perceived lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, lack of family support and travel expenses. These presented challenges in terms of retention on the courses.

4.1 Recruitment

Providers highlighted a wide range of different methods of recruitment including working with existing partners and using innovative new ways of contacting young people that were harder to reach.

4.1.1 Methods of recruitment

The most commonly mentioned method of recruitment was through Jobcentre referrals with almost all of the providers mentioning that JCP has been involved in some way. This was usually building on an existing partnership between the DWP and the provider. Around a third of the providers had received some mandatory referrals from JCP whereas the other referrals had been on a voluntary basis. The providers reported variable success with their recruitment from JCP as some Jobcentres were reported to refer young people quite frequently whilst other providers (particularly third sector organisations) felt that their local Jobcentre was not as proactive as they would have liked in recruiting young people to their courses. A few of the providers mentioned further discussions with JCP as part of their recruitment drive in order to inform Jobcentre Advisers about the courses. Additionally, some providers were able to make suggestions about who might be suitable for the courses and some providers were able to interview the young people. More detail on partnerships with DWP is provided in Chapter 3.

Although it should be noted that the Connexions service no longer exists, providers frequently mentioned referrals from 'Connexions' and a few providers had also received referrals from housing associations. Providers had contacted local third sector organisations and used community links and council programmes where possible to find young people. These were usually existing partnerships with the provider that were developed for this particular course, although in some cases new links were made. One FE college noted the importance of having staff with dedicated time to build relationships with partners which had helped improve referral channels, extend their reach to learners and strengthen the course with the input of mentors from partner agencies. Providers reported that they had tried to target the local community wherever possible and had attended local job fairs, recruitment events and held open evenings for those actively seeking work or courses already.

Word of mouth was regularly mentioned as a successful method of recruitment for third sector organisations with young people bringing along friends to a course with them or recommending a provider. For example one provider explained *'one of the young adults attending the...training had a younger friend who qualified for the foundation learning programme and because the young adult came on the adult programme, he brought his friend who would never ever have known about the training offered by [third sector organisation] at this provider'*. One third sector organisation had written to all of their previous students who would fit the age category and asked if they were interested in doing another course with them thus building on their existing contacts. Several providers mentioned that it worked well to approach organisations and individuals that young people trusted and had an existing relationship with to help with recruitment for example the housing association.

Less common methods of recruitment mentioned were through recruitment agencies, marketing to young people's parents and through youth offender organisations.

4.1.2 Social Media

Print and social media had been used to recruit locally with adverts in local papers, radio adverts and handing out leaflets and flyers in town centres and also at events and to partners. Social media was becoming more common with about a third of the providers already using it to recruit young people and several other providers mentioning that they would like to in the future. Facebook and Twitter were the methods mentioned by providers and providers also commonly texted or emailed young people to maintain engagement.

Illustration of an effective recruitment strategy via social media

A third sector organisation had been using Facebook adverts as an innovative way of targeting young people to join the courses they had available. They targeted the adverts at those who were 19-24 and from the local area. The adverts would come up on young people's screens whilst on Facebook and if they clicked on the link they were directed to the provider's website with information about the courses. The provider could then monitor who had come to their site through this method. All of the first cohort of learners for this provider were recruited via this method and they commented that it was very cheap costing only £30- £40 per week.

4.1.3 Challenges with recruitment

The research identified some common challenges as follows:

- Several of the providers noted that the drop-out rate between being referred by JCP and starting the course was high and that this had been a problem for them. One college felt that the young person's JSA should be stopped if this was the case but this was not currently happening. The college representative explained '*there are issues with the mandated system because the [JCP] don't want to use sanctions and don't withdraw benefits from those who don't turn up*'. Stronger links with the local Jobcentres could help with this challenge. For example, some providers had been going in to the Jobcentres to conduct interviews and speak to the young people which had been successful.
- Providers usually had a website but these had variable levels of success and several of the providers mentioned that they felt their website needed development. Using ICT and social media was still a developing area for providers and many had already identified that they needed to work on this area in the future.
- Finally, some groups of young people who are NEET were still considered very difficult to target and one third sector organisation commented that they were 'off the radar' for most of the recruitment that they do: '*There really is a limited client group that you can get hold of*'. However, word of mouth recruitment was thought to help with reaching those who were not actively seeking employment or training and providers had to be flexible about course requirements in respect to previous qualifications and experience. One interviewee observed '*it is really hard to reach the 19-24s who have been completely disaffected and the way to do that is [through] word of mouth and peers which works very well.*'

4.2 Engagement

Once providers had recruited the young people, various methods were used to engage and maintain engagement including using a range of teaching and learning methods and using incentives. Ways in which providers helped young people towards progressing into jobs or other training are also discussed.

4.2.1 Range of teaching and learning methods

Providers used a wide range of teaching and learning methods to engage and maintain engagement with young people. These included:

- Structuring the course in a way that was accessible for young people with different circumstances. Regular start times staggered throughout the year were helpful for those who had dropped out of another course or had changed their minds about what they had wanted to do. One provider mentioned that they were open to new starters all year round including the summer which helped recruit more young people.
- Ensuring courses were short in length, broken down into units with regular certificates so if the young people did drop out they would still have some achievements along the way. Regular certificates and unit learning also made the young people feel that they were getting somewhere and progressing which was motivational. Some unit-based courses also allowed young people to choose which sections to work on each time they came in and this added flexibility empowered young people.
- Asking students what they wanted and being responsive to their wants and needs meant that they were more likely to stay on the course.

Providers felt that using an individualised approach with one-to-one personalised sessions, flexibility and choice in courses was key to engagement. As illustrated by the following observation: *'There is no set way to get people to engage, it is about treating everyone as an individual and seeing how they react'*. This one-to-one support was often needed in addition to academic help and providers noted that young people may need practical help and guidance (for example for application forms and job searches), reassurance, help with developing their confidence and encouraging motivation. One operational interviewee spoke about the importance of providing individualised support in addition to the general course delivery: *'I don't think [young adult] would have managed the college application...and things like...childcare bursary and travel support...without someone to sit and say, you do this bit then you do that bit. What they need is a one-to-one mentor as much as a teacher'*.

The evidence also suggests that the approach to delivery, including offering courses that are interactive, practical and varied in content, was important to maintain learner engagement in the course. For example, one teacher observed the importance of: *'...keeping it [course content] hands on. It definitely engages them more than just sitting down learning about it...and it definitely seems to work and they don't mind if you give them some paperwork to fill in if it is related to a job'*. In a small number of cases, flexibility in terms of delivery style was also noted. In one instance, a third sector organisation adopted a different approach to working with a learner who was unable to attend the

course in person due to illness. Instead, he was offered the opportunity to study the units online.

Interviewees mentioned that vocational courses were particularly popular and forming links with local employers was seen as important to show young people possible opportunities for the future. Around a third of the providers included employability skills into the courses so that young people could build their CVs, practice job interviews and gain a better understanding of what employers are looking for in regards to soft skills like presentation techniques. Several of the providers offered a 'work club' or 'job club' at the centres which was often open to all. These elements all kept young people engaged as they focused on what young people could achieve in the future, sometimes gave young people work experience and provided them with a network of contacts for future work possibilities.

Providers had often recruited new and specific staff for new courses including particular roles for mentoring or providing careers information and guidance to the young people. Providing *realistic* impartial information, advice and guidance (IAG) was important as some learners appeared to lack the knowledge required to make an informed decision about progression routes. It was also considered vital for staff to be flexible in *where* they were teaching as providers felt that young people often responded better outside a classroom environment. Therefore several of the providers ran courses outside of the college or classroom set up, in some cases visiting a local community centre/ charity setting so that young people were put at ease and not put off by a school like setting. A FE provider said they felt that using a drop-in facility in town had helped them engage young people: *'It's a much more unthreatening, comfortable environment for them to walk through the door than an intimidating modern college building'*. This also facilitated staff taking a different approach to teaching the young people which involved being very patient and emphasising the differences from school. One support staff interviewee said *'It's really important that nobody treats you like [you would be at] school, and it makes it a smooth transition for someone coming back into education after a gap'*.

4.2.2 Moving learners towards progression in employment, apprenticeships and training

Adopting a flexible and varied approach to make the course relevant and ensure it meets the needs of individuals and employers was more commonly identified as an effective approach to move learners towards progression. One FE provider had a job broker who gathered intelligence about what the employer was looking for and liaised with companies to find out about vacant positions that learners could apply for. In the future, they plan to extend this approach by using five recruitment advisors who will engage with employers to identify job opportunities. Learners are also encouraged to work 'smarter' by approaching employers before vacancies are advertised. In a few cases, third sector organisations noted the importance additionally of being flexible in order to develop a package of qualifications that meet the needs of employers but also fill a gap in terms of learners' experiences.

Employer engagement, including work experience was also mentioned across a quarter of case study areas. One third sector organisation noted that through partnership working with employers, they had been able to refer learners to apprenticeship placements.

4.2.3. Incentives

Various incentives were used by providers to entice young people to start and continue on a course. These included providing rewards for attendance such as free breakfast for the person with the highest attendance each month, group lunches if the group attendance reaches 90 percent or book vouchers. Other incentives included gaining a Care Quality Commission health and safety card, gaining a driving licence or driving theory training, nurseries for parents, free food, music lessons/ gig club, boot camp and on site activities like boxing and playing pool. One provider said that they had specifically introduced the option of driving theory onto the course as it introduced elements of numeracy and literacy but in a way they were interested in. A third sector organisation interviewee commented that supporting young people to learn to drive would also help with the young person's problems with getting to a course or work for the future. Another third sector organisation commented that the young people would not achieve the incentive unless they completed the full course of 13 weeks and this kept them motivated. These incentives were often used as a 'carrot' to get young people involved with the provider in some way and then they could try to get them onto a course. Sometimes the incentives were used to maintain engagement as young people knew they would get an additional benefit from attending. One FE provider noted that their boot camp idea had been successful as: *'our instinct is that we need something that is completely not to do with a course. . . there are a group of young people who are never going to come in as their first contact to do a course; we've been trying to reach them for years, and that's why they're still NEET aged 19-24.'*

4.2.4 Challenges with engagement and maintaining engagement

The main challenges for engagement were the young people's confidence and self-esteem problems, family support and travel expenses which could all lead to a problem for retention on the courses.

Many of the young people were observed by providers to have extremely low levels of confidence and self-esteem and some were reported to have less developed social skills which can cause problems, such as maintaining regular attendance and interacting with other young people. One interviewee observed: *'The challenges are lack of motivation, they are lacking in communication skills and eye contact, the ability to listen and respond. They find it difficult to give any amount of time their attention. You have to learn to access their needs to expand their attention span. Getting them to concentrate on something for more than ten minutes is difficult. They say they spend most of the day sat on the Xbox or on YouTube so it is quick fixes all the time.'* Some of the providers had looked at directly tackling these issues by incorporating team-building exercises, interpersonal skill training and small group work to build up young people's confidence and communication skills.

Several providers commented that the lack of family support (and sometimes family resistance to change) about attendance on courses could prevent the young person from fully engaging and could lead to them potentially dropping out altogether. As mentioned in Section 4. 1.1, some providers decided to market the courses to parents to enable them to see the benefits of the young person going on the course (for example the young person could move out and not be dependent on the family). Finally, some interviewees said that travel expenses were a deterrent for some young people and could potentially create a barrier to attendance. Several of the providers had reimbursed young people for their travel expenses to address this.

5. Learners' personal journeys

This chapter explores the characteristics of the young adults, not in education, employment or training, interviewed. It investigates their reasons for enrolling on the current training, their intentions to complete the courses and their future plans. In contrast to the segmentation outlined by the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (BIS, 2012 forthcoming), where young people are grouped according to their perceived distance from learning, we group learners according to their characteristics. For example we group young people according to the extent of their personal agency, their previous experiences and their motivation to progress. As well as helping to understand the young people, these groupings also suggest the focus of future support.

Key Findings

- The young adults interviewed covered a wide range of educational levels (approximately one-third had completed at least one course subsequent to leaving school, and just over a quarter left school early with no or very few qualifications). Many were in need of further developing their basic literacy and numeracy skills, and the majority lacked self-confidence and self-esteem.
- The majority of young people said that they had either not received any careers guidance or that it had not been helpful. They were motivated to enrol on the current training because they wanted to gain qualifications and acquire useful, new employability skills. They recognised that the course would help them to get a job and they actively wanted to do something to change the circumstances they were currently in. These reasons, and the satisfaction with the level of support provided, inspired all young adults to say that they intended to complete the course.
- The research categorised the young adults into the following groups according to their characteristics and their experiences: those facing multiple, complex barriers and not ready to progress; those facing multiple, complex barriers and ready to progress; those perceived to be able but lacking in direction; those perceived to be able and who have plans; and those who are well-qualified but cannot find a job. As well as furthering our understanding of the diverse range of young people who are NEET the categorisation also offers suggestions for the focus of further careers support.
- Overall, the young adults were very positive about the future and felt more confident to face it. This was largely due to the flexible, personalised support provided on a one-to-one basis in the current training.

5.1 Characteristics of young adults who are NEET

In total 39 of the young adults interviewed⁵ were aged between 19 and 21 and 28 were between 22 and 24. Three were 18 years old and eight were 25 years old or older. Fifty eight were male and 20 were female. All were unemployed and were looking for work, or wanted to study for further qualifications to achieve their desired job.

Of those interviewees who discussed the qualifications they had achieved, approximately one in five young adults said that they had no qualifications, nearly two-thirds said that they had a few qualifications (for example at Level 1, GCSEs grades D to G, or at Level 2, GCSEs grades A to C) and approximately one quarter held Level 3 or higher qualifications (such as level 3 BTECs, A levels, or, in a minority of cases, foundation or honours degrees).

On the whole, the young adults were perceived to be at a wide range of educational levels, although many were described by tutors to be in need of further developing their basic literacy and numeracy skills. Through accounts from the staff and young adults interviewed, and through interviewer observation, the majority of learners appeared to lack self confidence and self esteem. (The challenges associated with engaging young people lacking self-confidence are discussed in Section 4.2.5.)

5.2 Overall reflections on information, advice and guidance, education and employment

5.2.1 Reflections on IAG

Of those that discussed the careers' information, advice and guidance (IAG) they had received at school the majority (approximately four-fifths) felt they had either not received any or that it had not been helpful. For example, one learner described how he remembered receiving no careers' information from either Connexions or the Jobcentre but had '*just heard about new opportunities through family and friends*'. Another, a female learner aged 19, believed that she wanted to be a carer for the elderly when she left school but did not receive the guidance she needed. She explained:

I've never gone through with doing it [training to be a carer] and when I enrolled at college it was for childcare, but in my mind I was so puzzled about what I actually wanted to do, I've not kind of got to where I wanted to be. I would have liked some IAG at school – helping me a bit more, talking to me about things and what I would need to know to do what I wanted to do.

Few young adults discussed their expectations and plans when they left school with anyone. A 21-year-old young man's observation is illustrative of this point: '*When you leave school, you are very naive; you think everything's going to be easy, but it's not*'.

⁵ Figures based on learners' interviewed one-to-one. In addition one focus group was undertaken with seven young adults.

In some cases interviewees did reveal unrealistic ambitions and comprehensive careers guidance would help them to form more realistic plans, for example, one young man with grades DD in double science GCSE wanted to be a biomedical scientist. With careers guidance he would be able to look for a suitable job within this area of interest.

5.2.2 Overall reflections on education

Approximately two-thirds of young adults who commented on when they left school said they finished at 16 years old, and the majority then enrolled on a college course. One half said that they completed courses in, for example:

- NVQ Level in cookery
- BTEC Level 1 in Information Technology
- A carpentry City and Guilds qualification
- A Sport and Public Services course
- Bricklaying
- Catering
- Music.

Having completed the courses they then could not find employment. The remaining interviewees explained that they did not complete their courses mainly because they were no longer interested in them and they realised they were on the wrong course.

Just over a quarter said they left school early either because they were bullied, expelled (for example, for using drugs) or had been excluded. Just under a quarter said they had not enjoyed school. For example, one young man said that he did not want to spend any more time in classrooms: *'I just had enough of sitting in classrooms all the time'*. Others described how they disliked sitting in a classroom because they enjoyed more 'practical' and 'hands-on' learning.

5.2.3 Overall reflections on employment experiences

Approximately one half of the young adults interviewed described having experienced many different types of jobs. On the whole, these jobs had not worked out either because the young people were not enjoying the work or they had realised they were doing the wrong types of jobs for them or they were only in temporary positions. In a few cases young people said they had lost their job as a result of, for example arriving late for work or not carrying out the work to the required standard.

5.3 Reasons for enrolling on the current training programme

Just under two-thirds of the young adults had heard about the training programme from the Jobcentre. The majority voluntarily enrolled with only a few being mandated to attend. In terms of the Jobcentre, a mixed picture emerged with some young adults commenting

positively on the assistance they had received, while others reported experiencing a lack of support and understanding.

One sixth of interviewees had been told about the training programme from their existing provider, i.e. the college or training provider at which they recently attended. The remainder had heard about the course through word of mouth (mainly from family members), their local newspaper, radio or the internet.

Just under a third of interviewees was motivated to enrol because they wanted to gain qualifications. They recognised that achieving some qualifications was important to finding a job, as illustrated by the following young man: *'if you've got that [a qualification] then if you're applying for a job, your application is going to rise to the top of the pile'*.

Other reasons for enrolling on the course included:

1. acquiring useful, new employability skills
2. recognition that the course would help them to get a job
3. actively doing something to change the circumstances they were currently in. For example, one interviewee explained: *'I really wanted to do it as being on JSA (Job Seekers' Allowance) is not going to get me anywhere'*.

5.4 Influencing factors on intention to complete the programme

There were two main reasons that the young adults believed that they would complete the courses on which they had enrolled:

1. the level of support and interest shown in them by the tutors. The young adults were clearly very appreciative of the level of one-to-one attention that they were receiving. For example, one young woman explained that the one-to-one support, the *'real interest'* shown in her and the fact that the tutors *'appeared to really want to help [her]'* were most important in terms of influencing her decision to complete the course.
2. the desire to gain qualifications and new skills to facilitate attaining employment. There was recognition that this was an opportunity to gain (further) education or training in order to move closer to employment.

Other motivating, positive influences included:

- supportive family, friends and partners
- the desire for employment as one young person explained that *'looking to the future'* she did not want *'to be sat here on my backside in five years' time'*
- developing greater self-confidence

- developing CVs and interview techniques. One young man said *'it [the course] gets you back into that mindset of thinking again; when you've been out of work for a while you haven't done any paperwork for ages, it's got the old brain ticking again'*.

Overall, the young people appeared to be inspired by their experiences. Some reported that the course had a significant impact on them. For example, one believed: *'This is the best decision I've made, especially as I was sceptical about doing it in the first place'* while another reported: *'I was quite a negative person before, but since I've done the 12 weeks [the course] and got to know people, I've found out what I really want to do in life... if you don't try you don't get, if you do try you succeed'*. Chapter 6 provides further details about the effectiveness of provision from the views of learners and providers.

Around one third spontaneously commented on how their experiences on the course had motivated them. They indicated that they were more self-aware and they were clearly encouraged by their tutors, as illustrated by the following young person who described the tutors as *'having a lot of knowledge and experience'* which made her think *'I want to be like that'*. Additionally, the young adults described how they had developed, for example one explained how her self-awareness and confidence had grown:

I've never really been good working in a team but now I've come on this course, I've realised that I'm quite a good team leader and I'm the one that instigates things. I bring people together. Because of the feedback from our tutors and other group members I've realised I am the one that brings the group together.

All the young adults said that they intended to complete the training programme and all cited at least one positive reason to finish the course. There were few negative influences reported to be holding them back.

5.5 Sub-groups of 19 to 24 year-old young people who are NEET

One of the objectives of the study was to further our understanding of the diverse range of young people, aged 19 to 24 years old, who are NEET. In order to achieve this, we grouped responses according to the learners' reflections on their past biographies, their current motivations and their plans for the future. The categorisation also offers suggestions for the focus of further careers support.

Table 2 below outlines the categories, the young people's characteristics, and suggests the focus of the further support that they need.

Table 2 Sub-groups of 19 to 24 year old NEETs

Categories	Characteristics	Focus of support
A. Multiple, complex barriers and not ready to progress	In need of intensive support to overcome existing barriers	Counselling, one-to-one support and Careers Education
B. Multiple, complex barriers, ready to progress	Either through maturation or support they have found motivation, overcome their barriers and are ready to progress	One-to-one support, Careers Education and Guidance
C. Able but lacking direction	Reasonably positive and able but 'drifting' either because they can't make up their minds or they're not able to formulate any plans	Careers education and guidance
D. Able, positive and has plans	Positive, able and know what they want to do and have started to form plans	Careers guidance
E. Well qualified but cannot find a job	Either have qualifications or experience but cannot find the right job	Careers guidance, interview techniques, CV development etc

Segmentation analysis was used in order to categorise the young adults into smaller groups. Although it should be noted that segmentation analysis is not an exact science, young adults in each sub-group displayed broadly similar experiences, motivations and views on the future. In the following section, each category is discussed in more detail and descriptions are offered for illustrative purposes. Similarly, individual case studies are provided as illustration. In this study, just over one-third of the young adults interviewed fell into category D and just under one-third into category C. The remainder were in categories A, B and E.

A. Multiple, complex barriers and not ready to progress

These young adults displayed complex barriers to engaging in education or employment such as having lived in a care home, having a criminal record or having spent time in prison. They were unable to progress with their lives until they resolved the issues they were facing. Case study A illustrates this point. Sam will not be able to find direction until he addresses critical issues in his life, including ceasing to use drugs, which are a barrier to progression.

Case study A: Multiple, complex barriers and not ready to progress

Sam is 23 years old and from 21 to 23 he has not worked; he smokes cannabis and is on benefits. Sam achieved five GCSEs at grades B and C. He started a Performing Arts BTEC Level 3 qualification at college because he wanted to become famous but wasn't interested in the course so gave it up. He then went to another college and started another Level 3 course in Travel and Tourism and left before he completed it. At 18 he left home and worked in a greengrocer until he was sacked for being late. From 18 to 21 years old he drifted through part-time labouring jobs and working in bars and hotels. These were mostly three month or shorter contracts (Sam lives in a seaside town so seasonal work is available).

Currently, he is renting a flat and getting into debt. When asked to discuss his journey, he said: '*I've no idea why [I have done what I have done]... I just wanted to be famous when I left school*'.

Sam was mandated to the current training programme by the Job Centre. In a year's time Sam would like to be in Brazil teaching English – he said that '*I just have to complete a four-week course which costs £1,200. Who knows what I will be doing in three or five years time*'.

Young adults in Category A valued the counselling and one-to-one support available as part of the programmes they experienced. This focus is needed to help them overcome their multiple and complex barriers before they can progress onto receiving careers education and guidance. These young people are some way from being ready to secure steady employment.

B. Multiple, complex barriers, ready to progress

These young adults have also faced multiple or complex barriers, but have managed to overcome the barriers either through maturation and/or with support such as the current training programme on which they are enrolled. For example, one interviewee described how he has managed to give up drugs and is now ready to progress. Another described how she was bullied at school but is now able to move on with her life. Some became parents at a young age and are now motivated to do well for their new families. Case-study B shows how Ben is determined to progress despite his disability and how the current training programmes has facilitated this.

Case study B: Multiple, complex barriers, ready to progress

Ben left school at 16 years old and went to college, but has problems with his eyesight and dropped out of education for one year. He said that he did not *'have a clear idea'* about what he wanted to do after school and could not remember much about any IAG, only that he had not found it very helpful. He attributed the fact that he dropped out of college to his learning disability, in the form of bad eyesight.

Ben said that Connexions had recommended this course and he is very pleased with it as it has motivated him. *'I would have been at home doing nothing otherwise'*. He has always been interested in music and wants to have a career in that area but recognises that he needs skills and qualifications. The colleges he has attended previously have been very big and impersonal – he prefers it at this training provider where there are fewer people and the staff take his bad eyesight into consideration. He feels he is making progress because *'he is not rushed and the staff are very helpful'*. The course has helped him to make a decision about the future. He wants to go on to higher education and then work in the music industry. He feels he is more confident now and is making progress with his personal development.

These young adults have overcome, or come to terms with, the barriers they face and are ready to move on. They appreciated the one-to-one support, careers education (to enable them to make decisions about their future and to understand their strengths and weaknesses) and careers guidance to help them understand what qualifications they need to achieve their career choices.

C. Able but lacking direction

These learners were reasonably able and positive about life, but they had no sound plans. They either kept changing their minds about what they wanted to do as, for example, they felt there were so many possibilities or they were *'drifting'* and not thinking clearly about their future. The following two case studies illustrate the lack of direction that young adults in this category displayed.

Case study C: Able but lacking direction

At 16 Jim attained grades D and E in his GCSEs. His family then decided to move to Pakistan.

Between 16 and 19 years old he took 'O Levels' in Pakistan and achieved grade C in English, physics, chemistry and biology. He wanted to be a doctor so started 'A Levels' in biology, chemistry and physics but he felt they were too difficult and he observed that *'it's really hard to progress in Pakistan without 'A Levels'*.

At 19 years old he came back to England with his sisters and attended an FE college and achieved a pass in a Level 3 Media BTEC. At 21 years old he worked part time at a fast-food outlet, but he left after a year as he thought there was no chance to progress and it was a 'dead-end' job. He went back to Pakistan for three months.

Currently he is 22 and unemployed. Jim's plans for his immediate future are to be a manager at a mobile telephone retailer, progressing to area manager in three years time. In the longer term, he wants to be in London doing a journalist course.

Case study D: Able but lacking direction

Nick was expelled from school at 15 years old and did not achieve any qualifications.

After school he joined a programme called HELP where he received an introduction to the armed forces and to a NVQ Level 1. He did not complete the course as he left after two weeks to live with his Dad elsewhere. He then enrolled on a music course to learn music production and to gain his key skills at Level 2. But he did not complete this course. Afterwards he joined the army – but only stayed for six weeks and was dishonourably discharged.

At 18 years old he was working at a bingo hall and his girlfriend had a baby. He subsequently worked for two car valeting companies for two years but lost these jobs. He then loaded lorries for 11 months and was made redundant. After a period of unemployment he secured a job as a pot washer.

At this point he was assisted by the Jobcentre who found him two jobs, posting leaflets and working for an electrical company. In 2011 he became a waiter but was sacked just before Christmas. He then went back on JSA and was referred to this course.

He observed that *'I have had a lot of jobs but never really found the right path'*. He also reflected that he was offered a gardening apprenticeship when he was 16 years old and turned it down because he *'couldn't really be bothered'*. His

Case study D: Able but lacking direction

other reflections include:

- the schemes from the Jobcentre were to get *'him off their backs'*. They were only for six months and were a *'waste of time as places want more like two or three years' experience*.
- he feels crime is the only way *'to make money'*. He also has driving offences for having no insurance.
- most of his friends are unemployed or in the army or in *'dead-end jobs'*. He lives in a deprived area which he said *'doesn't help'*.

He views the current programme as an opportunity. However, he reflected that: *'I rarely have stuck at anything in my life, I give up easily'*. His plans for the future include doing an apprenticeship and starting his own painting and decorating business.

The current training programme was widely perceived to be helpful by most young adults in this category. Although widely lacking motivation, they valued the one-to-one support and direction which, they felt broadly enabled them to better understand their options. They also appreciated the need to improve their literacy and numeracy.

D. Able, positive and has coherent plans

These learners were reasonably able and positive about life and generally held plans for what they wanted to do. Many had considered various possibilities and had tried out different jobs and were now formulating a plan to achieve their targets. In some cases they had identified jobs they wanted to do, in others they knew the broad area and were trying to achieve the relevant qualifications. The following case study illustrates that some young people need to gain experience of different jobs before they can decide on their future pathway.

Case study E: Able, positive and has coherent plans

At 16, Alex left school with six GCSEs including English, maths and science. He then went on to complete two years of full-time motor mechanics courses at Levels 1 and 2. He tried to secure work in the motor vehicle industry but without success. A lot of employers wanted a Level 3 qualification; but he didn't want to do further study or an apprenticeship as he wanted to start work. He found part-time work in a garage but it didn't work out.

He then worked as a bar tender in a club for three years, and had about a year unemployed. He also started caring for his girlfriend's brother who has learning difficulties and disabilities, and this led to an interest in care work. He has now enrolled on a course in health and social care and has a job interview for a carer for the elderly. He described the current training programme as '*very helpful*'.

In terms of the future he would like to be working in a care home for the elderly or disabled and would like to progress to be a senior carer.

For these young adults who have started to formulate plans to achieve their ideal job, careers IAG is critical as they need to know what qualifications or training they require in order to secure employment. They particularly valued the parts of the programmes which provided them with information about careers and qualifications needed for different jobs and careers.

E. Well qualified but unable to find a job

A few of the young adults on the training programme that we interviewed were well-qualified (for example they held foundation or honours degrees) or had been in employment but had been made redundant. They had enrolled on the current training programme as they needed support to, for example acquire confidence and direction to find employment. Lucy's story illustrates how in the current economic climate some young graduates need assistance in finding their way into the workforce.

Case study F: Well qualified but unable to find a job

Lucy achieved A levels and went to university and attained a 2:2 degree in English. At 21 she was in a serious car accident. After recovering at 22, she worked for a company checking stock and for two years carried out audits. It then became necessary for her to drive for her job and, due to her accident; she is unable to drive, and so lost her job. She then spent six months job hunting on the internet, via agencies. She achieved three face-to-face interviews but no job. At 24 years old she felt her confidence was low, she had little idea of what she wanted to do and felt she could not secure a job on her own.

She considered that the current training programme had helped her enormously: *'It's brilliant – I had no idea what I wanted to do and now I have support. It's useful, I know what I want to do, it's practical and I have more confidence now'*. She particularly valued the one-to-one support, the mentoring and the peer support.

In terms of the future, Lucy wants to achieve a support worker qualification. She also wants to be able to leave home. Ultimately, she would like to be a teaching assistant in a secondary school.

According to staff interviewees, as with all the young adults not in education, employment or training, those in this category needed support (from peers, mentors or staff) in order to gain the confidence to re-engage with job searching. They also valued the practical tips and techniques on how to prepare for, and secure, job interviews.

5.6 Views on the future

Overall the young adults were very positive about the future and felt more confident to face it. The majority of young people attributed this confidence to their experiences on the current courses. When asked what they would like to be doing in one year's time, two-thirds of the young people said they would like to have a job. The majority were fairly definite about the nature of the employment they wanted, for example in catering, the army, in security, retail or administration. Others just wanted employment of any kind. The remaining third said that they would like to undertake further training. Many had specific plans such as a course for game development or an access course, others were less clear and just knew they wanted to be on *'a course'*, a few said they would like to take an apprenticeship but, on the whole, interviewees did not spontaneously refer to apprenticeships.

The current training programme was perceived to have helped many to consider their future. For example, one learner said: *'In the next year I want to concentrate on my studies. I rarely have stuck to anything in my life. I give up easily. I don't have the motivation.'* In addition, overall the young people said they felt more confident about the future. The following comments were typical: *'the course has enabled me to get back on track'* and *'I feel more comfortable about getting a job'*. For others the increase in their self-

esteem was substantial: *'I'm 75 per cent confident that I can get where I want to be in five years. Before I came on this course, I would have said that there was only a 25 per cent chance – I'd almost given hope'*. Furthermore, some young people felt the course had provided them with significant opportunities, as illustrated by the following comment:

I'll be confident about applying to the better employers now as I know I really have something to offer them. I have a really good chance now, before I always thought I wouldn't have a chance. We have to thank the government for this; they should be looking at giving more opportunities like this. If you give opportunities not everyone wants to sit on the dole. This gives you the chance to turn things around.

In terms of the factors considered necessary in order to realise their plans, the main themes were either financial support, particularly in relation to, for example, taking an access course or 'the opportunity' to get a job or find the right course.

6. Impact of provision

This chapter explores the perceived impact of the additional funding on young adults who are NEET and providers and explores mechanisms for monitoring progress and impact.

Key findings

- The research found that provision was widely reported to have had a positive impact on learner confidence, aspirations, motivation to progress into employment and skills development.
- On the whole, learners were positive about their course and support received. They valued the help and support from staff, and in some cases, their peers.
- The additional funding had helped FE providers to extend their reach to more young adults. Partnerships had also been developed across some providers through the expansion of delivery organisations and the opportunity to build referral routes.
- Providers were typically using follow-up contact, learner feedback and individual learning plans to monitor the provision they provide.
- Barriers and challenges to developing approaches and utilising funding included maintaining engagement of learners, a lack of clarity about the funding allocation, lack of flexibility in how the funding could be used and partnership working with JCP.

6.1 Perceived impact of the additional funding

This section explores the perceived impact of the additional funding from the learners' and provider perspective.

6.1.1 Impact on learners

The programmes were widely perceived to have helped develop learners' confidence. Learners and staff described the progress learners had made in terms of, for example, their communication skills. Soft skills development such as presentation skills and interviewing techniques contributed to their personal development. One operational interviewee observed: *'we have a kid in there now who, when he first came in, he wouldn't talk to anyone – he wouldn't even look at you in the eyes and now he's presenting fantastically'*. The case study below provides a further illustration:

Illustration of the impact of provision on learners' confidence

Alex had been out of work for seven years when he was directed to the college via the Jobcentre. He had low confidence and felt that he lacked skills. Through mentoring, it was identified that he had organisational skills and a willingness to learn. He undertook a one-week employability course, followed by the Kickstart programme in order to ascertain the skills, abilities and qualities that he possessed. As a result, he embarked on a two week security course and gained a Security Industry Authority (SIA) licence and subsequently gained full time employment doing security at the local hospital '*...and he's loving it. It's brought his confidence up ... during the course; it's amazing that as a group, their confidence just rose completely*'. Alex has since won a prestigious adult learner award.

Other more commonly cited outcomes mentioned by learners and staff include:

- **Increased motivation to learn and progress into employment** – one young adult, explained: 'I'm more confident with myself now because I was...getting depressed with staying at home and doing nothing. At least now, I've got something to motivate me to wake up and get out of the house'.
- **Developing skills** required for employment. One young adult, who had gained employment, believed that the employability skills she had acquired through the course helped position her well for the interview. She said: '*It shows that, even though you couldn't find a job, you weren't just sat around. It shows that you went out and tried to improve your chances for yourself. And it keeps you in a routine and keeps you busy*'.

There was also the perception amongst staff that the programmes had helped to raise learners' aspirations for the future, as illustrated by the following comment: '*A lot of them come here with very low self-esteem and not having done well as school. They realise here that they do have potential and then they want to carry on with education, or finding employment, rather than just sitting at home*'.

The research found some examples of progression into employment, further learning, training or apprenticeships following completion of the programme. For example, one third sector organisation explained that in a few cases, learners had since progressed into employment which was attributed to skills development and confidence building via presentation skills and interview techniques acquired on the training programme.

6.1.2 Learner views of the course and support

On the whole, learners were positive about their course and the support received. In particular, they valued the help and support from staff and, in some cases, their peers. One young adult commented: '*they've supported me well; any problems or issues, they'll help you out and sort it out straightaway. They phone me up and remind me which days I have to come in, which is good because I might forget...*'

There was also some indication to suggest that learners valued the opportunity to gain experience and to develop their knowledge and skills. Additionally, in a small number of cases, learners reported that they enjoyed the practical hands-on aspect of the course.

The general consensus amongst survey respondents when reflecting back on the course was that they found it useful, reasoning that it had helped with skills development, plans for the future, confidence building and CV development, for example.

Amongst the minority of respondents who were less positive in their response, comments related to a lack of support from tutors and attendance being mandatory. One young adult felt that this was unfair in cases where young adults were actively seeking employment and had the skills required to gain employment in their chosen sector. The general view amongst respondents was that they would recommend the course to others.

6.1.3 Progress to date

Of the 29 young adults who responded to the survey⁶, 11 were still on the same course. Six had started a job or were waiting to start a job they had been offered in retail, factory work or administration, working part time until starting a college course in the new academic year or employed in a voluntary capacity. The case study below provides an illustration:

Illustration of one learner's journey into employment

Jane had left school at 16 having gained a GNVQ level 1 in health and social care reported that she was forced to leave home and lived in a bed and breakfast. She began a level 2 course in health and social care but later fell pregnant and had a child when she was 18. She undertook a further course and secured some bar work for a short period when her child started school. This proved impractical because it involved late nights. At 25 years of age, she decided to go back into education.

She enrolled on an eight-week course aimed to build literacy and numeracy skills and get learners working with employers on a group project. Learners were also given a mentor and encouraged to organise their own voluntary work. She decided to embark on the course because she wanted a better future for her son and wanted to show her mum that she was capable.

She found the course inspiring. She enjoyed being treated like an adult and working with other people. She has since secured employment in a factory. She felt that the course was useful as it provided her with information to find employment and the opportunity to meet new people.

⁶ The survey was sent out to the young adults in two waves with the aim of reaching them at least 3 weeks after the one-to-one interviews were conducted.

Two respondents were currently on another course or waiting to start a course, while a further ten reported that they were NEET.

On the whole, respondents were largely positive about the course they had undertaken, with comments largely consistent with findings from the interviews. The majority either agreed or strongly agreed that, on reflection, the course had:

- given them skills for employment
- increased their confidence
- changed their aspirations/goals
- given them skills to search for work.

Respondents' views about the extent to which they agreed that the course had helped them to feel more able to secure a job were mixed. Just under half of the young adults agreed or strongly agreed (N=13) with this statement, while around two-fifths neither agreed nor disagreed (N=12). In addition, around one in four respondents stated that the course had helped them to progress onto a course.

6.1.4 Impact on providers

FE colleges commonly reported that the additional funding had helped to extend their reach to more young adults. There was also some evidence across the case-study areas that partnerships were being developed through, for example, the expansion of delivery organisations or the opportunity to build on referral routes with partners. One strategic interviewee said: *'we're almost building a shared services approach. It's leading to some synergy...Jobcentre...are going to fund the work experience worker for the course and build sustainability into the system'*.

Examples of other cited responses included the ability to widen the scope of qualifications and courses offered and develop more creative ways of working such as one-to-one work and work placements. In a small number of cases, third sector organisations also commented on the opportunity to work with a wider age group.

In a minority of cases across third sector organisations, poor uptake or dropout rates had meant that groups were too small to be viable. Whilst offering provision that is tailored to the needs of individuals is important, other considerations need to be made such as the cost effectiveness of the course. One operational interviewee remarked: *'it's been a learning experience because we've come to realise that we need to provide something much less individualised, less tailored, shorter, in order to...break even'*.

It is important to note that in some cases, providers were more reticent about the impact of the funding because programmes were less established and in early stages of delivery, or in the case of FE colleges, were already running such courses prior to being awarded the funding and therefore, could not identify or attribute any impact specifically as a result of the additional allocated funding.

6.2 Monitoring of provision

Interviewees commonly reported monitoring learners' attendance, achievement, retention and progression.

Providers were using various systems to monitor the provision that they provide. More typically, these included:

- **Follow-up contact** with learners at various points after they had completed the course to track progress. One FE college for example, contacted learners via telephone three months after completing the course. Learners who had not progressed were encouraged to go back into the college to talk to staff in order to determine what other training and support might be available.
- **Learner feedback**, including evaluation forms to find out learners' perceptions of what they have achieved from the course, what they want to do next and what skills they will need in order to achieve their intended destinations, and satisfaction surveys.
- **Individual learning plans** used to record weekly activities, including learning support, progress reviews and track achievements.

In some cases, third sector organisations were undertaking reviews with learners in order to discuss achievements, attendance and behaviour and to set targets. In addition, observations of teaching and learning had taken place across a small number of providers as a way of monitoring the quality of delivery.

6.3 Barriers and challenges to developing approaches and utilising the funding

Barriers and challenges to developing approaches and utilising the funding included the engagement of learners which is discussed further in Chapter 4. To try to overcome challenges such as this, one third sector organisation adopted a peer-to-peer support approach which involved learners who were engaged in the course making contact with their less engaged peers to try and encourage attendance. Other commonly cited barriers included:

- **The allocation of funding** (mentioned by half of the third sector organisations), including the timings of the allocation of funds and a lack of clarity around how it would be paid, how it could be used and whether or not funds could be carried forward. One provider for example, explained that they did not receive notification of how much funding they would receive until January which coincided with a request from the SFA for a report on how the funds had been used in the first month; this misunderstanding led the third sector organisation to be told that future allocations may be withheld. Another third sector organisation provider felt that there had been a lack of clarity about the status of the funding. Initially, they thought it was a grant but after receiving clarification, they were informed that it was part of the adult skills budget; a route that they had not accessed funding through before. This meant that

the pricing of qualifications was different and that they were unable to deliver all the courses that they had planned.

- **A perceived lack of flexibility** related to the criteria for learner eligibility onto programmes; for example, the inability to support young adults who do not claim benefits but might fall into the NEET group and the perception that funding is tied to qualifications. One strategic interviewee explained: *'it's great to have the money...but they need to make the rules more flexible to allow colleges and training providers to work with people who aren't pigeonholed into claiming unemployment [benefit]'*. This supports a common view that there was a lack of clarity with regard to the funding criteria and learner eligibility onto the programmes.
- **Partnership working with JCP** including learners being taken off courses by the Jobcentre to do other mandated activities, which subsequently impacted on retention rates. Interviewees were of the view that this approach was used as a way of ensuring that targets were met (although it is worth noting that JCP no longer have targets). More detail about provider relationships with JCP can be found in Chapter 3.
- **Employer engagement** was mentioned by a small number of FE colleges. For example, in one instance, it was reported that the number of employers offering apprenticeships did not match demand.

7. Future developments

This chapter examines how providers wish to develop their provision for this target group of young adults in the future and the support that they require to do this.

Key findings

- All providers plan to continue to work with the 19-24 year old age group and enhance the provision available. There was general consensus that, in order to access sustainable employment, young people who are NEET require a suite of support, work experience and skills development.
- Providers want to enhance the elements of their programmes which prepare young adults for further training or employment and to widen the subject and sector range of learning opportunities available in order to meet diverse needs.
- Staff in around half of the case-study areas planned to further strengthen partnership working as a means of enhancing their offer and around a quarter of providers plan to enhance their outreach activities particularly through a hub model.
- Providers considered funding a crucial form of support and the consensus was that 'ring-fenced' funding gave them the flexibility to do more because the funding is guaranteed and enables staff to make plans according to the needs of the target group. Around a quarter of providers did not consider the funding to have been flexible *enough*. They were concerned that eligibility criteria for the programmes had been too narrow and this meant that many young people who are NEET would miss out.
- There was an inconsistent level of understanding of the funding, with the perception amongst some providers that there is less flexibility in its use compared to other funding sources (more detail on this issue can be found in section 2.1).

7.1 Enhancing the offer for 19-24 year olds who are NEET

Although providers were utilising the funding in varying ways, their future goals shared some similarities. For example, there was a real consensus that many young adults need intensive support and mentoring to develop employability skills and the confidence to access work and training opportunities. This was endorsed by learners themselves (see Chapter 5). To this end, providers want to enhance the elements of their programmes which prepare young adults for further training or employment. They also acknowledged

that the training and support has to be bespoke to the needs of the young adult; therefore, they aim to widen the range of learning opportunities available in order to meet diverse needs. A number of providers plan to replicate their existing provision and extend it to other faculties or sectors (for example, those who had been able to trial a new approach in their engineering faculty, might now extend the approach to hairdressing or customer service subjects).

Ensuring the offer was attractive to this age group was also a concern for the future. Around a quarter of providers planned to enhance their outreach activities, particularly through a hub model which would provide learning opportunities to young adults in their local community. In addition, a small minority of providers reported that they aim to be even more flexible in their provision. One operational interviewee for example commented:

Students don't just want to come in September. We need to be able to respond to diverse need and pick up on young people that drop out of other courses like A levels.

In addition, staff from a few providers plan to enhance their marketing in order to recruit and engage more young adults. One operational interviewee said:

We want to go into schools to communicate the services we offer. We're the ones at the coal face but we don't get to actually meet them face to face until they're unemployed, we're not catching them early enough.

Reflecting the importance attached to partnership working highlighted in chapter 3, staff in around half of the case study areas plan to strengthen partnership working as a means of enhancing their offer. Staff emphasised the need to further strengthen relations with a wide range of partners, and interviewees commonly highlighted the need to better engage employers. In fact, one college was planning to act as a recruitment agency for employers in order to deepen the relationship and serve their mutual interests. Another has appointed an 'apprenticeship adviser' - partly to offer information to learners, but also to set up an event for learners and employers where employers were expected to offer a certain number of apprenticeship places

Further to enhancing and extending their existing offer, future plans generally related to overcoming the challenges that providers had experienced and subsequently highlighted throughout their interviews (as detailed in chapter 6). The following section details the support that providers require in order to develop and deliver their tailored provision.

7.2 Future support required

In discussing support, it transpired that funding was seen as a critical form of support. Responses by interviewee type suggest that staff in FE colleges welcome the funding, but are not completely reliant on it for the future continuation of the programme. This is because some have used it to establish or extend their curriculum for 19-24 year olds or 'pump-prime' future delivery by employing staff to develop partnerships, identify facilities and develop a new curriculum. There would be some scope for FE colleges to use their centralised funding in the future once the approach was established and proven to meet the institution's wider objectives. Despite this, ring-fenced funding is very much welcomed

by FE colleges (see below for more detail on why). However, the message from third sector organisations was that they rely much more on discrete funding such as this, as they do not receive central funding but instead rely on contractual pots of funding. The sustainability of the programme without discrete funding is more strongly called into question in respect to third sector organisation delivery.

Staff in around a quarter of providers took the opportunity to highlight the benefit of discrete pots of funding for targeted work. The consensus amongst these interviewees was that 'ring-fenced' funding gave providers the flexibility to do more, because the funding is guaranteed and enables staff to make plans according to the needs of the target group. This type of funding also gave providers the leverage they needed to employ new members of staff or provided the opportunity or '*justification*' to develop elements of support and training that do not directly contribute to the provider's regular targets. Therefore funding that is restricted to the use of one particular target group (such as the 19-24 age group) is seen as very positive. However, any further prescription within the use of a 'ring-fenced' pot of funding is seen as counter-productive. One operational interviewee explains:

Funding has been pared back, very restricted, bound by criteria, and that means you don't have the flexibility to give individual support.

Indeed, while interviewees welcomed this ring-fenced pot of funding for the 19-24 age group, staff in around a quarter of providers did not consider the criteria for the use of the funding within that to have been flexible enough. They were particularly concerned that eligibility criteria for the programmes had been too narrow and this meant that many young people who are NEET would miss out. For example, one provider was concerned that they may need to turn away young adults with qualifications. For others, they felt that the range of qualifications they could offer was too limited and that providers should have more say in this. This suggests a possible lack of understanding about the conditions of the funding which is discussed in more detail in Chapters 2 and 6.

It would seem that providers welcome ring-fenced funding for specific activities because it justifies a change to the 'normal' approach, but they reject too high a level of prescription within that.

Despite their dislike of prescription, however, some providers requested further ring-fenced funding for specific activities. Amongst their requests were: further funding for engagement and outreach, Apprenticeship wage subsidies, progression tracking, work experience, intensive support and funding for smaller groups.

There seemed was an inconsistent level of understanding around the funding, with the perception amongst some providers that there is less flexibility in its use than others. Some thought that the funding had to be 'tied' to qualifications, while, at the opposite end of the scale, others were using it solely for support activities or outreach.

Other specific suggestions for SFA support not related to funding included the following:

- revision of targets. One interviewee explained that they will 'never retain some young people but it doesn't mean we haven't made progress with them'

- more opportunities for networking, either with local partners or with other providers
- encouraging the provision of evening classes to fit in with work commitments or lifestyles.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

In summary, the evidence from this research shows that providers have, through diverse training programmes, prepared young adults for further training or enhanced their employment chances by making them more work-ready. Regardless of their previous experiences and their backgrounds, the majority of learners were positive about the training and felt more confident to face the future.

8.1 Conclusions

8.1.1 What is the nature of the training provision for young adults aged 19 to 24 who are not currently engaged in education, employment or training?

The additional funding was directed at supporting the progression of young adults, currently not engaged in employment, education or training, to further education, training or employment. Additionally, the enhancement of employability skills and work-readiness were also seen as important.

The nature of the training provision was diverse in terms of the content, but commonly included elements of literacy and numeracy development, employability skills training, vocational units of study, career planning and preparation for job applications and interviews. On the whole, providers offered opportunities to gain either a qualification or an industry-relevant certificate or licence. The duration of the training varied from a few weeks to five months and was flexible to learners' needs and the requirement not to exceed 16 hours per week to ensure learners could still receive Job Seekers' Allowance.

FE colleges were more likely to have used the funding to support existing provision and to link qualifications to specific employment possibilities. In contrast, the third sector organisations were more inclined to offer discrete, new courses and were more likely to offer qualifications in a greater range of vocational areas.

Providers reported using a range of delivery methods including group or team work, project work, peer mentoring, role play, workshop sessions, talks from employers and work experience. Partner organisations were also used to deliver elements of the training. There was evidence that alternative settings to the traditional classroom were being used, such as a dedicated vocational training centre and a church, but the use of classrooms was still common. Making the learning environment as realistic as possible in relation to the world of work was also a widespread theme.

The use of embedded, personalised support (for example with literacy, numeracy, life skills or careers guidance) was prevalent, so in many cases subject tutors were also providing the one-to-one attention that these young adults value and need. The building of relationships with a few key tutors was perceived by learners to be fundamental to their intention to complete the training.

8.1.2 What are the key characteristics of effective provision?

In addition to the 1:1 support and flexibility in terms of content, delivery style and duration of the training, partnerships were widely viewed as an essential contributory element of

effective provision. Interviewees in third sector organisations and FE colleges believed that partners play a key role in referring young adults to the providers, in enhancing the programme by offering bespoke elements (such as work experience, voluntary work and careers guidance) and by providing expertise. When providers and partners share a common understanding of the goals of the programme, for example to meet young adults' and local employers' needs, mutual benefit can be achieved.

In the case of partnership working with JCP, there was perceived to be scope for improvement in terms of achieving a shared understanding, both at strategic and operational levels that the common goal is to support young people to progress. This might involve some fairly extensive further training for young people (for example through work experience, voluntary work, enrolment on further courses or apprenticeships) before the ultimate goal of employment is achieved.

Where provider staff had been released to work with partners, so that regular contact had been achieved, enhanced understanding and effective referral routes had been realised. For example, not only were links to employers viewed as essential in the sense that the employers' input into the training was valued, but also in light of the progression opportunities for the young adults.

In terms of effective recruitment strategies, routes via partners, word of mouth and using social media were perceived to be key to effective practice. Challenges to recruitment include young adults dropping out between referral and the commencement of training, poor provider websites and reaching the hardest-to-reach – so these challenges need to be met in order to provide effective recruitment.

The successful engagement of learners on the programmes was characterised by flexibility (such as more use of roll on/roll off programmes and the facility to ensure the rapid achievement of an element of the course), short courses and personalised, individual support. Key to effective provision was enhancing learners' confidence quickly.

8.1.3 Who are the learners and why have they taken part?

The learners came from diverse backgrounds and were at varying educational levels, but the majority were reported to lack self-confidence and self-esteem. The majority had experienced despondency at some point and, although the majority had achieved qualifications, a quarter had left school early with few, if any, qualifications. Some face, or have faced and overcome complex, multiple barriers to participation, others are able and either have managed to progress and form plans for their future, or still lack direction, while others are well qualified but vulnerable to the economic downturn.

The vast majority of young adults were attending the training voluntarily and were motivated to acquire new qualifications and skills that would enable them to progress and ultimately achieve employment. They all intended to complete the training largely because they were inspired by the tutors and the personalised support supplied. They appreciated the 1:1 attention they were receiving, the interest shown in them and the direction and support provided. It seems that the tutors were successful in delivering the mentoring, careers guidance or the practical qualifications (either in literacy, numeracy or in vocational areas) that enhance young people's confidence sufficiently to enable them to cope with establishing the most appropriate progression route for them.

Overall, learners felt positive about the future. Although many recognised that they needed further training and/or qualifications to achieve their aspirations, the majority felt more confident about the future and were able to talk about their plans.

8.1.4 What impact has the training achieved?

Overall the training was widely perceived to have achieved a positive impact. Both learners and providers believed it improved learners' confidence, aspirations, motivation to progress towards employment and the development of their vocational and employability skills.

Providers reported that the additional funding had enabled them to reach more young adults, widen the scope of the qualifications offered to young adults and to develop partnership models to better reach and engage learners. Although many providers felt it was too early to evaluate the impact of the training, they were monitoring progress by collecting learner feedback, maintaining individual learning plans and following up learners by phone when they had completed the training.

In addition to the reported widespread increase in learners' self confidence and self esteem there was some early evidence of progression. Of those young adults who responded to the follow-up surveys, approximately one-third were still attending the training programme, one third had completed the training and described themselves as currently not in education, employment or training and one third of learners had progressed on to work, training (for example apprenticeships), further education or voluntary positions.

8.1.5 What are the future challenges?

All providers plan to continue to work with, and enhance provision for, 19-24 year olds who are not in education, employment or training to provide them with the support needed to enable their progression into further education, training or employment. It was pointed out that these plans are largely, especially in the case of the third sector organisations, reliant on the continuation of funding.

In addition to meeting the challenge of ensuring that all partners in future work together with a common understanding of the requirements to facilitate the progression of young adults, other challenges also need to be met. For example there was widely perceived to be a lack of clarity with regard to the criteria for securing funding. The consensus was that 'ring fenced' funding is needed both to stabilise funding for this age group and to enable provider plans to be formed and realised. Flexibility of funding is also important to ensure that providers can meet the needs of their local communities and the young adults who live there.

Furthermore, if providers are to meet the challenge of recruiting more young adults they need to be able to secure the funding to create the capacity to learn from early experiences (with regard to, for example, how to recruit and engage these young adults and how to understand them better and provide the tailored careers education and guidance needed) and enhance future provision.

8.2 Recommendations

8.2.1 What else can providers do to prepare young adults for progression?

We recommend that providers should:

- further develop their partnerships, both at strategic and operational levels, by creating the time to build regular contact, so all partners have a thorough understanding of the aims of the training and all expertise and knowledge can be maximised
- enhance their recruitment strategies for example by making further use of social media and word of mouth conduits. In addition, providers need to further develop strategies to contact the hardest-to-reach young adults and to ensure that once recruited, they do not 'drop out' between referral and starting the course
- recognise that young adults overwhelmingly appreciate flexible provision related to the world of work and the personalised, 1:1 support and interest shown in them. These features are essential to engage young adults, raise their levels of self-confidence and prepare them for further education, training and employment
- 'ringfence' incoming funding to maximise impact of provision on the target audience (i.e. young adults not in education, training or employment)
- further develop careers information, advice and guidance with an emphasis on providing direction and 'road maps', in terms of, for example more information on apprenticeship requirements and how to access them, and to specific jobs and careers. Young adults would then know exactly what they need in terms of qualifications and skills and how each element achieved contributes to their ultimate goal.
- consider follow-up strategies, such as keep-in-touch schemes both between providers and young adults and between the young adults so support networks can develop, for when young adults complete the training.

8.2.2 What further support do providers need?

We believe that, in order for providers to continue to prepare learners for further training, apprenticeships and employment and to further develop provision, providers need:

- stability of funding in order to plan at strategic and operational level and to maintain provision
- clarity of funding so they know there are minimal funding restrictions, for example, links to qualifications or to specific young adults and timelines should be specified as required
- networking opportunities to exchange good practice, both in terms of ways to sustain the programmes and in terms of creative approaches that can be replicated

- to be not so much target-driven, in terms of qualifications achieved, but rather to be more concerned about the progression and destination of young adults.

Overall, the evidence from this research shows that the learners reached through this programme are, on the whole, benefitting from, and appreciative of, this opportunity and, on completion, are more resilient and better able to plan a productive future.

Appendix

In terms of the geographical distribution of providers, four were located in the north, seven in the midlands and nine in the south. Three FE providers were part of the 157 group.

Just over half of all providers had received funding of £300,000 or less. Few colleges had received funding of £701,000 or more, as observed in the following breakdown:

- <£100,000 – 6
- £100,000 - £300,000 – 5
- £301,000 - £500,000 – 4
- £501,000 - £700,000 – 1
- £701,000 - £900,000 – 3
- £901,000 + - 1

Interviews were conducted with 85 learners. Of the young adults who were interviewed one-to-one, 58 were male and 20 were female. We interviewed learners across different age groups⁷ including:

- 3 learners aged 18
- 39 learners aged 19-21
- 28 learners aged 22-24
- 8 learners aged 25+

In total, 70 interviews were conducted with staff across FE colleges and VCS providers:

- 20 strategic staff
- 36 operational staff
- 14 support staff.

⁷ Again, these numbers are based on interviews undertaken one-to-one with learners.

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