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**Dorothe Bonjour
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Policy Studies Institute

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The Impact of Adult Basic Skills Pathfinder Extension Activities: Stage 2 of the Evaluation

Dorothe Bonjour and Deborah Smeaton
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Research Report
No 438

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The findings and conclusions presented in this report remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

Conventions for Tables

The following conventions have been used in all tables:

- No cases
- 0 Less than 0.5%
- [] Figures in square brackets denote the actual number of cases where the (unweighted) base is under 30 cases and therefore too small for percentages to be calculated.

Statistical significance is indicated as follows: * significant at 10%, ** significant at 5%, and *** significant at 1%.

Due to rounding not all percentages add up to 100 and impact estimates or not always equal to the difference between the reported outcome for the Extensions and the traditional learners.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

FRRC	Fixed Rate Replacement Costs
HSP	Highly Structured Prescriptive
IIL	Individual Incentives for Learners
PSM	Propensity Score Matching

Executive Summary

This report forms part of the extensive evaluation of adult basic skills Pathfinder Extension activities. These Extension activities were launched by the Department for Education and Skills in September 2001 within a wider campaign to improve the level of basic skills. The Department commissioned Policy Studies Institute together with NFO System Three to evaluate the Pathfinder Extensions.

The two main aims of the evaluation were to provide an estimate of the net impact of Extension activities relative to traditional adult basic skills provisions and to estimate the relative impacts of different types of Pathfinder courses. Secondary objectives were to provide descriptive and 'process' information about programme delivery and about learner characteristics and experiences.

The report of the first stage of the evaluation contains an extensive description of processes, participants' characteristics, attitudes and experiences, teachers' experiences and understandings as well as the presentation of cases studies. This current second stage report concentrates on providing impact estimates. However, these are complemented with descriptive evidence.

Generally, there was a very high level of satisfaction with the courses and their effects. More than nine out of ten learners on Pathfinder Extensions would recommend the course to a friend and felt that it was helpful in increasing their confidence and improving their skills.

As would be expected the group of learners on adult basic skills courses have a relatively high incidence of disadvantage. Furthermore, this incidence is higher for learners on Extension courses¹ compared to learners on traditional courses. On Extension courses 32 per cent of participants report either suffering from dyslexia, having a long-term health problem or having reading, writing or communications difficulties. These 32 per cent compare to 24 per cent among learners on traditional courses. Also the percentage that left school without any qualifications was higher among those on Extension courses (54 per cent) compared to those on traditional courses (49 per cent).

Different types of outcomes were of interest and were considered in the evaluation:

- *Learning outcomes* were the percentage of learners that finished the course, the percentage that received a qualification, the proportion starting new courses and planning courses for the next year.
- *Intermediate outcomes* were a self-efficacy score that measures the self-confidence of respondents in applying basic skills to everyday situations such as job search, work and helping children with homework and whether respondents had an interest in education and training courses in the future.
- *Labour market outcomes* included the percentage in employment, the number of months in employment between the start of the course and the beginning of interviewing at Stage 2. Also job related outcomes for those in employment and job search information for those without a job were considered.

For all of these outcomes either impact estimates or descriptive evidence is offered. An impact estimate provides information on the effect the Pathfinder Extensions has on a specific outcome compared to a situation where there had been no Extension Activity. Thus, not only the outcome of the Pathfinder Extensions learners but also a hypothetical or counterfactual outcome that would have occurred had Extensions learners gone on traditional basic skills

¹ Any use of the phrase 'Extension courses' refers to the Pathfinder Extensions programme and not to extension courses in the ordinary sense.

courses has to be considered. The hypothetical outcome is not observable but has to be estimated.

In the current evaluation this estimate is based on participants on traditional course, the Comparison Group. However, as mentioned above the make-up of the Comparison Group differs in some important aspects from that of Extensions learners. To take such differences into account outcomes of Extensions learners are compared to those of a matched Comparison sample. This matched sample is formed by finding a close match, i.e. a similar individual, among the Comparison Group for each individual on the Pathfinder Extensions.

For the Pathfinder Extensions as a whole the following main results were found:

- Among all participants, being on an Extension course raised the completion rate by 14 percentage points.
- However, among those not still continuing the same course, being on an Extension course reduced the completion rate by six percentage points.
- While participants on Extension courses were nine percentage points less likely to have started a new course, those who did start new courses were more likely to enrol for more than one new course.
- There were no significant impacts on any of the intermediate outcomes such as self-efficacy and life-long learning.
- Learners on Extension courses were nine percentage points more likely to be in employment at the time of the second interview. This effect remained positive and significant when learners on Fixed Rate Replacement Costs – which are by definition more likely to be in employment – were excluded from the analysis.
- A positive effect of the Extension provision on the time in employment was shown to be partially due to learners on Fixed Rate Replacement Costs who were all continuously employed between the beginning of the course and the second interview. The impact was reduced and became insignificant when estimating the model excluding FRRC learners.

Due to the relatively small number of participants in some of the Extension types it was not possible to provide complete relative impact estimations. However, Residential courses and Intensive and Highly Structured Prescriptive courses were compared separately to traditional courses. The impact estimates were complemented with detailed descriptive analyses. The results can be summarised as follows:

- Generally, differences between different types of Extensions were more pronounced than between Extension and traditional courses. However, as not all Extension courses were provided in all Pathfinder areas it is not possible to say whether this is due to differences in the provision of courses or due to regional differences in labour market conditions and population mix.
- The overall positive effect of Extensions on course completion (among the full sample) is not observed for Residential or for Intensive/HSP courses.
- The negative impact on course completion (among those not still doing the course) found for Extensions as a whole is stronger for Residential courses but insignificant for Intensive/HSP. This suggests that for this particular outcome participants on Residential courses do less well compared to participants on Intensive/HSP courses.
- A strong negative impact on starting a new course, planning a new course and interest in future courses is estimated for Intensive/HSP course participants. No significant effects were found for Residential courses and the overall impact is only significant in the case of new courses started. Thus, Intensive/HSP courses seem less likely to encourage further learning activities compared to Residential and traditional courses.

- The positive effect of Extensions on employment is confirmed when treating Residential courses as a separate group – no effect is found for Intensive/HSP courses. Thus, in terms of employment nine to eleven months after the start of the course Residential Extensions do better compared to Intensive/HSP courses.
- Based on purely descriptive results – i.e. not controlling regional differences and differences in the characteristics of participants – courses that offer incentives for either employers (FRRC) or learners (IIL) seem to perform relatively well in terms of course completion, qualifications and labour market outcomes.

1 Introduction

The main aims of the evaluation of adult basic skills Pathfinder Extension activities were to estimate the net impact of Extension activities relative to traditional adult basic skills provision and to estimate the relative impacts of different types of Pathfinder courses. Secondary objectives were to provide descriptive and ‘process’ information about programme delivery and about learner characteristics and experiences. Policy Studies Institute and NFO System Three were commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills to carry out the evaluation.

Participants on Extension activities as well as a Comparison group of learners on traditional courses were interviewed at the beginning of their course in early 2002. Both groups were then followed-up and interviewed again in late 2002. Data from these two surveys were used to describe and compare Extensions participants in terms of their characteristics and their learning experiences, and to produce impact estimates. Qualitative methods were used to gain in-depth knowledge of attitudes, processes and delivery in parallel with the earlier survey.

An extensive description of processes, participants’ characteristics, attitudes and experiences, teachers’ experiences and understandings as well as the presentation of cases studies are contained in the Stage 1 reports (Barnes et al., 2003; White et al, 2003). The present report concentrates chiefly on the different impact estimates. A summary of descriptive and qualitative findings as well as impact estimates is presented in an overview report (White, 2003).

Even though the Stage 2 report will focus on providing impact estimates, descriptive analyses are also contained in the report. The aim is to describe learners on Pathfinder Extensions especially with regard to characteristics not collected at Stage 1 of the research. It is also of interest to investigate attitudes of Extensions participants toward the course, future learning plans and the labour market some nine to eleven months after the courses started.

The Pathfinder Extension activities comprised five types of innovative features of provision²:

- *Residential courses* were traditional courses with an added residential component where learners were taken to a hotel or conference centre for two or three nights for a programme of intensive learning.
- *Intensive courses* were based on an intensified learning experience where the courses lasted only four weeks compared to traditional courses that could last up to 20 weeks.
- *Highly structured and prescriptive* courses were based on commercially available teaching material and were as the title suggests more structured and prescriptive.
- *Individual financial incentives for learners* provided participants with grants of up to £250 conditional on course attendance, test attendance and achievement on assessments and tests.
- *Fixed rate replacement costs* provisions provided employers with a financial incentive – a fixed, daily rate – for sending their employees on a basic skills course, usually at their own premises.

Originally it was believed that each of the Pathfinder types would have 300-400 participants and the plan was to interview as many of the participants as were willing to take part. But, in practice, the number of participants and therefore the potential sample size was much lower than the original assumption except for the Residential programme. The other types had only 125 to 200 participants. The smaller than expected sample size affected the viability of some impact estimations, especially relative impacts of different types of Extensions.

² More details can be found in Section 1.1 of the Stage 1 report (White et al, 2003).

Net impact evaluations are based on questions like “How much have participants in the programme benefited from taking part, in comparison with what they would have got in the absence of the programme?” Thus, not only the outcome of participants has to be considered but also some hypothetical outcome that would have happened if there was no programme. This hypothetical – or counterfactual – outcome is not observable and has to be estimated. In the case of adult basic skills the comparison of interest was not the absence of a programme but traditional forms of provision. Thus, a counterfactual outcome was estimated based on a matched subset of the Comparison group consisting of learners on traditional adult basic skills courses.

For this evaluation two groups of outcomes were of interest to the Department for Education and Skills: learning outcomes and labour market outcomes. The former were measured as qualifications gained, enrolment in further courses, interest in future education and training courses and confidence in using basic skills in everyday situations. Employment status and time in employment were primary labour market outcomes. But also secondary outcomes for those in jobs (job types, on-the-job training, job tenure and wages) and those not in employment (job search and barriers to employment) were considered.

The next chapter provides descriptive evidence on learners’ characteristics, their attitudes, and their course experience, and it introduces some of the outcome measures. Chapter 3 compares some of the key characteristics between the Pathfinder Extensions participants and a Comparison group of learners on traditional adult basic skills courses. In the following chapter the methodology used to produce impact estimates is described. In Chapter 5 estimates of the impacts of Pathfinder activities compared to traditional provisions are presented, followed by a chapter on the relative impacts of different types of Extensions. Chapter 7 contains a summary and concluding remarks.

2 Extension Course Participants

The focus of the following six sections is upon Extension course learners at Stage 2 of the Pathfinder Extension Activities Evaluation survey. The following section provides a description of any changes in learner's composition between the interviews at Stages 1 and 2. In the subsequent sections, descriptive analyses are undertaken to establish perceived benefits of and general attitudes toward the various Extension courses. Qualifications achieved, course completion and attendance rates are also provided. The final discussions in Chapter 2 are devoted to a consideration of the outcomes associated with course participation. Outcomes are divided into: employment status, labour market attachment, job change, new course enrolment and plans for the future.

2.1 Characteristics of Extension course learners

A brief summary of the characteristics of learners as presented in Report 1, is provided below. Supplementary information is added to this profile of respondents, based on questions which appeared exclusively in the second survey (Sections 0 to 0).

The Extensions sample was comprised of a greater preponderance of women than men (with a ratio of about 6 to 4), nearly half the Stage 1 sample had dependent children and nearly one fifth were lone parents. The majority were white British (67 per cent) and single (54 per cent). About 70 per cent left school at or before 16 but nearly one fifth continued with post-compulsory education.

Additional information gathered at Stage 2 included; age of respondent, housing tenure, self assessed health, number of children, childcare use, partner's employment status and learning disadvantages among learners. These are presented in turn below.

School qualifications

Most Pathfinder learners at Stage 2 had left school by the age of 16 (83 per cent, Table 2.1). A little over half these learners left school without any qualifications (Table 2.2). Among the rest most achieved a 'basic' qualification, a category that includes CSE, GCSE and basic school certificates, by the time they left school. A small minority (4 per cent) achieved a higher level qualification including AS and A levels. The remainder secured a variety of other qualifications including C&G, Pitman, RSA, NVQ and GNVQs.

Table 2.1: Age left school

	Column percentages
Age left school	
14 or below	9
15	25
16	49
17	7
18 and above	9
<i>Base</i>	<i>461</i>

Note: 7 cases with missing information

Table 2.2: Qualifications achieved at school

School qualifications	# receiving qualification	% receiving qualification
No qualifications	251	54
Basic (Including CSE, GCSE, School Certificate)	170	36
Higher (AS, A level, Higher School Certificate)	19	4
NVQ (Including GNVQ)	5	1
Vocational (C&G and Pitman)	10	2
Other	27	6
<i>Base</i>	<i>468</i>	<i>100%</i>

Note: Numbers in column one add up to more than the base as more than 1 qualification type could be selected.

Age of respondents

The Pathfinder participants are, on average, ‘mature’ learners with a mean collective age of 36 (Table 2.3). There is some variation in average age by course type with the youngest, at 33, attending Intensive courses and the oldest, at 41, attending courses with financial incentives. The range of ages among all learners was very wide with the youngest aged 17 and the oldest 83. Twenty-two per cent of learners were under 22 with a further 20 per cent over the age of 50.

Table 2.3: Age by course type

	Average and column percentages					
	Intensive	Residential	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Average age	33	36	33	40	41	36
Age range	18-68	17-80	18-79	18-59	18-83	17-83
Age groups	%	%	%	%	%	%
17-21	11	28	38	3	13	22
22-35	55	29	22	43	26	33
36-49	22	24	25	20	33	25
50+	12	20	16	34	28	20
<i>Base</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>468</i>

Housing tenure

The housing tenure profile of Pathfinder participants is shown in Table 2.4. 56 per cent of learners resided in rented accommodation, twenty two per cent had a mortgage and 19 per cent were outright owner-occupiers. The overall proportion of owner-occupiers, at 41 per cent, was lower than the national average which is approximately 70 per cent. This low proportion of owner-occupation reflects the economic disadvantage of this group of learners to which attention was drawn in the report of the Stage 1 survey.

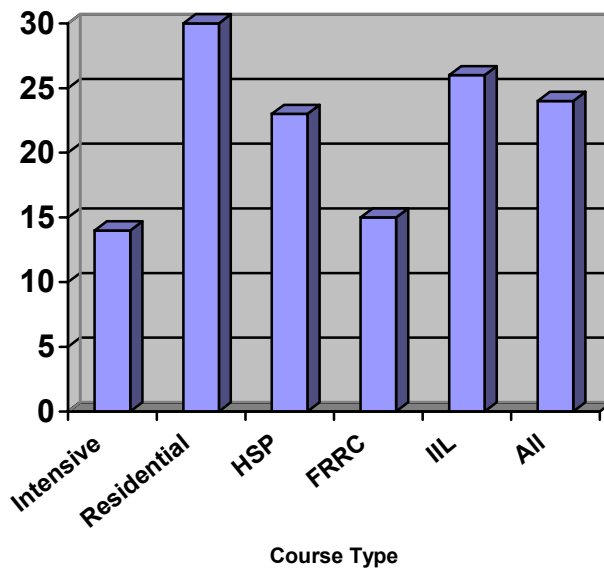
Table 2.4: Housing tenure by course type

	Column percentages					
	Intensive	Residential	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Tenant	58	56	62	49	49	56
Owner-occupier with mortgage	9	23	25	37	28	22
Owner-occupier with mortgage repaid	27	18	10	14	23	19
Other	6	4	3			3
<i>Base</i>	85	210	69	35	69	468

Self-assessed general health

At Stage 1, 22 per cent of learners responded affirmatively to the question “Do you have a long-term health problem or a disability which limits the paid work you can do?”. A further indicator of health is self assessed general health. At the Stage 2 interview respondents were asked to rank their health along a five point Likert scale from excellent to poor. Overall, around three quarters of Pathfinder learners are in reasonable health, classified as excellent, very good or good. There is some variation according to course type, apparent from Figure 2.1 which displays the proportion of learners who describe their health as only fair or poor. At the extremes, 30 per cent of Residential learners do not have good health, a figure which contrasts with less than 15 per cent among FRRC and Intensive course learners.

Figure 2.1: Proportion of learners in ‘poor’ or ‘fair’ health



Dependent children and childcare usage

One third of Pathfinder Extensions learners claimed to have dependent children under the age of 18 living in their household (Table 2.5). Most respondents with children had just one dependent child, apart from HSP and IIL learners, most of whom had two children. On average the youngest child was of junior school age. Despite this young age of children, the majority of parent learners (60 per cent) do not use any form of childcare (Table 2.6). Those

who do make use of childcare rely on family members, either grandparents of their children, or other family members, and very few use more formal, paid forms of childcare.

Table 2.5: Number of dependent children and age of youngest child by course type

	Column percentages and average					
	Intensive	Residentia 1	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Has dependent children	41	33	25	20	28	33
<i>Base</i>	85	210	69	35	69	468
Has 1 child	51	41	[7]	[4]	[5]	40
Has 2 children	34	28	[8]	[3]	[12]	45
Has 3 or more children	14	32	[2]	[0]	[11]	26
Average age of youngest child	7.7	8.1	7.7	5.6	7.3	7.7
<i>Base</i>	35	69	17	7	28	156

Table 2.6: Childcare arrangements among parents

	Cell percentages
Apart from respondent, who helps with childcare	
Grandparents	15
Other family	20
Friends / neighbours	3
Nursery / playgroup	3
School / school club	3
Childminder	1
Other	2
Nobody	60

Note: Multiple answers possible

Learning and health disadvantages

Table 2.7 reports a number of specific disadvantages experienced by course participants reported at Stage 2 only. Nearly one fifth of Pathfinder participants have a long-term health problem or disability, fourteen per cent have dyslexia and ten per cent have other physical or mental conditions which make it hard to read, write or talk to people. One third of participants have at least one of these disadvantages and 13 per cent have the multiple disadvantage of long-term ill health and either dyslexia or a reading difficulty.

Table 2.7: Indicators of disadvantage by course type

	Cell percentages					
	Intensive	Residential	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Long term sick	7	22	20	9	22	18
Has dyslexia	5	18	13	11	19	14
Has difficulty reading	5	11	10	9	12	10
Long term sick and dyslexic or with reading difficulty	5	17	12	3	16	13
Partner unemployed	60	48	18	36	29	43
<i>Base</i>	85	210	69	35	69	468

Note: Multiple answers possible; 'Partner unemployed' only among those living with partner.

In addition to physical and psychological problems, a high proportion of learners also appear to be at risk of financial hardship with 43 per cent living in a household with an unemployed partner. Among the non-employed respondents, 58 per cent had partners who were also not working (Table 2.8). Where the respondent was working the partner was highly likely to be in work as well: 67 per cent for men, 89 per cent for women and 79 per cent in total. Among those employed the incidence of living with an unemployed partner dropped to just one in five.

Table 2.8: Relationship between employment status of learners and their partners

	Partner's status		Row percentages
	Working	Not working	<i>Base</i>
Men			
Working	67	33	30
Not working	[4]	[17]	21
Women			
Working	89	11	37
Not working	49	51	73
Total			
Working	79	21	67
Not working	42	58	99

The Pathfinder group with partners divides almost exactly into thirds; one third have both partners working, in another third neither partner works and in a final third just one partner is employed.

2.2 Changes in sample composition

All follow-up surveys encounter problems of attrition, with respondents either moving away or refusing for various reasons to continue. At Stage 1 of the present study, 1,343 interviews were achieved of whom 826 were Extension course participants and 517 a comparison group

on traditional adult basic skills courses.³ At the end of Stage 1 interviewing, 61 learners (5 per cent) denied permission to be re-contacted at the second stage. At Stage 2, 468 Pathfinder and 302 comparison group interviews were achieved representing a survey attrition rate of 43 per cent and 42 per cent for each group respectively.⁴ This loss of respondents will not compromise analyses provided no group is over represented among the survey drop-outs. This section serves to briefly compare the Pathfinder samples at Stages 1 and 2 with reference to a few key variables. A more formal treatment of attrition will be undertaken for the analyses in Sections 5 and 6 and is discussed in some detail in Appendix B.

Table 2.9: Proportion of learners by course type at Stages 1 and 2

Interview Stage	Row percentages					
	Intensive	Residential	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Stage 1	19	45	15	8	13	826
Stage 2	18	45	15	7	15	468

Despite a reduction in the overall number of participants, the distribution of Pathfinder learners among the various Extension course types remained stable between interviews at Stages 1 and 2, as can be seen in Table 2.9. On the other hand Table 2.10 presents the numbers of learners on each course at Stage 1 and 2 indicating that retention rates overall stood at 57% with the IIL course exhibiting the highest rate at 66%.

Table 2.10: Retention rates by course type

Number of respondents at	Intensive	Residential	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Stage 1	158	371	125	67	105	826
Stage 2	85	210	69	35	69	468
Retention rate %	54	57	55	52	66	57

Table 2.11: Summary of change in the profile of participants

Participant profile	Cell percentages		
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Percentage Change
Women	59	62	+3
Have dependent children	45	33	-12
Lone parent	18	13	-5
Have a health problem	23	31	+8
Employed or self employed	30	35	+5

Table 2.11 provides a summary of particularly important characteristics used to give a preliminary assessment of the existence and extent of any change in the learner samples. A small increase in the proportion of women and employed or self-employed respondents can be observed. A slightly larger increase in the proportion of learners with a health problem is evident but the largest change, with a decline of 12 per cent is among participants with

³ See the stage one report for a more detailed discussion of the survey, sampling frames and response rates.

⁴ More details on the Stage 2 fieldwork are presented in Appendix D.

dependent children. The representation of lone parents has not, however, been affected to the same extent.

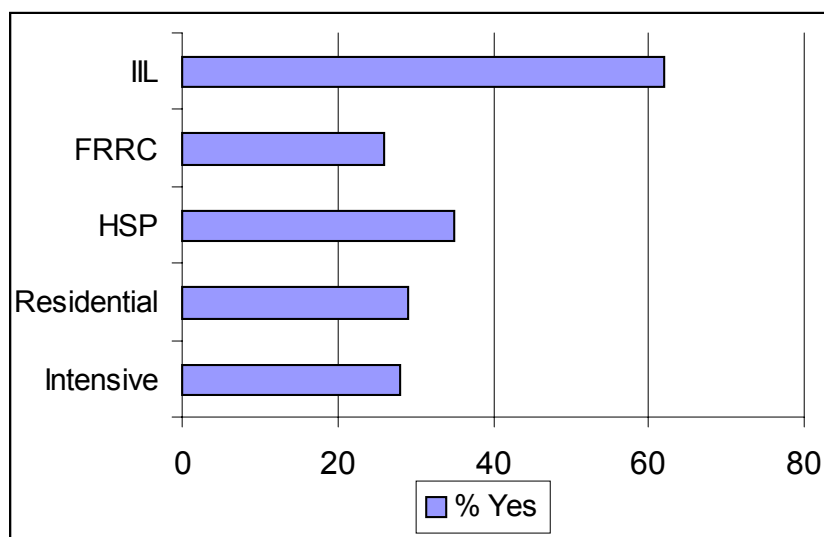
2.3 The Extension course experience - attitudes

The purpose of the Pathfinder evaluation study is to determine the educational and labour market outcomes of participants. As part of the project it is also relevant to assess the quality and nature of the learning experiences as perceived by the learners involved. One important aspect of course quality is the extent to which participants regarded the experience as promoting self-development across a range of dimensions. It is also of interest to establish the proportion of learners attending regularly and completing the courses. This section examines obstacles to previous course participation, perceived benefits of the Extension course and, finally, course completion and attendance rates.

Obstacles to previous course attendance

Prior to analysing the Extension course experiences of Pathfinder learners some background information in terms of previous course attendance difficulties is provided. Within the interviews some questions were asked about obstacles encountered by respondents in pursuing training or education in the past.

Figure 2.2: Whether Ever Been Stopped Attending Course



Overall, among the Pathfinder participants one third had been prevented from attending a course in the past. This proportion increased to nearly two thirds among the IIL learners (Figure 2.2). Reasons for failing to attend chosen courses have been divided into 'school reasons' and 'post school reasons' when respondents were older. Table 2.12 presents the number of instances that particular reasons were cited, the two most common being poor performance at school and dyslexia or other learning difficulties. Therefore, while young, academic ability was the most significant obstacle to further course attendance.

Later in life different impediments emerge although difficulties with confidence, reading and writing still feature as barriers to learning. The most frequently mentioned obstacle to course enrolment was childcare availability or affordability cited by 37 learners. 47 per cent of learners with dependent children had been stopped from attending a course compared with 28 per cent of those without children. A recent survey by the national charity Daycare Trust

(Daycare Trust, 2003) has revealed that the cost of all childcare services including nurseries, after school clubs and childminders, has risen by seventeen per cent.

The second most common barrier to entry, after leaving school, was the cost of courses: this was mentioned by 20 of the 161 people reporting any barrier. Another common barrier was the need to earn a living, referred to by 15 people as a barrier to entry. Health disabilities and entrance criteria were also cited, though by smaller numbers, as reasons for not attending desired courses in the past.

Table 2.12: Reasons for not attending a course

Reasons						Cell count
	Intensive	Residential	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
School Reasons						
Did not do well	-	2	1	-	3	6
Ill health	-	1	1	-	1	3
Family ill health	-	-	-	-	1	1
Dyslexia/learning difficulty	1	3	4	-	4	12
No English	1	-	1	-	-	2
Didn't like school	-	2	-	-	-	2
Not settled	1	-	-	-	-	1
Reasons After School						
Couldn't find suitable course	1	-	-	-	-	1
Couldn't afford course	7	4	4	1	4	20
Needed to work after school	2	5	-	1	1	9
No need – had a job	1	-	1	-	-	2
Children to care for	6	16	1	-	7	30
No affordable childcare	2	2	1	-	2	7
Lack of qualifications	1	6	-	-	2	9
Problems with reading /writing	1	8	3	-	2	14
Lack of confidence	-	12	3	-	2	17
Became pregnant	-	1	1	-	-	2
Had to work	2	5	1	3	4	15
Health disability	2	4	-	-	2	8
Had to leave country	3	-	1	-	2	6
Course fully booked	-	-	-	-	2	2
Lack of time	-	1	-	1	-	2
Had to care for relatives	-	-	-	-	1	1
Other reasons	3	4	2	3	7	19
<i>Base</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>161</i>

Perceived benefits of the course

Two blocks of questions were designed to assess the subjective value of the courses once completed. The first set asked how helpful learners found the course in terms of both education or skill advancement and broader life task activities. Questions addressed skill improvement, acquisition of new skills, job search or change, future planning, doing

paperwork and helping children. The second set elicited from respondents an indication of their levels of confidence in the performance of a variety of tasks. This form of self-confidence in the performance of everyday activities is referred to as self-efficacy⁵. By comparing responses at Stages 1 and 2 any enhancement of self-efficacy during course participation can be established.

Perceived advantages of course

Table 2.13 presents the results from questions asking how helpful respondents found the course. The dimensions have been ranked in order of positive responses with an increase in confidence at the top, cited by 92 per cent of all learners as a distinct outcome of course attendance. Other benefits of the course widely acknowledged include the development of existing skills (91 per cent), the acquisition of new skills (89 per cent), and sufficient advancement to consider and/or apply for further educational and training courses (85 per cent).

Table 2.13: Proportion of learners who found the course helpful in various ways

Course helpful in terms of:	Cell percentages					
	Intensive	Residential	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Increased confidence	89	92	93	94	93	92
Improving skills	86	90	91	91	97	91
Learning new skills	86	92	87	86	98	89
Step toward further courses	85	87	90	66	83	85
Help using computer / ICT	73	71	57	77	57	68
Planning future	80	67	62	60	61	67
Help with hobbies	68	58	46	46	54	57
Doing paperwork e.g. paying bills	71	50	44	37	51	52
Seeking / changing jobs	31	34	41	17	35	33
Claiming benefits	47	18	22	6	13	22
Dealing with officials	28	13	13	11	16	16
<i>Base</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>468</i>
Learners with children						
Helping children with homework	54	53	41	25	58	51
Helping children with other activities	57	43	41	33	38	43
<i>Base</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>156</i>

While less widespread, the courses were also perceived as helpful in the use of ICT, planning for the future, in the pursuit of hobbies and doing paperwork such as paying bills. One third of learners found the course of help in seeking or changing jobs and one fifth believed the course to have been helpful in the claiming of benefits. At the bottom of the list, just 16 per cent felt that course participation had helped them deal with officials. Of course the 'life tasks' toward the bottom of the list, including searching for and changing jobs, may simply reflect the fact that respondents had not, by the time of the second interview, initiated these forms of activity and were therefore not in a position to judge the value of the course in this regard.

⁵ For the analyses in Chapters 5 and 6 the separate items were added up to form a mean score of self-efficacy. Its construction is discussed in Appendix C.

Among respondents with children, half felt that the course provided them with skills which improved their ability to help their children with homework, schooling and other activities.

There are some differences in responses according to course type. The Intensive courses stand out as having the largest proportions of learners believing their course to have been helpful on five items: planning for the future, doing paperwork, helping children with other activities, claiming benefits and dealing with officials. The proportions of IIL learners who found their course helpful in terms of both learning new and improving old skills exceeded those of other course participants.

Change in confidence levels

While course participation was widely perceived as helpful in a variety of ways, comparison of confidence levels between interviews 1 and 2, presented in Table 2.14, suggests static self-efficacy levels. Analyses of change may however underestimate the impact of the courses because respondents were not questioned prior to participation; only once the course had commenced. At both time points, the great majority of learners were ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ confident in performing everyday tasks, pursuing educational opportunities and applying for jobs. The only apparent area of progression relates to official letter responses. A six per cent increase in the proportion of learners who feel very or fairly confident in replying to a letter about a hospital appointment is evident between Stages 1 and 2.

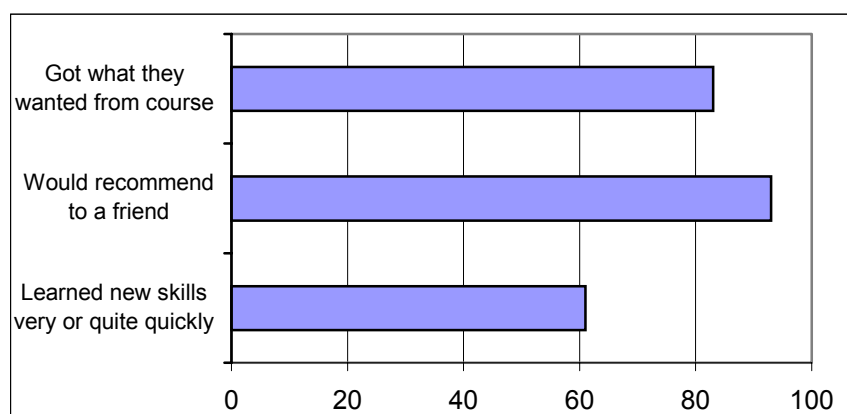
Table 2.14: Per cent of respondents very or fairly confident

Very or fairly confident to:	Cell percentages	
	Stage 1	Stage 2
Finding education and training	86	89
Training involving reading and writing	83	79
Job training involving maths	75	77
Helping child with homework	76	75
Replying to a letter about a hospital appointment	76	82
Checking electricity bill	73	75
Looking for jobs	76	76
Filling job application form	75	76
Making a good impression in interview	74	76
Doing a job with some reading and writing	87	85
Doing a job with some basic maths	82	82
<i>Base</i>	<i>826</i>	<i>468</i>

General attitudes toward the course

Further attitudinal questions (Figure 2.3) indicate that the learners very well received the educational experience. It was nearly unanimously believed that the courses were of such a standard to warrant recommendation to friends (93 per cent gave this reply). The great majority (83 per cent) were also satisfied that the course had delivered what they had hoped for and expected. Lower proportions, but nevertheless a majority at 61 per cent of respondents, felt they learned new skills very or quite quickly.

Figure 2.3: Attitudes to course content



In terms of speed of learning there were no differences by gender but there were, as might be expected, some differences according to indicators of learning disadvantage (Table 2.15). 50 per cent of the group with difficulties acquired the new skills very or quite quickly. This figure contrasts with sixty seven per cent of the remaining learners.

Table 2.15: Speed of learning by sex and learning difficulties

	Cell percentages
Proportion of each group learning 'quite' or 'very' quickly	
Men	63
Women	61
With learning problem	50
Without learning problem	67

Note: 'Learning problem' was defined in the following way: A single variable was derived indicating whether the respondent was long term sick, had dyslexia or had difficulty reading or talking with others.

Speed of learning was also associated with course type as can be seen in Table 2.16. While just under half of the IIL learners learned quite or very quickly, this rate of learning was experienced by three quarters of the FRRC learners. There are clearly, however, differences in the characteristics of these two groups with, for example all FRRC learners employed compared with less than half of the IIL learners (see Table 2.22).

Table 2.16: Attitudes to course content

	Cell percentages					
	Intensive	Resid.	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Learned new skills very or quite quickly	67	63	57	74	48	61
Would recommend course to a friend	93	96	84	100	93	93
Got what they wanted from course	74	85	78	91	84	83
<i>Base</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>468</i>

2.4 Course attendance and completion

Course attendance is an indicator of course effectiveness while course completion can be regarded as a partial educational outcome. These two issues are discussed in turn below.

Table 2.17: Course attendance and completion by type of course

	Cell percentages					
	Intensive	Residential	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
% completed the course	96	88	72	91	95	89
<i>Base</i>	74	170	57	35	63	399
% missed classes	39	54	39	34	54	48
<i>Base</i>	85	210	69	35	69	468

Note: Base is smaller as those reporting still being on the course were not asked whether they finished the course.

Nearly one half of learners missed classes at some point during the course (Table 2.17). The survey did not collect information on the frequency of absences by each learner. FRRC courses exhibited the lowest rate of non-attendance with residential and IIL courses the highest. There is an association between missed classes and course completion with 43 per cent of completers missing sessions compared with 77 per cent of non-completers (Table 2.18).

Table 2.18: Relationship between course attendance and course completion

Attendance status	Column percentages	
	Course completed	Course not completed
Missed classes	43	77
No missed classes	57	23
<i>Base</i>	345	44

Note: Base is lower as 'not sure' responses were omitted from calculations.

The completion rates varied across course types from a minimum of 72 per cent among HSP course attendees to 96 per cent of Intensive course learners with an overall rate of 89 per cent remaining until the end (Table 2.17). IIL, Residential and FRRC courses had completion rates which were close to the high end, leaving HSP significantly lower than all other course types.⁶

Reasons for non-completion of courses are listed in Table 2.19. Some reasons were cited by a small minority, such as incompatibility with teacher, course unsuitability, difficulty or ease of course and timing of classes. There were three main groups of reasons for failure to remain on the Extension courses until the end. Course content was cited as responsible on seven occasions, illness of their own or their child accounted for ten early departures and work commitments for a further five. Of the 44 learners not completing only two stated that they did not like or enjoy the course.

The vast majority of class absences were due to the learner being unwell.

⁶ This might be due to regional differences discussed more fully in Section 6.1.

Table 2.19: Reasons for missing classes and non completion

	Cell counts	
	Reasons for non completion	Reasons for missed classes
Did not enjoy	2	1
Did not get on with teacher	2	1
Unsuitable course	3	5
Course too hard	1	-
Course too easy	3	3
Times / days awkward	1	7
Difficult / expensive journey	-	3
Unwell	6	106
Child / family member unwell	4	27
No support from family	1	1
Childcare problems	1	5
Work commitments	5	15
Bereavement / Personal problem	-	10
Holiday	-	16
Had an appointment	-	6
Became pregnant	3	-
Class cancelled	n.a.	3
Clash with other course	n.a.	4
Did not complete course	n.a.	3
Other reasons	18	19
Don't know	1	5
<i>Base</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>221</i>

Note: Multiple answers possible.

2.5 Qualifications achieved

Three quarters of all learners received a qualification from their Pathfinder course. Proportions varied from 64 per cent of HSP learners either having taken or still waiting for a test compared, at the other extreme, with 91 per cent of FRRC learners (Table 2.20). In order to achieve the qualification or certificate 80 per cent of learners were formally assessed and required to sit a test. Once again there were differences according to course type. Just under two thirds of learners on the HSP courses took a test at the end compared with nearly all learners on the Intensive and ILL schemes.

Table 2.20: Whether received a qualification by type of course

	Column percentages					
	Intensive	Residential	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Received qualification	73	75	58	80	87	74
No qualification	24	18	29	6	12	19
Still waiting for test /result	2	3	6	11	1	4
Do not know	1	4	4	3		3
<i>Base</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>468</i>
Of those achieving a qualification:						
% who took a test	95	76	63	68	92	80
<i>Base</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>157</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>347</i>

A wide variety of courses were offered under the Pathfinder system as can be seen in Table 2.21. Just looking at the City and Guilds and other basic schemes, 16 per cent took a maths programme and 21 per cent an English course. A broad selection of other skills were also pursued including courses as diverse as cooking, family literacy, health and safety, first aid and nursing.

Table 2.21: Qualification or certificate received by Pathfinder respondents

Course type	Number of course participants
City and guilds maths	32
City and guilds English	35
City and guilds level 1	37
City and guilds level 2 or 3	23
City and guilds other	53
NVQ	14
GNVQ	14
GCSE	5
Basic maths	25
Basic English	38
Basic IT	18
Other	53
<i>Base</i>	<i>347</i>

2.6 Outcomes at Stage 2

The next five subsections are concerned with some of the outcomes which may occur after Extension course attendance and completion. The sections introduce variables and issues which will be taken up more formally and with greater statistical rigour in Sections 5 and 6 below. The areas under investigation are: Stage 2 employment circumstances, labour market attachment changes, job change among those employed at Stages 1 and 2, new course enrolment subsequent to Extension course participation and, finally, looking to the future, Pathfinder respondent plans to start new educational and training courses in the next year.

Employment outcomes

At Stage 2, 35 per cent of learners were employed, ranging from all FRRC participants to one quarter of HSP learners (Table 2.22). Overall, just 2 per cent of learners were self-employed, less than the national average.

Table 2.22: Employment status by course type

Employment status	Column percentages					
	Intensive	Residential	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Not working	73	69	75	0	68	65
Self-employed	6	1	0	0	0	2
Employed	21	30	25	100	32	33
<i>Base</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>468</i>

Table 2.23 presents information on change between Stages 1 and 2, showing that among respondents available for interview at both points in time, 10 per cent without a job at Stage 1 acquired an employed post. Of those employed at Stage 1, ten per cent were without employment by Stage 2. In terms of employment therefore, there would appear to be equal proportions of winners and losers.

Table 2.23: Employment status change between Stages one and two

Stage 1	Stage 2			Row percentages
	Unemployed	Employed	<i>Base</i>	
Unemployed	90	10	<i>325</i>	
Employed	10	90	<i>143</i>	
<i>Base</i>	<i>305</i>	<i>163</i>	<i>468</i>	

Labour market attachment outcomes

Among the non-employed, a positive labour market attachment in terms of job search behaviour and employment aspirations can be regarded as a type of outcome since it is a step in the direction of employment. Table 2.24 presents employment orientations among all non-employed learners at Stage 2. 65 per cent of the Pathfinder participants were not employed, of these, the majority (56 per cent) were not looking for work and did not, at that point in time, wish to have a job. 30 per cent were not looking but would have liked a job while 14 per cent were actively seeking employment.

Table 2.24: Labour Market Orientations at Stage 2

	Number of respondents working or seeking work	% of respondents working or seeking work
Employed	163	35
Not employed:		
Seeking work	42	14
Not seeking but desire a job	92	30
Not seeking and do not want a job	170	56
<i>Base</i>	468	

Focussing upon the unemployed who were not searching for work but would like a job, a number of reasons were commonly expressed as preventing immediate availability for work (Table 2.25). One fifth were still learners and one fifth were long term sick or disabled. 16 per cent were looking after their family. In another context, participants not attached to the labour market claimed that, despite course completion, lack of qualifications (16 per cent) or difficulties reading and writing (14 per cent) would still make it difficult to find a job.

Table 2.25: Reasons for not being available for work

	Number of respondents unavailable	% of respondents unavailable
Awaiting result of application	2	2
Learner	20	22
Looking after family / home	15	16
Temporary sick / disabled	4	4
Long term sick / disabled	20	22
Believes no jobs available	4	4
Not yet started looking	1	1
Other reason	26	28
<i>Base</i>	92	100

Job Change

To what extent has the occupational profile of the employed at Stages 1 and 2 changed? What proportion of those employed who remained in the survey at both interviews have changed jobs and what are the implications for job satisfaction and contractual status? These are the questions this section addresses.

Comparison of the occupations among Pathfinder students at Stage 1 and 2 of the interviewing process uses the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) schema. The picture is one of stability with the majority of workers at both points in time labouring in 'other' unskilled jobs (Table 2.26). At the other end of the occupational continuum, there is scant representation of Pathfinder learners in groups 1, 2 or 3, i.e. managerial or professional occupations.

Table 2.26: Occupational groups of current jobs – employed and self-employed

Occupations	Column percentages	
	Stage 1	Stage 2
Management & administrative	3	-
Professional	0	1
Associate professional	4	3
Clerical and secretarial	6	9
Craft and related	11	9
Personal and protective service	21	16
Sales	6	12
Plant and machine operators	12	13
Other	37	37
<i>Base</i>	<i>237</i>	<i>161</i>

Of the 129 workers employed in both Stages, 55 per cent were in the same job, while 45 per cent either changed employer or occupation. In terms of contractual status many of these changes were advantageous to the Pathfinder workers. Seventy two per cent of those employed on a temporary contract of less than one year's duration were, by Stage 2, employed on a permanent basis. Among those on a temporary contract of a longer term at Stage 1, sixty three per cent were on a permanent contract by Stage 2.

New Course Enrolment

New course uptake upon completion of the Pathfinder basic skills experience is a further outcome of concern to the evaluation. Table 2.27 shows the overall results at Stage 2, while Table 2.29 gives further details of the types of courses started.

Table 2.27: Proportion of learners beginning new courses

New course status	Cell percentages					
	Intensive	Residential	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Started a new course	45	61	52	43	55	55
Started more than 1 new course	9	28	12	3	30	21
<i>Base</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>468</i>

55 per cent of Pathfinder participants commenced a new course with 21 per cent beginning more than one. The most common source of finance (Table 2.28), for nearly half of the respondents, was government, local authority or other public grants. 39 per cent claimed the course was free and 11 per cent funded themselves.

Table 2.28: Source of finance for new course attendants

	Number using financial assistance	% using financial assistance
Employer	11	4
Self	27	11
Family	2	0.8
Government / local authority / other public support or grant	123	48
Free	100	39
Other	3	1.2
<i>Base</i>	<i>256</i>	<i>100</i>

Note: Multiple answers possible.

Table 2.29 lists the various course types begun by ‘the continuers’. The most popular follow-up course, pursued by 16 per cent of this group, provided basic information technology skills, followed by basic English courses (12 per cent). City & Guilds courses were being taken by 7 per cent, courses for NVQs by 9 per cent, and Basic maths courses by 7 per cent. There was however a very wide variety of courses, which is indicated by the large number classified as ‘other’ (38 per cent).

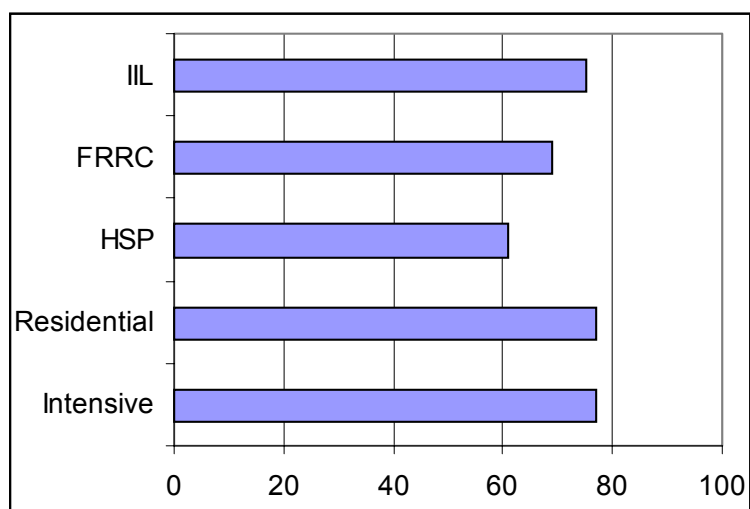
Table 2.29: Course types pursued by those starting a new course

Course Type	Number of respondents taking course	% of respondents taking course
City & Guild level 2 or 3	1	-
City & Guild other	21	7
NVQ	27	9
GNVQ	10	3
GCSE	25	8
Basic maths	20	7
Basic English	37	12
Basic IT	49	16
Other	114	38

Educational plans for the future

In assessing the value of Pathfinder Extension courses, attitudes toward the course, qualifications received and employment outcomes have all been considered. In addition, consequent orientation toward future education is also an important outcome dimension. Does participation whet the appetite for continued learning? Figure 2.4 presents data showing that the majority of Pathfinder participants desired further training or educational development, most notably among those attending IIL, Residential and Intensive courses.

Figure 2.4: Percentage of learners interested in future training or education



There are however often differences between people’s educational intentions at one time and what takes place at a later time. Table 2.30 shows the future learning plans and preferences expressed by Pathfinder participants at Stage 1 of the interviewing. The extent to which these plans were fulfilled by Stage 2 are also presented. Of the 280 learners wishing to start a new course at Stage 1, 60 per cent did so by Stage 2. 47 per cent of those thinking about the possibility of a new course took the step of enrolment. Interestingly, just over one fifth of learners stated that they had no desire to pursue further education in the coming year at Stage 1, but of these 48 per cent did indeed commence further education later in the same year. Ignoring waverers, i.e. the ‘maybe’ and ‘not sure’ respondents, 224 (58 per cent) of learners followed their expressed intentions or preferences.

Table 2.30: Stage 1 aspirations and Stage 2 behaviour

Stage 1: Do you wish to start a new course this year?	Stage 2: Whether started a new course			Row percentages
	Yes	No		<i>Base</i>
Yes	60	40		280
Perhaps	47	53		36
No	48	52		107
Not sure	44	56		45

3 The Comparison Group

The purpose of this section is to ascertain whether the Pathfinder participants are distinct from the Comparison sample across a number of measures. At this stage the intention is to provide a descriptive account of any differences between the two groups. Findings will be developed and analysed in further detail later in the report where a full evaluation is undertaken. Some of the results examined in earlier sections are re-presented for ease of comparison, as the focus here is upon the Pathfinder participants as an aggregate group compared with all Comparison sample respondents. Attention is not paid at this stage to different course types. Questions addressed in this section include the following: Are the Comparison and Pathfinder groups different in terms of the characteristics introduced in Section 2.1 i.e. in terms of age, housing tenure, general health, existence of dependent children, presence of learning disadvantages. This section is also concerned to establish whether similar proportions completed the educational programmes and gained qualifications. Are the groups equally satisfied with the product of their learning and finally, do employment and further educational outcomes differ?

In order to compare the Pathfinder and Comparison groups at Stage 2 and to contextualise some of the findings reported below, a single table is first provided which summarises a few health, marital and partner status characteristics of the two groups (Table 3.1). While there are few differences in terms of age, school level qualifications achieved, owner occupation, marital status and having dependent children, the health of the Pathfinder group is not as good as of the Comparison sample and the former also suffer to a greater extent with various problems which present individuals with learning difficulties. These differences may have an impact upon the employment and educational outcomes of course attendance and will be considered in further detail in Section 4.

Table 3.1: Characteristics of survey participants

	Pathfinder Extensions sample	Comparison sample
Average age	36	36
% who left school with no qualifications	54	49
% owner occupiers	41	39
% in excellent or very good health	45	51
% with long term health problem which limits paid work	31	23
% with dyslexia	14	10
% with other reading, writing or communication difficulties	10	7
% with either health, dyslexia or 'other' problem	32	24
% married/cohabiting	36	34
% with partner unemployed	43	46
% both partners unemployed	34	39
% with dependent children	33	30
Average age of youngest child	7.7	8.0
Base	468	302

3.1 Course attendance and completion

Of the 468 Pathfinder learners and 302 Comparison group learners at Stage 2, the vast majority completed their courses (Table 3.2). Commitment levels therefore appear to be similar in each group.

About half of each group missed some classes with six per cent more of the comparison group experiencing absenteeism, a small but statistically significant difference. Reasons for non-attendance are the same for each group with illness being the most frequently cited cause.

Table 3.2: Course completion and class absence by learner type

	Extensions sample	Comparison group	All
% completed the course	89	92	90
<i>Base</i>	399	214	613
% missed some classes	48	54	50
<i>Base</i>	468	302	770

Note: Learners who responded that they were still doing the course were not asked whether they completed the course.

3.2 Qualification outcomes

The two learner groups cannot be differentiated according to the qualifications received or certificates awarded upon course completion (Table 3.3). In order to obtain such credentials, identical proportions of each group were also required to sit some form of formal test.

Table 3.3: Qualifications received and tests taken by learners type

	Extensions sample	Comparison group	Total
% receiving or waiting for a qualification	78	76	77
<i>Base</i>	468	302	770
% with qualification who took a test	80	80	80
<i>Base</i>	347	194	541

3.3 Attitudes toward and satisfaction with the course

It can be observed from examination of Figure 3.1 that, overall, the learners from both groups hold their courses in high regard; virtually all course participants would recommend the classes to friends. The only discernible difference between the two groups of interest relates to fulfilment of expectations. A slightly larger, statistically significant proportion of the comparator group claimed to have got what they wanted from the course. It is difficult to speculate why this small difference may exist especially as the same proportions of each group received a qualification and sat a test (see the previous Section 3.2). It is also apparent from Table 3.4 that differences in the number of learners from each group who found their course helpful across a wide range of dimensions are negligible, the one exception being the greater likelihood of the Comparison group who found their course helpful in making plans for the future (a difference of seven percentage points).

Figure 3.1: Attitudes toward course content by learner type

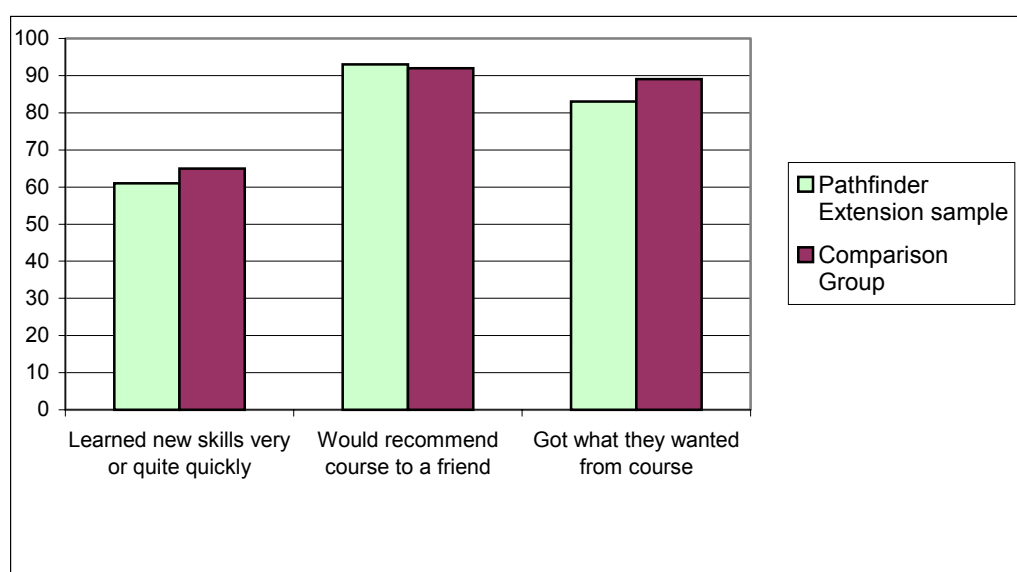


Table 3.4: Proportion of learners who found the course helpful by learner type

Course helpful in terms of	Cell percentages	
	Extensions sample	Comparison group
Increased confidence	92	92
Improving skills	91	89
Learning new skills	89	90
Step toward further courses	85	89
Help using computer /ICT	68	68
Planning future	67	74
Help with hobbies	57	52
Doing paperwork e.g. Bills	52	55
Helping children with homework	51	49
Helping children with other activities	43	46
Seeking / changing jobs	33	30
Claiming benefits	22	24
Dealing with officials	16	20
<i>Base</i>	468	302

3.4 Employment status change

There appears to be some more labour market transitions among Comparison group learners compared with the Pathfinder participants (Table 3.5). More Comparison group respondents became employed between Stages 1 and 2 but an even larger percentage left employment. By Stage 2 the difference in unemployment levels was not large with 69 per cent of the Comparison group and 65 per cent of the Pathfinder group not working for one reason or another. The larger proportions of comparator learners moving to non-employed status is

partially explained by their over-representation as learners in Stage 2 having pursued further educational opportunities to a greater extent, discussed further below.

Table 3.5: Labour market movements and status by course type

	Cell percentages		
	Extensions sample	Comparison group	Total
% moving from unemployment to employment	10	13	11
% moving from employment to unemployment	10	16	12
% unemployed at Stage 2	65	69	67
<i>Base</i>	<i>468</i>	<i>302</i>	<i>770</i>

Figure 3.2 indicates that the two groups are very similar in their orientation toward work and job search activity. The only difference between the Pathfinder and Comparison sample is in the reasons for not currently searching for employment despite wishing to have a job; these findings are presented in Table 3.6. The only reason groupings to display any difference between the two learner cohorts are learner status and long-term sickness or disability. 14 per cent more of the comparator sample claimed learner status as a reason for not looking for work, explained in part by the fact that while 55 per cent of the Pathfinder group commenced at least one further course since the Stage 1 interview, 64 per cent of the Comparison group did so (see Section 0). Twice as many Pathfinder participants have a disability or long-term health problem which deters them from seeking a job despite a desire to work.

Figure 3.2: Work orientation of the non-employed by learner type

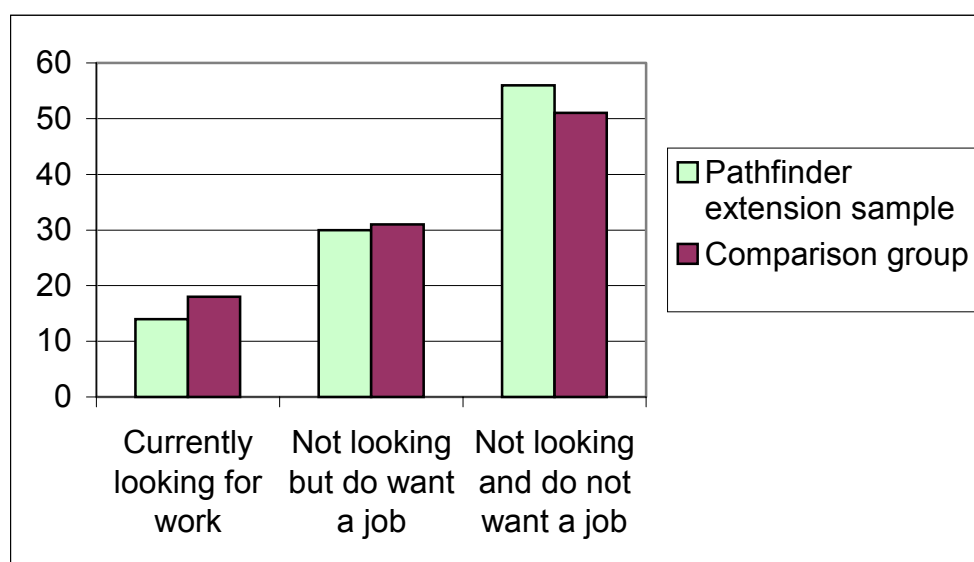


Table 3.6: Reasons for not looking for work in last four weeks

Reasons for non search	Column percentages		
	Extensions sample	Comparison	Total
Waiting for application results	2	2	2
Learner	22	36	28
Looking after home	16	13	15
Temporary sick / disabled	4	3	4
Long term sick / disabled	22	11	17
Believes no jobs available	4	6	5
Not yet started looking	1	8	4
Other reason	28	22	26
<i>Base</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>156</i>

Note: Only respondents who are not looking for work but would like a regular paid job were asked this question.

3.5 New course uptake

A statistically significant nine percentage points more comparator group respondents enrolled on new courses between the interviews at Stages 1 and 2 compared with the Pathfinder participants. Table 3.7 lists the primary content of courses taken up by learners. There is no difference, however, in the sort of courses favoured by the two learner groups.

Table 3.7: New course uptake and course content by learner type

	Column percentages		
	Extensions sample	Comparison group	Total
% started a new course	55	64	58
Course content:			
Mainly number skills	12	12	12
Mainly reading and writing skills	17	19	18
Mainly reading, writing and number skills	11	15	13
Mainly IT or computer skills	24	24	24
Mainly something else	36	30	33
<i>Base</i>	<i>256</i>	<i>193</i>	<i>449</i>

4 Methodological Aspects of the Impact Evaluation

In this Chapter methodological aspects of the impact evaluation are discussed. The method used to estimate the impact of adult basic skills Extension activities is described. Not all outcome measures of interest are suitable for such estimation and other, descriptive tools and their interpretation are considered in the following section. All discussions are kept intuitive. A more formal treatment can be found in Appendix A.

All analyses, impact estimates and descriptive investigations, are based on weighted data. As was shown in Section 2.2 there are some differences in the characteristics of respondents at Stage 1 and 2. To take account of attrition between the two stages of the survey data have been weighted. Weights are based on the probability of responding to both interviews controlling for personal characteristics. More details on the model and the effectiveness of weights are provided in Appendix B.

4.1 Impact estimates

To estimate the impact of Pathfinder Extension activities on different outcomes of interest it is necessary to know what these outcomes would have been if the individual had *not* enrolled in one of the Extension courses but a traditional course. The problem is that this hypothetical or ‘counterfactual’ outcome is not observable and has to be estimated.

A simple analysis of differences in outcomes between the Pathfinder participants and learners on traditional courses is likely to be misleading. Chapter 3 revealed some important differences in characteristics between the two groups. These differences could occur because different individuals are more or less likely to choose one of the Extension courses rather than a traditional course. This is also referred to as a selection problem. Differences between the two groups can also affect the outcomes of interest. Therefore, if no account is taken of the selection, one is never sure whether observed differences in outcomes between the two groups are due to the type of course provision or the characteristics of participants.

There are different ways of taking selection into programmes into account. The technique chosen here is known as ‘propensity score matching’ (PSM). The outcome of an Extension course learner is compared to a matched counterpart on a traditional course who is ‘similar’. First, some details on the ‘matching’ are given and then ‘being similar’ is discussed in more detail.

Each learner on an Extension course is assigned the most similar learner on a traditional course. This matched counterpart from the Comparison group becomes the counterfactual for the treated person and provides an estimate of the outcome that would have occurred had the participant on the Extension course instead been on a traditional course. Comparing the average outcome of those on Extension courses with the average outcome of their matched counterparts gives an estimate of the impact of Extension activities.

In the case of PSM people are defined as similar if they have a similar probability to enrol in an Extension course as opposed to a traditional adult basic skills course. This probability is estimated taking all characteristics into account that influence both the participation decision and outcomes. In this application the model controlled for personal characteristics, disadvantage, labour market history and region.⁷ As with all models there are some underlying assumptions and possibilities to assess the performance of the model. Both are discussed in more detail in Appendix B.

⁷ Details of all the variables included and the model estimates are given in Appendix B.

When presenting impact estimates using propensity score matching different results are given: First, observed average outcomes for the two groups of interest – the difference between these is sometimes referred to as the ‘raw’ difference; second, results after controlling for selection – these are called ‘matched’. Again the average outcome for the participants on Extension courses is given, followed by the average for the ‘matched’ control group. The difference between these two is the impact estimate.

4.2 Descriptive analyses

There are situations where an impact estimate using PSM is not feasible. Two such situations are encountered in the current evaluation and are summarised below:

Secondary outcomes. These are outcomes that depend on a primary outcome. The primary outcome – for example whether a person is employed at the Stage 2 interview – is an outcome affected by the treatment. The secondary outcome is only observable if the primary outcome is of a certain type. For example, wages can only be observed for those who are in employment at the Stage 2 interview. There are no statistical methods to control simultaneously for both selection processes (i.e. Extensions vs. Comparison group and employed vs. non-employed).

Outcomes for small subgroups. Where the subgroups are small it can become difficult to implement PSM. There are two main factors creating difficulties. First, it becomes difficult to estimate an adequate selection model and second, the two groups might not overlap enough in their probability of selection, thus making it difficult to find ‘matches’ for individuals in the treatment group.

Therefore, not only impact estimates using propensity score matching but also descriptive analyses will be used to assess the impact of the adult basic skills Extension activities. The descriptive evidence will take the form of cross-tables. Furthermore, it will be tested whether apparent differences between learners on Extension courses and those on traditional courses are statistically significant.

In interpreting the descriptive evidence it has to be kept in mind that possible selection into the programme has not been controlled for. As will be shown for outcomes where PSM is achievable, the programme impact before and after taking selection into account can vary considerably in magnitude and significance.

5 The Impact of Adult Basic Skills Extension Activities

In this Chapter the results of the impact analyses are presented. They are structured by outcome themes. In Section 5.1 learning outcomes are discussed followed by a section on intermediate outcomes. Section 5.3 is concerned with labour market outcomes. The robustness of the impact estimates is discussed in Section 5.4. The next two sections discuss outcomes for two subgroups: job characteristics for those in employment (Section 5.5) and job search among those not employed (Section 5.6).

5.1 The impact on learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are outcomes of the courses concerned as well as additional courses started and planned by learners on the adult basic skills courses. Formal assessments or test results – which would also constitute a learning outcome – were not available. Many of the outcomes considered are secondary ones and therefore descriptive analyses have been conducted. PSM has been carried out on whether learners finished their course and whether they started any new courses.

Whether learners finished the course

It is of interest whether learners actually finished their course or left before the end. There are two complications in calculating the percentage of those who finished. First, the first stage interviews took place while learners were on the course and at the course location. This means that there is no information on learners that (might have) dropped out before the interviews took place. Thus the percentage of those finished has to be interpreted as among those who were still on the course at the time of the interview. Given the different format of Extension courses it might well be that drop-out rates varied at the time of the interview. This means that the calculations start from a different base and that differences in the percentage that finished between Extension and traditional courses might be due to this difference in the base. This should least affect the comparison between traditional courses and the Residential type of Extension courses as those courses only differ by the residential component but are otherwise identical. Such a comparison is discussed in Section 6.1.

Second, the Stage 2 fieldwork took place between October and December 2002. By this time all the adult basic skills courses that started in January 2002 should have finished. However, some learners responded that they were still doing the initial adult basic skills course and were therefore not asked whether they have finished their course. To account for this, the percentage of those who finished the course is expressed as the percentage of all learners and as a percentage of those who did not still do the initial course. Table 5.1 gives an overview of course status.

Table 5.1: Course status

Course status	Column percentages		
	Extension courses	Traditional courses	Total
Stayed till end	76	66	72
Left before end	10	5	8
Not sure	0	0	0
Still doing course	14	28	20
<i>Weighted base</i>	459	289	748
<i>Unweighted base</i>	468	302	770

Difference significant at 1%, chi-square statistic: 24.32

While 14 per cent of learners on Extension courses maintain to be still on the same course this number doubles to 28 per cent for learners on traditional course. Thus the percentage that finished the course (stayed till the end) will depend crucially on whether these individuals are included in the base or not.

Next, impact estimates using PSM are presented. First, the percentage that finished the course among all those not still doing the course is considered and then among all in the sample. Some time will be spent interpreting Table 5.2 as this is the format all tables presenting impact estimates will take.

Table 5.2: Impact estimates on finishing course

Course status	'Raw'	'Matched'
Percentage finished course out of those not still on the course		
Extension courses	89	89
Traditional courses	92	95
Impact	-3	-6**
(Standard error)	(2.5)	(2.5)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	606	
Percentage finished course out of full sample		
Extension courses	76	76
Traditional courses	66	63
Impact	10***	14***
(Standard error)	(3.4)	(5.0)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	760	

Notes:

- (1) 'Raw' and 'matched' mean purely descriptive and after PSM, respectively. Both are calculated using attrition weights.
- (2) 'Impact' is the difference between the outcomes for learners on Extension courses compared to traditional courses, the standard error of the estimated impact is given in parenthesis.
- (3) The unweighted base is lower than in the descriptive tables. Excluded are those that fell outside the common support (see Appendix A for details).

Among those not still doing the course learners on traditional courses were six percentage points more likely to have finished the course. The difference is statistically significant. It has been shown above that a much larger proportion of learners on traditional courses respond that they are still doing the same course. Thus, the picture changes, if the finishers are

expressed as a percentage of all learners, which gives the Extension courses a 14 percentage points advantage over traditional courses. This second impact estimate is also statistically significant.

Whether a qualification was obtained

Those who finished the course were then asked whether they got a qualification from that course. As this outcome is a secondary one – it is conditional on finishing the course – only descriptive evidence is provided in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Qualifications received

Qualification obtained	Column percentages		
	Extension courses	Traditional courses	Total
Yes	73	64	70
No	19	21	20
Waiting to take test	2	7	4
Waiting to hear result	2	5	3
Not applicable – no qualification awarded	4	3	3
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>459</i>	<i>289</i>	<i>748</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>468</i>	<i>302</i>	<i>770</i>

Difference significant at 5%, chi-square statistic: 6.38

Some interesting differences can be detected. More learners on Extension courses did receive a qualification from their course, 73 per cent, compared to 64 per cent on traditional courses. However, the number of those who did not gain a qualification is very similar for the two types and the main difference seems to be in the numbers waiting to take their test or hear their result. This difference could be explained by the longer average duration of traditional courses or the fact people on traditional courses were less likely to finish within the original educational year (see Table 5.1) and might therefore start the same course again in the following term.

New courses started

Next, additional learning activities are examined. At the Stage 2 interview all participants were asked whether they started any new courses. This formed a measurable primary outcome. Furthermore, descriptive evidence will be presented on whether they started more than one course, whether they were still doing this course and what kind of new course learners started.

Table 5.4: Impact estimates on new courses

Course status	'Raw'	'Matched'
Percentage that started a new course		
Extension courses	55	55
Traditional courses	64	64
Impact	-.9**	-.9*
(Standard error)	(3.7)	(5.0)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	760	760

Notes:

(1) 'Raw' and 'matched' mean purely descriptive and after PSM, respectively. Both are calculated using attrition weights.

(2) 'Impact' is the difference between the outcomes for learners on Extension courses compared to traditional courses, the standard error of the estimated impact is given in parenthesis.

(3) The unweighted base is lower than in the descriptive tables. Excluded are those that fell outside the common support (see Appendix A for details).

Both before and after taking differences in characteristics into account (by applying PSM), learners on traditional courses were nine percentage points more likely to have started a new course compared to those on Pathfinder Extension courses. Only the level of significance seems affected by the selection process. It is unclear, why traditional learners should be more likely to engage in additional learning activities. One reason could be the different types of Extension courses. As will be shown in Section 0 Residential courses have a far higher percentage (62 per cent) of learners that start new courses than learners on the other types where the percentage varies from 42 (FRRC) to 55 per cent (IIL).

Again, there are secondary outcomes of interest: whether learners started more than one course (Table 5.5), the current status of that course (Table 5.6) and what the course was about (Table 5.7).

Table 5.5: Number of new courses started

Number of new courses	Column percentages		
	Extension courses	Traditional courses	Total
One	64	78	70
More than one	36	22	30
<i>Weighted base</i>	251	185	435
<i>Unweighted base</i>	256	193	449

Difference significant at 5%, chi-square statistic: 6.38

Table 5.6: Status of new course

Whether still doing course	Column percentages		
	Extension courses	Traditional courses	Total
Yes	91	95	93
No	9	5	7
Course finished	[13]	[1]	[14]
Left before end	[9]	[9]	[18]
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>251</i>	<i>184</i>	<i>435</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>256</i>	<i>193</i>	<i>449</i>

Difference not significant.

Learners on Extension courses were less likely to start a new course; however, those who engaged in additional learning were more likely to have started more than one course (Table 5.5). Over a third of learners on Extension courses who started new course(s) started more than one compared to less than a quarter among traditional learners. There is very weak evidence (Table 5.6) that learners on comparison courses were more likely to stop the new course before it ended. Together with the fact that they were also less likely to start more than one new course this suggests a more intense learning experience for those Extension course participants that did engage in further education or training.

Table 5.7: Type of new course

What was the course about	Column percentages		
	Extension courses	Traditional courses	Total
Mainly number skills	11	12	12
Mainly reading & writing	16	19	17
Mainly reading, writing and number skills	11	14	13
Mainly IT or computers	24	24	24
Mainly something else	37	30	34
Don't know / not sure	-	1	0
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>251</i>	<i>185</i>	<i>435</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>256</i>	<i>193</i>	<i>449</i>

Difference not significant.

There is no significant difference between learners on Extension and traditional courses in the choice of type of additional course. Many people – one in three learners – took courses which could not be classified under any of the basic skills (they are classified in the table as ‘something else’). The most popular of the remaining courses were those that focus on IT and computers (one in four learners). Courses on reading and writing were chosen more often than courses on number skills. Overall, traditional adult basic skills subjects still attracted more than 40 per cent of learners.

5.2 The impact on intermediate outcomes

In this section the focus is on intermediate outcomes. They measure life-long learning aspirations and self-efficacy. To some extent the self-efficacy measure can be interpreted as a measure for employability as it captures the self-confidence in applying adult basic skills in job search and actual job situations. For all of the outcomes in this section impact estimates were possible. For planned courses also descriptive evidence on course content is presented.

Self-efficacy

The self-efficacy measure ranges from 1 (low self-efficacy) to 4 (high self-efficacy). It is based on nine items that measure how confident individuals are in applying basic skills to everyday situations including job search and work. Some descriptive evidence on the separate items is given in Section 0. Details of the derivation of the scale are presented in Appendix C. Table 5.8 presents the impact estimates on the self-efficacy score. Self-efficacy is slightly higher for learners on traditional courses compared to those on Extension courses. After applying PSM to control for differences in characteristics between the two groups no difference remains.

Table 5.8: Impact estimates on self-efficacy

Self-efficacy mean score	'Raw'	'Matched'
Extension courses	3.23	3.23
Traditional courses	3.28	3.23
Impact	-0.05	0
(Standard error)	(0.05)	(0.07)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>760</i>	

Notes:

- (1) 'Raw' and 'matched' mean purely descriptive and after PSM, respectively. Both are calculated using attrition weights.
- (2) 'Impact' is the difference between the outcomes for learners on Extension courses compared to traditional courses, the standard error of the estimated impact is given in parenthesis.
- (3) The unweighted base is lower than in the descriptive tables. Excluded are those that fell outside the common support (see Appendix A for details).
- (4) Self-efficacy is a mean score calculated out of nine separate items (see Appendix C) with a range from 1 (low self-efficacy) to 4 (high self-efficacy).

'Life-long' learning

Under the heading of 'life-long' learning two outcomes about the future are considered. First, participants were asked whether they planned to start a new course during the next year and second, they were asked whether they think that they will be interested in education and training in the future. No significant differences between the two types of courses were detected for either of the outcomes.

Table 5.9: Impact estimates on ‘life-long’ learning

	‘Raw’	‘Matched’
New courses planned during the next year		
Extension courses	43	43
Traditional courses	45	41
Impact	-2	2
(Standard error)	(3.7)	(5.0)
Interested in new education and training this time next year		
Extension courses	73	73
Traditional courses	72	70
Impact	2	3
(Standard error)	(3.4)	(4.9)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	760	

Notes:

- (1) ‘Raw’ and ‘matched’ mean purely descriptive and after PSM, respectively. Both are calculated using attrition weights.
- (2) ‘Impact’ is the difference between the outcomes for learners on Extension courses compared to traditional courses, the standard error of the estimated impact is given in parenthesis.
- (3) The unweighted base is lower than in the descriptive tables. Excluded are those that fell outside the common support (see Appendix A for details).

Nearly three out of four respondents were interested in education and training in the future and four out of ten planned to take a course during the next year. Looking at the topic list (Table 5.10) a move away (compared to additional courses already taken, see Table 5.7) from traditional adult basic skills subjects can be detected with an increase in the popularity of IT and computer courses and the miscellaneous courses that were about ‘something else’.

Table 5.10: Type of planned course

What was the course about	Column percentages		
	Extension courses	Traditional courses	Total
Mainly number skills	11	5	7
Mainly reading & writing	17	12	15
Mainly reading, writing and number skills	15	9	12
Mainly IT or computers	24	31	27
Mainly something else	33	42	37
Don’t know / not sure	-	1	0
<i>Weighted base</i>	143	94	237
<i>Unweighted base</i>	149	99	248

Difference not significant.

5.3 The impact on labour market outcomes

In this section impact estimates for four different labour market outcomes are presented. The first three outcomes concern the labour market status of participants while the last one

measures the time in employment from the start of adult basic skills courses (January 2002) to the beginning of second stage interviews (September 2002). Further labour market outcomes – job characteristics for those in jobs and job search for the unemployed – will be discussed in Sections 5.5 and 5.6, respectively.

Labour market status is grouped into three outcomes: employed, attached, and inactive. The definition is based on questions similar to those used in the Labour Force Survey to arrive at the international definitions of employment and unemployment. The three groups attempt to measure distance to the labour market. Closest to the labour market are those employed, defined as all in a paid job. Next, are those attached to the labour market. This group comprises all those looking for work and those who are not currently looking but would like to have a regular paid job. Furthest from the labour market is the inactive group. These are individuals who are not looking for work and would not like to have a regular paid job.

Table 5.11: Impact estimates on labour market outcomes

	‘Raw’	‘Matched’
Employed at Stage 2 interview		
Extension courses	36	36
Traditional courses	32	27
Impact	3	9*
(Standard error)	(3.6)	(4.7)
‘Attached’ at Stage 2 interview		
Extension courses	29	29
Traditional courses	34	36
Impact	-5	-7
(Standard error)	(3.5)	(5.0)
‘Inactive’ Stage 2 interview		
Extension courses	36	36
Traditional courses	34	37
Impact	2	-2
(Standard error)	(3.5)	(4.9)
Number of months in employment between January and September 2002		
Extension courses	2.65	2.65
Traditional courses	2.62	1.97
Impact	0.04	0.69**
(Standard error)	(0.30)	(0.35)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	760	

Notes:

- (1) ‘Raw’ and ‘matched’ mean purely descriptive and after PSM, respectively. Both are calculated using attrition weights.
- (2) ‘Impact’ is the difference between the outcomes for learners on Extension courses compared to traditional courses, the standard error of the estimated impact is given in parenthesis.
- (3) The unweighted base is lower than in the descriptive tables. Excluded are those that fell outside the common support (see Appendix A for details).
- (4) ‘Attached’ are ILO unemployed, those looking for work but not available and those that – even though they are not looking – would like to have a regular paid job. ‘Inactive’ are those not looking for work and that would not like to have a regular paid job.

More participants on Extension courses were employed at the Stage 2 interview than participants on traditional courses. This difference increases to nine percentage points once differences in characteristics between the two groups are accounted for. The effect is significant at the 10 per cent significance level. Differences between the other two possible labour market states – being attached or inactive – were not statistically significant.

The positive impact of Extension courses on employment is not only an effect observed at a specific point in time (the Stage 2 interview) but is also detected in a more continuous measure. Over the nine months period from January 2002 to September 2002 learners on Extension courses were in employment for an additional 0.7 of a month. This difference was significant at 5 per cent.

It might be suspected that this positive impact on employment outcomes is at least partially driven by the fact that one type of Extension course – FRRC – is specifically for those in employment. The next section deals with this and other issues of robustness.

5.4 Robustness of impact estimates

As with all estimations it is important to assess the robustness of results. This was done in a number of ways. First, different models of the probability to be on an Extension course as opposed to a traditional course were estimated. As expected this changed the actual estimates of the impact. However, in most cases, the interpretation stayed the same in the sense that impact estimates might change in magnitude but effects were of the same sign. In some cases impact estimates lost their significance or became significant by changing the model to estimate the propensity scores. The positive impact on employment was among the most robust results.

Second, analyses were repeated for different subgroups with respect to type of Extension courses. Most of these results are discussed in the next Section when relative impacts of different course types are considered. Of special concern for the overall effect were FRRC courses. Learners on FRRC courses were by definition in employment when they started the course and therefore a very distinct subgroup. Even though the sample contains only 35 learners on FRRC courses it was felt important to check whether they were driving any of the positive labour market outcomes.

Table 5.12 summarises the results for impact estimates on labour market outcomes. Excluding FRRC learners does not alter the basic interpretation – if at all, results are stronger than for the whole group of Extensions learners. Not only a significant positive effect on employment but also a negative effect on the number attached to the labour market (unemployment) is found. The effect on those inactive remained insignificant suggesting that the increase in employment is due to people attached to the labour market finding jobs.

The positive effect on the number of months employed is reduced and becomes insignificant. This is due to the fact that learners on FRRC courses had a different work history profile and all of them have been in continuous employment in the period considered (see Section 6.4 for further details).

Table 5.12: ‘Matched’ Impact estimates – The effect of FRRC learners

	All	FRRC learners excluded
Employed at Stage 2 interview		
Impact	9*	10**
(Standard error)	(4.7)	(4.3)
‘Attached’ at Stage 2 interview		
Impact	7	-14**
(Standard error)	(5.0)	(5.4)
‘Inactive’ stage 2 interview		
Impact	2	3
(Standard error)	(4.9)	(5.2)
Number of months in employment between January and September 2002		
Impact	0.69**	0.54
(Standard error)	(0.35)	(0.33)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	760	726

Notes:

(1) All impacts based on propensity score matching.

(2) ‘Attached’ are ILO unemployed, those looking for work but not available and those that – even though they are not looking – would like to have a paid job. ‘Inactive’ are those not looking for work and that would no like to have a paid job.

5.5 Job characteristics of those in employment

As mentioned earlier all job characteristics are secondary outcomes as they are only observed for those in employment. Therefore, no impact estimates are possible and all the evidence provided below is purely descriptive. Job characteristics considered are: length in current job, training, whether the job is permanent or not, and wages.

Table 5.13 summarises the time learners spent in their current job. There was no significant difference between Extension and traditional courses. About one quarter of those employed found their job within the last six months. But there was also a considerable number, nearly two thirds, who had been in their job for more than one year.

Table 5.13: Length in current job

	Column percentages		
	Extension courses	Traditional courses	Total
0 – 6 months	25	22	24
6 – 12 months	15	14	14
1 – 3 years	23	32	27
3 – 10 years	15	20	17
More than 10 years	21	12	18
<i>Weighted base</i>	154	91	245
<i>Unweighted base</i>	153	91	244

Difference not significant.

Just over 40 per cent of all learners responded that they have done some training connected to the work they do during their current job (Table 5.14). There was no difference in the incidence of training between Extension course learners and learners on traditional courses.

Table 5.14: Work related training during current job

Any training for current job	Column percentages		
	Extension courses	Traditional courses	Total
Yes	42	42	42
No	58	58	58
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>165</i>	<i>93</i>	<i>258</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>163</i>	<i>93</i>	<i>256</i>

Difference not significant.

Another characteristic of interest is whether the current job was permanent or not. Table 5.15 summarises results. Just under 80 per cent of jobs were permanent, leaving 21 per cent non-permanent. Non-permanent jobs can be seasonal, temporary or limited contract jobs. The difference between Extension course learners and learners on traditional courses was not statistically significant.

Table 5.15: Current job permanent or not

Job status current jobs	Column percentages		
	Extension courses	Traditional courses	Total
Permanent	80	76	79
Non-permanent	20	24	21
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>154</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>243</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>153</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>242</i>

Note: Non-permanent includes seasonal, temporary, and casual jobs, jobs done under contract for a limited period of time and jobs that are not permanent in some other way.

Difference not significant.

Table 5.16 displays average hourly wages for the two groups. Again, the difference between them was not significant. On average, adult basic skills course participants that were in employment earned £4.69 an hour. This was 50p above the minimum wage at the time of the Stage 2 interview. Given the low level of qualifications and other labour market disadvantages of those starting adult basic skills courses, it is not surprising that the hourly wages are relatively low. According to data from the September to November 2002 Labour Force Survey only 16% of the general population earned less than £4.69 an hour⁸.

⁸ This gives a broad comparison as the LFS data is unweighted and not corrected for outliers.

Table 5.16: Hourly wages in current job

	Extension courses	Traditional courses	Total
Hourly wage rate	4.67	4.74	4.69
(Standard error)	(0.16)	(0.22)	(0.13)
<i>Number of observations</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>158</i>

Difference not significant.

5.6 Job search among those not in employment

In this section the focus shifts to those not currently employed and their job search behaviour. First, Table 5.17 displays whether those not in employment were looking for a job within the last four weeks, then Table 5.18 presents the reasons given for not looking for a job, followed by Table 5.19 which lists barriers to job search.

Table 5.17: Job search activities

	Column percentages		
Looking for a job in last four weeks	Extension courses	Traditional courses	Total
Yes	14	19	16
No	86	81	84
Would like regular paid work	35	38	36
Would not like regular paid work	65	62	64
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>294</i>	<i>196</i>	<i>490</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>304</i>	<i>209</i>	<i>513</i>

Difference not significant.

Among those not in employment at the Stage 2 interview only 16 per cent were actively looking for work in the last four weeks. Among those not looking for work one in three would like to have regular paid work. Thus in total, over half of those not currently in employment have some attachment to the labour market.

The reasons why those that would like regular paid work were not looking for a job during the four weeks preceding the Stage 2 interview are summarised in Table 5.18. The reasons given were very varied which is further reflected in the high proportion of ‘other’ reasons. Among the specific reasons, being a student was mentioned most often (28 per cent), followed by long-term sickness or disability (16 per cent) and looking after the family and/or home (14 per cent).

Table 5.18: Reason for not looking among those who would like regular job

Main reason	Column percentages		
	Extension courses	Traditional courses	Total
Waiting for result of application for job or government programme	2	1	2
Student	23	35	28
Looking after family/home	15	12	14
caring for children below school age	[11]	[5]	[16]
caring for other children	[4]	[2]	[6]
Other	[0]	[1]	[1]
Temporary sick or injured	5	4	4
Long-term sick or disabled	20	11	16
Believes no jobs available	4	6	5
Not yet started looking	1	7	4
Any other reasons	29	24	27
<i>Weighted base</i>	88	61	149
<i>Unweighted base</i>	92	64	156

Difference not significant.

Respondents who would like regular paid work but were not looking for work were further asked whether there are any specific reasons that would make it difficult for them to find a job if they were looking for one. Table 5.19 presents the answers to this question.

Table 5.19: Barriers to job search

Reasons that would make it difficult finding a job	Cell percentages		
	Extension courses	Traditional courses	Total
Age	4	3	3
Own ill-health	33	20	28*
Illness of other family members	1	3	2
Having child/children to look after	15	8	12
Lack of childcare / not able to afford childcare	12	2	8**
Lack of qualifications	17	20	18
Lack of skills / problems with reading, writing and/or numbers	15	21	17
Lack of work experience	7	13	10
Lack of references from previous employer	2	4	3
Lack of transport	6	-	4**
Discrimination by employers	2	2	2
Lack of jobs in the area	5	-	3*
Lack of confidence	2	2	2
Other main reason	9	9	9
No reason(s)	19	25	21
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>149</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>156</i>

Percentage is significantly different between Extension and traditional courses if total percentage has * (10%) or ** (5%).

First, it is worth noting first that one in five learners replied that there were no such reasons. The remaining four out of five named at least one specific reason that would make it difficult for them to find a job. There were some differences between learners on Extension as compared to learners on traditional courses. The most important reason for those on Extension courses was their own ill-health (33 per cent) followed by a lack of qualifications (17 per cent), lack of skills and looking after children (both 15 per cent). For those on traditional courses the three most important reasons were lack of skills (21 per cent), lack of qualifications and own ill-health (both 20 per cent). Learners on Extension courses were significantly more likely to mention own ill-health, lack of childcare, lack of transport and lack of jobs in the area as barriers to job search. These reasons reflect that the learners on Extension courses were on average a more disadvantaged group (see Table 3.1).

6 The Relative Impact of Different Extension Provisions

6.1 Introduction

Apart from an estimation of the overall impact of adult basic skills Extension provisions the second main aim of this evaluation was to provide estimates of the relative impact that different types of Extension courses had. Ideally, this would be achieved by applying PSM to all possible pair-wise comparisons – an approach similar to that adopted by PSI to evaluate the different programme options on the New Deal for Young People (Bonjour et al, 2001). However, for such an approach sample numbers for each of the different types of Extension courses were far too low (see Table 6.1).⁹

Table 6.1: Sample size by type of Extension course

Course type	Number of observations
Residential	210
Intensive	85
HSP	69
FRRC	35
IIL	69
Total	468

Note: More details on the sample are given in Appendix D.

Therefore a different approach had to be implemented. Instead of comparing different types of Extension courses with each other some types were treated as a subgroup and compared to traditional courses. In particular: i) learners on Residential courses were compared to the full set of learners on traditional courses and ii) learners on Intensive and HSP courses, which were only provided in a subset of regions, were compared to learners on traditional courses in those regions. For these subgroups PSM was applied and impact estimates are provided for all outcomes where this is feasible.

Furthermore descriptive results comparing all types of Extension courses are presented. These are provided for primary outcomes – as the impact estimates only cover a subset of the Extension course types – as well as for secondary outcomes that show significant differences between Extension types. No results are provided for job characteristics and job search. Because these outcomes are only defined for a subset of all observations cell numbers are reduced even further and for many of the types less than 30 learners are observed which is not enough to report percentages and perform significance tests. Moreover, where it was possible to calculate percentages differences were insignificant.

Tables describing differences between all the different Extension course types have to be interpreted with care as only Residential courses were offered in all Pathfinder Extensions regions. Other types were offered in two to four of the Pathfinder regions only. As the Stage 1 report showed, concentration of minority ethnic groups differed widely by region. In

⁹ In the evaluation of the New Deal for Young People the number of observations for the programme options ranged from 264 to 857.

addition, Pathfinder regions were chosen to cover rural and urban labour markets. Not all types were offered in all regions which resulted in an unequal urban-rural mix. For example, nine out of ten HSP course participants were in the two Inner City Pathfinder regions East London and Birmingham. Thus, some of the observed differences in descriptive tables might be due to differences in labour market conditions and different concentrations of minority ethnic groups rather than reflecting genuine differences based on the different provisions.

6.2 Learning outcomes

Whether learners finished the course

The variation in the percentage of learners that stayed till the end of the course is larger between the different Extension types (60 to 92 per cent) than it is between Extension courses as a whole (76 per cent) compared to traditional courses (66 per cent). This is true for most outcomes considered and demonstrates that assessing relative differences between the different types of Extension courses is important. However, detected differences could also reflect regional effects discussed in Section 6.1 above.

Table 6.2: Course status

Course status	Column percentages					
	Residential	Intensive	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Stayed till end	72	83	60	92	87	76
Left before end	9	4	24	8	4	10
Not sure	0	-	-	-	-	0
Still doing course	19	13	16	-	9	14
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>209</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>459</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>468</i>

Difference significant at 1%, chi-square statistic: 37.22

The proportion of finishers was highest for FRRC courses and lowest for HSP courses. One in four learners on HSP courses left before the end of the course while this number was below ten per cent for all other courses including traditional ones. Also the proportion of those reporting that they are still doing the course at the Stage 2 interview varies widely: it is zero for FRRC courses and nearly 20 per cent for Residential courses. The number was even higher for traditional courses (28 per cent, see (Table 5.1).

An impact estimate can be achieved for the two subgroups discussed above (see Section 6.1). These findings compared to the overall impact estimate shed some light on the relative impact of different Extension type courses. Again, two measures are presented. Table 6.3 shows results for the comparison of Residential with traditional courses. The impact estimate is minus eight percentage points which is highly significant and larger than for the Extension courses as a whole where the impact was minus six percentage points. Thus, for this measure it can be concluded that residential courses do worse than the average Extension course. On the second measure the significant overall effect (Table 5.2) of plus 14 percentage points disappears.

Table 6.3: Impact estimates on finishing course – Residential vs. traditional

Course status	'Raw'	'Matched'
Percentage finished course out those not still on the course		
Residential courses	88	88
Traditional courses	92	97
Impact	-4	-8***
(Standard error)	(3.1)	(3.0)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	383	
Percentage finished course out of full sample		
Residential courses	72	72
Traditional courses	66	67
Impact	6	5
(Standard error)	(4.2)	(6.3)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	511	

Notes:

(1) 'Raw' and 'matched' mean purely descriptive and after PSM, respectively. Both are calculated using attrition weights.

(2) 'Impact' is the difference between the outcomes for learners on Extension courses compared to traditional courses, the standard error of the estimated impact is given in parenthesis.

(3) The unweighted base is lower than in the descriptive tables. Excluded are those that fell outside the common support (see Appendix A for details).

Table 6.4 repeats the exercise for the second subgroup: Intensive and HSP courses. It has to be kept in mind that – judging from the descriptive analysis in Table 6.2 – the two course types are quite different in terms of course status. It is therefore not surprising that no significant effects are found.

Table 6.4: Impact estimates on finishing course – Intensive and HSP vs. traditional

Course status	‘Raw’	‘Matched’
Percentage finished course out those not still on the course		
Intensive / HSP courses	83	83
Traditional courses	89	82
Impact	-6	1
(Standard error)	(4.3)	(8.3)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	278	
Percentage finished course out of full sample		
Intensive / HSP courses	71	71
Traditional courses	64	61
Impact	7	10
(Standard error)	(5.1)	(8.0)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	366	

Notes:

(1) ‘Raw’ and ‘matched’ mean purely descriptive and after PSM, respectively. Both are calculated using attrition weights.

(2) ‘Impact’ is the difference between the outcomes for learners on Extension courses compared to traditional courses, the standard error of the estimated impact is given in parenthesis.

(3) The unweighted base is lower than in the descriptive tables. Excluded are those that fell outside the common support (see Appendix A for details).

Whether a qualification was obtained

As Table 6.5 shows also the proportion of learners who received a qualification varied considerably between different types of courses. However, here HSP courses seem a clear outlier. The proportion of those who gained a qualification on HSP courses was only 56 per cent compared to 72 to 87 per cent on the other Extension types. The proportion was highest for ILL courses which is not too surprising given that part of the financial incentive was tied to receiving a qualification.

Table 6.5: Qualifications gained

Qualification obtained	Column percentages					
	Residential	Intensive	HSP	FRRC	ILL	Total
Yes	75	72	56	79	87	73
No	18	24	30	6	11	19
Waiting to take test	2	1	3	-	-	2
Waiting to hear results	1	1	3	12	1	2
Not applicable – no qualification awarded	4	2	8	3	-	4
<i>Weighted base</i>	209	87	68	38	57	459
<i>Unweighted base</i>	210	85	69	35	69	468

Difference significant at 1%, chi-square statistic: 47.65

New courses started

The next outcome measure – whether participants started a new course – varies less between the different types. There is a maximum of twenty percentage points difference between the courses (Table 6.6).

Table 6.6: New course started by Extension type

Whether started new course	Column percentages					
	Residential	Intensive	HSP	FRRC	ILL	Total
Yes	62	45	52	42	55	55
No	38	55	48	58	45	45
<i>Weighted base</i>	209	87	68	38	57	459
<i>Unweighted base</i>	210	85	69	35	69	468

Difference significant at 5%: Chi-square statistic: 10.06

It will be interesting to see whether applying PSM changes this picture. Table 6.7 presents the results. Remember that the overall impact estimate was that learners on Extension courses were nine percentage points less likely to have started a new course compared to learners on traditional courses (Table 5.4). This effect stays the same but becomes insignificant when only Residential are considered. The effect is double the size and significant for Intensive and HSP courses. Thus, it is possible to conclude that the overall negative impact is dampened by Residential courses. Concentrating on this specific outcome measure it seems that Residential course fare somewhat better than Intensive and HSP courses.

Table 6.7: Impact estimates on new courses

Percentage that started a new course	'Raw'	'Matched'
Residential vs. traditional		
Residential courses	61	61
Traditional courses	64	71
Impact	-2	-9
(Standard error)	(4.4)	(6.2)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	511	
Intensive / HSP vs. traditional		
Intensive / HSP courses	46	46
Traditional courses	61	65
Impact	-15***	-19**
(Standard error)	(5.4)	(8.5)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	366	

Notes:

- (1) 'Raw' and 'matched' mean purely descriptive and after PSM, respectively. Both are calculated using attrition weights.
- (2) 'Impact' is the difference between the outcomes for learners on Extension courses compared to traditional courses, the standard error of the estimated impact is given in parenthesis.
- (3) The unweighted base is lower than in the descriptive tables. Excluded are those that fell outside the common support (see Appendix A for details).

The majority of learners have started just one new course. However, depending on the type of course a considerable proportion has started more than one new course. This proportion is highest for IIL courses followed by Residential.

Table 6.8: Number of new courses started

Number of new courses	Column percentages					
	Residential	Intensive	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
One	56	79	78	[14]	46	64
More than one	44	21	22	[1]	54	36
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>129</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>251</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>129</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>256</i>

Difference significant at 1%, chi-square statistic: 20.76

Table 6.9 summarises the status of the newly started course. Differences between different types of courses are less pronounced. In total over 90 per cent are still doing the new course they have started. Among the 22 learners that are not still doing the course a majority (13 learners) finished their course while 9 left it before the end.

Table 6.9: Status of new course

Whether still doing new course	Column percentages					
	Residential	Intensive	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Yes	95	89	78	[14]	95	91
No	5	11	22	[1]	5	9
Course finished	[3]	[4]	[5]	[0]	[1]	[13]
Left before end	[4]	[0]	[3]	[1]	[1]	[9]
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>129</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>251</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>129</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>256</i>

Difference significant at 5%, chi-square statistic: 10.81 (for whether still doing course or not).

Some interesting differences emerge when looking at the main content of the course started (Table 6.10). While more than half of learners on HSP courses started a new course that was mainly in the miscellaneous category ('something else') the same is true for only one quarter of learners on Intensive courses. The proportion of learners starting a new course with a specific basic skill content varies from 17 per cent (HSP) to 42 per cent (Residential).

Table 6.10: Type of new course

What was the course about	Column percentages					
	Residential	Intensive	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Mainly number skills	14	3	-	[3]	22	11
Mainly reading & writing	18	17	3	[1]	25	16
Mainly reading, writing and number skills	10	18	14	[1]	9	11
Mainly IT or computers	17	38	30	[8]	18	24
Mainly something else	41	24	54	[2]	27	37
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>129</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>251</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>129</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>256</i>

Difference significant at 1%, chi-square statistic: 42.22

6.3 Intermediate outcomes

Self-efficacy

While self-efficacy was the same for the total of Extension courses and traditional courses differences within Extension types are quite pronounced. The score is lowest for learners on HSP (3.11) and highest for those on IIL (3.40) – many of the pair-wise comparisons are statistically significant.

Table 6.11: Self-efficacy by Extension type

	Residential	Intensive	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Self-efficacy score	3.24	3.20	3.11	3.18	3.40	3.23
(Standard error)	(0.04)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.07)	(0.03)
<i>Number of observations</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>468</i>

The differences between the following types are significant: Residential and IIL at 5%, Intensive and IIL at 10%, HSP and IIL at 1% and FRRC and IIL at 10%.

Self-efficacy is a mean score calculated out of 9 separate items (see Appendix C) with a range from 1 (low self-efficacy) to 4 (high self-efficacy).

But when estimating the impact of Residential courses and Intensive and HSP courses on self-efficacy controlling for selection all significant differences disappear (Table 6.12).

Table 6.12: Impact estimates on self-efficacy

Self-efficacy mean score	'Raw'	'Matched'
<u>Residential vs. traditional</u>		
Residential courses	3.24	3.24
Traditional courses	3.28	3.19
Impact	-0.04	0.05
(Standard error)	(0.06)	(0.09)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>511</i>	
<u>Intensive / HSP vs. traditional</u>		
Intensive / HSP courses	3.19	3.19
Traditional courses	3.26	3.15
Impact	-0.07	0.04
(Standard error)	(0.07)	(0.13)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>366</i>	

Notes:

- (1) 'Raw' and 'matched' mean purely descriptive and after PSM, respectively. Both are calculated using attrition weights.
- (2) 'Impact' is the difference between the outcomes for learners on Extension courses compared to traditional courses, the standard error of the estimated impact is given in parenthesis.
- (3) The unweighted base is lower than in the descriptive tables. Excluded are those that fell outside the common support (see Appendix A for details).
- (4) Self-efficacy is a mean score calculated out of 9 separate items (see Appendix C) with a range from 1 (low self-efficacy) to 4 (high self-efficacy).

'Life-long' learning

Table 6.13 presents results for questions about the future: whether participants plan a new course in the next year and whether they are interested in education and training in the future. There is relatively little variation between Extension types with respect to these two outcomes. It is interesting to note that learners on Intensive, HSP and FRRC courses are most likely to say that they are not sure whether they plan a course or have an interest in future learning.

Table 6.13: New course planned and future education and training

	Column percentages					
New course planned for next year	Residential	Intensive	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Yes	39	50	42	42	50	43
No	43	25	31	33	38	36
Not sure	19	25	27	25	12	21
Interest in future courses						
Yes	77	76	61	69	74	74
No	10	2	13	26	14	11
Not sure	13	21	26	6	12	16
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>209</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>459</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>468</i>

Planned course: Difference not significant.

Future courses: Difference significant at 1%, chi-square statistic: 28.02

Even though Residential and HSP course participants have a low rate of planning courses for the next year the result only remains significant after PSM for the subgroup containing Intensive and HSP courses (see Table 6.15). Similarly, for future interest in education and training only the impact of Intensive and HSP courses is significant.

Table 6.14: Impact estimates on ‘life-long’ learning – Residential vs. traditional

	‘Raw’	‘Matched’
New courses planned during the next year		
Residential courses	39	39
Traditional courses	45	45
Impact	-6	-6
(Standard error)	(4.4)	(7.0)
Interested in new education and training this time next year		
Residential courses	77	77
Traditional courses	72	78
Impact	6	1
(Standard error)	(3.9)	(5.6)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>511</i>	

Notes:

(1) ‘Raw’ and ‘matched’ mean purely descriptive and after PSM, respectively. Both are calculated using attrition weights.

(2) ‘Impact’ is the difference between the outcomes for learners on Extension courses compared to traditional courses, the standard error of the estimated impact is given in parenthesis.

(3) The unweighted base is lower than in the descriptive tables. Excluded are those that fell outside the common support (see Appendix A for details).

Table 6.15: Impact estimates on ‘life-long’ learning – Intensive / HSP vs. traditional

	‘Raw’	‘Matched’
New courses planned during the next year		
Intensive / HSP courses	48	48
Traditional courses	50	65
Impact	-2	-17**
(Standard error)	(5.5)	(7.6)
Interested in new education and training this time next year		
Intensive / HSP courses	69	69
Traditional courses	73	85
Impact	-4	-17***
(Standard error)	(5.0)	(5.6)
<i>Unweighted base</i>		

Notes:

(1) ‘Raw’ and ‘matched’ mean purely descriptive and after PSM, respectively. Both are calculated using attrition weights.

(2) ‘Impact’ is the difference between the outcomes for learners on Extension courses compared to traditional courses, the standard error of the estimated impact is given in parenthesis.

(3) The unweighted base is lower than in the descriptive tables. Excluded are those that fell outside the common support (see Appendix A for details).

6.4 Labour market outcomes

The last group of outcomes considered are labour market outcomes. Table 6.16 presents descriptive results. The first fact to notice is FRRC courses are very different in this respect. This is not surprising, given that FRRC courses take place in the context of employment and that employed people are highly likely to stay employed (see Table 2.23). In fact all participants on FRRC courses were still employed at Stage 2 and all of them have been employed continuously resulting in nine months employment between January and September 2002.

Table 6.16: Labour market outcomes by Extension type

Labour market status	Column percentages and mean					
	Residential	Intensive	HSP	FRRC	IIL	Total
Employed	32	28	24	100	35	36
Attached	28	32	34	-	37	28
Inactive	40	40	43	-	28	36
Number of months employed between January and September 2002						
Mean	2.09	1.74	2.10	9	2.76	2.67
(Standard deviation)	(0.26)	(0.36)	(0.44)	-	(0.48)	(0.19)
<i>Weighted base</i>	<i>209</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>459</i>
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>468</i>

‘Attached’ are ILO unemployed, those looking for work but not available and those that – even though they are not looking – would like to have a paid job. ‘Inactive’ are those not looking for work and that would no like to have a paid job.

Labour market status: Difference significant at 1%, chi-square statistic: 79.65

Number of months employed: All pair-wise differences between FRRC and other types are statistically significant at 1%.

Among the rest of the Extension courses IIL have the highest proportion of participants in employment at the Stage 2 interview. Learners on IIL courses also have been in employment for the longest in the nine months period preceding the Stage 2 interview.

A positive employment impact is estimated for Residential compared to traditional courses. It is very similar to the impact found for the Extensions as a whole (Table 5.12). A similar effect is not found comparing Intensive and HSP to traditional courses. Thus, Residential courses seem to do relatively well in terms of employment.

Table 6.17: Impact estimates labour market outcomes – Residential vs. traditional

	‘Raw’	‘Matched’
Employed at Stage 2 interview		
Extension courses	32	32
Traditional courses	32	22
Impact	0	10*
(Standard error)	(4.3)	(5.5)
‘Attached’ at Stage 2 interview		
Extension courses	28	28
Traditional courses	34	30
Impact	-5	-1
(Standard error)	(4.2)	(6.2)
‘Inactive’ Stage 2 interview		
Extension courses	40	40
Traditional courses	34	48
Impact	5	-9
(Standard error)	(4.4)	(7.0)
Number of months in employment between January and September 2002		
Extension courses	2.1	2.1
Traditional courses	2.6	1.8
Impact	-0.5	0.3
(Standard error)	(0.35)	(0.44)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>511</i>	

Notes:

- (1) ‘Raw’ and ‘matched’ mean purely descriptive and after PSM, respectively. Both are calculated using attrition weights.
- (2) ‘Impact’ is the difference between the outcomes for learners on Extension courses compared to traditional courses, the standard error of the estimated impact is given in parenthesis.
- (3) The unweighted base is lower than in the descriptive tables. Excluded are those that fell outside the common support (see Appendix A for details).
- (4) ‘Attached’ are ILO unemployed, those looking for work but not available and those that – even though they are not looking – would like to have a paid job. ‘Inactive’ are those not looking for work and that would no like to have a paid job.

Table 6.18: Impact estimates labour market outcomes – Intens. / HSP vs. traditional

	‘Raw’	‘Matched’
Employed at Stage 2 interview		
Extension courses	27	27
Traditional courses	33	28
Impact	-5	-1
(Standard error)	(5.0)	(7.1)
‘Attached’ at Stage 2 interview		
Extension courses	32	32
Traditional courses	34	31
Impact	-2	1
(Standard error)	(5.1)	(7.8)
‘Inactive’ Stage 2 interview		
Extension courses	41	41
Traditional courses		41
Impact		0
(Standard error)		(8.6)
Number of months in employment between January and September 2002		
Extension courses	2.1	2.1
Traditional courses	2.7	2.3
Impact	-0.60	-0.26
(Standard error)	(0.41)	(0.59)
<i>Unweighted base</i>	366	

Notes:

- (1) ‘Raw’ and ‘matched’ mean purely descriptive and after PSM, respectively. Both are calculated using attrition weights.
- (2) ‘Impact’ is the difference between the outcomes for learners on Extension courses compared to traditional courses, the standard error of the estimated impact is given in parenthesis.
- (3) The unweighted base is lower than in the descriptive tables. Excluded are those that fell outside the common support (see Appendix A for details).
- (4) ‘Attached’ are ILO unemployed, those looking for work but not available and those that – even though they are not looking – would like to have a paid job. ‘Inactive’ are those not looking for work and that would no like to have a paid job.

The significant effect on the length in employment found for the Extensions as a whole disappears when the two specific sub-groups are considered. This seems to suggest, that this positive impact is mainly due to the continuous employment of FRRC participants. This is in line with the findings in Section 5.4 when FRRC participants were excluded from the analysis.

There were no significant impacts on any of the other possible labour market statuses considered.

7 Summary and Conclusions

The main aim of this second stage of research of the evaluation of adult basic skills Pathfinder Extension activities was to provide estimates of the net impact of the Extensions as a whole and of relative impacts of different types of Extension provisions. The impact estimations were supplemented with descriptive evidence on participants' characteristics and attitudes.

Some of the findings of the Stage 1 research were confirmed by the descriptive analysis based on data collected at Stage 2, nine to eleven months after the start of the Pathfinder Extensions:

- Participants were – compared with the general population – more likely to have no or few qualifications from school, fewer post-school qualifications, suffer from dyslexia and have learning difficulties.
- Participants on Pathfinder Extensions tended to be more disadvantaged than the Comparison group consisting of learners on traditional adult basic skills courses. This highlights the importance of impact estimations that take account of differences between the target and the control group.
- There was a high level of satisfaction with the Extension courses. More than nine out of ten would recommend the course to a friend and believe that the course was helpful in increasing their confidence and improving their skills.

Impact estimates were achieved by comparing the outcomes of Extensions participants with a matched sample of participants in the Control group. This technique takes account of potential differences between the two groups. Impact estimates were provided for learning and labour market outcomes. ('Intermediate' outcomes in the form of self-efficacy attitudes and lifelong learning goals were also examined, but all results relating to these were non-significant, and they will not be discussed further.) The impact estimates were supplemented with some descriptive evidence for outcomes where an impact estimate was not feasible. Results for the two sets of outcomes are summarised in turn:

Learning outcomes:

- Among all participants, being on an Extension course raised the completion rate by 14 percentage points.
- However, among those not still continuing the same course, being on an Extension course reduced the completion rate by six percentage points.
- While participants on Extension courses were nine percentage points less likely to have started a new course, those who did start new courses were more likely to enrol for more than one new course.

Labour market outcomes:

- Learners on Extension courses were nine percentage points more likely to be in employment at the time of the second interview. This effect remained positive and significant when learners on Fixed Rate Replacement Costs – which are by definition more likely to be in employment – were excluded from the analysis.
- A positive effect of the Extension provision on the time in employment was shown to be partially due to learners on Fixed Rate Replacement Costs who were all continuously employed between the beginning of the course and the second interview. The impact was reduced and became insignificant when estimating the model excluding FRRC learners.

The estimation of relative impacts between types of Extension programmes was complicated by the smaller than expected number of participants on Extension courses. Generally,

differences between different types of Extensions were more pronounced than between Extension and traditional courses. However, as not all Extension courses were provided in all Pathfinder areas it is not possible to say whether these differences are due to differences in the provision of the course or due to regional differences in labour market conditions and population mix.

It was possible to achieve impact estimates comparing Residential courses to traditional courses and Intensive and Highly Structured Prescriptive Courses combined to traditional courses. Combining these results with the net impact of the Extensions as a whole allows the following conclusions:

- *Course completion (among all participants)*: The overall positive effect of Extensions on course completion is not observed for Residentials or for Intensive/HSP courses.
- *Course completion (among those not still on the course)*: The negative impact found for Extensions as a whole is stronger for Residential courses but insignificant for Intensive/HSP. Suggesting that on this particular outcome participants on Residential courses do less well compared to participants on Intensive/HSP courses.
- *New courses*: A strong negative impact on starting a new course, planning a new course and interest in future courses is estimated for Intensive/HSP course participants. No significant effects were found for Residential courses and the overall impact is only significant in the case of new courses started. Thus, Intensive/HSP courses seem less likely to encourage further learning activities compared to Residential and traditional courses.
- *Employment*: The positive effect of Extensions on employment is confirmed when treating Residential courses as a separate group – no effect is found for Intensive / HSP course. Thus, in terms of employment nine to eleven months after the start of the course Residential Extensions do better compared to Intensive/HSP courses.

Based on purely descriptive results – i.e. not controlling regional differences and differences in the characteristics of participants – courses that offer incentives for either employers (FRRC) or learners (IIL) seem to perform relatively well in terms of course completion, qualifications and labour market outcomes.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Propensity Score Matching

This section will provide more detailed information on the method of propensity score matching (PSM) in Section A.1 and present the results of the three participation models estimated along with diagnostics of the actual matching (Sections A.2 to A.4).

A. 1 The Method¹⁰

Propensity Score Matching Step-by-Step

As discussed in Section 4.1 to arrive at an impact estimate it is necessary to compare the outcome of learners on Extension courses with the outcome that would have occurred had those learners been on traditional adult basic skills courses. As the second, hypothetical or counterfactual, outcome is not observable it has to be estimated. In the method of matching the counterfactual is estimated using a ‘matched’ comparison sample. For each learner on an Extension course a ‘similar’ learner is found among participants of traditional courses. One way to find similar individuals – or matches – is to specify a number of important characteristics that have to be the same. Where a suitable match can be found for an individual on an Extension course, there is said to be *support* in the comparison group for that individual. However, as the number of characteristics to be included increases, the probability of finding an exact match decreases and there is less and less support.

It has been shown (Rosenbaum and Rubin, 1983) that instead of matching on characteristics it is possible to match on an index of characteristics. One such index is the propensity, or probability, to enrol in an Extension course as opposed to a traditional course – hence the name propensity score matching. Matching on a single index is much less demanding in terms of support than matching on a large number of characteristics directly.

Therefore, when performing PSM, the first step is to estimate a model of the probability to enrol in an Extension course and not a traditional course. Variables entering this participation model should theoretically influence both participation and the outcomes of interest. Variables that are not predictive of participation should be excluded, whether they are predictive of outcomes or not since, they will not bias estimates of the programme effect on outcomes. Conversely, variables that are predictive of outcomes but not of participation should also be excluded, since they are randomly assigned between Extension course and traditional learners – if they were non-random, they would affect participation. Because of these restrictions on the model specification it is – strictly speaking – not possible to interpret the model as a participation model.

Then, based on the estimated model, a propensity score (the expected probability to take part in an Extension course) is calculated for each individual. After that, each individual on an Extension course is matched with the individual on a traditional course that has the most similar propensity score. An individual on a traditional course can serve as a match for more than once or not at all. If the propensity score of an individual on an Extension course is higher than the highest propensity score among traditional learners or lower than the lowest score among traditional learners, then this individual is excluded from the analysis as there is no support in the comparison group.

The impact estimate is simply the difference in average outcomes between the Extension course learners and the matched comparison group of learners on traditional courses.

¹⁰ Parts of this section draw on Green et al, 2001, Chapter 4 and Appendix C.

Critical Assumption

The key assumption underlying PSM is that, if one can control for differences in characteristics between individual on the two types of courses, the outcome that would occur in the absence of Extension courses is the same for the two groups. This assumption allows that the counterfactual for participants on Extension courses can be inferred from what happens to learners on traditional courses. Thus, with all characteristics accounted for, the matching technique provides an impact estimate.

For this critical assumption to be plausible, one must be able to control for all characteristics affecting both course type selection and outcomes of interest. The data collected for the evaluation of adult basic skills Pathfinder Extension Activities provides very detailed information on the previous learning and labour market experiences of learners as well as a wealth of personal background information. However, it is worth noting that it is not possible to test whether the critical assumption holds, i.e. whether the participation model includes all relevant factors.

Diagnostics or the Performance of the Match

For each of the PSM application carried out for this report the following diagnostics will be provided below:

- Estimation results from the propensity model.
- The numbers excluded due to lack of common support reasons. If this number is very large, then the group for which impact estimates are carried out (for which a match among learners on traditional courses could be found) might differ systematically from the one including all Extension courses participants and conclusions drawn from impact estimates would be weak.
- Histograms plotting propensity scores for Extension course learners and those on traditional course providing some visual evidences of the overlap.
- A table giving the number of times comparison group individuals were used as a 'match' – this again offers some evidence on the overlap and similarity of the two groups in question.

A. 2 Propensity Score Matching for all Extension Activities

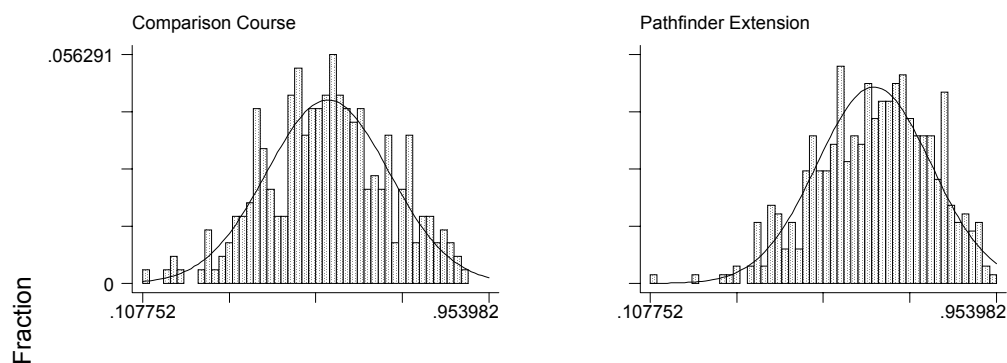
Table A.1: Estimation of the probability to enrol in Extension course (Probit)

	Coefficient	Absolute value z-statistic
Male	-0.191*	1.77
Age Groups		
Aged 16 to 18	0.353	1.43
Aged 19 to 25	0.489**	2.19
Aged 26 to 35	0.504***	2.76
Aged 36 to 50	0.288*	1.83
Minority Ethnic Group	-0.124	0.68
Having dependant children	0.010	0.07
Marital Status		
Married or living with partner	-0.090	0.58
Divorced	0.057	0.27
Widowed	0.192	0.57
Suffered from Dyslexia	0.326**	2.05
Any reason for not attending courses	-0.345	0.43
Specific reasons		
Skill based reasons	-0.199	1.03
Financial reasons	0.058	0.28
Other reasons	-0.168	0.85
Don't know	-0.279	0.34
Not speaking mainly English before 6	-0.379**	2.52
Stayed in the UK for at least last 6 years	0.262	1.42
Stayed in UK for the last 5 years or less	0.484**	2.19
Parents working when respondent was 16	0.226**	2.07
Age left full time education	-0.015	0.41
Age left full-time education missing	0.353	0.71
Highest Qualification		
Basic	-0.174	1.53
Higher	0.014	0.05
Vocational	0.223	0.92
Started apprenticeship	0.133	0.95
Driving licence	0.103	0.81
Work history		
Never had paid job	-0.144	0.68
Did not work 1999 or 2000	-0.250	1.06
Did some work 1999 or 2000	0.238	1.02
Worked all year 1999	-0.170	0.68
Worked all year 2000	0.055	0.21
Did some work 2001	-0.404*	1.91
Worked all year 2001	-0.036	0.17
Pathfinder Region		
North West	0.498**	2.20
North East	0.072	0.31
Yorkshire & Humberside	0.653***	2.75
East Midlands	0.563	1.61
West Midlands	0.227	1.20
East of England	0.119	0.42
South East	0.131	0.47
South Wes	0.901***	2.68
Constant	0.350	0.34
<i>Observations</i>	770	

Excluded categories are for highest qualification: no qualification, for Pathfinder region: London, for marital status: single; and for Extension Type: comparison group.

Ten cases or two per cent of all Extensions learners were excluded due to common support requirements.

Figure A.1: Propensity scores for Extension course and traditional course learners



Probability of positive outcome
Histograms by Extension or Comparison

Table A.2: Number of times comparison group individuals were matched

Number of times matched	Frequency	Percentage
1	75	24.8
2	51	16.9
3	30	9.9
4	10	3.3
5	7	2.3
6	4	1.3
7	5	1.6
8	3	1.0
10	1	0.3
11	1	0.3
12	1	0.3
Not used	114	37.8
Total	302	100

Figure A.1 shows that there is quite a good overlap between the propensity scores of Extension course participants and learners on traditional courses. Also the distribution of

scores is relatively similar. This is also reflected in the high number of learners on traditional courses that are only used once or twice as a match for an Extension course learner. Only three individuals provided a match for ten or more Extension course learners. However, nearly 40 per cent of the comparison sample was not used as a match at all.

A. 3 Propensity Score Matching for Residential Courses

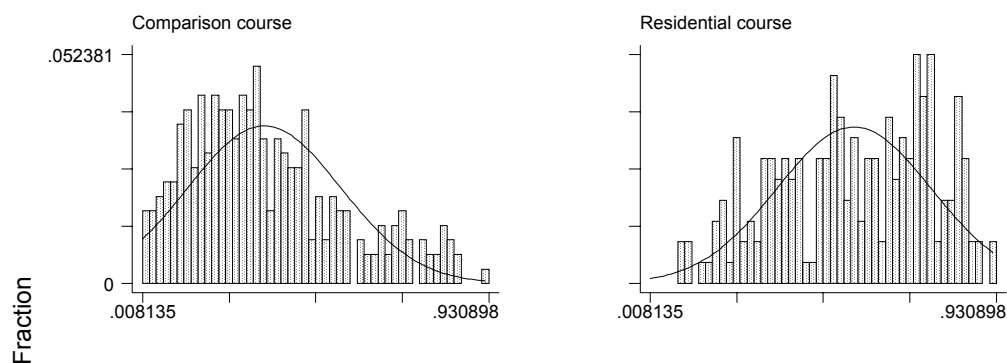
Table A.3: Estimation of the probability to enrol in Residential course (Probit)

	Coefficient	Absolute value z-statistic
Male	-0.153	1.04
Age Groups		
Aged 16 to 18	0.809**	2.46
Aged 19 to 25	0.816***	2.65
Aged 26 to 35	0.609**	2.51
Aged 36 to 50	0.219	1.08
Minority Ethnic Group	-0.373	1.64
Having dependant children	0.361*	1.80
Marital Status		
Married or living with partner	-0.157	0.77
Divorced	-0.007	0.03
Widowed	-0.277	0.60
Suffered from Dyslexia	0.424**	2.14
Any reason for not attending courses	-1.193	1.45
Specific reasons		
Skill based reasons	-0.046	0.20
Financial reasons	0.048	0.17
Other reasons	-0.252	0.96
Don't know	-0.825	1.00
Not speaking mainly English before 6	-0.524	2.67
Stayed in the UK for at least last 6 years	0.062	0.27
Stayed in UK for the last 5 years or less	-0.339	1.10
Parents working when respondent was 16	0.231	1.65
Age left full time education	0.041	0.79
Age left full-time education missing	0.635	0.93
Highest Qualification		
Basic	-0.231	1.48
Higher	-0.220	0.49
Vocational	0.172	0.55
Started apprenticeship	-0.040	0.22
Driving licence	0.127	0.75
Work history		
Never had paid job	-0.648**	2.33
Did not work 1999 or 2000	-0.297	0.96
Did some work 1999 or 2000	0.303	0.92
Worked all year 1999	-0.204	0.74
Worked all year 2000	-0.023	0.08
Did some work 2001	-0.640**	2.21
Worked all year 2001	-0.264	0.90
Pathfinder Region		
North West	0.296	1.12
North East	-0.696**	2.41
Yorkshire & Humberside	-0.547*	1.79
East Midlands	0.058	0.15
West Midlands	-0.944***	3.49
East of England	-0.871**	2.14
South East	-0.081	0.26
South Wes	0.079	0.20
Constant	0.349	0.28
<i>Observations</i>	512	

Excluded categories are for highest qualification: no qualification, for Pathfinder region: London, for marital status: single; and for Extension Type: comparison group.

Only one case or less than 0.2 of a per cent of all Extension learners was excluded due to common support requirements.

Figure A.2: Propensity scores for Residential and traditional course learners



Probability of positive outcome
Histograms by Residential or Comparison

Table A.4: Number of times comparison group individuals were matched

Number of times matched	Frequency	Percentage
1	59	19.5
2	23	7.6
3	6	2.0
4	8	2.7
5	4	1.3
6	2	0.7
7	2	0.7
8	1	0.3
Not used	197	65.2
Total	302	100

Here the distributions diverge more than for the total of all Extension course participants. This is reflected in the fact, that now nearly two thirds of the comparison group are not used as a match – or in other words, the ‘artificial’, matched comparison group is made up of only one third of comparison group individuals.

A. 4 Propensity Score Matching for Intensive and HSP Courses

Table A.5: Estimation of the probability to enrol in Intensive / HSP course (Probit)

	Coefficient	Absolute value z-statistic
Male	-0.460***	2.73
Age Groups		
Aged 16 to 18	-0.114	0.31
Aged 19 to 25	0.002	0.01
Aged 26 to 35	0.333	1.13
Aged 36 to 50	0.533**	1.99
Minority Ethnic Group	0.169	0.57
Having dependant children	-0.341	1.34
Marital Status		
Married or living with partner	0.027	0.12
Divorced	0.398	1.19
Widowed	0.547	1.08
Suffered from Dyslexia	0.281	0.94
Any reason for not attending courses	0.429	0.58
Specific reasons		
Skill based reasons	-0.034	0.11
Financial reasons	0.386	1.29
Other reasons	-0.157	0.51
Don't know	0.595	0.77
Not speaking mainly English before 6	-0.153	0.66
Stayed in the UK for at least last 6 years	0.323	1.27
Stayed in UK for the last 5 years or less	0.901***	3.08
Parents working when respondent was 16	0.132	0.78
Age left full time education	-0.041	0.86
Age left full-time education missing	0.364	0.66
Highest Qualification		
Basic	0.025	0.15
Higher	0.295	0.65
Vocational	0.502	1.29
Started apprenticeship	0.432*	1.80
Driving licence	0.304	1.36
Work history		
Never had paid job	0.398	1.20
Did not work 1999 or 2000	-0.434	1.19
Did some work 1999 or 2000	0.548	1.49
Worked all year 1999	-0.302	0.87
Worked all year 2000	0.308	0.82
Did some work 2001	-0.296	0.97
Worked all year 2001	-0.449	1.39
Pathfinder Region		
North East	1.095***	3.01
Yorkshire & Humberside	0.420	0.97
West Midlands	1.111***	4.38
South East	-0.303	0.46
Constant	1.456	1.17
<i>Observations</i>	385	

Excluded categories are for highest qualification: no qualification, for Pathfinder region: London, for marital status: single; and for Extension Type: comparison group.

This model is less good in explaining the participation than the previous ones. Thus, it is not surprising that match does not work quite as well. Less overlap as can be seen from the graph

and from the fact that 19 cases or five per cent of all Extensions learners had to be excluded due to common support requirements.

Figure A.3: Propensity scores for Intensive /HSP and traditional course learners

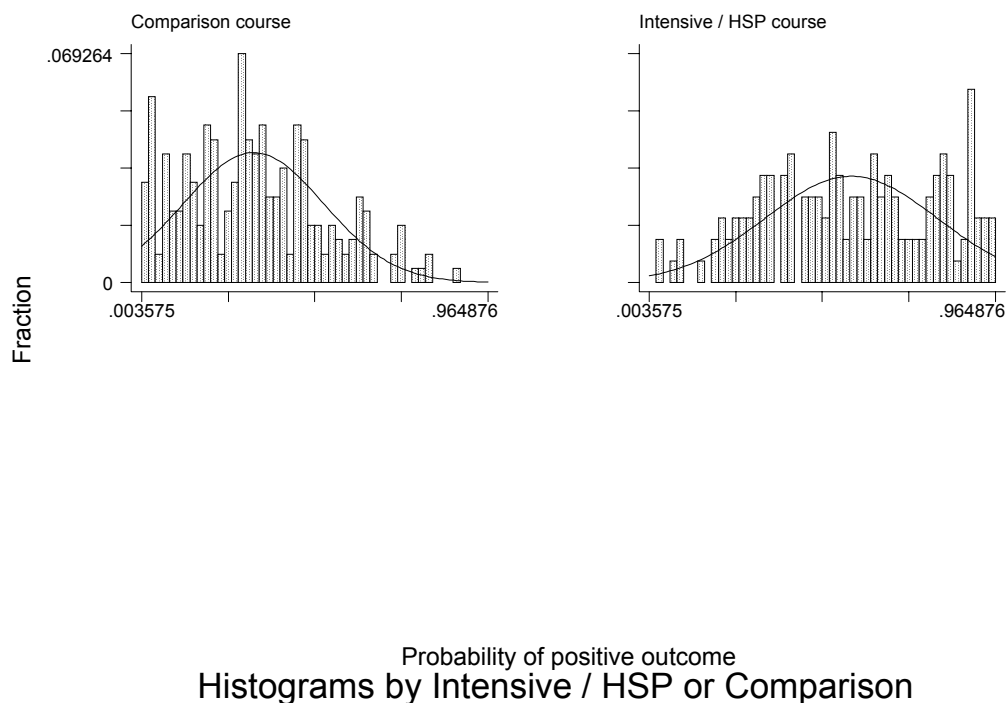


Table A.6: Number of times comparison group individuals were matched

Number of times matched	Frequency	Percentage
1	54	23.4
2	15	6.5
3	5	2.2
4	4	1.7
6	1	0.4
10	1	0.4
Not used	151	65.4
Total	231	100

There is even less overlap between the distributions of propensity scores. However, the fraction of the comparison sample used to form the matched comparison group is similar as in the case of Residential courses.

Appendix B: Attrition Weights

The representativeness of the Stage 2 survey can be compromised by refusal to be contacted for a second interview, the inability to contact Stage 1 respondents for a second interview and by non-response at this second interview – in sum by attrition between the two stages of the survey.

To overcome potential biases that may result, weights can be calculated that will have the effect of restoring the representativeness of the achieved sample in respect to those characteristics observed at Stage 1.

Attrition weights were calculated by estimating a probit model of survey response at Stage 2 across all individuals responding to Stage 1. The inverse of the estimated probability of response can then be used to weight back to the Stage 1 sample. Table A.7 presents the results from the probit model. It can be seen that the main factors affecting response were: ethnicity, Pathfinder region, marital status and whether the learner planned a course in the future. All these variables have the expected sign. Generally speaking, more mobile groups are less likely to have responded to both interviews.

Table A.7: Estimation of the probability to respond to the survey (Probit)

	Coefficient	Absolute value z-statistic
Male	-0.019	0.25
Minority Ethnic Group	-0.243**	1.97
Pathfinder Region		
North West	0.372**	2.32
North East	0.216	1.36
Yorkshire & Humberside	0.239	1.27
East Midlands	0.661***	2.59
West Midlands	0.411***	2.71
East of England	-0.243	1.14
South East	0.034	0.17
South Wes	0.396*	1.75
Marital Status		
Married or living with partner	0.209***	2.62
Divorced	0.141	1.06
Widowed	0.460*	1.83
Extension Type		
Residential	-0.078	0.85
Intensive	-0.198	1.40
HSP	-0.012	0.09
FRRC	-0.299	1.50
IIL	0.301*	1.69
Planning future course	0.159**	2.17
Speaking more than one language	0.132	1.32
Having long-term health problem	0.105	1.19
Constant	-0.189	1.12
<i>Observations</i>	<i>1343</i>	

Excluded categories are Pathfinder region: London; marital status: single; and Extension Type: comparison group.

Table A.8 considers the impact of attrition and effectiveness of weights in returning the profile of characteristics at Stage 2 to that of the Stage 1 sample. Column one gives the frequency of the characteristics considered for the full Stage 1 sample. The second column shows the same frequencies for Stage 2 respondents. As can be seen and as was discussed in

Section 2.2 there were no dramatic shifts.¹¹ Finally, column three gives Stage 2 sample frequencies after applying attrition weights. The weights perform well, restoring the profile found in the population to a large extent.

Table A.8: Adjusting for attrition bias

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Stage 1 sample	Stage 2 sample	Stage 2 sample weighted
Gender			
Male	59	60	59
Female	41	40	41
Ethnicity			
White	66	69	67
Minority Group	34	31	34
Marital status			
Married or living with partner	35	37	35
Divorced or separated	9	9	9
Single	54	51	54
Widowed	2	3	2
Planning new course	62	64	62
Speaking more than one language	34	33	34
Having Long-term health problem	22	24	23
Pathfinder Region			
North West	15	16	15
North East	22	22	22
Yorkshire & Humberside	11	12	11
East Midlands	3	4	3
West Midlands	21	22	21
East of England	6	5	6
South East	6	6	6
South Wes	5	5	5
London	11	9	11
Comparison Group	39	39	39
Extension Type			
Residential	28	28	28
Intensive	12	11	12
HSP	9	9	9
FRRC	5	5	5
ILL	8	9	8
<i>Base</i>	<i>1343</i>	<i>770</i>	<i>770</i>

¹¹ The presence of dependent children did not prove important in the probit model even though there was a remarkable drop of participants with children between the two stages among Extension course participants (see Table 2.11).

Appendix C: Self-efficacy

The self-efficacy score is based on nine questions relating to general self-confidence and applying basic skills to everyday, job search and job situations. The respondents could answer all those questions with 'not at all confident', 'not very confident', 'fairly confident' and 'very confident'. The answers were assigned the numbers 1 (not confident at all) through to 4 (very confident). The nine items were then added up and an average – the mean score – was calculated. Cronbach's alpha assesses the reliability of such an additive rating scale. In the present case an alpha of 0.91 suggests a high interitem correlation and that the items can be added up to form an overall score. The resulting mean score ranges from 1 to 4 with high self-efficacy scores measuring high levels of confidence.

The nine questions were:

If you need to do these things today, how confident would you feel about doing them?

- Finding out about education or training which suits you.
- Doing job training that involves some reading and writing.
- Doing job training that involves some basic maths.
- Replying to a letter about a hospital appointment.
- Checking that an electricity bill is the right amount.
- Looking for jobs.
- Filling-out job application forms.
- Doing a job that involves a small amount of reading and writing.
- Doing a job that involves a small amount of basic maths.

Some descriptive evidence on the separate items is discussed in Section 0.

Appendix D: Survey technical report¹²

Sampling approach

The sample was drawn from respondents that had agreed to be contacted for a follow-up study during the first stage of interviews. No new sample was sought.

A total of 1282 respondents in the first stage had expressed an interest in being contacted for participation in the second study. They had provided us with a postal address so that an advanced letter could be sent to them, informing them that they would be contacted by an interviewer from NFO Social Research for the second stage.

Questionnaire development and piloting

As with the initial study, the questionnaire was developed in consultation with the Department for Education and Skills by the Policy Studies Institute and John Killeen of the University of Hertfordshire. This questionnaire was tested by NFO Social Research in a small pilot exercise in the North East and West Midlands between the 19th and 23rd September 2002. Five pilot interviews were completed, two of which were in the presence of an NFO Social Research Executive and revisions were made as a result. The final version was agreed in conjunction with the Department.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was carried out using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) by fully-trained interviewers from NFO's national fieldforce, in accordance with supervision and quality control standards required by the Market Research Quality Standards Association (MRQSA).

Main stage fieldwork was conducted between 7th October and 22nd December 2002. Fieldwork was originally due to be complete by 15th December, but was extended by a week in a bid to boost the final number of interviews achieved.

Response rates

A total of 770 interviews was achieved, against a target of 815. The number of interviews completed was considerably lower than had been anticipated. There were a number of factors that contributed to the shortfall in the total number of successful interviews achieved. First and foremost, there was an unexpectedly higher than anticipated refusal rate. In addition, many respondents had changed their address in the intervening period between the two studies, meaning that there was virtually no way of getting in touch with them and obtaining their participation.

Response rates by sample type are shown in Table A.9 below. The overall response rate was 61.4%. A higher response rate (62.8%) was achieved for the comparison sample than for the extension sample (60.5%). The main reason for non-response was non-contact – accounting for 12.4% of outcomes overall.

¹² This section is based on the technical report provided by NFO System Three to PSI.

Table A.9: Response rates by sample type

Outcome	Total sample		Extensions sample		Comparison sample	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	1282		792		490	
Invalid sample	27		18		9	
Total valid sample	1255	100	774	100	481	100
Full interview	770	61.4	468	60.5	302	62.8
Refusal	142	11.3	76	9.8	66	13.7
No contact	155	12.4	107	13.8	48	10
Other unproductive	188	15	123	16	65	13.5

Table A.10 shows response by course type for the Extensions sample. Response rates ranged from 67.6% for IIL courses to 54.8% for FRRC, where the refusal rate (21.9%) was particularly high.

Table A.10: Response rate by course type (Extensions sample)

Outcome	Residential		Intensive		HSP		FRRC		IIL	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	355		150		120		65		102	
Invalid sample	6		6		5		1		0	
Total valid sample	349	100	144	100	115	100	64	100	102	100
Full interview	210	60.2	85	59	69	60	35	54.8	69	67.6
Refusal	40	11.5	5	3.5	13	11.3	14	21.9	4	3.9
No contact	49	14.0	27	18.7	13	11.3	9	14.1	9	8.8
Other unproductive	50	14.3	27	18.7	20	17.4	6	9.4	20	19.6

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