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What is the impact of the Foundation Learning Tier?

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August 2008

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Prepared for the Learning and Skills Council
by IFF Research

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Tracking London's Learners: What is the impact of the Foundation Learning Tier?

Research report prepared for **Learning and Skills Council (LSC)**
London Region by **IFF Research Ltd**
May 2008

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Over the next three years work will continue in the development of progression pathways within the Foundation Learning Tier (FLT). Progression pathways will provide the vehicle for a more focussed and strategic approach to Entry Level and Level 1 provision for young people and adults, in order to raise achievement and improve progression to Level 2. Full implementation of the FLT will be completed by 2010, with a comprehensive range of progression pathways.
- 1.2 This report presents key findings from a study involving 1,000 telephone interviews conducted in February and March 2008 with learners who completed an Entry Level or Level 1 NVQ accredited qualification with a London provider in late 2007 / early 2008. Skills for Life courses were not included, but English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses were in scope for the survey. For the purpose of this study these are referred to as the 'Foundation Learning Tier'.
- 1.3 The LSC London region undertook a number of Learner Tracker studies in 2007 assessing the impact of Level 2, Level 3 and Skills for Life learning. The research investigated the impact of FE study on progression into further learning, employability and career progression.
- 1.4 Following on from this work, the LSC wished to extend the tracker study to those learners engaged with Entry Level and Level 1 qualifications.
- 1.5 Specifically the objectives of the research were to investigate the profile of people undertaking this type of learning, and whether completing an Entry Level or Level 1 learning aim makes a difference to their subsequent employment status, career development or progression into further learning. Other objectives included assessing the motivations of learners for taking the course, and their attitudes to learning.
- 1.6 A total of 1,000 learners were surveyed, 500 of whom had been studying at Entry Level, and 500 of whom had been studying at Level 1. The findings will be used to highlight the role of the Foundation Learning Tier in raising employability, tackling unemployment, and increasing progression into further education and training.
- 1.7 The study took a representative sample of adult learners aged 19 to 50 who completed an Entry Level or Level 1 course in London within the six months prior to

the interviewing period, meaning that they all completed their Entry Level or Level 1 learning between September 2007 and February 2008.

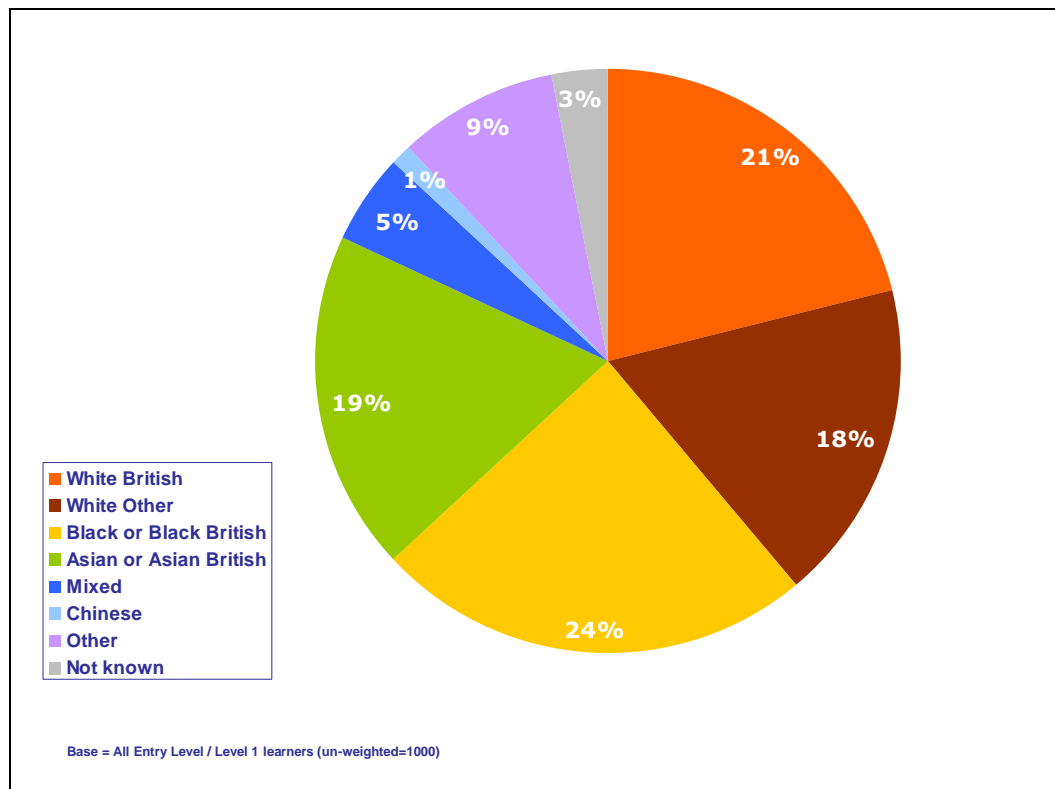
- 1.8 The survey data presented in this report has been weighted to ensure that it is representative by age, gender and level (Entry vs. Level 1) of all learners completing a relevant course at a London college between September 2007 and February 2008. Data presented in this report is weighted unless otherwise specified. Unweighted base descriptions are used in charts and tables to give an indication of the statistical reliability of the findings presented; the actual data within these charts and tables is weighted.
- 1.9 The report is structured with each chapter examining a key research issue identified by the LSC, as follows:
- What are the characteristics of learners engaged with learning as part of the Foundation Learning Tier?
 - How do Entry Level and Level 1 learners find out about and become engaged with FLT provision?
 - What is the impact of the Foundation Learning Tier on an individual's employability?
 - Does completing an Entry Level or Level 1 course encourage and enable individuals to undertake further learning and training?
 - What are the characteristics of Entry Level or Level 1 learners who progress onto higher levels of learning?
 - How does the Foundation Learning Tier help the unemployed?
 - What are the benefits of Entry Level or Level 1 study for those without a prior qualification?
 - What is the impact of the Foundation Learning Tier on BAME learners?
 - How do the benefits and outcomes of Entry Level or Level 1 study compare to the outcomes of achieving a Level 2 or Level 3 qualification in FE?
 - What impact do Entry Level or Level 1 learners feel that the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will have on them?
- 1.10 In addition to this report of findings, a technical report is being produced separately for the LSC.

2 What are the characteristics of learners engaged with learning as part of the Foundation Learning Tier?

- The majority of London's Entry Level and Level 1 learners are female (71 per cent).
- There is substantial ethnic diversity amongst London Entry Level and Level 1 learners, and less than one third have English as their first language (31 per cent).
- One in eleven learners were long term unemployed when starting their Entry Level or Level 1 course (9 per cent).
- Entry Level and Level 1 learners typically continue or progress into employment (44 per cent are in employment following the course), or are engaged in further study (31 per cent).

- 2.1 One of the key objectives of this research was to collect more information on the characteristics and motivations of individuals undertaking Entry Level and Level 1 qualifications in London. This section provides the context for the rest of the findings presented in this report by describing the prior circumstances of learners, their demographic profile and the reasons for undertaking a course of study at this time. We also outline the main outcomes of Entry Level and Level 1 learning, including progression into employment and progression into further education.
- 2.2 The learner profiles presented in this as in all sections are based on weighted data; that is, they describe the profile of *all* London adult learners completing an Entry Level or Level 1 course between September 2007 and February 2008, rather than just the profile of the learners surveyed as part of this research.
- 2.3 **Gender and age** - The majority of London's Entry Level and Level 1 learners are female (71 per cent, higher at 74 per cent for Entry Level courses), and aged 25 or over (81 per cent of Entry Level learners and 74 per cent of Level 1 learners).
- 2.4 One in nine learners considers themselves to have a learning difficulty (11 per cent).
- 2.5 **Ethnicity** - There is substantial ethnic diversity amongst London Entry Level and Level 1 learners, as illustrated in Figure 2.1. One quarter of learners are Black or Black British (24 per cent), and around one fifth are White British (21 per cent), Asian or Asian British (19 per cent) or White other (18 per cent).
- 2.6 Only around a third of learners have English as their first language (31 per cent - this did not differ between ESOL and other courses).

Figure 2.1 – Ethnicity profile of individuals completing an Entry Level or Level 1 course Sept 2007 – Feb 2008



Employment and education status before starting the Entry Level or Level 1 course

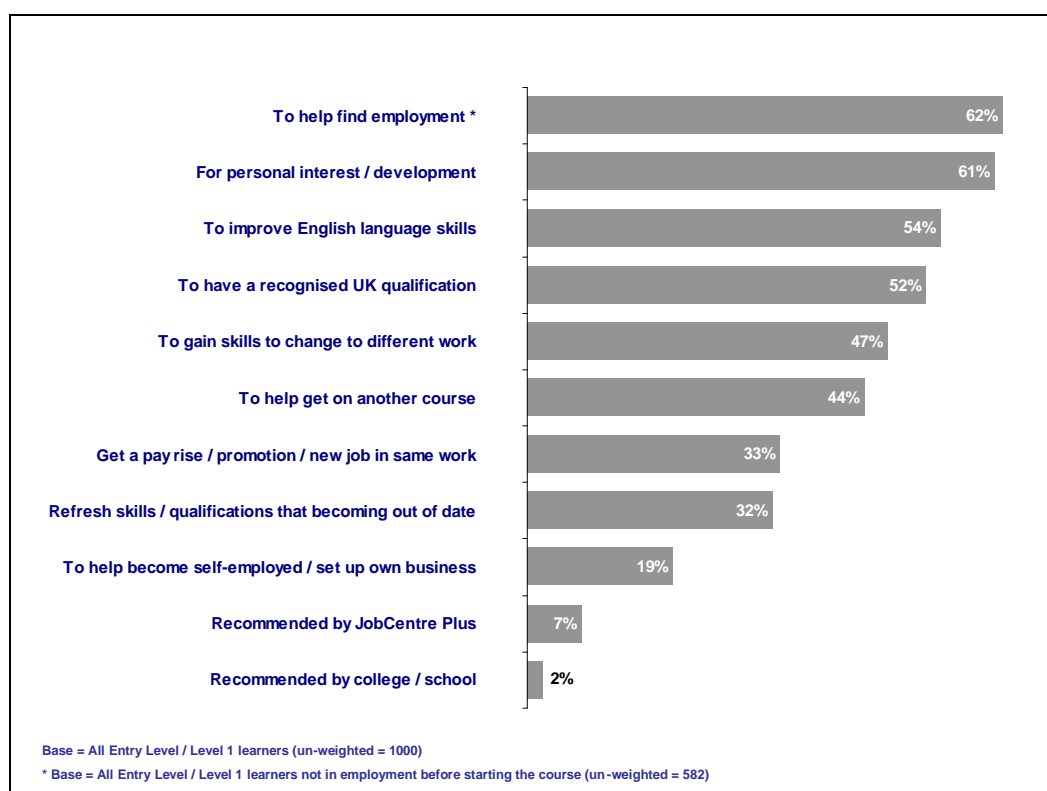
- 2.7 Over two-fifths of learners (44 per cent) were in employment immediately prior to starting their Entry Level or Level 1 course; 25 per cent were employed full time, 18 per cent were employed on a part time basis, and 2 per cent were self-employed or running their own business. Where the learner was employed full time or part time before starting the course, this was likely to be in a permanent role (73 per cent), rather than in a seasonal or temporary role (17 per cent), or on a limited contract (6 per cent). The vast majority of part-time workers (90 per cent) had only one job at the time of starting their Entry Level or Level 1 learning.
- 2.8 A substantial proportion of learners (26 per cent) were already engaged with a course of study immediately prior to starting the Entry Level or Level 1 course. In most cases learners were studying at the same institution with which they went on to take the Entry Level or Level 1 course (39 per cent) or at another FE institution (27 per cent). In around one third of cases where the learner had been studying before starting their course they reported needing to attain that prior aim in order to get on to the Entry Level or Level 1 course. Prior learning was mostly (66 per cent) at the same or lower level as the Entry Level or Level 1 course (i.e. Level 1 or lower).

- 2.9 One fifth (20 per cent) of those completing a Entry Level or Level 1 course did not have any prior qualifications before starting the course. Perhaps surprisingly, almost half (47 per cent) of learners had prior qualifications at NQF Full Level 2 or above.¹
- 2.10 One fifth of learners were unemployed before starting the course (21 per cent), with the vast majority of these stating that they had been actively seeking work. Approaching half (44 per cent, equivalent to 9 per cent of all learners) were long term unemployed at the time of starting the course, i.e. they had been out of work for over a year.

Motivations for Entry Level or Level 1 study

- 2.11 Learners were asked whether a number of factors were a key reason or a part of the reason for starting their Entry Level or Level 1 course. As illustrated in Figure 2.2, which shows the proportion answering that each reason was key, the most common motivations for taking the course are to boost employability and help them find a job (a key reason for 62 per cent of all those not working as an employee before starting the course, for 36 per cent of all learners) and for general personal interest and development (a key reason for 61 per cent).

Figure 2.2 – Key reasons for undertaking an Entry Level or Level 1 course



¹ Note that level of prior attainment was assigned based on information about prior qualifications given by respondents during the survey itself.

- 2.12 Reflecting the fact that two-thirds of the cohort do not have English as their first language, over half (54 per cent) state that a key reason for doing the course has been to improve their English language skills, and over two-thirds (68 per cent) say this was at least part of the reason for taking the course.

Progression of learners following completion of a Entry Level or Level 1 course

- 2.13 Following completion of their Entry Level or Level 1 study, the majority of learners were in paid employment (44 per cent), engaged in further study (31 per cent), or taking part in a Government-supported training programme (9 per cent), and overall just over two-thirds (68 per cent) were either in paid employment, studying or on a Government-supported training programme. One fifth (19 per cent) have found themselves unemployed and looking to work following completion of their course.
- 2.14 Of those who were unemployed before starting their course, well over a quarter (28 per cent) have now found work (26 per cent are working as an employee, while 2 per cent are working on a self-employed basis).

3 What is the impact of the Foundation Learning Tier on an individual's employability?

- Seven out of ten learners currently in work (71 per cent) feel that they have learnt and developed vocational skills that will be of benefit in their job role.
- Over a quarter (28 per cent) of learners who were unemployed before starting the course are now in paid employment.
- There has been a slight increase in the proportion of individuals working as employees (from 42 per cent before the course to 44 per cent at the time of interview) or working on a self-employed basis (from 2 per cent to 3 per cent).

3.1 There has been increasing focus in the learning and skills arena on ensuring that learning and training provision matches the demands of employers and gives individuals the skills needed to meet these demands. This section explores both how Entry Level and Level 1 courses contribute to the learner's vocational skill set and any positive outcomes in their ability to find employment or progress within their chosen career.

Learner views on their own increased employability

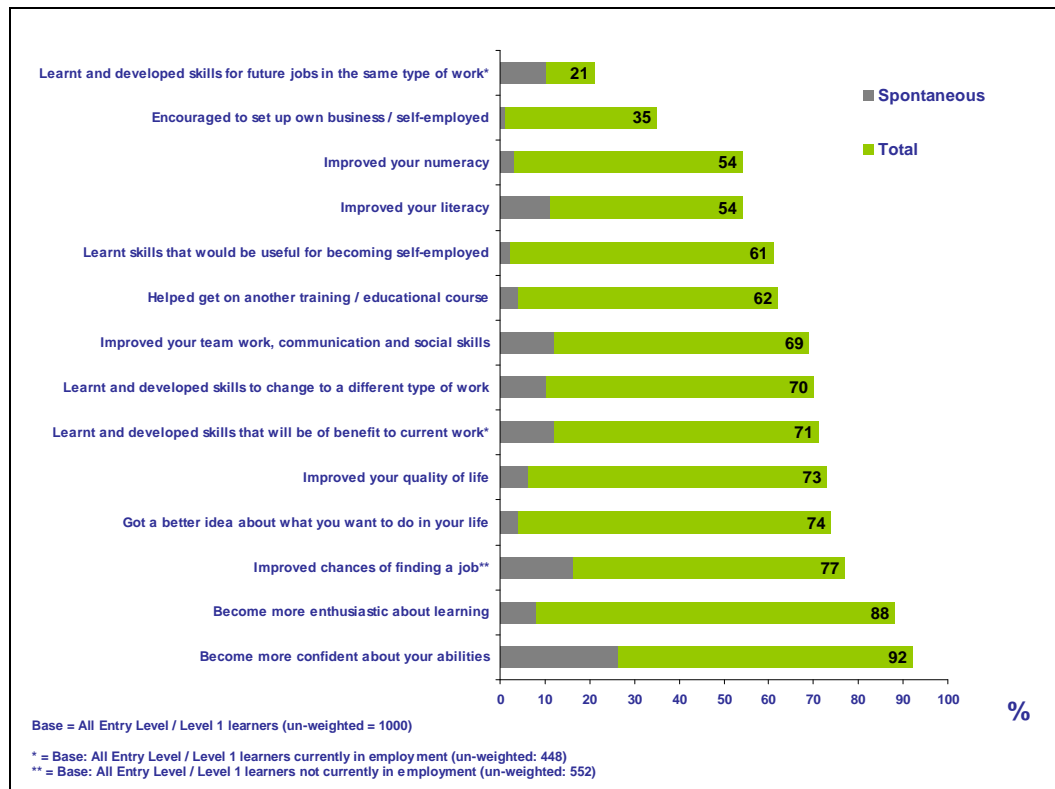
3.2 The most commonly reported benefits (spontaneously) amongst Entry Level and Level 1 learners are having improved their English language skills (32 per cent), and having gained confidence in their abilities (26 per cent). These are both important elements that will help an individual perform better when applying for jobs or when attempting to progress in their career. Learners who completed an Entry Level qualification in 2007 are more likely than those studying at Level 1 to report improvements in their English language skills (Entry Level – 34 per cent, Level 1 – 27 per cent).

3.3 As shown in Figure 3.1, when prompted with different factors, learners were likely to believe that they have developed a whole range of skills as a result of the learning that are likely to make them more employable:

- Of those who are currently in employment following the course, seven out of ten (71 per cent) feel that they have learnt and developed vocational skills that will be of benefit in their current job role;
- 70 per cent of all learners report that through the course they have developed skills that would allow them to change to a different area of work that they may want to pursue in the future, and three-fifths (61 per cent) think they would now have at least some of the capabilities required to set up on a self-employed basis;
- More than half of all learners feel that they have improved their basic numeracy (54 per cent) and / or literacy (54 per cent) skills.

- The majority of learners report that they have developed core 'soft' skills such as increased confidence and improved team work, communication and social skills.

Figure 3.1 – Reported benefits of FE study – spontaneous and total in agreement



Increases in the qualification level of the workforce

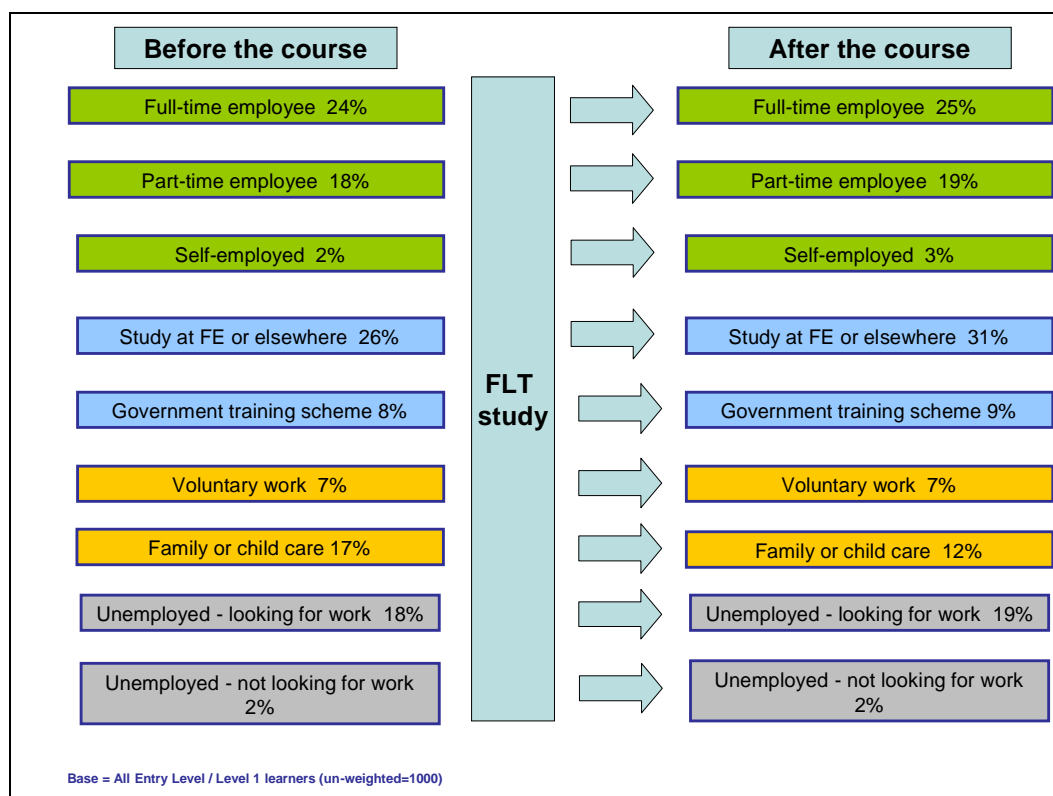
3.4 The qualification level of the individual is an important factor in their overall employability. One fifth (19 per cent) of Entry Level or Level 1 learners who went on to achieve their qualification had no prior qualifications. These courses have therefore raised the qualification level of many learners (admittedly a minority) rather than just giving them different skills at the same level.

Changes in employment status

3.5 Evidence from this study suggests that improvements in the qualification level and skill set arising from completing their course lead to positive outcomes for learners in terms of their employment status and prospects.

3.6 Figure 3.2 shows the proportion of learners employed, working on a self-employed basis, and unemployed, both immediately before starting the course, and at the time of interview (up to six months after completion). There has been a marginal increase overall in the proportion of individuals working as employees (from 42 per cent before the course to 44 per cent at the time of interview), or who are self-employed (2 per cent to 3 per cent after the course).

Figure 3.2 – Changes in the status of learners as a result of completing an Entry Level or Level 1 course²



3.7 Note that these findings refer to **net** changes – it is not the case that all those working before starting their course are still in employment. Over one quarter (26 per cent) of learners who were unemployed before starting the course are now employed either in a part time or full time role. In two-thirds of cases, these learners found employment within three months of finishing their course.

3.8 Of those working for the same employer as before the course 19 per cent have had a promotion (a clear indicator of improved employability) and most say either that this was definitely a result of the learning (21 per cent) or the course helped (48 per cent).

3.9 One in eleven learners (9 per cent) have moved from the employment they had before the course to a new job with a different employer. In almost two-thirds of these cases the learner has gained a higher level job (64 per cent), a higher hourly rate of pay (66 per cent) and/or improved pay and promotion prospects (66 per cent). Most

² N.B. There is overlap between categories (e.g. learners may be unemployed and studying) and therefore the figures do not sum to 100 per cent.

of those learners experiencing these beneficial changes attributed these to the effects of the course (20 per cent directly, with a further 53 per cent saying that the course helped in this regard).

4 Does completing an Entry Level or Level 1 course encourage and enable individuals to undertake further learning and training?

- Just over two fifths of learners had started a new course since finishing the Entry Level or Level 1 learning (44 per cent).
- A third of all learners have progressed onto higher level study (33 per cent).
- Two-thirds report that they would be likely or very likely to make a financial investment in their own learning and training in the future (65 per cent).

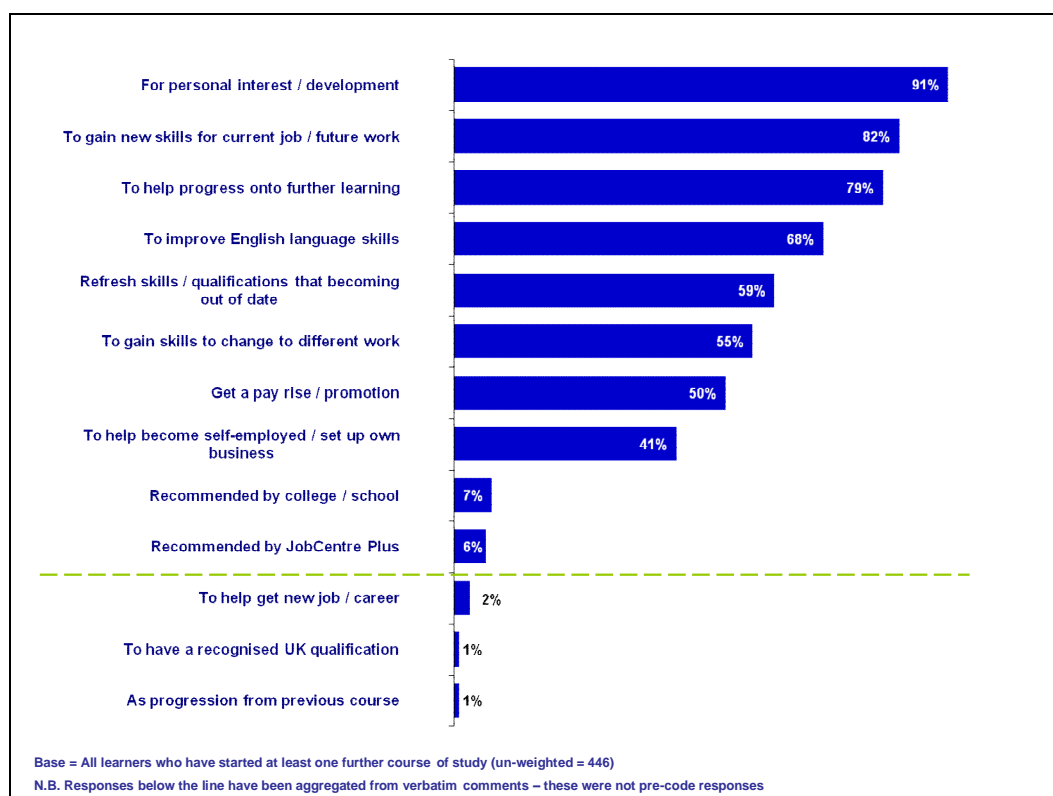
- 4.1 Whilst the impact of the Foundation Learning Tier on employability and success in the work place, as discussed in the previous section, is an important marker of the value of the FLT, it is also possible to measure success in terms of the progression of learners into further learning and onto a higher qualification and skill level. This section explores the extent to which Entry Level and Level 1 courses act as a springboard which has or will enable individuals to progress into higher level courses and training.
- 4.2 More than two in five learners (44 per cent) said that a key reason for undertaking the Entry Level or Level 1 course was the fact that they thought it could help them get onto another educational course in the future, and a further 29 per cent said that this was at least part of the reason. Attending the course has further strengthened the desire to progress in learning and training for many learners and 88 per cent have become more enthusiastic about learning as a result of completing the course. In the following section we discuss whether this enthusiasm for learning and training has led to individuals following up their Entry Level or Level 1 training with more study.
- 4.3 In total, just over two fifths of learners had started a new course since finishing the Entry Level or Level 1 learning (44 per cent). The majority of these learners (75 per cent) have started just one new course, though 17 per cent have started two courses since completing their Entry Level or Level 1 study, and 7 per cent having engaged with three or more courses.
- 4.4 At the time of interview (around three to nine months after most learners had completed their study) 31 per cent were still engaged in further study at FE or elsewhere. This compares to a total of 26 per cent of learners who were studying / learning before starting the Entry Level or Level 1 course, suggesting that the FLT does have an effect on the propensity of learners to progress into further education and training.
- 4.5 Amongst people who have started new courses following completion of their original Entry Level or Level 1 course, the vast majority (84 per cent) report that their course helped them to some degree in being able to enrol on the new course(s), and many (42 per cent) said that doing the original course was *vital* in enabling them to progress.

4.6 In most cases where learners have started new courses this has been at a higher level (75 per cent) – this is equivalent to 33 per cent of all Entry Level or Level 1 learners progressing onto higher level study. Overall, three in ten of all learners (31 per cent) have moved onto a subsequent course in the same or a related subject area to the Entry Level or Level 1 learning.

4.7 Key reasons given for continuing into further study include:

- For personal interest and development (a reason for 91 per cent of those going onto another course)
- To gain new skills for a current job or future work (82 per cent);
- To help the learner to progress onto even further learning in the future (79 per cent);

Figure 4.1 – Reasons given by Entry Level or Level 1 learners for progressing onto further study



4.8 In addition to those individuals who have gone onto formalised education at FE or elsewhere following their Entry Level or Level 1 learning, 9 per cent are currently participating in a Government-supported training and employment programme (compare with 8 per cent on such a programme immediately before the course).

4.9 This research also sought to measure the extent to which learners are likely to invest in their own training and development going forward. Two-thirds (65 per cent) of learners report that, based on their positive experience of their course, they would be likely or very likely to make a financial investment in their own learning and training in

the future. A similar proportion of learners overall say that a system in which credit is awarded for small steps of learning would make them more likely to undertake further learning in the future (66 per cent).

5 What are the characteristics of Entry Level and Level 1 learners who progress onto higher levels of learning?

- Younger adults (aged 19-24) are more likely to have progressed to higher level learning (39 per cent compared with 32 per cent among 25-50 year olds).
- Those who were in learning before doing the Entry Level or Level 1 course are more likely to have progressed to higher level courses.
- The most frequent motivations for progressing onto higher level learning are personal interest and development, to gain new skills for a current job or future work, or to help them to progress onto another course.

- 5.1 As outlined in the previous chapter, more than two-fifths (44 per cent) of Entry Level and Level 1 learners have started a new course of study following completion of their course, and in three-quarters of cases this has been at a higher level than their Entry Level or Level 1 study. This equates to 33 per cent of all Entry Level and Level 1 learners progressing onto higher level study, and is equivalent to around 5,200 learners on higher level courses. Of whom 3,700 learners are **currently** engaged with higher level study. This section of the report looks at the characteristics of learners who have started a course at a higher level following their Entry Level or Level 1 study, whether or not they went on to complete that new course and whether or not they are currently still engaged with this course of study.
- 5.2 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) learners are more likely to have progressed onto higher level courses (36 per cent have done so, compared to 33 per cent of all learners), as are those in the younger age group (39 per cent of 19-24 year olds have progressed onto a higher course, compared to 32 per cent of 25-50 year olds). Men are just as likely as women to have engaged with higher level learning following their original course, but given the greater numbers of women taking Entry Level or Level 1 courses, 70 per cent of those moving into higher learning are female.
- 5.3 The rates of progression are the same for Entry Level and Level 1 learners (33 per cent of learners on each level of course subsequently move onto a higher level). Those learners who completed an ESOL course in 2007/08 are more likely to progress (38 per cent).
- 5.4 Most learners who have moved onto a higher level course are currently still studying towards their new qualification aim (71 per cent). Amongst those currently undertaking a new higher course, 42 per cent are also in work.
- 5.5 Those who were working immediately before starting their initial original course (a base of 438 learners) are less likely to have undertaken further learning at a higher level (31 per cent).
- 5.6 In contrast, those who were studying before doing the course are more likely to have progressed to a higher level course (37 per cent compared to 32 per cent of those who were not studying prior to undertaking the course).

5.7 Amongst those progressing onto higher learning, the reasons given for further study are very similar to those reported in the previous section among all learners undertaking further study (whether at a higher level or not), specifically:

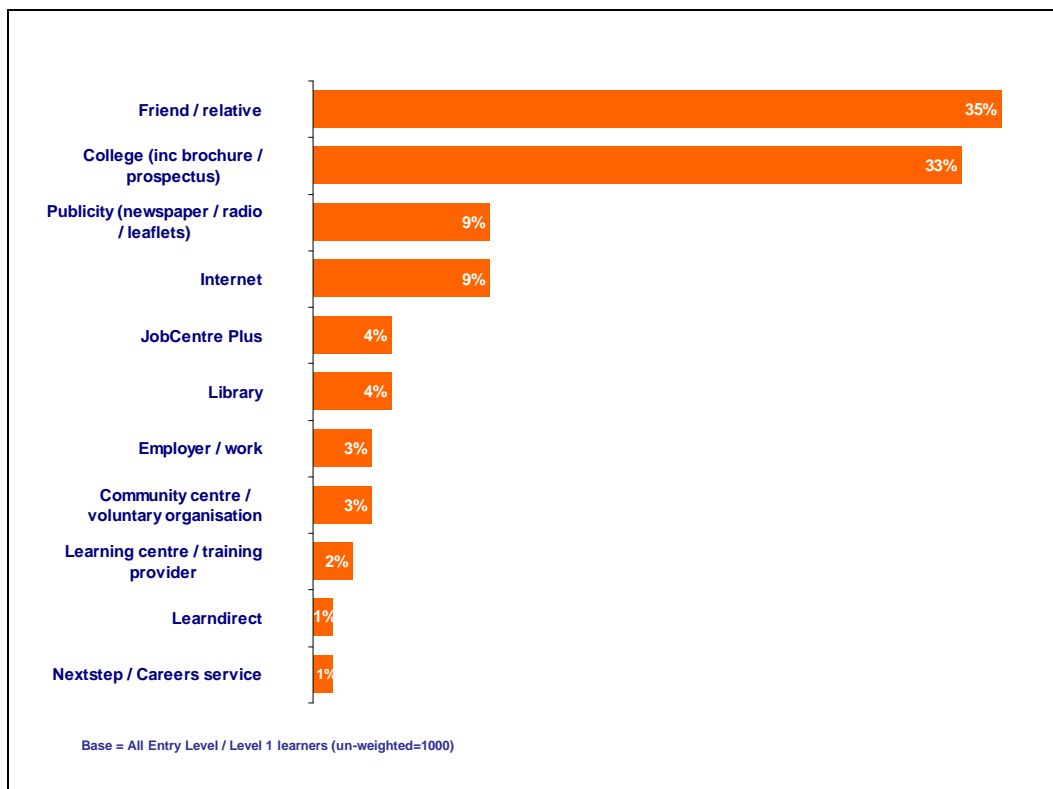
- For personal interest and development (a reason for 91 per cent of those who have started a higher level course since the original course)
- To gain new skills for a current job or future work (84 per cent);
- To help the learner get on higher educational courses in the future (81 per cent);
- To further improve English language skills (67 per cent);
- To refresh skills or qualifications that have become out of date (61 per cent).

6 How do Entry Level and Level 1 learners first find out about and become engaged with FLT provision?

- Learners most often hear about the opportunity to undertake an Entry Level or Level 1 course through a recommendation from a friend or relative (35 per cent), or through provider information such as their brochure or prospectus (33 per cent).
- Only a small proportion of individuals enrolled on a course following a suggestion from their employer.

6.1 This section looks at where learners heard about the opportunity to undertake an Entry Level or Level 1 course. Figure 6.1 shows the main sources.

Figure 6.1 – Where learners heard about the opportunity to undertake an Entry Level or Level 1 course



6.2 The most common trigger is a recommendation from a friend or relative (mentioned by 35 per cent). Learners whose first language is not English were significantly more likely to say that they first heard about the opportunity to undertake their course from a friend or relative (43 per cent, compared to 21 per cent of those learners with English as their first language).

- 6.3 One third of learners (33 per cent) first thought about doing their course in response to information received from the college, including prospectuses and course lists mailed out to local residents. For learners who were already on a course at the college before starting the learning there, this information may have been provided more directly e.g. through course tutors. Overall 9 per cent of learners enrolled in response to advertisements from the college or other organisations on the radio, in newspapers or in direct mailings.
- 6.4 A small proportion of individuals enrolled following a suggestion from their employer at the time (3 per cent of all learners, 6 per cent of those who were employed at the time of starting the course).
- 6.5 There is some evidence of the influence of advisory and support organisations in getting learners onto Entry Level and Level 1 courses. Overall 4 per cent of learners first heard about the opportunity of taking their course from JobCentre Plus, rising to 8 per cent amongst those unemployed before starting the course. Community centres, voluntary organisations, nextstep and Learndirect are also sources of information on Entry Level and Level 1 courses, though individually they are the source for relatively small proportions of learners.

7 How does the Foundation Learning Tier help the unemployed?

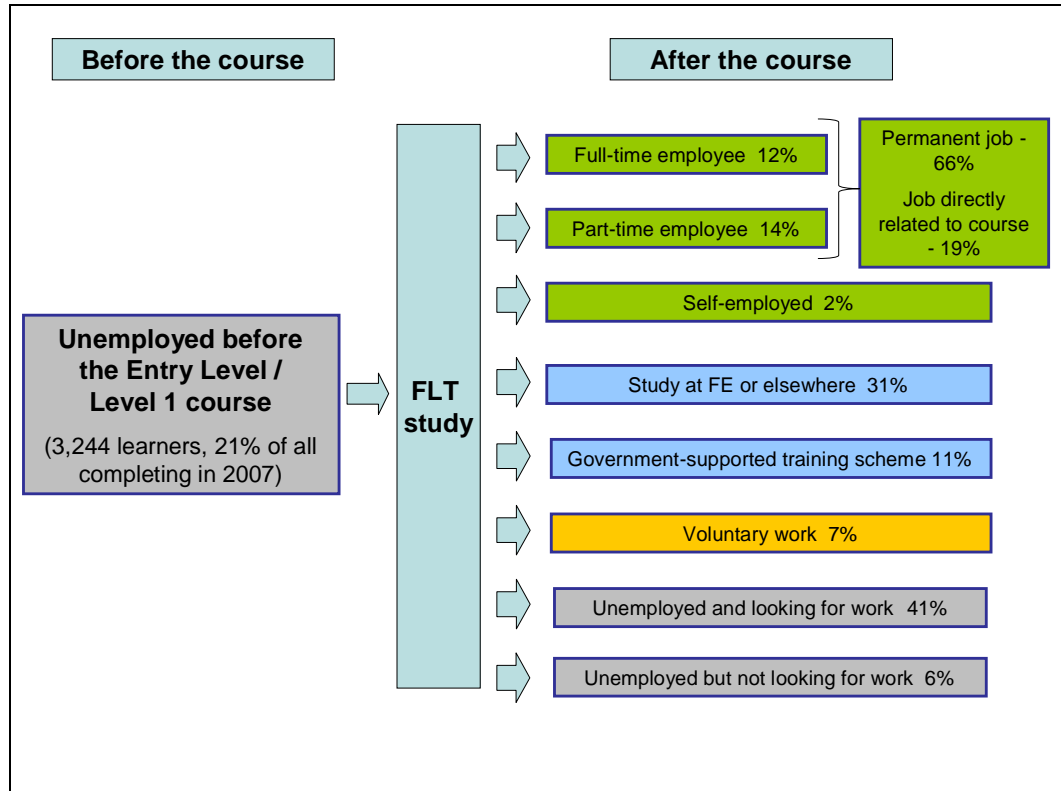
- Over a quarter of learners who were unemployed before starting their Entry Level or Level 1 course have now moved into paid employment (28 per cent), one in eight as full time employees (12 per cent).
- Two-thirds of those now in working as employees are in permanent roles (66 per cent). Three-quarters think it likely they will be in this role in 12 months time (74 per cent).
- The majority of the unemployed who have taken an Entry Level or Level 1 course have developed their numeracy (66 per cent), literacy (54 per cent), and English language skills (32 per cent).

7.1 Just over a fifth of London learners completing an Entry Level or Level 1 course in FE in 2007/08 were unemployed immediately before starting their course of study (21 per cent). Whilst the majority of these individuals were actively looking for work before starting their course, 11 per cent of the unemployed had not actively been seeking employment (equivalent to 2 per cent of learners overall). More than two-fifths of the unemployed (44 per cent) had been out of work for more than a year; we refer to these individuals as being 'long term unemployed' in this section. This section examines the outcomes of FE for this unemployed group, and the overall impact that FE has in terms of improved skills and employability.

Changes in employment status

- 7.2 Completing an Entry Level or Level 1 course improves the employability of those who have been unemployed before the course. As shown in Figure 7.1, over a quarter of learners who were previously unemployed are now employees or self-employed (28 per cent), with 12 per cent working as full time employees. Almost half (47 per cent) those previously are still unemployed.
- 7.3 Just over half (54 per cent) of those who have moved from unemployment into a full or part time job role say that attending their course helped them get their new job, with one in ten saying that it was vital to them being able to secure their current job. A minority of previously unemployed learners who are now in employment are working in jobs which are directly or broadly related to the course they completed (42 per cent).
- 7.4 Where previously unemployed learners have found employment, this appears in most cases to be permanent work that fits in with their long term aspirations. Two-thirds of those now in work are employed in permanent roles (67 per cent) and three-quarters (74 per cent) think it likely they will be in this role in 12 months time.

Figure 7.1 – Changes in the status of previously unemployed learners as a result of completing an Entry Level or Level 1 course



Note: there is overlap between categories (e.g. learners may be unemployed and studying) and therefore the figures do not sum to 100 per cent.

7.5 Three in ten learners who were unemployed before starting their FE course are currently undertaking further study (31 per cent). In most cases, the current course is at a higher level than the original Entry Level or Level 1 learning (83 per cent), and in the same or a related subject area (80 per cent). Half of these learners now in education or training report that doing their course was vital in enabling them to progress into this further learning (52 per cent). Amongst all those previously unemployed learners who have **started** a course of learning since finishing their Entry Level or Level 1 course, one third have already finished a course, whilst a quarter have dropped out of at least one subsequent course without completing.

Perceived benefits gained by undertaking the course

7.6 Almost all previously unemployed learners feel that completing their course has been beneficial to them. The most commonly reported benefits for this cohort were:

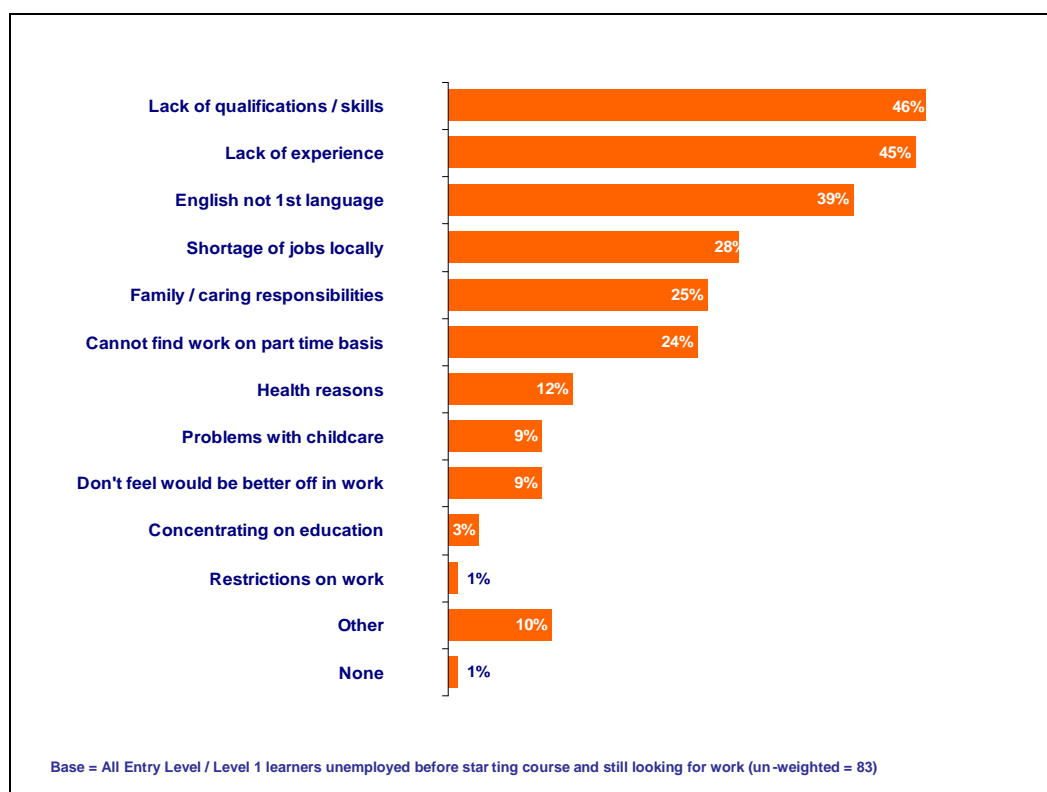
- An increase in their confidence with regard to their abilities (96 per cent);
- An increase in their enthusiasm for learning (89 per cent);
- More clarity about what they want to do and achieve in life (79 per cent).

7.7 The majority of the unemployed who have taken an Entry Level or Level 1 course also feel that their numeracy and / or literacy have improved (66 per cent and 54 per

cent respectively), as do a third regarding their English language skills (32 per cent). Most previously unemployed learners also report that their team work, communication and social skills have improved as a result of the course (74 per cent).

- 7.8 Amongst previously unemployed learners who have found work following the course, two-thirds (64 per cent) believe that they have gained skills that will be of benefit in their current job role, higher among those undertaking Entry Level courses (68 per cent) than Level 1 courses (59 per cent).
- 7.9 As shown in Figure 7.1, a relatively high proportion (47 per cent) of those learners out of work before starting their study have remained unemployed after the course (corresponding to 10 per cent of learners overall). Encouragingly, 45 per cent of those who have remained unemployed think they now have a *significantly improved* chance of finding work because they have taken the course, and another 39 per cent think their employment prospects have improved slightly. Figure 7.2 shows the barriers that those still looking for work think they face to finding employment, with the key factors being a lack of qualifications or skills, a lack of experience and poor English language skills. Clearly many of these learners feel they face multiple barriers to finding work.

Figure 7.2 – Main barriers to finding work as reported by those still unemployed following their Entry Level or Level 1 course



8 What are the benefits of Entry Level or Level 1 study for those without a prior qualification?

- One fifth (20 per cent) of all learners completing an Entry Level or Level 1 course in 2007/08 had no qualifications before starting their course.
- Three-fifths of learners without previous qualifications improved their numeracy (60 per cent) and their literacy skills (57 per cent) as a result of the course.
- One fifth of previously unqualified learners have started a higher level course since finishing their original Entry Level or Level 1 learning (22 per cent).

8.1 One fifth (20 per cent) of all learners completing an Entry Level or Level 1 qualification in 2007/08 had no prior qualifications before starting their course. This is equivalent to around 3,000 learners across London. This section examines the benefits experienced by those learners who completed an Entry Level or Level 1 course who had no prior qualifications.

Perceived benefits gained by undertaking the course

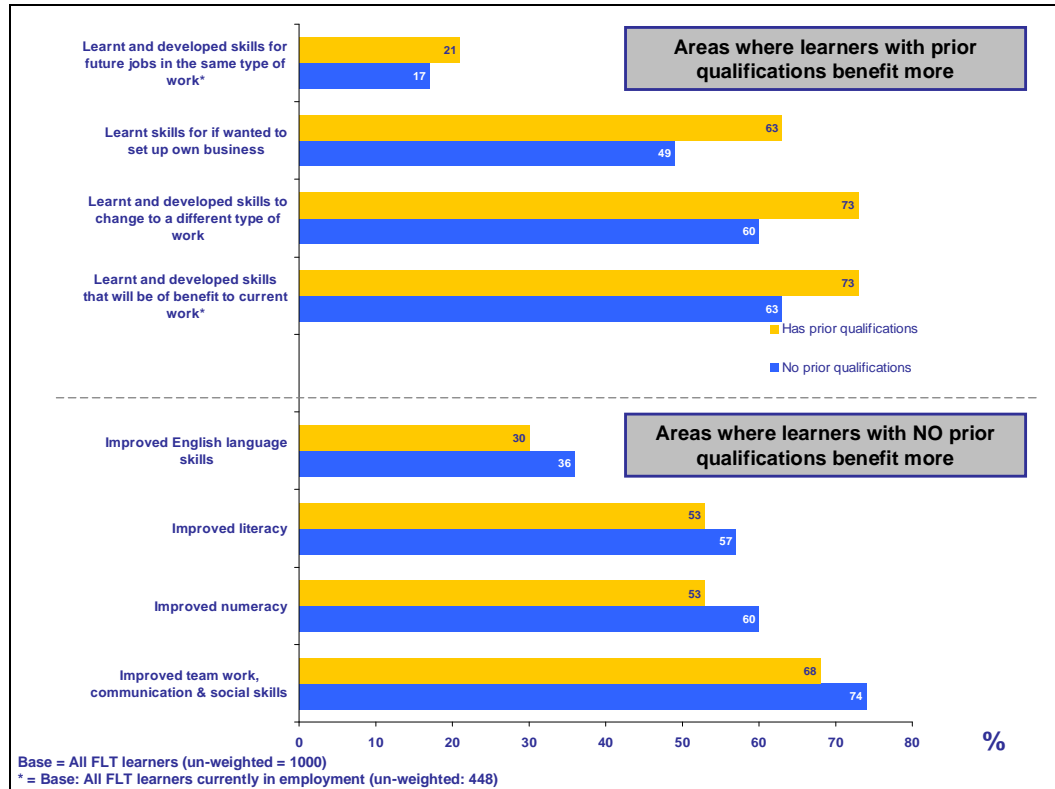
8.2 As seen amongst the entire cohort of Entry Level and Level 1 learners, the key benefits gained by those without prior qualifications include an increase in confidence (92 per cent), an increase in the learner's enthusiasm for learning (89 per cent), and greater clarity about what direction the learner would want to take in their life (73 per cent).

8.3 The majority of these learners with no prior qualifications have developed useful 'soft' skills, specifically:

- Three-quarters (74 per cent) report that attending the course has meant that they have improved their team work, communication and social skills;
- Three-fifths (60 per cent) have improved their numeracy, and a similar proportion (57 per cent) have noted an improvement in their literacy levels;
- Over a third (36 per cent) have improved their English language skills, equivalent to 52 per cent of all those learners with no prior qualifications who went into the learning with improving their English as a key aim.

Those with no prior qualifications are more likely to feel the course has benefited them in each of these ways. Results are summarised in Figure 8.1, which shows the benefits among those with no prior qualifications (in blue) and among learners with previous qualifications (in yellow).

Figure 8.1 – Selected benefits of Entry Level or Level 1 study amongst learners with and without prior qualifications



8.4 As shown in Figure 8.1, learners currently in work who had no prior qualifications are less likely to report that they have gained skills useful for their current job than those who had qualifications before the course. Those with no prior qualifications are also significantly less likely to feel they have developed skills that will allow them to change to a different type of work, or that would be helpful if they wanted to set up their own business.

Changes in employment status

8.5 Amongst those learners without qualifications prior to the Entry Level or Level 1 course there has been a slight increase in the proportion in work (37 per cent working as employees or on a self-employed basis compared to 34 per cent who were in work immediately before starting the course).

8.6 Where learners with no prior qualifications have stayed with the same employer that they had when starting the course (a base of 37 respondents), a substantial proportion have experienced improvements in their situation at work which they attribute to the effects of the learning³:

- 25 per cent feel that the course has helped them undertake more interesting work;
- 25 per cent report improved pay and promotion prospects as a result the course.
- 19 per cent say the course has helped them then get an increase in their hourly pay
- 11 per cent say that the course has helped them get a promotion

Changes in learning and training status

8.7 There has been a more substantial effect of the Entry Level or Level 1 learning on the numbers of previously unqualified individuals engaging in further learning and training: 35 per cent are currently studying in FE or elsewhere, compared to 27 per cent studying before starting the course.

8.8 Overall there has been a marked increase in the proportion of Entry Level or Level 1 learners with no prior qualifications working, studying or on a government-supported training programme (48 per cent before the course, 56 per cent at the time of interview). However, the proportion of learners with no prior qualifications currently working, studying or training is still significantly lower than amongst those who had prior qualifications before starting the course (56 per cent v 71 per cent).

8.9 One fifth of previously unqualified learners have started a subsequent higher level course since finishing their Entry Level or Level 1 learning (22 per cent). Of all learners with no prior qualifications who have gone on to further learning (whether at a higher level or not), 41 per cent say that doing the original learning was vital to them being able to get onto their new course, and another 43 per cent say that it helped.

8.10 Half of learners who had no qualification previously would be likely to make a financial investment in their own learning and training going forward (20 per cent very likely, 32 per cent quite likely).

³ Note that the data presented here shows those learners who said that they had gained a promotion, pay rise etc where the course was either vital in helping them to achieve this, or that the course helped. There are more learners who gained a promotion, pay rise etc following their course, but who said that this had nothing to do with them having completed the course.

9 What is the impact of the Foundation Learning Tier on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) learners?

- Almost one in five BAME learners continuing in employment have gained a promotion as a result of the Entry Level or Level 1 study (18 per cent).
- Three in five BAME learners report improvements in their literacy (60 per cent) and / or numeracy (59 per cent) as a result of the course.
- Almost two-fifths of BAME learners have gone on to further study or training, (37 per cent, compared with 35 per cent of learners overall).

9.1 This section looks at the impact of the Foundation Learning Tier specifically on learners from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups. BAME individuals make up three-quarters (76 per cent) of the total cohort of learners completing an Entry Level or Level 1 course in London in 2007/08.

Changes in employment status

9.2 BAME learners are slightly less likely to have been in paid employment (i.e. working as an employee or self-employed) prior to undertaking their Entry Level or Level 1 course than learners on these courses overall (41 per cent, compared to 44 per cent of all learners). Following the learning there has been a slight increase in the proportion in paid employment (to 43 per cent).

Perceived benefits of the course

9.3 BAME learners believe that they have gained significant benefits from their learning, both in terms of their vocational skills and with regard to their employment prospects for the future:

- Three-quarters (74 per cent) agree that they have learnt skills that will be useful if they want to change jobs or their career (compared to 70 per cent of all learners);
- Of those BAME learners currently in work, the majority (74 per cent) feel they have learnt or developed skills that will be of benefit to them in their current job role;
- Most BAME learners who are currently looking for work (84 per cent) feel that they have more chance of finding a job now than if they had not undertaken the learning.

- 9.4 One fifth of BAME learners (21 per cent) have stayed working for the same employer that they had before the course following completion of their study. Specific benefits that these particular BAME learners have experienced either as a *direct or indirect*⁴ *result of the course* include:
- Winning a promotion (18 per cent)
 - Gaining a pay rise (23 per cent)
 - Doing more interesting work (32 per cent), and gaining more job satisfaction (46 per cent);
 - Having more job security (35 per cent) and improved pay and promotion prospects (31 per cent).
- 9.5 Two-fifths of BAME learners currently in employment are working in a field related to their course of study (45 per cent), and most expect to be in their current job role for at least the next 12 months (64 per cent).
- 9.6 Where BAME individuals have changed jobs after their course, or where they have moved into employment after having been unemployed before the course, 60 per cent have gained a permanent job role. Where BAME learners have changed job two-thirds (65 per cent) are now on a higher salary and three-fifths (60 per cent) are in a higher level compared with the job they had before the course.
- 9.7 Undertaking a course of study has had a great impact on the basic skills and capabilities of BAME learners. For two-thirds of BAME learners (66 per cent), the main intention or objective in undertaking this learning was to improve their English language skills. Encouragingly, 39 per cent of BAME learners who completed the course reported that it had led to a clear improvement in their skills in reading, writing and speaking in English.
- 9.8 Three in five BAME learners report improvements in their literacy and / or numeracy levels (60 per cent and 59 per cent respectively, significantly higher than the 54 per cent of all learners who have benefitted from learning in each regard).
- 9.9 More generally, BAME learners are particularly likely to report that undertaking the Entry Level or Level 1 learning has boosted their confidence (93 per cent), given them a better idea of what they might like to do in life (78 per cent) and that the learning has improved their quality of life (76 per cent, compared to 73 per cent of all learners).
- 9.10 BAME learners are slightly more likely to have been in learning prior to undertaking their course than the overall average for all learners (32 per cent v 30 per cent). This trend continues following completion of the course, with 37 per cent of BAME learners engaged with further study or training at the time of interview, compared to 35 per cent of learners overall.

⁴ Note that the data presented here shows those learners who said that they had gained a promotion, pay rise etc where the course was either vital in helping them to achieve this, or that the course helped. There are more learners who gained a promotion, pay rise etc following their course, but who said that this had nothing to do with them having completed the course.

- 9.11 In the majority of cases where BAME learners have started at least one new course of formal study at FE or elsewhere, the new study is at a higher level than that already undertaken (75 per cent), and in the same area or in a subject more broadly related to the original course of study (69 per cent).
- 9.12 The vast majority of those going on to further study feel that the course helped them get on this course (88 per cent), with around half of these (41 per cent) reporting that this prior learning was vital in this regard.
- 9.13 Nine in ten BAME learners (90 per cent) report that they have become more enthusiastic about undertaking further learning after having taken the course of study.

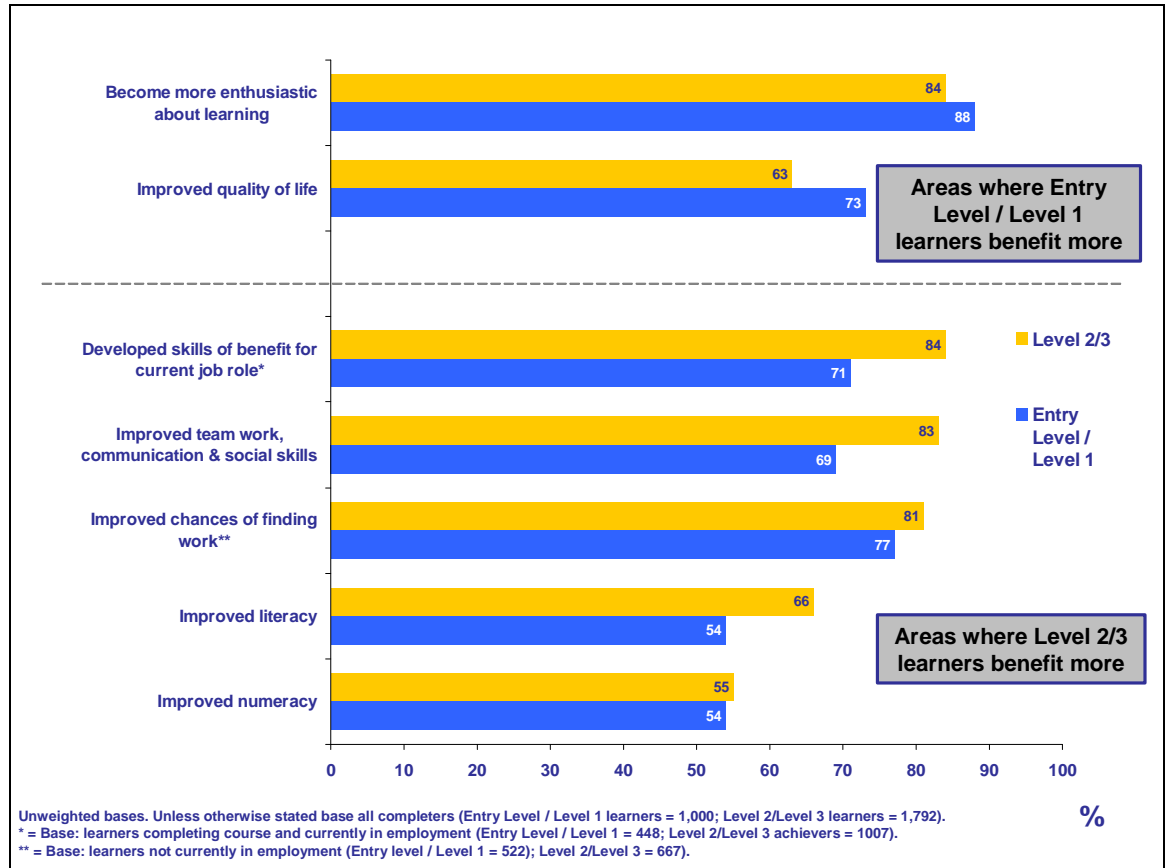
10 How do the benefits and outcomes of Entry Level and Level 1 study compare to completing a Level 2 or Level 3 qualification in FE?

- Learners completing an Entry Level or Level 1 course are more likely than those completing a Level 2 or 3 course to go on to further learning (44 per cent v 36 per cent).
- Entry Level and Level 1 learners are more likely than those completing a Level 2 / 3 course to feel that the course has improved their quality of life (73 per cent compared with 63 per cent among Level 2 / 3 completers).

- 10.1 As part of the overall London Learner Tracker programme of research, the London Learning and Skills Council commissioned IFF Research to undertake a concurrent survey of 2,400 learners who were due to complete a Full Level 2 or Level 3 course at a London Further Education (FE) college in 2007⁵. Of these Level 2 and Level 3 learners interviewed, 1,792 completed their course. This section compares the benefits gained by Entry Level and Level 1 learners with those experienced by learners completing a Level 2 or Level 3 course in 2007.
- 10.2 One key area in which Entry Level and Level 1 learners have more positive outcomes in comparison to Level 2 or Level 3 learners is in progression to further learning and training: 44 per cent have started a new course following completion of their original course of study (37 per cent have started a *new higher level* course), compared with 36 per cent of Level 2 / 3 completers starting a new course (and 31 per cent starting a *new higher level* course).
- 10.3 As shown in Figure 10.1, Entry Level and Level 1 learners are also significantly more likely than those completing a Level 2 or Level 3 qualification in 2007 to say that completing the course has improved their quality of life (73 per cent do so compared to 63 per cent of Level 2/3 completers), and to say that they are now more enthusiastic about learning (88 per cent agree, compared to 84 per cent of Level 2/3 completers).

⁵ 'Tracking London's Learners: What's achievement got to do with it?' IFF Research Ltd for the London Learning and Skills Council.

Figure 10.1 - Selected benefits of study amongst learners completing Entry Level / Level 1, and Level 2 / Level 3 courses in 2007



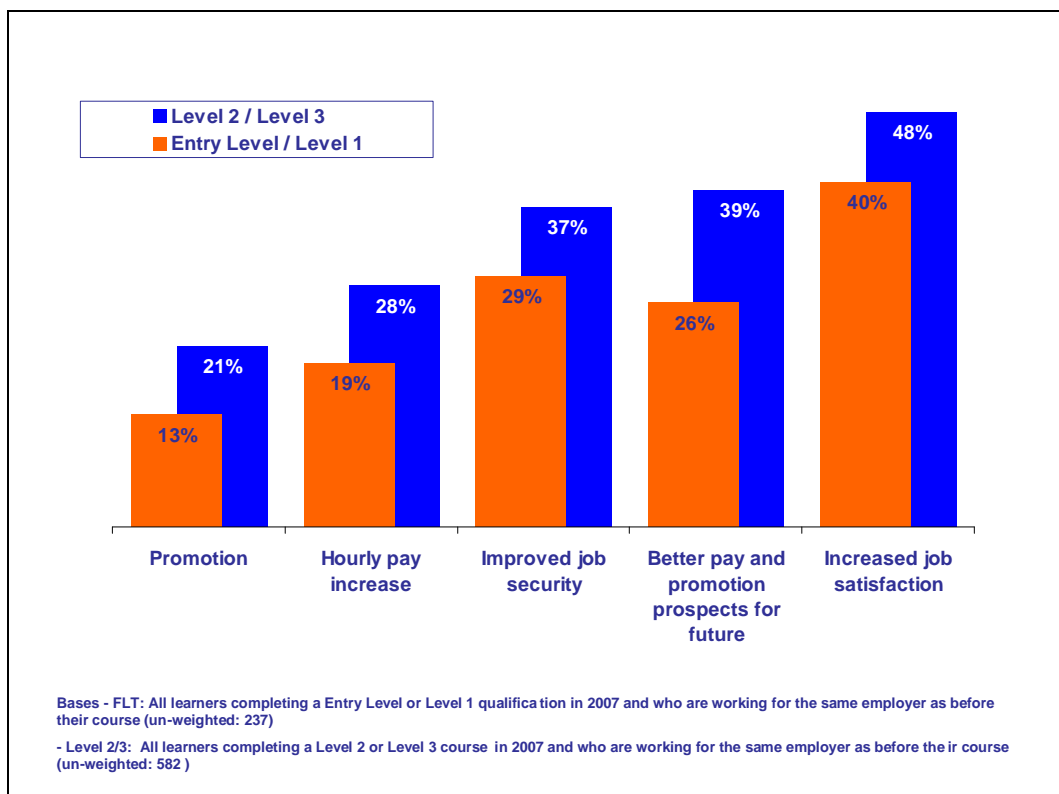
10.4 Other than for numeracy where results differed little, on all other measures of the benefits of study, those completing Level 2 or Level 3 courses were significantly more positive than Entry Level or Level 1 learners. The most marked discrepancies are in regard to:

- Improving the individual's team work, communication and social skills (83 per cent of Level 2 / 3 completers cite this as a benefit, compared to 69 per cent of Entry Level / Level 1 learners);
- Literacy skills: 66 per cent of Level 2 / 3 completers say that the course has improved their literacy skills, compared with 54 per cent of Entry Level / Level 1 learners;
- For those in work, the extent to which the course has developed skills of relevance to their current work (84 per cent of Level 2 / 3 completers cite this as a benefit, compared to 71 per cent of Entry Level / Level 1 learners).

10.5 Completing a Full Level 2 or Level 3 course appears to be somewhat more beneficial in helping previously unemployed learners find work (36 per cent of these learners had found a job following their course) than is the case for previously unemployed Entry Level or Level 1 learners (though still 28 per cent of these learners had found work subsequently).

- 10.6 Level 2 and Level 3 learners who were in work when they undertook their course and have changed employer are more likely than the equivalent Entry Level or Level 1 learners to have moved into a higher level job role following completion of the course (12 per cent v 6 per cent).
- 10.7 Figure 10.1 shows the benefits attained by learners who have continued in the same employment as before their course of learning. Level 2 and Level 3 learners are significantly more likely than Entry Level and Level 1 learners to have had a promotion or pay rise that they attribute to the effects of the course, and are also more likely to feel that their long term pay and promotion prospects have improved. Entry Level and Level 1 learners are also less likely to report beneficial effects on their job security and job satisfaction in comparison to Level 2/3 learners.

Figure 10.1 – Benefits gained within current work for which the course helped for Entry Level / Level 1 and Level 2 / Level 3 learners



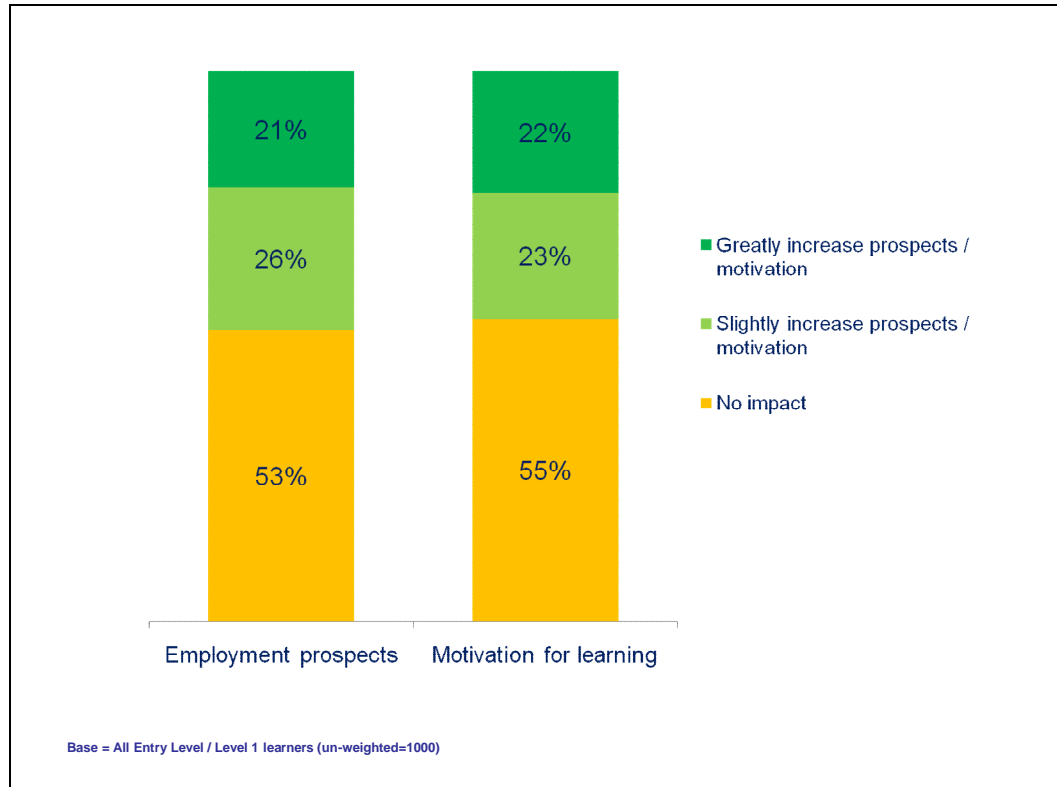
- 10.8 While Level 2/3 learners continuing in the same employment are more likely to report that the course helped them achieve each of the benefits listed in Figure 10.1, the encouraging finding is the extent to which much shorter, lower level Entry level and Level 1 courses bring benefits for only slightly fewer learners.

11 Anticipated impact of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games for Entry Level and Level 1 learners?

- Just under half of individuals who completed an Entry Level or Level 1 course in 2007/08 feel the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will lead to an improvement in their employment prospects (46 per cent).
- Just over one fifth of 2007 learners (22 per cent) say that the London 2012 Games will *greatly* increase their motivation to engage in further learning or training.
- Learners unemployed before starting their course are the most optimistic: 28 per cent feel that the Games will greatly improve their employment prospects (compared to 21 per cent overall).

- 11.1 This research aimed to gauge what London Entry Level and Level 1 learners think about the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and whether they are likely to be inspired by and engage with the opportunities that the Games will bring to the city. Learners were asked whether they feel that London's hosting of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will improve their employment prospects, and whether it will increase their motivation to undertake further learning and training.
- 11.2 Overall, just under half of individuals who completed an Entry Level or Level 1 course in 2007/08 feel the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will lead to an improvement in their employment prospects (46 per cent), with around half of these (21 per cent overall) anticipating that their prospects are likely to improve greatly. Learner views on the likely effects on their employment prospects did not differ according to whether their course had been at Level 1 or Entry Level.
- 11.3 It is hoped that the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will inspire individuals to undertake further learning and training in order to engage with any new employment and volunteering opportunities associated with the Games. Just over one fifth of learners (22 per cent) say that the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will *greatly* increase their motivation to engage in further learning or training in FE or elsewhere, with a further 23 per cent stating that the Games would *slightly* increase their motivation to continue in study.

Figure 11.1 – Anticipated impacts of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games for Entry Level and Level 1 learners



11.4 Those learners who were unemployed before starting their course are the most optimistic when it comes to anticipating the effect that the Games might have, particularly in relation to employment: 28 per cent feel that the Games will lead to a great improvement in their employment prospects, compared to 21 per cent overall.

11.5 The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be hosted by five London Boroughs; Greenwich, Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest. However, learners resident in London East LSC (which covers the first four of these Boroughs) are no more likely to express confidence that the Games will directly improve their job prospects, or to report a beneficial impact on their motivation and drive to engage with further learning.

12 APPENDIX A – Full data on the benefits of Entry Level and Level 1 study

Table A.1 – Benefits of Entry Level and Level 1 as reported by learners

Benefit of learning	Spontaneous and prompted		
	ALL	Entry Level	Level 1
<i>Base = All Entry Level / Level 1 learners (unweighted)</i>	1000	500	500
Become more confident in abilities	92	93	91
Become more enthusiastic about learning	88	89	88
Improved chances of finding a job**	77	79	75
Got a better idea about what want to do in life	74	76	72
Improved quality of life	73	74	72
Learnt / developed skills that will be of benefit in current work*	71	73	70
Learnt / developed skills to change to a different type of work	70	72	67
Improved team work, communication and social skills	69	70	68
Helped get on another training / educational course	62	65	58
Learnt skills that would be useful if you wanted to set up your own business or become self-employed	61	63	57
Improved literacy	54	54	53
Improved numeracy	54	54	55
Encouraged you to set up your own business or become self-employed	35	37	32
Learnt / developed skills that will be of benefit for future jobs or same type of work as you do currently *	21	21	21

KEY: EL = Entry Level; L1 = Level 1
 Figures shown in red indicate significant differences between Entry Level and Level 1 learners at the 95 per cent confidence level.
 * = Base: All Entry Level or Level 1 learners currently in employment (un-weighted: 448)
 ** = Base: All Entry Level or Level 1 learners not currently in employment (un-weighted: 552)

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