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# Where are they now?

The long term impact of Further Education on adult Level 2 and Level 3 London learners

August 2008

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## Tracking London's learners

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Prepared for the Learning and Skills Council  
by IFF Research

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# Tracking London's Learners: Where are they now?

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

April 2008

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## 1 Introduction

1.1 This report presents the findings of a study involving re-contacting learners originally interviewed in December 2006 / January 2007 in order to assess the longer term impact of their Further Education (FE) learning. In the initial study, 1,400 learners aged 19-50 who completed a Full Level 2 or Level 3 course at one of six London FE colleges in the academic year 2005 / 2006 were interviewed. For this follow-up study, 922 of these learners were re-interviewed, fieldwork taking place in February and March 2008.

1.2 The research undertaken in late 2006 / early 2007 soon after learners had completed their course<sup>1</sup> showed that Level 2 and Level 3 FE courses had very positive impacts in terms of employment and learning outcomes, and in improving numeracy, literacy, communication, confidence and other areas. The current survey aimed to assess the longer term benefits of a Full Level 2/3 approximately 18 months after completion. More specifically the objectives of the study were to determine:

- Whether taking the course enabled the learner to progress onto higher levels of learning
- The longer term benefits obtained by the learner by going on the course, and whether the perceived benefits change over time
- The impact the course has had on employment prospects and career progression
- The impact of FE provision on employability and self employment
- The impact of the learning on quality of life and life opportunities
- Any change in earnings of respondents following completion
- Whether the learner progressed to a job that is relevant to the course
- The elements of the course that most helped the learner to progress

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<sup>1</sup> For the pilot study 84 per cent of those interviewed had completed their FE course after May 2006, hence for the vast majority the interview took place within 6 months of completion.

1.3 The report is structured with each chapter examining a key research issue identified by the LSC, as follows:

- What are the lasting benefits of a Level 2 and 3 to a learner?
- Do the longer term impacts of gaining a Level 2 or 3 in FE differ by level?
- What is the longer term impact on undertaking further learning?
- What is the longer term impact on the self employed and on entrepreneurship amongst learners?
- What have been the longer term impacts on employability?
- What is the long term impact on the unemployed?
- Do the longer term benefits match learner's original motivations? Did they get what they wanted? E.g. If a learner wanted to change to a different type of work did they?
- What are the longer term benefits to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) learners?
- What impact do learners feel the Olympics will have on their employment prospects and further learning?

1.4 The survey data presented in this report is unweighted.

## 2 What are the lasting benefits of a Level 2 and 3 to a learner?

### Key messages on the lasting benefits of Level 2 and 3 courses:

- **Marked increase in employment and participation in further learning when compared either with learners' situation immediately before or soon after their course**
- **Wide range of benefits reported including increased confidence, team working / communication / social skills, greater enthusiasm for learning and a clearer idea of what they want to do**
- **Almost three quarters say their literacy skills improved and two thirds their numeracy skills as a result of their FE course**

### Changes in employment and learning status

- 2.1 Amongst the 922 learners, the vast majority (86 per cent) are now engaged in work or study. This is a large increase compared with the proportion that were working or learning immediately before starting their course (75 per cent). The proportion in work has increased from 54 per cent to 65 per cent, and the proportion specifically in full-time work has increased from 29 per cent to 36 per cent. The proportion studying or on a government-supported training and employment programme has increased from 32 per cent to 46 per cent.
- 2.2 A significant proportion of learners have progressed to a Higher Education Institution such as a university. In total 29 per cent are currently on such a course. Most of these were studying at an HE Institution when interviewed for the pilot study, but a total of 111 learners (12 per cent of the total cohort) are on a course at a Higher Education Institution that they were not when they were interviewed in December 2006 / January 2007.
- 2.3 On the other hand, fewer of this cohort are now unemployed; 13 per cent are out of work, compared to 19 per cent before they started their course in 2005.
- 2.4 Employment levels and participation in learning and training are much higher *when compared against the situation relatively soon after the course had been completed (for most learners the first interview took place within 6 months of their completing the FE course)*. This is shown in the following table. Hence the impacts of the learning continue in the medium term rather than it being the case that they happen immediately or not at all.

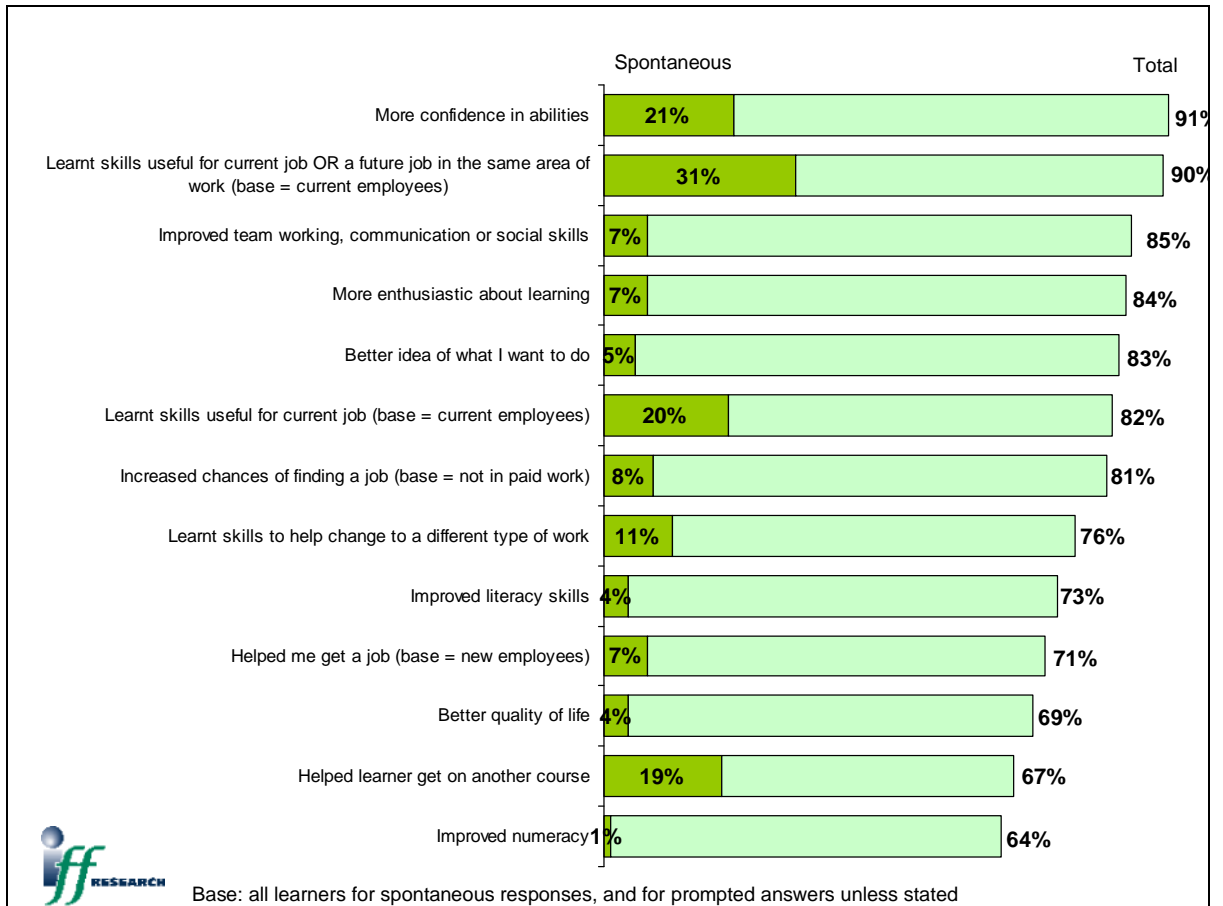
<b>Table 1: Work and learning status</b>			
	<b>Pre the course</b>	<b>Soon after the course</b> (December 2006 / January 2007)	<b>Current wave</b> (February / March 2008)
Paid employment	54 %	56 %	65 %
- working full time	29 %	26 %	36 %
Studying or working	75 %	81 %	86 %

- 2.5 Of those now in work who were also in work when we last spoke to them, improved hourly pay, job satisfaction, job security, and pay and promotion prospects since the previous interview were each reported by around two thirds (each 64 per cent to 66 per cent), and overall nine in ten (91 per cent) who had continued in work reported some definite work-related benefit.
- 2.6 It is encouraging not just that these benefits have taken place, but that the course was usually felt to have contributed to these improvements. In almost three in four instances where those who had continued in employment felt some work-related benefit had occurred since the previous interview, the course helped them to obtain these benefits (72 per cent), and for a third (33 per cent) at least some of these benefits were a *direct result* of the course.
- 2.7 Similarly among employees that had either changed company or who were not working when we last spoke to them (263 learners, 29 per cent of the total cohort), 45 per cent said the course of FE study had been vital in helping them to get this job, whilst a further 25 per cent said that the fact that they had done the course had had some bearing on them getting their new job.
- 2.8 A year or so down the line from finishing their course, those who are now in employment indicate they are committed to their work for the foreseeable future. Three quarters (75 per cent) have found permanent employment, and correspondingly the same proportion (74 per cent) anticipates being in the same role in 12 months time.

## Benefits gained by going on the course

- 2.9 When learners were asked to evaluate with hindsight the main lasting benefits that they have gained by doing the original course of FE study, *spontaneously* the key themes that emerged were that the course had:
- Increased their confidence in their own abilities had improved (mentioned spontaneously by 21 per cent of respondents);
  - Given them skills relevant to their current employment (mentioned spontaneously by 20 per cent of respondents);
  - Enabled them to progress onto another useful training or educational course (19 per cent) and / or made them more enthusiastic about learning (7 per cent)
  - Given them skills that would help change to a different type of work (11 per cent) or which would help with a future job in their current area of employment (15 per cent)
  - Helped them get a job (7 per cent) or had improved their chances of getting a job (8 per cent).
- 2.10 Once prompted the vast majority of respondents felt they had benefited in a large number of specific areas: and over three quarters felt they had become more confident in their abilities (91 per cent), improved their communication and social skills (85 per cent), got a better idea of what they wanted to do in their life (83 per cent), become more enthusiastic about learning (84 per cent) and learnt and developed skills which would help them change to a different type of job (76 per cent). Similarly, high proportions of those currently not in paid employment felt the course had improved their chances of finding a job (81 per cent), while most currently working as employees felt the course had developed skills which would be of benefit in their current job (82 per cent).
- 2.11 Results for both spontaneous mentions of the main lasting benefits, and the benefits once prompted, are shown on the following chart. All spontaneous and most of the prompted responses are based on all respondents, though some prompted responses are based on particular sub-group of learners: for example improved job prospects is based on those not currently in paid employment; and learning skills useful for their current job (or a future job in the same area of work) are both based just on those working as employees. Where figures are based on sub-groups of learners this is identified in the following chart.

**Figure 1: Lasting benefits gained by going on the course**

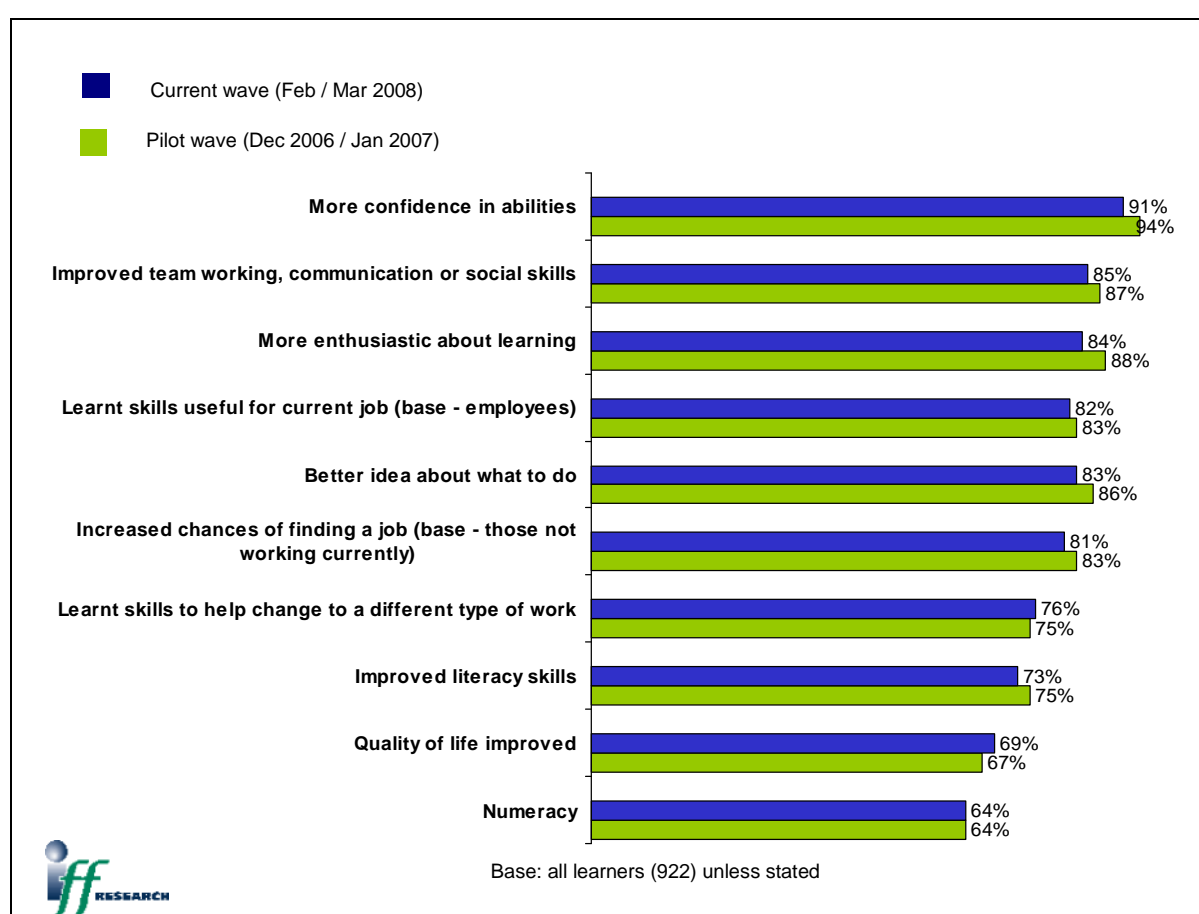


*Note: the base for 'helped me get a job' is 'new employees', meaning those currently working as employees who were not working as employees when last interviewed or those working in a new job*

## The 'durability' of benefits of the FE course

- 2.12 Results on the perceived benefits of the course have been presented in the previous subsection, based on views of learners some 18 months after they completed the course. These can be compared with the perceived benefits described by learners in the previous research undertaken (for the vast majority of learners) within six months of completion so as to assess whether the immediate benefits persist or are much more short term.
- 2.13 Results are shown on the following chart, showing for those factors where comparative data exists, the proportion of learners saying each benefit had taken place in the previous and the current research. Figures are based on all learners except where otherwise stated.

**Figure 2: Benefits gained by undertaking their course (prompted)**



- 2.14 It is readily apparent the benefits cited soon after the learner completed the course have persisted, and there has been very little change in the proportion of learners saying that each benefit has taken place.

### 3 Does the longer term impact of gaining a Level 2 or 3 in FE differ by level?

#### Key messages on whether benefits differ by level of the course

- Level 2 provision has made a particular impact on the proportion in full time employment (48 per cent compared with 33 per cent before the course).
- Level 3 provision has had a particular impact on encouraging further learning: almost 3 in 5 of Level 3 learners are on a new course
- Similar benefits experienced by those continuing with the same employer regardless of level

- 3.1 **For both Level 2 and Level 3 learners, there has been an identical increase (of 11 percentage points) in the proportion that are either currently in paid employment or who are studying or training** as compared to their situation immediately before their FE course. This increase in the proportion in paid employment or studying or training is shown in the penultimate row of data in Table 2. Table 2 also shows the situation for particular types of employment (full time, part time and self-employment), and the proportion studying or on a government-funded training or education programme. Three time periods are shown: the situation immediately before the course, that at the time of the first interview (December 2006 / January 2007) and for the current study.

Table 2: Longer term impact by Level of FE course						
	Level 2			Level 3		
	Pre	Immediately after	Current survey	Pre	Immediately after	Current survey
Full time work	33 %	35 %	48 %	25 %	18 %	25 %
Part time work	19 %	22 %	21 %	25 %	29 %	30 %
Self-employment	5 %	6 %	5 %	1 %	2 %	3 %
<b><i>Paid employment</i></b>	<b>58 %</b>	<b>63 %</b>	<b>73 %</b>	<b>51 %</b>	<b>50 %</b>	<b>58 %</b>
On a course or on a government-supported training programme	26 %	39 %	33 %	37 %	53 %	57 %
<b><i>Either in paid employment or studying</i></b>	<b>74 %</b>	<b>81 %</b>	<b>85 %</b>	<b>76 %</b>	<b>81 %</b>	<b>87 %</b>
<i>Unemployed</i>	21 %	21 %	13 %	18 %	16 %	13 %
<i>Results in each column can add to more than 100 per cent both because of the inclusion of summary rows (in bold), and because individuals can be both working and studying / training</i>						

- 3.2 For both Level 2 and Level 3 provision, the overall positive longer term impacts in terms of leading to an increase in the proportion working or studying apply whether comparing the situation of learners immediately prior to the course or soon after.
- 3.3 There are however noticeable differences in the specific longer term impacts of Level 2 and Level 3 courses:
- **Level 2 provision has had a particularly marked longer term positive impact on the proportion in paid employment, especially those in full time employment.** Almost half of Level 2 learners (48 per cent) are in full time employment, compared with around a third before and soon after their Level 2 course. The proportion studying or on a government-supported training programme (33 per cent) is higher than found prior to the Level 2 course but actually lower than found at the first interview.

- Relative to this, Level 3 courses have had much less impact on employment. A quarter of these learners are in full term employment, exactly the same proportion as was the case immediately before the course, though there has been a net increase in the proportion in paid employment (from 51 per cent before the course to 58 per cent currently).
- **The main longer term impact of Level 3 provision has been on the proportion studying**, with almost three in five of all the Level 3 learners interviewed (57 per cent) on a course or government-supported training programme (in nearly every case this was the former, with 56 per cent of all Level 3 learners on a new course of study). This represents a large increase on the proportion on a course or programme before their Level 3 study (37 per cent), but much less of an increase compared with the situation soon after this course (53 per cent), suggesting that most Level 3 learners embarking on a new course do so as a continuation of or very soon after completing their initial course.

- 3.4 **In terms of progression at work** among those who have continued in employment since the last interview (a base of 218 Level 2 learners and 203 Level 3 learners), Level 2 learners were more likely to report having been promoted or working in a new higher level job (41 per cent compared with 34 per cent among Level 3 learners). However, there was little difference in the proportion reporting that their hourly pay rate had increased since the last interview (64 per cent among Level 2 learners compared with 67 per cent among level 3 learners), or that their job satisfaction had improved (67 per cent among Level 2 learners compared with 64 per cent among level 3 learners).
- 3.5 For some of these benefits at work, the perceived role played by the course in bringing them about varied between Level 2 and Level 3 learners. In particular Level 2 learners that had continued working for the same company and that had experienced an increase in their rate of pay following the course were more likely to feel this was due at least in part to the course than Level 3 learners (50 per cent compared with 38 per cent). Where a promotion had been attained, Level 2 learners were also more likely to say the course contributed to this change (83 per cent compared with 66 per cent among promoted Level 3 learners), however Level 3 learners were much more likely to say the promotion was a *direct* result of the course (38 per cent compared with 20 per cent among Level 2 learners).
- 3.6 Results have shown variation in the longer term employment and learning impacts of Level 2 and Level 3 learning. One further key measure of longer term impact is the employment prospects of those unemployed and looking for work. **Among learners looking for work** almost four in five (79 per cent) felt they had more chance of finding work as a result of having completed the course, and half (49 per cent) felt their chances had significantly improved. There was little difference by the level of the course undertaken in the proportion of the unemployed thinking their job prospects had improved, though Level 3 learners were somewhat more likely to think their job prospects had significantly improved (50 per cent) than Level 2 learners (45 per cent).

### **Benefits gained by level of course**

- 3.7 Generally there was relatively little difference between Level 2 and Level 3 learners in the perceived benefits of their course. However, level 3 learners were significantly more likely to mention benefits relating to learning (for example getting on another course and becoming more enthusiastic about learning) as well as improved literacy skills. On the other hand Level 2 learners were more likely to mention it helping them get a job and benefits relating to self-employment / setting up their own business (the course encouraging this or their learning skills which would help them do this).

## 4 What is the longer term impact of getting an FE qualification on progression into further learning?

### Key messages on progression to further learning:

- Over 2 in 5 of the learners are currently on a course at FE or elsewhere, rising to over half of Level 3 learners
- Nearly all studying at a higher level than the original FE course
- Just over a quarter of all the original learners are currently studying at a Higher Education Institution

4.1 Among the 922 learners re-contacted a large proportion were undertaking a new course of study (different to the course completed in the academic year 2005 / 2006) at FE or elsewhere (44 per cent<sup>2</sup>, higher among those who had completed a Level 3 course (56 per cent) than completers of Level 2 courses (31 per cent)). Exactly the same proportion (44 per cent) had been undertaking a new course of study when interviewed in the first wave of research soon after completing the course undertaken in the 2005 / 2006 academic year. However, the cohort of current learners is not simply made up of those who have continued in learning on the same courses as they were studying when contacted in late 2006 / early 2007.

- Just over a third of current learners (36 per cent) were not on a course when first interviewed in late 2006 / early 2007
- Among the remainder (the two thirds of current learners that were on courses when last interviewed) almost half were on a different course to the one they went on soon after completing the Level 2 or Level 3 course undertaken in the 2005 / 2006 academic year.

4.2 A very positive finding is that the vast majority of those on a course of study or on a government-supported training or employment programme are studying at a higher level than the original Level 2 or Level 3 FE course completed in the 2005 / 2006 academic year (86 per cent), equivalent to almost four in ten (38 per cent) of all the 922 respondents re-contacted for the survey studying on a higher level course or programme than the one they were originally studying.

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<sup>2</sup> If those on a government-supported training and employment programme are included this rises to 46 per cent.

- 4.3 This compares with:
- 8 per cent of those in learning being on a course at the same level as their original one (equivalent to 3 per cent of the overall cohort being on a same-level course at the time of the interview)
  - 5 per cent those in learning being on a course at a lower level as their original one (equivalent to 2 per cent of the overall cohort being on a lower level course)
- 4.4 Overall over a quarter of all the 922 learners (28 per cent) are doing a course of study at a Higher Education Institution. Predictably this is much higher among those that completed a level 3 course (47 per cent) in the academic year 2005 / 6 than those who completed a Level 2 course (6 per cent).
- 4.5 In the vast majority of cases, where the learner is undertaking new learning (i.e. they were either not learning when we last spoke to them or they were learning but have now changed to a different course) the individual has commenced learning in the same subject area to their 2005/2006 FE course (39 per cent) or one directly related (38 per cent). Perhaps unsurprisingly given that generally learners are progressing within the same or a closely related subject area, half (51 per cent) said that gaining the qualification from their FE course was vital to them getting on their current course, with another 31 per cent thinking that it had had some influence on their ability to progress to their new learning.
- 4.6 These learners who had started a new course or training programme since the previous research - a base of 278 learners - had a variety of reasons for engaging in this further learning, which mix personal interest, work-related reasons and to help them get on another course in the future:
- 91 per cent said personal interest and development was part of the reason (65 per cent said it was key);
  - 87 per cent wanted to gain new skills for their current job or future work (67 per cent said this was key);
  - 66 per cent said at least part of the reason for embarking on their new course was to help them progress to further courses (42 per cent said this was key).
- 4.7 A significant number of respondents (167) had been in learning or on training at the first interview but were no longer in this situation. For most this was because they had completed their learning (57 per cent), though clearly a large proportion had left early (43 per cent). More encouraging is that of the 95 respondents that had completed their course, nearly all achieved a qualification (94 per cent), and where a qualification was achieved in two thirds of cases (66 per cent) it was at a higher level than their original FE course. This is equivalent to 6 per cent of the FE learners surveyed having gone on to successfully achieve a higher level qualification within a year to 18 months of finishing their Level 2 or Level 3 course.

## 5 What is the longer term impact on the self employed and entrepreneurship amongst learners?

### Key messages on self employment and entrepreneurship:

- A slight increase in the proportion self employed or running their own business (3.7 per cent) compared with before the course (2.9 per cent)
- However, slightly fewer now self employed or running their own business compared with soon after the course completed (3.9 per cent)
- A majority work in construction and related areas
- Two thirds of all learners felt they learnt skills that would be useful if they decided to set up their own business or become self-employed

- 5.1 Of the 922 learners just under 4 per cent (3.7 per cent) were running their own business or self-employed at the time of the interview. This compares with just under 3 per cent (2.9 per cent) in this situation prior to taking their FE course, hence results therefore indicate a positive impact of the FE learning in stimulating entrepreneurial activity.
- 5.2 This impact appears to happen soon after completion of the course: the proportion running their own business or self-employed was slightly higher relatively soon after the course had been completed in the initial wave of interviewing (3.9 per cent) than found for the current wave of interviewing.
- 5.3 In all 13 learners were self-employed or running their own business at the time of the interview and had been in the same situation before the course. Of these, eight (62 per cent) said hourly earnings and their average weekly income had increased since the course, ten (77 per cent) said their job satisfaction now was higher than before the course, and the same number felt their security and longer term earning potential had increased. Overall, all but one of the 13 (92 per cent) felt that at least one of these benefits had happened. The majority of these respondents felt the benefits had accrued directly because of the course (25 per cent) or the course had helped (42 per cent).
- 5.4 In total eight 'new' entrepreneurs had been created (representing 0.1 per cent of the 922 learners) who were currently self-employed or running their own business but had not been so before the course. Four indicated that the course was vital in their being able to set up their own business or go self-employed, and two said it helped, hence only two of the eight felt the course played no part at all. The main elements of the course which were seen to help were the opportunity to develop personal contacts (mentioned by four learners) and simply achieving the qualification (four learners).

- 5.5 The vast majority of those self-employed (and seven of the eight who were new to self-employment) worked in construction, typically in carpentry and joinery, but also plumbing, electricians, tiling and in general construction. Other areas where people were working on a self-employed basis included a hairdresser, a fitness instructor, a foster carer, a child minder and a fashion designer. Among the eight learners who set up on a self-employed basis after the course, five indicated that the area they set up in was directly related to their course, and one other said it was related. Two said the course was unrelated to the area they set up in (hairdressing and one doing general building work).
- 5.6 A relatively large number of learners indicated that a key reason for their undertaking their course was to set up their own business or go self-employed, but as yet had not done so (171 learners). Most of these were still interested in taking this path (59 per cent still very interested and 29 per cent quite interested), suggesting that longer term it is still possible that many learners may take this route.
- 5.7 By far and away the main barrier to becoming self-employed among those still interested was raising capital, mentioned by nearly half this group (46 per cent). Following this the main barriers were finding the time (12 per cent), lacking experience (12 per cent), difficulty finding suitable help and support (9 per cent), and a perceived lack of qualifications (7 per cent, predictably higher among those who had completed a Level 2 qualification (9 per cent) than those that had completed a Level 3 course (3 per cent)).
- 5.8 Overall 18 learners said that a key reason for their undertaking their course had been to help them become self employed or set up their own business, but were no longer interested in doing so. A mix of reasons explains why their enthusiasm has waned, including preferring the security of paid employment, the amount of work involved, believing that it would be too much work once set up, and the feeling that not enough support is available. Each was mentioned by three or four of these learners (around a fifth of this group). Some (3 learners) also said there was no particular reason for their having changed their mind on this option.
- 5.9 In addition all respondents were asked first spontaneously then prompted what they considered to be the main lasting benefits of doing the course. Spontaneously 4 per cent said one of the main lasting benefits was that they learned skills that would be useful if they wanted to set up in business and 2 per cent said one of the main impacts was to encourage them to set up their own business or become self-employed. Overall 5 per cent of respondents gave one of these answers spontaneously.
- 5.10 When prompted as to whether they had benefited in these two areas, just over two thirds said they learnt skills that would be useful if they wanted to set up on a self employed basis, and almost half said they felt the course had encouraged them to go self employed or set up their own business. Overall almost three quarters of all learners once prompted felt they had benefited in one of these two ways. Clearly then the FE courses are encouraging and supporting entrepreneurship among these Level 2 and Level 3 learners.

**Table 3: Impacts of the course regarding self employment and entrepreneurship**

<i>Base: all learners (922)</i>	<b>Main lasting impact (spontaneous)</b>	<b>Benefits (spontaneous or prompted)</b>
Learnt skills that would be useful in setting up your own business or to become self-employed	4 %	68 %
Been encouraged to set up own business or become self-employed	2 %	48 %
Either	5 %	74 %

## 6 What have been the longer term impacts on employability?

### Key messages on the longer term impacts on employability:

- **Just over half of learners have a higher qualification as a result of completing their FE course, and including qualifications gained since completion two thirds are now more highly qualified**
- **2 in 5 learners spontaneously say the main lasting benefit of the course has been on skills relevant for current or future jobs**
- **Among those currently unemployed and looking for work, 4 in 5 feel their chances of finding work have improved as a result of taking their FE course**
- **Two thirds of learners in paid employment compared with just over half pre and soon after completing their course**

6.1 The impact on employability was assessed through a number of measures within the research:

- The extent to which learners are now more qualified. The previous study examined the proportion of learners for whom the Level 2 or Level 3 FE course was at a higher level than any previous qualification, but this research provides the opportunity to assess how many learners have achieved a further higher level qualification
- Learners' own perceptions of whether the course has helped them develop skills that make them more employable, for example whether those who are unemployed and looking for work feel they have a better chance of finding work (and how often this is attributed to the course)
- Changes in employment outcomes, for example the proportion that have moved into employment and those that have moved into 'higher' level employment (including those that have had a promotion).

### **Increases in the qualification levels of the learners**

- 6.2 Achieving their Level 2 or Level 3 qualification at FE increased the qualification level of just over half (53 per cent) of the 922 learners. Level 3 learners were more likely to have increased their qualification level (62 per cent) than Level 2 learners (42 per cent). In addition *since their course* a number of learners had achieved a higher qualification or were working towards a higher qualification than their original FE course. Overall just under two thirds (64 per cent<sup>3</sup>) of the 922 learners interviewed had either achieved a higher qualification by doing their FE course in 2005 / 2006, had subsequently achieved a higher qualification than their FE course, or are currently undertaking a course higher than their FE course.

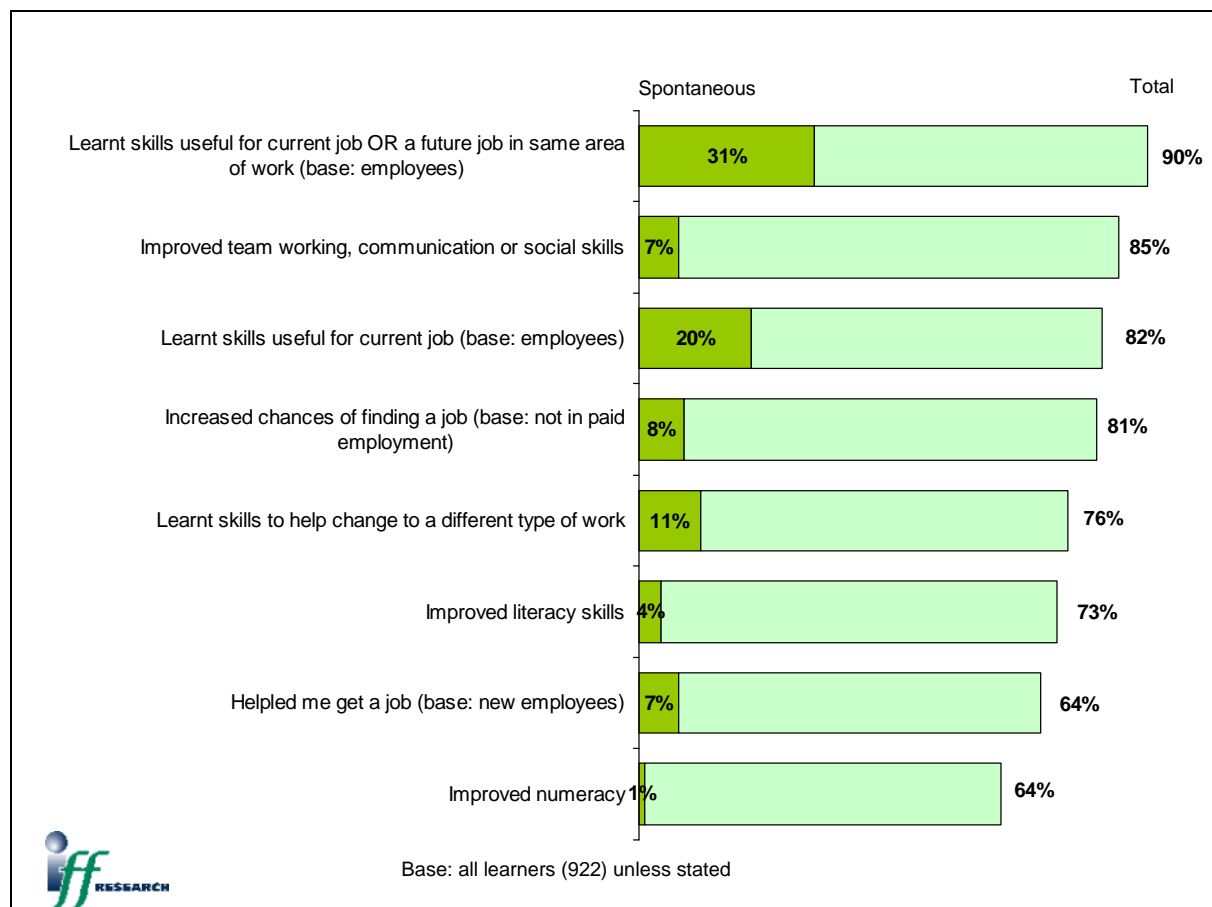
### **Learners' views on their own increased employability**

- 6.3 When asked what they considered to be the main lasting benefits they gained by doing the FE course, almost two fifths of learners *spontaneously* mentioned a skills-related benefit (39 per cent), most commonly learning and developing skills which will be of benefit for their current job (20 per cent) and / or for a future job in the same area of work (15 per cent), though others mentioned developing skills to help them change to a different type of work (11 per cent). Once prompted, the vast majority of learners (92 per cent) felt they had learnt or developed skills that would be of benefit in at least one of these ways.
- 6.4 As well as this belief that they had learnt and developed skills which would be useful for current or future jobs, others indicated that specific skills had improved. Spontaneously, 7 per cent of all learners said the main or one of the main lasting benefits of their course was improved team working, communication and social skills, 4 per cent mentioned improved literacy and 1 per cent mentioned improved numeracy. Once prompted with these skill areas, two thirds felt their numeracy had improved by going on the course, three quarters felt their literacy had improved and almost nine in ten (85 per cent) considered that team working, communication and social skills had been enhanced.

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<sup>3</sup> In this calculation we have excluded those that said their prior qualification was Level 4 or above on the basis that any course taken after their FE study, even if higher than their FE course, is unlikely to be at a higher level than their Level 4 or above qualification.

**Figure 3: Employability related benefits gained by going on the course**



*Note: the base for 'helped me get a job' is 'new employees', meaning those currently working as employees who were not working as employees when last interviewed or those working in a new job*

6.5 Among those currently unemployed and looking for work, almost four in five (79 per cent) feel their chances of finding work had improved as a result of taking their FE course, and half (49 per cent) believed that their chances had improved *significantly*.

## Changes in employment status

- 6.6 Learner confidence about their increased skill and employability levels is reflected in the longer terms changes to employment levels. This is shown in the following table. Two thirds of the cohort (65 per cent) are now in paid employment, compared to just over half pre and then soon after the course. The change is most marked in relation to full time employment.

<b>Table 4: Work status</b>			
	<b>Pre the course</b>	<b>Soon after the course (Dec 06 / Jan 07)</b>	<b>Current wave (Feb / March 2008)</b>
<b><i>Paid employment</i></b>	<b>54 %</b>	<b>56 %</b>	<b>65 %</b>
- working full time	29 %	26 %	36 %
- working part time	23 %	26 %	26 %
- self employment / run own business	3 %	4 %	4 %

- 6.7 As discussed in chapter 3, the longer term impacts on employment status are especially marked for those that had undertaken a Level 2 course.

## Progression at work

- 6.8 As well as improvements in employment status there are also strong indications of progression at work among those who have continued in employment since the last interview, whether this is with the same or a new employer. Between three fifths and two thirds of those that have continued in work say their job satisfaction has increased, they are earning more per hour, their job is more secure, their pay and promotion prospects have increased, and they are doing more interesting work. Almost two in five (38 per cent) say they have had a promotion or are now in a higher level job or position.
- 6.9 When those that had experienced each of these improvements at work since their course were asked if they thought these changes had come about as a direct result of the course, whether it had helped or if the changes were unrelated, typically around a quarter thought the gain was a direct result of the course and overall around seven in ten said the course had at least helped. The course was most likely to have helped people who had been promoted: 27 per cent of these learners said this was a direct result of the course and in total just over three quarters (77 per cent) felt the course had helped. The course was least likely to have felt to have contributed to an increase in their hourly pay rate: where this change had taken place 13 per cent felt it was a direct result of having completed the course, and over half (56 per cent) felt it had nothing to do with the course.

## 7 What is the long term impact on the unemployed?

### Key messages on the impact on those previously unemployed:

- Large fall in the proportion unemployed compared with before the course (13 per cent from 19 per cent)
- Of those unemployed before the course, almost 3 in 4 are now either in work, on a new course or on a government-supported training or education programme
- Just over 3 in 4 say that the course has either helped them get a job or improved their chances of finding a job
- The FE courses have had particular impact on the confidence of those learners previously unemployed, but also on helping them get on another course and learning useful skills for current or future jobs

### Changes in employment and learning status

- 7.1 Of the 922 learners interviewed for the study, almost one in five (19 per cent, a total of 176 learners) were unemployed prior to the course (covering both those looking for work and those not, but excluding those looking after children or family). Currently 13 per cent of learners are unemployed. This already indicates a significant reduction in unemployment levels, but in this section we look specifically at those that were unemployed before the course to see what the impacts of the course have been.
- 7.2 A very positive finding is that of those unemployed before the course, almost three in four (73 per cent) are either in work, on a new course at FE or elsewhere or on a government-supported training or education programme. This leaves just over a quarter of those unemployed prior to the course also unemployed when interviewed for the current research (27 per cent).

<b>Table 5: Current situation of those unemployed prior to the course</b>	
<i>Base: those unemployed prior to the course (176)</i>	
Full time work	20 %
Part time work	26 %
Self-employment	2 %
<b><i>Paid employment</i></b>	<b>48 %</b>
Studying or on a government-supported training or education programme	46 %
<b><i>Either in paid employment or studying</i></b>	<b>73 %</b>
<b><i>Unemployed</i></b>	<b>27 %</b>
<i>Figures add to more than 100 per cent because of the inclusion of the summary codes 'paid employment' and 'either in paid employment or studying' and because people can be studying and in employment</i>	

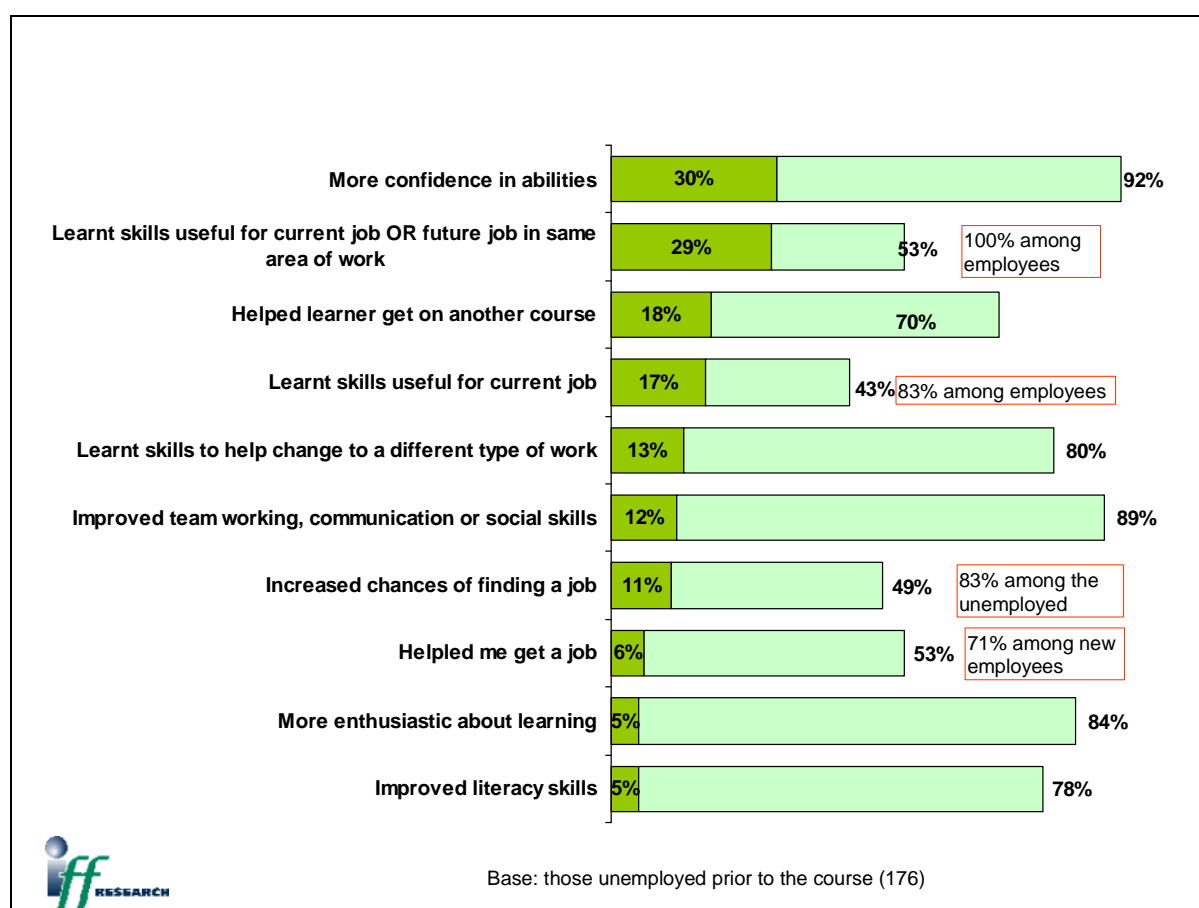
- 7.3 Not only have a relatively large proportion of those who were unemployed before the course found work, but for the majority this is 'sustained' employment: three in five of these learners (59 per cent) have a permanent position and two thirds (67 per cent) say their job is one they see themselves doing in 12 months time.
- 7.4 Even among those still unemployed most of those looking for work are looking for a type of work very closely related (56 per cent) or quite closely related (36 per cent) to the FE course they completed, suggesting strongly that the qualification and skills learnt are likely to still be relevant to their ambitions. Similarly among those not in paid employment (including for example those studying who are not doing part time work, a base of 92 learners) just over four in five feel they have more chance of finding a job as a result of undertaking the course, and just over half (52 per cent) felt they had significantly more chance of finding work.

#### **Benefits gained by going on the course**

- 7.5 In addition to changes in work and learning status, the unemployed are also very positive about the benefits gained from the FE course that they undertook in 2005 / 2006. The main lasting benefits (asked as a spontaneous question - '*with hindsight, what have been the main lasting benefits gained by doing the course?*') relate to increased confidence in their own abilities, helping the learner get on another course and learning useful skills for current or future jobs. It is interesting that the proportion of those previously unemployed saying the main lasting benefit has been increased confidence in their abilities (30 per cent) is much higher than found among learners as a whole (21 per cent).

- 7.6 Once prompted with a range of potential benefits, the vast majority of learners, typically at least 75 per cent, indicated that each benefit had been obtained. For example, 92 per cent of all learners said their confidence in their abilities had increased, 86 per cent felt they had a better idea of what they wanted to do in their life and 84 per cent were now more enthusiastic about learning. Regarding specific skills areas, 89 per cent said their team working, communication and social skills had improved, 78 per cent said their literacy had improved, and 73 per cent felt they benefited from improved numeracy skills.
- 7.7 Hence as well as improved working and learning outcomes among those unemployed before the course, nearly all these learners benefit in terms of increased confidence and developing and learning skills.
- 7.8 The following chart shows responses both to the spontaneous question asking about the *main lasting* benefits gained by the doing the FE course, and the prompted question on the benefits occurring. Responses to the former mentioned by at least 5 per cent of respondents are shown.

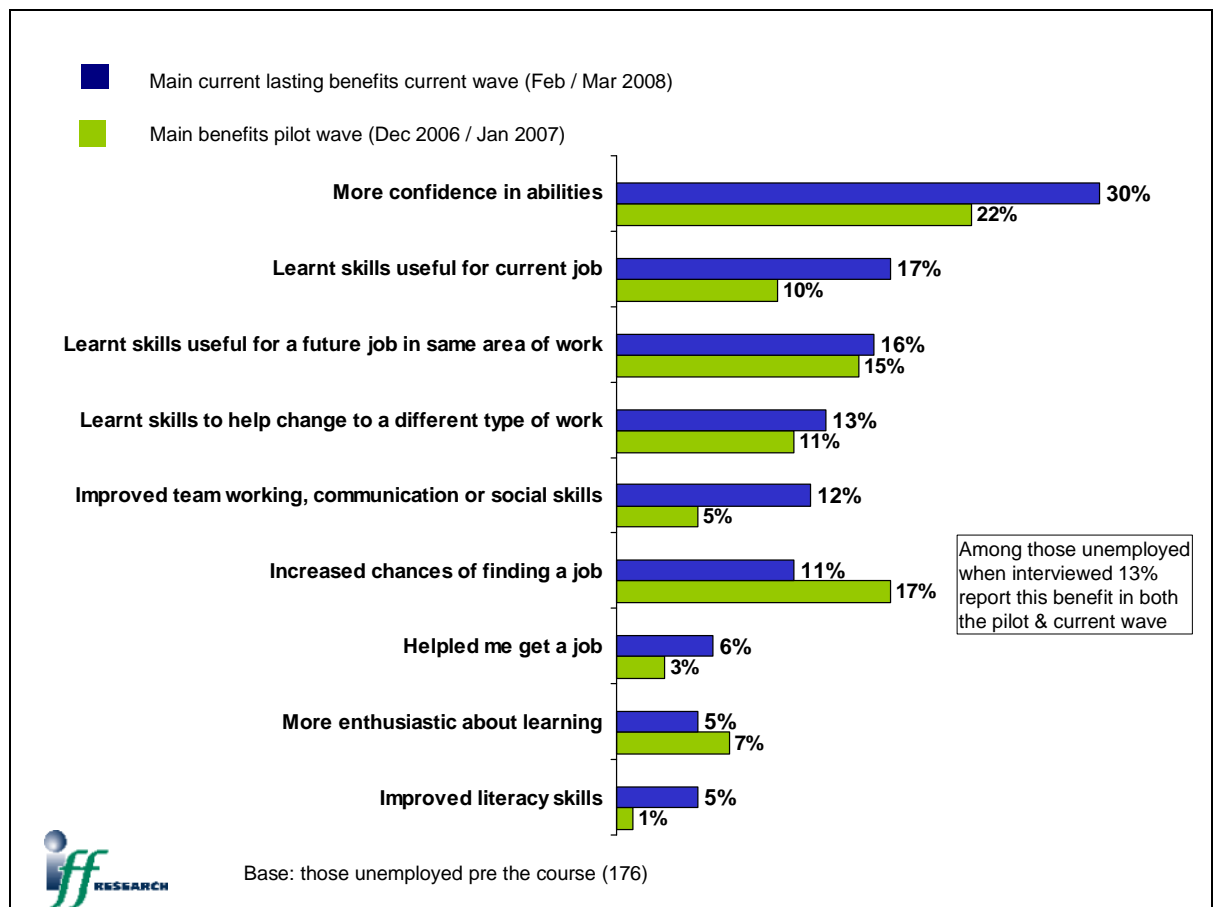
**Figure 4: Benefits gained by going on the course**



- 7.9 Overall, results show that as well as improved working and learning outcomes among those unemployed before the course, nearly all these learners benefit in terms of increased confidence and developing and learning skills.
- 7.10 By comparing results on the benefits gained through undertaking the course reported in the current research with those of the pilot study, the research can also help identify the

'durability' of the benefits of undertaking FE courses for the unemployed. Results are shown on the following chart for those factors where comparable data exists. This shows that the benefits for those previously unemployed have persisted, indeed more now say it has increased their confidence than was found for the pilot study. As more have now moved to employment, the proportion saying the course has benefited them in terms of learning or developing skills useful for their current employment has increased, while fewer now say it has increased their chances of finding a job. However, among those unemployed when interviewed exactly the same proportion in the current as in the pilot survey (13 per cent) indicate that one of the main benefits has been improved job prospects, confirming the durability of this benefit.

**Figure 5: Benefits gained by going on the course, current research v. pilot study (spontaneous responses)**



## 8 Do the longer term benefits match learner's original motivations?

### Key messages on the benefits compared with original expectations:

- The FE course had particular impact for those motivated to learn to get on another course (3 in 4 where this a key motivator had achieved this aim).
- Many more had gone on to further learning where progression to further learning was a key motivation than among other learners.
- Half saying a key motivation was to get a pay increase, promotion or change of job had achieved their aim, though this had been achieved by almost as many where this was not a key aim
- Generally there appears to be relatively little correlation between the longer term benefits gained and the motivation for undertaking the course, except in regard to undertaking more learning

8.1 At the pilot interview learners were all asked what the main reasons were for them having undertaken the FE course. This was a prompted question with learners being read a list of options and asked whether each was a key reason, part of the reason or not a reason at all for their embarking on the course. Learners could also give other key reasons for their undertaking the course.

8.2 The main reasons for undertaking their FE course were for personal interest and development (64 per cent said this was key), to gain a recognised qualification (55 per cent said this was key), to gain new skills in order to change to a different type of work (52 per cent) and to help them get on another course (49 per cent). Slightly less critical were to help them get a pay rise or promotion (31 per cent), to update skills that were becoming out of date (25 per cent) and to help them set up their own business (20 per cent). Spontaneously 2 per cent mentioned specifically a key reason was to help them get into university<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that this 2 per cent will underestimate the proportion actually wanting to go on to Higher Education since many with this motivation will have felt this ambition was already covered by the prompted response regarding the FE course helping them get on another course. However it is useful to see the outcomes specifically for those specifically mentioning the aim of going on to Higher Education.

8.3 Given that the interview for the current research has taken place more than 12 months after the first, it is possible to assess the extent to which some of these ambitions have been met.

- For those who said a key reason for undertaking their FE learning was **to get on another course** that they wanted to do, 74 per cent had achieved this aim (i.e. they had started another course or training programme since completing their FE course), higher among Level 3 learners (82 per cent). The proportion was also high among those who said this had been part of the reason for starting their course (60 per cent). In comparison half (51 per cent) of those who said getting onto a future course was not part of the reason for their studying had still gone onto do some learning following the course.
- For those who said a key reason for undertaking their course was to obtain either **a pay rise, promotion or a new job in the same area of work**, 52 per cent had achieved this aim (they had had a pay rise, promotion, had changed employer or started working where they were previously unemployed). This is almost identical to the proportion among those saying this had been part of the reason (55 per cent), and only slightly higher than among those where this had not been part of the reason for doing the course (47 per cent). In addition to those that had achieved a pay rise, promotion or got a new job, others felt their pay or promotion prospects had improved, and among those for whom increased pay, promotion or changing job was a key reason for starting their course well over half (56 per cent) said they had achieved this or the prospect of a pay rise or promotion had improved.
- Among those saying a key reason for undertaking the course had been to help them set up their own business, 8 per cent were now self employed or running their own business. This compares with 3 per cent self employed / running their own business among those for whom this had not been a key motivation. While at face value this is relatively low achievement rate, it is worth noting that most of the 185 learners who said this was a key motivation also said other factors were key as well, and only nine cited this as their only key reason for doing the course. (Among these two were now self employed or running their own business.)

## 9 What are the longer term benefits to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) learners

### Key messages on the benefits for BAME learners:

- Significant increase in the proportion of BAME learners in paid employment compared with immediately before or soon after the course
- Just over half on a new course of study at FE or elsewhere
- Nearly all that have continued in employment have benefited at work in some way, usually in terms of better job security, increased pay or more job satisfaction
- Over three quarters of those that are unemployed feel they now have more chance of finding work

- 9.1 Of the 922 learners interviewed for the study, a slight majority (501, 54 per cent of the total) were Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) learners.
- 9.2 As shown in Table 6 there have been very positive impacts since the Level 2 / Level 3 FE course undertaken in the academic year 2005 / 2006. This is the case whether comparing results to the situation immediately prior to their embarking on this FE course, or to their situation soon after this course (when interviewed for the study in late 2006 / early 2007).

<b>Table 6: Work and learning status among BAME learners</b>			
<i>Base: 501 learners</i>	<b>Pre the course</b>	<b>Soon after the course</b> (Dec 2006 / Jan 2007)	<b>Current wave</b> (Feb / Mar 2008)
Working full time	25 %	20 %	28 %
Working part time	25 %	30 %	30 %
Self employed	2 %	2 %	2 %
<b><i>In paid employment</i></b>	<b>52 %</b>	<b>52 %</b>	<b>61 %</b>
On a course of study at FE or elsewhere	35 %	47 %	52 %
On a government-supported training or employment programme	7 %	7 %	5 %
<b><i>Studying or working</i></b>	<b>77 %</b>	<b>79 %</b>	<b>87 %</b>
Unemployed and looking for work	18 %	20 %	14 %
Unemployed and not looking for work	1 %	*	1 %
<i>Figures sum to more than 100 per cent since respondents can be working and studying or training. That said, some categories have been excluded including looking after children or family, and undertaking unpaid voluntary work.</i>			

- 9.3 Currently three in five of BAME learners are in paid employment (61 per cent). This compares with just over half who were in paid employment either immediately before the course (52 per cent) or soon after (52 per cent). The change in employment status compared with the situation soon after the learners had completed their course is in the proportion now working full time (28 per cent).
- 9.4 Almost three quarters of those working as an employee (73 per cent) are employed in a permanent job, and more than two thirds of those with a permanent position see themselves doing this job in 12 months time (68 per cent). Hence the FE course have increased employment outcomes in the longer term, and led to learners usually taking on permanent positions and ones which most expect to continue in for the foreseeable future.
- 9.5 As well as more being in employment, most of those that have continued in employment (either with the same or a new employer), have benefited at work in some way (91 per

cent), usually in terms of better job security (68 per cent), increased pay (65 per cent) or more job satisfaction (63 per cent).

- 9.6 A significant proportion of BAME learners have gone on to start further learning since completing their original course at FE, indeed just over half (52 per cent) are on a new course of study at FE or elsewhere. In nearly all cases this was a higher level course (90 per cent), and 15 per cent of all the BAME respondents interviewed were undertaking a course at a Higher Education institution.
- 9.7 Overall almost nine in ten (87 per cent) of BAME learners were in paid employment or studying / training at the time of the interview, a ten per cent increase on the situation prior to the original FE course, and an increase on the proportion working or studying soon after the course (79 per cent).
- 9.8 The FE course has also had significant impacts on the employment prospects of those not working. Over three quarters of those not in paid employment feel they have significantly more chance of finding work (49 per cent) or slightly more chance (28 per cent) as a result of completing their FE course. It is also the case that most of those looking for work are seeking types of work which are very closely related to the FE course (51 per cent) or quite closely related (30 per cent).
- 9.9 As well as the positive longer term impacts of the course for these BAME learners, it is also the case that the benefits are felt to have been a result of the course. For example among those working who were not working when we last spoke to them or who are now working in a new job (139 learners), 45 per cent said the course had been vital in getting them this new job and 23 per cent said it had helped. Similarly among those who had started a (new) course since we last spoke to them a base of 169 BAME learners) just over half (53 per cent) said completing the original FE course had been vital in enabling them to get on to their new course, and 30 per cent said it helped.

## 10 What impact do learners feel the Olympics will have on their employment prospects and further learning?

- 10.1 Just over half of those taking part in the survey feel the London 2012 Olympics will have no impact on their *employment prospects* (52 per cent). Around a quarter think it will slightly increase their employment prospects (23 per cent) and a further 18 per cent think it will greatly improve their prospects (6 per cent were unsure what impact the Olympics would have on their employment prospects).
- 10.2 Learners are slightly less positive about the impact the Olympics will have on their *motivation to undertake further learning* with over three fifths saying the 2012 games will have no impact (62 per cent), 22 per cent saying it will slightly increase their motivation and 14 per cent saying it will greatly increase it.
- 10.3 Gender has a marked effect on learners' beliefs about the impact the Olympics will have on their employment prospects, with men much more positive in this regard (55 per cent of male learners think the Olympics will improve their job prospects, compared with 34 per cent among women). Male learners are also a little more likely to believe the Olympics will increase their motivation to undertake further learning (41 per cent) than are female learners (33 per cent).
- 10.4 There is relatively limited interaction between age and attitudes to the Olympics though young learners (those aged 19 to 24) are a little more likely to expect it to believe it will improve their job prospects and increase their motivation to study more.
- 10.5 Those that completed a Level 2 course in 2005 / 6 were somewhat more positive about the potential impact of the Olympics than Level 3 learners. Almost half (46 per cent) of Level 2 learners thought the games would improve their job prospects and almost two in five expected it to increase their motivation to undertake further learning (38 per cent). The comparative figures among level 3 learners were 39 per cent and 34 per cent respectively.
- 10.6 Those currently in work and those currently studying (the bulk of those interviewed) differed little from the overall picture. Learners who are currently unemployed, however, were slightly more positive about the impact of the Olympics on their employment prospects with slightly fewer saying they think it will have no impact (41 per cent) and half saying they think it will slightly (27 per cent) or greatly (22 per cent) their employment prospects. They were also more positive about the games' impact on their motivation to undertake further learning, with over fifth of those currently unemployed expecting it to greatly increase their motivation and the same proportion saying it would slightly increase it (21 per cent).
- 10.7 There are also marked differences by ethnicity, with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) much more positive about the impact of the games. For example, 46 per cent of BAME learners think the games will improve their employment prospects, compared with 37 per cent among other learners.

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