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Leading learning and skills

Understanding Choice and the Empowered Learner

March 2009

Of interest: to everyone involved in improving
skills and learning opportunities across
England

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1.1 Background to the Research

One of the LSC's key priorities is to raise demand for learning amongst both adults and young people. Raising demand for, and participation in, learning and training will enable more people to enhance their employment and career prospects and to improve their quality of life.

From 2008/09, new funding models have been introduced (demand-led funding) to ensure that money follows learner and employer choice. Employers are able to exercise their choice through the national Train to Gain service. For individual learners, Skills Accounts (trials are running in the South East and East Midlands from Autumn 2008, with a national roll-out planned for Autumn 2010) will give learners enhanced purchasing power, alongside improved Information, Advice and Guidance. Skills Accounts are intended to give learners greater choice over their learning, and demand-led funding aims to ensure that providers are able to offer courses that better meet learners' and employers' needs.

In the context of this fundamental move to a model of learning provision that is centred on **choice and on the empowerment of learners to make effective decisions**, it is important to gain a clearer understanding of how people make their choices in the learning and skills sector. The LSC therefore commissioned a research project to meet this need for greater understanding of choice and the empowered learner. The research need cuts across policies for both 14-19 and adult learning, and is also of interest to those involved in the development of advisory and guidance services and marketing campaigns.

1.2 Research Objectives

As the wider learning environment and the process of making informed choices are very different for both young people and adults, the research consisted of two separate strands, each with its own objectives:

1. Understanding how **adult learners** (aged 19 and above) make informed choices, looking at:
 - Those who are considering embarking upon a learning programme
 - Those who are currently studying on a Pre-Level 2, Level 2, Level 3 vocational/ work based or non-vocational classroom based course
 - Those who are currently studying for pleasure or leisure (personal or community based) learning

- Those who are not currently studying but who are open to the idea of learning
2. Understanding how **young people** make choices in relation to their destinations following compulsory education, focusing on those aged 15-19, in particular:
- Those studying A or AS Levels in school 6th forms and FE or 6th form college
 - Those studying vocational or Apprenticeship schemes either through FE college or employers
 - Those on Entry to Employment (E2E) provision
 - Those who have entered employment and are not currently in education

The experiences of these key targets were firstly explored **qualitatively**, to give a full and detailed understanding of the different experiences and then **quantitatively**, to support the qualitative findings. The primary role of the second stage was to quantify some of the key findings emerging from the initial qualitative stage. This first stage identified a number of different typologies of adult learners, according to their attitudes towards making choices in learning, and the extent to which they need help and guidance to make effective choices. The quantitative stage then enabled us to estimate the size of each of these groups and, thus, to determine what proportion of potential adult learners are able to make informed and effective choices on their own, and what proportion need help. The second stage also quantified additional findings from the qualitative research, to provide a more robust indication of how many people use different sources of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), and what factors influence the decision-making process for both adults and young people.

In addition to the key targets given above, a wider perspective was also gathered with the following additional groups being interviewed in the initial qualitative phase only:

- Adult career/ Learning advisers working in both the private and public sectors
- Parents of young people who are in the above key young people targets
- Career/ Learning advisers of young people working in school, in FE/ 6th form college and working independently of the education system (Connexions adviser)

These people were interviewed in order to sense-check the findings from the qualitative interviews conducted with adults and young people. The aim was to check that the views expressed were consistent with the experiences of people who provide advice and guidance to adults and young people, and also to find out if there were any further aspects of the process of making choices in learning that had not been fully captured in the qualitative interviews.

Full details of the sample and methodology are given in the Research Design Appendix (Appendix 5.1).

The report begins with an Executive Summary, which sets out the key findings and conclusions from the research amongst Adults and Young People separately. The report then goes on to present the detailed findings for Adult learners, followed by findings relating to Young People. All sections contain a mix of results from the quantitative and qualitative stages of the project, but the report makes it clear where the findings are primarily qualitative (and, thus, based on a relatively small sample of respondents) and where they are quantitative and based on a larger sample.

1.3 Adults: Key Findings

- 1 The research highlights the fact that adults enter into learning for many different reasons, and that the decision-making journey when choosing courses and providers is highly varied and individual.

Categorising adult learners is therefore a complex task, but several broad typologies did emerge from the research.

Typologies of adult learners

- 2 The typologies discussed below were identified from the qualitative research findings, based on respondents' attitudes towards choosing a course of learning, their previous experience of learning and training, and their demographic profile.

Data from the quantitative research was then analysed to estimate the relative size of each group. These findings enable us to determine which groups or typologies of adult learners are larger, and which are smaller. The findings should not, however, be used to infer the total number of a particular group of adult learners within the population as a whole, as the sample for the research was designed to reflect the subgroups of adult learners which were of interest to this project; it was not designed to be representative of the total population of adult learners.

Furthermore, the results presented here are not intended to replace the widely-used segmentation derived from the National Adult Learner Survey (NALS), again because the 'understanding choice and the empowered learner' research focussed on specific groups of adult learners, not on the total adult learner population.

- 3 It is clear that there is an empowered group of learners who are able to make informed choices in learning on an independent basis – they are referred to in this report as 'hot starters'. They have a clear end goal in mind and a good idea of how to achieve this goal. They have minimal needs for support or guidance from information, advice and guidance (IAG) providers, as they are able to seek out information themselves which will validate their choices.

Hot starters are more likely to be influenced in their choices by information around provider quality and performance.

- 4 The research also identified a group of adults who have an end goal in mind (or a particular provider where they want to study), but lack knowledge of how to realise their goals. They are referred to as ‘warm starters’ in this report. This group needs support to make effective choices. There are risks in both over-loading them with information (thereby resulting in a ‘paralysis’ of choice) and in them making decisions which are not fully informed (resulting in poor choices and the potential for false starts in learning or early leaving).
- 5 A significant minority (around one in five) of adults are more vulnerable in the process of making choices in learning, and require more intensive support. They are referred to as ‘cold starters’ in this report. They are more likely to be from socio-economic groups C2DE¹. This group can be differentiated from other adult learners in that they do not have a clear idea of their end goals – they know that they want or need to participate in learning, but are unsure about what they need to achieve and what type of route in learning they should follow.
- 6 The quantitative research revealed that, whilst the majority of adult learners (85%) reported that the process of choosing a course was easy, over one in ten adults experienced some difficulties. Those who are more vulnerable to experiencing difficulties were adults from the C2DE socio-economic groups, and those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.
- 7 The qualitative research explored why adults sometimes feel they have made poor choices in learning. Three major inhibitors of effective choices emerged:
- 1) Lack of independent information about the full range of learning options available.
Learners can feel their choice was restricted by a lack of information about alternative options, and lack of awareness of where to source such information.
 - 2) Difficulty in understanding the implications of different courses and learning options.

¹ Refers to the socio-economic classification used by the National Readership Survey and generally for market research in the UK consists of six grades:

A Upper class. Higher level managers and professionals.

B Middle class. Intermediate managers and professionals.

C1 Lower middle class. Supervisory or clerical workers and junior managers, administrators and professionals.

C2 Skilled working class. Skilled manual workers.

D Working class. Semi and unskilled manual workers.

E State pensioners or widows/ers (with no other earnings), casual or lowest grade workers.

3) Difficulty in navigating through all of the available information, with a feeling that there are too many options to consider and no effective way of sifting through these options. This can discourage people from taking further action, as they feel they have too much information to review.

8 Evidence from the quantitative survey indicates that potential learners use a wide range of formal and informal sources of IAG when making their choices in learning. The most widely-used source of information is *informal* – potential learners turn to family and friends for help in making their choices. A relatively high number also sought information from a formal source, i.e. directly from colleges.

In terms of IAG, it is clear that interactive and experiential forms of guidance can be beneficial, especially for those with less experience of prior adult learning. This could involve face-to-face meetings with tutors and other learners.

Poor standards of customer service from any IAG provider (including those who respond to potential learners' enquiries at colleges) pose a threat to the success of the decision-making journey.

9 When choosing between different courses and providers, the quantitative research shows that the most significant influence on choice is the qualification itself. Beyond this, adults are influenced by the quality of teaching, the location of the course and course timings and costs.

Whilst relatively few adults felt that the reputation of the provider was the most important influence, nearly six in ten did consider reputation when making their choices. There is evidence to suggest, therefore, that potential adult learners would be interested in information on reputation and teaching quality.

10 The qualitative research revealed that some potential learners are making choices without a full knowledge of what financial support may be available to them. There is considerable confusion around sources of funding and eligibility, particularly for those in the more vulnerable 'cold starter' group.

1.4 Adults: Conclusions and Implications

How can we support adults to be truly empowered when making choices in learning?

1 **Understand the different mindsets and motivations**

At a preliminary level, those involved in providing IAG to adults, and those designing communications materials, need to understand the extent to which their end customer is ready to make effective choices.

It is important to identify more vulnerable individuals who need more intensive support – i.e. those who we have termed ‘cold starters’ and who have a hazy idea about what they want to learn, and why.

It is also important to identify the individual’s **triggers for learning**. Some potential learners will have been highly motivated to embark on their journey via an external trigger, such as a friend or employer recommending a course. It is important to manage their expectations carefully, as they are likely to have very specific goals and be motivated to make a quick start on their journey in learning.

2 **Add value to the choices of the most empowered group of learners**

The group who are clearest about their goals and routes in learning (‘hot starters’) will welcome additional information about provider quality and performance. Such information – which will include the Framework for Excellence scores from 2009 - needs to be easy for individuals to access both directly from the internet and via learning providers themselves, as the majority of this empowered group will be seeking information on their own, rather than via an IAG provider.

3 **Provide more intensive support for the least empowered group**

Whilst overall preferences for IAG channels are fairly equally split between face-to-face and the internet, there is a clear need to retain a strong face-to-face advisory service in the future.

When making choices in learning, some adults will require help at the initial stage to formulate their end goals and ambitions. The first advisory session should therefore focus on defining the ‘end point’ of learning, before moving on to providing information which could help the individual to make a good choice of course and provider.

4 Raise awareness to sources of independent advice and guidance – but avoid ‘information overload’

Where people have made ‘the wrong choice’ in learning, they often feel that they had insufficient information about alternative options, so were restricted in their choice. They want access to a ‘single portal’ for information – one *impartial* source that they can access that will provide information about a number of different learning routes and providers.

This points to an end user requirement for a service such as the existing nextstep and Careers Advice Service and the future adult advancement and careers service. It is important that this service provides help for potential learners to navigate through the information and options available to them. Providing too much information (with no assistance to navigate through it, or to narrow down the options) may cause learners to lose motivation.

5 Improve access to information about financial support for learning

Confusion about sources of funding can cause problems in the decision-making process as potential learners are often not aware of what, if any, financial support might be available to them. It is important to raise awareness of financial support *before* individuals open a Skills Account, as prior knowledge of the existence of potential financial support might encourage them to take the first steps towards choosing a course or provider.

1.5 Young People: Key Findings

- 1 Post-16 choices are seen as being amongst the most important decisions which young people will have to make. However, many young people fail to make the link between the IAG they receive, the choices they need to make, and their future careers.
- 2 The quantitative survey revealed that young people who have chosen an employment route are significantly less likely to feel they have made the right choices post-16 than those involved in either academic or vocational learning routes. Approximately half of those in employment had considered staying in learning, and the majority would consider retuning to education in the future.
- 3 The qualitative research found that there are a number of misconceptions around Apprenticeships amongst young people (for example, that they are unpaid, only for young men or that they do not even exist any more). Only around two fifths of young people in the

quantitative research claimed to feel knowledgeable about vocational training and Apprenticeships.

- 4 Satisfaction with sources of IAG used by young people to help formulate their post-16 choices is generally high. However, as stated above, young people need to be able to make better links between the information supplied through IAG and the specific choices that they need to make.
- 5 Young people can be passive in their attitude towards IAG, preferring to receive it rather than actively seek it out. Experiential sources of IAG, such as college open days and having the opportunity to meet older students, are valued as being more informative and interactive than 'traditional' information dissemination sessions.
- 6 Satisfaction with the Connexions service was variable. The perceived quality of the service can depend upon the extent to which the young person can relate to their adviser. There was also evidence that those who might consider themselves to be 'middle achievers' can feel somewhat neglected when it comes to support with making their post-16 choices. Connexions and school-based advice was felt to be focussed on those at risk of becoming Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET), and on those who are described as 'high fliers' and destined for higher education.
- 7 Nearly four in ten of those studying in school 6th forms in the quantitative survey felt that they had not been provided with sufficient information about alternative options. This therefore suggests that a significant minority of those in schools with 6th forms feel their post-16 choices are limited by the amount of information provided at schools.
- 8 Four parental typologies were identified in the research, Protectors, Planners, Enablers and Observers. Two out of the four typologies (Protectors and Planners) are likely to try to influence their child's choices and it is therefore important that parents receive up-to-date information and guidance about all the available learning and training options.

1.6 Young People: Conclusions and Implications

How can we support young people to be truly empowered when making choices in learning?

1 **Young people require clear information and guidance about career pathways**

Whilst young people are mainly satisfied with the sources of IAG they use, they can struggle to make the links between the IAG they receive, their potential choices and early ideas around long-term careers.

In order to support young people to make choices in learning, they need more help to link up information about post-16 choices, specific courses and qualifications and career pathways.

2 **There is a need for ‘myth busting’ activity around Apprenticeships**

Confusion about, and misperceptions of, Apprenticeships need to be addressed through communications activities and information provided via IAG services.

Given the appeal of experiential sources of IAG (see below), more young people should have the opportunity to meet and talk to existing Apprentices and perhaps to see how Apprentices learn in the workplace.

3 **Experiential sources of IAG could be used more widely – but experiences need to be directly linked to choices of courses and careers**

It is clear that young people benefit from the opportunity to ‘live through’ their potential choices, before making a final decision. This could be via a visit to a college, face-to-face discussions with students, or work experience.

It is essential that information and feedback gained from these experiences are linked directly to future course or career choices – i.e. by having an interview with a careers adviser or Connexions staff soon after the event, to link what the young person has learnt to their future choices. Otherwise the experience risks being an isolated event, not linked to future choices.

4 **Parents also require IAG, to help their children make meaningful choices**

Whilst the extent of parental influence does vary, many will be heavily involved in the decision-making process. Therefore, they need to be sufficiently well-informed to provide effective guidance.

5 Support for young people when making post-16 choices could be more consistent

The research revealed evidence that not all young people in school 6th forms feel that they received sufficient information about alternative options. Furthermore, those who are neither high achievers nor at risk of dropping out can feel somewhat neglected by the Connexions advisory services. It is therefore important that all young people have the opportunity to access the full set of information that they need to make their choices.

6 Young people choosing the employment route may be encouraged to return to learning

As the majority of those young people in employment would consider returning to education, and a relatively high proportion feel they have not made the right choices at age 16, there is an opportunity to re-engage them in learning at a later date. Some of these young people may have decided not to take up their entitlement of a place in learning under the September Guarantee² – so it will be important to follow up with them to find out why the offer was not appropriate, and to consider additional flexibilities around course content and start dates. It is also important to ensure that Connexions staff keep in contact with young people who have moved into employment, to keep open a dialogue around a future return to learning.

² The September Guarantee was rolled out in England in 2007, and guarantees a written offer of a place in learning or training for each young person leaving compulsory education. In 2008, the guarantee was extended to 17 year olds.

1.7 Understanding Attitudes and Motivations

This section looks at adults' motivations and triggers for engaging in learning, as well as attitudes towards learning, in order to understand the different starting points of the decision-making journey.

1.7.1 What motivates adults to engage in learning?

The qualitative research phase revealed that motivations to undertake adult learning can be complex, and vary according to the individual. Motivations can be categorised as follows:

- **'Non-career'**: for example a hobby or leisure activity, or to enable a parent to help children with their homework. Some non-career choices can eventually lead to career or lifestyle changes.
- **'Career'**: for example, to enable a change of career or development within an existing career.

Both of these types of motivations are underpinned by a range of emotional drivers (e.g. meeting friends, feeling a sense of achievement) and practical drivers (e.g. earning more money or improving skills).

Two further key influences on the motivation to learn are past experience and confidence. For those who have been out of learning for a long time, adult learning or returning to learning is seen as a second chance. Many adult learners returning to learning feel that they had underachieved at school or made the wrong choices upon leaving school. Often these experiences have undermined their confidence, and thus their sense of their own abilities is very fragile. On the other hand, for those who had a more positive experience, or those that are used to taking adult courses, the experience is empowering.

1.7.2 Triggers for learning

The qualitative research revealed three broad types of triggers for learning:

- **Life events:** e.g. having children, moving to a new part of the country, divorce, death of a partner, redundancy or retirement
- **People orientated:** e.g. colleagues or friends taking part in education, encouragement from family, or recommendations from authority figures such as an employer or a previous tutor
- **Comms-orientated:** e.g. advertising, direct mail, billboards, job centre, college signage

Together a person's motivations and triggers determine their readiness to enter the decision-making process, and in turn, their readiness determines their starting point into the journey and the potential length of their decision-making journey. There are other factors that influence their starting point, which should not be overlooked. These include:

- Extent to which the learner has an end goal: e.g. area of interest/ study
- Emotional mindset of the learner: positive, excited vs. daunting, difficult
- Practical skills and know-how: awareness of IAG sources and knowing how the process works (i.e. being a repeat learner)
- Level of confidence
- Attitude to learning

Passive triggers

The ultimate tipping point, when it comes, for some is the build up of a number of inwardly directed emotions felt by an individual throughout their life, and the actual trigger may be relatively minor – a chance conversation or timely piece of communication. The trigger here may be thought of as *passive*: there is no major event to trigger a decision, but finally a point is reached through a gradual build up of factors where the decision is made to act. The final trigger may be thought of as the tip of the iceberg – it may be the one stated factor, but beneath the surface lie many more factors that may have accumulated over a long period of time (such as, boredom, feeling others are progressing faster, a desire to help their children with homework, an interest they wish to make more of and so on).



Chart 1: Passive Triggers – the “tip of the iceberg”

Active Triggers

For others there may be a more *active* trigger for their tipping point. This may be directed from an external source, and may prompt the individual to seriously consider participating in learning for the first time. For example, in some cases a serendipitous event may create the rationale for an individual to seek out adult education, and speed them on a journey to seek out IAG. In this case motivation is usually high and the individual focussed on the end goal. Triggers here may be:

- A respected source suggesting a change of career/career development
- Job Centre identified and organised training
- A friend/colleague having done a course previously and suggesting it would be a good idea for them as well
- A friend who wants to go on a course and wants to be accompanied
- A professional recognising skills in a lay person and suggesting they consider this as an alternative career
- A course is advertised prominently and taps into an unrecognised need
- Brochures/flyers at work or delivered through the door or inserted in a local newspaper
- Announcement on notice board of an visited establishment (such as a school or library)

Those who experience a gradual build up of desire to learn will need a clear call to action to enable them to take the first steps towards participating. Their choice of course and provider will likely be

extremely vague at this stage, so they will need help in navigating through the choices available to them.

In contrast, those who are motivated by an external agent are more likely to already have a specific type of course, or end goal, in mind. As stated above, their motivation is usually high. Therefore, it is important for those involved in delivering IAG to carefully manage the expectations of this group – to set out all the steps they will need to take in order to realise their goal, and to provide information around course entry requirements and financial support.

1.8 What is the decision-making journey for Adult Learners?

1.8.1 Stages in the decision-making journey

Once adults have taken the decision to undertake learning, they then embark upon a decision-making journey which takes them towards their final choice of course and/or provider. The decision-making journey is **unique for each individual**, with a wide variety of factors influencing choices and progress made along the way.

The qualitative research revealed that journeys are highly individual and varied. It is difficult to describe a 'typical' decision-making journey. However, it is possible to identify three broad stages of decision making, as shown below.

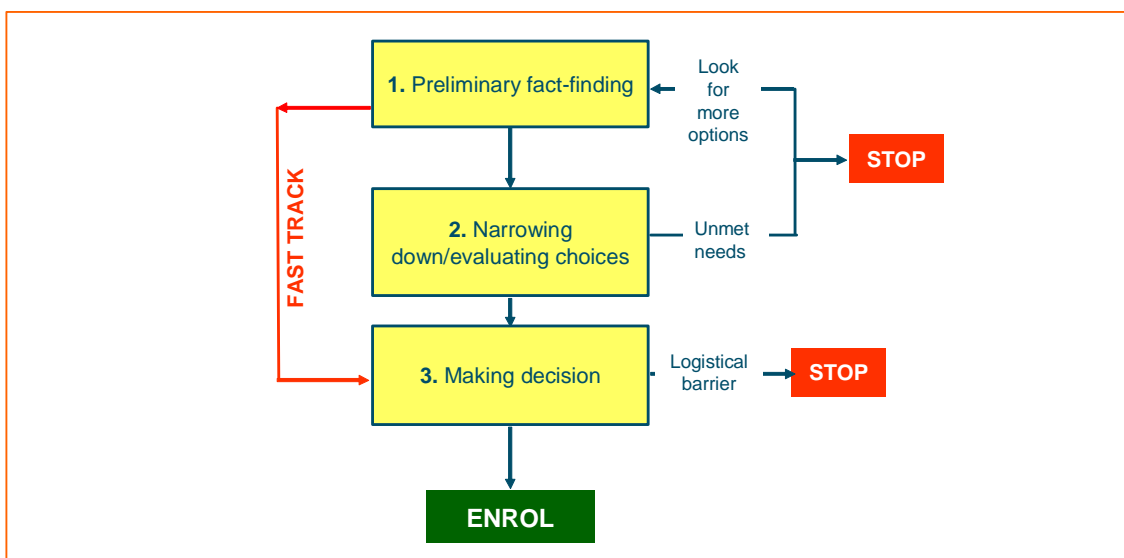


Chart 2: Decision-making journey – the starting point

It is important to bear in mind that the process is not always linear, and that various events such as a change in circumstances or encountering a 'pitfall', may cause a learner to repeat a step or return to an earlier stage in the process. Equally, the journey may be fast-tracked or stopped by experiences along the way. The result of this is that although there seems to be a logical set of steps in the journey, not all individuals may take all steps and some may start at later stages than

others – for example, some may not go through stages 1 and 2 (fact finding and evaluating the choices) but already know what they want to do, and thus will start at stage 3 – making the decision.

1.8.2 Decision-making typologies

As people travel along the decision-making journey, their situation changes, as do their needs and behaviour. As described above, different people begin their journey at different points, or at different stages of the decision making process, according to their motivations and what triggered them to consider learning. Therefore, the actions and needs of each broad stage can be equated with the type of people who start their journey there (remembering that those starting at earlier stages may later pass through the other stages). Four entry points to the decision making journey were identified in the qualitative research, based on the progress that the individual has already made towards formulating their end goal in learning.

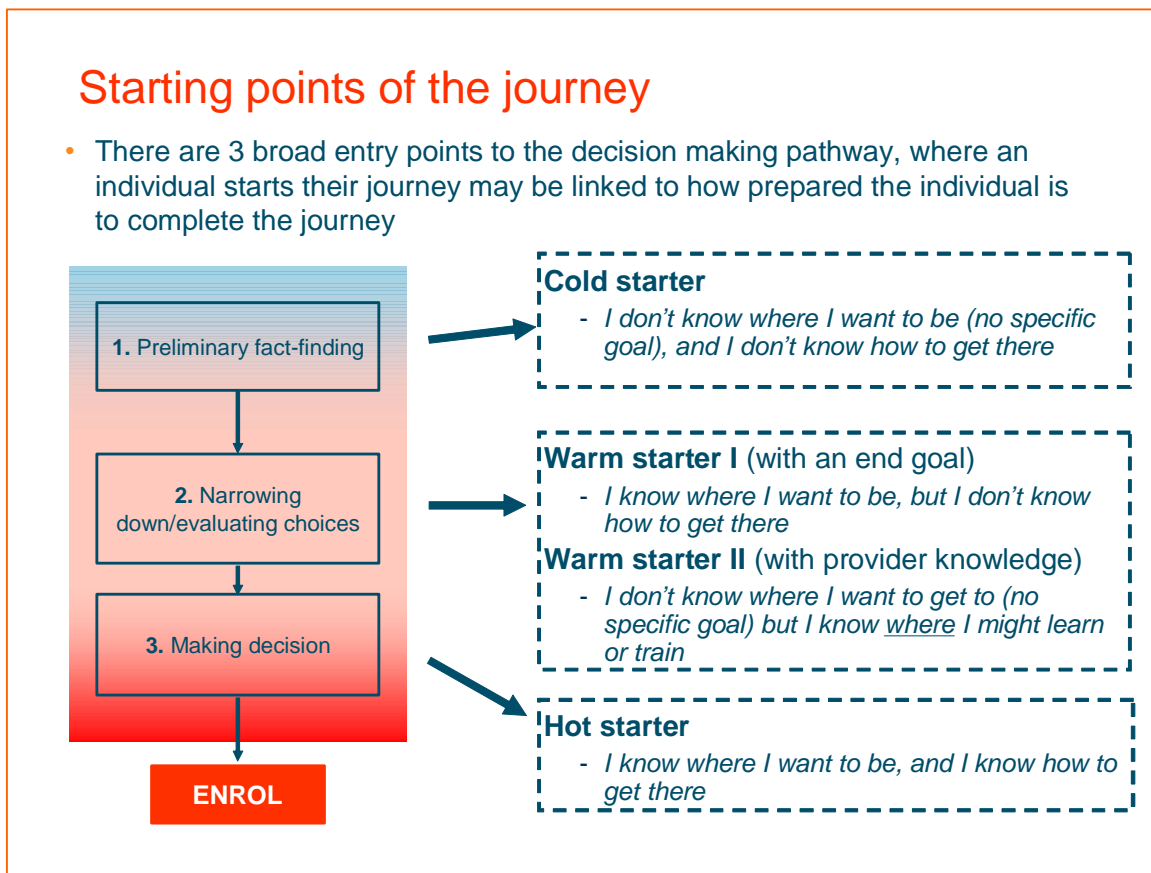


Chart 3: Starting points of the journey

It is important to recognise that potential learners can start the decision-making journey with a very hazy idea of both the learning that they want to undertake and their end goal. For the 'cold starters', information on courses and qualifications may be too specific and detailed to meet their needs at the early stages of their journey. At this stage, they need help in formulating their end goals and learning options.

Likewise those who are starting the journey as ‘warm starters’ are essentially skipping the preliminary fact-finding phase and sifting the amount and type of information they seek by already being interested in a specific learning route, course or provider.

Hot starters are those who are likely to seek out the least amount of information. As the most focused group, they are likely to require precise information on a limited number of courses – for example the contents of one course or the time it is running, rather than broader information on a range of possibilities.

1.8.3 Size of each typology

Chart 4 below shows the proportion of each decision-making typology present in the quantitative research. It is important to note that the relatively small size of the base (405 respondents) means that these findings should be treated as indicative only. The sample was designed to reflect the groups of adult learners that were of interest to the research project, and is not intended to be representative of the general learner population.

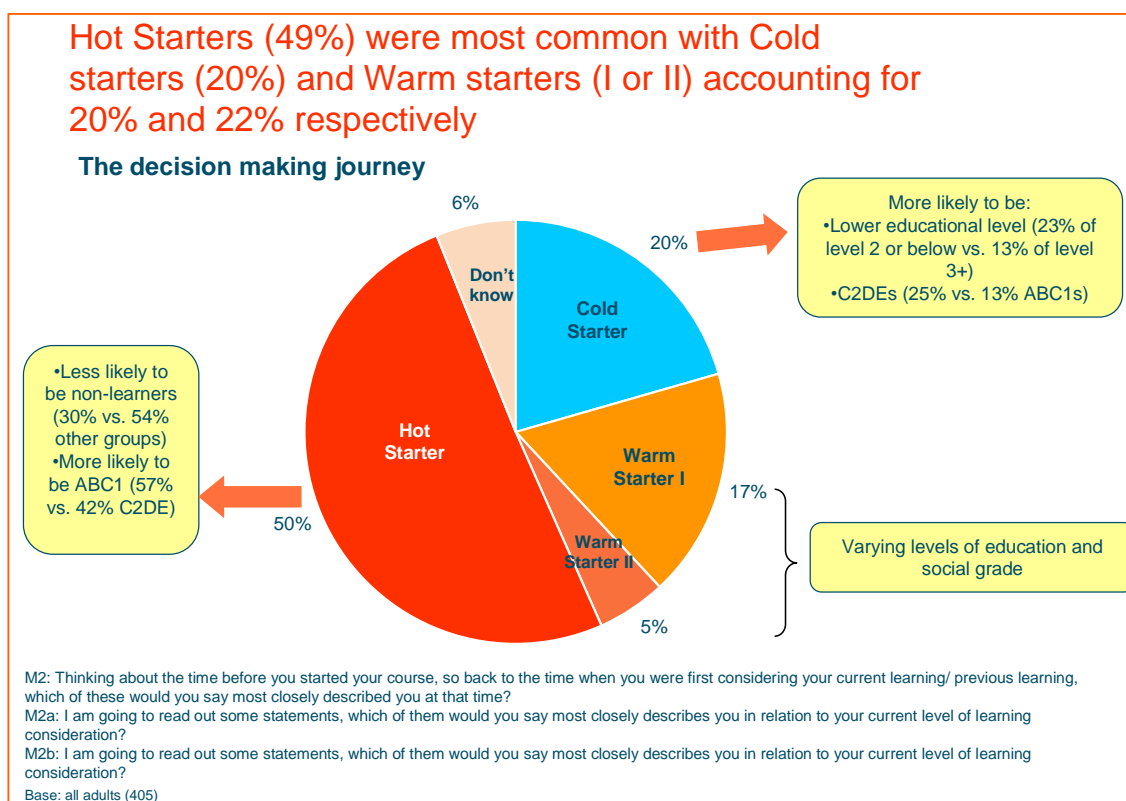


Chart 4: The decision-making typologies

Half of the adult sample are ‘Hot Starters’ – i.e. they know where they want to be and how to get there. Those in the higher socio-economic groups are more likely to fall into this group (57% ABC1 vs. 42% C2DE).

A significant minority (1 in 5) are identified as 'Cold Starters'. The proportion of Cold Starters was similar in both the learner and non learner groups, indicating that around 1 in 5 of both current learners and potential learners are likely to fall into this more vulnerable group. This group is clearly a key target group for future IAG, in order to become empowered and equipped for the decision making journey.

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the typologies. Adults aged 35 to 44 and those from social grades C2DE are more likely to fall into the Cold Starter group, suggesting that these groups may be more vulnerable and thus should be targets for more intensive IAG.

Significant at 95%:
○ = higher ○ = lower

Decision- Making Segmentation – Demographic Profile				
Segment		Cold Starter (81) %	Warm Starter I or II (88) %	Hot Starter (200) %
Age	20-24	20	21	23
	25-34	26	28	25
	35-44	33	23	22
	35-44	16	18	17
	55+	4	10	12
Gender	Male	30	31	35
	Female	70	69	66
Ethnicity	White	74	80	78
	BAME	25	20	21
Social Grade	ABC1	23	36	32
	C2DE	57	51	58
	Refused	20	13	11
Learner Type	Pre-Level 2	20	25	20
	Level 2	16	14	21
	Level 3	21	20	21
	Leisure	10	12	14
	Considerers	12	11	12
	Non-Learner	21	17	13

M2: Thinking about the time before you started your course, so back to the time when you were first considering your current learning/ previous learning, which of these would you say most closely described you at that time?
M2a: I am going to read out some statements, which of them would you say most closely describes you in relation to your current level of learning consideration?
M2b: I am going to read out some statements, which of them would you say most closely describes you in relation to your current level of learning consideration?
Base: all adults (405)

Table 1: Decision-making typologies – demographic profile

1.8.4 Ability to navigate the decision-making journey

A further consideration is how '*intellectually equipped*' an individual is – i.e. how able they are to access and utilise the available IAG. This is dependent on:

- Educational background: i.e. schooling and level of qualifications gained in the past
- Family/ peer group background: the degree to which other people within their social or family circle are aware of or have been previously engaged in learning
- Age: to some extent those with lower levels of qualifications who have been absent from the education system for a long time are often less well-equipped
- Previous experience of adult learning (even if a few years ago)

On this basis, two broad groups can be considered:

- Well equipped: often resulting in a faster, smoother journey
- Ill-equipped: often resulting in a slower, more turbulent journey

As shown below, looking at the starting point of the journey as well as how intellectually equipped an individual is, we can identify seven broad typologies of potential learner, from analysis of findings from the qualitative research:

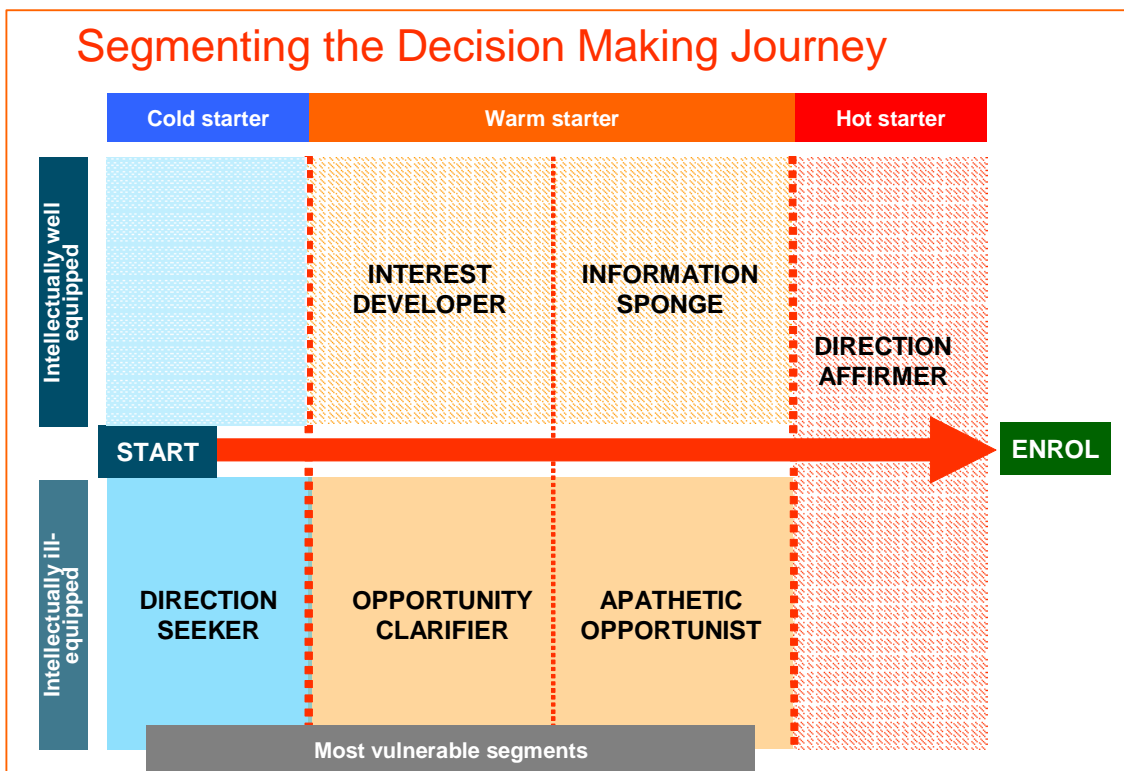


Chart 5: Segmenting the decision-making journey

Full details of all the typologies are included in the Appendix, but the most vulnerable groups come from those who are intellectually ill-equipped. These groups are the most likely to be 'looking for reasons' to halt or stop the journey, or to turn back at the first obstacle, and as such they need more support than others:

- **Direction Seeker** – (intellectually ill-equipped cold starters) know that they should go back into education/ learning but need help travelling the pathway and to formulate an end goal. They are not able, or not ready to complete the journey on their own just with guidance given to them. More than just initial advice is required.
- **Opportunity Clarifier** – (intellectually ill-equipped warm starter with course knowledge) have an idea about what they want to achieve but need guidance as to the steps required, where to find those steps, and how to take them. They differ from the '*Interest Developers*' who are clearer about what they want, but just lacking the contacts, or the information as to where to go to in order to get to their end goal.
- **Apathetic Opportunist** – (intellectually ill-equipped warm starter with provider knowledge) know of a provider they can use, but not what courses they should do, or what learning or training is best to reach an (undefined) end target.

Illustrative examples of these three typologies are provided below, and examples of the other typologies are included in the Appendix.

Direction Seeker

Cold Starter, Intellectually ill-equipped, looking for reasons to exit the journey – first steps towards education are easily dashed, as a result they need nurturing and spoon-feeding

- **Who:**
 - Lower end of the educational spectrum / SEG
 - Often had poor/ unhelpful advice at school (or since leaving)
 - Feel insecure about being clever enough to do it and are overwhelmed by the range of options available
 - Frozen by inertia and don't know where to start
- **Why:**
 - Realisation of the need to do something, often with a push from their family
 - They are looking to better themselves, or; they have a personal interest that they wish to develop, or; it is job focus
- **What information they need:**
 - They are in need of information to help give them their end goal
 - They need help understanding what they might be good at
 - Advice on factors that they need to consider including advice on **how to look for a course**, and which courses and options that will best suit
- **How they choose to receive the information:**
 - A face to face approach best suits many (strong need for reassurance)
 - However, for some telephone provides greater anonymity and less embarrassment
 - Websites are often of less use at these early stages for those ill-equipped to deal with information

The Direction Seeker: Pen Portrait

“Geraldine”

- A single mum of four and a grandmother, she fell pregnant before completing her education
- Currently working in family African -Caribbean catering business she is talking about returning to college, but is unclear how she would go about getting on a course
 - Occasionally looks on the internet, and her children might direct her to a page to write down contact details
- Has not decided whether to speak to an adviser in the colleges or go to the job centre or Pertemps
 - Feels it will all be confusing
- She does not feel she has a lot of support and expects/requires a lot of help from authorities (sending her information in post/calling her and encouraging her to enrol)
- Ideally Geraldine would like one person to approach her and tell her all she needs to know
- Likely to drop out the system, and at one level is looking for reasons not to take part
 - “I can’t see very well”
 - “The information isn’t coming to me”
 - “The motivation is a bit like losing weight isn’t it – you need a push”
 - “Sometimes adult classes are not all adults because they take on young people – you take longer to grasp things when you are older!”



Emotionally: she is confused and feels very much on her own

Opportunity Clarifier

Warm Starter, Intellectually ill-equipped, interested in idea of return to learning but practical guidance and reassurance needed to take final step and reduce slippage

- **Who:**
 - Level 1 (sometimes lower), often Lower SEGs and often in lower end of employment spectrum, they ‘work to live’
 - Take the path of least resistance and have the least tenacity to see process through
- **Why:**
 - Know that more education would be beneficial, but cannot see the tangible benefits, or are put off by a lack of commitment to education
 - Have lots of basic information related to courses accumulated from word of mouth (and information provided at school when applicable) but don’t know what to do with it, or how to move forward
- **What information they need:**
 - The “perfect” course to suit them with a mapped example of the journey including detailed steps of the involvement and commitment required
 - They need to know exactly what they will get out of the course, and tangibly how it will benefit them
- **How they choose to receive the information:**
 - Face to Face IAG to find best fit from choices they have found with follow up needs to help with finding the steps to take, and which information is needed at each step

The Opportunity Clarifier: Pen Portrait

“Jimmy”

- Aged 22 and living in a rural area
- Had enough of school at 16, and thought he might do something with art and design
 - Had a break for about 6 months on leaving school and then joined his father as a roofer, and then went to work in a factory
 - Girlfriend persuaded him to do something more with his life, and eventually thought about returning to college
 - Initially did some searches on local college website to see what courses they did - it was nearby and easy to get to
 - Started to look at graphic design courses, but friends told him it was hard work
 - As interested in sport started to look at sports options too
 - Friends told him he would be a good fitness instructor
 - And other friends were doing the course and could tell him about it
 - Progressed from website to visiting the college to talk to the physical fitness instructors and administrators and had decided at this point that this is what he wanted to do
 - Needed to find out about fees so could start saving and ways of funding the course



Emotionally: felt relieved when the decision was made and finally doing something with life

Apathetic Opportunists

Warm Starter, Intellectually ill-equipped, need clear guidance on what courses they could take/their best options and the benefits to them of undertaking a course to avoid apathy

- **Who:**
 - Level 1 (or lower), often lower SEGs, who often live in poorly served communities (less affluent and/or rural)
 - Dominant presence of local provider – ‘the only one’
 - Low motivation to undertake further education
- **Why:**
 - To open up career and social possibilities
 - Guilty conscience for not using local college
 - Possibly were looking out of boredom/ come across information on courses by accident
- **What information they need:**
 - To understand what courses are available and affordable in local area but they can be easily bogged down with too much information
 - They want something within their own location, and that is affordable
 - Some are looking for an excuse to exit the journey
- **How they choose to receive the information:**
 - Not a strong preference for face-to-face IAG, but guidance would be welcomed and follow-up would help with motivation

The Apathetic Opportunist: Pen Portrait

“Sammi”

- Left school at 16 after getting a handful of GCSEs and went to work on her parents market stall, but realised after a few years it was not going to get her anywhere
- Was encouraged by her mother to go into further education
 - An aunt had been a beautician and she liked the idea of this as a career
- A walk past the Connexions office drew her inside, where she went in to find about available courses
 - She felt she knew enough about what she wanted to not need career counselling, but wanted to know how to get onto a course and whether she had sufficient qualifications
 - They sent away for a prospectus for her and arranged for her to go into the college for an open evening
 - At the college she wanted to check out the other students, the facilities and the atmosphere before she enrolled
 - She was also concerned about what equipment she would need to buy and how she would be able to fund the course
 - She had been subject to bullying at school and did not want a repeat of that



Emotionally: she felt that she had had it easy, and that Connexions had given her a shortcut that several of her college friends had not had

1.8.5 Success or failure of the decision-making journey

The success of the decision making journey can be measured by the degree to which people make the ‘right choice’ – for example, whether they enrol on a course or achieve their end goal. The speed and ease of the decision-making process can affect the success of the journey, influencing future choices and whether learning is undertaken at all.

Chart 6 below summarises the main reasons why individuals may make the wrong choices. These relate to either not knowing about all of the options (for example due to a lack of awareness or being given inappropriate or inaccurate advice), or choosing the ‘wrong’ option (for example due to an inability to understand the differences between options or a lack of accessible information).

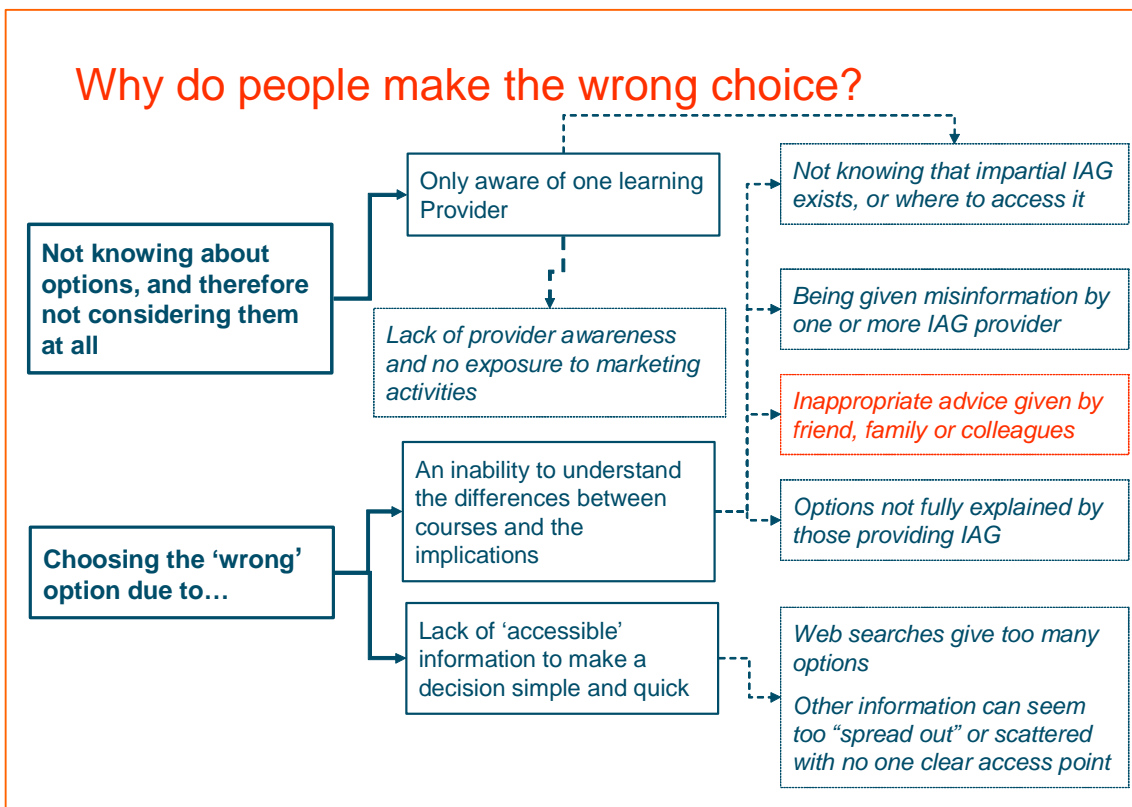


Chart 6: Why people make the wrong choice

The ease of the process can also be a factor in the success or failure of the journey. Positively most adult learners interviewed in the quantitative survey (85%) had found the process of choosing a course easy; however this does leave 15% who experienced difficulties.

Pre Level 2 learners, those from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and C2DE social grades are most likely to experience difficulties.

The most common difficulties relate to deciding what route to follow, a lack of available places and a lack of information.

The qualitative research explored why some adults had made what they considered to be ‘wrong choices’ in learning in the past. It is important to understand why people make ‘wrong choices’ in order to reduce the number of enrolments on unsuitable courses, that may then lead to failure to complete the course. The LSC’s National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2007 (LSC, July 2008) indicates that ‘being on the wrong course for me’ was the main reason why individuals left their course early. The qualitative research revealed three main factors that lead to wrong choices:

- Lack of awareness of all the available options, resulting in the learner choosing a course that is not the best fit with their needs.
- Difficulty in understanding the implications of different courses, and not knowing how a particular course will or will not help the individual to achieve his or her goals
- Difficulty in navigating through the wide range of options and information available

This indicates that a relatively difficult balance needs to be struck between providing potential learners with sufficient information to avoid their choices being constricted, whilst at the same time taking care not to ‘overload’ them with information and so result in navigational problems.

1.8.6 Propellers and Pitfalls

The speed and efficiency of moving through the decision making process also depends on experiences along the way. Propellers can move a person through to the next stage or ‘fast-track’ them directly to enrolling for a course. Pitfalls can delay or prevent a person from moving forward, and in some cases result in them ‘exiting’.

Looking at the different stages of the journey there are variations in what the propellers and pitfalls may be. Findings from the qualitative research reveal that, at the **outset of the journey**, when people are initially reviewing their options there are three key areas where LSC and its partners can have an impact:

- **The quality of IAG received from advisers** – clearly the IAG received from an adviser needs to be understood by the individual as being reliable, appropriate for them and correct. Where this is not the case, then there is a high likelihood that the more vulnerable groups, those that require the highest levels of support, may not make further progress in their journey.
- **The service received from providers (e.g. colleges)** – as with the experiences of service from advisers, a negative service experience can be enough to prevent some of the more vulnerable segments from carrying on with their journey. This is especially so for those who are ‘looking’ for a reason not to continue, but even for others can result in a lack of momentum to the process.
- **Communications and advertising** – as described previously communications can act as a trigger to action for some people, whether as part of an accumulation of passive factors or, for some, as an active trigger to learning. Within this it is also important that the logistics of courses are clearly specified, for example the start dates. There is a

perception that courses just start at certain times of year and this can be a pitfall to some.

Chart 7 outlines how the propellers and pitfalls may manifest during this initial phase of the journey. There are also some areas that are possibly beyond the direct control of the LSC and its partners, but which should not be forgotten when thinking of the individual. These factors are shown in Chart 8.

<h2 style="color: #e67e22;">Propellers and Pitfalls at the Outset</h2> <p style="color: #e67e22;">Factors that can be influenced by the LSC and its partners</p>	
Propellers	Pitfalls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Effective’ Adviser <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gives sufficient time and individual attention - Assesses and understands needs - Knowledgeable about courses, jobs/careers, requirements - Reassures that they can help - Informs you of the ‘next step’ - Provides alternative options and ideas • Attending Open Day at local provider <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See a subject area or course that appeals - Meet course coordinator/tutor to seek further information - Can enrol on the spot • Compelling communications and advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directs person to local provider or IAG sources - Suggest particular field, job, career and indicates call to action • Course Logistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Start dates fit with learners’ needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Ineffective’ Adviser <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Doesn’t give sufficient time to address and understand individual needs - Little knowledge of options - Discouraging manner - Poor management of customer relationship (e.g. not returning phone calls) • Negative service experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ordered prospectus, never arrived - Phone calls, emails not returned - Calls diverted to non-local call centre • ‘Now’ is not the right time of year to enrol – doesn’t align with provider enrolment cycle • No appropriate course to meet specific end goal • No funding available for specific circumstances • Course Logistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Start dates inflexible, too long to wait to start a course

Chart 7: Propellers and Pitfalls experienced at the outset – within the influence of LSC and partners

<h2 style="color: #e67e22;">Propellers and Pitfalls at the Outset</h2> <p style="color: #e67e22;">Factors <u>beyond</u> the direct influence of the LSC and its partners</p>	
Propellers	Pitfalls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing someone/ a chance encounter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A friend/ family member doing a course that inspires - Has been ‘on the journey’ and provides a ‘map’ to reach specific course and provider • Intrinsic to career development (encouraged by employer) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Upgrading current qualifications - Going up the career ladder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial fact finding proves to be difficult <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information overload, too many choices, too much information (especially on internet) • Peer group pressure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discouragement from peers, family

Chart 8: Propellers and Pitfalls experienced at the outset – beyond LSC’s direct influence

During the actual decision making process, the nature of the potential propellers and pitfalls alters. Again, adviser training is of paramount importance. IAG providers should suggest and facilitate meetings with tutors, course coordinators and former students where possible, and there is also a need to ensure that up-to-date and local information can be accessed.

Propellers and Pitfalls During the Decision-Making Process Factors relating to IAG	
Propellers	Pitfalls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective Adviser <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proactive approach, anticipating individual needs and readiness - Effective trouble-shooter - Good range of detailed information on hand - Well connected with learning providers • Meeting a tutor/course coordinator • Meeting former students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineffective Adviser <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-proactive - Doesn't provide specific tailored information - Lack of follow-up • Information gaps or inaccuracies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entry requirements - Availability of funding - Qualifications gained through course

Chart 9: Propellers and Pitfalls during the decision-making process – related to IAG

Propellers and Pitfalls During the Decision-Making Process Factors relating to support for learning and course/ provider practicalities	
Propellers	Pitfalls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving encouragement from those around you • Having a support network to meet practical needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents to look after children - Partner offers help with computer homework - Employer agrees to time off ▪ Accessibility to funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course does not meet specific needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Doesn't provide appropriate qualification - College lacks appropriate facilities • Unable to meet practical needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Get time of work - Course does not fit in with family/work schedule - Not eligible for funding, have to spend own money - No childcare available • Failing entry requirements, entry interview etc. • Unforeseen circumstances (e.g. sudden illness)

Chart 10: Propellers and Pitfalls during the decision-making process – beyond LSC’s direct influence

Looking at all of these factors together and considering the potential influences that they have on potential learners, there are some clear implications for the LSC and its partners. Care should be taken to:

- Ensure that national advertising campaigns have a link to local sources of information – that the initial trigger from the communication is backed up by relevant information for the individual, and thus the momentum of the journey is maintained.
- Recognise the value of interactive and experiential IAG – enabling potential learners to meet tutors and existing learners face-to-face, as this can assist and add clarity, or remove doubt, in the decision-making process.
- Insist on high service standards from IAG providers, colleges and other training providers. Poor standards of service and a lack of responsiveness, such as non-returned phone calls and emails, pose a threat to the success of the decision-making journey.
- Build in flexible course start dates where possible, to minimise the risk of losing potential learners who are not offered a course at the time when they wish to start learning.

In addition to the points above there is also room for more support for learners in terms of the information available in regards to **funding learning**. Financial support for learners is one of the ways in which the LSC aims to raise demand for learning amongst more disadvantaged groups. The qualitative research revealed that there is considerable confusion around sources of funding and eligibility, especially amongst the most vulnerable groups (intellectually ill-equipped cold starters) for whom financial support may be necessary if they are to return to learning. For others, information on what they may be entitled to is just another piece of information that they seek out to help affirm their decision.

1.9 Sources of IAG in the decision making journey

The qualitative research found that people use a variety of IAG sources at different points along the journey, and have different information needs from the source according to the stage they are at. Informal IAG from friends and family is key, underpinning the whole process of information-gathering.

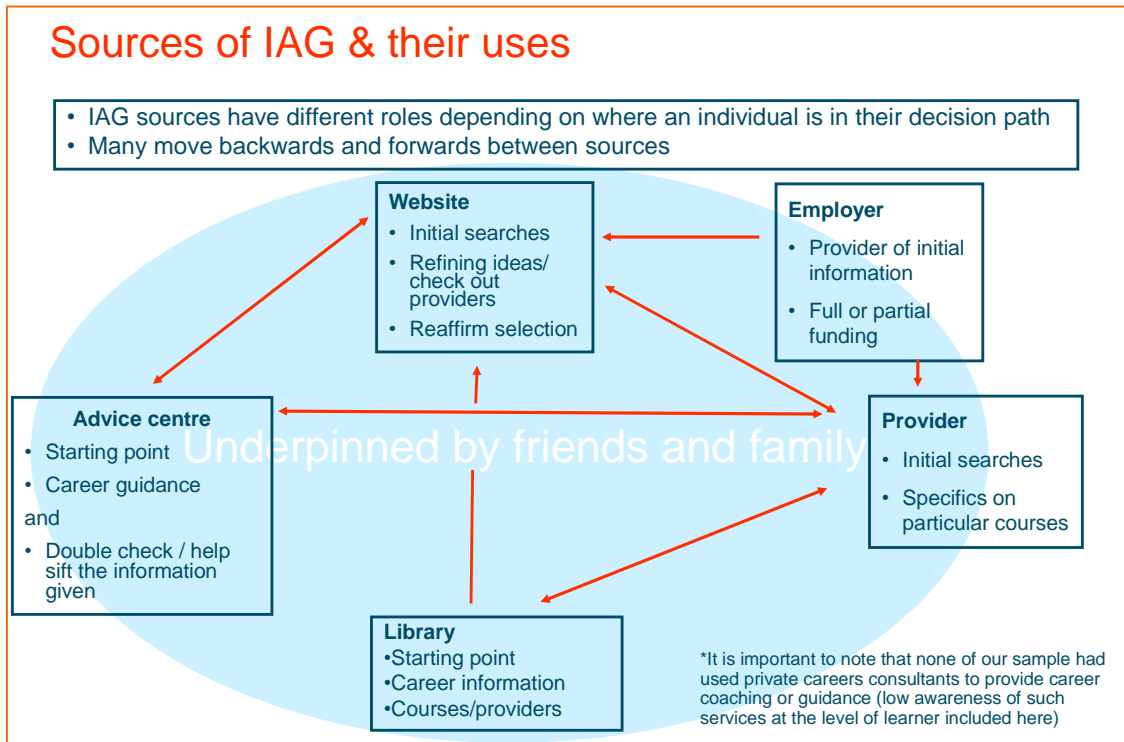


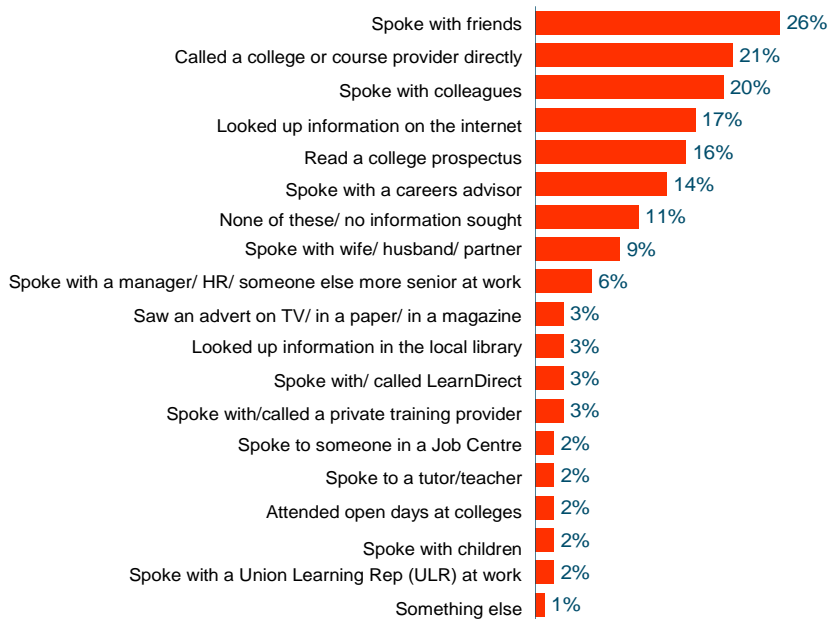
Chart 11: Sources of IAG and their uses

1.9.1 Sources of guidance used

Around a quarter (26%) of adult learners and considerers interviewed in the quantitative survey say that speaking with friends helped them to make their decisions, as shown in Chart 12. The other main IAG sources for adults are course providers (21%), colleagues (20%) and the internet (17%).

A quarter of adults spoke to their friends and one in five called a learning provider for IAG

Sources of IAG - past



M5/M5a/M5b: And still thinking about this time what sources of information, advice or guidance helped you make your decision?
Base: all adult learners and considerers (322)

Chart 12: Sources of IAG used to help make decisions

The following table shows sources of IAG by learner type.

Significant at 95%:
○ = higher ○ = lower

Sources of IAG by learner type				
	Pre Level 2 (77) %	Level 2 (69) %	Level 3 (85) %	Non-learner (83) %
Spoke with friends	35	25	24	17
Called a college or course provider directly	18	29	22	16
Looked up information on the internet	17	19	11	20
Spoke with colleagues	17	20	22	10
Read a college prospectus	16	13	18	12
Spoke with a careers advisor	12	14	20	7
Spoke with husband/ wife/ partner	17	9	6	4
Spoke with manager/ HR/ someone else more senior at work	5	7	9	11
Saw an advert on TV/ paper/ magazine	6	1	2	5
Spoke with/ called LearnDirect	5	1	4	2
Looked up information in the local library	1	3	1	5
NET: FAMILY/ FRIENDS	45	33	27	23
None of these/ no information sought	5	10	12	27

M5/M5a/M5b: And still thinking about this time what sources of information, advice or guidance helped you make your decision?
 Base: all adults (405)

*Figures are not shown for Leisure learners and Considerers due to small base sizes (less than 50).

Table 2: Sources of IAG which helped make decisions – by learner type

Almost half of Pre-Level 2 learners (45%) spoke to their friends before making a decision – indicating a preference for informal sources of IAG, and the importance of also reaching out to this wider group of ‘informal advisers’. Around one in five adults, in each learner type, are approaching learning providers directly, thus it is also important that these organisations are equipped to deal with enquiries and provide up to date information. Among all learner types and non-learners, few respondents are consulting managers or those in an HR function from their workplace, although they are talking to their immediate colleagues.

Table 3 below shows sources of IAG by decision-making group.

Significant at 95%:
○ = higher ○ = lower

Sources of IAG by decisionmaking group			
	Cold Starter (81) %	Warm Starter I or II (88) %	Hot Starter (200) %
Spoke with friends	33	32	21
Called a college or course provider directly	17	24	21
Looked up information on the internet	17	28	14
Spoke with colleagues	21	14	21
Read a college prospectus	15	17	16
Spoke with a careers advisor	9	10	15
Spoke with husband/ wife/ partner	7	9	8
Spoke with manager/ HR/ someone else more senior at work	4	7	8
Saw an advert on TV/ paper/ magazine	4	6	4
Spoke with/ called LearnDirect	2	3	3
Looked up information in the local library	2	1	4
NET: FRIENDS/ FAMILY	42	36	29
None of these/ no information sought	15	10	12

M5/M5a/M5b: And still thinking about this time what sources of information, advice or guidance helped you make your decision?
 Base: all adults (405)

Table 3: Sources of IAG used to help make decisions – by typology

Looking at differences by group, a range of IAG sources are used by all groups, highlighting the importance of offering advice through a range of channels. Friends and family play a key IAG role for cold starters in particular (42% compared with 29% of hot starters). Warm starters are more likely than other typologies to look up information on the internet (28%). As discussed earlier, warm starters are already interested in a specific course or college, and are therefore likely to be using the internet for ‘fact finding’. For hot starters, the search for information is more straightforward, and their use of the internet is more likely to focus on double-checking information.

1.9.2 Preferred sources of guidance

Chart 13 below shows the sources of IAG rated as most important by adult learners and considerers. Again, friends are key to the process – 15% rate them as the most important IAG source. Learning providers were also rated as the most important source by 15%, stressing the importance of ensuring that these are fully equipped to deal with direct enquiries from learners. The third most common source was speaking to colleagues (12%), again suggesting that the experiences and advice of other people are key to the decision-making process.

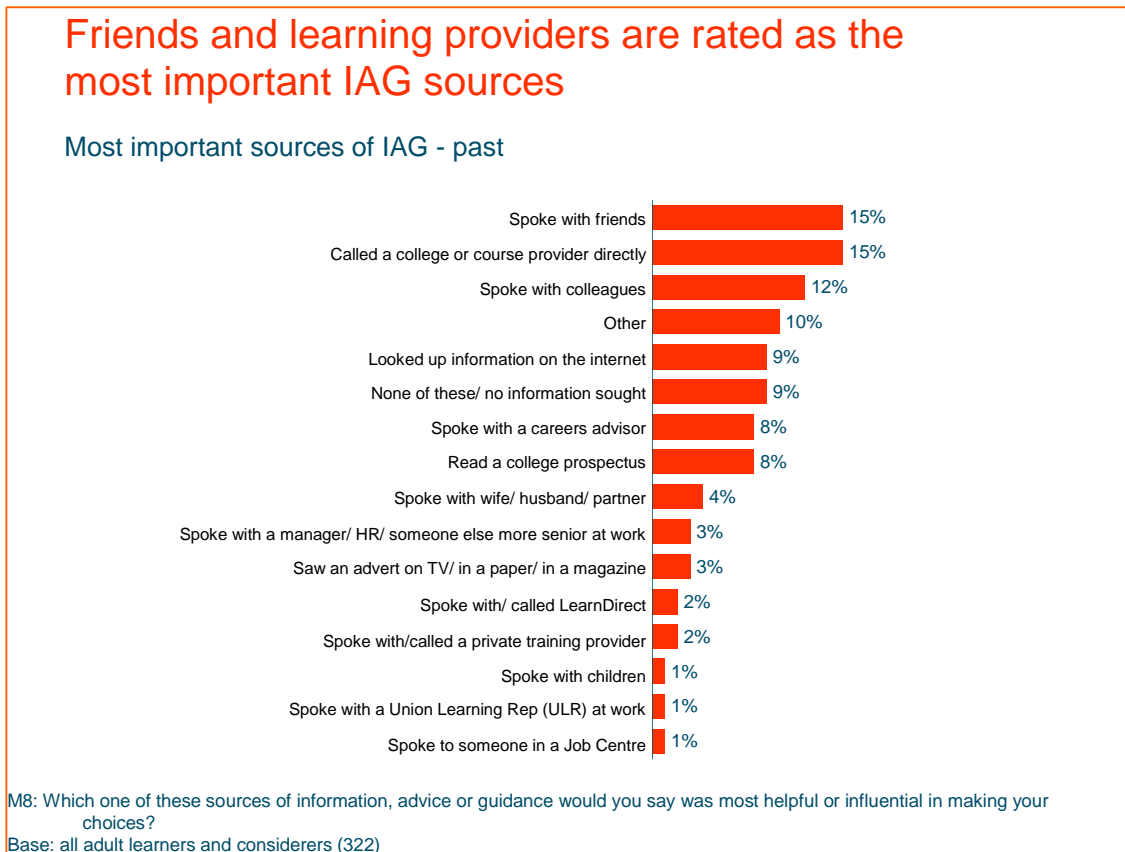


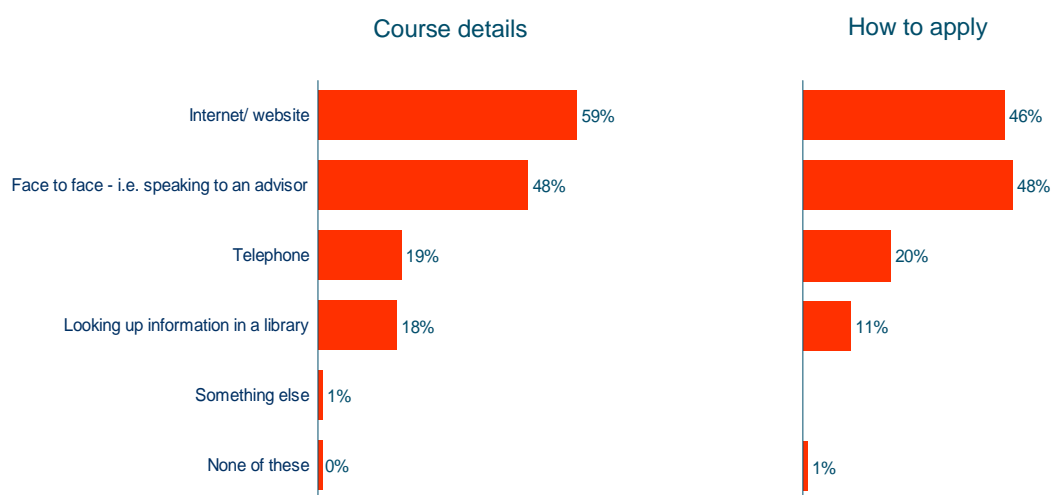
Chart 13: Most important source of IAG

In terms of preferred channels of IAG for future information about **course details**, (as shown in Chart 14), there is a slight preference for using the internet vs face-to-face IAG, although a significant proportion of adults would want to receive such information face-to-face.

In terms of channels preferred for receiving advice or support on **how to apply for courses**, It is clear that there is a fairly equal preference for web-based and face-to-face IAG channels.

The internet and face to face meetings are the preferred sources of IAG both for information about courses and how to apply

Sources of IAG – future: course details vs. suitability/ how to apply



M9: Thinking more generally about how you may like to gather information, advice or guidance about learning in the FUTURE, or as you go forward, which of the following would you prefer to use to get information about courses, such as dates and timings of courses?

M10: And which would you prefer to use to find out what courses would be suitable for you, and how you might apply for them?

Base: all adults (405)

Chart 14: Sources of IAG preferred for future information about courses and how to apply

Those from social grades ABC1 are more likely to prefer online information resources when finding out about courses (66% vs. 55% C2DE). Face-to-face channels are favoured by those from BAME backgrounds (62%).

The picture is similar in terms of preferred channels for IAG about how to apply for courses, with 48% requesting face to face information and 46% online information, and the same pattern in terms of social grade and ethnic group differences.

1.9.3 IAG needs of specific learner typologies

The previous section looked broadly at what types of IAG are used and preferred. This section now considers the IAG needs of our different learner typologies in more detail, based on insights from the qualitative interviews.

The more intellectually equipped typologies have a fuller understanding of what IAG is available and how to access it, thus for these groups it is simply a case of providing access to relevant information. As these individuals are able to access information themselves, more 'informational' channels such as websites and written prospectuses may be appropriate. However, those who are less intellectually equipped and more vulnerable are far less comfortable with the various sources of IAG.

The issues and needs of each of the typologies are detailed below.

Cold Starter – Intellectually ill-equipped

These individuals, who are a vulnerable target group, often do not know where to start in the process of seeking out helpful information and advice. They may require suggestions on learning programmes which are relevant and within their skills set, explanations of how a course can help towards achieving their career goals, and advice on funding. It is important to provide support (both practical and emotional) and to ensure that the information is fully understood. Chart 15 summarises the needs of this group.

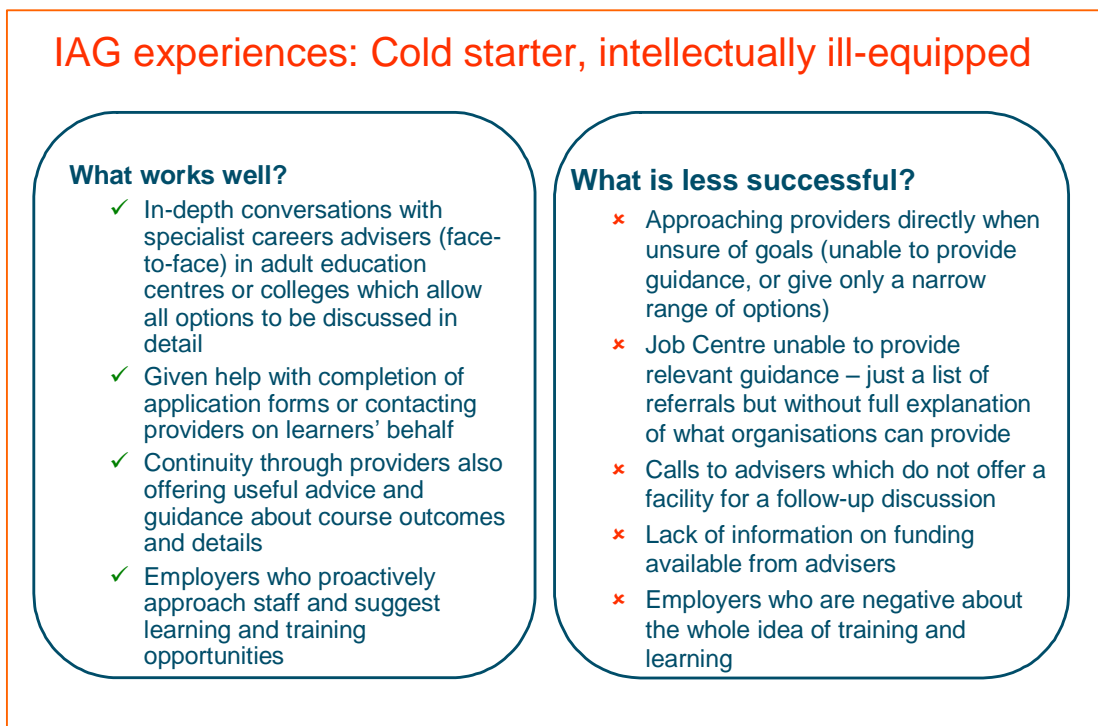


Chart 15: IAG needs for cold starter, intellectually ill-equipped

Two individual examples of the 'IAG route map' are given in Charts 16 and 17.

These maps are taken from the direct experiences of respondents interviewed in the qualitative phase of the research. They demonstrate how effective face-to-face support can lead to greater success at the points in the journey when the individual is identifying his or her options and end goals, and at the point where applications are completed. They also show how provision of information only (without adequate guidance) can lead to false starts and interruptions in the decision-making journey.

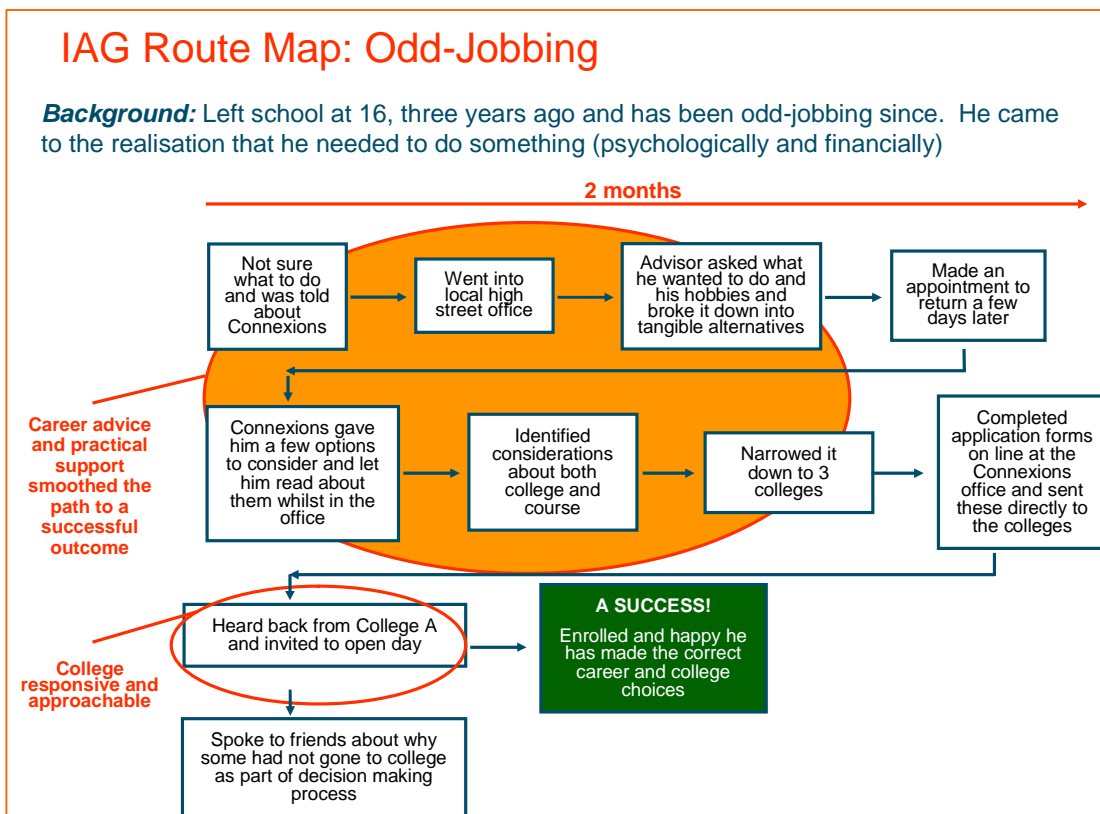


Chart 16: IAG cold starters route map – 'odd-jobbing'

IAG Route Map: Family Man

Background: An African immigrant with an incomplete education and desire to further himself and do something other than shop work, needs to combine training with paid employment to support his family.

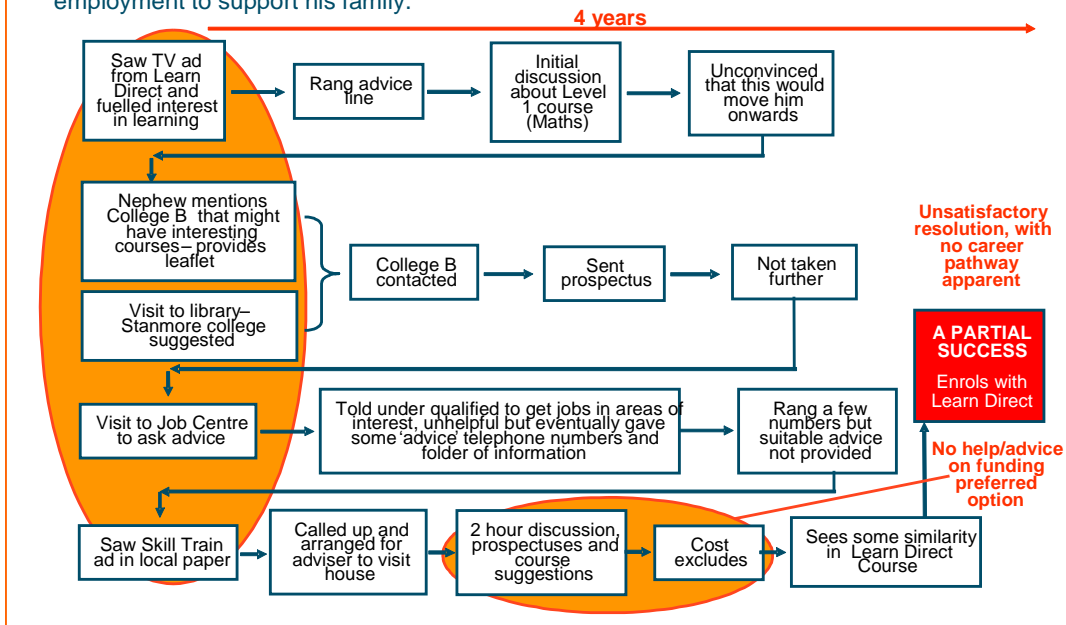


Chart 17: IAG cold starters route map – ‘family man’

Warm Starter – Intellectually ill-equipped

These individuals are often still interested in speaking to a ‘real person’, but a telephone channel is often appropriate as slightly less depth of guidance is required. Those with lower level qualifications or less experience will face similar issues to the cold starter in terms of tracking down relevant information and advice. They may require further career guidance (in order to ‘double check’), help to narrow down their options and advice on funding.

IAG experiences: Warm starter, intellectually ill-equipped

What works well?

- ✓ Conversations with tutors who are able to talk about the ‘bigger picture’ and not simply ‘sell’ their own course
- ✓ Impartial advisers talking through the options and explaining the differences and implications of them
- ✓ (Provider websites which provide detailed information about a range of courses in a particular topic area)

What is less successful?

- ✗ Not knowing who to go to for advice, resulting in lots of ‘random’ web searching
- ✗ Providers which fail to send relevant information in time (or at all)
- ✗ Lack of information available from Providers about funding
- ✗ Lack of ‘advice’ or ‘reassurance’ available from Providers (either tutors or admissions) – just provision of basic facts is not always enough
- ✗ Absence of independent advice resulting in enrolment on a less than suitable course

Chart 18: IAG needs for warm starter, intellectually ill-equipped

Two examples of the 'route map' for the warm starter well-equipped groups are given in Charts 19 and 20. These maps illustrate the risks associated with 'information overload' and also with a lack of information about sources of funding.

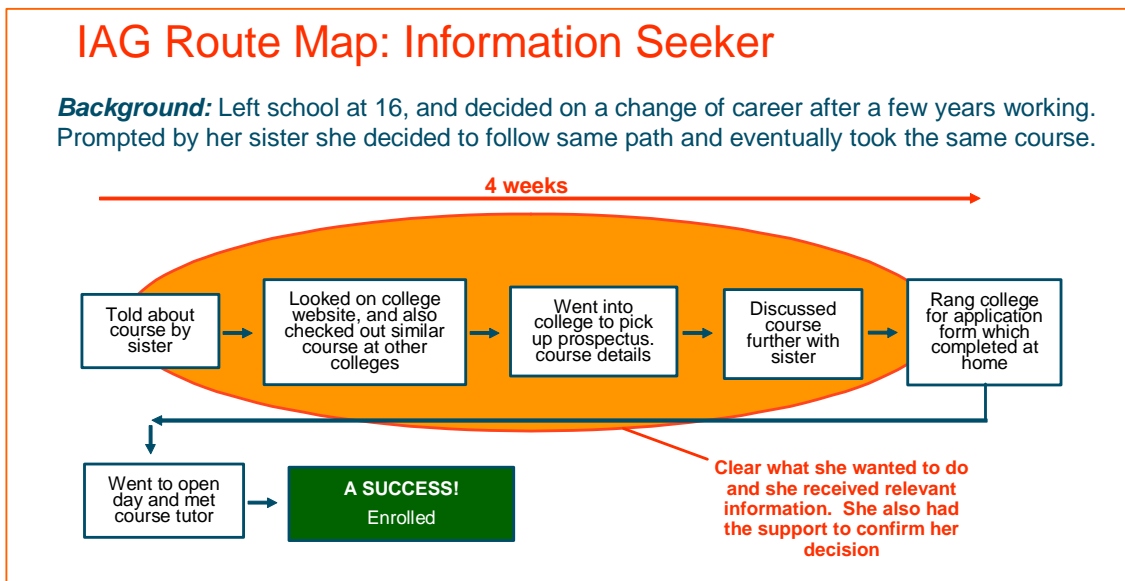


Chart 19: IAG warm starters route map – Information Seeker

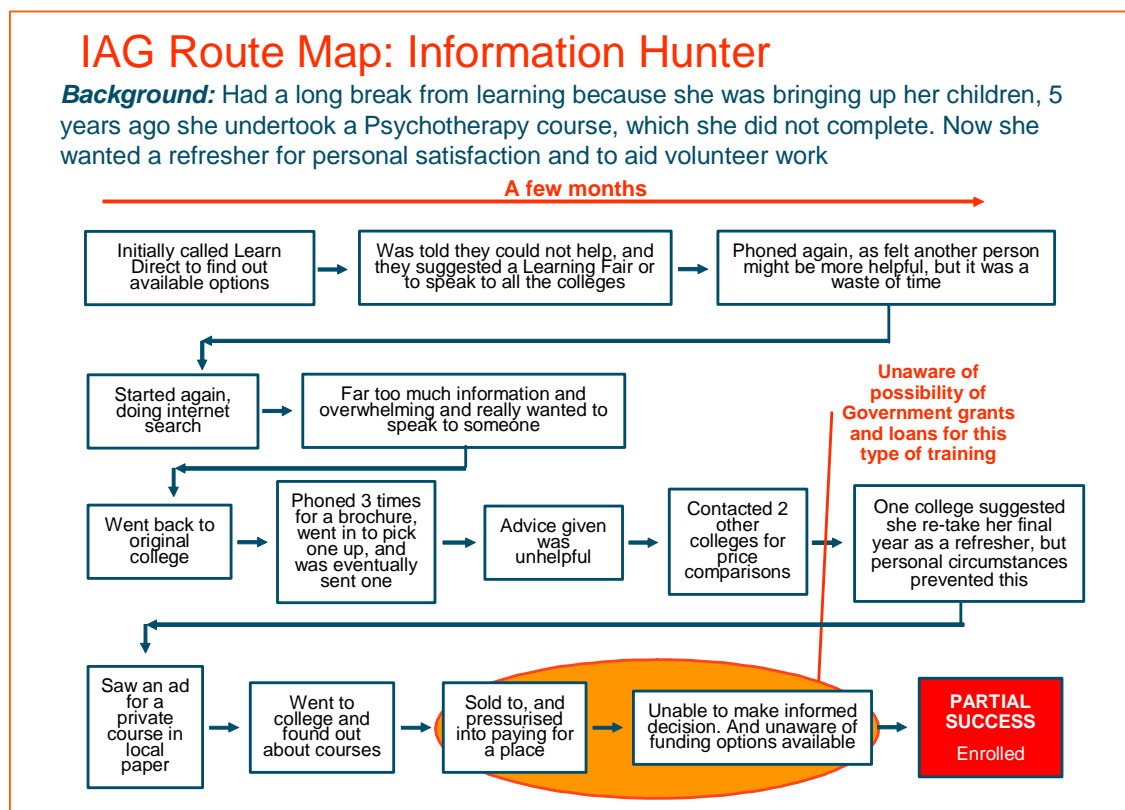


Chart 20: IAG warm starters route map – Information Hunter

1.10 What factors influence choice of course and provider?

1.10.1 Decision-making factors

Factors influencing choices in learning fall into two tiers – ‘non-negotiable’ and ‘negotiable’.

Non-negotiable factors are those which *must be in place* in order for the individual to choose that particular course or provider. Negotiable factors are the ‘nice to have’s’ – i.e. factors which learners might deem to be important, but which might not influence their final choice.

A set of factors was identified in the qualitative phase, and then taken forward into the quantitative research. Current learners and considerers were asked which factors influenced their decisions, and which single factor was the most important. Table 4 summarises this:

Decision- making factors – negotiable vs. non-negotiable			
	Considered	Most Important	
The qualification offered at the end of the course	72	33	NON-NEGOTIABLE
The quality of the teaching on the course	70	18	
The location of the college or place where the course takes place	67	14	
The time of the course	63	8	
Cost of the course	58	10	NON-NEGOTIABLE/ NON-NEGOTIABLE
The reputation of the college or the place where the course takes place	59	4	NEGOTIABLE
The length of the course	57	2	
The entry criteria or qualifications needed to get on to the course	42	2	
Facilities at the college	37	2	
Availability of special help	25	3	

M3: Which, if any, of the following were important considerations to you? When you were choosing your current course ?
M4: And which ONE of these considerations would you say was the most important to you?
Base: all adult learners and considerers (322)

Table 4: Factors considered when making choices vs. most important factor

The top ‘non-negotiable’ factor is the qualification offered, with around seven in ten (72%) adults considering this and a third (33%) feeling that it is the most important factor. Teaching quality is also important, with 70% rating it among their considerations and around a fifth (18%) choosing it as the main concern. Location and timings are also fairly high on the list of considerations, although fewer adults rated them as the most important factor.

Cost falls between non-negotiable and negotiable – it is clearly a key factor for those who are less able to afford learning.

Around six in ten were concerned with the reputation of the provider (59%) and course length (57%). However, only a minority chose these as their most important deciding factor. Other 'negotiable' factors are entry criteria, facilities and availability of special help.

Table 5 shows decision-making factor by learner type. Unsurprisingly, leisure learners are less likely to consider the qualification offered, and leisure learners and Pre level 2 learners are least likely to consider the entry criteria. Leisure learners also appear to be more concerned with the quality of teaching, although this difference is not statistically significant.

Significant at 95%:
○ = higher ○ = lower

Decision-making factors by learner type					
	Pre Level 2 (77) %	Level 2 (69) %	Level 3 (85) %	Leisure Learners (47*)	Considerers (44)*
The qualification offered at the end of the course	74	80	78	49	70
The quality of the teaching on the course	68	65	67	81	75
The location of the college or place where the course takes place	61	72	65	64	75
The time of the course	65	65	55	70	64
The reputation of the college or the place where the course takes place	55	58	56	62	68
Cost of the course	56	68	56	53	57
The length of the course	60	61	54	49	57
The entry criteria or qualifications needed to get on to the course	34	46	46	30	52
Facilities at the college	40	36	38	32	39
Availability of special help	25	30	28	19	20

M3: Which, if any, of the following were are important considerations to you? When you were choosing your current course ?
 Base: all adult learners and considerers (322)
 *Caution: small base size

Table 5: Decision-making factors by type of learner

Decision-making criteria also vary by segment, as shown in Table 6. The most important factors for hot starters is the quality of teaching, with adults in this segment significantly more likely to mention this compared with cold starters and warm starters. Related to this, hot starters are also more likely than other groups to consider the reputation of the learning provider. Thus, the most empowered learners will be more likely to want to seek out information relating to quality and reputation.

Significant at 95%:
○ = higher ○ = lower

Decisionmaking factors by group			
	Cold Starter (64) %	Warm Starter I or II (73) %	Hot Starter (175) %
The qualification offered at the end of the course	70	71	75
The quality of the teaching on the course	64	60	79
The location of the college or place where the course takes place	61	71	69
The time of the course	59	67	64
The reputation of the college or the place where the course takes place	48	53	66
Cost of the course	58	59	60
The length of the course	56	45	63
The entry criteria or qualifications needed to get on to the course	45	32	46
Facilities at the college	33	36	40
Availability of special help	28	16	29

M3: Which, if any, of the following were are important considerations to you? When you were choosing your current course ?
 Base: all adult learners and considerers (322)

Table 6: Decision-making factors by typology

This section looks at the findings for young people, including their attitudes towards learning choice, experiences of the decision-making journey, sources of IAG and key factors and individuals which influence choices.

1.11 Attitudes to choices in learning

Findings from the quantitative research show that the attitudes that young people expressed towards learning are generally very positive, with around eight in ten young people (79%) describing themselves as keen learners, and three quarters (74%) feeling that they know where to go for IAG. However, some young people are more negative, with around a third saying that they feel lost when considering all their options (34%) or nervous about their ability (32%). Therefore around 1 in 3 young people may be experiencing some difficulties in assessing their options and making choices.

Chart 21 below shows attitudes towards learning choice among young people.

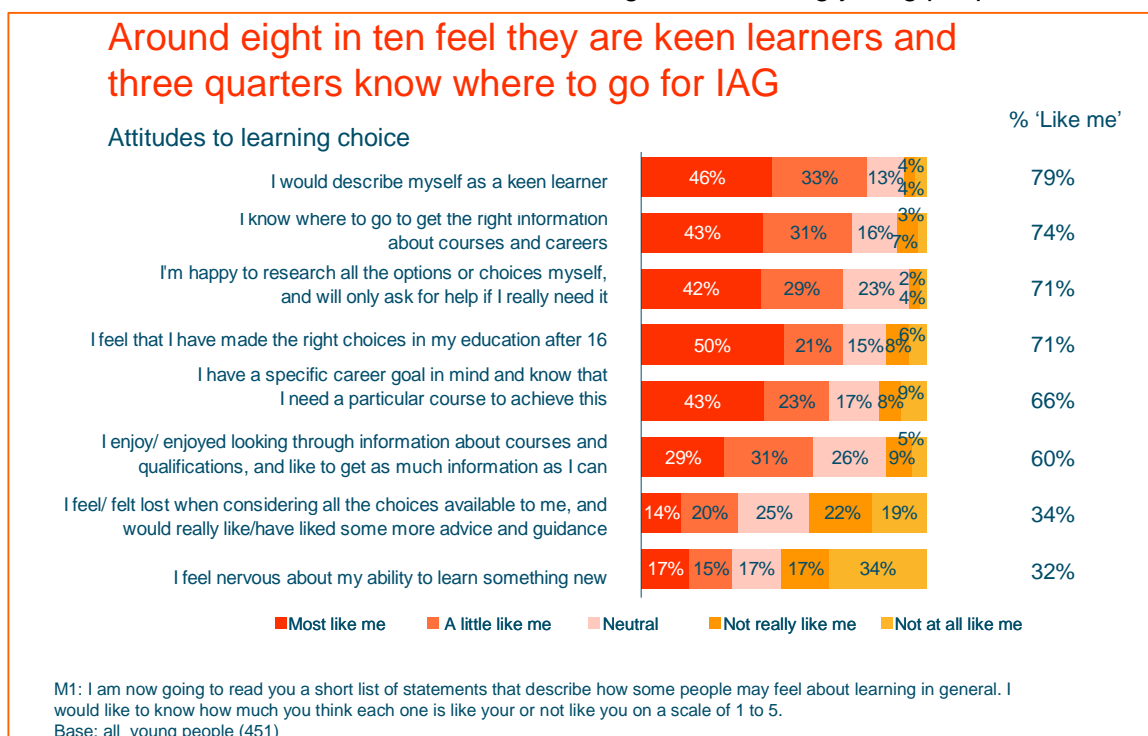


Chart 21: Attitudes to learning choice

Females are more likely than males to describe themselves as: keen learners (82% vs. 74%), to know where to go for IAG (78% vs. 69%), and to enjoy looking through information (66% vs. 53%). There are also differences by ethnic group – young people from BAME backgrounds are less likely to describe themselves as keen learners (67% vs. 81% White) and to know where to go for information (63% vs. 77%). However, they are more likely than those from White backgrounds to enjoy looking through information (72% vs. 57%). In terms of social grade, those from C2DE backgrounds are more likely to feel nervous about their ability to learn (33% vs. 19% ABC1). Thus, there appears to be a notable minority of young people who need support in order to become empowered, and this group are more concentrated among males, those from BAME backgrounds and C2DEs.

There are some differences by learner type, as shown in Table 7.

Significant at 95%:
○ = higher ○ = lower

Attitudes towards learning - % 'like me'						
	FE 6 th Form (101) %	FE Voc (99) %	School 6 th Form (46*) %	Apprenticeship (98) %	E2E (60) %	Employment (47*) %
I would describe myself as a keen learner	75	86	76	85	88	81
I know where to go to get the right information about courses and careers	77	81	72	78	75	66
I'm happy to research all the options or choices myself, and will only ask for help if I really need it	73	77	61	73	75	79
I feel that I have made the right choices in my education after 16	70	82	74	80	63	53
I have a specific career goal in mind and know that I need a particular course to achieve this	71	76	61	78	62	53
I enjoy/ enjoyed looking through information about courses and qualifications, and like to get as much information as I can	58	72	63	53	63	51
I feel/ felt lost when considering all the choices available to me, and would really like/ have liked some more advice and guidance	36	30	37	29	37	32
I feel nervous about my ability to learn something new	35	35	33	32	33	23

M1: I am now going to read you a short list of statements that describe how some people may feel about learning in general. I would like to know how much you think each one is like your or not like you on a scale of 1 to 5.
 Base: all young people (451)
 *Caution: small base size

Table 7: Attitudes to learning choice by learner type

Based on a small base size, young people in employment are generally less positive in their attitudes towards learning, and are significantly less likely to feel that they made the right choices post 16, to have a specific career goal in mind and to enjoy looking through course information. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that young people who have already left the education system are in some way engaged with IAG/support services – to ensure that they can be supported to develop their career aspirations and do not become distant from the possibility of improving their skills in future. It is positive that eight out of ten describe themselves as keen learners.

Encouragingly, those young people following a vocational learning or Apprenticeship route are more likely to feel they have made the right choices in their learning, and to have a specific career goal in mind. Whilst Apprentices are less likely to enjoy looking through information about courses, they are confident that they know where to go to get the right information about courses and careers.

1.12 The decision-making journey

1.12.1 Stages in the decision-making journey

Young people feel that post-16 decisions are among the most important they will have to make. Of course, not all young people deal with these decisions in the same way. They are aware that decisions they make in terms of their education will impact on their future; for some this is in a rather abstract way as “the future” is not always a tangible thing, for others who are more vocationally minded (such as being a doctor, a plumber, a sports coach) the path appears much clearer.

Whilst young people often think about what they might want to do from an early age, the majority only start to think in terms of specific post-16 choices during year 11. Choices at 14 tend to be about which subjects to study at GCSE rather than what to do after this, and these subject choices are mainly related to personal enjoyment. For those who choose to follow non-academic routes such as vocational courses, the choices at 14 are more relevant as their goals may be more apparent and closer.

For some there is a disconnect between the IAG that they have received; the post-16 choices that they know they will have to make and ‘the future’ that they need to make these choices for. Below are some verbatim comments from the qualitative interviews which illustrate this:

“There’s not much information about what ‘A’ levels go to what careers, like if you really wanted to do something when you were older , I’m not really sure what I’d have to do to or how to put it all together” (Yr 11, Female, BTEC NVQ)

“My form tutor keeps saying like just remember that what you choose, this is what your going to be doing for the rest of your life...I’m like ‘wow!’...but really that’s a bit full-on” (Yr 11, Female, Apprenticeship)

In order to help young people to make effective choices, it is important to explicitly demonstrate the links between IAG, choices and their future careers, as many young people expect or need this link to be made for them.

Beyond the initial thinking that may happen in year 10, the most crucial decisions take place in year 11. Chart 25 shows the key stages of decision-making during this year. The core decision-making period then takes place in the limited time period from November, where young people start to look at college options, to February, when a decision is required.

Key stages of decision making and IAG – Year 11												
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug/Sept
IAG received	CV/ application form/ interview practice Tutorials Work experience	Work experience Tutorials Mock interviews	Taster days College open evenings	College open evenings College careers fair MOCK EXAMS	MOCK EXAMS College applications open College open days	College application deadlines	Course-work deadlines	College open evenings Course introductions Connexions meetings	GCSE exams start	GCSE exams continue	Looking for summer jobs Starting apprentice-ships	College open evenings Course introductions GCSE results
People involved	Form tutors Careers/ connexions advisor Employers	Employers Connexions / Careers advisor Form tutor	College tutors/ staff College students Parents	College tutors/staff College students Parents	Form tutors Careers/ connexions advisor College staff Parents	Parents Connexions / Careers advisor Form tutor College staff		College tutors/staff Connexions advisors			Employers	College tutors/staff Connexions advisors Parents
Key decisions / feelings	Quite overwhelmed! Lots to do at the same time as GCSE pressure...	Getting to grips with the world of work...	...then having to understand the post-16 world!	Really looking for advice and guidance at this stage/ feeling quite stressed	Feel like have very little time to make a decision	Decision made						Reacting to results... change of plan if needed

Chart 22: Key stages of the decision-making process during year 11

In particular the key times for IAG are often immediately before and after any work experience that the young people take part in, and there is often an increase in the amount of support that is desired during this crucial period to help them make their decisions.

The effect of this timetable for making choices, although necessary for the schools system, is to force all young people into making their decisions in the same period of time. As shown in the above chart, young people feel particularly stressed and pressurised during December and January.

1.13 Sources of IAG

The qualitative research found that, despite being aware that post-16 choices are of great importance, young people are generally quite passive in relation to IAG – they are generally happy to receive it but do not always actively seek it out. It is important to note the distinction between

information – which young people feel there is a large amount of – and *advice and guidance* – which appears to be sometimes lacking.

Key reasons for this passivity include:

- IAG is received or offered in a school environment, where young people are used to ‘things coming to them’ and being told what to do, rather than proactively initiating requests for information or advice.
- Given that they are the “what’s in it for me” generation, they will only actively seek something out that they see great value in, and given that the benefits are not always explicit, this is a key barrier. If there is no clear understanding or indication of the benefits, then there is little motivation to go looking for it.
- Until they reach this stage in their lives, everything has been planned out for them – i.e. having to go to school, following a fixed school timetable etc. They have not really had much / any choice, thus far (other than e.g. selecting subjects at GCSE level). As such it can be very overwhelming to have to make such big decisions – where too much / difficult choice can lead to inertia, apathy and disengagement .

The verbatim quote below from the qualitative research provides an example of this passivity:

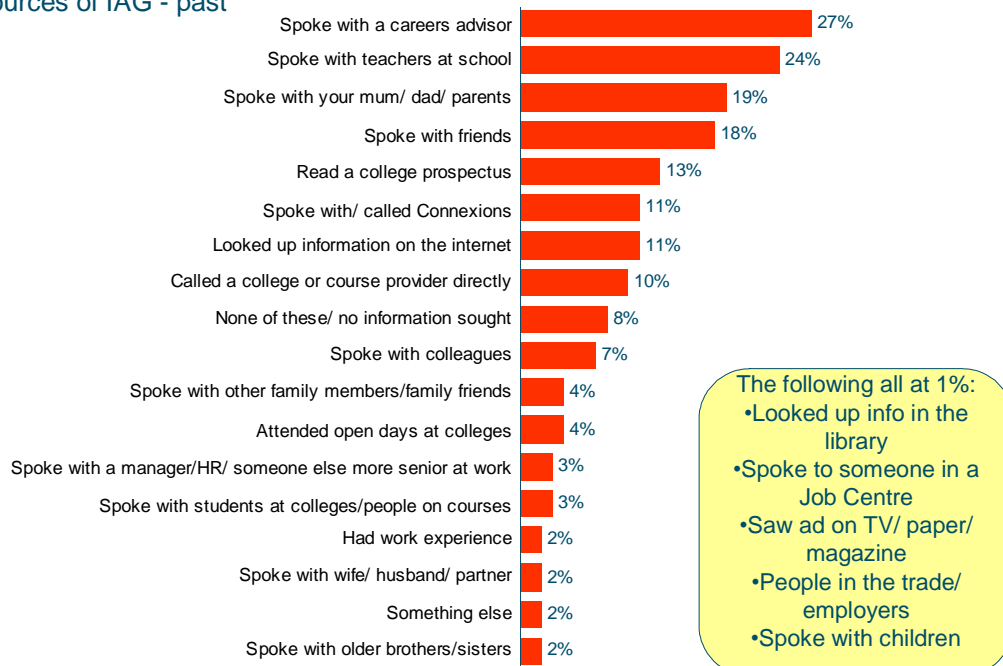
"I knew I wanted to do something outside with my hands but other than that I didn't really go and try and find what I was looking for I sort of waited and thought it would come to me" (Male, Yr 13, Apprenticeship)

1.13.1 Sources of guidance used

Young people are using a mix of formal and informal IAG sources to help them make their decision, and do not tend to perceive a distinction between the two in terms of importance. The most widely used sources are careers advisers (27%), teachers (24%), parents (19%) and friends (18%). Although it is encouraging that young people are receiving professional advice, word of mouth clearly plays an important role, and young people often do not question the validity of this information. However, they do expect to receive a greater level of expertise from formal sources (such as college tutor, careers teachers or Connexions advisers), and they are looking for advice and guidance from these sources, not just information.

Around a quarter of young people felt that a careers advisor or teacher helped make decision

Sources of IAG - past



M5/M5a/M5b: And still thinking about this time what sources of information, advice or guidance helped you make your decision?
Base: all young people (451)

Chart 23: Sources of IAG used to help make decisions

There are some demographic differences in use of IAG. Females are more likely than males to speak to a teacher (28% vs. 19%), and those in social grades ABC1 are more likely to speak to their parents compared with those from C2DE backgrounds (20% vs. 11%).

Table 8 shows differences by learner type in sources of IAG used. There are a number of differences, with those in employment less likely to have sought IAG at all. Young people in school 6th forms are most likely to have spoken to a teacher before making their decision, whereas those in E2E are most likely to speak to a careers adviser.

It is notable that relatively few Apprentices have sought IAG from a teacher at school, but a fairly high proportion have spoken to their parents and to a careers adviser. As teachers are less likely to have in-depth experience and knowledge of vocational learning and Apprenticeships, it is important that those young people who are considering following a work-based learning route have the opportunity to receive specialist advice and guidance from non-teaching staff.

Significant at 95%:
 = higher  = lower

Sources of IAG – by learner type						
	FE 6 th Form (101) %	FE Voc (99) %	School 6 th Form (46*) %	Apprenticeship (98) %	E2E (60) %	Employment (47*) %
Spoke with a careers advisor	34	20	24	32	40	23
Spoke with teachers at school	28	19	37	9	8	2
Spoke with your mum/ dad/ parents	20	17	24	22	15	9
Spoke with friends	18	15	20	15	22	21
Read a college prospectus	20	18	7	7	7	11
Looked up information on the internet	14	6	9	6	7	15
Spoke with/ called Connexions	12	16	7	15	23	9
Called a college or course provider directly	18	15	-	11	12	11
Spoke with colleagues	11	8	-	7	12	13
Spoke with other family members/ family friends	5	11	2	6	5	2
Attended open days at colleges	7	7	-	3	3	2
None of these/ no information sought	4	6	7	10	10	17

M5/M5a/M5b: And still thinking about this time what sources of information, advice or guidance helped you make your decision?
 Base: all adults (405)
 *Caution: small base size

Table 8: Sources of IAG used by learner type

Work experience

The quantitative research found that very few young people feel that work experience helped them to make their post-16 decisions (just 2%), perhaps because this is less top of mind as an IAG source compared with other key sources such as careers advisers and teachers. However, qualitatively it was found that work experience can be an important way of enabling young people to make the link between the world of work and their post-16 choices, by affirming or discounting early ideas about future career paths.

The time directly after work experience may be a good time to help young people start thinking about their future choices, but this does not seem to happen in all cases at the moment. Many young people are not getting the most out of work experience, as they are having to work in areas which do not interest them (due to a general lack of placements or a lack of understanding of how to find one).

Connexions

Around one in ten young people (11%) said that Connexions helped with their decision. Opinions on the service were varied, with many young people unclear about the service offering. For some, it is a general advisory service including issues such as sexual problems and bullying, making it less desirable to be seen going to an adviser. For others, there was a level of inconsistency in the service received; qualitatively not everyone was offered a careers interview (supported by the quantitative figures where not everyone has spoken with an adviser, with school 6th formers being the least likely to have spoken to them) and with the level of expertise of the advisers, some being

perceived as very knowledgeable and others less helpful (failing to give advice that was felt to be meaningful).

The research also showed that 'middle achievers' can feel neglected or overlooked, as the Connexions service tends to be focused towards high fliers (e.g. those going to University) and lower achievers who are at risk of becoming NEET.

Careers lessons

Just 1% of those in the quantitative study mentioned careers lessons as a key source of IAG. The qualitative research also found that careers lessons only take place sporadically through years 10 and 11, and are generally seen as ineffective, as they are often taught by a teacher who is not a specialist, with class sizes which are seen as too large. Young people often struggle to make the link between what they do in the lessons and the choices they have to make. For example, they may practice writing their CV, but then how does this help them to choose which course to study? The general disengagement with these lessons is also compounded by the way that they are scheduled by some schools, for example the careers lesson replacing a PE lesson, rather than having a dedicated slot in the timetable.

Careers library

The careers library is untouched by most young people, due to two main problems. Firstly, there are issues with the format of the materials, for example lengthy and wordy booklets and leaflets. Secondly, there is a 'chicken and egg' situation – i.e. to navigate through the careers library, you need to know what you are looking for, but if you already know what you want to do, you are unlikely to want to use the library. Programmes such as Kudos and Fast Tomato are an alternative to the traditional careers library which are seen in a much different light – they are fun to use and as such get attention, however they are not seen as idea generators, not serious sources of IAG.

College open days and taster days

Although only one in twenty young people (4%) mentioned college open days as a key IAG source, qualitatively they were found to be extremely useful. This suggests that for those who do attend them they serve a very important role, but perhaps not all young people are aware of these days or encouraged to attend. Those who do attend appreciate being able to speak to tutors who are experts in their subjects of interest, and having the opportunity to speak to current students. Often the tutors are felt to be able to talk through the different routes available as experts on a subject of interest, and this is seen as an important source of advice and guidance for those who receive it. Talking to current students offers the other side of the equation – particularly in terms of the culture

of the college, allowing potential students to develop an understanding of whether they would 'fit in', as well as gaining further insight into the courses of interest.

The only criticism that those attending the open days had was that they often were only able to attend one day out of the school year, and would welcome the opportunity to attend a day at more than one college.

Careers fairs and events

Careers fairs were seen as moderately useful in terms of helping young people to consider careers that they may not have thought of beforehand, but this is dependent on the variety and quality of employers present at the events. Specific events focusing on more general life skills rather than courses and choices, whilst being related to careers from the perspective of the provider, leave young people struggling to make the connection between these events, their skills, and their post 16 choices. For example an event such as 'Dress to Impress' may raise awareness of appropriate behaviours in the workplace and good interviewing skills, but as with CV writing in careers lessons, young people do not see this as directly impacting on the decisions about courses that they need to make.

1.13.2 Satisfaction with IAG sources

The quantitative research also measured young people's satisfaction with each of the IAG sources that they used. Results are shown below for all the most commonly used sources of information.

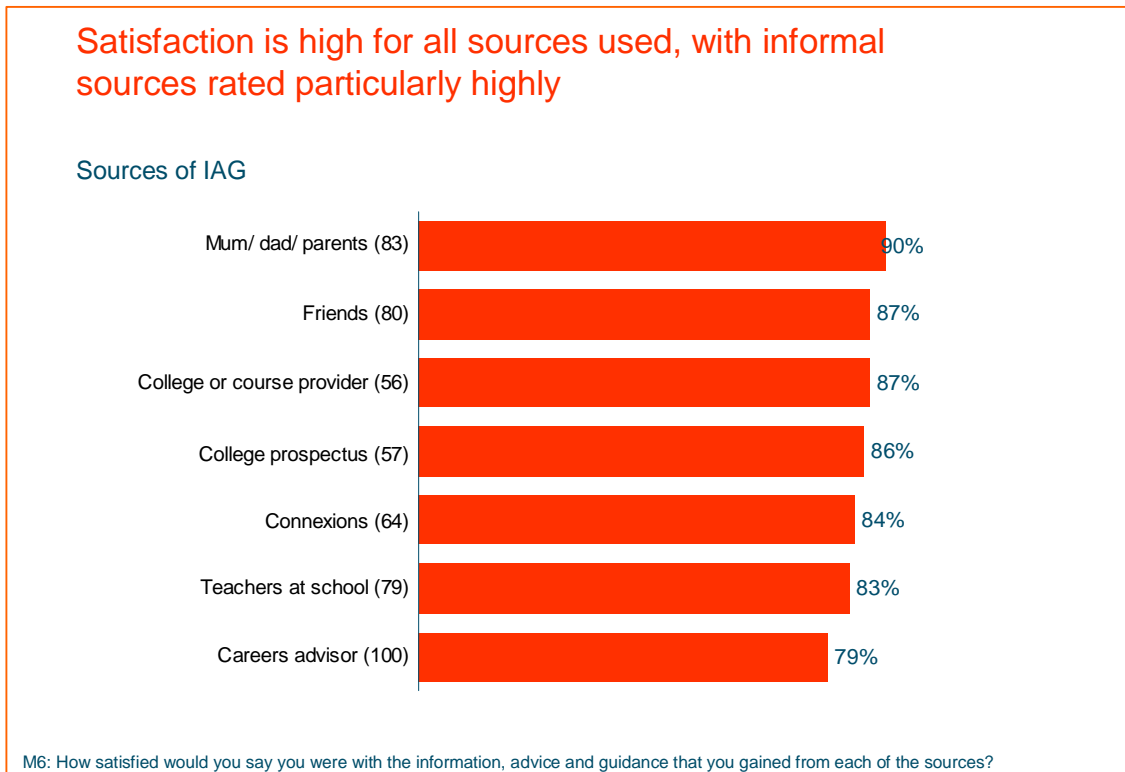


Chart 24: Satisfaction with IAG sources (those used by 50 or more)

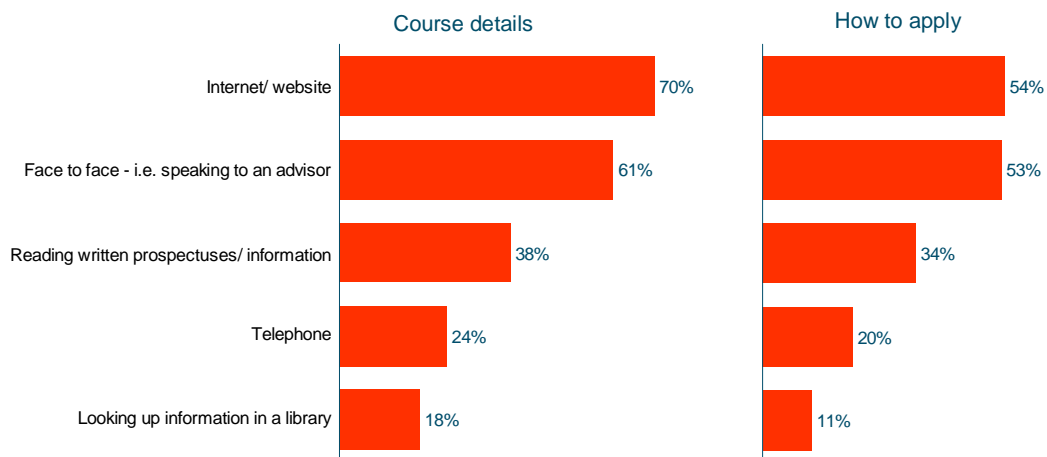
Encouragingly, satisfaction levels are high for all of the key sources of IAG. Informal sources score particularly highly, with 90% of those who spoke to their parents saying they were satisfied, and 87% satisfied with IAG provided by friends. Learning providers are also among the highest rated (87%).

1.13.3 Preferred sources of IAG for the future

In terms of receiving future IAG, the internet and face to face methods are the preferred channels for both information on courses and how to apply.

The internet and face to face meetings are the preferred sources of IAG both for information about courses and how to apply

Sources of IAG – future: course details vs. suitability/ how to apply



M9: Thinking more generally about how you may like to gather information, advice or guidance about learning in the FUTURE, or as you go forward, which of the following would you prefer to use to get information about courses, such as dates and timings of courses?

M10: And which would you prefer to use to find out what courses would be suitable for you, and how you might apply for them?

Base: all young people (451)

Chart 25: Sources of IAG preferred for future information about courses and how to apply

The internet and face to face are the preferred channels among all learner types, but there are some differences between groups. Young people in FE 6th form and vocational courses are more likely to choose written prospectuses than other learner types, both for course information and details on how to apply. Those in employment are more likely than other groups to prefer telephone information regarding how to apply, perhaps suggesting they feel less confident and prefer a one-on-one approach.

Significant at 95%:
○ = higher ○ = lower

Sources of IAG for Course Information – by learner type						
	FE 6 th Form (101) %	FE Voc (99) %	School 6 th Form (46*) %	Apprentice -ship (98) %	E2E (60) %	Employment (47*) %
Internet	73	75	67	69	63	64
Face to face – i.e. speaking to an advisor	60	67	57	67	60	64
Reading written prospectuses/ information	45	54	28	36	23	34
Telephone	28	25	11	36	28	36
Looking up information in a library	17	26	22	15	10	9

M9: Thinking more generally about how you may like to gather information, advice or guidance about learning in the FUTURE, or as you go forward, which of the following would you prefer to use to get information about courses, such as dates and timings of courses?
 Base: all young people (451)
 *Caution: small base size

Table 9: Preferred source of IAG for future information about courses – by learner type

Significant at 95%:
○ = higher ○ = lower

Sources of IAG about Suitability and Application – by learner type						
	FE 6 th Form (101) %	FE Voc (99) %	School 6 th Form (46*) %	Apprentice -ship (98) %	E2E (60) %	Employment (47*) %
Internet	54	61	46	64	57	57
Face to face – i.e. speaking to an advisor	51	62	48	53	58	57
Reading written prospectuses/ information	41	40	30	24	20	30
Telephone	19	17	13	29	18	34
Looking up information in a library	12	11	13	7	8	6

M10: And which would you prefer to use to find out what courses would be suitable for you, and how you might apply for them?
 Base: all young people (451)
 *Caution: small base size

Table 10: Preferred source of IAG for future information about suitability and how to apply – by learner type

1.14 Influencers on Young People’s Decisions

Both the qualitative and quantitative research highlighted the importance of **informal** influences on young people’s decisions. We now consider the extent to which parents, other family members, friends and teachers influence young people’s choices in learning.

1.14.1 The role of parents

Parents certainly play a key role in their child’s decision making process and overall parents are the main source of moral support and guidance for their children. Based on depth interviews with parents, the qualitative research hypothesised four parenting types which differ by their attitudes, behaviour and engagement with IAG:

- Protectors
- Planners
- Enablers
- Observers

The following charts describe these four typologies, their general attitude towards their children, their attitudes towards post-16 decisions, their level of engagement with IAG and the implications that their typology may have for their child.

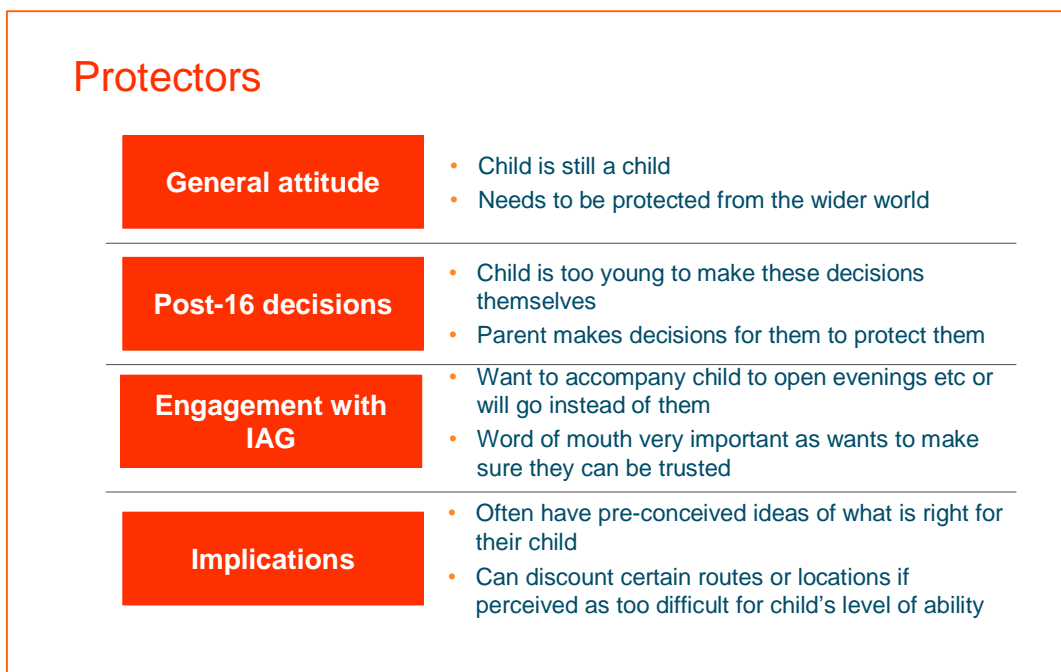


Chart 26: Parent typologies - Protectors

Planners

General attitude

- Hierarchy between parent and child
- Quite sensitive to the norm

Post-16 decisions

- Decision is too important for child to make themselves
- Parent makes decisions as they know best

Engagement with IAG

- Wants to find out as much as possible but not about all options
- Often focussing on long term careers

Implications

- Can sometimes not really listen to what their child needs or wants to do
- Often wants to stick to traditional routes e.g. A-levels, apprenticeships

Chart 27: Parent typologies - Planners

Enablers

General attitude

- Guiding children towards independence
- Children need to be supported into adulthood

Post-16 decisions

- Child needs to make their own decisions
- Parent wants to help them be confident in their choices

Engagement with IAG

- Wants to find out information with child to help them make sure they're making the right decision
- Doesn't want to do everything for their child

Implications

- Can be unsure of how much help to offer their child
- Can feel unable to criticise their child's plans

Chart 28: Parent typologies - Enablers

Observers

General attitude

- Everybody has their own life
- Teenagers should be independent

Post-16 decisions

- It's the child's life so they need to make their own choices
- Parent wants to offer moral support but doesn't want to bias them

Engagement with IAG

- Waits for child to share IAG with them
- Likely to rely on formal sources of IAG to guide their child

Implications

- Child can feel empowered and in charge of own decisions or...
- Child can feel lost and lacking in anyone to turn to

Chart 29: Parent typologies - Observers

1.14.2 The role of other family members

Siblings can serve to bridge the gap to a certain extent between parents and school. They offer a certain amount of moral support, but not to the same extent as parents, and they are more likely to have up-to-date information and more recent experiences that they can pass on. This makes siblings more like formal sources of IAG in the eyes of the young people. They are particularly useful for information about providers, courses and employers, though the caveat here is that their information could be based on subjective opinion as opposed to objective facts.

Other family and extended family members/ friends are often consulted in a similar manner to siblings e.g. cousins, neighbours and so on. In many cases it is actually the parents as opposed to the young people themselves who glean information from these sources to pass onto their children. These extended contacts also have other practical uses such as finding work experience and potential employers for apprenticeships or part-time employment.

1.14.3 The role of teachers

The role of teachers in terms of IAG and decision making seems to vary greatly between schools with 6th Forms and those without. Those from a school with a 6th Form feel that teachers are likely to be interested and helpful, but only if you are staying on to do their subject. Those from a school without a 6th Form can feel that teachers care only about getting them through their GCSEs and have no interest beyond that. There will always be exceptions and it is acknowledged that some

subject teachers do take the time to help and offer advice but this is very dependent on the individual teacher as opposed to any underlying structure in place.

1.15 Choosing between different post-16 routes

The majority of young people are happy with the amount of choice available to them. However, many struggle to understand which of the options are most suited to them, and some may feel overwhelmed by the amount of choice available. Where some may feel overwhelmed, this feeling is often driven by the subject matter of courses rather than the different route options (e.g. History vs. Geography rather than A¹ levels vs. Apprenticeships etc).

In opposition to the current feelings of the young people themselves, the careers advisers that were spoken to in the qualitative research feel that young people will deal with the increasing choice easily. They feel that this generation are used to fairly rapid changes in media and technology, so will have few problems in navigating through technology-based channels. The young people, who currently feel that they have a large amount of choice anyway, feel that overwhelmingly their issues are about getting the right information about courses that exist at the moment.

The quantitative research asked how much young people felt they knew about the various options, as shown in Chart 30.

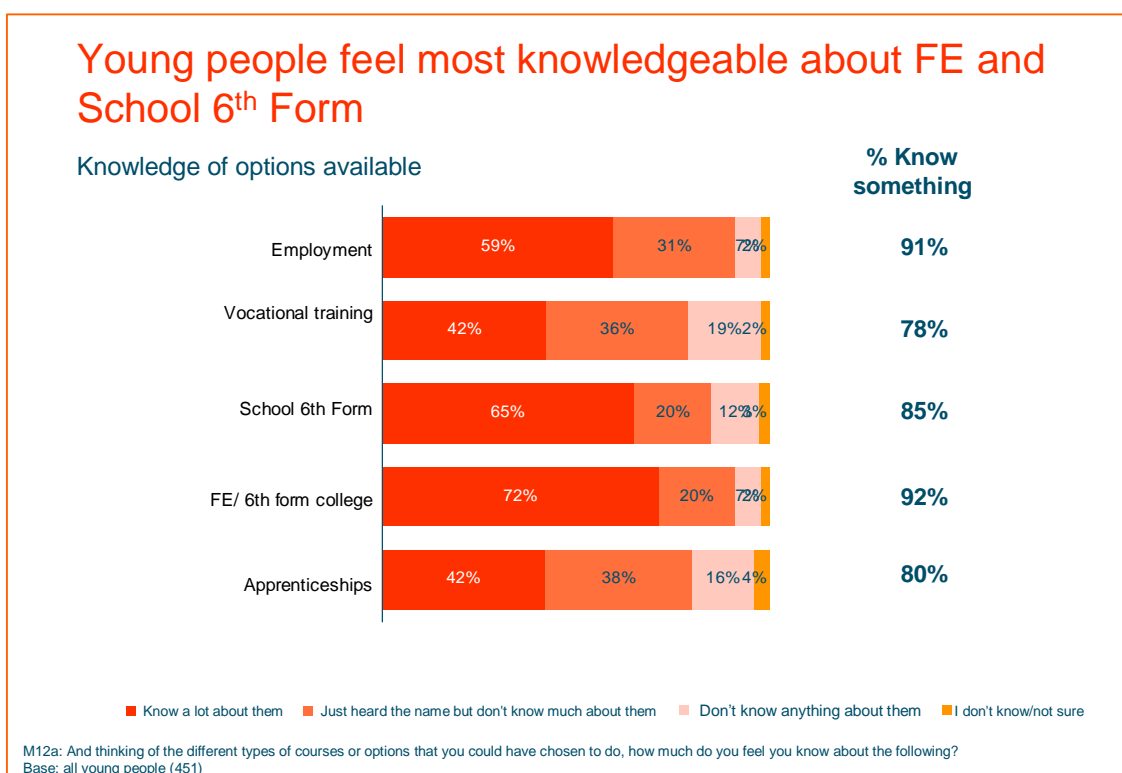


Chart 30: Level of knowledge about different courses or options

The options which young people were least knowledgeable about are vocational training and Apprenticeships (42% claim to 'know a lot' about both routes). There are some subgroup differences in terms of level of knowledge. Males feel more knowledgeable about Apprenticeships than females (48% vs. 37% know 'a lot').

The qualitative research also explored young people's understanding of the various options, and discovered some commonly held beliefs about some routes that are untrue and may prevent young people from exploring a route that may be right for them:

A and AS Levels

Whilst these are perhaps the most well-known qualifications, there is a degree of confusion surrounding them. Many young people in year 11 and year 12 are aware that they are purely academic qualifications but they may be unsure of:

- The workload involved
- What A' levels can lead to
- How A' and AS Levels work together
- What the best subject combinations are

There is an awareness that A' Levels are a route which leads to university, but this may only be present if someone else in their family has been to university.

Classroom based vocational courses

There is a large amount of confusion regarding vocational education. There is a real lack of awareness about the full spectrum of vocational choices available, and where young people are aware of different routes, they do not always understand the differences between them. Combined with this there is still a level of confusion about the merits of vocational courses: what is the value of this qualification and how does it relate to my future prospects?

Apprenticeships

Work based vocational courses, and in particular, Apprenticeships, are the route that young people appear to be most misinformed about. Some common misconceptions about Apprenticeships are: that they are unpaid, that they are only for young men, employers will make you work as many hours as they want or even that they don't exist any more.

School 6th Forms

A significant minority of school 6th form students felt that they had received little information about alternative options, and that they were pressurised to stay on. Nearly four in ten (39%) of those

studying in school 6th forms in the quantitative study felt they had not been presented with alternative options. Overall this may have the effect of limiting choices for these young people as many 6th Forms only offer A' Levels. In the qualitative research, many students in schools with 6th forms felt that it had been implied to them that:

- College education was sub-standard
- That the teachers at college would not care enough about the students
- That A levels were the only worthwhile option if they wished to enter higher education

Employment

Most young people had been discouraged from choosing full time employment as their post-16 option. For those who did wish to work, it was felt that there was a lack of support and information in terms of getting started on a career, rather than just taking a job. The quantitative research found that around half of those not in education (47%) considered continuing to learn when they made their choices in Year 11, with the remainder feeling that they wanted to work (53%). The main reasons for entering employment were due to finances or to gain experience, and three quarters (75%) said that they would consider learning in the future.

Therefore, young people who have chosen to follow an employment route at an early age are fairly equally split into those who definitely knew they wanted to work, and those who also considered staying in learning. This indicates that a significant proportion of those who move into employment when leaving school could have been encouraged to stay on, had the learning offer been right for them. Furthermore, the majority would consider returning to education in the future, emphasising the importance of Connexions and learning providers maintaining contact with young people who are in employment.

1.16 Factors Influencing Choice

There are a number of factors influencing young people's decision making, and these factors are often interlinked. The main factors are:

Location: an important factor for all young people and taken as a 'given', so it is not always at the forefront of their minds. Young people are happy to consider a range of options within a certain perimeter, with the outer boundary usually determined by travelling time and modes of transport available rather than a need to be within a specific area. It is worth noting that those in rural areas did not feel restricted by the (possibly more limited) options available to them.

When location does become an issue, it is most likely to be through the influence of the individual's parents trying to steer their child towards an option they feel is more appropriate for them. This

can manifest itself as parents claiming that they do not want their child to travel 'long' distances or to negotiate public transport.

Providers and quality: this has a large influence on choice, but factors used to discriminate on reputation are subjective and based on anecdotal reports, rather than assessments of provider performance. Most young people are aware of the relevant providers strengths and specialisms, such as sports or vocational courses, and this can have an impact on their decisions. Providers were not evaluated on pass rates or statistics, but more on personal and anecdotal stories of enjoyment and success. Indeed many young people do not seem to make a connection between the pass rate and the quality of the provider, with many believing that the results are down to the individual's efforts (or lack of effort) rather than teaching standards.

Finance: those from C2DE backgrounds were more likely to take finance into account generally and also in regard to their education. They are concerned about contributing to the house keeping and having their own independence rather than just funding their social activities. There is a strong sense amongst this group that at the age of 16 you should not be relying on your parents for money. In terms of their education, their concerns relate to practicalities around funding travel and meals while studying and working.

Young people from ABC1 backgrounds tend to see their finances more in terms of how much money they have to fund their own activities, rather than in the wider context of household finances.

For those who choose to go into full time employment, money is a large influencing factor. The idea of being financially independent appeals, and the idea of earning full time wages helps to make them feel superior to, and more mature than, their peers. Interestingly, money is not a key motivator for choosing an apprenticeship or vocational course. Here the money is considered an added bonus by some, whereas others worry that their family will lose their child benefit allowance should they choose a work-based route over a college based one.

EMA: there are a number of different perceptions of EMA, both from those receiving the payment and those who are not eligible. Some believed that the system was unfair and that all young people should be treated equally no matter what their parents earn. Others not receiving the grant accepted the reasons behind this but felt that the bonus payments that EMA students receive are unfair (due to the fact that not all learners are able to receive them). Most students receiving EMA felt that it didn't influence their decisions and saw it as an added bonus, but for some it made all the difference to being able to stay on in education (although there were no clear differences by

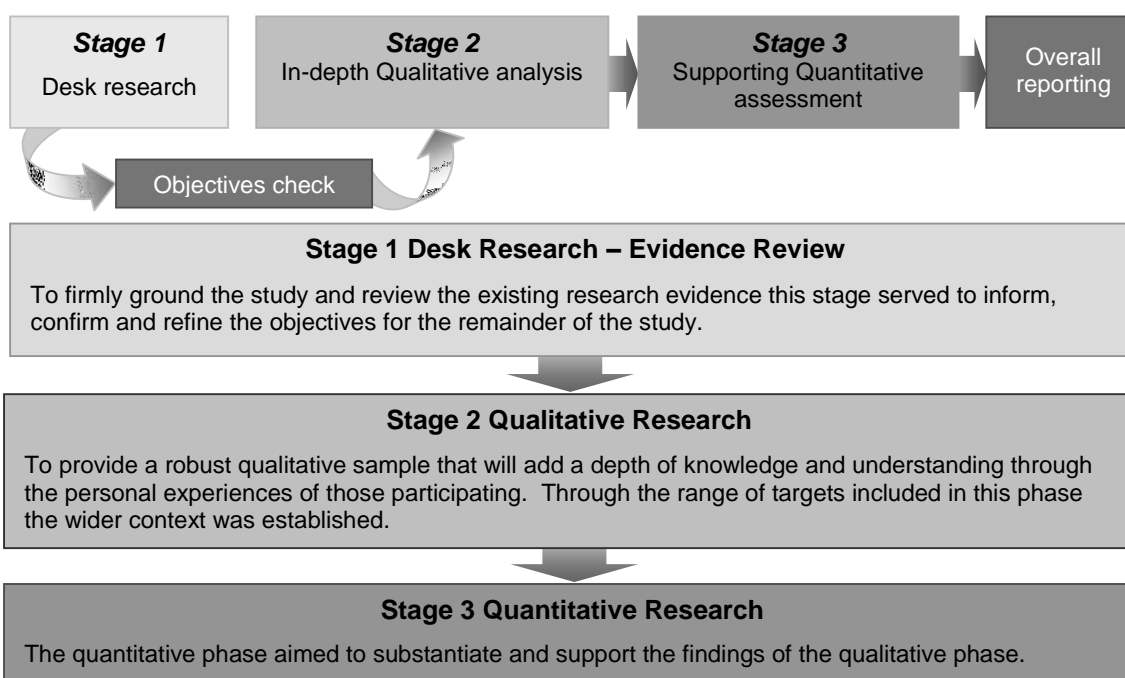
social grade). This group feel that the criteria they have to meet each week are quite strict (such as tutors not accepting lateness due to transport issues). There is also some concern that some students take on post-16 education just to receive EMA. These students are felt to be a disruptive influence in classrooms and can cause a great deal of resentment.

Attitudes towards learning styles and learning environments: is very much an individual preference but it does have a certain amount of influence on decision making. Whilst young people may not always be able to articulate it as such they do seem to have a fairly clear idea of ways in which they prefer to learn, such as: the safety of school versus the independence of college, academic versus practical learning, learning on the job versus learning in a classroom.

1.17 Research Design

A multi-stage research project was conducted, involving the following:

1. **Desk research:** a review of existing research around young peoples' and adults choices in the learning and skills sector. This found that past research focussed mainly on individual aspects of the education experience rather than a detailed examination of the step by step journey. *As this stage was to check existing sources/ refine the objectives for the subsequent stages the findings from this are not included in this report*
2. **Qualitative stage:** depth interviews with young people and adult learners
3. **Quantitative stage:** telephone interviews with young people and adult learners



1.17.1 Qualitative Stage – Adult Sample

A total of 46 depth one hour depth interviews were carried out. 42 were conducted with the different learner types as shown below:

Respondent Type	Age		
	20 – 29	30 – 44	45+
Pre-Level 2 Learners	2	2	2
Level 2 Learners	3	3	3
Level 3 Learners	3	3	3
Personal and Community Development Learners	2	2	2
Considering starting a learning programme	2	2	2
Non-Learners	2	2	2
Totals	14	14	14

Within each respondent type a balance was kept according to:

- Vocational Vs classroom-based (where appropriate)
- Employment status
- Gender

And across the whole sample, a balance was achieved according to:

- Rural Vs urban location
- SEG
- Ethnicity
- Location (by levels of deprivation)

In addition, 4 one hour depth interviews were also conducted with career/ learning advisers:

Depth	Organisation type	Location
1	Public body	Urban
2	Private organisation	Rural
3	Private organisation	Rural
4	Public body	Urban

1.17.2 Qualitative Stage – Young People Sample

The qualitative stage looked at young people in school year 11, 12 and 13, or equivalent. Subsequently this allowed the inclusion of those aged 15-16, and yet to make their post-16 choices, to be included in the research.

A number of different techniques were used:

- *Paired friendship depths*: with peers who are likely to choose (for year 11) or have chosen (for year 12) similar routes. This method reduces any social embarrassment or awkwardness, leading to more meaningful insights
- *Conflict groups*: with 4 peers who have all chosen different paths post-16. These groups allowed exploration of any potential differences in experiences of guidance and decision making and also allow respondents to compare and contrast themselves with each other, leading to interesting level of insight and awareness.
- *Depth interviews*: one on one interviews

A total of 26 1.5 hour paired friendship depth interviews, 4 2 hour friendship mini-groups and 4 2 hour conflict groups were conducted as follows:

Year 11 Paired friendship depths – 1.5 hours, defined by their intentions post-16

Depth	Intentions for post-16 choices	Gender	Location	SEG
1	Likely to do A/S or A levels at a school 6 th form/6 th form college/ FE college	M	Urban	BC1C2
2	Likely to do A/S or A levels at a school 6th form/6th form college/ FE college	F	Rural	C1C2D
3	Likely to do BTEC/GNVQ etc at a school 6th form/ 6th form college/ FE college	M	Rural	C1C2D
4	Likely to do BTEC/GNVQ etc at a school 6th form/ 6th form college/ FE college	F	Urban	BC1C2
5	Likely to choose vocational, work based learning e.g. Apprenticeships	M	Rural	C1C2
6	Likely to choose vocational, work based learning e.g. Apprenticeships	F	Urban	DE
7	Likely to choose employment	M	Urban	DE
8	Likely to choose employment	F	Rural	C1C2

Year 12 Paired friendship depths – 1.5 hours, defined by their recent post-16 choices

Depth	Post-16 choices	Gender	Location	SEG
1	Studying A/S or A levels at school 6th Form	M	Urban	BC1C2
2	Studying A/S or A levels at school 6th Form	F	Rural	C1C2D
3	Studying A/S or A levels at 6th form college/ FE college	M	Rural	C1C2D
4	Studying A/S or A levels at 6th form college/ FE college	F	Urban	C1C2D
5	Studying BTEC, GNVQ etc at School 6th Form	M	Rural	BC1C2
6	Studying BTEC, GNVQ etc at School 6th Form	F	Urban	C1C2D
7	Studying BTEC, GNVQ etc at 6th form college/ FE college	M	Urban	C1C2D
8	Studying BTEC, GNVQ etc at 6th form college/ FE college	F	Rural	BC1C2
9	In vocational, work based learning e.g. apprenticeships	M	Rural	C1C2
10	In vocational, work based learning e.g. apprenticeships	F	Urban	C2DE
11	In Employment	M	Urban	C1C2
12	In Employment	F	Rural	C2DE

Year 12 Conflict Groups – 2 hours

Group	Post-16 choices	Gender	Location
1	A mixture of the following:	M	Urban
2	- One respondent studying A/AS levels	M	Rural
3	- One respondent in vocational, classroom based training,	F	Urban
4	- One in vocational, work based training - And one respondent in employment	F	Rural

Year 13: Paired friendship depths – 1.5 hours, defined by the choices they have made post-16

Depth	Post-16 choices	Gender	Location	SEG
1	Studying A/AS levels at a school 6th form/6th form college/FE college	M	Rural	BC1C2
2	Studying A/AS levels at a school 6th form/6th form college/FE college	F	Urban	BC1C2
3	Studying BTEC/GNVQ at a school 6th form/ 6th form college/ FE college	M	Urban	BC1C2
4	Studying BTEC/GNVQ at a school 6th form/ 6th form college/ FE college	F	Rural	C1C2D
5	Completing vocational, work based learning e.g. apprenticeships	M	Rural	C1C2D
6	Completing vocational, work based learning e.g. apprenticeships	F	Urban	C2DE

In addition the following interviews were also conducted with parents and career/ learning advisers:

Parents: Depth interviews

Depth	Children's post-16 choices	Location
1	Have children in year 12 studying A/AS levels at a school 6 th form/ 6 th form college/ FE college	Rural
2	Have children in year 12 studying BTEC, GNVQ etc at school 6 th form/ 6 th form college/ FE college	Urban
3	Have children of year 12 age in vocational, work based learning e.g. apprenticeships	Rural
4	Have children of year 12 age who are in full time employment	Urban

Careers/ Learning advisers: Depth interviews

Depth	Institution	Location
1	Working in a school (advising year 11s)	Urban
2	Working in a school 6 th Form	Rural
3	Working in a 6 th form college/FE college	Rural
4	Working independently of the education system e.g. Connexions adviser	Urban

1.18 Quantitative Stage Sample

The following conducted by telephone:

Strand	Target	Sample size	Total
Young People... (aged 16-19)	...who have chosen A/ AS Levels at further education college or 6 th form college learning	n=101	n=451
	... who have chosen vocational courses at further education college or 6 th form college learning	n=99	
	...who have chosen A/ AS Levels at school 6th form	n=46	
	...who have chosen vocational or work based learning (apprenticeships)	n=98	
	...who are participating in the Entry to Employment (E2E) scheme	n=60	
	...who have chosen employment	n=47	
Adults... (aged 20 plus)	...who have embarked on pre level 2 learning	n=77	n=405
	...who have embarked on level 2 learning	n=69	
	...who have embarked on level 3 learning – vocational/ work based and non-vocational classroom based	n=85	
	...who have embarked on personal/ community based learning (leisure learning)	n=47	
	...who are considering starting a programme of learning	n=44	
	...non-learners – who are open top the idea of learning but who have not yet participated	n=83	
Total quantitative sample			n=856

For the young people's sample it was then possible to weight the sample to be representative of the universe covered as follows:

Target	Sample size	% of sample	Weighted %
A/ AS Levels at further education college or 6 th form college learning	n=101	22%	34%
Vocational courses at further education college or 6 th form college learning	n=99	22%	11%
A/ AS Levels at school 6th form	n=46	10%	30%
vocational or work based learning (apprenticeships)	n=98	22%	8%
Entry to Employment (E2E) scheme	n=60	13%	1%
Employment	n=47	10%	16%

Please note: it was not possible to apply a similar weighting to the adults sample as the universe is unknown.

1.19 Additional Findings

1.19.1 Adults' Attitudes to learning

The quantitative research explored attitudes to learning, using a series of attitude statements (chart 31).

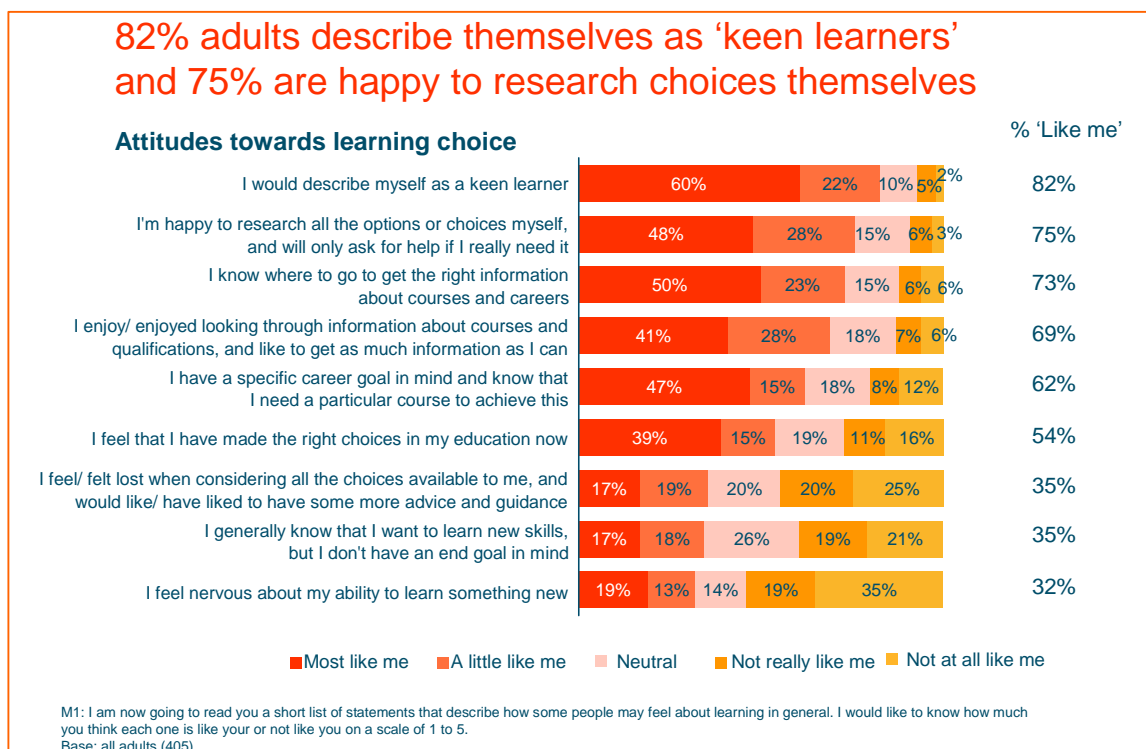


Chart 31: Attitudes towards learning choice (Adults)

Among all adults interviewed, attitudes towards learning are generally positive. Over eight in ten (82%) describe themselves as 'keen learners' and three quarters (75%) say they are happy to research the options themselves. However, some adults are more negative in their attitudes – around a third say that they felt lost when considering their choices or didn't have an end goal in mind (both 35%), and 32% feel nervous about their ability to learn. As shown in the qualitative research, this lack of confidence has an impact on motivation to learn and starting point on the journey, and therefore this vulnerable subgroup should be a key focus for IAG.

There are some subgroup differences in attitudes towards learning. Females are more likely than males to feel that they know where to go for IAG (76% vs. 66%) and have a specific goal in mind (66% vs. 54%), but they are also more likely to feel nervous about learning (35% vs. 25%). Those from social grades C2DE are likely to be less 'empowered' – 44% say that they feel lost (compared with 23% of ABC1s) and 37% are nervous about learning (compared with 26%).

Table 11 below shows attitudes towards learning by learner type.

Significant at 95%:
 = higher  = lower
















Attitudes towards learning - % 'like me'				
	Pre Level 2 (77) %	Level 2 (69) %	Level 3 (85) %	Non-learner (83) %
I would describe myself as a keen learner	82	83	 88	 76
I'm happy to research all the options or choices myself, and will only ask for help if I really need it	74	75	82	72
I know where to go to get the right information about courses and careers	69	74	 81	 65
I enjoy/ enjoyed looking through information about courses and qualifications, and like to get as much information as I can	64	68	 78	 63
I have a specific career goal in mind and know that I need a particular course to achieve this	 78	 68	 72	 42
I feel that I have made the right choices in my education now	 60	48	 64	51
I feel/ felt lost when considering all the choices available to me, and would really like/ have liked some more advice and guidance	30	33	38	34
I generally know that I want to learn new skills, but I don't have an end goal in mind	29	32	33	36
I feel nervous about my ability to learn something new	 38	26	 40	 20

Table 11: Attitudes towards learning choice by adult learner type

*Figures are not shown for Leisure learners and Considerers due to small base sizes (less than 50).

Unsurprisingly, non-learners are the least positive about learning, and are significantly less likely to describe themselves as keen learners, knowing where to go for information, enjoying looking through information or to have a specific goal in mind.

Pre Level 2 and Level 2 learners are slightly less likely to feel that they know where to go for information (although this difference is not statistically significant) but are most likely to feel that they have an end goal in mind. Given their current level of learning, Pre Level 2 and Level 2 learners are those most likely to have just returned to learning, and therefore may have not developed the confidence of Level 3 learners. IAG is required to ensure that these learners progress as they wish to.

1.19.2 Adult Learner Typologies – Pen Portraits

Direction Hunter – Cold Starter, Intellectually well equipped, usually rapidly progress along the journey to enrolment, once their direction is clear – however they need options to consider

- **Who:**
 - Minimum of level 1 qualifications (usually higher)
 - Recently left education (within last 5 years), and are often younger
 - Have often made a false start in their career and are having a rethink
- **Why:**
 - In a job with limited prospects
 - Realisation that their current career path is unsatisfying
 - They feel young enough to start over
 - Realise that education is needed for their further/ future advancement
 - There is often an external push from their family
- **What information they need:**
 - They are looking for a range of options to mull over
 - Need information to evaluate what to do, with supplementary information on dates fees etc
- **How they choose to receive the information:**
 - Happy to initiate enquiries by phone or website
 - Would like to discuss, if possible (preferably face-to-face, but not essential)
 - Final decisions taken following more self-initiated research (web or prospectuses)

The Direction Hunter: Pen Portrait

“Jane”

- Aged 24, she left school with 9 GCSEs and went on to 6th form college where she came out with an A level in Performing Arts
- She wanted to stay in the rural area in which she lived, so she took odd jobs and finally settled as an account manager in a bank, where she has been for 5 years
 - Currently she feels under qualified to get promotion, and is not enjoying her current job so she is thinking what else she can do
 - As a result she is now considering going back to college as she currently doesn't have any commitments – the only thing stopping her is the loss of an income
- She does not want to waste time on the wrong course, so is taking the time to look into her options, and the outcomes
 - Cost of course/ qualifications gained /availability of jobs in the locality
 - She has contacted a few colleges about courses, but the information did not come through
- Would like some guidance to help her decide what she is good at
 - Once she decides what she wants to do she is confident about being able to source a course
 - She currently uses friends and family as sounding boards

Emotionally: *floundering a bit, and looking for fulfilment in her future job*



Direction Seeker – Cold Starter, Intellectually ill-equipped, looking for reasons to exit the journey – first steps towards education are easily dashed, as a result they need nurturing and spoon-feeding

- **Who:**
 - Lower end of the educational spectrum / SEG
 - Often had poor/ unhelpful advice at school (or since leaving)
 - Feel insecure about being clever enough to do it and are overwhelmed by the range of options available
 - Frozen by inertia and don't know where to start
- **Why:**
 - Realisation of the need to do something, often with a push from their family
 - They are looking to better themselves, or; they have a personal interest that they wish to develop, or; it is job focus
- **What information they need:**
 - They are in need of information to help give them their end goal
 - They need help understanding what they might be good at
 - Advice on factors that they need to consider including advice on **how to look for a course**, and which courses and options that will best suit
- **How they choose to receive the information:**
 - A face to face approach best suits many (strong need for reassurance)
 - However, for some telephone provides greater anonymity and less embarrassment
 - Websites are often of less use at these early stages for those ill-equipped to deal with information

The Direction Seeker: Pen Portrait

“Geraldine”

- A single mum of four and a grandmother, she fell pregnant before completing her education
- Currently working in family African-Caribbean catering business she is talking about returning to college, but is unclear how she would go about getting on a course
 - Occasionally looks on the internet, and her children might direct her to a page to write down contact details
- Has not decided whether to speak to an adviser in the colleges or go to the job centre or Pertemps
 - Feels it will all be confusing
- She does not feel she has a lot of support and expects/requires a lot of help from authorities (sending her information in post/calling her and encouraging her to enrol)
- Ideally Geraldine would like one person to approach her and tell her all she needs to know
- Likely to drop out the system, and at one level looking for reasons not to take part
 - *“I can't see very well”*
 - *“The information isn't coming to me”*
 - *“The motivation is a bit like losing weight isn't it – you need a push”*
 - *“Sometimes adult classes are not all adults because they take on young people – you take longer to grasp things when you are older!”*

Emotionally: she is confused and feels very much on her own



Interest Developer – Warm Starter, Intellectually well equipped, often highly motivated, meaning that their steps from this point can be quite straightforward. But some are still in need of reassurance that their instincts are correct

- **Who:**
 - Varying levels of education, but often over post level 1
 - Have life experience and often coming back to education after a considerable gap, often lapsed learners. They are hungry and motivated to get on, but worried they will be older than the rest
- **Why:**
 - Often looking to develop hobby/ interest/ casual job into a career (some encouraged by friends and family), or move away from existing job / career into something more interesting / fulfilling but they do not want to compromise on choices
- **What information they need:**
 - Have an end goal in sight, a topic area or career
 - Want advice, information and affirmation that making the right decisions, or help to evaluate any compromises that need to be made, and on the best fit of course or provider for them
 - Need basic information on taking next steps
- **How they choose to receive the information:**
 - Often happy to seek out information about providers for themselves and approach directly, though some may feel the need for impartial advice (telephone likely to be sufficient for some)
 - Channel for interaction with Provider varies, for some websites and literature are enough for many to evaluate options, but others need face-to-face contact to discuss options

The Interest Developer: Pen Portrait

“Jacqui”

- Left school with a few CSEs, but fell pregnant soon after
- Has done a few short courses over the years and a bit of voluntary work
- A single parent of four, with two special needs children
 - Became successful at the demands placed on her
- A nurse at the hospital where her son was being treated commented she would make a good nurse
 - This was the trigger
 - Increased her confidence and sense of self worth
- The journey:
 - Talked to an advisor at the library and received leaflets about courses and colleges
 - Discussed admission criteria
 - Considered three colleges and looked at details on the internet
 - Tier one criteria came into play as location and course times had to fit with children
 - Contacted the closest college for application form
 - Went to college for assessment
 - Once accepted went to college to enrol

Emotionally: she found everyone very supportive, and she encountered the right people who gave her the confidence she needed



Opportunity Clarifier – Warm Starter, Intellectually ill-equipped, interested in idea of return to learning but practical guidance and reassurance needed to take final step and reduce slippage

- **Who:**
 - Level 1 (sometimes lower), often Lower SEGs and often in lower end of employment spectrum, they 'work to live'
 - Take the path of least resistance and have the least tenacity to see process through
- **Why:**
 - Know that more education would be beneficial, but cannot see the tangible benefits, or are put off by a lack of commitment to education
 - Have lots of basic information related to courses accumulated from word of mouth (and information provided at school when applicable) but don't know what to do with it, or how to move forward
- **What information they need:**
 - The "perfect" course to suit them with a mapped example of the journey including detailed steps of the involvement and commitment required
 - They need to know exactly what they will get out of the course, and tangibly how it will benefit them
- **How they choose to receive the information:**
 - Face to Face IAG to find best fit from choices they have found with follow up needs to help with finding the steps to take, and which information is needed at each step

The Opportunity Clarifier: Pen Portrait

"Jimmy"

- Aged 22 and living in a rural area
- Had enough of school at 16, and thought he might do something with art and design
 - Had a break for about 6 months on leaving school and then joined his father as a roofer, and then went to work in a factory
 - Girlfriend persuaded him to do something more with his life, and eventually thought about returning to college
 - Initially did some searches on local college website to see what courses they did - it was nearby and easy to get to
 - Started to look at graphic design courses, but friends told him it was hard work
 - As interested in sport started to look at sports options too
 - Friends told him he would be a good fitness instructor
 - And other friends were doing the course and could tell him about it
 - Progressed from website to visiting the college to talk to the physical fitness instructors and administrators and had decided at this point that this is what he wanted to do
 - Needed to find out about fees so could start saving and ways of funding the course



Emotionally: *felt relieved when the decision was made and finally doing something with life*

Information Sponge – Warm Starter, Intellectually well-equipped, weighed down with information and need help to achieve a forward focus

- **Who:**
 - Higher SEG with a supportive family and a higher level of education but lacked direction when left school
 - Might have dropped out of higher education, or have been out of education for some time
- **Why:**
 - Spurred on by a wish to do something and see adult education as the outlet.
 - Depending on the outcome the level of education that they choose may differ, as a career option (level 2) or for a personal interest / community development (level 1)
 - Continual exposure to a subject area creates impetus
- **What information they need:**
 - They have often collected considerable amounts of information and need help sifting/narrowing down options that will give them courses that will meet their interests or give them scope for advancement
- **How they choose to receive the information:**
 - Web is often a natural channel for these people (at this stage) as they are happy to go through information themselves, but would like it to be supplied in an accessible and navigable way
 - Telephone or face-to-face preferred by some (often older), but not essential

The Information Sponge: Pen Portrait

Stuart

- Aged 32 and single
- He dropped out of university after a year as felt the course was not right for him
- He fell into working in a bar and got on well with the owners who made him manager, when they sold the business he moved closer to his family in a rural area and went to work for another bar
 - He is quickly taking over many of the elements of running the bar and saw a need to be able to cook to cover illness and absences
 - Long term he has decided that he wants to open his own business and felt that training would be helpful
 - He approached the owner who agreed to fund the course
 - Through contacts in the trade he was told that the local college had catering courses and that the tutors were well respected
 - Contacted the college and a tutor came to meet him at his bar to discuss an NVQ
 - Double checked with his friends in the trade that the course suggested was suitable and signed up within the week



Emotionally: felt confident to source the information and evaluate whether it was beneficial to him

Apathetic Opportunists – Warm Starter, Intellectually ill-equipped, need clear guidance on what courses they could take/their best options and the benefits to them of undertaking a course to avoid apathy

- **Who:**
 - Level 1 (or lower), often lower SEGs, who often live in poorly served communities (less affluent and/or rural)
 - Dominant presence of local provider – ‘the only one’
 - Low motivation to undertake further education
- **Why:**
 - To open up career and social possibilities
 - Guilty conscience for not using local college
 - Possibly were looking out of boredom/ come across information on courses by accident
- **What information they need:**
 - To understand what courses are available and affordable in local area but they can be easily bogged down with too much information
 - They want something within their own location, and that is affordable
 - Some are looking for an excuse to exit the journey
- **How they choose to receive the information:**
 - Not a strong preference for face-to-face IAG, but guidance would be welcomed and follow-up would help with motivation

The Apathetic Opportunist: Pen Portrait

“Sammi”

- Left school at 16 after getting a handful of GCSEs and went to work on her parents market stall, but realised after a few years it was not going to get her anywhere
- Was encouraged by her mother to go into further education
 - An aunt had been a beautician and she liked the idea of this as a career
- A walk past the Connexions office drew her inside, where she went in to find about available courses
 - She felt she knew enough about what she wanted to not need career counselling, but wanted to know how to get onto a course and whether she had sufficient qualifications
 - They sent away for a prospectus for her and arranged for her to go into the college for an open evening
 - At the college she wanted to check out the other students, the facilities and the atmosphere before she enrolled
 - She was also concerned about what equipment she would need to buy and how she would be able to fund the course
 - She had been subject to bullying at school and did not want a repeat of that



Emotionally: she felt that she had had it easy, and that Connexions had given her a shortcut that several of her college friends had not had

Direction Affirmer – Hot Starter, Intellectually ill-equipped/ well equipped, need affirmation, practical advice and accurate information to confirm that they are doing the right thing (to reinforce their decision)

- **Who:**
 - Highly motivated individuals, who are often outwardly directed which gives the impetus to seek out a course (e.g. employer, respected professional)
 - Their motivation over-rides their current educational level
- **Why:**
 - Because it is the right thing to do for personal development or career
- **What information they need:**
 - Some just need to make sure that the practicalities are OK and accurate logistical information is key here, or;
 - They may want to weigh up the relative merits of different providers offering the same (or similar) course/s
 - Some need final affirmation that doing the right thing, or that they have selected right option, or some may need assistance in regards to the forms they need to fill in
- **How they choose to receive the information:**
 - Practical information can be provided in writing / online
 - Affirmation can be provided by telephone (if from an independent source)
 - A personal evaluation of the course and the provider is achieved through a mix of documentary 'evidence' and visiting the location

The Direction Affirmer: Pen Portrait

“Jed”

- A divorcee, whose children had left home, she had breast cancer and had just been given the all clear
- She wanted to do something with her time, and liked the idea of it being something creative
- A leaflet for the local college fell out of her newspaper and she saw they did pottery course
- She went along to the opening evening, met the tutor who was very supportive, and assured her that she did not need to have any prior experience
- She enrolled on the night

Emotionally: *she felt elated that this opportunity had come to her and that she could do it*

Postscript

Jed enjoyed the course so much that she wanted to study further, she has taken two further courses and is now aiming to go to university. She has bought her own kiln and is starting to sell her work



1.20 Quantitative Questionnaire

INTRODUCTION

Good XXXX [morning/afternoon/evening]. Please may I speak to... (name)?

IF NOT SPEAKING TO THE NAMED RESPONDENT, DO NOT REVEAL THE PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY OR THE NAME OF THE CLIENT.

EXPLAIN IF NECESSARY: Synovate is an independent market research company. For this particular study I have received specific instructions to only speak to the person whose name appears on my screen so I am not able to reveal who the survey sponsor is, or what the nature of the research is, until I speak to <respondent name>.

S1. May I confirm that I am speaking with xxx

- 1 Yes
2 No

CONTINUE
TRANSFER OR MAKE APPOINTMENT

WHEN THROUGH TO NAMED RESPONDENT:

My name is XXXX and I'm calling from Synovate, an independent market research agency, on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council (the LSC).

Our records show that you are currently studying or involved in a course of learning. We're conducting a survey amongst people of all ages to people's attitudes towards education or learning and training and the choices available. We would really value your feedback in order to help the LSC understand how they can best help people in their choices.

Would you be willing to take part in our survey? The survey will take about 10 minutes of your time, depending on your answers.

Would now be a convenient time, or should I call back?

AS NECESSARY (INCLUDE ON HELP SCREEN) PRESS ESC H FOR HELP SCREEN

- May I assure you that we are a member of the Market Research Society and follow their strict Code of Conduct. As such you will not be subject to follow-up sales of any kind & all your answers will remain confidential and reported back to the LSC as aggregated data.
- The survey is being conducted according to the Market Research Society Code of Conduct, and all your answers will remain completely confidential.
- If you would like to verify this information and that Synovate is a market research agency, you can call the Market Research Society's Freephone Service: 0500 39 69 99.
- We got your details from the LSC's database of learners. Names have **not** been passed on by colleges.
- If you would like to speak to someone at the LSC about the research, please contact Charlotte Beckford on 024 76825725
- Survey participation is voluntary, although we are keen to ensure a comprehensive picture of learners' views and experiences, to feed into our report to the Learning and Skills Council
- People have been chosen from Learning and Skills Council's database. - Confidentiality — re-emphasise that no identifiable information about the establishment or the respondent will be passed on to any other body.

ASK ALL YOUNG PEOPLE LIST SAMPLE – SAMPLE GROUPS 1 & 3

S2. Could you confirm for me what type of course you are undertaking...? Is it...?

(PROMPT WITH LIST AS NECESSARY, CHECK WHETHER SCHOOL 6TH FORM OR 6TH FORM COLLEGE AND CODE APPROPRIATELY)

- 1 A or AS Levels at a Further Education (FE) or **6th Form College**
2 Vocational courses (inc. apprenticeships if ONLY study at college NOT with an employer) at a FE or **6th Form College**:

CONTINUE (QUALIFY AS QUOTA 1)

CONTINUE (QUALIFY AS QUOTA 2)

3	School 6th Form	CONTINUE (QUALIFY AS QUOTA 3)
4	Apprenticeship programme delivered through employer (not solely through college)	CONTINUE (QUALIFY AS QUOTA 4)
5	Entry to Employment course	CONTINUE (QUALIFY AS QUOTA 5)
6	Employment – NOT in education at all	CONTINUE (QUALIFY AS QUOTA 6)
7	Something else (i.e. NOT studying OR working)	CLOSE

ALL GO TO QGENDER

INTRODUCTION NON-LIST SAMPLE

Good XXXX [morning/afternoon/evening]. My name is and I am calling from Synovate, an independent research agency. We are carrying out a survey on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council (the LSC) about people's attitudes towards education or learning and training and the choices available.

Would you be willing to take part in our survey? The survey will take about 10 minutes of your time, depending on your answers.

Would now be a convenient time, or should I call back?

AS NECESSARY:

- May I assure you that we are a member of the Market Research Society and follow their strict Code of Conduct. As such you will not be subject to follow-up sales of any kind & all your answers will remain confidential and reported back to the LSC as aggregated data.
- The survey is being conducted according to the Market Research Society Code of Conduct, and all your answers will remain completely confidential.
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- If you would like to speak to someone at the LSC about the research, please contact Charlotte Beckford on 024 76825725

SCREENING – ASK ALL SAMPLE GROUPS

Before we start, may I just check a couple of classification questions...

QGENDER: (Do not ask)

1	Male	
2	Female	

QAGE1: And how old were you on your last birthday?

IF NECESSARY: We are interested in talking to a cross section of learners of all ages so this will help us understand your answers in the context of your situation.

1	Write in age:	
2	Refused	GO TO QAGE2

QAGE2: Can I confirm that you are over 16?

1	Yes – 16 or over	CONTINUE
2	No – Under 16	CLOSE

CHECK GENDER, AND AGE QUOTAS AND CLOSE IF FULL. ETHNICITY TO BE MONITORED

QUAL: And could you please tell me what your HIGHEST educational qualification is? That is, the highest qualification that you currently hold (excluding anything that you may be studying for at the moment).

(DO NOT READ OUT BUT CHECK WITH LIST TO CODE RESPONSE)

GROUP A (Level 1):		GROUP C (Level 3):	
GCSE's, but not 5 or more exams at grades A-C	1	2 or more A levels or AVCEs at grades A-E	30
O levels, but not 5 or more exams at grades A-C	2	4 or more A/S levels at grades A-E	31
GCEs, but not 5 or more exams at grades A-C	3	1 A level or AVCE at grade A-E and 2 or more A/S levels at grade A-E	32
Have SCE Standard, but not 5 or more exams at grades A-C	4	Apprenticeship / Modern Apprenticeship	33
NVQ Level 1 (access level)	5	OND/ONC	34
Access to HE Level 1	6	3 or more SCE Highers	35
Foundation GNVQ	7	Access to HE Level 3	36
YT / YTP certificate	8	NVQ Level 3 (intermediate level 2)	37
BTEC, BEC, TEC – First Certificate or General Certificate	9	BTEC, BEC, TEC – National Certificate or National Diploma level	38
SCOTVEC, SCOTEC, SCOTBEC - First Certificate or General Certificate	10	SCOTVEC, SCOTEC, SCOTBEC – Full National Certificate	39
RSA/Pitmans – Stage I, II or III	11	RSA/Pitmans – Advanced diploma / Advanced certificate	40
City & Guilds – Foundation / part 1	12	City & Guilds – Advanced craft / part 3	41
GROUP B (Level 2):		GROUP D (level 4+):	
5 or more GCSEs' at grades A-C	13	Degree	42
5 or more O levels at grades A-C	14	PGCE	43
5 or more GCEs at grades A-C	15	Postgraduate qualification (e.g. a Masters or PhD)	44
5 or more SCE Standard at grades A-C	16	HND or HNC	45
Intermediate GNVQ	17	NVQ level 4 or 5 (higher / advanced higher Diploma in Higher Education)	46
BTEC First Diploma	18	Nursing or other medical qualification	47
NVQ Level 2 (intermediate level 1)	19	Professional qualification (e.g. chartered accountant)	48
A levels or AVCEs, but not 2 or at grades A-E	20	BTEC, BEC, TEC – Higher level	49
AS levels but not 4 or at grades A-E	21	SCOTVEC, SCOTEC, SCOTBEC – Higher level	50
Access to HE Level 2	22	RSA – Higher diploma	51
International Baccalaureate/Welsh Baccalaureate	23		
Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (CSYS) or equivalent	24	Something else/ a different qualification/s	52
1 or 2 SCE Highers	25	No qualifications	53
BTEC, BEC, TEC – First Diploma or General Diploma	26		
SCOTVEC, SCOTEC, SCOTBEC - First Diploma or General Diploma	27		
RSA/Pitmans – Diploma	28		
City & Guilds – Craft / part 2	29		

(ASK ALL ANSWERING CODES 1-51 AT QQUAL)

QYEAR: And in what year did you gain that qualification? (An approximation will do)

Write in year

ASK SAMPLE GROUPS 4 & 5 AND AGE REFUSED

Q1. Are you either considering or currently studying or engaged in a learning programme? This could be to gain a specific qualification, for your work (vocational training), , classroom based, work based or remote learning or just for your own pleasure or leisure such as an evening class?

PROMPT AS PER PRECODES

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Yes – I am currently studying/ learning | GO TO Q3 |
| 2 | Yes – I am considering studying but not doing so currently | GO TO Q2 |
| 3 | No – I am not studying or considering studying | GO TO Q12 |

Q2. And which of these best describes your level of consideration...would you say that...?

READ OUT – SINGLE CODE

1	I have signed up to/ enrolled on a course and know when I start	GO TO Q3
2	I am in the process of signing up/ enrolling for a course but have not yet done so	
3	I am choosing between courses at the moment and then I will be signing up	
4	I am just thinking about things at the moment, I have <u>not</u> looked into anything specifically but I hope to do something soon	GO TO Q2A
5	I have considered and decided that I can't sign up / enrol in a course at the moment	
6	I have some idea of a course/ courses that I might like to do but have not done anything about this yet	GO TO Q2A

Q2A. Have you taken part in any learning programmes in the last 2 years? This can be to gain a specific qualification, for your work (vocational training), for pleasure, classroom based, work based or remote learning.

PROMPT AS PER PRECODES – SINGLE CODE

1	Yes	GO TO Q3
2	No	CLOSE

ASK IF CURRENTLY (Q1 CODE 1) & CONSIDERING (Q2 CODE 1-3 OR 6) (OR Q2A=1) Q3-12:

IF Q2A=1: Thinking about the course you did in the last two years....

Q3. And does / would/ did this course lead to a specific formal qualification?

1	Yes	GO TO Q4
2	No – this course is mainly learning for pleasure/ leisure	GO TO Q7 IF Q1 CODE 1 QUALIFY AS 'LEISURE LEARNING' QUOTA 10 IF Q2 CODE 1, 2 OR 3 OR Q2A=1 QUALIFY AS 'CONSIDER' QUOTA 11
3	Not sure yet	GO TO Q7 IF Q1 CODE 1 QUALIFY AS 'CONSIDER' QUOTA 11

Interviewer note: some leisure learning/PCDL (Personal and community development learning) courses may involve a qualification such as a 'certificate of completion' or have an exam or test but specific formal qualifications are those previously listed in Qqual.

Q4. And which qualification is that / was that/ would that be (Interviewer prompt as necessary)?

PROBE AS PER PRECODES

USE THE SEARCH FACILITY

			(Reference only)
BTEC certificate in life skills	1	QUALIFY AS 'PRE-LEVEL 2' QUOTA 7 IF Q1=1	Entry Level = Pre-Level 2
BTEC certificate in skills for working life	2	QUALIFY AS 'CONSIDERER' QUOTA 11	Entry Level or Level 1 = Pre-Level 2
Key skills – literacy or numeracy	3	IF Q2=1,2, 3 OR 6 OR Q2A=1	Level 1 = Pre-Level 2
ESOL / English for foreign language speakers	4		
NVQ – Level 1	5		
Access to HE – Level 1	6		
BTEC introductory/ first/ general award or certificate	7		
RSA/ Pitmans – Stage I, II or III	8		
City & Guilds foundation / part 1	9		
GCSE	10	QUALIFY AS 'LEVEL 2' QUOTA 8 IF Q1=1	Level 2
NVQ – Level 2	11	QUALIFY AS 'CONSIDERER' QUOTA 11	
Access to HE – Level 2	12	IF Q2=1,2, 3 OR 6 OR Q2A=1	
BTEC first/ general diploma	13		
RSA/ Pitmans – Diploma	14		
City & Guilds craft / part 2	15		
A or AS level	16	QUALIFY AS 'LEVEL 3'	Level 3

NVQ – Level 3	17	QUOTA 9 IF Q1=1 QUALIFY AS 'CONSIDERER' QUOTA 11 IF Q2=1,2,3 OR 6 OR Q2A=1	
Access to HE – Level 3	18		
BTEC national certificate or diploma	19		
RSA/ Pitmans – Advanced diploma or certificate	20		
City & Guilds advanced craft / part 3	21		
Apprenticeship/ Modern apprenticeship	22		
Degree	23	CLOSE	Level 4
NVQ – Level 4 or 5	24	CLOSE	
Post graduate qualifications (inc. Masters, PGCE, PhD)	25	CLOSE	
Professional qualifications (i.e. chartered accountant)	26	CLOSE	
Nursing qualifications	27	CLOSE	
Higher level BTEC or RSA	28	CLOSE	
HND/ HNC	29	CLOSE	
Foundation degree	30	CLOSE	
I do not know/ I am not sure yet	99	QUALIFY AS 'CONSIDERER' QUOTA 11 IF Q2=1,2, 3 OR 6 OR Q2A=1, BUT CLOSE IF Q1=1	

Interviewer note: Level 3 learning is equivalent to A Levels, Level 2 to GCSE and Pre-Level 2 to learning below GCSE level

ASK SAMPLE GROUP 2 IF AGED 16-19 AT QAGE1

Q6. Are you currently doing any of the following...?
(READ OUT) – SINGLE CODE ONLY

1	A or AS Levels at a Further Education (FE) or 6 th Form College	CONTINUE (QUALIFY AS QUOTA 1)
2	Vocational courses (inc. apprenticeships if ONLY study at college NOT with an employer) at a FE or 6 th Form College:	CONTINUE (QUALIFY AS QUOTA 2)
3	School 6 th Form	CONTINUE (QUALIFY AS QUOTA 3)
4	Apprenticeship programme delivered through employer (not solely through college)	CONTINUE (QUALIFY AS QUOTA 4)
5	Entry to Employment course	CONTINUE (QUALIFY AS QUOTA 5)
6	Employment – NOT in education at all	CONTINUE (QUALIFY AS QUOTA 6)
7	University	CLOSE
8	Something else (i.e. NOT studying OR working)	CLOSE

ASK ALL LEARNERS/ CONSIDERERS – CODES 1 TO 5 AT S2 OR CODE 1 OR 2 AT Q1 OR CODES 1 TO 5 AT Q6

Q7. What is/ was the topic/subject of the course that you are studying/ considering?

Subject 1: Write in ...
Subject 2: Write in ...
Subject 3: Write in ...
Subject 4: Write in ...

ASK ADULT LEARNERS/ CONSIDERERS – CODE 1 OR 2 AT Q1

Q8. Broadly speaking, what motivation did/ do you have for undertaking this course? Did you...

PROBE AS PER PRECODES – SINGLE CODE

1	Decide to do this course for yourself – either as a general interest, to add or improve your skills for work, to change careers, or to develop your job further etc	GO TO Q9
2	Take the course because of encouragement or support from your employer, but were free to decide what course you took, where you took it and how you learned	GO TO Q9
3	Have to take this course because of an employer – with NO CHOICE of how or when you learned	CLOSE

(ASK THOSE CURRENTLY STUDYING CODE 1 AT Q1) AND Q8=1-2

Q9. And when did you start your course?

READ OUT – SINGLE CODE

1	Less than 6 months ago	GO TO Q11
2	More than 6 months ago but less than a year ago	GO TO Q11
3	Over a year ago	CLOSE

(ASK THOSE CONSIDERING STUDYING CODE 1 to 3 AT Q2) AND Q2=1-3 I THINK THIS FILTER SAYS THE SAME THING TWICE?? BUT IT SHOULD BE 1 TO 3 AT Q2 SO I THINK IT'S FINE

Q10. And when did you think you might start your course?

READ OUT – SINGLE CODE

1	Less than 6 months time	
2	More than 6 months but less than a years time	
3	In more than a years time	

ASK ALL ADULT LEARNERS/ CONSIDERERS – CODE 1 OR 2 AT Q1

Q11. How much research did you do/ have you done when considering your course?

PROBE AS PER PRECODES – SINGLE CODE

1	Lots or some – <i>Actively</i> gathered brochures, spoke to advisers, looked at websites – sought advice in some other way	
2	None – I was automatically enrolled (or re-enrolled) on the course when I finished a previous course so I did not need to do any research	CLOSE
3	None – just thought about it or discussed it but took no steps (SHOW THIS CODE FOR CONSIDERERS ONLY – CODE 2 AT Q1)	REVISE QUOTA 11 QUALIFICATION TO QUALIFY AS 'NON-LEARNER' QUOTA 12

ASK ALL ADULT SAMPLE GROUPS – 4 AND 5. IF Q2A=1 AUTOPUNCH AS CODE 1

Q12. Have you taken part in any OTHER/ PREVIOUS learning programmes in the last 5 years? This can be to gain a specific qualification, for your work (vocational training), for pleasure, classroom based, work based or remote learning.

PROMPT AS PER PRECODES – SINGLE CODE

1	Yes – I have taken part in other learning programmes in the last 5 years	
2	No – this is the only learning program I have been on in the last 5 years	

ASK NON-LEARNERS Q1 CODE 3 or Q2 4 or 5 answer Q13:

Q13. How would you best describe your feeling towards the idea of studying or engaged in a learning programme in the future? On a scale of 1-5 where 5 means 'I definitely will' and 1 means 'I definitely will not' consider studying/ learning in the future...

SINGLE CODE

1	I definitely will consider studying/ a learning programme in the future	QUALIFY AS 'NON-LEARNER' CONTINUE TO M1
2	I may consider...	QUALIFY AS 'NON-LEARNER' CONTINUE TO M1
3	I am not sure...	QUALIFY AS 'NON-LEARNER' CONTINUE TO M1
4	I will probably not...	CLOSE
5	I will definitely not...	CLOSE

ASK ALL YOUNG PEOPLE – SAMPLE GROUPS 1 AND 2

Q14. Which school year do you (or would you) fall into?

SINGLE CODE

1	Year 12 (lower sixth/1 st year at FE college/1 st year of working post-16)	
2	Year 13 (upper sixth/2 nd year at FE college/ 2 nd year of working post-16)	
3	Not applicable/ more than 2 years of working or course/ finished 6 th form	

MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE

ASK ALL

IF Q2A=1: For the following questions, please think about the course you did in the last two years....

M1. Thank you for that, I am now going to read you a short list of statements that describe how some people may feel about learning in general. I would like to know how much you think each one is like you or not like you on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 would mean 'this statement is most like me'; a 1 would mean 'this statement is NOT at all like me'

(Randomise order of statements)

Main Statement (READ OUT)	5 Most like me	4 A little like me	3 Neutral	2 Not really like me	1 Not at all like me
1 I enjoy/ enjoyed looking through information about courses and qualifications, and like to get as much information as I can	5	4	3	2	1
2 I feel/ felt lost when considering all the choices available to me, and would really like/ have liked some more advice and guidance	5	4	3	2	1
3 I'm happy to research all the options or choices myself, and will only ask for help if I really need it	5	4	3	2	1
4 I feel that I have made the right choices in my education after 16 (now)	5	4	3	2	1
5 I feel nervous about my ability to learn something new (<i>adults: or go back to studying</i>)	5	4	3	2	1
6 I would describe myself as a keen learner	5	4	3	2	1
7 I know where to go to get the right information about courses and careers	5	4	3	2	1
8 I have a specific career goal in mind and know that I need a particular course to achieve this	5	4	3	2	1
<i>(ADULTS ONLY QUOTAS 7-12)</i>					
9 I generally know that I want to learn new skills, but I don't have an end goal in mind	5	4	3	2	1

M2. (ADULT LEARNERS WORDING QUOTAS 7-10 OR Q2A=1) Thinking about the time before you started your course, so back to the time when you were first considering your current learning/ previous learning, which of these would you say most closely described you at that time? Would you say that you ... (Read out)

M2a. (ADULT CONSIDERS WORDING QUOTA 11 BUT Q2A NOT 1) I am going to read out some statements, which of them would you say most closely describes you in relation to your current level of learning consideration? Would you say that you... (Read out)

1	Wanted [QUOTAS 7-10 OR Q2A=1]/ want [QUOTA 11 BUT NOT Q2A=1] to do some learning, but that you did not [QUOTAS 7-10 OR Q2A=1]/ do not [QUOTA 11 BUT NOT Q2A=1] know exactly what to study or where to go to study it	<i>[Ref] [Cold starters]</i>
2	Wanted [QUOTAS 7-10 OR Q2A=1]/ want [QUOTA 11 BUT NOT Q2A=1] to do a specific type of course but did not [QUOTAS 7-10 OR Q2A=1]/ do not [QUOTA 11 BUT NOT Q2A=1] know where (what college) you could go to study it	<i>[Warm starter I]</i>

3	Wanted[QUOTAS 7-10 OR Q2A=1]/ want [QUOTA 11 BUT NOT Q2A=1] to study at a specific place (college etc), but did not[QUOTAS 7-10 OR Q2A=1]/ do not [QUOTA 11 BUT NOT Q2A=1] know what type of course to do	[Warm starter II]
4	Knew [QUOTAS 7-10 OR Q2A=1]/ know [QUOTA 11 BUT NOT Q2A=1] exactly which course you wanted[QUOTAS 7-10 OR Q2A=1]/ want [QUOTA 11 BUT NOT Q2A=1] to do and where you wanted[QUOTAS 7-10 OR Q2A=1]/ want [QUOTA 11 BUT NOT Q2A=1] to study it	[Hot starter]

M2b. (ADULT NON-LEARNERS WORDING QUOTA 12) I am going to read out some statements, which of them would you say most closely describes you in relation to your current level of learning consideration? Would you say that you ... (Read out)

1	Want (or wanted) to do some learning, but that you did not know exactly what to study or where to study it BUT it's currently not an option for you	[Cold starters]
2	Want (or wanted) to do a specific type of course but not where (what college) you could study at BUT it's currently not an option for you	[Warm starter I]
3	Want (or wanted) to study at a specific college , but not what type of course to do BUT it's currently not an option for you	[Warm starter II]
4	Know exactly which course you want to do and which college you want (or wanted) to study at BUT it's currently not an option for you	[Hot starter]
5	Do not want to stay in full time education or return to education	

(ASK QUOTAS 7- 11 ADULT LEARNERS AND CONSIDERS)

M3. Different considerations when choosing a course can be more or less important to different people. Which, if any, of the following were [QUOTAS 7-10 or Q2a=1]/are [QUOTA 11 but Q2a not 1] important considerations to you? when you were choosing your current course [QUOTAS 7-10] Please tell me all that applied [QUOTAS 7-10 or Q2a=1]/apply [QUOTA 11] to you... (Read out)

(Randomise order)

1	The entry criteria, or qualifications needed to get on to the course
2	The qualification offered at the end of the course
3	The length of the course (i.e. 6 weeks, a year)
4	The location of the college or place where the course takes place
5	The time of the course (i.e. classes held in the evening)
6	Facilities available at the college (i.e. childcare)
7	Cost of the course
8	The quality of the teaching on the course
9	The reputation of the college or place where the course takes place
10	Availability of special help (i.e. help with dyslexia, wheel chair access)

(ASK QUOTAS 7- 11 ADULT LEARNERS AND CONSIDERS)

M4. And which ONE of these considerations would you say was the most important to you?

[SHOW ANSWERS CODED AT M3, SINGLE CODE ONLY]

M5. (LEARNERS WORDING QUOTAS 1-4 AND 7-10 or Q2a=1) And still thinking about this time (before you started your course) what sources of information, advice or guidance helped you make your decision? This could be anything you saw or read, or anyone you spoke to or discussed your choices with, or anywhere you went or contacted to gather information... (Prompt with list if necessary... Did you discuss your options with anyone? At home? An independent adviser? Read anything? etc)

M5. (CONSIDERS WORDING QUOTA 11 but Q2a not 1) And what sources of information or guidance have you used to help you when considering your course of learning? This could be anything you have seen or read, or anyone you've spoken to or discussed your choices with, or anywhere you have been or contacted to gather information... (Prompt with list if necessary... Have you discussed your options with anyone? At home? An independent adviser? Read anything? etc)

M5. (NON-LEARNERS WORDING QUOTA 5, 6 & 12) And have you used any sources of information or guidance to help you make your choices so far, in regards to learning or not learning? This could be anything you have seen or read, or anyone you've spoken to or discussed your choices with, or anywhere

you have been or contacted to gather information... (Prompt with list if necessary... Have you discussed your options with anyone? At home? An independent adviser? Read anything? etc)

DO NOT READ OUT – MULTICODE POSSIBLE

- 1 Spoke with friends
- 2 Spoke with colleagues
- 3 Spoke with wife/ husband/ partner
- 4 Spoke with children
- 5 Spoke with a manager/ HR/ someone else more senior at work
- 6 Spoke with a Union Learning Rep (ULR) at work
- 7 Spoke with a careers adviser
- 8 Spoke with/ called LearnDirect
- 9 Called a college or course provider directly
- 10 Looked up information in the local library
- 11 Looked up information on the internet
- 12 Read a college prospectus
- 13 Saw an advert on TV/ in a paper/ in a magazine
- 14 Spoke to someone in a Job Centre
- 15 Spoke with/called nextstep
- 16 Spoke with/called Citizens Advice Bureau
- 17 Spoke with/called a private training provider

(ADDITIONAL CODES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE QUOTAS 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6)

- 18 Spoke with teachers at school
 - 19 Spoke with a careers adviser (at school)
 - 20 Spoke with your mum/ dad/ parents
 - 21 Spoke with/ called Connexions
 - 22 Had work experience
 - 23 Had careers lessons
 - 24 Spoke with older brothers/sisters
 - 25 Spoke with other family members / family friends
 - 26 Attended open days at colleges
 - 27 Spoke with students at colleges / people on courses
- 98 None of these/ no information sought
 - 99 Something else (specify)

(ASK YOUNG PEOPLE QUOTAS 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6)

M6. How satisfied would you say you were with the information, advice and guidance that you gained from each of the sources?

So firstly would you say you were, fully satisfied, satisfied neutral, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied when you... [INSERT ANSWER FROM M5]

And how about when you... [INSERT ANSWER FROM M5]

M7. And specifically how much would you say that your parents' influenced your choice? Would you say they...

READ OUT – SINGLE CODE

- 1 Completely influenced my choice
- 2 Slightly influenced my choice
- 3 Did not influence my choice
- 4 (I don't know/ Not applicable)

(ASK ALL)

M8. Which **one** of these sources of information, advice or guidance would you say was most helpful or influential in making your choices?

READ OUT – SINGLE CODE ONLY

[SHOW ANSWERS FROM M5]

M9. Thinking more generally about how you may like to gather information, advice or guidance about learning in the FUTURE, or as you go forward, which of the following would you prefer to use to get information about courses, such as **dates and timings** of courses?

READ OUT – MULTICODE POSSIBLE

- 1 Telephone
- 2 Face to face – i.e. speaking to an adviser
- 3 Internet/ website
- 4 Looking up information in a library
- 5 Reading written prospectuses / information
- 6 Something else (specify)
- 7 (None of these)

M10. And which would you prefer to use to find out what courses would be suitable for you, and how you might apply for them?

READ OUT – MULTICODE POSSIBLE

- 1 Telephone
- 2 Face to face – i.e. speaking to an adviser
- 3 Internet/ website
- 4 Looking up information in a library
- 5 Reading written prospectuses / information
- 6 Something else (specify)
- 7 (None of these)

M11. (LEARNERS WORDING QUOTAS 1-4 AND 7-10 or Q2a=1) Now, thinking about the amount of choice that you had before you started your course. How did you feel about the amount of choice (the number of courses or institutions/ colleges) that was available to you at this time...? Would you say that there was...

READ OUT – SINGLE CODE

- 1 Too much choice – so that I didn't/ don't know where to start
- 2 Enough choice to allow me to pick something that was/ is exactly right for me
- 3 A limited amount of choice – so I had/ may have to settle for something that was near enough what I wanted
- 4 No real choice at all – so that there was/ is only one option that I could study
- 5 (I don't know/ I am not sure)

M12. (CONSIDERS & NON-LEARNERS WORDING QUOTA 5, 6, 11 & 12) Now thinking about what you know of the amount of choice (the number of courses or institutions/ colleges) that is available to you in terms of your learning options...? Would you say that there is...

READ OUT – SINGLE CODE

- 1 Too much choice – so that I didn't/ don't know where to start
- 2 Enough choice to allow me to pick something that was/ is exactly right for me
- 3 A limited amount of choice – so I had/ may have to settle for something that was near enough what I wanted
- 4 No real choice at all – so that there was/ is only one option that I could study
- 5 (I don't know/ I am not sure)

(ASK YOUNG PEOPLE QUOTAS 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6)

M12a. And thinking of the different types of courses or options that you could have chosen to do, how much do you feel you know about the following... Where 3 means that you 'know a lot about them, 2 means that you had 'just heard of them but don't know much about them' and 1 means that you 'don't know anything about' that type of course...

(Randomise order)

	Don't know anything about them	Just heard the name but don't know much about them	Know a lot about them	I don't know/ I am not sure	
Employment	1	2	3	4	[Auto punch quota 6 as 3 and do not ask]
Vocational training – such as NVQs or City and Guilds	1	2	3	4	[Auto punch quota 2 as 3 and do not ask]
School 6 th form	1	2	3	4	[Auto punch quota 3 as 3 and do not ask]
Further education or 6 th form college	1	2	3	4	[Auto punch quota 1 as 3 and do not ask]
Apprenticeships	1	2	3	4	[Auto punch quota 4 as 3 and do not ask]

ASK LEARNERS QUOTAS 1-4 AND 7-10 AND Q2A=1

M13. And overall how easy or difficult did you find the process of choosing a course and researching your options? Would you say that you found it ...

READ OUT – SINGLE CODE

- 1 Very easy – few or no problems experienced
- 2 Fairly easy
- 3 Fairly difficult
- 4 Very difficult – had quite a lot of problems
- 5 (I am not sure/ hard to say)

(If found process fairly or very difficult code 3 or 4, ask M14.)

M14. Please could you tell me what, in particular, you found difficult? (Open ended)

(Write in verbatim answer)

ASK CONSIDERS QUOTA 11

M15. Do you have plans to start a course (or programme of learning) soon?

PROBE AS PER PRECODES – SINGLE CODE

- 1 Yes – I am enrolled
- 2 Yes – I am planning to enrol shortly
- 3 No – I do not yet know when I will be starting a course

ASK SCHOOL 6TH FORM QUOTA 3

M16. Did you feel that there were any other options open to you other than attending the school 6th form? (Prompt with list if necessary)

PROBE AS PER PRECODES– SINGLE CODE

- 1 Yes – I had other options to consider, but decided **NOT** to go to 6th form college
- 2 No – I don't feel that I had much choice of options
- 3 Don't know

ASK E2E & EMPLOYMENT QUOTAS 5 & 6

M17. Why did you decide to leave school and go straight into employment? (open ended response)

(Write in verbatim answer)

M18. Did you consider continuing in classroom based/ formal education (either at school or college)?

PROBE AS PER PRECODES– SINGLE CODE

- 1 Yes – but I decided it wasn't for me
- 2 Yes – but due to circumstances I couldn't
- 3 No – I knew I just wanted to go to work

M19. Do you think that you might decide to embark on a (another) course of learning in the future?

PROBE AS PER PRECODES – SINGLE CODE

- 1 Possibly – but I don't know what or when, never say never
- 2 Yes – I am thinking about it at the moment
- 3 No

DEMOGRAPHICS – ASK ALL

Thank you very much for your answers so far, they have been very helpful. I just have a few more questions about you...

D1. To which ethnic group do you consider you belong? / What would you describe your ethnic background or ethnic origin as?

Interviewer – read out and code only one

- A: White
- 1 British
- 2 Irish
- 3 Any other White background
- B: Mixed
- 4 White and Black Caribbean
- 5 White and Black African
- 6 White and Asian
- 7 Any other Mixed background
- C: Asian or Asian British
- 8 Indian
- 9 Pakistani
- 10 Bangladeshi
- 11 Any other Asian background
- D: Black or Black British
- 12 Caribbean
- 13 African
- 14 Any other Black background
- E: Chinese or Other Ethnic Group
- 15 Chinese
- 16 Any other ethnic group
- 17 (Refused)

D2. Are you ...?

READ OUT - MULTICODE POSSIBLE e.g. might work part time and be a part time student

- 1 Working full time (30+ hours a week)
- 2 Working part time (less than 30 hours a week)
- 3 A full time student
- 4 A part time student
- 5 Not working – looking for work
- 6 Not working (not looking for work)
- 7 Retired
- 8 Looking after family and home
- 9 Other (please write in)
- 10 (Refused)

D3: What is the occupation of the chief income earner in your household?

PROBE FOR:
INDUSTRY SECTOR
TYPE OF WORK DONE
MANUAL/ NON-MANUAL
SKILLED/ SEMI SKILLED
JOB TITLE/ POSITION
SIZE OF COMPANY
NUMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR (IF MANAGER/SELF EMPLOYED)
QUALIFICATIONS HELD RELEVANT TO JOB

1. AB
2. C1
3. C2
4. D
5. E
6. (Refused)

(Ask all aged 18+)

D4. What is your marital status?
READ OUT – PROMPT USING PRECODES
– SINGLE CODE

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1 | Single |
| 2 | Co-habiting with partner |
| 3 | Married |
| 4 | Divorced/Separated |
| 5 | Widowed |
| 6 | Other (specify) |
| 7 | Refused |

D5a. How many people are there living in your household in total, that is adults and children and including yourself?

ENTER NUMBER _____ *(Refused)*

D5b. And how many are aged 18+ *(if aged 18+ say:)* this includes yourself?

ENTER NUMBER _____ *(Refused)*

D5c. And how many are aged 4 and under, if any?

ENTER NUMBER _____ *(Refused)*

D5d. And how many are 5 to 15, if any?

ENTER NUMBER _____ *(Refused)*

D5e. And how many are aged 16-17 *(if aged 16 or 17 say:)* including yourself?

ENTER NUMBER _____ *(Refused)*

ASK ADULTS ONLY

D6. From the bands that I read out, could you tell me which one comes closest to your annual household income including earnings from employment, pension, tax credits, state benefits etc. Can I reassure you that everything you tell us is treated in the strictest confidence and used for this survey purposes only. So, before tax, is your annual household income...

READ OUT – SINGLE CODE

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1 | Less than £10,000 |
| 2 | £10,000 to £19,999 |
| 3 | £20,000 to £29,999 |
| 4 | £30,000 to £49,999 |
| 5 | £50,000 or above |
| 6 | Don't know |
| 7 | (Refused) |

ASK ALL

D7. And can you tell me which English county or city you live in? Or if you live in London, which borough do you live in?

PROMPT AS NECESSARY

USE SEARCH FACILITY

North East:

1. Darlington
2. Hartlepool
3. Middlesbrough
4. Redcar & Cleveland
5. Stockton-on-Tees
6. Durham
8. Northumberland
9. Tyne and Wear

North West:

10. Halton
11. Warrington
13. Blackburn with Darwen
14. Blackpool
15. Cheshire
16. Cumbria
17. Lancashire
18. Greater Manchester
19. Merseyside

Yorkshire & The Humber

20. East Riding of Yorkshire
21. Kingston upon Hull
22. North East Lincolnshire
23. North Lincolnshire
24. York
25. North Yorkshire
26. South Yorkshire
27. West Yorkshire

East Midlands

28. Derby
29. Leicester
30. Rutland
31. Nottingham
32. Derbyshire
33. Leicestershire
34. Lincolnshire
35. Northamptonshire
36. Nottinghamshire

West Midlands

37. Herefordshire
38. Telford & Wrekin
39. Stoke on Trent
40. Worcestershire
41. Shropshire
42. Staffordshire
43. Warwickshire
44. West Midlands

South West

45. Bath & North East Somerset
46. Bristol, City of
47. North Somerset
48. South Gloucestershire
49. Plymouth
50. Torbay
51. Bournemouth
52. Poole
53. Swindon
54. Cornwall

55. Devon
56. Dorset
57. Gloucestershire
58. Somerset
59. Wiltshire

East

60. Luton
61. Peterborough
62. Southend-on-Sea
63. Thurrock
64. Bedfordshire
65. Cambridgeshire
66. Essex
67. Hertfordshire
68. Norfolk
69. Suffolk

London

70. City of London
71. Barking & Dagenham
72. Barnet
73. Bexley
74. Brent
75. Bromley
76. Camden
77. City of Westminster
78. Croydon
79. Ealing
80. Enfield
81. Greenwich
82. Hackney
83. Hammersmith & Fulham
84. Haringey
85. Harrow
86. Havering
87. Hillingdon
88. Hounslow
89. Islington
90. Kensington & Chelsea
91. Kingston upon Thames
92. Lambeth
93. Lewisham
94. Merton
95. Newham
96. Redbridge
97. Richmond upon Thames
98. Southwark
99. Sutton
100. Tower Hamlets
101. Waltham Forest
102. Wandsworth

South East

103. Bracknell Forest
104. West Berkshire
105. Reading
106. Slough
107. Windsor & Maidenhead
108. Wokingham
109. Brighton & Hove
110. Isle of Wight
111. Milton Keynes
112. Portsmouth
113. Southampton

114. Medway Towns
115. Buckinghamshire
116. East Sussex
117. Hampshire
118. Kent
119. Oxfordshire
120. Surrey
121. West Sussex

122. (Refused)
123. (Don't know)
124. Other (specify)

D8. And finally, although there are no plans at the moment, would you be willing to be re-contacted to take part in further research for the LSC if there were any further studies on this topic?

- 1 Yes
 - 2 No
-

THANK RESPONDENT AND CLOSE!
STANDARD CLOSING SCRIPT

