

Understanding
the Contribution
of the Third
Sector in
Learning and
Skills

September 2009

Further information

For further information, please contact the appropriate Learning and Skills Council office. Contact details for each office can be found on the LSC website: www.lsc.gov.uk.

Learning and Skills Council **National Office**

Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
T 0845 019 4170
F 024 7682 3675
www.lsc.gov.uk

Acknowledgements

This research project was conducted by IFF Research Limited and was managed by Lorna Adams and Katie Oldfield. Christoph Koerbitz and Jessica Owens also worked on this study and contributed to the report.

At the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Cheryl Turner and Gareth Ashcroft directed this evaluation. Elana Zivinsky at the LSC's Data Service provided support with the preparation of the Individualised Learner Record data. The Third Sector Advisory Group provided input into the design of the topic guides.

We would like to thank all the learners and providers who participated in this research project.



IFF Research

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY	6
KEY FINDINGS	6
Profile of learners and learning aims	6
Achievement rates	7
Engaging and supporting learners.....	7
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	8
1 INTRODUCTION	11
Introduction to the third sector.....	11
Aims and objectives.....	12
Methodology	12
Report structure	13
2 WORK-BASED LEARNING (WBL).....	14
Overview of trends in WBL provision	14
Demographic profile of WBL learners.....	16
Geographic profile of WBL learners.....	18
Prior achievement and employment status of WBL learners.....	20
Trends in WBL provision.....	22
WBL achievement rates.....	25
3 FURTHER EDUCATION (FE).....	29
Overview of trends in FE provision.....	29
Demographic profile of FE learners	31
Geographic profile of FE learners	33
Prior achievement levels of third sector FE learners	34
Trends in FE learning provision	35
Fees waived in FE	37
FE achievement rates	38
4 EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND (ESF) LEARNING	43
Overview of trends in ESF provision	44
Demographic profile of ESF learners.....	45

	Geographic profile of ESF learners	47
	Prior achievement and learner destination of ESF learners.....	48
	Trends in ESF learning provision	50
	ESF achievement rates	51
5	OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDIES	55
	Introduction.....	55
	Providers interviewed.....	58
	Learners interviewed	59
6	WHY THE THIRD SECTOR?	62
	Provider recruitment.....	62
	Learner motivations and reasons for picking third sector	63
7	MEETING LEARNER NEEDS	67
	Flexible approach.....	67
	Learner support.....	68
	Assessing needs	71
	Monitoring performance	73
8	LEARNER EXPERIENCE.....	76
	Overall satisfaction	76
	Feedback on learning delivery.....	77
	Why different to other learning experiences	79
	FUN AND RELAXED ATMOSPHERE	80
	APPROACHABLE TUTORS.....	80
	TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OWN LEARNING	81
	NEGOTIATION AND COMPROMISE	81
	Why thinking of leaving early.....	81
9	EMPLOYERS AND THE ECONOMY	84
	Role of the recession	84
	Provider links with employers	85
10	EMPLOYMENT, SKILLS AND FURTHER LEARNING	88
	Employment outcomes.....	88
	Skills gained.....	89
	Further learning.....	90
11	A PROVIDER PERSPECTIVE.....	92

Factors impacting on provider performance.....	92
Relationship with the LSC	94
RURAL PROVIDERS	96
SFA and YPLA	97
12 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	100
APPENDICES	103
APPENDIX A: Work-based Learning (WBL) tables for young people and adults.....	103
APPENDIX B: Further Education (FE) tables for young people and adults	113
APPENDIX C: European Social Fund (ESF) tables for young people and adults.....	120
APPENDIX D: Methodological details	130
OBJECTIVES	130
DEFINING THE FIVE CASE STUDIES	130
EMPIRICAL FIELDWORK AND RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS	132
ACHIEVED SAMPLE COMPOSITION	132
QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS	134
APPENDIX E: Qualitative topic guide – PROVIDER INTERVIEWS	135
INTRODUCTION	135
THIRD SECTOR LEARNING OFFER	136
THIRD SECTOR LEARNERS	136
LEARNING DELIVERY	137
LEARNING OUTCOMES	138
PROVIDER FEEDBACK	139
APPENDIX F: Qualitative topic guide – LEARNER INTERVIEWS.....	141
INTRODUCTION	141
LEARNER MOTVIATION AND EXPECTATIONS	142
LEARNING EXPERIENCE WITH PROVIDER	143
SATISFACTION WITH LEARNING	144
LEARNING OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS	145
APPENDIX G: Learner Journeys.....	147
APPENDIX G: LEARNER JOURNEYS.....	147

List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Trends in third sector WBL learner volumes (ALL LEARNERS)	17
Figure 2.2: Trends in third sector WBL achievement rates (ALL LEARNERS)	26
Figure 3.1: Trends in third sector FE learner volumes (ALL LEARNERS)	32
Figure 3.2: Trends in third sector FE achievement rates (ALL AIMS)	40
Figure 3.3: Third sector FE achievement rates by level of learning (ALL LEARNERS)	41
Figure 4.1: Trends in third sector ESF learner volumes (ALL LEARNERS)	46
Figure 4.2: Trends in third sector ESF achievement rates (ALL AIMS)	53

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Top-ten third sector WBL providers by learner volumes (2007/08)	16
Table 2.2: Demographic profile of WBL learners (ALL LEARNERS)	18
Table 2.3: Geographic profile of WBL learners (ALL LEARNERS)	20
Table 2.4: Learner educational and employment status background (ALL LEARNERS)	22
Table 2.4.1: Learner prior employment status and destination (third sector WBL Learners 2007/08)	23
Table 2.5: Top-ten third sector WBL learning aims (2007/08)	24
Table 2.6: Profile of WBL learning aims by level of learning and programme type (ALL AIMS)	25
Table 2.7: Achievement rates (achieved or partially achieved) of WBL Learning Aims (ALL AIMS)	28
Table 3.1: Top-ten third sector FE providers by learner volumes (2007/08)	31
Table 3.2: Demographic profile of FE learners (ALL LEARNERS)	33
Table 3.3: Geographic profile of FE learners (ALL LEARNERS)	35
Table 3.4: Learner background (ALL LEARNERS)	36
Table 3.5: Top-ten third sector FE learning aims (2007/08)	37
Table 3.6: Profile of FE learning aims (ALL AIMS)	38
Table 3.7: Profile of FE learning aims – fees waived (ALL AIMS)	39
Table 3.8: Achievement rates (achieved or partially achieved) of FE learning aims (ALL AIMS)	42
Table 4.1: Top-ten third sector ESF providers by learner volumes (2007/08)	45
Table 4.2: Demographic profile of ESF learners (ALL LEARNERS)	47
Table 4.3: Geographic profile of ESF learners (ALL LEARNERS)	48
Table 4.4: ESF learners' prior qualifications and destinations (ALL LEARNERS)	50
Table 4.5: Top-ten third sector ESF learning aims (2007/08)	51
Table 4.6: Profile of ESF learning aims (ALL AIMS)	52
Table 4.7: Achievement rates (achieved or partially achieved) of ESF learning aims	54
Table 5.1: Profile of learners interviewed for each case study	62

Appendices:

Table A1: Demographic profile of WBL learners (16–18 learners)	104
Table A2: Demographic profile of WBL learners (19+ learners)	105
Table A3: Geographic profile of WBL learners (16–18 learners)	106
Table A4: Geographic profile of WBL learners (19+ learners)	106
Table A4.1: Regional WBL learner profile within the 10% and 20% most deprived areas (ALL LEARNERS)	107
Table A5: WBL learner background (16–18 learners)	108
Table A6: WBL learner background (19+ learners)	109
Table A7: Profile of WBL learning aims (16–18 AIMS)	110
Table A8: Profile of WBL learning aims (19+ AIMS)	111
Table A9: Achievement rates of WBL learning aims (16–18 AIMS)	112
Table A10: Achievement rates of WBL learning aims (19+ AIMS)	113
Table B1: Demographic profile of FE learners (16–18 learners)	114
Table B2: Demographic profile of FE learners (19+ LEARNERS)	115
Table B3: Geographic profile of FE learners (16–18 LEARNERS)	115
Table B4: Geographic profile of FE learners (19+ LEARNERS)	116
Table B4.1: Regional FE learner profile within the 10% and 20% most deprived areas (ALL LEARNERS)	116
Table B5: FE learner background (16–18 learners)	117
Table B6: FE learner background (19+ learners)	117
Table B7: Profile of FE learning aims (16–18 learners)	118
Table B8: Profile of FE learning aims (19+ learners)	118
Table B9: Achievement rates (achieved or partially achieved) of FE learning AIMS (16–18 AIMS)	119
Table B10: Achievement rates (achieved or partially achieved) of FE learning AIMS (19+ AIMS)	120
Table C1: Demographic profile of ESF learners (16–18 LEARNERS)	121
Table C2: Demographic profile of ESF learners (19+ LEARNERS)	122
Table C3: Geographic profile of ESF learners (16–18 LEARNERS)	123
Table C4: Geographic profile of ESF learners (19+ LEARNERS)	123
Table C4.1: Regional ESF learner profile within the 10% and 20% most deprived areas (ALL LEARNERS)	124
Table C5: ESF learner background (16–18 LEARNERS)	125
Table C6: ESF learner background (19+ LEARNERS)	126
Table C7: Profile of ESF learning aims (16–18 LEARNERS)	127
Table C8: Profile of ESF learning aims (19+ LEARNERS)	128
Table C9: Achievement rates (achieved or partially achieved) of ESF learning aims (16–18 AIMS)	129
Table C10: Achievement rates (achieved or partially achieved) of ESF learning aims (19+ AIMS)	130
Table D1: Overview of achieved interviews in each case study	134
Table D2: Profile of learners interviewed for each case study	135

Research Report: Understanding the Contribution of the Third Sector in Learning and Skills

Prepared for Learning and Skills Council by IFF Research Ltd

September 2009

Executive summary

Background and methodology

This report has been commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to gain a detailed understanding of the scale and nature of the learning provision supplied by third sector learning providers in England and the impact of this provision on learners.

Third sector providers play an important role in bringing disadvantaged adults and young people into learning and skills development. This report brings together quantitative data on third sector¹ learner demographics and performance, alongside qualitative insights into how the third sector engages and supports its learners.

Meeting these objectives required two phases of research, comprising:

- A comprehensive analysis of existing quantitative data recorded on the LSC's Individualised Learner Record (ILR) database, covering four academic years from 2004/05 to 2007/08; and
- A series of qualitative case studies of priority learning areas², involving 54 in-depth interviews with third sector learners and 12 interviews with third sector providers.

The third sector provision referred to in this report relates only to direct provision, and not provision that is subcontracted- or franchised-out, to the third sector.

Key findings

Profile of learners and learning aims

Analysis of ILR data shows that within the three funding streams explored (Further Education [FE], Work-Based learning [WBL] and European Social Fund [ESF]), third sector provision reaches a distinct learner demographic compared with non-third sector provision.

Within every funding stream, third sector learners are more likely to have a learning difficulty or disability, and in WBL and ESF provision, they are more ethnically diverse and also more likely to be resident in a deprived area³.

Almost half (45%) of WBL third sector learners live in the bottom 20% of the most deprived areas, compared with 28% of non-third sector WBL learners.

¹The Third Sector comprises organisations which are non-governmental and value- rather than profit-driven, reinvesting surpluses to further their social, cultural or environmental goals. It was previously known as the voluntary and community sector. (HM Treasury, 2005: *Exploring the role of the third sector in public service delivery and reform*).

²The priority learning areas that the case study research focussed on were: Work-based learning (WBL) undertaken by learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability; European Social Fund (ESF) learning undertaken by 16–18-year-old learners; ESF learning undertaken by adult learners; Further Education (FE) learners participating in Full Level 2 learning; and WBL undertaken by young learners on Apprenticeships resident in particularly deprived areas. These areas were informed by exploration of the ILR data and were agreed in consultation with the LSC's Third Sector team.

³As defined according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

www.communities.gov.uk/communities/neighbourhoodrenewal/deprivation/deprivation07

Third sector FE provision also attracts older learners compared with non-third sector FE: just 2% of learners are aged 16–18 vs. 30% of those learners on an FE course with a non-third sector provider.

As well as showing demographic differences, third sector learners engage with learning and skills from different backgrounds and less ‘traditional’ routes. In 2007/08, around two-thirds of WBL third sector learners (67%) were unemployed when they started their course vs. just 12% of learners in non-third sector WBL. Here the third sector has a significant role to play in delivering Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes; over 19,000 E2E programmes were provided in 2007/08, representing just over one-quarter of all the total E2E aims delivered nationally.

Achievement rates

The achievement rates for third sector learners vary by funding stream and also by learner demographics.

Achievement rates⁴ for third sector FE learning aims are significantly higher than those for non-third sector FE learning aims (88% vs. 75%). Furthermore, third sector FE achievement rates have increased significantly since 2004/05 (from 78% to 88% – an increase of 10 percentage points).

In WBL and ESF provision, third sector achievement rates among young learners (16–18 years) are comparable with non-third sector provision. However, among adult learners (19+ years) on both funding streams, achievement rates are slightly lower than those found outside of the third sector.

The lower achievement rates secured by adult learners on WBL and ESF courses in the third sector compared with non-third sector provision is likely to be, at least in part, a result of the third sector tending to work with individuals who are more likely to have multiple disadvantages and additional learning or social needs, particularly in the case of those studying Level 1 and Entry Level courses (where achievement rates tend to be the lowest).

That said, third sector WBL providers were more successful at securing achievement among adult learners on *Skills for Life* aims than non-third sector providers (77% of adult third sector learners achieved their *Skills for Life* aims in 2007/08 compared with 64% of non-third sector adult learners).

Across all ages and funding streams third sector providers performed better than their non-third sector counterparts, in terms of achievement rates for learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability.

Engaging and supporting learners

Evidence from the qualitative case study research suggests that third sector providers invest considerable time and effort into the recruitment, initial guidance and needs-assessment of their prospective students. Third sector providers tend to take a holistic, rather than a funding-led, approach to learning delivery, with learners offered not just their funded course but also commonly mentoring, one-to-one tutoring and guidance, personal support and job-searching advice. Consequently, third sector learners can extract maximum benefit from their learning.

Third sector providers have strong relationships with other organisations, in both the public and voluntary sectors, and draw on these relationships to engage learners and offer additional support. Many of their learners are referred by Connexions Direct (in the case of young learners) or by Jobcentre Plus (for adults), and work in partnership with these organisations, local schools, social services, youth groups, young offenders’ programmes and other organisations to meet learners’ needs more holistically.

⁴Calculated as the number of achieved and partially achieved aims, expressed as a percentage of the number of aims with a definite outcome (i.e. excluding any aims where learning is still ongoing).

Providers offer pastoral and financial advice in-house, where possible, but refer learners to specialist organisations in more complex cases.

The personalised, flexible approach of third sector providers is central to their success with harder-to-reach learners. Advisors or teaching staff help students choose the most suitable courses for that individual and extra Key Skills or preliminary courses can be added, as needed. Much resource is put into monitoring learners and working with them to 'overcome' the barriers that they encounter. Students are often able to complete a course 'in their own time', rather than having to adhere to strict or 'traditional' timetables.

Previously 'disaffected' learners describe feeling able to engage with third sector provision due to the approachable staff and the one-to-one help that they receive with both learning and personal issues, right from the outset. In smaller classes and an environment that is 'not like school', many of these students discover a new motivation to learn and find work. Overall, learner satisfaction with third sector courses is extremely high.

Successful work placements are key drivers of learning satisfaction and completion. Some third sector providers have established in-house, simulated, workplace environments or social enterprises that are very effective for those learners who are furthest from the labour market. However, in organisations that rely on local employers to provide work experience, some learners report not getting a placement or not feeling their placement was relevant. The economic downturn has made arranging work placements more difficult for WBL providers.

As well as 'hard' outcomes (for example, qualifications, further learning and/or employment) being achieved by many learners interviewed as part of the case study research, a wide range of 'softer' outcomes were reported (for example, increased confidence and motivation, an improved attitude to learning and improved employability skills).

Conclusions and recommendations

Personal and social circumstances of the third sector learner population, such as learning difficulties and/or disabilities, social deprivation, precarious housing or unstable family backgrounds, make the starting point for many third sector providers more difficult compared with that of non-third sector learning provision.

The research suggests that the key factor differentiating providers with very high achievement rates from those with average achievement rates is the type of learner targeted and attracted. Typically, providers with very high achievement rates work with less disadvantaged learners, who are less 'disenfranchised' from learning. As such, a single, overall measure of achievement by the provider may mask the significant 'added value' of those providers working predominantly with more disadvantaged groups.

Key recommendations arising from the research include:

Information – more regular and more transparent communication

- Ongoing information and communication between the LSC and its third sector partners is vital. Providers need to be informed, well in advance, of any changes to their contracts, administrative requirements, specific funding rules and eligibility criteria, or new policy priorities within the learning and skills sector, in general.

Flexibility and long-term commitment – recognising the needs of third sector providers and their learners

- Third sector providers feel that the needs of their learners could be met more effectively by increasing the flexibility of funding streams and eligibility criteria or by allowing providers more discretion in the administration of a limited amount of budget for learning delivery and support. This would reflect the manner in which many providers work with learners; tailoring the level and

nature of the support needed to the individual and providing intensive one-to-one interventions, when needed.

- We recommend that consideration is given to calculating the contribution of the third sector to the LSC's aims and objectives by introducing a 'value-added' or 'distance-travelled' performance metric, in addition to the current achievement rates that are calculated for providers. This approach would assess the relative improvement a learner makes, considering his or her prior educational attainment, any barriers to their learning and enabling a complete assessment of their progress. This is a complex task, and current ILR records do not allow this type of reliable measure, given that much of the information relating to prior educational achievement and learning outcomes is incomplete. Working with the third sector to improve data collection in this area may 'pave the way' for robust analysis.
- Providers would benefit from more long-term and integrated, priority commitments and from funding being 'ring-fenced' for particular disadvantaged groups to ensure 'continuity' in the provision that can be offered. This is perhaps even more important in the recession, where the third sector has a strong record of working with the long-term unemployed and those with low, prior educational achievement to re-skill or up-skill and to promote employability and confidence. Longer-term contracts are vital for providers, so that funding will not suddenly be removed, enabling them to engage in more effective future planning.
- Looking forward, the role of the third sector in working with priority groups (for example, the unemployed, those with a learning difficulty and/or disability and learners resident in deprived areas) could be consolidated and fully utilised in the equality and diversity strategies, and the recession/unemployment strategies, of the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

Resources – more funding to cover the resource implications of recruiting and supporting disadvantaged learners

- Providers often struggle to mobilise enough resources to finance their activities. Thus, there is a repeated call to make more funds available to help resource the extra effort that is required to safeguard the continuity of a holistic, learning delivery and learner support programme within the third sector. Across the different funding streams (FE, WBL, ESF) there is an increased need for funding arising from a learner population that is more disadvantaged and faces more barriers to learning than the non-third sector learner population. Building on the disadvantage, 'uplift' element of the current funding model to provide additional funds for those learners likely to require significant additional support would benefit the third sector and provide an incentive for all providers to engage with particular learning groups.
- Adult learners within WBL and ESF are currently less likely to achieve their aims than their non-third sector counterparts. Additional resource for WBL and ESF adult learners may help; within the third sector these learners tend to be those with the greatest additional (whether learning or non-learning) needs.
- Providers were concerned that funding may, in the future, increasingly follow achievement rates. There is a perception that this would financially favour colleges and would discourage providers from 'reaching out' to those learners who are more difficult to assist (or make it financially impossible to do so). As discussed above, 'softer' outcomes (for example, increased employability skills, confidence or improved attitude to learning) are often important outcomes for both third sector providers and learners. Overall measures of achievement often mask the significant progress that many learners make with third sector providers.

- WBL provision, in particular, has found it harder to adjust to the recession, as learners struggle to get the jobs that are a prerequisite of this type of training. As well as additional resources, some third sector WBL providers may benefit from LSC support in developing stronger links with local employers to provide guaranteed and relevant work placements to learners.
- Rural providers face additional costs from working in more remote locations, with learners having greater needs in terms of provider-supported transport and childcare, and suitable venues for training being considerably harder to find. Funding organised on a session-by-session basis is felt not to acknowledge these extra costs. Instead, providers require additional funding for working in geographically isolated areas, covering the infrastructural costs that need to be met prior to learning or training occurring.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to gain a detailed understanding of the extent and nature of the learning provision supplied by third sector learning providers in England and the impact of this provision on learners.

Introduction to the third sector

- 1.2 Third sector providers typically work as large or small charities, voluntary organisations, social enterprises, co-operatives, community interest groups and 'mutuals'. One of the accepted working definitions of third sector learning activity includes organisations previously classified within the voluntary and community sector (VCS), i.e. those organisations that:
- are non-governmental;
 - are 'value driven' – that is, are primarily motivated by the desire to further social, environmental or cultural objectives rather than to make a profit, *per se*; and
 - principally reinvest surpluses to further their social, environmental or cultural objectives⁵.
- 1.3 Currently, the LSC has a formal, contractual relationship with over 500 third sector organisations in England. Much has been done by the LSC to engage with its third sector partners. After setting-out a *Working Together Strategy* in 2004 it went on to establish regional consortia to facilitate engagements with third sector organisations in the nine English LSC regions.
- 1.4 The contribution of third sector providers to the LSC's targets and priorities were thought to be substantial, in particular in relation to two key areas: firstly, third sector providers have a proven track-record of exceeding non-third sector providers in their attempts to include disadvantaged learners; and, secondly, third sector providers are often more effective in supporting disadvantaged learners through to a successful completion of their learning aims⁶.
- 1.5 Previous research across government departments supported this view noting that, third sector organisations have an important role to play in getting disadvantaged learners to embark on a learning and skills journey⁷. However, much of the existing evidence relating to the positive contribution of third sector providers remains anecdotal.
- 1.6 Following on from the recommendation of the LSC Third Sector Advisory Group that better data collection in relation to the third sector was essential if the learning contribution of the third sector was to be properly assessed and evaluated, the LSC decided to commission IFF Research to undertake a thorough review of LSC-funded third sector provision.

⁵HM Treasury, 2005: *Exploring the role of the third sector in public service delivery and reform*.

⁶LSC, November 2004: *Working Together with the Third Sector*.

⁷Social Exclusion Unit, November 2005: *Improving Services, Improving Lives*.

Aims and objectives

- 1.7 The key objective of the research was to systematically examine third sector activity in the context of LSC-funded learning provision. The evaluation included two, major strands of enquiry:
- To fully understand the extent and nature of third sector provision and its contribution to LSC priorities; and
 - To move beyond existing, anecdotal evidence to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of third sector provision, and the reasons for this impact, on learners.
- 1.8 In 2010, the LSC will be replaced by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) under the *Machinery of Government changes*. Consequently, a focus of this research was to present the two, new agencies with specific evidence and insights into the role of third sector provision for young people and for adult learners, separately.

Methodology

- 1.9 Meeting these objectives required two phases of research, comprising:
- A comprehensive analysis of existing, quantitative data recorded on the LSC's Individualised Learner Record (ILR) database; and
 - A series of qualitative, case studies of priority learning areas involving 'in-depth' interviews with third sector providers and learners.
- 1.10 The first stage of the analysis included a systematic exploration of the quantitative information recorded on the ILR for four, academic years (2004/05 to 2007/08, inclusive). The data sets used were learner and learning aims for the following data collections:
- Further Education (FE);
 - Work-Based Learning (WBL); and
 - European Social Fund (ESF) Learning.
- 1.11 From 2008/09 onwards, the LSC collects data in a new format, reflecting the new funding streams that replaced the previous FE and WBL streams. The new *Learner Responsive* stream encompasses all previously labelled 'FE learning' (including National Vocational Qualifications [NVQs] for adults and young learners and Entry to Employment [E2E]) aims. The new *Employer Responsive* stream covers all learning delivered as Apprenticeships and *Train to Gain*. However, since the scope of this research project ended with the academic year 2007/08, the results are reported according to the old funding categories.
- 1.12 The data preparation included a number of steps, such as matching learning aim variables onto the learner data sets and appending the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) onto the merged dataset.
- 1.13 Key to the analysis was the list of third sector providers supplied by the LSC's third sector policy team when the project was initiated. This list was used to create a variable, separating the third sector learners and aims from non-third sector learners and aims. The list included all third sector providers who had a direct and active, funding relationship with the LSC between 2004/05 and 2007/08. As such, only direct provision was included into the analysis, any subcontracted or franchised-out provision was excluded, since this type of activity could not be identified either by the LSC's provider list or by the data stored on the ILR.

- 1.14 The analysis established the profile of third sector learners, learning aims and provider performance compared with non-third sector learning provision. ILR data based on all active third sector providers was compared against all active non-third sector providers for each academic year. The key measures presented in the tables throughout the report and in the Appendix include:
- Volume of activity, measured by learners and learning aims;
 - Characteristics of activity, measured by mode of attendance, level, type and subject of study;
 - Demographic participation of activity, measured by gender, age group, ethnicity and learning difficulty and/or disability;
 - Contribution of activity to LSC priorities, including *Skills for Life*;
 - Geographic participation of activity, measured by deprivation; and
 - Outcome of activity, measured by achievement rates.
- 1.15 The second element of the research involved a series of qualitative, case studies which sought to explore further the impact of the third sector in a number of key priority areas. These areas were confirmed after the initial exploration of the ILR data, following a discussion with the LSC Third Sector Advisory Group and included:
- CASE STUDY 1:** ESF learning undertaken by learners aged 16–18 years;
- CASE STUDY 2:** ESF learning undertaken by adult learners;
- CASE STUDY 3:** WBL undertaken by learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability;
- CASE STUDY 4:** WBL undertaken by learners, aged 16–18 years, on Apprenticeships in disadvantaged areas;
- CASE STUDY 5:** FE learners participating in Full Level 2 learning.
- 1.16 The selected case studies provided a good ‘spread’ across the different funding streams and age groups. In addition, the case studies were in those areas in which the nature and contribution of third sector provision particularly warrants further exploration.
- 1.17 The qualitative fieldwork was conducted between July and August 2009 and included 12 interviews with third sector providers and 54 interviews with learners. The interviews were conducted using loosely structured topic guides. All the interviews were fully transcribed and analysed using the text as a basis for qualitative coding and the extraction of relevant quotations. Responses were analysed by demographic and other learner- and provider-information. More details on the research methodology and the qualitative topic guides are provided in Appendices D, E and F.

Report structure

- 1.18 The next three chapters of the report present the findings resulting from the quantitative analysis of the ILR for WBL (Chapter 2), FE (Chapter 3) and ESF learning (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 onwards focuses on the qualitative findings from the case study interviews leading to conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 12.
- 1.19 Finally, the Appendices show a series of detailed data tables illustrating ILR analyses relating to young and adult learners separately.

2 Work-Based Learning (WBL)

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Within Work-Based learning (WBL), third sector learners tend to be younger, more ethnically diverse and more likely to have a learning difficulty and/or disability than non-third sector learners.
- They are also concentrated in deprived areas; almost half (45% in 2007/08) of all WBL third sector learners live in the 20% most deprived areas (compared with 28% of all non-third sector learners).
- In 2007/08 around two-thirds of WBL third sector learners (67%) were unemployed when they started their course (vs. 12% of WBL non-third sector learners). A similar proportion of WBL third sector learners had only a Level 1 or below qualification prior to commencing the course.
- At an overall level, the achievement rates for third sector WBL learning aims are slightly lower than those for non-third sector learning (although they are comparable for the 16–18 age group). However, there are some exceptions to this overall pattern by learner type: those third sector learners studying at Level 3 or above and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are **more** likely to achieve their learning aim than their non-third sector counterparts.

2.1 This chapter examines the contributions made by the third sector to WBL. Although learner definitions were changed for the academic year 2008/09, the WBL category has been used, as the data that have been analysed pre-dates the full 'roll-out' of this change. From 2008/09 the bulk of programmes previously categorised as WBL will reside in the Employer funding stream although some programmes will also fall into the Adult and Youth funding streams. This chapter addresses;

- The demographic profile of WBL learners;
- The geographic profile of WBL learners;
- The prior achievement and employment status of WBL learners;
- The trends in WBL learning provision by level and by type of learning; and
- The WBL achievement rates.

Overview of trends in WBL provision

2.2 In 2007/08, there were 136 training providers delivering WBL programmes within the third sector. This represents 9% of the total number of WBL providers that were active during 2007/08.

2.3 The number of third sector providers delivering WBL has changed over time, from 126 in 2004/05 (11% of the total number of WBL providers), decreasing to 98 in 2005/06 (8%) and 109 in 2006/07 (9%), before increasing again to 136 in 2007/08 (although this figure is in accordance with the overall numbers of WBL providers, and therefore, still represents 9% of the total number of active providers).

2.4 In 2007/08 two providers – Rathbone Training and the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) – dominated third sector WBL provision, between them accounting for almost three in ten of all third sector WBL learners. Rathbone Training was the biggest provider in terms of learner volumes, training over 6,500 learners (accounting for 16% of all third

sector WBL learners). The second largest provider was NACRO, which trained approximately 5,500 learners (13%) in 2007/08. **Table 2.1** shows the top-ten third sector providers according to the volume of WBL in 2007/08.

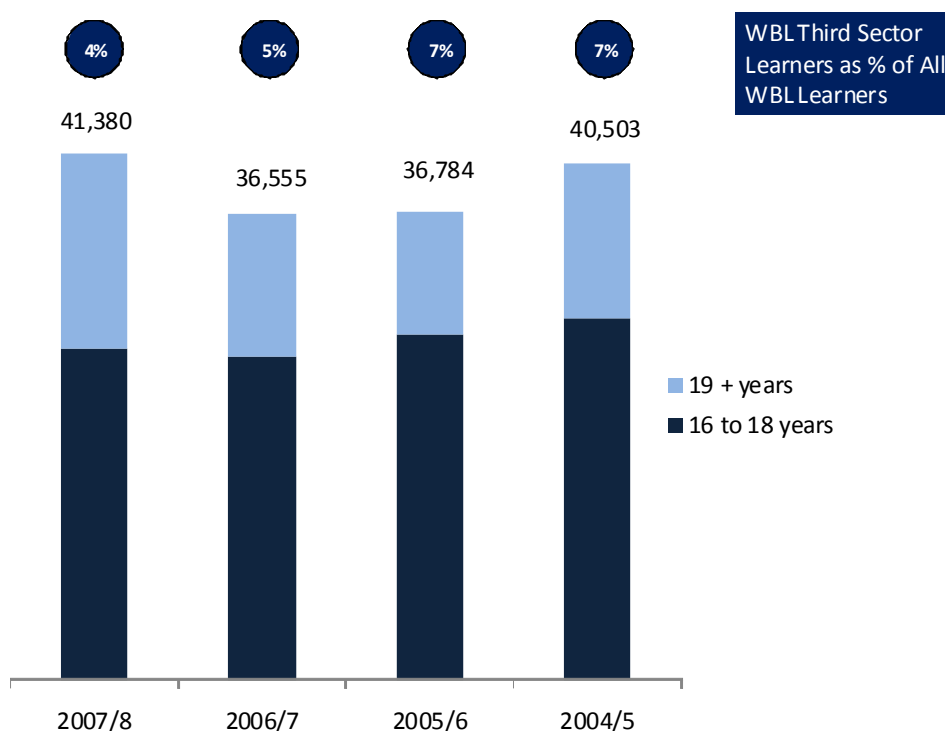
Table 2.1: Top-ten third sector WBL providers by learner volumes (2007/08)

Provider name	Volumes of third sector learners	Proportion of third sector learners
<i>Base: All third sector learners</i>	<i>(41,380)[†]</i>	<i>(%)</i>
Rathbone Training	6,662	16
NACRO	5,345	13
Springboard Sunderland Trust	1,497	4
Morthyng Ltd	1,277	3
Aylesbury Training Group	1,270	3
5E Ltd	1,170	3
LifeLine Community Projects	1,132	3
VC Train ⁸	1,003	2
Ridgemoor Training Ltd	866	2
Oakmere House	852	2

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); NACRO=National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders [†]Percentage of all third sector WBL learners.

2.5 Overall, there has been some movement in third sector WBL learner numbers over time (**Figure 2.1**). Around 40,500 learners participated in a WBL course with a third sector provider in 2004/05. Thereafter, there was a notable decrease in learner numbers during 2005/06 and 2006/07, until a substantial increase occurred in 2007/08, where learner numbers peak at around 41,500. Most of these changes have been driven by differences in adult learner (19+ years) numbers.

⁸This provider has been recorded previously on the ILR as 'South Yorkshire Voluntary & Community Training Consortium'.

Figure 2.1: Trends in third sector WBL learner volumes (ALL LEARNERS)

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

2.6 The third sector's contribution to WBL, in terms of learner volumes, has declined slightly since 2004/05; 4% of **all** WBL learners studied with a third sector provider in 2007/08 compared with 7% in 2004/05 (**Figure 2.1**). It is worth reiterating that these learner numbers are based on direct provision and not provision that is subcontracted or franchised-out to the third sector.

Demographic profile of WBL learners

2.7 A number of significant differences are observed when the demographic profile of WBL learners within the third sector is compared with the non-third sector learner population (see **Table 2.2**). Overall, third sector WBL learners tend to be:

- younger than non-third sector WBL learners;
- more ethnically diverse; and
- more likely to have a learning difficulty and/or disability.

2.8 Firstly, looking at age differences, learners studying with a third sector provider tend to be significantly younger than non-third sector learners. For example, in the academic year 2007/08 two-thirds of third sector WBL learners (63%) were aged 16 to 18 years while just over one third (37%) were 19+ years; the situation is reversed in non-third sector learning, where almost three-quarters (73%) of learners were 19+ years and one-quarter (26%) were aged 16 to 18 years. As discussed later in this chapter, this is likely to be related, at least in part, to the nature of the third sector WBL provision and the programme types that are more commonly offered (e.g. Entry to Employment [E2E] courses that are open to those with no or low-level prior qualifications).

2.9 In terms of ethnicity, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) learners account for a greater share of the WBL learner population within the third sector compared with the non-third sector. In 2007/08, just under one-quarter (23%) of third sector WBL learners were BAME learners compared with 16% of all non-third sector WBL learners (**Table 2.2**).

2.10 Finally, third sector WBL learners are significantly more likely to have a learning difficulty and/or a disability than non-third sector learners. In the last academic year 2007/08, over one quarter (26%) of third sector WBL learners considered themselves to have a learning difficulty and/or disability compared with just one in ten (10%), non-third sector learners (**Table 2.2**).

2.11 These patterns are stable and consistent over time.

Table 2.2: Demographic profile of WBL learners (ALL LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All WBL learners</i>	(937,065)	(41,380)	(630,867)	(36,555)	(497,103)	(36,784)	(576,221)	(40,503)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gender								
Male	56	55	56	57	57	56	57	56
Female	44	45	44	43	43	44	43	44
Age (years)								
16–18	26	63	37	70	48	74	45	70
19–59	73	37	62	30	51	26	54	29
60+	1	*	1	1	*	*	1	1
Ethnicity								
White – British	82	75	87	78	91	81	90	79
BAME	16	23	11	21	8	18	9	20
Not known	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
Have a learning difficulty and/or disability	10	26	11	26	12	27	11	28
Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability	88	72	87	71	86	70	86	68
Not known	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	4

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes data points below 1%. Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data. BAME= Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

2.12 The following two paragraphs look at the demographic profile of third sector learners within broad age groups, comparing **young learners** (16–18 years) with **adult learners** (aged 19+ years). The corresponding tables are appended (**Tables A1 and A2**).

2.13 Looking first at those aged 16 to 18 years, the demographic profile of these **young learners** in terms of ethnicity shows a similar pattern between non-third sector and third sector groups, as is evident at the overall level. However, in 2007/08, one third (33%) of all young WBL third sector learners considered themselves to have a learning difficulty and/or disability (**Table A1**) – an even greater proportion than that seen among WBL third sector learners (26%), in general (**Table 2.2**).

2.14 The demographic profile of **adult learners** (aged 19+ years) is broadly in-line with the overall WBL third sector learner population, apart from a couple of notable differences:

- Adult learners within WBL third sector provision are more likely to be BAME than non-third sector learners (In 2007/08, 35% were BAME; **Table A2**).
- In 2007/08, female adult learners (52%) outnumbered male adult learners (48%) in terms of WBL third sector provision (**Table A2**). The opposite was true for non-third sector provision across all age groups and academic years, where there was a greater proportion of male than female adult learners.

Geographic profile of WBL learners

- 2.15 One of the key priorities of the LSC is to extend learning opportunities to an increasing number of learners, particularly to those classified as ‘disadvantaged learners’. Learners can be disadvantaged for a number of reasons, one being social deprivation. It is, therefore, important to understand the geographic dimension of third sector learning provision. This section looks at the regional composition of the WBL learner population and the proportion of learners that are resident in the most deprived areas of England.
- 2.16 Overall, third sector WBL provision tends to be fairly evenly distributed across the regions (**Table 2.3**). However, there is some concentration in Greater London and the South East of England, where the greatest proportions of learners are resident (18% and 15%, respectively, for 2007/08). In addition, in 2007/08, 14% of third sector WBL learners lived in the North East compared with just 6% of non-third sector WBL learners.
- 2.17 Relatively small proportions of third sector WBL learners are found in the East Midlands (5% in 2007/08) and the South West (3% in 2007/08) compared with non-third sector provision (9% and 10%, respectively; **Table 2.3**). The proportion of third sector learners found in the South West has also decreased over time (from 6% in 2004/05 to 3% in 2007/08).
- 2.18 Third sector WBL learners are significantly more likely to live in a deprived area compared with non-third sector WBL learners⁹. In 2007/08, almost half (45%) of WBL learners of the third sector lived in the 20% most deprived areas compared with just over a quarter (28%) of non-third sector WBL learners (**Table 2.3**). Similarly, over one-quarter of third sector WBL learners (27%) live in the 10% most deprived areas compared with 15% of non-third sector WBL learners. This pattern is constant and has been relatively stable over time¹⁰.

⁹Levels of deprivation are measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) as published by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The IMD combines several measures of social deprivation and assigns a combined, overall score for each Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA). The IMD can also be used to calculate a ranking of LSOAs, with a rank of 1 being the most deprived, and 32482 the least deprived LSOA. The data presented in Table 2.3 summarise the bottom 10% and 20% of this ranking of LSOAs.

¹⁰As a note, the category of learners living in the 20% most deprived areas captured by the IMD includes those living in the 10% most deprived areas.

Table 2.3: Geographic profile of WBL learners (ALL LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
Base: All WBL learners	(937,065)	(41,380)	(630,867)	(36,555)	(497,103)	(36,784)	(576,221)	(40,503)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Region								
East of England	9	7	9	7	4	2	9	6
East Midlands	9	5	9	5	1	1	9	6
Greater London	10	18	8	18	6	16	7	17
North East	6	14	7	15	8	16	8	14
North West	16	12	17	12	17	14	17	14
South East	12	15	12	14	13	14	13	13
South West	10	3	11	5	12	6	10	6
West Midlands	13	13	13	13	12	13	12	15
Yorkshire & the Humber	11	10	12	8	14	6	14	7
Not known	4	3	2	3	13	12	1	2
Index of Multiple Deprivation								
Resident in 10% of most deprived areas	15	27	14	25	13	25	13	24
Resident in 20% of most deprived areas	28	45	26	44	24	43	25	42

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

Note: Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

2.19 Looking at the geographic profile of learners split by **young learners** and **adult learners** (Tables A3 and A4 in the Appendix) reveals some notable differences:

- Among **young learners** (16–18 years), in 2007/08, third sector WBL provision is reasonably well concentrated in the North East (17%), the West Midlands (16%) and the North West (15%) (Table A3). The relative weight of North East provision for young, WBL learners is explained by the second biggest, third sector WBL provider, NACRO, operating in this region.
- **Young learners** receiving third sector WBL provision tend to be even more likely to live within a deprived area than third sector WBL learners overall. In 2007/08, half of the young WBL learners (50%) were living in the 20% most deprived areas and almost one-third (31%) were living in the 10% most deprived areas (Table A3).
- Third sector **adult learners** (19+ years) are quite heavily concentrated in Greater London (27% in 2007/08) and the South East (21% in 2007/08) (Table A4), even more so than WBL third sector learners, overall (18% and 15%, respectively) (Table 2.3).
- Reflecting the overall picture for third sector WBL learners, **adult learners** in the third sector are more likely to live in a deprived area than non-third sector learners. In 2007/08, 38% lived in the bottom 20% of deprived areas compared with 28% of non-third sector, adult WBL learners (Table A4), but this difference is less pronounced than among young WBL learners.

Prior achievement and employment status of WBL learners

- 2.20 This section considers some key aspects of learner's background, including their prior attainment status and their pre- and post-course employment status (**Table 2.4**). Exploring these figures provides an indication of the distance that learners travelled through their learning¹¹. In general, third sector WBL learners tend to be:
- more likely to have a Level 1 or Entry Level qualification or no qualification prior to starting their course; and
 - more likely to be unemployed before the course.
- 2.21 Overall, third sector learners are significantly more likely to have no prior qualifications (15% in 2007/08) or only Level 1 or Entry Level qualifications (50%) than non-third sector learners (5% and 40%, respectively; **Table 2.4**). This profile appears to be relatively stable over time with between three-fifths and two-thirds of third sector WBL learners each year having no prior qualification at Level 2 or above when they started a course with a third sector provider¹¹.
- 2.22 Prior to starting their course, third sector learners were significantly more likely to be out of work (67% in 2007/08) than non-third sector learners (12%) (**Table 2.4**). This pattern is evident across the four academic years.
- 2.23 Analysing learner destinations shows that the most common outcome for third sector learners was to continue their existing programme of learning (36% in 2007/08) which was also the most common outcome for non-third sector WBL learners (47% in 2007/08); albeit this outcome was slightly less frequent among third sector than non-third sector learners (**Table 2.4**). One-fifth moved on to find employment (20% in 2007/08); again a smaller proportion than amongst non-third sector learners (32% in 2007/08). Notably, the ILR data showed a substantial drop in employment from 87% and 32% for non-third sector and third sector learners, respectively, on the first day of learning down to 32% and 30%, respectively, after their learning (**Table 2.4**). This development may be explained by the fact that a large proportion of learners were recorded as continuing their existing learning on the ILR (47% and 36%, respectively), some of which may have involved employment as part of a WBL programme.
- 2.24 Third sector learners were more likely to move on to further education (FE) or training after finishing their course than non-third sector learners (11% in 2007/08 compared with 2%, respectively; **Table 2.4**). Notably, third sector WBL learners were most commonly enrolled in an E2E programme or an Apprenticeship (see **Tables 2.5 and 2.6** for more details). They were also more likely to be unemployed after the course (8% in 2007/08 compared with 3% in 2007/08 among non-third sector learners; **Table 2.4**). However, it should be considered that third sector learners were much more likely to be unemployed *prior* to their course than non-third sector learners (67–73% over the four years vs. 12–19%; **Table 2.4**); a comparison of destinations between third sector and non-third sector learners should be seen in this context.

¹¹As a note, the ILR records show a relatively high incidence of learners whose prior qualifications and destinations appear as "unknown" (see Tables 2.4 and 2.4.1), which creates a degree of uncertainty around the true distribution of prior qualifications and learner destinations within and outside the Third Sector. Some of the variation discussed here may be, therefore, as much a factor of these fields not being completed, as genuine differences in learners' characteristics/destinations.

Table 2.4: Learner educational and employment status background (ALL LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector (937,065) %	Third sector (41,380) %	Non-third sector (630,867) %	Third sector (36,555) %	Non-third sector (497,103) %	Third sector (36,784) %	Non-third sector (576,221) %	Third sector (40,503) %
<i>Base: All WBL learners</i>								
Learner level or prior attainment								
Level 1 & Entry	40	50	42	48	37	40	33	36
Level 2	19	11	23	13	27	13	23	11
Level 3	2	1	3	1	4	1	4	2
Level 4, 5 or higher	*	*	*	*	*	*	1	1
Other level	1	3	1	5	3	6	4	6
No prior qualifications	5	15	8	18	20	22	27	26
Not known	33	19	23	16	9	17	9	18
Learner employment status on first day of learning								
Employed	87	32	84	28	79	25	78	25
Unemployed	12	67	14	69	19	73	19	68
Not known	1	1	3	2	2	2	3	7
Learner destination: employment status after learning								
Employed	32	20	28	19	30	21	30	20
Unemployed	3	8	3	8	4	10	3	10
Education or training	2	11	2	11	3	10	2	9
Continuing existing programme of learning	47	36	52	36	45	32	47	34
Other	10	15	9	15	12	18	11	16
Not known	6	10	5	10	5	9	7	10

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes data points below 1%. Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

- 2.25 Having considered the background and destinations of all learners, the following paragraphs explore the picture among **young learners** and **adult learners**. To some extent, learner educational background and employment status are explained by age, for example, younger learners have less opportunity to gain higher qualification levels than older learners. The corresponding tables are appended (**Tables A5** and **A6**).
- 2.26 **Young learners** (16–18 years) who enter WBL learning within the third sector most commonly have a Level 1 or Entry Level qualification (53% in 2007/08) or no prior qualifications (19% in 2007/08) (**Table A5**). This pattern was even more pronounced among young learners than WBL learners, overall.
- 2.27 **Young learners** were also less likely to be employed before starting their course, with only one-in-ten (11% in 2007/08) of young WBL learners working compared with two-thirds of all WBL third sector learners (68%; **Table A5**). The learner destinations of young learners were generally comparable to the overall third sector picture, but young learners were more likely to enter FE or training (17% in 2007/08; **Table A5**) compared with the third sector WBL average (11%; **Table 2.4**).

- 2.28 Third sector **adult learners** (19+ years) enter learning from a slightly different background. As with all third sector learners within WBL, adults most commonly started their course with a prior Level 1 or Entry Level qualification (44% in 2007/08; **Table A6**). However, adult learners were more likely to possess a prior Level 2 qualification (17% in 2007/08; **Table A6**) than WBL third sector learners, overall (11% in 2007/08; **Table 2.4**), and were less likely to start their course without any prior qualifications (10% vs. 15% in 2007/08, on average; **Table A6 and 2.4**).
- 2.29 Reflecting the overall picture, adult WBL third sector learners are more likely to be unemployed at the start of their course (one third [33%] were unemployed in 2007/08) compared with their non-third sector counterparts (5%; **Table A6**).
- 2.30 Examining the changes in learner's status in more detail, a cross tabulation of learner's prior employment status and destination upon finishing the course provides further insight regarding the findings presented in **Table 2.4**. Using the same categories as **Table 2.4**, **Table 2.4.1** shows that in 2007/08 only 10% of all third sector WBL learners who were unemployed remained unemployed after their course. Almost half (46%) of those previously not employed were either continuing their existing programme of learning (30%) or had entered a new programme in education or training (16%; **Table 2.4.1**).

Table 2.4.1: Learner prior employment status and destination (third sector WBL learners 2007/08)

	Learner destination						Total
	Employed	Un-employed	Education or training	Continuing existing programme of learning ¹²	Other	Not known	
Row percentages	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Learner employment status on first day of learning							
Employed	32	2	1	49	10	7	100
Unemployed	15	10	16	30	17	11	100
Not known	11	7	24	34	14	10	100

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

- 2.31 Notably, learners' destination after completing any learning aim can be classified as 'continuing' their existing programme of learning when they move on to the next learning aim that is part of their wider programme of learning.

Trends in WBL provision

- 2.32 This section looks at learning provision within WBL and examines the differences between third sector and non-third sector provision in terms of the nature of learning provision, the level of learning and the programme type. Notably, findings in the rest of this chapter are based on the analysis of total learning aims, i.e. individual courses, rather than learner numbers¹³. Most individual courses offered under the WBL funding stream in the third sector are classified as falling into the 'Preparation

¹²The ILR identifies the destination of the learner after completion of the learning at data field L39, where Code 95 is used for learners who are 'continuing an existing programme of learning' when the next component learning aim of the framework starts.

¹³Note that the total number of learning aims will be higher than the actual number of learners due to the Apprenticeship framework structure. Each Apprenticeship framework comprises multiple learning aims.

for life and work' and 'Foundations for life and learning' subject categories on the ILR. In terms of specific aims titles, E2E clearly dominated the learning provision in WBL, comprising one-fifth (19%) of all WBL third sector learning aims in 2007/08 (**Table 2.5**)¹⁴.

2.33 In 2007/08, the third sector delivered over one-quarter (26%) of all the E2E aims delivered nationally.

2.34 Short courses geared at improving basic skills, numeracy and literacy (often taken in conjunction with an E2E course) were also among the most frequently undertaken learning aims (**Table 2.5**).

Table 2.5: Top-ten third sector WBL learning aims (2007/08)

Learning aim title	Level	Awarding body	Volumes of third sector aims	Proportion of third sector aims
<i>Base: All WBL learning aims</i>			<i>(100,006)</i>	<i>(%)</i>
E2E	N/A	Generic award	19,282	19
Key Skills in application of numbers	Level 1	City & Guilds	4,127	4
Key Skills in communication	Level 1	City & Guilds	3,652	4
Certificate in adult numeracy	Entry	City & Guilds	3,167	3
Certificate in adult literacy	Level 1	City & Guilds	2,612	3
Co-financed ESF provision	N/A	Generic award	2,518	3
Certificate in adult numeracy	Level 1	City & Guilds	2,512	3
Certificate in adult literacy	Entry	City & Guilds	1,693	2
NVQ in children's care, learning and development	Level 2	City & Guilds	1,693	2
Certificate in children's care, learning and development	Level 2	City & Guilds	1,379	1

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); E2E=Entry to employment; NVQ=National Vocational Qualification.

Note: Some learning aims do not have an applicable level of learning attached on the ILR's Learning Aim Database (variable A_NVQLEV) in which case the level has to be displayed as "N/A".

2.35 Looking at third sector learning provision by level of learning in 2007/08 (**Table 2.6**), WBL learning aims were most commonly delivered at Level 1 and Entry Level (37%) followed by Level 2 learning (31%). A significant proportion of courses were classified as Other level (24%)¹⁵. Third sector learning is more evenly spread across Level 1 and Level 2 than non-third sector learning, where more than half of all learning aims were at Level 2 (57%). Non-third sector learning aims were more likely to be at Level 3 (16%) than third sector aims (7%).

2.36 Just over two-fifths of third sector WBL learning aims were classified as belonging to E2E programmes (42% in 2007/08); a much higher proportion than that found within non-third sector WBL provision (5% in 2007/08). Just under one third of third sector WBL learning aims (30%) were Apprenticeships and just over one in ten (11% in 2007/08) were Advanced Apprenticeships (compared with 42% and 28%, respectively, in non-third sector learning).

¹⁴As a note, the E2E learning recorded within WBL will be moved to the Learner Responsive (LR) data collection on the ILR from 2008/09 onwards.

¹⁵The relatively high proportion of learning aims classified as 'Other level' merits some further examination. The ILR shows that the E2E aims in WBL comprise a substantial proportion of all WBL aims (19% in 2007/08). These aims appear to be generic aims, with no awarding body recorded on the ILR, and not accredited according to the ILR. The short courses that are co-financed by ESF account for 3% of all WBL aims. These aims are generic courses that are not accredited either. Together these account for 22% of all aims.

Table 2.6: Profile of WBL learning aims by level of learning and programme type (ALL AIMS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All WBL learning aims</i>	(2,122,730)	(100,006)	(1,730,897)	(98,818)	(1,663,681)	(106,389)	(1,699,237)	(100,633)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Level								
Level 1 & Entry	22	37	24	38	27	39	26	34
Level 2	57	31	55	31	52	31	52	30
Level 3	16	7	16	7	16	6	16	6
Level 4, 5 or higher	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other level	4	24	4	24	5	24	6	30
Programme type								
Advanced Apprenticeship	28	11	32	12	33	12	32	11
Apprenticeship	42	30	49	35	56	38	54	32
NVQ level 1 within WBL	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
NVQ level 2 within WBL	1	*	1	*	1	1	4	4
NVQ level 3 within WBL	*	*	*	*	*	*	1	1
NVQ level 4 within WBL	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
E2E	5	42	5	43	6	42	5	41
Higher level Apprenticeship	*	–	*	–	–	–	–	–
Other programme type	24	17	13	10	4	7	4	11
Learning aim type								
Skills for Life	31	31	33	31	36	31	33	26

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); E2E=Entry to employment; NVQ=National Vocational Qualification; WBL=Work-based learning

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes data points below 1%; – denotes zero. Some column percentages may not add up to 100%

2.37 Analysing by age (**Tables A7 and A8** in Appendix), the WBL undertaken by **young learners** in the third sector followed a similar pattern to that reported at the overall level. The main exception was that young, WBL third sector learners were more likely to be undertaking E2E programmes (58% in 2007/08; **Table A7**) than third sector WBL learners overall (42%; **Table 2.6**).

2.38 Conversely, **Adult learners** studying a WBL aim in the third sector were most commonly working towards a Level 2 qualification (47% in 2007/08; **Table A8**) and were more likely than third sector WBL learners, as a whole, to be studying towards a Level 3 qualification (15% vs. 7%; **Tables A8 and 2.6**). Similarly, only relatively few adult learners participated in an E2E programme (3%), which is typically undertaken by younger learners. Adult learners within the third sector participated in Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships in proportions comparable with those seen in non-third sector provision (**Table A8**).

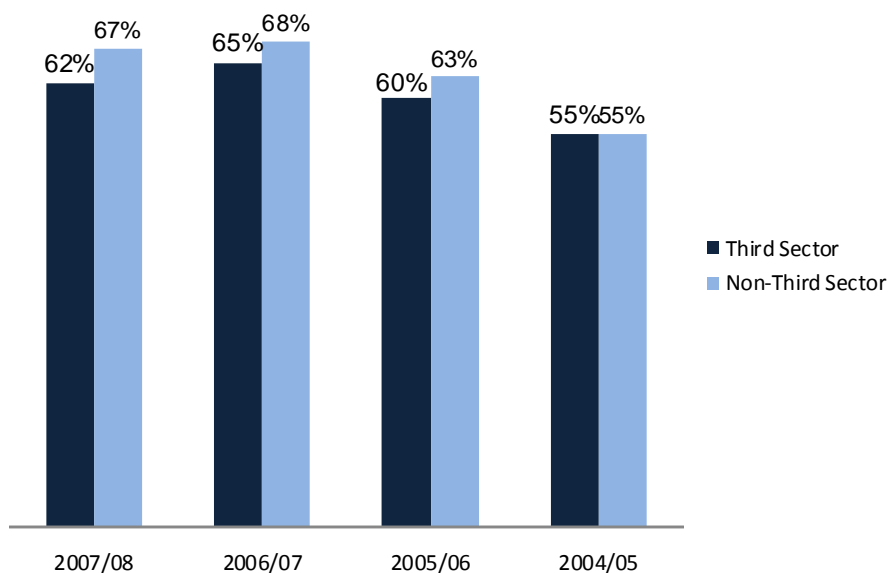
2.39 The ILR classifies a number of learning aims as 'Skills for Life'. Typically, these aims include a wide array of short-term courses, covering subject areas such as: numeracy, literacy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Overall, learning aims grouped together under *Skills for Life* accounted for just under one-third of all learning aims (31% in 2007/08; **Table 2.6**) within third sector

WBL; in non-third sector WBL the proportion of *Skills for Life* aims was equivalent (31% of all WBL aims in 2007/08).

WBL achievement rates

- 2.40 This section explores the achievement rates of WBL aims within third sector provision. These achievement rates have been calculated as the number of achieved and partially achieved aims, expressed as a percentage of the number of aims with a definitive outcome (achieved; partially achieved; or no achievement), excluding any aims where the learning was still ongoing¹⁶.
- 2.41 At an overall level, achievement rates within third sector WBL learning have increased over time (**Figure 2.2**), from 55% in 2004/05 to 62% in 2007/08.

Figure 2.2: Trends in third sector WBL achievement rates (ALL LEARNERS)



Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

- 2.42 In 2007/08, achievement rates were slightly lower for learning aims undertaken within the third sector compared with non-third sector WBL learning. However, there was some variation underneath this overall achievement rate by type or learning and learner (**Table 2.7**).
- 2.43 Looking at 2007/08 findings, compared with non-third sector provision:
- Third sector achievement rates were higher at Level 3 and above (69% vs. 67% achieved aims at Level 3 and 88% vs. 76% at Level 4 or higher). However, third sector achievement rates for Level 2 (64%) and at Entry or Level 1 (58%) aims fell slightly short of those seen in non-third sector provision (70% and 61%, respectively; **Table 2.7**);
 - *Skills for Life* learning aims were slightly less likely to be achieved by third sector learners (57% vs. 63%); the achievement rates were particularly low for adult learners (48% vs. 62%; **Table A10**), while young learners aged 16 to 18 years achieved a comparable proportion of their *Skills for Life* aims (61% vs. 64%; **Table A9**);

¹⁶More specifically, the variable used for this analysis of achievement is A35 on the ILR. Achievement rates are defined here as (A35=1 or 2) / (A35= 1, 2 or 3).

-
- Aims undertaken by learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability within third sector WBL were more likely to be achieved (64%) than similar, non-third sector learning aims (60%; **Table 2.7**);
 - Correspondingly, learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability were equally as likely to achieve their aims within third sector provision as learners without a learning difficulty and/or disability. This contrasts to the pattern within non-third sector WBL, where learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability were generally less likely to achieve their aims compared with those without a learning difficulty and/or disability, with an achievement gap of 7 to 8 percentage points observed across each of the four academic years.
 - BAME learners were less likely to achieve their aims in the third sector (54%) compared with the non-third sector (64%; **Table 2.7**).

Table 2.7: Achievement rates (achieved or partially achieved) of WBL learning aims (ALL AIMS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All learning aims with a definite outcome (A35=1, 2 or 3)</i>	(1,274,859)	(70,633)	(1,033,638)	(70,585)	(1,027,505)	(78,938)	(928,924)	(67,727)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All								
<i>Achieved or partially achieved Aims</i>	67	62	68	65	63	60	55	55
Achievement by level								
<i>Level 1 & Entry</i>	61	58	66	63	62	58	52	51
<i>Level 2</i>	70	64	70	65	64	58	56	52
<i>Level 3</i>	67	69	68	67	63	59	54	55
<i>Level 4, 5 or higher</i>	76	88	81	93	75	87	70	71
<i>Other level</i>	67	67	64	68	62	67	58	61
Learning aim type								
<i>Skills for Life</i>	63	57	66	61	61	53	49	45
Gender								
<i>Male</i>	68	62	70	65	65	62	56	55
<i>Female</i>	65	63	65	65	60	58	54	55
Age (years)								
<i>16–18</i>	65	65	67	65	63	60	54	54
<i>19+</i>	68	56	69	65	63	63	57	60
Ethnicity								
<i>White – British</i>	67	65	68	66	63	62	55	57
<i>BAME</i>	64	54	64	61	59	54	51	48
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
<i>Have a learning difficulty and/or disability</i>	60	64	61	64	57	60	49	56
<i>Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability</i>	68	62	69	65	64	60	56	55

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

- 2.44 **Young learners** (aged 16–18) within the third sector show achievement rates that are comparable with young learners on WBL courses outside the third sector (65% in both cases; **Table A9**).
- 2.45 However, **adult learners** who worked towards a third sector WBL aim were less likely to achieve this aim (56%) than non-third sector WBL learners overall (68%; **Table A10**). There was some variation by course type, with third sector adults learners actually producing higher achievement rates at Level 3 and above than non-third sector adult learners (reflecting the overall picture).
- 2.46 The lower than average achievement rates among adult learners in third sector WBL are being driven by the particularly low achievement rate for aims undertaken at Entry or Level 1 (43% in 2007/08 vs. 60% in non-third sector WBL; **Table A10**). A significantly higher proportion of third sector adult learning aims were at this level compared with non-third sector learning (30% vs. 18% in 2007/08; **Table A8**). There is evidence to suggest that adult learners on these entry level courses tend to be some of the ‘hardest-to-help’, often facing multiple disadvantages. This would seem to be particularly relevant in the third sector, where adult learners on Entry Level or Level 1 courses in 2007/08¹⁷ were:
- More likely to be doing ESOL learning within a *Skills for Life* type aim (16% vs. 4% of non-third sector Entry or Level 1 WBL);
 - More likely to be learners with lower prior qualification levels (17% of third sector WBL aims at Entry or Level 1 were undertaken by adults with only a prior Entry Level qualification compared with 8% in non-third sector learning);
 - More likely to have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (20% vs. 13% of non-third sector adult WBL learners on an Entry Level or Level 1 course);
 - Twice as likely to have additional needs, including additional learning and/or social needs (22% vs. 11% of non-third sector adult WBL at Entry or Level 1).
- 2.47 **Tables A9 and A10** in the Appendix show detailed achievement rates by each age group.

¹⁷Data derived from a special analysis exploring only aims undertaken by adults who studied a Level 1 course in WBL. By looking at this subset of aims, rather than all aims, IFF were able to explore the differences between adult L1 learners in the third sector against mainstream adult L1 learners and, thus, shed more light on possible reasons why adult learning achievement in the third sector is lagging behind mainstream WBL achievement.

3 Further Education (FE)

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Overall, third sector Further Education (FE) learners were older and were more likely to have a learning difficulty and/or disability than non-third sector FE learners.
- Third sector learning in FE is dominated by one provider, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), which accounted for more than half of all learners. When this provider was removed from the analysis, the remainder of third sector FE learners were still found to be older than those in non-third sector FE, but also to be more ethnically diverse.
- FE courses undertaken with third sector providers tended to be part-time (just 13% were full-time) and were more likely to be at Level 1 and Entry levels or classified as 'Other' levels than non-third sector FE. However, third sector FE learners were more likely than their non-third sector counterparts to have a higher qualification (Level 3 or above) prior to starting their course.
- The achievement rates for third sector learning aims were significantly higher than those for non-third sector aims (88% compared with 75%). Furthermore, third sector FE achievement rates have increased significantly since 2004/05 (from 78% to 88% – an increase of 10 percentage points).
- These higher achievement rates vs. non-third sector FE provision, at an overall level, were also observed for ethnic minority and learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability.

3.1 In this chapter the contribution made by the third sector to learning within FE is examined. Notably, some of the data definitions and funding categories have changed for the current academic year, 2008/09, which means that much of the data on learners and learning aims previously classified under FE will henceforth reside in the 'Adult Learner Responsive', the 'Young Learner Responsive' and the 'Employer Responsive' funding streams. This Chapter discusses:

- The demographic profile of FE learners;
- The geographic profile of FE learners;
- The prior achievement levels of third sector FE learners;
- The trends in FE learning provision by level and type of learning (learning aims); and
- The basic achievement rates of FE learning (learning aims).

Overview of trends in FE provision

3.2 FE third sector provision is characterised by a small number of providers delivering FE learning to large numbers of learners. The number of third sector providers has remained relatively stable since 2004/05; 40 providers were active in 2004/05 and only slightly fewer (34) were delivering training in 2007/08.

3.3 In terms of learner volumes, third sector FE provision outweighs the learner numbers seen in both Work-based learning (WBL) and European Social Fund (ESF), third sector learning, with approximately 127,000 learners in 2007/08 (compared with approximately 41,500 for WBL and 78,000 for ESF).

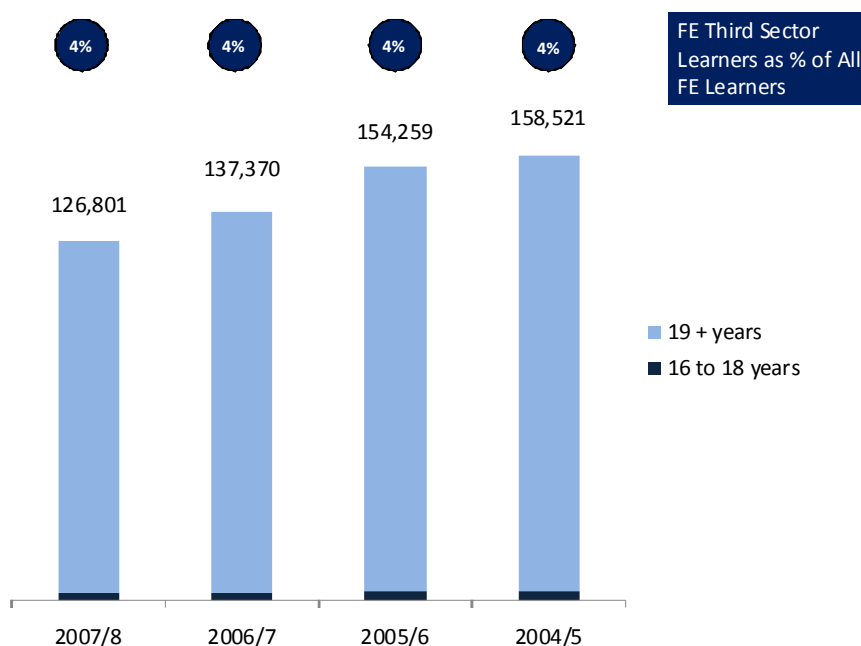
- 3.4 One provider, the WEA, accounted for over half (54%) of all third sector FE provision, in terms of learner volumes in 2007/08, a proportion which has been stable over the last four academic years.
- 3.5 Two London-based providers accounted for a further quarter of all third sector learners in FE (**Table 3.1**); the City Literary Institute (19% of all third sector FE learners in 2007/08) and Morley College Ltd (7% of all third sector FE learners in 2007/08).

Table 3.1: Top-ten third sector FE providers by learner volumes (2007/08)

Provider name	Number of third sector learners	Proportion of third sector learners
<i>Base: All FE third sector learners</i>	<i>(126,801)</i>	<i>(%)</i>
Workers' Educational Association	68,830	54
The City Literary Institute	24,564	19
Morley College Ltd	9,342	7
Mary Ward Centre	5,165	4
Northern College for Residential Adult Education	3,463	3
Pre-school Learning Alliance	2,280	2
The Learning Curve	1,738	1
Walsall Adult Community College	1,588	1
Learning Plus	1,297	1
Myrrh Ltd	752	1

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

- 3.6 Overall learner volumes for third sector providers within FE have declined over time (**Figure 3.1**) from just over 158,500 learners in 2004/05 to just fewer than 127,000 learners in 2007/08. This decline may have been related to shifts in the entire FE sector towards more accredited learning and away from 'FE other' provision, a term used to describe provision that does not fall into accredited frameworks within the FE system. The funding for this type of provision has been slowly withdrawn.
- 3.7 However, the number of third sector FE learners **as a proportion of all FE learners** has remained stable (at 4%).

Figure 3.1: Trends in third sector FE learner volumes (ALL LEARNERS)

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

Demographic profile of FE learners

3.8 Comparing the demographic profile of all third sector FE learners with non-third sector FE learners (**Table 3.2**) revealed that:

- Young learners aged 16–18 represented a very small minority of third sector FE provision (2% in 2007/08 compared with 30% in non-third sector FE);
- Third sector FE learners were significantly more likely to be female (72% in 2007/08 compared with 55% in non-third sector FE);
- They were also significantly more likely to be aged 60+ (31% in 2007/08 compared with just 4% within non-third sector provision); and
- Third sector FE learners were more likely to be Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) learners (29% in 2007/08) compared with non-third sector FE learners (25%); they were also more likely to consider themselves as having a learning difficulty and/or a disability (16% in 2007/08 vs. 12% of non-third sector FE learners). However, these differences were not as marked as those seen for third sector WBL or ESF provision.

3.9 The demographic profile of third sector FE learners remained stable over time, in terms of age and gender. However, the proportion of learners that were BAME increased slightly over time (by 5 percentage points; 24% in 2004/05 to 29% in 2007/08; **Table 3.2**). The same was true for learners who considered themselves to have a learning difficulty and/or disability (this also increased by 5 percentage points; 11% in 2004/05 to 16% in 2007/08).

3.10 As those learners studying with the WEA represent the majority of third sector FE provision, it is useful to look at the demographic profile of third sector FE learners with that provider removed. The third column of Table 3.2 presents this analysis for 2007/08.

Table 3.2: Demographic profile of FE learners (ALL LEARNERS)

	2007/08			2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Third sector without WEA	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
Base: All FE learners	(3,044,316)	(126,801)	(57,971)	(3,228,288)	(137,370)	(3,844,533)	(154,259)	(4,344,972)	(158,521)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gender									
Male	45	28	30	44	28	42	29	42	28
Female	55	72	70	56	72	58	71	58	72
Age (years)									
16–18	30	2	3	27	2	23	2	20	2
19–59	65	66	83	67	66	71	66	72	66
60+	4	31	14	5	31	6	30	7	30
Ethnicity									
White – British	72	67	56	72	66	73	69	75	72
BAME	25	29	40	25	28	23	25	21	24
Not known	3	4	4	3	6	4	6	4	4
Learning Difficulty and/or disability status									
Have a learning difficulty and/or disability	12	16	12	12	13	10	13	9	11
Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability	79	76	86	79	82	79	79	77	73
Not known	9	8	2	10	5	11	8	13	15

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

Note: Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

- 3.11 The demographic profile of FE learners, once WEA learners are removed, was broadly in-line with the overall, FE third sector learner population, in terms of gender. However, the age profile showed some significant differences, with fewer learners aged 60 or over (14% vs. 31% of all third sector FE learners in 2007/08; **Table 3.2**). However, the proportion of Third-Sector, older learners were still significantly higher than that seen in non-third sector FE provision (4%).
- 3.12 Removing WEA learners from the analysis also revealed a more ethnically diverse learner population; two-fifths (40%) of the remainder of third sector FE learners in 2007/08 were BAME vs. 29% in the FE third sector overall and one-quarter (25%) of those in non-third sector FE learning.
- 3.13 **Table B1** (see Appendix) examines the demographic profile of **young learners** (aged 16–18) in more detail. It shows that the gender distribution of young learners within third sector FE was much more even, although still leaning towards women (57% vs. 43% in 2007/08). Young people were very similar to the overall, third sector FE population, in terms of their ethnic composition and the proportion of learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability.
- 3.14 The demographic profile of **adult learners** is presented separately in **Table B2** (See Appendix). As the adult learners represent almost all (98%) of the total, third sector FE population there are almost no variations from the overall profile presented above.

Geographic profile of FE learners

- 3.15 This section looks at the regional composition of the FE learner population and the proportion of learners that were resident in the most deprived areas of the country (**Table 3.3**).
- 3.16 Over one-third (35% in 2007/08) of all third sector FE learners were resident in Greater London. One in seven (15%) were found in Yorkshire & the Humber. These findings reflect that fact that two of the largest third sector FE providers (WEA and The City Literary Institute) are located in these regions.
- 3.17 Third sector FE learners overall were only slightly more likely to live in a deprived area, with just over one-quarter (27% in 2007/08) resident in the 20% most deprived areas compared with 25% of non-third sector FE learners (**Table 3.3**). This is a notable difference when compared with third sector learners in WBL and in ESF, who were significantly more likely to live in a deprived area than their non-third sector counterparts.
- 3.18 However, examining the *young learners* profile (aged 16–18, see **Table B3** in the Appendix) shows that there was a much higher proportion of learners living in deprived areas receiving third sector provision than was the case for non-third sector provision for this age group. Across the four academic years, about 4 in 10, third sector young learners in FE (between 40% and 43%) came from 20% of the most deprived areas, compared with around 26% of non-third sector learners. Similarly, about one-quarter (between 24% and 26%) came from 10% of the most deprived areas, compared with around 13% and 14% of non-third sector learners.
- 3.19 Although the absolute numbers of young learners in third sector FE were relatively small (just over 2,200 in 2007/08; **Table B3**), these findings suggest that third sector FE provision may be ‘reaching’ some of those that non-third sector providers do not.

Table 3.3: Geographic profile of FE learners (ALL LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All FE learners</i>	(3,044,316)	(126,801)	(3,228,288)	(137,370)	(3,844,533)	(154,259)	(4,344,972)	(158,521)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Region								
<i>East of England</i>	9	9	8	9	8	9	9	9
<i>East Midlands</i>	9	7	9	7	9	8	9	8
<i>Greater London</i>	13	35	14	34	13	31	12	31
<i>North East</i>	6	3	6	3	6	3	7	3
<i>North West</i>	14	7	14	7	14	7	14	8
<i>South East</i>	14	9	13	9	13	9	13	10
<i>South West</i>	11	7	11	8	11	8	11	7
<i>West Midlands</i>	12	7	12	6	12	7	12	7
<i>Yorkshire & the Humber</i>	11	15	11	15	11	15	11	15
<i>Not known</i>	1	1	2	2	3	3	2	2
Index of Multiple Deprivation								
<i>Resident in 10% of most deprived areas</i>	13	13	13	13	13	13	12	12
<i>Resident in 20% of most deprived areas</i>	25	27	25	27	25	27	24	26

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

Note: Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

Prior achievement levels of third sector FE learners

- 3.20 This section considers the level of prior qualifications, as a key aspect of the learner's background before undertaking their learning¹⁸.
- 3.21 Overall, third sector FE learners were more likely than their non-third sector counterparts to have a higher qualification prior to starting their course (see **Table 3.4**). In particular, over two-fifths (44% in 2007/08) of third sector learners had a Level 3 or above qualification compared with only 13% of non-third sector learners. Third sector learners were correspondingly less likely to have no prior qualifications than non-third sector learners (26% vs. 33%) before starting their course.
- 3.22 Again, a column in **Table 3.4** has been included with the WEA learners taken out of the 2007/08, third sector learner population. The data suggest that it is WEA learners who are less likely to have a qualification at Level 4 or higher but, similarly, it is their learners who are more likely to have no prior qualifications. The data indicate that the percentage of those with an unknown qualification is less in the WEA than overall, which could suggest that their data collection about learners is more robust than the third sector, generally.
- 3.23 Exploring the background of **young learners** (aged 16–18, see **Table B5** in the Appendix) reveals an opposite pattern to that seen at an overall level. Third sector young learners were more likely to enter FE having no prior qualification than non-third sector FE young learners (2007/8: 29% vs. 21%; **Table B5**) or to only have had a Level 1 or Entry level qualification (26% vs. 24%; **Table B5**). At the same

¹⁸We were unable to report with confidence on the learner destinations in this section, because the FE data recorded on the ILR (at data field L39) are very patchy. For example, in 2007/08 more than half (58%) of learner's destinations were recorded as 'unanswered' and a further 35% as 'unknown'.

time, young third sector learners were more likely to have had a prior Level 3 qualification (10% in 2007/08) compared with 'mainstream' learners (3%).

3.24 Similarly, relatively few third sector learners (one-fifth [20%] in 2007/08) had a Level 2 qualification before starting their FE course. Conversely, in non-third sector FE provision two-fifths (41%) of young learners had a Level 2 qualification prior to starting their course.

Table 3.4: Learner background (ALL LEARNERS)

	2007/08			2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Third sector without WEA	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All FE learners</i>	(3,044,316)	(126,801)	(57,971)	(3,228,288)	(137,370)	(3,844,533)	(154,259)	(4,344,972)	(158,521)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Learner level or prior attainment									
Level 1 & Entry	16	10	11	14	9	9	9	7	7
Level 2	22	9	9	20	10	15	10	11	10
Level 3	7	9	10	6	9	5	9	4	9
Level 4, 5 or higher	6	35	43	6	33	5	31	3	26
Other level	3	6	2	3	6	3	7	2	6
No prior qualifications	33	26	11	40	27	55	29	65	36
Not known	13	5	13	12	5	9	5	8	6

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

Note: Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

Trends in FE learning provision

3.25 This section examines the learning provision within FE and compares the differences between third sector and non-third sector provision in terms of the nature of learning provision, including the level of learning, the programme type and the length of study. The analysis also considers whether course fees for individual aims have been paid or waived for a number of reasons.

3.26 The data henceforth presented are based on the analysis of total learning aims, i.e. individual courses, rather than learner numbers. Since any individual learner could have enrolled for more than one learning aim, the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) stores aims-related information in a separate data set. The following sections of this chapter, therefore, report the type and level of every individual learning aim.

3.27 A large proportion of individual courses offered within FE in the third sector are generic awards recorded on the ILR as "Non-externally certificated FE other provision"¹⁹. Within this, the greatest number of individual learning aims were undertaken within the Arts, Media and Publishing sector subject area (6% in 2007/08) – see **Table 3.5**.

¹⁹ Non-externally certificated FE other provision' is recorded on the ILR in the 'aim title' field and includes aims ranging from Entry Level to Level 3 and covering diverse subject areas including: Arts; Media and Publishing; Information and Communication Technology; History; Media; and Publishing. There is no further information available on the ILR to indicate aim or programme type.

Table 3.5: Top-ten third sector FE learning aims (2007/08)

Learning aim title	Level	Volumes of third sector aims	Proportion of Third Sector aims
<i>Base: All third sector FE learning aims</i>		(228,452)	(%)
FE other provision – Arts, Media and Publishing	Level 1	14,060	6
FE other provision – Information and Communication Technology	Level 1	7,534	3
Modern Languages (City Literary Institute)	N/A	6,806	3
FE other provision – History, Philosophy and Theology	Level 3	6,601	3
Morley College – Programme Area 8, Art & Design	N/A	6,504	3
FE other provision – Arts, Media and Publishing	Level 2	6,423	3
Morley College – Programme Area 9, Humanities	N/A	6,374	3
Basic ESOL Course	Entry Level	6,188	3
FE other provision – History, Philosophy and Theology	Level 2	5,003	2
FE other provision – Arts, Media and Publishing	Level 3	4,752	2

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); FE=Further Education; ESOL=English for Speakers of Other Languages.

Note: Some learning aims do not have an applicable level of learning attached on the ILR's Learning Aim Database (variable A_NVQLEV) in which case the level has to be displayed as "N/A".

3.28 Looking at third sector FE learning provision by level and type of learning, **Table 3.6** illustrates a number of trends, including a tendency for third sector aims to be:

- More likely to be at Entry Level and Level 1 (35% in 2007/08) compared with non-third sector FE learning (30% in 2007/08);
- Less likely to be undertaken at Level 2 (20% in 2007/08) and Level 3 (11%) compared with non-third sector FE learning (27% and 24%, respectively, in 2007/08); and
- Less likely to be part of a *Skills for Life* programme (3% in 2007/08) than among the non-third sector FE aims (14% in 2007/08).

3.29 However, it should also be noted that while third sector FE learning provision was more likely to be at Entry Level or Level 1, as discussed above, third sector FE learners were actually more likely to enter the FE third sector learning with higher-level qualifications (see **Table 3.4**).

3.30 It is noteworthy that the proportion of learning aims classified under 'Other level' were twice as high among third sector FE learning (34% in 2007/08) compared with non-third sector learning (17% in 2007/08). This indicates a more diverse and, perhaps, more unconventional, learning offer within third sector FE, where a substantial proportion of courses do not fit into the established framework of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs)²⁰. At the same time, there was a substantial reduction over time in the number of learning aims recorded as 'Other' within third sector learning (from 68% in 2004/05 down to 34% in 2007/08). This may be due, at least in part, to the move towards more accredited learning being funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) within FE learning.

3.31 There were a number of noticeable differences between third sector and non-third sector FE learning aims in terms of their length, as captured by the amount of Guided Learning Hours (GLH) on the ILR.

²⁰It is worth noting that all of the top-ten learning aims (Table 3.4) in Third Sector FE are generic awards, i.e. they do not have a specific awarding body (for example, City & Guilds or Edexcel) behind them (as indicated on the ILR variable A_AWARDB). Some of the top 10 aims in Third Sector FE do, however, have a level assigned. Yet a large number of aims appear to be 'Non-externally certificated' and not accredited (derived from the A09, A_FLAG10 and A_FLAG13 variables).

Third sector FE courses tended to be part-time in length, with the majority of courses requiring fewer than 450 GLH (87% in 2007/08). By contrast, the slight majority of learning aims in non-third sector FE were full-time courses of 450 GLH or more (57%).

- 3.32 Third sector FE learning aims of **young learners** (ages 16–18) are profiled in the Appendix (**Table B7**). The profile of learning aims by Level broadly mirrored the overall profile of third sector FE learning aims, but young people were much more likely to undertake Entry and Level 1 aims (61% in 2007/08; **Table B7**) than was the case overall (35%; **Table 3.6**).

Table 3.6: Profile of FE learning aims (ALL AIMS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All learning aims</i>	(6,603,839)	(228,451)	(6,914,460)	(239,407)	(8,131,599)	(264,904)	(8,918,759)	(270,943)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Level								
Level 1 & Entry	30	35	32	41	33	36	37	17
Level 2	27	20	26	17	24	18	23	11
Level 3	24	11	23	10	20	10	19	3
Level 4, 5 or higher	2	*	2	*	2	*	2	*
Other level	17	34	16	31	21	35	19	68
Type of aim								
Skills for Life	14	3	14	4	11	3	9	2
Length of aim – Guided Learning Hours (GLH)								
<200 GLH	16	38	16	36	25	36	27	41
200 to 449 GLH	26	49	26	49	25	46	26	43
≥450 GLH	57	13	57	15	50	15	47	15

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes data points below 1%. Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

Fees waived in FE

- 3.33 Courses undertaken within third sector FE were much less likely to have their fees waived (48% in 2007/08) than were non-third sector FE aims (83% in 2007/08) (**Table 3.7**).
- 3.34 In fact, the proportion of aims where fees were waived decreased from approaching two-thirds (65%) in 2004/05 to 48% in 2007/08 for third sector FE aims.
- 3.35 There were a variety of reasons for the waiver of fees for third sector FE courses, most commonly in cases when the learner was in receipt of income-based state benefits (16% in 2007/08) and as a result of local provider policy (13% in 2007/08; **Table 3.7**).

Table 3.7: Profile of FE learning aims – fees waived (ALL AIMS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All learning aims</i>	(6,603,839)	(228,451)	(6,914,460)	(239,407)	(8,131,599)	(264,904)	(8,918,759)	(270,943)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Fees for the aim waived								
<i>Fees paid in full</i>	17	52	17	39	16	36	16	35
<i>Fees waived</i>	83	48	83	61	84	65	54	65
Reasons for fees being waived								
<i>Fee is zero</i>	11	2	3	1	8	2	8	2
<i>Fees waived – in receipt of other income-based state benefit</i>	4	16	3	14	4	12	4	17
<i>Fees waived – consistent with the Local Provider policy</i>	17	13	17	23	24	32	24	32
<i>Fees waived – main aim is Skills for Life, excluding ESOL</i>	6	4	10	11	13	9	13	9
<i>Fees waived – in receipt of Working Tax Credit</i>	1	3	1	2	1	1	1	1
<i>Fees waived – in receipt of Jobseekers' allowance</i>	1	2	1	2	1	3	1	3
<i>Fees waived – 16–18-year-old learner</i>	37	1	36	1	28	1	28	1
<i>Fees waived – other funding</i>	3	1	3	2	4	2	4	2

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); ESOL=English for Speakers of Other Languages.

Note: Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

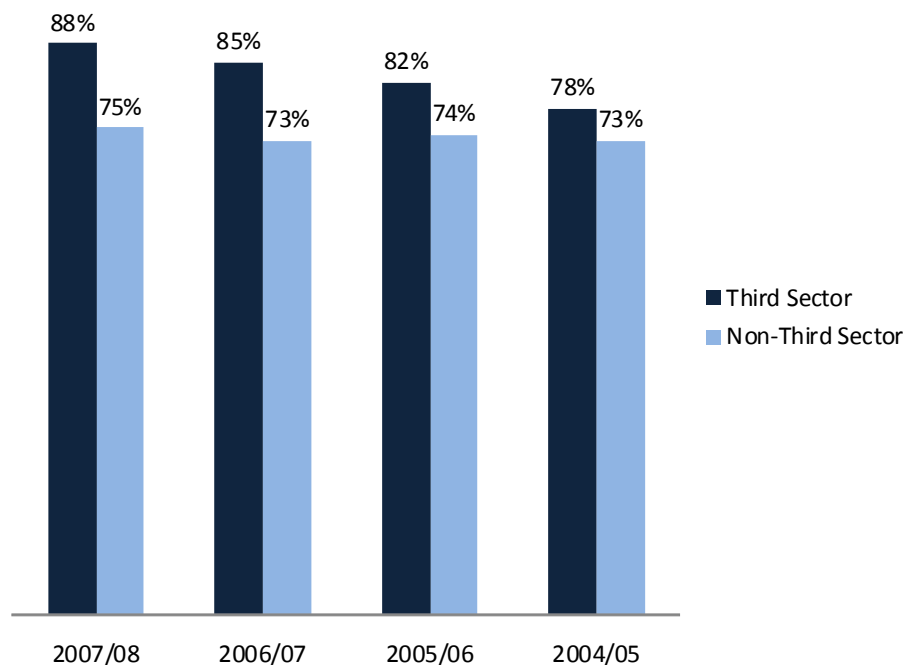
FE achievement rates

- 3.36 This last section concludes the analysis of ILR data for FE learners and learning aims by presenting the achievement rates within third sector learning. Notably, these achievement rates have been calculated as the number of achieved and partially achieved aims, expressed as a percentage of the number of aims with a definitive outcome (achieved; partially achieved; no achievement), excluding any aims where the learning is still ongoing²¹. Notably, providers can record learning outcomes as 'partially achieved', for example, when a learner does not achieve a key skills qualification but passes either the end test or the portfolio.
- 3.37 In general, FE achievement rates were significantly higher for learning aims undertaken within the third sector (**Figure 3.2**). For example, in 2007/08 the achievement rate was 88% for third sector aims and 75% for Non-third sector aims. Higher achievement rates were recorded for all learner types and demographic subgroups.
- 3.38 Furthermore, achievement rates within the third sector showed a steady, significant increase over the four academic years, from 78% in 2004/05 to 88% in 2007/08; an increase of ten

²¹More specifically, the variable used for this analysis of achievement is A35 on the ILR. Achievement rates are defined here as (A35=1 or 2) / (A35=1, 2 or 3).

percentage points. This compares with a more modest increase in achievement rates within non-third sector learning, where 75% of all aims were achieved in 2007/08 compared with 73% in 2004/05.

Figure 3.2: Trends in third sector FE achievement rates (ALL AIMS)

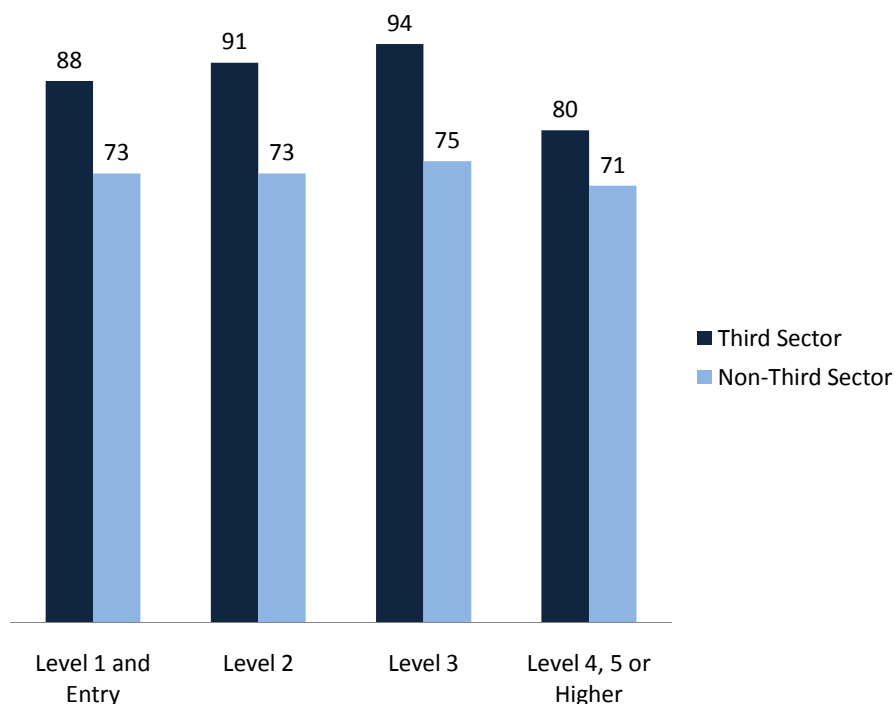


Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

- 3.39 Higher achievement rates for third sector FE vs. non-third sector FE were observed across all demographic groups (**Table 3.8**). Since these differentials are evident at every sub-group level, it is likely that the higher achievement rates within the FE third sector were not the result of differences in the learner population. The report explores further reasons for these differences in the qualitative chapters below.
- 3.40 In particular, achievement rates for aims undertaken by learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability were significantly higher within the third sector (88% vs. 73% within non-third sector FE in 2007/08); the achievement rate for the aims of learners with a learning difficulty or disability within the third sector improved significantly from 2006/07 when it was at 71% (**Table 3.8**).
- 3.41 In terms of achievement rates by the nature of the course:
- In 2007/08, the third sector FE recorded higher achievement rates across all levels; the difference was particularly high at Level 3, where 94% of all aims were achieved in third sector FE compared with 75% within non-third sector FE (**Figure 3.3**)
 - Shorter courses within third sector FE had the highest achievement rates compared with non-third sector FE (89% of courses with fewer than 200 GLH were achieved in 2007/08, third sector FE provisions compared with 76% of similar courses outside the third sector; **Table 3.8**).

- However, achievement rates for full-time courses (≥ 450 GLH) in third sector FE fell slightly short of those seen in non-third sector provision (64% in 2007/08 compared with 70%).

Figure 3.3: Third sector FE achievement rates by level of learning (ALL LEARNERS)



Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

- 3.42 *Skills for Life* learning aims comprised only 3% of all third sector FE aims in 2007/08, but their achievement rates were also higher compared with non-third sector learning (76% vs. 64% in 2007/08). This difference was largely driven by the performance of adult learners (77% achieved vs. 64% among adult non-third sector FE *Skills for Life*; **Table B10** while 16- to 18-year-old learners produced similar achievement rates for *Skills for Life* (64% in the third sector vs. 65% in non-third sector FE).

Table 3.8: Achievement rates (achieved or partially achieved) of FE learning aims (ALL AIMS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All learning aims with a definite outcome (A35=1, 2 or 3)</i>	(5,994,607) %	(225,080) %	(6,228,176) %	(235,355) %	(5,300,109) %	(211,640) %	(5,656,766) %	(205,893) %
All								
<i>Achieved and partially achieved aims</i>	75	88	73	85	74	82	73	78
Achievement by level								
<i>Level 1 & Entry</i>	73	88	71	83	72	79	72	59
<i>Level 2</i>	73	91	70	90	68	89	64	82
<i>Level 3</i>	75	94	74	94	71	93	69	70
<i>Level 4, 5 or higher</i>	71	80	68	75	65	73	63	69
<i>Other level</i>	81	85	81	83	87	79	86	83
Type of aim								
<i>Skills for Life</i>	64	76	62	67	60	60	56	54
Length of aim – Guided Learning Hours (GLH)								
<i><200 GLH</i>	76	89	74	86	75	82	74	79
<i>200 to 449 GLH</i>	71	73	69	80	67	75	65	74
<i>≥450 GLH</i>	70	64	69	67	66	71	63	62
Gender								
<i>Male</i>	73	88	72	85	73	82	71	78
<i>Female</i>	76	89	74	86	75	82	73	79
Age (years)								
<i>16–18</i>	73	76	71	74	69	66	66	67
<i>19+</i>	77	89	76	86	77	82	76	79
<i>19–59</i>	77	86	75	82	77	78	76	73
<i>60+</i>	84	93	81	93	81	92	80	90
<i>Not known</i>	57	84	72	86	80	83	78	81
Ethnicity								
<i>White – British</i>	76	90	73	69	75	87	73	83
<i>BAME</i>	72	85	74	71	72	70	70	65
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
<i>Have learning difficulty and/or disability</i>	73	88	72	71	73	82	71	79
<i>Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability</i>	75	89	72	74	74	82	73	77
<i>Not known</i>	72	88	72	73	73	83	73	87

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); BAME=Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority.

- 3.43 The following two paragraphs examine the achievement rates for aims undertaken by young learners and adult learners in more detail (see **Tables B9 and B10** in the Appendix).
- 3.44 **Young learners** (16–18 years) in third sector FE tended to experience lower achievement rates than **adult learners**. In 2007/08, the achievement rate for young people was 76% (**Table B9**) compared with 89% (**Table B10**) among adult learners in third sector FE, although it should be noted that this rate was still higher than among young people in non-third sector FE (73%). It should also be considered that, as seen earlier in the chapter, young people studying an FE course with a third sector provider were significantly more likely to be living in a deprived area and that, therefore, these achievement rates were being secured among learners who were more likely to be disadvantaged.
- 3.45 The achievement rates of **adult learners** (19+ years) reflect the average, with 89% of aims undertaken by adult learners within the third sector achieved (**Table B10**) compared with 88% of all third sector FE aims overall (**Table 3.8**). These high achievement rates were broadly consistent across all demographic groups.

4 European Social Fund (ESF) Learning

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- European Social Fund (ESF) provision is relatively dispersed within the third sector and is characterised by large numbers of providers, each with small numbers of learners.
- As with Work-based learning (WBL) provision (and to some extent Further Education [FE]), there is evidence that the third sector reaches different types of learners compared with other providers; third sector ESF learners tended to be more ethnically diverse, were more likely to have a learning difficulty and/or disability and were more likely to live in a deprived area than non-third sector ESF learners.
- Achievement rates among young learners (16–18) were comparable with non-third sector provision. Better non-third sector provision is offered among ESF third sector learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability and those on Level 1 and Entry Level courses compared with non-third sector providers.
- Among adult learners, however, achievement rates were lower than those found outside the third sector and have declined over time, particularly, for Level 1 and Entry Level courses.

4.1 This chapter examines the contribution made by the third sector to learning funded and supported by the ESF. Since 2000, the ESF has been a key part of the European Union's (EU) Lisbon strategy for growth and employment. The ESF supports the EU's goal of increasing employment by giving unemployed and disadvantaged people the training and support necessary for them to enter jobs. By focusing on those most in need of help, the ESF contributes to policies to reduce inequality and build a fairer society. The ESF also equips the workforce with the skills needed by business in a competitive, global economy.

4.2 The priorities in the 2007 to 2013 ESF programme are designed to focus ESF spending on specific activities and to ensure that it reaches those people in most need of support. There are two main priorities in England:

- **Priority 1:** 'Extending employment opportunities'. This initiative supports projects to tackle the barriers to work faced by unemployed and disadvantaged people. About £1.2 billion of ESF money was made available for this priority in 2007–2013; and
- **Priority 2:** 'Developing a skilled and adaptable workforce'. This initiative supports projects to train people who do not have basic skills and qualifications needed in the workplace. About £670 million of ESF money was made available for this priority in 2007–2013.

4.3 With these priorities in mind, this chapter looks at:

- The demographic profile of ESF learners;
- The geographic profile of ESF learners;
- The prior achievement and learner destination of ESF learners;
- The trends in ESF learning provision by level and type of learning (learning aims); and
- The basic achievement rates of ESF learning (learning aims).

Overview of trends in ESF provision

4.4 Third sector ESF provision is delivered by a large number of providers, each with relatively small numbers of learners; learners are more dispersed compared with FE and WBL provision.

4.5 That said, the number of third sector providers delivering ESF programmes has fallen year-on-year over the last, four academic years, from 542 in 2004/05 to 348 in 2007/08²². It is worth reiterating that these learner numbers are based on direct provision only, and not provision that is subcontracted or franchised-out to the third sector.

4.6 In 2007/08 one provider – South Yorkshire Voluntary and Community Training Consortium (VC) Train – accounted for one-seventh (14%) of all third sector ESF learners. This provider aside, no other providers accounted for more than 3% of the total third sector ESF learners. **Table 4.1** shows the top-ten third sector providers ranked by their learner numbers in 2007/08.

Table 4.1: Top-ten third sector ESF providers by learner volumes (2007/08)

Provider name	Number of third sector learners	Proportion of third sector learners
<i>Base: All ESF third sector learners</i>	<i>(77,914)</i>	<i>(%)</i>
VC Train ²³	10,630	14
Cornwall Arts Centre Trust Ltd	2,234	3
Surrey Care Trust	1,803	2
Akademi: South Asian Dance UK	1,678	2
The Big Life Company Ltd	1,602	2
Learning South West	1,314	2
Wai Yin Chinese Women Society	1,227	2
InterAct Chelmsford Ltd	1,205	2
Lincolnshire Action Trust	1,164	1
Humberside Learning Consortium	1,152	1

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR);

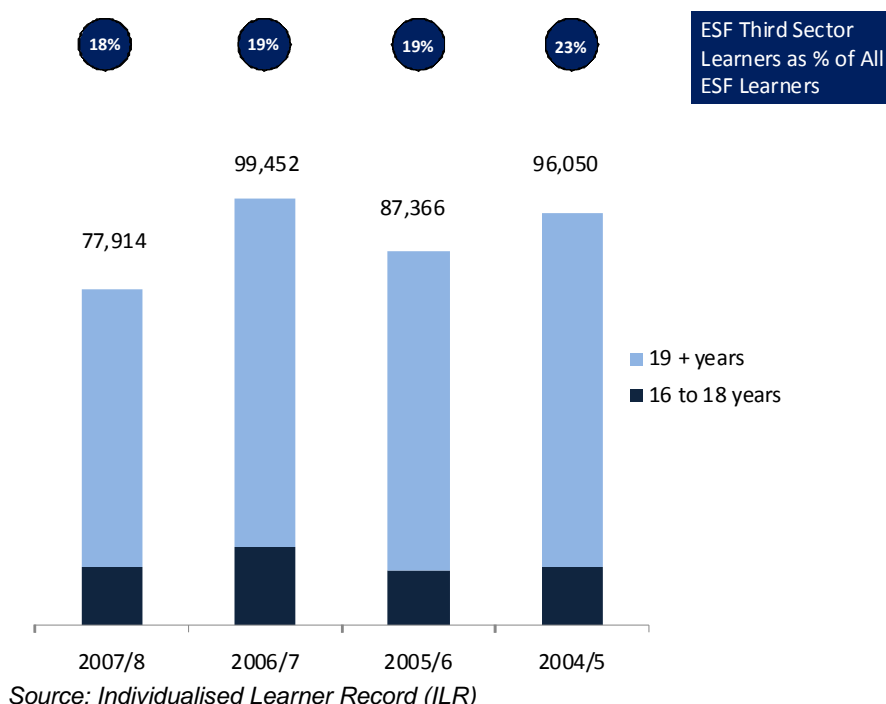
4.7 Overall, ESF learner numbers have also declined over time, albeit with some fluctuation. Just over 96,000 ESF learners were studying with a third sector provider in 2004/05. This dropped to just fewer than 87,500 in 2005/06 before peaking at almost 99,500 learners in 2006/07. In 2007/08 the number of

²²There were 442 Third Sector providers delivering ESF programmes in 2005/06 and 424 in 2006/07.

²³This provider has been recorded previously on the ILR as 'South Yorkshire Voluntary & Community Training Consortium'.

ESF learners stood at just fewer than 78,000. Most of these changes have been driven by variation in adult learner numbers (**Figure 4.1**).

Figure 4.1: Trends in third sector ESF learner volumes (ALL LEARNERS)



4.8 While the volume of ESF-funded third sector learners is quite small, in absolute terms (for example, when compared with the third sector FE learner population), the third sector's contribution to the overall ESF provision is substantial, in relative terms, with just under one-fifth (18%) of **all** ESF learners studying with a third sector provider.

4.9 This proportion has fallen since 2004/05, where third sector ESF learners represented almost one-quarter (23%) of all ESF learners.

Demographic profile of ESF learners

4.10 This section looks at the demographic profile of ESF learners within the third sector and comments on how this profile compares with that of non-third sector ESF learners. In summary, compared with the non-third sector ESF learner population third sector ESF learners were:

- more likely to be female;
- more likely to be from ethnically diverse backgrounds; and
- more likely to have a learning difficulty and/or disability.

4.11 This pattern is observed across all four academic years (**Table 4.2**).

4.12 The third sector attracts a greater proportion of female learners to ESF programmes than non-third sector providers (58% of all third sector ESF learners were female in 2007/08). The proportion of women engaged in ESF learning dropped between 2006/07 and 2007/08 among non-third sector providers (from 53% to 49%) but this drop was not observed among third sector providers.

4.13 Analysing the ethnic composition of ESF learners shows that over one-third (36% in 2007/08) of third sector learners were Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) compared with less than one-quarter (24%) among non-third sector learners (**Table 4.2**).

4.14 Third sector ESF learners were twice as likely to consider themselves as having a learning difficulty and/or a disability (15% in 2007/08) compared with non-third sector ESF learners (7% in 2007/08). Furthermore, there were small increases year-on-year in the proportion of all third sector learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability, accounting for an increase of 3 percentage points in total, since 2004/05 (**Table 4.2**).

4.15 In terms of age, the profile of third sector ESF learners broadly matched that of non-third sector ESF learners; with around four in five (83% in 2007/08) being adult learners aged 19+ years (compared with 80% among non-third sector ESF learners; **Table 4.2**).

Table 4.2: Demographic profile of ESF learners (ALL LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
Base: All ESF learners	(360,244)	(77,914)	(414,064)	(99,452)	(367,791)	(87,366)	(323,592)	(96,050)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gender								
Male	51	42	47	41	47	39	47	41
Female	49	58	53	59	53	61	53	59
Age (years)								
16–18	20	17	23	18	25	14	22	14
19–59	77	78	73	75	71	78	74	78
60+	3	5	3	6	3	7	3	8
Ethnicity								
White – British	73	62	71	62	72	65	71	63
BAME	24	36	26	36	24	33	23	34
Not known	3	2	3	2	4	2	6	3
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
Have a learning difficulty and/or disability	7	15	7	14	6	13	6	12
Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability	72	73	74	74	73	77	72	78
Not known	21	12	19	12	21	10	21	10

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

Note: Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

4.16 Exploring the demographic profile of ESF learners *within* age group (**Tables C1 and C2** in Appendix) shows that the patterns in terms of ethnicity and disability observed at an overall level are reflected in the profile of both **young learners** (16–18 years) and **adult learners** (19+ years).

4.17 There are, however, some differences looking at the variable gender within age; among **adult learners** the majority of third sector ESF learners were female (61% in 2007/08; **Table C2**) as seen at an overall level. Conversely, **Young learners** were more likely to be male (56% in 2007/08; **Table C1**) – a proportion in-line with non-third sector ESF learners.

Geographic profile of ESF learners

4.18 This section looks at the geographic distribution of the ESF learner population and the proportion of learners that are resident in the most deprived areas of the country (**Table 4.3**). Analysis is based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation which has been appended to geographic information available on the Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

4.19 ESF third sector learners were reasonably well-distributed geographically, reflecting the number and range of providers delivering programmes. That said, the greatest proportion (18% in 2007/08 - just under one-fifth of all third sector ESF learners) lived in Yorkshire and the Humber (partly driven by the fact that the largest third sector ESF provider – VC Train – operates in this region). Just one in twenty third sector ESF learners (5% in 2007/08) were found in the North East, significantly less than the proportion of non-third sector ESF learners in this region (17% in 2007/08; **Table 4.3**). This geographic distribution was broadly stable over time.

4.20 Third sector ESF learners were significantly more likely to live in a deprived area compared with non-third sector ESF learners. In 2007/08, over two-fifths (43%) of all third sector ESF learners were resident in the 20% most deprived areas compared with one third of non-third sector ESF learners (34%; **Table 4.3**). Similarly, over one-quarter of third sector ESF learners (26% in 2007/08) lived in the 10% most deprived areas compared with just under one-fifth (19%) of non-third sector learners.

Table 4.3: Geographic profile of ESF learners (ALL LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All ESF learners</i>	(360,244)	(77,914)	(414,064)	(99,452)	(367,791)	(87,366)	(323,592)	(96,050)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Region								
<i>East of England</i>	8	8	9	7	8	6	8	9
<i>East Midlands</i>	7	13	8	12	8	14	7	11
<i>Greater London</i>	7	14	16	18	16	15	16	18
<i>North East</i>	17	5	13	5	11	5	9	2
<i>North West</i>	9	13	9	10	12	10	14	10
<i>South East</i>	10	10	11	12	12	13	9	8
<i>South West</i>	5	8	7	9	5	9	4	6
<i>West Midlands</i>	15	9	14	7	10	8	11	16
<i>Yorkshire & the Humber</i>	14	18	12	18	12	17	16	16
<i>Not known</i>	8	2	1	2	6	3	6	4
Index of Multiple Deprivation								
<i>Resident in 10% of most deprived areas</i>	19	26	16	23	16	22	16	22
<i>Resident in 20% of most deprived areas</i>	34	43	31	40	30	38	31	38

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

Note: Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

- 4.21 The next two paragraphs discuss the geographic profile of both young and adult learners in further detail. As **Tables C3 and C4** in the Appendix show, both age groups mirror the overall pattern in terms of social deprivation (in 2007/08, 46% of **young learners** receiving third sector ESF provision and 43% of **adult learners** were resident in the 20% most deprived areas, compared with 37% and 33% of non-third sector learners, respectively).
- 4.22 There were some differences in the regional distribution of learners within age group:
- 4.23 There was considerable variation in the regional distribution of **young learners** on third sector ESF programmes. Almost three in ten (29% in 2007/08; **Table C3**) were found in Greater London and a further 15% in the South East of England. A relatively high proportion of young learners were living in the North West (15%). Conversely, just 3% were resident in the East of England and just 4% were living in Yorkshire & the Humber.
- 4.24 **Adult learners**, by contrast, were much more evenly distributed, though as seen at an overall level, one-fifth (20% in 2007/08) were concentrated in Yorkshire and the Humber, reflecting the substantial presence of VC Train in the region (**Table C4**).

Prior achievement and learner destination of ESF learners

- 4.25 This section considers some key aspects of ESF learner's prior attainment status and their destination after the course (**Table 4.4**). Some of this ILR data has to be interpreted with caution²⁴, but there is some suggestion that third sector ESF learners tended to be:
- more likely to have a Level 1 or Entry Level qualification before starting their course; and
 - more likely to continue in learning and training than non-third sector learners.
- 4.26 Comparing the prior educational attainment of ESF learners shows that one-quarter of third sector learners had an Entry or Level 1 qualification (26%) in 2007/08 compared with one in five (19%) of ESF non-third sector learners (**Table 4.4**). ESF learners were also less likely to have no prior qualifications at all (13% in 2007/08) compared with non-third sector learners (25% in 2007/08), although it should be noted that third sector learners were more likely to be recorded as 'prior qualification unknown'. The proportion of learners with no and low (i.e. Level 1 and Entry Level) qualifications has decreased over time. One of the reasons for this may be due to changes to the eligibility criteria for ESF.
- 4.27 In terms of destinations, third sector ESF learners were most commonly recorded as continuing their existing programme of learning (24% in 2007/08) or continuing into education or training elsewhere (14% in 2007/08). Just under one-fifth (17%), moved into employment. Over one-quarter (26%) of all ESF third sector learners do not have a destination recorded on the ILR, and it is reasonable to assume that a proportion of these learners also moved into employment or further learning. As a note, the reduction of learners in continuing training over the years may possibly reflect more focus on quality of data, as 'continuing existing programme of learning' is not a valid destination.

²⁴As a note, the ILR records show a relatively high incidence of learners whose prior qualifications and destinations, appear as 'unknown' (see Table 4.4). This creates a degree of uncertainty around the true distribution of prior qualifications within and outside the Third Sector. Some of the variation discussed here may be, therefore, as much a factor of qualifications not being recorded as genuine differences in learner's characteristics.

Table 4.4: ESF learners' prior qualifications and destinations (ALL LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
Base: All ESF learners	(360,244)	(77,914)	(414,064)	(99,452)	(367,791)	(87,366)	(323,592)	(96,050)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Learner level or prior attainment								
Level 1 & Entry	19	26	20	23	20	21	16	17
Level 2	15	12	14	12	13	12	10	10
Level 3	7	7	8	8	7	8	6	7
Level 4, 5 or higher	8	10	8	11	8	12	7	9
Other level	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
No prior qualifications	25	13	24	14	25	19	35	33
Not known	20	27	21	26	22	21	20	17
Learner destination: employment status after learning								
Employed	36	17	21	9	18	10	19	12
Unemployed	12	10	7	5	7	6	5	5
Education or training	14	14	8	8	7	6	7	7
Continuing existing programme of learning	17	24	50	55	54	60	47	50
Other	7	7	3	6	4	6	5	7
Not known	12	26	9	14	10	11	15	16

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

Note: Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

- 4.28 The following paragraphs investigate any differences between young and adult learners in terms of their prior attainment and destination after learning. The corresponding tables are attached in Appendix (Tables C5 and C6).
- 4.29 **Young learners** most commonly had an Entry or Level 1 qualification before starting their ESF learning with a third sector provider (31% in 2007/08), although over half (52% in 2007/08) were recorded as 'prior qualifications unknown' (Table C5).
- 4.30 **Overall, Young learners** were much more likely than ESF third sector learners to be recorded as continuing learning, with just over two-fifths moving into a different education or training activity (42% in 2007/08) and a further one-fifth (21% in 2007/08) continuing their existing programme of learning (Table C5).
- 4.31 Unsurprisingly, third sector ESF **adult learners** were more likely than young learners to have to started their ESF course in 2007/08 already having a Level 2 (13%), Level 3 (9%) or a Level 4, 5 or higher qualification (12%; Table C6). However, in-line with third sector ESF learners, overall, they most commonly had only Level 1 or Entry Level qualifications (24% in 2007/08) or no prior qualifications (13% in 2007/08).
- 4.32 Destinations for adults were comparable with the average in terms of learners continuing their existing programme of learning (24%), but adult learners were slightly more likely to enter

employment after their course (20%, **Table C6** vs. 17% of ESF third sector learners overall, **Table 4.4**) and were slightly less likely to start a new education or training course (8%, **Table C6** vs. 14%, **Table 4.4**).

Trends in ESF learning provision

4.33 This section turns to an analysis of the nature of the ESF-funded courses being delivered by third sector providers. Firstly, the nature of learning provision is examined, in terms of the individual learning aims being delivered, before moving on to the level of learning. This analysis is based on all **learning aims** rather than **all learners**. Since any individual learner could have enrolled for more than one learning aim, the ILR stores aims-related information in a separate data set. The following sections of this chapter, therefore, report the type and level of individual learning aims.

Table 4.5: Top-ten third sector ESF learning aims (2007/08)

Learning aim title	Level	Awarding body	Volumes of third sector aims (96,517)	Proportion of third sector aims (%)
<i>Base: All ESF Learning Aims</i>				
Co-financed ESF provision not leading to a recognised qualification or other learning aim	N/A	Generic award	55,223	57
Non-externally-certificated non-FE other provision, Foundations for learning and life	N/A	Generic award	1,090	1
Award for progression	Level 1	NOCN	883	1
Credit Achievement Code, Preparation for life and work	Entry	NOCN	649	1
Credit Achievement Code, Preparation for life and work	Level 2	NOCN	588	1
Certificate in adult literacy	Level 1	OCR	548	1
Certificate in adult literacy	Level 1	City & Guilds	533	1
Certificate in adult literacy	Level 1	EDEXCEL	499	1
Certificate for IT users (ECDL Part 2)	Level 2	BCS	477	*
Basic ESOL Course	Entry	Generic award	460	*

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); ECDL=European Computer Driving Licence; ESF=European Social Fund; ESOL=European Speakers of Other Languages. NOCN=National Open College Network; OCR= Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations; BCS= British Computer Society

Note: Some learning aims do not have an applicable level of learning attached on the ILR's Learning Aim Database (variable A_NVQLEV) in which case the level has to be displayed as "N/A". Similarly, some aims do not have a specific awarding body recorded (A_AWARDDB), in which case the aim is displayed as a "generic award".

4.34 The majority of individual ESF learning aims provided by the third sector were generic awards that fell under the 'Preparation for life and work' sector subject area of learning. Within this sector, the array of generic, short courses, co-financed by ESF²⁵ dominated the overall third sector ESF provision and comprised more than half (57% in 2007/08) of all learning aims.

4.35 Examining third sector provision by level of learning, shows (**Table 4.6**) that almost two-thirds (62%) of learning aims within ESF in 2007/08 were recorded as 'Other level', i.e. aims that have not been assigned any specific level of learning²⁶.

²⁵These are generic learning aims captured on the ILR by the learning aim reference number A09 = XESF0001.

²⁶Almost all of these Third Sector courses with no level assigned are generic, short courses, where the course title (A09 = XESF0001) specifies that this falls under 'Co-financed ESF provision not leading to a recognised qualification or other learning aim on the learning aim database'. The next most frequent aim (A09 = Z9OAC141) appears not to be accredited either, it is classed as being a 'Non-externally-certificated, non-FE, other provision, Foundations for Learning and Life SSA (14.1)'.

- 4.36 In 2007/08, compared with non-third sector ESF provision, third sector provision was more likely to be at Level 1 or Entry level (21% compared with 12% of non-third sector ESF courses). The proportion of learning aims at this level within the third sector appears to have almost doubled since 2004/05 (11%), although it is not clear whether this increase was related to the declining proportion of aims classified as 'Other' level (**Table 4.6**).
- 4.37 *Skills for Life* learning aims comprised a relatively small proportion of all ESF aims (5% in 2007/08) in both the third sector and in non-third sector learning (**Table 4.6**).

Table 4.6: Profile of ESF learning aims (ALL AIMS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All ESF learning aims</i>	(477,583)	(96,517)	(516,414)	(118,902)	(445,261)	(103,105)	(361,836)	(108,123)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Level								
Level 1 & Entry	12	21	12	20	10	16	6	11
Level 2	13	11	13	9	13	8	15	5
Level 3	6	4	6	4	6	4	5	3
Level 4, 5 or higher	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	*
Other level	68	62	68	66	70	71	73	81
Type of aim								
Skills for Life	5	5	5	5	4	4	2	1

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes data points below 1%. Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

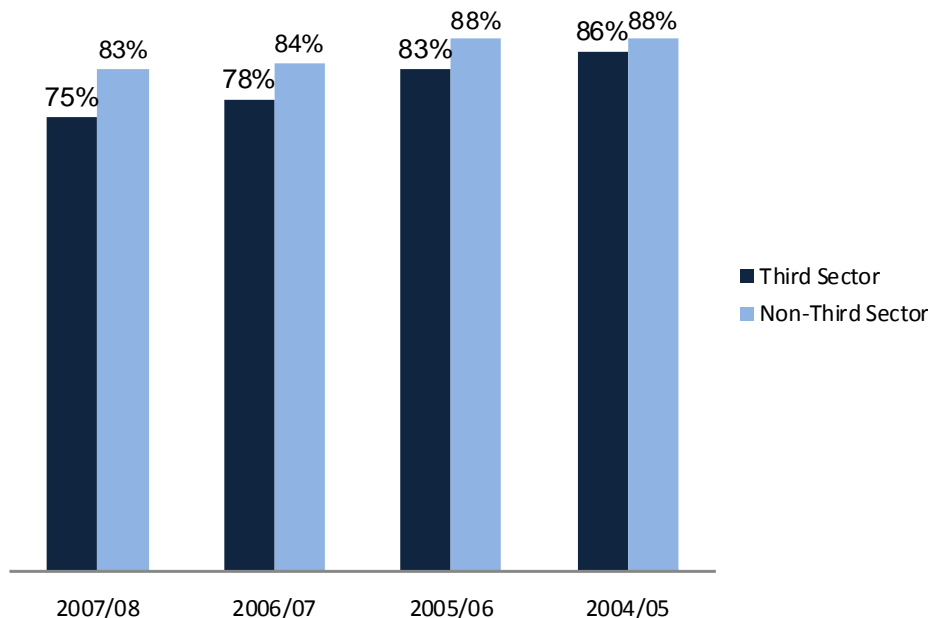
- 4.38 The nature of learning aims in terms of level undertaken by both young learners and adult learners broadly reflected the pattern observed at the overall level (**Tables C9 and C10 in Appendix C**).

ESF achievement rates

- 4.39 Concluding the ILR analysis of ESF learning aims, this section presents the achievement rates within third sector ESF learning. As with the preceding FE and WBL chapters, the achievement rates have been calculated here as the number of achieved and partially achieved aims, expressed as a proportion of all aims with a definitive outcome (achieved; partially achieved; no achievement).
- 4.40 In general, achievement rates for third sector ESF aims were high, with three-quarters (75%) of all aims being achieved or partially achieved in 2007/08 (**Figure 4.2**). However, there have been year-on-year decreases in achievement rates from 2004/05 within the sector, representing a decline of 11 percentage points overall.
- 4.41 Achievement rates for ESF learning aims were also slightly lower among third sector provision compared with those ESF learning aims delivered by non-third sector providers. While there was also a downward trend in achievement of non-third sector ESF aims over time, the fall was more pronounced among third sector learning aims.
- 4.42 This fall in third sector ESF achievement rates is being driven by a decline in achievement rates among adult learners (19+) where the proportion of achieved aims decreased from 87% in 2004/05 to 73% in 2007/08 (**Table C10**). Achievement rates for young learners (16–18) were at levels

comparable with non-third sector ESF provision (81% vs. 82% in 2007/08; **Table C9**) and remained broadly stable over time. Paragraph 4.47 discusses these overall trends in more detail.

Figure 4.2: Trends in third sector ESF achievement rates (ALL AIMS)



Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

4.43 Profiling achievement rates further by learner characteristics (**Table 4.7**) shows that:

- Achievement rates for ESF learning at Level 4, 5 or higher were greater for the third sector compared with non-third sector provision (83% compared with 67% in 2007/08); and
- Gender, ethnicity and disability status had little impact on overall achievement rates within third sector ESF provision.

4.44 *Skills for Life* learning aims produced slightly lower achievement rates in the third sector (61% vs. 68% in non-third sector ESF learning in 2007/08; **Table 4.7**). This pattern was similar for young learners and adult learners.

Table 4.7: Achievement rates (achieved or partially achieved) of ESF learning aims (ALL AIMS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All learning aims with a definite outcome (A35=1, 2 or 3)</i>	(413,613)	(78,546)	(290,097)	(57,704)	(232,505)	(46,211)	(208,988)	(59,255)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All								
<i>Achieved or partially achieved aims</i>	83	75	84	78	88	83	88	86
Achievement by level								
<i>Level 1 & Entry</i>	72	65	74	71	79	74	83	81
<i>Level 2</i>	77	71	79	76	79	79	86	79
<i>Level 3</i>	72	65	74	83	79	79	81	84
<i>Level 4, 5 or higher</i>	67	83	71	73	74	78	71	59
<i>Other level</i>	88	80	88	80	91	86	89	87
Aim type								
<i>Skills for Life</i>	68	61	73	63	73	75	74	83
Gender								
<i>Male</i>	82	75	84	75	87	80	86	82
<i>Female</i>	84	75	84	80	88	85	89	88
Age (years)								
<i>16–18</i>	82	81	80	78	83	74	89	80
<i>19+</i>	83	73	85	78	89	85	88	87
<i>19–59</i>	83	73	85	78	89	84	88	86
<i>60+</i>	89	75	90	86	92	93	90	92
<i>Unknown</i>	94	89	96	74	94	84	90	97
Ethnicity								
<i>White – British</i>	84	75	86	77	88	84	88	88
<i>BAME</i>	82	75	81	80	88	81	85	82
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
<i>Have a learning difficulty and/or</i>	84	77	84	79	90	82	86	85
<i>Do not have a learning difficulty and/or</i>	84	75	85	77	88	83	87	86
<i>disability</i>								
<i>Not unknown</i>	80	75	82	81	88	81	91	85

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

- 4.45 Earlier in the chapter, it was illustrated that achievement rates among adult learners have driven both the fall in achievement rates for third sector ESF provision over time, and the related finding that third sector achievement rates were lower than those achieved outside of the third sector in 2007/08. Exploring this group of adult learner further highlights that:
- As seen at an overall level, the profile of **adult learners** by gender, ethnicity or disability status did not impact on overall achievement rates among adult learners participating in ESF third sector aims (in fact achievement rates were slightly higher among learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability [76% in 2007/08] than learners without a learning difficulty and/or disability [73%]; **Table C10**).
 - Achievement rates were lowest among those **adult learners** on courses that were at Level 1 and Entry Level (61% in 2007/08) and have fallen 22 percentage points from 2004/05 when they were equivalent to those of non-third sector ESF provision at the same learning level (83% for both non-third sector and third sector groups; **Table C10**).
 - By comparison, achievement rates for Level 1 and Entry Level courses delivered by third sector providers among **young learners** were significantly higher (77% in 2007/08) than those of adult learners; an achievement rate which was both higher than corresponding non-third sector ESF provision (72% in 2007/08) and which increased slightly over time (from 73% in 2004/05; **Table C9**).
- 4.46 Although achievement rates for adult learners on Level 1 and Entry Level courses within the third sector were particularly low (and to some extent responsible for decreasing the overall achievement rate for third sector ESF learners), there is also some suggestion that these learners may be some of the 'hardest-to-reach'. Comparing those adult learners undertaking Level 1 and Entry Level courses within the third sector aims, with adult learners undertaking courses at the same level within non-third sector provision²⁷ shows that:
- Those learning with third sector providers were more likely to be learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability (18% vs. 11% in 2007/08 of adult learners undertaking Level 1 and Entry Level courses in non-third sector ESF learning); and
 - Were more likely to have no prior qualifications (31% vs. 24% in 2007/08).
- 4.47 Therefore, compared with non-third sector ESF provision of courses of this level, there is evidence that third sector providers have an 'extended reach' and are more successful at engaging those falling into some, key ESF priority groups into learning.
- 4.48 Looking at **young learners** (aged 16–18) in more detail, it has already been demonstrated that overall achievement rates for third sector provided ESF aims were comparable with those seen outside of the third sector and were, in fact, higher for young learners on Level 1 or Entry Level aims. It is also notable that achievement rates for ESF learning aims undertaken by young, third sector Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) learners were significantly higher than among non-third sector BAME learners (89% and 79%, respectively, in 2007/08; **Table C9**).
- 4.49 Tables detailing achievement rates by learner demographics within age groups are appended (**Tables C9 and C10**).

²⁷Data calculated separately looking at a subset of learning aims (Level 1 and Entry Level aims) undertaken by adults with ESF.

- 4.50 The next section of this report (Chapters 5 to 11), considers the findings from the qualitative phase of the research. Conclusions and recommendations drawing together findings from both the ILR analysis and the qualitative work are presented in Chapter 12.

5 Overview of case studies

- 5.1 The following chapters (Chapters 5 to 11) present the key findings of a series of qualitative case studies, which examined the learning provision and learner's experiences within five, key priority areas, where third sector provision can make a significant contribution to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)'s delivery targets. The findings of the qualitative case studies have been synthesised and are reported as such (with comments on differences between the case study areas, where appropriate).
- 5.2 This chapter describes the background and approach to the case study research, before describing the profile of learners and providers included within the case studies.

Introduction

- 5.3 As the quantitative analysis of the preceding chapters has demonstrated, third sector providers appear to be successful with engaging disadvantaged learners, catering for a distinct learner population who are, perhaps, less likely to engage with learning in a traditional Further Education (FE) or Work-based Learning (WBL) setting than non-third sector learners. The Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data indicate that learners in the third sector tended to be:
- more ethnically diverse;
 - more likely to have a learning difficulty and/or disability;
 - more concentrated in deprived areas; and
 - more likely to have lower, or no prior qualifications, before starting their course.
- 5.4 Overall, third sector providers are also effective in supporting their learners through to successful completion and achievement of their learning aims, whether these aims are informally or formally defined. The formal achievement rates recorded on the 2007/08 ILR show a complex picture of third sector learning which produced:
- A significantly better performance of third sector learning within FE provision (88% aims achieved or partially achieved vs. 75% in non-third sector FE; **Table 3.8**);
 - A slightly lower, overall performance within WBL learning (62% vs. 67%; in the non-third sector WBL; **Table 2.7**) but achievement rates were higher for aims undertaken by learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability (64% vs. 60% in non-third sector WBL; **Table 2.7**); and
 - A lower, overall performance within European Social Fund (ESF) learning (75% vs. 83% in non-third sector ESF), which was largely driven by lower achievement rates of adult learners. Young learners produced comparable overall achievement rates (81% vs. 82% in non-third sector ESF; **Table 4.7**) and higher achievement rates at Entry and Level 1 (77% vs. 72% in non-third sector ESF; **Table C9**).

- 5.5 It is, therefore, important to consider achievement in the third sector in the context of a learner population who often enter learning with a lower, prior educational attainment than many non-third sector learners (particularly so in WBL and ESF learning). Moreover, third sector learners often have to overcome a variety of obstacles and barriers to learning, such as social, financial or educational disadvantages. It is also notable that learners benefit in a variety of other ways, even if they do not formally achieve their aims (for example, gaining relevant skills, work experience, more confidence, a positive attitude to learning or social benefits by meeting new people).
- 5.6 So far, the quantitative analysis has determined the nature and extent of learning provision and the typical learner profile in third sector learning, which has helped to establish a comprehensive picture of the contribution that third sector provision makes. The qualitative analysis will now move beyond this description and uncover additional insights into **how** third sector providers design and manage their operations. The analysis will also examine **why** third sector providers are particularly successful in certain areas and where there are areas for improvement. As such, while the quantitative analysis made direct comparisons between third sector and non-third sector learning, the qualitative research was designed to explore specific particularities **within** the third sector, to identify 'what works'. Direct comparisons with non-third sector learning were, therefore, limited.
- 5.7 Aiding this type of enquiry is a series of in-depth interviews with learners and with providers, which form the basis of the qualitative findings. The interviews covered a variety of themes, including: aspects of learners' expectations and motivations; learner recruitment, advice and guidance; how learner's needs are assessed; the way learning is delivered; what forms of learner support are made available; and the outcomes and benefits of learning. The qualitative fieldwork was conducted between July and August 2009.
- 5.8 Third sector providers that were active in the delivery of LSC funded WBL, FE and ESF co-financed learning in 2007/08 were eligible for inclusion with the case study research. Beyond this, five priority areas were identified in consultation with the LSC third sector Advisory Group. The rationale for selecting each case study was to provide a good spread across the different funding streams and learner age groups. Case study selection was also based on areas where the nature and contribution of third sector provision linked with a key objective or priority area and, particularly, warranted further exploration. The five priority areas that formed the basis of the qualitative, research design were:
1. ***ESF learning undertaken by learners aged 16–18 years;***
 2. ***ESF learning undertaken by adult learners (19+ years);***
 3. ***WBL undertaken by learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability;***
 4. ***WBL undertaken by learners, aged 16–18 years, on Apprenticeships in disadvantaged areas;*** and
 5. ***FE learners participating in Full Level 2 learning.***
- 5.9 Each of these priority areas formed a case study. In each case study, two third sector providers were selected who were found to be making a significant contribution to the LSC's priorities in terms of having particularly high achievement rates for the type of learner or learning in question ('Type 1' providers). In addition, two third sector providers were selected who had achievement rates that were average or slightly below the average ('Type 2' providers). Providers were selected using achievement data on the ILR. Selecting both types of providers ensured that the qualitative research was not only an exploration of 'best practice' among those providers with an excellent track record of achievement but involved a complete assessment of the impact of third sector provision. Results were analysed by whether the provider was a 'Type 1' or 'Type 2' provider. Overall, there was very

little difference in the practices and procedures of third sector providers with high achievement rates and those with average or slightly below average rates. As will be illustrated later in this section, achievement rates were driven by the nature of the learners who the provider engaged with (i.e. the 'harder-to-help' the target group, the greater the likelihood of non-completion). As such, minimal reference is made to these two types of providers throughout the qualitative chapters.

- 5.10 Of the four providers selected for inclusion within each case study area, two were interviewed (one from each 'type' of provider). In addition to the provider interviews, two to three interviews were conducted among learners from each of the four providers selected within each case study area; this resulted in ten learner interviews per case study area. Learners were selected using ILR data.
- 5.11 Further to this, a need was identified during fieldwork to extend coverage of **Case Study 2: ESF undertaken by adult learners** to include providers and learners based in rural areas. This resulted in two, additional provider interviews and four, additional learner interviews being conducted in this case study.
- 5.12 Overall, the qualitative fieldwork involved:
- Twelve face-to-face, in-depth interviews with senior staff (including Chief Executives, Principals, Learning Co-ordinators and Scheme Managers) at third sector providers; and
 - Fifty-four in-depth interviews with learners; the majority of these interviews were conducted over the telephone and 11 were undertaken as face-to-face interviews (the first interview in each case study area was conducted face-to-face, as well as the majority of interviews with learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability).
- 5.13 The interviews were conducted using loosely structured, topic guides. All the interviews were fully transcribed and analysed. The text was used as a basis for qualitative coding and extraction of relevant quotations and was subsequently analysed using demographic and other learner and provider data. More details on the research methodology and the qualitative topic guides are provided in Appendix D.

Providers interviewed

- 5.14 The provider interviews included a range of different types and sizes of organisations and a good geographic spread was achieved.
- 5.15 The twelve third sector providers interviewed for the case study research had a fairly broad learning offer, spanning various subject areas, types and levels of learning. Across the five case studies, providers often stressed the practical nature of their courses and the flexibility with which they are tailored to individual needs and delivered throughout the programmes.

“It’s not so much the academic programmes we deliver; it’s more about learners’ self-esteem and confidence and the work-related skills, like team work, presentation and communication skills. It’s more preparation for work and life.”

Provider – ESF 16- to 18-year-old learners

- 5.16 The basic learning offer is dominated by *Skills for Life*-type, short-courses and *Entry to Employment* (E2E) courses, which can last between one and 26 weeks. Some of the Apprenticeships can last 6 to 12 months, depending on the sector. WBL providers offer pre-Apprenticeships at Level 1, and Apprenticeship programmes at Levels 2 and 3.
- 5.17 A large proportion of the courses and qualifications offered by the third sector providers represented in the five case studies are accredited by an official awarding body, such as the credit-based qualifications awarded by the National Open College Network (NOCN). Providers also offer shorter courses and more informal learning. However, given the funding relationship providers have with the LSC, there is a clear incentive to getting learners to complete their course and achieve a qualification. The contract with the LSC acts as a catalyst for many third sector providers to boost accredited-learning.

“We have run informal learning opportunities for years and years and until we got the LSC contract, we were registered with the NOCN to run accredited learning. Before that, we did not actually give a qualification at the end.”

Provider – ESF adult learners

- 5.18 These third sector providers reported a diverse learner profile, including learners from different age groups, social classes and prior educational backgrounds. One of the key commonalities across the five case study areas, was that many learners were considered by providers to be disadvantaged in some way (financially; socially; or educationally). As a result, they either started their learning journey at a lower level compared with non-third sector learners or they have to overcome a number of additional barriers or obstacles on their way to achievement.
- 5.19 Providers reported that a large proportion of their learner population lived in a deprived area or had a 'disadvantaged' social background. Many came from the care system, were classified as 'Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)', were young, single-parents, or people with financial or housing difficulties, including the homeless. Some also had behavioural problems or serious barriers to learning:

"They are erratic, young people with very chaotic lives. Some of the problems they have are having enough money to eat, not having anywhere stable to live and, quite often, their personal appearance isn't great, which puts employers off. Some have behavioural issues, like being aggressive. Then they've got problems with their time-keeping and their attendance. It tends to be a 'can of worms'."

Provider – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

- 5.20 Some providers (particularly those working with young ESF-funded learners) work extensively with learners that had been in trouble with the law. Other disadvantages described by both providers and learners included: long-term unemployment; and a very low level of prior educational attainment. Many learners have very low prior skills or qualifications having dropped-out of non-third sector education or only achieved two or three, low-grade GCSEs. For some of these learners, a third sector provider was often seen as a 'last resort'.
- 5.21 One third sector provider specialised in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) learners and made significant efforts to engage with high-achieving and high-potential, minority ethnic students, as well as those who were NEET or lacked qualifications. The provider sought to overcome 'stereotyping' by offering personal-development training to Year 10 and Year 11 learners, management skills for undergraduate students, and also had relationships with investment banks to help minority ethnic students obtain work experience and paid internships. Beyond the academic content of the training, this provider focused on boosting learners' confidence and communication skills and raising their aspirations.

Learners interviewed

- 5.22 The learners interviewed, as part of the case study research, undertook a variety of courses. The young learners from a deprived area (**Case Study 4**) and the FE learners (**Case Study 5**) typically aimed for a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 2, either as part of their Apprenticeship programme or as a standalone qualification. The NVQs undertaken include subjects such as: business administration; information and communication technology; engineering, maintenance and installation; dental nursing; health and social care; and childcare.

- 5.23 The courses undertaken by the young and adult ESF-funded learners within **Case Study 1** and **Case Study 2** and the learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability within **Case Study 3** tended to be at Level 1 or Entry Level. These courses included: a large proportion of *Skills for Life* and E2E courses (for example, numeracy, literacy, English for speakers of other languages [ESOL] and basic computer courses, such as European Computer Driving Licence [ECDL] and Computer, Literacy and Information Technology [CLAIT] certificates).
- 5.24 The learners interviewed represented a wide spectrum, in terms of background and situation, ranging from some learners with no reported personal or social difficulties who had completed GCSEs (or equivalent) or A-Levels at school, to a significant proportion who had dropped-out of education with no qualifications, some of whom reported significant difficulties or disadvantages, such as homelessness or drug-addiction. A significant minority of the learners interviewed were female returners to learning or to the labour market, many of whom had to balance caring responsibilities with the demands of their course.
- 5.25 Around half of those interviewed were BAME learners and many were living in inner cities; providers tended to describe these learners as 'disaffected' after experiencing prejudice and social exclusion.
- 5.26 Learners studying their first, Full Level 2 qualification with a third sector provider (**Case study 5**) tended to have entered this learning from a variety of different routes. Whilst some had a more 'typical' or 'mainstream' journey (having completed school first before starting learning with their third sector provider), others described a background of low educational attainment or a significant break from learning.

"We work with the long-term unemployed, disaffected, disadvantaged. The majority of our learners have never worked. They have no qualifications and may not have even completed school. Their basic skills levels are non-existent; very low levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. These are the most challenging groups of learners."

Provider – FE Full Level 2 course learners

- 5.27 Finally, as the ILR analysis has shown, learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability or with mental health problems comprised a sizeable proportion of learners studying with a third sector provider. **Case study 3: Learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability in WBL** focussed on this group of learners. On balance, these learners reported negative prior experiences of learning, particularly within school and college education, where most left with no qualifications or low/ungraded GCSEs.

"I was excluded from school at 14 years-of-age and didn't get to do my GCSEs. I went to college when I was 15- or 16-years-old but I was kicked out of there as well; I failed as well."

Learner – WBL learner with a learning difficulty and/or disability

5.28 The profile of achieved learner interviews by case study area is presented in **Table 5.1**.

Table 5.1: Profile of learners interviewed for each case study

	CS1	CS2	CS3	CS4	CS5	Total
Gender						
Male	5	5	8	3	2	23
Female	5	9	2	7	8	31
Age (years)						
16–18	10	–	7	10	–	27
19+	–	14	3	–	10	27
Ethnicity						
White – British	3	9	6	5	4	27
BAME	7	5	4	5	6	27
Learning difficulty and/or disability status						
Have a learning difficulty and/or disability	–	–	10	–	–	10
Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability, or not known	10	14	–	10	10	44
Total	10	14	10	10	10	54

CS=Case study; BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic. Note: Total refers to the number of learners in each case study.

6 Why the third sector?

- 6.1 This chapter explores learners' motivations for entering learning or training in the third sector, as well as detailing providers' approaches to recruitment. Methods that third sector providers use for engaging learners *throughout* their course are detailed in Chapters 3 and 4.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Connexions referred many young learners (aged 16–19) to third sector learning and skills development, whilst Jobcentre Plus was a key route for older learners.
- Providers also have close connections with other, local voluntary and community groups, schools and social services; many learners were recruited via these partnerships.
- Previously 'disaffected' learners choose third sector provision due to the approachable staff and one-to-one help they received with personal or learning issues from the outset. 'Word-of-mouth' recommendations and the provider's reputation of being 'open to all' were also key factors and particularly important among younger learners.
- The combination of getting a qualification and the job opportunities 'opened-up' by a qualification was the central reason why most learners decided to start their courses.

Provider recruitment

- 6.2 Learners were recruited into third sector learning by a variety of means. Younger learners came to their provider via a referral from the Connexions youth Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) service. Learner referrals also came from other organisations, such as: Aim Higher; other youth drop-in centres or community groups; Social Services; or youth-offender teams. A high proportion of adult learners were referred by Jobcentre Plus and, to some extent, by the Probation Service.
- 6.3 Providers also have active, recruitment plans in-place; these may include advertising their programmes via leaflets and posters, for example, at Connexions, local schools or with employers. Some providers organised school visits, where pupils can learn about the provider's courses before they leave school, and they may also arrange day-long workshops on further education (FE) or job application skills held in conjunction with schools or colleges. Many providers welcomed interested learners during regular 'open days'. Third sector providers also relied heavily on 'word-of-mouth', particularly amongst young learners.

"We do get a lot of young people who are actually coming to us by 'word-of-mouth', [from] past learners or friends-of-friends. We actively recruit through the Connexions service. We go to Connexions to make ourselves obviously visible to young people there.

Provider – Work-based Learning (WBL) 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

"I have loads of friends at [the provider], and they said the people are really nice, and they enjoyed it there, so I thought I'd give it a go."

Learner – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

- 6.4 A major theme running across all case study areas is that third sector providers pick-up and cater for (indeed, actively target) 'harder-to-help' or disadvantaged learners – those learners who providers believe may 'fall through the net' were it not for their efforts.

"The ethos with which our team was set-up was to deal with the 'hardest-to-reach' young people. We fill in a huge gap that the colleges and mainstream providers leave. They don't want to deal with learners who present anything like a tenth of the problems we deal with. Without the third sector, that gap would be absolutely huge."

Provider – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

Learner motivations and reasons for picking third sector

- 6.5 For many learners, the prospect of attaining a valuable qualification within their chosen subject was a key reason for choosing to study with their third sector provider. Another prominent motive for learners to start their learning was to gain 'access to employment' or to establish themselves in their current jobs or job placements. Many learners, particularly the young learners studying within a WBL or European Social Fund (ESF) programme, emphasised the importance of their programme for gaining work-related skills, work experience and a job.

"I didn't have a job, so I decided I should do a course, going back to my computer skills. But I didn't have any certificates to prove that I could do this, so I was looking to get a certificate."

Learner – ESF 16- to 18-year-old learners

"I was just adding to my qualifications and to get more experience, so I could go and get a job that I knew I would enjoy doing"

Learner – FE Full Level 2 course learners

- 6.6 For a handful of learners in **Case Study 4: Young Apprenticeships in deprived areas**, undertaking a course designed to lead to a job-specific qualification was a requirement within their current jobs or was suggested by a current employer.

- 6.7 Some learners also saw their course as a route into further or higher education.

"I wanted to do an NVQ Level 3 to get into university, to study education. I'd then have to do a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and then I'll become a qualified teacher."

Learner – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

"[The provider] actively encourages people to finish the course and then go to college. It's a stepping-stone to college"

Learner – WBL learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability

- 6.8 For some learners, particularly those in **Case Study 2: ESF adult learners** who were unemployed before starting their learning with a third sector provider, the course simply gave them something to do. Going to the course meant a new routine and also an opportunity to meet new people.

"I was unemployed at the time. It would give me something to do in the afternoons"

Learner – ESF adult learners

"Since my last job, I've struggled to find work. I was a bit dispirited, spending too much time in the house, alone. There had to be something to change the way I was isolated at home."

Learner – ESF adult learners

- 6.9 Even though many learners were referred to their third sector provider by Connexions, a college or Jobcentre Plus (and in these cases, generally, had not heard of the provider before), there is also evidence that some learners recognised and actively choose their third sector provider because they were seen as offering something different. At the point of enrolment, the perceived advantages of third sector providers included:

- being accessible to all, irrespective of academic background;
- offering flexible, classroom teaching hours; and
- being conveniently located and/or located at familiar, and accessible, community centres.

- 6.10 Unlike colleges, the third sector rarely required learners to hold any prior qualifications; many providers accepted everybody who wanted to study and found them an appropriate programme.

- 6.11 For **older learners** (19+ years), the need for their training to be at times that fitted-around the rest of their lives was instrumental in their decision of provider; whether that was a part-time course that let them keep working while studying, or shorter daytime courses after their children were in school. Courses also needed to be part-time to ensure that unemployed learners could still claim Jobseeker's Allowance.

- 6.12 Given these diverse learner characteristics and prior educational backgrounds, it is necessary for third sector providers to adapt the way they target learners to accommodate a variety of learner needs. Special learner needs and circumstances call for more flexibility in the way third sector providers approach prospective learners, for example, by promoting their flexible course formats and class teaching schedules to meet the needs of their particular learner profiles:

"You have to make the programme fit them, rather than asking them to fit the programme. For example, the Apprenticeship has a particular format and quite often you have to bend that format to accommodate the young people who have more problems than the average person."

Provider – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

“Most of our learners are mature women, who usually have parental responsibilities or family responsibilities. They need to have their provision tailored around school drop-off times. So, we usually don’t start until 9.45 or 10am in the morning and we aim to finish by 3.30pm, so school-runs can be accommodated. We only operate in term-time. We offer community-based venues to limit travel requirements. We employ tutors that have come-up through these same experiences – they know the particular needs of the learners they are now tutoring.”

Provider – FE Full Level 2 course learners

- 6.13 Both young and adult learners reported needing reassurance during their first visit to, or interview with, a provider. This first meeting was crucial for engaging those who may have the most significant barriers to learning and encouraging them that there is a course that is ‘right for them’.
- 6.14 Older learners, or learners with interrupted learning biographies, frequently reported how important their third sector provider was in overcoming their doubts and negative expectations before starting the course. Many of the reservations held by learners had to do with concerns about how they would ‘fit into’ a classroom setting after a period of not participating in any learning.

“I did have concerns; I thought I was too old. I knew there would be a group and I was concerned I was going to be the old lady and they would think, ‘Oh my god, what is she doing there?’ I was concerned if I would be able to complete it. Would it be too hard? Would I be able to do the homework? Could I commit to that amount of hours? These things all run through your head.”

Learner – ESF adult learners

“I couldn’t read or write and I couldn’t go back to school because I wasn’t good enough; I couldn’t do anything. My biggest concern was the thought of getting back into it; I didn’t think I could do it; sitting in a classroom and having to concentrate, things like that, really. They told me there was no need to feel stupid, it’s one-to-one and nobody is perfect.”

Learner – ESF adult learners

- 6.15 **Case Study 4** learners on Apprenticeships in deprived areas reported the fewest concerns about starting learning. These learners had more straightforward experiences of previous education and were already employed at the outset of the course (and, therefore, had a more ‘stable’ lifestyle and regular income). Third sector providers in this sector perhaps also regarded themselves as more ‘mainstream’ (i.e. delivering higher level and/or full-time provision to less disadvantaged learners) or were moving that way because of funding requirements – meaning they were less likely to work with more ‘marginalised’ learners.

“We are moving more ‘mainstream’. So, we are aiming ourselves with the higher ability person who would be employed. We are trying to move more towards the person who would traditionally go to a college to come to us.”

Provider – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

- 6.16 Young learners reported feeling comfortable engaging with their third sector provider from the outset. There was an immediate perception that the tutors and other staff at the provider's organisation treated them in a way that was 'different' from any previous experiences that they may have had with education or training. Methods of engaging with and supporting learners are discussed in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

LEARNER PORTRAIT – CASE STUDY 1: YOUNG ESF LEARNERS

Robert²⁸, 17, lives in a small town in the North of England and has completed full-time ESF-funded courses in literacy and numeracy

Robert left school with no qualifications and was out-of-work and homeless, sleeping in hostels and on friends' floors. Having started off as a self-described 'bad boy' at school, he had tried to 'settle down' and start working in Year 9, as his GCSEs approached. He felt that the teachers had, however, continued to see him as disruptive and he ended-up leaving school with no GCSEs and unable to read.

Connexions referred him towards a third sector provider as they felt improved key skills would help him find employment. He studied two courses full-time: Adult Literacy Level 1 and Adult Numeracy Levels 1 and 2. The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was central to his decision to return to education: "What really interested me most was the EMA money, getting paid to do a bit more training and trying to get into work."

Robert described himself as shy and, he was consequently, glad to study at a smaller provider – he said the large numbers at college would have been daunting. He reported the provider as being known locally as the place that all the 'dropouts' go, but actually viewed this as a positive – because the provider would have more tutors and more assistance for these learners. He found staff encouraging and approachable, distinctly different from the school teachers who he felt had stigmatised him as a 'troublemaker'. Tutors would check on students if they seemed disengaged or unhappy but the fact that attendance on these courses was voluntary, also encouraged him to develop his own motivation and responsibility.

Robert reported several positive outcomes from the course. He was proud that he had gone from getting 'nothing' at school to attaining qualifications and gained a lot of confidence in working with other people. The structure of getting-up each morning for classes motivated him to take action on his unemployment and homelessness: he says that he thought, "*What's the point of going back to how it used to be and being lazy, not having a care in the world what time I get out of bed?*" *It kept me on the straight and narrow.*" While the course did not directly lead to employment, it gave him the confidence he needed for job interviews and he is now working.

²⁸Pseudonyms have been used throughout the qualitative reporting in order to ensure confidentiality and the respondents' privacy.

7 Meeting learner needs

7.1 In this section, the systems and processes that third sector providers have in-place to identify and meet learners' needs (both learning and non-learning) throughout their courses are explored. In particular, we discuss how they:

- Offer flexible learning provision;
- Deliver additional support;
- Assess learners' needs; and
- Monitor and assess progress.

7.2 How learners view the support available to them and the role of provider support in helping them complete and achieve their learning aim are reported.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- The personalised, flexible approach of third sector providers is central to their success with 'harder-to-help' learners or those who have had a negative experience of non-third sector education.
- Third sector providers organise systematic, learner needs' assessment at the start of their engagement which sometimes included 'taster weeks'. Learners were generally satisfied with this personalised approach; however, some learners were dissatisfied when their provider mixed learners of different levels into one group.
- Third sector providers invested considerable time and effort into supporting learners' needs. Learners were commonly offered mentoring, one-to-one tutoring and guidance, non-learning support and job-searching advice, as appropriate.
- Much resource was put into observing and monitoring learners – including the maintenance of tracking sheets, gathering feedback from employers, arranging monthly reviews – and working with them to overcome barriers they encounter.

Flexible approach

7.3 Several providers emphasised their flexible approach to learning delivery, for example, by arranging some learning on a unit-by-unit basis or by delivering qualifications in a 'holistic' manner by integrating many units into one lesson. Some providers offered part-time or 'roll-on/roll-off' options. Several learners emphasised the importance of this approach and commented that it was important to be able to work under a course structure that was not too rigid and which allowed them to accommodate other responsibilities, such as childcare or part-time work.

“The more work-based learning, like ‘Customer service and teamwork’ are done slightly differently. That might entail a half- to a full-day workshop. It can vary. That’s a ‘roll-on/roll-off’ programme, as and when we get people in. They usually tie that in with a volunteer work placement. The rest of that training, apart from the half- to full-day workshop, is on-the-job training and developing a portfolio.”

Provider – European Social Fund (ESF) adult learners

“It was really important [that the course was part-time], as I have two children and a part-time job. The course had to work around my lifestyle”

Learner – Further Education (FE) Full Level 2 course learners

- 7.4 Providers that deliver accredited learning work had to incorporate flexibility with their approach to learning delivery, whilst still adhering to the basic, formal structure of any course, as it is set-out and accredited by the awarding body.

“The flexibility and support offered by the National Open College Network (NOCN) is fantastic. Their units are very flexible; we have very good working relationships with their business development manager, who comes down and helps us explore alternative methods of delivering the courses, especially when it comes down to the assessment of learners.”

Provider – ESF adult learners

“Qualifications are quite tied-down and we do accredit everything we deliver. We are not the type of organisation that views a young person coming on a programme for months and months and not having any accreditation at the end. I suppose the mechanisms for accreditations are quite formal; even though our delivery isn’t that formal, the sessions could be deemed as quite formal, in terms of their make-up.”

Provider – Work-based Learning (WBL) 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

Learner support

- 7.5 Third sector providers make a range of resources available to support their learners, particularly when learners came from a disadvantaged background. Learner support is a crucial element used by providers to attract learners, improve their attendance and increase overall completion and achievement rates. As discussed above, providers usually assessed learners’ needs at the start of the programme and arranged additional funds and support for learners’ financial needs, travel costs, housing problems, childcare arrangements, etc.
- 7.6 Partnership working with other agencies is very important for third sector providers when working with learners who faced complex, personal situations, such as financial problems, housing issues, alcohol- or drug-abuse or disrupted family relations. Providers typically rely on a ‘network’ of other organisations for assistance, such as local housing groups, job rehabilitation teams, youth offender teams or other charities or community networks.
- 7.7 Third sector providers reported strong, well-established links with these other agencies that have been developed over time and are mutually beneficial. Third sector providers commonly work in consortia with these sorts of organisations on current or past projects or initiatives (whether learning related or not), meaning they can utilise existing links and relationships, when needed.

“Each learner has their own individual learning programme, and depending what the learners’ needs are, that is what we will put-in-place, if at all possible. We work a lot with mental health workers, social workers, probation officers; it is all linked-together, so we are ensuring we meet everything that they need and making sure that they don’t get lost in the system. We are quite small, so you can give that little bit of extra help to individuals.”

Provider – FE Full Level 2 course learners

- 7.8 However, most learner support provision was typically delivered by qualified learning tutors, who assisted students with their individual academic workload by way of mentoring, coaching and giving advice and guidance. The philosophy of most third sector providers was to build into the basic learning delivery, a programme of continuous and personalised support for students. A number of providers went further, making personal counsellors available to their students, who would offer psychological support, in times of particular need.

“They do get a one-to-one personalised review every month. All the staff tend to have an open door policy. There’s a learning mentor we link to and that mentor is available for all the young people. We offer Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) as well and they can access that anytime. We’ve got staff who are qualified for that. It could be about anything, it could be to do with their learning, the next step to take with their lives, etc.”

Provider – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

- 7.9 Learners ‘echoed’ the importance of the availability of this type of support. While additional, non-learning support was not needed for many of the learners interviewed, a significant minority utilised support of this nature with some saying that it played a ‘fundamental role’ in encouraging them to complete the course. Support such as one-to-one counselling or advice was particularly welcomed by learners in **Case Study 2: ESF adult learners** and **Case Study 4: WBL young Apprentices in deprived areas**.

“If you were having any problems in general life they’d help. I think if the support had stopped I’d have left, because I’d have had nobody who was bothering with me.”

Learner – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

“There was counselling as well. If you had any problems, problems at home, problems with being a carer, they’d go through everything so you could continue your education. It was very important. If you had no support you might not stay all the way.”

Learner – ESF adult learners

- 7.10 Mentoring was a common approach in **Case Study 3: WBL Learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability** where often a Connexions adviser or someone external to the provider would visit learners regularly to provide them with someone else to discuss their learning experience with. Outside of **Case Study 3** some learners on Full Level 2 courses (**Case Study 5**) also noted that there was additional support available for those with learning difficulties or disabilities, if this was needed. This support ranged from handouts being provided on different coloured paper for learners with dyslexia, to learning support assistants being available for those who needed additional help in the classroom.
- 7.11 In larger providers, nominating older or more senior learners to become mentors to the incoming cohort of new learners is seen as a valuable way of providing the learner with another possible outlet for any concerns or issues they may have.

“They also have another learner as a mentor who has been here for some time. So, if they don’t wish to divulge to us, they often do with other learners and that can come back to us, as long as the learner has said that it is okay.”

Provider – FE Full Level 2 course learners

- 7.12 While many learners did not require ‘formal’ additional support or did not report any particular additional needs, a broad range of learners across all case study areas and age groups noted that they appreciated being able to approach tutors or staff ‘as and when’, if they needed to talk about something on a one-to-one basis. A few mentioned that they were given phone numbers and email addresses of staff to be able to contact them, if the need arose.
- 7.13 Establishing mutual trust and treatment ‘on a level’ with students is important to third sector providers. One provider has set-up a democratic Student Council as a platform for learners to discuss their concerns and communicate with staff and the executive.

“We have reintroduced learner representatives for each of the groups, and an overall Student Council. They’ve now met, I think two- or three-times. The idea is for students to meet together and then they meet with the Executive, myself and the Chief Exec, and they discuss the things that they’re worried about, have concerns with, the changes they’d like to see or what they’d like. And then we respond to that as an organisation.”

Provider – ESF 16- to 18-year-old learners

- 7.14 There is also a social dimension to learner support, that recognises that learning is best achieved in a ‘supportive’ group environment. Thus, where possible, third sector providers arranged communal facilities that enable social interaction, both in a learning context and during recreational activities. These resources included: study rooms; workshops; libraries; and student-support centres, which provide personal computer terminals for practising information technology (IT) or simply ‘surfing’ the internet; there are student cafés or canteens; and, in one case, a pool-table to “*stop young learners getting bored*”.

“[The provider] had an internet café and a little library, as well. These were very important to me; I can still access the library, if I have the need.”

Learners – ESF adult learners

“There was a common room and it had coffee machines, pop machines and everything like that.”

Learners – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

- 7.15 Provider and learner interviews indicated that more disadvantaged learners require additional resources to be mobilised, in terms of learner support. However, there was a perception among some third sector providers that the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has not always recognised this situation, and that some of its programmes and funding streams were not tailored to the needs, priorities and circumstances of these learners. Providers also felt strongly that frequent changes of policy made it harder for them to ‘reach-out’ to the groups who most needed learning or training.

“What is supposed to be a huge issue, the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)’s issue, and is supposed to be on the agenda of the government, all this falls by the wayside in comparison to this year where the buzzword is ‘Apprenticeships’. Most of the young people that we are talking about in that group [NEETs] will never be able to do an Apprenticeship because they will never be able to stick-it-out. They will never be able to complete what the employer needs them to complete. They are in a group that is over-subscribed and under-funded.”

Provider – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

Assessing needs

- 7.16 Once on board, learners typically received some form of initial advice and guidance from the third sector provider, in most cases on a one-to-one basis. These initial conversations revolved around the course content and format but providers also tried to encourage learners, at this point, to develop their own sense of ‘direction and purpose’ and to identify their broader goals-in-life.

“They sat down with me and went through the whole course and what I’d have to do.”

Learner – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

“For a lot of people at the point of engagement, they do not know where they are heading, what it is they want to do. It’s about giving them that time and that opportunity to develop their own ‘self-awareness’ and identify where they want to go.”

Provider – ESF adult learners

- 7.17 Next, some providers reported that the *learning* needs of every learner were assessed by a learner support professional; this process included: academic aptitude tests (for example, basic numeracy and literacy tests) and assessment of the young person’s learning style. The structure and content of the subsequent learning programme could then be tailored to an individual’s capabilities and needs, depending on how much individual attention each learner requires.

“They have an interview with one of our admin staff or a member of staff. They have to do an initial literacy and numeracy assessment. We have Basic Skills tutors, who they meet immediately on their first day here.”

Provider – FE Full Level 2 course learners

- 7.18 Learners were generally happy with this assessment process. However, in a few cases, learners reported dissatisfaction with how they were assessed and/or with the way in which learner groups were organised, with providers sometimes mixing learners of different levels or ages into one group for assessment.

“Maybe when they are assessing someone who wants to go there, they could group people into their ability more and also their age.”

Learner – FE Full Level 2 course learners

- 7.19 Following an assessment of basic literacy and numeracy skills, some providers also identified any particular problems in terms of ‘softer’, generic skills such as communication and team-working. Where these were identified, additional short-courses were sometimes offered to help improve these skills alongside the ‘core’ learning aim:

“We then do more of a personal sort of assessment, where we are finding out what skills they have. If it is deemed in the first, few weeks that the young person has poor communication skills and really low confidence, what we would tend to do is then do more of a formal assessment, which is a tool the LSC have. We would draw down additional funds and they would actually come in for a separate session to deal with personal and social issues. It would be communication workshops, self-confidence, team-building, that kind of thing.”

Provider – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

- 7.20 Most learners also benefited from an assessment of any *additional*, non-learning needs they may have, such as any issues with transport, housing, health or financial support. Some providers also promoted mentoring for learners and assigned them a dedicated, personal mentor, who was responsible for pastoral care on a one-to-one basis.

“People are linked-up with a mentor who looks at their learning needs but also some of their personal goals. Our approach is to say, where we can’t help ourselves, on issues such as finance, housing, or mental health issues, we can refer the learner onto other agencies. People cannot get into a learning situation if they have other priorities in their life that are not being met. We offer a holistic approach.”

Provider – ESF adult learners

“We also consider individual learner support when we are talking to them, we ask questions not only about what they would like to do and their course, but we also go into any of the social problems they may have.”

Provider – FE Full Level 2 course learners

- 7.21 Where learners were encountering financial difficulties, some providers tried to address these needs by way of making extra funds available, such as paying travel expenses or by helping learners with application forms for the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). This was crucial for several learners, who would have been unable to continue studying without this financial help.
- 7.22 Assessing learner needs can be a difficult and time-consuming task, in some cases. This process can sometimes stretch over a period of time and require careful observation of the learner within a social setting, such as monitoring how he or she interacts with a group of learners. Time is also needed to build-up a rapport with the learner and gain their trust, as they are not always forthcoming at the start of the programme.
- 7.23 Providers working with learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability on WBL courses (**Case Study 3**) or adult learners on ESF-funded courses (**Case Study 2**), in particular, had developed structured and time-intensive assessment methods, including: ‘taster’ or induction weeks; observations; interviews with both tutors and learning support staff; and the involvement of specialist staff, such as social workers, case workers or transcribers.

“We usually organise a ‘taster week’ for new, prospective learners. This gives the learner the chance to see what it’s like and for us it’s an opportunity to assess his or her needs. We try to identify any areas where the learner needs support, as well as any behavioural issues and social needs. We do a literacy and numeracy assessment; there is also a risk-assessment. And during the ‘taster week’ our tutors observe the learner and record how he or she works in a group of learners.”

Provider – WBL learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability

“The learners will be in talks with their case worker about what they want to do and which courses are suitable. They’ll then have an induction period with us, where we would look at their level of learning. A lot of the time, we may see that there is a particular learner need but they are not ready to divulge that need to us. It takes time, it takes trust, and it takes a while for people to actually open-up. They may be dyslexic; they may need a transcriber; they may need somebody to read for them. That’s not always obvious at first.”

Provider – ESF adult learners

Monitoring performance

- 7.24 A crucial part of the overall learning delivery is for providers to monitor the progress that learners are making throughout their programmes. Third sector providers have a number of procedures to monitor learners’ progress, including tracking sheets and monthly progress reviews that measure success rates against key targets for each, individual learner. Many of these monitoring processes are also supported by feedback from employers, case workers and learners’ parents.

“Every department has tracking sheets to ensure that their learners are on target and their homework or, whatever has been set, has been handed in. We also monitor our overall success rates and our timely achievement rates.”

Provider – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

“We conduct an evaluation at the end of the programme or workshop. At each seminar, the tutors observe their behaviour or performance. They have tutors to monitor individual progress and give them feedback on where they are. We get feedback from their parents on what they see about their children.”

Provider – ESF 16- to 18-year-old learners

- 7.25 Some providers also have procedures in place to integrate learners’ own experiences and feedback into the monitoring of their progress, such as individual learner plans, setting and revisiting of key targets, regular meetings and online forums. This allows third sector providers to be responsive to the changing needs and aspirations of their learners.

“There will be meetings every term with tutors to assess progress against individual learning plans. We usually encourage groups to nominate a ‘class representative’ to liaise through the different channels. So, people can keep a track of their own progress and any issues they wish to raise.”

Provider – FE Full Level 2 course learners

- 7.26 Learners confirmed that the provider’s efforts at monitoring progress and communicating feedback were recognised and valued. A common view was that tutors often go out-of-their-way to make time for one-to-one coaching, mentoring, and providing personal feedback. Whereas for some, this was

on a regular (most commonly fortnightly or monthly) and formal basis, for others it simply took the form of informal but frequent 'check-ups' from the tutor.

“Every week they’d go through and see how far you’ve got on your assignments, and just checking it really, seeing how you’re doing, if you’re up-to-speed or if you’re not – ‘Come on, you need to get that little bit in, that one should have been done by now!’ This was very important for me.”

Learner – FE Full Level 2 course learners

“Well, every two or three weeks they would give student feedback, where they would go through what you have achieved, what you need to achieve and any improvements on your written feedback sheet. It was good for me because I like everything organised. I knew what my targets were and I knew what I had to do to achieve my targets”

Learner – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

“When we’d ask the teacher about our progress, they would sit us down and tell us how we were doing academically. He could print you out a document showing your attendance, punctuality and how you were keeping-up with the work, on a percentage scale.”

Learner – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

- 7.27 Encouragement of self-monitoring was common among those learners in **Case Study 2: Adult ESF learners**, where learners described being given a booklet or action plan at the start of the course which they were encouraged to check their own progress against. Some were shown how to conduct a self-assessment and evaluate their progress.
- 7.28 Adult learners in **Case Study 5: Full Level 2** learning tended to be given written feedback on assignments and a more formal programme of tests and assessments.
- 7.29 Just a handful of learners reported receiving little or no feedback on their progress. These tended to be learners on short ESF-courses (**Case Study 1** or **Case Study 2**), who said that progress monitoring was either 'kept private' or that the course was too short or too basic to warrant monitoring.

LEARNER PORTRAIT – CASE STUDY 2: ESF ADULT LEARNERS**Karen, 49-years-old, lives in a rural area and is a single-parent preparing for a return to work**

Karen had been unemployed for three years and was claiming income support. A Lone Parent advisor at the Jobcentre referred her to a third sector training provider, as preparation for returning to work. Having previously been employed in community work, she undertook a four-month Level 1 Entry to Employment (E2E) course to update and upgrade her communication and administration skills.

As an older learner and someone who had been out of the workforce for a while, she had substantial concerns about returning to training: *“Was I too old; would I be able to complete the course; could I make that time commitment?”* The additional support offered by the provider’s advisers at the recruitment stage was crucial in helping her take the first step. In one-to-one sessions they identified her goals and skills needs, so she could enrol on the most suitable course.

The group of 12 learners was of mixed ages and backgrounds and this format worked well for Karen: *“The tutor was very encouraging. If she saw someone would struggle to stand up on their own, she would encourage them to do it with someone else, and do pair-work. The tutor seemed to find strength in every person.”* The provider offered help with childcare and travel costs (the latter being especially important in a rural area), and could help learners access financial advice at the Citizens Advice Bureau. This package of support made it possible for Karen to get back into learning, making the course accessible for her. She felt the provider understood her needs in a way colleges did not.

Karen said her tutor really listened, and brought out skills and abilities that *“she didn’t know she had”*. The personalised support built her confidence and helped her work-out what kind of employment she would not just be able to do but would find satisfying. *“They are unique in the fact they tend to listen and work with you, rather than make you do something you don’t want to do.”* As a result of this course, she got a sustainable, full-time job in the community work sector, with which she’s *“thrilled to bits.”*

8 Learner Experience

- 8.1 This chapter examines learner satisfaction with the experience of third sector provision and explores the reasons why this experience was commonly described as preferable to any other provision they had experienced. The chapter concludes with a discussion of why some learners considered leaving their course early, and the measures that were taken to encourage completion.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Learner satisfaction with their third sector course was extremely high. A considerable proportion of learners directly attributed their completion and achievement to the additional, often one-to-one, learning support they received from their tutor
- Third sector providers stand out and are being recognised as distinctive, learning and skills providers by learners, who trust their teachers and feel supported. Learners see the third sector as offering a learning experience and atmosphere that is 'different' in that is relaxed, enjoyable, promotes responsibility and mutual respect. The way young learners feel about their treatment is instrumental to their performance.
- The personalised approach to learning delivery and learner support is also a vital element that mitigates the risk of learners abandoning their course before finishing it. Several learners interviewed for this research said that the personalised support from their tutors persuaded them to stay on their course and finish it.
- Learners clearly appreciate the practical elements of their learning, including learning at their workplace and learning by doing, beside the purely academic teaching content – as enjoyable and encouraging.

Overall satisfaction

- 8.2 Almost all learners were satisfied with their experiences of education or training with a third sector provider. Most learners were extremely satisfied with the teaching style and environment and the approachable staff. Learners were pleased to get a qualification that marked their achievement and they often attributed this directly to the teaching style or one-to-one attention they had received from their tutor, who many felt had 'gone the extra mile' to help them achieve their learning aim.

"I was so happy, very excited because I'd done something for once – the teachers had helped me so well with computers, English and Maths (they explained everything so well) and then I got a certificate to show that I'd done so well."

Learner – European Social Fund (ESF) 16- to 18-year-old learners

"I passed it and didn't expect to do anything after leaving [previous] college, so happy I got a qualification – I used to get stuck on it [course work] all the time, and she [tutor] would purposely drive up to see me at work and sit with me for hours and just help me through it, and she didn't have to but she did."

Learner – Work-based Learning (WBL) 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

"On a scale of 1 to 10 [the provider] is a 20. I would never, ever go back to college again but if they asked me to go back to [the provider] tomorrow, I would. I just loved the way that they treated people like family, no matter what."

Learner – WBL learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability

- 8.3 Certain groups show particularly high levels of satisfaction, notably female learners overall, and **Case Study 4: Young Apprentices in deprived areas**.
- 8.4 Conversely, a couple of **younger** learners on ESF-funded courses (**Case Study 1**) were disappointed that they were asked to retake the course to succeed – though one of these students did return and eventually achieved the qualification.
- 8.5 On the couple of occasions where **older** learners were not satisfied, they tended to have complaints about the structure of their courses – either that they had not been assigned courses at the right level or that learners on their course had too wide a range of abilities for tutors to teach effectively. One man attended a 'return to work course' for older workers but felt the provider did not offer guidance that was suitable for this age group.

"I'd have liked if we could have talked more to employers. I thought that part was quite limited and wasn't really suitable for the 50+ group. They took us to a hotel room and we spoke with the management of the hotel, they told us how people started there as porters and ended-up as chefs, and they were talking to us all at 50+. It's very unlikely we are going to take this route at our age and progress far beyond kitchen porter, it's ridiculous, and that's for 17-year-olds."

Learner – ESF adult learners

Feedback on learning delivery

- 8.6 The vast majority of learners, across all age groups and case study areas, noted that the small class sizes (typically eight to twelve pupils per class) they had experienced at the third sector provider were particularly welcome. Many learners felt that a class of this size provided opportunities for knowledge sharing, group work and meeting new people, without being intimidating or overwhelming. Small class sizes also facilitated a lot of one-to-one support from the tutor and learners on the whole and felt like somebody 'always had time for them'.

"They were more efficient in helping you, because the course wasn't so big and everyone got catered for. They help everyone, because in other colleges the class is so big they can't get to everyone."

Learner – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

“In the citizenship lesson we were sat in a circle; and the tutor would give us a situation and we would say our thoughts on it. You were encouraged to give your opinions. I loved these classes because it seemed like a sociable space and everything. I could just talk about anything. I hate just sitting in a chair at a desk and looking at a board...it reminds me of being at school and I hated my school time.”

Learner – WBL learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability

- 8.7 Overall, learners’ feedback on the teaching style and methods involved in their course was very positive, with courses typically including a mix of one-to-one tutoring, group exercises, self-learning and practical components. On the whole learners found their tutors to be knowledgeable and approachable. Learners in **Case Study 2: Adult ESF learners** were particularly likely to mention that one-to-one interventions from a tutor were helpful for them.

“The tutors there were straight to the point, they were very helpful, broke everything down into stages, so it was easy to understand. It was important to understand it, so you didn’t feel lost as everyone was going along at a different pace.”

Learner – ESF adult learners

- 8.8 Dealing with an often disadvantaged, learner population means that personalised support is the key to securing achievement. This required tutors to show a degree of ‘empathy’ with the learner and to build-up a relationship of trust to facilitate learning.

“The environment they work in is very supportive. The style of our delivery is very participative and really involves the learner. It helps if they are not talked at and lectured. They are made to feel capable and they are able to achieve. They have skills and qualities and all the students are encouraged to shows those.”

Provider – ESF 16- to 18-year-old learners

- 8.9 One learner with learning difficulties described how his tutor was supportive and reassuring and encouraged him to go at his own pace:

“It was really hard for me when all the other people that went through the Entry to Employment (E2E) course with me were moving on quite quickly and I was going at a slower pace and I thought, ‘Well, they are going to do it and I am not because I am so slow at it’...I spoke to the E2E tutor. She said I should just carry on going at the normal speed that I was going at and that I would get there eventually. And that it doesn’t matter how long it takes. It could take 5 years or as long as I wanted. When she said that, I felt a lot better. She was very comforting towards students.”

Learner – WBL learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability

- 8.10 Only a few learners disliked aspects of their learning experience. The handful of negative comments recorded typically related to learners finding the course too easy and not demanding enough.

“They gave you stupid games to play. They were really old games and it was boring. They were sort of word games. I said, ‘I’m not a kid!’”

Learner – WBL learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability

“We were given tasks that weren’t really relevant for the name of the course. It was a shame – it was different to being at school or college, at school you were checked-up on more and actually learning something with a syllabus. But there you just go there and waste your time. The course I went to wasn’t serious at all, for the four hours you were there you’d just draw and just talk to the other people that were there.”

Learner – ESF 16- to 18-year-old learners

- 8.11 On WBL programmes providers tended to emphasise the practical nature of the content and format of courses. For example, much of the vocational learning was not classroom-based but was delivered in the workplace, where learning is practical. This type of learning is also assessed at the workplace, often in conjunction with the employer. Learners (particularly in **Case Study 4: Young learners on Apprenticeships in deprived areas**) clearly saw the benefits of this practical approach.

“My full-time job was to do with cycle maintenance and I was performing engineering tasks. It was almost like learning constantly. When I was working, I was sort of learning the course and picking more and more things up.”

Learner – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

“People learn differently, so I can’t learn in a classroom, sort of sitting down, doing theory. I learn hands-on, so if I can touch and fiddle with things, I understand and then the theory makes sense to me... So with them I wasn’t learning just to pass a qualification, I was learning to do the job properly.”

Learner – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

- 8.12 An appreciation of a practical approach was not restricted to those on WBL programmes; several learners on ESF-funded courses (**Case Study 1** and **Case Study 2**) also found the practical elements of their learning enjoyable and encouraging.
- 8.13 A couple of learners in **Case Study 5: Further Education (FE) Full Level 2** noted that they would have preferred their course to contain a larger practical element (though this is likely to be dictated by the nature of the programme, rather than the provider).

Why different to other learning experiences

- 8.14 There was a real sense from learners that they viewed their learning experience with their third sector provider as ‘different’ from any previous learning experience they had undertaken (at school, college or with a private provider). The reasons for this can be grouped into four broad themes:
- A fun and relaxed atmosphere;
 - Approachable tutors;
 - Encouragement to take personal responsibility; and
 - A culture of negotiation and compromise.

8.15 These are discussed, in turn, below.

FUN AND RELAXED ATMOSPHERE

8.16 The most common perception or experience of third sector provision was that the general atmosphere was much, more relaxed than other learning environments they had experienced (typically school – both pre-16 and sometimes post-16 – or FE colleges). Many learners had found previous learning experiences stressful and to be endured, rather than enjoyed.

8.17 Learners noted that teaching staff, support staff, management staff and other learners, all contributed to this positive and enjoyable atmosphere.

8.18 This view was particularly common amongst those learning with a small provider, where they could quickly 'get-to-know' everyone and where there was a mutually supportive, community atmosphere.

8.19 Learners felt able to 'be themselves' and to share a joke with senior staff or reveal personal information without fear of 'being judged' in a way that had not been possible for them in a learning environment previously.

APPROACHABLE TUTORS

8.20 The great majority of learners were extremely satisfied with their tutor and the support they had received from them during their course.

8.21 As well as the additional support that many were offered (described in the previous chapter), a key reason for this was that, as compared with other provision they had experienced, the third sector provider seemed more like a 'friend' than an 'enforcer'. Many thrived in what they perceived as a less 'hierarchical' relationship with their tutor, describing a new motivation to learn and do well. Some learners had previously struggled with authority figures and had either been excluded from school or had dropped-out of education early. For these learners, in particular, the tutor was described as being 'one of us' or 'down-to-earth', and the mistrust or wariness of teachers that had existed for them previously was largely dissolved.

"They are unique in the fact they tend to listen and work with you, rather than make you do something you don't want to do. They will help you towards your own goals for future employment. They are supportive. They are not in 'power'. At the Jobcentre, you feel you have to look-up to people and feel you have to practically bow-down to them."

Learner – ESF adult learners

"The teachers treated you as though they had known you for years. And they would tell you things about their lifestyles – it wasn't just a one-way thing. It was really something that I wanted to be a part of, at that time."

Learner – WBL learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability

8.22 As a result of this (and the learning atmosphere described above) some learners reported that for the first time they had felt confident to ask questions or to let the tutor know if they didn't understand something.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OWN LEARNING

- 8.23 Relating to the approachability of tutors described above, several learners noted that they were *'treated like adults'* for the first time in a learning environment. This was often attributed to the manner in which staff spoke to them but also because they were encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and achievement. One young learner who achieved a Level 2 qualification with his third sector provider described:

"They were laid-back but not too much, they still got you to do things but if you didn't get something done, they wouldn't shout at you, they'd just ask you to do it again, explain that it's on your own-back to do it. At school they make you but it's your decision (at the training centre), if you want to do it."

Learner – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

- 8.24 Learners noted that tutors rarely *'told them what to do'* in terms of giving orders or asserting a hierarchy. Instead, the tutors explained to them why certain actions or activities would be beneficial to them and others, and why others would not. Several providers had 'house rules' (relating to issues, such as respect for others, attendance and the learning environment), that all staff and learners agreed to abide by when they enrolled. Where these existed, they were explained to learners at the outset and learners were asked whether they were happy to commit to following these rules and whether there were any they disagreed with, that they'd like to discuss. This had the impact of 'empowering' learners, whilst still ensuring that the learning environment was controlled and beneficial for all.
- 8.25 Some learners described being initially surprised that when they got something wrong or fell-behind, they weren't shouted at or punished. Instead learners describe tutors making extra time to talk to them about an issue they were facing or providing additional learning support. The third sector learning environment was seen as less 'punitive' and more 'encouraging' than many learners' previous experiences were perceived to be.

NEGOTIATION AND COMPROMISE

- 8.26 Some learners praised their third sector provider for creating a culture of negotiation and compromise, in the event of issues or disagreements arising (either with other learners or with staff). In previous learning experiences, some learners had been left with the feeling that decisions had been taken that were 'unfair' and that their voice had not been heard. By contrast, with their third sector provider some learners describe playing an active role in any conflict resolution and being taught how to *'see the other person's side'*, and how to reach a compromise. As well as contributing to their overall positive experience of the general learning environment, these learners also acquired important people and communication skills.

Why thinking of leaving early

- 8.27 On the whole, learners included in the case study research completed their course and achieved a qualification or an accredited certificate (though it should be noted that this was largely by design, as the research mainly focussed on those learners who had completed their course, so they could describe, in detail, their experience at the third sector provider that led to this achievement).
- 8.28 Most of the learners interviewed never considered leaving their courses early, even though some of these people had dropped-out of school or college, or previous courses.

- 8.29 However, some learners did consider leaving at a certain point during their course, especially (but not exclusively) learners in **Case Study 5: FE Full Level 2 learning**. In several cases, the support from tutors at key points during the course was crucial in persuading learners to complete the course.

“At one point, I thought I might leave. It was when we started to do the Maths and I started to struggle. I went to the lecturers and they reassured me, and it helped me. They offered extra Maths lessons and that reassured me.”

Learner – FE Full Level 2 course learners

“With other courses, I didn’t finish. But with this provider, I did. I started the course and finished it and looked forward to the future. They took the time out to help you, so you knew what you were doing.”

Learner – ESF 16- to 18-year-old learners

- 8.30 There were, however, a handful of learners who did not complete their course or who came close to dropping-out. These tended to be younger learners, particularly those on a **Case Study 3: WBL learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability** or **Case Study 1: young ESF learners** course. Sometimes these learners left early for positive reasons, such as finding a job. Other learners, however, did not complete their courses due to personal issues or because of difficulties getting-on with the tutor or because the standard of teaching was seen as either too easy or too difficult. However, these students did tend to find work or alternative training after their courses.
- 8.31 These problems underline the importance of tutors or advisers assessing students’ learning needs at the start of the course, and continuing to follow-up on whether or not those needs were being met. As has been seen, providers principally offer this support, but for some providers it may be difficult to adequately resource the necessary support.

LEARNER PORTRAIT – CASE STUDY 3: WBL LEARNERS WITH A LEARNING DIFFICULTY AND/OR DISABILITY**Ryan, 18-years-old, lives in a large city and has a learning difficulty**

Ryan was referred to a third sector provider after failing to get a place at a local FE college. He found his initial interview with the provider encouraging and was assigned a key worker, who spent time with him explaining the course and what he could get out of it.

Classes were small (just around 10 people) and Ryan found the environment friendly. He studied literacy and numeracy, horticulture skills and health and safety. Ryan enjoyed the teaching style.

He had frequent one-to-one reviews with the tutors, where they would discuss how he was doing and any concerns that he might have had. He felt comfortable approaching a tutor, if he had any problems.

Part of the course involved a work placement doing gardening once-a-week for the provider's sister organisation (a social enterprise). One of the main things that he said he got from the course, was confidence and improved communication skills. He also gained practical skills and gained an Entry Level qualification. The one thing he would have liked to do more of during the course was computer work.

The course made him feel more positive about doing more learning in future. He has already completed another course in life skills and independent living with a different third sector provider and has plans to continue learning.

9 Employers and the economy

- 9.1 This chapter explores the impact of the current recession on third sector learning and training provision. It then examines how providers give learners experience of employment through work placements, in-house enterprises and building relationships with local employers.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- The economic downturn has increased demand for learning and training, although Work-based Learning (WBL) providers are struggling to find the work experience placements and Apprenticeship jobs that learners need for these vocational programmes.
- Successful work placements were key drivers of learning satisfaction and completion; some third sector providers have established in-house 'simulated' workplace environments that were very effective for learners who were the furthest from the labour market. However, in organisations that rely on local employers to provide work experience, some learners reported not getting a placement or not feeling their placement was relevant.

Role of the recession

- 9.2 For some providers the recession has driven increased demand for learning; as people sought to retrain following redundancy or recognised they need to increase their skills, if they were to gain work in a highly competitive labour market. The lack of availability of work may also drive people into training, as a constructive alternative to employment.
- 9.3 Conversely, however, the current economic downturn was thought to have had a negative impact on learners' achievement rates, in particular among WBL providers. Young Apprentices tend to be employed with companies. In the current economic climate, many Apprentices are threatened with losing their jobs. Yet, as soon as they lose their jobs they cannot continue with their National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) since these programmes have to be delivered at the workplace.

Provider links with employers

- 9.4 For WBL programmes (as well as certain Further Education [FE] and European Social Fund (ESF) programmes with a particular vocational focus), it is important that many third sector providers maintain relationships with employers to help their students to gain work experience and find places in the labour market upon completing their courses.
- 9.5 Preparing learners for the world of paid employment can take various forms, including short-term work assignments, voluntary placements or regular Apprenticeship work. Most WBL providers have established close-links with employers, where their Apprentices work and learn.
- 9.6 One of the fundamental issues third sector providers face is to improve young learners' attendance and punctuality (both as a prerequisite for their learning progress but also to improve their chances of employment or likelihood of having a positive, work placement experience). Providers did this by trying to instil a work ethic into young people's attitudes.

“Well, with the 16–18-year-olds, what we are trying to do here is get them used to coming to work. So, the actual environment is set-up very much like a work place. We are trying to change their attitude. It's about coming to work, not just coming to school.”

Provider – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived area

- 9.7 A few third sector providers have also established a dedicated, social enterprise unit or 'sister organisation/outlet' that takes on learners to work for 'real' clients or customers in a number of projects, for example in gardening, horticulture, retail or furniture manufacture. This appeared to be a particularly successful and 'safe' way of giving those learners who were furthest from the labour market the opportunity to improve their confidence and technical skills in a workplace environment.

“We have a subsidiary arm of our organisation that is a supported-employment initiative. Learners finish their Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes and are then offered employment and some real work experience through this scheme.”

Provider – WBL learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability

“We are a sort of small workshop environment, we are not a classroom. It's a sort of small working environment. It's real on the job. So, our learners on the carpentry course, they are producing and working on real furniture that comes in and needs repairing. The items end-up in our retail outlet, so the carpentry workshop works on items that we can then generate an income from. As does the computer workshop, in terms of recycling old computers, stripping them down into components and then we get the resale value on that.”

Provider – ESF adult learners

- 9.8 As has been demonstrated, the opportunity to gain work experience and the possibility of a work placement after the course is a key factor for many learners when they decide to participate in learning. As such, experiences of the work-based elements of a course can be hugely influential in determining overall satisfaction with the course and likelihood of completion.

"I was very, very satisfied. I achieved what I went for, a Level 2. I was one of the best in the placement. I got a special certificate for the best in the work placement. It helped me start the Level 3 and understand that as well. It was a good foundation for that."

Learner – FE Full Level 2 course learners

- 9.9 Conversely, a few learners reported being very disappointed when the promise of a work placement failed to materialise or where a work placement was unsatisfactory:

"I would have wanted better work placements. The work placements were awful. I was in this factory and I was thinking, 'What am I in this factory for?' I was just putting clothes rails up."

Learner – WBL learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability

"I was least happy with the work placement. I went on one interview, whereas other students didn't have to go on interview; they just got work placement. I kept talking to them about this, 'When am I getting my placement?' They kept holding it off until I got fed-up and when it came to the end of the year, I didn't try to sign-up for another year or anything."

Learner – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

- 9.10 It should be noted that current economic conditions are having a significant effect on third sector providers of work-based learning programmes, as rising unemployment makes it very difficult for learners to find the jobs required to participate in an Apprenticeship programme.

"The major requirement for WBL is that young learners need to be employed. We can still provide a lot of the training to unemployed people to re-skill them, making them more employable. But, unfortunately, as the contracts are very Apprenticeship-based, this means you have to have a job. This means we are increasingly very restricted by people not being employed, unlike FE Colleges that have funding available through different routes."

Provider – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

LEARNER PORTRAIT – CASE STUDY 4: YOUNG APPRENTICES IN DEPRIVED AREAS**Michael, 19-years-old, is from a deprived area in the South East, studying an Apprenticeship**

Michael was already working in a bike shop and had picked-up basic knowledge and already had an interest in cycle mechanics and maintenance. His employer encouraged him to take the Apprenticeship and covered his travel expenses.

Previously, he had dropped-out of college after having health problems and had entered employment rather than returning to learning. He had always been interested in mechanics, so was enthused at the chance to get a qualification for the knowledge he already had and eventually progress to a Level 3 qualification.

The course improved his technical skills and he felt he learnt a lot. He also met quite a lot of new people, many of them older than him and from different backgrounds. It was important for him that the atmosphere was relaxed and 'not like school' and he formed good relationships with the tutors: *"it wasn't like a teacher relationship; it was more like a friendship, more respect for each other"*. He enjoyed the learning experience, particularly the practical focus and the workshop sessions. One aspect he found particularly helpful, was the high level of progress monitoring and feedback on how he was doing.

Michael gained a Level 2 qualification at the end of the course and also says his confidence at work has improved a lot (both in terms of confidence in his technical knowledge and his ability to communicate this to customers and other staff). He's still working for the same employer, has since gone on to do further training in administration and plans to undertake management training soon, to further his chances of progression.

10 Employment, Skills and Further Learning

- 10.1 This section explores, in depth, the outcomes from third sector learning in terms of employment outcomes, skills gained and progression into further learning.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Commonly, learners reported improved employability skills, as a result of their course. For a number of learners, the experience and qualification gained with their third sector provider was directly related to finding a job.
- The learning offered by their third sector provider was often a stepping-stone into further learning, with several Further Education (FE) or Work-based Learning (WBL) learners on Level 2 courses progressing to Level 3 courses in their chosen subject area.
- As well as 'hard' outcomes (for example, employment, qualifications or progression to further learning) the majority of learners reported a whole range of 'softer' outcomes, such as increased confidence and motivation, an improved attitude to learning and people skills

Employment outcomes

- 10.2 Mirroring the initial expectations learners had about their course, many of them reported positive employment outcomes on completing their course. For a number of learners, the experience and qualification gained with their third sector provider was directly related to finding a job.

"Getting a job, being able to look after myself; the course gave me the will to look for a job, to stop being homeless, having to 'sofa surf'. I just started work again, three weeks ago. I'm enjoying it."

Learner – European Social Fund (ESF) 16- to 18-year-old learners

"I got a job at the end of my course; it's gardening for the local Council."

Learner – WBL learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability

"I am over-the-moon with the job; it is not something I would ever think of going into. The course woke me up and showed me I had dormant skills out there. I was thinking of jobs like cleaning and stuff like that before, so it showed me I could apply for other jobs."

Learner – ESF adult learners

- 10.3 Around half of all learners felt that the course had helped them develop their employability skills, such as job searching, how to write a professional *Curriculum Vitae* or how to prepare for job interviews. This benefit was most commonly mentioned by ESF funded learners – both young and adult (**Case Studies 2 and 3**).

Skills gained

- 10.4 Many of those who completed their course gained a qualification which they recognised as having real value in the labour market.

“It gave me a lot of confidence getting my qualification. Obviously, I knew what I knew and whatever skills I already had, but having that piece of paper gives you that confidence to be able to put your foot-down and say, ‘This is what I know!’”

Learner – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

“I was able to go out and look for work. Without qualifications, I could not do this before. I got a job through it.”

Learner – FE Full Level 2 course learners

- 10.5 Most learners said they had gained a number of important skills, including basic skills (numeracy, literacy and language skills), job-specific skills and generic skills (communication, team working, problem solving, etc.).

“When I finally get married and have children, I can teach my kids how to read by reading them stories at night. And then there are financial things, like if I get loans and things like that, I will be able to work-out monthly payments. And I will be able to write letters when my kids go to school, if they have hurt their foot then I can write notes saying that they need to wear trainers because they have a bad foot.”

Learner – WBL learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability

- 10.6 Learners also benefited from their course in terms of their ‘soft skills’, with the majority reporting improved confidence, assertiveness, people skills or team working.

“I definitely gained confidence because I had just left school, so I was quite young when I left. I enjoyed meeting new people and it gave me that confidence, that I knew I could do it and I didn’t need to be scared.”

Learner – ESF 16- to 18-year-old learners

“I’m a lot more confident than I was before I did the course; confident within myself. Before, when I looked at a piece of paper, I just saw words. Before, I couldn’t read; now I can read them a lot more than I did.”

Learner – WBL learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability

- 10.7 Learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability or on ESF-funded courses (**Case Studies 1, 2 and 3**), commonly mentioned that the course had improved their ability to get-on with a range of different people.

- 10.8 Independent of whether or not learners completed their course, they reported a wide variety of positive benefits gained as a result of their learning experience. For many **young** learners, the learning experience at their third sector provider transformed their general outlook in life and gave them a ‘sense of direction’.

“The biggest benefit is that I know what I want to do in the future. I think that’s important. A lot of youngsters my age I’ve spoken to say, ‘You’re so lucky, you know what you want to do. We don’t know what we want to do, we’re just in college.’ And because I’ve done this course, it’s made me realise what I want to do.”

Learner – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

“Before I did this course, I was just mixing with friends being lazy. I wasn’t looking for a job. When I did this course and had to get up at 8.30am being at the college for 9.00am. When I finished the course it made me think, ‘What’s the point of going back to how it used to be and being lazy, not having a care in the world what time I get out of bed?’ So, it kept me on the straight-and-narrow.”

Learner – ESF 16- to 18-year-old learners

Further learning

- 10.9 The learning offered by their third sector provider was often a stepping-stone into further learning and, sometimes, higher education. Learners on Level 2 courses (**Case Studies 4 and 5**) tend to progress to Level 3 courses, sometimes in combination with employment. Many learners reported how their provider encouraged them and helped them on their way to progression into the next levels of learning.

“Yes, I went to college [after the course]. I went straight into doing Level 2 because I knew what to do.”

Learner – ESF 16- to 18-year-old learners

“I think the course helped me into university because I had to have interviews there, I had to write a personal statement for that, and I felt that my tutor’s support helped there.”

Learner – ESF adult learners

- 10.10 A significant minority of learners said that the course had improved their general attitude towards learning, even if they hadn’t progressed immediately to another course. This view was reasonably common across case study areas and ages, although was particularly prevalent among adult learners who had completed a full Level 2 qualification with a third sector FE provider (**Case Study 5**).
- 10.11 **Case Study 3: WBL learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability** were the least likely of all the case study, learner groups to mention that they had undertaken further learning following their third sector provision or were planning to do so in future.

LEARNER PORTRAIT – CASE STUDY 5: FULL LEVEL 2 LEARNING**Emily, 23, lives in a large city and completed a Full Level 2 course in pre-school practice**

Emily had found school difficult and had attained only 3 GCSEs at E and F grades. She had been working in a succession of part-time jobs in shops and pubs since she left school at 16, but had started to want more stable employment.

She considered studying at college, but concerns that she would struggle financially put her off. By contrast, the third sector provider offered a heavily subsidised course, which was also part-time (2 days-a-week), so she could keep working while she studied. The provider also helped by arranging nursery school placements for the students, giving them work experience and a likely job at the end of the course.

Emily gained a lot of confidence through studying with supportive tutors in a smaller class. She particularly appreciated the personal attention she received with her assignments or with work she had missed – tutors made a real effort to make sure she understood. *“People might say it’s like going back to school and it really wasn’t. Yes, we had to work, but they made it feel easy and straightforward as well”*. School had not been a success for her, but this course re-engaged her with learning, helped her find a job (and a career path) in childcare, and substantially boosted her confidence and teamwork skills. Through producing written assignments for the Level 2 qualification, Emily also improved her Key Skills in literacy and IT. She now works in a nursery and is about to begin a Level 3, NVQ in childcare with the same provider.

11 A provider perspective

- 11.1 This chapter explores the provider's perspective on the contribution that the third sector makes to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)'s aims and objectives, in more detail. It looks firstly, at provider performance, and discusses the factors that impact on third sector provider achievement rates. It then details provider's experience of their relationship with the LSC (consideration is also given to some of the specific issues facing providers located in rural areas), before turning to views on the transition from the LSC into the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- The key factor differentiating third sector providers with very high achievement rates from those with average achievement rates is the type of learner targeted/attracted. Typically, providers with average or below average achievement rates work with learners that are more disadvantaged and, as such, have a lower starting point. Therefore, a single overall measure of achievement by provider, may mask the significant 'added value' of those providers working predominantly with particularly disadvantaged groups
- Third sector providers believe that they play a crucial role in the LSC's provision of learning and skills for the most disadvantaged learners, in particular, although some have had problems with funding being directed away from these priority groups towards more 'mainstream' or higher-level programmes, such as Apprenticeships.
- Providers are keen to get more communication from the LSC about changes in administration and priority groups. They also express a need for more continuity in funding these priorities, so that they are able to engage in longer-term planning.
- Providers recognise that there will be continuity between the LSC and the new SFA and YPLA, but seek reassurance that the valuable and distinctive work of the third sector will be recognised by these new bodies. Providers have concerns that a move to Local Authority funding could lead to an increasing 'centralisation' of learning and training in colleges.

Factors impacting on provider performance

- 11.2 So far, the case study research has demonstrated the manifold, positive outcomes and benefits for learners studying with a third sector provider. To allow a comparative analysis of the third sector's performance, the formal achievement rates recorded on the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) are discussed. At an overall level, the 2007/08 ILR data have shown the third sector achievement rates to be significantly better for Further Education (FE) learning aims but slightly lower for Work-based Learning (WBL)- and European Social Fund (ESF)-funded aims, when compared with non-third sector provision (see Chapters 2, 3 and 4).
- 11.3 This relative underperformance in certain areas can be, in part, explained by the fact that many third sector providers tend to cater for a more disadvantaged learner population, which puts them in a more difficult 'starting' position compared with non-third sector providers.

- 11.4 The case study research was designed to allow a comparison between third sector providers with very high achievement rates and those with average, or slightly below average, achievement rates. An analysis of the case study data suggests that there is very little that actually differentiates these two types of providers in terms of processes or practices. The methods of recruitment, assessment and delivery of learner support and the nature of learning experience described in earlier chapters was found consistently across **both** high- and average-performing providers.
- 11.5 However, those providers with average or below average achievement rates were more likely to report their student profile to consist of particularly disadvantaged learners, including socially deprived learners, learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability, and learners with personal or behavioural issues. Facing one or multiple serious barriers to learning, these groups are less likely to achieve their qualifications in the first place but are more in need of additional learner support.

“Because we are very inclusive as an organisation and we are small enough to adapt to the learner, so we can personalise activities and help that learner to achieve, I think that’s the main reason. It’s more time-consuming sometimes, to have that one-to-one learning with somebody.”

Provider – ESF 16- to 18-year-old learners

- 11.6 Correspondingly, those providers with higher than average achievement rates tended to recruit fewer disadvantaged learners and, therefore, have to invest slightly fewer resources into additional learner support.
- 11.7 This is an important point, as it suggests that simply looking at overall achievement rates is not necessarily an indicator of the level of resource a provider invests in each learner. Moreover, third sector achievement rates are not necessarily correlated with the level of skill, expertise and effort that providers put into working with each learner to encourage them to complete and achieve. The findings from the research suggest that above all, different achievement rates among third sector providers are being driven by the different ‘starting points’ of the learners they typically engage with (i.e. those with average or below average achievement rates typically work with learners who require the most intensive support and who are more likely not to achieve from the outset).
- 11.8 Many providers, particularly those delivering ESF-funded courses to disadvantaged learners, feel that the conventional performance targets should not apply to their learner population. They believe their learners have a ‘unique set of needs’ and ‘circumstances’ that make a comparison of their achievement rates with non-third sector providers irrelevant and, potentially, misleading.
- 11.9 Providers often emphasise that the type of learners they work with do not necessarily fit into the standard assumptions applied by the LSC, in terms of how much a learner should have progressed or achieved in a given time frame. In this respect, there was a strong feeling among providers that their contribution is not always recognised by the LSC’s standard success rates and that there should be more flexibility in measuring the ‘added-value’ provided by third sector learning.

“I think, again, it comes down to that horrible word “benchmarking”. I think if you were to go out there and benchmark third sector providers with ‘mainstream’ college providers, they are never going to be on a par. Yes, we can try and achieve these wonderful retention and success rates of 85% or whatever they put on the contract. To them, that’s just a number; to us, that’s a barrier. There’s so much more these people need, our learners like hand-holding, that one-to-one coaching, the coffee-mornings, like, ‘Let’s just sit down and have a chat, how are you doing this week?’ which isn’t recorded anywhere.”

Provider – ESF adult learners

“We have so many targets now imposed on us by LSC. Because it is national, minimum levels of performance, there is no room for flexibility given the types of learners we have. We are still targeted and actioned against ‘mainstream’ colleges, which I think is totally unfair. So, some of our departments are below minimum levels of performance, but actually for our types of learners, we think we’re doing a really good job but LSC don’t take that into account.”

Provider – FE Full Level 2 course learners

- 11.10 That said, there are also some providers (typically those delivering courses at Levels 2 or 3), who actively embrace performance targets and have developed these into sophisticated, performance measurement programmes and, thereby, increase achievement rates.

“We set assessors and trainers individual targets, which are really strict, clear and time-bound achievement targets. These are transferred to learner targets, which has clearly improved success rates.”

Provider – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

“We set targets for learners, but we also set targets for staff; and we’ve become a lot tougher in the last year or so with our targets. We also try to negotiate desperately with the LSC. We set the tutors achievement targets and unit achievement targets monthly. So, we can have a clear idea of what learners are on target and which ones aren’t, and which ones might need extra help.”

Provider – FE Full Level 2 course learners

Relationship with the LSC

- 11.11 Third sector providers believe they make a significant contribution to LSC priorities, across all case study areas and learner types discussed.
- 11.12 One provider suggested that the third sector’s particular expertise with these groups of learners meant that the LSC should be approaching the sector for dialogue, when determining strategic priorities. The current system was felt to leave the third sector in a purely ‘reactive’ role, chasing after pre-determined funding and not being able to contribute to higher-level discussions about learning and skills provision.

“I think the LSC can certainly learn a lot from organisations like us about the work that we are doing. What tends to happen is that the third sector are always looking for funding opportunities given by the LSC and are, therefore, often driven by limited resources. Rather than being able to say, ‘These are some of the issues and these are some of the things that you should be focusing on.’”

Provider – ESF 16- to 18-year-old learners

- 11.13 Some providers reported a sense of confusion over changing criteria with regards to funding; these providers highlighted the need for more continuity to facilitate planning and development of their programmes.

“What I would say is that things seem to change daily, certainly in the current climate. Things aren’t steady. Providers aren’t given time and stability to plan and bring things forward. Also, contract variations are changing daily.”

Provider – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

- 11.14 Due to their different learner population, the third sector providers interviewed for this research argue for more flexibility in the way the LSC directs crucial funding towards their programs. Funding is felt to be lacking for particular groups, such as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs), 19+ adults and disadvantaged learners, so providers cannot always work with the groups they most want to teach. Funding requirements may instead direct them towards working with groups of learners they see as already well-served or as a less urgent priority.

“Our contribution [to LSC learning targets] will probably increase, on an overall level. That’s probably because we have to pull away from working with the hard-to-reach because the funding has become so small. We are increasing our stakehold in Apprenticeships and ‘Train to Gain, which are more ‘mainstream’. We are increasing our business year-on-year, but not with hard-to-reach groups, but with other programmes.”

Provider – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

- 11.15 Providers were also concerned that funding may follow achievement rates. There is a perception that this move in funding might financially favour colleges; some third sector providers feared that this might potentially increase achievement rates by excluding disadvantaged or disruptive students. Those providers working with younger learners, in particular, felt they did an important job in reaching-out to people who had been excluded from or ‘turned-off’ from a school or college education. For these learners, third sector learning or training provided a path to achieve educational success, gain confidence and motivation and, subsequently, return to college to undertake Level 2 or 3 qualifications.
- 11.16 The administrative workload that the LSC placed on third sector providers was a particular concern for several providers, particularly regarding paperwork and the tight specifications for the data they had to return to the LSC. They perceived a risk that this workload could distract efforts away from frontline delivery and wanted recognition that, as smaller organisations, they may not have the same administrative resources as colleges. This administrative burden was exacerbated by perceived organisational problems within the LSC, with providers receiving multiple requests from different departments for the same data or not receiving a response to queries they had raised.

- 11.17 One of the things the LSC could do to improve working relationships is to provide more information to their third sector partners. While this information is usually available online, one provider said they would like a regular newsletter too. This would offer an accessible method of keeping providers up-to-date with changes in LSC provision, a need mentioned in most provider interviews.

“I think the LSC could really support our sector with more information on what is coming next. What is the next big thing going to be in education and training? It all seems to be last-minute. There’s no foresight and build-up to it.”

Provider – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

- 11.18 Third sector providers have varied opinions on their day-to-day relationships with the LSC. Contract Managers are quite widely seen in a positive light, suggesting this relationship is working well in most places and some providers (especially the larger ones), have built strong relationships with their regional LSC contacts.

“We get a lot of support from the LSC. Our Contract Manager is great. They are very supportive. We’ve had a lot of support and guidance from the LSC. They do provide access for consultancy support. They do provide staff access to training that tends to be funded.”

Provider – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

- 11.19 Other providers found their experience of LSC contact typified by a shortage of information and inconsistent requests, however, and did not always feel they were working in partnership.

“They will come for meetings and they will go back saying, ‘Yes, we will send you this, will do this for you,’ and they do nothing at all. You send them an email and ask them a question and they never come back to you. But, when they want something, you’ve got 24 hours’ notice. You might get three people from three different departments asking for the same thing, because they don’t seem to communicate from department to department.”

Provider – FE Full Level 2 course learners

RURAL PROVIDERS

- 11.20 Rural geography imposes some specific requirements on third sector providers. Organisations in urban areas are able to work from a centralised site, with population density and transport links meaning that one centre can be accessible for high numbers of learners. In contrast, rural providers have to be considerably more mobile and need to go to the communities they wish to reach – especially when working with disadvantaged learners, who are less likely to have access to a car. While the commitment of these providers is considerable – one says, *“We are not worried if we are delivering in a community shed which hasn’t got a white board or is running off a generator”* – they feel the LSC could offer more support for, not just course delivery, but also the infrastructure required for this delivery.
- 11.21 One rural provider addressed this issue by hiring premises, as and when needed, or working with partners to deliver in a rural or remote area. Another, however, reports that in their region, there is a serious shortage of community venues to hire, and wants the LSC to provide investment in these facilities (they suggest £1 million a year could provide ten community activity centres) to work alongside existing large-scale centralised FE infrastructure.

“If you look around urban areas you will see a significant amount of community buildings where learning is delivered. If you look at the most deprived [rural] areas across Cornwall only 13 out of those top-50 deprived areas have a community building. If you haven’t got the buildings in the right place to deliver and engage, then you’re not going to get in there. We’ve had to take out mobile facilities or deliver in places that are inappropriate. The LSC needs to look at just not investing £50 million for a new Cornwall College building; it needs to be having a community investment programme too.”

Provider – Adult ESF learners

- 11.22 Childcare and transport are considerable barriers to accessing learning in rural areas, potentially more so than in urban locations. It becomes crucial for third sector providers to offer learners support with these issues, as rural areas are often underserved by public transport, with buses being infrequent or not connecting the necessary villages. A particular problem for rural providers is that changes in the LSC contract model towards session-by-session payment now make it much harder for them to cover these additional, rural costs of transport and venue hire.

“In terms of a rural perspective, there are issues around transport and big issues around childcare, as there is none available for women who would need it. We have to buy-in a mobile childcare unit from the nearest town, an hour-and-a-half away, or we have to find some kind of childcare and that is a huge, huge issue, it takes up a lot of time and if it fails, we can’t do the learning.”

Provider – Adult ESF learners

“From having LSC contracts which potentially offered £1000 support to each woman, so we could pay for their learning, childcare, transport, any other needs they have, we are now in a position of having contracts where we get paid £20 or £30 for a face-to-face session, whereby we may have to travel across Northumberland, pay for venue hire, manage the whole system in our office. It [The funding], in no way, covers the cost of it. Otherwise, we have to have a very large group in one place, which never happens in a rural area – it never has done.”

Provider – Adult ESF learners

SFA and YPLA

- 11.23 Looking ahead, third sector providers were asked to comment on the expectations they have with regard to the two, new agencies that will replace the LSC; the future SFA for adult learning and the YPLA, as well as the role of Local Authorities going forward.
- 11.24 Providers recognised that there would be a certain level of continuity, but many had substantial concerns about how these changes would affect third sector funding. More than one provider feared that colleges would gain priority, with smaller organisations from the third sector becoming marginalised.

“My concern is there isn’t a third sector skills funding officer²⁹ [in the SFA] and it’s a hugely reduced budget. Given that we fall into that bracket, I’m not sure where the money is going to come from.”

Provider – ESF adult learners

“There’s no clear, strategic vision on how it is going to work out. I find this crazy that this is coming in April. For starters the Local Authority has never worked on these programmes before. They don’t understand the programmes. Because we are all ‘in the dark’, we are a little bit concerned, as we don’t know how we are going to have contracts with people, and how they are going to tender for work. The Local Authority has always favoured partnership work with colleges, which would then completely cut us out of the loop.”

Provider – WBL 16- to 18-year-old Apprenticeships in deprived areas

- 11.25 Providers’ opinions varied as to whether their role within learning and skills provision would increase or decrease going forward. Given the economic climate and many providers’ specialism in engaging disadvantaged learners, the great majority of providers felt the *need* for third sector learning and skills provision would certainly increase. Some of this group were concerned, however, that changes in LSC funding regulations would marginalise their organisations, such that they would not be able to make as great a contribution to LSC priorities as they would like.

“I think it might decrease. It’s a feeling I get when I go to LSC meetings or any meetings; everything seems to be biased towards the colleges and the systems they put in. They are expecting small providers to deliver exactly like the colleges, but the colleges have whole departments dealing with finance and welfare and we don’t. It seems they are expecting us to jump through the same hoops, but we can’t.”

Provider – WBL learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability

- 11.26 With almost every provider unsure how they (or third sector provision generally) would be involved in SFA or YPLA learning arrangements, there is an urgent need for more communication and information about these changes to enable providers to plan effectively for 2010. Competitive tendering is a particular concern for third sector providers, as they cannot afford access to the bid-writing teams that larger colleges may use for this process.

“Obviously, the openly competitive tendering which is done at a national level takes away from the locality of Cornwall. We are very isolated. We have very different needs to the rest of the UK. You sort of worry going forward, some of that understanding, some of that compassion for Cornwall is going to get lost. We are going to be expected to conform to the same sort of contract as the other parts of the UK, without consideration of the fact that we are very rural. We are very isolated, we don’t have the transport links, and we don’t have the infrastructure.”

Provider – ESF adult learners

- 11.27 A couple of providers mentioned that the increasing regional focus of the LSC worked contrary to its attempts to engage with third sector organisations. One provider found this a problem because they worked on a larger-scale, across several regions, yet another provider had difficulties because they felt they were too locally oriented to be visible at a regional scale. This suggests regional LSC structures could potentially benefit from adjustment to engage with much of the range of third sector providers.

²⁹This provider works with adult learners, so their concern about the lack of a coordinating national Third Sector post applies to the SFA (there will be a Third Sector post in the YPLA but this was not mentioned by the provider).

11.28 As a solution, one provider stressed the importance of the SFA having a national, third sector officer to speak-up for the needs and importance of the sector's providers, to lobby for funding, and to ensure these organisations will still be heard at regional and national levels.

“What’s happened is that the agenda has moved more and more towards third sector partnership working and consultation. But, in actual fact structurally, the LSC has come away from that. They’ve become more regional, so it’s like they’ve moved the ‘goalposts’ to me. It doesn’t make sense that the LSC are becoming more regional and yet they’re wanting more and more to partner with third sector organisations, which are by their very nature, community groups and local. It doesn’t fit.”

Provider – ESF adult learners

12 Conclusions and recommendations

- 12.1 Personal and social circumstances of the third sector learner population, such as learning difficulties and/or disabilities, social deprivation, precarious housing or unstable family backgrounds often make the 'starting point' for third sector providers more difficult compared with that of non-third sector learning provision.
- 12.2 As such, third sector providers invest considerable time and effort into the recruitment, initial guidance and needs assessment and ongoing support of their prospective students. They tend to take a holistic, rather than a funding-led approach to learning delivery, with learners offered not just their funded course but also commonly mentoring, one-to-one tutoring and guidance, personal support and job-searching advice, so they can extract maximum benefit from their learning. A personalised, flexible approach to learner support is key to the success of the third sector in securing achievement rates that are comparable with (and sometimes exceed) non-third sector provision in many areas.
- 12.3 Where achievement rates fall below those seen in non-third sector provision (for example adult learners on European Social Fund [ESF] or Work-based Learning [WBL] courses at Entry Level or Level 1) the evidence suggests that third sector providers are targeting and attracting those learners who may otherwise have 'fallen through the net' of non-third sector provision and who have the greatest additional needs. While achievement rates are relatively low for these groups, this single measure of success may mask the 'distance travelled' in terms of individuals (re-)engaging with learning or achieving 'softer' outcomes, such as increased confidence, people skills, employability skills or motivation.
- 12.4 Recommendations arising from the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) analysis and, subsequent case study research group, fit together into three broad themes: information; flexibility; and resource.

Information – more regular and more transparent communication

- Ongoing information and communication between the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and its third sector partners is vital. Providers need to be informed well in advance of any changes to their contracts, specific funding rules and eligibility criteria, or new policy priorities within the learning and skills sector, in general.
- Third sector providers ask for more information in two key areas: changes in LSC administrative requirements and how third sector providers will be affected by the transition to the new Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) structures.
- Providers would also benefit from having a direct point of contact in the SFA and YPLA, such as a third sector officer who is responsible for communicating with the sector and for attending to queries from providers.

Flexibility and long-term commitment – recognising the needs of third sector providers and their learners

- Third sector providers feel that the needs of their learners could be better met by making funding streams and eligibility criteria more flexible or by allowing providers more discretion in the administration of a limited amount of budget for learning delivery and support. This would reflect the following points: the manner in which many providers work with learners; tailoring the level and nature of the support needed to the individual; and providing intensive one-to-one interventions, when needed.
- We recommend that consideration is given to calculating the contribution of the third sector to the LSC's aims and objectives by introducing a 'value-added' or 'distance travelled' performance metric, in addition to the current achievement rates which are calculated for providers. This approach would assess the relative improvement a learner makes, considering his or her prior educational attainment, any barriers or obstacles to learning faced by the learner, and enabling a complete assessment of the progress made. This is a complex task, and current ILR records do not facilitate this type of reliable measure, given that much of the information relating to prior educational achievement and learning outcomes is incomplete. Working with the third sector to improve data collection in this area may pave the way for a robust analysis.
- Policy priorities are felt to change very frequently (with funding following these changes), making it difficult for third sector providers to establish a base of expertise and reputation with the learning groups they would most like to prioritise. Apprenticeships, for example, were seen to take resources away from working to enrol disadvantaged learners on Entry to Employment (E2E) courses. Providers would benefit from more long-term and integrated priority commitments and from funding being 'ring-fenced' for particular disadvantaged groups; this would ensure continuity in the provision that can be offered to disadvantaged groups. This is perhaps even more important in the recession, where the third sector has a strong record of working with the long-term unemployed and those with low, prior educational achievement to re-skill or up-skill and promote employability and confidence.
- Longer-term contracts are vital for providers, so that funding will not suddenly be removed, enabling them to engage in more effective, future planning.
- Third sector providers often work with more ethnically diverse learners, those with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, or those from areas classified as deprived using the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Consequently, as well as offering the LSC and its successor bodies a means of engaging disadvantaged learners that non-third sector provision cannot address, the third sector's learner base also means it can contribute significantly to these organisations' equality and diversity strategies.
- Third sector WBL is considerably more focused on previously unemployed learners compared with non-third sector provision (67% of learners in 2007/08 were 'not employed' immediately before their course, compared with 12% in 2007/08 in non-third sector provision). Consequently, despite accounting for just 4% of all WBL learners in 2007/08, the third sector accounted for one fifth (20%) of all unemployed people brought into WBL. The third sector has a significant role to play in engaging with the unemployed and could be utilised in the recession/unemployment strategies of the YPLA and SFA.

Resources – more funding to cover the resource implications of recruiting and supporting disadvantaged learners

- Providers often struggle to mobilise sufficient resources to finance their activities. Thus, there is a repeated call to make more funds available to help resource the extra effort that is required, in terms of safeguarding the continuity of a holistic learning delivery and learner support within the third sector. Across the different funding streams (Further Education [FE], WBL, ESF), there is an increased need for funding arising from a learner population that is more disadvantaged and faces more barriers to learning than the non-third sector learner. Building on the disadvantage, 'uplift' element of the current funding model to provide additional funds in connection with those learners likely to require significant additional support would benefit the third sector. It would also offer an incentive for all providers to engage with particular learning groups.
- Adult learners within WBL and ESF are currently less likely to achieve their aims than their non-third sector counterparts. Additional resource may help this learner group; within the third sector these learners tend to be those with the greatest additional (whether learning or non-learning) needs.
- Providers were concerned that funding may increasingly follow achievement rates in the future. There is a perception that this would financially favour colleges and would discourage providers from 'reaching-out' to the 'hardest-to-help' learners (or make it financially impossible for them to do so). As discussed above, 'softer' outcomes, such as increased employability skills, confidence or improved attitude to learning, are often important for third sector providers and learners alike. Overall measures of achievement often mask the significant progress that many learners make with third sector providers.
- WBL provision, in particular, has found it harder to adjust to the recession, as learners struggle to get the jobs that are a prerequisite of this type of training. Colleges have adapted to this by acquiring other funding streams, but specialist third sector WBL providers need more financial support to train those unable to find employment. As well as additional resources, some third sector WBL providers may benefit from LSC support in developing stronger links with local employers to provide guaranteed and relevant work placements to learners.
- Rural providers face additional costs from working in more remote locations, with learners having greater needs in terms of provider-supported transport and childcare and since suitable venues for training are considerably harder to find. Funding organised on a session-by-session basis is felt not to acknowledge these additional costs. Instead, providers require additional funding for working in geographically isolated areas, covering the infrastructural costs that have to be met before any learning or training can occur.

APPENDICES

As a note, there are cases where the column percentage points do not necessarily add up to 100% which is due to rounding up or down of the original data. An asterisk (*) denotes data points where the original data is below 1%.

APPENDIX A: Work-based Learning (WBL) tables for young people and adults

Table A1: Demographic profile of WBL learners (16–18 LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: 16–18 WBL learners</i>	(240,964)	(25,997)	(234,308)	(25,460)	(239,995)	(27,156)	(259,630)	(28,437)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gender								
Male	59	58	59	58	59	58	58	58
Female	41	42	41	42	41	42	42	42
Age (years)								
16–18	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Ethnicity								
White – British	91	83	92	81	92	80	92	79
BAME	8	17	7	18	7	19	7	20
Ethnicity not known	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
Have a learning difficulty and/or disability	15	33	15	33	16	32	16	33
Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability	84	65	83	65	82	66	81	65
Not known	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	3

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR). BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

Table A2: Demographic profile of WBL learners (19+ LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: 19+ WBL learners</i>	(696,101)	(15,383)	(396,559)	(11,095)	(257,108)	(9,628)	(316,591)	(12,066)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gender								
Male	54	48	55	53	56	52	56	50
Female	46	52	45	47	44	48	44	50
Age (years)								
19–59	98	99	99	98	99	98	99	98
60+	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	2
Ethnicity								
White – British	79	63	84	71	90	83	88	77
BAME	19	35	14	27	8	16	10	21
Ethnicity not known	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
Have a learning difficulty and/or disability	8	13	8	11	8	14	7	19
Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability	89	84	89	83	90	80	89	74
Not known	3	3	3	5	2	6	4	8

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR). BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

Table A3: Geographic profile of WBL learners (16–18 LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: 16–18 WBL learners</i>	(240,964)	(25,997)	(234,308)	(25,460)	(239,995)	(27,156)	(259,630)	(28,437)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Region								
<i>East of England</i>	9	7	9	6	5	2	9	4
<i>East Midlands</i>	9	6	9	6	1	1	9	6
<i>Greater London</i>	7	12	6	15	6	16	6	17
<i>North East</i>	7	17	7	17	7	18	7	17
<i>North West</i>	18	15	18	14	18	13	18	13
<i>South East</i>	12	11	12	12	12	12	12	12
<i>South West</i>	11	2	11	4	11	5	10	5
<i>West Midlands</i>	11	16	11	15	11	14	11	16
<i>Yorkshire & the Humber</i>	14	11	14	9	14	7	15	7
<i>Not known</i>	2	3	3	2	15	12	3	3
Index of Multiple Deprivation								
<i>Resident in 10% of most deprived areas</i>	15	31	14	29	14	28	15	28
<i>Resident in 20% of most deprived areas</i>	27	50	26	48	26	48	27	48

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Table A4: Geographic profile of WBL learners (19+ LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: 19+ WBL learners</i>	(696,101)	(15,383)	(396,559)	(11,095)	(257,108)	(9,628)	(316,591)	(12,066)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Region								
<i>East of England</i>	9	8	9	10	4	4	8	11
<i>East Midlands</i>	10	4	9	3	1	*	8	5
<i>Greater London</i>	12	27	8	24	6	14	8	19
<i>North East</i>	6	9	7	10	8	12	8	7
<i>North West</i>	15	7	16	10	15	17	16	14
<i>South East</i>	12	21	12	18	14	20	13	15
<i>South West</i>	9	3	10	7	13	9	11	8
<i>West Midlands</i>	13	9	14	8	13	12	13	13
<i>Yorkshire & the Humber</i>	11	9	11	7	13	4	12	7
<i>Not known</i>	3	3	4	3	13	8	3	1
Index of Multiple Deprivation								
<i>Resident in 10% of most deprived areas</i>	15	20	13	17	11	16	12	15
<i>Resident in 20% of most deprived areas</i>	28	38	26	33	21	28	23	28

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Table A4.1: Regional WBL learner profile within the 10% and 20% most deprived areas (ALL LEARNERS)

	Non-third sector		Third sector	
	Resident in 10% most deprived areas	Resident in 20% most deprived areas	Resident in 10% most deprived areas	Resident in 20% most deprived areas
<i>Base: WBL learners in deprived areas</i>	(137,526)	(261,129)	(11,220)	(18,814)
	%	%	%	%
Region				
<i>East of England</i>	2	3	2	3
<i>East Midlands</i>	7	8	5	5
<i>Greater London</i>	11	15	17	21
<i>North East</i>	10	10	18	19
<i>North West</i>	30	24	19	16
<i>South East</i>	2	4	3	4
<i>South West</i>	3	5	1	2
<i>West Midlands</i>	17	16	19	17
<i>Yorkshire & the Humber</i>	17	14	14	13
<i>Not known</i>	1	1	1	*

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); Note: An asterisk () denotes data points below 1%. Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.*

Table A5: WBL learner background (16–18 LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: 16–18 WBL learners</i>	(240,964)	(25,997)	(234,308)	(25,460)	(239,995)	(27,156)	(259,630)	(28,437)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Learner level or prior attainment								
Level 1 & Entry	54	53	52	51	46	44	43	40
Level 2	25	8	24	9	22	8	20	8
Level 3	1	*	1	*	1	*	1	*
Level 4, 5 or higher	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other level	1	4	2	6	3	7	3	7
No prior qualifications	7	19	10	18	18	23	23	25
Not known	11	15	11	15	10	17	9	19
Learner employment status on first day of learning								
Employed	68	11	67	13	63	11	61	12
Unemployed	31	88	31	86	35	87	36	83
Not known	1	1	2	2	2	1	3	5
Learner destination: employment status after learning								
Employed	22	16	22	18	22	19	20	18
Unemployed	5	6	5	8	6	12	5	12
Education or training	6	17	6	15	5	12	5	12
Continuing existing programme of learning	49	32	50	31	49	28	51	29
Other	12	17	10	15	11	18	11	17
Not known	6	10	6	11	7	10	8	12

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes data points below 1%. Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

Table A6: WBL learner background (19+ LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: 19+ WBL learners</i>	(696,101)	(15,383)	(396,559)	(11,095)	(257,108)	(9,628)	(316,591)	(12,066)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Learner level or prior attainment								
Level 1 & Entry	36	44	35	39	29	29	24	26
Level 2	16	17	22	22	32	26	26	19
Level 3	3	2	4	3	6	5	6	5
Level 4, 5 or higher	*	1	*	1	1	1	1	2
Other level	1	1	1	2	3	3	4	4
No prior qualifications	4	10	7	15	21	19	31	29
Not known	41	25	30	16	8	18	9	15
Learner employment status on first day of learning								
Employed	94	66	93	65	93	65	92	57
Unemployed	5	33	4	30	4	32	4	33
Not known	1	1	3	4	2	3	3	10
Learner destination: employment status after learning								
Employed	36	26	31	20	38	26	37	24
Unemployed	2	10	2	8	2	4	2	7
Education or training	2	2	3	2	1	3	1	3
Continuing existing programme of learning	46	42	54	45	42	44	43	47
Other	10	10	9	16	12	16	10	14
Not known	6	10	4	8	4	5	6	5

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); Note: An asterisk (*) denotes data points below 1%. Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

Table A7: Profile of WBL learning aims (16–18 AIMS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: 16–18 learning aims</i>	(900,300)	(70,977)	(931,102)	(76,673)	(986,789)	(84,694)	(960,289)	(77,093)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Level								
Level 1 & Entry	28	40	29	41	30	43	29	37
Level 2	51	25	51	26	50	26	50	27
Level 3	14	3	14	4	13	4	13	4
Level 4, 5 or higher	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other level	7	31	7	29	7	27	8	32
Programme type								
Advanced Apprenticeship	31	7	31	8	29	8	29	7
Apprenticeship	57	30	59	33	60	36	60	31
NVQ Level 1 within WBL programme (19 and over only)	*	–	*	–	*	–	*	*
NVQ Level 2 within WBL programme	*	*	*	*	*	1	1	3
NVQ Level 3 within WBL programme	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
NVQ Level 4 within WBL programme	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
E2E within WBL	11	58	9	54	9	51	9	52
Higher level Apprenticeship	*	–	*	–	–	–	–	–
Other programme type	1	5	1	5	2	4	1	7
Learning aim type								
Skills for Life	34	30	36	31	36	31	34	26

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); E2E=Entry to employment; NVQ=National Vocational Qualification; WBL=Work-based Learning.

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes data points below 1%; – denotes zero. Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

Table A8: Profile of WBL learning aims (19+ LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: 19+ learning aims</i>	(1,222,423)	(29,029)	(799,795)	(22,145)	(676,879)	(21,695)	(738,948)	(23,540)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Level								
Level 1 & Entry	18	30	19	26	24	25	22	22
Level 2	62	47	60	49	54	48	54	41
Level 3	18	15	19	17	21	17	20	15
Level 4, 5 or higher	*	*	*	*	1	*	1	*
Other level	2	8	1	8	2	10	4	22
Programme type								
Advanced Apprenticeship	26	20	33	27	39	29	35	23
Apprenticeship	30	31	39	40	51	44	48	36
NVQ Level 1 within WBL programme (19 and over only)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
NVQ Level 2 within WBL programme	1	1	2	1	2	2	7	4
NVQ Level 3 within WBL programme	*	*	*	*	1	1	2	2
NVQ Level 4 within WBL programme	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
E2E within WBL	*	3	*	4	*	3	*	6
Higher level Apprenticeship	*	–	*	–	–	–	–	–
Other programme type	43	45	26	28	7	21	8	29
Learning aim type								
Skills for Life	28	31	30	31	35	30	31	27

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); E2E=Entry to employment; NVQ=National Vocational Qualification; WBL=Work-based Learning.

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes data points below 1%; – denotes zero. Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

Table A9: Achievement rates of WBL learning aims (16–18 AIMS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All learning aims with a definite outcome (A35=1, 2 or 3)</i>	(374,999) %	(28,708) %	(389,007) %	(32,192) %	(372,163) %	(33,340) %	(261,282) %	(23,881) %
All								
<i>Achieved or partially achieved aims</i>	65	65	67	65	63	60	54	54
Achievement by level								
<i>Level 1 & Entry</i>	61	62	66	64	62	58	52	52
<i>Level 2</i>	67	64	69	64	64	57	56	50
<i>Level 3</i>	69	66	67	70	62	58	54	55
<i>Level 4, 5 or higher</i>	75	100	85	50	73	33	74	67
<i>Other level</i>	63	68	62	67	60	66	47	58
Learning aim type								
<i>Skills for Life</i>	64	61	67	61	62	53	51	45
Gender								
<i>Male</i>	66	65	69	65	64	61	54	54
<i>Female</i>	64	64	64	65	61	58	53	54
Ethnicity								
<i>White – British</i>	66	65	68	66	63	61	54	56
<i>BAME</i>	62	61	62	61	58	53	47	44
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
<i>Have a learning difficulty and/or disability</i>	58	65	60	64	57	60	49	56
<i>Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability</i>	66	64	68	65	64	60	55	53
<i>Not known</i>	63	74	69	66	61	65	46	43

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

Table A10: Achievement rates of WBL learning aims (19+ AIMS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All learning aims with a definite outcome (A35=1, 2 or 3)</i>	(683929)	(17689)	(436481)	(12518)	(414911)	(12971)	(417486)	(12575)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All								
<i>Achieved or partially achieved aims</i>	68	56	69	65	63	63	57	60
Achievement by level								
<i>Level 1 & Entry</i>	60	43	65	59	61	61	53	47
<i>Level 2</i>	71	63	71	67	64	63	57	54
<i>Level 3</i>	66	71	68	65	63	61	53	56
<i>Level 4, 5 or higher</i>	76	87	81	95	75	90	70	72
<i>Other level</i>	83	53	79	79	83	70	85	82
Learning aim type								
<i>Skills for Life</i>	62	48	65	58	59	56	48	46
Gender								
<i>Male</i>	71	53	72	66	66	68	58	61
<i>Female</i>	65	59	66	64	60	57	55	59
Ethnicity								
<i>White – British</i>	69	62	70	67	64	64	57	59
<i>BAME</i>	65	43	67	60	60	59	54	61
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
<i>Have a learning difficulty and/or disability</i>	62	53	62	63	56	56	49	55
<i>Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability</i>	69	56	70	65	64	62	57	62

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

APPENDIX B: Further Education (FE) tables for young people and adults**Table B1: Demographic profile of FE learners (16–18 LEARNERS)**

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non- third sector	Third sector	Non- third sector	Third sector	Non- third sector	Third sector	Non- third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: 16–18 FE learners</i>	(908,153)	(2,211)	(887,398)	(2,398)	(874,211)	(2,823)	(864,583)	(2,857)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gender								
Male	52	43	52	40	51	39	51	36
Female	48	57	48	60	49	61	49	64
Age (years)								
16–18	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Ethnicity								
White – British	77	69	78	65	78	68	77	71
BAME	20	29	20	31	20	28	20	26
Ethnicity not known	3	2	2	4	2	4	3	3
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
Have a learning difficulty and/or disability	16	14	15	9	14	10	12	7
Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability	78	77	77	84	78	80	77	81
Not known	7	8	8	7	8	10	11	12

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

Table B2: Demographic profile of FE learners (19+ LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
Base: 19+ FE learners	(2,124,378)	(122,591)	(2,327,770)	(132,586)	(2,956,878)	(148,327)	(3,460,650)	(151,672)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gender								
Male	42	27	41	28	40	28	39	27
Female	58	73	59	72	60	72	61	73
Age (years)								
19–59	94	68	93	68	92	69	91	69
60+	6	32	7	32	8	31	9	31
Ethnicity								
White – British	69	67	69	66	72	69	74	72
BAME	27	29	27	28	24	25	21	24
Not known	4	4	4	6	4	6	5	4
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
Have a learning difficulty and/or disability	10	16	10	13	9	13	8	11
Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability	80	77	80	82	79	79	78	74
Not known	10	7	10	4	12	8	14	15

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

Table B3: Geographic profile of FE learners (16–18 LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
Base: 16–18 FE learners	(908,153)	(2,211)	(887,398)	(2,398)	(874,211)	(2,823)	(864,583)	(2,857)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Region								
East of England	10	5	9	5	9	6	9	5
East Midlands	8	4	8	5	8	5	8	5
Greater London	13	22	13	19	13	17	13	19
North East	6	2	6	2	6	5	6	5
North West	16	13	16	12	16	13	16	10
South East	15	9	15	7	15	5	15	6
South West	9	19	10	17	9	15	9	13
West Midlands	12	11	12	13	12	15	12	20
Yorkshire & the Humber	10	14	10	17	10	16	11	14
Not known	1	1	1	3	2	3	1	3
Index of Multiple Deprivation								
Resident in 10% of most deprived areas	14	24	13	26	14	26	14	24
Resident in 20% of most deprived areas	26	40	26	43	26	43	26	40

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Table B4: Geographic profile of FE learners (19+ LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
Base: 19+ FE learners	(2,124,378)	(122,591)	(2,327,770)	(132,586)	(2,956,878)	(148,327)	(3,460,650)	(151,672)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Region								
East of England	8	9	8	9	8	9	9	9
East Midlands	9	7	9	7	9	8	9	7
Greater London	14	35	14	34	13	32	12	32
North East	6	3	6	3	6	3	7	3
North West	13	7	13	7	14	7	13	8
South East	13	9	13	9	12	9	13	10
South West	11	7	11	8	11	8	11	7
West Midlands	12	7	13	6	13	7	12	7
Yorkshire & the Humber	11	15	11	16	11	16	11	15
Not known	3	1	2	1	3	1	3	2
Index of Multiple Deprivation								
Resident in 10% of most deprived areas	13	13	13	13	13	12	12	12
Resident in 20% of most deprived areas	25	27	25	27	24	26	23	26

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Table B4.1: Regional FE learner profile within the 10% and 20% most deprived areas (ALL LEARNERS)

	Non-third sector		Third sector	
	Resident in 10% most deprived areas	Resident in 20% most deprived areas	Resident in 10% most deprived areas	Resident in 20% most deprived areas
Base: FE Learners in deprived areas	(405,656)	(765,134)	(16,233)	(34,438)
	%	%	%	%
Region				
East of England	2	3	1	2
East Midlands	7	7	4	4
Greater London	15	21	29	43
North East	8	9	4	3
North West	26	21	18	12
South East	3	5	2	3
South West	4	5	6	6
West Midlands	18	16	11	9
Yorkshire & the Humber	17	14	25	18
Not known	*	*	*	*

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes data points below 1%. Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

Table B5: FE learner background (16–18 LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
Base: 16–18 FE learners	(908,153)	(2,211)	(887,398)	(2,398)	(874,211)	(2,823)	(864,583)	(2,857)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Learner level or prior attainment								
Level 1 & Entry	24	26	22	18	16	15	13	17
Level 2	41	20	40	24	35	19	31	15
Level 3	3	10	3	10	3	10	3	8
Level 4, 5 or higher	*	*	*	1	*	1	*	*
Other level	1	3	1	3	1	4	1	2
No prior qualifications	21	29	24	36	37	47	46	50
Not known	10	11	9	8	8	6	6	7

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes data points below 1%. Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

Table B6: FE Learner Background (19+ LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
Base: 19+ FE learners	(2,124,378)	(122,591)	(2,327,770)	(132,586)	(2,956,878)	(148,327)	(3,460,650)	(151,672)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Learner level or prior attainment								
Level 1 & Entry	13	10	11	9	7	8	5	7
Level 2	14	9	12	10	9	10	6	10
Level 3	8	9	7	9	6	9	4	9
Level 4, 5 or higher	8	35	8	34	6	32	4	26
Other level	3	6	3	6	3	7	2	6
No prior qualifications	39	26	46	27	60	28	69	35
Not known	14	5	13	5	10	5	9	6

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Table B7: Profile of FE learning aims (16–18 LEARNERS)

Base: 16–18 learning aims	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
	(3,340,785)	(3,038)	(3,331,326)	(3,224)	(3,349,463)	(3,925)	(3,294,489)	(4,090)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Level								
Level 1 & Entry	23	61	23	61	23	55	23	37
Level 2	24	22	24	20	24	18	25	21
Level 3	34	3	33	4	33	4	33	6
Level 4, 5 or higher	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other level	19	14	19	14	19	22	18	35

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes data points below 1%. Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

Table B8: Profile of FE learning aims (19+ LEARNERS)

Base: 19+ learning aims	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
	(3,045,869)	(143,729)	(3,327,533)	(153,443)	(4,378,148)	(171,437)	(5,055,854)	(174,627)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Level								
Level 1 & Entry	36	39	39	43	38	38	43	21
Level 2	30	16	29	14	25	13	23	12
Level 3	15	6	14	5	12	6	12	5
Level 4, 5 or higher	4	*	4	*	3	*	3	*
Other level	14	38	13	37	22	42	19	62

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes data points below 1%. Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

Table B9: Achievement rates (achieved or partially achieved) of FE learning aims (16–18 AIMS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All learning aims with a definite outcome (A35=1, 2 or 3)</i>	(3,061,078)	(2,946)	(3,014,868)	(3,064)	(3,031,792)	(3,695)	(2,957,757)	(3,768)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All								
<i>Achieved or partially achieved aims</i>	73	76	71	74	69	66	66	67
Achievement by Level								
<i>Level 1 & entry</i>	71	77	68	76	66	62	64	58
<i>Level 2</i>	69	77	65	72	61	69	57	77
<i>Level 3</i>	75	72	74	73	72	62	69	66
<i>Level 4, 5 or higher</i>	67	50	64	33	61	100	62	50
<i>Other level</i>	75	73	74	67	77	73	75	70
Type of aim								
<i>Skills for Life</i>	65	64	61	60	58	52	54	51
Length of aim – Guided Learning Hours (GLH)								
<i><200 GLH</i>	73	77	71	74	69	65	66	67
<i>200 to 449 GLH</i>	72	74	70	72	68	57	65	64
<i>≥450 GLH</i>	73	41	70	73	67	83	64	71
Gender								
<i>Male</i>	71	75	69	72	68	67	64	70
<i>Female</i>	74	77	72	75	70	65	67	65
Ethnicity								
<i>White – British</i>					69	69	66	71
<i>BAME</i>	73	76	72	79	68	58	65	57
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
<i>Have a learning difficulty and/or disability</i>	73	77	72	66	69	73	66	68
<i>Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability</i>	72	74	71	69	69	65	66	67
<i>Not known</i>	73	77	71	69	65	62	63	68

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

Table B10: Achievement rates (achieved or partially achieved) of FE learning aims (19+ AIMS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All learning aims with a definite outcome (A35=1, 2 or 3)</i>	(2,914,106)	(219,369)	(3,198,345)	(229,212)	(3,306,489)	(205,960)	(5,121,505)	(255,245)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All								
<i>Achieved or partially achieved aims</i>	77	89	76	86	77	82	76	79
Achievement by level								
Level 1 & Entry	75	89	73	83	74	79	75	59
Level 2	77	92	75	90	73	90	70	82
Level 3	76	94	73	94	69	93	67	70
Level 4, 5 or higher	71	80	69	76	65	73	63	69
Other level	89	85	88	83	92	79	92	83
Type of aim								
Skills for Life	64	77	63	67	63	61	60	54
Length of aim – Guided Learning Hours								
<200 GLH	79	89	77	86	79	83	78	79
200 to 449 GLH	70	73	68	81	67	76	64	74
≥450 GLH	68	66	66	66	63	70	61	61
Gender								
Male	76	88	74	85	77	82	76	78
Female	79	89	77	86	78	83	76	79
Age (years)								
19–59	77	86	75	82	77	78	76	73
60+	84	93	81	93	81	92	80	90
Ethnicity								
White – British	79	90	74	68	79	87	78	83
BAME	73	85	75	72	74	70	73	65
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
Have a learning difficulty and/or disability	75	88	73	72	76	82	75	79
Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability	78	89	73	74	78	82	76	77
Not known	76	88	73	73	77	84	77	87

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

APPENDIX C: European Social Fund (ESF) tables for young people and adults**Table C1: Demographic profile of ESF learners (16–18 LEARNERS)**

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: 16–18 ESF learners</i>	(71,661)	(13,597)	(94,956)	(17,924)	(91,459)	(12,666)	(71,627)	(13,484)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gender								
Male	55	56	54	57	53	58	53	58
Female	45	44	46	43	47	42	47	42
Age (years)								
16–18	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Ethnicity								
White – British	80	65	76	63	72	66	67	62
BAME	15	33	19	36	19	32	21	36
Ethnicity not known	5	2	5	1	9	2	12	2
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
Have a learning difficulty and/or disability	8	10	8	10	8	11	8	10
Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability	70	74	69	71	66	71	66	76
Not known	22	17	23	20	26	18	26	14

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

Table C2: Demographic profile of ESF learners (19+ LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: 19+ ESF learners</i>	(287,692)	(64,167)	(316,021)	(81,251)	(274,772)	(74,216)	(249,808)	(81,976)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gender								
Male	50	39	44	38	45	36	45	38
Female	50	61	56	62	55	64	55	62
Age (years)								
19–59	96	94	96	92	95	91	96	91
60+	4	6	4	8	5	9	4	9
Ethnicity								
White – British	71	62	70	62	72	65	73	64
BAME	26	36	28	36	25	33	24	34
Ethnicity not known	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	2
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
Have a learning difficulty and/or disability	7	16	7	15	6	14	6	13
Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability	73	73	76	74	75	77	74	78
Not known	20	11	18	11	19	9	20	9

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

Table C3: Geographic profile of ESF learners (16–18 LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
Base: 16–18 ESF learners	(71,661)	(13,597)	(94,956)	(17,924)	(91,459)	(12,666)	(71,627)	(13,484)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Region								
East of England	7	3	10	3	6	2	6	3
East Midlands	4	7	4	8	4	15	4	11
Greater London	8	29	17	31	18	25	19	28
North East	32	7	21	9	15	7	9	5
North West	8	15	5	10	15	8	19	14
South East	5	15	7	13	11	13	8	8
South West	4	5	8	10	6	12	5	5
West Midlands	18	9	15	6	11	6	15	13
Yorkshire & the Humber	11	4	10	5	9	6	12	7
Not known	3	6	3	5	5	6	3	6
Index of Multiple Deprivation								
Resident in 10% of most deprived areas	20	26	17	26	18	24	19	26
Resident in 20% of most deprived areas	37	46	34	46	34	45	35	47

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Table C4: Geographic profile of ESF learners (19+ LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
Base: 19+ ESF learners	(287,692)	(64,167)	(316,021)	(81,251)	(274,772)	(74,216)	(249,808)	(81,976)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Region								
East of England	8	9	9	8	9	7	8	9
East Midlands	8	14	9	12	9	14	8	10
Greater London	7	11	15	15	15	13	16	16
North East	13	4	10	4	10	4	9	2
North West	10	13	11	10	11	10	13	9
South East	11	8	12	12	13	14	10	8
South West	5	8	6	8	5	8	4	6
West Midlands	14	9	13	7	10	8	10	16
Yorkshire & the Humber	14	20	13	21	14	18	18	18
Not known	10	4	2	3	4	4	4	6
Index of Multiple Deprivation								
Resident in 10% of most deprived areas	19	26	16	23	15	22	16	22
Resident in 20% of most deprived areas	33	43	31	39	29	37	29	37

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Table C4.1: Regional ESF learner profile within the 10% and 20% most deprived areas (ALL LEARNERS)

	Non-third sector		Third sector	
	Resident in 10% most deprived areas	Resident in 20% most deprived areas	Resident in 10% most deprived areas	Resident in 20% most deprived areas
<i>Base: ESF learners in deprived areas</i>	(69,064)	(19,962)	(123,327)	(33,593)
	%	%	%	%
Region				
<i>East of England</i>	2	3	3	4
<i>East Midlands</i>	5	6	17	17
<i>Greater London</i>	5	8	11	16
<i>North East</i>	18	19	5	4
<i>North West</i>	17	14	23	19
<i>South East</i>	2	3	2	3
<i>South West</i>	2	2	2	4
<i>West Midlands</i>	21	20	13	11
<i>Yorkshire & the Humber</i>	19	16	25	21
<i>Not known</i>	10	10	*	1

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes data points below 1%. Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

Table C5: ESF learner background (16–18 LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
Base: 16–18 ESF learners	(71,661)	(13,597)	(94,956)	(17,924)	(91,459)	(12,666)	(71,627)	(13,484)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Learner level or prior attainment								
Level 1 & Entry	20	31	23	30	22	25	16	18
Level 2	6	6	7	7	9	7	7	8
Level 3	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
Level 4, 5 or higher	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other level	2	1	2	2	2	3	3	3
No prior qualifications	32	9	28	8	24	17	33	29
Not known	39	52	39	51	42	46	39	39
Learner destination: employment status after learning								
Employed	7	5	5	3	3	3	3	4
Unemployed	7	7	3	3	2	4	4	3
Education or training	51	42	20	23	21	18	23	27
Continuing existing programme of learning	17	21	59	52	59	57	51	49
Other	7	6	4	4	3	6	7	4
Not known	9	17	8	14	11	12	12	12

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes data points below 1%. Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

Table C6: ESF learner background (19+ LEARNERS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: 19+ ESF learners</i>	(287,692)	(64,167)	(316,021)	(81,251)	(274,772)	(74,216)	(249,808)	(81,976)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Learner level or prior attainment								
Level 1 & Entry	19	24	19	22	19	21	16	17
Level 2	17	13	17	13	14	13	11	10
Level 3	9	9	10	9	9	9	7	8
Level 4, 5 or higher	10	12	11	14	11	13	9	11
Other level	7	7	7	7	7	7	8	7
No prior qualifications	24	13	23	16	25	20	35	33
Not known	15	21	15	20	14	17	14	14
Learner destination: employment status after learning								
Employed	44	20	26	11	23	11	24	14
Unemployed	13	10	9	6	9	6	6	5
Education or training	5	8	4	4	3	4	3	4
Continuing existing programme of learning	17	24	48	56	52	61	46	50
Other	7	7	3	6	4	5	5	8
Not known	13	28	10	15	9	11	16	17

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Table C7: Profile of ESF learning aims (16–18 LEARNERS)

		2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
		Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base:</i>	16–18								
<i>learning aims</i>		(110,232)	(19,159)	(127,559)	(22,123)	(118,087)	(14,591)	(77,790)	(15,450)
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Level									
<i>Level 1 & Entry</i>		20	22	17	26	12	22	6	13
<i>Level 2</i>		11	7	10	4	9	3	3	3
<i>Level 3</i>		1	*	1	*	1	1	1	1
<i>Level 4, 5 or higher</i>		*	–	*	*	*	*	*	–
<i>Other level</i>		68	72	72	70	78	74	90	84
Type of aim									
<i>Skills for Life</i>		7	5	5	6	4	6	1	2

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR)

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes data points below 1%; – denotes zero. Some column percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding up or down of the original data.

Table C8: Profile of ESF learning aims (19+ LEARNER)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: 19+ learning aims</i>	(366,428)	(77,185)	(385,679)	(96,489)	(325,470)	(88,017)	(281,797)	(92,077)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Level								
Level 1 & Entry	10	21	10	19	9	15	6	11
Level 2	13	13	14	11	15	9	18	5
Level 3	8	5	8	5	7	5	7	3
Level 4, 5 or higher	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1
Other level	68	60	66	65	66	70	68	80
Type of aim								
Skills for Life	5	5	5	5	4	4	2	1

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

Table C9: Achievement rates (achieved or partially achieved) of ESF Learning Aims (16–18 AIMS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All learning aims with a definite outcome (A35=1, 2 or 3)</i>	(93,566) %	(17,333) %	(64,134) %	(13,350) %	(56,681) %	(7,703) %	(39,760) %	(8,925) %
All								
<i>Achieved or partially achieved aims</i>	82	81	80	78	83	74	89	80
Achievement by level								
<i>Level 1 & Entry</i>	72	77	70	73	75	68	83	73
<i>Level 2</i>	79	80	82	68	81	69	87	75
<i>Level 3</i>	74	76	75	80	73	95	62	80
<i>Level 4, 5 or higher</i>	40	0	82	100	67	0	100	0
<i>Other level</i>	86	83	82	80	84	76	89	82
Type of aim								
<i>Skills for Life</i>	66	61	75	62	74	72	80	94
Gender								
<i>Male</i>	81	80	79	75	83	72	87	79
<i>Female</i>	84	84	81	81	84	77	91	82
Ethnicity								
<i>White – British</i>	83	77	80	74	82	72	86	79
<i>BAME</i>	79	89	77	83	86	79	91	83
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
<i>Have a learning difficulty and/or disability</i>	82	79	83	78	86	79	81	88
<i>Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability</i>	84	82	79	77	83	73	89	80
<i>Not known</i>	76	80	82	81	83	76	91	77

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

Table C10: Achievement rates (achieved or partially achieved) of ESF learning aims (19+ AIMS)

	2007/08		2006/07		2005/06		2004/05	
	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector	Non-third sector	Third sector
<i>Base: All learning aims with a definite outcome (A35=1, 2 or 3)</i>	(319,849)	(61,117)	(223,771)	(44,284)	(175,358)	(38,239)	(168,390)	(50,077)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All								
<i>Achieved or partially achieved aims</i>	83	73	85	78	89	85	88	87
Achievement by level								
<i>Level 1 & Entry</i>	73	61	76	69	80	76	83	83
<i>Level 2</i>	77	69	79	77	79	80	86	79
<i>Level 3</i>	72	65	74	83	79	78	81	84
<i>Level 4, 5 or higher</i>	67	83	70	73	74	78	71	59
<i>Other level</i>	88	79	90	81	94	88	89	88
Type of aim								
<i>Skills for Life</i>	69	61	73	63	73	76	73	79
Gender								
<i>Male</i>	83	73	86	75	89	82	86	83
<i>Female</i>	84	73	85	80	90	86	89	89
Ethnicity								
<i>White – British</i>	84	74	87	78	90	86	89	89
<i>BAME</i>	83	72	81	79	88	81	84	81
Learning difficulty and/or disability status								
<i>Have a learning difficulty and/or disability</i>	84	76	85	80	91	83	87	85
<i>Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability</i>	84	73	86	78	89	85	87	87
<i>Not known</i>	81	73	83	81	90	85	91	87

Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR); BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

APPENDIX D: Methodological details

This annex outlines the qualitative research design and provides further methodological details about the case studies, including specific information about the sampling strategy, the composition of providers and learners interviewed and the topic guides and analysis techniques deployed in the qualitative investigation.

OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of the qualitative research were to explore further the impact of the third sector on learning and skills development in a number of specific priority areas. Its purpose was to complement the insights gathered by the quantitative analysis of the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data, which have determined the nature and extent of learning provision and the typical learner profile in third sector learning.

The qualitative research strand was designed to move beyond a merely descriptive analysis and to uncover additional insights into **how** third sector providers design and manage their operations, as well as examining **why** third sector providers are particularly successful in certain areas and where there may be areas for improvement. Rather than establishing representative findings, the qualitative research aimed to probe for the depth and strength of opinions held among a small number of respondents. The research also sought to reveal previously unknown or little known instances of particular opinions, practices or social typologies. The principal value of this type of research lies in the opportunity it provides to probe deeper into the key research issues and to develop a more grounded understanding of the experiences, motivations and perceptions held by individuals engaged in third sector learning.

Notably, the qualitative research design was established to explore, in depth, what is typical and special about learning **within** the third sector – it was not designed to allow direct comparisons with non-third sector learning. There are instances where such comparisons became evident during the qualitative interviews with providers and learners and the report presents these findings, where applicable. However, since the research design did not include a comparison group of non-third sector learning, these comparisons have to be understood as subjective impressions by individual respondents, rather than systematic comparisons between third sector and non-third sector learning.

DEFINING THE FIVE CASE STUDIES

It was decided that a case study approach would be best placed to meet the research objectives of the qualitative, research strand. This approach sought to focus attention on five priority areas that were identified in consultation with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Third Sector Advisory Group. The rationale for selecting each case study was to provide a good spread across the different funding streams and learner age groups, as well as being in areas where the nature and contribution of third sector provision particularly warranted further exploration.

The five case studies that formed the basis of the qualitative research design were:

1. *European Social Fund (ESF) learning undertaken by learners aged 16–18 years;*
2. *ESF learning undertaken by adults (19+ years);*
3. *Work-based Learning (WBL) undertaken by learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability;*
4. *WBL undertaken by learners, aged 16–18 years, on Apprenticeships in disadvantaged areas.*
5. *Further Education (FE) learners participating in Full Level 2 learning;*

Sampling approach

The first stage in the sampling process involved selecting providers to be included into the qualitative research. Third sector providers that were active in the delivery of LSC-funded WBL, FE and ESF co-financed learning in 2007/08 were eligible for inclusion within the case study research.

In each case study, two third sector **providers** were selected who were found to be making a significant contribution to the LSC's priorities in terms of having particularly high achievement rates for the type of learner or learning in question ('Type 1' providers); and two third sector providers were selected who had achievement rates that were average or slightly below the average ('Type 2' providers). Providers were selected using achievement data on the ILR for the academic year 2007/08. Selecting both types of providers helped to ensure that the qualitative research was not only an exploration of 'best practice' among those providers with an excellent track record of achievement, but involved a complete assessment of the impact of third sector provision³⁰. Of the four providers selected for inclusion within each case study area, two were interviewed (one from each 'type' of provider).

Further to this, a need was identified later during fieldwork to extend coverage of **Case Study 2: ESF undertaken by adult learners** to include providers and learners based in rural areas. This resulted in two, additional provider interviews and four, additional learner interviews being conducted in this case study.

Once providers were selected, the sampling strategy allowed for the selection of two to three individual **learners** from each provider, within each case study area. Learners were, again, sampled using the contact information, demographic and other learner information recorded on the ILR learner files for 2007/08. Learners qualified for inclusion into the starting sample if they fell into the desired categories for each case study, including age bands, types of learning, level of learning, learning difficulty and/or disability status and achievement status of their course. Notably, the learner interviews covered a majority of learners who achieved their course; however, a small number of learners who did not complete their course were selected to allow exploring possible reasons and motivations of early leavers. In addition, the research team made sure to include only those learners

³⁰As a note, even though providers were selected according to these criteria, the later analysis actually found very little variation of how the two groups compare in terms of their approaches to learner recruitment, learner support, needs assessment practices or performance monitoring.

who had given their prior consent to be contacted for research purposes (as per L27³¹, the restricted code indicator on the ILR) into the starting sample for the recruitment phase.

EMPIRICAL FIELDWORK AND RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The qualitative fieldwork was completed between July and August 2009. The fieldwork consisted of a series of in-depth interviews conducted over the telephone or face-to-face. All the interviews were undertaken by the research team at IFF Research and its fully trained interviewing staff.

The interviews were conducted using loosely structured, topic guides, which are attached in the Appendix. The interviews covered a variety of themes, including: aspects of learners' expectations and motivations; learner recruitment, advice and guidance; how learner's needs are assessed; the way learning is delivered; what forms of learner support are made available; and the outcomes and benefits of learning.

ACHIEVED SAMPLE COMPOSITION

Table D1 shows the composition of the achieved sample of third sector learners and learning providers. Overall, the qualitative fieldwork involved:

- Twelve face-to-face, in-depth, interviews with senior staff (including Chief Executives, Principals, Learning Co-ordinators and Scheme Managers) at third sector providers; and
- Fifty-four, in-depth, interviews with learners; the majority conducted over the telephone with 11 undertaken as face-to-face interviews (the first interview in each case study area was conducted face-to-face, as well as the majority of interviews with learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability).

The interviewed providers included a range of different types and sizes of organisations and with a good geographic spread across various regions. In addition, the twelve providers interviewed for the case study research have a fairly broad learning offer, spanning various subject areas, types and levels of learning.

³¹L27 is the 'restricted use indicator' which indicates restrictions on the use of the learner record in order to take into account learners' wishes about the use of their data. Code 1=learner has withheld permission for the LSC or other users to contact them. Code 2=learner is not to be contacted, for example where a learner has died, or suffered a severe illness during the programme. Code 3=learner has only withheld permission to be contacted about courses or learning opportunities by post. Code 4= learner has only withheld permission to be contacted for survey and research. Code 9=no additional restriction on the use of this learners record.

Table D1: Overview of achieved interviews in each case study

	<i>In-depth interviews with learners</i>		<i>In-depth interviews with providers</i>	
	TS provider has very high achievement rates for learner group	TS provider has average/below average achievement rates for learner group	TS provider has very high achievement rates for learner group	TS provider has average/below average achievement rates for learner group
CS1. ESF learning undertaken by learners aged 16–18	5	5	1	1
CS2. ESF undertaken by adult learners (19+; plus rural interviews)	7	7	2	2
CS3. WBL undertaken by learners with learning difficulties and/or disability (LLDD)	5	5	1	1
CS4. WBL undertaken by 16–18 learners on Apprenticeships in disadvantaged areas	5	5	1	1
CS5. FE learners participating in Full Level 2 learning	5	5	1	1
Total	27	27	6	6

CS=Case study.

Table D2 offers a comprehensive breakdown of the demographic characteristics of the 54 learners who were interviewed within the case study research.

Table D2: Profile of learners interviewed for each case study

	CS1	CS2	CS3	CS4	CS5	Total
Gender						
Male	5	5	8	3	2	23
Female	5	9	2	7	8	31
Age						
16–18	10	–	7	10	–	27
19+	–	14	3	–	10	27
Ethnicity						
BAME	7	5	4	5	6	27
White British	3	9	6	5	4	27
Learning difficulty and/or disability status						
Have a learning difficulty and/or disability	–	–	10	–	–	10
Do not have a learning difficulty and/or disability, or not known	10	14	–	10	10	44
Total	10	14	10	10	10	54

BAME=Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

All the interviews were fully transcribed and analysed using the text as a basis for qualitative coding and for extraction of relevant quotations; interviews were analysed using demographic and other learner and provider data information.

APPENDIX E: Qualitative topic guide – PROVIDER INTERVIEWS

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL	J4704 LSC Third Sector Provision Face-to-face interviews with PROVIDERS Topic Guide	J4704_Face-to-face June 2009
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Case Study:	1	2	3	4	5	PROVIDER TYPE:	1	2
Provider Name								
Respondent Name								
Job Title								
Date of Interview								
Interviewer								

INTRODUCTION

- S1) Good morning/afternoon, my name is [NAME], calling from IFF Research, an independent market research company. We are currently conducting a research project for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The aim of the research is to explore the nature and the extent of third sector learning provision in England and the contribution of third sector providers to the LSC's aims and priorities.**

We're very interested in learning about how you go about engaging learners, about your course portfolio, your teaching and delivery methods, the learner support and any other support you provide.

My questions should take around 45 minutes.

IFF Research:

IFF Research is an independent, market research agency which specialises in researching business, marketing and public policy issues.

The Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC is a non-departmental, public body which exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. The LSC is responsible for planning and funding high-quality education and training for everyone in England, other than those in universities.

Reassurance of confidentiality

Please be reassured that everything you tell me during the interview will be strictly confidential. Nothing will be reported back to the LSC about how individuals respond to the survey.

If the respondent wishes to confirm the validity of survey or get more information about aims and objectives, they can call:

- **MRS: Market Research Society on FREEPHONE: 0500 396999.**
- **IFF: Christoph Koerbitz or Jessica Owens: 020 7250 3035.**
- **LSC: Gareth Ashcroft**

Interviewer: Secure permission for audio recording and use of anonymised quotations. Audio recording will be for analysis purposes only and confidentiality of the recording will be ensured.

S4) How many teaching or training sites do you have?

WRITE IN:

S5) How many people are employed in your organisation?

At this site:

In England:

THIRD SECTOR LEARNING OFFER

1) Can you tell me a little bit about the courses that your organisation offers to learners?

- a) How broad is your offering? Or how specialised?
- b) What subject areas?
- c) Which levels?
- d) Course length, delivery mode, teaching methods, etc.
- e) Type of qualifications offered?

WRITE IN:

2) Thinking about the academic year 2007/08, which courses have been particularly successful?

- a) Which courses were popular with learners?
- b) Which courses were successful in terms of success rates?
- c) Why? What made you think that this course was successful?
- d) Which courses were not so successful? Why?

WRITE IN:

THIRD SECTOR LEARNERS

3) When trying to recruit new learners, what type of learners do you target? Are there groups that you feel you are particularly successful with?

- a) Age groups? Gender? Employment status? Income?
- b) Deprived areas? Vulnerable groups? Problems with housing, alcohol, ex-offenders?
- c) What is your approach to target potential learner groups? How do you approach [PRIORITY GROUP]?
- d) Is your approach to target 'hard-to-reach' learners different? If yes, how? Compared with what learner group?

WRITE IN:

4) What is your approach to assessing the needs of learners at the start of their course, particularly regarding the needs of [PRIORITY GROUP]?

- a) How do you assess needs for learner support?
- b) How do you assess additional learner needs? For example, housing, financial, mental health issues, etc.

WRITE IN:

5) Thinking about learners within the following priority group – [PRIORITY GROUP] – in what ways are the needs of these learners different from other learners?

- a) How do you accommodate differing needs?

WRITE IN:

6) What does the fact that your organisation operates within the third sector mean for learners?

- a) How do you think their learning experience with you differs from that of learners studying at mainstream providers?

WRITE IN:

LEARNING DELIVERY

7) Can you tell me how you approach learning delivery in terms of the following priority group – [PRIORITY GROUP]?

- a) Is the learning delivery designed in any other way compared with mainstream delivery? How is it different?
- b) How is the learning structured and delivered?
- c) Can you outline the teaching style and teaching methods that are being used?
- d) What procedures are in place to monitor progress?

WRITE IN:

8) Still thinking about learning delivery for [PRIORITY GROUP], what other support do you offer?

- a) For example, mentoring, support with financial, housing, health issues, etc.
- b) What other facilities do you have that support learners?

WRITE IN:

- 9) **Have you modified your approach recently in terms of delivering learning for [PRIORITY GROUP]? In what way? What made you decide to do this?**

WRITE IN:

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- 10) **Thinking about learner completion rates amongst [PRIORITY GROUP]...**

- a) **Are you happy with the completion rates you typically record?**
- b) **Do you think the completion rates that you record are better or worse than other providers? Why is this?**
- c) **What factors are at play that may influence these completion rates? positively/negatively?**
- d) **What have you done/are you doing to improve completion rates?**

WRITE IN:

- 11) **Thinking about learner achievement rates recorded for [PRIORITY GROUP]?**

- a. **Are you happy with the achievement rates you typically record?**
- b. **Do you think the achievement rates that you record are better or worse than other providers? Why is this?**
- c. **What factors are at play that may influence these achievement rates? Positively/negatively?**
- d. **What have you done/are you doing to improve achievement rates?**

WRITE IN:

- 12) **In terms of assessing the impact of learning, do you follow up what [PRIORITY GROUP] learners do next, after completing their course?**

- a. **Does the learning help learners to find a job? What proportion? Sustainable work? Better than before the course?**
- b. **Do learners improve their employability skills? Numeracy, literacy, etc.**
- c. **Does the learning help workers to progress in their current jobs? What proportion? Better salary, job satisfaction, prospects?**
- d. **Does the learning help learners to progress into further learning? What proportion? Higher level, qualifications?**

WRITE IN:

- 13) **What softer outcomes do you think that learners from [PRIORITY GROUP] achieve from their experience with you?**

INTERVIEWER PROMPT:

- a) **Gained confidence**
- b) **Renewed motivation**
- c) **Improved attitude towards learning**
- d) **Improved prospects for the future**

WRITE IN:

PROVIDER FEEDBACK

- 14) **Thinking about providers like you who operate within the third sector, what do you feel is their role in the current landscape of learning provision funded by the LSC?**

- a) **How important is the contribution of third sector providers to the learning and skills system?**
- b) **How important should the contribution of third sector providers to the LSC be?**
- c) **What, if anything, inhibits third sector providers from making a greater contribution to LSC learning priorities?**

WRITE IN:

- 15) **Do you feel that your role and your contribution as a third sector provider within the landscape of LSC funded provision will increase or decrease in the future?**

- a) **Why do you say that?**
- b) **What impact is the current economic downturn having on your role and the contribution you are able to make?**
- c) **Do you feel that tighter funding rules are having an impact on your role as a third sector provider?**

WRITE IN:

- 16) **What are your expectations as a third sector provider in terms of support from the LSC?**

- a) **Is there anything the LSC could/should do to support third sector providers?**
- b) **Are you happy with the existing processes and practices?**
- c) **What are your experiences with bureaucracy?**
- d) **What are your thoughts on the new Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and the new Skills Funding Agency (SFA)? Your expectations, concerns, etc.**

WRITE IN:

- 17) **Do you have any other feedback on your working relationship with the LSC you would like to share?**

WRITE IN:

THANK RESPONDENT AND CLOSE INTERVIEW

I declare that this survey has been carried out under IFF instructions and within the rules of the MRS Code of Conduct.

Interviewer signature:

Date:

Finish time:

Interview Length

mins

APPENDIX F: Qualitative topic guide – LEARNER INTERVIEWS

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL	J4704 LSC Third Sector Provision Tele-depth interviews with LEARNERS Topic Guide					J4704_ Teledepth June 2009		
Case Study:	1	2	3	4	5	PROVIDER TYPE:	1	2
Provider Name								
Learner Name								
Date of Interview								
Interviewer								

INTRODUCTION

S1) Good morning/afternoon, my name is [NAME], calling from IFF Research, an independent, market research company. We are currently conducting a research project for the Learning and Skills Council.

We're very interested in hearing about your recent experience of studying with [INSERT PROVIDER].

My questions should take around 30 minutes. Would it be possible to speak to you now?

IFF Research:

IFF Research is an independent, market research agency which specialises in researching business, marketing and public policy issues.

The Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC is a non-departmental, public body which exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. The LSC is responsible for planning and funding high-quality education and training for everyone in England, other than those in universities.

Reassurance of confidentiality

Please be reassured that everything you tell me during the interview will be strictly confidential. Nothing will be reported back to the LSC about how individuals respond to the survey.

If respondent wishes to confirm validity of survey or get more information about aims and objectives, they can call:

- MRS: Market Research Society on FREEPHONE: 0500 396999
- IFF: Christoph Koerbitz or Jessica Owens: 020 7250 3035
- LSC: Gareth Ashcroft

Interviewer: Secure permission for audio recording and use of anonymised quotations. Audio recording will be for analysis purposes only and confidentiality of the recording will be ensured.

S2) Can I just confirm that you have studied a course with [INSERT PROVIDER] during the academic year 2007/08?

Yes	CONTINUE TO S3
No – definitely not done any learning with this provider	THANK AND CLOSE

S3) Can I confirm the course(s) you have studied with [INSERT PROVIDER]?

	<COURSE> <LEVEL> <START DATE>	Yes	No	DK
1				
2				
3				
4				

S4) And can I confirm how old you were when you studied for your course(s)?

WRITE IN LEARNER'S AGE:

LEARNER MOTVIATION AND EXPECTATIONS

18) Can you tell me a little bit more about the courses or qualifications you undertook while studying at [INSERT PROVIDER]?

PROBE FOR: Subject area, level, start date, length and type of qualification.

WRITE IN:

19) Looking back at when you were first thinking about taking-up training, what made you decide to undertake a course at this point?

PROBE: Were there any specific triggers? For example, a change in your circumstances? Any encouragement provided? Funding available?

WRITE IN:

20) And why did you decide to embark on this particular course(s)?

Did you discuss a range of options with [INSERT PROVIDER] or anyone else? What did they say? What role did they play in helping you to make a decision about what training to undertake?

WRITE IN:

21) Thinking about your initial expectations, what did you hope to get out of this course? What was the most important thing you wanted to achieve?

PROBE FOR: a qualification, specific skills, get back in to learning, help with job/finding a job, meet new people, etc.

WRITE IN:

22) What did you know about your training provider [INSERT PROVIDER] before undertaking the course?

- a) How did you first hear about your provider?
- b) Why did you choose to study with your provider? What else?
- c) Did you feel that your provider would help you achieve your learning goals? If so, why?
- d) How important was the provider delivering the course in your decision to undertake learning? (Would you have taken up the course with anyone else if it had been available? Why/why not?)

WRITE IN:

23) Before embarking on this course, what has been your previous learning experience?

- a) How long ago did you last do any learning before your course?
- b) Did you have any concerns about learning before starting your course? If so, which?
- c) How did you overcome these concerns? What was the role of the provider in helping you to overcome these concerns? What reassurance did they give?

WRITE IN:

LEARNING EXPERIENCE WITH PROVIDER

24) Can you tell me more about how your course was organised.

- a) How was the course teaching structured? PROBE: full-time/part-time, daytime/evenings, weekly/monthly sessions,
- b) How was the content of the course delivered? PROBE: lectures, seminars and distance learning.
- c) How big was your 'class'? What were the other learners like?
- d) How important was the format and structure of your course when you decided whether and what to study?

WRITE IN:

25) How would you describe the teaching style of your course?

- a) What methods did the lecturer/tutor employ? PROBE: presentations, discussions, group exercises, homework
- b) How important were teaching style and methods when you decided whether and what to study?

WRITE IN:

26) How easy was it for you to monitor your learning progress?

- a) What procedures were in place to help you monitor progress?
- b) How important was the ability to monitor progress when you decided whether and what to study?

WRITE IN:

27) What other support (apart from learning support) did the provider offer you?

PROBE: mentoring, support with financial, housing, health issues, etc.

- a) How important was this support when you decided to take the course?
- b) How important was this support for you to stay on the course?

WRITE IN:

28) What other facilities did the provider offer you?

- a) How important were these facilities when you decided to take the course?

WRITE IN:

29) All things considered, would you say that your provider was 'different' to other providers in any way?

- a) IF YES: In what way do you feel that your provider was different?
- b) How does your experience with [INSERT PROVIDER] differ from previous learning experiences you may have had with 'mainstream' colleges or providers that are not part of the third sector.

WRITE IN:

SATISFACTION WITH LEARNING

30) Looking back on your experience with the course, how satisfied were you overall?

- a) Were there any particular elements of the course you are particularly pleased with?
- b) Were there any elements you were not happy with?

WRITE IN:

31) Is there anything about this course you would have liked to see done in a different way?

- a) Do you have any suggestions or improvements for the delivery of the course?

WRITE IN:

LEARNING OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

- 32) Did you finish your course?

- a) IF NOT FINISHED: Why not?
- b) IF FINISHED: Did you ever consider leaving your course at any point?
- c) IF CONSIDERED LEAVING: What persuaded you to continue with your course? What was the role of the provider in helping you finish the course?

WRITE IN:

- 33) What would you say was the main outcome of you completing your course?

INTERVIEWER RECORD SPONTANEOUS ANSWER AND THEN PROMPT:

- a) Did you achieve a qualification? PROBE: Which qualification, level?
- b) Did you find a job as a result of doing this course? PROBE: What job? Full-time? Long-term?
- c) IF FOUND A JOB: In what ways did the course help you find a job? What else?
- d) Did you proceed into further learning as a result of doing your course? Into learning at a higher level?

WRITE IN:

34) What types of skills did you obtain as a result of your course?

INTERVIEWER RECORD SPONTANEOUS ANSWER AND THEN PROBE FOR:

- a) **Job specific skills**
- b) **Generic skills (communication, problem solving skills, teamworking, etc.)**
- c) **Job searching skills**
- d) **Higher level skills**

WRITE IN:

35) What other benefits do you feel you obtained from your course?

INTERVIEWER RECORD SPONTANEOUS ANSWER AND THEN PROBE FOR:

- e) **Gained confidence**
- f) **Renewed motivation**
- g) **Improved attitude towards learning**
- h) **Improved prospects for the future**

WRITE IN:

36) And finally, how do you anticipate you will 'use' the outcomes and skills you obtained from your course in the future?

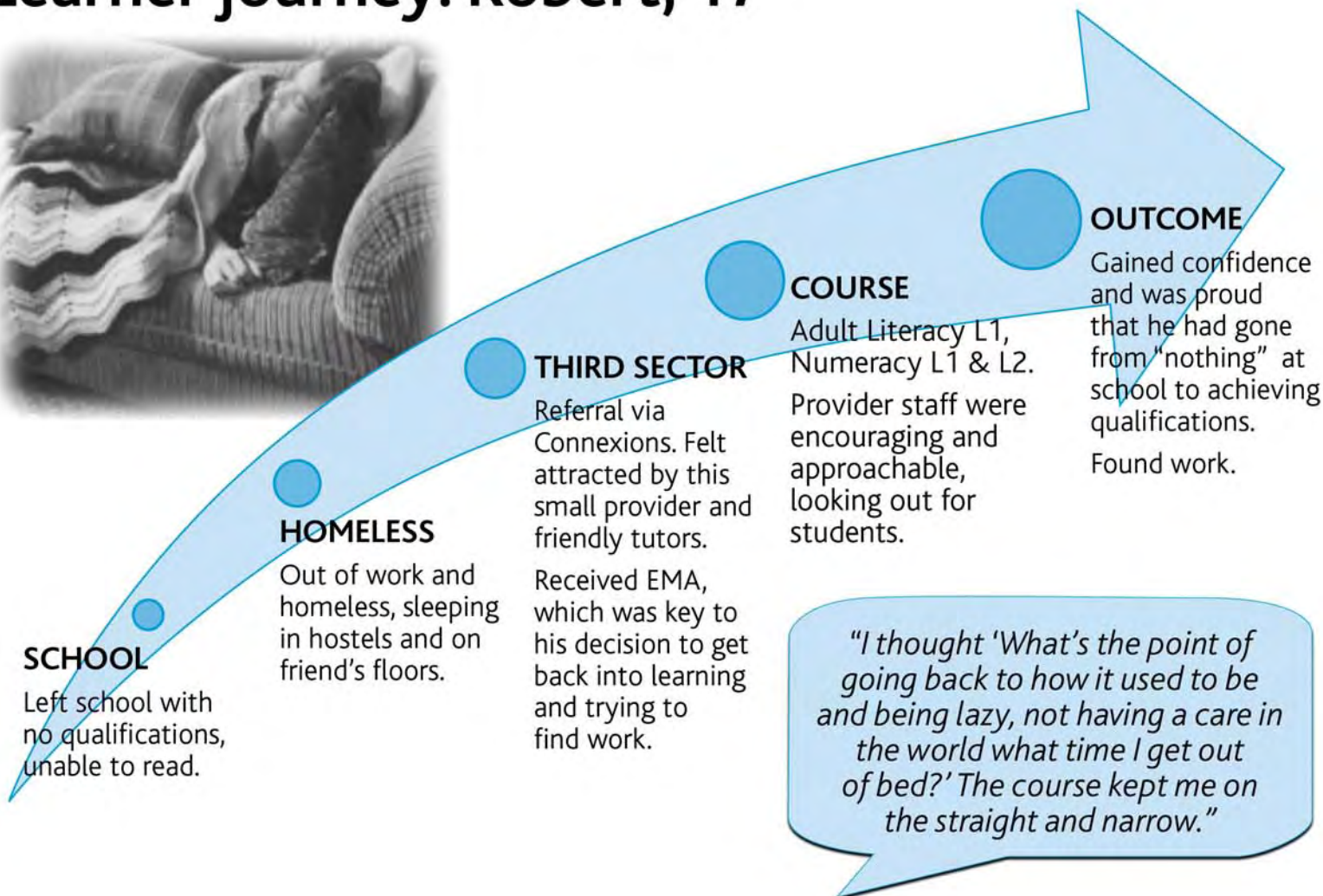
WRITE IN:

THANK RESPONDENT AND CLOSE INTERVIEW

I declare that this survey has been carried out under IFF instructions and within the rules of the MRS Code of Conduct.		
Interviewer signature:	Date:	
Finish time:	Interview Length	mins

APPENDIX G: Learner Journeys

Learner journey: Robert, 17



Learner journey: Karen, 49



DISADVANTAGE

Unemployed for 3 years, claiming Income Support; lone parent.

THIRD SECTOR

Jobcentre referred her to a third sector provider, where advisors helped her identify her goals and skills needs.

SELF-DOUBT

As an older learner, she was concerned whether she would make the commitment and finish the course.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

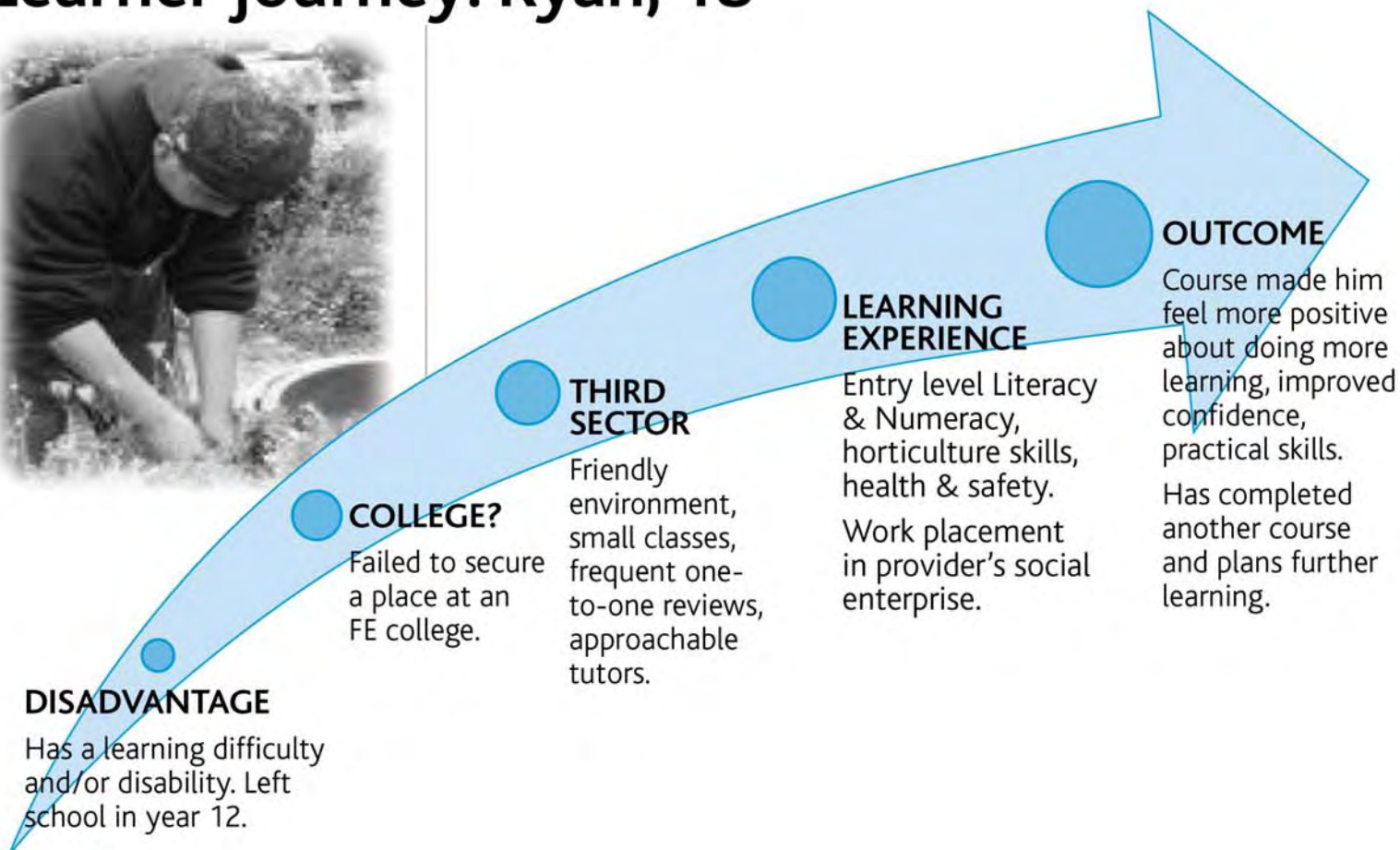
L1 Entry to Employment course, fully funded.
Flexible course dates, personalised support, and help with travel and childcare costs were key.

OUTCOME

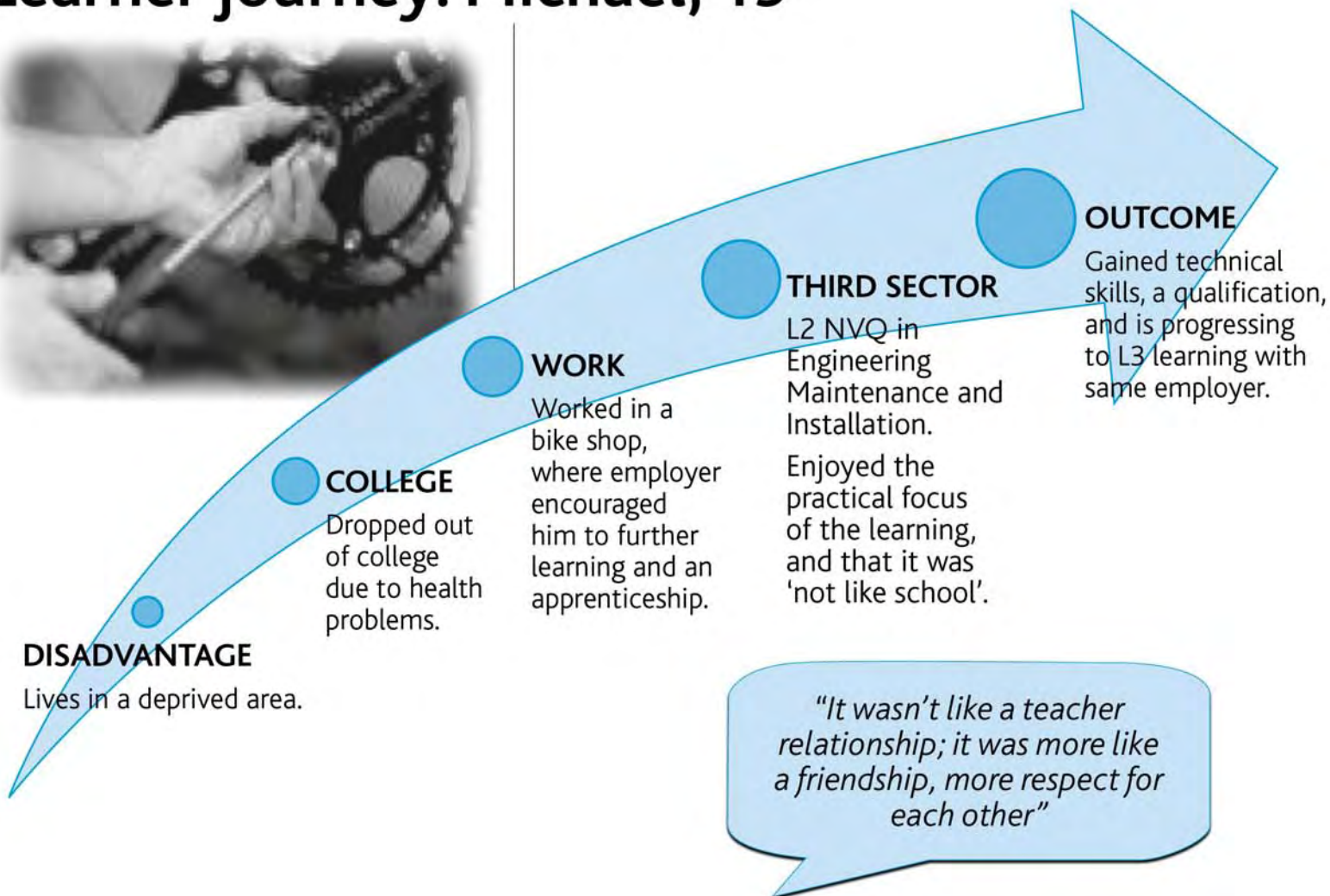
Improved confidence and ideas about future employment.
Now working in a sustainable full-time job in the community work sector.

"The tutor was very encouraging. If she saw someone would struggle she would encourage them to do it with someone else, and do pair work. The tutor seemed to find strength in every person."

Learner journey: Ryan, 18



Learner journey: Michael, 19



Learner journey: Emily, 22



SCHOOL

3 GCSEs, E and F grades.
Found it hard to keep up and concentrate.

WORK

Part-time and temporary jobs in shops & catering.
Wanted something more stable and long term

COLLEGE?

But it was expensive, and full-time so she couldn't work.

THIRD SECTOR

NVQ Level 2 in Childcare.
Developed Key Skills, confidence, and qualification needed to work in this field.

CURRENTLY EMPLOYED

Working in a nursery, which she sees as the start of a career.
About to start L3 NVQ with same Third Sector provider.

"People might say it's like going back to school, but it really wasn't. Yes, we had to work, but they made it feel easy and straightforward as well".

Learning and Skills Council
National Office

Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
T 0845 019 4170
F 024 7682 3675
www.lsc.gov.uk

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LSC-P-NAT-090181