

European Social Fund

The 2005 Beneficiaries Survey

**Research study conducted for
The Scottish Executive**



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1. Introduction

The 2005 Beneficiaries Survey follows up individual beneficiaries of projects supported under the European Social Fund (ESF) programme, who took part in the programme in 2004. For this research, separate surveys have been conducted in England, Wales and Scotland, and they build on similar work conducted in earlier years.

This report presents the findings for individual beneficiaries who attended projects supported under Objectives 3, Objective 2 (West) and Objective 1 (Highlands and Islands Special Transitional Programme) in Scotland. They were surveyed when undergoing training or upskilling in the winter of 2004/05 and again in the summer of 2005 after they had finished their courses.

This chapter provides background information about the ESF programme. It sets out the research aims and methods, and provides guidance on interpretation of the data in the report. However, it begins by briefly outlining the structure and content of the report itself.

The structure of this report

After this introductory chapter, the report is divided into four sections:

- A summary of the findings;
- An overview of the research findings for all surveyed beneficiaries;
- An overview of the findings presented by Priority; and
- Conclusions.

ESF programme 2000–2006

The ESF is designed to improve the employability of individuals and the competitiveness of businesses through a number of channels. There is also a strong social inclusion element to the ESF, as it seeks to ensure that support is targeted at those who face the most difficulty in accessing and participating in the labour market.

The ESF is one of several structural funds through which the member states of the European Union (EU) redistribute part of their budget contributions to the most disadvantaged regions and social groups. In the current programming period, 2000 to 2006, the structural funds are designed to meet three broad objectives:

- To promote the development of the most economically disadvantaged regions of the EU;
- To support areas facing structural difficulties, e.g. those adjusting to change in the industrial or service sectors; and
- To deliver support for employability and human resource development activities.

In Scotland, training courses and projects are currently receiving ESF contributions for all three Objectives.

The role of ESF in UK structural fund programmes

The European Employment Strategy provides the policy framework for employment issues across the European Union and defines the guidelines for policies in each member state. In line with this framework, the National Action Plan for Employment sets out the key priorities for employment policy in the UK as a whole, although it also discusses how these apply in each of the individual home countries. It analyses the economic and employment context, and identifies the challenges the UK faces in delivering employment opportunity for all and meeting the long-term aim of having 75% of the working age population in employment by 2010.

The National Action Plan for Employment sets out key policy measures to tackle the problems and challenges in the labour market. In common with the European Employment Strategy, these are structured under four pillars of:

- Improving employability;
- Developing entrepreneurship;
- Encouraging adaptability of businesses and their employees; and
- Strengthening equal opportunities for women and men.

In strengthening these pillars, the UK has a number of EU structural fund programmes, contributing alongside domestic programmes to these ends.

- Firstly, the **Objective 3** programme covers the whole of Great Britain except for Objective 1 areas, with separate operational programmes running in each of England, Wales, and Scotland. Objective 3 funds aim to improve the prospects of long-term unemployed people, young people and those who are socially excluded. It is also targeted at helping working people adjust to changes in the workplace.
- Additionally, there are **Objective 1** programmes in Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, the Highlands and Islands, Northern Ireland, and West Wales and The Valleys. Objective 1 funds help redevelop regions which are seriously lagging behind the EU

average (in particular, areas where GDP per head is less than 75% of the EU average). In Scotland, funding is available in the Highlands and Islands through a Special Transitional Programme.

- Finally, there is also an **Objective 2** programme which covers numerous sub-regional areas in Great Britain. This programme helps regions which are either affected by industrial decline or which are rural and require redevelopment.

Approximately two-thirds of the ESF budget in the UK is devoted to the Objective 3 programme, while most of the rest goes to Objective 1 areas. Moreover, whereas projects running under Objectives 1 and 2 are supported by a number of structural funds, Objective 3 projects are funded solely by ESF.

At the core of the ESF Objectives are a number of Priorities and measures, which act to focus support. They help to identify the particular types of activity and beneficiary that the programme will prioritise for support. Although the focus of ESF support is prescribed to some extent by these Priorities, member states can choose to emphasise certain Priorities over others and, within each Priority, they have the discretion to develop measures which reflect their own particular policies.

Objective 3

The Strategic Aim of the Scottish Objective 3 Operational Programme is to support economic growth in Scotland by contributing to the sustainable development of a competitive economy, with an efficient and flexible labour market, where people have equal access to training, employment and income earning opportunities. The Programme operates across Lowland Scotland, and is strengthened by five Priorities/Policy Fields, which are set out below.

Priority 1: raising employability

Priority 1 aims to support preventative measures to help unemployed people return or enter the job market through the provision of advice, guidance or counselling.

Priority 2: addressing social exclusion

This Priority is made up of four 'measures', two of which are geographically defined (urban and rural). The third measure tackles vulnerable groups in general and the fourth deals with capacity building among support organisations.

Priority 3: lifelong learning

This Priority aims to ensure that training providers are enabled to deliver lifelong learning and promotes organisational competence.

Priority 4: towards a competitive economy

Priority 4 deals with supporting training provision for the workforce and working to expand Scotland's entrepreneurial base. Its three measures cover staff training, raising skill levels and assisting business start-ups.

Priority 5: addressing gender imbalance

This Priority aims to tackle gender discrimination and imbalances and to promote equal opportunities in the workforce.

Objective 1

The Highlands and Islands area did not meet the Objective 1 eligibility criteria in 2000-2006, but benefits from Objective 1 funding through a transitional programme. The strategic objectives of this programme are to:

- Increase incomes and prosperity in the region relative to EU averages;
- Reduce social and economic disparities;
- Create and safeguard employment;
- Ensure that communities and individuals can make a full contribution to the development of the region;
- Reduce the problems caused by peripherality and insularity; and
- Enhance the environmental quality of the region in terms of sustainability and biodiversity.

It seeks to achieve this through four Priorities, although ESF funds are only available for Priority 3 (and to a lesser extent, Priority 4):

- Increasing business competitiveness, creating employment and increasing incomes;
- Creating the conditions for regional competitiveness;
- Human resource development; and
- Assisting rural communities (rural development and fisheries as well as community economic development).

Priority 3 contains five further measures, which mirror the Objective 3 Priorities.

Objective 2

Finally, ESF funds can be used in Western Scotland to support training initiatives which target the skill requirements of growth sectors, and which re-engage people in the labour market. There are two Priorities under this Objective which are relevant to ESF funding:

- To develop the competitiveness and innovative capacity of the region's Small and Medium Enterprises; and
- To increase the economic and social cohesion of the region.

Research aims and methods

In this section we briefly set out the principal aims of the research as specified by the Scottish Executive. We also provide a brief outline of the research methodology and an overview of the target and achieved samples, so that the representativeness of the data can be assessed.

Research aims

The main aim of the 2005 Beneficiaries Survey is to evaluate the effectiveness of the training or advice provided through ESF projects to beneficiaries. Following on from this, the key research objectives of the study have been to:

- Obtain information about the longer-term impact of the programme;
- Acquire more detailed information on beneficiaries, thus enabling insight into the various and sometimes cumulative disadvantages they face; and
- Obtain more detail about the kinds of support offered, and beneficiaries' views on the support they received.

Research methods

The broad sample design adopted was developed following an extensive review of the 2002 Leavers Survey and a feasibility study carried out in 2004. The method was adapted to attempt to improve the reliability of the sample and to reduce clustering effects.

The strategy was predicated upon the fact that there is no database of beneficiaries or of leavers in Scotland. We were therefore required to access samples of beneficiaries through individual ESF-funded projects.

One of the main issues which this raised was that of data protection. After lengthy discussions with colleagues in the Department of Work and Pensions (who were managing the English Beneficiaries Survey), it was decided that the following sampling and data clearance strategy would be followed:

- The Scottish Executive provided MORI with three databases (one for each Objective) of all ongoing ESF projects in Scotland.
- MORI then removed projects finishing earlier than October 2004 and all projects with zero beneficiaries or with more than 10,000 beneficiaries (indicating that they only provided advice and guidance rather than training or support). This left 1,046 projects, with a total number of expected beneficiaries of 177,364.
- MORI then drew a sample of 245 projects, reducing clustering effects by stratifying by size of project and proportionally by Objective and Priority. Projects were grouped into the following bands:
 - projects with 1 to 499 beneficiaries (201 projects)
 - projects with 500 to 1499 beneficiaries (32 projects)
 - projects with 1500 or more beneficiaries (12 projects)
- Overall, 32 Objective 1 projects, 36 Objective 2 projects and 177 Objective 3 projects were selected.
- MORI then wrote to or e-mailed all the projects on the sample, explaining the aims of the research and clarifying the data protection issue. The contracts which had been set up with participating projects helped in this matter, as they included the collection of data protection-cleared beneficiary contact details one of its main provisions.
- Beneficiary samples – with those who opted out removed – were then forwarded to MORI for inclusion in the survey ‘snapshot’ sample. This left us with a sample of 4,893 beneficiaries.

As with the 2002 Leavers Survey, obtaining samples of beneficiaries was a complex and lengthy process – anticipated improvements in data storage and collection at the project level failed to materialise. Therefore, in order to generate a sufficient number of interviews, MORI had to make use of the entire beneficiary sample.

Fieldwork

The questionnaires for both waves were developed by MORI, using the questionnaires from the 2002 Leavers’ Surveys as the starting point, and in consultation with the Scottish Executive and the Department for Work and Pensions. It is also similar to those used in England and Wales.

Computer assisted telephone interviews were conducted by MORI Telephone Surveys. All interviewers received written instructions, briefing them about the background to the survey, the nature of the sample, and the questionnaire itself. All leads were tried a minimum of ten times where no contact was made, on different days and times of the week over the fieldwork period. A relatively large

proportion of leads turned out to be ineligible (either because the person had never attended the course or had received advice and guidance only), or telephone numbers were incorrect.

While nearly all of the interviews were carried out over the telephone, in a number of cases (39 in the first wave) the questionnaire was administered face-to-face. This was when a particular project alerted MORI that its beneficiaries could be categorised as vulnerable and it was decided that a telephone call would not be appropriate. The face-to-face questionnaire was based on the telephone questionnaire, with appropriate changes of wording and instruction.

A total of 877 interviews were conducted in the first wave, while beneficiaries were still on a course. All of these interviewees were asked if they would be happy to be recontacted in around six months time, and in July and August 2005, they were recontacted. A further 263 interviews were therefore carried out at this stage, allowing us to assess how the training helped these beneficiaries.

Guidance for the interpretation of data in this report

The data presented in this report are based on a sample of beneficiaries rather than the whole population, and for a 'snapshot' period relating to recall of experiences in late 2004. Results are, therefore, subject to certain sampling tolerances and it should also be noted that the sample interviewed may not be completely random. Any differences between results which are statistically significant are noted in the body of the report.

After discussion with the Scottish Executive, it was decided that the data would not be weighted. This allows for comparisons with the 2002 Survey, which also reported on unweighted data.

Where percentages do not sum to 100, this is due to rounding, the exclusion of don't know or not answered categories, or multiple response.

2. Summary of Findings

MORI carried out two waves of research among beneficiaries of European Social Fund (ESF) training. The first wave drew on the views of 877 beneficiaries while they were enrolled on an ESF course and the second wave involved interviews with 263 of the same beneficiaries once they had left a course. This Executive Summary sets out the key main findings and contextualises them in terms of the ESF's policy priorities.

Beneficiary characteristics

- **ESF-funded training courses successfully target beneficiaries who face a wide range of potential labour market disadvantages. Many beneficiaries are employed when they enrol onto a course and are seeking to improve or update their skills, but half are either unemployed or inactive.**
- Just under half of the beneficiaries surveyed were men (47%), and a similar proportion (43%) were under 25 years old.
- Two in five beneficiaries (37%) were employed on entry to an ESF-funded course, while a third were inactive (33%) and one in six (17%) unemployed.
- Objective 3 beneficiaries were most likely to have been employed on entry (44% compared with 28% in Objective 1 and 23% in Objective 2).
- Beneficiaries in Objective 3, Priorities 3 and 4 were more likely than their counterparts to have been employed on entry, while those in Objective 2, Priority 3 and Objective 3, Priorities 2 and 5 were more likely to have been inactive or unemployed. Beneficiaries in Objective 3, Priority 1 were more likely than those in other Priorities to have been in education on entry.
- One in four beneficiaries had a long-term health problem or disability (24%), while a similar proportion had caring responsibilities (22%).
- One in six beneficiaries (18%) did not have a qualification prior to joining an ESF-funded course. Younger beneficiaries were less likely to be unqualified than older people (only 10% of 18-24 year olds did not have a qualification, compared to 29% of the over 50s).
- Over three in five beneficiaries (62%) experienced 'low human capital'. This is defined as beneficiaries who did not have the right qualifications, lacked the training or skills, had no recent work experience, had skills that were out of date, or had a poor understanding of English and the 3Rs. Beneficiaries with low human

capital are more likely than other beneficiaries to be inactive on entry (40% compared with 33% of all beneficiaries).

- Beneficiaries in Objective 3, Priorities 2 and 5 were most likely to experience low human capital (75% each) while those in Objective 3, Priority 1 were least likely (51%).
- Two in five beneficiaries (44%) had experienced long-term unemployment or inactivity. This group is made up of beneficiaries who were either inactive or unemployed and seeking work for 12 months or more before entry to an ESF course (or six months for beneficiaries under the age of 25). This sub-group of beneficiaries experienced nearly twice the average level of inactivity (61% compared to 33% overall).
- Beneficiaries in Objective 2, Priority 3 were most likely to have experienced long-term unemployment/inactivity (71%), compared with just 11% of those in Objective 3, Priority 4.

Barriers to employment

- **Non-working beneficiaries face a wide range of barriers to work – both skills-based and individual. ESF-funded courses are most likely to address skills-based barriers, largely because they are directly work-related.**
- More than two in five beneficiaries who were not in work on entry felt that they had difficulty finding paid work, or getting a better job, because they did not have the right qualifications, training or skills (42%). This was most keenly felt among non-working beneficiaries in Objective 3, Priority 5 (59%).
- A lack of appropriate skills was the most common barrier for all the non-working groups of entrants – those with low human capital, unemployed entrants, long-term unemployed and inactive entrants – although it was most pronounced among those with low human capital (57%) and unemployed entrants (48%).
- A lack of recent work experience or out-dated skills was cited by around a third of beneficiaries each (37% and 32%, respectively). As with qualifications, those with low human capital and unemployed entrants were more likely to cite these as barriers.
- Disability or health problems were mentioned by a third of beneficiaries (36% – rising to 69% among non-working beneficiaries in Objective 1), although as might be expected, this was more prevalent among inactive entrants (49%) and the oldest (71% of those aged 50 or more).

- A perceived lack of local jobs was cited as a barrier by a slightly smaller proportion (34%), but was most commonly highlighted by unemployed entrants, those with low human capital, low basic skills, older beneficiaries and men.
- Age and problems with transport were each mentioned as barriers by around one in five (26% and 21%, respectively). It is significant to note that transport was most commonly perceived as a barrier among carers, lone parents, and those with a disability.
- While only 14% of non-working beneficiaries said that poor 3Rs was a barrier to work, two in five beneficiaries in Objective 3, Priority 4 felt that this held them back (39%).

Expectations

- Overall, beneficiaries had high expectations of their courses. At least four in five either felt that they would gain work-related skills (90%), improve their qualifications (87%), or boost their self-confidence (83%) as a result of attending their course. Furthermore, over two-thirds hoped that they would be given practical help to find a job (71%).
- There are significant differences in expectations between groups of beneficiaries. Women, younger beneficiaries, carers and those from ethnic minorities tended to have among the highest expectations of their courses.
- Entry status is also a significant indicator of expectations. Employed entrants were more likely to expect to gain work-related skills and qualifications, while unemployed entrants were more likely to expect to receive practical job search help.
- Priority is also an important factor in terms of expectations: 95% of beneficiaries in Objective 2, Priority 1 hoped that they would gain work-related skills, compared with 81% among Objective 1 beneficiaries.
- Similarly, 99% of Objective 2, Priority 1 beneficiaries felt that they would improve their qualifications, compared with 68% of Objective 1 beneficiaries.
- Priority 1 beneficiaries in Objectives 2 and 3 were the most likely to feel that they would be given practical job search help (85% and 86% respectively), while only 43% of Objective 1 beneficiaries felt this way.
- Generally, beneficiaries entering the courses with the most labour market disadvantages were most likely to expect to improve their work-related self-confidence and to be given practical job search help. In contrast, the expectations of those in employment and with more advantages centred on improving skills and qualifications.

- Beneficiaries with poor basic skills, those with low human capital and with three or more labour market disadvantages tended to have higher expectations about improving the 'hard' skills they need at work.
- It is instructive to note that beneficiaries who started their course with no qualifications were less likely to see the gaining of qualifications as a major goal, although the majority did still expect this outcome (80% compared with 87% overall).

Meeting expectations

- **Beneficiary expectations are generally met or even exceeded, and it is instructive to note that gains and improvements appear to be relatively well-focused on key groups of beneficiaries. Across the board, all beneficiaries feel that they gain work-related skills, qualifications and self-confidence, but it is the 'soft' skills which appear to be of particular benefit to inactive entrants.**
- Improvements in work-related skills are exceeded, with 94% of beneficiaries interviewed once they had left an ESF-funded course saying that they were helped in this area, a rating which is replicated across all demographic groups.
- In general, inactive entrants were more likely than average to feel that they had gained across a range of specific work skills. In particular, two in three (67%) felt that they had gained in terms of English-speaking skills, compared to 57% overall.
- Gains in self-confidence are also clearly evident across the board, with 87% of beneficiaries saying that their ESF experience helped them to build their self-confidence about working. As is the case with work skills, reported gains in self-confidence are high among almost all groups, though women are more likely than men to feel that they gained in this regard (91% compared with 81%).
- Again, inactive entrants were generally more likely than other beneficiaries to feel that they had gained across a range of 'soft' skills. More than nine in ten (93%) felt that they had improved their motivation as a result of going on their course, compared to 75% among employed entrants.
- A high proportion of interviewed beneficiaries (81%) gained a qualification as a result of being on their courses. Those who were inactive on entry (84%), unemployed entrants (81%), and those who were in education on entry (80%) were also all highly likely to gain qualifications.
- Mirroring the high level of qualification gain among unemployed entrants, those with low human capital were also highly likely to gain a qualification (80%).

- It is less clear whether ESF-funded training courses provide the expected practical help. Overall, 71% of beneficiaries expected to receive some practical help in finding a job. However, less than half (45%) actually felt that they received this support.
- It is likely, though, that this low level of practical help is due to the fact that this particular aspect of ESF training is targeted at specific groups of beneficiaries. Only a third of employed entrants (33%) said that they were given this practical help, indicating perhaps that this element of ESF training courses is targeted at those in most need. Contrastingly, over two in three beneficiaries who had been unemployed on entry (69%) felt that they were given this help.

Outcomes

- **The labour market status of beneficiaries was tracked at three points in time: at the point of entry, on leaving and at the time of survey. It is encouraging to note that over this time period, there is a positive move from unemployment to employment for many beneficiaries.¹**
- Nearly all beneficiaries felt satisfied with the quality of the course they attended (96%). Beneficiaries with none or one labour market disadvantage were significantly more satisfied with the course than other beneficiaries (99% and 98% respectively).
- Those between the ages of 18-24 were significantly more likely to be satisfied with their course (98%) than other age groups of a significant base size. However, even the age group with the lowest level of satisfaction (35-49 year olds) still possess a high level (91%).
- Over nine in ten beneficiaries (92%) thought the course gave training, or help, or support relevant to their needs. It should also be noted that for every major demographic grouping, at least four in five beneficiaries feel that they have profited from their course in this way.
- Over four in five beneficiaries (82%) felt that the course was about right for them. This view was especially prevalent among those in education at entry level (93%) and those who were employed at entry level (90%).

¹ It should be noted that labour market status was self-assessed and that there was no external validation for this. Furthermore, the study was not set up as an empirical evaluation (with a control group) to isolate and measure the impact of ESF courses versus other factors which would influence the labour market status of these beneficiaries, or establish a causal link between the course and their subsequent labour market status. Nevertheless, the positive movements from unemployment or inactivity to employment can be considered encouraging.

- Employment levels rise from 32% on entry to 50% at the time of the survey – representing a 56% rise over the course of this study. Perhaps more significantly, is the finding that inactivity levels fall from 35% to 14% – a proportional rise of 60%. Although these beneficiaries are not all transferring directly to the employed group, many appear to be moving towards the labour market by actively seeking work. Unemployment, therefore, actually rises by a third (from 18% to 24%) by the time of the survey.
- Although the base size is small, the fact that employment among Objective 1 beneficiaries rises from 41% on entry to 55% by the time of the survey represents a real and significant change for these beneficiaries.
- This improvement in employment levels is consistent across all Objectives, as Objective 2 beneficiaries improved from nearly four in ten (39%) on entry to over half (53%) at the time of the survey and Objective 3 beneficiaries improved from one in four (25%) on entry to nearly half (47%) at the time of the survey.
- Levels of inactivity fell markedly among Objective 2 (32% to 14%) and Objective 3 (39% to 13%) beneficiaries between entry and the time of the survey while Objective 1 levels stayed constant (23% at entry and survey time). Upon further investigation, it can be seen that those in Objective 2, Priority 3 (36%) and Objective 3, Priority 5 (23%) had the highest relative proportions of inactivity at the time of the survey.
- It should be noted that the most dramatic shifts in employment status occur between entry and leaving a course. While employment continues to rise between leaving and the time of survey, its rate slows significantly. At the same time, inactivity remains at the same level on survey as it was on leaving the course. Most of the initial change in inactivity can be attributed to a steep rise in unemployment – rising by 61% – between entry and exit, although this falls to the more modest increase of a third as already stated.
- Looking at the employment pathways of ESF entrants, we find that most employed entrants are still in work at the time of the survey (76%), while 42% of unemployed entrants have found work by that point, as have 50% of those who were in education on entry. This contrasts with just a third of inactive entrants who were in work at the time of the survey (33%).

3. Overview of Survey Findings

This chapter will outline the key findings of the survey for the entire sample. It covers the key demographics and entry status information before summarising the sample's experiences on ESF courses. It concludes with the main course outcomes – in terms of skills gained, self-confidence, qualifications and employability.

Who was surveyed?

This section details the profile of beneficiaries in terms of their key demographic characteristics. It is primarily a descriptive chapter which aims to assist readers to understand the main characteristics of the beneficiary population and how they are inter-linked. This will assist readers in interpreting the key survey findings presented in later chapters of the report.

Sample profile

In total, 887 beneficiaries were surveyed in the first wave. Table 3.1 contains a breakdown of respondents by key demographics and status upon entry into the course. These demographic characteristics are shown by age and gender, and compared with the sample as a whole.

Just over half of the beneficiaries are women (53%). In terms of age, nearly two-thirds (61%) are under the age of 35, including 43% who are 16 to 24 years of age. A further 27% of beneficiaries are between the ages of 35 and 49 and 12% are 50 years of age or older.

Nearly all beneficiaries in this sample (95%) classify themselves either as 'white British' or 'white other'. Correspondingly, only 5% identify themselves as being from a non-white background, of whom 2% are Asian.

During the interview respondents were asked a series of questions to identify the labour market disadvantages they face. As Table 3.1 shows, the most common disadvantage is 'low human capital', with nearly two-thirds of respondents (62%) falling into this category.² Nearly half of respondents (44%) were long-term unemployed during the year prior to joining an ESF project.³ One-quarter had either a long-term health problem or disability which limits their daily activities and work (24%) or caring responsibilities (22%).⁴

² 'Low human capital' is defined as beneficiaries having either out-of-date skills, poor reading, writing and number skills, the wrong qualifications, no recent experience of working or their understanding of English is inadequate.

³ Long-term unemployed is defined as unemployed for six months or more for those aged under 25 and 12 months or more for those aged 25 or more.

⁴ Caring responsibilities were identified using the question: "Would you say that your daily activities, or the work you can do, are limited by any caring responsibilities for children, family members, friends, neighbours or others?"

Over one-third of beneficiaries (37%) were employed on entry to the ESF programmes and slightly fewer were inactive (33%), while one in six either was unemployed (17%).⁵ Just 10% were in education at the point when they started an ESF course.

The profile of beneficiaries with each of these characteristics is discussed in more detail in the remainder of this section.

Table 3.1: Key demographics, by age and gender, compared with the overall sample

	Total	<18	18-24	25-34	35-49	50+	Men	Women
	<i>Bases</i> (877) %	(96) %	(282) %	(155) %	(235) %	(106) %	(410) %	(467) %
Total	100	11	32	18	27	12	47	53
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>								
Low human capital	(544) 62	65	57	68	62	64	62	62
Long-term unemployed	(388) 44	55	38	43	46	51	40	48
Disability/health problem	(208) 24	7	13	23	32	52	24	24
Carers	(192) 22	10	13	34	32	16	11	31
Lone parents	(102) 12	-	6	23	20	3	4	18
Low basic skills	(89) 10	11	10	9	8	13	10	10
Minority Ethnic Group	(41) 5	4	6	5	5	2	4	6
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>								
None	(279) 32	29	45	25	24	26	38	26
One	(259) 30	49	29	28	28	17	30	29
Two	(166) 19	15	15	19	20	28	18	20
Three or more	(173) 20	7	10	27	28	28	14	25
<i>Entry status:</i>								
Employed	(325) 37	18	37	45	41	34	37	37
Inactive	(286) 33	30	25	35	36	45	29	36
Unemployed	(146) 17	20	17	16	17	13	19	15
In education	(87) 10	25	15	3	4	7	11	9

Source: MORI

⁵ 'Inactive' is defined as people who were not in work or education and who were also not actively seeking work.

Employment status

Respondents were asked to identify their main activity one year prior to enrolling in an ESF programme. As Table 3.2 shows, over a third (37%) were in employment, most of whom were working full-time (28% full-time, 9% part-time and 2% self-employed). Women were more likely than men to have been working part-time as were those in education upon entry. A majority of those in employment one year prior to the ESF programme were still employed when they started the course (70%).

One third of beneficiaries (32%) were in education or training of some kind one year prior to their ESF course, four in five of whom (84%) were aged under 25. Men were more likely than women to be participating in education and training (38% versus 26%), although this is likely to be explained by the fact that men comprise a higher proportion of beneficiaries aged under 25. Over four in five (83%) of the same beneficiaries were still in training upon entry to the ESF programme one year later, the others being either inactive (8%), unemployed (6%), or employed (3%).

One in ten beneficiaries (9%) was unemployed and actively seeking work one year prior to their ESF course. Beneficiaries between the ages of 35 and 49, and women, are slightly over-represented in this group (11% and 10% respectively). Two in five of these beneficiaries (40%) were also unemployed on joining the ESF course.

The inactive category is made up of those who, one year prior to the beginning of their ESF course, were either looking after the home or family full-time (20%), not working at all due to sickness or disability (26%), occupied with something else or were doing nothing in particular (2%). Over half (59%) of those who were inactive one year prior to entry were still inactive upon commencement of the ESF course. Women are more likely than men to have been inactive prior to the ESF programme (both one year and one week before the course).

Table 3.2: Activity one year prior to ESF course entry, by activity one week prior to entry

			Entry status (one week prior to enrolment)			
			Employed	Unemployed	Education	Inactive
		Total				
<i>Base: all those asked the question</i>		<i>Base</i>	(325) %	(146) %	(87) %	(286) %
Total	(877)	100	37	17	10	33
<i>Status one year prior to entry:</i>						
In paid work as an employee	(308)	35	70	29	3	10
Working as self-employed	(15)	2	4	1	-	*
Unemployed and actively seeking work	(81)	9	2	40	6	2
In education or training	(277)	32	22	23	83	29
Not working due to sickness or disability	(84)	10	1	2	6	26
Looking after the home or family member	(62)	7	-	2	1	20
Voluntary or unpaid work	(18)	2	*	-	-	6
Other/Nothing	(21)	2	1	2	-	5
<i>One year status summary:</i>						
Employed	(323)	37	74	29	3	10
Unemployed	(81)	9	2	40	6	2
In education	(277)	32	22	23	83	29
Inactive	(190)	22	2	6	8	59

Source: MORI

Qualifications held

More than four in five beneficiaries in the sample surveyed had some level of qualifications or certificates before starting the ESF course (82%). Those aged 18 to 24 were more likely than their older counterparts to have some level of qualification (90%, compared with 75% of those between the ages of 25 and 34, and 71% of those over 50 years old).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, those with some level of qualification or certificate were more likely to be in education upon entry to the ESF programme or be employed (87% and 84%, respectively) and were less likely to have multiple disadvantages in terms of the labour market (98% had none of the disadvantages).

As Table 3.3 demonstrates, younger respondents were more likely to have SVQ level 1/2 or equivalents prior to starting the ESF programme, while older respondents were more likely to have SVQ level 4/5 or equivalents. Also of note, women are more likely than men to report an SVQ level 4/5 or equivalent set of qualifications.

Table 3.3: Qualifications held, by age and gender (multiple responses possible)

	Total	<18	18-24	25-34	35-49	50+	Men	Women
<i>Base: all entrants who had qualifications or certificates prior to course</i>	(721) %	(82) %	(255) %	(116) %	(193) %	(75) %	(338) %	(383) %
SVQ level 1/equivalent	13	17	8	15	20	8	12	15
SVQ level 2/equivalent	36	68	42	36	22	16	37	35
SVQ level 3/equivalent	17	4	29	13	13	7	18	16
SVQ level 4/equivalent	16	2	10	21	22	28	13	18
SVQ level 5/equivalent	3	-	-	3	5	9	2	3

Source: MORI

Labour market disadvantages

Overall, more than two-thirds of beneficiaries (68%) identify one or more labour market disadvantages – that is, they are either lone parents, carers, they belong to a Minority Ethnic Group, their main language is not English or they are disabled or suffer from a health problem. This includes three in ten (30%) who experience one disadvantage, one in five who experience two disadvantages (19%), and 20% who experience three or more disadvantages.

Existence of labour market disadvantage is, of course, closely linked to respondents' activity status on entry to the ESF programme. Beneficiaries who were employed on entry are much less likely to identify any labour market disadvantages and, correspondingly, those who were inactive are much more likely to identify multiple disadvantages.

Focusing on those most disadvantaged (three or more labour market disadvantages identified), almost all (92%) have low human capital and just under two-thirds have caring responsibilities, and/or are disabled (61% each). Furthermore, just under four in ten beneficiaries with multiple disadvantages are lone parents (38%), and slightly fewer than one-quarter have low basic skills (21%). Women are more likely than men to identify three or more labour market disadvantages (67% versus 33%), which might be expected given the over-representation of women in both the lone parent and carer groups.

Compared with the overall profile of beneficiaries, those with multiple disadvantages are approximately twice as likely to have been inactive on entry to the programme (65% versus 33%) and, correspondingly, much less likely to have been employed (5% versus 37%). In terms of age, those with multiple disadvantages are less likely than beneficiaries overall to be under 18 (4% versus 11%) and more likely to be aged 35 to 49 (38% versus 27%).

Table 3.4: Multiple disadvantages, compared with the overall sample

	Total	Multiple disadvantages			
		None	One	Two	Three or more
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	(877) %	(279) %	(259) %	(166) %	(173) %
Total	100	32	30	19	20
<i>Gender:</i>					
Women	53	44	53	56	67
Men	47	56	47	44	33
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>					
Low human capital	62	33	66	72	92
Disabled or with a health problem	24	-	9	48	61
Carers	22	-	15	28	61
Lone parents	12	-	7	12	38
Low basic skills	10	4	8	13	21
Minority ethnic group	5	-	3	7	12
English as a second language	3	-	2	3	10
<i>Age:</i>					
<18	11	10	18	8	4
18-24	32	46	32	26	16
25-34	18	14	17	18	24
35-49	27	20	25	29	38
50+	12	10	7	18	17
<i>Entry status:</i>					
Employed	37	66	40	17	5
Unemployed	17	13	19	16	19
In education	10	8	11	13	9
Inactive	33	9	24	52	65

Source: MORI

Low human capital

Low human capital is defined as beneficiaries who, upon entry to an ESF programme, did not have the right qualifications, lacked the training or skills, had no recent work experience, had skills that were out of date, or had poor basic skills (reading, writing, maths not good enough and poor understanding of English).

As Table 3.5 demonstrates, nearly two-thirds of the sample is categorised as having low human capital (62%). The gender and age characteristics of this subgroup mirror that of the overall sample. In terms of entry status, beneficiaries

with low human capital are more likely than average to have been unemployed (21% versus 17% of the total sample) or inactive (40% versus 33%). Correspondingly, they are less likely to be employed (26% versus 37%). Not surprisingly (given the definition of this group of beneficiaries), more than one-quarter of this group has no qualifications (27%). Correspondingly, those with low human capital are more likely than average to be held back by three or more disadvantages and low basic skills.

Table 3.5: Low human capital, by age and gender

	Total	Beneficiaries with low human capital
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	(877)	(544)
	%	%
Low human capital	62	100
<i>Gender:</i>		
Women	53	53
Men	47	47
<i>Age:</i>		
<18	11	11
18-24	32	30
25-34	18	19
35-49	27	27
50+	12	13
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>		
None	32	17
One	30	31
Two	19	22
Three or more	20	29
<i>Entry status:</i>		
Employed	37	26
Unemployed	17	21
In education	10	10
Inactive	33	40

Source: MORI

Long-term unemployment

Nearly half of the beneficiaries (44%) are classified as long-term unemployed in the week prior to joining the ESF programme. This group comprises of beneficiaries who were either inactive, or unemployed and seeking work, in the 12 months before they joined the programme (or six months for beneficiaries under the age of 25). Nearly two-thirds (61%) were inactive on entry to the ESF programme, a further 21% were unemployed and 13% were in education.

As might be expected, when compared to beneficiaries overall, the long-term unemployed are much more likely to have three or more labour market disadvantages (40% versus 20% of the entire sample). In fact, 90% of those with three or more market disadvantages were long-term unemployed prior to joining an ESF programme. Correspondingly, as Table 3.6 shows, a higher proportion reports each of the labour market disadvantages measured by the survey. Furthermore, the long-term unemployed have a slightly younger age profile: 14% are under 18, compared with 11% of the sample overall.

Table 3.6: Long-term unemployed characteristics, compared to overall sample

	Total	Long-term unemployed
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	(877) %	(388) %
Long-term unemployed	44	100
<i>Gender:</i>		
Women	53	58
Men	47	42
<i>Labour market disadvantages:</i>		
Low human capital	62	81
Disabled	24	41
Carer	22	29
Lone parent	12	17
Low basic skills	10	15
Minority Ethnic Group	5	5
<i>Age:</i>		
<18	11	14
18-24	32	27
25-34	18	17
35-49	27	28
50+	12	14
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>		
None	32	-
One	30	29
Two	19	31
Three or more	20	40
<i>Entry status:</i>		
Employed	37	-
Unemployed	17	21
In education	10	13
Inactive	33	61

Source: MORI

Disability or health problems

As Table 3.7 shows, one in four respondents in this survey had a disability or health problem prior to entering the course (24%). Compared to the overall sample of beneficiaries, those with a disability have an older age profile (63% are over the age of 35, compared with 38% overall). Disabled beneficiaries are more likely than average to have multiple disadvantages (50% have three or more disadvantages compared with 20% overall); specifically, a higher proportion of disabled beneficiaries experience low human capital (79% versus 62% overall) and long-term unemployment (76% versus 44%). By definition, nearly two-thirds of disabled beneficiaries (65%) were inactive on entry to the programme and they were much less likely than other beneficiaries to be employed (11% versus 37% overall).

Table 3.7: Disabled people and those with a health problem, compared with the overall sample

	Total	Disability/health problem
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	(877) %	(208) %
Disability/health problem	24	100
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>		
Low human capital	62	79
Long-term unemployment	44	76
<i>Age:</i>		
<18	11	3
18-24	32	17
25-34	18	17
35-49	27	36
50+	12	26
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>		
None	32	-
One	30	11
Two	19	38
Three or more	20	50
<i>Entry status:</i>		
Employed	37	11
Unemployed	17	15
In education	10	7
Inactive	33	65

Source: MORI

Caring responsibilities

One in five (22%) beneficiaries report that they have caring responsibilities which limit their daily activities and the work they can do. Like the general population, the majority of carers are women (77%) and three in ten (30%) are lone parents (compared with just 12% of lone parent beneficiaries overall).

The majority of carers (67%) are aged between 25 and 49. Compared with the overall sample of beneficiaries, they are more likely to have multiple disadvantages (55% with three or more disadvantages versus 20% of all beneficiaries). On entry to the ESF programme, carers were most commonly inactive (44% versus 33% of all beneficiaries).

Table 3.8: Carer characteristics, compared with the overall sample

	Total	Carers
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	(877) %	(192) %
Carers	22	100
<i>Gender:</i>		
Women	53	77
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>		
Lone parents	12	30
<i>Age:</i>		
<18	11	5
18-24	32	19
25-34	18	27
35-49	27	40
50+	12	9
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>		
None	32	-
One	30	21
Two	19	24
Three or more	20	55
<i>Entry status:</i>		
Employed	37	27
Unemployed	17	16
In education	10	9
Inactive	33	44

Source: MORI

Lone parenthood

Lone parents represent 12% of the sample and consist of those who do not live with a husband, wife, or partner but are responsible for the care or support of children. As in the general population, most of lone parent beneficiaries are women (83%), as shown in Table 3.9.

As would be expected, nearly all lone parent beneficiaries are under the age of 50 (97%) and are more than twice as likely to say they have caring responsibilities, compared to the total sample of beneficiaries (56% versus 22%).

Nearly half of lone parents (47%) were inactive on entry to the ESF programme, compared to one-third of beneficiaries overall (33%). One-quarter were employed (25% – lower than the overall sample) and a similar proportion of lone parents were unemployed on entry (21% – higher than the overall sample). Finally, just 4% of lone parents were in education (compared with 10% overall) on entry to the ESF programme.

Table 3.9: Lone parents characteristics, compared with the overall sample

	Total	Lone parents
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	(877) %	(102) %
Lone parents	12	100
<i>Gender:</i>		
Women	53	83
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>		
Long-term unemployment	44	66
Carer	22	56
<i>Age:</i>		
<18	11	-
18-24	32	17
25-34	18	35
35-49	27	45
50+	12	3
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>		
None	32	-
One	30	17
Two	19	20
Three or more	20	64
<i>Entry status:</i>		
Employed	37	25
Unemployed	17	21
In education	10	4
Inactive	33	47

Source: MORI

Poor basic skills

One in ten respondents (10%) are categorised as having poor basic skills, described as lacking skills in reading, writing or maths *and* having a poor understanding of the English language. Nearly two-thirds of those with low basic skills are long-term unemployed (64%, compared to 44% of the overall sample). Not surprisingly, they are far less likely to have been employed upon entry into the ESF programme and are more likely to have been inactive (49%, compared to 33% of the overall sample).

This sub-group is more likely than the overall sample to contain those whose main language is not English. Those with low basic skills are also more likely than the overall sample to be disabled or suffer from a health problem (49% versus 24%) and one-third are carers (33%, compared to 22%). They are also more likely to lack qualifications (33%, compared to 17% of the overall sample).

Those with low basic skills are, by definition, more likely to have two or more disadvantages and are, in fact, more likely than the overall sample to have three or more disadvantages (42% versus 20%).

Table 3.10: Beneficiary characteristics for those with low basic skills, by age and gender

	Total	Beneficiaries with low basic skills
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	(877) %	(89) %
Low basic skills	10	100
<i>Gender:</i>		
Women	53	52
Men	47	48
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>		
Low human capital	62	100
Long-term unemployed	44	64
Disabled	24	49
<i>Age:</i>		
<18	11	12
18-24	32	33
25-34	18	16
35-49	27	21
50+	12	16
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>		
None	32	12
One	30	22
Two	19	24
Three or more	20	42
<i>Entry status:</i>		
Employed	37	16
Unemployed	17	19
In education	10	10
Inactive	33	49

Source: MORI

Minority Ethnic Groups

Nearly all beneficiaries in this sample are white (95%) with only 5% identifying themselves as belonging to a Minority Ethnic Group (see Table 3.11).

Respondents from a Minority Ethnic Group have a slightly younger age profile than the overall sample (only 5% are over the age of 50 versus 12% of the overall sample). They are more likely to have multiple disadvantages (80% versus 39% overall have two or more disadvantages), and are also more likely to experience low human capital (83% versus 62%) and low basic skills (15% versus 10%).

On entry to the ESF programme, beneficiaries from a Minority Ethnic Group are less likely than average to be employed (22% versus 37%) and more likely than average to be unemployed (27% versus 17%). One-third were inactive (34%), and one in ten were in education (12%) when they joined the ESF course, both of which are in line with the proportions for all beneficiaries. Beneficiaries from a Minority Ethnic Group are also more likely to be women, which may explain why they are more likely than average to have caring responsibilities (32% versus 22%).

Table 3.11: Minority ethnic group characteristics, compared with the overall sample

	Total	Minority Ethnic Group
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	(877) %	(41) %
Minority Ethnic Group	5	100
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>		
Low human capital	62	83
Long-term unemployment	44	51
Carer	22	32
Low basic skills	10	15
<i>Age:</i>		
<18	11	10
18-24	32	39
25-34	18	17
35-49	27	29
50+	12	5
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>		
None	32	-
One	30	20
Two	19	29
Three or more	20	51
<i>Entry status:</i>		
Employed	37	22
Unemployed	17	27
In education	10	12
Inactive	33	34

Source: MORI

Barriers to employment

Before turning to beneficiaries' experiences of ESF courses, this section describes the barriers faced by beneficiaries who were not in paid work the week prior to joining an ESF course.

As shown in Table 3.12, two in five respondents felt that they had difficulty finding paid work, or getting a better job, because they did not have the right qualifications, training or skills (42%). This was the most common barrier for all the non-working groups of entrants – those with low human capital, unemployed entrants, long-term unemployed and inactive entrants – although it was most pronounced among those with low human capital (57%) and unemployed entrants (48%).

A lack of recent work experience, or out-dated skills was cited by around a third of beneficiaries each (37% and 32%, respectively). As with qualifications, those with low human capital and unemployed entrants were more likely to cite these as barriers. Out-dated experience was also perceived as a barrier by younger respondents (under the age of 25). Out-dated skills, on the other hand, were more commonly mentioned by older respondents (25 years of age or older) and women.

Disability or health problems were mentioned by one-third of beneficiaries (36%), although as might be expected, this was more prevalent among inactive entrants (49%) and the oldest (71% of those aged 50 or more). A perceived lack of local jobs was cited as a barrier by a slightly smaller proportion (34%) and was particularly highlighted by unemployed entrants, those with low human capital, low basic skills, older beneficiaries and men. Age and problems with transport were each mentioned as barriers by around one in five (26% and 21%, respectively). Age as a barrier was more common among the youngest and oldest age groups and transport was more common among carers, lone parents, and those with a disability (36%, 28%, and 28%, respectively).

Caring responsibilities in terms of a lack of affordable childcare, or the need to take care of an elderly, ill or disabled person were less common barriers (14% and 10%), but of course, were mentioned by higher proportions of lone parents (54% and 21%, respectively) and carers (41% and 25%, respectively).

Inadequate literacy and numeracy skills were mentioned as a barrier by one in seven beneficiaries (14%), while relatively few (6%) said they had a language barrier in terms of understanding English.

Table 3.12: Problems encountered by groups of non-working beneficiaries in finding work

	All not in work	Inactive entrants	Unemployed entrants	Low human capital	Long-term unemployed
<i>Base: all respondents not in work on entry</i>	(552) %	(284) %	(146) %	(404) %	(388) %
<i>Skill-based barriers:</i>					
Did not have right qualifications, training or skills	42	42	48	57	45
No recent experience of working	37	37	38	50	40
Skills out of date	32	37	34	44	36
Reading, writing, maths not good enough	14	15	12	19	15
Understanding of English not good enough	6	5	5	8	7
<i>Functional barriers:</i>					
Personal disability or health problems	36	49	25	39	44
No jobs where lived	34	32	37	38	32
Age	26	25	29	31	28
Problems with transport	21	23	22	24	23
Could not find suitable and/or affordable childcare	14	17	15	16	17
Taking care of elderly, ill or disabled person	10	14	6	12	12

Source: MORI

Joining an ESF-funded course

This section considers beneficiaries' experiences while they took part in the ESF-supported project. It should be remembered that we are dealing with retrospective assessments of experiences and that there was anywhere from four to eight months between both waves of the survey. The next section looks at the reasons respondents joined a course and their expectations about the project they joined.

Reasons for joining

More than two-thirds of those surveyed (70%) had started their ESF programme in the year prior to the survey (i.e. since May 2004).

Beneficiaries were asked why they had participated in the ESF-supported project they had attended. As Table 3.13 shows, for the vast majority of beneficiaries (69%) the reason given is that it was due to their own personal choice, they felt they needed to go on the particular course or project to improve their skills and

abilities to get a job. The groups of beneficiaries who are most likely to have attended courses due to their own personal choice are younger beneficiaries (under 25 years) and those who are either unemployed or in education upon entry.

One in ten beneficiaries (12%) say they were given the opportunity to attend the course or project, for instance by an employer. Those who are in employment, and beneficiaries between the ages of 25 and 49 are more likely than average to have been offered the chance to take advantage of the courses. Only a minority of beneficiaries (5%) report being persuaded to go on the course by someone else. This is most common among older beneficiaries (12%), those in education (10%), and those with disabilities or health problems (10%). The same proportion of beneficiaries (6%) said they had been 'compelled' to attend the course by another organisation (e.g. Jobcentre, courts or youth offending team). In addition, men (7%) are more likely than women (5%) to have been compelled, as well as carers (10%) and those aged 35 to 49 years (9%).

Table 3.13: Reasons for attending a project, by key beneficiary groups

		Was compelled	Was persuaded	Given the opportunity	Personal decision
<i>Base: all respondents</i>		(49) %	(46) %	(101) %	(608) %
Total	(877)	6	5	12	69
<i>Gender:</i>					
Women	(410)	5	5	11	70
Men	(467)	7	5	12	69
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>					
Low human capital	(544)	6	6	9	73
Long-term unemployed	(388)	5	7	7	71
No qualifications	(152)	8	7	16	66
Low basic skills	(89)	6	8	8	74
<i>Age:</i>					
<18	(96)	3	7	5	76
18-24	(282)	4	4	8	74
25-34	(155)	5	1	21	69
35-49	(235)	9	6	15	65
50+	(106)	4	12	6	60
<i>Entry status:</i>					
Employed	(325)	7	4	20	62
Unemployed	(146)	4	3	4	84
In education	(87)	3	10	7	74
Inactive	(286)	5	7	8	69

Source: MORI

Course details

Computer training was by far the most popular type of course taken with more than one-third of beneficiaries (36%) report having done computer training on their course. A distant second, at 13%, was written work and theory; 7% report having done communications, accounting, or administration work; 6% trained in trades and practical applications; and 5% trained in health and safety, numeracy, or workplace assessment.

In terms of how the course was organised, the same proportion of respondents indicated that their course was classroom-based (62%) and hands-on or practical (60%). One-third of the courses (35%) were related to personal or social development.

More than four in five beneficiaries enjoyed being on the course most of the time (85%) and a further 11% enjoyed it some of the time. Women were more likely than men to enjoy the course most of the time (88% versus 82%) as were beneficiaries who were unemployed upon entry to the course (89%).

The majority of beneficiaries (63%) spent three to five days a week on the course, while one in five (21%) spent one or two days on the course. Nearly all participants agreed that time spent on their course is time well spent – 87% agreed that this was true most of the time and 9% agreed that this was true some of the time. Again, those unemployed upon entry were most likely to feel that most of the time spent on course was time well spent (91%). This is also true of those in a hands-on or practical course (91%).

Nearly two-thirds of beneficiaries (62%) were aware that the European Social Fund supports the courses. Those over the age of 35 were more likely than their younger counterparts to be aware of this.

Half of course participants had an agreed personal training plan with the course organiser (50%). Women are more likely than men to have had a plan (52% versus 48%) as were those over the age of 25. Other beneficiaries with agreed plans in advance of the course include those with a disability or health problem (64%), those with three or more disadvantages (60%), and those in practical courses and courses related to personal or social development (56% and 60%, respectively). Lone parents and those who were inactive on entry were also more likely to have an agreed personal training plan.

Expectations of course

An important component of beneficiaries' experiences of ESF-funded courses and projects is their expectations before entering the courses. Beneficiaries' expectations of the course will affect both their experience during the course and also their perceptions of how successful the course or project has been in meeting these expectations.

Beneficiaries were asked to consider their expectations on joining the programme and whether they thought the course or project would help them in four different ways. Overall, beneficiaries had high expectations – more than four in five thought the course would help in each of the following ways:

- Improve the skills they needed at work (90%);
- Improve their qualifications (87%); and
- Improve their self-confidence about work (83%).

In addition over two-thirds also thought the course would provide them with practical help to find a job (71%), although this may be lower due to the proportion of those in employment who did not have this as an expectation.

Table 3.14 details the proportion of beneficiaries who expected courses to address each of the areas. Such high proportions across the range indicates that many beneficiaries replied positively to most (if not all) of the possible advantages offered by the programme.

There are significant differences in expectations between groups of beneficiaries. Women tend to have higher expectations of the courses than men; particularly, they are more likely to think the programmes would improve their work-related skills and their self-confidence about working. However, they had lower expectations than men about whether the courses would deliver the practical help needed to find a job at the end of the programme but, again, this may reflect the fact that more women than men are employed on entry.

There is a consistent difference in attitudes according to the age of respondents. Younger respondents, particularly those under 18 years of age, are most positive and have higher expectations with regards to improving skills, qualifications, and receiving practical help. Whereas there is an increasing scepticism with increasing age across these three expectations, older beneficiaries (between the ages of 35 and 49) are more likely to believe the programme would help improve their self-confidence about working. Similarly, those beneficiaries from ethnic minority groups have more positive expectations of the ESF funded programmes, particularly when it comes to improving self-confidence about working and getting practical help for finding a job. Lone parents also have positive expectations when it comes to improving their qualifications and self-confidence about working.

The employment status of beneficiaries at the point they entered the programme is significant when looking at people's expectations. Perhaps not surprisingly those who were in work at the time they entered the course are more likely to expect to gain skills needed at work and also improve their qualifications. By contrast those who were unemployed at the time of starting the course are more likely to expect to receive practical help finding a job.

Generally those beneficiaries entering the courses with the most disadvantages were most likely to expect to improve their work-related self-confidence and to be given practical job seeking help. In contrast, the expectations of those in employment and with more advantages centre on improved skills and qualifications. Those beneficiaries with poor basic skills, those with low human capital and with three or more disadvantages tend to have higher expectations about improving those skills they need at work.

There are relatively low expectations among those with no qualifications that they would gain qualifications (although the majority still do think the course will help in this way). Four in five of those with no qualifications (80%), compared to 87% overall, thought the course would help them in this regard.

Table 3.14: Expectations before joining the project, by key beneficiary groups

		Proportion expecting that the project would:			
		Improve skills needed at work	Improve qualifications	Improve self- confidence about work	Give practical help to find a job
<i>Base: all respondents</i>		(786) %	(762) %	(729) %	(621) %
Total	(877)	90	87	83	71
<i>Gender:</i>					
Women	(467)	92	88	86	70
Men	(410)	87	86	80	72
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>					
Low human capital	(544)	92	88	85	74
Long-term unemployed	(388)	89	87	87	75
Disability/health problem	(208)	83	79	84	65
Carers	(192)	93	94	87	77
No qualifications	(152)	83	80	84	68
Lone parents	(102)	92	94	89	71
Low basic skills	(89)	90	81	80	67
Minority Ethnic Group	(41)	90	88	90	85
<i>Age:</i>					
<18	(96)	94	97	83	77
18-24	(282)	94	94	84	82
25-34	(155)	89	86	84	69
35-49	(235)	89	81	86	65
50+	(106)	76	75	73	53
<i>Entry status:</i>					
Employed	(325)	88	84	78	60
Unemployed	(146)	95	86	85	83
In education	(87)	91	94	90	80
Inactive	(286)	86	87	85	72
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>					
None	(279)	90	87	80	71
One	(259)	91	88	83	70
Two	(166)	89	85	86	69
Three or more	(173)	87	86	86	73

Source: MORI

Needs met and skills gained

Given that this survey was carried out some months after people had completed their training, it is interesting to see whether the course met beneficiaries' expectations and whether the training they received was relevant to their particular needs.

In terms of relevance, nearly all the beneficiaries felt that the particular course they went on helped to improve the skills they would need at work (94%). It should be stated that for every major demographic grouping, at least four in five beneficiaries feel that they have benefited in this way.

Table 3.15: Whether beneficiaries were helped to improve the skills they would need at work, by key beneficiary groups

		Improved work-related skills (246) %
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>		
Total	(263)	94
<i>Gender:</i>		
Women	(158)	94
Men	(105)	93
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>		
Low human capital	(171)	95
Long-term unemployed	(123)	94
Carers	(60)	93
Disability/health problem	(50)	94
Lone parents	(34)	94
No qualifications	(31)	100
Low basic skills	(22)	95
Minority Ethnic Group	(11)	82
<i>Age:</i>		
<18	(36)	94
18-24	(101)	94
25-34	(46)	93
35-49	(57)	91
50+	(23)	96
<i>Entry status:</i>		
Employed	(84)	92
Unemployed	(48)	92
In education	(30)	97
Inactive	(91)	95
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>		
None	(86)	94
One	(84)	95
Two	(50)	86
Three or more	(43)	98

Source: MORI

Work-related skills

The following table details whether beneficiaries who were surveyed feel that they developed specific work-related skill sets. Looking at these work-related skills, when asked about a pre-defined set of skills, nearly nine in ten beneficiaries (89%) feel that they gained practical skills relating to a particular job. This ranged from 94% among those currently unemployed to 86% among the currently inactive.

It was naturally important for beneficiaries who were in education on entry to improve their study skills (70%) but it should be remembered that there are relatively few of these beneficiaries in the survey. It should also be noted that more than two in three (68%) carers felt that their skills in this area had improved.

Over three in four surveyed beneficiaries (78%) felt that they had been helped to improve IT skills. Those who were currently unemployed were significantly more likely than those who were currently employed to feel that they had gained in this area (86% compared with 70% of currently employed). Similarly, those with low human capital and the long-term unemployed felt that they had gained these skills (80% and 77% respectively).

Unemployed entrants felt that they had gained wider job skills having been on a course (58% felt these skills had improved). By contrast, employed entrants were the least likely to feel that they had benefited in this area (48%).

Table 3.16: Ways in which beneficiaries were helped to improve the skills they would need at work, by key beneficiary groups

		Practical skills related to a particular job	Improve computing/IT skills	Study skills	Improved English speaking skills	Improved reading and writing skills	Training in wider job skills	Training in management/leadership skills	Improved maths and number skills
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>									
Total	<i>(263)</i>	89	78	75	57	56	52	51	47
<i>Gender:</i>									
Women	<i>(158)</i>	90	77	75	59	57	53	53	47
Men	<i>(105)</i>	87	80	74	53	53	51	50	47
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>									
Low human capital	<i>(171)</i>	91	80	75	61	60	58	49	49
Long-term unemployed	<i>(123)</i>	90	77	74	63	59	56	53	48
Carers	<i>(60)</i>	88	78	68	70	65	52	53	47
Disability/health problem	<i>(50)</i>	88	72	66	54	52	50	46	42
<i>Entry status:</i>									
Employed	<i>(84)</i>	86	79	73	44	49	48	45	45
Unemployed	<i>(48)</i>	90	71	79	58	60	58	44	46
In education	<i>(30)</i>	83	87	70	70	60	63	80	50
Inactive	<i>(91)</i>	92	79	77	67	58	49	52	49

Source: MORI

Self-confidence

Most beneficiaries felt that their self-confidence in regards to working had improved as a result of going on an ESF course. Overall, nearly nine in ten beneficiaries (87%) say that this is the case. As with work skills, levels of self-confidence are highly consistent and at no point fall below 70% for the key demographic groups, while among 25-34 year olds, self-confidence about working was improved for 96% of beneficiaries.

Table 3.17: Whether beneficiaries were helped in building their self-confidence at working, by key beneficiary groups

		Improved self-confidence
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>		(229) %
Total	(263)	87
<i>Gender:</i>		
Women	(158)	91
Men	(105)	81
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>		
Low human capital	(171)	88
Long-term unemployed	(123)	90
Carers	(60)	92
Disability/health problem	(50)	86
Lone parents	(34)	97
No qualifications	(31)	97
Low basic skills	(22)	95
Minority Ethnic Group	(11)	73
<i>Age:</i>		
<18	(36)	78
18-24	(101)	85
25-34	(46)	96
35-49	(57)	88
50+	(23)	91
<i>Entry status:</i>		
Employed	(84)	86
Unemployed	(48)	88
In education	(30)	93
Inactive	(91)	86
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>		
None	(86)	83
One	(84)	88
Two	(50)	88
Three or more	(43)	93

Source: MORI

Looking at the specific ways in which beneficiaries were helped to improve their self-confidence about working, there is much less variation than for the work-related skill factors. As shown in Table 3.18, between the most common specific of doing things independently (89%) and the least common ones of being able to solve problems/expressing yourself and problem solving (85%), there are only four percentage points.

With the exception of beneficiaries who were in education on entry (who, it should be pointed out, only make up 30 people), inactive entrants were most likely to have improved their ability to act independently (91%) and to have gained in motivation (93%).

In all cases, the long-term unemployed, carers and those with low human capital were more likely than average to feel that they had benefited. This was most marked in terms of ability to do things independently, solving problems and team working.

Table 3.18: Ways in which beneficiaries were helped to improve self-confidence at work, by key beneficiary groups

		Ability to do things independently	Working with other people as part of a team	Motivation	Ability to take responsibility	Solving problems	Expressing communicating with people
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>							
Total	(263)	89	88	87	87	85	85
<i>Gender:</i>							
Women	(158)	90	90	91	87	86	88
Men	(105)	88	86	82	88	84	81
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>							
Low human capital	(171)	91	89	88	87	88	86
Long-term unemployed	(123)	94	90	90	90	87	88
Carers	(60)	93	88	95	92	95	90
Disability/health problem	(50)	80	82	86	82	80	80
<i>Entry status:</i>							
Employed	(84)	85	85	85	83	82	85
Unemployed	(48)	88	92	88	90	90	83
In education	(30)	93	87	87	87	93	90
Inactive	(91)	91	89	93	88	84	86

Source: MORI

Practical job search help

It is important to assess whether those beneficiaries who were interviewed felt that they were given practical help in finding work. While it is apparent that ESF-funded training courses improve both beneficiaries' work skills and self-confidence, it is not as conclusive that they provide this practical help. As Table 3.19 shows, just under half of beneficiaries (45%) felt that they were given this help.

It should be noted that those who were in work on entry may not have expected to be given this sort of help. Only a third of these beneficiaries (33%) said that they were given this practical help, indicating perhaps that this element of ESF training courses is targeted at those in most need. Contrastingly, over two in three beneficiaries who had been unemployed on entry (69%) felt that they were given this help.

Table 3.19: Whether beneficiaries were given practical help in finding a job, by key beneficiary groups

		Received practical help
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>		<i>(119)</i> %
Total	<i>(263)</i>	45
<i>Gender:</i>		
Women	<i>(158)</i>	47
Men	<i>(105)</i>	43
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>		
Low human capital	<i>(171)</i>	50
Long-term unemployed	<i>(123)</i>	49
Carers	<i>(60)</i>	43
Disability/health problem	<i>(50)</i>	36
Lone parents	<i>(34)</i>	56
No qualifications	<i>(31)</i>	71
Low basic skills	<i>(22)</i>	45
Minority Ethnic Group	<i>(11)</i>	36
<i>Age:</i>		
<18	<i>(36)</i>	53
18-24	<i>(101)</i>	41
25-34	<i>(46)</i>	52
35-49	<i>(57)</i>	49
50+	<i>(23)</i>	30
<i>Entry status:</i>		
Employed	<i>(84)</i>	33
Unemployed	<i>(48)</i>	69
In education	<i>(30)</i>	43
Inactive	<i>(91)</i>	46
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>		
None	<i>(86)</i>	43
One	<i>(84)</i>	45
Two	<i>(50)</i>	44
Three or more	<i>(43)</i>	51

Source: MORI

Looking at specific practical job experiences, Table 3.20 shows that over three quarters of all surveyed beneficiaries (77%) felt that the course gave them advice or guidance on the sorts of work or training they could do. Over half felt that they received general training about work (60%) or training about looking for work.

Under half, though, felt that they were given information about vacancies (48%) or were provided with contacts (47%) and only two in five said that they were given work experience or a work placement (40%). Women (45%) were significantly more likely than men (31%) to be given this last element of practical support.

Those beneficiaries who were unemployed at entry were more likely than other groups to have received help to improve the skills they would need at work. This was specifically the case in regards to training in how to look for work and information about vacancies.

Table 3.20: Ways in which beneficiaries were given practical help to find a job, by key beneficiary groups

		Advice/guidance about what sort of work/training to undertake	General training about the world of work	Provision of training in how to look for work	Information about vacancies	Provision of contacts	Work experience or work placement
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>							
Total	<i>(263)</i>	77	60	54	48	47	40
<i>Gender:</i>							
Women	<i>(158)</i>	77	65	56	44	46	45
Men	<i>(105)</i>	78	53	50	54	48	31
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>							
Low human capital	<i>(171)</i>	80	64	57	51	49	42
Long-term unemployed	<i>(123)</i>	83	67	59	53	46	46
Carers	<i>(60)</i>	77	65	57	47	38	52
Disability/health problem	<i>(50)</i>	72	66	42	48	40	42
<i>Entry status:</i>							
Employed	<i>(84)</i>	71	55	46	43	49	35
Unemployed	<i>(48)</i>	77	63	69	58	54	44
In education	<i>(30)</i>	90	60	57	50	43	33
Inactive	<i>(91)</i>	78	63	54	48	45	45
<i>Source: MORI</i>							

Course outcomes

It is important to assess whether those beneficiaries interviewed felt as if they were satisfied with the courses they went on and how relevant they actually were to them and their opportunities for development.

Satisfaction and relevance

Table 3.21 indicates that nearly all beneficiaries felt satisfied with the quality of the course they attended (96%). Beneficiaries with none or one multiple disadvantage were significantly more satisfied with the course than other beneficiaries (99% and 98% respectively).

Those between the ages of 18-24 were significantly more likely to be satisfied with their course (98%) than other age groups of a significant base size. Even the age group with the lowest level of satisfaction (35-49 year olds) still possess a high level (91%).

Table 3.21: Satisfaction, dissatisfaction and net satisfaction with quality of course, by key beneficiary groups

		Satisfaction	Dissatisfaction	Net satisfaction
		%	%	%
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>				
Total	(263)	96	3	+93
<i>Gender:</i>				
Women	(158)	96	3	+92
Men	(105)	96	3	+93
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>				
Low human capital	(171)	96	4	+92
Long-term unemployed	(123)	96	3	+93
Carers	(60)	87	10	+77
Disability/health problem	(50)	88	12	+76
Lone parents	(34)	88	9	+79
No qualifications	(31)	100	-	+100
Low basic skills	(22)	100	-	+100
Minority Ethnic Group	(11)	91	9	+82
<i>Age:</i>				
<18	(36)	97	3	+94
18-24	(101)	98	1	+97
25-34	(46)	93	4	+89
35-49	(57)	91	7	+84
50+	(23)	100	-	+100
<i>Entry status:</i>				
Employed	(84)	96	1	+95
Unemployed	(48)	100	-	+100
In education	(30)	100	-	+100
Inactive	(91)	92	6	+86
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>				
None	(86)	99	*	+99
One	(84)	98	1	+96
Two	(50)	94	6	+88
Three or more	(43)	88	9	+79

Source: MORI

Over nine in ten beneficiaries (92%) thought the course gave training, or help, or support relevant to their needs. It should also be noted that for every major demographic grouping, at least four in five beneficiaries feel that they have profited from their course in this way.

Table 3.22: Relevancy of training, help or support, by key beneficiary groups

		Course was relevant to needs
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>		(242) %
Total	(263)	92
<i>Entry status:</i>		
Employed	(84)	95
Unemployed	(48)	90
In education	(30)	93
Inactive	(91)	93
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>		
None	(86)	93
One	(84)	92
Two	(50)	96
Three or more	(43)	86

Source: MORI

Looking at the course itself, Table 3.23 highlights that over four in five beneficiaries (82%) felt that the course was about right for them. This view was especially prevalent among those in education at entry level (93%) and those who were employed at entry level (90%).

Table 3.23: Whether support was provided at the right level, by key beneficiary groups

		Too basic	About right	Too advanced
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>		<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Total	<i>(263)</i>	14	82	3
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>				
Low human capital	<i>(171)</i>	16	80	3
Long-term unemployed	<i>(123)</i>	15	79	4
Carers	<i>(60)</i>	15	80	3
Disability/health problem	<i>(50)</i>	16	80	2
<i>Age:</i>				
<18	<i>(36)</i>	19	75	6
18-24	<i>(101)</i>	11	84	3
25-34	<i>(46)</i>	17	83	-
35-49	<i>(57)</i>	16	79	4
50+	<i>(23)</i>	4	91	4
<i>Entry status:</i>				
Employed	<i>(84)</i>	8	90	1
Unemployed	<i>(48)</i>	17	79	4
In education	<i>(30)</i>	-	93	3
Inactive	<i>(91)</i>	19	76	4

Source: MORI

Qualifications

As Table 3.24 demonstrates, a high proportion of interviewed beneficiaries (81%) gained a qualification as a result of being on their courses. One in three (35%) of those who did not gain a qualification gained units or credits towards a qualification as a result of their course.

Beneficiaries over the age of 50 were the least likely to gain a qualification (only 65% did) while those aged 25-34 were the most likely (91%). With the exception of those aged 25-34, lone parents were the most likely demographic to gain a qualification through their course – 91% did so.

Those who were inactive on entry (84%), unemployed entrants (81%), and those who were in education on entry (80%) were also all highly likely to gain qualifications. Emulating the high level of qualification gain among unemployed entrants, those with low human capital were also more likely to gain a qualification (80%).

Table 3.24: Qualifications gained, by key beneficiary groups

		Qualifications gained
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>		<i>%</i>
Total	(263)	81
<i>Gender:</i>		
Women	(158)	82
Men	(105)	79
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>		
Low human capital	(171)	80
Long-term unemployed	(123)	82
Carers	(60)	90
Disability/health problem	(50)	78
Lone parents	(34)	91
No qualifications	(31)	77
Low basic skills	(22)	73
Minority Ethnic Group	(11)	73
<i>Age:</i>		
<18	(36)	78
18-24	(101)	80
25-34	(46)	91
35-49	(57)	81
50+	(23)	65
<i>Entry status:</i>		
Employed	(84)	77
Unemployed	(48)	81
In education	(30)	80
Inactive	(91)	84
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>		
None	(86)	79
One	(84)	81
Two	(50)	78
Three or more	(43)	86

Source: MORI

Unfortunately, we could not obtain precise details about the type of qualification gained from everybody surveyed. However, as Table 3.25 shows, where this information is available and categorisable, some observations can be made.

Nearly one in five beneficiaries (18 per cent) gained a level 3 SVQ or equivalent and three in ten (30 per cent) achieved a level 4 SVQ or equivalent. Those aged 18-24 were significantly more likely to have attained the higher award (51 per cent). None of the beneficiaries achieved a level 5 SVQ.

Table 3.25: Qualifications gained, SVQ level or equivalent where known, by key beneficiary groups

		SVQ1	SVQ2	SVQ3	SVQ4
		%	%	%	%
<i>Base: all wave 2 beneficiaries who gained a qualification</i>					
Total	(212)	5	8	18	30
<i>Gender:</i>					
Women	(129)	6	11	21	23
Men	(83)	4	4	14	41
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>					
Low human capital	(136)	4	9	20	30
Long-term unemployed	(101)	5	14	19	19
Carers	(54)	6	7	17	19
Disability/health problem	(39)	3	8	18	15
Lone parents	(31)	6	13	19	19
No qualifications	(24)	13	21	21	4
Low basic skills	(16)	6	6	25	38
Minority Ethnic Group	(8)	-	-	13	25
<i>Age:</i>					
<18	(28)	18	14	25	21
18-24	(81)	1	5	14	51
25-34	(42)	-	10	21	24
35-49	(46)	4	9	20	15
50+	(15)	20	7	20	-
<i>Entry status:</i>					
Employed	(65)	5	3	18	40
Unemployed	(39)	8	15	18	23
In education	(24)	13	13	8	25
Inactive	(76)	3	8	22	25
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>					
None	(68)	7	3	13	47
One	(68)	3	12	24	31
Two	(39)	5	8	23	18
Three or more	(37)	5	11	14	11

Source: MORI

Employability

As well as many beneficiaries believing that they have gained or improved various skills sets as a result of being on an ESF-funded course, the survey found a clear effect on their employment prospects too. By looking at beneficiary status at three defined points (on entry, on exit and at the time of the survey) we are able to determine the potential effects of the ESF.

The table below indicates that among those beneficiaries in the survey, employment markedly increases over the time span surveyed, with the greatest increase coming during or just after the course, although growth continued up until the survey itself.

Table 3.26: Distribution of activity across three time periods

	On joining project	On leaving project	At time of survey
<i>Base: all those answering the question</i>	(263) %	(263) %	(263) %
Employed	32	47	50
Inactive	35	14	14
Unemployed	18	29	24
In education	11	10	12

Source: MORI

The level of employment among beneficiaries increased from nearly one in three (32%) on entry to half (50%) at the time of the survey. This represents a 56% increase in the proportion on people who were employed.

The proportion of people who were inactive fell from over one in three (35%) on entry to one in seven (14%) at the time of the survey. It should also be noted that inactive entrants were most likely to have improved their ability to act independently (91%) and to have gained in motivation (93%) after taking the course.

The level of beneficiaries who are in education remained fairly static across the three time periods, but perhaps the least satisfactory movement occurred among unemployed beneficiaries. On entry, nearly one in five (18%) beneficiaries were unemployed, and on exit this had risen to nearly three in ten (29%). However, at the time of the survey, the level of unemployed beneficiaries had fallen again to one in four (24%).

While these rises in unemployment may seem counter-intuitive, they are in fact a positive finding. This is because the increase in unemployment does not come from people who were previously employed or even from people who had been

in education, but from people who had previously been inactive. In other words, there is a clear and significant move towards engagement with the labour market.

In regards to employment, the data also suggests that the greatest swing was from beneficiaries who had been inactive on entry to those who were employed at the time of the survey.

We can look at these trends more closely, to compare the situation of beneficiaries on entry to the ESF programme with their activity immediately after the course and then at the time of the survey (as shown in Tables 3.26 and 3.27).

Over one in three unemployed entrants (33%) had a job when they left their course, a highly positive development. Fewer than three in ten inactive entrants had a job on leaving an ESF-funded course (29%). The proportion of inactive entrants employed had risen slightly at the time of the survey (to 31%).

While it is positive to find that nearly four in ten of those with low human capital (39%) were employed on leaving their course, the fact that under one in five (17%) were inactive is a concern, as is the fact that 26% of long-term unemployed beneficiaries were still inactive.

Table 3.27: Immediate activity on leaving the course, by entry status and key demographics

	Total	Employed on entry	Inactive on entry	Unemployed on entry	In education on entry	Low human capital	Long-term unemployed
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	(263)	(84) %	(91) %	(48) %	(30) %	(171) %	(123) %
In paid work on leaving project	47	75	31	35	40	39	24
Inactive on leaving project	14	1	32	8	10	17	26
Unemployed on leaving project	29	18	27	46	33	35	37
In education on leaving project	10	6	10	10	17	9	13

Source: MORI

These tables also reveal that in general, rates of employment growth slow with time – for instance, 35% of unemployed entrants were in work when they left a course, compared to 42% when they were surveyed. As a result, the biggest impact of ESF-funded help seems to have come in the short-term – a noted increase in employment by the end of the course, followed by diminishing growth afterwards.

It should be noted that levels of unemployment continued to fall for the long-term unemployed. Those with low human capital experienced no change in level.

There is still no real change in terms of inactivity. Across all types of entry status and across the key tracking demographics, inactivity levels remain similar for those leaving the course and at the time of the survey.

Table 3.28: Activity at the time of the survey, by entry status and key demographics

	Total	Employed on entry	Inactive on entry	Unemployed on entry	In education on entry	Low human capital	Long-term unemployed
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	(263)	(84) %	(91) %	(48) %	(30) %	(171) %	(123) %
In paid work at time of survey	50	76	33	42	50	39	30
Inactive at time of survey	14	4	30	10	3	18	24
Unemployed at time of survey	24	15	21	40	33	30	29
In education at time of survey	12	5	16	10	13	14	18

Source: MORI

Job mobility

While it is possible to track beneficiaries' employment prospects, we can also examine how the course affected those who had a job at the time of the survey.⁶

Overall, over one in five of those in paid work at the start of the course and working at the time of the survey had found a new job with a new employer (23%). Women appear more likely to have found a new job with a new employer than men as over a quarter (27%) have found a new role compared to one in five men (19%).

Outcomes for beneficiaries not in employment

While half (50%) of beneficiaries had a job at the time of the survey, the rest were still without work. Of those who were unemployed or inactive, over half (53%) were actively looking for work at the time of the survey. This proportion was highest (61%) among unemployed entrants, an indication that they are closer to the job market than currently non-working inactive entrants (44% of whom were not looking for work).

⁶ It should be noted that this section only relates to 64 beneficiaries who had been in work before their course *and* at the point of interview.

Of people without a job who stated they are currently looking for work (69 beneficiaries), 91% felt more confident about getting a job as a result of being on the training course and 90% believed they were now better skilled for the type of work they are looking for.

Looking at the problems that still face non-working beneficiaries, Table 3.29 compares the perceived barriers for non-workers prior to their course with the barriers faced by those still without a job after their course.

As can be seen, having the wrong qualifications or out of date skills become significantly less important barriers by the time of the survey. Similarly, the functional barrier of disability also falls dramatically. Conversely, a lack of local jobs becomes a more important barrier to work, as do caring responsibilities.

Table 3.29: Barriers for those who were without work on entry and at time of survey

	Before	After	Change
<i>Base: all respondents not in work</i>	(552) %	(131) %	%
<i>Skill-based barriers:</i>			
Did not have right qualifications, training or skills	42	27	-15
No recent experience of working	37	37	0
Skills out of date	32	18	-14
Reading, writing, maths not good enough	14	6	-8
Understanding of English not good enough	6	1	-5
<i>Functional barriers:</i>			
Personal disability or health problems	36	23	-13
No jobs where lived	34	38	+4
Age	26	21	-5
Problems with transport	21	16	-5
Could not find suitable and/or affordable childcare	14	11	-3
Taking care of elderly, ill or disabled person	10	13	+3

Source: MORI

4. Findings by Priority

Following the main survey findings, this chapter summarises the findings by ESF Programmes and Priorities. It covers much of the same information as the main findings but it was felt to be important to provide this information separately, as there are some statistically significant differences between the two. It should be noted that given the inclusion of analysis on relatively small sub-groups (fewer than 100 beneficiaries), the results presented here should be interpreted with caution.

Who was surveyed?

In total, 887 beneficiaries were surveyed in the first wave of this study. They are sub-divided into three separate objectives, each of which is further sub-divided into a number of priorities ranging from 43 beneficiaries in the smallest sub-group to 219 beneficiaries in the largest sub-group (with the exception of Objective 1, where all beneficiaries belong to the same priority as well). Table 4.1 details this breakdown, along with each of these sub-groups by age and gender.

Table 4.1: Objectives and Priorities, by age and gender

		Total	<18	18-24	25-34	35-49	50+	Men	Women
	<i>Bases</i>	(877) %	(96) %	(282) %	(155) %	(235) %	(106) %	(410) %	(467) %
Total		100							
<i>Objective 1</i>	(90)	10	4	13	16	36	31	49	51
<i>Objective 2</i>	(277)	32	14	55	16	13	2	54	46
Priority 1	(219)	25	15	65	12	7	1	59	41
Priority 3	(58)	7	12	17	29	36	5	36	64
<i>Objective 3</i>	(510)	58	10	23	19	33	14	42	58
Priority 1	(43)	5	35	14	14	30	7	16	84
Priority 2	(155)	18	14	27	16	28	14	59	41
Priority 3	(82)	9	11	12	22	32	23	38	62
Priority 4	(145)	17	3	27	22	37	10	52	48
Priority 5	(85)	10	2	25	19	38	16	13	87

Source: MORI

In terms of gender, the Objective 1 (O1) sub-group closely mirrors the overall sample. More than half of the beneficiaries in Objective 2, Priority 1 (O2P1), Objective 3, Priority 2 (O3P2), and Objective 3, Priority 4 (O3P4) are men. In contrast, more than 60% of those in Objective 2, Priority 3 (O2P3), Objective 3, Priority 1 (O3P1), Objective 3, Priority 3 (O3P3), and Objective 3, Priority 5 (O3P5) are women.

Beneficiaries in both O1 and O3P3 tend to be over the age of 50 and those in O3P5, O3P3, O3P2, and O3P1 also tend to be older (over the age of 35). Those in O3P4 and O2P3, on the other hand, tend to be between the ages of 25 and 49; and those in O2P1 tend to be youngest (under the age of 24).

Employment status

Respondents were asked to identify their main activity one year prior to enrolling in an ESF programme. Over one-third (37%) had been in employment, of whom three in four (75%) had been working full-time.

As Table 4.2 demonstrates, beneficiaries in O3P3 and O3P4 are more likely than their counterparts to have been employed on entry to the ESF programmes. In contrast, those in O2P3, O3P2, and O3P5 are more likely to have been inactive or unemployed. Beneficiaries in O3P1 are more likely than those in other sub-groups to have been in education when they started an ESF course.

Given their younger age profile, it is not surprising that beneficiaries in O2P1, O3P1, and O3P2 are more likely to have been in education one year prior to entry into the ESF programme. More than one-third of those in O2P1 were employed upon entry into the programme, and one in ten were either still in education or unemployed and actively seeking work. Those in O3P1 are most likely to have still been in education, been unemployed and actively seeking work, or looking after the family full-time one week before starting the ESF programme.

Although slightly older, beneficiaries in O2P3 were also more likely to have been in education one year prior to entry into the ESF programme. One week prior to entry, however, members of this group were more likely to have been unemployed and actively seeking work, looking after the family full-time, or not working due to disability or illness.

Beneficiaries in O1 were most likely to have either been employed one year prior to entry in the programme or not working due to disability or illness. This is relatively unchanged from their status one week prior to entry.

Table 4.2: Entry status, by Priority, compared with the overall sample

		Total	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	In education
	<i>Bases</i>	(877) %	(325) %	(146) %	(286) %	(87) %
Total		100	37	17	33	10
<i>Objective 1</i>	(90)	10	40	9	34	16
<i>Objective 2</i>	(277)	32	32	16	34	12
Priority 1	(219)	25	37	14	30	13
Priority 3	(58)	7	14	22	50	10
<i>Objective 3</i>	(510)	58	39	18	31	8
Priority 1	(43)	5	14	19	42	21
Priority 2	(155)	18	10	28	48	11
Priority 3	(82)	9	59	18	21	4
Priority 4	(145)	17	79	7	7	4
Priority 5	(85)	10	19	20	48	5

Source: MORI

Qualifications held

More than four in five beneficiaries in the sample surveyed had some level of qualifications or certificates before starting the ESF course (82%). As Table 4.3 shows, beneficiaries in O2P3, O3P1, O3P2, and O3P4 are all more likely to have an SVQ level 1/2 or equivalent prior to starting the course.

Those in O2P1 are more likely to have mid-level qualifications (SVQ 2/3 or equivalent) while those in O1 and O3P3 are more likely than other beneficiaries to have higher level qualifications (SVQ 4/5 or equivalent).

Table 4.3: Qualifications held, SVQ level or equivalent where known, by Priority (multiple responses possible)

		Total	SVQ1	SVQ2	SVQ3	SVQ4	SVQ5
	<i>Bases</i>	(877)	(97)	(261)	(123)	(115)	(19)
		%	%	%	%	%	%
Total		100	13	36	17	16	3
<i>Objective 1</i>	(90)	10	18	24	6	25	11
<i>Objective 2</i>	(277)	32	11	46	25	9	-
Priority 1	(219)	25	6	49	29	10	-
Priority 3	(58)	7	35	28	5	7	-
<i>Objective 3</i>	(510)	58	14	33	14	18	3
Priority 1	(43)	5	24	41	7	12	-
Priority 2	(155)	18	15	30	19	19	2
Priority 3	(82)	9	10	31	6	22	9
Priority 4	(145)	17	12	36	16	19	2
Priority 5	(85)	10	13	29	16	17	-

Source: MORI

Labour market disadvantages

As Table 4.4 demonstrates, overall, more than two-thirds of beneficiaries in the sample (69%) identify one or more labour market disadvantages – that is, they are either lone parents, carers, they belong to a Minority Ethnic Group, their main language is not English or they are disabled or suffer from a health problem. This includes three in ten (30%) who experience one disadvantage, one in five who experience two disadvantages (19%), and 20% who experience three or more disadvantages.

Beneficiaries in O1, O2P3, O3P2, and O3P5 are all more likely to experience at least two disadvantages. In fact, those in O2P3, O3P2, and O3P5 are all more likely to experience three or more disadvantages.

Of those who are the most disadvantaged (three or more labour market disadvantages identified), at least three-quarters have low human capital and approximately one-third have caring responsibilities and/or are disabled. Furthermore, around one-quarter of beneficiaries with multiple disadvantages are lone parents and slightly fewer have low basic skills.

Table 4.4 Key demographics, by Priority, compared with the overall sample

	Total	O1	O2 P1	O2 P3	O3 P1	O3 P2	O3 P3	O3 P4	O3 P5	
<i>Bases</i>	(877) %	(90) %	(219) %	(58) %	(43) %	(155) %	(82) %	(145) %	(85) %	
Total	100	10	25	7	5	18	9	17	10	
<i>Labour market disadvantage:</i>										
Low human capital	(544)	62	57	62	71	51	75	54	48	75
Long-term unemployed	(388)	44	48	39	71	60	70	23	11	59
Disability/health problem	(208)	24	44	7	38	9	50	13	8	31
Carers	(192)	22	13	12	31	28	28	20	26	29
Lone parents	(102)	12	2	8	24	12	11	13	10	24
Low basic skills	(89)	10	8	5	10	5	21	7	10	12
Minority Ethnic Group	(41)	5	1	7	5	5	3	6	1	11
<i>Multiple disadvantages:</i>										
None	(279)	32	36	47	12	19	14	40	39	21
One	(259)	30	16	32	22	49	25	33	41	19
Two	(166)	19	24	11	29	21	28	13	11	28
Three or more	(173)	20	24	10	36	12	34	13	9	32
<i>Entry status:</i>										
Employed	(325)	37	40	37	14	14	10	59	79	19
Inactive	(286)	33	34	30	50	42	48	21	7	48
Unemployed	(146)	17	9	14	22	19	28	18	7	20
In education	(87)	10	16	13	10	21	11	4	4	5

Source: MORI

Low human capital

Low human capital is defined as beneficiaries who, upon entry to an ESF programme, did not have the right qualifications, lacked the training or skills, had no recent work experience, had skills that were out of date, or had poor basic skills (reading, writing, maths not good enough and poor understanding of English).

Table 4.4 shows that nearly two-thirds of the sample is categorised as having low human capital (62%). Beneficiaries in O3P2, O3P5, O2P1, and O2P3 are all more likely to have low human capital. Again, this is unsurprising given that those with low human capital are more likely than average to be held back by three or more disadvantages and low basic skills.

Long-term unemployment

Given the fact that beneficiaries in O2P3 and O3P2 are more likely to have been unemployed or inactive upon entry into the ESF programme, it is unsurprising that they are also more likely than their counterparts to be classified as long-term unemployed. Seven in ten of each of these groups (71% and 70%, respectively) are classified as long-term unemployed. More than half of those in O3P1 (60%), O3P5 (59%) are also classified as such, along with just under half of those in O1 (48%) and O2P1 (39%).

Disabilities or health problems

One in four beneficiaries in this survey had a disability or health problem prior to entering the course (24%); those in O3P2, O1, and O2P3 are far more likely than their counterparts and the overall sample to have a disability or health problem (50%, 44%, and 38%, respectively). Beneficiaries in O2P1, O3P4, and O3P1, on the other hand, are far less likely to have a disability or health problem that limits their daily activities or work.

Caring responsibilities

One in five (22%) beneficiaries in the sample report that they have caring responsibilities which limit their daily activities and the work they can do. Beneficiaries in O3P3 closely mirror this breakdown while those in O1 and O2P1 are far less likely to be carers, which is unsurprising given their younger age profile. Those in O2P3, O3P5, O3P1, and O3P2 on the other hand, are more likely that their counterparts to be carers.

Lone parenthood

Lone parents represent 12% of the sample and consist of those who do not live with a husband, wife, or partner but are responsible for the care or support of children. Beneficiaries in O2P3 and O3P5 are more likely than their counterparts to be lone parents. This is unsurprising given the slightly older age profile of these two groups and the fact that they are more likely to be carers.

Poor basic skills

One in ten respondents in the sample (10%) is categorised as having poor basic skills, described as lacking skills in reading, writing or maths *and* having a poor understanding of the English language. Beneficiaries in O3P2 are far more likely than their counterparts to have low basic skills. Those in O3P5 are also more likely to have low basic skills, although to a lesser degree.

Minority Ethnic Groups

Nearly all beneficiaries in these sub-groups are white (around 90% or more). Those in O3P5 are more likely than their counterparts to identify themselves as belonging to a Minority Ethnic Group (11% compared to 5% overall).

Barriers to employment

As Table 4.5 demonstrates, non-working beneficiaries report employment barriers that reflect their individual Priority's profiles. For example, O2P3 and O3P5 (both contain an over-representation of lone parents) report that one of their barriers was lack of suitable or affordable childcare. O3P3 and O3P3, both of which contain younger beneficiaries, are more likely to report that age is an employment barrier.

Table 4.5: Problems encountered by non-working beneficiaries in finding work, by Priority

	All not in work	O1	O2 P1	O2 P3	O3 P1	O3 P2	O3 P3	O3 P4	O3 P5
<i>Base: all respondents not in work on entry</i>	(552) %	(54) %	(137) %	(50) %	(37) %	(140) %	(34) %	(31) %	(69) %
<i>Skill-based barriers:</i>									
Did not have right qualifications, training or skills	42	30	43	50	35	37	44	35	59
No recent experience of working	37	37	47	24	16	34	35	35	46
Skills out of date	32	35	20	32	19	38	21	45	49
Reading, writing, maths not good enough	14	11	5	12	5	21	9	39	14
Understanding of English not good enough	6	2	3	4	3	9	-	19	7
<i>Functional barriers:</i>									
Personal disability or health problems	36	69	9	44	16	56	26	23	35
No jobs where lived	34	37	37	28	32	34	32	29	30
Age	26	22	23	18	38	33	38	16	23
Problems with transport	21	30	12	24	30	29	9	26	13
Could not find suitable and/or affordable childcare	14	13	11	26	14	10	12	13	20
Taking care of elderly, ill or disabled person	10	6	7	12	5	11	6	19	16

Source: MORI

Beneficiaries in O3P2 and O3P4 are more likely to mention poor basic skills and outdated skills. This is unsurprising given that these two groups have lower qualifications profiles (these sub-groups are most likely to have an SVQ 2 or equivalent). Furthermore, those in O3P2 (who are more likely to be disabled) are more likely to cite their disability and the cost of transport as employment barriers. This is also true of O1, which also contains an over-representation of beneficiaries with a disability.

Given that beneficiaries in O3P4 and O3P5 are more likely to be carers, it is unsurprising that they are also more likely to cite having to care for an elderly, ill or disabled relative or friend as a barrier to employment.

Joining an ESF-funded course

Most beneficiaries across all Objectives and Priorities joined an ESF programme due to their own personal choice, as they felt they needed to go on the particular course or project to improve their skills and abilities to get a job. This is especially true of those in O2P1, O3P5, and O3P1.

Beneficiaries in O3P4, O2P3, and O1 are all more likely to have joined an ESF programme when given the opportunity to do so. Beneficiaries in O3P2 were more likely than their counterparts to have been persuaded to go by someone else, while those in O3P4 were more likely to have been compelled or referred to it by another organisation (such as a job centre, court or youth offending team).

Table 4.6: Reasons for attending a project, by Priority

		Was compelled	Was persuaded	Given the opportunity	Personal decision
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	<i>Bases</i>	<i>(49)</i> %	<i>(46)</i> %	<i>(101)</i> %	<i>(608)</i> %
Total	(877)	6	5	12	69
<i>Objective 1</i>	<i>(90)</i>	4	7	19	66
<i>Objective 2</i>	<i>(277)</i>	4	3	8	79
Priority 1	<i>(219)</i>	3	3	5	82
Priority 3	<i>(58)</i>	7	2	21	67
<i>Objective 3</i>	<i>(510)</i>	7	6	12	65
Priority 1	<i>(43)</i>	-	5	2	74
Priority 2	<i>(155)</i>	6	9	5	66
Priority 3	<i>(82)</i>	4	6	16	63
Priority 4	<i>(145)</i>	14	3	26	51
Priority 5	<i>(85)</i>	2	7	4	81

Source: MORI

When asked what course they undertook, most beneficiaries across all sub-groups report computer training (with the exception of O3P1 and O3P4). Those in O3P5 were more likely to have taken courses in administration, communication, and trades, while those in O2P1 were more likely to have taken courses in accounting or maths.

Beneficiaries in O3P4 are more likely to have taken written work, health and safety, childcare, and food and hygiene; and those in O2P3 are more likely to have taken nursing, communication, work placement, and administration.

Those in O3P1, on the other hand, are more likely than their counterpart to have taken interaction courses, language courses, health and beauty, trades, and alternative therapies.

Courses taken by those in O2P1 and O3P5 are more likely to have been classroom-based, which is unsurprising given that they are also more likely to have taken computer training courses.

All other Objectives/Priorities attended courses that were more hands-on or practical and all beneficiaries felt the courses were time well-spent, with the exception of O3P4, who are more likely to have disagreed that the time was well-spent (although it should be noted that this group was more likely to have been employed upon entry to the programme and had relatively few disadvantages).

Not unlike the overall sample, awareness of the ESF support for the courses was mixed. Those in O2P1 and O3P1 were more likely to be aware of this support, compared to their counterparts.

More than half of beneficiaries in most Objectives/Priorities agreed a personal training plan with the course organiser. The exceptions are beneficiaries in O2P1 and O3P5.

Expectations of course

An important component of beneficiaries' experiences of ESF-funded courses and projects is their expectations before entering the courses. Beneficiaries' expectations of the course will affect both their experience during the course and also their perceptions of how successful the course or project has been in meeting these expectations.

As Table 4.7 shows, beneficiaries in O2P1 had the highest expectations upon joining the ESF programme – hoping that the courses would improve their work skills, improve their qualifications, improve their self-confidence about working, and give them practical help finding a job. On the other hand, those in O1 and O3P3 were less likely to have specific expectations when it came to the programme.

Given they were employed upon entry and their lack of qualifications, it is not surprising that those in O3P4 were less likely to assume that the course would give them practical help finding a job and more likely to expect that the course would improve their qualifications.

Beneficiaries in O3P5 were more likely to expect that the courses would improve their self-confidence about working and improve their qualifications. This is perhaps unsurprising given their long-term unemployed status, low human capital, and multiple disadvantages.

Table 4.7: Expectations before joining the project, by Priority

		Proportion expecting that the project would:			
		Improve skills needed at work	Improve qualifications	Improve self-confidence about work	Give practical help to find a job
<i>Base: all respondents</i>	<i>Bases</i>	(786) %	(762) %	(729) %	(621) %
Total	(877)	90	87	83	71
<i>Objective 1</i>	<i>(90)</i>	81	68	79	43
<i>Objective 2</i>	<i>(277)</i>	94	96	86	84
Priority 1	<i>(219)</i>	95	99	85	85
Priority 3	<i>(58)</i>	90	83	91	79
<i>Objective 3</i>	<i>(510)</i>	89	85	82	68
Priority 1	<i>(43)</i>	88	95	88	86
Priority 2	<i>(155)</i>	91	88	83	74
Priority 3	<i>(82)</i>	89	73	78	56
Priority 4	<i>(145)</i>	87	86	77	58
Priority 5	<i>(85)</i>	89	87	92	79

Source: MORI

Needs met and skills gained

It should be noted that at the Priority level, data from the second wave are often based on small sample sizes and that comparisons *within* the second wave data are generally difficult to validate. Due to the longitudinal nature of the research, however, statistical reliability tests can be applied to comparisons *between* wave one and wave two data, as will be found when examining employment status.

In terms of whether beneficiaries felt that they benefited from their course, Objective and Priority status does not appear to play a major role. As in general, the vast majority were satisfied with their course and – at the Priority level – the proportions which felt that the course was relevant to their needs varied from 86% among beneficiaries in O2P3 and O3P5 to 100% among O3P1 and O3P3 beneficiaries.

Work-related skills

Over nine in ten beneficiaries in the second wave of research felt that the course helped them to improve the skills they would need at work regardless of their Objective category.

Table 4.8: Whether beneficiaries were helped to improve the skills they would need at work, by Priority

		Improved work-related skills
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>		(246) %
Total	(263)	94
<i>Objective 1</i>	(22)	100
<i>Objective 2</i>	(109)	94
Priority 1	(95)	95
Priority 3	(14)	86
<i>Objective 3</i>	(132)	92
Priority 1	(23)	91
Priority 2	(46)	91
Priority 3	(16)	88
Priority 4	(12)	100
Priority 5	(35)	94

Source: MORI

Although Objective 3 beneficiaries had the highest relative level of unemployment on entry (21% compared to 16% for Objective 2 and 14% for Objective 1) both Objective 3 and Objective 2 beneficiaries often feel that they have the most improved specific working skills following the course.

Table 4.9 shows that around nine in ten Objective 2 and Objective 3 beneficiaries felt that they had gained or improved **practical job skills**. At a Priority level, these skills were most prevalent among O3P1 beneficiaries and least so among O3P4 beneficiaries, though as already stated, it should be noted that very small base sizes are involved at this level.

Nine in ten Objective 2 beneficiaries thought that they had been helped to improve their **IT skills**. This is significantly higher than Objective 3 beneficiaries, of whom only three in four said that the course had helped their IT skills. At a Priority level, this was most felt by beneficiaries in O2P1 and O3P5 and least by those beneficiaries under O3P4.

The gaining of **wider job skills** was also prevalent among Objective 2 beneficiaries as over half claimed they had improved them from the course, in line with Objective 3 beneficiaries. Among those with different Priorities in Objective 3, there was a noticeable difference in the perceived acquisition of wider job skills. Seven in ten beneficiaries in O3P2 and O3P5 believed they gained wider skills compared to just over two in five for O3P1, one in five for O3P3 and less than one in ten for O3P4.

Table 4.9: Ways in which beneficiaries were helped to improve the skills they would need at work, by Priority

<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>		Practical skills related to a particular job	Improve computing/IT skills	Study skills	Improved English speaking skills	Improved reading and writing skills	Training in wider job skills	Training in management/leadership skills	Improved maths and number skills
Total	<i>(263)</i>	89	78	75	57	56	52	51	47
<i>Objective 1</i>	<i>(22)</i>	77	45	36	50	41	36	32	41
<i>Objective 2</i>	<i>(109)</i>	89	92	82	56	56	55	49	48
Priority 1	<i>(95)</i>	91	94	85	55	57	58	49	47
Priority 3	<i>(14)</i>	79	79	57	64	50	36	43	50
<i>Objective 3</i>	<i>(132)</i>	90	72	76	58	58	53	57	47
Priority 1	<i>(23)</i>	96	57	78	78	65	43	65	48
Priority 2	<i>(46)</i>	93	80	85	67	65	70	61	54
Priority 3	<i>(16)</i>	94	50	56	38	38	19	19	38
Priority 4	<i>(12)</i>	75	33	58	33	42	8	33	17
Priority 5	<i>(35)</i>	86	94	77	51	57	69	71	51

Source: MORI

Self-confidence

There are slight differences among beneficiaries in the various Objectives regarding whether the course helped to improve their self-confidence, although overall levels are high. Objective 1 beneficiaries possess the highest level, followed by Objective 3 beneficiaries and Objective 2 beneficiaries.

Table 4.10: Whether beneficiaries were helped to improve the self-confidence they would need at work, by Priority

		Improved self-confidence
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>		(229) %
Total	(263)	87
<i>Objective 1</i>	(22)	95
<i>Objective 2</i>	(109)	81
Priority 1	(95)	81
Priority 3	(14)	79
<i>Objective 3</i>	(132)	91
Priority 1	(23)	100
Priority 2	(46)	87
Priority 3	(16)	88
Priority 4	(12)	100
Priority 5	(35)	89

Source: MORI

As Table 4.11 demonstrates, when looking at the specifics of self-confidence, in most cases, more than four in five beneficiaries across all Priorities felt that they had gained 'soft' skills.

Beneficiaries in Objective 3 were most likely to feel that they had improved their **ability to work with other people as part of a team**, while beneficiaries in Objectives 2 and 3 were most likely to feel they were helped to increase their **ability to take responsibility**. Nine in ten beneficiaries in Objectives 2 and 3 considered this to be the case compared to two in three of these beneficiaries in Objective 1. At a Priority level, over three in four of all beneficiaries believed they had enhanced this ability and all of O3P4 beneficiaries felt this way.

When looking at a Priority level, those beneficiaries in O3P5 were significantly more likely (97%) to have improved their **motivation** and **problem-solving**. Beneficiaries in O2P1 were also highly likely to feel that they had improved their **ability to do things independently**.

Table 4.11: Ways in which beneficiaries were helped to improve self-confidence at work, by Priority

		Ability to do things independently	Working with other people as part of a team	Motivation	Ability to take responsibility	Solving problems	Expressing communicating with people
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>							
Total	(263)	89	88	87	87	85	85
<i>Objective 1</i>	(22)	68	86	77	64	73	86
<i>Objective 2</i>	(109)	93	86	87	91	86	86
Priority 1	(95)	95	89	86	92	87	88
Priority 3	(14)	79	64	93	86	79	71
<i>Objective 3</i>	(132)	89	90	89	88	86	84
Priority 1	(23)	100	100	96	96	96	96
Priority 2	(46)	85	87	87	85	80	80
Priority 3	(16)	75	75	75	75	69	75
Priority 4	(12)	92	92	83	100	83	75
Priority 5	(35)	94	94	97	89	97	89

Source: MORI

Practical job search help

As Table 4.12 shows, nearly half of those beneficiaries in Objectives 2 and 3 thought the course provided practical help in looking for a job, compared to only one in five of those in Objective 1. When looking at a Priority level, those beneficiaries in O3P2 were among the most likely to think the course provided practical help

Table 4.12: Whether beneficiaries were given practical job search help, by Priority

		Given practical help
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>		(119) %
Total	(263)	45
<i>Objective 1</i>	(22)	18
<i>Objective 2</i>	(109)	48
Priority 1	(95)	46
Priority 3	(14)	57
<i>Objective 3</i>	(132)	48
Priority 1	(23)	52
Priority 2	(46)	54
Priority 3	(16)	31
Priority 4	(12)	33
Priority 5	(35)	49

Source: MORI

These overall patterns can be found in many of the specifics of job search help, as set out in Table 4.13 below.

Two in five of those beneficiaries in Objectives 2 and 3 believed the course gave them **work experience or a work placement** compared to only one in five of Objective 1 beneficiaries. This was most notably felt at the Priority level by those beneficiaries in O3P1 and O3P2.

Three in five of beneficiaries in Objective 2 and just over half of Objective 3 beneficiaries felt the course provided training in **how to look for work** compared to only one in four beneficiaries in Objective 1.

Half of Objective 2 and Objective 3 beneficiaries felt they were told about **vacancies**, and beneficiaries under O3P2 were most likely to say that they received this help.

Table 4.13: Ways in which beneficiaries were given practical help to find a job, by key beneficiary groups

		Advice/guidance about what sort of work/training to undertake	General training about the world of work	Provision of training in how to look for work	Information about vacancies	Provision of contacts	Work experience or work placement
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>							
Total	(263)	77	60	54	48	47	40
<i>Objective 1</i>	(22)	73	64	23	27	23	23
<i>Objective 2</i>	(109)	78	61	60	50	50	39
Priority 1	(95)	79	60	61	52	49	38
Priority 3	(14)	71	64	50	43	50	50
<i>Objective 3</i>	(132)	77	59	54	49	48	42
Priority 1	(23)	91	91	70	57	65	65
Priority 2	(46)	80	61	52	59	46	52
Priority 3	(16)	63	38	38	38	38	31
Priority 4	(12)	58	25	33	8	33	17
Priority 5	(35)	77	57	60	51	51	29

Source: MORI

Course outcomes

By looking at the training received by beneficiaries under different Objectives, it can allow us to predict some of the potential outcomes:

- As they are more likely to be unemployed entrants, Objective 3 beneficiaries should be more likely to have gained a qualification or certificate than those beneficiaries in other Objectives.
- In addition, given the make up of Objective 3 beneficiaries, they should also be significantly more likely to have found employment. As Objective 1 and 2 beneficiaries are more likely to be in work on entry, their employment prospects should be greatly reduced.

Satisfaction and relevance

Over nine in ten beneficiaries across all Objectives thought the course gave training, or help, or support relevant to their needs, this included all surveyed beneficiaries in Objective 1, O3P1 and O3P3.

Table 4.14: Relevancy and level of training, help or support, by Priority

		Relevant to needs	Too basic	About right	Too advanced
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>		(242) %	(36) %	(216) %	(8) %
Total	(263)	92	14	82	3
<i>Objective 1</i>	(22)	100	9	91	-
<i>Objective 2</i>	(109)	91	15	82	3
Priority 1	(95)	92	14	82	3
Priority 3	(14)	86	21	79	-
<i>Objective 3</i>	(132)	92	14	81	4
Priority 1	(23)	100	17	78	4
Priority 2	(46)	89	13	80	4
Priority 3	(16)	100	6	94	-
Priority 4	(12)	92	8	92	-
Priority 5	(35)	86	17	74	6

Source: MORI

When looking at the course itself, Table 4.14 also highlights that over nine in ten beneficiaries in Objective 1 thought the course was about right compared to eight in ten for Objectives 2 and 3. It is also worth noting that nearly one in six of Objective 2 and Objective 3 beneficiaries thought the course was too basic.

The vast majority of beneficiaries across all the Objectives were satisfied with the quality of the course they attended (95%, 95% and 96% respectively for the 3 Objectives). When looking at a Priority level, O3P2, O3P3 and O3P4 all have 100% satisfaction among their beneficiaries.

Qualifications

As Table 4.15 shows, Objective 3 and Objective 2 beneficiaries in the survey were much more likely than their Objective 1 counterparts to have gained a qualification or certificate.

Beneficiaries in Objective 3 gained varied levels of qualifications at a Priority level: 96% of those in O3P1 gained a qualification or certificate as a result of doing a course compared to only 69% for O3P3.

Table 4.15: Qualifications gained, SVQ level or equivalent where known, by Priority

		Gained qualifications	SVQ1	SVQ2	SVQ3	SVQ4
<i>Base: all wave 2 beneficiaries who gained a qualification</i>		(212) %	(11) %	(17) %	(39) %	(64) %
Total	(212)	81	5	8	18	30
<i>Objective 1</i>	(12)	55	17	25	-	-
<i>Objective 2</i>	(86)	79	-	5	19	47
Priority 1	(75)	79	-	4	16	52
Priority 3	(11)	79	-	9	36	9
<i>Objective 3</i>	(114)	86	8	9	20	21
Priority 1	(22)	96	5	14	36	14
Priority 2	(42)	91	12	10	21	29
Priority 3	(11)	69	-	9	9	-
Priority 4	(10)	83	-	-	20	10
Priority 5	(29)	83	10	7	10	28

Source: MORI

As can be seen from the table, Level 3 and Level 4 SVQs were primarily attained by those beneficiaries in Objectives 2 and 3. Around one in five beneficiaries in these two Objectives attained a Level 3 qualification or equivalent. Nearly half of Objective 2 beneficiaries attained a Level 4 qualification or equivalent compared to only one in five Objective 3 beneficiaries. At a Priority level, those beneficiaries in O2P1 were significantly more likely to attain the Level 4 qualification than those in other Priorities.

It is also worth observing that over half (55%) of Objective 2 beneficiaries and a third (33%) of Objective 3 beneficiaries who did not directly gain a complete qualification on the course claimed to gain some units/credits towards a qualification.

Employability

As with the full sample, it is useful to look at beneficiary status by Objective and Priority at the three defined points of entry, exit and at the time of survey. This is set out in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16: Distribution of activity across three time periods, by Priority

	On joining project				On leaving project				At time of survey				
	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	In education	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	In education	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	In education	
<i>Base: all wave 2 respondents</i>	(84) %	(48) %	(91) %	(30) %	(123) %	(77) %	(38) %	(25) %	(132) %	(63) %	(37) %	(32) %	
Total	(263)	32	18	35	11	47	29	14	10	50	24	14	12
<i>Objective 1</i>	(22)	41	14	23	18	50	23	18	9	55	18	23	5
<i>Objective 2</i>	(109)	39	16	32	10	48	28	16	9	53	18	14	16
Priority 1	(95)	42	15	27	12	49	28	13	9	56	19	11	16
Priority 3	(14)	14	21	64	-	36	21	36	7	36	14	36	14
<i>Objective 3</i>	(132)	25	21	39	11	45	32	13	10	47	30	13	11
Priority 1	(23)	22	17	48	13	57	17	9	17	70	13	4	13
Priority 2	(46)	13	26	37	20	39	41	4	15	41	35	9	15
Priority 3	(16)	56	25	19	-	75	13	13	-	63	13	19	6
Priority 4	(12)	50	8	25	8	83	8	8	-	92	-	8	-
Priority 5	(35)	20	20	49	6	20	46	29	6	17	51	23	9

Source: MORI

The proportion of beneficiaries in employment on entry was highest in Objectives 1 and 2, with two in five beneficiaries being in work on entry.

Although the base size is small, the fact that employment among Objective 1 beneficiaries rises from 41% on entry to 55% by the time of the survey represents a real and significant change for these beneficiaries.

This improvement in employment levels is consistent across all Objectives, as Objective 2 beneficiaries improved from nearly four in ten (39%) on entry to over half (53%) at the time of the survey and Objective 3 beneficiaries improved from one in four (25%) on entry to nearly half (47%) at the time of the survey.

Unemployment rates have also risen across all Objectives. Objective 3 beneficiaries saw the greatest increase between entry and at the time of the survey (from 21% to 30%) with Objective 1 and Objective 2 beneficiaries following a similar pattern (4% and 2% increases between entry and survey respectively). Those in O3P5 and O3P2 were significantly more likely to be unemployed at the time of the survey than other beneficiaries (51% and 35% respectively).

As already noted in the previous chapter, these rises in unemployment can be attributed to a move towards engagement with the labour market among beneficiaries who were previously inactive.

Levels of inactivity fell markedly among Objective 2 (32% to 14%) and Objective 3 (39% to 13%) beneficiaries between entry and the time of the survey while Objective 1 levels stayed constant (23% at entry and survey time). Upon further investigation, it can be seen that those in O2P3 (36%) and O3P5 (23%) had the highest relative proportions of inactivity at the time of the survey.

Although there were some slight differences between Objectives in terms of education levels, the overall impact of this was small.

Job mobility

It is also possible to gather a general picture of job mobility by Objective and Priority. As before, it should be noted that this section only relates to the 64 beneficiaries who were in work both before joining their course and at the time of survey.

All Objective 1 beneficiaries in this situation still had the same job with the same employer, while three in four Objective 2 beneficiaries and two in three Objective 3 beneficiaries had the same job. All the rest of the Objective 3 beneficiaries who were employed both before and after had found a new job with a new employer.

Outcome for beneficiaries not in employment

Although half (50%) of all beneficiaries had a job at the time of the survey, the rest were still without work. Overall, 53% of these people were actively seeking work and one would expect the level of job seeking to be higher where there are greater levels of non-working beneficiaries (such as those beneficiaries under Objective 3). This is indeed the case, with 61% of non-working Objective 3 beneficiaries actively seeking work at the time of the survey, compared to only 43% of Objective 2 non-working beneficiaries and 40% of Objective 1. At a Priority level, those beneficiaries in O3P5 (69%) and O3P2 (59%) were more likely to be seeking work than most other beneficiaries.

Looking at the problems that still face non-working beneficiaries, Table 4.17 compares the perceived barriers by non-workers prior to their course with the barriers faced by those without a job at the time of the survey for Objectives 2 and 3 (Objective 1 has too small a base size for any meaningful conclusions to be drawn).

Overall, Objective 2 beneficiaries seem to have experienced a more marked fall in the salience of barriers than Objective 3 beneficiaries. In particular, a lack of skills or qualifications, out-of-date skills and age fell as key barriers.

Table 4.17: Barriers for those who were without work on entry and at time of survey, by Objective

	Objective 2			Objective 3		
	Before	After	Change	Before	After	Change
<i>Base: all respondents not in work</i>	(187) %	(51) %	%	(311) %	(70) %	%
<i>Skill-based barriers:</i>						
Did not have right qualifications, training or skills	45	18	-27	42	33	-9
No recent experience of working	41	33	-8	35	40	+5
Skills out of date	24	10	-14	37	23	-14
Reading, writing, maths not good enough	7	4	-3	18	7	-11
Understanding of English not good enough	3	2	-1	8	-	-8
<i>Functional barriers:</i>						
Personal disability or health problems	19	14	-5	40	23	-17
No jobs where lived	35	29	-6	32	40	+8
Age	22	12	-10	30	23	-7
Problems with transport	15	16	-1	23	16	-7
Could not find suitable and/or affordable childcare	15	10	-5	13	13	-
Taking care of elderly, ill or disabled person	9	8	-1	12	17	+5

Source: MORI

Among Objective 2 and 3 beneficiaries, the skills-based aspects of unemployment remain pronounced. Having no recent experience of work remains an important barrier to employment (standing at 33% for Objective 2 and 40% for Objective 3 beneficiaries). In fact, for Objective 3 beneficiaries who completed their course (and who therefore look part in the second wave of research) this barrier became more pronounced, increasing by five percentage points.

Among Objective 3 beneficiaries, while skills also become less of a barrier, the most significant fall is in terms of the functional barrier of disability, where it falls from 40% to 23%. This fall is not due to there being a lower proportion of disabled Objective 3 beneficiaries in wave two: in both waves of research, 25% of Objective 3 beneficiaries had a disability or health problem. It should be noted, however, that a lack of local jobs and the need to take care of a relative also increase proportionately as barriers for Objective 3 beneficiaries.

5. Conclusions

Surveys of ESF beneficiaries have been conducted in the past. The 2005 Beneficiaries Survey, however, was more ambitious in that it was carried out in two waves. For the first time, we were therefore able to track beneficiaries' attitudes towards their course while they were on it as well as once they had completed it. In addition, it provides longitudinal data on their labour market activity status.

The findings show that in general, expectations beneficiaries had on joining a course were met and often exceeded, with most people reporting that they had developed both 'hard' and 'soft' work-related skills. Indeed, four in five beneficiaries attained a qualification on completion of their course.

It is also instructive to note that gains and improvements appear to be relatively well-focused on key groups of beneficiaries. Non-working entrants – whether they are actively seeking work or are inactive – clearly benefit not only from targeted, skills-based training but also from the development of 'soft' skills relating to their self-confidence.

Furthermore, there is evidence of upskilling among beneficiaries who were employed on entry. This group cite a wide range of skills development, in particular improving practical skills relating to a particular job, as well developing IT and study skills.

A key outcome, however, for any ESF-funded training is whether beneficiaries improve their labour market status. From the two stage survey process, we are able to see a clear and positive move from unemployment to employment for many beneficiaries.

The proportion of beneficiaries in the second wave of research who are employed rises from a third on entry (32%) to a half (50%) at the time of the survey. This represents a 56% increase in employment. The rise is particularly impressive among Objective 3 beneficiaries, where the increase from 25% to 47% represents an 88% rise. At the Priority level, although the sub-groups are relatively small, the fact that employment rises from 13% to 41% among Objective 3, Priority 2 beneficiaries is also an extremely positive result.

While this research was not set up as an empirical evaluation to establish a causal link between attendance on the ESF course and subsequent labour market activity, the majority of those who moved into a new job felt that participation in the course had helped them to do so.

The large part of this move towards employability can be traced to those beneficiaries who had been inactive on entry. While most of those who had been employed on entry were still in work at the time of the survey, a quarter of those who were employed at the time of the survey (23%) had previously been inactive.

Moreover, even if they were not moving directly into work, inactive entrants were moving in the direction of work: a third of those who were unemployed at the time of the survey (30%) and nearly half of those in education (47%) had been inactive on entry.

This is a major finding of this research – that inactivity is being directly addressed by the ESF in Scotland. It should also be noted, however, that unemployment levels are affected by this move. Rather than falling, unemployment actually rises from entry to leaving a course (from 18% to 29%) and is still higher than at the beginning of the process by the time of the survey (24%). While this rise may be seen as a disappointment, it should be recognised that the ‘direction of travel’ is a positive one. The challenge for the ESF in Scotland is to maintain the increase in employment so that inactive and unemployed beneficiaries are able to make that final transition.

Appendices

Statistical Reliability

The sizes of the samples for the survey mean that differences in results for different sub-groups of a few percentage points or more are likely to be statistically significant. However, some bases are small and care should be taken when drawing comparisons if the shown base size is small.

The table below gives an indication of the confidence intervals to apply to different percentage results for different sample sizes in this report. These 95% confidence intervals are the levels within which we can be 95% confident (i.e. it will happen 19 times out of 20) that the true answer will lie.

Sample size	Approximate sampling tolerances		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
100 interviews	5.9	9.0	9.8
200 interviews	4.2	6.4	6.9
263 interviews	3.6	5.5	6.1
300 interviews	3.4	5.2	5.7
400 interviews	2.9	4.5	4.9
500 interviews	2.6	4.0	4.4
600 interviews	2.4	3.7	4.0
700 interviews	2.2	3.4	3.7
800 interviews	2.1	3.2	3.5
877 interviews	2.0	3.0	3.3

For example, with a sample size of 877, where 30% give a particular answer, the chances are 19 in 20 that the “true” value (which would have been obtained if all beneficiaries had been interviewed) will fall within the range of ± 3.0 percentage points from the sample result (i.e. between 27% and 33%).

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be “real”, or it may occur by chance (because not everyone in the population has been interviewed). To test if the difference is statistically significant, we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentage giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume a 95% confidence interval, the differences between the results of two separate groups must be greater than the values given in the table below.

Sample size	Approximate sampling tolerances		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	±	±	±
100 and 100	8	13	14
100 and 200	7	11	12
100 and 400	7	10	11
100 and 600	6	10	11
200 and 200	6	9	10
200 and 400	5	8	9
300 and 300	5	7	8
400 and 400	4	6	7

MORI