The Learning and Skills Council exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England’s young people and adults to ensure we have a workforce of world-class standard. The LSC is responsible for funding high quality education and training for everyone in England other than those in universities. Our vision is for young people and adults in England to have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world to become part of a truly competitive workforce. We are passionate about skills – we recognise the key role that skills play in furthering the opportunities for economic development in all local communities, giving local people the focused training they need to achieve employment, share in wealth and participate in the local sustainable development. The LSC has an enviable track record in delivering priorities and targets that promote both basic and employability skills, helping people to get a job and develop their future careers – and helping ensure that businesses have access to the skills they need to grow.

**IMPACT OF LEARNING ON EMPLOYABILITY RESEARCH: HEADLINE FINDINGS**

**Background**

The LSC has conducted the largest-ever survey of the impact and benefits of general learning in FE on:

- The economic status of workless individuals – their progression into work and off benefits
- The personal impact of learning – in terms of improving skills and increasing confidence?

10,000 learners were interviewed by telephone from June to August 2007. They had all undertaken an FE course which completed in 2005-06, and all were eligible for fee remission due to receipt of workless benefits. 10% of the sample were working less than 16 hours a week when their course started, and all were aged between 20 and 55.

**Key Findings**

Nearly four in ten (38%) of learners who were claiming workless benefits at the start of their FE course have worked since finishing their learning.

One in three learners are currently in employment and not claiming workless benefits. Employment outcomes are less positive for learners with multiple disadvantages\(^1\). However, those with multiple disadvantages do benefit from a positive impact of learning in terms of: improved communication skills, increased confidence and propensity to get involved in their communities.

**Motivations for Learning**

- The primary motivation for people receiving workless benefits to participate in learning was to ‘help get new skills or update skills’ (20% cited this as their main reason for learning).

  The desire to improve skills was a more important trigger to learning than to help get a job specifically (15%) or for personal interest (16%).

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\(^1\) Multiple Disadvantage Score: A point is given for each of the following:
- Having a disability
- Having dependent children
- Being from the Black, Bangladeshi or Pakistani ethnic group
- Having no or low qualifications prior to course
The need to improve skills is, therefore, high on unemployed learners' agenda when they enrol on FE courses.

Barriers to Employment
- Learners were asked why they were not in employment at the start of their course. The main barriers to employment were caring responsibilities (41%) and health reasons (35%). Personal barriers such as these were more significant than labour market barriers – less than a quarter (23%) said they were not in work due to a lack of jobs where they lived.
- Despite the presence of significant barriers to employment, the majority of learners (78%) who were not in work at the start of the course said that they were motivated to move in to work, with around half being 'very motivated'. Learners with dependent children were also motivated to progress into employment.

Impact of Learning on Specific Skills
- Learning had a particularly positive impact on the communication skills of people with multiple disadvantages (72%), those far from the labour market (70%), Basic Skills learners (78%) and those with dependent children (71%).
- Those with multiple disadvantages, far from the labour market, with dependent children and on Basic Skills courses were also more likely to report an improvement in their literacy and numeracy skills.

Impact of Learning on Personal and Social Outcomes
- Learning had a positive effect on encouraging more disadvantaged learners to become involved in community and voluntary activities.
  Over half (54%) of those classified as far from the labour market said that the course encouraged them to get more involved in their communities, as did 61% of learners with three disadvantages – compared to only 35% of learners with no disadvantages.  
  Therefore, amongst learners who are less able to move into employment, the learning that they undertake may have a positive impact upon the extent to which they play an active role in their communities.
- An improvement in personal and social skills was particularly strongly felt by learners with multiple disadvantages, those far from the labour market, and women rather than men. Learners who are more disadvantaged and/or far from the labour market were also more likely to report an improvement in their motivation, as a result of their learning.

Impact of Learning on Economic Outcomes
- Overall, 32% of all learners surveyed were working at the time of the interview, and a further 6% had worked at some point since finishing learning – giving a total of 38% of learners with a positive employment outcome.
- One third (33%) of learners had moved off workless benefits (JSA, Income Support) and into employment after the course.
- The more disadvantages a learner has, the less likely they were to have a positive employment outcome or to have moved off benefits after the course. Only 14% of those with four or more disadvantages were in work at the time of interview, compared to 37% with one disadvantage and over half (55%) of those with no disadvantages.
- Learners on vocational courses had more positive job outcomes (33%) than Basic Skills (28%) or non-vocational learning (29%).
- Those who claimed JSA at the start of the course were more likely to have moved from benefits into work (60%) than those who claimed IB, IS or Carer's Allowance (around 25% for each group).

Contact Details
For more information on our research work, access http://research.lsc.gov.uk/