

# ICT and Employability: A Case Study of Clients using UK online centres

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ISBN 1 84478 226 3

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# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1 Background to the study

The government has invested in a range of initiatives aimed at boosting people's employability by providing them with access to ICT. Two initiatives have been particularly significant in this respect. In 1998 the University for Industry (Ufi) was established, with the mission of enhancing learners' employability, as well as organisations' productivity and competitiveness, by:

- inspiring existing learners to develop their skills further;
- winning over new and excluded learners;
- transforming the accessibility of learning in everyday life and work.

Two years later, in October 2000, the Ufi and its partners created **learndirect** to deliver mainly online courses and information through a national network of learning centres with the goal of promoting e-learning to all and providing the opportunity to learn anywhere, at any time and at any pace. There now exists a national learning information and advice service and an e-learning network of over 1,600 centres.

At about the same time as the Ufi/**learndirect** initiative was being developed the government began to set up UK online centres for those with little or no access to the new technologies, or few skills in using them. The centres were aimed, *inter alia*, at helping people to develop the ICT skills, confidence and motivation to exploit opportunities for further learning and skills updating by accessing, for example, **learndirect** provision. At the time of writing, there are over 6000 UK online centres located in a wide range of settings from voluntary and community centres to libraries, colleges and high street cyber-cafés.

With regard to the notion of employability, this study makes use of a research report commissioned by the DfEE: *Employability: Developing A Framework For Policy Analysis*<sup>1</sup>. Our understanding of the term "employability" is built upon the definition offered by Hillage and Pollard, for whom employability means "being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work". They propose that it has four main elements:

1. what people have to offer employers i.e. their assets in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes;
2. the extent to which they are aware of what they have got and how they choose to use it (Hillage and Pollard refer to this as "deployment");
3. how they present themselves to employers and demonstrate their employability;
4. the context in which they seek employment, reflecting both their personal circumstances and wider labour market influences.

All four of these elements are relevant to this particular study. Firstly, when users embark on courses in ICT with a view to improving their employability, they are acquiring relevant knowledge and skills. Secondly, in their interactions with tutors or agencies helping to prepare them for making applications for work, they are developing both their skills of 'deployment' (item 2) and their presentational skills (item 3). Finally, Hillage and Pollard stress the importance of the employment context. One of the issues addressed by this study is the extent to which the centres understand the local employment context and work closely with employers and other relevant agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> *Employability: Developing A Framework For Policy Analysis*, Hillage, J. and Pollard, E., DfEE Research Report RR85 (1998)

## 1.2 Aims

The present study is an initial piece of exploratory research focusing on some of the issues related to improving employability within the context of the UK online initiative, seen from the perspective of both centres and users. Its chief aim is to analyse the factors which promote, or inhibit, the development of clients' employability, through the acquisition of ICT skills, by studying ten UK online centres which are actively addressing employability issues with regard to the following target groups:

- people with basic skills needs;
- lone parents;
- ethnic minorities;
- the unemployed;
- people with disabilities.

Two issues were of particular interest: firstly, how far the centres' clients were able to develop their ICT skills and their employability in general, over the duration of the study and, secondly, how the centres matched their provision to the local context (the employment situation, the employability needs of their clientele and other training provision in the area).

## 1.3 Methods

### 1.3.1 Selection of the centres

The selection of the ten case study centres was made from a list of 2211 UK online centres provided by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). On the basis of their postcode, each UK online centre was allocated to a micro area, in this case 1998 electoral wards. The decision was taken to use 1998 wards as the micro areas because they are the areas on which the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000 is based.<sup>2</sup> A number of ward-level socio-economic variables were then merged onto the list of candidate UK online centres and each non-categorical variable was ranked across all 8,444 wards in England, and across all wards within a particular Government Office Region.

An exploratory analysis across all variables showed that the UK online centres in the most deprived wards were concentrated in four Government Office regions: the West Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber, the North West and the North East. Four urban wards were selected, one from each of these regions. A fifth urban ward was selected from the London region. To provide an urban/rural balance, five rural wards were selected, one each from the South West, the East and the South plus two rural wards from the East Midlands. This provided a full geographical spread of UK online centres across England. All the wards selected had a national ranking of 1500 or less on the IMD 2000 (where a rank of 1 is the most deprived).

In selecting the centres themselves, those with the greatest number of clients, according to their Management Information (MI) returns were initially considered. This ensured that as large a pool as possible of potential clients could be asked to participate in the study. The second criterion was to ensure that there was a diversity of organisational types represented in the final choice of centres.

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<sup>2</sup> The selection of the case study areas was carried out prior to the publication of the detailed 2001 Census of Population data.

### 1.3.2 Research Design

To enable follow up of the progress of sets of clients as they acquired ICT skills and improved their employability, the study used an iterative design, involving three visits, of 2 days duration, to each of the ten centres. During the first round of visits (January – February 2003) the centre managers and ICT tutors were interviewed, as were as many clients as possible within the time available. The interviews with the centre managers were especially important because of their role in determining the policy of the centres. The initial interviews with clients informed the construction of the face-to-face questionnaire which formed the main quantitative element of the study. The survey was conducted during the second round of visits in April–May 2003. The final round of visits, in July and August 2003, focused on following up as many as possible of the clients who were involved in the face-to-face survey of round 2 and up-dating their responses. In addition, a small number of indicative in-depth interviews were carried out with clients who reflected the main UK online target groups.

Table 3. Numbers of clients interviewed

	No. of clients interviewed round 1	No. of clients interviewed round 2	No. of clients interviewed in <b>both</b> rounds 1 and 2	No. of clients interviewed in round 3 ( <b>all</b> interviewed in round 2)	No. of clients interviewed in <b>all 3</b> rounds	No. of in-depth interviews in round 3
Birmingham	6	11	1	6	2	2
East Sussex	5	18	0	9	1	1
Harlow	4	20	0	10	0	1
Lincoln	7	19	5	8	4	1
N.Devon	13	17	8	8	3	1
N.E.Derbyshire	12	27	9	8	2	1
Newcastle	8	27	3	9	1	1
Newham	6	26	3	5	1	2
Oldham	11	26	2	10	2	1
Wakefield	9	31	3	11	1	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>

### 1.4 Findings

The indicative evidence, based on 222 users in 10 centres, suggests that in some respects, this relatively small sample had fewer people from some of the socially excluded groups than would have been expected, given the overall profiles of their local communities:

- 45% of the users interviewed were not currently in employment. This was comparable to the average of 48% across the ten wards.
- 7% of the sample were lone parents; 12% reported they were disabled; 8% reported literacy problems and 5% reported numeracy problems.
- Less than a third of the sample belonged to two or more of the target groups.

Given the deprived areas in which the centres were situated, those interviewed were relatively well-qualified people, even in terms of basic ICT skills:

- 18% of the sample had no qualifications, well below the average of 40% across the ten wards the centres were located in and the national average of 29%.
- Almost a quarter of the sample had already achieved CLAIT qualifications in ICT, reflecting perhaps the high level of client motivation, retention and progression to further learning as a result of attending the UK online centres

Most users interviewed were attending primarily for vocational or employment-related reasons rather than for social or recreational reasons:

- The vast majority (94%) felt that ICT skills were important or essential to getting a job.
- Over half (51%) of the respondents used the UK online centres to improve their job prospects (either to find employment or improve their current employment situation).
- Most (64%) did this by attending computer classes, reflecting the pattern of provision in the centres.
- 42% visited the centres to surf the web and send emails
- 22% used the centre on a drop-in basis.
- The employment aspirations of many of the sample were to leave unskilled manual jobs and gain employment in either clerical and secretarial posts or teaching and health care.

Few respondents were digitally disadvantaged, but many required other forms of support to increase their employability:

- 43% of the respondents owned a computer and had an Internet connection at home. This was comparable with the national ONS survey figure of 48%. A further 18% had a computer but no internet connection. However, very few of these computers were new and 39% did not have a home computer.
- There was a general lack of awareness, on the part of the users, of the nature of the local employment context.
- Respondents were not very confident of their ability to deploy and present their employability assets.
- Users were willing to travel to find employment and for most of them transport was not a limiting factor.
- Several managers and tutors felt that although the acquisition of ICT skills was a stimulus to learning by the clients (particularly in the field of ICT), it was not in itself sufficient for those with a poor record of learning. What was needed, they felt, was the integration of ICT with basic skills within an individualised, long-term learning program.

Employability outcomes:

- 29 clients out of 84 (35%) had completed ICT qualifications by round 3 of the visits to the centres, and 42 (50%) were continuing with their learning. There was a general enthusiasm for learning amongst the clients which was often attributed to the success they had met with in their ICT courses.
- When asked whether they would continue to use the centre in the future, the overwhelming majority of users (92%) replied in the affirmative. Only 6% said they were unsure and barely 1% said they would not.
- Gains in confidence were reported by the clients interviewed in round 3 with regard to a range of ICT skills and skills for employment.
- The twelve in-depth interviews, which were open-ended in nature, revealed that in most cases:
  - Clients' self-confidence and self-esteem had increased, sometimes dramatically.
  - Marketable ICT skills had been acquired, whether for use in paid employment or in the voluntary sector.
  - Clients had begun to think about their longer term employment prospects as well as their immediate future.
  - Further training opportunities were being sought to further boost employment prospects.
  - The support offered by the centres, in terms of training, job searching and advice and guidance was warmly welcomed.
- Only 7 of the 84 clients (8%) who attended the third round of interviews had found work since the previous round. The remainder were actively looking for work or were planning to

start looking for work. Clients were realistic about the difficulties they faced in accessing the jobs market.

A number of other important issues were identified:

- Enhancing employability was a key aim for most of the centres, but the structure of the organisations in which the centres were embedded was one of the factors that determined how effectively they could develop clients' employability.
- Managers and other key staff reported that the process of developing the employability of people who are socially excluded depended upon the creation of a climate of trust and stability. Longer term funding was felt to be important in helping to ensure that once people have begun to engage with learning, their local centre was able to continue to support them.
- Overlap and duplication of provision within areas could undermine a centres' stability and impact adversely on efforts to bring people who are socially excluded into learning. Coordination of provision at regional level was therefore identified by managers as an important issue.
- Centre staff felt that successful marketing was important if the centres are to reach their target groups, but many did not have the resources or expertise to carry out the necessary background and market research.



## 2. Aims of the research and structure of the report

The government has invested in a range of initiatives aimed at boosting people's employability by providing them with access to ICT. Two initiatives have been particularly significant in this respect. In 1998 the University for Industry (Ufi) was established, with the mission of enhancing learners' employability, as well as organisations' productivity and competitiveness, by:

- inspiring existing learners to develop their skills further;
- winning over new and excluded learners;
- transforming the accessibility of learning in everyday life and work.

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At about the same time as the Ufi – **learndirect** initiative was being developed the government began to set up UK online centres for those with little or no access to the new technologies, or few skills in using them. The centres were aimed, *inter alia*, at helping people to develop the ICT skills, confidence and motivation to exploit opportunities for further learning and skills updating by accessing, for example, **learndirect** provision. At the time of writing, there are over 6000 UK online centres located in a wide range of settings from voluntary and community centres to libraries, colleges and high street cyber-cafés.

The present study is an initial piece of exploratory research focusing on some of the issues related to improving employability within the context of the UK online initiative, seen from the perspective of both centres and users. Its chief aim is to analyse the factors which promote, or inhibit, the development of clients' employability, through the acquisition of ICT skills, by studying ten UK online centres which are actively addressing employability issues with regard to the following target groups:

- people with basic skills needs;
- lone parents;
- ethnic minorities;
- the unemployed;
- people with disabilities.

Previous studies have examined the key concepts underpinning the government's approach, such as employability and the issues around measuring the distance travelled by those seeking to develop their employability. With regard to the notion of employability, this study makes use of a research report commissioned by the DfEE: *Employability: Developing A Framework For Policy Analysis*<sup>3</sup>. Our understanding of the term "employability" is built upon the definition offered by Hillage and Pollard, for whom employability means "being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work". They propose that it has four main elements:

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<sup>3</sup> *Employability: Developing A Framework For Policy Analysis*, Hillage, J. and Pollard, E., DfEE Research Report RR85 (1998)

1. what people have to offer employers i.e. their assets in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes;
2. the extent to which they are aware of what they have got and how they choose to use it (Hillage and Pollard refer to this as “deployment”);
3. how they present themselves to employers and demonstrate their employability;
4. the context in which they seek employment, reflecting both their personal circumstances and wider labour market influences.

All four of these elements are relevant to this particular study. Firstly, when users embark on courses in ICT with a view to improving their employability, they are acquiring relevant knowledge and skills. Secondly, in their interactions with tutors or agencies helping to prepare them for making applications for work, they are developing both their skills of ‘deployment’ (item 2) and their presentational skills (item 3). Finally, Hillage and Pollard stress the importance of the employment context. One of the issues addressed by this study is the extent to which the centres understand the local employment context and work closely with employers and other relevant agencies.

With regard to assessing the distance travelled by users towards employability, *Measuring Soft Outcomes and Distance Travelled: A Review of Current Practice*<sup>4</sup> offered guidelines on measuring soft outcomes and helped to inform this study. However, implementing this methodology was limited by the time-scale and scope of this project. This meant that only basic data on distance travelled could be gathered from the clients who agreed to participate in the research.

Two issues were of particular interest: firstly, how far the centres’ clients were able to develop their ICT skills and their employability in general, over the duration of the study and, secondly, how the centres matched their provision to the local context (the employment situation, the employability needs of their clientele and other training provision in the area). The report is divided into three main sections.

- ‘The Users’ (Section 4) describes the sample of users which forms the basis of the quantitative aspect of the study, particularly with regard to their learning, past and present, and their views on employment.
- ‘The Centres’ (Section 5) focuses upon the efforts being made by the case study centres to establish themselves in their local communities and develop the employability (in the terms of the definition adopted by Hillage and Pollard) of the more deprived members of those communities. It identifies elements of good practice and analyses some of the major difficulties faced by the centres.
- ‘Progression’ (Section 6) concentrates on the progress made, in terms of ICT skills and employability generally, by the sample of users between April/May and July/August 2003. It also provides an analysis of in-depth interviews with 12 users who were reflective of the UK online target groups.

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<sup>4</sup> *Measuring Soft Outcomes and Distance Travelled: A Review of Current Practice*, Sara Dewson, Jude Eccles, Nii Djan Tackey and Annabel Jackson., Institute for Employment Studies. DfEE Research Report RR219, August 2000.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Selection of the ten case study centres

The selection was made from a list of 2211 UK online centres provided by DfES. On the basis of their postcode, each UK online centre was allocated to a micro area, in this case 1998 electoral wards. The decision was taken to use 1998 wards as the micro areas because they are the areas on which the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000 is based.<sup>5</sup> A number of ward-level socio-economic variables were then merged onto the list of candidate UK online centres. The variables were:

1. A variable classifying wards as either rural or urban derived by the Countryside Agency. Urban-rural differences tend to be pronounced on population density, employment in agriculture/forestry/fishing and primary production, travel to work by public transport, etc.
2. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2000, defined for the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) now the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) by Oxford University. The Index of Multiple Deprivation is a composite index, incorporating variables (mainly recording the position in 1998) from six different domains: income; employment; health deprivation and disability; education, skills and training; housing; and geographical access to services.
3. The Employment Deprivation domain from the IMD. This domain was derived using the following indicators: unemployment counts; people out of work but in government-supported training; young people on New Deal options; Incapacity Benefit recipients; and Severe Disablement Allowance claimants.
4. The 1998 unemployment rate, derived using the annual average of unemployment, and Oxford University estimates of the labour force by ward.
5. The inactivity rate, calculated as the percentage of people aged 16 to 59 not economically active in 1998, based on Oxford University estimates.
6. The percentage of the population from minority ethnic groups, i.e. all non-White groups, from the 1991 Census of Population. It was necessary to convert 1991 ward based data to a 1998 ward base. The 1991 Census of Population provides the most up-to-date information available on the spatial distribution of minority ethnic groups at the micro area level.
7. Basic Skills Agency estimates of the percentage of the population with poor literacy and numeracy skills, 1998. These estimates were derived by applying national level survey results designed to identify individuals with borderline or poorer skills on functional literacy to local areas using a geodemographic classification of 1991 wards. These estimates were converted on to a 1998 ward base. The methodology assumes that there may be special circumstances in some local areas which mean that this assumption is invalid and that poor literacy is under-estimated or over-estimated. This was an issue with some of the selected centres.

Each non-categorical variable was ranked across all 8,444 wards in England, and across all wards within a particular Government Office Region.

An exploratory analysis across all variables showed that the UK online centres in the most deprived wards were concentrated in four Government Office regions: the West Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber, the North West and the North East. Four urban wards were selected, one from each of these regions. A fifth urban ward was selected from the London region. To provide an urban/rural balance, five rural wards were selected, one each from the South West, the East and the South plus two rural

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<sup>5</sup> The selection of the case study areas was carried out prior to the publication of the detailed 2001 Census of Population data.

wards from the East Midlands. This provided a full geographical spread of UK online centres across England.

In order to guarantee anonymity to the centres, neither they, nor the wards where they are located, are named in the study. Instead, the local authority name is used as a proxy for both the name of the ward and the name of the centre, except in the case of East Sussex where using the local authority name would have been insufficient to guarantee the anonymity of the centre.

Table 1. Location of the case-study areas

Local authority	Region
Birmingham	West Midlands
East Sussex	South East
Harlow	East of England
Lincoln	East Midlands
Newcastle upon Tyne	North East
Newham	London
North Devon	South West
North East Derbyshire	East Midlands
Oldham	North West
Wakefield	Yorkshire & the Humber

The selection of wards ensured that at least two (Newham and Birmingham), had a high percentage of non-White residents and at least two had a very low percentage of non-White residents (North Devon and N.E.Derbyshire). All the wards selected had a national ranking of 1500 or less on the IMD 2000 (where a rank of 1 is the most deprived). The following table shows the deprivation scores for the relevant wards (using the local authority names):

Table 2. IMD ranking of the case study wards

Ward/local authority	Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000			Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000, Employment domain		
	Value	Rank within England	Rank within region	Value	Rank within England	Rank within region
N.E.Derbyshire	51.00	525	43	23.38	443	27
Lincoln	41.05	1052	101	19.27	846	67
East Sussex	35.16	1480	94	15.94	1404	80
N.Devon	41.76	1007	41	21.44	620	20
Harlow	42.76	949	41	12.38	2314	119
Birmingham	75.96	27	1	32.61	66	2
Newham	62.17	231	31	25.78	288	36
Newcastle	70.61	78	18	32.27	73	24
Wakefield	41.16	1045	100	19.00	876	84
Oldham	43.84	890	224	16.24	1339	322

In selecting the centres themselves, those with the greatest number of clients, according to their MI returns were initially considered. This ensured that as large a pool as possible of potential clients could be asked to participate in the study. The second criterion was to ensure that there was a diversity of organisational types represented in the final choice of centres. Annex 1 gives an indication of this diversity.

### 3.2 Research design

To enable the follow-up of the progress of each set of clients as they acquired ICT skills and improved their employability, the study used an iterative design, involving three visits, of 2 days duration, to each of the ten centres. It should be emphasised that our sampling was opportunistic in the sense that it was restricted to those users who were present at the time of the visits and willing to participate in the research.

During the first round of visits (January – February 2003) the centre managers and ICT tutors were interviewed, as were as many clients as possible within the time available. The interviews with the centre managers were especially important because of their role in determining the policy of the centres. The majority of them had a dual role, on the one hand running the centre and, on the other, exercising a management function at either consortium or local authority level. The interviews with clients helped inform the construction of the questionnaire which formed the main quantitative element of the study and which was administered face-to-face, by the fieldworker, during the second round of visits in April–May 2003. The centre managers concurred that only by face-to-face interviews would the necessary quality of information be derived. The final round of visits, in July and August 2003, focused on following up as many as possible of the clients who were involved in the face-to-face survey of round 2 and up-dating their responses. In addition, a small number of in-depth interviews were carried out with clients who reflected the main UK online target groups.

Table 3. Numbers of clients interviewed

	No. of clients interviewed round 1	No. of clients interviewed round 2	No. of clients interviewed in <b>both</b> rounds 1 and 2	No. of clients interviewed in round 3 ( <b>all</b> interviewed in round 2)	No. of clients interviewed in <b>all 3</b> rounds	No. of in-depth interviews in round 3
Birmingham	6	11	1	6	2	2
East Sussex	5	18	0	9	1	1
Harlow	4	20	0	10	0	1
Lincoln	7	19	5	8	4	1
N.Devon	13	17	8	8	3	1
N.E.Derbyshire	12	27	9	8	2	1
Newcastle	8	27	3	9	1	1
Newham	6	26	3	5	1	2
Oldham	11	26	2	10	2	1
Wakefield	9	31	3	11	1	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>

A number of issues are raised by these figures.

1. The number of clients interviewed in round 1 is relatively small because centre managers and tutors were also interviewed at this point. The interviews shared common themes, but because they were being used to develop the questionnaire for round 2, the interviewer adopted a semi-structured approach.
2. The number of clients interviewed in round 2 produced a sample of clients whose collective profile quite closely matched, in most respects, that of the respondents in the Hall Aitken survey<sup>6</sup> of UK online centres (see the section 4 ‘The Users’ for details).

<sup>6</sup> *Evaluation of CMF funded UK online centres –initial report*, Hall, J. et al, DfES Research Report RR368. Hall Aitken Associates, (2002)

3. The round 2 interviews were all based closely on the questionnaire which provides the quantitative data on the centre users, together with MI returns where these were available.
4. The number of clients interviewed in both rounds 1 and 2 was modest (34 clients out of 81) despite considerable efforts being made to ensure that the timing of the second visit was appropriate and alerting all those interviewed in round 1 to the desirability of their participating in round 2. There are several reasons why this occurred.
  - a. Although many of the clients interviewed in round 1 were on courses, some of the courses were of short duration and clients had ceased to attend in the interval between the visits.
  - b. If the clients were using the centre on a drop-in basis it was more likely that they would not coincide with the interviewer on the second occasion.
  - c. Clients were under no obligation to inform the centre if they decided to discontinue their studies.
  - d. In some cases, clients were actively looking for work (voluntary, part-time or full-time) and, if they had been successful in the interval between the visits, would not have attended.
5. The purpose of the interviews in round three was to determine how those clients interviewed in round 2, who were looking for work either in the short or medium term, had progressed in the interval. 84 of the 222 round 2 interviewees agreed to participate in this stage of the process. With the assistance of the fieldworker, they up-dated the round 2 questionnaire.
6. The clients selected for the in-depth, open-ended interview represented the main target groups of UK online, with the exception of the retired, who, by definition, were not necessarily seeking to develop their employability.

The interviews with the centre managers and the tutors were semi-structured, covering a core of common issues, but with ample opportunity for the interviewer to follow up issues of interest. In those centres where the manager function was shared between two people, both were interviewed. No tutors were interviewed in either Harlow or East Sussex. The reason for this was that the tutors in question were peripatetic and could not spare the time after their teaching session, to give an interview.

The statistical information on the main factors affecting the employment context of the wards where the ten centres are located is summarised in annexes 3 and 4. Reference is made to these at various points in the body of the report.

## 4. The Users

### Content

In order to ensure that the characteristics of this sample of users were not untypical of the bulk of UK online centres and that therefore our findings (with regard to employability and ICT) would have some level of generalisability, relevant data was gathered on users' personal backgrounds (age, gender, employment status etc.). Against this background, their level of qualifications and their attitudes to employment and learning were investigated as central themes of this study. By comparing this data, based on 222 users in 10 centres, carried out in April/May 2003, with the data from the larger Hall Aitken survey (op cit) of 1360 users across some 59 centres, carried out in October/December 2001, it was possible to determine the extent to which these ten case study centres were representative of the wider picture.

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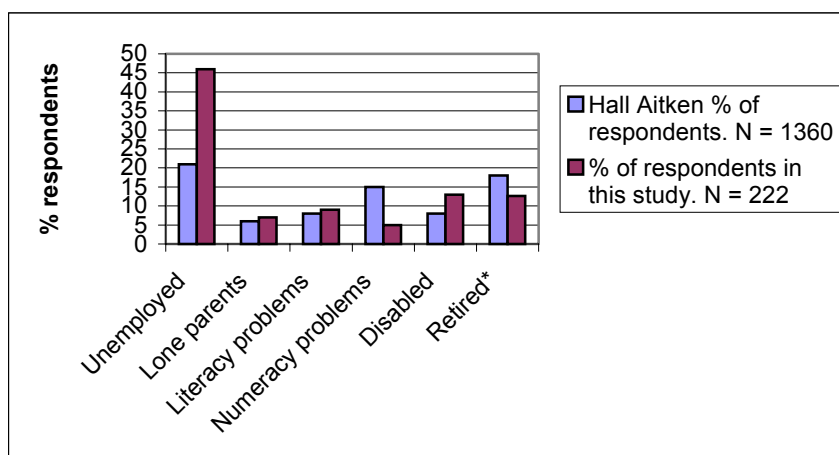
### 4.1 Age, gender and ethnic origin of users

The age distribution of users in Hall Aitken's survey (2002) was similar to the distribution that was found in this smaller sample (see annex 5 for details). However, in terms of gender, our sample showed a higher percentage of women (62%) than Hall Aitken (56%). In the nine case study centres which were able to supply copies of their Management Information (MI) returns, the female/male balance was almost identical to the Hall Aitken figure, suggesting that some special factors were at work in our data gathering. For example, the fact that our data were collected face-to-face, and the interviewer was female, possibly deterred some men from contributing. Another factor could be that our data were gathered during centre opening times but not at weekends, possibly excluding more men in full-time employment at two of the large urban centres, Birmingham and Newcastle, which opened at weekends (the other eight did not). In terms of ethnic origin, the preponderance of users of White ethnic origin (81% of our sample) was exactly the same as in the Hall Aitken survey.

### 4.2 UK online target groups

Figure 4 shows the relative percentages of respondents belonging to the other UK online target groups (excluding ethnic minorities dealt with above), comparing results from this sample with Hall Aitken (2002, op cit).

Figure 4. Membership of target groups of respondents in the two studies



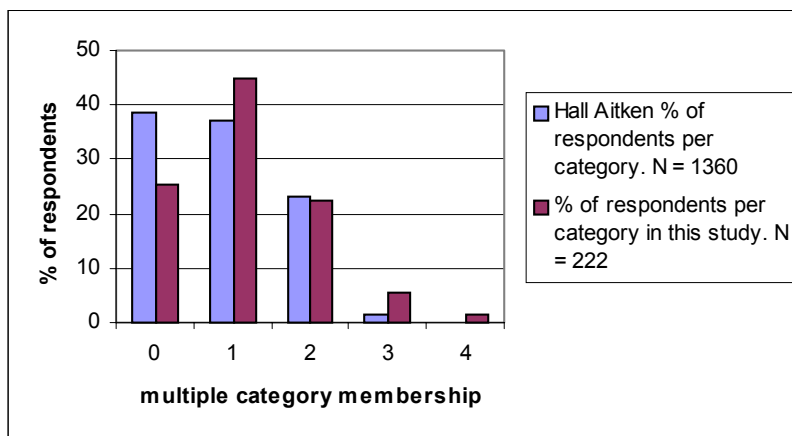
\*Hall Aitken’s figure for “retired” equates to “people over 60 who are not involved in learning activities”, learning activities other than ICT, presumably. Our category is based simply on those people who, at interview, said they had retired from paid work, although some were doing voluntary work.

In terms of the number of unemployed, the figure of 45% for the present study is noticeably higher. This suggests the centres were successfully attracting the unemployed or could possibly be due to differences in definitions and data collection. Because we interviewed respondents face-to-face during centres’ weekday opening hours, we coincided with significant numbers of people who were able to attend day time classes, which excluded many of those in full-time work and those doing significant amounts of part-time work.

The figure for literacy problems was almost the same as Hall Aitken’s i.e. 8% and the same was true of the figure for lone parents (7 % of respondents). The percentage of users admitting to numeracy problems came out lower in our survey (5%) compared to Hall Aitken (15%). Conversely, the Hall Aitken figure for disability (8%), was lower than our figure of 12%. Some labour commentators link permanent sickness to hidden unemployment and “highlight how sickness levels tend to be highest in (former) coalfield areas and in areas of long-standing industrial decline.”<sup>7</sup> This is borne out here, with the two localities with a mining heritage (North East Derbyshire and Wakefield) both recording approximately 11% in this category, compared with 5% nationally. In the Newcastle ward, 15% of the population aged 16-74 are characterised as permanently sick or disabled (see annex 3 for details).

To see how many users in our sample were multiply deprived, the frequencies in the various target groups were summed. The results were quite close to Hall Aitken’s in that few clients belonged to more than two categories and 70% of our interviewees, as against 76% of Hall Aitken’s respondents, suffered from at most one type of disadvantage:

Figure 5. Multiple category membership of users



In 2002, Hall Aitken concluded that “the most excluded groups (i.e. those who might fall into several of the target group categories) are not using the centres in great numbers” which is supported by these findings. The issue seems to remain: how to configure the centres and their activities so that the target groups can be reached. Some of the centre managers who were interviewed for this study had reached conclusions about what could be done in their areas and this is discussed later in the report.

<sup>7</sup> See Beatty C., Fothergill S., Gore T. and Green A. (2002) *The Real Level of Unemployment*. Sheffield: CRESR: Sheffield Hallam University.



### 4.3 Employment status and aspirations

Figure 6 shows users' current employment in terms of the major groups of the 1990 Standard Occupational Classification. In assigning the interviewees to these categories, "managers and administrators" included all those who exercised some sort of responsibility for others within an organisation. "Sales" included anyone running a small business. Unskilled manual work is by some way the most frequent type of employment and one from which the majority of our users wished to leave, as can be seen from figure 7, which describes users' employment aspirations. Note that only 71 of our 222 interviewees were in work, so figure 6 is based on fewer responses than figure 7, where 135 expressed a preference for the type of work they would like in the future.

Figure 6. Current employment of respondents

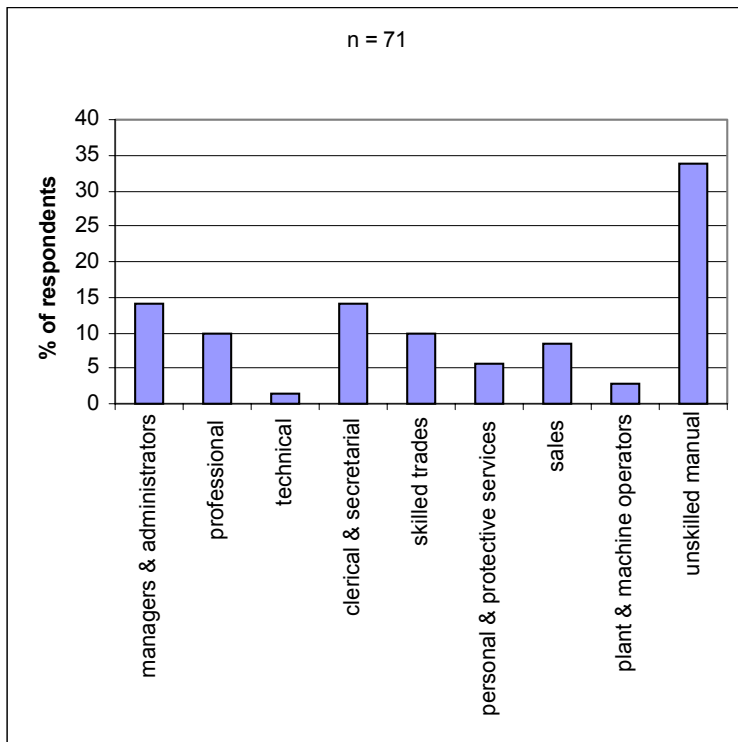
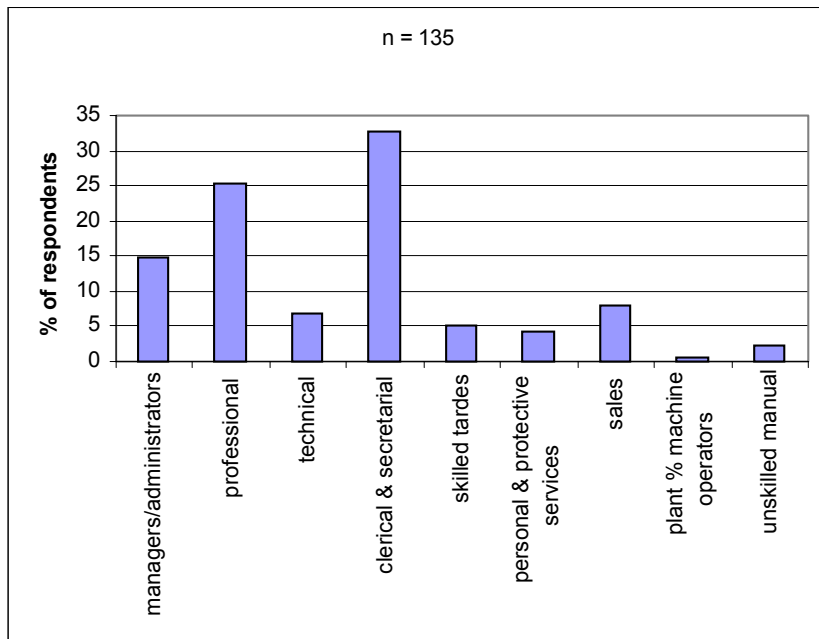


Figure 7. Employment aspirations of respondents



One of a number of interesting features of figure 7 is that there were so few users who saw their future as ICT technicians or in skilled trades. Almost all of those in the unskilled manual category wished to leave it and clerical and secretarial work was the favoured option for the majority, most of whom were women (see table 8 below). This resonates with the evolution of the employment situation generally where the service sector now plays a much more prominent role.

Table 8. Employment aspirations of men and women

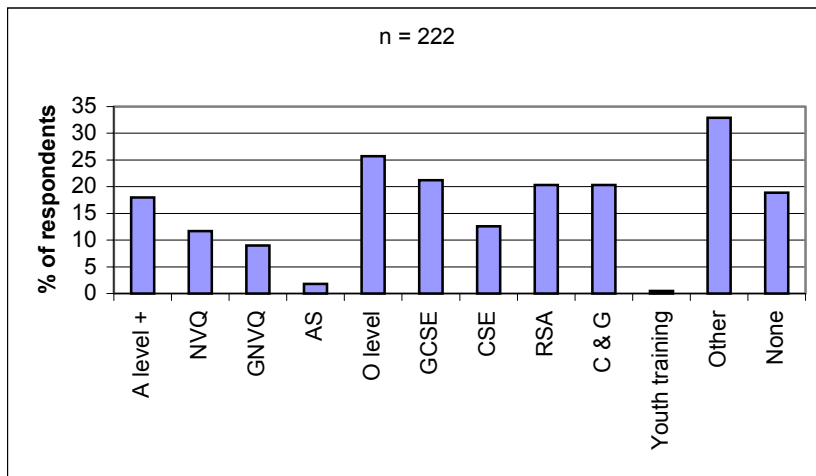
	Number of male respondents	Number of female respondents	Totals
managers and administrators	9	11	20
professional	10	24	34
technical	5	4	9
clerical and secretarial	5	39	44
skilled trades	6	1	7
personal and protective services	2	4	6
sales	8	3	11
plant and machine operators	1		1
unskilled manual	2	1	3
Totals	48	87	135

In the sample, few users were seeking to achieve promotion within their current job situation (only 2%) whereas 13% were engaging with ICT in order to change their type of employment.

#### 4.4 Qualifications

Users were invited to itemise the qualifications they had, not just to give their highest level qualification. A wide variety of qualifications are subsumed under the heading “other qualifications”, some of them degrees at graduate and post-graduate level and several overseas qualifications.

Figure 9. Qualifications of respondents



Two main points emerge from this chart. Firstly, the average percentage of residents in the ten wards who do not have any qualifications, according to the 2001 census, is 40% compared to a national figure of 29% (see annex 3). In this study, only 18% of interviewees had no qualifications. Secondly, the figure for 'A' level or better (18%) is in line with the figure nationally (19%). Given that the figure for the sample was based on some of the most deprived wards in the country, it would appear that the centres are attracting some quite well-educated people who feel they have not caught up with new technology. However, some caution is needed in interpreting these figures, as some of this disparity may also be due to the differences in the way the questions on qualifications were asked and recorded in each study.

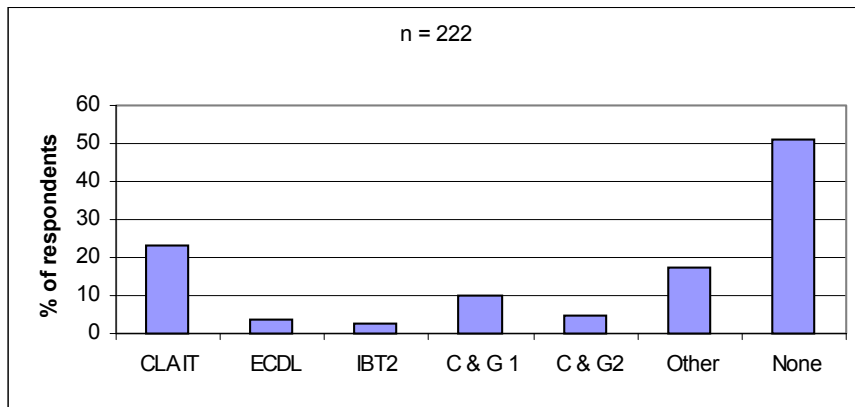
In terms of computing qualifications (see figure 10, below), one might have expected no qualifications to be the norm. However, 23% already had Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) qualifications, which most of them passed in 2002, and 17% had other qualifications, typically Information Business Technology level 2 (IBT2) and City and Guilds. It may be that this set of users was already quite well qualified, in terms of basic computing skills, with 50% having some meaningful qualification. Another possible explanation for this may be that for some users, once they have made initial learning gains in ICT by attending the UK online centre, they are motivated to engage with the subject and continue to progress while using the centre on a longer-term basis. When we asked users to say how interested they were in continuing to study ICT (on a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 was 'extremely interested') 84% gave a response of 8 or over. At interview, this response from one user was typical:

Interviewer: Have you thought about what you might like to do next to increase your skills, not necessarily in ICT?

Respondent: I want to go on further with ICT. I don't know where, and I don't know how yet, but I'd like to continue as much as I can.

Interviewer: So you haven't made decisions about whether you'll do another course here? If I could do another course here I would, but City and Guilds I think finished at level 2.

Figure 10. Computing qualifications of respondents



In our sample, of the 42 interviewees who had no general qualifications, 33 (15% of the total) had no computer qualifications either, of any kind. In other words, given the high levels of social exclusion in these areas, a much higher level of unqualified centre users would have been expected. This could suggest that the centres have been attracting relatively qualified clients or retaining clients as they progressed through their learning and qualifications. Further analysis would be needed to fully understand the relationship between the qualifications gained and length and nature of attendance at the centres.

#### 4.5 Reasons for attendance

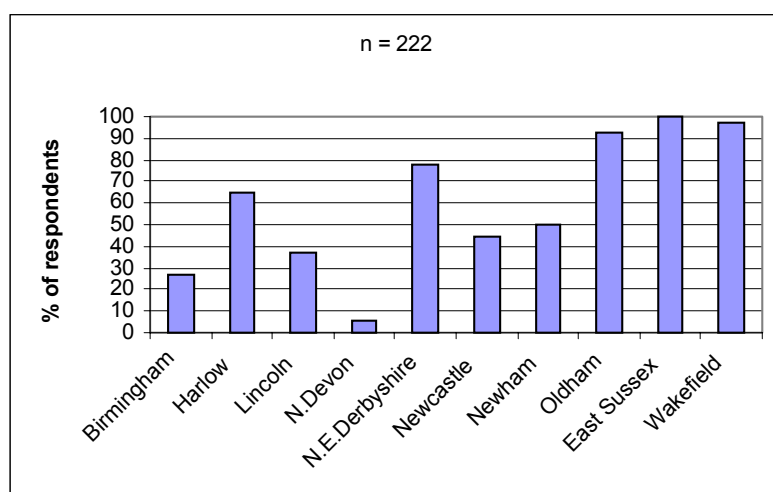
Users were able to give several reasons for their attendance, and many did.

Table 11. Reasons for attending the centres

	Percentage of users	Frequency
To get help and advice	17.6	39
To improve job prospects	50.9	113
To attend computer classes	64.0	142
To drop-in to use the computers	22.1	49
To surf the Web and send emails	42.3	94
For social reasons	5.4	12
For other reasons	19.8	44

This table has a number of interesting features. First, 50% of all users were attending in order to find employment or improve their employment. Almost all our sample of users (94%) felt that ICT skills were important or essential to getting a job. Users' choice of formal classes at set times (64%) is perhaps a reflection of the specialisation of some centres in this type of provision. For example, at East Sussex, Wakefield, North East Derbyshire and Oldham the clients interviewed were predominantly there to attend classes (over 75%). Only in North Devon was the class option largely ignored.

Figure 12. Percentage of users attending classes, by centre



Clients were asked whether they came to the centre to learn about computers on a drop-in basis, for example by doing a **learnirect** course, without having to attend at a specific time as part of a class. Only 22% replied affirmatively, which again reflected the predominance of class-based provision in most centres. They were also asked whether they came to the centre to browse the internet and use email and 94 of them (42%) replied that they did. This figure should be seen in the light of the following statistics on computer ownership and internet connections in the home.

Table 13. Computer ownership and internet connection

	Frequency	Percent
No computer at home	86	38.7
Computer but no internet connection	40	18.0
Computer and internet connection	96	43.2
Total	222	100.0

It is possible that the 126 who did not have a connection, either because they had no home computer or because it was not connected to the Internet, included the 94 users who attended the centres to browse the internet and use email. Again, further investigation would be needed to confirm this.

Just 5% of respondents said that one of their motives for attending the centre was for social interaction, but a larger proportion (19%) gave other reasons for attendance. At Harlow, for example, one important reason was the existence of a crèche which enabled parents to bring their children to the centre whilst they studied.

#### 4.6 Potential for learning at home

Table 13 shows that 61% of the users interviewed had a computer at home, virtually the same as the figure quoted by Hall Aitken (2002). The percentage of respondents who had an internet connection at home was 43%. The latest figure from the National Statistics Omnibus Survey for the period January to March 2003 is 47%, so our figure is below the national norm, but not by much, suggesting that these were not the most digitally excluded people in the local area.

The main computer users in the household were the interviewees themselves: 64%. In terms of our sample of 222 users, this translates to a figure of 87 users who, in principle, could continue to practise at home the skills they were acquiring at the centre. About a quarter of clients (24%) said that their children were the main users of the computer. Although 75% of the computers had been acquired in

the last 3 years, and quite a large proportion (28%) acquired during the last 12 months, very few of these machines were new: a reflection of the relatively high cost of new computers for most of the users in our sample.

#### 4.7 Patterns of computer use

Table 14 summarises information on the type of ICT tasks clients had completed and where they were completed. For ease of reading we have omitted a range of other settings where clients use computers i.e. at work or in the public library.

Table 14. Tasks completed by users and where they are completed

	% of all respondents completing task	% of all respondents at centre	% of all respondents at home	% of all respondents centre and home
1. Letter	90.1	41.4	9.5	24.8
2. Spreadsheet	73.8	46.8	5.0	8.1
3. Search engine	73.5	33.8	18.9	10.8
4. Email	70.3	31.5	19.8	7.2
5. Database	60.3	39.2	3.6	7.2
6. Image processing	55.8	28.8	9.0	9.9
7. Write CV	44.6	11.7	17.1	2.7
8. Presentation	39.6	21.6	5.0	2.7

Word processing and spreadsheets were the most frequent activities, but, as the table shows, they were carried out mostly in the centre, rather than at home, reflecting the predominance of class-based and course-based provision that was observed. Web searching and emailing were the next most frequently completed tasks, indicating that the Web was significant in ICT training in the centres. However, it is interesting to note how much home use contributed to the figures for these two activities: almost 20% of our sample searched the Web and sent and received emails at home.

That databases were placed so highly in the table is possibly a function of their presence in course syllabuses, as with image processing, but to a lesser degree. Few users had created databases or manipulated image files at home. Respondents were specifically asked about the drafting of CVs because, in terms of employability, ICT skills can help in presenting one's assets, as Hillage and Pollard call them. What the table shows is that 55% had not done a CV and only 11% of the total sample had written one at a centre, which might indicate that this aspect of facilitating employability through the use of ICT was not a strong practice in the centres as a whole. Creating presentations was also part of course syllabuses, which explains why as many as 39% of our sample had already completed the task, mostly at a centre.

Table 15, a continuation of the previous one, examines the extent to which users access the Web for recreational or personal reasons.

Table 15. Accessing the Web for personal reasons

	% of all respondents completing task	% of all respondents at centre	% of all respondents at home	% of all respondents centre and home
9. Send / receive photos	29.8	10.4	14.9	.5
10. Buy on Web	27.9	4.5	19.8	.9
11. Greeting cards	27.1	10.8	10.4	1.4
12. Download entertainment	20.8	5.4	11.3	1.4
13. Chat room	15.4	4.5	5.9	.5
14. Online discussion group	10.9	5.0	4.1	.5

Most of the tasks were completed more frequently at home, as one would expect, with the exception of the sending of electronic greetings cards and participating in online discussions. It is likely that the figure for sending electronic cards at the centre is slightly higher than sending them from home due to the fact that one centre in particular does this task quite often.

#### 4.8 Looking for work

Those who were definitely looking for work made up 57% of our sample. However, when asked about their knowledge of the local labour market, only 29% had any specific knowledge of what was available in the area that might be suitable and 36% admitted to having no clear idea at all. This lack of awareness is a general tendency which affects all the centres, whether or not they have placed particular emphasis on employability issues (see the next section 'The Centres').

Of those who expressed an opinion about the amount of time they thought it was acceptable to travel to work (65%) almost half (45%) thought that up to 30 minutes was acceptable and a further 36% thought that a journey of up to 60 minutes was tolerable. This suggests that the respondents did not expect to find jobs 'on their doorstep' and, indeed, when asked about the barriers to employment that those searching for work were having to confront, lack of transport was the least significant, as table 16 shows:

Table 16. Barriers to employment

% Caring for others	% Too old	% Lack of transport	% Lack of skills	% Lack of experience	% Lack of confidence	% Other barriers
27.6	23.1	17.3	34.6	30.1	21.2	24.7

The "other barriers" category encompasses, for the most part, various types of incapacity. The figure for lack of self-confidence has to be seen in the context of how users rate their abilities in the work place on a scale of 0 to 10, which is the subject of the next section.

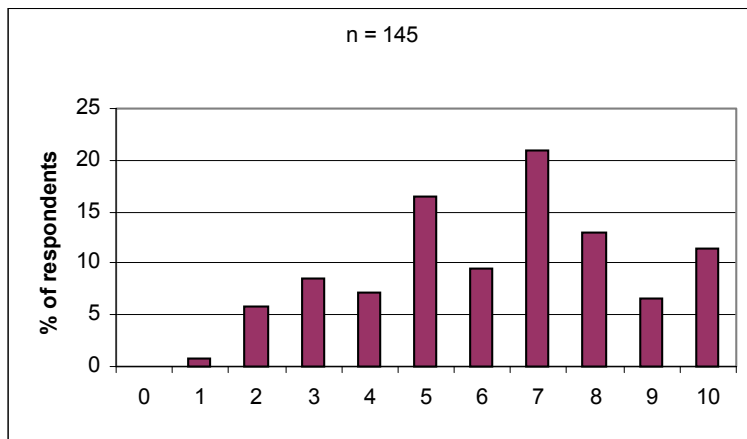
#### 4.9 Perceptions of competence in work situations

The purpose of the final two sets of questions in the questionnaire was to record any changes in users' perceptions that occurred between visits 2 and 3. A comparison between results from the two rounds is made in the final section of the report, 'Progression'. The results discussed below are exclusively

from the second round. The first of the two sets of questions dealt with how confident users felt about their performance in a work situation. The retired users and those not seeking work did not complete this part of the questionnaire so the base numbers are much lower than the total number of respondents: 222.

We asked the interviewees to rate their feelings of confidence on a scale of 0 to 10. Firstly: ‘How confident are you that your ICT skills would help you get a job?’

Figure 17. Respondents’ confidence in ICT skills improving employment prospects



Given that the respondents were learning basic ICT skills, the levels of confidence seem quite high, reflecting, perhaps, clients’ perception that ICT skills at even a basic level are an important factor in the jobs market. Figure 18 shows clients’ responses to two questions regarding their basic skills:

- How confident are you that your reading and writing skills are good enough in a work situation?
- How confident would you be in a job where you had to work with figures?

Full confidence in literacy skills was relatively high (44% give a rating of 10). But full confidence in numeracy skills at work (25% with a rating of 10) was much lower.

Figure 18: Respondents’ confidence in basic skills

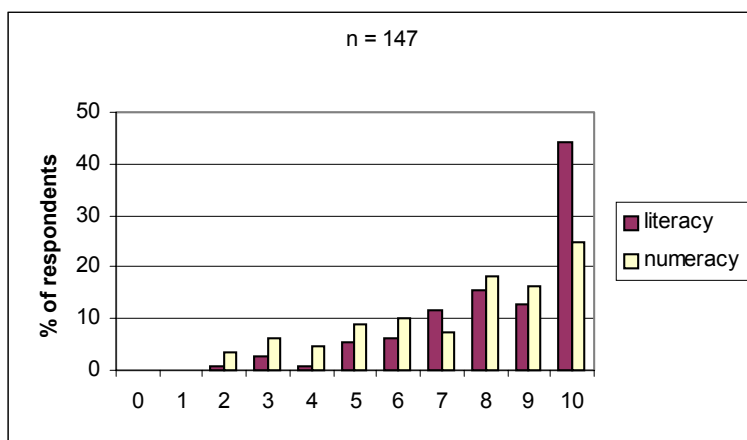


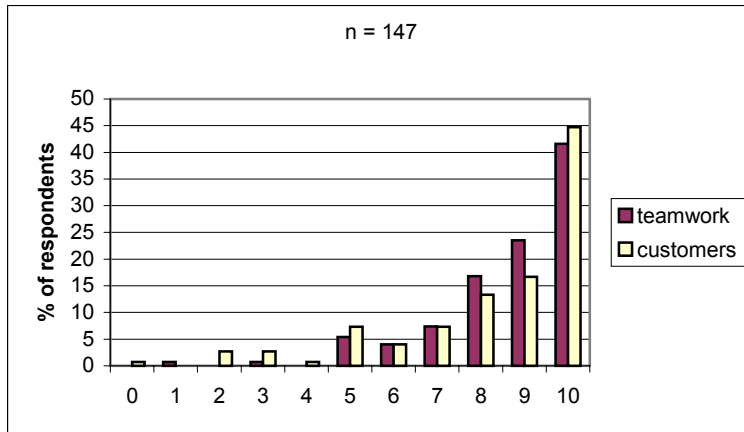
Figure 19 compares perceptions about relations with colleagues and customers:



- How well do you get on with people when working in a team?
- How confident would you be in a job where you had to deal with customers face to face?

Confidence in team-working was high (41% give a rating of 10) as was confidence in dealing with customers (44% give 10 rating). So, in literacy and in dealings with others, our interviewees felt very positive:

Figure 19: Confidence in teamworking and with customers

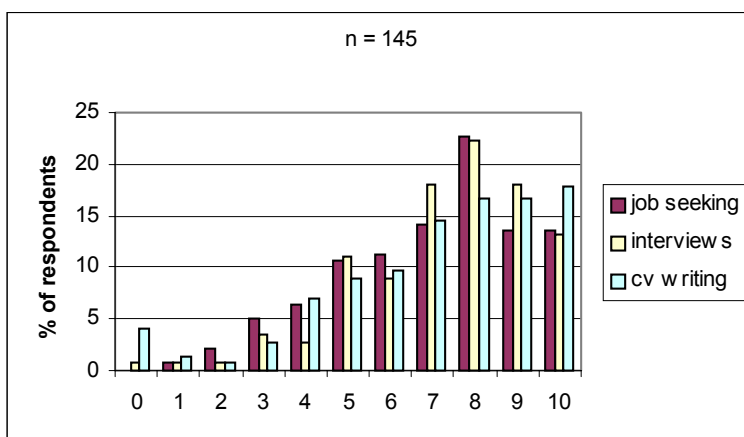


Finally we asked about job seeking skills:

- How confident are you in your ability to find job opportunities?
- How confident are you of your ability to make a good impression in an interview?
- How confident are you in your ability to write a good CV without help from someone else?

And here the picture was rather different.

Figure 20: Perceptions of job seeking skills



With regard to the first question, only 13% gave themselves a 10 rating and there is a fairly even spread from 5 to 10 with a peak at 8. This lack of confidence may be reflected in the relatively high figure for those with no specific information about the local jobs situation (66%). If you have poor job searching skills you may well not have a very clear idea of the labour market. The position is rather similar with confidence in interview performance (13% give a rating of 10) and confidence in writing a good CV (17% give a rating of 10). So the ability to deploy and present one's assets (i.e. skills and attitudes) was not viewed as positively as the ability to work with people and not as positively, even,

as basic numeracy. This finding would suggest that centres need to engage more actively in this type of support. Whilst some centres devote considerable time and effort to this area by providing one-to-one guidance, others do not, often directing clients towards **learnirect** courses which were reported by some tutors as not being appropriate to clients' needs.

#### 4.10 Perceptions of learning

Almost the entire set of interviewees gave answers to the following set of questions (218 out of 222), since they were not predicated upon the intention to look for work. We asked two questions about ICT skills:

- How confident are you in your computer skills?
- How confident are you of your ability to find the information you want on the Internet?

It is interesting to note that the profile for confidence in computer skills generally was very similar to the profile for the earlier question "How confident are you that your ICT skills would help you get a job?", with the highest estimates falling in the 5 to 8 range. Figure 21, below, also shows that levels of confidence in Web searching skills varied a good deal, with 15% of clients saying they have no confidence whatever in their searching skills. This is perhaps a consequence of some centres not giving sufficient prominence to the issue of deriving meaningful information from the Web.

Figure 21. Confidence in using computers compared to confidence in searching the Web

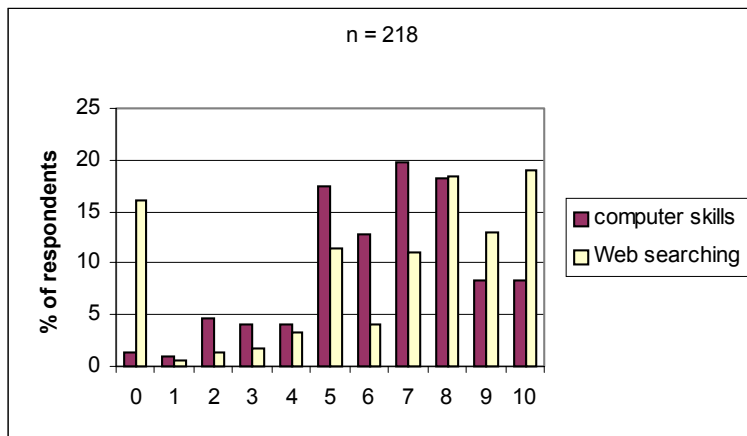
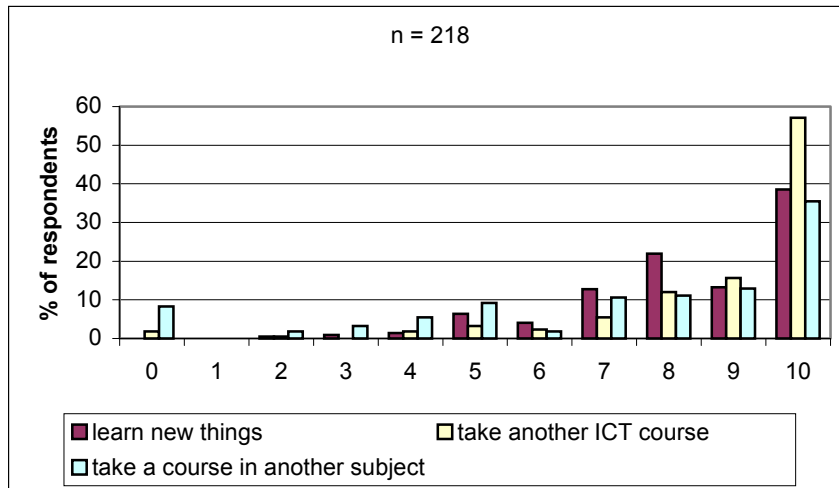


Figure 22 compares clients' perceptions of their learning in three respects. We asked:

- How confident are you that you can learn new things?
- How interested are you in continuing to learn about computers by taking another course?
- How interested are you in taking a course in another subject?

Figure 22. Perceptions of learning

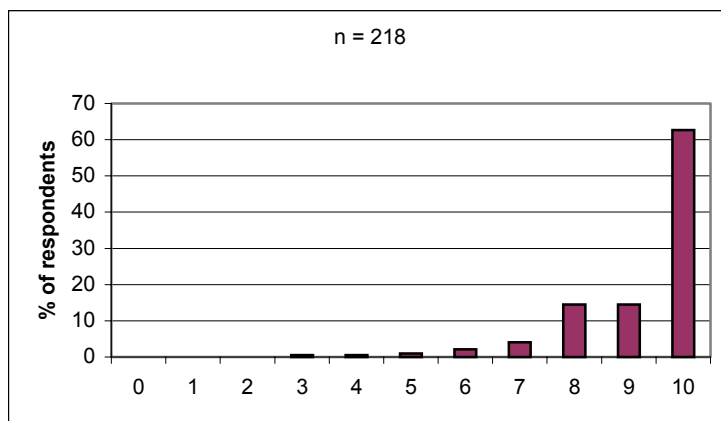


A substantial proportion of respondents (38%) gave a rating of 10 to their ability to learn, a reflection, perhaps, of the type of confidence-boosting effect that undertaking learning in ICT can have and something which was commented on by numerous tutors and centre managers:

It builds their confidence a lot. They can actually see their progress. They can involve their friends and family. (Tutor at Birmingham)

Our in-depth interviews all provided evidence of how learners’ self-confidence improved as a result of their learning experiences. Well over half of our sample (57%) said that they were “extremely interested” in taking another course in computers. If we include those who scored their level of interest at 9 rather than 10, the percentage increases from 57% to 72%. When we asked to what extent clients were interested in studying other subjects, 48% gave a response at the level of 9 or 10. This opens up the possibility that learning ICT skills contributes to stimulating an appetite for learning more generally. Finally, we asked: “How helpful has the Centre been in helping you to learn?” and the response was almost wholly very positive.

Figure 23. Centres’ helpfulness



One would naturally expect high levels of approval for the centres from clients who attended on a regular basis. When asked whether they would continue to use the centre in the future, the overwhelming majority of users (92%) replied in the affirmative. Only 6% said they were unsure and barely 1% said they would not.

#### **4.11 Summary**

1. Our data suggest (and the centre managers confirm, as we will see in the next section) that the most socially excluded are not being attracted to the centres in large numbers.
2. The employment aspirations of our sample of users were, by and large, to leave unskilled manual jobs and gain employment in either clerical and secretarial posts or teaching and health care.
3. Given the deprived areas in which the centres were situated, the centres were attracting relatively well-qualified people, even in terms of basic ICT skills.
4. Users were attending primarily for vocational rather than social or recreational reasons.
5. Computer ownership and access to the Internet from home were close to the national averages, so our sample of users were not the most digitally disadvantaged.
6. There was a general lack of awareness, on the part of the users, of the nature of the local employment context.
7. Users were not very confident of their ability to deploy and present their employability assets.
8. On the other hand, users were willing to travel to find employment and for most of them transport was not a limiting factor.
9. The acquisition of ICT skills stimulated an appetite for more learning, especially in the field of ICT.

## 5. The Centres

### Content

How the acquisition of ICT skills impacts upon a learner's employability is partly a function of the organisational context in which the learning takes place, especially the availability of other kinds of support and training. This section identifies aspects of provision which the centres saw as especially important for the development of employability. It also identifies a number of threats to centres' prospects of implementing the kinds of initiatives they feel are needed to reach their wider goals.

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Analyses of historical and projected trends in industrial structure at national and regional levels show a continuing shift in the structure of employment from primary and manufacturing industries towards the service sector.<sup>8</sup> In absolute terms, there have been major job losses in manufacturing and a growth in employment in services, notably in business and miscellaneous services. It is notable that many of the jobs lost in primary and manufacturing industries (such as those in mining) were relatively well paid. A substantial number of new jobs in the service sector are characterised by relatively low skill levels and low pay. Indeed, in several of the case study areas, centre users indicated that they were keen to develop their skills in order to enhance their prospects of getting more fulfilling jobs and higher rates of pay. These then are the economic realities which condition the activity of the majority of the case study centres, with the possible exception of North Devon and East Sussex, where manufacturing has not played a major role historically. However, even in these two cases, the level of deprivation within the ward, as opposed to the local authority as a whole, is such that the employment prospects for residents are still characterised by low skills and low pay.

One of the most dramatic examples of the position faced by many of the centres was articulated by the Wakefield centre manager who had to deal with the consequences of a relatively rapid switch from mining and manufacturing to service sector employment:

The area was quite heavily dependent on jobs in the mining industry... they lost 20-25,000 jobs up to last year. The ratio of other jobs that go because of that is 3:1. Manufacturing industry employment likewise is on the wane, and the jobs that are being created are predominantly service sector, and in comparison fairly low waged. You can look at that as a two-edged thing: the training and education that will allow people into that area of work, but also on another level we should be trying to attract and encourage more quality employment into the district. We can play a part in that, but relatively small.

In a sense, this centre, like the Newcastle centre, had developed as a result of the scale and speed of the collapse of the old industries. The Wakefield centre was set up in 1989, by the local TUC and the County Council, in order to act as a focal point for social and economic regeneration and the centre manager, who had been in post since that time, was still accountable to the Economic Development Unit of Wakefield District Council. As a result, the centre was well supported and well led and had been able to create an extensive support structure for its clientele (see Annex 1 Course Provision), something which the manager felt was critically important:

The labour market's very different these days, and we are getting people who've got multiple barriers from getting back into work, which brings in other issues: what other support mechanisms there are. Those are the people we should be attracting, that's who we're here to support.

There were two main types of support structure in the centres that we looked at, other than ICT training: basic skills courses of various kinds (sometimes incorporating an ICT element) and support for employability.

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<sup>8</sup> Institute for Employment Research (2001) *Projections of Occupations and Qualifications, 2000/2001*. Coventry: IER, University of Warwick.

## 5.1 Basic skills and ICT

Whilst an individual's membership of one or more of the UK online target groups (lone parents, disabled, ethnic minorities etc.) accounted for some of the barriers to employment, perhaps a more fundamental and widespread barrier was the individual's lack of confidence in their ability to cope with learning and their subsequent loss of self-esteem. This was certainly one of the strongest themes to emerge from the interviews with managers, tutors and clients during the course of this study. The Lincoln centre manager articulated the problem well when describing the role that ICT can play in helping to boost basic skills and self-confidence:

Some of the people when they first came in couldn't even look you in the eye. They'd talk to you and they'd be looking at their feet, they'd be looking at anywhere and they didn't think that they were capable of doing any form of learning; they'd had so many knockbacks. But we enrolled some of them because of a progression, they did group training, one to ones, and we did different courses with them, but progression for them was to use ICT in terms of numeracy and literacy. And the confidence, the changes in them, as individuals and as people, that they could do it, and they can use a computer, and they are worthy, and that somebody will help them, is amazing, and their confidence increases. In the terms of literacy, the skills that they pick up, and understanding written and verbal instructions from a computer is actually concentrating their mind on a different...There's so many different things that they get from it, working in a group and the social aspects of working with people in an ICT setting.

What is described here is a process which produces a qualitative change in the individual which is perhaps the *sine qua non* of becoming employable. The manager at the East Sussex centre emphasised that the process can be lengthy, since it is the individual who has to choose his or her own goals:

They have to identify their own needs. It's no good any of us identifying what needs they have on their behalf. It's a very long-winded development process. It can take two years before somebody says, 'I think I'm ready to go for a job'.

So those with multiple barriers to work are likely to need individual help with learning for a relatively long period of time. ICT training by itself is not sufficient, although several of the centre managers and tutors we spoke to highlighted the role it can play in developing self-confidence and changing deeply rooted attitudes to employability and learning:

(ICT) has a great effect on it (employability). It's not only things like the fact that there are very few jobs nowadays where you don't have to at least be confident on a computer keyboard, it's even things like warehousing: you've got to input onto computers, you've got to be able to read computer printouts. If you want to move up from any kind of unskilled job into a skilled job, or something with better prospects, it's going to involve ICT. I don't think it's just the actual knowledge, it's the confidence it gives people, especially for the slightly older generation, who maybe have not got any qualifications. They left school with absolutely nothing. This may be the first thing they've ever done in their life that they've got a certificate to prove they can do it. Even if they don't use the actual skill, the confidence it gives somebody to be able to do something like that is quite amazing.  
(Oldham)

Supporting ICT training by offering basic skills courses, or integrating the two, was a key element in several centres' strategies to develop the employability of their clientele. In the East Sussex centre, for example, the centre manager felt that the introduction of basic skills provision had greatly improved the quality of the support that they could give to their clients:

We found that basic skills problems in the area were very high. It's about 30 percent of the population that has very low literacy and numeracy skills and I said that it would be a good idea to put in a basic skills project, which we did to Learning and Skills Council under core financing, and that's now in its second year, and it's made such a difference.

Where basic skills course were not yet available, as at North Devon, which currently lacks the staff to offer in-house basic skills courses, management considered their introduction an urgent priority. Interestingly, the manager at this centre observed that a certain level of competence in ICT can actually mask basic skills weaknesses which could prove a problem in employment. This is how the fieldworker reported their conversation:

The centre manager also noted that some clients lacked basic literacy and numeracy skills which were not apparent or even masked by ICT skills until they reached a certain level. For example, many could not work out percentages when required. For others writing was clearly a problem when large amounts of text were used. In a real work situation these clients would find it difficult to survive.

The importance that the centres attributed to basic skills is amply justified by the estimates of basic skills deficits derived for the purposes of this study from the data provided by the Basic Skills Agency in 1998. Table 24 presents Basic Skills Agency estimates of the percentage of the population in the case study wards with poor literacy skills and poor numeracy skills. These estimates were derived by applying national level survey results designed to identify individuals with borderline or poorer skills on functional literacy and numeracy to local areas using a geodemographic classification of 1991 wards. For the purposes of this exercise, these estimates were converted on to a 1998 ward base. It should be noted that the methodology of generating estimates by applying national survey results to local areas of a geodemographic classification of local areas assumes that literacy and numeracy needs are uniform across England within each geodemographic category. There may be special circumstances in some local areas, which mean that this assumption is invalid – and that literacy and numeracy needs are underestimated/overestimated accordingly. The fact that in Newham there are large numbers of people of Asian origin whose first language is not English means that literacy problems are probably under-estimated by the methodology used here.

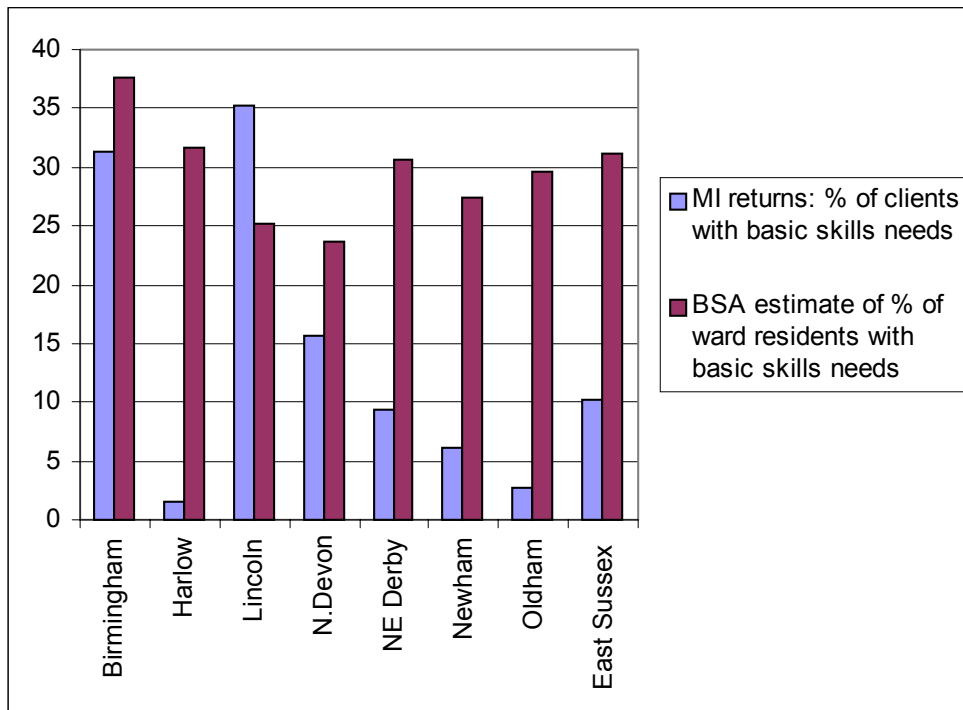
Table 24. Poor literacy and poor numeracy levels for wards containing case study centres, 1998

	% population with poor literacy			% population with poor numeracy		
	Value	Rank within England	Rank within region	Value	Rank within England	Rank within region
Birmingham	37.6	54	4	40.2	109	11
East Sussex	31.2	925	64	34.3	600	37
Harlow	31.6	822	64	34.2	618	45
Lincoln	25.2	3087	359	27.0	2121	279
N. Devon	23.7	3681	557	21.8	4236	591
N.E. Derbyshire	30.6	1059	84	34.8	533	55
Newcastle	32.4	660	84	35.3	467	82
Newham	27.4	2153	151	27.8	1905	171
Oldham	29.6	1366	252	31.7	1029	214
Wakefield	29.0	1567	142	31.4	1075	103

According to these figures, the North Devon centre is located in a ward which has the lowest level of basic skills needs of all ten of our case study wards, and yet we have seen that basic skills provision is a priority, even for them. The reason is not too far to seek: poor basic skills are a major barrier to employment.

Estimates of users' basic skills needs from centres' MI returns show percentage values much lower than the ones in the above table, except in the case of Lincoln. The returns do not differentiate between literacy and numeracy and no MI returns were available for Wakefield. Newcastle did not provide information on basic skills needs:

Figure 25. Estimates of basic skills needs



Although all of the centres accepted the importance of basic skills provision, and stressed how central they are to their clients' development, it would appear that some of them were attracting only a small number of clients with those needs. This may be linked to another issue which was of concern to centre managers: the difficulties that they faced in reaching those who were most in need of help. We deal with the marketing of centres' services in a subsequent section.

## 5.2 Support for employability

It is one thing to bring about a qualitative shift in an individual's self-esteem and attitude to learning but quite another to provide them with effective support in their quest for employment, or more fulfilling employment. We have already touched on some aspects of the first element of Hillage and Pollard's model for employability in our discussion of ICT training and basic skills (people's assets in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes) and we have argued that changes in attitudes to learning and the consequent growth in self-confidence constitute significant assets. However, the centres have an equally important part to play in fostering elements 2 and 3:

2. the extent to which they are aware of what they have got and how they choose to use it (deployment);
3. how they present themselves to employers and demonstrate their employability;

As can be seen from Annex 1, four centres stood out in terms of this type of provision: Newham, Birmingham, Newcastle and Wakefield. Of these, the Newham centre was perhaps the most tightly focused on getting clients into work, largely because the bulk of its staff (17 in all, including the centre manager) belonged to the Newham Action Team. At any one time, as many as eight community consultants were working at the centre, registering new clients or setting up appropriate training that matched them to vacancies or developed their potential for being placed in work. This sometimes included use of the UK online centre to improve ICT skills or to enhance job search and presentation skills. One young interviewee made good use of this facility and was full of praise for the support offered:



Respondent: What they do is: the job that you like, they apply for that job, and the Job Centre, they don't do that. They help you much better [here]. That is what makes me come here all the time. Whatever help you need, they'll help you. If you're looking for a job they will help you with the jobs you want. What I'm looking for is retail. I've had a couple of interviews with them.

Interviewer: You use the computers here. Can you tell me what you use them for?

Respondent: I use them for looking up any jobs. Once I've looked for a job I e-mail, I check in my e-mail if anything comes up. I had a reply yesterday, so I sent back a reply today. [Here] they have computers, everything you need: stamps, envelopes, they'll send it for you. You don't need any money. They'll give you a travel pass if you're going for anything.

The Birmingham centre used the web of relations existing within the consortium, and the ease with which cases could be transferred between its various members, to offer clearly-focused training to its target groups. Another significant factor was the flexibility of the different aspects of training on offer in the centre itself and the crossover between them. Also important was the experience of staff in putting together appropriate training packages which included work preparation. The UK online facility fitted very well into the whole provision, contributing to both qualifications and work preparation.

In the Newcastle centre, the emphasis of the centre was rather more on education and training than getting people into employment, as at Newham. So, instead of there being a permanent Action Team presence in the centre, the Newcastle Employment Action Team visited on a regular basis to offer help for those seeking employment, as did an Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) officer. The centre is now seeking IAG accreditation.

The Wakefield centre's provision resembled that in Newcastle, largely because they shared the same general remit, i.e. to contribute to the economic regeneration of a major industrial area. It offered New Deal, Workspace (for small new businesses), New Deal for Disabled People and JobNet Plus (Wakefield Intermediate Labour Market) and had close links with the local Enterprise Agency, Business Link, the Wakefield Learning Network, Jobcentre Plus and IAG.

Although other centres did not have such well-developed employment support structures, they nearly all made considerable efforts in this direction. At the North East Derbyshire centre, volunteers ran a Job Club which met twice a week. The computers were used to gain online information about jobs, help was given in CV writing and skills assessment, local jobs were advertised and information on different careers was made available. The Job Club volunteers all came from the area and so were helping their friends and neighbours. In a very different context, the North Devon centre had created its own employability course based around job searching skills.

## **5.3 Barriers to developing employability**

### **5.3.1 Organisational structure**

Whilst some centres (Newham and Newcastle for example) were configured in ways which supported the promotion of employability in its wider sense, there were structural factors which led other centres to engage with it less actively, or more narrowly. Two centres, in Harlow and Oldham, fell into this category and both were closely linked to local colleges.

The Harlow centre was part of an Adult Community College, so a wide range of courses other than ICT, including basic skills, was available. However, employability did not figure as one of the centre's priorities and the centre manager had a rather optimistic view of the local labour market, affirming that jobs were plentiful in the area:

I think (the local labour market) is quite buoyant. Because we are so close to London, so close to Stansted, there are a lot of jobs, and it's quite low in unemployment, but you find in Harlow it's quite

high in people who are on incapacity benefit. There's a lot of disability.

It is certainly true that this ward was the least deprived of the ten we studied with regard to employment, however, 45% of the clients of the Harlow consortium as a whole were unemployed, according to the consortium's MI return, and 70% of the clients we interviewed were unemployed and looking for work. The only support that clients received with regard to employability, according to some of them, was that the ICT tutor in the centre would give informal advice and support to those seeking assistance with applying for jobs.

The centre manager at Oldham was clear about the main focus of the centre:

To provide the people of Oldham with a centre which is flexible, and in which they can gain any knowledge of ICT and basic skills from absolutely no knowledge to level 2 qualifications.

Of those interviewed, 92% were attending classes as part of accredited courses, providing more stability, in terms of income, than at most other centres. However, although there was a great deal of support available, within the college, to help clients get to grips with looking for employment, we found that very few knew that this support existed. Later in the interview, employability was given a high priority by the centre manager, but the definition of the term was rather narrow:

I think it (employability) is a main focus. It depends on what you mean by 'employability'. Any IT knowledge has to make people more employable in this day and age. You can't do any job, even if it's the traditional manual worker or whatever; there's always some IT involved in it.

Increased employability was seen here as no more than the general effect that any ICT training is likely to have on clients, a view to which all centres would subscribe, although the Harlow centre manager was rather more sceptical than some others about the link:

(ICT) does extend people's employability, but perhaps not as much as the government and everyone else would like us to think. As an IT manager I've seen it over the last couple of years; it's like you throw computers at people and everything will be OK, and it's not. They need IT skills, but they need to be hung on other information. But everyone does need some form of IT skills.

### 5.3.2 Funding

All centres were concerned by the problem of securing the funding necessary to continue their work, or diversify, although some were more secure than others in this respect; the centres in Oldham and Wakefield were cushioned by having large numbers of clients doing accredited courses and Wakefield was also able to draw on funding from a number of different local council departments. According to other centres, working on the margins of mainstream education and training meant that their funding was time-limited and insecure. Yet, as several centre managers observed, bringing people who are socially excluded into learning and employment is a long-term, complex process which involves creating a climate of trust between the centres and the communities they serve. Securing longer-term viability for the centres was therefore considered by staff to be one of the key conditions that have to be met if ICT is to be used to lever people who are socially excluded into learning. This concern for sustainability produces a tension, within the centres, between the need to develop accredited courses, which bring in revenue, and to find other sources of income both to support those whose needs are perhaps more fundamental and to attract the clients that so far have not been drawn into the centres.

Four main themes emerged from the interviews with centre managers. Firstly that reaching people who are socially excluded meant running types of courses which currently do not receive funding.

**learnirect** provision was seen by some centres as inappropriate.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, the uncertainties of the bidding process created insecurity and hindered forward planning and, in the case of the smaller centres, placed a significant added burden upon administrative staff. Thirdly, the time-limited nature of much of the funding meant that some very successful initiatives might be threatened. Finally, the communities that the centres serve had, in some areas, begun to develop a degree of trust in the people who run them, and this trust, one of the keys to successful recruitment, could be placed in jeopardy by the short-termism of the funding process. We have drawn together, below, some comments from centre managers which serve to illustrate their views on how funding issues threaten the type of provision which is most appropriate for many people who are socially excluded.

Aston's centre manager advocated a different funding regime that would allow the centre to do more with those clients who come with no background in learning at all:

Because a lot of people who come in who haven't been in education for 20 to 30 years. Computers are something that's totally new to them, so just going on to them is maybe not the first step, they need some work doing first of all, whether it be in basic skills or confidence building or careers guidance work. There's no funding for that. We do an awful lot of that work, so we're trying to get some funding to do the activity type work, to get people to come on to ICT type courses. It's a big problem for us at the moment, the funding stream.

Some of the comments made by the Oldham centre manager were very much on the same lines:

A weakness is that - and I think this is for all centres - because either you have to rely completely on funding from outside, or you have to rely on LSC funding, if you rely on LSC funding you're constrained as to what you can do and what you can offer. Ideally, you would hope for both. The DfES has to realize that if they are going to give this kind of flexible play: 'you don't have to do a qualification, come in and learn anything you want', then you've got to provide the money for it, because there's no funding for it apart from the UK online funding from bids that we're lucky enough to get.

The Oldham centre manager was concerned that when the time limit was reached, the centre, and the consortium to which it belongs, could be placed in jeopardy:

The downside of this money is that it's time limited. What's going to happen when the guillotine falls on 31 December 2003? It will suddenly go 'Whoops, Apocalypse', and we'll have to shed posts, and if we can't get additional funding, we'll have to suddenly reduce service just at the point when it's about to get really motoring.

The centre in North East Derbyshire, which operated on a much smaller scale, within a single community, was perhaps even more at risk:

The main difficulty we're facing at the moment is trying to attain financial sustainability. The funding tapers away. We've got funding for another two years. It comes to an end at the end of 2004. The shortfall we're expected to make up.

In the meantime, they were putting in a bid to further develop employability skills through the expansion of their job club and to promote more drop-in and internet use. The centre manager felt that they needed more of a presence in the centre of the village if they were to do this successfully and they had plans to rent or purchase an empty council property there.

In a particularly telling passage, the centre manager at Lincoln emphasised not only the planning blight associated with short term funding, but also the potential consequences of loss of funding in those neighbourhoods where social exclusion was rife:

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<sup>9</sup> The fieldworker's report on the North Devon centre included the following: "Comments about **learnirect** match those I have heard in other centres. Some courses are very good while others are very unsophisticated and difficult for clients to use. "

Because we are a registered charity and applying for funds, funding is often a year on year basis, therefore you've got no long-term strategy that you can implement. The people around here have identified that they want the Centre to stay here, but because funding streams are forever changing, you don't know where you stand from one year to the next, and you're forever trying to chase pots of money. So that's one of the difficulties. In terms of locally, the difficulties we face is because people around here have never had anything given to them really in the past, and now that there are certain agencies working to help them, it's trying to get their trust that we are going to be here for a long time to come, and trying to get that trust when you don't know yourself where the funding is coming from.

### 5.3.3 Marketing

The marketing challenge faced by the centres is how to attract people who have missed out on learning opportunities and so far remained indifferent to the presence of the centres in their communities. Some of the centres, for example Newham, had only recently been established, which made marketing their services to the local community that much more difficult. Within the budgetary constraints within which the centres operate, a great deal of time and ingenuity was being expended on making themselves known:

We market ourselves continuously through fliers, brochures, newspaper articles. We've been on the radio, we have launches, lunches. We've just paid to be a permanent advert on a year planner, which the local authorities produce.  
(N.E.Derbyshire)

Whilst this type of activity was common amongst the centres, some centre managers were aware of the need for some analysis of the results of these endeavours and a tighter focus on the ward they were serving:

Because a lot of marketing hasn't been analysed before - analysing what works best for us - and targeting the ward that we're meant to be in. (Lincoln)

One comment made both by centre managers and clients was that word-of-mouth was particularly important in recruiting new clients to the centres. Even in Wakefield, where the centre has been open for 14 years, the process of making the community aware of what was on offer was still not complete. This is how the manager responded to a question about how the centre is marketed:

For the education and training programmes a lot of word-of-mouth now. It took quite a long time for us to get, whether it's a reputation or build up an awareness of what we did, and it's still not universal round here.

Reinforcing the importance of person-to-person contact in recruiting more learners, the North East Derbyshire centre, which was staffed by people who already had strong links in the community, was contemplating moving part of its operation to a more central location in the village in order to try to bring more people into learning. This was consistent with the general point made by the Lincoln centre manager, that centres have to create a climate of trust between themselves and their communities, and that this takes time. Even the Newham centre, which enjoyed considerable media coverage at its opening at the beginning of the year, was turning its efforts more towards door-to-door marketing in order to make direct contact with its target groups. Very much the same situation applied in Newcastle where, after a successful high-profile launch, attention was being focused on attracting specific groups in the local community such as asylum seekers and lone parents.

In some areas, the difficulty of building relationships with the local community, or communities, was compounded by the fact that other organisations might be pursuing similar goals in the same area, leading to a form of competition between them which could work against the interests of the clients.

The driving force behind this competition, according to the Lincoln centre manager, was the need to meet targets in order to secure funding:

I feel that lots of agencies that are working with government funding, that have targets to get their client grouping ... and sometimes the things you could do with that person are a lot more, but what tends to happen is that the agency will say: 'that person is my output. I want that person to be counted as the person I'm getting into employment', but what they're offering them may not be the best. They may get a lot more benefit from a help in a lot wider source. Other agencies aren't keen to let the person try other things, because they want to claim them for their funding purposes, so there's a lot of ownership there for a client, whereas if people come into us and they're doing elements of training with us, we always say to them first: 'are you getting any help from any other agency?' to find out if they're already in receipt of other funding. And we're not just going to turn them down just because it's a funding statistic. We'll say: 'OK, yeah', but we can't claim for any funding for this person, it has to fall in with what we do, and unfortunately somebody else is getting the funding and we lose out.

In other areas, by contrast, mechanisms were in place to minimise competition and favour collaboration. In Newcastle, for example, the East End Education Forum met regularly to review provision in the area and to share ideas or raise issues and, in Wakefield, the Learning Network provides a forum which, potentially at least, could ensure complementarity of provision:

What's happening at the moment is there's quite an expansion of centres through the ICT learning centres that are being developed through this Wakefield Learning Network. Quite a few of those will be in and around Five Towns, and you would have thought attracting people - a similar client group to us - who are new to adult education, and I don't think it's been properly thought through as to how all the centres are going to interact. The idea is to increase participation, and I don't think you could do that without having more locally based provision.

Where no such formal mechanisms existed, there was evidence of a certain tension in the relations between providers, with each one looking to create its own specific identity, as at Newham:

The main competitor would be one of the partners in New Deal for Communities, which is a suite of computers in a lorry, which is fantastic, a lovely set-up, it's nine or 10 computers and they go round to a different road every day. Great for open access, not great for people who want to do courses and want to practise. The other reason we don't compete is that we have stuck to - and intend to stick to - the contract, which says that we're not going to charge. The nearest **learn**direct Centre - we don't have that status - is in Stratford and has two or three times as many computers as we have, very plush, but they charge. Something like £1 an hour.

#### 5.3.4 The employment context

The shift towards services and away from manufacturing and mining has led to a certain level of homogenisation in the type of work that is available to the poorly qualified: low paid work in distribution, communications and the wholesale/retail trade for example. So a common theme emerged from our interviews with many of the clients: they saw gaining computer skills as a way to escape this type of work. Below, two wards in two very different types of area have been selected to illustrate the degree of similarity in the type of problems that centres can face.

In general terms, in North East Derbyshire manufacturing still accounts for nearly 26 % of total employees compared with 14 % nationally. Construction, mining and quarrying are also over-represented relative to the national average, although the demise of the mining industry has had a major impact on the local economy. The centre manager referred, in interview, to high levels of non-employment consequent to the run-down of the mining industry (the job density statistics show that there are 31000 jobs and a working age population of 58871) and the low educational achievement in the area (poor literacy and numeracy rates of 30% and 34% respectively). Much of the work on offer tends to be low paid, unskilled and part-time. This situation is indicative of a 'low skills equilibrium' (i.e. a situation of a relatively low supply of skills coupled with a relatively low demand for skills).

European funding has enabled an industrial estate to be set up in the locality to provide employment in the area, but, in reality, very few local people work there. This is how the centre manager described the dynamics of the situation:

We also have a focus group, which means we - the community - meet on a quarterly basis with employers from the industrial estate and the Chamber of Commerce, and Business in the Community to talk about the issues around employers employing more local people, trying to break down the stigma that's there. Local employers don't employ local people, because they perceive them to be bad employees. The other side of the coin: local people don't want their work, because they perceive them to be bad employers, who don't offer good wages. Working conditions aren't very good, so it's a stand-off really.

So those who were attending the centre were aiming for something better and, in this locality, that meant secretarial and administrative work in education, health and social work which are the largest employment categories in the service sector.

In terms of the IMD employment domain data, the ward in East Sussex is the second least disadvantaged of the ten case study wards (ranked 1404 in England), whereas the North East Derbyshire ward is the fourth most disadvantaged (ranked 443 in England). The two areas also have very different employment profiles. The employment structure of East Sussex is biased heavily in favour of services. Most service sector categories have an important stake in the local economy, but hotels and restaurants and public services stand out as accounting for larger shares of employment locally than nationally. Less than 9 per cent of employees working in the district are engaged in manufacturing. Job density figures for East Sussex indicate a total of 33000 jobs and a working age population of 43633. However, as with all ten wards where the centres are located, levels of deprivation are greater than for the local authority area as a whole.

Despite these differences, the problems the centre faces are similar to those faced by the N.E. Derbyshire centre i.e. the jobs on offer are low skilled, low paid jobs:

It's a very difficult labour market. There's lots of social housing. There's a lot of people with social problems. A lot of people have problems in employability.

Interviewer: So what kind of work is available?

Service industry, Tesco's, there's no manufacturing industry other than the brickworks. There's the call centre, but apart from that there's nothing for anyone with any get up and go. That's exactly what they do: they leave.

It is also interesting that both centre managers saw the development of clients' employability within the wider development of the community as a whole:

The main goals (of the centre) are to help people to keep in touch with their families and gain skills that will give them confidence, to not only master computers, but to let them see there's a big world out there, because people are very parochial here.... the whole reason for the centre being here is not only community use, but community development. However people want to develop, we have to provide a service which will allow that.

(East Sussex)

Although employability is on paper - and very much in our workaday ethic - important, we also recognize that in a community like this it is the hardest nut to crack, and in some ways it's not possible to achieve some of the things you're setting out to achieve. If we can engage people in whatever activity it is, if it doesn't end up in employment, we're not overly concerned. We've got lots of problems here in terms of employment. There's a culture of not working for up to three generations, because the mines closed in the late '70s, early 80s. It's very much a benefit culture around here.

(N.E.Derbyshire)

The populations of both wards are relatively isolated from centres of economic activity, are ethnically homogeneous and have an age profile older than the average. In all these respects, they contrast

sharply with the Newham ward. In Newham, although the wholesale/retail trade accounts for the single greatest number of employees (18 % of the total), the key distinctive features of the local employment structure are the greater than average share of employees in financial intermediation, transport, storage, communication and in real estate, renting and business activities, all reflecting the distinctive employment structure of Inner London as a whole. Health and social work also account for a larger share of employees locally than nationally. Employment in construction is over-represented relative to the national average, but only 10% of employees in the borough are engaged in manufacturing, compared with 14% nationally.

The ward is more disadvantaged in employment terms than the other two, and has the lowest job density of all ten wards, but its ethnic diversity and the youthfulness of its population distinguish it sharply from East Sussex and N.E.Derbyshire. More importantly, the ward's proximity to central London and the diversity of employment possibilities mentioned above have a major impact upon the way the centre approaches its work. Although job opportunities are at the low end of the scale, there was a clear note of optimism in the centre manager's assessment of the possibilities open to the long term unemployed working with the Newham Action Team:

The majority of people are long term unemployed because the eligibility criteria to join the action team is that they have to be unemployed and hardest to help. Occasionally we get people who are employed, but they tend to be people who the action team has already placed and they're coming back for more training. The vast majority are unemployed or part-time studying.

Interviewer: What are the opportunities in the area people can travel to to find work?

They will tend to be the lower end of the labour market: security work, warehouse work, but then it moves up to Ladbroke's and Carphone Warehouse, customer services - not just retailers, as in Tesco retail work - but actually trainee managers.

## 5.4 Summary

1. Several managers and tutors felt that although the acquisition of ICT skills was a stimulus to learning, it was not in itself sufficient for many with a poor record of learning. What was needed, they felt, was the integration of ICT with basic skills within an individualised, long-term learning program.
2. Enhancing employability was a key aim for most of the centres, but the structure of the organisations in which the centres were embedded was one of the factors that determined how effectively they could develop clients' employability.
3. The process of developing the employability of people who are socially excluded depended upon the creation of a climate of trust and stability. Longer term funding would help ensure that, once people have begun to engage with learning, their local centre is able to continue to support them.
4. Overlap and duplication of provision within areas could undermine centres' stability and impact adversely on efforts to bring people who are socially excluded into learning. Coordination of provision at regional level is needed.
5. Successful marketing is important if the centres are to reach their target groups, but they do not have the resources or expertise to carry out the necessary research.

## 6. Progression

### Content

This section provides details of the progress made by clients between the second and third visits to the centres with regard to their ICT skills and their search for employment. Twelve clients were interviewed at length to elicit their views on the impact that their learning experiences at the centres had had upon them.

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In the second round of visits 222 clients were interviewed. Of those, 128 were selected for round three, i.e. those who were looking for work or were intending to look for work at some point in the future. Letters were sent out to all 128 and 84 attended for the third and final round of interviews. Given the rate of turnover of clients in UK online centres this is quite a good result. Of the 44 who did not attend, 12 had finished their courses and 3 had found work.

The low level of response in round 3 at Newham was disappointing, but there are a number of possible reasons for the low figure:

- A large proportion of clients interviewed in rounds 1 and 2 were drop-in users who might have moved away or got work.
- Some clients were doing short courses and probably no longer attending. Take-up on other courses after completion of the ICT introductory courses was only 20% for the centre as a whole.
- Some of the clients had very limited English and were helped to fill in the original questionnaires. They might have been reluctant to repeat the exercise.
- The centre was unable to help follow up clients for round 3.

Table 26: Round 3 interviews

	Number invited	Number attended	Reasons for non-attendance			
			No longer attending	None given	Found work	Other reasons
Birmingham	7	6	1			
Harlow	15	10	3			2
Lincoln	15	8	2	4		1
Newcastle	14	9		4	1	
Newham	15	5		10		
N.Devon	12	8	1			3
N.E. Derbyshire	15	8	1	1	2	3
Oldham	15	10	2			3
East Sussex	9	9				
Wakefield	16	11	2	3		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>

All 84 clients up-dated, with the interviewer, the information they had given in round 2, with particular attention being given to efforts to gain access to the jobs market and progression in ICT skills. The next two tables summarise the results of these interviews. Note that those clients who gave an in-depth interview later during the same visit are included in these figures.



Table 27: Employment

	N.E. Derby- shire	Lincoln	East Sussex	North Devon	Harlow	Birmingham	Newham	Newcastle upon Tyne	Wakefield	Oldham	TOTALS
Found a full-time job		1	1	1				2	2		7
Found a part-time job									1		1
Found voluntary work											0
On work experience			1								1
Applying for jobs		2			2				3	2	9
Looking for full-time work	2						3				5
Looking for part-time work	1				1						2
Looking for work placement		1									1
Continuing voluntary work		3	2	2	1						8
Continuing part-time work				2			1			2	5
Continuing full-time work								3		2	5
Entering mainstream education			1		2			1		1	5
Not looking for work yet			4	2	4	6	1		5	1	23
Have ceased looking for work	5	1								2	8
Waiting for work permit				1				1			2
Asylum seekers								2			2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>84</b>

Out of the 84 clients in round 3, only 7 had found a full-time job during the interval between rounds 2 and 3 (around three months). If we add in to that figure the three clients who failed to attend in round 3 because they had found work, that gives a figure of 10 out of 128 who had been able to find work within the 2 to 3 month period. It is not possible to comment on the remaining 46 who failed to attend although it is possible that some of them may also have found work.

23 clients were not yet ready to start looking for work, and in some cases, for example mothers with young children, they were not anticipating doing so for one or two years. Eight clients had abandoned altogether the attempt to find work.

In centres where the centre manager and staff had a close relationship with clients, there was some information on where clients had gone after finishing their course. However, the information was largely anecdotal and held by individuals. No centre has yet found a way of formally recording progression routes after completion.

Table 28: Progression in ICT skills/qualifications

	N.E. Derby- shire	Lincoln	East Sussex	North Devon	Harlow	Birmingham	Newham	Newcastle upon Tyne	Wakefield	Oldham	TOTALS
Completed ECDL	1		1		4	1			2		9
Completed City and Guilds level 1										2	2
Completed City and Guilds level 2										2	2
Completed CLAIT			2	2		1		1	2		8
Completed RSA Word Processing level 2									2		2
Completed NVQ computer maintenance level 1						1					1
Completed introductory course	1	1	2			1	1				6
Progressing on ECDL	3	1		3							7
Progressing on CLAIT	3			1					3		7
Progressing on City and Guilds										3	3
Progressing on introductory course		1	1	1	5	2	3	3	2	3	21
Progressing with ICT specialisms		1	2	1							4
Drop-in only		4					1	5			10
No longer attending			1		1						2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>84</b>

Table 28 shows 29 course completions. 42 clients were continuing to work on their chosen courses, 21 at introductory level. Only 10 were attending the centres in order to use the internet and email, almost all at Lincoln and Newcastle. One person at Harlow came into the centre expressly for the interview. What these figures indicated, together with the interviews and the classroom observations, was that clients on the whole make good progress, with many gaining valuable qualifications and almost all feeling a marked increase in self-confidence. Virtually all of them found the self-paced, open-learning format (asking for help when required) very much to their taste because it enabled them to take charge of their own learning.

## 6.1 Clients' perceptions of progress

Two sets of questions asked clients to grade their level of confidence on a scale of 0 to 10. This estimated to what extent they felt more, or less, positive about their learning experiences, whether in terms of looking for work or more generally.

Table 29 Looking for Work

		Mean score visit 2	Mean score visit 3
1	How confident are you that your ICT skills would help you get a job?	6.2	6.9
2	How confident are you that your reading and writing skills are good enough in a work situation?	8.3	8.3
3	How well do you get on with people when working in a team?	8.6	8.9
4	How confident would you be in a job where you had to work with Figures?	7.2	7.4
5	How confident would you be in a job where you had to deal with customers face to face?	8.4	8.5
6	How confident are you in your ability to find job opportunities?	6.7	7.2
7	How confident are you of your ability to make a good impression in an interview?	7.2	7.4
8	How confident are you in your ability to write a good CV without help from someone else?	7.1	7.6

The shifts in perceptions were small, ranging from zero to 0.7 in the case of question 1. One would expect that question 1, along with questions 6 and 8 (where an increase of 0.5 was registered in both cases), would show the largest increases in confidence, since many clients had practised these skills at the centres in the interval between the two visits.

The questions to do with perceptions of learning showed an increase of 0.7 for confidence in computer skills, exactly the same as in question 1 in the previous figure. The biggest increase was in clients' confidence in finding information on the Internet (1.0), reflecting centres' concerns to promote this type of skill. The figure for those intending to continue studying ICT was noticeably higher than for those intending to take a course in another subject, but, in the latter case, the figure was a little higher on visit 3.

Table 30: Learning

		Mean score visit 2	Mean score visit 3
1	How confident are you in your computer skills?	6.9	7.6
2	How confident are you that you can learn new things?	8.5	8.9
3	How confident are you of your ability to find the information you want on the Internet?	6.8	7.8
4	How interested are you in continuing to learn about computers by taking another course?	9.2	9.1
5	How interested are you in taking a course in another subject?	7.7	8.0

## 6.2 In-depth interviews

These in-depth, open-ended interviews focused on clients' perceptions of the changes they experienced as a result of their learning, with special reference to employability issues. All the interviews were recorded on minidisk, transcribed and archived to CD-ROM. The table below gives a brief indication of which of the UK online target groups the selected individuals fell into. There is an element of overlap in one or two cases (Oldham and Wakefield for example) because it was felt worthwhile to include at least one interviewee from each of the ten centres.

Table 31

Birmingham	Both interviewees were unemployed. One suffering from a disability (Asperger's syndrome) and the other from severe dyslexia
East Sussex	A lone parent with no qualifications re-engaging with learning via ICT training.
Harlow	Lone parent, looking to get a decent job to support herself and her child.
Lincoln	An unemployed elderly male client with basic skills needs.
N.Devon	Middle-aged woman, unemployed, with mental health problems and a poor employment record. Acquiring ICT skills with a view to getting part-time office work.
N.E.Derbyshire	An older woman, with qualifications in childcare, seeking to gain access to better employment opportunities through ICT training.
Newcastle	Male asylum seeker from Burundi. Not one of the UK online target groups but representative of the centre.
Newham	Both ethnic minority clients. One female (Bangladeshi) who is also learning English and hopes to work in childcare at a later stage. The other is a young unemployed British Asian with basic skills needs.
Oldham	A female client who has succeeded in finding the better quality employment she wanted on the basis of her newly acquired ICT skills.
Wakefield	A female client upgrading her existing office skills to re-enter the job market having taken time out to have a family.

### Birmingham

In terms of the range of its provision and the specialist skills of its staff, the Birmingham centre offered more opportunities to people who were socially excluded than several of the other centres. Two clients were interviewed, one suffering from severe dyslexia and another from Asperger's syndrome. They were representative of two of the centre's four main target groups i.e. people with disabilities and mental health problems, the other two groups being the homeless and the unemployed. What they illustrate is the quality of the support the centre had been able to offer to these two clients who were struggling with major employability problems. Although neither of them had been successful in finding suitable employment, their learning was giving them practical computing skills and increased self-confidence.

The first client, aged 25, suffered from Asperger's Syndrome and from quite a young age had lived in care and attended a special boarding school. He was living in a residential unit at the time of the interview. He had never had paid work and had attended a number of colleges and training centres before coming to this centre. Although he had made progress with his ICT skills, he did not have any qualifications and had engaged with elements of CLAIT and ECDL without completing either. However, he intended continuing with ECDL and had started on a Basic Employment Training

course, beginning with Business Administration, which could lead to an NVQ. The six month course included work preparation.

The interview was complicated by the fact that the client had difficulty expressing how he felt about himself and his situation. For example, in response to the question about how his learning had affected him personally, he replied:

Respondent: In a way it's benefited me, because if I do get employment, my employers would want me to be using computers.

Interviewer: Has it made your life different in any way?

In a way it has. I had a personal computer at home, but it wasn't exactly up to what it was when I first really started using computers.

He had no clear idea of what paid work entailed and had yet to engage with the local job market. None of the people in his residential home had ever been in paid work. When asked what sort of jobs he might go for he replied:

Respondent: I'd probably start at the bottom of the stairs and then slowly climb up to a senior position.

Interviewer: Have you thought what kind of company it might be? Are you thinking mainly retail?

Yes, mainly retail; but I haven't said I want to work for say Tesco's, or supermarkets.

However, he had been employed on a voluntary basis before, not entirely successfully:

Interviewer: What placements have you done?

Respondent: Mainly the retail sector. Helping out, customer inquiries, filling shelves.

Interviewer: How did you get on with that work?

There were occasions when I was all right, but there were occasions where I didn't exactly fit in.

He said he felt quite confident about his skills and getting work but recognised that he needed more practice. He commented that his handwriting was poor and so he was not good at filling in application forms. He also felt he would need support for things like attending an interview and perhaps for his first few days in a job. The fieldworker was certain that the centre would provide this level of support, but it seemed that the most likely outcome would be that further training would enable him to enjoy better times in voluntary rather than paid work, unless he was fortunate in his search for an employer.

The second client was 42 and suffered from severe dyslexia. He came to the centre because it also housed a Dyslexia Centre which had helped him to cope better with his condition. He had, until recently, always found paid work, albeit in low skilled jobs such as warehousing, factory work, and hotel work. At the time of the interview he had been out of work for over two years. His overriding goal was to become a computer technician and that was the course on which he was registered. He was hoping to reach NVQ level 2 standard, the minimum requirement for what he wanted to do. Unfortunately, because of his dyslexia, reaching this level was proving very difficult and he was frustrated and angry at his predicament, although very appreciative of the support he was receiving both from his course tutors and the dyslexia staff:

Interviewer: How do you think the learning here has affected you personally?

Respondent: It's helped me get back some of my confidence. I always fall back when it comes to the writing work, because if a person passes me a form or gives a certain diagram I can explain it nicely.

They will happily pass me the form to fill in, because they assume that because I've read it, I can write it, and I can't. This place is very supportive.

There are three quite distinctive features of the interview that this client gave. Firstly, he was keenly aware of the exploitative nature of some employers, in the retail trade for example, and also the dismissive attitude that some had towards people with disabilities, which had led him into confrontations in the past. Secondly, because he was confident in his abilities, he felt that his self-worth and dignity were undermined because he did not have the paper qualifications to gain access

to the jobs he wanted:

There'd be a difference if I'd got the paperwork behind me. It isn't applying, I can say "here's what I can do. If your company needs an engineer to cover this A,B,C or whatever, then it's there." I don't have to worry about it. They can give me a job and I can get on with it; but without it, it's more or less like a beggar. I was an industrial cleaner, meant to do it for two weeks and done it for about three and a half years. I don't really want to go back to that.

Thirdly, unlike the majority of our interviewees, he had an exceptionally good knowledge of the local labour market where many jobs were available. However, those that he would like to do required skills that he did not have:

I've been into the jobcentre more than once, and they were astonished, over 300 and so many jobs. I've gone down and they've said: "you need to be numerate and literate. That knocks out about one third. Driving licence: knocks out another quarter. Fork lift licence: knocks out the rest.

He did, however, draw some comfort from a recent trend that he had noticed in Birmingham:

I think unemployment is increasing over the age of 35. A nice thing I've seen inside some of these shopping 24-hour things, they are reemploying the older people. The message I get back is: they're more reliable because they don't go pubbing, and they're more sensible because they know that if they don't work, they don't get the money.

His local knowledge also kept him abreast of the latest developments in Birmingham's manufacturing sector.

## **Harlow**

This client, a lone parent aged 25, was one of a number attending an ICT/Basic Skills & Parenting class, a free non- accredited course with crèche provision and help with travel. The crèche facility was perhaps the most important element in the package, since without it the young mothers who made up the course would not have been able to attend. They all had done badly at school and had taken the opportunity to build up their skills so that they could return to the workplace when their children went to school. Before beginning this course, the client had successfully completed a City and Guilds level 2 course run at another centre which is part of the same network.

The programme included modules on diet, healthy living, food hygiene and fire safety, as well as ICT, but its flexible design meant that the tutor put on topics requested by the students, a feature which was particularly valued by this client:

We're now doing our food hygiene course on Tuesdays, which we've all wanted. We done a first aid course. Anything we want to do, she'll (the tutor) find some work on it. I'm brushing up on my English, my grammar and punctuation. When you haven't been to school for so long, you just forget. We're just doing quite a bit of work on that the moment, because she's trying to get me ready to go for my GCSE English again.

She was also doing a preschool workshop at the centre, a first step on the way to realising her ambition, to run her own nursery:

Interviewer: What kind of thing do you think you might be looking for eventually?

Respondent: Something to do with childcare. I would eventually like to run my own nursery. The computer side will help me to do that, setting up my own business.

The mode of study in ICT – self-paced, open learning – complements the flexibility of the course structure and was much appreciated, as it was by the vast majority of the clients we interviewed:

It's more relaxed. You know there's no pressure. If you get stuck, you can just ask, but you know that the most of it you're doing yourself. It you that's doing it, not getting told exactly how to do it. You've got the use your own brain, but if you do get stuck, you've got somebody there that's quite happy to help you.

As with most interviewees, the impact of learning on her self-esteem had been profound:

I feel more prepared than I did when I first had A (her child), but I think by coming here I've got a lot of confidence, because I didn't have any when I first came here. So it has helped me in a lot of ways.

This is perhaps the main reason why her employment aspirations had been raised. She was well aware of the nature of the local labour market and keen to avoid, at least in the longer term, being trapped in low paid and low skilled work:

Interviewer: Can you tell me what kind of work you think is available in the local area?

Respondent: There's quite a few new places opened...for till work and stuff like that. There is bits in the paper, but it's all experience. There's lower-level jobs around, but the higher-level ones you have to be experienced for a good few years, have lots of training.

Interviewer: Apart from this new development, and it will provide jobs, although they're not really the kind of jobs that you might go for, in terms of a career.

Respondent: Not as a career. As a stopgap, maybe. I would want something better, because I'm a single parent, so I need something to cover me and A. I need to get a job that pays good.

An important element in the experience of this client at the centre was the role paid by the tutor. The transcript of the interview revealed a great deal of trust and reliance placed upon this one individual. Here are three comments which feature the tutor, referred to as "L":

I came here on the Monday and the girls were so nice and L. said to me to come here, and I came here...

Now I feel confident enough just to go in and do whatever, and L. comes out with all these really new ideas that we haven't done, so I'm still learning now...

Yes, I'm doing a course at the moment on a Monday with L., through the College: preschool workshop.

This is something that was noted in other centres and it bears out the comments made by some centre managers, that the building of personal relationships is an important factor in client retention and the development of their potential.

## **Lincoln**

This client was selected as an example of clients with basic skills needs who have made good progress in their learning. He was 51 years old and came to the centre in June 2002. He had completed **learnirect** *Desk Top Tutor*, which has elements of spreadsheets, data bases, word processing and DTP. He had also done *A Way With Words* levels 1 & 2 and *Numbers Direct* level 1. Alongside this he had done City and Guilds English level 1 and Maths level 1, although he failed the latter. He said he would take it again, next year, together with level 2 in English and Maths. He was also planning to do CLAIT and a course on sign language.

Clients often mentioned that their experience of learning had given them new self-confidence. In the case of this client it was more a new sense of his own dignity. In the interview, he recalled how he had been belittled in the past:

I've always wanted something better, but I was getting drawn into the same routine where people were calling me thick, dumb and stupid, and it was like: "OK, maybe I am." It got to that stage it didn't hurt me because I was that used to people saying I was thick, dumb and stupid, so I began to think I was really that level.

Now, because of his experiences at the centre, he claimed he had a much more positive view of himself:

It's affected me personally because when everybody calls me dumb, thick and stupid, I just ignore it, and just think: Well, if he'd have told me that I'd be doing this at this stage, it's quite unbelievable what I've learned in such a short time with the help of the people and staff of the access centre, and at the College, because I've got tutors there as well as here.

At the time of the interview he was unemployed, after many years of hard physical work:

Been in the army. Came out the army, got a job as a butcher. Was humping sides of beef, four quarters of beef. Then I went to work at Swifts working in a deep freeze, stacking boxes.

He was also trying to acquire the basic skills, and ICT skills, that would help him develop the voluntary work he had been doing since he was forced to stop working, three years previously, because of unspecified physical and mental health problems. It was very noticeable that the type of voluntary work he did, in the local hospital, reflected his long-standing concern for the vulnerable: those who, in his words, had been "taken advantage of":

The personal advantages I've got is that I've helped people before what's been really ill, and they've been taken advantage of, and it's like I used to help people, and we used to take training sessions for people that want to learn to play football. I've always had a hand on situations where I've been going through some stage of my life where I've always helped people, both physically fit and those who are bedridden.

Respondent: I don't like the way that people are treated, especially if they can't read; they get pushed to one side. It's OK every notice is stuck up, but not everybody can read.

Interviewer: So you think you might be able to help?

Respondent: Yes. I like to pass the knowledge I have learned over the lifetime I have done, to help other people.

Interestingly, when he was first interviewed in January, he was talking of finding paid employment, but it would appear, from the interview in August, that this project had been abandoned in favour of his educational development. His aspirations were now to continue his learning and to be able to do more voluntary work at the hospital; his long term aim being to do an OU course in Health and Social Care. To this end, he was going to do an OU Openings course which would help him develop the study skills needed to attempt the Health and Social Care course.

Like the client from North East Derbyshire (see below), he took an uncompromising view of the employment situation in his area and the phrase "and I've not looked back since" exemplified his determination to make something of himself:

The work is there if people are determined to go and find it, because when I was the first made redundant, after about two or three months, I thought: "well, that's it, once a fortnight, this isn't any good for me, I'm just sat at home until the next time I sign on." I looked in the Echo, and there was an open evening at the College for people what was like myself, what couldn't read and write and struggle with Maths, and I went to the open day, and I've not looked back since. If people say that they're bored, I just say: "why don't you look in the Echo or see if you can go to the college open evening and do things like that". Some people say: "no, that's not for me." You can't help some people.



The fieldworker noted that “the centre has been very supportive of his efforts, not just with learning but on a personal level too”. Recently one of the tutors arranged some bereavement counselling for him. As he said, “they always help you with any problem you have”.

## **Newcastle**

This client, an asylum seeker from Burundi, was selected as one of a number of asylum seekers living in the locality who used the centre for internet and e-mail. He arrived in Newcastle in December 2002 and used the centre for communication with his family in Africa and also to update his ICT skills and improve his English:

Learning ICT on this Centre is to help me to be in communication with all the world, and my family who is staying in Africa. Learning ICT too, is for me to update my knowledge, because as my first language is French, all the documentary [he means 'documents'] is now in English, so I have to find out knowledge in English through Internet.

He had completed an ESOL course at the local college and done an interpreting qualification which he used in his voluntary work with the North East Refugee Service. He was not allowed to go to university until his legal status was determined, but his aim was to study economics: in Burundi he was a community leader and agronomist engineer, managing projects in the farming community. He hoped he would be able to find similar work here and felt that the only barrier, apart from his legal status, was language. He already had a strategy for looking for work and saw the ICT skills he was acquiring as an important element in it:

Interviewer: How will you go about finding work once you have your legal status? What will you do?

Respondent: First it is the Internet, through job centres. There are many websites giving information about jobs; and through friends. I can send you a message: "I got my papers, can you help me? Please find enclosed my CV."

Interviewer: How do you think your ICT skills improve your chances of getting a job?

Respondent: Yes, I think that nowadays you can't expect to do good things without ICT skills. I do believe that my ICT skills will help to get me the job.

Consequently, he intended to take ECDL in September 2003.

The centre had obviously been a great help and he knew the value of integrating with the community:

Respondent: When I reached this town I found people friendly. When you're dealing with adult people they are helpful, they can advise you; show you what to do, what not to do. That's why I think I will stay in this town...I like this Centre. This Centre's free. You know, you can't like somewhere without people. It's only people who make you like the area.

Interviewer: Do you know whether it will be easy to get work here?

Respondent: I think the main thing's to mix with people. If you mix with people it will be easy for you. If you can't mix with people you can't get a job.

Of the centre itself, he said he would like to see it grow, teaching the people of the area “many courses”. He particularly liked the way that staff dealt with clients: “It makes me happy”.

## **Newham**

Two clients were selected from Newham, both members of ethnic minorities. The first was a young Bangladeshi woman of 28. Although she came to this country eight years ago, she had been learning English for only five months and her ICT course at the centre was run in Bengali. Although she was able to begin the interview in English, she soon had to use her tutor, a Bengali speaker, as interpreter. She had two children, one six and one three and a half, and the reason she gave for starting

English so late was the need to look after the family. Now her older child had started to attend school, she was able to begin to learn and she was progressing on three fronts: ICT, ESOL and a course in nursery health (she was also doing voluntary work in a local nursery). She was finding English the most difficult, as might be expected, but her motivation was very strong because it enabled her to communicate:

I am enjoying my study. I want to know more about computing and English language. I want to communicate fluently....I feel proud that I'm learning something. I can talk to other people, as well.

Her use of the adjective “proud” showed that self-worth, as with so many of the individuals we spoke to, was one of the mainsprings of her motivation.

She gave a number of reasons for wanting to acquire ICT skills:

- so that she would be able to help her children with their education;
- because she was interested in computers and wanted to be able to use them;
- because the skills might lead to a job.

But she also mentioned another reason, later in the interview, which linked to her desire to communicate; the Internet and email were her favourite topics in the ICT programme she was following because they offered ways to communicate:

Interviewer: What about this course that you're doing: which bits are the most interesting?

Respondent: Internet and e-mail. Because I can send e-mails to my friends and husband. Also, they return e-mails.

Having started ICT only six months previously, she was still at an early stage, having just completed Computers for Beginners:

Interviewer: Can you tell me how much you have learned in six months? What can you do now on the computer?

Respondent: I am doing Internet, Excel, Photoflash (?), word processing, e-mail.

The family had a computer at home and her husband worked in computing, so she was able to continue her learning at home and get help when she needed it.

Her course in nursery health and the voluntary work at the local nursery would lead eventually, she hoped, to a job doing support work in school, and certainly her ICT skills would be an important asset. She was spending one day per week at the nursery, three mornings at ESOL classes and one morning on ICT, an indication of the strength of her commitment to learning.

One final point needs to be emphasised: the centre was very close to her home, as were the two schools where the ESOL classes were run. The importance of locating the centres in amongst their target communities in order to reach those most in need has been outlined earlier in this report, and this was another case in point.

The second interviewee from Newham was a 20 year old British Asian male. He was selected as an example of a client using the centre purely on a drop-in basis in order to find work, with the help of a member of the Newham Action Team. He had been out of work for nearly a year and was a New Deal client. He began attending the centre in February, when he did an ICT taster session which was not followed up. The fieldworker noted that his English was poor and he had a speech impediment. He had no qualifications from school and no ICT qualifications.

He had worked for a total of nine months after leaving school, four months with the Royal Mail and five months at a newsagent which, it emerged at interview, belonged to his cousin. He said he quit the

newsagent job because he no longer wanted to work for his cousin. Despite this setback, he remained convinced that retail was the only avenue open to him:

Interviewer: Have you thought about any other line of work at all?

Respondent: Not really. Retail would be best. If I go for something else, I can't really do it, so it's not worth it.

These limited horizons were allied to a lack of self-awareness and sense of purpose which manifested themselves when he was asked about what course he would like to do at college as part of his New Deal arrangements:

Interviewer: What will you do at college?

Respondent: IT.

Interviewer: Do you know which particular courses in IT might be useful for you?

Respondent: No. I didn't really know. I applied for IT. I don't know which course I'm going to do.

He energetically exploited, and was very appreciative of, the support and facilities on offer at the centre:

I use them (computers) for looking up any jobs. Once I've looked for a job I e-mail, I check in my e-mail if anything comes up. I had a reply yesterday, so I sent back a reply today. [Here] They have computers, everything you need: stamps, envelopes, they'll send it for you. You don't need any money. They'll give you a travel pass if you're going for anything.

But, although he had been successful in getting interviews, he had never been offered a job, a pattern of failure which he found depressing but which he did not appear to have analysed to any great extent:

Respondent: I used to work before, but I don't know why I can't get a job now. I find it really hard.

Interviewer: Is there not very much work available?

Respondent: There is work, it's just that if you have an interview they call you and they say: "you've been unsuccessful."

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Respondent: I don't know.

Some of the exchanges with the interviewer offered an insight into why he was not successful at interview. For example, the talk prior to the next extract had been about his learning to use a computer without any formal tuition:

Interviewer: Nobody has taught you how to use it?

Respondent: No, because I used to use just one hand before, and now I'm using both hands.

Interviewer: Who taught you how to use the Internet?

Respondent: I know how to use the Internet.

Interviewer: Who showed you first?

Respondent: No-one, I just found out how to use the Internet Explorer.

Interviewer: How about your reading and writing: is that good enough for work?

Yes, I can read and write.

By making use of the centre in this way (exclusively as drop-in) this client was unlikely to begin tackling his learning problems. It may be only when he becomes aware of the reasons for his record of failure, and takes appropriate action, that his prospects will begin to improve.

## **North Devon**

This client, a lady of 40 with a history of mental health problems and a poor employment record, had made considerable progress in her learning after coming to the centre in 2001. She had previously gained an NVQ level 2 qualification in office administration, after leaving school with only a few

CSEs. In her time at the centre she had passed CLAIT and ECDL and, at the time of the interview, was working on New CLAIT and **learnirect** Word processing level 3. Her focus on ICT was largely determined by her desire to get into office work “a part-time admin job in a hospital or in a theatre, or in a kind of publishing place, or somewhere really quite lively”. To this end she had enrolled on a part time NVQ in customer services:

Respondent: I would have liked to have done the personal secretary's diploma, but it means full-time. I could have done it, but it means going back to college full-time, and I didn't think I was really up to it, so I'm doing part time NVQ in customer services instead.

Interviewer: What makes you say you didn't feel up to it?

Respondent: Going back to college full-time would mean that I didn't have time to do anything else, and there was no guarantees that I was going to find a job afterwards, as it was for people who've got degrees.

This last comment about there being “no guarantees” was typical of the realistic assessment that she made of her situation. She did not assume, for example, that her ICT qualifications would be enough to get her the job she was seeking:

Interviewer: How do you think your ICT skills have improved your prospects for getting a job?

Respondent: Because some of the exams I've got, like ECDL, are recognized, I would say it's given me a slightly better chance, but I think a lack of experience will go against me, in terms of the sorts of places I'd like to work.

and was aware that looking for, and getting, the sort of job she wanted could be a lengthy process. To this end she had contacted a training agency which would provide her with the support she needed: “It's going to be a slow process. It could take two or three years for me to actually secure something I feel comfortable with”. The quality of the work was an important consideration for her, and she felt the need to be challenged:

I don't mind shop work; it's quite good fun, but I'd like somewhere where I'm more challenged.

Having to travel to work was not a barrier, but there was, perhaps, an echo of her earlier problems in what she had to say about Barnstaple:

I would travel to work, to towns like Barnstaple, Bideford, or even commuting to Exeter if I had to. But at the moment I wouldn't leave Ilfracombe... If you're a bit sensitive it's a much happier place to live than Barnstaple, which can be a bit full. Barnstaple's a very busy market town and it can be very hectic and more impersonal, whereas Ilfracombe's much more relaxed.

The centre had clearly played a major role in keeping her confidence up, as she put it, and after some initial apprehension at being in a self-directed learning situation, she had discovered a new self-reliance:

One thing I found a bit frightening about here at first was the fact that although the tutors were here, you were on your own. Now I'm fine, and I really enjoy doing work on my own.

Learning had acquired a value in itself for this client, quite apart from opening up the possibility of more fulfilling work.

## **North East Derbyshire**

This client was selected as an example of an older woman (aged 54) who joined the centre to develop ICT skills to gain access to better quality work. Her previous qualifications consisted of an NVQ level 3 Diploma in Pre-school Practice and various short courses in special needs. In the space of about one

year at the centre she had passed City and Guilds 1 and 2 and ECDL and was progressing through CLAIT level 1.

Initially, her motivation to acquire ICT skills resulted from her need to prepare materials for the playgroup where she was a supervisor, but her success in ICT had led her to consider upgrading her childcare qualifications:

Now, anything to do with the playgroup I can type it up and it's neat and tidy. And you can change the mistakes before you print it. I want to do a level 4 next in childcare, and it would be better if you can type that up.

Another possibility for her was to develop the office skills that would enable her to work in a school:

At the moment I notice there's one on there, the job thingy [the notice board]. I were good at Maths at school, and there were one on there for doing payrolls, but you've got to do SAGE, so I don't know whether M.'s going to try and get that. Same as childcare, I'd like to do that, but if you did that part-time and something else, I'm not bothered. I can't sit at home; it gets on my nerves. I'm so bored. I don't know how these people who stay on dole all these years cope.

There are two significant issues raised in this short extract. The reference to M. was a reference to the centre's ICT tutor, a local woman who played a major role in attracting people into the centre. If there was a demand for a particular type of training, clients approached M. to see whether she could arrange it to be run in the centre.

Interviewer: You're talking about perhaps going on to teaching. Where would you train to do that?

Respondent: No. I've thought of asking at Chesterfield College. I have asked M. about doing the RSA thing, and they're looking into it now, to see if there's enough requests for it. They might do it here. It's easier here.

Interviewer: What's easier about it?

Respondent: It's local. I haven't got to mess about catching bus.

The second issue is her incomprehension of those in the community who remain outside learning. Despite all the best efforts of the centre manager and M., even this locally rooted centre had not succeeded in breaking down the benefit culture and persuading more people to engage with the centre. The impact of the centre upon this particular client had not been restricted to ICT training, far from it:

Respondent: If I hadn't done these courses, I would have just been at home fed up and bored, and it's really helped me to mix more with different people. It's helped me to mix more with people I don't know. It's learnt me skills that I can use: life skills....

Interviewer: What do you mean by 'life skills'?

Respondent: It's made me more confident in myself, and I mix more with other people that are strangers, plus at one time I would have talked myself out of office work, but now I think I'd be able to do it.

## **Oldham**

This client was a 45 year old female fitness instructor who was a success story for the centre, having found the better quality job she wanted on the basis of the ICT skills she had acquired:

Respondent: I have been offered employment since you've seen me, and it's through having IT skills that I've got it.

Interviewer: Tell me about it, because I think you had applied for a job last time I came.

Respondent: Yes, it's the same one. It's for reception, admin assistant, and it is only part time the moment, but it's at North Manchester General Hospital, and it's to do with community mental health.

However, because of the impetus that her success had given her, she was already looking beyond this post to something full-time and more personally fulfilling:

Now I really want full-time employment, and it's very hard to come by. It's all part-time or job share. I want to do something for me, and something I'll enjoy.

In terms of qualifications, she already had five O-levels on starting at the centre and within the space of a year, doing shift work, had managed to complete City and Guilds level 1 in ICT. It had been, in her own words “The best thing I’ve ever done...It's given me a lot more confidence. It started me to use my brain again. I went a little bit brain dead at work”. She now wished to take ICT further “I don't know where, and I don't know how yet, but I'd like to continue as much as I can”.

Two particular features about the interview deserve mention. The first was that despite her success in finding better employment, she still felt a need for support in finding work, confirming the necessity for well-targeted employability support in the centres:

Interviewer: Do you feel you need more support from anywhere, in terms of getting or applying for work?

Respondent: Yes, because I don't know where to start looking. I've done it off my own bat, got my own job, but it was advertised in the paper...I don't know which direction to go in.

Interviewer: So you haven't, for example, since coming here, heard of anywhere where you could go to discuss a career move?

Respondent: No.

Her last answer was not surprising, since the centre was part of a consortium run by the local college and specialized in accredited training courses. Although advice and guidance were available at the college, we found that very few users of the centre were aware of what was available.

The second feature was that, despite being born and bred in the area, and working in a range of jobs, this client had very little notion of the local employment context:

Interviewer: Has employment changed over that period? Do people do different things now, are there different things available? You mentioned all the things that are available to you, but they seem to be town centre orientated, retail and businesses. Has there been a big change in what's gone on in Oldham?

Respondent: There's different types of shops. Little shops have disappeared.

Paradoxically, this lack of knowledge of the local labour market was combined with a certain parochialism, which was not uncommon amongst our interviewees. In this case, looking for work in Manchester was presented as a daunting prospect: “I don't know Manchester. It's so vast”.

## **East Sussex**

The East Sussex centre was a small, community-based operation which lacked the resources of centres in the major metropolitan areas. The client we selected was attracted to the centre by a course in ICT and personal development, run by Women in Action, which also contributed to her travelling expenses and childcare costs, paid the fees for another ICT course (CLAIT), and then provided her with a mentor to help with job applications, especially CV writing and interview technique. In this respect, Women in Action was playing the supporting role that is part and parcel of the service offered by centres such as Newham, Newcastle and Birmingham.

The client, aged 32, was a lone parent, with no previous qualifications, who was starting to plan a route back into work. She began her learning at the centre in October 2002 and had successfully completed an accredited course: CLAIT. She was evidently pleased with her progress:

I didn't know a lot about ICT when I first started. Now I have also done CLAIT, so I've really come a long way. I can do spreadsheets and e-mailing, make posters, and I'm also doing desktop publishing. I've really got into computers.

and was planning further study which would increase her chances of getting the type of office work that she aspired to:

Interviewer: Have you thought about what you might do next in terms of learning? Are you going to continue?

Respondent: Yes, I'd like to a SAGE course. There's one running in September. I'm going to enroll on that.

Interviewer: What made you decide to do that?

Respondent: It's just something else to learn. I'm really into learning at the moment. I didn't like school. I think I've learned more since I left school that I did when I was at school. Once I know what I want to do, I'm happy to learn.

The key factors which drew her into learning were that the Women in Action course was free and the personal development aspect struck a chord with her, although not immediately:

When I went, I thought at first: "What am I doing here!?" but as the weeks went past I really got into it. It's mainly trying to see what sort of person you are and how you work, how you deal with situations, and I really enjoyed it.

Having had support in her initial job applications from Women in Action, she now felt ready to look for work unaided:

I'm quite happy looking for work and going for interviews and putting in my CV. I've had help: I've had a mentor, but we've just stopped now, because we both felt that we've got to the point where I don't need any more help.

and was planning to do a GCSE English course "basically to boost my English, not necessarily to get the qualification". Her motives for learning were not simply utilitarian and, as she remarked, "... it's really put me into learning. It's like a new lease of life."

## **Wakefield**

Aged 35, this client was using the centre to upgrade the skills she had when she was secretary to a cardiothoracic surgeon, prior to having a family. In this respect she was typical of many of the users of the centre: young women in the 30 - 45 age group who were looking to return to work after having a break to have children. The fieldworker observed that "they are mostly bright, single-minded and get what they want". This is the only interview with one of the better qualified users of the ten centres: she already had a B.Tech in Business Studies. She was also unusual in our sample in that she lived in a remote rural area and was reliant upon her car for transport. This had the effect of making her appreciate the social aspect of learning in the centre:

Interviewer: How do you feel coming back into a learning environment has affected you personally?

Respondent: I think it's been good, because it's given me a bit more confidence in what skills I have got, and it's been nice to come out and meet different people from different backgrounds. Generally it's good to get out of my area, because I do come from out in the country.

Rural isolation did not mean that she was in any way intimidated by the prospect of working in the cities:

Interviewer: You've already mentioned the local area. Do most people work? What do they do? What kind of work is available across the board?

Respondent: Pig farming (laughter). I've got to travel at least 20 minutes to get to any sort of centre.

There's only a couple of local schools. The rest would be odd office jobs. I would be looking to Doncaster, Leeds, Castleford area where there is more jobs.

This contrasts with some of our round 3 interviewees, with fewer skills and less self-confidence, who balked at the idea of leaving the environment with which they were familiar. Her dependence on the car also highlighted the predicament of those in the area without a car. In fact, she was typical of the 31 clients at this centre who we interviewed in the second round: 71% of whom travelled to the centre by car.

In the year or so she had been attending the centre, she had completed CLAIT and RSA Word Processing Level 3 and had signed up to do New CLAIT. Having updated her skills (in her previous job she used Apple computers), she was now in a position to look for part-time secretarial work:

Interviewer: How do you feel now about looking for work? How would you go about it?

Respondent: I feel quite confident. I'm probably looking in the press more than anything. I'm probably in the middle of the areas, so I'll be probably Pontefract, Doncaster, Selby, Goole...I have been looking recently at school work in term times, in the offices in schools, and also there's been a couple of jobs that have come up in the NHS, part-time, that have only been about 15 hours a week, which I can probably fit in over the summer, with child care.

There was no mention of needing any support in looking for a job, even though her knowledge of the local labour market seemed somewhat hazy. When asked about any changes she had noticed over the last few years she replied:

Probably just the new shopping areas at Leeds and Castleford; Doncaster's got a new one, and York. And anything else that ties in with that. Probably the work that I would be looking for would not be in that area.

She had not felt the need to use the adult careers service and could not see how the course, the teaching, or the general organisation of the centre could be improved. The interview gave a picture of a self-reliant and clearly focused person who found the centre's self-directed teaching style very much to her liking because she was able to work at her own, accelerated pace.

### **6.3 Summary**

1. Only 7 of the 84 clients who attended the third round of interviews had found work since the previous round. The remainder were actively looking for work or were planning to start looking for work. Clients were realistic about the difficulties they faced in accessing the jobs market.
2. 29 clients out of 84 had completed ICT qualifications during the same period and 42 were continuing with their learning. There was a general enthusiasm for learning amongst the clients which was often attributed to the success they had met with in their ICT courses.
3. Small gains in confidence were reported by the clients interviewed in round 3 with regard to a range of ICT skills and skills for employment.
4. The twelve in-depth interviews, which were open-ended in nature, revealed that in most cases:
  - a. Clients' self-confidence and self-esteem had increased, sometimes dramatically.
  - b. Marketable ICT skills had been acquired, whether for use in paid employment or in the voluntary sector.
  - c. Clients had begun to think about their longer term employment prospects as well as their immediate future.



- d. Further training opportunities were being sought to further boost employment prospects.
- e. The support offered by the centres, in terms of training, job searching and advice and guidance was warmly welcomed.

## 7. Conclusions

By bringing together the perceptions of both the centres and their clients and presenting them within their local context, this exploratory and indicative study raises a number of interesting issues that are worthy of further research.

The tentative findings from this small scale study suggest that:

1. Taken as a whole, the clients interviewed were not an especially disadvantaged group in terms of national averages for level of qualifications and computer ownership for example. However 15% (33 out of the total of 222) had no qualifications of any kind.
2. The centre managers were aware that more needed to be done to attract the more disadvantaged clients, but often felt they did not have the expertise or resources necessary to market themselves to this section of the local population.
3. On the whole, our sample of clients often had little awareness of the local employment context. 66% of interviewees had no specific information about the local jobs situation.
4. We found a good deal of evidence that clients were acquiring marketable ICT skills, gaining in self-confidence and developing a taste for more learning, mostly, but not exclusively, in the field of ICT.
5. On the other hand, clients often lacked confidence in their ability to deploy the assets they had begun to accumulate and to present them to an employer.
6. In the case of people with a poor learning record, the process of building confidence and preparing them for employment is a lengthy one, and one which is facilitated by the integration of ICT training and basic skills training alongside assistance in accessing the employment market. The presence of a locally based, well-qualified and easily accessible tutor, who they could identify with and trust, was an important factor in maintaining motivation and increasing self-confidence. It was partly the lack of such a figure in more formal educational settings that makes them inappropriate environments for learners of this type and explains why many of those we spoke to would not have contemplated using them.
7. Some centres are better equipped to provide this type of integration than others because of the particular circumstances under which they were established i.e. the type of organisation in which they were originally embedded.
8. The process of developing the employability of people who are socially excluded depends upon the creation of a climate of trust and stability. Longer term funding would help ensure that, once such people have begun to engage with learning, their local centre is able to continue to support them, particularly in terms of well-qualified staff able to build relationships of trust with the local community.
9. In the period between the second and third round of visits to the centres (a period of 2 to 3 months) only 7 of the 84 clients interviewed at the third visit had found paid employment. The great majority of the remainder were looking for work either in the short or long-term.
10. In contrast to the employment position, 29 clients out of 84 had completed ICT qualifications during the same period and 42 were continuing with their learning. There was a general enthusiasm for learning amongst the clients which was often attributed to the success they had met with in their ICT courses.
11. The twelve in-depth interviews, which were open-ended in nature, revealed that in most cases:
  - Clients' self-confidence and self-esteem had increased, sometimes dramatically.
  - Marketable ICT skills had been acquired, whether for use in paid employment or in the voluntary sector.
  - Clients had begun to think about their longer term employment prospects as well as their immediate future.
  - Further training opportunities were being sought to further boost employment prospects.

- The support offered by the centres, in terms of training, job searching and advice and guidance was warmly welcomed.

Based on these issues, possibilities for further research would include analysing, in more detail, the interactions between the clients and the centres over several months in order to understand more fully, from the clients' perspective, the benefits of the integration of training in ICT, basic skills and employability. Another would be to investigate the nature of clients' transitions from acquiring ICT skills in the centres to actually employing them in work situations. Both proposals would encounter the problem of maintaining contact with learners within what is a very fluid, flexible learning structure: a problem that this study had difficulty in solving.

## Annex 1: The Centres' Provision

	<b>Learndirect Centre</b>	<b>Type of organisation</b>	<b>Basic skills</b> (also available via <b>Learndirect</b> )	<b>ICT</b>	<b>Employability training and resources</b>	<b>Learner support</b>
Birmingham	√	Non-profit making company, leads 19 centre consortium.	ESOL. Individual basic skills tuition.	A range of introductory courses; ECDL; CLAIT; IBT2	Work preparation; New Deal; Training workshops (NVQ).	Reachout Project. Dyslexia centre; Childcare facilities
Harlow	√	Adult Community College run by County Council	Literacy; numeracy; ESOL;	Computing for Beginners; ECDL; CLAIT;		Childcare facilities. Tutor for drop-in sessions.
Lincoln	√	Charitable trust serving the ward.	Literacy; numeracy; Job search skills	CLAIT; Basic Computing; IBT2; Computing for the Terrified.	Job Club; Volunteering Project	
North Devon	√	Trust serving N. Devon (5 centres).		CLAIT; ECDL; IBT2; Desk Top Publishing;	A course based on job searching skills.	Drop-in access with tutor support.
N.East Derbyshire		Local authority Community Economic Development Department		Introduction to Computers Basic Computers (OCN); Intermediate Computers ICT2 (OCN); CLAIT ECDL; Introduction to DTP	Job club.	No drop-in provision, all sessions time-Figured.
Newcastle	√	City Council (library services). TUC involvement.	ESOL. Basic skills to be provided by Basic Skills Team.	Five week courses in basic IT; ten week courses on the internet; CLAIT.	Newcastle Action Team and IAG support.	Reachout project: ICT for housebound. Tutor for drop-in.
Newham		Branch of a national employment agency	ESOL	Computer Basics; MS Office Skills (also in Bengali, Punjabi and Urdu); Computers at Work; CLAIT	Action Team based in the centre. Training in job searching.	No tutor support for drop-in clients. Drop-in access at any time.
Oldham	√	Local college runs a consortium of 22 centres.		Start IT (City and Guilds) City and Guilds 7261 & 7262		A tutor is provided for drop-in users.
East Sussex		Community association serving the ward	Basic Skills Project (LSC funded)	CLAIT; ECDL; short courses in: word processing, DTP, digital imaging.		No support for drop-in clients
Wakefield		Local authority Economic Development Department.	GCSE English and Maths	CLAIT; ECDL; IBT2; Word Processing 1,2 and 3; DTP; Digital Photography; Computerised Accounts; Computer Maintenance.	Work Preparation; JobNet Plus; Links with Enterprise Agency, Business Link, Jobcentre Plus; IAG.	Creche facilities

## Annex 2: Staffing and Computing Resources

	<b>Staffing</b>	<b>Computing resources</b>
Birmingham	The UK online centre is managed by a coordinator supported by 6 ICT tutors. The outreach centre has 1 coordinator and 1 basic skills tutor. It shares the main centre's ICT tutors. There are special needs tutors for those with disabilities.	At the main site the suite has 16 computers and in the outreach centre there are 15.
East Sussex	There are two staff: the centre manager, who also manages the consortium as a whole, plus one full-time and one part-time ICT tutor from the local college. Administration is handled by the consortium.	The computer suite consists of two adjoining rooms with ten workstations in one and five in the other. The larger room is used for teaching courses, leaving the other free for drop in clients.
Harlow	The centre manager is also IT curriculum coordinator for the college. College tutors deliver the ICT courses and a part-time tutor supports drop-in clients.	ICT provision consists of 24 computers in two adjoining rooms.
Lincoln	Three staff: a centre manager, a projects manager responsible for the job club and the volunteers' project, and an IT manager.	The building includes a tea shop, a computer suite, a meeting room, a reception area, and a computer room with 16 workstations.
N.East Derbyshire	There are four staff: the manager, a tutor, an administrator and an IT facilitator. A number of other tutors employed by Derbyshire LEA, in the adult education tutor pool, also work at the centre as required.	The centre possesses 12 PCs and 19 laptops plus a range of peripherals such as scanners and digital cameras.
Newcastle	A UK online centre manager plus a project manager for TUC courses. One administrator. 2 tutor/facilitators. All the courses are taught by Adult Education staff.	The main computer suite consists of 20 workstations, an Apple Mac, 4 scanners and 2 printers - all in a large open plan room. In another room there are a further 6 workstations, an Apple Mac and an interactive Smartboard for use in work based training and basic skills courses.
Newham	An operations manager is responsible for both the Action Team and the UK online centre. The Action Team consists of the centre manager, 2 business managers, 12 community consultants and 2 recruitment consultants. An IT tutor has recently been appointed.	The centre suffers from a lack of space. There is only one computer suite with 26 machines, 10 of which machines are reserved for the Action Team, leaving 16 for UK online use.
North Devon	The centre is staffed by a manager and two tutors who work on different shifts to cover a range of daytime and evening sessions.	The UK online computer suite has 16 work stations, plus peripherals. There is also a business training room with 10 computers used for basic skills training and business specific courses.
Oldham	The centre manager is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the centre. College staff are responsible for running the courses. ESF funding provides funding for 3 administrators in the centre and also an outreach worker for the unemployed.	3 computer rooms, each with 15 systems. A further room was set up during the year with 6 systems dedicated to drop-in provision.
Wakefield	The centre has 3 full time equivalent (fte) administrative staff, 5 (2fte) childcare staff, 2 caretaking and 15 (6fte) tutors as well as the centre manager. The tutors are employed by the adult education service and also work in other centres.	Three ICT suites with 15, 14 and 12 computers. There is a small room with 6 rather older computers for UK online users to browse the Web and use email.

### Annex 3: Economic Activity, Long-term Limiting Illness and Qualification Profile of the Resident Population age 16-74 years, 2001

% of resident population aged 16 to 74 years

NB: Data for the wards are given in the column to the left of the local authority column which is shaded.		<i>North East Derbyshire</i>		<i>Lincoln</i>		<i>East Sussex</i>		<i>North Devon</i>		<i>Harlow</i>		<i>Birmingham</i>		<i>Newham</i>		<i>Newcastle upon Tyne</i>		<i>Wakefield</i>		<i>Oldham</i>	<b>NATIONAL</b>
<b>Economic activity</b>																					
Employed	51.7	60.9	50.0	57.2	55.4	56.1	60.0	61.3	62.0	66.0	35.0	51.6	46.8	47.7	43.1	50.0	56.3	58.8	55.8	59.0	60.6
Unemployed	5.2	3.3	5.7	4.2	3.0	2.3	4.0	3.3	3.6	3.4	10.6	5.7	6.9	6.7	7.3	4.7	4.0	3.5	4.3	3.7	3.4
Economically active full-time students	1.0	1.8	4.8	3.7	2.1	2.0	1.2	1.8	1.9	2.3	3.3	3.0	4.5	4.3	2.5	3.8	1.2	1.9	2.7	2.1	2.6
Retired	15.9	16.0	9.9	12.3	18.3	22.3	18.0	17.3	15.6	13.0	9.4	12.2	7.8	7.8	14.1	13.2	14.9	14.4	13.3	13.0	13.6
Economically inactive students	2.7	2.9	8.8	6.3	2.3	3.1	2.0	2.3	2.1	2.2	8.7	7.5	9.1	9.4	5.0	10.0	2.2	3.1	4.4	4.0	4.7
Looking after home/family	8.8	6.1	5.6	6.8	9.2	6.9	6.2	6.3	7.3	6.5	13.3	8.0	10.5	10.4	7.5	6.2	6.8	6.5	7.0	6.6	6.5
Permanently sick or disabled	10.8	6.3	7.2	6.3	7.5	4.6	6.3	5.0	5.0	4.2	9.1	6.7	7.2	6.8	15.0	8.5	10.8	8.3	7.8	7.7	5.5
Other economically inactive	3.9	2.6	7.9	3.2	2.3	2.7	2.3	2.6	2.5	2.5	10.6	5.2	7.3	7.0	5.4	3.7	3.8	3.4	4.7	3.8	3.1
<b>Long-term limiting illness</b>	29.0	21.7	19.8	19.2	23.1	22.0	20.3	18.7	17.8	16.2	20.3	19.6	18.1	17.3	29.6	21.6	27.5	22.4	21.8	20.3	18.2
<b>Qualifications</b>																					
Had no qualifications	46.7	33.5	29.8	30.0	37.9	28.6	32.5	29.6	34.4	31.9	50.1	37.1	34.1	33.6	47.6	32.6	48.7	39.1	42.4	37.7	29.1
Qualified to at least degree level	8.2	15.1	17.7	14.6	9.2	17.7	12.5	14.7	10.4	11.8	10.4	16.6	21.2	21.3	11.7	20.8	6.1	12.5	11.3	12.9	19.8

Source: 2001 Census of Population

Notes: Information is presented at ward level<sup>10</sup> (identified by underlining of area names) and for districts (identified by *italics*).

It should be noted that this information refers to the population aged 16-74 years, so is not directly comparable with information relating to the 'working age' (i.e. 16-64 years for men and 16-59 years for women) population referred to in section 7.

<sup>10</sup> The wards referred to here are those existing in 2003. In the cases of Harlow and Newham the wards are different from those for which 1998 data are presented.

#### Annex 4: Percentage of Resident Population by Age and Ethnic Group for case study centres/areas, 2001

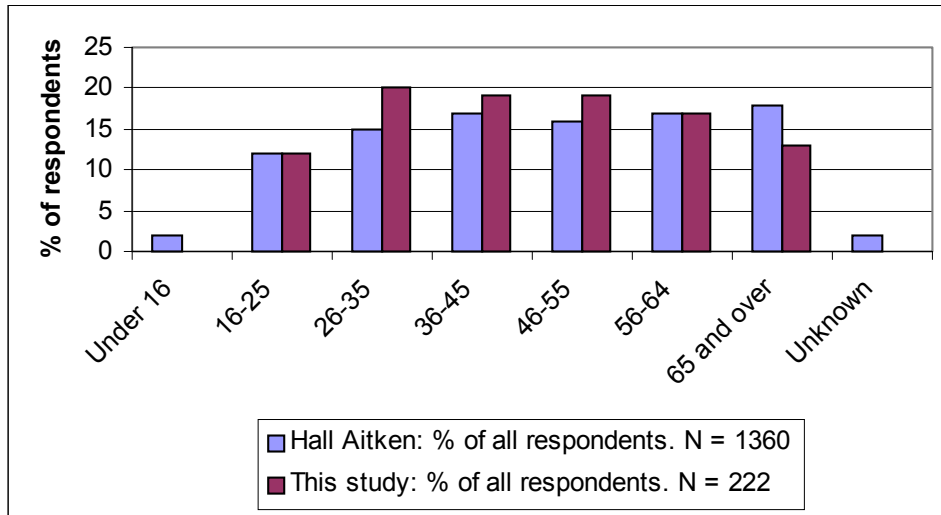
NB: Data for the wards are given in the column to the left of the local authority column which is shaded.		<i>North East Derbyshire</i>		<i>Lincoln</i>		<i>East Sussex</i>		<i>North Devon</i>		<i>Harlow</i>		<i>Birmingham</i>		<i>Newham</i>		<i>Newcastle upon Tyne</i>		<i>Wakefield</i>		<i>Oldham</i>	<b>NATIONAL</b>	
<b>Age structure</b>																						
Under 16	21.5	<i>18.4</i>	17.0	<i>20.1</i>	22.7	<i>17.0</i>	18.6	<i>18.9</i>	21.4	<i>21.5</i>	30.5	<i>23.4</i>	27.1	26.2	18.2	<i>18.8</i>	19.4	20.5	22.2	23.0	<b>20.2</b>	
16 to 19	4.0	<i>4.6</i>	6.0	<i>5.7</i>	4.3	<i>4.0</i>	3.9	<i>4.2</i>	4.7	<i>4.9</i>	7.0	<i>6.0</i>	5.6	6.2	4.9	<i>5.8</i>	4.0	4.8	5.5	5.2	<b>4.9</b>	
20 to 29	11.3	<i>9.8</i>	22.6	<i>15.8</i>	8.7	<i>6.9</i>	8.4	<i>9.5</i>	13.5	<i>13.5</i>	17.4	<i>14.6</i>	17.4	17.7	14.3	<i>16.6</i>	12.2	<i>11.4</i>	12.5	<i>11.8</i>	<b>12.6</b>	
30 to 59	39.6	<i>43.6</i>	37.2	<i>38.7</i>	37.5	<i>37.2</i>	43.5	<i>41.2</i>	38.6	<i>41.2</i>	31.2	<i>37.1</i>	37.4	37.6	38.6	<i>38.4</i>	41.5	42.8	39.2	40.8	<b>41.5</b>	
60 to 74	14.4	<i>15.4</i>	10.3	<i>12.0</i>	16.7	<i>19.4</i>	17.2	<i>16.3</i>	15.5	<i>12.8</i>	9.7	<i>11.9</i>	8.3	8.2	14.5	<i>12.8</i>	14.0	<i>13.4</i>	12.3	<i>12.5</i>	<b>13.3</b>	
75 & over	9.2	<i>8.2</i>	6.8	<i>7.7</i>	10.1	<i>15.5</i>	8.4	<i>9.8</i>	6.4	<i>6.2</i>	4.1	<i>7.0</i>	4.1	4.0	9.6	<i>7.6</i>	8.9	<i>7.1</i>	8.4	6.8	<b>7.6</b>	
Av. age	39.8	<i>41.1</i>	35.9	<i>37.4</i>	40.7	<i>46.3</i>	42.3	<i>42.0</i>	37.7	<i>37.0</i>	30.4	<i>36.0</i>	31.7	31.8	40.0	<i>37.8</i>	39.7	38.6	37.7	37.2	<b>38.6</b>	
<b>Ethnic group</b>																						
White	99.2	<i>98.9</i>	95.2	<i>97.8</i>	98.1	<i>98.1</i>	99.6	<i>99.0</i>	95.0	<i>94.9</i>	29.4	<i>70.4</i>	36.4	39.4	95.4	<i>93.1</i>	98.6	97.7	73.0	86.1	<b>90.9</b>	
Mixed	0.4	<i>0.5</i>	1.0	<i>0.7</i>	0.9	<i>0.6</i>	0.3	<i>0.4</i>	1.2	<i>1.2</i>	4.6	<i>2.9</i>	4.2	3.4	0.7	<i>0.9</i>	0.4	0.5	1.0	1.1	<b>1.3</b>	
Asian or Asian British	0.1	<i>0.3</i>	2.1	<i>0.7</i>	0.4	<i>0.4</i>	0.0	<i>0.2</i>	1.8	<i>1.6</i>	42.4	<i>19.5</i>	29.8	32.5	2.6	<i>4.4</i>	0.8	<i>1.4</i>	25.2	11.9	<b>4.6</b>	
Indian	0.1	<i>0.2</i>	1.1	<i>0.4</i>	0.1	<i>0.2</i>	0.0	<i>0.1</i>	0.6	<i>0.6</i>	4.2	<i>5.7</i>	9.3	12.1	0.7	<i>1.2</i>	0.4	<i>0.3</i>	4.5	0.7	<b>2.1</b>	
Pakistani	0.0	<i>0.0</i>	0.4	<i>0.1</i>	0.0	<i>0.0</i>	0.0	<i>0.0</i>	0.9	<i>0.6</i>	21.0	<i>10.6</i>	7.6	8.5	1.0	<i>1.9</i>	0.3	<i>1.0</i>	17.0	6.3	<b>1.4</b>	
Bangladeshi	0.0	<i>0.0</i>	0.3	<i>0.1</i>	0.2	<i>0.1</i>	0.0	<i>0.1</i>	0.2	<i>0.2</i>	16.1	<i>2.1</i>	10.6	8.8	0.6	<i>1.0</i>	0.0	<i>0.0</i>	3.1	4.5	<b>0.6</b>	
Other Asian	0.0	<i>0.1</i>	0.3	<i>0.1</i>	0.1	<i>0.1</i>	0.0	<i>0.0</i>	0.1	<i>0.2</i>	1.1	<i>1.0</i>	2.2	3.1	0.3	<i>0.3</i>	0.0	<i>0.1</i>	0.5	0.3	<b>0.5</b>	
Black or Black British	0.1	<i>0.1</i>	0.4	<i>0.3</i>	0.3	<i>0.2</i>	0.0	<i>0.1</i>	1.0	<i>1.0</i>	21.5	<i>6.1</i>	25.3	21.6	0.4	<i>0.4</i>	0.1	<i>0.1</i>	0.6	0.6	<b>2.1</b>	
Caribbean	0.1	<i>0.1</i>	0.2	<i>0.1</i>	0.1	<i>0.1</i>	0.0	<i>0.0</i>	0.5	<i>0.5</i>	17.6	<i>4.9</i>	8.6	7.4	0.0	<i>0.0</i>	0.0	<i>0.1</i>	0.4	0.4	<b>1.1</b>	
African	0.0	<i>0.0</i>	0.2	<i>0.1</i>	0.2	<i>0.1</i>	0.0	<i>0.0</i>	0.5	<i>0.5</i>	1.8	<i>0.6</i>	15.4	13.1	0.3	<i>0.3</i>	0.0	<i>0.1</i>	0.1	0.1	<b>1.0</b>	
Other Black	0.0	<i>0.0</i>	0.1	<i>0.0</i>	0.0	<i>0.0</i>	0.0	<i>0.0</i>	0.1	<i>0.1</i>	2.1	<i>0.6</i>	1.2	1.1	0.0	<i>0.0</i>	0.0	<i>0.0</i>	0.1	0.1	<b>0.2</b>	
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group	0.1	<i>0.2</i>	1.2	<i>0.5</i>	0.3	<i>0.6</i>	0.2	<i>0.2</i>	1.0	<i>1.3</i>	2.0	<i>1.2</i>	4.4	3.1	0.8	<i>1.2</i>	0.2	<i>0.3</i>	0.2	0.3	<b>0.9</b>	

Source: 2001 Census of Population

Notes: Information is presented at ward level<sup>11</sup> (identified by underlining of area names) and for districts (identified by *italics*). ‘National’ refers to England & Wales in the case of age structure statistics and to England only in the case of ethnic group statistics.

<sup>11</sup> The wards referred to here are those existing in 2003. In the cases of Harlow and Newham the wards are different from those for which 1998 data are presented.

**Annex 5: Comparison of the age profiles of respondents to the two studies.**





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Produced by the Department for Education and Skills

ISBN 1 84478 226 3  
Ref No: RR534

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