

Evaluation of Increased Flexibility for 14 to 16 Year Olds Programme: The Second Year

Sarah Golden, Lisa O'Donnell and Peter Rudd

National Foundation for Educational Research

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Increased Flexibility for 14-16 year olds Programme (IFP) was introduced in 2002 by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in order to ‘*create enhanced vocational and work-related learning opportunities for 14-16 year olds who can benefit most*’. Partnerships between a Lead Partner, which was usually a college of Further Education, partner schools and sometimes other providers such as training providers and employers, were formed in 2002 to achieve this aim. A first cohort of Year 10 students embarked on two-year vocational courses, including NVQs, other VQs and new GCSEs in vocational subjects, in the autumn term of 2002. The IFP was subsequently expanded to a second cohort of Year 10 students in autumn 2003 and a third in 2004. For each cohort, about 300 partnerships have supported the learning of around 40,000 young people in Years 10 and 11.

The partnerships aimed to raise the attainment of the students who participated in the Programme. They also aimed to increase students’ skills and knowledge, develop their social learning and increase retention in education and training after 16. They are working towards a set of national targets relating to achievement of qualifications, post-16 progression and attendance. The DfES commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to undertake an evaluation of the first and second cohorts of IFP students. This summary presents the main findings from the follow-up surveys of a sample of Year 11 students, schools and colleges and training providers which were undertaken in spring 2004. Further details of the surveys are provided at the end of the summary.

Key findings

- ◆ Students who participated in IFP had benefited from accessing a broader curriculum and, on the whole, were on target to achieve their qualifications. The majority (82 per cent) planned to progress into further education or training after school.
- ◆ There was evidence that the students surveyed had developed their social skills, including in relation to working with adults, their confidence in their employability skills, including inter-personal and communication skills, and their abilities such as their problem-solving skills. The survey also revealed that they had a more positive attitude towards school than they had in Year 10.
- ◆ Fifty-six per cent of the students said that their IFP course had helped them to decide what they would like to do in the future. Forty per cent aimed to pursue a course in the same subject area as their IFP course and 20 per cent intended to get a job in the same occupational area as their IFP course.

- ◆ A third (33 per cent) of colleges and training providers, and 30 per cent of schools, said that they worked with employers to support the delivery of IFP. Around a third (35 per cent) of students said that they had visited an employer as part of their course. This was a greater proportion than in 2003. The most common use of employers was for one-off visits and as visiting speakers, although there were instances of blocked work placements and regular work placements.
- ◆ Nearly all of the schools and colleges and training providers surveyed were involved in the second cohort of IFP. It was evident that in many cases, they had built on their experience of the first cohort and had adapted their criteria and processes for identifying students to participate. They had also increased the involvement of colleges and training providers in identifying the students. In addition, most had increased the amount of information they shared about students both before and during the course.

THE IMPACT OF THE IFP

Progress towards qualifications

In general, students were said to be making satisfactory progress towards achieving their qualifications in the view of school and college and training provider staff. However, some students were said to be behind target and the evidence from the surveys suggests that some were finding it increasingly challenging to complete the work in the time allocated. At the time of the surveys students had yet to complete their qualifications, and their achievements and the extent to which the IFP has met its target will be the focus of future analyses.

Impact on social skills

The majority of students who had participated in IFP appeared to have developed their social skills in the course of the two-year programme. The majority of participating students and the majority of staff in schools and colleges and training providers said that the IFP had enhanced students' ability to work with adults. In addition, more students in 2004 said that they felt confident working with students from other schools than said so in 2003.

Impact on employability skills

More students indicated that they were confident in relation to a range of employability skills in 2004 than in 2003. These included the skills required to gain a job, interpersonal skills and team working and problem-solving skills. This change was more noticeable among students who had visited an employer as part of their IFP course.

Impact on attitudes

More students indicated that they were well-behaved and liked going to school when they were surveyed in 2004 compared with 2003. Although they remained as likely to say that they were sometimes bored with lessons, overall, students were more positive about schools and more confident in their abilities than they were in 2003. The majority of students identified a positive impact

of their involvement in IFP on their attitudes. In particular, they said that IFP had helped them gain confidence in finding out what they were good at and trying new things and that they were more able to see the value of learning in school and qualifications.

Impact on plans for progression

The majority (82 per cent) of students intended to progress onto further education and training after Year 11, which exceeds the target for the IFP of 75 per cent. Most students planned to embark on A levels, but the interest in the vocational route, which may have led these students to participate in IFP, is reflected in the third of students who planned to start a job with training after Year 11.

Students' continuing interest in the vocational area they engaged with through IFP, is reflected in the finding that two-fifths (40 per cent) of students intended to take a qualification post-16 that was in the same vocational area as their IFP course. This was particularly the case among students who were intending to take NVQs or GNVQs after Year 11. Half of the students (56 per cent) said that their experience of IFP had influenced their decision about their post-16 destination and a similar proportion (54 per cent) had found their college or training provider tutor helpful in making their decision.

Impact on working in partnership

The majority of the schools (86 per cent) and the colleges and training providers (92 per cent) surveyed, indicated that their involvement in IFP had led to more effective partnership working between their organisations. In addition, it appeared that contact between organisations had become more frequent and more informal, as the partnerships matured. In addition to this informal contact, partnerships appear to have increasingly introduced formal mechanisms for sharing information about the progress of individual students while they participated in IFP.

EXPERIENCE OF IMPLEMENTING IFP

Approaches

The approaches adopted to delivering IFP continued to differ within partnerships and between partnerships. Half of the colleges and training providers surveyed (55 per cent), and a quarter (27 per cent) of schools, used more than one approach to delivery in terms of the location of study for their students.

Timetabling

Incorporating IFP provision into the timetable of school was largely unproblematic for over half (56 per cent) of the schools surveyed. Nevertheless, it had caused difficulties for about two-fifths of schools (42 per cent) mainly due to the inflexibility in the days and times that courses were available for students to attend, as was the case in the first year of IFP. Timetabling difficulties did not appear to have affected the majority of students; however, a quarter of students (28 per cent) said that they had missed

lessons, including core subjects, as a result of participating in IFP. Most of these students, however, said that they did not experience any difficulty in catching up work they had missed.

Learning support

In the majority of schools, students who were participating in IFP were said to be receiving ongoing support from the Connexions Service or mentors. Moreover, the proportion of schools where this was the case was greater in 2004 than 2003. In the majority of schools (62 per cent) a member of staff accompanied students to their off-site location and typically supported the tutor with classroom management, observed delivery or provided one-to-one support for individual students.

In 39 per cent of the colleges and training providers, students were said to have access to the learning resource centre. However, half of the students surveyed said that they did not use the learning resource centre and a fifth did not use ICT facilities at the external provider to do coursework or search the internet.

Employers

There were some indications of an increase in the use of employers among the organisations surveyed and more of the students surveyed in 2004 said that they had visited an employer as part of their IFP course than had said this in 2003. Half (51 per cent) of schools and 62 per cent of colleges and training providers said that their links with employers were more effective this year than last, and the responses of around half of the students surveyed indicated that their visits had been a valuable learning experience.

Managing the programme

Around two-thirds (64 per cent) of Lead Partners and 54 per cent of the schools surveyed, said that they had subsidised the IFP. While for around half (46 per cent) of the respondents in college and training provider organisations, the amount of time they had to coordinate IFP was sufficient, this was said by only 25 per cent of schools. Time to maintain contact with partners, and in the case of schools, to oversee student welfare, was identified as a major requirement.

Staffing and staff development

Training in working with a younger group of students had been provided in the majority (68 per cent) of colleges and training providers and, although it remained a requirement in the view of around a third (36 per cent), fewer organisations who were surveyed in 2003 said that this training was needed in 2004 than had said so in the previous year. The development of understanding of new qualifications and in understanding student attainment data were the main areas identified where further training was required.

Second cohort

Nearly all of the schools and colleges and training providers surveyed were involved in the second cohort of IFP. It was evident that, in many cases, they had built on their experience of the first cohort and had adapted their criteria and processes for identifying students to participate. They had also increased the involvement of colleges and training providers in identifying the students. In addition, most had increased the amount of information they shared about students both before and during the course.

Involvement in the second cohort was said to have impacted positively on relationships between schools and colleges and training providers, but was felt by some to have had a negative impact on timetabling, resourcing, staffing and transporting students.

Challenges and future developments

Although the schools and colleges and training providers surveyed were predominantly positive about IFP provision, they outlined some issues and areas for future development. The main challenges associated with implementing IFP which were identified concerned the management of the programme, the funding and costs of delivery, timetabling provision and selecting students. Ensuring that partnerships have sufficient time to plan their provision through timely confirmation of funding and ensuring that they have sufficient and sustainable funding, could usefully contribute to future development of the programme. Involving all partners in the selection of students to participate could help to ensure that, in the future, appropriate students embark on courses which meet their needs.

Conclusions and policy implications

Overall, involvement in IFP appears to have been successful for many students in developing their social skills, their confidence in their employability skills, and in their own abilities, such as working on their own and solving problems, and on their attitudes towards school and learning. The majority (82 per cent) of the students surveyed in spring 2004 intended to progress into further education or training after the end of Year 11.

Participating in IFP had led to more effective partnership working between schools and colleges and training providers, in the view of the majority of those surveyed, and the partnerships appeared to have matured during the second year of the programme. The introduction of a second cohort was said to have contributed to consolidating the partnerships.

The amount of time required to implement a programme such as IFP, which entails working in partnership between providers, and the logistical complexities of doing so, should not be underestimated. In many cases, the cost and time involved in delivery of IFP appeared to exceed the expectations of participating organisations. Policy makers may wish to take this into consideration when examining future provision of this nature.

Summary of research methods

A representative sample of around 5,600 students in Year 10, and their associated schools and colleges and training providers, responded to a baseline survey in the spring term of 2003. These students and organisations were sent follow-up questionnaires in the spring term of 2004 when the students were in Year 11. The data presented in this summary is based on responses from:

- ◆ 2,616 students who replied in both 2003 and 2004
- ◆ 248 schools, 115 of whom replied in 2003 and 2004
- ◆ 78 colleges and training providers, 62 of whom replied in both years: 61 of the respondents in 2004 were Lead Partners.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Throughout the 1990s, there was a growing recognition in government that the standard educational interventions adopted in schools were not meeting the needs of all young people. The Green Paper: *14–19: extending opportunities, raising standards* (2002) set out a proposal to further increase curriculum flexibility in order to enable pupils to learn at a pace which is appropriate to them and pursue individually focused programmes to help them meet their potential. The Green Paper also announced the introduction of GCSEs in vocational subjects. These are intended to provide young people, whose needs have not fully been met by the National Curriculum, the opportunity to achieve vocational qualifications with parity of esteem with existing ‘academic’ qualifications.

In response to the Green Paper, the Increased Flexibility for 14-16 year olds Programme (IFP) was introduced in 2002. This is a £120 million programme which aims to ‘*create enhanced vocational and work-related learning opportunities for 14-16 year olds of all abilities who can benefit most*’ – including provision of the GCSEs in vocational subjects. A total of 269 partnerships have been established to achieve this aim. Each of these has a ‘Lead Partner’, the majority of which are further education (FE) colleges. The partnerships involve links with schools and, in some instances, other training providers and employers. Funding to support these partnerships is channelled through Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs) who also have responsibility for monitoring the process.

In November 2002, it was announced that further funding would be made available to the IFP in 2003-2005 and subsequently for 2004 to 2006. This funding enabled a second and third cohort of 14-16 year olds to become involved in the programme from September 2003 and September 2004.

The IFP partnerships have established links with around 2000 schools and are providing courses to meet the needs of about 40,000 Year 10 students in each cohort who then continue into Year 11. The partnerships aim to fulfill the objectives of the IFP. These are to:

- ◆ raise the attainment in national qualifications of participating pupils
- ◆ increase young people’s skills and knowledge
- ◆ improve social learning and development
- ◆ increase retention in education and training after 16.

In meeting these objectives, the partnerships are working towards a set of targets that are as follows:

- ♦ one-third of the young people involved in IFP should gain at least one GCSE in a vocational subject at Level 2 (over and above their predicted GCSEs)
- ♦ one-third of students should gain at least one NVQ at Level 1 (over and above their predicted GCSEs)
- ♦ three-quarters of IFP participants should progress into further education or training
- ♦ attendance rates of the young people involved should match that of the average key stage 4 cohort.

The DfES has commissioned the NFER to undertake a national evaluation of the first and second cohorts of IFP students to examine the extent to which the aims and objectives of the IFP are being met.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The evaluation of the first cohort aims to:

- ♦ assess the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of the implementation of the IFP, and identify those delivery models and implementation practices and strategies that appear to be most and least successful
- ♦ evaluate the extent to which the IFP has fulfilled its national aims, objectives and targets
- ♦ as part of this, assess the impact of vocational qualifications and new work-related learning opportunities on young people's skills, knowledge, attitudes, attendance, attainment and post-16 progression.

The research methods, which were adopted for the evaluation, are outlined below.

1.3 Research methods

In order to achieve the aims and objectives detailed above, the evaluation drew on a range of research methods. These included:

- ♦ A baseline data collection exercise which identified the schools and individual students who were participating in the first cohort of IFP. The data collection was undertaken in the autumn term of 2002 when the students were in Year 10 and the data was matched to NFER's Register of Schools and the DfES's National Pupil Database (NPD) which contain background information on schools and pupils.

- ♦ Baseline and follow-up surveys of a representative sample of around 11,500 students and their associated 450 schools and 130 providers of vocational courses, including Lead Partners.
- ♦ Data on the attendance, achievements and destinations post-16 of the sample of students, collected from their schools
- ♦ A programme of case studies in nine partnerships which entailed interviews with Lead Partners, tutors, school staff and students, undertaken in spring 2003 and spring 2004.
- ♦ Programmes of telephone interviews conducted with 100 parents of IFP participants, with 26 employers who had supported the delivery of IFP and with staff in nine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

This report presents the findings from the follow-up surveys of students, schools, colleges and training providers, and the interviews with employers and HEI representatives which will be discussed in more detail below. In addition, it draws on the findings of the evaluation thus far which include analyses of the baseline,¹ the case-study visits,² and the baseline surveys.³

1.3.1 Follow-up surveys of students, schools, colleges and training providers

A sample of 11,438 students was drawn to represent the population of 28,885 Year 10 students who were identified by their schools in autumn 2002 as participating in IFP. The 446 schools and 132 colleges and training providers who were associated with these 11,438 students were selected to form a sample of IFP partnerships. A total of 80 Lead Partners were included in the sample of 132 providers and at least one partnership in each of the 47 LLSC areas was selected.

These students, schools and colleges and training providers were sent a questionnaire in spring 2003 and a total of 5,824 student questionnaires, 299 schools questionnaires and 90 questionnaires for colleges and training providers were returned. In spring 2004, a follow-up questionnaire was dispatched to the schools and colleges and training providers in the sample and to the students who had replied to the baseline questionnaire. The students' questionnaires were distributed by staff in the schools they attended. A small number of students were not sent a follow-up questionnaire where they were known to have discontinued their involvement in IFP. Similarly, in a few schools all of the students had discontinued their involvement and, in these

¹ GOLDEN, S., NELSON, J., O'DONNELL, L. and RUDD, P. (2004). *Evaluation of Increased Flexibilities for 14 to 16 Year Olds Programme: Profile of Partnerships and Students 2002 and 2003* (DfES Research Report 558). London: DfES.

² GOLDEN, S., NELSON, J., O'DONNELL, L. and RUDD, P. (2004). *Implementing the Increased Flexibility for 14 to 16 Year Olds Programme: the Experience of Partnerships and Students* (DfES Research Report 562). London: DfES.

³ GOLDEN, S., NELSON, J., O'DONNELL, L. and MORRIS, M. (2004). *Evaluation of Increased Flexibilities for 14-16 Year Olds: the First Year* (DfES Research Report 511). London: DfES.

cases, the schools were not sent questionnaire. The surveys yielded the following response rates:

- ♦ 2,616 students questionnaires (47 per cent of 5,576 sent)
- ♦ 248 school questionnaires (58 per cent of 428 sent)
- ♦ 78 college and training provider questionnaires (59 per cent of 132 sent) of which 61 were from Lead Partner organisations.

Throughout this report, in addition to presenting the responses in 2004, comparisons are made with the responses of the same students, schools and colleges and training providers in 2004 with their responses in 2003. The responses of the students in 2003 which are reported are of the sub-sample of 2,616 who replied in both years which may differ slightly from the responses of the 5,824 students reported previously. The responding students in 2004 did not differ noticeably from their peers who responded in 2003 although, as detailed in Appendix A, those who responded in 2004 were slightly more likely to have achieved Level 5 or above in their key stage 3 assessments than those who responded in 2003. Comparisons of the responses of colleges and training providers in both years are based on 62 respondents who provided data in 2003 and 2004 and where comparisons of the responses of schools in both years are provided, this is based on a sub-sample of 115 schools who responded in 2003 and 2004.

Overall, as discussed in detail in Appendix A, the 2,616 students who responded to the survey in 2004 were broadly representative of all students although a slightly higher proportion of females and those with no special needs provision responded than were in the sample and a higher proportion of students who had achieved level 5 and above at key stage 3 in English, Maths and Science. A lower proportion of Year 11 respondents were in receipt of free school meals compared with the sample. Some differences emerged in the types of qualifications which students themselves identified that they were pursuing through IFP and the qualifications identified by their schools, as detailed in Appendix A. It is likely that these discrepancies are due to students and school staff's understanding of the titles of vocational qualification and students not making a distinction between new GCSEs in vocational subjects and their other GCSEs.

The schools who responded were broadly representative of all schools participating in IFP except that they were slightly more likely to be community schools, comprehensive to 16 and to have few or no students with English as an Additional Language. Moreover, as outlined in Appendix A, the schools who responded to the questionnaire were representative of the schools who were participating in the partnerships of the colleges and training providers who returned a questionnaire.

The questionnaires to students contained many of the same questions as the previous questionnaire in order to compare their responses in Year 10 to their views in Year 11. In addition, the questionnaire included questions about the impact of IFP and the students' future plans. More specifically, the questions related to:

- ◆ Students' views on taking courses away from school
- ◆ Whether they missed lessons due to their IFP involvement
- ◆ Their views on the qualification they were taking
- ◆ Their experience of visiting an employer
- ◆ Their perspectives of the impact of their IFP course on their attitude to learning and plans for the future
- ◆ Their views on school and learning
- ◆ Their plans after the end of Year 11
- ◆ Their perspectives on employability skills.

The questionnaires to schools and colleges and training providers also contained many questions which were on the 2003 questionnaire. Additional questions, which related to the impact of IFP and the effect of having two cohorts of IFP students, were added. In more detail, the questionnaires contained questions relating to:

- ◆ The way in which IFP courses were delivered, including the extent of shared delivery and the involvement of employers
- ◆ The costs of delivering IFP including the extent of subsidisation by schools and providers
- ◆ Communication and partnership working between partners
- ◆ The management and coordination of IFP
- ◆ Staffing and staff development
- ◆ The impact of IFP on students and on their organisations
- ◆ The effect of having two cohorts of students and the extent to which their experience of the first cohort affected their approaches with the second.

The report draws on the perspectives of employers who had participated in IFP. Telephone interviews were conducted with 26 employers who were identified by Lead Partners and partner providers as those who had supported the delivery of IFP in a variety of respects. The employers who participated in the interviews represented a range of sectors and sizes of companies. Most of the employers (18) were based in companies with more than one establishment. The majority (16) were large companies with more than 250 employees in the company as a whole. Four had between 50 and 249

employees and four had 10 to 49 employees. One company had fewer than ten employees. The sectors represented can be grouped as follows:

- ♦ Health, care and childcare – 11 companies
- ♦ Manufacturing – six companies including two who were in engineering manufacture
- ♦ Leisure services – three companies
- ♦ Land-based and mining – three companies
- ♦ Airports – two companies
- ♦ Social housing – one company.

As the employers who were interviewed were supporting the delivery of IFP courses, the sectors which they represent may reflect the vocational areas which the students were engaged in through the programme. The sample of employers did not seek to be representative of all employers who were involved in IFP but rather provide an insight into the experience of these organisations in working with schools and colleges to support students aged 14 to 16 in their vocational choices.

Telephone interviews were also carried out with representatives of the admissions services in nine HEIs, between August and November 2004. These included three HEIs that were Lead Partner organisations in IFP partnerships and six HEIs that had been identified through the research visits to case-study partnerships. Although none of these six HEIs were actively involved in IFP provision, they were identified as having non-IFP-related links with IFP schools and/or colleges. All but one of the HEIs involved were post-1992 institutions and all offered degree courses in broadly vocational areas. These interviews sought to explore HE staff's perspectives on the vocational route into HE and the potential relationships between this and IFP and the new GCSEs in vocational subjects.

1.4 Structure of the report

Chapter 2 examines the evidence of the impact of the IFP on students. It presents school and college staff's perceptions of the impact of IFP in students and their organisations. The chapter focuses on the impact on the skills and attitudes of the young people who participated in the IFP including their personal and social skills and employability skills. The extent of any change in students' attitudes to learning, and their progress towards their qualifications by the spring term of Year 11 are discussed.

Chapter 3 presents the impact of IFP on students' plans for progression post-16. It explores their intended destinations immediately after Year 11, the qualifications they intend to pursue and the influences on these choices. This

chapter also present the views of HEI admissions staff on the vocational route into HE.

Chapter 4 explores the experience of participating in IFP from the perspectives of colleges and training providers, schools and students. The approaches adopted to delivering IFP, and the issues around incorporating such provision into the timetable and the impact on missing lessons, are discussed. The experience of providing learning support for IFP students, and their experience of support are presented. The chapter concludes by outlining the extent of employer involvement in supporting IFP and presents the perspectives of employers who had been involved.

Chapter 5 outlines the management of IFP which underpins the delivery and outcomes. The experience of working in partnership between schools and colleges and training providers is discussed. The funding and costs associated with delivering IFP are outlined and the staff development provided is presented. The chapter concludes by presenting schools' and colleges' and training providers' perspectives on the impact of a second cohort on managing the partnership, the challenges encountered and views on the future developments of the partnerships.

The report concludes in Chapter 6 with conclusions and discussion of the policy implications.

2. THE IMPACT OF THE INCREASED FLEXIBILITY PROGRAMME ON SKILLS AND ATTITUDES

Key findings

- ◆ The positive impact of IFP on students particularly related to enabling students to access an alternative curriculum, helping them to make decisions about their post-16 transition and developing their ability to work with, and relate to, adults. IFP was also reported to have had a positive impact on students' attitudes and behaviour.
- ◆ A further positive impact of IFP was on the development of more effective partnerships between schools and colleges and training providers. IFP also appeared to have met its aims of enabling students to access a broader range of qualifications and ways of working and had improved the status of vocational learning in schools.
- ◆ Students in most IFP partnerships were reported by school and college staff to be on target or ahead of target to achieve their qualifications. However, in around half of schools and two-thirds of colleges and training providers, some students were said to be behind target to achieve their qualifications.
- ◆ Although the majority of students indicated that their qualification was taught at an appropriate level, the small proportions who found it all difficult or boring all of the time had increased in the second year of their programme. The pressure of completing the qualification in Year 11 may be reflected in the response of a third of students who said that they needed more time, most commonly in order to complete the work.
- ◆ Students who participated in IFP said that they had developed their ability to work with adults. Their responses in both years of the surveys indicated that in Year 11 they were more confident about working with other students than they had been in Year 10.
- ◆ Students who studied away from school at an external provider were generally positive about the experience. The majority felt comfortable, were not nervous, thought that they were treated as an adult and felt that the atmosphere was relaxed.
- ◆ Across a range of employability skills, students' responses in Year 11 indicated that they were more confident in their abilities than they had been in Year 10. They were noticeably more confident in the skills needed to gain a job, such as writing a CV or job application, and in the important inter-personal skills of speaking clearly and dealing with others. This difference was more marked among those who had visited an employer as part of their IFP course.

- ◆ In Year 11 more students indicated that they were well-behaved and liked going to school than had said this in Year 10. Although they remained as likely to say that they were sometimes bored by lessons overall, students were generally more positive about school and more confident in their abilities in Year 11.
- ◆ The majority of young people said that the IFP course had a positive impact on them. In particular it had helped their confidence in terms of finding out what they were good at, feeling able to achieve more, and being able to try new things. Students were also positive about the impact on their views of the value of learning in school and gaining qualifications.

One of the objectives of the IFP is to increase young people's skills and knowledge. This chapter:

- ◆ examines students' progress towards their qualifications
- ◆ explores the extent to which their personal and social skills developed
- ◆ examines the extent of change in their employability skills and attitudes to learning.

2.1 School and college staff's views of the impact of IFP

When asked about their views of the impact of the IFP on Year 11 students, school staff were generally very positive, as can be seen in Table 2.1. Nearly all (95 per cent) of the school staff who responded to the survey indicated that the IFP had provided an alternative opportunity for these students to achieve and fulfil their potential. Indeed, half of the respondents strongly agreed that this was the case. A total of 84 per cent of school staff agreed or strongly agreed that the IFP had helped students to make decisions about transition post-16, while 79 per cent felt that the programme had enhanced students' ability to work with, and relate to, adults. Just less than three quarters (73 per cent) of the respondents indicated that the IFP had improved students' motivation to learn. Less commonly, school staff agreed that the IFP had enhanced students' attainment in school (62 per cent) and had improved the behaviour and attitudes of students (61 per cent). School staff were least likely to agree or strongly agree that the IFP had improved the attendance of students in school (39 per cent).

In response to an open-ended question about the most positive outcomes of the IFP for students, more than half (54 per cent) of school staff mentioned the opportunity for students to access an alternative curriculum or learning environment. This corresponds with one of the main aims of the IFP identified by school staff in last year's survey – to provide alternative opportunities for students at key stage 4. Just over a quarter of respondents to

the open-ended question this year also reported that the IFP had helped with post-16 transition and preparedness for work (28 per cent) and had contributed to students' personal development (28 per cent). A total of 24 per cent of school staff felt that one of the main successes of the IFP had been increasing students' motivation to learn, which again, had been identified as one of the main aims of the programme.

Table 2.1 Views on impact of IFP on Year 11 students: School staffs' responses

Impact of IFP on students	Strongly agree %	Agree %	No strong opinion %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	No response %
Enhanced students' attainment in school	15	47	26	9	1	3
Provided alternative opportunity for students to achieve	50	45	2	1	0	1
Improved students' motivation to learn	19	54	20	5	1	1
Improved behaviour and attitudes of students	13	48	27	9	1	1
Improved attendance of students in the school	9	30	45	13	1	2
Led to high attendance rates by students at the college/ training provider	12	40	30	12	2	4
Helped students to make decisions about transition post-16	19	65	13	2	0	1
Created positive relationships between Year 11 students and students from other schools/ colleges	11	41	38	6	1	3
Enhanced students' ability to work with, and relate to, adults	17	62	17	3	0	1
N = 248						

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Schools 2004

The views of the college staff reflected those of the school staff in that they most commonly reported that the IFP had provided an alternative opportunity for the students to achieve and fulfil their potential, had enhanced their ability to work with, and relate to, adults and had helped students to make decisions about transition post-16. However, a comparison of Tables 2.1 and 2.2 reveals that the college staff who responded to the survey were, on the whole, more positive about the impact of the IFP on Year 11 students than the school staff. For example, 80 per cent of college staff agreed or strongly agreed that the IFP had improved the behaviour and attitudes of students, compared with 61 per cent of school staff. It is worth considering that the school staff might be able to

provide a more accurate reflection of the impact on the students than the college tutors given the limited amount of time that the students spend taking courses at their college provider. Nevertheless, respondents in college and training providers may be reporting changes in students' behaviour when they were attending an external provider.

College staff's responses to an open-ended question about the most positive outcomes of the IFP also reflected those given by school staff. The main successes of the programme for students identified by college staff were:

- ♦ accessing an alternative curriculum/ learning environment (53 per cent)
- ♦ help with post-16 transition and preparedness for work (40 per cent)
- ♦ personal development (23 per cent)
- ♦ motivation to learn (23 per cent).

Table 2.2 Views on impact of IFP on Year 11 students: College staffs' responses

Impact of IFP on students	Strongly agree %	Agree %	No strong opinion %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	No response %
Enhanced students' attainment in school	22	51	23	0	0	4
Provided alternative opportunity for students to achieve	58	40	0	0	0	3
Improved students' motivation to learn	36	46	15	1	0	1
Improved behaviour and attitudes of students	27	53	15	4	0	1
Improved attendance of students in the school	18	36	40	4	0	3
Led to high attendance rates by students at the college/ training provider	21	46	22	8	1	3
Helped students to make decisions about transition post-16	35	50	14	0	0	1
Created positive relationships between Year 11 students and students from other schools/ colleges	23	42	26	8	0	1
Enhanced students' ability to work with, and relate to, adults	28	58	12	0	1	1
N = 78						

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Colleges 2004

School and college staff were also asked about their perceptions of the impact of the IFP on their organisations. Table 2.3 shows the responses of the school staff, while Table 2.4 gives the responses of the college staff.

Table 2.3 Views on impact of IFP on Schools: School staffs' responses

Impact of IFP on schools	Strongly agree %	Agree %	No strong opinion %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	No response %
Led to more effective partnerships with colleges/ training providers	36	50	10	3	<1	1
Led to more effective partnerships with employers	4	24	50	17	2	3
Presented difficulties in transporting students between locations of study	19	33	21	21	6	2
Improved status of vocational learning within the school	16	57	21	4	1	2
Broadened the range of ways in which young people can learn	37	57	4	<1	1	1
Broadened the range of qualifications students can study	37	59	3	<1	<1	1
Increased the workload of staff	19	45	23	11	1	2
Provided new opportunities for staff development	7	40	34	15	3	2
Presented difficulties in timetabling Year 11 students' curriculum	21	43	21	11	2	3
Has been good value for money	14	52	23	7	1	4
N = 248						

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Schools 2004

The great majority of the school staff who responded to the survey agreed or strongly agreed that the IFP had broadened the range of qualifications students can study (96 per cent) and the range of ways in which young people can learn (94 per cent). A substantial majority also indicated that the programme had led to more effective partnerships with college and training providers (86 per cent) and that it had improved the status of vocational learning within the school (73 per cent). The financial cost of achieving this broader curriculum through working in partnership did not appear to be considered exceptional in the view of two-thirds of school respondents, who agreed that IFP offered good value for money. However, it is worth noting that interviews with tutors and teachers in the case-study partnerships revealed that staff often took into consideration the value of the outcomes for students when assessing value for money.

Despite this, the responses of school staff indicated that they had experienced some negative effects of the IFP. A total of 64 per cent of respondents

indicated that the IFP had increased the workload of staff in the school, and the same proportion reported that the IFP had presented difficulties in timetabling Year 11 students' curriculum. Furthermore, just over half (52 per cent) agreed that the IFP had presented difficulties in transporting students between locations of study.

In response to an open-ended question about the most positive outcomes of the IFP for schools, developing vocational learning and a broader curriculum was the most commonly identified outcome (42 per cent), followed by having more positive students in the school (23 per cent) who were more motivated and less disaffected, and developing external links (21 per cent).

Table 2.4 Views on impact of IFP on Colleges: College staffs' responses

Impact of IFP on colleges	Strongly agree %	Agree %	No strong opinion %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	No response %
Led to more effective partnerships with schools	51	41	5	1	0	1
Led to more effective partnerships with employers	4	13	59	19	1	4
Presented difficulties in transporting students between locations of study	24	35	23	14	3	1
Enhanced the status of colleges and training providers among schools	22	58	12	8	0	1
Broadened the range of ways in which young people can learn	49	50	0	0	0	1
Broadened the range of qualifications students can study	54	44	1	0	0	1
Increased the workload of staff	26	53	13	8	0	1
Provided new opportunities for staff development	28	63	6	1	0	1
Presented difficulties in timetabling programmes	28	39	21	8	4	1
Has been good value for money	18	41	24	8	5	4
Contributed to the widening participation strategy	44	49	6	0	0	1
N = 78						

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Colleges 2004

The views of the college staff were broadly similar to those of the school staff. The great majority agreed that the IFP had broadened the range of ways in which students can learn and the qualifications they can study, and that it had led to more effective partnerships with schools. A total of 93 per cent of

college staff also reported that the IFP had contributed to the widening participation strategy. It is interesting to note that the college respondents were much more likely to agree or strongly agree that the IFP had provided new opportunities for staff development (91 per cent, compared with 47 per cent of school staff). However, they were also more likely to report that the programme had increased the workload of staff (79 per cent, compared with 64 per cent of school respondents). College staff (and school staff) were less likely to report that the IFP had led to more effective partnerships with employers (17 per cent of college staff, compared with 28 per cent of school staff).

In response to an open-ended question, the most commonly identified successes of the IFP for colleges were:

- ♦ developing external links (45 per cent)
- ♦ staff development (21 per cent)
- ♦ enhanced student recruitment (21 per cent).

2.2 Progress towards qualifications

At the time of the survey, in the first half of the spring term 2004, the majority of the school staff reported that at least some of the students were on target to achieve their qualification, with 71 per cent indicating that some students were on target and 23 per cent reporting that all IFP students were on target to achieve their qualifications. Only three per cent of school respondents stated that none of the students were on target to achieve their IFP qualification.

Indeed, in just over a third of schools (34 per cent), staff indicated that some IFP students were ahead of target, although 39 per cent reported that none of the IFP students in their school were ahead of target. The main reasons given by school staff for students being ahead of target were that they:

- ♦ were motivated and worked hard on their course (50 per cent)
- ♦ enjoyed and valued their course (17 per cent)
- ♦ received good quality teaching (ten per cent).

As can be seen in Table 2.5, around half of the school respondents indicated that some of the students were behind in terms of their qualification target, while few stated that all of their IFP students were behind target. Twenty-seven per cent of school staff reported that none of the students were behind in terms of their targets. The main reasons given by school staff for IFP students being behind target were that students had poor attendance on their course (34 per cent) or that they lacked motivation or interest (23 per cent). Smaller proportions of school respondents felt that students were behind target because

of the poor quality teaching they had received (nine per cent), because the course was the wrong choice for them (eight per cent) and because the GCSEs in vocational subjects were too difficult for students (seven per cent).

Table 2.5 Views on whether students are on target to achieve IFP qualifications: Schools' responses

Students are:	All IFP students	Some IFP students	No IFP students	No response
On target to achieve	23	71	3	4
Ahead of target to achieve	0	34	39	27
Behind target to achieve	2	49	27	21
N = 248				

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Schools 2004

As Table 2.6 shows, the responses of the college staff were broadly similar to their colleagues in schools, with the majority (80 per cent) of colleges and training providers indicating that some students were on target to achieve their qualifications. The reasons given by college staff for students being ahead of target were also similar to those given by school staff – the students were motivated and had worked hard (53 per cent), and the students were of an appropriate ability for the course (19 per cent). The main reasons given by college staff for students being behind target were that the ability level of students was not appropriate to the course they were taking (29 per cent), students had poor attendance (26 per cent) and students lacked interest in their IFP course (20 per cent).

Table 2.6 Views on whether students are on target to achieve IFP qualifications: Colleges' responses

Students are:	All IFP students	Some IFP students	No IFP students	No response
On target to achieve	12	80	1	8
Ahead of target to achieve	0	46	23	31
Behind target to achieve	1	69	14	15
N = 78				

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Colleges 2004

The perceptions of school and college staff suggest, therefore, that whether a student will succeed in their IFP course is related to their individual motivation and attendance. Nevertheless, the quality of the teaching and whether it was engaging, the appropriateness of the qualification and the choice of course were also all factors in a student's success.

The surveyed students were generally positive about the courses they were studying through the IFP, and felt that they were taught at a level appropriate to them. The majority (81 per cent) of the young people said that they had found some aspects of their course easy and some aspects difficult. This suggests that, for most students, the qualifications matched their ability. Smaller proportions of respondents reported that their course was either all easy (13 per cent) or all difficult (four per cent). These proportions are broadly similar to the proportions of students who made these responses last year, when they were in Year 10. However, the proportion of IFP participants who found all aspects of their course difficult had increased from two per cent when they were surveyed in Year 10.

The majority of students (61 per cent) also reported that they found some aspects of their course interesting and other aspects boring. Nearly a third (30 per cent) of the young people indicated that they found the whole of their course interesting, although this proportion had decreased from 37 per cent when these students were surveyed in Year 10. Only seven per cent of respondents found all aspects of their course boring, but this proportion had increased from four per cent in Year 10.

The extent to which students found their IFP course easy or difficult differed according to certain background characteristics. Overall, it appeared that students who found their IFP courses easy were more likely to be those who:

- ◆ were male
- ◆ were undertaking NVQs or other VQs
- ◆ had a tendency to prefer college to school
- ◆ had a positive attitude to school
- ◆ were confident in their abilities.

There were also differences in the students who found their course interesting, compared with those who found it boring. Students who found their course interesting were more likely to be those who:

- ◆ were working towards NVQs or other VQs
- ◆ had a lower attainment at key stage 3
- ◆ were recognised as having some form of Special Educational Need (SEN)
- ◆ were taking their IFP course at college
- ◆ had a tendency to prefer studying at college to school
- ◆ had a positive attitude towards school and its usefulness for their future
- ◆ were confident in their abilities.

When asked about their views of the amount of time they spent on their IFP courses each week, just over half of the students (53 per cent) felt that it was about right. However, 37 per cent of students stated that they would like more time on their course, and a sub-group of 58 per cent of these young people stated that this was because they did not have enough time to do the work. This may reflect pressures on students as the course neared completion, as this was a notable increase from last year's survey of these IFP students, when 36 per cent noted that they did not have enough time to complete the work. Furthermore, the proportion of students who reported that they wanted more time on their course because they enjoyed it had decreased from 59 per cent in Year 10 to 38 per cent in Year 11.

Only eight per cent of young people reported that they would like less time on their course. Of these 212 students, 61 per cent stated that this was because they did not enjoy their course, which was a notably higher proportion than in Year 10 (47 per cent). A third of the Year 11 students who reported that they wanted less time on their course indicated that this was because they were able to complete all the work and had spare time. This is a lower proportion than the 43 per cent of students who reported this in Year 10.

Further analysis of the data revealed that there were some differences in the background characteristics of students who wanted more or less time on their IFP course. Male students, those who preferred college to school, and students who preferred a practical approach to learning, were more likely than students overall to want more time on their course. It is worth noting that there were no significant differences in the qualifications that students were taking and the time they would like on their course. This reflects a change from last year when students taking NVQs and other VQ and GNVQ courses were more likely than those taking GCSEs in vocational subjects to want more time on their course. Some differences emerged in the characteristics of students reporting different reasons for wanting more or less time on their courses. For example, students who needed more time on their IFP course to complete their work tended to be those who were female, higher achieving students, and those who were taking GCSEs in vocational subjects. Future analyses will explore these findings in further depth and, for example, will assess whether there is any relationship between students' perception of a lack of time to complete their work and their achievement on the IFP course.

2.3 Development of skills

2.3.1 Development of personal and social skills

When asked about the impact of the IFP, just over half (54 per cent) of all students reported that their course had helped them to learn how to work with adults, while 47 per cent said that it had helped them learn how to work with

other young people. The same proportion (47 per cent) stated that participating in the IFP had made them a more confident person.

Similarly, analysis of the responses of students who were pursuing their courses away from school revealed that, compared with when they were in Year 10, a higher proportion reported that they work well with students from other schools on the course (52 per cent, compared with 44 per cent in Year 10). In addition, a slightly higher proportion of Year 11 students felt that they fitted in with other students on the course (79 per cent, compared with 75 per cent in Year 10).

2.3.2 Development of employability skills

The 26 employers who had supported IFP through providing work placements for students, giving talks and hosting visits, outlined their requirements when recruiting young people. Eleven specified that they required young people to have GCSEs and seven identified the need for other qualifications such as NVQs. Three said that they did not look for qualifications. Employers looked for a range of skills depending on the occupation they were recruiting for including IT skills, basic English and numeracy skills and problem-solving skills. However, half of the employers across the sectors identified good communication skills as an important attribute in young people they considered recruiting. Young people's attitude, motivation and appearance were also noted and half looked for aspects of a personality which were relevant to their work such as patience, a caring approach, enthusiasm and the ability to work under pressure. While eleven of the employers interviewed said that an individual's qualifications, skills and characteristics were equally important considerations when recruiting, ten commented that the person's characteristics were most important.

Table 2.7 shows students' views on the skills they thought were useful for getting a job. The young people were most likely to indicate that turning up on time (79 per cent), understanding the requirements of the job (75 per cent), coping well in an interview (73 per cent) and dressing appropriately (71 per cent) were very useful for getting a job. It is interesting that technical skills, such as answering the telephone, using a computer to find and present information and doing mathematics accurately, were considered less important by students than some of the key skills, such as dealing with others, working in a team and speaking clearly, reflecting the comments of many of the employers who were interviewed.

Table 2.7 Students' views on work-related skills

Views on skills that are useful for getting a job	Very useful %	Quite useful %	Not useful %	Not sure %	No response %
Being able to:					
fill in an application form well	63	26	3	3	5
write a Curriculum Vitae (C.V.)	62	22	4	6	5
cope well in an interview	73	17	3	3	5
understand what you will need to do in that job	75	16	1	2	5
write clearly	48	39	4	4	5
speak clearly	64	26	2	2	6
do maths accurately	28	45	11	10	6
use a computer to find and present information	38	40	7	9	6
answer the 'phone properly	40	36	10	8	5
deal with others (e.g. workmates, customers)	66	24	2	3	5
deal with people in authority	58	26	4	7	5
work in a team	67	23	2	3	5
use your initiative	66	23	2	4	6
turn up on time	79	12	2	1	5
dress appropriately	71	19	3	2	5
N = 2616					

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

As Table 2.8 shows, students' confidence in their abilities in all these work-related skill areas seemed to have increased over the past year. For example, compared with when they were in Year 10, a higher proportion of students this year reported that they were confident in their ability to:

- ♦ write a CV
- ♦ fill in an application form well
- ♦ cope well in an interview
- ♦ understand the requirements of a job
- ♦ speak clearly
- ♦ deal with others
- ♦ deal with people in authority
- ♦ use their initiative.

Table 2.8 Students' confidence in work-related skills: 2003 and 2004

I feel confident that I can:	Year 10 (2003) %	Year 11 (2004) %
fill in an application form well	40	50
write a Curriculum Vitae (C.V.)	25	39
cope well in an interview	33	44
understand what I will need to do in that job	38	47
write clearly	44	49
speak clearly	45	53
do maths accurately	26	30
use a computer to find and present information	43	46
answer the 'phone properly	44	45
deal with others (e.g. workmates, customers)	42	51
deal with people in authority	31	40
work in a team	51	57
use your initiative	37	48
turn up on time	52	58
dress appropriately	53	61
No response	35	33
N =	2616	2616

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

Further analyses were carried out to explore whether visiting an employer as part of the IFP had any effect on students' perceptions of which skills are useful for getting a job and on their confidence in their abilities in these skill areas. The analyses revealed that the young people who reported that they had visited an employer in Year 11 (907 students) were significantly more likely to indicate that certain skills were very useful for getting a job compared with those who had not visited an employer (1,462 students). These skills included being able to:

- ◆ write a CV
- ◆ speak clearly
- ◆ answer the telephone properly
- ◆ work in a team
- ◆ deal with others
- ◆ use initiative
- ◆ dress appropriately.

The young people who had been to an employer as part of their IFP course were also more confident in their abilities in each of the employability skills,

compared with those who had not visited an employer in Year 11. In particular, they were significantly more likely to report that they were confident in their ability in skills required to gain a job such as writing a CV, coping in an interview and dressing appropriately and in inter-personal skills such as speaking clearly, answering the telephone and dealing with others.

This suggests that the IFP students' experience in a workplace had helped them to gain an insight into the particular skills that are most useful for gaining employment. It also seems that the students had gained experience in certain skills as part of their visits to employers, which had contributed to them feeling more confident in their abilities than IFP students who had not visited an employer.

2.4 Students' attitudes to learning

As was found in the 2003 surveys, the majority of IFP students surveyed indicated that they responded to, and were motivated by, practical work. For example, 79 per cent of respondents stated that they learn best by doing something, whilst 72 per cent indicated that they prefer practical work to lots of writing. Further analysis of the data, using one of the student attitude variables constructed,⁴ revealed that male students, those undertaking NVQs and those studying at college were more likely to prefer a practical approach to learning.

The young people's views on their experience of school and their lessons were mixed. Two-thirds (66 per cent) of respondents felt that school work was worth doing, and a slightly lower proportion (62 per cent) reported that they are well-behaved in school. This proportion had increased notably from when they were in Year 10 (62 per cent of Year 11 students reported that they were well-behaved, compared with 53 per cent when they were in Year 10). In addition, just over half (52 per cent) of the students reported that most of the time they liked going to school, and this proportion had increased slightly from 49 per cent in Year 10. However, 54 per cent of the students felt that some of the subjects they did in Years 7-9 were a waste of time, and this proportion had, in fact, increased from 46 per cent in Year 10. Similarly, although the majority (66 per cent) of students indicated that the courses they were taking will help them to get a good job, this proportion had decreased from 74 per cent when the students responded to this question in Year 10.

Table 2.9 shows that, when asked about their lessons at school, more than two-thirds of students indicated that they work as hard as they can in most or all of their lessons. However, three-quarters of the students reported that they often count the minutes until a lesson ends, for at least some of their lessons, and the

⁴ See Appendix B for details of the variables constructed.

same proportion stated that they are bored in at least some of their lessons. There had been very little change in students' responses this year compared with when they were in Year 10.

Table 2.9 Students' views of lessons

Views of lessons	All lessons	Most lessons	Some lessons	Hardly any lessons	No lessons	No response
	%	%	%	%	%	%
I work as hard as I can in school	15	52	27	3	1	1
I often count the minutes until a lesson ends	14	19	42	17	7	2
I am bored in lessons	7	16	52	19	4	2
The work I do in lessons is a waste of time	3	6	29	31	27	3
The work I do in lessons is interesting	5	31	47	12	4	2
N = 2616						

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

An overall analysis of students' attitudes, using the attitude variables constructed,⁵ revealed some differences between the young people when they were in Year 10 and when they were in Year 11. Students appeared to have gained in confidence in their abilities and were more positive about school by Year 11, compared with their views in Year 10. More specifically, in 2004, the IFP students surveyed were significantly:

- ♦ more positive about school and its usefulness for the future, including the extent to which their education had given them useful skills and knowledge and prepared them for adult and working life.
- ♦ more confident in their own abilities, including the ability to work on their own and to solve problems.

However, the Year 11 students were less likely to prefer studying at college rather than school, and were more likely to have been late for lessons, and, in particular, to have truanted from school, compared with when they were surveyed in Year 10. These responses reflect the observations of school respondents, the majority of whom did not perceive a positive change in attendance.

Table 2.10 shows IFP students' views on their education and their plans for the future, and illustrates that the young people were generally positive about how their education could help them with future employment. Although 37 per cent of respondents indicated that they cannot wait to leave school and get

⁵ See Appendix B for a description of the variables.

a job, this proportion had decreased from 48 per cent in Year 10. This suggests that more students may now be carefully considering undertaking further learning after Year 11. Two-thirds of students agreed that the courses they are taking will help them to get a good job. However, this proportion had decreased from 74 per cent when the students were in Year 10. It is worth noting that it is not clear whether respondents were referring to their IFP course or the other courses they were studying at school when answering this question.

Table 2.10 Students' views on education and the future

Views on education	True for me %	Not sure %	Not true for me %	No response %
My parents want me to stay in education as long as possible	51	28	18	2
I can't wait to leave school and get a job	37	27	34	2
I think there is no point in studying subjects that don't lead to a qualification	45	30	23	3
I don't think school subjects are much help in getting a job	16	34	47	2
I think I will need to know how to use a computer when I get a job	47	31	19	2
I think the courses I am taking will help me get a good job	66	25	7	2
N = 2616				

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

Further analysis was undertaken to explore the characteristics of students who tended to be more positive about school, using one of the attitude variables constructed. This revealed that, compared to the overall profile of respondents, students with the following characteristics were over-represented among those with more positive attitudes about school and its usefulness for the future.

Students who:

- ♦ were female
- ♦ were of Asian ethnic background
- ♦ had higher prior attainment at key stage 3
- ♦ were not recognised as having a SEN
- ♦ were taking GCSEs in vocational subjects
- ♦ were studying their course at school.

Views on working away from school

The students who were undertaking at least part of their IFP courses away from school (1,244 individuals) were generally positive about this experience.

For example, as Table 2.11 shows, more than four-fifths of the young people agreed that they felt comfortable and were not nervous when taking courses away from school. In addition, the majority felt that they were treated as an adult and that the atmosphere was more relaxed at the external provider. Overall, three-quarters enjoyed their course. These findings reflect the experience of students who participated in interviews,⁶ who valued and appreciated the approach of tutors and the alternative atmosphere and environment at their external provider.

Students were less sure that what they were doing out of school would help them understand their school work (30 per cent agreed). Only around a fifth of the young people studying out of school agreed that they can work more at their own pace at school than at the college or training provider, and that they find it easier to learn at school than the college or training provider.

Table 2.11 Students' views of their course out of school

Views of course	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	No response
	%	%	%	%
I feel comfortable at the college/training provider	84	10	4	2
I find it difficult to travel to the college/ training provider	9	11	77	3
I am only doing this course because it is better than being at school all the time	16	18	62	4
I am nervous about the courses I am doing out of school	4	11	81	4
I enjoy the courses I am doing out of school	75	16	7	2
I fit in with the other students on the course	79	14	4	3
I do not enjoy working with adults from outside school	8	17	71	4
I think that what I am doing out of school helps me understand my school work	30	37	29	4
I work well with students from other schools on the course	52	24	17	7
I feel I am treated more as an adult when I am at the college/training provider	80	9	9	2
I find it easier to learn at school than the college/training provider	19	34	44	3
I think that the college/training provider has a more relaxed atmosphere than school	76	14	7	3
I can work more at my own pace at school than at the college/training provider	20	30	47	3
N = 1244				

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A filter question: all those doing a course out of school

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

⁶ See GOLDEN, S., NELSON, J., O'DONNELL, L. and RUDD, P. (2004). *Implementing the Increased Flexibility for 14 to 16 Year Olds Programme: the Experience of Partnerships and Students* (DfES Research Report 562). London: DfES.

Generally the students studying out of school were slightly more positive about their views of the experience compared with when they were in Year 10. For example, as 81 per cent of the young people disagreed that they were nervous about studying out of school compared with 77 per cent in Year 10. However, a smaller proportion of the young people agreed that they enjoy the courses they are doing out of school than in Year 10 (75 per cent, compared with 82 per cent in Year 10).

Views on the impact of the IFP

Young people were asked about their views of the impact of the IFP course on their attitudes to learning. Although many of the students felt unsure of the impact of the IFP at this stage, generally, the young people felt that doing the IFP course had had a positive effect on them. As can be seen in Table 2.12, more than half the IFP students felt that doing their course had:

- ◆ helped them to find out what they are good at
- ◆ made them feel that they can achieve more
- ◆ helped them realise the importance of getting qualifications
- ◆ helped them to feel able to try new things
- ◆ helped them to decide what they want to do in the future
- ◆ helped them to learn how to work with adults
- ◆ helped them realise the importance of the things they are learning in school.

Table 2.12 Students' perceptions of the impact of their course

Doing the course has:	True for me %	Not sure %	Not true for me %	No response %
Helped me realise the importance of getting qualifications	59	27	10	4
Helped me realise the importance of the things I am learning in school	50	33	14	4
Made me feel that I can achieve more	61	26	9	4
Helped me to find out what I am good at	64	23	10	4
Made me more motivated to learn and do well at school	41	38	18	4
Helped me to find my education interesting	37	37	23	4
Helped me to manage my time better	29	41	25	4
Helped me to feel able to try new things	58	27	11	4
Helped me to decide what I want to do in the future	56	21	19	4
Helped me to decide what I don't want to do in the future	45	26	24	5
Helped me to understand what working life will be like	47	28	20	5
Made me a more confident person	47	31	18	4
Helped me learn how to work with adults	54	25	18	4
Helped me learn how to work with other young people	47	27	21	5
N = 2616				

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A total of 2,544 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

Further analysis, which entailed constructing two student attitude variables from this data,⁷ enabled an exploration of the reported impact on students with different background characteristics.

An examination of the characteristics of students who felt that doing their IFP course had given them an increased respect for education (for example, by helping them to realise the importance of getting qualifications) revealed that, compared to the overall profile of respondents, students with the following characteristics were over-represented among those whose respect for education had increased.

Students who:

- ♦ had some form of special educational need
- ♦ had lower prior attainment at key stage 3
- ♦ were not taking GCSEs in vocational subjects
- ♦ preferred studying at college than school
- ♦ were confident in their abilities

⁷ See Appendix B for a description of the variables.

- ♦ preferred a practical approach to learning
- ♦ had chosen their course because it was related to a career they were interested in
- ♦ had not been told to do their course by the school.

A similar analysis revealed that students with the following characteristics were over-represented among those who felt that their IFP course had helped to prepare them for work (for example, by helping them understand what working life will be like).

Students who:

- ♦ were taking NVQs or other VQs
- ♦ had some form of special educational need
- ♦ had lower attainment at key stage 3
- ♦ were studying their course at college
- ♦ had a positive attitude to school
- ♦ were confident in their abilities
- ♦ preferred a practical approach to learning
- ♦ chose their course because it was related to a career they were interested in or because they wanted to study out of school
- ♦ had not been told to do their course by the school.

In summary, the evidence from the surveys suggests that involvement in IFP had a positive impact on broadening students' opportunities to access a relevant curriculum and ways of learning. Students had gained confidence in their abilities such as problem solving and had developed their ability to work with adults and with other students. IFP had also impacted positively on students' readiness for post-16 progression. Students had increased their confidence in their employability skills and they were more positive overall about school and its usefulness for their future. In addition to positive outcomes for the students surveyed, at an institutional level, involvement in IFP was said to have led to more effective partnerships between schools and colleges and training providers.

3. THE IMPACT OF THE INCREASED FLEXIBILITY PROGRAMME ON STUDENTS' PLANS FOR PROGRESSION

Key findings

- ◆ In spring 2004, the majority of students (82 per cent) said that they intended to progress into further education or training after Year 11, which exceeds the target for IFP of 75 per cent. Most planned to embark on A Levels, but the continued interest in the vocational route, which might have led these students to participate in IFP initially, is reflected in the third who planned to start a job with training. In the longer term, a quarter of students planned to leave education after taking an HE course.
- ◆ Some students' continuing commitment to the vocational area studied, which may have influenced their initial choice to participate in IFP, is reflected in the finding that two-fifths of students intended to take a qualification post-16 that was in the same subject area as their IFP course. This was particularly the case with regard to students who were intending to take NVQs or GNVQs post-16.
- ◆ Most students' planned course post-16 was at a higher level than the level of course they had undertaken as part of their IFP involvement. The intended post-16 course of only six per cent of students was at the same level as their IFP course.
- ◆ The majority of students' reasons for their intended post-16 plans related to whether they were interested by it and thought that they were good at it, and whether it offered good career opportunities. Their experience at school of the vocational area was less frequently noted as an influential factor. However around half of the students said that their IFP experience had influenced their decision about their post-16 transition and a similar proportion had found their college or training provider tutor helpful in this respect.
- ◆ The HEIs interviewed felt that students' participation in the IFP will have limited impact on their progression to HE because admission tutors were more likely to take account of their post-16 choices and achievements. Although the HEIs reported that they consider the qualifications achieved by students pre-16, Level 3 qualifications were seen as the most important factor in considering a student for admission.
- ◆ Generally, the HEIs were open to students who had achieved 'vocational' qualifications. However, they emphasised a need for these to be balanced with academic qualifications.

As outlined in Section 1.1, one of the targets of the IFP is that three-quarters of IFP participants should progress into further education or training. This chapter presents findings relating to:

- ♦ students' plans after they finish Year 11, and gives an indication as to whether this target will be achieved
- ♦ the factors influencing the young people's choices regarding their future
- ♦ HEI staff's perspectives on vocational routes into higher education.

3.1 Students' plans for progression

It is important to note that the following data represents students' initial intended destinations after Year 11, when they were surveyed early in the spring term 2004. Therefore, it gives only a self-reported indication of whether IFP students will progress into further education or training. Students' actual transition and the extent of progression from their IFP course will be explored in the final report of the evaluation.

IFP students' intended plans for after they finish Year 11 are presented in Table 3.1. It is worth stressing that students were able to give more than one response to this question, so they may have indicated more than one plan. Nearly a third (30 per cent) of students reported that they intended to undertake A levels, while 22 per cent planned to do AS levels. Only nine per cent of respondents intended to take a Vocational A level course. A total of 16 per cent of young people planned to follow an NVQ course, while a slightly lower proportion (11 per cent) planned to undertake a GNVQ. A notable proportion of IFP participants (32 per cent) reported that they intended to get a job with training after finishing Year 11, while only eight per cent of the young people indicated that they planned to get a job without training.

Preliminary analysis of the characteristics of young people with different intended plans for after Year 11 revealed that, as might be expected, female students, Asian students and those with higher key stage 3 attainment were more likely than other groups to report that they plan to go into further education or training after finishing Year 11. Future analysis will explore the characteristics of those with different intended destinations in more detail.

Table 3.1 Students' intended destinations after Year 11

Plans after Year 11	%
Do AS levels	22
Do A levels	30
Do Vocational A levels (AVCE)	9
Do an NVQ	16
Do a GNVQ	11
Get a job with training	32
Get a job without training	8
Be self-employed	3
Look after home/ family	3
Take a break from work/ study	5
Something else	10
Don't know at the moment	9
No response	4
N = 2616	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

Aggregation of the above data revealed that 82 per cent of the IFP participants planned to continue into further education or training after finishing Year 11, which exceeds the target for IFP partnerships of 75 per cent. As illustrated in the above table, students most commonly planned to pursue A/AS levels. Fifteen per cent of respondents had alternative plans such as a job without training, self-employment, looking after home or family, or were undecided (the remaining four per cent did not respond).

As well as asking about their plans immediately after finishing Year 11, IFP participants were also asked about their plans to remain in education in the longer-term. Table 3.2 reveals that nearly a quarter (22 per cent) of respondents planned to leave school at the end of Year 11. Thirty one per cent planned to leave full-time education after completing either a one-year course (five per cent) or two-year course (26 per cent) in sixth form or further education. Nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of IFP participants reported that they planned to leave full-time education in their early twenties, after taking a university course.

Table 3.2 Students' views on when they will leave full-time education

Intend to leave:	%
At the end of Year 11	22
At age 17, after one year in college or in the sixth form	5
At age 18, after two years in college or in the sixth form	26
In my early twenties after taking a university or other higher education course	23
Not sure yet	20
No response	4
N = 2616	

A single response item

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

In order to explore how the future plans of the IFP students compared with those of other students of a similar age, their responses were compared with those of Year 11 students involved in the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative⁸ (N = 11,320), who were asked the same question in a survey carried out in 2003. This comparison revealed that IFP students were more likely to report that they intended to leave school at the end of Year 11 (22 per cent, compared with 12 per cent of EiC students), or after two years of college (26 per cent compared with 22 per cent of EiC students). Conversely, they were less likely to plan to leave full-time education after university (23 per cent, compared with 38 per cent of Year 11 students attending EiC schools).

3.1.1 Qualifications that IFP students intend to take

The young people were asked to provide information about the qualifications they intended to take immediately after finishing Year 11, in order to explore whether this planned course represented a progression from their IFP course and whether it was in the same subject area. A total of 1,830 respondents gave details of the qualifications they intended to take. The self-reported information provided by each student was compared with the baseline data which identified the qualification they were working towards through IFP, to assess the extent of progression.

The majority (86 per cent) of the young people who provided details of their intended qualifications gave information about only one type of qualification, suggesting that they only planned to take this one qualification type. Only 13 per cent of students indicated that they planned to take more than one type of qualification.

⁸ NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS and INSTITUTE FOR FISCAL STUDIES (2003). Evaluation of Excellence in Cities Policy: Summer 2004 Evaluation Papers. Paper 8 – Pupil Survey Analysis Year 11. Unpublished.

Of the 868 young people who gave information about the A/AS level courses they planned to undertake, just over half (51 per cent) reported that they planned to take four subjects. Just over a fifth (21 per cent) planned to take three A/AS level subjects, while 15 per cent planned to take two, and 14 per cent planned to take one subject.

Those respondents who indicated that they intended to pursue NVQs, GNVQs or other vocational qualifications were more likely to report that they only planned to undertake one subject. For example, of the 465 students who gave information about the NVQ courses they planned to undertake, 85 per cent indicated that they were only planning to take one NVQ course. Similar proportions of respondents planned to undertake only one GNVQ (82 per cent) or one other VQ (90 per cent).

Details of the qualification level and subject area that students were intending to take are discussed for each of the qualifications (A/AS levels, NVQs, GNVQs, other VQs) in turn below.

A/AS levels

Table 3.3 summarises the A/AS level subject areas that students said that they were intending to follow after Year 11, including AVCEs, and reveals that social science, science and arts⁹ subjects were the most popular subjects that students were intending to pursue at A/AS level.

⁹ Arts subjects included Art and Design, Performing Arts and Media Studies.

Table 3.3 A level subjects students are intending to take

A level subjects	%
Social Science	36
Science	34
Arts	32
ICT	28
Humanities	28
English	26
Maths	22
Business	19
Sports and Leisure	13
Health and Social Care-related	11
Technology	10
Modern Foreign Languages	7
General Studies	1
Key Skills	1
Engineering	1
Manufacturing	<1
Construction and the Built Environment	<1
Land and Environment	<1
Other	1
No response	1
N = 868	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

All those who indicated that they plan to take an A/AS level

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

NVQs

As shown in Table 3.4, the most common NVQ courses that students planned to take after Year 11 were in the vocational areas of hair and beauty, engineering and motor, catering and construction.

Table 3.4 NVQ subjects students are intending to take

NVQ subjects	%
Hair and beauty	27
Engineering and motor	20
Catering	16
Construction	14
Care and childcare	9
Administration/ business	5
Sports, leisure and tourism	5
ICT	3
Arts	2
Animal related	2
Land-based	1
Manufacturing	<1
No response	6
N = 465	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

All those who indicated that they plan to take an NVQ

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

Table 3.5 reveals that nearly one third (30 per cent) of respondents who intended to do an NVQ course indicated that this would be a Level 2 course, while just under a quarter (23 per cent) planned to do a Level 1 NVQ. As would be expected, only small proportions of young people reported that they would be doing Level 3 and Level 4 NVQ courses: given the age and attainment profile of the IFP respondents, it would not be expected that many of these students would be undertaking courses at these levels immediately after finishing Year 11. It may well be that these students intended to do courses at these levels at some point in the future rather than immediately after Year 11.

Table 3.5 NVQs: Levels students are intending to take

NVQ Level	%
Level 1	23
Level 2	30
Level 3	7
Level 4	4
Don't know	25
More than one box ticked	13
No response	13
N = 465	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

All those who indicated that they plan to take an NVQ

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

GNVQs

Table 3.6 reveals that more than half of the young people who reported that they planned to take a GNVQ course after Year 11 indicated that this would be in the area of Health and Social Care.

Table 3.6 GNVQ subjects students are intending to take

GNVQ subjects	%
Health and Social Care	52
Business	15
Leisure and Tourism	9
ICT	8
Engineering	5
Hospitality and Catering	4
Art and Design	4
Construction and the Built Environment	3
Land and Environment	2
Science	2
Performing Arts	1
Retail and Distributive Services	<1
Media: Communication and Production	<1
Other relevant	1
No response	7
N = 272	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

All those who indicated that they plan to take a GNVQ

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

As Table 3.7 shows, more than two-thirds (70 per cent) of the students who planned to undertake a GNVQ reported that this would be an Intermediate GNVQ, while 29 per cent indicated that they would be taking a Foundation GNVQ course.

Table 3.7 GNVQs: Levels students are intending to take

GNVQ Level	%
Foundation	29
Intermediate	70
Don't know	1
More than one box ticked	2
No response	14
N = 272	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

All those who indicated that they plan to take a GNVQ

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

Other vocational qualifications

Those young people who indicated that they planned to take another vocational qualification (VQ) were asked to provide details of the qualification type, as well as the subject and level. A total of 49 per cent of these students did not give information about the type of qualification they intended to pursue, possibly because they were undecided or unaware of the details at the time of the survey. However, the main qualification types reported by the remaining students were:

- ◆ BTEC/ Edexcel (32 per cent)
- ◆ National Diploma (awarding body unspecified) (seven per cent)
- ◆ City and Guilds (three per cent)
- ◆ CACHE Care Award (two per cent).

As can be seen in Table 3.8, 22 per cent of the young people who indicated that they planned to take another VQ, reported that this would be in the area of care and childcare, while 13 per cent of respondents planned to follow a course in sports, leisure and tourism.

Table 3.8 Other vocational qualification: subjects students are intending to take

Other vocational qualification subjects	%
Care and childcare	22
Sports, leisure and tourism	13
Construction	9
Engineering and motor	8
Arts	8
Administration/ business	8
Hair and beauty	5
ICT	3
Animal related	3
Land-based	3
Other*	3
No response	15
N = 488	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

All those who indicated that they plan to take another vocational qualification¹⁰

**Other subjects included science, catering and retail.*

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

¹⁰ In addition, one per cent of respondents reported that they planned to take mathematics (GCSE), however, as this is not a vocational subject, it was not included in the table.

The majority of those young people who gave information about another vocational qualification they planned to take after Year 11 either did not provide details of the level of this qualification, or indicated that they did not know what the level would be. This is perhaps unsurprising given the timing of the survey, early in the spring term 2004, when many students would still be undecided on their post-16 course. However, Table 3.9 shows that a total of 16 per cent of respondents stated that the qualification they planned to take would be at Level 2.

Table 3.9 Other vocational qualifications: Levels students are intending to take

Level	%
Level 1	14
Level 2	16
Level 3	9
Level 4	4
Don't know	53
More than one box ticked	5
No response	16
N = 488	

*All those who indicated that they plan to take another vocational qualification
Respondents could be taking qualifications at more than one level. Therefore percentages do not sum to 100*

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

3.1.2 Extent of progression

The extent to which students' plans for after Year 11 represented a progression from their IFP course was assessed for each of the qualifications that students said they would be taking. As highlighted in section 3.1.1, this assessment was based on a comparison of the intended qualification reported by each student in the questionnaire and the baseline data provided by schools on each student's IFP qualification.

Table 3.10 shows the overall progression of students, looking across all the qualifications that young people said they intended to take after Year 11.

Table 3.10 Overall progression of students

Overall progression	%
Same subject area and progression	23
Same subject area and no progression (same level)	3
Same subject area but progression unclear	15
Different subject area and progression	35
Different subject area and no progression (same level)	3
Different subject area but progression unclear	16
No judgement possible	4
No response	2
N = 1830	

A single response item

All those who indicated that they planned to do a course after Year 11

Categories were assigned by comparing students' responses with qualifications they were taking through IFP

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004 and baseline data 2002

Aggregation of the above data (Table 3.10) revealed that, overall, 40 per cent of respondents were planning to take a course that was in the same subject area as their IFP course, while 54 per cent were intending to take a course in a different subject area. There appeared to be some differences in whether students planned to take a course in the same subject area as their IFP course or not, depending on the qualification they intended to pursue after Year 11 (details are provided in Appendix C). For around a third of students planning to undertake A/AS levels or another VQ, this was in the same subject area as their IFP course. However, for those intending to take NVQs or GNVQs, the proportion of students planning to take a course in the same subject area as their IFP course was much higher (47 per cent for NVQs and 50 per cent for GNVQs). This suggests that these students were following a vocational route from pre-16, and future analysis will explore the characteristics of these students and their reasons for participating in the IFP. This is supported by the finding that students who undertook an NVQ through the IFP were more likely than those following GCSEs in vocational subjects or GNVQs to be intending to take a course that was in the same subject area as their IFP course.

Overall, more than half (58 per cent) of the young people who planned to undertake further qualifications indicated that they would be progressing onto a higher level qualification than that which they were studying through the IFP. Only six per cent of respondents indicated that they would be taking a course that was not a progression from their IFP course because it was at the same level as their current course. For 34 per cent of responding IFP participants, it was not possible to work out the extent of their planned progression because they did not provide full information on the level of the qualification they intended to take, or, in a few cases, because the baseline data on their IFP qualification was not provided.

3.1.3 Job plans of IFP students

Of the 985 young people who indicated that they planned to get a job (with or without training) after Year 11, just under half gave details of the profession that they intended to pursue. Table 3.11 shows that the jobs that IFP participants planned to get were in a range of occupational areas, but most commonly they were in the engineering and motor and construction industries. It is worth noting that ICT can be both a vocationally-specific qualification and a generic qualification. The case-study visits revealed that some young people taking an ICT qualification regarded it as a useful generic qualification, and this view may be reflected in the finding that less than one per cent of respondents to the survey said that they intended to follow a career in ICT.

Table 3.11 Type of job students plan to do

Type of job	%
Engineering and motor	11
Construction	9
Hair and beauty	6
Retail	4
Care and childcare	3
Catering	3
Administration/ business	2
Land-based	2
Armed Forces	2
Sport, leisure and tourism	2
Undecided	2
Animal related	1
ICT	<1
Arts	<1
Other	1
No response	53
N = 985	

An open-ended, single response question

All those who planned to get a job after Year 11

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

For a fifth (20 per cent) of the young people who intended to get a job after finishing Year 11, their intended job was related to the vocational area they were studying through their IFP course. Twenty four per cent of the young people intended to get a job that was in a different vocational area to their IFP course.

There were some employment areas that were significantly more likely to be related to the vocational area that students were studying through the IFP.

These included jobs in construction, catering, care and childcare, engineering and motor, and sport, leisure and tourism.

In examining the intended occupations of these IFP students, it is worth noting that, when asked about their long-term career plans and the extent to which they had decided on what job they would like to do in the future, most of the young people knew what type of job they would like, but were also willing to consider alternatives. Thirty eight per cent reported that they had definitely decided on their career and did not intend to change their mind, while a slightly lower proportion (34 per cent) indicated that they were fairly sure of their decision, but they would consider other careers. A total of 14 per cent of respondents had some ideas about possible careers, but they were still thinking about their options. Only nine per cent felt that they really did not know what job they wanted to do in the future. Overall, these findings suggest that the majority of IFP students would benefit from advice and guidance on their plans for the future.

3.2 Influences on students' plans for future progression

Table 3.12 shows that most of the young people who indicated that they intended to take a course or get a job after the end of Year 11, reported that they had decided on these plans because they found the vocational area interesting (86 per cent) and because they thought they would be good at it (83 per cent). Nearly three quarters (71 per cent) of the young people also considered that their choice of job or course offered good career opportunities. A lower proportion (59 per cent) reported that this was something they have always wanted to do. A third of young people indicated that their intended course or career was in the same subject area as a course they were studying at school.

Table 3.12 Students' reasons for what they plan to do after Year 11

	True for me %	Not sure %	Not true for me %	No response %
I have always wanted to do it	59	22	11	8
It is in the same subject area as a course I am studying at school	33	21	36	9
Someone in my family did this course/ works in this career	23	14	53	10
I find it interesting	86	6	1	7
I think I will be good at it	83	9	1	7
I like working with my hands	53	25	13	9
The job will offer good pay	45	35	11	10
It offers good career opportunities	71	19	2	8
N = 2230				

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A filter question: all those who indicated that they planned to do a course or get a job after Year 11

A total of 2,115 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

Generally, students were positive about how well their education at school had prepared them for the future. As Table 3.13 shows, nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of participants felt that their education had given them helpful information about choices after Year 11, while 56 per cent felt that it had given them useful skills. A total of 64 per cent of young people reported that their school had made them think about going on to further learning after Year 11, and further analysis revealed that students in 11-16 schools were more likely to indicate this than students in 11-18 schools. However, a lower proportion (49 per cent) felt that their education had prepared them for adult and working life.

Table 3.13 Preparation for the future

How well has your education:	Very well %	Not sure %	Not very well %	No response %
given you useful skills and knowledge	56	35	6	2
prepared you for adult and working life	49	35	14	3
given you helpful information about choices after Year 11	65	23	9	3
made you think about going on to further learning after Year 11	64	24	9	3
N = 2616				

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

As well as reporting that they had received helpful information about their choices after Year 11 from their school, most of the IFP students also indicated that they had spoken to various people to help them decide what they would like to do after leaving school. Table 3.14 shows that the majority of young people felt that their family and friends had helped them decide what to do, with 80 per cent reporting that their family had been very helpful or quite helpful, and 71 per cent reporting that their friends had been helpful. Just over two-thirds (67 per cent) of IFP participants indicated that they found it helpful to discuss their future plans with their school teachers, while 61 per cent stated that discussions with a Careers Service or Connexions Personal Adviser had been helpful to them. In addition, 54 per cent reported that they had found their college or training provider tutors helpful, and 45 per cent stated that discussions with an employer or other people in work had been helpful to them. Nearly half (49 per cent) of the students felt that their IFP course had been an influential factor in helping them decide what to do after they finish school in Year 11.

Table 3.14 Influential factors on students' future plans

Individuals	Very helpful %	Quite helpful %	Not helpful %	Not sure %	Not applicable %	No response %
School teachers	19	48	18	6	4	6
College/Training provider tutor	21	33	15	11	13	7
Careers/Connexions Service Personal Adviser	30	31	15	8	9	7
Careers databases on computer	9	22	28	16	16	8
Employer(s)/other people in work	18	27	16	16	15	8
The IFP course (indicated earlier in the questionnaire)	23	26	18	15	7	11
Friends	29	41	12	8	3	7
Family	48	33	6	5	2	7
TV/ the media	11	19	30	17	13	10
Other adult(s) in the school	15	24	24	17	13	8
N = 2616						

A series of single response items

A total of 2,500 respondents answered at least one item in this question

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

In summary, the surveys of young people in spring 2004 indicated that the majority intended to progress into further education and training. Some intended to pursue a vocational route, working towards NVQs, other VQs and GNVQs, and some planned to take an academic route post-16, pursuing AS and A levels. Two-fifths of students intended to pursue a course in the same vocational area that they had studied through their IFP involvement. It appears, therefore, that although half of the students said that their IFP course

had influenced their choice of course post-16, it was not always the case that the students' choice of a vocationally-related subject at 14 would be followed through into their post-16 choices.

3.3 Views of admissions staff in higher education institutions

This section presents the findings from interviews carried out with representatives of a small sample of nine HEIs between August and November 2004. The nine staff who were interviewed had responsibility for admissions to the HEI or to individual courses within the institution. Eight of the interviews were conducted with staff in post-1992 institutions, and one with a pre 1992 institution, where degree courses which could be described as 'vocational' were offered¹¹. Examples of such courses included architecture and the built environment, business, agriculture and conservation science.

The interviews in the nine institutions selected did not seek to be representative of the whole HE sector, or indeed of the whole institution. The aim was, rather, to explore the experiences and perceptions of a small number of HEIs with respect to the vocational route into higher education in order to supplement the wider evaluation of IFP. Three of the HEIs identified were selected because their institutions acted as the Lead Partner for IFP partnerships, although the individuals interviewed were not actively involved in the IFP. The remaining six were identified through the Lead Partners who participated in the case-studies, although their links with the HEIs were not related to IFP.

It is worth noting that, at the time of the interviews, the first cohort of IFP participants had just completed their compulsory schooling and were some way off applying for a course in an HEI. In addition, the first cohort of students undertaking the new GCSEs in vocational subjects had just taken their examinations and the staff in HEIs had yet to experience any young people applying to their institutions with these qualifications. Consequently, as higher education specialists, the interviewees did not have a detailed knowledge of either IFP or of the new GCSEs in vocational subjects and their perceptions and observations should be regarded as illustrative and exploratory. Nevertheless, they often had experience of students with a variety of qualifications embarking on courses and were able to reflect on this experience in their responses.

¹¹ There were no apparent differences in the views of the staff interviewed in the pre-1992 institution and the post-1992 institutions, although it is important to note that the pre-1992 HEI involved in this research may not be representative of other pre-1992 institutions.

The interviews included questions about admissions criteria and involvement with schools and colleges, in addition to more specific HEI views on IFP, new GCSEs and the vocational route into higher education.

The interviews focused on the views of HEI staff on progression into HE, including 'vocational' HE courses. The interviewees were asked, therefore, to explain which disciplines were perceived as 'vocational' within their institution. HEI staff gave examples of subject areas which related to health and social care, engineering, business, land-based and construction. They explained that these disciplines were considered to be vocational because they involved some element of work-related learning and allowed a student to go directly into a job in that area. As one interviewee stated, she *'equates vocational with work'*.

3.3.1 HEIs' current admissions process

The HEIs currently consider a range of qualifications, both academic and vocational, for entry to their institutions. They reported that the majority of students currently embarking on courses in their institutions had A levels (either GCE A levels or VCE A levels), while smaller proportions had alternative qualifications such as GNVQs, National Certificates and Access qualifications. Only small proportions of students were reported to have NVQs. Interviewees gave a number of explanations for this distribution, including that it reflects the over-representation of applicants with traditional, academic qualifications to HE courses, and that it is a reflection of the Level 3 qualifications that are available to students in the local schools and FE colleges. One admissions manager, for example, reported that this distribution can be explained by the high proportion of students who come from school sixth forms, rather than Further Education (FE) colleges, and so have traditional, academic qualifications. Another interviewee attributed the small numbers of applicants with NVQs to a lack of defined progression routes into HE for many NVQ courses. Overall, therefore, although the majority of applicants to the nine HEIs had academic qualifications, students who had attained vocational qualifications were also participating in degree courses.

The admissions criteria varied between institutions and between courses within institutions, and generalising about admissions was not always possible. Nevertheless, courses were said to have minimum entry requirements which were based on the UCAS points tariff and ranged from 40 points in one HEI (for a Foundation Degree) to 280 points in another. In addition to A Levels, a range of equivalent qualifications could contribute towards the total points achieved by a student including GNVQs, National Certificates and Diplomas, and Higher National Certificates and Diplomas. Six of the interviewees specified that they did not differentiate between GCE and VCE A levels, because, as one admissions manager summed it up, *'an A level is an A level'*. In considering the range of qualifications they would accept, two of the nine admissions tutors who were interviewed commented

that they would only accept a student with a Level 3 qualification that was not a GCE A Level if they had also achieved GCE A levels. This was because, in their experience, some students had found it difficult to adapt to a different style of learning at university, compared with their previous courses working towards vocational qualifications even where they were following a 'vocational' degree course. For example, they noted that the mode of assessment for NVQs and GNVQs was through coursework and portfolios which was different from the essays and examinations at university. This did not present an insurmountable challenge, however, and in one institution, the interviewee explained that they had established a '*bridging course*' to develop the necessary study skills in students who entered with non-traditional qualifications.

In addition to formal qualifications, the HEI staff commented that they also take other factors into consideration for admission to courses, most commonly with mature applicants. These included Assessment of Prior Learning, Access qualifications, key skills qualifications and exploratory essays. The interviewees also reported that they carefully consider a student's personal statement and references and two admissions tutors commented that work experience can be an important influential factor in the admissions process.

Although there was variation in the entry requirements for different courses in the HEIs, none of the interviewees indicated that any distinction was made between the entry requirements for vocational and academic courses. Instead, the variation in entry requirements was reported to depend largely on the level of academic study required on a course and on the popularity of a course, with more competitive courses having higher entry requirements. Generally, the HEIs indicated that even on courses where entry is very competitive, they did not differentiate between qualifications that could be described as academic or vocational. Indeed, one interviewee stated that academic and vocational qualifications are considered to be '*equally credible*'. However, two of nine admissions staff interviewed stated that they were more likely to accept students with academic qualifications, rather than vocational qualifications, on competitive courses.

In summary, the admissions staff who were interviewed in these nine institutions currently considered vocational qualifications in addition to academic qualifications in their entry requirements. Their perceptions of the impact of IFP and new GCSEs on future admissions is discussed next.

3.3.2 Views on the impact of IFP and GCSEs in vocational subjects pre-16 on admissions

Generally, the Level 3 qualifications achieved by students were seen by the HEIs as the most important factor in considering a student for admission. However, all of the HEI staff also reported that they consider the qualifications achieved by students pre-16. In most cases, these were taken

into consideration for all applicants, however, in two of the HEIs, pre-16 qualifications were only looked at if an applicant was on the borderline for admission. Six of the interviewees reported that they look at the overall profile of achievement pre-16, as this was thought to give a *'good indication of how a student has performed throughout their school life'*, and to be *'a powerful indicator of performance at degree level'*. In these cases, the universities took account of students' overall achievement or the spread of subjects they had achieved. However, three of the HEIs indicated that for some courses they look for specific GCSE subjects. Two HEIs also indicated that achievement of GCSEs in English and mathematics was an important factor. It is worth noting that the HEIs tended to refer to GCSE achievements when discussing pre-16 qualifications, and were less likely to take into consideration other pre-16 awards. This was reported by one interviewee to be *'more due to a lack of familiarity rather than hostility'*. In other words, there was a lack of awareness because of the low number of applicants who have achieved vocational qualifications pre-16.

The admissions staff interviewed were aware of GCSEs in vocational subjects, however, they were not fully informed about the details of these qualifications. When asked whether they anticipated considering GCSEs in vocational subjects as part of their admissions criteria in the future, the six HEI staff who reported that they currently look at students' pre-16 qualifications indicated that they also anticipate considering students' achievements in GCSEs in vocational subjects. None of these HEIs anticipated that they would differentiate between GCSEs in academic and vocational subjects, although one admissions officer stated that they would see how students performed in vocational GCSEs before making a firm decision about whether to consider them as part of their admissions criteria.

As discussed earlier, participation in IFP may entail undertaking part or all of a course away from school at a college, training provider or employer. The location of study pre-16 did not emerge as a significant factor in HEIs' considerations, although three of the interviewees suggested that having studied away from school might enhance a students' overall application. A regular placement with an employer was viewed more favourably by the HEIs, with five of the admissions staff interviewed reporting that they might take this work experience into consideration when looking at a students' application. Indeed, one of these interviewees stated that work experience was a requirement on some courses such as education or health and social care.

The HEIs were asked what advice they would give to a student who was making option choices at 14, if he or she ultimately aimed to do a vocational course at university. The admissions staff tended to recommend that students take courses that they enjoy and are good at, regardless of whether they are generic or vocational qualifications, as they felt that students would be more likely to achieve well in subjects they enjoyed and this could contribute to

their progression to the next phase of education at 16. However, five of the interviewees suggested that taking a broad range of options, with a mixture of generic and vocational qualifications, was the best approach because this enabled students to *'keep their options open'*. Some were concerned about students making career decisions at 14 and specialising in a particular vocational area too early, in case they changed their minds at a later date. With regard to post-16 choices, a few interviewees (three individuals) emphasised the importance of ensuring that students who wished to embark on future study at an HEI balanced any vocational qualifications studied with academic qualifications which, in their experience, would more effectively prepare them for the style of learning at university.

In summary, although interviewees in these nine HEIs did not always have detailed knowledge of IFP or of GCSEs in vocational subjects, on balance their views suggest that a student's experience of these pre-16 could be one contributory factor to be taken into consideration by admissions tutors in the future.

3.3.3 Views of vocational qualifications and the vocational route

Generally, the admissions staff interviewed reported that views of vocational qualifications varied among their colleagues in the HE sector. Although the interviewees felt that their institution welcomed a mixture of academic and vocational qualifications and that most of their colleagues were positive about the vocational route, six admissions staff were concerned that there was still a degree of scepticism among some HE tutors. These interviewees indicated that vocational qualifications were regarded by some tutors as being lower status than academic qualifications, and that non-traditional learners were seen by some as *'problematic'*. One interviewee felt that a cultural change was needed to improve the status of the vocational route. There was also a feeling that the attitudes of older HEIs, such as those in the Russell Group, would be more negative than those in newer and post-1992 universities.

Notwithstanding this broad context, interviewees in the HEIs generally felt that perceptions of vocational qualifications were gradually improving and two of the nine admissions tutors suggested that the negative views of vocational qualifications are due, to some extent, to a lack of adequate knowledge about these qualifications among HE colleagues. One admissions officer, for example, stated that *'when something is new and not understood, it tends to be viewed negatively'*, and she added that once people understand vocational qualifications and their equivalence with academic qualifications, they tend to accept them. It was suggested that staff in the HE sector need to be better informed about vocational qualifications, and that there needs to be a better system for tracking students' achievement, in order to explore how students with different pre-16 and post-16 qualifications achieve in HE.

Overall, staff in the HEIs did not anticipate that students taking vocational qualifications at 14-16 would have a significant impact on HE courses either positively or negatively. However, three admissions tutors suggested that this might enable a more diverse group of students to enter HE, and another felt that it might lead to more demand for vocational courses in HE. In order to respond to developments in the 14-19 curriculum, two admissions staff commented that it might be necessary for HEIs to adapt their courses, so that they were suitable for students with a range of experience and qualifications, including those that were academic and vocational. This need to adapt reflected concern among some interviewees that students with vocational qualifications might not be as prepared for the academic mode of study required at university as those who had entered with only academic qualifications. It was suggested that these students might benefit from extra support on entering HE, such as the bridging programme of study skills which one institution had implemented in response to this identified need. A few of the interviewees mentioned that Foundation Degrees might help to expand the vocational route in HE, and indeed one admissions manager indicated that these degrees might be an appropriate progression route for those undertaking vocational qualifications pre-16.

3.3.4 HEIs' experiences of links with schools and colleges

All of the HEIs worked with local schools, often through widening participation strategies, and indeed, all but one of the admissions staff interviewed reported that their university received funding to support widening participation in HE. However, the focus of widening participation strategies tended not to be vocationally specific in these institutions. The nature of the HEIs' links with schools included general marketing work, summer schools, taster sessions for school students, Masterclasses, a mentoring programme, and in one case, support from lecturers with GCSE teaching in local schools. Three of the HEIs were involved in supporting the IFP, through their roles as Lead Partner organisations¹². The HEIs also worked with local FE colleges, in similar ways to the schools, but also, in a few cases, in connection with Foundation degrees, which were delivered through partnerships between the HEIs and FE colleges.

Overall, the HEIs considered their links with schools and colleges to be very valuable, and they acknowledged that the future of their institution was dependent on the recruitment of students from local schools and colleges. Interviewees felt that this liaison work was helping with recruitment in HE, by raising students' aspirations and enhancing their awareness of the options which were open to them post-18, and dispelling any myths they might have about university. Two interviewees also felt that these links were helping to build relationships and develop mutual understanding between different

¹² Given that the people interviewed were admissions staff, they were not actively involved in the IFP, and were, therefore, not able to provide details of their institutions' involvement in the IFP.

institutions. Furthermore, one of these interviewees felt that, through working with schools and colleges, university staff were learning more about the school curriculum and gaining a better understanding of the content and style of teaching which students had experienced. Four of the interviewees mentioned that their university was keen to extend their links with schools and colleges. However, lack of staff time and resources in the university, and in one case, a lack of interest from local schools, were making the further development of such links challenging for the HEIs. It might be beneficial for HEIs to explore how they could extend their links with schools and FE colleges to more vocationally-specific work, which shows students the vocational options that are open to them in HE.

In conclusion, the views of this sample of HEIs suggest that students' participation in IFP will have limited impact on their progression to HE because admissions tutors were more likely to take into account their post-16 choices and achievements. Nevertheless, there was an openness among these HEIs to students embarking on HE courses having achieved 'vocational' qualifications, although a need for these to be balanced with academic qualifications was noted. Overall, it appeared that undertaking courses pre-16 which were engaging and of interest to students might increase the likelihood that they would succeed and gain a qualification which would contribute to their overall achievement and help them to progress in their further and higher education. The perceptions of the HEI staff who were interviewed indicate that the difference between academic and vocational qualifications was as much related to the style of delivery as to the content. As higher education courses at present follow a largely academic style of learning, there may be a need for additional support for students who embark on a higher education course from a predominantly vocational background. This additional support would assist students in the transition between different styles of learning.

4. THE EXPERIENCE OF PARTICIPATING IN THE INCREASED FLEXIBILITY PROGRAMME

Key findings

- ◆ The approach to delivering IFP for the first cohort of students, in terms of the location of delivery, differed across partnerships, within partnerships and within schools within partnerships. Half of the colleges and training providers surveyed and a quarter of schools indicated that they used more than one approach. These included the external organisation teaching the course, the school teaching the course or a shared delivery approach.
- ◆ While half of schools found accommodating IFP provision into their key stage 4 timetables to be largely unproblematic, it had caused difficulties for about two-fifths. For the majority of schools, colleges and training providers, the experience was similar to their experience in the first year of IFP. The main reason for difficulty timetabling was the inflexibility of the days and times when courses were available or students could attend.
- ◆ In two-fifths of schools, respondents indicated that students did not miss other timetabled lessons when they were participating in their IFP course. The majority of students surveyed did not miss lessons but a quarter said that they did miss some lessons, including core subjects and other statutory subjects. However, the majority said that they were able to catch up with missed work with minimal difficulty.
- ◆ The majority of schools said that their students received ongoing support from the Connexions Service and from mentoring support. Noticeably more said that they used such support in 2004 than in 2003, and noticeably more students reported that they had spoken about their progress with a mentor or Connexions Personal Adviser in 2004 than in 2003. The majority of students had found these discussions helpful.
- ◆ In the majority of schools, a member of staff accompanied students when they were off-site. Their involvement typically entailed supporting the tutor with classroom management, observing delivery and providing one-to-one support for particular students.
- ◆ Access to the college tutors and the external providers' learning resource centre was provided for students in around two-fifths of colleges and training providers. Around a fifth of students did not access computers at the external provider to do coursework or to search the internet, and half did not use the learning resource centre and it emerged that, for some students who were studying off-site, accessing learning support and facilities was not easy.

- ◆ Around two-thirds of colleges and training providers, and a similar proportion of schools surveyed, had not used employers to support the delivery of IFP. Where employers had been used it was most often to host visits, provide visiting speakers and provide work placements for students.
- ◆ There were some indications of an increase in the use of employers among the organisations surveyed and half of schools and two-thirds of colleges and training providers said that their links were more effective this year. The increase is reflected in the responses of students, a third of whom said that they had visited an employer in Year 11 compared with a quarter in Year 10.
- ◆ A higher proportion of students in 2004 than in 2003 indicated that they had gained from their employer experience in various respects, such as learning about the company and about the world of work, than said this in 2003. This suggests that schools and colleges and training providers were indeed developing more effective links with employers.
- ◆ Most employers who were involved with IFP had engaged in discussions with course tutors before students attended their organisation and had tailored the experience to meet the students' needs. They identified effective communication before and during a placement as central to good practice in involving employers.
- ◆ The employers had a positive experience of working with students and identified benefits including students gaining an insight into their organisation or sector and into the world of work and having an opportunity to see the relevance of their work. The organisations benefited from engaging with the local community and meeting with potential future recruits.

This chapter explores the experience of participating in IFP from the perspectives of colleges and training providers, schools and students. It discusses:

- ◆ the approaches adopted to delivering IFP for the first cohort of students
- ◆ the experience of incorporating IFP provision into the timetable and the extent to which students missed lessons
- ◆ the learning support provided for students
- ◆ the involvement of employers in supporting the delivery of IFP, including the perspectives of the employers on working with young people, the vocational route and vocational qualifications.

4.1 Approaches to delivering IFP

As has been noted in previous reports of the evaluation, the approach to delivering IFP can vary between partnerships, between schools within partnerships and between courses within schools and partnerships.

Nevertheless, in the majority of the schools surveyed in 2004, only one approach to delivering IFP courses was adopted. More specifically:

- ◆ nearly half of the schools (48 per cent) indicated that the only approach used was that where an external organisation taught the entire course
- ◆ an approach where the school and college shared the teaching was the only approach used in 20 per cent of schools
- ◆ in three per cent of schools, the only approach was where the school only taught the whole curriculum.

Among the schools surveyed in 2004, just over a quarter (27 per cent) used more than one approach to delivering IFP courses.

Among the colleges and training providers surveyed, 55 per cent reported that they used a combination of approaches to delivery, as might be expected given that each college or training provider may be working with a number of schools. This suggests that a partnership-wide approach to delivering IFP was not always adopted and may reflect negotiation of delivery with schools individually. In the remaining colleges and training providers a single approach was used as follows:

- ◆ in 31 per cent of those surveyed, the college or training provider taught the entire curriculum
- ◆ 13 per cent of colleges and training providers indicated that they only used an approach where teaching was shared with schools.

As can be seen in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below, there was a tendency for particular approaches to be used for each of the different qualification types. For example, among the schools surveyed, 19 per cent indicated that they taught the entire curriculum for GCSEs in vocational subjects and 52 per cent reported that the external provider taught the entire curriculum for NVQs. Similarly 62 per cent of the colleges and training providers surveyed said that they taught the entire curriculum for NVQs and 18 per cent said that schools taught the entire curriculum for GCSEs in vocational subjects.

Table 4.1 Approaches to delivering IFP: Schools' responses

Delivery approaches	New GCSEs in vocational subjects	NVQs	GNVQs	Other VQs
	%	%	%	%
Your external provider(s) teaches the entire curriculum	23	52	9	24
Your external provider(s) teaches most of the curriculum with some support from the school	7	5	2	2
Your external provider(s) and the school share teaching equally	9	1	1	<1
The school teaches most of the curriculum with some support from your external provider(s)	13	2	4	2
The school teaches the entire curriculum	19	<1	7	1
Not applicable	3	2	3	3
No response to this question	34	40	77	68
N = 248				

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of schools 2004.

Table 4.2 Approaches to delivering IFP: Colleges' responses

Delivery approaches:	New GCSEs in vocational subjects	NVQs	GNVQs	Other VQs
	%	%	%	%
Your organisation teaches the entire curriculum	37	62	10	40
Your organisation teaches most of the curriculum with some support from the school	28	10	4	8
Your organisation and the school share teaching equally	18	5	5	1
The school teaches most of the curriculum with some support from your organisation	28	1	3	1
The school teaches the entire curriculum	18	1	5	0
Not applicable	1	0	6	3
No response	18	28	73	51
N = 78				

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of colleges/training providers 2004.

It was evident, therefore, that a student who participated in the first cohort of IFP may have studied their qualification only away from school, only at school or through shared teaching between colleges or training providers and schools. Half of the students who responded to the survey in 2004 said that they pursued their IFP qualification at their school. A total of 22 per cent said that they studied at a college and less than one per cent attended a training provider. Twenty-five per cent said that they studied at more than one place

which was most frequently a school and a college.¹³ Less than one per cent of students said that they studied at another school and the same proportion said they attended an employer. Reflecting the tendency reported above for the location of study to be related to the type of qualification studied, most students who were taking GCSEs in vocational subjects said that they did so at school and students taking NVQs and other VQs tended to state that they did so at college or at more than one location of study, as illustrated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Location of study for each qualification

Qualifications studied at:	New GCSEs %	NVQ %	GNVQ %	Other qualification %	No response %
your school	62	9	43	20	41
another school	<1	0	<1	0	0
College	14	37	18	43	50
a training provider	<1	2	<1	0	0
an employer	0	1	0	1	0
more than one place	24	52	38	36	9
N =	2006	514	301	231	54

A series of single response items

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

4.2 Timetabling IFP

Accommodating IFP provision into the school timetable emerged as one of the notable challenges of implementing IFP for the first cohort of participants.¹⁴ The responses to the school survey in 2004 indicated that timetabling for IFP students in Year 11 was relatively straightforward for a majority but had provided a challenge for around two-fifths of schools. Colleges and training providers also experienced some difficulties in accommodating provision for the first IFP cohort into their timetables when they were in Year 11, as shown in Table 4.4.

¹³ See Appendix A for a discussion of the differences between students' self-reported qualifications and information provided by schools

¹⁴ GOLDEN, S., NELSON, J., O'DONNELL, L. and MORRIS, M. (2004). *Evaluation of Increased Flexibility for 14-16 Year Olds: the First Year* (DfES Research Report 511). London: DfES.

Table 4.4 Experience of timetabling IFP

Timetabling IFP was:	Schools 2003 %	Schools 2004 %	Colleges 2003 %	Colleges 2004 %
Straightforward	15	20	9	9
Some small difficulties	38	36	49	46
Problematic	35	31	33	36
Extremely difficult	11	11	8	6
No response	<1	3	1	4
N=	299	248	90	78

A single response question

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: surveys of schools and colleges and training providers 2003 and 2004

Comparison of the responses of the schools surveyed in 2004 with those in 2003 (see Table 4.4) suggests that timetabling had been straightforward for a slightly greater proportion in the second year. This slight tendency is also reflected in the responses of the same 115 schools who responded in both years which revealed that 13 per cent had found timetabling straightforward in 2003 but 20 per cent had done so in 2004. Furthermore, the responses of staff in schools and colleges and training providers, relating to the extent to which their experience of timetabling had changed, indicated that it did not appear to have been noticeably less straightforward to timetable provision for Year 11 than it had been when students were in Year 10. Most schools (60 per cent) said the experience was no more or less straightforward in the second year, which may reflect the timetable remaining static for students throughout their key stage 4 career. A smaller proportion of colleges and training providers (32 per cent) said that the experience of timetabling was unchanged, but 41 per cent of this group reported that it had been more straightforward while this had been the experience of 20 per cent of schools. In a minority of cases timetabling had been less straightforward in 2004 than in 2003 (22 per cent of colleges and training providers and 12 per cent of schools).

The reasons why those schools and colleges and training providers found timetabling problematic in the second year of the first cohort of IFP students are summarised in Tables 4.5 and 4.6.

Table 4.5 Schools' reasons for timetabling difficulties

Reason	School %
Inflexibility in the days and times during which courses are available	56
Need to provide school staff to supervise students in transit or off-site	33
Need to build in catch-up time for lessons	31
Need for each student to have a tailored timetable	36
Insufficient time in the school timetable	18
Other	14
No response	2
N = 191	

More than one response could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A filter question: All those who found timetabling difficult

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of schools 2004

Table 4.6 Colleges' and training providers' reasons for timetabling difficulties

Reason	School %
Inflexibility in the days and times during which students could attend	68
An increased number / range of courses to fit into the timetable	55
Timetabling staff to deliver courses	68
Need for each student to have a tailored timetable	13
Other	17
N = 69	

More than one response could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A filter question: All those who found timetabling difficult

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Surveys of colleges and training providers 2004

As was the case in 2003, the most common reason identified by schools for difficulty was the inflexibility of the availability of courses which IFP students would pursue. The challenge of accommodating the needs of a number of schools may be reflected in the finding, illustrated in Table 4.6, that more than two-thirds of colleges and training providers who had experienced difficulties timetabling, noted that inflexibility in the time when students could attend was a reason for this difficulty.

The challenge of staffing IFP within colleges and training providers remained a reason for timetabling difficulties for the majority of respondents. Among the schools surveyed, timetabling staff time to accompany students was a less widely reported challenge this year (33 per cent) than in 2003 (42 per cent), though, as will be discussed later in this chapter, in most schools staff accompanied students. The responses of the same 115 schools in both years also suggest that this had proved less problematic, as 41 per cent had noted it as a reason for timetabling difficulties in 2003 and 31 per cent did so in 2004.

Among these 115 schools, the percentage who found that building in catch-up time for students was a reason for timetabling difficulties had also declined from 35 per cent in 2003 to 26 per cent¹⁵ in 2004. Other reasons for difficulties included the knock-on effect on the wider timetable (four schools), the IFP students not being timetabled together (one school) and building in travel time (two schools).

In addition to the reasons presented in Table 4.6, six respondents in colleges and training providers said that the limited availability of facilities and staff was a challenge when timetabling, and two highlighted the difficulty of fitting the timetable around the college's post-16 students. The logistical challenges of coordinating timetables of different organisations and of factoring in time for travelling were each mentioned by one respondent.

The need to accommodate any inflexibility in the times when courses are available, and to enable students to attend an external provider for a block of time, such as a half day or full day, into the timetable may have implications for the remaining lessons in a student's timetable. In around two-fifths of schools surveyed in 2004 (44 per cent) students in the Year 11 IFP cohort did not miss any other lessons due to their participation in IFP. However, in 42 per cent of the schools surveyed, students were said to miss some statutory lessons, and in 32 per cent of schools they missed some non-statutory lessons. Around a quarter (28 per cent) of the Year 11 students who responded to the survey in 2004 said that they missed some lessons when they undertook their IFP course.

A total of 469 (18 per cent) students said that they had missed lessons in both Year 10 and Year 11. Just under two-thirds (65 per cent) said that they did not and four per cent did not know (the remaining three per cent did not respond). These proportions were similar to the responses of the same students in 2003, which suggests that their timetabling experience was largely unchanged. The lessons which were missed by a notable minority, which are detailed in Table 4.7, included core subjects of mathematics, English and science and other non-statutory subjects.

¹⁵ These percentages represent the responses of the 115 schools who responded in both years and therefore differ from the percentage of 191 schools in Table 4.5.

Table 4.7 Lessons missed by students

Lessons missed	%
Maths	37
English	38
Science	42
Modern Foreign Languages	25
Design and Technology	26
PE	30
RE	10
PSHE (this might include sex and health education, careers and citizenship)	17
Other lessons	38
No response	1
N = 741	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A filter question: All those who missed lessons

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

Most of the students who said that they missed lessons indicated that they were expected to catch up with missed work (64 per cent). Most of these 476 students said that they managed to catch up with the work they missed. Just over a third (35 per cent) said that they did not have any problems and 45 per cent acknowledged that it is difficult but said that they managed to catch-up missed work. A fifth (20 per cent) of these students indicated that they found it very difficult to catch up.

Most of the schools surveyed appeared to be satisfied that most of their students were successful in catching up missed work. Half of the respondents in the 136 schools where students missed timetabled lessons said that half or more of their students were successful in catching up work and 18 per cent said that they were all successful. Nevertheless, catching up had proved more challenging in 24 per cent of schools which indicated that less than half of their students were successful and in seven per cent of schools, where no students were said to be successful. The extent to which students were successful in catching up was said to be unchanged in 51 per cent of schools while in eight per cent fewer students were able to catch up. Twenty-one per cent of schools found that more students were able to catch up in Year 11 than had been the case in Year 10. The reasons for any change were:

- ♦ 40 schools (34 per cent) said that they had adopted strategies to address the issue of catch-up. Such strategies included organising the timetable to support catch up, ensuring that students miss only non-statutory lessons, monitoring students more closely, and improving student support.
- ♦ 21 schools (18 per cent) said that there were structural constraints on addressing the issue of catch up, including the school having to come to

terms with the need for catch up work, the additional pressures on Year 11 students in relation to coursework requirements, and that some students had too much work to catch-up.

- ◆ 15 school respondents (13 per cent) indicated that the reason why students did not catch up successfully was due to the nature of the students who were said in some cases to be unmotivated. Conversely, ten schools (nine per cent) reported that the reason why students were able to catch up was because of their motivation and commitment.

4.3 Learning support for students

As outlined in Section 4.1, while in some schools IFP courses were only delivered in schools, in most cases at least some students who were participating in IFP undertook some of their course at an external provider. The nature of the support provided for students who were participating in IFP, including those who were undertaking some of their key stage 4 learning away from school, is the focus of this section.

Table 4.8 Structures in Place to Support Students

Support structures	Schools	Colleges/training providers
	%	%
Time within the college day for IFP pastoral/study support	21	44
Time within the school day for IFP pastoral study/support	40	33
Individual curriculum/action plan produced by the external provider(s)	16	50
Individual curriculum/action plan produced by the school	37	27
Ongoing Connexions/careers service support and guidance	76	46
Mentoring support for students	60	49
Other	4	10
No response to this question	7	10
N =	248	78

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Surveys of schools and colleges/training providers 2004.

As can be seen in the Table 4.8, colleges and training providers had adopted a range of strategies to support IFP students. Students in half of the colleges and training providers were said to have individual action plans and in a slightly smaller proportion they were said to receive support from the Connexions Service and from a mentor. Use of the Connexions Service to support IFP students was a feature of three-quarters of the schools and the majority also used mentors to support students. There was a notable increase in the proportions of schools which indicated that their IFP students received support from the Connexions Service or from a mentor among the 115 schools

who replied in both years of the survey. In 2003, 40 per cent of these schools reported that they used mentoring support with their students and, in 2004, 62 per cent reported that this was the case. The Connexions Service was used by 26 per cent of these schools in 2003 and 76 per cent in 2004. Similarly, the number of colleges and training providers who said that students were supported by mentors and by the Connexions Service increased from 17 organisations to 28 in the case of the Connexions service and from 22 organisations to 32 who said that they used mentors (among the 62 organisations who replied in both years). These findings may to some extent reflect the focus of the Connexions Service on Year 11 students as they approach the school leaving age, and they also reflect evidence from other studies of the use of Learning Mentors to support Year 11 students.¹⁶ Nevertheless, they also suggest that students in the IFP cohort may have been a particular target group for these forms of support.

The use of individual action plans had also increased among those schools and colleges and training providers who responded in both years. In the schools surveyed, seven per cent said that the external provider produced an action plan in 2003 while in 2004 16 per cent reported this. Among the 62 colleges and training providers who replied in both years, 26 organisations produced individual action plans in 2003 and in 2004 29 did so. There was an increase among both the school respondents and the colleges and training providers in the numbers who indicated that the school produced an action plan, from 28 per cent to 35 per cent of schools respondents and from eight¹⁷ organisations to 15 organisations among the 62 colleges and training providers.

In addition to the areas outlined above, some respondents noted alternative strategies they had employed to support their students. Three of the colleges and training providers said that IFP students in their partnership had access to advice and guidance about post-16 transition and two mentioned that students accessed student services. Three commented that support teachers or supervisors in the college worked with students and one mentioned that they had provided support with basic skills. Schools also mentioned staff who supported the students, including staff in the Learning Support Unit, the student's form tutor and the IFP coordinator, all mentioned by one school each. Support with subjects the students missed and holiday study sessions were each provided by one school.

A further mechanism for supporting students who were engaging in their IFP course at an external provider was for a member of school staff to accompany the students off-site. The majority (62 per cent) of the 241 schools which had

¹⁶ O'DONNELL, L. and GOLDEN, S. (2003). *Learning Mentor Strand – Survey Findings* (Excellence in Cities Report 19/2003) [online]. Available: <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research/documents/EIC/Paper19.doc> [28 September, 2004].

¹⁷ Due to the low number of respondents who replied in both years, the figures presented are numbers, not percentages.

some students undertaking their course away from school, who responded to the survey, said that a member of school staff accompanied the students during their course. As shown in Table 4.9, in addition to one-to-one support for specific students, such as those with SEN, school staff were often reported to have a role in supporting tutors with classroom management. However, fewer school respondents said that their staff supported the delivery of the course, and were more likely to indicate that they observed delivery.

Table 4.9 Support provided by school staff in relation to courses at an external provider

Role of school staff	Schools %
One-to-one support for particular students	37
Supporting the college tutor with classroom management	40
Supporting the college tutor with general course delivery	22
Observing delivery	37
Accompanying students in transit	38
No response	3
N=149	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A filter question: All those where students studied off-site and a member of staff accompanied students

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of schools 2004.

It appears therefore, that partnerships were increasingly implementing mechanisms to support students participating in the IFP in relation to their learning and wider pastoral needs and in the information, advice and guidance they might require in Year 11. The evidence from the surveys of students indicates that these mechanisms had impacted on more students in Year 11 than in Year 10, as will be discussed below.

Nearly all of the IFP participants reported that they had talked to someone about how they were progressing on their course, and the extent to which this occurred seemed to have increased since Year 10. As can be observed in Table 4.10, only seven per cent of respondents said that they had not talked to anyone, compared with 13 per cent when they were surveyed in Year 10. Furthermore, for each of the individuals that respondents were asked about, a higher proportion of young people reported that they had discussed their progress with them, compared with Year 10.

Table 4.10 Individuals with whom students have discussed their progress

Individuals	Year 10 (2003) %	Year 11 (2004) %
I have not talked to anyone	13	7
Teacher at school	44	65
Another adult at school	10	21
College tutor/trainer	22	36
Supervisor at my work placement(s)	5	11
Friend(s)	49	62
Parent(s)	62	65
Mentor	5	14
Connexions Personal Adviser/ Careers Adviser	*	35
No response to this question	4	2
N =	2616	2616

* Question not asked

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Surveys of IFP Students 2003 and 2004

As was the case last year, the students most commonly stated that they had talked about their progress on their IFP course with their parents (65 per cent). Nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of respondents also indicated that they had talked to a teacher at their school about their progress and, indeed, this proportion had increased notably since Year 10 (44 per cent). This suggests that much of the responsibility for student support remained with schools, and they were putting more emphasis on supporting IFP students in the second year of the programme.

Young people's friends continued to be a source of support with 62 per cent of respondents indicating that they had discussed their progress with their friends. It is not clear, however, whether these friends were also involved in IFP. Just over a third of young people had talked to their college tutor (36 per cent), compared with 22 per cent in Year 10. Further analysis revealed that students who indicated that they were working towards an NVQ or other vocational qualification, and those with low prior attainment, were more likely to have discussed their progress with a college tutor, while those with high prior attainment were less likely to have done so.

A total of 35 per cent of young people had discussed their progress with a Connexions Personal Adviser or Careers Adviser. Further analysis revealed that students who were taking an NVQ course or other vocational qualification and those with low prior attainment were more likely to have talked to a Connexions Personal Adviser, while those who were taking GCSEs in vocational subjects and those who were studying their course solely at school were less likely to have done so.

The proportion of students who had talked to a mentor about their progress had more than doubled from the Year 10 survey (five per cent in Year 10, compared with 14 per cent in Year 11), which indicates that mentors in schools and colleges were playing a greater role in supporting IFP students in the second year of the programme. It also reflects the findings from the survey of schools which revealed a notable increase in the proportion who reported that mentors supported their IFP students.

Table 4.11 Students' views on the helpfulness of discussing their progress

Individuals	Finding the discussion helpful %	N
Connexions Personal Adviser/ Careers Adviser	71	903
Mentor	70	365
Parent(s)	67	1700
College tutor/trainer	65	934
Teacher at school	64	1709
Supervisor at my work placement(s)	62	275
Another adult at school	57	557
Friend(s)	56	1632

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A filter question: All those who had talked to someone about their progress

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

As Table 4.11 shows, the majority of students who had discussions with Connexions Personal Advisers or Mentors found them helpful. As well as being the most commonly mentioned individuals with whom students had discussed their progress, parents were also reported to be one of the most helpful sources of support, with 67 per cent of the young people who had talked to their parents indicating that they had found this helpful.

Overall, it seems that students found talking to someone about their progress on their IFP course helpful. However, the young people surveyed this year appeared to find these discussions less helpful than when they were in Year 10. In all cases, with the exception of talking to a supervisor at a work placement, the proportions of young people who found discussing their progress with each individual helpful were lower than in Year 10.

Table 4.12 indicates that a notable minority of staff in colleges and training providers stated that students could access the learning resource centre at the college and could have contact with their course tutor in between their timetabled IFP sessions. Fewer said that they had established remote access to ICT resources and others mentioned that students were supported through contact with the IFP coordinator (two respondents) and school teachers delivering 'catch-up' sessions (one respondent). Visits to the case-study

partnerships¹⁸ revealed that there were instances of college tutors establishing ICT-related resources which could be accessed by students from school or home, and tutors who provided students with their contact details, such as e-mail addresses, in order that they could seek advice as required. The need for such support arose from the limited extent to which some students could access learning resources when pursuing a course away from school when all their time on the course was in teaching sessions. This was said to be particularly the case for students who did not travel independently to the external provider and had to return to school at a specified time, or those who did not live near to the external provider.

Table 4.12 Support provided for students in between sessions at the external provider

Support provided	Colleges %
Contact with course tutor	36
Remote access to ICT	12
Access to the learning resource centre	39
Other	6
No response	29
N = 78	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Colleges 2004

Most of the students who were undertaking part of their IFP course at an external provider organisation often or sometimes used the computer facilities at the organisation to support their work, as illustrated in Table 4.13. However, fewer indicated that they had used the learning resource centre, which may reflect the views of some tutors noted above regarding the difficulty of accessing the centre.

Table 4.13 Students' use of facilities at college or training provider

Students use:	Often %	Sometimes %	Never %	No response %
Computers to do coursework	27	33	37	3
Computers to search the internet	27	31	38	4
Library/Learning resource centre	10	38	49	3
N = 1244				

A series of single responses items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A filter question: all those doing a course out of school

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

¹⁸ GOLDEN, S., NELSON, J., O'DONNELL, L. and RUDD, P. (2004). *Implementing the Increased Flexibility for 14 to 16 Year Olds Programme: the Experience of Partnerships and Students* (DfES Research Report 562). London: DfES.

Compared with their experiences in Year 10, when 1,426 of these students said that they attended an external provider, a greater proportion said that they used these facilities often or sometimes in 2004. For example, 49 per cent in 2003 said they used computers to do their coursework, compared with 60 per cent in 2004, and 51 per cent used computers to search the internet in 2003 compared with 58 per cent in 2004. Although use of the learning resource centre remained the least widely reported resource activity in both years, in 2003 a slightly smaller proportion (41 per cent) said that they used it compared with 48 per cent in 2004.

On the whole the students appeared to have found it quite easy to access the relevant literature, ICT facilities and their course tutor when they were not attending the external provider, as can be seen in Table 4.14. However, the students' responses indicate that they found it slightly less easy to access relevant books or magazines and for a notable minority, access to their course tutor was not easy.

Table 4.14 Ease of access to resources when not at college or training provider

Access to resources	Very easy %	Quite easy %	Not easy %	Not sure %	Not relevant %	No response %
Access to books or magazines you need for your course	15	42	15	12	14	3
Use computer programmes you need for your course	27	32	14	9	15	3
Find course information you need on computer	21	34	15	11	15	3
Get help from your course tutor	27	31	19	11	9	4
N = 1244						

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A filter question: All those doing a course out of school

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

Although it is not possible to compare students' experiences of accessing learning resources at an external provider with their experiences at school, the survey findings suggest that, for some students, accessing such support when learning with an external provider had not been easy and it was only 'very easy' for a notable minority. This suggests that there may be scope for examining further the impact on students of the apparent constraints in accessing these resources, and exploring appropriate practice in enabling access.

4.4 Involvement of employers in IFP

The majority (64 per cent) of colleges and training providers who responded to the survey in the second year of IFP said that they had not linked with employers as part of their delivery of IFP for the first cohort of participants. A similar proportion (63 per cent) of schools said that they had not involved employers. A third of colleges and training providers (33 per cent or 26 organisations) and 30 per cent of schools (75 schools) used employers to support IFP delivery. Table 4.15 details the activities employers engaged in.

Table 4.15 Activities involving employers which supported IFP

Activity	Schools %	Colleges %
Providing regular work placements (e.g. once per week)	55	31
Providing blocked work placements (e.g. for a full week/fortnight)	37	46
Hosting visits	53	73
Providing visiting speakers	49	50
Project work	25	35
Involvement in industry days	27	31
Involvement in enterprise activities	31	19
Providing volunteer business mentors	12	0
Other	1	4
N =	75	26

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A filter question: All those who indicated that they had linked with employers as part of their delivery of IFP

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Surveys of schools and colleges and training providers 2004.

As was the case in 2003, employers were most often reported to be involved in providing work experience, either in blocks or regular placements, hosting visits and providing visiting speakers. The colleges and training providers in particular had used employers to host one-off visits. This reflects the findings from the case-study partnerships where individual tutors used such visits to supplement the students' learning experience. Comparison of the responses of the same 115 schools in 2003 and 2004 suggests that more schools were using employers to host visits, as visiting speakers, for project work and enterprise activities than had said this in 2003.¹⁹ Moreover, 51 per cent considered that they had more effective links with employers this year than last, while 42 per cent felt that there had been no change and three per cent believed that they were less effective. Among the colleges and training providers, 62 per cent believed that their links with employers were now more effective, while 35 per

¹⁹ The question relating to work experience was altered in 2004 and direct comparisons cannot therefore be made. The number of colleges and training providers who responded in both years and linked with employers is too small to report the findings (19 organisations).

cent said that there had been no change and four per cent (one organisation) stated that their links were less effective.

The apparent increase in the use of employers, and in the effectiveness of their links, reported by of the schools appears to be reflected in the survey of students. While just over half (56 per cent) of the students surveyed had not visited an employer as part of their IFP course, 35 per cent said that they had, which was a notably greater proportion than said this in 2003 (22 per cent). A total of 61 per cent of the students (345 individuals) said that they had visited an employer in both Year 10 and Year 11. The nature of their experience, detailed in Table 4.16, also reflects the type of involvement reported by schools, as in both years around a half of students reported that they had participated in a one-off visit. Nevertheless, a fifth of those who had some employer involvement in their course indicated that this was a regular placement, though it did not appear that students undertook a regular placement across both years of their programme. Only 46 students said that they had visited an employer regularly in both years. This suggests that regular placements with employers may have occurred in a block rather than being sustained across both years of the programme.

As can be seen, although in both years one day visits were the main type of visits reported, more students in 2004 reported that they had participated in a block placement or regular placement than had done so in 2003.

Table 4.16 Length of students' visits to an employer

Length of visit	2003 %	2004 %
Once (one day or less)	54	47
In a block (e.g. for a whole week)	7	13
Regularly (e.g. once a week)	17	22
Other	20	16
No response	1	2
N=	580	907

A single response item

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

A filter question: all those who visited an employer

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Surveys of IFP students 2003 and 2004

As was the case in 2003, the majority of students (66 per cent) took notes during their visit which could contribute towards their coursework. A quarter (25 per cent) said that they kept a diary during their employer experience and 19 per cent used the internet to find out more about the employer. The visits appeared to have contributed to the students' knowledge of the particular company in the majority of cases, as can be seen in Table 4.17. In addition,

around half of the students said that they had gained a more general understanding of work and working with others.

Table 4.17 What students learned on their visit

I learnt:	2003 %	2004 %
about the particular company	61	65
what employers look for in their staff	36	49
how to use the skills I am learning on my course	42	51
what it's like to go to work	37	54
how to work with other people	43	50
about the qualifications I might need to work in this sort of career	*	45
about the types of career I could have with this sort of employer	*	40
No response	4	2
N =	580	907

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A filter question: All those who visited an employer

** question not asked*

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Surveys of students 2003 and 2004

Notably more of the students who said that they had engaged in visits to employers indicated that they had gained in all the respects listed in Table 4.17. This may suggest that schools and colleges and training providers have further developed their preparation for young people and that employers have been able to provide a more meaningful experience for IFP participants. Students' experiences of visiting an employer, which are summarised in Table 4.18, suggest that on the whole the employers had been successful in making the young people feel comfortable and respected. Young people's reported experience of learning at the employer, and its contribution to their school work, however, continued to vary, as was the case in 2003. Moreover, a comparison of the responses of students who had attended an employer in 2003 with those who had done so in 2004 indicated that fewer in 2004 agreed that visiting an employer helped them to understand their school work (44 per cent in 2003 and 32 per cent in 2004).

Table 4.18 Students' views on their visit to an employer

Views of visit	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	No response
	%	%	%	%
I feel comfortable at the employer/company	67	26	4	3
I find it difficult to travel to the employer/company	9	22	64	4
I feel I am treated more as an adult when I am at the employer/company	69	21	6	3
I find it easier to learn at the employer/company	42	44	11	3
I can work at my own pace more at school than the employer/company	32	39	25	4
I think that what I learn at the employer/company helps me understand my school work	32	39	26	4
N = 907				

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

A filter question: all those who visited an employer

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004

4.5 Employers' experiences of IFP and working with schools and colleges

Twenty-six employers who had supported IFP students in undertaking their course were interviewed in summer 2004, in order to explore their perspectives on the experience of engaging with students aged 14 to 16 and their views on the value of vocational learning and vocational qualifications. Their perspectives are the focus of this section.

4.5.1 Employers' experiences of becoming involved with IFP and school links

The employers who were interviewed were identified through contact with Lead Partners, colleges, training providers and schools, and were said to have contributed to supporting students who were participating in IFP. Just over half (14) of the employers who were interviewed were familiar with the name 'Increased Flexibility Programme' and were aware that the students were participating in this programme. The remaining 12 employers were not aware of the IFP, or that the students that they had worked with were involved in the programme. Even where interviewees were aware of IFP, those who were involved in other links with schools and colleges were often unable to differentiate their involvement with IFP from the range of other activities they were participating in. Those who were aware of IFP tended to observe that they understood that the programme aimed to raise the attainment and motivation of students and enable them to access work experience. Interviewees sometimes mentioned that it provided an opportunity for students to pursue a more vocational route.

The employers who were interviewed had become involved in IFP through direct contact with schools (four employers) or through an Education Business Partnership (EBP) or other similar organisation (seven employers). Two of the employers had a personal link with individuals involved through, in one case, a school governor in the company and a family relationship in the second case.

The most frequently mentioned means through which these employers became involved in supporting IFP students, however, was through their organisation's existing history of working with local schools or colleges. These employers regarded their involvement in IFP as an extension, or another facet, of their existing activities from which it did not appear to differ greatly, as will be outlined below. All but two of the employers interviewed were involved in links with schools other than in relation to IFP, and one of the two who was not involved with schools had links with a local college. The main activities in which they reported that they engaged to support IFP were: work placements (ten employers), hosting visits (seven employers), giving talks in schools (five employers), undertaking project work (two employers) and conducting workshops (three employers). Three had participated in mock interviews and one in mentoring. Seven of the employer organisations, all but one of which were large organisations, appeared to have extensive involvement in school links and engaged in a range of activities. In one instance, the interviewee supported teachers in schools in the strategic planning of work-related learning while a second was involved in a sector-wide initiative to promote the sector in schools.

Employers' observations on their motivation for becoming involved in IFP reflected the mutual benefits which could accrue to schools, students and the wider community, and the employers. Six of the interviewees mentioned that they were involved in order to make a contribution to the local community of which schools and their students were a part. Associated with this was the desire to enhance the company's reputation locally, which was mentioned by four employers. Ten employers observed that they hoped that their involvement in IFP would help to improve awareness and understanding of their sector among students and teachers. In the view of six employers, involvement in IFP had the potential to contribute to future recruitment, and some cited experience in the past where students who had visited the organisation had subsequently gained employment. Finally, through their involvement, eight employers hoped to enable young people to access an alternative experience. For example, one highlighted the value of learning on the job and a second noted that students could gain '*practical knowledge*' through their participation. Three employers made a connection between such experience and '*retaining the interest and motivation of students*'. Moreover, one mentioned the value for students who had experienced bullying at school, in attending an alternative environment, and commented that '*some have been*

bullied at school and they communicate better with the adults here – they discuss their problems’.

Most of the employers who were interviewed felt that they could not do more to contribute to IFP. The main constraints were finding the time and the staff required to participate and support the students effectively. In addition, two companies in the care sector noted the legal requirements regarding young people aged under 18 which constrained the nature of the activities which students could undertake in their organisations. Six employers perceived that there was scope to make a greater contribution to IFP. Their observations included broadening the qualifications they supported and, in the case of one large company, the boroughs they worked with. One interviewee in a large company noted the challenge for an employer organisation in identifying changes in the school curriculum, and the potential contribution which they could make to this, when he said *‘we need a way of deciding what is going on in the subjects to help us create and deliver the product’*. A further interviewee observed that more input and support was needed from government departments to inform employers and advise regarding health and safety. Two interviewees considered that there was scope for extending the amount of time students could participate in activities. One suggested a whole day rather than one hour and a second wished to offer half-day activities, but had found the partner school unsupportive.

These employers were actively engaged in working with schools and colleges both through IFP and other activities. However, as noted earlier in this chapter, the majority of IFP partnerships had not engaged employers in the programme. This group of employers made a number of observations on how more employers could be encouraged to become involved in working with schools and colleges to support 14 to 16 year olds. Some interviewees explained the constraints which might prevent an employer becoming involved in such work. These included the time required (three interviewees), the insurance and health and safety requirements (one interviewee), the paperwork involved (one interviewee) and the cost associated with the *‘diversion’* from the operation of the business of having 14 to 16 year old students on site (one interviewee). Three interviewees emphasised the particular impact of these constraints on small companies.

One interviewee felt that employers need to be altruistic and *‘to give and not to expect’*, while four believed that the benefits to employers of raising the profile of their company should be emphasised when encouraging participation. Improvements in schools’ and colleges’ awareness of business, and structuring any engagement so that any hindrance to the business was minimised, were raised by four interviewees. Effective coordination by an EBP would make an important contribution to encouraging participation in the view of two interviewees, one of whom also observed that receiving contacts from many schools was hard to manage. The enthusiasm of the individual

within a company was felt to be critical by one interviewee and another felt that employers could be more proactive in engaging with local education providers.

4.5.2 Nature of employers' involvement

Reflecting the findings from the surveys reported earlier in this chapter, the employers who were interviewed indicated a variety of ways in which they had contributed to IFP. Fifteen of the interviewees said that students had attended a placement at their organisation. This was most often a one-week placement (nine employers), but some students had attended for two weeks in a block (five employers) and four reported that students had undertaken extended placements, for example, for one day a week for a period of time such as six weeks. Six of the employers had hosted visits of one day or less, often for groups of students, four had visited schools to give a talk and four had been involved in one-off projects. Three commented that they had participated in mock interviews with students.

Although some employers engaged with students in groups and could only comment generally on their characteristics, overall, the employers felt that the nature of the students whom they had met varied or was good. Only three commented specifically that the students had been '*disappointing*' and had poor attendance or were disinterested or lacked motivation and initiative. Conversely, another employer was '*thrilled to bits*' with the students, who were described as being committed and enthusiastic, and another felt that the students had good manners and were respectful. Two observed that the students were young and therefore needed '*nurturing*'.

It was evident from the interviews that employers and tutors and teachers had often invested time in planning prior to the students' involvement to ensure that they had a beneficial experience. For example, 16 of the interviewees said that they had engaged in discussions with the tutor which included, in some cases, examining the course syllabus or module requirements. They subsequently tailored the visits or placements to meet these requirements and ensure that students could participate in a range of activities which would potentially develop the skills of the young people. Half (13) of the employers stated that they were aware that the students' experience with their organisation made a direct contribution to a qualification. In two cases the interviewees commented that students had a workbook to complete, and another said that the students kept a diary while on their placement.

Interviewees outlined their views of what constituted good practice in ensuring that using employers was a positive experience for students, and for the employers and school or college staff. Their observations reflected their experience of implementing IFP-related activities, and other links with education providers. Central to good practice in the view of 14 interviewees was establishing effective communication prior to a placement or visit and,

where appropriate, maintaining effective communication throughout the students' involvement. Building a working relationship with school staff involved and '*getting to know them*' was said to be beneficial. Establishing clearly what the schools or colleges aimed to gain from their students' attendance at an employer organisation at an early stage, was recommended as good practice by three of these organisations. Ensuring that all parties were fully aware and kept informed throughout was highlighted by two interviewees. Having established the aim, five employers suggested that it was good practice to plan a programme for the time that students would be engaged. Two emphasised that the student should be occupied at all times and a second felt that it was important that a student had an identifiable learning outcome from their experience.

The use of student diaries or workbooks in which to record evidence was noted by two interviewees. While one interviewee considered that it was important to retain some flexibility in their plan, in order to accommodate needs as they arose, a second cautioned against this, as he felt it could become '*unmanageable*'. In addition to establishing school and college staff's expectations, three interviewees noted that there was value in ensuring that students were well-informed regarding the hours they would be expected to attend, and the importance of following health and safety policies and procedures, for example. One of these organisations recommended using a contract which set out clearly the hours, policies and expected behaviour of the students. A second recommended a one-day visit for the students to meet staff and to familiarise themselves with the location. Assigning a member of staff who had responsibility for the students was recommended by four interviewees, although one noted the difficulty of undertaking this role as a '*bolt-on*' to their work role. Ensuring that staff were happy to work with young people was suggested by a fourth.

4.5.3 Benefits and Challenges

The experience of these employers in working with schools and colleges to support young people aged 14 to 16 had been largely positive. They generally considered that such links were valuable and seven reported that they had not encountered any challenges in their involvement with schools, colleges and young people. Four interviewees mentioned the positive feedback they had received from schools and students about their experiences. Reflecting on their experiences, they identified a range of benefits for all parties. These were often related to the expectations outlined above. Students and organisations were said to benefit from schools, colleges and employers working in partnership in the following ways:

- ♦ **The insight into an organisation or sector** which students gained through visits and placements. This was said to contribute positively to students' understanding of the range of roles and occupations within a

company, and the nature of the work of a sector. This could then help them to make informed career decisions in future (13 employers).

- ♦ **The potential effect on future recruitment** into the company either directly through young people applying for jobs in companies they had visited (11 employers), or more generally through '*developing the future workforce*', as one interviewee expressed it.
- ♦ **The experience of work and insight into the world of work generally**, through which students could learn about the expectations of employers such as reliability and good attendance and the more disciplined environment of work compared with school (ten employers).
- ♦ **Employers engaging with the local community** through raising the profile of the company and its work, which was sometimes described as '*good PR*', and making a contribution to the development of young people in the local community (nine employers). For example, one company felt that it helped to counteract the poor reputation of young people locally through involving them in the work of the company.
- ♦ **The opportunity for students to see the relevance** of their work at school and college through applying their learning and seeing its value (five employers). For example, one interviewee explained how students '*enjoyed being involved in things that mattered...they were proud of tasks they completed*'.

In addition students were said by two interviewees to have benefited from the opportunity to mature by two interviewees. A third organisation's employees were said to have gained from interacting with students and a fourth had gained from a student using their IT skills to help the company.

Although on the whole these employers had a positive experience in working with 14 to 16 year olds, they did also identify some challenges which they had encountered. These included logistical problems, such as transport difficulties which had led to lateness or non-attendance of students (six employers) and difficulties contacting teachers (three employers); while undertaking the necessary administration was a challenge for one employer. The need for planning and preparation was highlighted by eight interviewees who particularly noted that schools and colleges needed to take into consideration that employers needed sufficient time to prepare for any activity involving students. In addition, finding a mutually convenient time for tutors to visit young people while they were attending the employer could prove challenging. Finally, ensuring that the activities were meaningful and aimed at an appropriate level, and remained within the constraints of any health and safety requirements, were noted as challenges in five organisations.

4.5.4 Employers' views of vocational qualifications and the vocational route

Students who are involved in IFP are among the first students to pursue the new GCSEs in vocational subjects and, at the time of the interviews, no students had yet achieved these new qualifications. Therefore, employers' exposure to them had been limited and their perspectives on them were largely speculative. Just under half of the employers interviewed (ten individuals) said that they had heard of the new GCSEs in vocational subjects and a similar number (13 individuals) said that they had not. Where they felt able to comment, seven indicated that, in future, they would consider whether a young person had achieved a new GCSE when recruiting. Three of the employers perceived that such a qualification would be appropriate for some students who were described as '*non-academic*', although one asserted that the new GCSEs were '*not a soft option*'. Two felt that taking a new GCSE would be a '*good starting point*' for a student and four considered that it could help a student to explore a possible future career or to confirm their interest in an occupational area. The GCSE status of the new qualification was considered valuable by an interviewee in the manufacturing sector who commented that there was a '*stigma*' associated with NVQs. Three interviewees stressed the need to complement GCSEs in vocational subjects with GCSEs in core subjects, specifically English and mathematics, as employers continued to value these qualifications. One interviewee considered that making a vocational choice at 14 might be too early and that students encountered too much choice. Indeed, this employer and one other observed that employers felt confused by the range of qualifications available and needed more information.

NVQs and other vocational qualifications are more established and employers were able to comment in more detail on these qualifications. Indeed, 22 of the interviewees identified specific vocational qualifications which were relevant to their sector, and in all but one of these cases at least one NVQ was mentioned. Sector-specific vocational qualifications were said to be valued by 12 of the interviewees and eight observed that their reputation was increasingly being developed following, in some cases, an initial period of uncertainty and suspicion. In some sectors, such as construction and care, NVQ qualifications were a pre-requisite for working in the sector and, for this reason, they were regarded as valuable by five interviewees. Other reasons why they were well-regarded included that they involved employers in their delivery (two interviewees), they developed practical, work-related skills (two interviewees) and they provided opportunities for progression between levels (two interviewees) and they were transferable (one interviewee). Nevertheless, four interviewees commented on the need to complement vocational qualifications with GCSEs, for example one interviewee felt that '*a candidate who had vocational qualifications backed up with GCSEs would be highly regarded*'.

Some interviewees were more circumspect about vocational qualifications, for example one observed that *'you know where you are with GCSEs'*, while a second felt that the *'jury's still out'* on NVQs. Concerns regarding the quality of the theory which supported the competence-based NVQs were raised by five interviewees and two commented that some candidates were encouraged to complete their qualifications too quickly.

Overall, therefore, it appears that the employers who were interviewed valued vocational qualifications and felt that there were benefits for students gaining exposure to, and experience of, the world of work before leaving school. Their perceptions of the benefits of students undertaking vocational courses at 14 to 16, as they do through IFP, reflected their overall views on the value of work-based experience. Seven observed, for example, that a programme such as IFP would provide young people with an early insight into the world of work or a specific occupational area, and two felt it enabled students to put skills into practice and see how they could fit into industry. In addition, two believed that it helped students to develop a talent or skill further, while four believed that it motivated young people as they had an opportunity to engage with a vocational area in which they were interested.

However, 11 of the employers who commented said that whether a potential young recruit had studied away from school or at a workplace would have no influence over their decision to employ them or not. The prevailing view among these employers was that the performance at interview and their overall application would be more influential. This suggests that it is the young person's ability to translate any understanding of industry, and the skills they may have developed through their involvement in IFP, rather than just the fact that they had participated in such a programme, which might enhance their employment prospects. Four of the employers interviewed, all of whom worked in the care sector, felt that whether a student had relevant work experience would influence them positively when recruiting. One commented that a good reference from the employer where they had undertaken their placement would be valuable, and a second commented that he would consider a student with experience of work as they would be more likely to fit in easily to the organisation.

Overall, eight of these employers said that they would advise a 14 year old to choose a course which entailed working towards a vocationally-specific qualification if they were certain that this was the career they wished to pursue later in life. However, six employers commented that 14 was too young to make vocationally-specific choices and thought that it could limit a young person's later choices. A further seven commented that there was a need to balance any vocational options with academic qualifications and specifically, mathematics and English and, to a lesser extent, science, as these were valued by employers in any sector and would enable a young person to follow a

variety of routes, including management and supervisory routes, within the same vocational area they had pursued while at school.

In summary, this chapter has shown that, in the second year of implementing IFP for the first cohort of students, the schools and colleges and training providers had developed their approaches to implementing the programme in certain respects, in particular the support they provided and the use of employers to support IFP delivery. In terms of the support for students, it appeared that some partnerships were enabling students to access learning resources and some schools had established strategies to support students who missed other timetabled lessons to participate in IFP. It was evident that students had more opportunities to discuss their progress on their IFP course with a range of individuals in the second year. In addition, schools had made more use of existing sources of support such as Learning Mentors and the Connexions Service in the second year of the first cohort of IFP, and the majority of those students who had experienced these forms of support, had found them helpful.

Although the majority of the schools and colleges and training providers who were surveyed in the second year had not used employers to support the delivery of IFP, more students said that they have visited an employer as part of their course in Year 11 than had done so in Year 10. On the whole, the experience for those students who reported that they had visited an employer appeared to have been positive and they indicated that they had found it a valuable learning experience.

The views of the sample employers who had supported the delivery of IFP highlighted the value of effective communication prior to, and during, any activity, in order to ensure that students and employers both had a positive experience. The employers considered that supporting the learning of pre-16 students was valuable and identified benefits to their company, such as giving students an insight into their organisation or sector, engaging with the local community and the potential positive effect on future recruitment of engaging with young people. In addition, they considered that students benefited from gaining an insight into the world of work in general and assisted them with seeing the relevance of their school work to employment. However, their views on the value of pre-16 work experience and undertaking vocational qualifications in preparing young people for future employment were slightly more mixed. They generally advocated complementing any vocational qualifications with non-vocational GCSEs, particularly in the core subjects of English and mathematics. Perceptions of NVQs appeared to vary in different sectors and were more well-regarded in those sectors where they have currency such as in care and construction.

5. MANAGING THE IFP PARTNERSHIP

Key findings

- ◆ IFP partnerships appeared to have matured and become more established in the second year of IFP. Most schools and their partner colleges and training providers were in regular contact and the extent of this had increased in the second year. The majority of respondents considered that the contact was sufficient.
- ◆ Contact between partners was often informal, though there had been an increase in the use of formal mechanisms for sharing information about individual students' progress. There was evidence of an increase in joint staff development both formally and informally.
- ◆ The average amount of funding received by colleges and training providers across two years to deliver IFP was £114,000. Around two-thirds of Lead Partners, and half of the schools, had subsidised the programme.
- ◆ Coordinators in about half of the colleges and training providers, and a quarter of schools, had dedicated time to undertake their role and felt it was sufficient. Staff who felt that additional time was required particularly identified a need for time to maintain contact with partners. In schools, additional time was needed to oversee students' welfare and in colleges to coordinate staff in the organisation.
- ◆ The need for training for staff in colleges and training providers in relation to working with young people aged 14 to 16 appeared to have been largely addressed. Most colleges and training providers reported that such training had been provided and a minority noted that it was still required. Further training in relation to the new qualifications, working in partnership and understanding student attainment data were reported requirements.
- ◆ Half of the schools surveyed had altered their criteria for identifying students to participate in the second cohort of IFP and a slightly smaller proportion had altered their procedure. Around half of the colleges and training providers had more involvement in identifying the second cohort of students and those who were not involved often would have liked more involvement. There had been an increase in the sharing of information about students between partners before they embarked on the programme.
- ◆ Having two cohorts of students participating had helped to consolidate relationships between partners. However, in many cases, having two cohorts did not impact positively on the logistical challenges of transporting students, organising timetables and resourcing the programme.
- ◆ The main areas of concern among the schools and colleges and training providers who responded related to the management of the programme, the funding and costs of delivery, timetabling provision and selecting students.

This chapter outlines the management of IFP which underpins the delivery and outcomes of the programme. It focuses on:

- ♦ how schools and colleges and training providers and schools worked in partnership to deliver IFP
- ♦ the funding received and costs associated with delivering IFP
- ♦ the staffing requirements of delivering IFP and the staff development opportunities provided
- ♦ school and college and training provider staffs' views on the impact of a second cohort on managing the partnership
- ♦ the challenges encountered in delivering IFP and views on future developments.

5.1 Working in partnership

IFP is delivered through schools and external providers such as colleges, training providers and employers, working in partnership to enable young people to access vocational courses. One of the key factors which has been identified previously as contributing to successful partnership working²⁰ is ensuring that communication between all organisations involved is effective. The colleges and training providers surveyed were in frequent and regular contact with the majority of schools with whom they were working in partnership. Nearly two-thirds said that they were in contact weekly and a further 18 per cent were in daily contact with schools. A minority (14 per cent) indicated that they were in contact half termly and three per cent were in contact termly. It appeared that the extent of contact had increased between 2003 and 2004 in the 62 colleges and training providers who responded in both years. For example, in 2003,²¹ five said that they were in daily contact, while in 2004 13 indicated that this was the case. Similarly, while 37 were in contact weekly in 2003, in 2004 slightly more (40) said that they had weekly contact.

Comparisons with the responses from 115 schools which replied in both years also revealed that there was an increase in the proportion who were in contact weekly from 49 per cent in 2003 to 58 per cent in 2004 and a corresponding decline in the proportion who were in contact every half-term (from 40 per cent in 2003 to 30 per cent in 2004).

²⁰ GOLDEN, S., NELSON, J., O'DONNELL, L. and RUDD, P. (2004). *Implementing the Increased Flexibility for 14 to 16 Year Olds Programme: the Experience of Partnerships and Students* (DfES Research Report 562). London: DfES.

²¹ Due to the low numbers of respondents who replied to the college and training provider survey in both 2003 and 2004, the figures provided are numbers not percentages.

Overall, therefore, the responses of schools and colleges indicate an increase in the frequency of contact between schools and the external providers. The majority of respondents in schools (86 per cent) and in colleges and training providers (81 per cent) stated that the amount of contact they had was sufficient. The reasons given by the 12 **colleges and training providers** for considering that contact was insufficient related to issues to do with students, and management issues.

- ♦ **Student-related issues:** five respondents would have liked more information about students on an ongoing basis, two mentioned the need for more contact to discuss and monitor the behaviour of students and one thought more contact was required to monitor students' progress. In addition, one respondent felt that more visits from school staff would help to support students.
- ♦ **Management-related issues:** three respondents felt that more contact would ensure more effective planning and two believed that it would help to develop further links with schools. Finally, one respondent considered that more contact was required to discuss curriculum issues.

Thirteen per cent of respondents to the schools survey (33 schools) said that more contact was required. Although 14 of these said that they had weekly contact, seven (21 per cent of these schools) indicated that contact was termly. Among all the schools surveyed, nine per cent reported that they had termly contact, which suggests that those who would prefer more contact were more likely to be those who had less frequent, termly contact. The comments of **schools** regarding the reasons for requiring more contact related to student issues, management issues and teaching.

- ♦ **Student-related issues:** ten respondents said more contact was needed to monitor the progress of students and five mentioned the need for more contact to provide support and guidance to students at the external provider location.
- ♦ **Management-related issues:** five respondents considered that more contact was needed to resolve problems generally and five specifically mentioned 'chasing' absences and attendance. Five respondents felt that more contact between partners would facilitate forward planning and three believed it would be helpful in exchanging information and good practice. One mentioned that more contact was needed to coordinate two cohorts of students and another identified a need for more contact to resolve staffing issues. One other respondent commented on the need for more guidance, as he or she was new to the course.
- ♦ **Teaching-related issues:** two respondents from schools felt that they needed more direct contact with staff who were teaching the IFP courses, rather than just the IFP coordinator. Moreover, two commented that there was a need for more contact to provide guidance to college staff regarding teaching key stage 4 students.

Contact between schools and Lead Partners was mostly reported to be informal, which was also reflected in the findings of the visits to partnerships and the responses to the surveys in 2003. For example, 73 per cent of colleges and training providers and 63 per cent of schools indicated that their contact with each other was largely informal. In comparison, 20 per cent of colleges and training providers, and 34 per cent of schools, stated that contact was mainly formal. Moreover, the responses of the same organisations surveyed in both 2003 and 2004 indicated a slight decrease in the numbers who said that contact was mainly formal. Whether contact was formal or informal appeared to be influenced by the purpose of the contact, as can be seen in Tables 5.1 and 5.2.

Table 5.1 Nature of schools' contact with Lead Partners

Contact is for:	Formal contact %	Informal contact %	No contact %	No response %
sharing information about individual students prior to them starting on the programme	54	30	8	8
sharing information about individual students' progress	35	45	7	15
sharing information about a school's students' progress generally	29	52	10	9
sharing information about the content of vocational courses offered through IFP	59	23	7	11
sharing information about the delivery of vocational courses offered through IFP	57	27	7	10
sharing information about the objectives/targets of IFP	67	15	10	8
joint staff development	38	17	34	12
other reasons	2	6	0	92
N = 248				

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

'No response' includes a small number of respondents who ticked more than one box – i.e. contact was both formal and informal

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of schools 2004

Table 5.2 Nature of Colleges' and Training Providers' Contact with Schools

Contact is for:	Formal contact %	Informal contact %	No contact %	No response %
sharing information about individual students prior to them starting on the programme	64	21	4	11
sharing information about individual students' progress	54	30	3	14
sharing information about a school's students' progress generally	35	50	4	12
sharing information about the content of vocational courses offered through IFP	76	10	5	9
sharing information about the delivery of vocational courses offered through IFP	65	22	5	8
sharing information about the objectives/targets of IFP	82	12	1	5
joint staff development	46	26	21	8
other reasons	8	18	4	71
N = 78				

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

'No response' includes a small number of respondents who ticked more than one box – i.e. contact was both formal and informal

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of colleges/training providers 2004

As can be seen in the tables, in the majority of schools and colleges and training providers, information about students before they embarked on the programme, the content and delivery of IFP courses and the objectives of IFP was shared formally. However, general information about the progress of students from a school appeared to be more likely to be shared informally. Comparisons of the responses of the same 115 schools in each year of the surveys revealed that a greater proportion of respondents in 2004 indicated that information about individual students' progress was shared formally (22 per cent in 2003 and 33 per cent in 2004). Similarly, more colleges and training providers in 2004 said that such information was shared formally (33 organisations), compared with 2003 (21 organisations). This suggests that partnerships were increasingly formalising their structures for providing such information and reflects the findings from the visits to case-study partnerships, where colleges and training provider tutors were increasingly involved in writing individual reports on students in order to provide feedback to the school and parents.

There appeared to be some change in the way in which information regarding the content and delivery of vocational courses was shared between the two years of the surveys. Among the schools surveyed, a greater proportion in 2004 (31 per cent) indicated that information about the delivery of vocational courses was shared informally than had done so in 2003 (24 per cent).

However, among the colleges and training providers, the number who indicated this had declined from 23 organisations in 2003 to 14 organisations in 2004, while the numbers who said that information about delivery was shared formally, increased from 31 to 40 organisations.

Nearly half of the colleges and training providers, and two-fifths of schools, indicated that joint staff development occurred formally in their organisations, and around a fifth of schools and a quarter of colleges and training providers said that there was informal joint staff development. However, around a fifth of colleges and training providers, and a third of schools, indicated that there was no contact between external providers and schools in relation to joint staff development. Nevertheless, the proportions indicating that there was no joint staff development had decreased from 38 per cent in 2003 to 29 per cent in 2004 (in the same 115 schools who replied in both years). The proportions who noted that there had been formal and informal contact in relation to staff development had increased from 36 per cent to 43 per cent and from 12 per cent to 18 per cent respectively. It appears, therefore, that as these partnerships matured, partner organisations were increasingly working together in terms of staff development (this is discussed in more detail in Section 5.3).

In summary, the evidence from the surveys of colleges and training providers indicates that the partnerships have become increasingly established in the second year of IFP and that partnership working had generally become more effective. The frequency of contact between schools and external providers had increased and the majority felt that the amount of contact was sufficient. Moreover, contact had become increasingly informal, which suggests that relationships between individuals, which have been noted as an influential factor in developing effective partnerships, were becoming embedded. Nevertheless, the apparent increase in the use of formal mechanisms for sharing information about individual students' progress also suggests that schools and colleges have developed formal systems for sharing information where these are required, as the IFP has progressed.

5.2 Funding and costs

5.2.1 College and training providers' funding and costs

In the 2003 to 2004 academic year, the 74 colleges and training providers who gave details had received a mean of £61,175 to deliver IFP for the first cohort of students. The median amount received was £50,000. Across both years of the surveys, the total mean amount of funding received by 58 colleges and training providers (who provided details in both years) was £113,925 and the median was £106,000.

In 2004, 56 per cent of the colleges and training providers indicated that it had been necessary to subsidise the funding received to deliver IFP. A total of 39 per cent said that it had not been necessary and the remaining five per cent did not respond. Of the total of 78 providers, 61 were Lead Partner organisations. Among this group, the percentage which reported that subsidisation of the core funding was necessary was higher at 64 per cent while 33 per cent said it had not been necessary (the remaining three per cent did not respond). The responses of the 38 colleges and training providers who gave details of the amount of subsidy indicated that the mean subsidy was £28,817 in 2003 to 2004 (the median was £20,000). Across the two years of the programme, the 29 organisations which said that it had been necessary to subsidise IFP in either years, and provided details, had used a mean of £49,015 additional funds.

The main sources of additional funding among the 44 colleges and training providers who had subsidised the programme in 2004 were the colleges' or training providers' own budget (16 organisations), school funds (seven organisations), the LSC (eight organisations) and the Local Initiative Fund (LIF) (seven organisations). European funding, such as the Single Regeneration Budget (one partnership) and the European Social Fund (two partnerships), had subsidised IFP and other government funds such as Neighbourhood Renewal Funds, the Neighbourhood Management Initiative and Excellence Challenge, had been used in one partnership each, while Local Intervention and Development funding had supported IFP in three partnerships. The additional funding was used for the following purposes:

- ◆ Staff and teaching costs (15 respondents)
- ◆ Resources and materials (12 respondents)
- ◆ Management and development of the programme (11 respondents)
- ◆ Support for students including learning support (nine respondents)
- ◆ Transport and travel costs (nine respondents)
- ◆ Enabling more students to participate (four respondents)
- ◆ Staff training (three respondents)
- ◆ Providing additional courses (two respondents).

As was found in the 2003 surveys,²² these findings indicate that, although additional funding was sometimes used to fund the underpinning elements of the programme such as management and staff training, it was also often used to fund core elements of the programme, such as staff costs and resources.

²² GOLDEN, S., NELSON, J., O'DONNELL, L. and MORRIS, M. (2004). *Evaluation of Increased Flexibility for 14-16 Year Olds: the First Year* (DfES Research Report 511). London: DfES.

A more detailed examination of the responses of the 43 colleges and training providers who provided details of the funding and costs of IFP in both years reveals that the total cost, including any subsidisation by the colleges and training providers, was a mean of £144,954. Where it was possible to calculate an average cost per pupil across the two years it emerged that the mean cost was £3,054 in these 38 partnerships. The analysis revealed that there was a statistically significant relationship between the costs and the number of students who participated in these partnerships. That is to say that the costs increased in line with the numbers of students participating.

5.2.2 Schools' funding and costs

A total of 42 per cent of the schools surveyed had received funding to support the first cohort of IFP students in the 2003 to 2004 academic year. This was a higher proportion than was the case in 2003 when 33 per cent said that they received funds. This increase in the proportion of schools receiving funding for IFP is further reflected to some extent in the responses of the same 115 schools which replied in both years. These revealed that, while 31 per cent said that they received funding in 2003, 37 per cent said so in 2004. In 2004, around half of all schools surveyed (51 per cent) said that they did not receive funding and the remaining seven per cent did not respond.

These schools had each received around £5,000 to support IFP. The mean amount of funding received by the 83 schools in 2004 which had received funds and provided details, was £5,934 and the median £3,900. Across the two years of the first cohort of IFP, 31 schools said that they had received funding and these schools provided details. They identified a wide range of funding which represented a mean of £9,938 or a median of £3,825. In 2004, the main source of this funding reported by schools was the IFP partnership which 83 per cent identified as the source. Other funding sources identified by schools included the LSC (five schools), the European Social Fund (two schools) and the Single Regeneration Budget (one school). Other government initiatives, each mentioned by one school, included the Local Initiative Fund, the Leadership Incentive Grant and the Local Intervention and Development Fund.

As was the case among the colleges and training providers, around half (54 per cent) of the schools surveyed indicated that it had been necessary to subsidise the first cohort of IFP in 2003 to 2004. In the 115 schools where details were provided, the mean amount of funding was £6,797 and the median £3,450. Across the two years of the surveys, the 56 schools which had subsidised IFP and provided details had accessed a mean amount of £10,765 of additional funds each or a median of £6,000. The main areas where this additional funding was spent were transport costs (50 schools) and college course fees (40 schools). In addition, the costs of school staff supporting students had been met through additional funding in 21 schools, other unspecified school staff costs had been met through subsidies in 17 schools, while two mentioned

supply cover and three noted staff training costs. In 11 schools, additional funding subsidised student support costs and the costs of resources were mentioned by respondents in 17 schools as met through subsidies. Less-frequently mentioned areas which had been funded through subsidisation included school staff teaching costs (seven schools), school management costs (six schools) and examination entry costs (four schools). Enabling more students to participate, or offering more courses, were mentioned as reasons for subsidisation by five and four schools respectively. Among the 115 schools which responded in both years of the surveys, a similar proportion indicated that they had subsidised the programme in each year (56 per cent in 2003 and 54 per cent in 2004). This suggests that these schools remained committed to ensuring that their students were able to access the opportunity to learn through IFP.

5.3 Staffing and staff development

The surveys in 2003 found that nearly all of the organisations surveyed had a designated coordinator for IFP. However, not all coordinators had dedicated time to undertake the role, although a greater proportion of the staff in colleges and training providers had dedicated time than staff in schools. As can be seen in Table 5.3, in 2004, the majority of staff in colleges and training providers had dedicated time to undertake the role of coordinating the programme and for 46 per cent of respondents, this time was deemed to be sufficient. Among school staff who responded, a quarter had protected time for their coordinator role and felt that this was sufficient but the majority indicated that the time they had was not sufficient, including some who had dedicated time and some who did not.

Table 5.3 Extent of protected time

Protected time for coordination?	Colleges %	Schools %
Yes, there is sufficient time	46	25
Yes, but more time is needed	41	22
No, but time is needed	12	45
No, no time is needed	1	7
No response	0	1
N =	78	248

A single response item

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of colleges/training providers 2004.

The responses of the schools which replied in both years of the survey suggest that, in these schools, there had been an increase in the proportion of school staff who felt that they had sufficient time. In 2003, 17 per cent of these 115

schools said that they had sufficient time and, in 2004, 28 per cent of staff in these schools indicated that this was the case. Whether this was because they had been given increased time, or because the amount of time required to coordinate IFP had reduced, is not clear from the responses to the questionnaire. The reasons why additional time was required, which were identified by those respondents to the 2004 surveys who said that more time was needed, are detailed in Tables 5.4 and 5.5.

Table 5.4 Reasons for additional time needed for coordination in colleges

Time for:	Major need %	Moderate need %	Minor need %	No response %
administration/paperwork	42	49	10	0
establishing courses/programmes	39	42	7	12
maintaining contact with schools	61	32	5	2
coordinating the work of organisational staff	46	39	10	5
overseeing student welfare	37	44	10	10
timetabling the IFP programme	29	34	29	7
Other	17	2	0	81
N = 41				

A series of single response items

A filter question: all those who needed more time for coordination

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of colleges/training providers 2004

The importance of the time required to work in partnership is evident from the finding that the most widely-noted major need for time was to maintain contact with partner schools. Other areas where time was required, as identified by respondents, included to support teaching staff and students (two respondents), for monitoring and quality assurance (two respondents), for staff development (two respondents) and in order to develop and maintain protocols (two respondents).

Table 5.5 Reasons for additional time needed for coordination in schools

Time for:	Major need %	Moderate need %	Minor need %	No response %
administration/paperwork	34	49	9	8
establishing courses/programmes	32	40	15	14
maintaining contact with external providers	50	35	7	8
coordinating the work of school staff	23	38	23	16
overseeing student welfare	47	38	8	7
timetabling the IFP programme	17	29	32	22
Other	6	1	1	92
N = 167				

A series of single response items

A filter question: all those who needed more time for coordination

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of schools 2004

As was the case among the respondents in colleges and training providers, the most frequently-mentioned area where time was required was in order to maintain contact with external providers. Student welfare also made a major demand on staff's time in just under half of the schools surveyed, while the more operational aspects of coordinating staff, organising the timetable and administration were slightly less frequently identified as a major need.

Implementing a programme of vocational learning which entailed partnerships between schools and colleges and training providers, as in the case of IFP, had implications for the professional development of staff. The surveys undertaken in 2003²³ found that a greater proportion of the colleges and training providers had undertaken staff development than was the case among schools, perhaps reflecting the greater probability that colleges and training providers were the main providers of IFP courses. Staff development relating to working with 14 to 16 year olds was said to be a training requirement by half of the survey respondents based in colleges and training providers in 2003.

As can be seen in Tables 5.6 and 5.7, it appears that this need for training, which was related to working with a younger age group, had been addressed in 68 per cent of the colleges and training providers surveyed. Moreover, the proportion who identified this as an area where training was required was lower in 2004 (36 per cent) than in 2003 (52 per cent). The apparent success of partnerships in meeting this identified training need is further substantiated in the responses of the same 62 colleges and training providers who responded in both years of the surveys. In 2004, 41 of these organisations reported that

²³ GOLDEN, S., NELSON, J., O'DONNELL, L. and MORRIS, M. (2004). *Evaluation of Increased Flexibility for 14-16 Year Olds: the First Year* (DfES Research Report 511). London: DfES.

training related to working with a younger age group had been provided compared with 34 in 2003 and fewer said that such training was needed in 2004 (23 organisations) than had indicated this in 2003 (31 organisations).

Table 5.6 Staff development activities provided

Activity:	Colleges %	Schools %
Working in partnership with schools and/or other colleges/training providers	59	55
Developing knowledge of a new qualification	47	34
Developing subject/curriculum knowledge and awareness	53	36
Working with a younger client group (14-16 year olds)	68	*
Providing vocational education and/or training opportunities	*	39
Developing understanding of data on students' prior attainment	17	*
Other	8	0
No response to this question	12	34
N =	78	248

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100

** question not asked*

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of schools and colleges and training providers 2004

Table 5.7 Staff development activities required

Activity:	Colleges %	Schools %
Working in partnership with schools and/or other colleges/training providers	23	26
Developing knowledge of a new qualification	42	48
Developing subject/curriculum knowledge and awareness	36	44
Working with a younger client group (14-16 year olds)	36	*
Providing vocational education and/or training opportunities	*	43
Developing understanding of data on students' prior attainment	71	*
Other	3	1
No response to this question	23	37
N =	78	248

More than one answer could be put forward so percentages do not sum to 100

** question not asked*

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of schools and colleges and training providers 2004

Training to assist staff in developing their knowledge of a new qualification had been undertaken in 47 per cent of colleges and training providers and 34 per cent of schools in 2004. In 42 per cent of colleges and training providers and 48 per cent of schools, such training was felt to be required, and the responses of the same 115 schools who responded in both years suggest that there may be an ongoing requirement for training in this area. A smaller

proportion of schools (that responded in both years) indicated that training related to understanding a new qualification had been provided in 2004 (35 per cent in 2004 and 43 per cent in 2003) but a greater proportion said that such training was needed in 2004 than had said this in 2003 (50 per cent in 2004 and 37 per cent in 2003). Similarly, while 27 of the colleges and training providers said that training in relation to new qualifications was provided in 2004, 38 had said so in 2003. Again more said that such staff development was needed in 2004 (26 organisations) than had done so in 2003 (17 organisations).

Staff development to support organisations in working in partnership had been provided in 2004 in 59 per cent of the colleges and training providers and 55 per cent of schools. The emphasis on such staff development appears to have increased among the schools surveyed. For example, among the 115 schools which responded in both years of the surveys, 56 per cent provided such staff development in 2004 compared with 48 per cent in 2003. Similarly, the proportion of schools which indicated that staff development related to providing vocational education opportunities (and had responded in both years) had increased from 27 per cent in 2003 to 40 per cent in 2004.

Staff development opportunities to assist staff in colleges and training providers in further developing their understanding of students attainment data had been provided in 17 per cent of those surveyed. However, the majority of respondents (71 per cent) indicated that training in this respect was needed suggesting that this could be an area for further development in the future, as partnerships between schools and colleges and training providers mature.

In addition to the areas outlined in the tables, respondents mentioned other staff development activities which were identified as having been provided or as needed. These included training related to behaviour management (four colleges and training providers), legal requirements (one college or training provider), and health and safety (one school).

In meeting their staff development needs and in supporting the overall management of the IFP, schools and colleges and training providers had accessed the support of a range of external agencies, as outlined in Tables 5.8 to 5.9.

Table 5.8 Helpfulness of support and guidance received by colleges and training providers

Support from:	Very helpful %	Quite helpful %	Not very helpful %	Not at all helpful %	N=
Learning and Skills Council (LSC)	34	47	16	3	73
Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA)	31	56	11	1	71
Department for Education and Skills (DfES)	8	54	31	8	67
Awarding/examination bodies	6	45	42	7	69

A series of single response items

All those who commented on the helpfulness of each organisation

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of schools 2004

The large majority of colleges and training providers surveyed had found the IFP-related support and guidance provided by the LSC and LSDA ‘very’ or ‘quite’ helpful. Respondents in college and training provider organisations were slightly more circumspect about the extent to which they had found the DfES and awarding bodies helpful, and a notable proportion had not found these two organisations helpful. Comparisons of the responses of the 62 colleges and training providers who responded in both 2003 and 2004 revealed no notable differences in the extent to which they perceived that the support from these organisations was helpful or not helpful.²⁴ However, there was a slight increase in the number who said that the LSDA had been ‘very’ or ‘quite’ helpful from 41 organisations in 2003 to 48 in 2004.

Table 5.9 Helpfulness of support and guidance received by schools

Support from:	Very helpful %	Quite helpful %	Not very helpful %	Not at all helpful %	N=
Lead Partner	53	37	8	2	238
Learning and Skills Council (LSC)	10	55	23	13	178
Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA)	6	41	34	20	140
Department for Education and Skills (DfES)	5	38	35	22	152
Awarding/examination bodies	6	41	40	14	153

A series of single response items

All those who commented on the helpfulness of each organisation

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of schools 2004

Lead Partners emerged as having been particularly helpful to schools in 2004. As illustrated in Table 5.9, 90 per cent of the schools said that the support and advice offered by their Lead Partner had been ‘very’ or ‘quite’ helpful. The LSC had also reportedly been helpful to the majority of schools. Comparisons of the responses of the 115 schools which responded in both years indicated

²⁴ Respondents were not asked about the helpfulness of awarding bodies in 2003.

that there had been an increase in the proportions of schools which felt that the support they had been given by these two organisations was helpful. In 2003, 44 per cent of these schools said that their Lead Partner had been very helpful and in 2004, 53 per cent indicated that this was the case. The proportions who had found the LSC ‘very’ or ‘quite’ helpful had increased from 54 per cent in 2003 to 68 per cent in 2004. Although a smaller proportion of all schools surveyed in 2004 said that the DfES had been helpful, compared with other organisations, the responses of the 115 schools who replied in both years also revealed an increase from 29 per cent in 2003 to 43 per cent in 2004 who said the DfES had provided helpful support and guidance.

5.4 Impact of the second cohort on managing the partnership

This section explores the extent to which the experience of implementing the IFP for the first cohort of students had influenced the approaches adopted for the second cohort in the same organisations. IFP was extended to a second cohort of students in 2003. Nationally, 14 additional partnerships were established and a total of 500 additional schools became involved in existing and new IFP partnerships. The majority of schools whose students had participated in the first cohort continued their involvement with a second cohort of students who were in Year 10 in 2003 to 2004.²⁵ Reflecting this national profile, among the schools surveyed, the majority (93 per cent or 231 schools) said that they were offering IFP provision to a second cohort of students in 2003 to 2004. Five per cent (13 schools) said that they were not and two per cent did not know or did not respond. The 13 schools which did not have a second cohort were involved in 13 different partnerships and their responses to the questionnaire in 2004 did not indicate that they had unusually negative experiences of IFP. All but one of the 78 colleges and training providers who responded to the survey in 2004 said that they were involved with the second cohort of IFP.

The aim of IFP was to provide vocational and work-related learning opportunities to those students who would benefit most. This necessitated some selection of students in partnerships and the evaluation of the first year²⁶ indicated that most schools had taken into account students’ ‘underachievement’ in the academic curriculum, their interest in vocational study or a specific occupational area and lack of motivation at school. Colleges and training providers who had been involved in identifying students, primarily considered the students’ interest in an occupational area or in

²⁵ GOLDEN, S., NELSON, J., O’DONNELL, L. and RUDD, P. (2004). *Implementing the Increased Flexibility for 14 to 16 Year Olds Programme: the Experience of Partnerships and Students* (DfES Research Report 562). London: DfES.

²⁶ GOLDEN, S., NELSON, J., O’DONNELL, L. and MORRIS, M. (2004). *Evaluation of Increased Flexibility for 14-16 Year Olds: the First Year* (DfES Research Report 511). London: DfES.

vocational study. It emerged that, although around half of the colleges and training providers surveyed in 2003 had been involved in the selection of students from some schools in their partnership, 40 per cent of colleges and training providers were not satisfied with the students selected and three-quarters of those who had no involvement in selection of some students said that they would have liked more involvement. The extent to which schools had changed their approaches, and the experiences of colleges and training providers in relation to the second cohort, are explored below.

Half (50 per cent) of the schools which had a second cohort of students said that they had altered the **criteria** for selecting students in the second cohort such as the characteristics of students who could participate. Four per cent did not know or did not respond and 46 per cent had not altered their criteria. A smaller proportion (42 per cent) said that they had altered their **procedure** for identifying students to participate such as the mechanisms and procedures for selecting students. Where schools had altered their **criteria**, their comments indicated that 32 per cent (37 schools) had aimed to involve students with a greater spread of ability, and a similar proportion (31 per cent or 36 schools) targeted students for the second cohort who were well motivated, while 17 per cent (20 schools) did not allow students with behaviour problems to participate and ten per cent (12 schools) specified a required level of attendance for students who wished to participate. In addition, in 13 per cent of schools (15 schools), staff aimed to address individual students' needs and nine school respondents said that they targeted those who would benefit from the content of the course, while two considered the students' career intentions.

Some schools had broadened the opportunity to access IFP for the second cohort. For example, in nine schools, students were said to have an open choice and six mentioned that there were fewer restrictions on participation for the second cohort. Timetabling issues were mentioned by some schools, four of whom said that a criterion for selection was that the curriculum was disapplied or their GCSE timetable was reduced, while one school respondent mentioned that students could participate if they did not have timetable clashes. The lessons learned from the first cohort are apparent in the responses of staff in 22 schools (19 per cent) who said that their criteria had changed as a consequence of their improved understanding of the courses and three respondents stated that the college had specified standards.

The **procedure** for identifying students was said to have changed for the second cohort of students in 42 per cent of schools (97 schools). A fifth (21 per cent or 20 schools) of these schools said that the process was more detailed for the second cohort. Further details indicated that in 34 per cent (33 schools) interviews were undertaken with students and in 13 schools students applied to participate, while in 17 schools parents were interviewed. Greater consultation was a feature of some schools' new procedures. For example, nine mentioned that they consulted with other staff and seven specified that

they had involved all relevant parties. Furthermore, 14 commented that they had examined available data in identifying students. Ensuring that students made an informed choice to participate appeared to have been an aim of some schools. Seventeen schools mentioned that they had improved the awareness of the content of the course students in the second cohort, and more detailed comments included five schools which had offered an induction visit and two who mentioned displays at Year 9 options evenings. Some schools identified management processes which they had introduced in selecting the second cohort of students. These included earlier planning (three schools), reorganising the timetable (two schools), improving monitoring (two schools), introducing student contracts (two schools) and avoiding the creation of an 'IFP group' (one school).

It appears, therefore, that many of the schools surveyed had examined their criteria and procedures for identifying students to participate in IFP and had amended these in light of their experience. The responses of the colleges and training providers reflect these developments.

Just under half (48 per cent) of colleges and training providers said that they had more involvement in the selection of students for the second cohort than they had for the first cohort. The type of involvement which they outlined included conducting interviews with students (in 12 cases) and having a greater say in the nature of students who would be appropriate for the programme (ten cases) or specifying entry requirements (three cases). Improved information and guidance was a feature of some partnerships: there were seven colleges or training providers where staff had attended or provided information for parents' evenings, five which had held open days or taster days for prospective students and six which mentioned that they had improved their advice and guidance activities for the second cohort. The enhanced understanding among colleges (two respondents) and schools (two respondents) of the nature and demands of the IFP courses was said to have contributed to the method of selecting of the students in the second cohort. The improved relationships with schools had proved helpful in three colleges and training providers, and improved information sharing between schools and the external providers about the students was noted by four respondents. A further three had used attainment data or diagnostic tests to assist selection.

Just under half of the colleges and training providers (48 per cent) said that they had about the same level of involvement in selection of the second cohort as they had with the first, and three per cent reported having less involvement (the remaining one per cent did not respond). There appears to be some scope for further involvement of external providers: the majority (72 per cent) of the 39 colleges and training providers who had the same or less involvement in the selection of the second cohort stated that they would have liked more involvement.

The level of success of the approaches to identifying the students to participate is reflected in the finding that the majority (68 per cent) of college and training providers said that they were satisfied with the students who were participating. However, a notable minority (26 per cent) were not content. The value of involving colleges and training providers in the selection of students is illustrated in the finding that the majority (84 per cent) of the 37 respondents who said that they had more involvement in identifying the students to participate, were happy with the students who participated. Among the 34 organisations that had the same amount of involvement, 59 per cent were content.

In addition to the selection of students to participate, the schools' and colleges' and training providers' experience of the first cohort of students may have influenced other aspects of the provision for the second cohort. Tables 5.10 and 5.11 explore this in more detail.

Table 5.10 Effect of the experience of the first cohort on working in partnership for the second cohort: colleges' and training providers' views

Affect of the first cohort experience on:	Increased or developed %	Reduced %	No change %	Unsure %	No response %
Frequency of meetings with IFP schools	44	4	49	1	1
College involvement in decisions about the qualifications offered to students	57	0	40	1	1
College involvement in teaching IFP courses	44	1	51	1	3
School involvement in teaching IFP courses	36	1	56	4	3
Sharing information on individual students prior to starting the programme	61	1	36	1	0
Sharing information on individual students whilst they are on the programme	64	0	35	0	1
N = 77					

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

A filter question: all those involved in the second cohort

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of colleges and training providers 2004

The main areas where a majority of respondents had increased or developed their approach was in relation to the sharing of information about students before and during their involvement in the programme. This corresponds with the comments of some respondents regarding their approaches to identifying students to participate, where some reported that more information was shared between colleges and schools to assist with this process. As can be seen in the table, around half of the colleges and training providers appear to have been satisfied with their approaches to meetings and the responsibilities for teaching

the courses. However, just over two-fifths reported that there had been an increase in the college's involvement in teaching and just over a third had increased or developed the role of schools in teaching IFP courses. Seven respondents mentioned other ways in which they had developed the IFP in relation to the second cohort. Three mentioned that they had increased staff development including joint staff development. Joint learning support, improved monitoring of student progress, provision of information to pupils and parents and improved guidance were each mentioned by one college or training provider.

The perceptions of school staff of developments for the second cohort are provided in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11 Effect of the experience of the first cohort on working in partnership for the second cohort: schools' views

Affect of the first cohort experience on:	Increased or developed %	Reduced %	No change %	Unsure %	No response %
Frequency of meetings with external providers	36	5	56	1	2
Frequency of contact with other IFP schools	20	3	74	1	2
School involvement in decisions about the qualifications offered to students	37	1	56	4	2
School involvement in teaching IFP courses	23	2	71	3	2
College involvement in teaching IFP courses	30	4	60	3	3
Sharing information on individual students prior to starting the programme	55	2	39	1	2
Sharing information on individual students whilst they are on the programme	55	<1	40	2	3
N = 231					

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

A filter question: all those involved in the second cohort

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of schools 2004

As was the case among the colleges and training providers, the main areas where the schools reported that activity had increased or developed were regarding the information shared about students before and during the programme. The majority appeared to be content with the approach to teaching as they had not changed the extent of colleges' or schools' involvement in the teaching of IFP courses. Nevertheless the development of working in partnership to provide an appropriate education for students may be reflected in the notable minority of schools which reported an increase in college involvement in teaching or in schools' involvement of delivering

vocational courses. Other aspects of provision which schools noted that they had changed, included improved monitoring of students (two schools) and supporting students off-site (two schools), increased parental involvement (one school) and improved accountability and quality assurance (one school). In addition, one mentioned that they had reduced the school's input and one said that they had reduced the use of new GCSEs in vocational subjects.

In the schools and colleges and training providers who were involved in the second cohort of IFP, students in both Year 10 and Year 11 will have been participating in the 2003 to 2004 academic year. This may have had a positive or negative impact on the organisation and management of IFP in the second year. Tables 5.12 and 5.13 detail the colleges' and training providers' and schools' perspectives of the effect of having two cohorts of students participating in IFP.

Table 5.12 The impact of two cohorts of IFP students on the management and organisation of the programme: colleges' and training provider's views

Impact of two cohorts on:	Positive impact %	Negative impact %	No apparent impact %	Not applicable %	Don't know %	No response %
Coordinating and managing the programme	43	20	35	1	0	1
Working with schools to deliver IFP	73	1	25	0	0	1
Working with other colleges/training providers to deliver IFP	35	1	35	23	3	3
Working with employers to deliver IFP	17	0	42	36	0	5
Arranging your organisation's timetable	18	43	34	3	1	1
Ensuring that IFP courses are available to all students who wish to be involved	34	23	22	8	7	7
Staffing the IFP programme	27	40	29	1	0	3
Resourcing the IFP programme	35	38	23	0	0	4
Transporting students to and from their schools	9	38	34	14	3	3
N = 77						

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

A filter question: all those involved in the second cohort

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of colleges and training providers 2004

Table 5.13 The impact of two cohorts of IFP students on the management and organisation of the programme: schools' views

Impact of two cohorts on:	Positive impact %	Negative impact %	No apparent impact %	Not applicable %	Don't know %	No response %
Coordinating and managing the IF programme	31	16	48	1	0	4
Working with external provider to deliver IFP	48	4	44	1	<1	3
Working with employers to deliver IFP	14	<1	49	26	4	6
Arranging your key stage 4 timetable	20	35	36	2	2	5
Ensuring that IFP courses are available to all students who wish to be involved	33	16	36	8	2	6
Staffing the IFP programme	18	20	44	12	2	4
Resourcing the IFP programme	13	32	41	9	1	4
Transporting students to and from their off-site provision	8	34	42	11	0	4
N = 231						

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

A filter question: all those involved in the second cohort

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of schools 2004

The responses of the two types of organisations reveal similar perspectives on the overall positive and negative impacts of two cohorts. It appears that having two cohorts of IFP students had a positive impact on working in partnership. The majority of the colleges and training providers stated that there had been a positive effect on working in partnership with schools, and just under half of schools noted a positive impact on working with external providers. However, in a number of areas, a notable minority of both schools and colleges and training providers indicated that delivering IFP to two cohorts of students had a negative impact. Organising the timetable, transporting students and resourcing two cohorts of IFP were all noted as having a negative effect and were less likely to be considered as having been positively affected by having two cohorts. These findings suggests that engaging with two cohorts of students, in some cases, had consolidated relationships between schools and external providers, as was observed by some interviewees during the case study visits.²⁷ However, schools and

²⁷ GOLDEN, S., NELSON, J., O'DONNELL, L. and RUDD, P. (2004). *Implementing the Increased Flexibility for 14 to 16 Year Olds Programme: the Experience of Partnerships and Students* (DfES Research Report 562). London: DfES.

colleges continued to encounter logistical challenges in incorporating two cohorts of students into their structures.

Respondents in the schools and colleges and training providers elaborated on their experiences of implementing IFP for two cohorts of young people in an open-ended question. Having cohorts of students participating in IFP had a range of impacts in the schools and the providers, as outlined below.

- ◆ 14 per cent of schools and five per cent of college respondents said that the **timing and timetabling** of IFP had been affected by having two cohorts. In most cases (26 schools) schools said that timetabling had been more problematic and that two cohorts had placed additional strain on the timetable. In addition, timetabling IFP for two cohorts of students who attended an external provider on different days had presented difficulties for nine schools. Moreover, three colleges and training providers said that schools accessing provision on more than one day was problematic.
- ◆ The **management and coordination** of two cohorts was an issue in 11 per cent of schools and ten per cent of colleges and training providers. More specifically, 13 school respondents said that having two cohorts had led to considerable demands on the IFP coordinator and two noted that more management time was required. Among the colleges and training providers, five noted the increased workload for the IFP coordinator and four highlighted the need for additional administrative support for two cohorts.
- ◆ The impact of two cohorts on the requirement for **learning support** was raised by eight per cent of schools and three per cent of colleges and training providers. More time was said to be needed to support students in 12 schools and monitoring was reportedly more difficult in five schools. Staff in two colleges and training providers said that there was an increased need for learner support with two cohorts.
- ◆ **Transport and travel**-related issues were raised by staff in ten per cent of schools and five per cent of colleges and training providers. The additional costs of transporting two cohorts of students were mentioned by 12 schools and two colleges and training providers. In addition, the need to supervise travel more often was raised by staff in nine schools. The logistical complexities of transporting two cohorts were mentioned by three colleges and training providers and the same number of schools. The three schools all commented that this was due to students attending more than one site.
- ◆ The **costs** of providing for two cohorts was raised by seven per cent of schools and five per cent of colleges and training providers. Eleven of the schools commented that the college fees were high and eight reported that funding two cohorts of IFP students had depleted the school budget. Four of the colleges and training providers noted that the costs had increased but there had been no additional funding.
- ◆ Having two cohorts of IFP students had a positive effect on **raising the profile** of the programme with younger students in five per cent of schools. Moreover, eight per cent of colleges and training providers said

that it had helped to consolidate the raised profile of vocational education among schools, through improving partnerships with schools and providing increased opportunities to offer a broad curriculum.

- ◆ Three per cent of schools and one per cent of the colleges and training providers said that, although there were two cohorts, the IFP remained a **finite resource** and the college and three schools noted that there had been insufficient places for all students. In addition, five schools noted that there were shortages of the facilities or equipment required to provide for two cohorts.
- ◆ Six per cent of school respondents said that involvement in two cohorts of IFP had a positive effect on the **wider school**. More specifically, four commented that links with the FE college were strengthened and three valued the improved curriculum opportunities available. Two said that they had created new school-based systems to accommodate the two cohorts. Two per cent of respondents in schools felt that there had been a negative impact on the wider school, including having fewer qualified support teachers in the school and the additional strain on ICT facilities.

In summary, it appears that partnerships had identified, through their experience of the first cohort of students, the importance of involving all parties in selecting students and of sharing information about students before and during the programme, and had developed these aspects of their provision for the second cohort. Having two cohorts of students had led to some benefits in terms of consolidating working relationships and further raising the profile of vocational learning opportunities, but some partnerships continued to encounter logistical complexities.

5.5 Challenges and future developments

The final section of the school, college and training provider surveys provided respondents with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences in a year and a half of implementing this new type of provision for students at key stage 4. This consisted of a group of open questions, allowing individuals to elaborate on their own particular concerns. Respondents were asked to identify the successes and positive outcomes of participation in the programme. They were also able to identify any concerns that they had about the IFP. They outlined the aspects that they would have approached differently, with the benefit of hindsight, and the areas which they considered could be improved. As will be discussed below, their concerns related to the management of the programme, logistics and organisational issues, and the delivery of the programme. It should be noted that, with the exception of concerns about costs, each of these concerns were identified by only a small minority of respondents.

A number of issues which related to the **management** of IFP were raised by respondents to the surveys, as follows:

- ♦ The main area of concern among both schools and colleges and training providers related to the **costs** involved in this provision and the funding arrangements. Although the majority of schools were not concerned about costs, around half of colleges and training providers (55 per cent) and 38 per cent of schools expressed concern about finance. Future funding and the sustainability of the programme was the main focus of this concern and was mentioned by 26 of the colleges and training providers and 45 of the schools. The current funding was said to be inadequate by 22 of the colleges and training providers and 33 of the schools (and 29 schools observed that IFP was a costly type of provision).
- ♦ The **overall management** of the programme was a concern for a minority (13 per cent) of schools and eight per cent of colleges and training providers. Twelve schools felt that there was insufficient time for planning and coordinating the programme, as did four colleges and training providers, and five schools observed that they were limited in their choice of external provider.
- ♦ It appeared that, for a few schools, **accommodating changes** had proved difficult. For example, two schools each mentioned that they were concerned about courses ending early, students being removed from the course and problems they had encountered when provision '*breaks down*'. Respondents in two schools felt that there was insufficient flexibility when students wished to change course.
- ♦ **Staffing**-related concerns were noted by six per cent of colleges and training providers and seven per cent of schools. Five of the colleges' and training providers' had been concerned about a lack of staff development. Many of the comments from the small number of schools who raised staffing-related issues were related to the effect of providing support for IFP students. For example, four noted the need for students to be supervised in an '*adult environment*' and three mentioned the need for '*double staffing*'.
- ♦ The effects of **working in partnership** to deliver IFP were noted by some respondents. Five per cent of schools, and four per cent of colleges and training providers observed that communication had not always been effective. Eleven schools said that there was a lack of information from the college and three colleges and training providers highlighted the lack of information that they had received from schools about individual students. In addition, three per cent of schools observed that bringing together different cultures and systems of schools and vocational providers had proved challenging. Twelve per cent of the colleges and training providers reported that they had experienced a lack of support from schools.

The **logistical and operational issues** in implementing IFP for the first cohort of students had led to some concerns which were noted by respondents:

- ♦ **Timetabling** IFP was mentioned by 15 per cent of schools and 12 per cent of colleges and training providers. Although they often did not provide

details, seven schools and two colleges and training providers mentioned in particular the implications of timetabling for students missing lessons.

- ◆ The **selection of students** in the first cohort of IFP had caused concern for 30 per cent of colleges and training providers and four per cent of schools. Whether the most appropriate students were selected to participate in IFP was a concern for eight schools and 12 colleges and training providers, and 13 external providers commented that the option to participate was not open to all learners. Some comments acknowledged the constraint on the number of places and 13 per cent of schools said that there were not enough places available for their students or that the choice of courses available was limited.
- ◆ The final logistical concern, which was reported by 11 per cent of schools, was the difficulty in organising **transport** which, for 11 of these schools was due to the rurality of the area.

In terms of the **delivery** of IFP, respondents raised the following concerns:

- ◆ Twelve per cent of colleges and training providers mentioned the challenge of **managing younger students** aged 14 to 16. Seven observed that there had been difficulties in managing the behaviour of these students and two commented on the difficulty of integrating students of this age group into the college environment.
- ◆ Ten per cent of the schools surveyed commented that they had been concerned by the **quality of the teaching**. Twelve school respondents noted the staff development needs for tutors teaching the younger age group of students. Moreover, nine observed that there appeared to be little monitoring of students' progress and five felt that monitoring of the quality of teaching was lacking.
- ◆ Nine per cent of the colleges and training providers who responded to the survey indicated that the **content** of the qualification which students were pursuing was **inappropriate**, as did three per cent of schools. A few respondents (three schools and two external providers) mentioned that the new GCSEs in vocational subjects were '*not vocational enough*' and three schools made this observation more generally about the IFP courses of their students.
- ◆ A few school respondents (two per cent) commented that the **development of vocational education** generally was a concern and observed that the speed of growth of such provision, the need to start courses '*from scratch*' had been a concern. Concerns about **outcomes** of the IFP for schools were mentioned by two per cent of schools who noted the potential impact on their examination results and the school's lack of control of the outcomes.

The aspects of provision which respondents identified that could be improved in future to a large extent reflected their concerns, as might be expected. Indeed two per cent of schools and four per cent of colleges and training providers indicated that they had implemented changes for the second cohort of students following their reflections on the first cohort. The main aspects of

implementing IFP which the respondents considered could be improved included:

- ♦ **Funding and costs** (24 per cent of colleges and 19 per cent of schools) – 35 schools and nine external providers felt that the programme would be improved with more funding and eight schools and nine colleges mentioned that earlier confirmation of funding would be beneficial.
- ♦ **Student selection** (23 per cent of colleges and training providers and six per cent of schools) – the respondents considered that ensuring that the students who were selected were appropriate and that enabling a wider range of students to participate were areas for improvement. In addition, respondents reported that they could further develop their approaches to assessing students' needs and abilities before they embarked on their course and could match the students more effectively to the level of vocational qualification.
- ♦ **Management and planning** (14 per cent of schools) – school respondents believed that the liaison between schools and external providers could be further improved and that schools could be more involved.
- ♦ **Communication and information sharing** (11 per cent of schools) – increased contact between the schools and external providers would improve the programme, including through school staff visiting students at their external provider. Agreeing approaches for reporting progress to the school was identified as a further area for development by school respondents.
- ♦ **Developments in the type of provision** (12 per cent of colleges and training providers and nine per cent of schools) – colleges and training providers reflected that there could be an increase in the amount of joint delivery, as did some schools. In addition, school respondents suggested a variety of developments including extending the range of external providers, developing in-school provision and virtual courses. In addition, four mentioned the need for more flexible course provision.
- ♦ **Changing the content or type of qualification** (13 per cent of schools and six per cent of colleges and training providers) – providers and schools felt that the programme could be improved with the use of a wider choice of qualifications.
- ♦ **Staff development** (eight per cent of schools and three per cent of colleges and training providers) – the programme could be enhanced through an increase in staff development, particularly for college staff, in relation to working with a younger age group. Respondents from schools also noted the opportunities for collaborative staff development.

Other aspects of provision which respondents felt could be improved included the further use of employers to support the programme and provision of work experience (five per cent of schools), addressing transport difficulties (four per cent of schools and three per cent of colleges), and improving support for students (two per cent of schools and five per cent of colleges).

In summary, although schools and colleges and training providers were predominantly positive about IFP provision, they did outline a range of issues and concerns and possible areas for development. The management of the programme, funding and costs, timetabling and selection of students were the most widely mentioned themes. This suggests that ensuring that sufficient time is available to manage the IFP, and that it is adequately funded, with sustained funding, are important considerations in its future development. At a partnership level, meeting the challenge of timetabling such provision, and ensuring that appropriate systems are in place for selecting students to participate, would make a valuable contribution to the programme's development in the future.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

6.1.1 The impact on students and the progress towards IFP targets

The evidence from the surveys of young people and their associated schools and colleges and training providers indicates that the IFP has been largely successful, to date, in meeting its aims and objectives. Most colleges and training providers and most schools indicated that their students were on target to achieve their qualifications. The extent to which this will be translated into actual qualifications achieved will be explored in future analyses and may be influenced by the fact that just over a third of students said that they would like more time on the programme, most commonly because they needed more time to complete the work. Nevertheless, although the evidence relating to students' actual achievement in terms of qualifications is not yet available, the surveys indicated some positive changes in the skills and attitudes of students who had participated in IFP.

Where students had studied away from school, their survey responses indicated that their confidence in their social skills had improved in relation to working with adults and with other students. This was corroborated by the professional judgement of staff in colleges and training providers and schools, the majority of whom said that students' skills at working with adults were enhanced through their IFP experience. In addition, more students expressed more confidence in their abilities in relation to a range of employability skills, such as those needed to obtain a job and the important inter-personal and communication skills which employers value, towards the end of their IFP course than they had indicated towards the beginning of the experience. While it is likely that a range of influences may have affected the development of this confidence as students near to leaving school, their IFP experience may have been one influence, as around half of students said that their course had helped them to understand what working life would be like.

Although the evidence from both students and staff in schools did not strongly suggest that students' attendance had improved since participating in IFP, there was evidence of a positive change in their attitudes towards school. Students' own assessment of their behaviour at school indicated that they were more likely to report that they were well-behaved in Year 11 than in Year 10. Their overall attitudes to school and learning appeared to have improved as they were more likely in Year 11 to be positive about school, and to see its

relevance for their future, than they had been in 2003, and more were confident in their abilities than they were in 2003. While it is possible that such gains would also be observed in a group of students who had not participated in IFP, the majority of the students themselves identified that the programme had a positive effect on their recognition of their own skills and potential, their confidence to try new things and on their perception of the value of learning and gaining qualifications.

The large majority of students intended to progress into further education and training at the end of their compulsory education, which suggests that the IFP programme will exceed its target of 75 per cent of participants progressing into further learning. Only a minority of students intended to pursue a qualification at the same level as their IFP qualification. In the longer term, students planned a variety of routes with around a quarter intending to remain in education until they were 18 and a similar proportion planning to go to a HEI. Nevertheless, the IFP cohort was not a homogenous group and the interest in the vocational route, which might have led these students to participate in IFP, is reflected in the third who planned to start a job with training after Year 11 and may indicate that IFP was meeting the needs of a group of students whose preference was for a work-based route.

Some students' commitment to the vocational area studied, which may have influenced their initial choice to participate in IFP, is reflected in the finding that two-fifths of students intended to take a qualification post-16 that was in the same subject area as their IFP course. This was particularly the case with regard to students who were intending to take NVQs or GNVQs post-16. Although the majority of students' reasons for their intended post-16 plans related to whether they found it interesting, whether they thought that they were good at it, and whether it offered good career opportunities, their experience at school of the vocational area was less frequently noted as an influential factor. However, around half of the students said that their IFP experience had influenced their decision about their post-16 transition and a similar proportion had found their college or training provider tutor helpful. This suggests that IFP involvement could be a further influential factor in the range of influences on young peoples' post-16 choices.

6.1.2 The impact on working in partnership

The evidence from the surveys of schools and colleges and training providers indicates that the partnerships which were formed have matured and become increasingly embedded in the second year in many respects. A substantial majority of the schools and colleges and training providers surveyed said that their involvement with IFP had led to more effective partnership with partner institutions. This would have contributed to the IFP aim of providing access to a broader curriculum for students. The insights gained from the surveys suggest that the frequency of contact had increased and that partners were largely satisfied with the amount of contact. Moreover, contact appeared to

have become more informal in some respects, which suggests that the relationships between individuals, which have been identified as an important contributory factor to working effectively in partnership, were becoming increasingly established. Furthermore, as was found in the case-study visits, partnerships had also developed their formal mechanisms for sharing information about students as they progressed through their IFP programme.

The findings suggest that Lead Partners, partner providers and schools have continued to develop their relationships to work in partnership to deliver IFP, and the introduction of a second cohort was said to have had a positive impact on consolidating these relationships. However, the evidence indicates that there is an impact on staff's time and workload in implementing the IFP and, in particular, for undertaking the liaison between parties required. This suggests that, as the programme develops, the time and resource implications for managing and coordinating the programme should be taken into consideration in order to ensure that the students continue to benefit from the outcomes identified earlier.

6.1.3 Staff development

The need to provide staff in institutions which work primarily with post-16 learners with staff development opportunities to enhance their skills for teaching a younger age group of students was widely identified in the first year of the programme. The surveys in the second year, and the visits to partnerships, suggest that, to a large extent, staff who were involved in teaching students participating in IFP had been provided with training and development opportunities regarding teaching 14 to 16 year olds and had further developed their strategies for teaching this age group. Nevertheless, a notable minority of school respondents said that members of their staff accompanied students studying off-site in order to support the tutor with classroom management. Whilst it is clear that some college and training provider staff have further developed their skills in relation to teaching this age group, either through formal training or individually, it appears that this is an area where training requirements need to be kept under review. In addition to working with younger students, developing staff's understanding of new qualifications, and interpreting data on students' prior attainment, areas remained where it was felt that staff development was required. The evidence suggested that there was an increase in the incidence of joint staff development activities between schools and external providers – such activities could usefully address the training needs in relation to prior attainment data, as identified in the survey of colleges and training providers.

6.1.4 Involvement of employers in IFP delivery

The use of employers to support young people's learning through the IFP was not widespread among the schools and colleges and training providers in the second year of IFP, but had increased among the schools and providers who

replied in both years of the survey. Nevertheless, the schools and providers considered that their employer links were more effective in the second year than the first and the evidence from the survey of students, a greater proportion of whom indicate that their visits had been a valuable learning experience, provides some support for this assertion. Moreover, the apparent value placed by students on their experience, and the improved confidence in their employability skills among those students who had visited an employer, may illustrate the value of including experience with employers in the IFP.

6.1.5 Management and delivery of the programme

Across the two years of the implementation of IFP, and the evaluation, the main areas of concern raised by school and provider staff regarding managing and implementing the policy related to the time to manage and coordinate the programme, issues around selecting students and the challenge of incorporating the IFP into the schools' and, to a slightly lesser extent, colleges' timetables. As noted above, the time required to coordinate delivery where more than one organisation was involved had presented coordinators with a challenge. It is apparent from the perspectives of college and training provider staff, and those in schools, that the identification of appropriate students, which is based on an understanding of the content of the course that they will be pursuing, and the provision of relevant advice and guidance, are central factors in ensuring the success of the programme. Involving the external providers in this, and providing them with information about the students, was valued by the staff in external providers and appeared to contribute to their satisfaction with the cohort.

Finally, while the timetabling of IFP was largely unproblematic in the view of the majority of school staff, it remained a challenge for a notable minority of two-fifths. Similarly, although the majority of students said that they did not miss other timetabled lessons due to their participation in IFP, a notable minority of a quarter said that they did. The extent to which this impacted negatively on their GCSE attainment will be explored in future analyses. The apparent overall success of IFP for students outlined above, and reflected in the experience of students who participated in the case-study visits, suggests that there is value in partnerships continuing to seek to overcome some of the logistical challenges, which some appear to have experienced.

6.2 Policy implications

The evidence from the follow-up surveys in the second year of the first cohort of IFP illustrates the successes for individual students, in terms of development of their social and employability skills and their plans for progressions post-16. Furthermore, in the view of staff in schools and colleges and training providers, IFP had enabled their students to access a broader curriculum, which was an aim of the programme and one of the reasons why

schools chose to participate. In order to enable students to continue to access these opportunities and gain from the experience in the way that the participants in the first cohort had done, there may be value in taking into consideration the following implications for policy which emerged from the experience of partnerships in implementing the programme.

Across the two years of the programme, the core funding for partnerships appears to have been insufficient for its delivery in the majority of partnerships. While the approach to delivery and the numbers of students participating was at the discretion of local partnerships, the finding that most Lead Partners had subsidised delivery in some way, suggests that, in practice, the costs of this type of delivery were greater than anticipated.

In considering funding for this type of provision in future, the evidence from the surveys suggests that there would be value in taking into considerations the time required to manage the programme in particular, as it is a partnership approach, to liaise between parties and to coordinate the programme. In addition, the cost implications of a member of school staff accompanying a relatively small number of students off-site, which was reported in a notable minority of schools, could be taken into consideration.

As indicated above, working in partnership between organisations from different sectors to enable students to access a broader curriculum presents some logistical challenges and complexities, particularly in relation to timetabling and transport, albeit for a notable minority of organisations. Schools and colleges and training providers could usefully benefit from guidance on effective practice in ensuring that students' overall timetable at key stage 4 is not adversely affected by their involvement in IFP, and on means of addressing the challenge of transporting students between locations.

Providing appropriate information, advice and guidance for students who choose to embark on an IFP course, and as it nears completion and they consider routes post-16, could help to ensure that the students who would benefit most participate and that they have the opportunity to reflect on their experience when planning their post-16 transition. While it was evident that many schools were making use of the Connexions Service to support these students, there could be scope for students participating in IFP to be a focus group for individual advice and guidance at 14 and at 16.

APPENDIX A: Representativeness of responding students and schools

Student representativeness

A sample of 11,438 students was drawn from the data on 29,990 students participating in IFP that was provided by schools during the baseline data collection in the autumn term of 2002. The sample was representative of the whole population in terms of the qualifications studied, the location of study for IFP and background characteristics such as ethnicity and sex.

A total of 5,824 students responded to the questionnaire survey in the spring term of 2003, when they were in Year 10 at school. A total of 2,616 of these students responded to a follow-up survey in spring 2004, when they were in Year 11.

Table A1. Background characteristics of students participating in IFP: sample and responding students in Year 10 and Year 11

Characteristic	Respondents in Year 11 %	Respondents in Year 10 %	Sample %
Sex			
Male	51	53	56
Female	49	47	44
N=	2524	5595	10500
Ethnicity			
White	90	89	89
Asian or Asian British	5	6	5
Black or Black British	2	2	2
Other	2	2	2
Prefer not to say	1	2	2
N=	2473	5485	10301
Mother tongue			
English	94	94	94
Other than English	6	6	6
N=	2523	5592	10491
Free school meals			
Receives free school meals	17	19	22
Does not receive free school meals	83	81	78
N=	2523	5592	10488

Characteristic	Respondents in Year 11 %	Respondents in Year 10 %	Sample %
SEN			
No special provision	74	71	70
School action/ plus	21	24	25
Statement or assessment	5	5	6
N=	2401	5327	9979
KS3 English			
Level 4 and below	43	47	48
Level 5 and below	57	53	52
N=	2404	5251	9679
KS3 Maths			
Level 4 and below	43	45	47
Level 5 and above	57	55	53
N=	2437	5380	9942
KS3 Science			
Level 4 and below	43	45	46
Level 5 and above	57	55	54
N=	2439	5350	9854

All those for whom data was available on NPD

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme- baseline data and NPD

In general, the Year 11 students who responded to the survey were representative of peers in most respects. However, a slightly higher proportion of females and those with no special needs provision responded than were in the sample and than responded to the Year 10 survey. A higher proportion of students who had achieved level 5 and above at key stage 3 in English, Maths and Science also responded to the Year 11 survey compared with the sample and the Year 10 survey. A lower proportion of Year 11 respondents were in receipt of free school meals compared with the sample and the Year 10 respondents.

Table A2. Qualifications studied through IFP: sample and responding students in Year 10 and Year 11

	Respondents in Year 11 %	Respondents in Year 10 %	Sample %
Qualification			
New GCSE	64	61	58
NVQ	14	15	16
GNVQ	2	4	7
Other vocational qualification	20	19	18
Non-qualification	1	1	3
Qualification unknown	1	2	2
Location of study			
Lead partner	65	64	66
Non-Lead Partner	37	38	37
N=	2616	5824	11438

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme – baseline data

A higher proportion of Year 11 students who responded to the survey were taking GCSEs in vocational subjects, and fewer were taking GNVQs or were on courses where no qualification was identified compared with the sample and with responding students from the Year 10 survey.

As illustrated in Table A3, the 248 schools who responded to the survey in 2004 were broadly representative of all schools participating in IFP. A slightly greater proportion of schools who responded were:

- ♦ community schools
- ♦ comprehensive to 16
- ♦ those with few or no students with English as an Additional Language.

than was the case in the profile of all IFP schools.

In addition, the schools who responded were representative of the schools who were in partnership with the colleges and training providers who responded. It is worth noting that the sample was selected to include all schools within each partnership but some schools within a partnership may not have responded where the provider had done, and some providers in a partnership may not have responded where the schools had. However, as the schools who did respond were representative of the schools in the responding providers partnerships in the respects detailed in the table, it is reasonable to infer that their experiences may have been similar to those schools who did not respond.

Table A3. Characteristics of schools: those responding, those involved with responding colleges and all IFP schools

Characteristic	All responding schools %	Schools in partnerships of responding colleges %	All IFP schools %
GO Region			
North East	7	9	6
North West/Merseyside	15	12	14
Yorkshire and the Humber	10	8	8
East Midlands	12	13	9
West Midlands	14	15	15
Eastern	13	14	10
London	6	10	11
South East	12	10	17
South West	14	8	10
School type (1)			
CTC	-	-	<1
Community school	75	72	70
Community special school	4	4	4
Foundation school	7	8	11
Foundation special school	-	-	<1
PRU	1	1	1
LSU	-	-	<1
Voluntary aided school	9	11	11
Voluntary controlled school	3	4	2
Non-maintained special school	-	-	<1
School Type (2)			
Secondary Modern	4	5	4
Comprehensive to 16	49	45	41
Comprehensive to 18	40	44	48
Grammar	-	-	<1
Other secondary schools	2	1	1
CTC	<1	-	<1
Special Schools	4	4	4
PRU	1	1	1
Sex of establishment			
Boys	3	3	5
Girls	4	4	4
Mixed	92	93	92
Size of school			
600 or fewer pupils	13	16	15
601-1000 pupils	43	42	40
1001-1300 pupils	26	26	26
1301 or more pupils	16	14	18
no data	2	2	2

Characteristic	All responding schools %	Schools in partnerships of responding colleges %	All IFP schools %
Achievement band (KS3 overall performance)			
Lowest band	23	25	26
Second lowest	23	25	23
Middle band	21	19	19
Second highest	19	18	17
Highest	8	7	10
No data	7	6	5
Achievement band (GCSE total point score)			
Lowest band	26	28	27
Second lowest	23	22	23
Middle band	22	19	20
Second highest	18	19	18
Highest	8	7	8
No data	4	5	4
% of EAL pupils			
None	40	39	36
1-5%	41	36	39
6-49%	13	17	17
50+%	3	4	4
no data	3	4	2
% receiving free school meals			
Lowest 20%	1	2	3
Second lowest 20%	20	18	20
Middle 20%	30	30	27
Second highest 20%	25	24	26
Highest 20%	22	25	23
No data	2	2	2
N=	248	465	1757

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme – baseline data and NFER register of schools

As was discussed in detail in the report of the first year of IFP,²⁸ there were differences in the qualifications taken and the location of study which students self-reported and those which had been provided by students' teachers as part of the baseline data collection. In the 2004 survey, similar discrepancies emerged and are detailed in Tables A4 to A5.

²⁸ GOLDEN, S., NELSON, J., O'DONNELL, L. and MORRIS, M. (2004). *Evaluation of Increased Flexibility for 14-16 Year Olds: the First Year* (DfES Research Report 511). London: DfES.

Table A4. Qualifications students are working towards: self-reported and school data

Qualification	Self-reported %	School data %
New GCSE in a vocational subject	77	64
NVQ	20	14
GNVQ	12	2
Other VQ	9	20
No response	3	2
N = 2616		

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

'No response' includes a small number of students taking non-qualifications

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: survey of Year 11 students 2004 and baseline data provided by schools 2002

As was the case in the 2003 surveys, more students said that they were taking new GCSEs in vocational subjects and GNVQs than had been indicated by their schools. In addition, more students said that they were taking NVQs and fewer said that they were taking other vocational qualifications. There may be a number of explanations for this. Firstly, students' understanding of the precise title of the qualification which they are taking may be limited, particularly where the qualification titles are similar. For example, a student taking an other VQ in a construction occupation they may believe that he or she was taking a NVQ in construction. Secondly, the over-representation of students who said they were taking GNVQs may be due to the fact that these qualifications are fairly established and recognised within schools which may not be the case with new GCSEs and NVQs and other VQs. Thirdly, the higher than expected proportion of students who stated that they were taking a new GCSE may be a consequence of students recording existing GCSEs which they were taking (for example in Science, ICT or Art and Design) as new GCSEs which have similar titles. The data presented in Table A4 below provides some support for this theory.

Table A5. Qualifications students were working towards: details

Qualifications	Self-reported %	School data %
New GCSEs in:		
Applied Art and Design	9	2
Applied Business	10	8
Applied ICT	27	20
Applied Science	15	1
Engineering	13	11
Health and Social Care	18	15
Leisure and Tourism	11	10
Manufacturing	2	1
NVQ	20	14
GNVQ	12	2
Other qualification	9	20
No response	3	2
N = 2616		

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

'No response' includes a small number of students taking non-qualifications

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: survey of Year 11 students 2004 and baseline data provided by schools 2002

It is noticeable that the differences between the proportions of students who reported that they were undertaking new GCSEs and the proportions whom schools said were taking these qualifications was greater where the GCSE had an equivalent qualifications that was not a new vocational GCSE. For example, 27 per cent of students said that they were taking the new GCSE in Applied ICT while the information provided by their schools indicated that 20 per cent were doing so. Where the new GCSE had no equivalent or similar existing GCSE (for example health and social care or leisure and tourism) the difference was less marked.

APPENDIX B: Factor analysis of student attitudes

Exploratory factor analyses were carried out to consolidate the data on the Year 11 student questionnaire relating to students' views of themselves, their attitudes to school, and their views on the impact of the IFP. These produced more robust measures of students' attitudes than a consideration of the individual items on the questionnaire alone. The factor analyses also allowed simpler analyses to be undertaken, comparing students' attitudes with other variables (such as their sex and the qualification they were studying), than would have been possible if using each of the individual variables.

Factor analysis looks for variables and items that correlate highly with each other. The existence of such correlations between variables suggests that those variables could be measuring aspects of the same underlying issues. These underlying issues are known as factors. Thus, the aim of the factor analyses was to derive a smaller number of 'attitude' composite variables from selected questions on the questionnaire which could be used to explore the attitudes of IFP students in further detail.

Four factor analyses were carried out. The first included all the items from Question 3, related to students' views on studying out of school (only those respondents who studied out of school). The second factor analysis included all the items relating to students' views of themselves and their attitudes to school, and included the following questions:

- ◆ Question 19 (students' views of themselves and their learning style)
- ◆ Question 20 (students' views of their school lessons)
- ◆ Question 21 (students' views of school itself)
- ◆ Question 24 (students' views of how well school had prepared them for the future)
- ◆ Question 25 (students' views of school and work).

The third factor analysis carried out related to student truancy and lateness (Questions 22 and 23), and the fourth included items related to students' views on the impact of the IFP (Question 18).

Items that appeared to relate closely to one another were grouped together as a scale, and after subsequent analysis seven separate factors were identified (one from the first factor analysis, three from the second, one from the third and two from the fourth factor analysis), relating to different aspects of students' attitudes. These seven factors were related to:

- ♦ **Students' preference for studying at college rather than school** (including whether students enjoyed their courses, felt comfortable at the college or training provider, fitted in with other students and found it easy to travel to the college or training provider)
- ♦ **Students' confidence in their own abilities** (including whether students felt that they were good at working on their own, good at solving problems and liked to be given responsibility)
- ♦ **Students' preference for a 'hands on' learning approach** (including whether students preferred practical work, liked working in a team and liked to be treated as an adult)
- ♦ **Students' attitudes to school and its usefulness for the future** (including whether students liked school, thought that school work was worth doing, and felt that their education had given them useful skills and knowledge and prepared them for adult and working life).
- ♦ **Students' tendency to truant from school or be late for lessons**
- ♦ **Students' increased respect for education** (including whether students felt that doing their IFP course had helped them realise the importance of getting qualifications, made them more motivated to learn and do well at school and helped them to find their education interesting).
- ♦ **Students' preparedness for work** (including whether students felt that doing their IFP course had helped them decide what they want to do in the future and to understand what working life will be like)

These scales were then submitted to a test of reliability (Cronbach's alpha) to examine the extent to which the items which made up the scale were mutually correlated and thus measuring essentially the same construct. Values close to 1.0 are perfectly correlated, and values around 0 would imply no mutual relationship.

A description of the individual items on the questionnaire that made up each factor, and the reliability of the factors is presented below. As can be seen from this list of variables, some items that did not relate closely to the others in that factor were omitted, as they were measuring slightly different aspects of students' attitudes. These items will be examined separately in future analyses. It is also worth noting that items from a question do not necessarily appear within the same factor, for example, items from question 19 appeared in factor 2, factor 3 and factor 4.

Factor 1: Preferment of college to school

- ♦ 3a- I feel comfortable at college/training provider
- ♦ 3e- I enjoy the courses I am doing out of school
- ♦ 3f- I fit in with other students on the course

- ♦ 3h- I think that what I am doing out of school helps me understand my school work
- ♦ 3i- I work well with students from other schools on the course
- ♦ 3j- I feel I am treated more as an adult when I am at the college/training provider
- ♦ 3l- I think that the college/training provider has a more relaxed atmosphere than school
- ♦ 3b- (negative) I find it difficult to travel to college/training provider
- ♦ 3d- (negative) I am nervous about the courses I am doing out of school
- ♦ 3g- (negative) I do not enjoy working with adults from outside school
- ♦ 3k- (negative) I find it easier to learn at school than the college/training provider
- ♦ 3m- (negative) I can work more at my own pace at school than at the college/training provider

Reliability= 0.68

Factor 2: Confidence in abilities

- ♦ 19a- I am good at working on my own
- ♦ 19d- I find it easy to set targets for myself
- ♦ 19e- I am good at solving problems
- ♦ 19j- I like to be given responsibility
- ♦ 19l- I get on well with adults

Reliability= 0.51

Factor 3: 'Hands on' learning approach

- ♦ 19f- I prefer practical work to lots of learning
- ♦ 19h- I like working in a team
- ♦ 19i- I learn best by doing something
- ♦ 19k- I like to be treated as an adult

Reliability= 0.52

Factor 4: Attitude to school and its usefulness

- ♦ 19b- I am good at using books to look for information
- ♦ 19c- I am good at using computers to look for information
- ♦ 20a- I work as hard as I can at school
- ♦ 20b- (negative) I often count the minutes until a lesson ends

- ♦ 20c- (negative) I am bored in lessons
- ♦ 20d- (negative) The work I do in lessons is a waste of time
- ♦ 20e- The work I do in lessons is interesting
- ♦ 21a- Most of the time I like coming to school
- ♦ 21b- School work is worth doing
- ♦ 21c- I am well behaved in school
- ♦ 21e- (negative) Some of the subjects I did in years 7-9 were a waste of time
- ♦ 24a- Given you useful skills and knowledge
- ♦ 24b- Prepared you for adult and working life
- ♦ 24c- Given you helpful information about choices after Year 11
- ♦ 24d- Made you think about going on to further learning after Year 11
- ♦ 25a- My parents want me to stay in education as long as possible
- ♦ 25b- (negative) I can't wait to leave school and get a job
- ♦ 25c- (negative) I think there is no point in studying subjects that don't lead to a qualification
- ♦ 25d- (negative) I don't think school subjects are much help in getting a job
- ♦ 25e- I think I will need to know how to use a computer when I get a job
- ♦ 25f- I think the courses I am taking will help me get a good job

Reliability= 0.84

Factor 5: Tendency to truant or be late

- ♦ 22- Since the beginning of Year 10 have you ever played truant from school?
- ♦ 23- How often are you late for school lessons?

Reliability= 0.50

Factor 6: Increased respect for education

- ♦ 18a- helped me realise the importance of getting qualifications
- ♦ 18b- helped me realise the importance of the things I am learning in school
- ♦ 18c- helped me feel that I can achieve more
- ♦ 18e- made me more motivated to learn and do well at school
- ♦ 18f- helped me to find my education interesting

Reliability= 0.75

Factor 7: Preparedness for work

- ◆ 18d- helped me to find out what I am good at
- ◆ 18g- helped me to manage my time better
- ◆ 18h- helped me to feel able to try new things
- ◆ 18i- helped me to decide what I want to do in the future
- ◆ 18j- helped me to decide what I don't want to do in the future
- ◆ 18k- helped me to understand what working life will be like
- ◆ 18l- made me a more confident person
- ◆ 18m- helped me to learn how to work with adults
- ◆ 18n- helped me learn how to work with other young people

Reliability= 0.80

APPENDIX C: Students' progression by qualification type

A/AS levels

Overall, for 98 per cent of the respondents who indicated that they planned to take an A/AS course, this represented a progression from their IFP course. For only one per cent of the young people, A/AS levels were not a progression, and this was because they were already doing a Level 2 qualification as part of the IFP. More detailed data on this is presented in Table C1 below. Nearly a third (32 per cent) of the respondents who planned to take A/AS level courses intended to take a course in the same subject area as their IFP course, while nearly two-thirds (66 per cent) of students were intending to take an A/AS level course in a different vocational area.

Table C1. A levels: Extent of Progression

A level Progression	%
Same subject area and progression	31
Same subject area and no progression (same level)	1
Same subject area but progression unclear	<1
Different subject area and progression	66
Different subject area and no progression (same level)	<1
Different subject area but progression unclear	<1
No judgement possible	<1
No response	1
N = 868	

All those who indicated that they plan to take an A/AS level

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004 and baseline data 2002

NVQs

Just over a quarter (26 per cent) of respondents were intending to progress onto an NVQ course that was at a higher level than the course they were taking through the IFP. On the other hand, 14 per cent of respondents planned to take a NVQ that would not represent a progression from their IFP course as it was at the same level as their current course. A large proportion of the students who were planning to pursue an NVQ after Year 11 were unable to give information on the level of the qualification they intended to take. Consequently, for 55 per cent of the respondents, it was not possible to work out the extent to which this planned NVQ course represented a progression from their IFP course.

early half (47 per cent) of the young people intending to do an NVQ planned to pursue a course that was in the same subject area as their IFP course. As Table C2 shows, 20 per cent of respondents were not only intending to undertake a course in the same subject area as their IFP course, but they were also planning to progress to a higher level NVQ. A total of 41 per cent of respondents were intending to take an NVQ in a different subject area to their IFP course.

Table C2. NVQs: Extent of Progression

NVQ Progression	%
Same subject area and progression	20
Same subject area and no progression (same level)	8
Same subject area but progression unclear	19
Different subject area and progression	7
Different subject area and no progression (same level)	6
Different subject area but progression unclear	29
No judgement possible	8
No response	5
N = 465	

All those who indicated that they plan to take an NVQ

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004 and baseline data 2002

GNVQs

Table C3 shows that 14 per cent of students intending to do a GNVQ course were planning that this course would be at a higher level than their IFP course. In contrast, nine per cent planned to take a GNVQ course that would not represent a progression from their IFP course. For the remaining 72 per cent of students planning to pursue a GNVQ, it was not possible to work out the extent of their planned progression because they did not provide information on the level of GNVQ they intended to take. Just under half of the young people intending to do a GNVQ planned to take a course that was in the same subject area as their IFP course, while 43 per cent planned to undertake a GNVQ in a different subject area.

Table C3. GNVQs: Extent of Progression

GNVQ Progression	%
Same subject area and progression	7
Same subject area and no progression (same level)	3
Same subject area but progression unclear	40
Different subject area and progression	7
Different subject area and no progression (same level)	6
Different subject area but progression unclear	31
No judgement possible	2
No response	5
N = 272	

All those who indicated that they plan to take a GNVQ

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004 and baseline data 2002

Other vocational qualifications

As shown in Table C4, for 18 per cent of the students planning to pursue another VQ, this represented a progression from the course they were taking through the IFP, as it was at a higher level. On the other hand, six per cent of respondents planned to take a VQ that was at the same level as their IFP course. For 61 per cent of the students planning to take another VQ, it was not possible to work out the extent of their future progression because they did not provide information on the level of other VQ they planned to take.

Just over a third (34 per cent) of the young people intending to take another VQ after finishing Year 11 planned to pursue a course that was in the same subject area as their IFP course, while 51 per cent intended to take a course in a different subject area.

Table C4. Other vocational qualification: Extent of Progression

Other qualifications progression	%
Same subject area and progression	8
Same subject area and no progression (same level)	2
Same subject area but progression unclear	24
Different subject area and progression	11
Different subject area and no progression (same level)	4
Different subject area but progression unclear	37
No judgement possible	7
No response	8
N = 488	

All those who indicated that they plan to take another vocational qualification

Source: NFER evaluation of Increased Flexibility Programme: Survey of Year 11 Students 2004 and baseline data 2002

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