



**OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL**

**Activity Agreements  
Follow-up Study of Leavers**

**YouthLink**  
Scotland  
The national agency for youth work

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# FOREWORD

*It is with great pleasure that I introduce this document, which provides evidence of how local authority based partnerships across Scotland are working together, through Activity Agreements, to achieve better outcomes for some of the most vulnerable 16-19 year olds in Scotland.*

*The findings in this report are testament to the success of the key features and principles of the Activity Agreement approach; the offer of a tailored package of services, based on an assessment of a young person's needs and interests, and consistent support from a trusted professional. These are critical elements to young people participating in and sustaining learning.*

*YouthLink Scotland, as the national agency for youth work, champions the role and value of the youth work sector, and I am delighted that a wide range of partners, across different disciplines and fields of expertise, both voluntary and statutory, continue to be involved in the delivery of Activity Agreements. YouthLink Scotland is fully behind the Activity Agreement approach and is convinced that Activity Agreements are critical to those furthest away from the labour market enhancing their job and life chances and improving their employability and social skillsets.*

*Jim Sweeney*

*Chief Executive*

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# Executive Summary

Activity Agreements play a key role in the delivery of Opportunities for All, ensuring successful post-16 transitions for young people furthest from the labour market. An Activity Agreement offers young people a tailored package of activity, learning and support, delivered through local authority partnerships across all 32 Scottish local authorities. This is supported by the Scottish Government and co-ordinated nationally by YouthLink Scotland.

This study was undertaken to examine the post-Activity Agreement experiences of a cohort of young people who left their Agreement between April 2011 and March 2012. Its aim was to better understand and measure sustainability and subsequent progression from the first destination after completion of an Activity Agreement.

The research was conducted by 23 local authorities in the form of a telephone survey. 420 young people took part, representing 49% of the total number of young people who made a positive transition from an Activity Agreement during that time period.

## FINDINGS

### ***Routes and pathways for participants***

- Most young people engaged with Activity Agreements straight from school (68%).
- 90% of young people had completed their Activity Agreement.
- Following their Activity Agreement, 49% of young people were participating in a training programme, 22% were in further education, 18% had secured employment and 11% went on to participate in something else not listed.

### ***Preparing young people for progression***

- 30% of the young people surveyed had participated in a work taster as part of their Activity Agreement, with 81% of those young people stating that the work experience helped them make choices.
- Activity Agreements are preparing young people for employment. 84% of young people who secured employment following their Activity Agreement said that the Activity Agreement had helped them to get the job.

### ***Sustaining progression***

- Activity Agreements are preparing young people to sustain their progressions. 79% of young people surveyed have sustained participation after their Activity Agreement.

### ***Upskilling***

- Young people are re-engaging in learning and training through Activity Agreements and 79% have continued to upskill through their post-Activity Agreement destination.

### ***Impact of Activity Agreements***

- 93% of young people surveyed identified that something positive had changed for them as a result of their participation in an Activity Agreement.

## SUMMARY

This survey has been the first opportunity to capture the post-Activity Agreement experiences of young people on a national scale. Its findings suggest that this approach is a valuable employability intervention for those young people who are in need of additional support.

We would like to thank the local authorities who took part and the young people who gave up their time to participate. For further information please contact Sandra McIntyre at [smcintyre@youthlinkscotland.org](mailto:smcintyre@youthlinkscotland.org) or Marielle Bruce at [mbruce@youthlinkscotland.org](mailto:mbruce@youthlinkscotland.org) This report is also available on YouthLink Scotland's website at [www.youthlinkscotland.org](http://www.youthlinkscotland.org)

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# Follow-up Study of Activity Agreement Leavers

Activity Agreements are recognised as a positive and successful way of supporting the hardest to reach 16-19 year olds into education, employment and training. This study was undertaken to better understand and measure sustainability and subsequent progression from the first destination after completion of an Activity Agreement.

It is also hoped that this study will inform discussion around how the Activity Agreement approach could better influence other provision.

The objectives are:

- To consider routes and pathways for participants
- To identify those progression routes with a higher level of sustainability
- To identify employment sectors who have a higher rate of sustainability
- To measure the pipeline of learning
- To determine if Activity Agreements are preparing young people to sustain their progressions

## METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire survey was undertaken with young people who had left their Activity Agreement between April 2011 and March 2012 and who had progressed to employment or participation in further learning or training. The intention was to measure 50% of this cohort of leavers. Local authorities conducted the survey by telephone and responses were captured via an online survey. Data was collected anonymously and analysed by YouthLink Scotland.

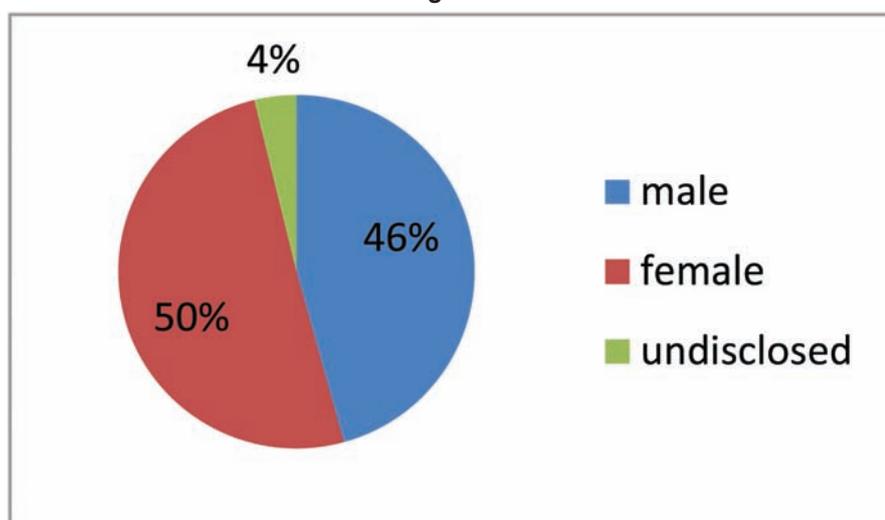
## FINDINGS

A total of 420 young people took part in the study<sup>1</sup>. This represents 49% of all positive Activity Agreement leavers between April 2011 and March 2012.

Responses were submitted by 23 local authority areas. Of the nine local authorities who did not submit data, four did not have any leavers as this period covered the first full year of roll-out and five were unable to make contact with their leavers.

**Figure 1** shows that 212 responses were from females, 192 from males and 16 did not answer the question.

Figure 1



# 1. ROUTES AND PATHWAYS FOR PARTICIPANTS

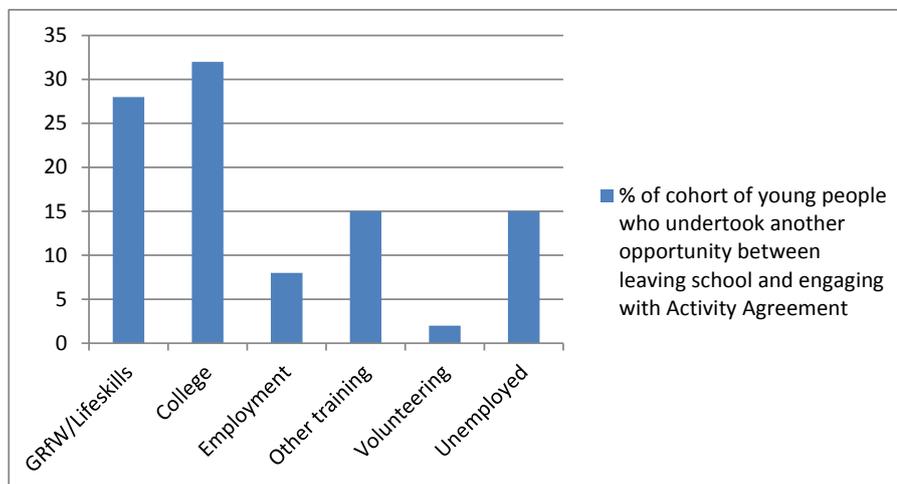
## 1.1 Routes into Activity Agreements

Most young people had engaged with Activity Agreements straight from school (68%) with females more likely than males to do so.

**Figure 2** shows young people who had undertaken an opportunity between leaving school and engaging with Activity Agreements.

This group's route into Activity Agreements tended to be from a period of attendance at college or a training programme.

**Figure 2: Activities Undertaken Prior to Activity Agreement**

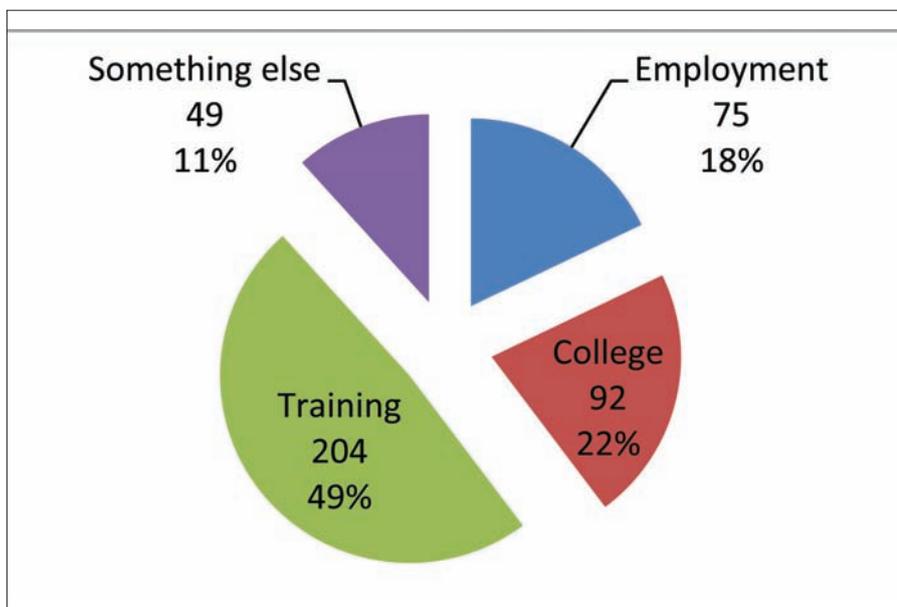


## 1.2 Pathways through Activity Agreements

**Figure 3** shows that the majority of young people surveyed went on to participate in a training programme following their Activity Agreement.

90% of the 420 young people surveyed had completed their Activity Agreement. 91% of males completed their Activity Agreement, while 89% of females completed.

**Figure 3: Post Activity Agreement Destinations**

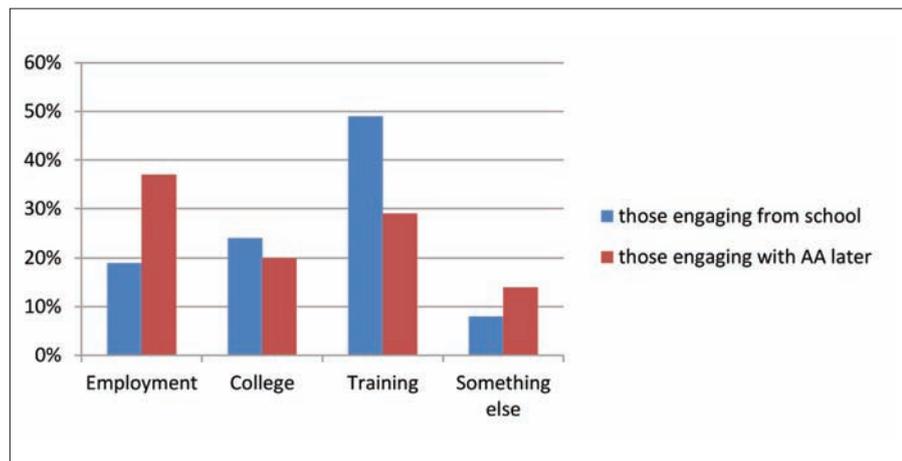


Our findings suggest that whether a young person completes their Activity Agreement or not can influence pathways beyond. Early leavers were less likely than completers to progress to a training programme, and were much less likely to go on to secure employment straight after their Activity Agreement. Young people who left their Activity Agreement early were also much more likely to progress to 'something else'<sup>2</sup> in our study.

A young person's pathway through Activity Agreements also appears to be influenced by whether they engaged straight from school or did something else first. Those who engaged with Activity Agreements straight from school were slightly more likely to complete their Activity Agreement than young people who did something else in between.

**Figure 4** shows that the most likely progression route for young people who had engaged with an Activity Agreement straight from school was into a training programme. Young people for whom an Activity Agreement had not been their first opportunity after leaving school, were more likely to go on to employment than those who went straight from school.

**Figure 4: Progression routes after Activity Agreement**



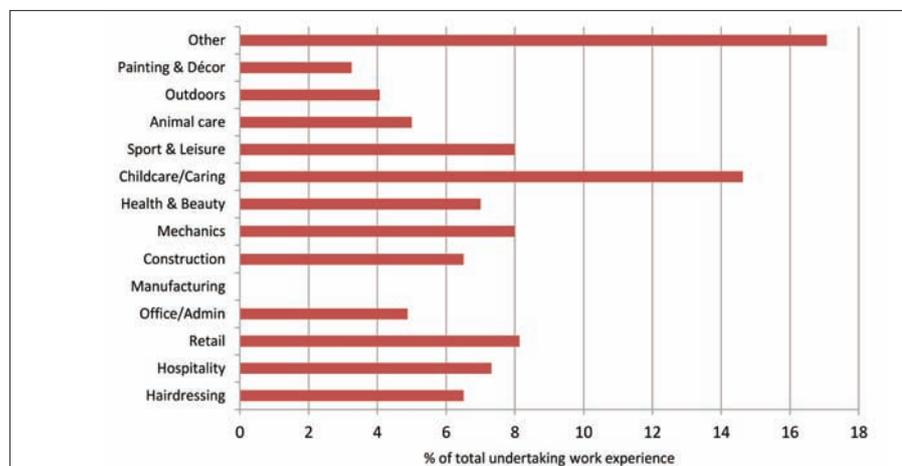
## 2. PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR PROGRESSION

### 2.1 Preparing young people for work

Work experience has a direct impact on work chances<sup>3</sup>. Research conducted by the UKCES<sup>4</sup> suggests that work experience should be good quality, offer a variety of experiences and be available across different sectors of the economy.

In our survey, 30% of young people had participated in work experience as part of their Activity Agreement. The time spent on work experience is very much dependent on the young persons individual needs. This helped to prepare them for work; through the development of employability skills, providing insight into careers and allowing young people access to a network of contacts. Opportunities were offered across a variety of sectors (**Figure 5**).

**Figure 5: Young People who Undertook Work Experience**



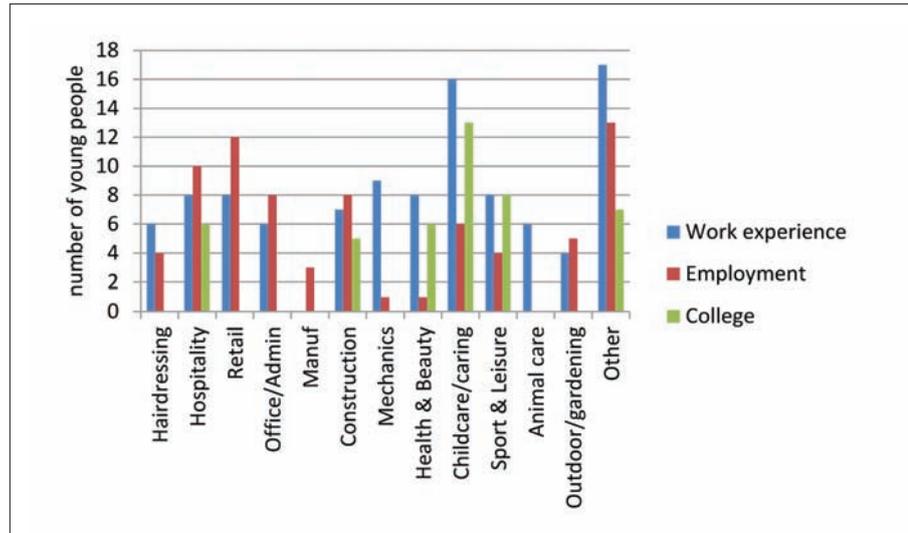
Work experience helps young people decide on their next steps. In our survey, 81% of those who undertook work experience said it helped them decide what they wanted to do when their Activity Agreement finished.

It is widely accepted that work experience opportunities should be offered in growth sectors so that aspirations are raised in sectors that offer real employment opportunities.

Local authorities are using local labour market intelligence to ensure their work experience opportunities are connecting young people to work and training. **Figure 6** shows that the sectors where young people undertook work experience mostly mirrored the sectors where young people (whether they undertook work experience or not) secured employment or undertook further education.

*“Working alongside full-time decorators – learning skills from them”*

Figure 6: Work experience compared to progression opportunities



Activity Agreements are connecting young people to work. Two thirds of those who undertook work experience and progressed to employment found a job in the same sector as their work experience. Over a third of those were kept on by their work experience employer.

*“They could see I could do the job”*

Construction and childcare were the sectors where young people were most likely to remain in the same sector between work experience and employment and also where young people were kept on by work experience employers.

### 2.2 Progression to work

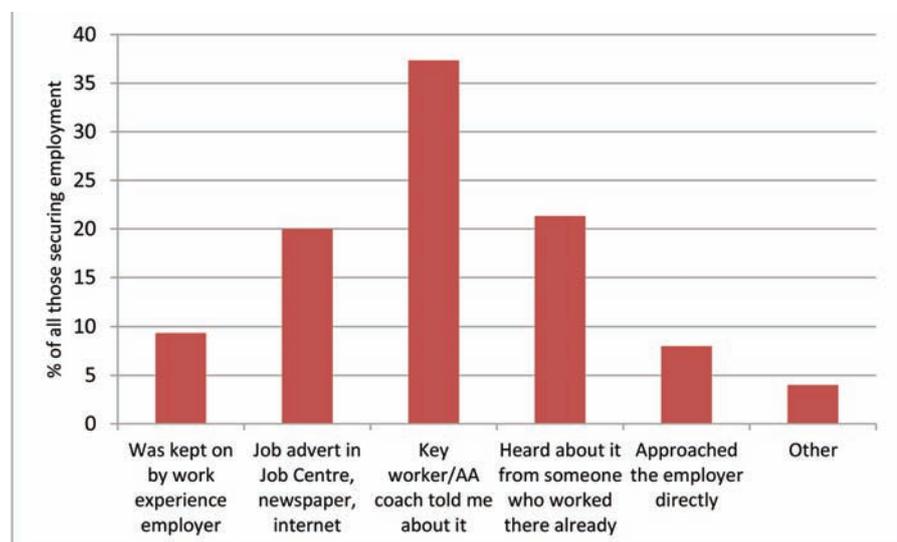
84% of young people who progressed to employment following their Activity Agreement said it helped them to get the job. When asked to explain their answer, most young people said the confidence gained on their Activity Agreement had the biggest impact. Other aspects young people said had helped them gain employment were their participation in work experience and the learning from programmes and courses undertaken, particularly mentioning the acquisition of interview skills.

*“At first I wouldn’t talk to anyone and I felt sick with nerves all the time.*

*Without my work experience and that they were so good with me letting me start with just a few hours and then more and more I could never have got a job”*

Figure 7: How young people heard about job vacancy

Figure 7 suggests that another critical aspect of the Activity Agreement approach to young people’s progression to employment is the role of the key worker or ‘trusted professional’.

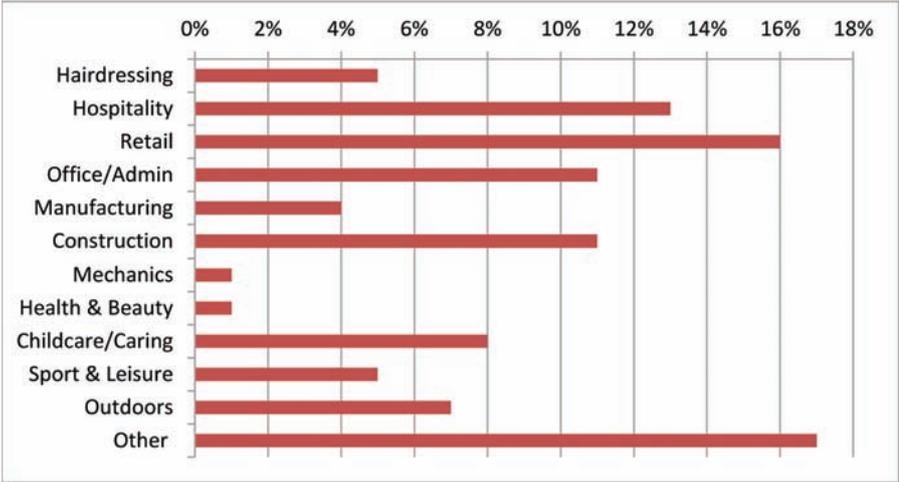


Our findings show that 37% of the young people who secured employment following their Activity Agreement heard about the vacancy through their dedicated professional.

21% heard about the vacancy from someone who already worked in the organisation and 8% had approached the employer directly. These findings reflect the UK picture of the rising importance of networks and contacts in recruitment<sup>5</sup>.

**Figure 8** shows that young people are progressing into employment across different sectors of the economy, reflecting local labour market patterns across the country. The biggest single sector category was retail, followed by hospitality.

**Figure 8: Percentage of young people in employment by sector**

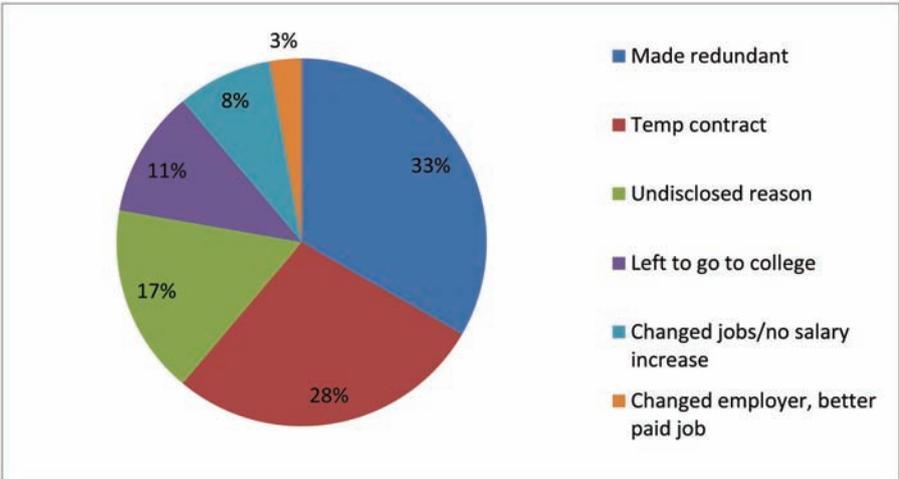


We asked young people about the nature of the employment they secured following their Activity Agreement. The majority (68%) had secured a full-time job, with 32% in part-time employment. Of those young people sustaining that first job nearly 50% said they were looking for more hours. This suggests at some level of under-employment in terms of hours worked.

In addition, 59% of young people who were in employment following their Activity Agreement had permanent contracts. For the other 41% of young people, their employment was temporary.

As **figure 9** shows, a temporary contract was the second most common reason a young person was no longer employed in their first job. Of those young people who had been employed on a temporary basis, but who are no longer in that job, 43% had sustained the job for around six months or more and 57% have either found other employment or are now participating in learning or training.

**Figure 9: Reason for not sustaining first job following Activity Agreement**



Young people who did not sustain employment were mostly made redundant/sacked, usually within the first six months of employment.

### 2.3 Progression to learning and training

71% of the leavers in our study had gone on to participate in training or further education following their Activity Agreement.

The majority (49%) had progressed to a training programme.

**Figure 10** gives a breakdown of the different types of training these young people participated in.

22% had progressed to further education. The most common subjects studied at college were Care and General Skills (including literacy and numeracy), followed by Sport/Fitness, Media Studies, Hair and Beauty and Hospitality. Attendance at a college taster, as part of an Activity Agreement, helped some young people make course choices following their Activity Agreement.

A further 11% of young people surveyed categorised themselves as having progressed to some other positive destination. This included volunteering and participation in supported learning or training programmes which young people chose to categorise as 'something else'.

**Figure 10: Types of training undertaken following Activity Agreement**

Training	% of young people in training
GRfW	46%
Lifeskills	22%
Modern Apprenticeship	14%
Local/other training	18%

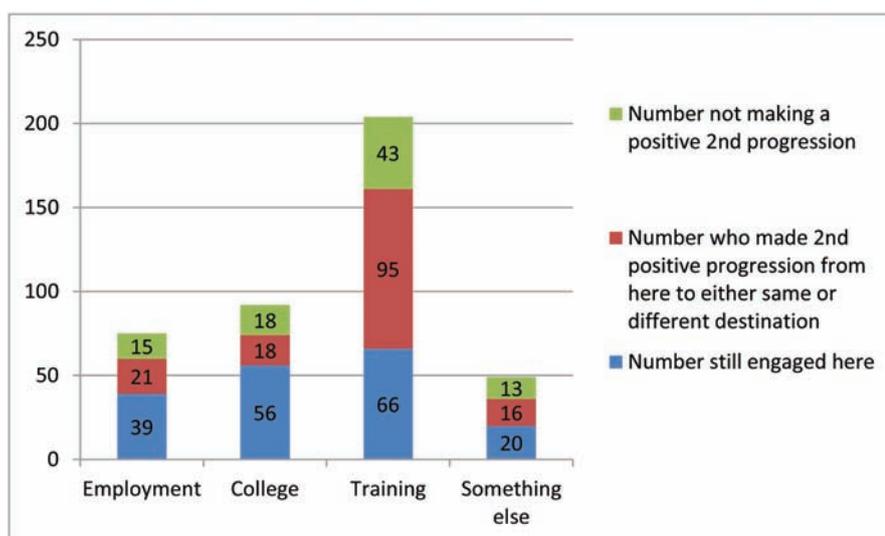
*"I was lost when I left school and the Activity Agreement made me see what I could do. I am now on my dream course at college, living away from home and independent."*

## 3. SUSTAINING PROGRESSION

### 3.1 Are young people sustaining their participation?

At the point they were asked, 79% of young people (331) had sustained their participation, either by continuing in the same destination or by making a positive second progression (see figure 11).

**Figure 11: Sustained Participation**



### 3.2 How sustainable are progression routes?

**Figure 11** also suggests that college was the most sustainable progression route for young people in our survey, with 61% of young people remaining in this destination. Employment sustained 52% of young people and 32% of young people sustained their training programme.

Some training programmes may be shorter in length than a college course, which is not reflected in these figures.

Looking at sustainability in terms of early leavers, 15% of young people left college before completing and 19% left a training programme early. This suggests again that young people may be more likely to sustain participation in a college course. Our findings also suggest that those who left their Activity Agreement early may be less likely to sustain a college or training programme.

Of the 52% of young people that are still in their original first job following their Activity Agreement, 85% have sustained this job for six months or more. Of those young people who are no longer in that first job, around half sustained it for six months or more.

In our survey, 63% of young people who had moved from their initial post-Activity Agreement destination had made a second positive progression. **Figure 12** shows that young people in our survey were most likely to make a positive onward progression from a training programme. They were least likely to make a positive second transition from college.

**Figure 12: Onward Positive Progressions by initial destination**

<b>1<sup>st</sup> destination following Activity Agreement</b>	<b>% of onward progressions that were positive</b>
Employment	58%
College	50%
Training	69%
Something else	55%

**3.3 Which employment sectors have higher rates of sustainability?**

**Figure 13** shows that Childcare/Caring, Health & Beauty and Mechanics were the sectors of the economy that had the highest rates of sustainability in our survey.

**Figure 13: Percentage of young people who sustained employment**

<b>Employment Sector</b>	<b>% who sustained</b>
Hairdressing	25
Hospitality	30
Retail	50
Office/Admin	38
Manufacturing	67
Construction	50
Mechanics	100
Health & Beauty	100
Childcare/Caring	100
Sport & Leisure	50
Outdoors	40
Other	46

**4. UPSKILLING**

Since leaving their Activity Agreement 79% of young people in our survey have continued to upskill.

Young people have developed their skills and gained knowledge at college, on training programmes and through a wide variety of workplace learning opportunities, including certificated courses.

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It is vital that individuals who have been less likely to engage in learning continue to upskill as they progress, particularly in these first stage learning opportunities. Activity Agreements are ensuring that young people are equipped to recognise the value of their skills and to want to continue developing.

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*“You never gave up on me and helped me to see what options there were to use my football skills even though I did not finish at school.”*

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## 5. IMPACT OF ACTIVITY AGREEMENTS

### 5.1 What has changed for young people as a result of participating in an Activity Agreement?

In our survey, 93% of leavers said that something positive had changed as a result of their participation in an Activity Agreement. It is these changes that young people can identify in themselves that is the key to how Activity Agreements are preparing young people to sustain their participation beyond Activity Agreement support.

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*“Changed my way of thinking.”*

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*“Got more confident in interviews.”*

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Activity Agreements are helping young people decide on their next steps. A vital part of this is the ‘trusted professional’ who young people told us motivated, encouraged and inspired them to make changes in their life. A big factor for many young people was the support they had received to get into a routine, something that has enabled them to sustain their participation beyond the Activity Agreement.

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*“I was always in trouble at school and they told me I wouldn’t get a job. I didn’t know I was good at things until I went on the Activity Agreements and then I found out I was.”*

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Activity Agreements are re-engaging the hardest to reach young people in learning and giving them the confidence, skills and personal awareness to continue participating beyond this support. A quarter of young people said they felt more confident as a result of their Activity Agreement. Young people have been able to translate this into an ability to seek employment or pursue other goals.

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*“She (trusted professional) made me see that I could do things and always listened when things weren’t good.”*

*“I actually got up and done something, if no one came to my door I would have done nothing.”*

*“I’m not as scared of doing new things now.”*

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#### REFERENCES:

- 1 This includes 16 incomplete surveys and 28 responses from young people who completed their Activity Agreement out-with the intended period but whose results have been included.
- 2 The ‘something else’ category covered volunteering, return to school and where young people were participating in something that they did not recognise as covered under the other category headings.
- 3 Education & Employers Taskforce (EET) – Work Experience: Impact and delivery – Insights from the evidence (April 2012)
- 4 UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) – The Youth Employment Challenge (July 2012)
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