
Skills Pipeline Project Evaluation

Revised Draft Report

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.0 BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES
- 2.0 METHODOLOGY
- 3.0 THE FINANCIAL SERVICES SKILLS PIPELINE PROJECT
- 4.0 IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS – KEY FINDINGS
- 5.0 PARTICIPANTS SURVEY - KEY FINDINGS
- 6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and Objectives

The Skills Pipeline project was established with a view to providing customised training for jobs in the financial sector and increase the pool of skilled people in the Glasgow area to supply local companies.

The project included:

- an awareness raising and recruitment campaign (delivered at Shopping Centre events)
- a two week training course (delivered over 10 days, with a guarantee of an interview with a participating company at the end of the course)
- establishment of a database of people interested in jobs in the financial sector.

PSP ran a Skills Pipeline co-ordinated project in Glasgow for Scottish Enterprise Glasgow through late 2003/ early 2004, with the following profile of participants:

- 336 'interested parties' listed on project database
- 33 individuals completed the training course
- 5 participating companies.

This report details the key findings of an evaluation of the Skills Pipeline Project, the key objective of which was to assess whether or not the project achieved its overall objectives to:

- Train unemployed people to enable them to take up jobs in the financial sector
- Act as a skills pipeline for the companies involved

Methodology

The evaluation comprised a hybrid research methodology, which included the following activities:

- A face to face interview with the Project Manager in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the nature of the project, an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and access to the relevant contact for the other elements of the project.
- Undertaking a total of 3 in-depth interviews with representatives of the companies who participated in the project in order to assess the extent to which they believed the project to meet their own requirements, whether it is cost effective and an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. Regrettably, of the

5 original participating companies, 2 of the relevant contacts had moved on and there was nobody else within the company who had been involved within the Project.

- A telephone with 100 of the individuals who attended either the Shopping Centre or Evening Events and subsequently put their names on the database of individuals interested in obtaining work in the Financial Services Sector. This survey was undertaken in order to find out their perceptions of the marketing events and the positive outcomes for these individuals and to profile these individuals.
- Finally a telephone survey of 19 individuals who participated in the training course was undertaken. From an available population of 35 participants, this represents a response rate of 54%. Interviews covered the profile of individuals involved, perceptions of the successes (and failures?) of the marketing events and training course, positive outcomes achieved for these individuals and the benefits of each element of the project.

This executive summary outlines the key findings of the surveys with each of the key groups, detailed above.

Employers Key Findings

- Companies were aware that the Skills Pipeline was established to provide opportunity for unemployed to learn about, train and (possibly) gain access to employment within the Call Centre industry in financial services.
- Ultimately, the companies were looking for the Skills Pipeline to increase their access to a bank of potential employees. This was their main motivation in terms of becoming involved in the Project. All employers involved were, at the time, in the throes of major recruitment campaigns themselves and viewed the Skills Pipeline as an opportunity to augment the activities that they were already undertaking.
- In terms of their involvement in the Skills Pipeline, the company's participation appears to have been minimal.
- Just one company representative interviewed could confirm that they were involved in discussions regarding the nature of employee required and their key skills in order to inform the training programme for trainees. None of the companies recall viewing the final training programme or having any more input than this initial discussion.
- In terms of the Evening Events, again, the participation from companies was limited. Just one of the companies involved attended every evening event. However, attendance from other companies was patchy. This was felt to be indicative of a lack of commitment to the Project from the employers perspective.
- It may, however, may be due to lack of awareness as one company received an email from the Project Manager inviting them along to the Cardonald College

event and, as such, attended. The company was unaware of any other events and of any opportunities to participate further.

- After the evening events, the companies had no involvement in the project until after the recruits completed the training course. At the end of the course, all trainees were guaranteed a telephone interview with one of the companies. Again, experience of this was not positive. The key issues were:
 - Database of poor quality i.e. out of date contact details, numbers unobtainable etc
 - Poor quality of candidate, with lack of willingness to work in call centre environment and lack of core skills required to allow them to do so.
- From all trainees, just one of the companies interviewed had successfully recruited one individual.
- In terms of the database, there is a perception from companies that this *should* be a useful tool. However, again, it was felt that much more screening could be done in order to ensure that those on the database were interested and had the core basic skills to work in the sector.
- The overall consensus from companies is that the outcomes of the project in terms of what was achieved from their perspective were disappointing. This, they believed, was in with their expectations with such a Project. It would appear that employers to have low expectations in terms of the ability of such projects to deliver 'quality' recruits. Their experience with the Skills Pipeline has borne this out.

Project Participants Key Findings

- 85% signed up to the Skills Pipeline Project at a shopping centre event, with 7% signing up at an evening event and the remaining 8% attending both shopping centre and evening events
- The main source of awareness of Shopping Centre events was, by far, that the attendee was just in the shopping centre and saw the stand. This was stated as the source of awareness by 91% of attendees.
- Overall, satisfaction with Shopping Centre events was high, with 96% of attendees stating that they were either very or fairly satisfied.
- A total of 17 interviewees attended an evening event. The most visited event was the Raddison event, which was attended by 53% of those interviewed.
- The main source of awareness of evening events was, by far, that the attendee was in the shopping centre, saw the stand and decided to go along for more information (53%). Other key sources of awareness were 'advert in local paper' (24%) and 'friend/ family'.

- Satisfaction with evening events was high, with just over three quarters of attendees (77%) stating that they were either very or fairly satisfied.
- The main reasons given in terms of why participants signed up to the Skills Pipeline Project were 'to get a job' (58%), followed by 'to get training' (20%), 'to change my career' (13%) and 'interested in sector' (11%).
- When asked their main reason for signing up from a prompted list, it is interesting to note that this main response changes to 'to receive training that would help me get a job' (40%) – without a mention of the Financial Services Sector.
- Prior to signing up to the Skills Pipeline, just 7 respondents had any call centre experience, whether current or previous, with a further 16 respondents having had customer service experience in another environment.
- Prior to signing up for the Project, just over one third of participants had considered employment within the Financial Services industry. Those who were interested in the sector (45 respondents) stated that their main reasons for interest were:
 - Used to work in the sector (16%)
 - Good prospects/ opportunities (12%)
 - Want a career (11%)
 - Thought it might be interesting (7%)
- Prior to signing up, 69% of respondents stated that they would have considered a job in the sector to be desirable. Currently, 79% of respondents stated that they would consider a job in the sector to be desirable. This represents a 10% rise indicating that Skills Pipeline does achieve some success in terms of changing attitudes to employment within the Financial Services sector.
- A total of 19 respondents participated in the 10 day training course organised by the project. Of those, 5 participated at Cardonald College, 9 at North Glasgow College and 5 at Learning IT.
- When asked their main reason for participating in the training course from a prompted list it is, again, interesting to note that there was the mention of the Financial Services sector was not the key reason given. The main reasons given were:
 - To receive training that would help me get any job (63%)
 - To receive training that would help me get a job in the financial services sector (42%)
 - To improve my computing skills (37%)
- Overall, satisfaction with the training was high, with 89% of trainees stating that they were satisfied with the training. 63% of these stated that they were very satisfied. No trainees stated that they were dissatisfied with the training.

- In terms of the length of the course, just under half (47%) felt the duration of the programme was 'just right'. However, a similar figure (42%) felt it was 'too short', with just 11% feeling that the course was 'too long'.
- All trainees believed that the location of the training programme was appropriate, with 63% stating that it was 'very appropriate' and 37% stating that it was 'fairly appropriate'. Cardonald College received the most praise in this respect, with 80% of trainees feeling that this venue was 'very appropriate'.
- The most helpful aspects of the course were, according to participants, General PC Skills and Interpersonal Skills.
- In terms of trainees expectations, just over half of participants (53%) felt that the training course met their expectations, with 26% stating that it exceeded their expectations. However, 21% (4 trainees) felt that the course fell short of their expectations
- 89% of those who participated in the training course (17 out of 19 respondents) stated that the training course was the element of the Skills Pipeline Project which worked best.
- Overall, almost three quarters of participants (73%) stated that they have received no follow up contact at all. In terms of training participants, just over one in five participant (21%) of those we interviewed have received no follow up from the companies involved.
- Goldfish have been most proactive in terms of making some form of follow up contact with project participants, particularly in terms of trainees. However, across the board, a very low proportion of those who sign up to go on the Project database, but do not go on the training, are actually contacted again by the companies.
- The key project outcomes from the participants perspective were:
 - 2 participants received a job offer with one of the employers involved in the project.
 - 4 participants received a personal interview with one of the employers involved in the project.
 - 20 participants received a telephone interview with one of the employers involved in the project.
 - 20 participants received a holding letter from one of the employers involved in the project.
- The key benefits of signing are in terms of raising opportunities that participants were not previously aware of (50%), giving participants the confidence to look for a job (20%) and giving participants the skills to get a job (12%).

- Overall, 4% of participants stated that participating in the project has given them a job. However, when training participants only are considered in this respect, this number rises to 21%. It should be noted, however, that at the time of the evaluation RBS were still in the process of contacting and interviewing trainees. As such, it is likely that the final percentage of training participants into work will be higher.
- At the time of signing up to Skills Pipeline, 37% of participants were in either full or part time employment, and 45% were unemployed. Compared to current employment status, 56% of participants are now in either full or part time employment, and 28% unemployed. This is a positive change with regard to the employment status of Skills Pipeline participants, with a 19% increase in employment and a 17% fall in unemployment.
- As noted previously, just 7 respondents had any call centre experience, whether current or previous, with a further 16 respondents having had customer service experience in another environment at the time of signing up. Currently, 14 respondents are employed in call centre environment (10 of these participated in the training), with a further 22 respondents currently working in a customer service environment.

Conclusions

Our conclusions with regard to the evaluation of the Skills Pipeline Project are summarised below, relating to the key objectives of the research:

- *Does the Skills Pipeline Project train unemployed people to enable them to take up jobs in the financial sector?*

From our discussions with companies, we have to conclude that the Skills Pipeline Project does not train unemployed people to enable them to take up jobs in the financial sector. The training course, companies believe, is set at a very basic level and, as such, would never facilitate the training of individuals (whether unemployed or employed) to enable them to take up jobs in the financial sector.

All companies would train any recruit in-house prior to letting them on the phones. This training course typically lasts 3-4 weeks and is perceived to be fairly intensive, covering, not just telephone skills, but product and systems training relevant to the company itself. In addition, the training required for any recruit would include legal and Financial Services Authority Training (FSA).

The training course within the Skills Pipeline is perceived to be sufficient to bring the right quality of candidate (in terms of attitude and willingness to work) up to a level where they could potentially compete for a job in an interview situation. It does, in no way, train somebody to be in a position to take up a job in the Financial Sector.

- *Does the Skills Pipeline Project act as a skills pipeline for the companies involved?*

We believe that it has to be concluded that the Skills Pipeline Project does not act as a skills pipeline for the companies involved. Of the companies which we spoke to, just one had successfully recruited one individual from the Project. It should be noted, however, that RBS is still in the process of screening and recruitment and, as such, believed it was too early to say whether or not the Project had been a success in this respect. As such, this figure may well rise in time.

However, regardless of this, the companies do not have high expectations of this type of project and do not, and will not, view it as anything other than a 'pre-screening' programme which will feed into their own recruitment programmes.

- *Which elements of the marketing events were successful?*

Satisfaction with the Shopping Centre events was high, with 96% of attendees stating that they were either very or fairly satisfied. Most highly rated at these events were the helpfulness of staff, information given and the location of the stand. In terms of numbers recruited to the Project through the Shopping Centre events, the most successful event was that at Asda Govan, where 78 individuals expressed an interest in the Project and 53 signed up to the database.

Evening events, surprisingly, were less successful. Satisfaction with evening events, from the participants perspective, was 77%. Again helpfulness of staff and information given is rated most highly. Evening events also gave potential recruits the opportunity to meet with employers and discuss potential job opportunities.

From the employers perspective, these events were not particularly well organised, that some venues were more adequate for the purpose than others (Raddison perceived as being most adequate) and that attendees expectations with regard to what they could expect from such an event had not been adequately managed. For example, there was a feeling that some attendees were expecting to be able to 'get a job' out of attending.

In addition, the conversion rate from evening events was much less, with 53 out of 122 attendees signing up to the database (43% conversion), compared to 336 out of 471 attendees at shopping centre events signing up to the database (71%). It could be argued, however, that the lesser conversion rate may result in more adequate participants who have a better understanding of the Project and the nature of jobs to which they were expressing an interest.

- *Which elements of the training were successful?*

For trainees, the most successful elements of the training were the 'General PC Skills' and 'Interpersonal Skills' elements of the training course. Both of these elements were rated as most helpful by 58% of participants. This was closely followed by 'interview guidelines' (47%) and then 'Telephone techniques/skills' (37%).

In speaking to the training providers, it was felt that a particular challenge in delivering the training course was the diversity of participant. For example, some had particularly strong IT skills whereas others had none. They also came from a range of different ages and backgrounds. Whilst, in some ways, this was a strength of the course and reflects the work environment, it also represented a challenge for the training providers who found it necessary to adapt the training course as they were going along in order to provide for the differing nature of participant. Some more flexibility in terms of the design of the training course was suggested by training providers in order to allow for more adequate provision of training such diverse groups.

It was felt by one particular training provider that the selection process does not filter out the people who would be unable to develop the necessary skills, and that training providers should be more involved with the selection process.

- *The profile of individuals responding to the project*

Overall, the profile of participants tended to be fairly diverse, with ages ranging from 16 to 63. However, in the main, participants tended to be under the age of 45, with 91% of participants falling within this age group. The most prolific

age group were aged 20-25, with a total of 29% of participants overall and 32% of training participants falling within this group.

In terms of gender, the split was skewed in favour of females, with 63% of participants overall and 68% of trainees being female.

The employment status of all participants tends towards the unemployed, with 45% of participants overall stating that they fell within this group, with 58% of these being unemployed for 6 months or less, 9% unemployed for between 6 and 18 months and 33% unemployed for longer than 18 months.

27% of participants were employed full time and 10% were employed part time at the time of signing up.

If we consider just the training participants, the profile is somewhat different, with 37% stating that at the time of signing up they were in full time employment, 21% in looking after home/ family, 16% unemployed, 11% students and just one trainee (5%) fell into each of the remaining groups (part time employment, long term sick/ disabled and retired).

At the time of signing up to the Skills Pipeline just 7 respondents had any call centre experience, whether current or previous, with a further 16 respondents having had customer service experience in another environment at the time of signing up

- *The model used to allow companies to participate*

In the main, it was felt that the model which allowed companies to participate in the project was felt to be relatively weak, with companies not feeling particularly engaged in the process and making many recommendations as to how this model could be improved from their perspective.

The lines of communication were not felt to be entirely open between the Project Managers and the companies. There was a lack of interaction and involvement from the Companies in terms of training course and database design. Just one company could confirm that they had input into the training course, however, they did not get to see the final course content.

After the evening events, the companies had no involvement in the project until after the recruits completed the training course. At the end of the course, all trainees were guaranteed a telephone interview with one of the companies. Again, experience of this was not positive. The key issues were:

- Database of poor quality i.e. out of date contact details, numbers unobtainable etc
- Poor quality of candidate, with lack of willingness to work in call centre environment and lack of core skills required to allow them to do so.

From all trainees, just one of the companies interviewed had successfully recruited one individual.

In terms of the database, there is a perception from companies that this *should* be a useful tool. However, again, it was felt that much more screening could be done in order to ensure that those on the database were interested and had the core basic skills to work in the sector.

The overall consensus from companies is that the outcomes of the project in terms of what was achieved from their perspective were disappointing. This, they believed, was in with their expectations with such a Project. It would appear that employers to have low expectations in terms of the ability of such projects to deliver 'quality' recruits. Their experience with the Skills Pipeline has borne this out.

- *Positive outcomes for individuals agreeing to both be put on the database and attend the training sessions*

The key benefits of signing are in terms of raising opportunities that participants were not previously aware of (50%), giving participants the confidence to look for a job (20%) and giving participants the skills to get a job (12%).

Overall, 4% of participants stated that participating in the project has given them a job. However, when training participants only are considered in this respect, this number rises to 21%. It should be noted, however, that at the time of the evaluation RBS were still in the process of contacting and interviewing trainees. As such, it is likely that the final percentage of training participants into work will be higher.

At the time of signing up to Skills Pipeline, 37% of participants were in either full or part time employment, and 45% were unemployed. Compared to current employment status, 56% of participants are now in either full or part time employment, and 28% unemployed. This is a positive change with regard to the employment status of Skills Pipeline participants, with a 19% increase in employment and a 17% fall in unemployment.

At the time of signing up to the Skills Pipeline, just 7 respondents had any call centre experience, whether current or previous, with a further 16 respondents having had customer service experience in another environment. Currently, 14 respondents are employed in call centre environment (10 of these participated in the training), with a further 22 respondents currently working in a customer service environment.

Recommendations

Based upon the findings of the research, we recommend that the following be considered in terms of the Skills Pipeline Model. Our recommendations are structured under the key participant groups:

Model for employers participation

- **More effective Recruitment and screening**
Employers would like to see recruits having a basic interest in job and an understanding in terms of what is required. Through the recruitment process it is recommended that the Project Managers ensure that recruits know what expect from this type of job and screen participants to ensure that individuals have right attitude to sector in terms of a willingness to work. There should also be some basic tests in place to ensure recruits have key skills for the job, as a two week training course is not perceived to be adequate to give them these if they really are at the beginners level (eg telephone manner, interest in job, IT literate)
- **Involvement in evening events**
Project Managers should attempt to ensure that there is a turnout from all companies to evening events. These should be more structured in terms of what is expected from companies the companies there. It is also felt that at the time of recruitment, there should be a focus on promoting these evening events in order that reasonable numbers turn up. It was suggested by two of the participating companies that an event could be held at the call centre itself in order to ensure that participants can see and explore the environment in which they could be working.
- **More involvement in training course design**
Companies would like a little (although admittedly not a lot) more input into the training course design. For example, rather than just asking what core areas should be covered, include companies in course design also involve companies in training eg through site visits to expose trainees to the nature of the environment in which they could be working.

There was also a feeling that the focus of course should have been different. Although core areas there, emphasis was wrong. If companies had seen final course, they could have fed into this. Companies would prefer much more of a focus on active listening skills/ soft skills/ PC skills and telephone techniques. In addition, the ability to be on the telephone and record information accurately onto a computer is key, there appears to be no acknowledgement that these two activities need to happen in unison in the training course.

- **Include site visits at call centres**
As suggested previously, companies would be happy to facilitate site visits in order to allow potential participants to get under the skin of what is involved in call centre employment, the environment, nature of work, expose them to the 'real' call centre environment.

- **Management of expectations**
It was believed to be key to ensure that trainees expectations were managed throughout the duration of the course. It should be stressed that participants are not guaranteed a job, but guaranteed a telephone interview. It was felt that this was not wholly understood by participants and that there needs to be much more clarity re type of role that they are training and will be interviewed for and that the onus is on them as individuals to take advantage of the opportunity. It was stated by one company that they felt that some participants appeared to think that they were 'owed' a job because they had been through the training course and made no effort to sell themselves.
- **Ensure that information held for training participants and those on database up to date and accurate**
This appeared not to be the case for both parties resulting in companies finding themselves unable to get in contact with participants.
- **Development of database as resource**
Companies felt that they required more information than just names and addresses to make the database a useful resource to them. For example, previous experience, qualifications, interest in employment in sector. It was suggested that perhaps some sort of application form could be developed that meets basic requirements of companies. Also, development of 'job spec' would help understand nature of job on offer.

Model for participants

- **Clarity in terms of recruitment to project and nature of job**
Again, this recommendation could be met by the development of some sort of 'job spec' and application form for Skills Pipeline recruitment. This would ensure that participants are aware of the nature of the job in which they are expressing an interest and that they are motivated enough to actually provide more information about themselves. This would overcome the type of comment received from survey participants in that they did not consider the Skills Pipeline to be successful because it was 'just for call centre jobs'.
- **More follow up for those on database only**
Many of those on the database had received no follow up at all from either the Project Managers or the participating companies. As such, from their perspective, the Skills Pipeline was a failure. Development of the database into a more useful resource which incorporates basic CV details as opposed to just names and addresses may encourage companies to make contact with this group.

Model for Training Providers

- Provide the opportunity to input into course design
The training providers were provided with a course structure which divided the key elements to be covered in the course into morning and afternoon sessions. This was felt to be quite rigid in structure and at times proved problematic for the training providers to work round given the availability of trainers, rooms and equipment within their own institution. It was felt that if they had the opportunity to design the course in a way which better reflected the resource availability within their institution the course would be smoother to run from the trainees perspective.
- Allow for more flexibility in course delivery
Again, training providers felt that it would be beneficial to build more flexibility into the course. This was particularly important, it was felt, due to the differing nature of course participants in terms of age, ability and experience. It was felt that when dealing with diverse groups such as these, it is necessary to allow for flexibility in delivery to ensure that the course meets the needs of the individual rather than delivering against a list of key topics.
- Allow for more involvement in the selection process
The current selection process does not filter out those who would be unable to develop the necessary skills. It was felt that training providers should be more involved with the selection process.

1.0 BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This report details the findings of a programme of research undertaken by T.L. Dempster Strategy & Research (TLD) to evaluate the Skills Pipeline Project on behalf of Scottish Enterprise Glasgow.

1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 The Skills Pipeline project was established with a view to providing customised training for jobs in the financial sector and increase the pool of skilled people in the Glasgow area to supply local companies.
- 1.2.2 The project included:
- an awareness raising and recruitment campaign (delivered at Shopping Centre events)
 - a two week training course (delivered over 10 days, with a guarantee of an interview with a participating company at the end of the course)
 - establishment of a database of people interested in jobs in the financial sector
- 1.2.3 The project worked with employers to gain commitment for the project, assess employer's recruitment criteria, attendance and intervention at the events and the guarantee of interviews for participants.

1.3 Objectives

- 1.3.1 The key objective of the evaluation is to assess whether or not the project achieved its overall objectives to:
- Train unemployed people to enable them to take up jobs in the financial sector
 - Act as a skills pipeline for the companies involved
- 1.3.2 More specifically, the evaluation was designed to answer the following objectives:
- Which elements of the marketing events were successful
 - Which elements of the training were successful
 - The profile of individuals responding to the project (age, gender, location, unemployed duration, attitudes toward the sector and previous experience).

- The model used to allow companies to participate
- Positive outcomes for individuals agreeing to both be put on the database and attend the training sessions
- The views of individuals and companies on benefits on each element of the project

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The evaluation comprised a hybrid research methodology, which included the following activities:

- A face to face interview with the Project Manager in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the nature of the project, an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and access to the relevant contact for the other elements of the project.
- Undertaking a total of 3 in-depth interviews with representatives of the companies who participated in the project in order to assess the extent to which they believed the project to meet their own requirements, whether it is cost effective and an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. Regrettably, of the 5 original participating companies, 2 of the relevant contacts had moved on and there was nobody else within the company who had been involved within the Project.
- A telephone with 100 of the individuals who attended either the Shopping Centre or Evening Events and subsequently put their names on the database of individuals interested in obtaining work in the Financial Services Sector. This survey was undertaken in order to find out their perceptions of the marketing events and the positive outcomes for these individuals and to profile these individuals.
- Finally a telephone survey of 19 individuals who participated in the training course was undertaken. From an available population of 35 participants, this represents a response rate of 54%. Interviews covered the profile of individuals involved, perceptions of the successes (and failures?) of the marketing events and training course, positive outcomes achieved for these individuals and the benefits of each element of the project.

2.1.2 The following sections of this report outline the key findings of the surveys with each of the key groups, detailed above. Copies of the company topic guides and participant survey questionnaires are available in the report appendices.

3.0 THE FINANCIAL SERVICES SKILLS PIPELINE PROJECT

3.1 Background

3.1.1 PSP ran a Skills Pipeline co-ordinated project in Glasgow for Scottish Enterprise Glasgow through late 2003/ early 2004. The Project achieved the following results:

- 336 'interested parties' listed on project database
- 33 individuals completed the training course
- 5 participating companies.

3.1.2 The Skills Pipeline Project is run along a 3 phase approach:

- Phase 1: Company Recruitment
- Phase 2: Individual Recruitment
- Phase 3: Training

3.2 Phase 1: Company Recruitment

3.2.1 The first phase of the project relates to recruiting companies to participate. PSP identify organisations who would support the project and then work with them in order to gain their commitment and involvement to the project. This includes identifying their needs in terms of candidate qualities, qualifications and aptitudes and the degree of involvement that the company would like in the process.

3.2.2 A total of 5 companies were initially signed up to the project. These were:

- Royal Bank
- Esure
- Goldfish
- Indigo Lighthouse
- NFU Mutual

3.2.3 These companies then defined their vacancies and the skills requirements for the posts. The course is then designed to meet the basic requirements for the posts, as defined and prioritised by the employers.

3.2.4 The training course is then designed and a training brief is issued to a number of training providers. PSP then assesses these Providers in terms of their ability to provide the training and training providers are then commissioned. Three training providers were used in Glasgow. These were:

- Cardonald College
- North Glasgow College
- Learning IT.

3.3 Phase 2: Individual Recruitment

- 3.3.1 Phase two involves the recruitment of individuals to the 'Skills Pipeline'. Initially, the opportunities are marketed through shopping centre events, supported by local advertising and support from Employment Services, local employment initiatives, and educational establishments.
- 3.3.2 A total of 9 shopping centre information events were held at a variety of shopping centres throughout Glasgow. These were:
- Buchanan Galleries
 - Castlemilk Shopping Centre
 - Maryhill Shopping Centre
 - Easterhoue Shopping Centre
 - Springburn Shopping Centre
 - Asda Govan
 - Pollock Market
 - Parkhead Forge Shopping Centre
 - Braehead Shopping Centre
- 3.3.3 A total of 471 individuals turned up at these events and showed an interest in the Project. From these, a total of 336 individuals signed up to the potential recruits database. Events varied in their success, with the most successful being at Asda Govan, with 78 individuals expressing interest in the Project and 53 signing up to the database. The least successful event was at Braehead Shopping Centre with just 25 expressing an interest and 12 signing up.
- 3.3.4 This was followed by a total of 4 evening events which were supported by employers and at which candidates are aptitude tested. At these events, Training Providers have the opportunity to give details of the course they will run and candidates have the opportunity to discuss job opportunities with employers. Evening events were held at:
- Raddison Hotel
 - Castlemilk CS
 - Cardonald College
 - North Glasgow College.
- 3.3.5 A total of 122 individuals attended evening events and showed an interest in the Project. From these, a total of 53 signed up to the database. Again, events varied in their success, with the most successful being at the Raddison Hotel, with 56 attendees and 20 signing up. The least successful was the Castlemilk evening event, which was attended by 8 individuals and resulted in just 3 signing up to the database.

3.4 Phase 3: Training and Recruitment

3.4.1 As stated above, a total of 3 training courses were run throughout the duration of the Skills Pipeline Project. A total of 35 individuals were trained. In this instance the training was designed to cover the following key areas:

- Interpersonal Skills
- Administrative Skills
- Telephone Techniques
- Office Procedures
- Basic PC and Internet Skills

3.4.2 The training courses were held over a 2 week duration, and at the end of the course, participants are guaranteed a telephone interview with one of the participating companies.

3.4.3 The other outcome of the Project is the development of the Potential Recruits database, comprising individual who had expressed an interest in gaining employment in the Financial Services industry at either the daytime or evening events. The format of this database is agreed with the participating companies and distributed as an additional source of recruits. A total of 371 individuals are listed on this database, including those who participated in the training programme.

4.0 IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS – KEY FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 A total of 4 in-depth interviews were undertaken. These comprised 1 with the Project Manager and a further 3 with participating companies. Unfortunately, it was not possible to interview all 5 participating companies as when contact was made, it was found that within 2 of the companies the relevant individual who had been involved in the Project had subsequently moved on and that nobody else within the company had been involved enough to participate in the evaluation.

4.1.2 In-depth interviews were undertaken on a face to face basis and covered the following key areas:

- Background to the Project
- The role of Employers in the Project
- The Project Process - Successes and Failures of the Project
- Did the Project meet its overall objectives?

4.1.3 The companies interviewed were:

- Esure
- Goldfish
- Royal Bank of Scotland

4.2 Background to the Project

4.2.1 All employers interviewed were aware that the Skills Pipeline Project provided an opportunity for them to recruit. All employers involved were, at the time, in the throes of major recruitment campaigns themselves and viewed the Skills Pipeline as an opportunity to augment the activities that they were already undertaking.

4.2.2 Companies were aware that the Skills Pipeline was established to provide opportunity for unemployed to learn about, train and (possibly) gain access to employment within the Call Centre industry in financial services. However, ultimately, the companies were looking for the Skills Pipeline to increase their access to a bank of potential employees. This was their main motivation in terms of becoming involved in the Project.

4.3 The Role of Employers in the Project

Motivations for Participation

4.3.1 Companies who participated in the Project became involved in the project because they were approached by Scottish Enterprise. All companies believe themselves to have a good relationship with SE and believed that involvement in this project represented a good way to reciprocate the help and support they

receive from SE, whilst at the same time augmenting their own recruitment activity.

Level of Involvement in the Project

- 4.3.2 In terms of their involvement in the Skills Pipeline, the company's participation appears to have been minimal.

Training Programme

- 4.3.3 Just one company representative interviewed could confirm that they were involved with discussions regarding the nature of employee required and their key skills in order to inform the training programme for trainees. This, however, was criticised as none of the companies recalled viewing the final training programme or having any more input than this initial discussion.

Evening Events

- 4.3.4 In terms of the Evening Events, again, the participation from companies was limited. For example, Royal Bank of Scotland received an email from the Project Manager inviting them along to the Cardonald College event and, as such, attended. However the company was unaware of any other events and of any opportunities to participate further.
- 4.3.5 This was mirrored by the other companies, who claimed that they had very little contact with the Project Managers until it came to the evening events. Just one of the companies involved, Esure, attended every evening event. However, attendance from other companies was patchy. One company felt that this was indicative of a lack of commitment to the Project from the employers perspective.
- 4.3.6 There was a feeling from the participating companies that companies could be encouraged to be much more proactive in the Project. For example, Esure and Goldfish both suggested that they would be willing to host events upon their own premises in order to give potential recruits a much better idea in terms of what they can expect from a call centre environment.
- 4.3.7 RBS, the other company interviewed, stated that they would also like to be able to participate in more locally organised events, given that they are located in Greenock, it was believed that Skills Pipeline participants were not from the key market for their business in terms of geographical location.

Telephone Interviews on Completion of Training Course

- 4.3.8 After the evening events, the companies had no involvement in the project until after the recruits completed the training course. At the end of the course, all trainees were guaranteed a telephone interview with one of the companies. Again, experience of this was not positive.

- 4.3.9 When Esure made contact with trainees to undertake this interview they found that some had dropped of the course, there were a number of mobile and invalid telephone numbers, a number of the contact details given were dated, the trainee had already secured employment or the company's calls were not returned. In total, the company managed to interview 8 trainees by telephone. Of those, none were deemed suitable to go on to the next stage of recruitment.
- 4.3.10 From Goldfish's perspective, from the list of potential recruits who had completed the training course, all who could be contacted were interviewed by telephone. From that process, 2 were offered a personal interview by the company and one person has subsequently secured employment with the company. Whilst the company admit that this is not a great success rate, they did state that this is in line with their expectations for this type of Project.
- 4.3.11 RBS is just in the process of making contact with individuals and, as yet, feels it is too early to comment on the outcomes of the project. However, again, it was stated that perhaps more information could be given before hand and that recruits could be screened to ensure that they are more suitable to employment in the sector. It is perceived that working in a call centre requires certain skills and that people have to really want to do it. There is a feeling that it is necessary to eek out those who have no real interest in working in the industry or are lacking in the core skills required before allowing them on the training course.

Potential Recruits Database (Non Trainees)

- 4.3.12 In terms of the database, there is a perception from companies that this *should* be a useful tool. However, again, it was felt that much more screening could be done in order to ensure that those on the database were interested and had the core basic skills to work in the sector.
- 4.3.13 Esure, for example, had asked for about 20-25 CVs of individuals on this database but was only provided with 6 CV's, none of which were taken through to the next stage of the process. This particular company believed that the database should be slightly more developed so that it encompassed information that you would access on a CV. For example, employment history, academic and vocational qualifications, interest in employment within the sector. As it stands, it is just a list of names and addresses, which is of little use.
- 4.3.14 Goldfish did receive the list of individuals from the database and subsequently supplied them with application forms in order to access the type of information that they required for potential recruits. However, they received just 2 application forms back.

Overall Satisfaction with Involvement

- 4.3.15 The overall consensus from companies is that the outcomes of the project in terms of what was achieved from their perspective were disappointing. This, they believed, was in line with their expectations with such a Project. It would appear that employers to have low expectations in terms of the ability of such projects to deliver 'quality' recruits. Their experience with the Skills Pipeline has borne this out.

4.4 The Project Process - Successes and Failures of the Project

Provision of Opportunity

- 4.4.1 On the whole, the Project was perceived to be a good thing in that it provides opportunity for individuals who may not have been previously aware of opportunities in this field, or who may not have had the confidence to pursue such opportunities a route into the market.

Nature of Participant

- 4.4.2 There is a perception that the nature of potential recruit accessed through the Project is not as good as on the open market. Comments were received that nature of participant, both at evening event and after training, was not really what companies were looking for. For example, their attitude was questionable, and relevant skills and experience were not there. Many, it was stated, did not even have appropriate telephone manner.

Management of Expectations

- 4.4.3 Participant's expectations must be managed much more closely in order that they understand specifically what they will and will not get out of participation. Perhaps working more closely with companies and giving guided tours of call centres in order that people can make informed decisions on the nature of the environment within which they would be working and, as such, those that continue with the Project are those that are aware and interested.

Training Course

- 4.4.4 The training course was set at a very basic level, it was perceived by the companies. The result of this is that the Project would never represent anything other than a pre-screening exercise for recruitment into the financial services sector. None of the companies would consider offering anything other than an interview as follow up to the training course due to the perceived lack of skills held on the part of the participants.

- 4.4.5 Indeed, as follow up to the telephone interview, all companies would then hold a face to face interview and, if the applicant was successful, they would then go onto the companies own training course. These in-house training courses tend to last c. 3-4 weeks and are perceived to be fairly intensive, covering not just telephone skills, but product training and systems training, both of which are perceived to be company specific and not suitable for training at a 'general' training course. In addition, companies within the financial services also provide legal and Financial Services Authority Training (FSA).

4.5 Did the Project meet its overall objectives?

- 4.5.1 If the Project were to deliver a better quality of candidate (which, it is perceived can be achieved through more effective screening and recruitment) then the project would be capable of meeting its objective in terms of being a cost effective skills pipeline. Effective screening and recruitment, from the employers perspective relates to ensuring that potential recruits are aware of the nature of employment to which they are expressing an interest, have a interest in that sort of employment and have the drive and confidence to follow through and present themselves to companies as potential employees.
- 4.5.2 The approach could potentially work across the call and contact sector, again, with the proviso in 4.5.1, due to the very general nature of the training received. None of the training given is believed to be specific to the Financial Services sector.
- 4.5.3 Both a strength and weakness in the project is the diverse group of people which it attracted. There is a feeling from the companies that this is perhaps indicative of the lack of screening of potential candidates, resulting in a greater number of potential recruits, but very few with the individual drive or capabilities to make good employees.
- 4.5.4 Greater communication and interaction with employers to try and focus the project and gain more commitment and involvement, it is believed, would go some way towards achieving a greater quality and more informed candidate.
- 4.5.5 In particular, one company felt that for the amount of effort that was put into the Project the return was very low. As a result, the company wouldn't participate again. Another believed that recruitment activities would need to be more focused within their geographical area and provide more focused candidates in order to be relevant and encourage them to participate again. The third company would participate again, however, would desire to be more involved in the process and receive a better quality of candidate.
- 4.5.6 All companies stated their ongoing desire to work with SE on other projects, despite a lack of willingness to participate in the Skills Pipeline again.

5.0 PARTICIPANTS SURVEY - KEY FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 As stated, there were two key participant groups with whom we consulted. The first of these were those individuals who attended either the shopping centre or evening events. A total of 100 interviews were undertaken with this group. The second key group were those individuals who participated in the training course. We interviewed a total of 19 individuals in this group.

5.1.2 One questionnaire was designed to cover both groups, with routing involved for those who did not participate in the training course. The questionnaire covered the following key issues:

- Satisfaction with the event attended (both shopping centre and evening)
- Reason for signing up to the Skills Pipeline Project
- Attitudes towards employment in the Financial Services Sector
- Satisfaction with the training course attended
- Overall satisfaction with the Skills Pipeline Project
- Outcomes achieved as a result of participating in the project
- Profile of participants

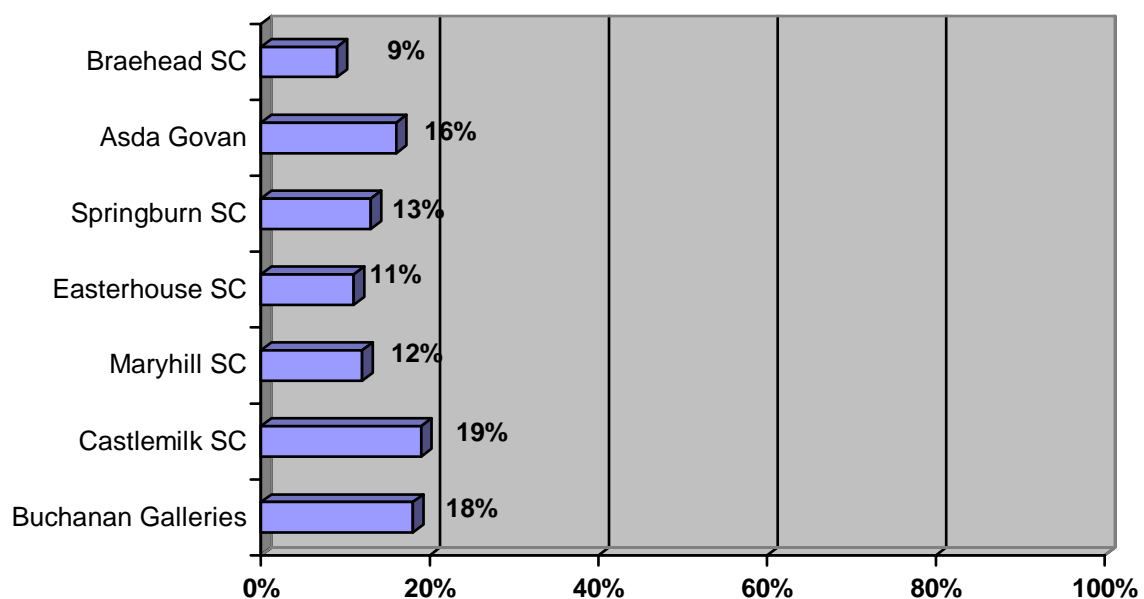
5.1.3 A copy of the questionnaire is available in Appendix 1 of this report.

5.2 Satisfaction with Shopping Centre Events

5.2.1 Of those interviewed, 85% signed up to the Skills Pipeline Project at a shopping centre event, with 7% signing up at an evening event and the remaining 8% attending both shopping centre and evening events.

5.2.2 The profile of interviewees attendance at shopping centre events was fairly mixed, with between 10% and 20% of interviewees attending each event, as illustrated below:

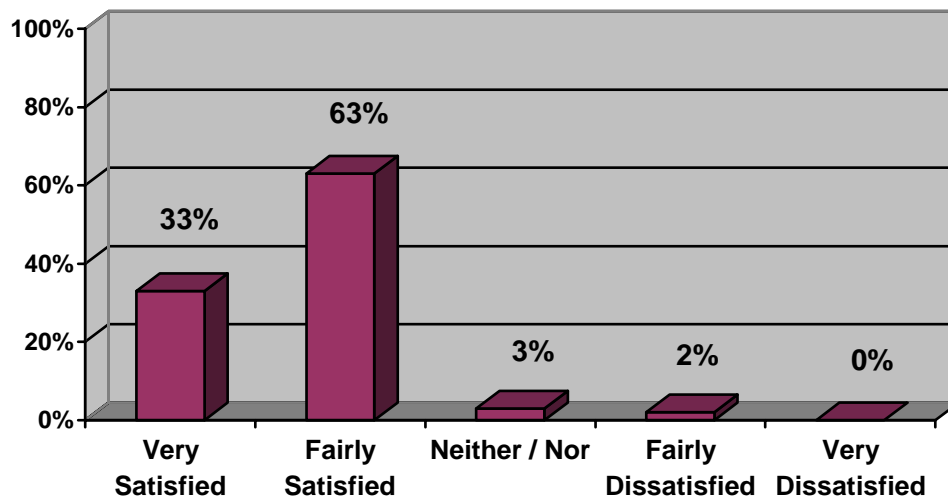
At which Shopping Centre did you initially sign up?
(Base: Attended Shopping Centre Event, 104)



5.2.3 The main source of awareness of Shopping Centre events was, by far, that the attendee was just in the shopping centre and saw the stand. This was stated as the source of awareness by 91% of attendees. Other sources of awareness were 'advert in local paper' (3%), 'friend/ family' (2%) and 'given information by Job Centre Plus' (4%).

- 5.2.4 Overall, satisfaction with Shopping Centre events was high, with 96% of attendees stating that they were either very or fairly satisfied.

Satisfaction with Shopping Centre Information Event
(Base: Attended Shopping Centre Event, 104)



- 5.2.4 Analysis by event, shows that some were perceived to be more successful than others by participants. The most successful events were:

- Easterhouse Shopping Centre (100% satisfied)
- Braehead Shopping Centre (100% satisfied)

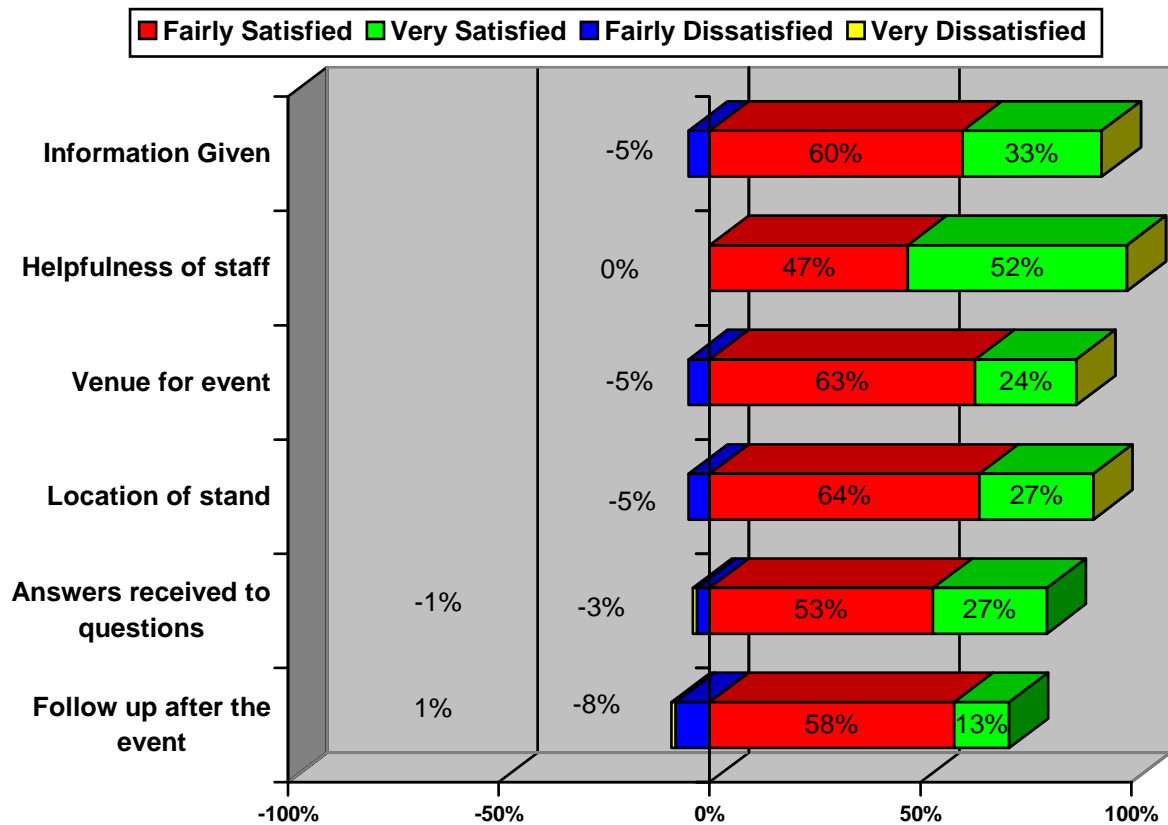
The less successful events, although it should be noted that overall they were still perceived to be very successful, according to participants were:

- Buchanan Galleries (84% satisfied)
- Springburn Shopping Centre (84% satisfied)

5.2.5 Attendees were then asked about their satisfaction with a series of factors relating to the event. Their responses were as follows:

Satisfaction with Specific Aspects of Shopping Centre Events

(Base: Attended Shopping Centre Event, 104)



5.2.6 As illustrated, satisfaction is high across the board with the Shopping Centre events. Satisfaction is highest with regard to:

- Helpfulness of staff (99%)
- Information given (93%)
- Location of stand (91%).

5.2.7 Satisfaction falls, however, with regard to:

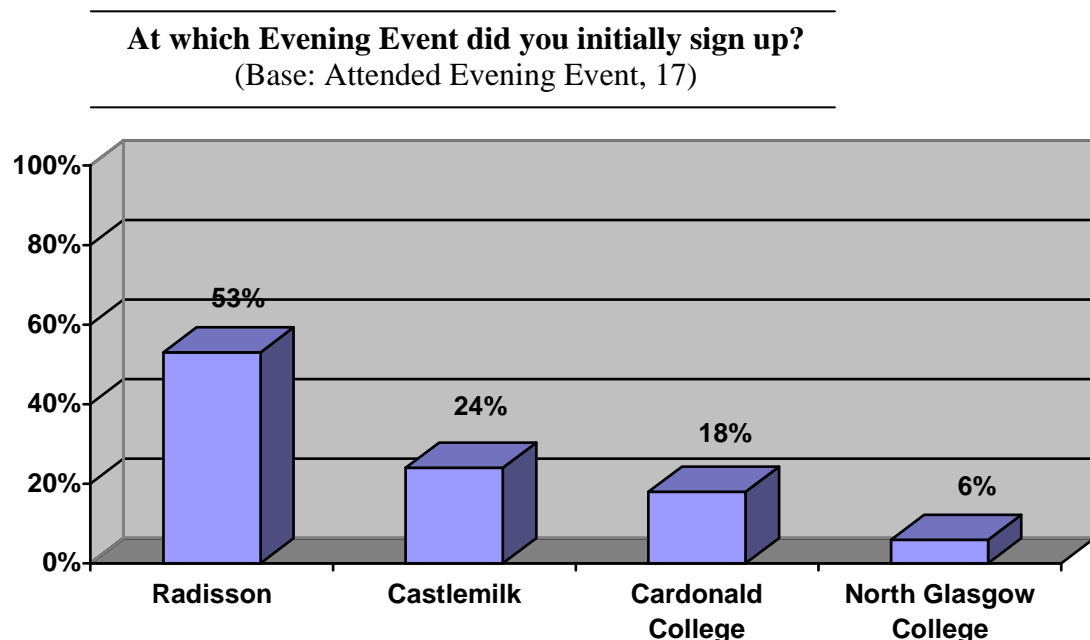
- Follow up after the event (71%)
- Answers received to questions (80%)

5.2.8 Finally, attendees of the shopping centre events were asked if they had any additional comments to make about the event. Very few made further comment. However, the few that did had the following statements to make:

- Informative/ helpful/ useful (6 respondents)
- It was brilliant/ good (4 respondents)
- Office/ stand should be more visible (2 respondents)
- Never heard from them (2 respondents)
- Staff very polite (1 respondents)
- Could have been better organised (1 respondent)
- Not enough information (1 respondent)

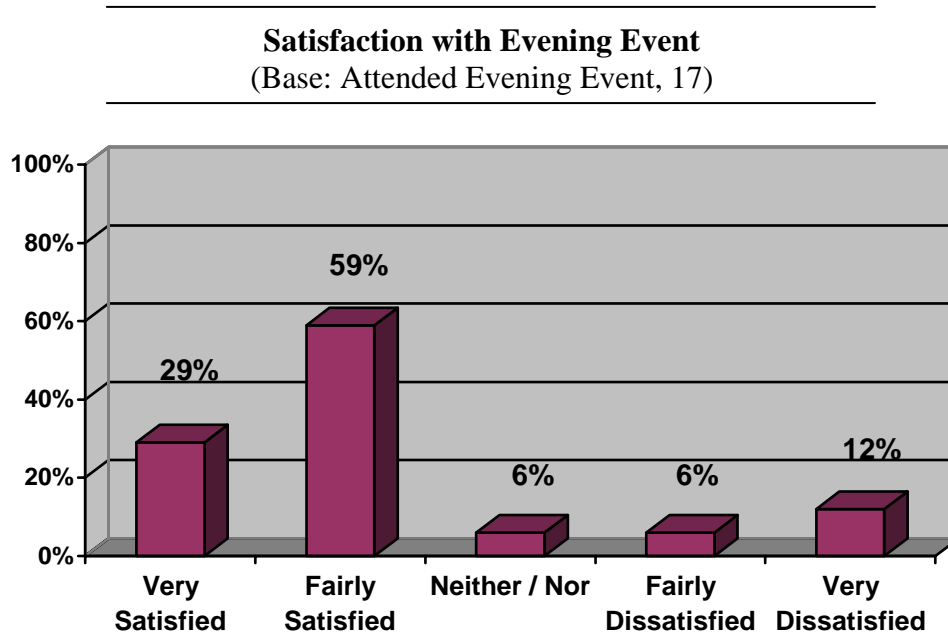
5.3 Satisfaction with Evening Events

5.3.1 A total of 17 interviewees attended an evening event. The most visited event was the Raddison event, which was attended by 53% of those interviewed.

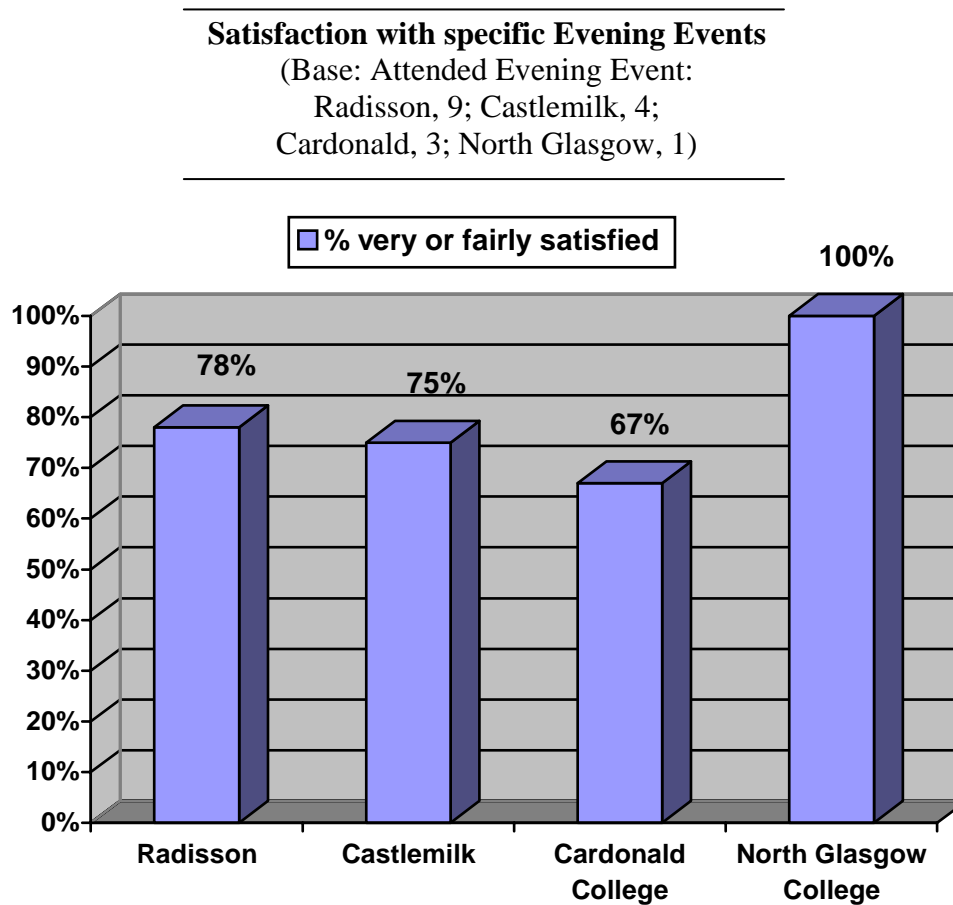


5.3.2 The main source of awareness of evening events was, by far, that the attendee was in the shopping centre, saw the stand and decided to go along for more information (53%). Other key sources of awareness were 'advert in local paper' (24%) and 'friend/ family'.

- 5.3.3 Overall, satisfaction with evening events was high, with just over three quarters of attendees (77%) stating that they were either very or fairly satisfied.



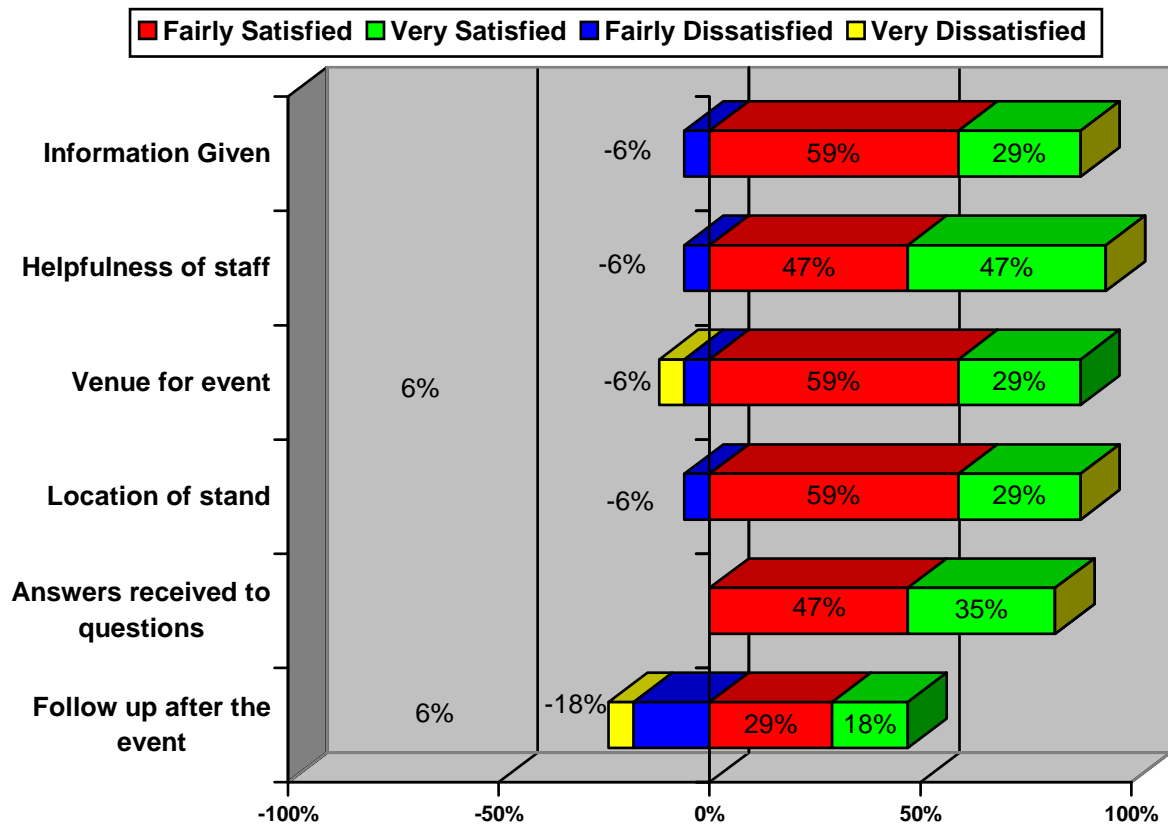
- 5.3.4 Satisfaction with specific events was as follows:



5.3.5 Attendees were then asked about their satisfaction with a series of factors relating to the event. Their responses were as follows:

Satisfaction with Specific Aspects of Evening Events

(Base: Attended Evening Event, 17)



5.3.6 As illustrated, satisfaction is high across the board with the evening events. Satisfaction is highest with regard to:

- Helpfulness of staff (94%)
- Information given (88%)
- Location of stand (88%)
- Venue for event (88%).

5.3.7 Satisfaction falls, however, with regard to:

- Follow up after the event (47%)

5.3.8 Finally, attendees of the evening events were asked if they had any additional comments to make about the event. Very few made further comment. However, the few that did had the following statements to make:

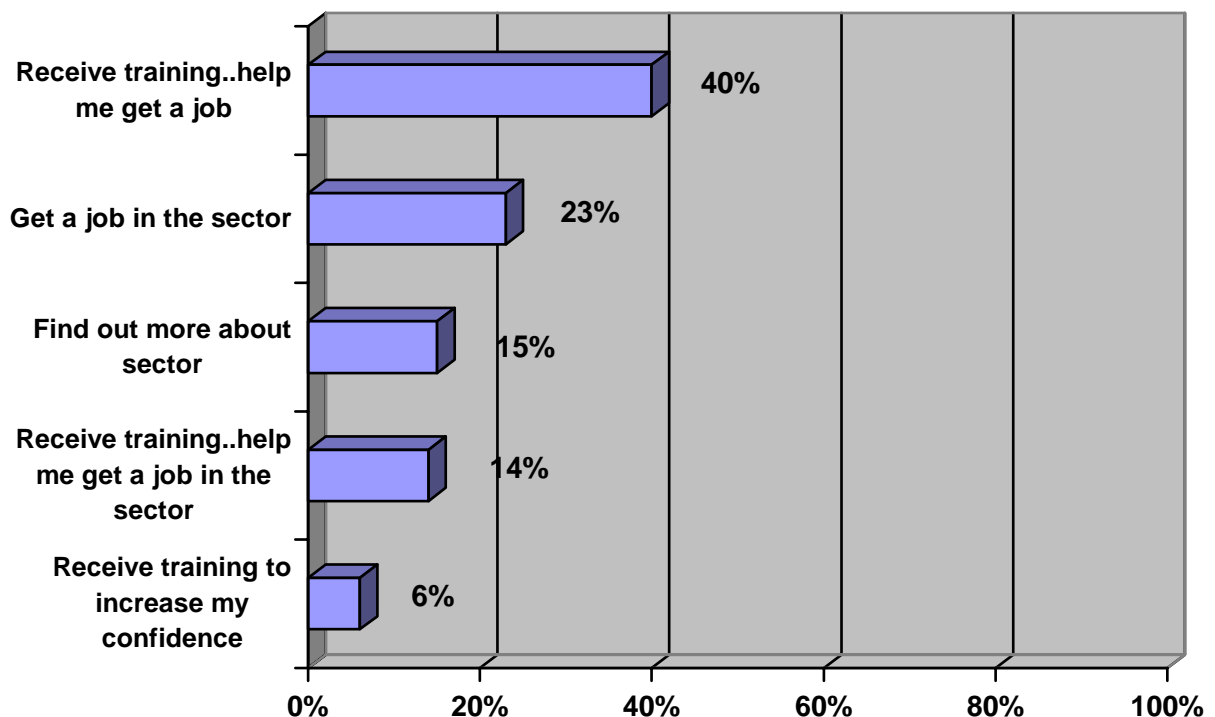
- Everything was fine/ satisfactory (3 respondents)
- It was only call centre work (2 respondents)
- Never heard from them (2 respondents)
- Newspaper gave wrong impression (1 respondents)
- Waste of time (1 respondents)
- Good way to meet people (1 respondent)
- Good presentation (1 respondent)

5.4 Reason for signing up to the Skills Pipeline Project

5.4.1 All interviewees were then asked, unprompted, why they signed up to the project. The main reason given was ‘to get a job’ (58%), followed by ‘to get training’ (20%), ‘to change my career’ (13%) and ‘interested in sector’ (11%).

5.4.2 When asked their main reason for signing up from a prompted list, it is interesting to note that this main response changes to ‘to receive training that would help me get a job’ (40%) – without a mention of the Financial Services Sector.

What was the main reason you signed up?
(Base: All respondents, 117)



5.4.3 It is interesting to note that those in full time employment at the time of signing up were most likely to state that an interest in the Financial Services sector was one of their main reasons for signing up, whether it be to find out more about the sector or to get a job in the sector:

- To find out more about the Financial Services sector (26%)
- To get a job in the Financial Services sectors (26%)

5.4.4 However, those that were unemployed at the time of signing up were most likely to state that their main reason for signing up was:

- To receive training that would help get me a job (51%)

5.4.5 Prior to signing up to the Skills Pipeline, just 7 respondents had any call centre experience, whether current or previous, with a further 16 respondents having had customer service experience in another environment.

5.5 Attitudes towards employment in the Financial Services Sector

5.5.1 Prior to signing up for the Project, just over one third of participants had considered employment within the Financial Services industry. Those least likely to have considered employment within this sector are those aged between 16-19 years old (19% considered). Those most likely to have considered employment in the sector are aged 20-35 years old (44% considered).

5.5.2 Those who were interested in the sector (45 respondents) stated that their main reasons for interest were:

- Used to work in the sector (16%)
- Good prospects/ opportunities (12%)
- Want a career (11%)
- Thought it might be interesting (7%)

5.5.3 However, those who stated that they had not considered employment in the sector (74 respondents) stated that this was because:

- Lack of skills (42%)
- Never thought about it (20%)
- Lack of awareness (18%)

5.5.4 In terms of desirability of the sector, respondents were asked two questions. Firstly, how desirable would they have considered a job in the sector to be prior to signing and then how desirable would they consider a job in the sector to be currently. Prior to signing up, 69% of respondents stated that they would have considered a job in the sector to be desirable. Currently, 79% of respondents stated that they would consider a job in the sector to be desirable. This represents a 10% rise.

5.5.5 Whilst there are still a significant number of respondents who have not changed their view of the sector, there are a number of respondents who have. For those who have changed their views in a positive way, some of the reasons given include:

- Received more information on the options (10 respondents)
- Talking to the staff made me think (2 respondents)
- Sounded interesting (2 respondents)
- Presentation was good (1 respondent)
- Better jobs (1 respondent)
- Better explained on course (1 respondent)

5.5.6 For those who found the sector undesirable, prior to signing up to the Skills Pipeline, 15% would have considered the sector to be undesirable. This figure fell to 9% currently, a fall of 6%. Despite this, some respondents had changed their opinion of the sector in a more negative way. Their reasons were:

- Don't treat people very well (1 respondent)
- Not the type of job I want (1 respondent)
- Pressure would put me off (1 respondent)
- Computers frighten me (1 respondent)

5.5.7 For those that had changed their opinion, over half (52%) stated that this was as a direct result of the information received at either the shopping centre or evening event. The greatest influences on the change in their perceptions were:

- Talking to staff at the event (93%)
- Company presentations at the event (7%).

5.6 Satisfaction with the training course attended

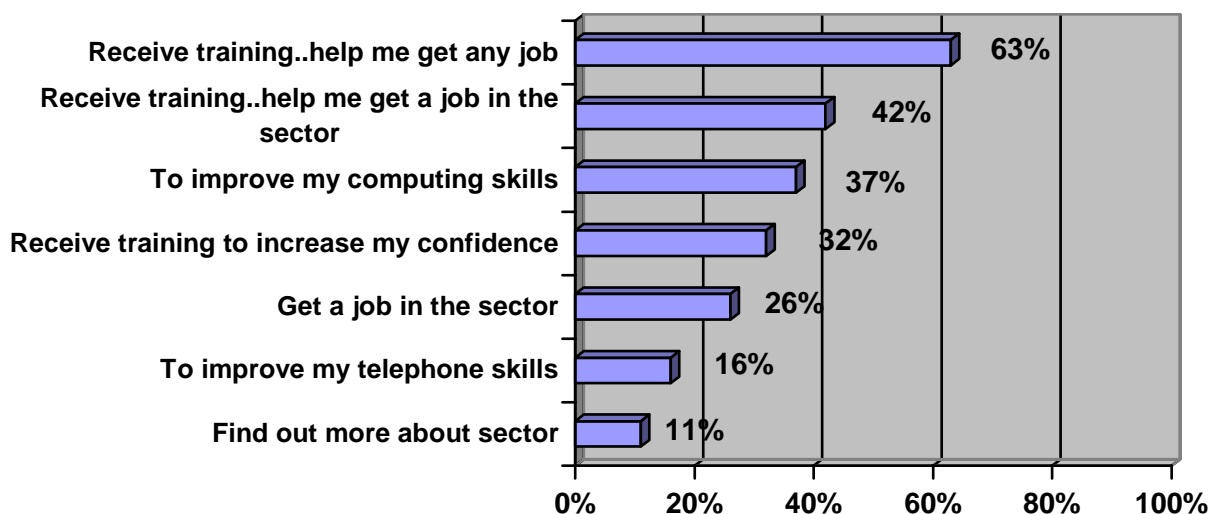
5.6.1 A total of 19 respondents participated in the 10 day training course organised by the project. Of those, 5 participated at Cardonald College, 9 at North Glasgow College and 5 at Learning IT.

5.6.2 The main reasons given for participating on the course, unprompted, were to 'get a job' (53%) or to 'improve my skills' (40%).

5.6.3 When asked their main reason for participating in the training course from a prompted list it is, again, interesting to note that there was the mention of the Financial Services sector was not the key reason given. The main reasons given were:

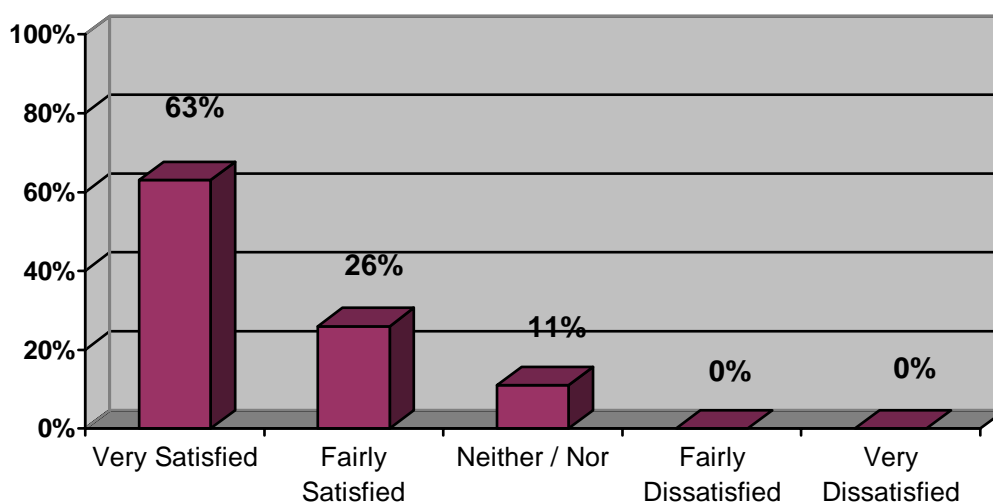
- To receive training that would help me get any job (63%)
- To receive training that would help me get a job in the financial services sector (42%)
- To improve my computing skills (37%)

Main Reasons for Participating in Training Course
(Base: Training Participants, 19)



5.6.4 Overall, satisfaction with the training was high, with 89% of trainees stating that they were satisfied with the training. 63% of these stated that they were very satisfied. No trainees stated that they were dissatisfied with the training provided. Of particular note is Cardonald College, where all trainees stated that they were satisfied with the training provided.

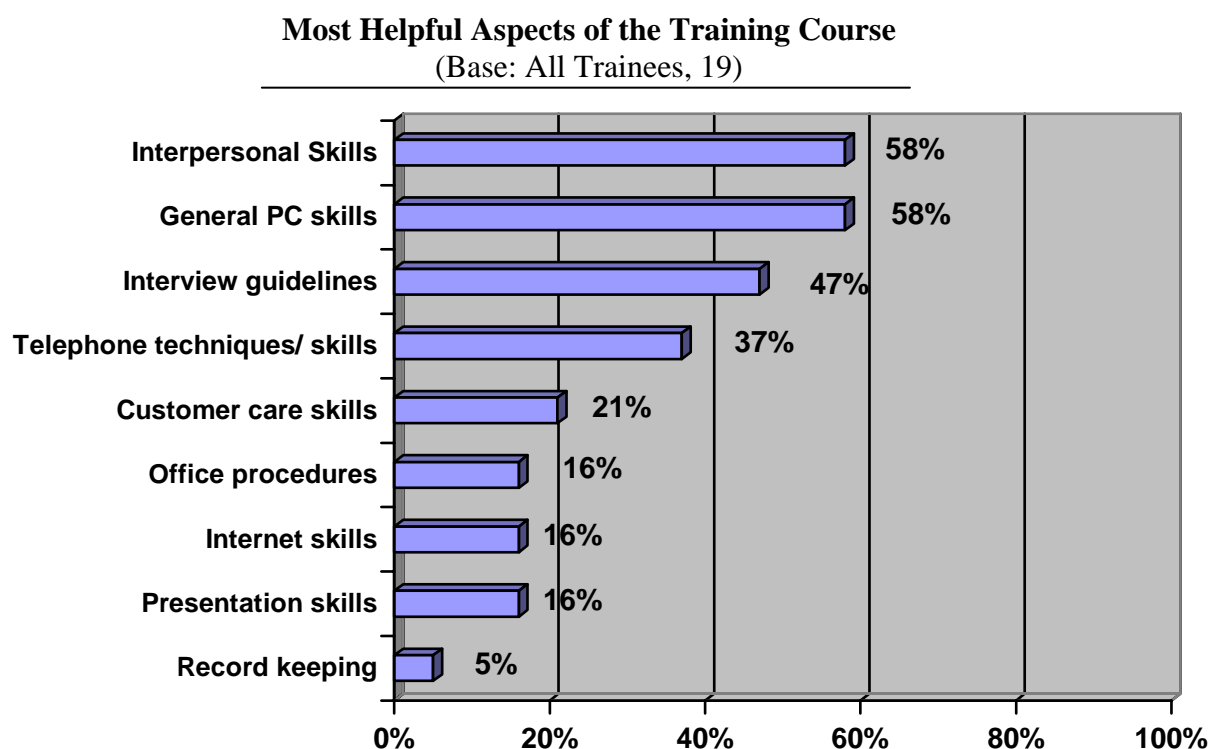
Overall Satisfaction with Training Provided
(Base: All Trainees, 19)



5.6.5 However, in terms of the length of the course, just under half (47%) felt the duration of the programme was 'just right'. However, a similar figure (42%) felt it was 'too short', with just 11% feeling that the course was 'too long'.

5.6.6 All trainees believed that the location of the training programme was appropriate, with 63% stating that it was ‘very appropriate’ and 37% stating that it was ‘fairly appropriate’. Again, Cardonald College received the most praise in this respect, with 80% of trainees feeling that this venue was ‘very appropriate’.

5.6.7 In terms of content of the training, the most helpful aspects of the course, according to participants were General PC Skills and Interpersonal Skills.



5.6.8 In terms of trainees expectations, just over half of participants (53%) felt that the training course met their expectations, with 26% stating that it exceeded their expectations. However, 21% (4 trainees) felt that the course fell short of their expectations. Of those, 3 participated at North Glasgow College and one at Learning IT.

5.6.9 The main reasons given for meeting or exceeding participant expectations were:

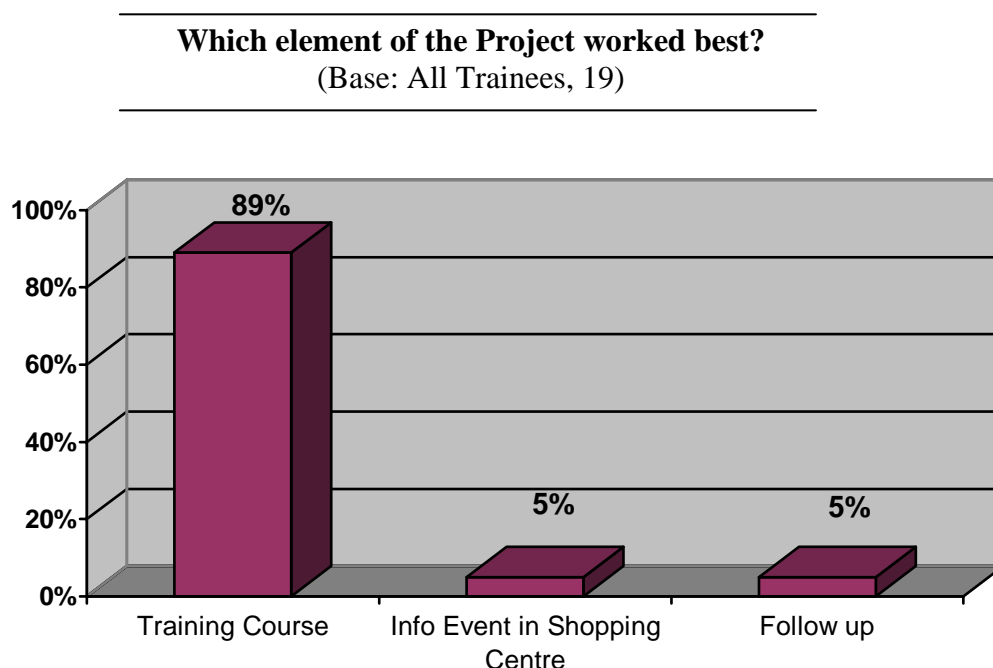
- Felt more confident in getting a job (3)
- Got offered a job (2)
- I got a lot from it (2)
- I enjoyed it (1)
- Helpful (1)
- Taught me things (1)
- Better than other courses done (1)

5.6.10 However, the reasons given for falling short of expectations were:

- Tried to fit too much in (1)
- Only call centre work (1)
- No telephone techniques (1)
- Only touched basic subjects (1)

5.7 Overall satisfaction with the Skills Pipeline Project

5.7.1 In terms of overall satisfaction with the Skills Pipeline project, those who participated on the training course were asked which element of the project they believed worked best. 89% of those who participated in the training course (17 out of 19 respondents) stated that the training course worked best.



5.7.2 When asked why they said that, the respondent that rated the information event as best stated that this was because 'it all hinged on the first thing'. The respondent that stated that the follow up was the element of the project that worked best from their perspective stated that this was because it 'got me a job'. Those that stated that the training course was the element of the project that worked best from their perspective gave a range of views as to why, including:

- It helped you with skills (6)
- More information there (2)
- Helpful/ interesting (2)
- Feel a marked improvement (1)
- Instructor was very good (1)
- Most organised (1)
- Gave me confidence (1)
- More hands on (1)

5.7.3 17 out of the 19 training participants interviewed stated that they have received follow up contact from the Skills Pipeline Project Managers. For all, this follow up comprised a telephone call, however in addition, 2 respondents stated that they have received a follow up letter from the Project Managers.

5.7.4 The nature of the follow up received appears to have been very general from the participants perspective, with the majority stating that the follow up was to discuss:

- How I was getting on (6)
- If I had a job (5)
- To ask if companies had been in touch (4)

It is worthwhile noting that two of the respondents who stated that their had been follow up, had been aware that they had received a telephone call but had not actually been in to take the call at the time. As such, no specific direct contact had been undertaken with the Project Managers.

5.7.5 Follow up was rated as satisfactory by 14 out of the 17 participants who had received it, and 'neither satisfactory nor dissatisfactory' by the remaining 3 participants.

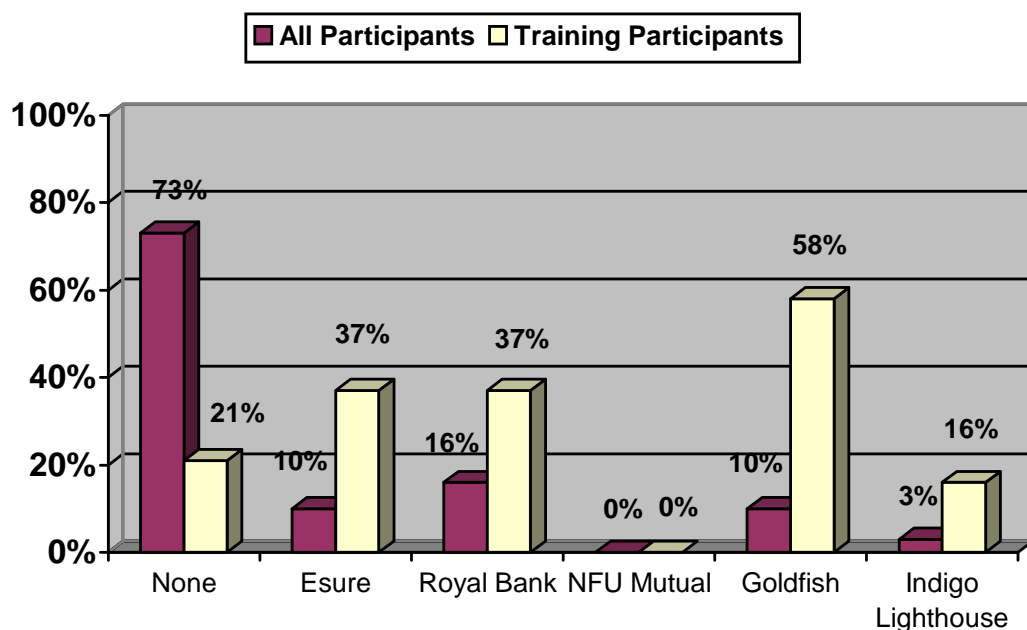
5.8 Outcomes achieved as a result of participating in the project

5.8.1 In terms of project outcomes, all participants were asked if they have received any follow up contact from any of the companies involved in the project. As illustrated, almost three quarters of participants overall (73%) stated that they have received no follow up contact at all. In terms of training participants, just over one in five participant (21%) of those we interviewed have received no follow up from the companies involved. This is illustrated below:

Have you received any follow up contact from any of the companies involved in the Project?

(Base: All Participants, 119)

Training Participants, 19)

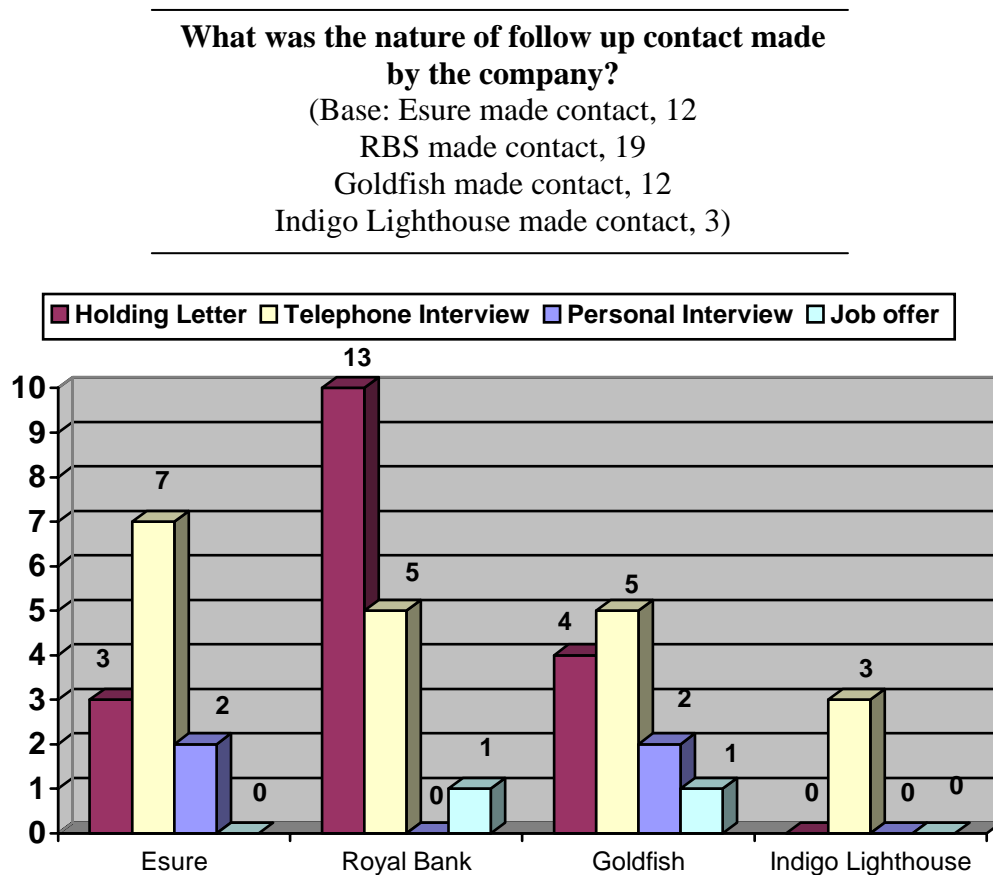


5.8.2 As illustrated, Goldfish have been most proactive in terms of making some form of follow up contact with project participants, particularly in terms of trainees. However, across the board, a very low proportion of those who sign up to go on the Project database, but do not go on the training, are actually contacted again by the companies.

5.8.3 However, if you look at the actual numbers of participants who have received some form of follow up contact from the companies, it indicates the true extent to which companies are likely to contact those who have not participated in the training course:

Company	Non-Trainees	Trainees	Total
Esure	5	7	12
RBS	12	7	19
Goldfish	1	11	12
Indigo Lighthouse	0	3	3

5.8.3 In terms of the nature of that follow up contact, a breakdown by company is illustrated below:

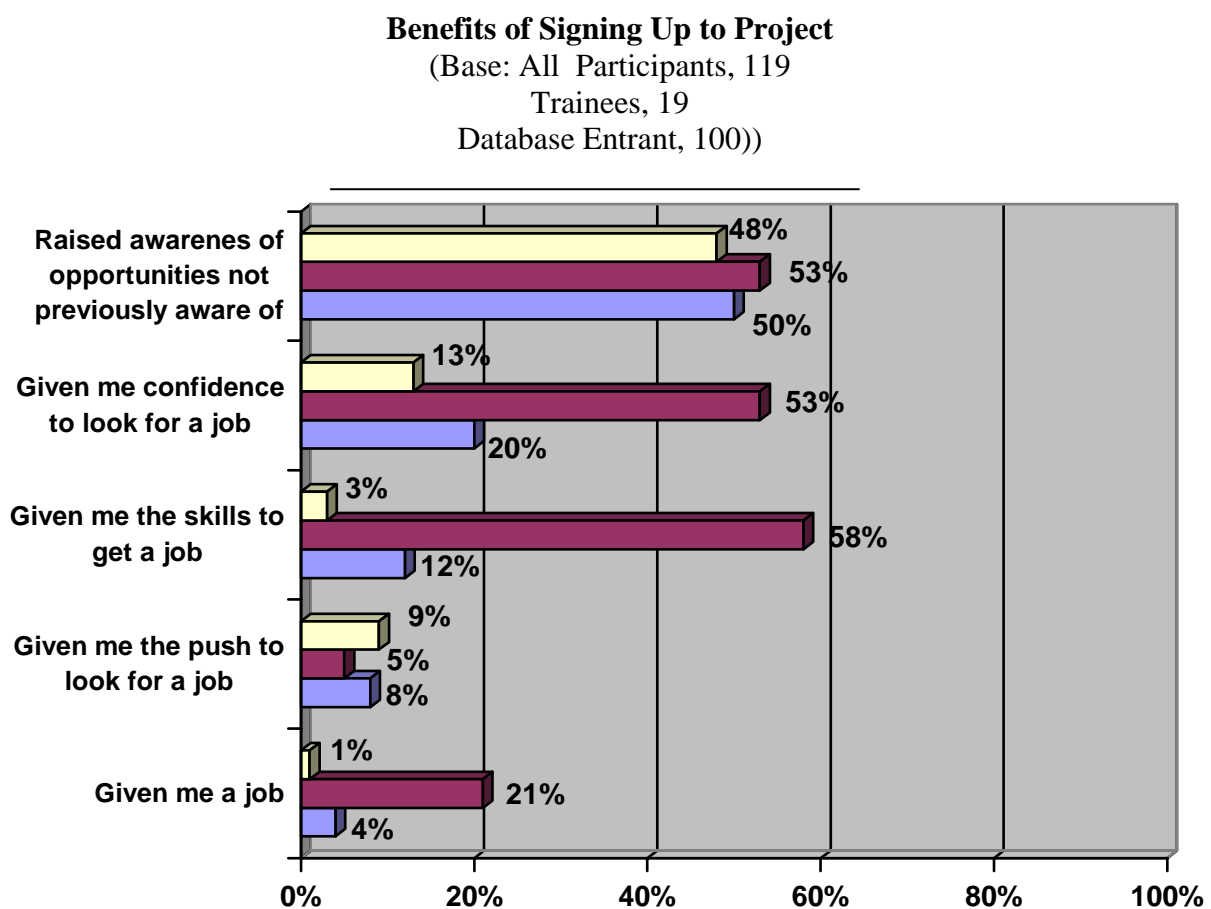


5.8.4 As illustrated, the key project outcomes from the participants perspective were:

- 2 participants received a job offer with one of the employers involved in the project.
- 4 participants received a personal interview with one of the employers involved in the project.
- 20 participants received a telephone interview with one of the employers involved in the project.
- 20 participants received a holding letter from one of the employers involved in the project.

It should be noted, however, that at the time of evaluation, Royal Bank of Scotland were in the process of making contact and undertaking interviews with trainees, as such, the true extent of the success of the project may be higher than illustrated above.

5.8.5 In terms of overall benefits of participation, the key benefits from the participants perspective were:

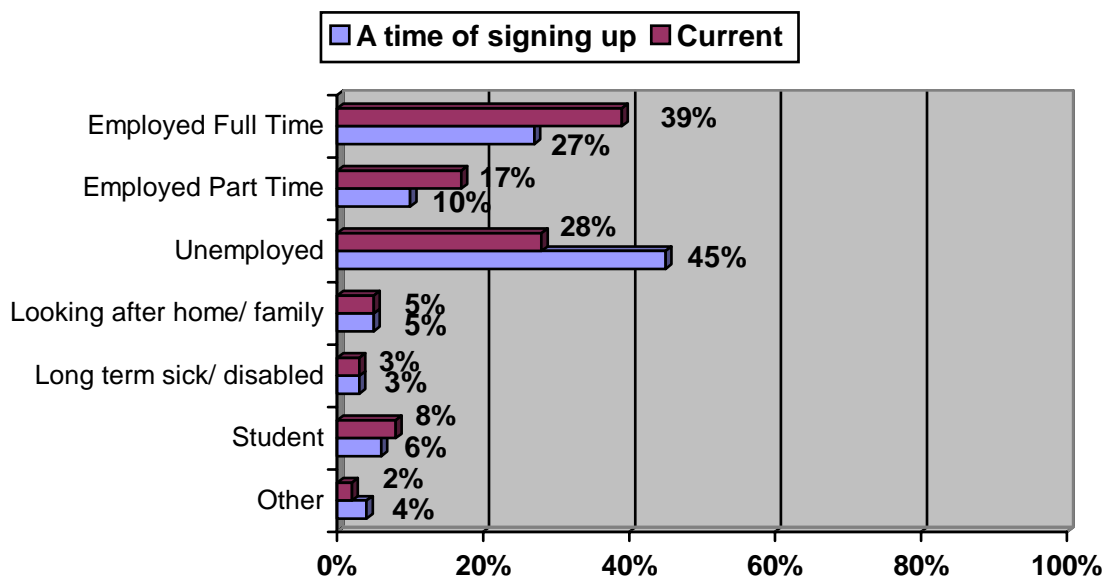


5.8.6 As shown, overall, the key benefits of signing are in terms of raising opportunities that participants were not previously aware of (50%), giving participants the confidence to look for a job (20%) and giving participants the skills to get a job (12%).

5.8.7 In terms of success of the project in terms of numbers into work, overall 4% of participants believes that participating in the project has given them a job, this represents a total of 5 individuals. However, when trainees only are considered, the percentage of participants who state that Skills Pipeline has given them a job rises to 21%. It should be noted that at the time of the evaluation, RBS was still in the process of contacting and interviewing trainees, as such, this number is likely to rise.

5.8.9 In terms of employment status at the time of signing up compared to current employment status, as shown below, at the time of signing up to Skills Pipeline, 37% of participants were in either full or part time employment, and 45% were unemployed. Compared to current employment status, 56% of participants are now in either full or part time employment, and 28% unemployed. This is a positive change with regard to the employment status of Skills Pipeline participants, with a 19% increase in employment and a 17% fall in unemployment.

Employment Status – Time of Signing Up vs. Current
(Base: All respondents, 119)



5.8.10 As noted previously, just 7 respondents had any call centre experience, whether current or previous, with a further 16 respondents having had customer service experience in another environment at the time of signing up.

5.8.11 Currently, 14 respondents are employed in call centre environment, with a further 22 respondents currently working in a customer service environment. It is worthy of note that of those 14 respondents employed in a call centre environment, 10 of these were training participants.

5.8.12 For those that are currently unemployed or are looking after home or family (39 respondents), we asked whether they had taken any action to get themselves a job, subsequent to signing up to the project. Of those, 37 have taken some course of action:

- Applying for jobs/ sending CV (27)
- Signed up to college course (5)
- Set up own business (2)
- Visit Job Centre (2)
- Register with agencies (1)

5.8.13 Finally, interviewees were asked if they had any further comments to make about the Skills Pipeline Project. Whilst few participants had a comment to make, those that did, are listed below under positive or negative comments themes:

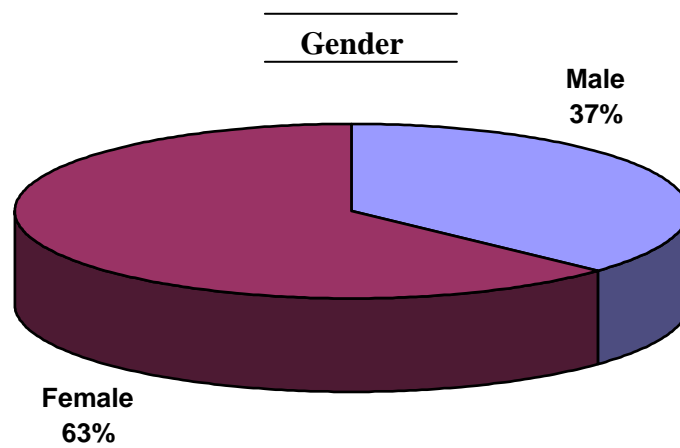
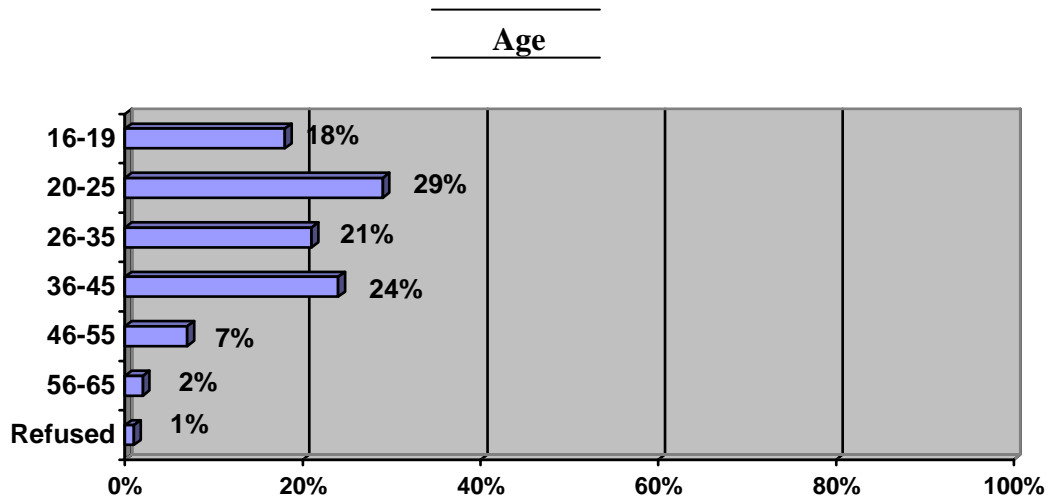
Positive

- Good idea/ useful/ helpful (23)
- Let me know what was available (4)
- Very nice/ encouraging people (3)
- Got IT certificate (2)
- It was worthwhile (2)
- It gave me confidence (2)
- Gives people a chance (1)
- Great for those going back to work (1)
- Helps people improve their skills (1)

Negative

- Never heard any more about it (5)
- Waste of time (2)
- Call centre is not a career in the financial sector (2)
- Would not work in a call centre (2)
- Disappointed with the lack of response (1)
- Did not get any interviews (1)
- Not made clear it was for call centres (1)

5.9 Profile of participants



6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

Our conclusions with regard to the evaluation of the Skills Pipeline Project are summarised below, relating to the key objectives of the research:

- *Does the Skills Pipeline Project train unemployed people to enable them to take up jobs in the financial sector?*

From our discussions with companies, we have to conclude that the Skills Pipeline Project does not train unemployed people to enable them to take up jobs in the financial sector. The training course, companies believe, is set at a very basic level and, as such, would never facilitate the training of individuals (whether unemployed or employed) to enable them to take up jobs in the financial sector.

All companies would train any recruit in-house prior to letting them on the phones. This training course typically lasts 3-4 weeks and is perceived to be fairly intensive, covering, not just telephone skills, but product and systems training relevant to the company itself. In addition, the training required for any recruit would include legal and Financial Services Authority Training (FSA).

The training course within the Skills Pipeline is perceived to be sufficient to bring the right quality of candidate (in terms of attitude and willingness to work) up to a level where they could potentially compete for a job in an interview situation. It does, in no way, train somebody to be in a position to take up a job in the Financial Sector.

- *Does the Skills Pipeline Project act as a skills pipeline for the companies involved?*

We believe that it has to be concluded that the Skills Pipeline Project does not act as a skills pipeline for the companies involved. Of the companies which we spoke to, just one had successfully recruited one individual from the Project. It should be noted, however, that RBS is still in the process of screening and recruitment and, as such, believed it was too early to say whether or not the Project had been a success in this respect. As such, this figure may well rise in time.

However, regardless of this, the companies do not have high expectations of this type of project and do not, and will not, view it as anything other than a 'pre-screening' programme which will feed into their own recruitment programmes.

- *Which elements of the marketing events were successful?*

Satisfaction with the Shopping Centre events was high, with 96% of attendees stating that they were either very or fairly satisfied. Most highly rated at these events were the helpfulness of staff, information given and the location of the stand. In terms of numbers recruited to the Project through the Shopping Centre

events, the most successful event was that at Asda Govan, where 78 individuals expressed an interest in the Project and 53 signed up to the database.

Evening events, surprisingly, were less successful. Satisfaction with evening events, from the participants perspective, was 77%. Again helpfulness of staff and information given is rated most highly. Evening events also gave potential recruits the opportunity to meet with employers and discuss potential job opportunities.

From the employers perspective, these events were not particularly well organised, that some venues were more adequate for the purpose than others (Raddison perceived as being most adequate) and that attendees expectations with regard to what they could expect from such an event had not been adequately managed. For example, there was a feeling that some attendees were expecting to be able to 'get a job' out of attending.

In addition, the conversion rate from evening events was much less, with 53 out of 122 attendees signing up to the database (43% conversion), compared to 336 out of 471 attendees at shopping centre events signing up to the database (71%). It could be argued, however, that the lesser conversion rate may result in more adequate participants who have a better understanding of the Project and the nature of jobs to which they were expressing an interest.

- *Which elements of the training were successful?*

For trainees, the most successful elements of the training were the 'General PC Skills' and 'Interpersonal Skills' elements of the training course. Both of these elements were rated as most helpful by 58% of participants. This was closely followed by 'interview guidelines' (47%) and then 'Telephone techniques/skills' (37%).

In speaking to the training providers, it was felt that a particular challenge in delivering the training course was the diversity of participant. For example, some had particularly strong IT skills whereas others had none. They also came from a range of different ages and backgrounds. Whilst, in some ways, this was a strength of the course and reflects the work environment, it also represented a challenge for the training providers who found it necessary to adapt the training course as they were going along in order to provide for the differing nature of participant. Some more flexibility in terms of the design of the training course was suggested by training providers in order to allow for more adequate provision of training such diverse groups.

It was felt by one particular training provider that the selection process does not filter out the people who would be unable to develop the necessary skills, and that training providers should be more involved with the selection process.

- *The profile of individuals responding to the project*

Overall, the profile of participants tended to be fairly diverse, with ages ranging from 16 to 63. However, in the main, participants tended to be under the age of 45, with 91% of participants falling within this age group. The most prolific age group were aged 20-25, with a total of 29% of participants overall and 32% of training participants falling within this group.

In terms of gender, the split was skewed in favour of females, with 63% of participants overall and 68% of trainees being female.

The employment status of all participants tends towards the unemployed, with 45% of participants overall stating that they fell within this group, with 58% of these being unemployed for 6 months or less, 9% unemployed for between 6 and 18 months and 33% unemployed for longer than 18 months.

27% of participants were employed full time and 10% were employed part time at the time of signing up.

If we consider just the training participants, the profile is somewhat different, with 37% stating that at the time of signing up they were in full time employment, 21% in looking after home/ family, 16% unemployed, 11% students and just one trainee (5%) fell into each of the remaining groups (part time employment, long term sick/ disabled and retired).

At the time of signing up to the Skills Pipeline just 7 respondents had any call centre experience, whether current or previous, with a further 16 respondents having had customer service experience in another environment at the time of signing up

- *The model used to allow companies to participate*

In the main, it was felt that the model which allowed companies to participate in the project was felt to be relatively weak, with companies not feeling particularly engaged in the process and making many recommendations as to how this model could be improved from their perspective.

The lines of communication were not felt to be entirely open between the Project Managers and the companies. There was a lack of interaction and involvement from the Companies in terms of training course and database design. Just one company could confirm that they had input into the training course, however, they did not get to see the final course content.

After the evening events, the companies had no involvement in the project until after the recruits completed the training course. At the end of the course, all trainees were guaranteed a telephone interview with one of the companies. Again, experience of this was not positive. The key issues were:

- Database of poor quality i.e. out of date contact details, numbers unobtainable etc

- Poor quality of candidate, with lack of willingness to work in call centre environment and lack of core skills required to allow them to do so.

From all trainees, just one of the companies interviewed had successfully recruited one individual.

In terms of the database, there is a perception from companies that this *should* be a useful tool. However, again, it was felt that much more screening could be done in order to ensure that those on the database were interested and had the core basic skills to work in the sector.

The overall consensus from companies is that the outcomes of the project in terms of what was achieved from their perspective were disappointing. This, they believed, was in with their expectations with such a Project. It would appear that employers to have low expectations in terms of the ability of such projects to deliver 'quality' recruits. Their experience with the Skills Pipeline has borne this out.

- *Positive outcomes for individuals agreeing to both be put on the database and attend the training sessions*

The key benefits of signing are in terms of raising opportunities that participants were not previously aware of (50%), giving participants the confidence to look for a job (20%) and giving participants the skills to get a job (12%).

Overall, 4% of participants stated that participating in the project has given them a job. However, when training participants only are considered in this respect, this number rises to 21%. It should be noted, however, that at the time of the evaluation RBS were still in the process of contacting and interviewing trainees. As such, it is likely that the final percentage of training participants into work will be higher.

At the time of signing up to Skills Pipeline, 37% of participants were in either full or part time employment, and 45% were unemployed. Compared to current employment status, 56% of participants are now in either full or part time employment, and 28% unemployed. This is a positive change with regard to the employment status of Skills Pipeline participants, with a 19% increase in employment and a 17% fall in unemployment.

At the time of signing up to the Skills Pipeline, just 7 respondents had any call centre experience, whether current or previous, with a further 16 respondents having had customer service experience in another environment. Currently, 14 respondents are employed in call centre environment (10 of these participated in the training), with a further 22 respondents currently working in a customer service environment.

6.2 Recommendations

Based upon the findings of the research, we recommend that the following be considered in terms of the Skills Pipeline Model. Our recommendations are structured under the key participant groups:

Model for employers participation

- **More effective Recruitment and screening**
Employers would like to see recruits having a basic interest in job and an understanding in terms of what is required. Through the recruitment process it is recommended that the Project Managers ensure that recruits know what expect from this type of job and screen participants to ensure that individuals have right attitude to sector in terms of a willingness to work. There should also be some basic tests in place to ensure recruits have key skills for the job, as a two week training course is not perceived to be adequate to give them these if they really are at the beginners level (eg telephone manner, interest in job, IT literate)
- **Involvement in evening events**
Project Managers should attempt to ensure that there is a turnout from all companies to evening events. These should be more structured in terms of what is expected from companies the companies there. It is also felt that at the time of recruitment, there should be a focus on promoting these evening events in order that reasonable numbers turn up. It was suggested by two of the participating companies that an event could be held at the call centre itself in order to ensure that participants can see and explore the environment in which they could be working.
- **More involvement in training course design**
Companies would like a little (although admittedly not a lot) more input into the training course design. For example, rather than just asking what core areas should be covered, include companies in course design also involve companies in training eg through site visits to expose trainees to the nature of the environment in which they could be working.

There was also a feeling that the focus of course should have been different. Although core areas there, emphasis was wrong. If companies had seen final course, they could have fed into this. Companies would prefer much more of a focus on active listening skills/ soft skills/ PC skills and telephone techniques. In addition, the ability to be on the telephone and record information accurately onto a computer is key, there appears to be no acknowledgement that these two activities need to happen in unison in the training course.

- **Include site visits at call centres**
As suggested previously, companies would be happy to facilitate site visits in order to allow potential participants to get under the skin of what is involved in call centre employment, the environment, nature of work, expose them to the 'real' call centre environment.

- **Management of expectations**
It was believed to be key to ensure that trainees expectations were managed throughout the duration of the course. It should be stressed that participants are not guaranteed a job, but guaranteed a telephone interview. It was felt that this was not wholly understood by participants and that there needs to be much more clarity re type of role that they are training and will be interviewed for and that the onus is on them as individuals to take advantage of the opportunity. It was stated by one company that they felt that some participants appeared to think that they were 'owed' a job because they had been through the training course and made no effort to sell themselves.
- **Ensure that information held for training participants and those on database up to date and accurate**
This appeared not to be the case for both parties resulting in companies finding themselves unable to get in contact with participants.
- **Development of database as resource**
Companies felt that they required more information than just names and addresses to make the database a useful resource to them. For example, previous experience, qualifications, interest in employment in sector. It was suggested that perhaps some sort of application form could be developed that meets basic requirements of companies. Also, development of 'job spec' would help understand nature of job on offer.

Model for participants

- **Clarity in terms of recruitment to project and nature of job**
Again, this recommendation could be met by the development of some sort of 'job spec' and application form for Skills Pipeline recruitment. This would ensure that participants are aware of the nature of the job in which they are expressing an interest and that they are motivated enough to actually provide more information about themselves. This would overcome the type of comment received from survey participants in that they did not consider the Skills Pipeline to be successful because it was 'just for call centre jobs'.
- **More follow up for those on database only**
Many of those on the database had received no follow up at all from either the Project Managers or the participating companies. As such, from their perspective, the Skills Pipeline was a failure. Development of the database into a more useful resource which incorporates basic CV details as opposed to just names and addresses may encourage companies to make contact with this group.

Model for Training Providers

- **Provide the opportunity to input into course design**
The training providers were provided with a course structure which divided the key elements to be covered in the course into morning and afternoon sessions. This was felt to be quite rigid in structure and at times proved problematic for

the training providers to work round given the availability of trainers, rooms and equipment within their own institution. It was felt that if they had the opportunity to design the course in a way which better reflected the resource availability within their institution the course would be smoother to run from the trainees perspective.

- Allow for more flexibility in course delivery
Again, training providers felt that it would be beneficial to build more flexibility into the course. This was particularly important, it was felt, due to the differing nature of course participants in terms of age, ability and experience. It was felt that when dealing with diverse groups such as these, it is necessary to allow for flexibility in delivery to ensure that the course meets the needs of the individual rather than delivering against a list of key topics.
- Allow for input into selection process
The current selection process does not filter out those individuals who would be unable to develop the necessary skills. For this reason it was felt that training providers should have the opportunity to be more involved with the selection process.