

**Attending:**

Alison Wolf (Chair)  
Frank Bowley, (BIS)  
Andrew Dickerson (Uni. of Sheffield) (via Skype)  
Stephen Machin (CEP, LSE)  
Sandra McNally (CVER Director)  
Frank McLoughlin (City and Islington College)  
Stephen Nickell (University of Oxford)

Harriet Ogborn (CVER Administrator)  
Bev Robinson (Blackpool and The Fylde College)  
Jenifer Ruiz-Valenzuela (CVER)

**Apologies**

Michele Weatherburn (DfE)  
Kate Murphy (BIS)  
Nigel Rogers (CEP Manager)

**Minutes from February steering group and action points**

No further comments.

Sandra McNally noted that Michele Weatherburn (DfE) had joined the Steering Group, replacing Donna Ward. Michele had sent her apologies but Sandra has been in correspondence with her and has requested a meeting. Sandra introduced Jenifer Ruiz-Valenzuela who is an active member of the research team at LSE.

**Presentation on Progress of the CVER Programme (Sandra McNally)**

[Presentation attached]

- 1) Sandra McNally explained that the presentation would give a brief overview of the projects, and, if time allowed, she would present some of the substantive findings from projects that are due to be published between now and the next SG meeting.
- 2) In terms of the facilitating data strand, Sandra McNally said they were exploring widening data access to external researchers, with the ADRN network and via the CVER data wiki.
- 3) [Slide 4] Sandra McNally explained that CVER would produce 2 types of outputs in the discussion paper series: research outputs (trying to identify causal effects) and policy papers (more descriptive). Some of these outputs can be disseminated in CentrePiece. In addition, we can write up blogs and journalistic pieces for a more general audience. The Steering Group also suggested FE week, TES and the Guardian as outlets. Sandra McNally said she is already in contact with Stephen Exley at TES and has discussed strategies with the media team for maximum impact.
- 4) [Slide 5] Sandra McNally showed the schedule of upcoming outputs. Two referees (members of the SG) are to assess the work before publication. *Project 3.2* will be the first discussion paper (currently being reviewed by Alison Wolf and Steve Machin).
- 5) [Slide 6] Sandra McNally brought up the issue of how to add new proposals to CVER's work programme. She suggested a short proposal (a couple of paragraphs outlining the idea) is given to her, as Director, on which she consults with one other person on the Steering Group for a second opinion. If it is agreed that it fits in the CVER work programme, does not repeat work being undertaken and looks doable, the second step would be to produce a short scoping study with details on how the researchers plan to answer the research questions and how the project fits into the literature. Stephen Nickell expressed concern about potential bureaucracy but after some discussion it was agreed that the process would not be onerous.
- 6) [Slides 7, 8] Sandra noted that progress was being made, but difficulties remain with delays in access to NPD-linked datasets. She added that both Michele Weatherburn and Tim Leunig are very well aware of these issues and that we will continue to follow up. Frank Bowley pointed out that the All Education Dataset is now referred to as LEO (Longitudinal Educational Outcomes).
- 8) *Project 1.3*: now mainly orientated towards a technical matching exercise of the ILR with the Employer Data Service (EDS) and the ONS Inter Departmental Business Register. Progress report suggests available data sets do not have enough information to look at costs and benefits of training.

- 9) *Project 1.4*: aims to look at the nature of employer engagement in training and impact on firm-level outcomes. Working with Employers Skills Survey (EES) linked to the Business Structure database (BSD) and other ONS surveys based on the Interdepartmental Business Register Data (IDBR): the ONS Virtual Microdata Lab. Quality issues raised about the EES-BSD data held in the VML. Frank Bowley mentioned that he had commissioned London Economics to lead a review of the Employers Skills Survey, and encouraged CVER researchers to feed into that.
- 10) Sandra McNally raised Steve McIntosh's concerns about the future of *Project 2.2*. The initial response rate was 50% or about 60 people, and they were concerned it would decline further. Should the project change nature and become more qualitative, interviewing this small number of apprentices? Further to Frank Bowley's request for clarification, Andy Dickerson explained that they had planned to follow a cohort of apprentices at Sheffield's AMRC, which provides elite apprenticeships, for 3-4 years through to employment. Andy Dickerson said that a possibility was to conduct some case studies, following a few individuals instead of everyone. Alison Wolf questioned the usefulness of this because of lack of representativeness. There was general agreement on this. **Action**: It was agreed to halt this project and the Sheffield team should propose a replacement.
- 11) In relation to survey data, Frank Bowley talked about the limits of administrative datasets, as they are not very rich. He thought that at some point we would have to think how we were going to supplement those datasets (with social outcomes data, etc.) to look at motivation, social mobility etc.
- 12) Frank McLoughlin also argued for research on more typical apprenticeship programmes rather than elite ones.
- 13) Andy Dickerson emphasised that the researchers' intent had been to look at a contemporary apprenticeship programme in real time, to complement other CVER research. He felt there was potential in the Understanding Society data to study apprenticeships. **Action point**: Steve McIntosh and Andy Dickerson to explore.
- 14) Sandra McNally mentioned that there has not been progress in *Project 2.3* due to lack of data (GCSE re-marking indicators) and that she is in contact with Michele Weatherburn about this.
- 15) Sandra McNally presented the evolution of learner numbers for 16-18 years old [Slide 11]. Stephen Nickell asked about the jump from 2005 to 2006 in the number of learners in Sixth Form Colleges. **Action point**: Clarify why there is this jump. It is potentially due to reclassification.
- 16) Sandra McNally highlighted the dramatic decrease in the number of 19+ learners in FE colleges [Slide 12]. Stephen Nickell asked why this was the case and Frank McLoughlin referred to cuts in adult funding for FE (around 2007). Sandra McNally pointed out that overall funding had not changed as much as learner numbers. Frank Bowley mentioned that this could be due to the fact that there was a general move from shorter courses for more people (under the Train to Gain programme) to longer courses for fewer people. Sandra McNally highlighted again the puzzle of decreasing numbers of learners (in particular for 19+) together with greater overall stability in funding allocations. Alison Wolf thought that the composition of funding is likely to be important and in general it is important to understand possible explanations for informing future policy. Bev Robinson mentioned that relevant factors also include the introduction of study programmes in 2014-15: all 16-19 year olds became a single enrolment with the introduction of study programmes). Alison Wolf mentioned the relevance of cohort size and the change in recruitment incentives provoked by changes in funding allocations. Frank McLoughlin commented that the growth seen in sixth form colleges and also in private providers is striking. **Action**: Frank Bowley said that he could put CVER in contact with BIS team to further understand these trends.
- 17) Stephen Nickell asked whether the graphs in slides 11 and 12 reflect a snapshot of people at a given point in the year or the total number of people that had contact with the college during the year. Bev Robinson said that it is likely to be the latter given that the numbers come from ILR data, and Frank Bowley confirmed that too. Sandra McNally said that if a learner was taking courses with multiple providers, they would then be counted more than once. Frank McLoughlin said that it is possible to tell whether a learner that enrolls at two different points in time in the same year is the same person. Alison Wolf recommended checking whether numbers used in the analysis reflect learner numbers and not the number of enrolments (**Action point**: Clarify how learner numbers are computed in the paper (noting that this should be learners and not enrolments).
- 18) [Slide 14] Turning to the number of apprenticeships withdrawn after 3 years, Sandra McNally highlighted the big drop-out rates (1/3). There was some discussion as to what this meant. Sandra McNally said these were apprenticeships as defined by the ILR. Steve Machin suggested

breaking down the graph by the duration of the apprenticeship. Bev Robinson suggested checking SASE rules (on minimum duration of apprentices). Frank Bowley clarified that there was a minimum duration rule but not a maximum duration rule for apprenticeships. Sandra McNally made the point that whatever the length, they should finish. **Action point:** Review graph presentation.

- 19) Frank McLoughlin thought it was important to understand what apprentices did after completion. Are they in work? Do they work in the same sector after the apprenticeship? Would the sector provide routes for progression for a higher volume of apprenticeships? Sandra McNally mentioned that other projects were going to look at this (Steve McIntosh using LFS). Frank Bowley acknowledged the problem here of ILR not linking with HMRC administrative data. Bev Robinson suggested exploring the impact of the apprenticeship levy coming in 2017. Steve Machin talked about research in other countries and looking at employers in Germany which retained a higher number of apprentices.
- 20) Alison Wolf suggested looking at the LSYPE and seeing whether we can use that survey to look at apprentices. Frank Bowley offered the possibility of using BIS funding as leverage to incorporate questions in surveys, like the MCS.
- 22) Sandra McNally mentioned that projects on returns had been on hold due to data delays, and that Gavan Conlon and Steve McIntosh were putting a lot of effort into understanding the contradictory results on returns, particularly for low-level learners, when using administrative versus survey data. Frank Bowley mentioned the potential selection issues when looking at returns by subjects. Steve Machin said that the strategy using completers versus non-completers was completely endogenous.

### Discussion: Issues raised in presentation (or background papers)

- 23) Alison Wolf raised a question for Frank Bowley: why is it not possible to get simple statistics relating to adult learners and providers? She welcomed the progress CVER had made to date with the figures but noted there were still obstacles to unpacking the data, which would have clear policy implications. Sandra McNally mentioned that the provider's project (0.1) suggests that the SFA should compile more detailed information on funding and adult learner numbers. Frank Bowley said that they do know how many organisations they fund, and they do know how many learners there are because pay is linked to the number of learners. Sandra McNally said that they do not systematically record the number of learners and institutions like in the Edubase, for instance. Frank Bowley mentioned the SFA data function had been hived off, and combined with EFA, now called FASST led by Simon Parks. **Action:** Meet with FASST team.
- 24) Jenifer Ruiz-Valenzuela asked about learners within the same institution but in different funding streams, potentially receiving two candidate learner numbers. Bev Robinson offered the help of the technical team at Blackpool and The Fylde College (who could help via email with these sort questions).
- 25) Sandra McNally mentioned that researchers at CVER could not replicate funding numbers; and that the SFA funding formula should be made available. Alison Wolf added that it should be transparent.

### Communication, dissemination and CVER events and data:

[Slide 21]

- 26) Sandra McNally explained that the programme for the CVER conference is not yet out, but that a list of accepted papers had been provided in the appendix, as well as the keynote speakers. Wider invitations will be sent shortly.
- 27) With regard to publicising the first discussion paper, *Project 3.2* (post-16 choices), Sandra had spoken to Fran Abrams (Education Media Centre) and Romesh Vaitilingam (CEP media). There will be a general press release, given that they think this work is potentially interesting to a wider audience.
- 28) The Steering Group considered the date of release, and agreed it should be before the Sainsbury's review. **Action:** Alison Wolf and Steve Machin to give comments by 27 June.
- 29) Frank McLoughlin asked if adults are included in project 3.2 and because he was surprised at the high number of students stuck in low-level courses for 4 years. Sandra clarified that it's only young learners. He also raised the question of the impact of rising numbers of ESOL learners.
- 30) Frank Bowley suggested we should have a section in the CVER conference for a policy panel with room for a light non-academic discussion about where policy is heading.

- 31) Frank McLoughlin encouraged Sandra to find ways to involve the sector in the work of the CVER. Sandra clarified that FE college principals receive the CVER newsletter, she had given a recent webinar organised by the Federation of Awarding Bodies. **Action:** Alison Wolf asked whether Bev Robinson and Frank McLoughlin could provide, for the next steering group, a one-page summary on how to disseminate the findings of our research to interested parties in the FE sector. Frank McLoughlin also suggested that CVER should present work at the AoC conference.

The next meeting of the Steering Group is 19 October 2016 (1–2.30pm).

\* \* \*

#### **Summary of Action points:**

*Project 1.4:* Halt this project and the Sheffield team should propose a replacement.  
Explore Understanding Society data to study apprenticeships [Steve McIntosh and Andy Dickerson]

*[Slides 11 and 12] Evolution of learner numbers for 16-18 years old, and 19+*  
Clarify why there is this jump from 2005 to 2006 in the number of learners in Sixth Form Colleges.  
[CEP team]

CVER to be in contact with BIS team to further understand these trends of decreasing numbers of 19+ learners in FE colleges. [Frank Bowley]  
Clarify how learner numbers are computed (should be learners and not enrolments). [CEP team]

*[Slide 14] Number of apprenticeships withdrawn after 3 years*  
Review graph presentation. [IES team]

*Gaining simple statistics relating to adult learners and providers*  
CVER researchers to meet with FASST team. [Frank Bowley]

*First discussion paper, Project 3.2 (post-16 choices)*  
Comments by 27 June. [Alison Wolf and Steve Machin]

*Involving the sector in the work of the CVER*  
One-page summary on how to disseminate the findings of our research to interested parties in the FE sector [Bev Robinson and Frank McLoughlin]  
Investigate presenting work at the AoC conference, November. [Sandra McNally]



# Centre for Vocational Education Research: Steering Group Meeting, 21 June 2016

Sandra McNally

# Outline

1. Brief overview + adding projects to the programme
2. Some substantive findings from projects with outputs due between now and September

# CVER programme: main strands

1. Facilitating Strand – Data
2. Overarching Strand – Descriptive overview of VE sector and policy issues
3. Impact of VE on individuals, firms and growth
4. Quality of VE provision
5. Individual participation decisions and the costs and benefits of VE



## Main written outputs

### Discussion paper series:

Research papers (intended for academic publication) and policy papers. Some of these will also be prepared for CentrePiece (CEP magazine)

### Briefing notes:

Short articles (e.g. 4-5 pages), usually based on discussion papers – for a general audience.

### Blogs:

More journalistic short pieces about research/policy targeted at a general audience.

## Outputs – what to expect in the next few months (subject to data!)

Strand	Projects	Expected submission
Overarching Strand	0.1 Further Education Providers in England: An analysis of the evolution of providers, learners and funding (Hupkau, Ventura)	DP by June/July 2016
	0.2 Careers information and guidance: (McNally)	DP as soon as published
	0.3 An Analysis of duration and achievement for a recent cohort of apprentices (Speckesser, Nafilyan)	DP: July 2016
1. Impact of VE on individuals, firms and growth	1.1 Private returns to VE (Conlon and McIntosh)	3-4 DPs by end of 2016 <b>(LFS paper: June/July)</b>
	1.2 Post-apprenticeship benefits of individual apprentices to employers (Speckesser, Nafilyan)	DP December 2016
	1.3 Firm decision to engage in publicly funded training (Conlon)	DP October 2016
	1.4 The impact of vocational education and training on firms: New evidence from linked administrative data (Speckesser)	DP December 2016
	1.5 Procuring a Skilled Workforce: Automotive Sector: (Steedman)	DP February 2017
2. Quality of VE provision	2.1.1 Effects of UTCs (Machin, McNally, Terrier).	1 DP by end of 2016
	2.1.2 Effectiveness of CEOs in the Public Sector: evidence from Further Education Colleges (Ruiz-Valenzuela, Terrier)	2-3 DPs by May 2017
	2.1.3 Value added of FE providers in England (Hupkau, Aucejo)	
	2.1.4 The impact of capital expenditure on college performance	
	2.2 Case study of Apprenticeships in AMRC (McIntosh)	First outputs May 2017
	2.3 Maths and English: gaining access to 'high quality' VE routes (Machin, McNally, Ruiz-Valenzuela)	1 DP by end of 2016
3. Individual participation decisions etc.	3.1 The demand for VE skills, and the choices individuals make (Dickerson)	2-3 DPs between <b>Sept 2016</b> and March 2017
	3.2 Access and Returns to Apprenticeships and classroom-based FE (CEP, IES)	<b>2 DPs June-July 2016</b>

# Process for adding projects to the programme

Suggestion:

1. Short draft proposal to be reviewed by director + one other member of the SG.
2. Progress report in the form of a 'scoping study' to be reported for SG in papers for quarterly meetings

## Overall progress: strengths

- Much progress on data acquisition and processing of core data sets.

(See Wiki page for example)

- Close to having several policy discussion papers and briefing notes ready for publication (in addition to other forms of dissemination which are ongoing)
- Substantive findings should stimulate debate.

# Overall progress: difficulties

1. Data delays (NPD linked data sets).

2. Data quality (selected issues):

Project 0.1: Funding allocations to providers: published figures do not match with calculations from the ILR; Difficult to derive adult learner numbers from the ILR.

Project 1.3: now mainly orientated towards a technical matching exercise of the ILR with the Employer Data Service (EDS) and the ONS Inter Departmental Business Register. Progress report suggests available data sets do not have enough information to look at costs and benefits of training

Project 1.4: aims to look at the nature of employer engagement in training and impact on firm-level outcomes. Working with Employers Skills Survey (EES) linked to the Business Structure database (BSD) and other ONS surveys based on the Interdepartmental Business Register Data (IDBR): the ONS Virtual Microdata Lab. Quality issues raised about the EES-BSD data held in the VML

## Data access/quality continued

- Project 2.2. Case study of Apprenticeships in AMRC

50% response rate to Wave 1 questionnaire (60 people). Expected to decline in future waves.

Should the project continue through interviews of a small number of apprentices?

- Project 2.3. Importance of Maths and English in gaining access to ‘high quality’ VE routes.

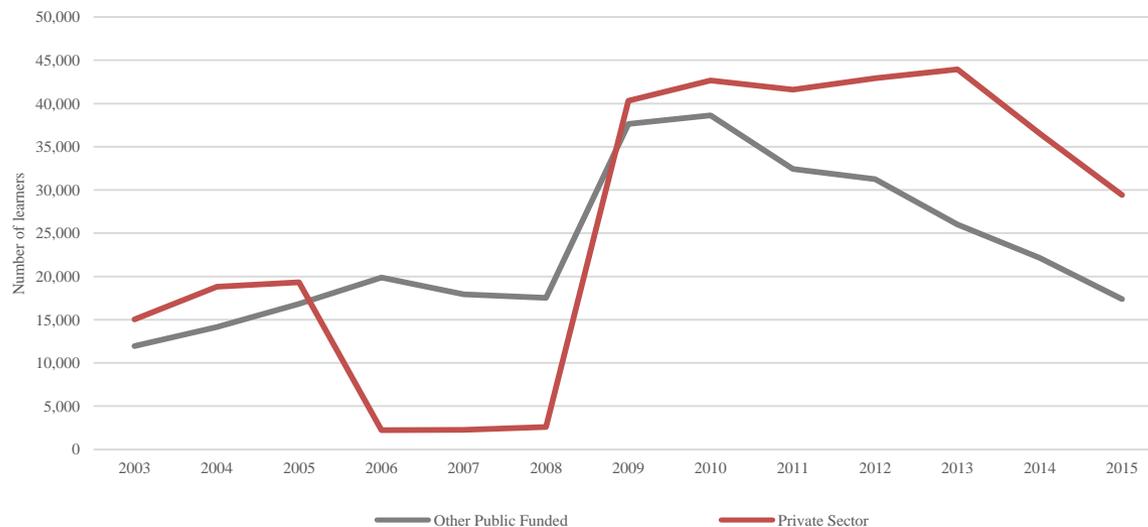
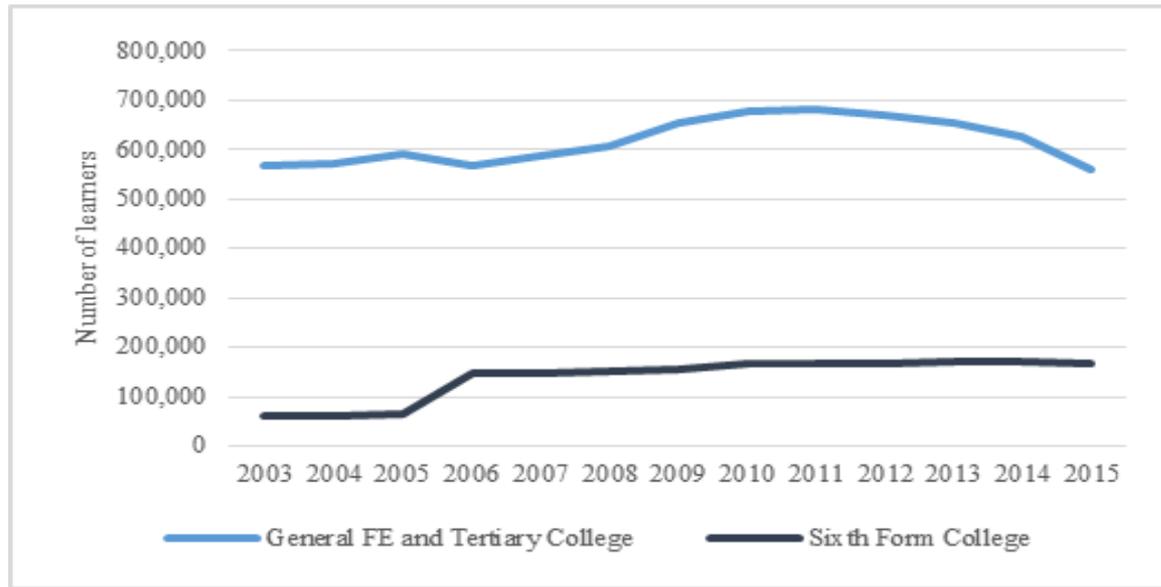
Need a re-marking indicator for GCSEs from the Awarding bodies.

No progress on this project since February because of this and one outstanding NPD linked application.

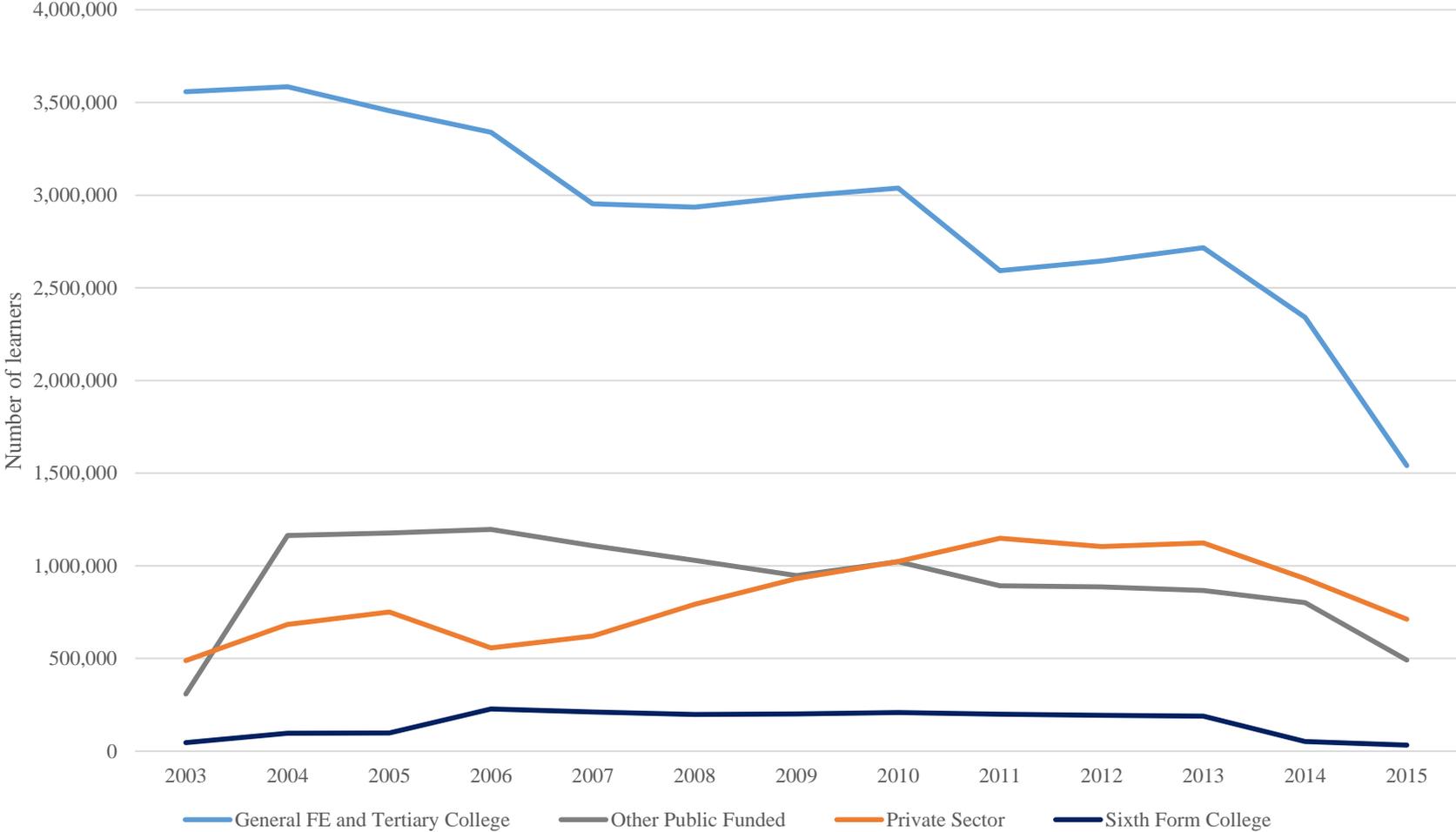
## Selected findings from some of the outputs between now and September:

- 0.1 Further Education Providers in England: An analysis of the evolution of providers, learners and funding (Hupkau, Ventura)
- 0.3 An Analysis of duration and achievement for a recent cohort of apprentices (Speckesser, Nafilyan)
- 1.1 Private returns to VE (Conlon and McIntosh)
- 3.2 Access and Returns to Apprenticeships and classroom-based FE (CEP, IES)

# Evolution of total learner numbers: age 16-18



# Evolution of total learner numbers: age 19+



# Funding allocations

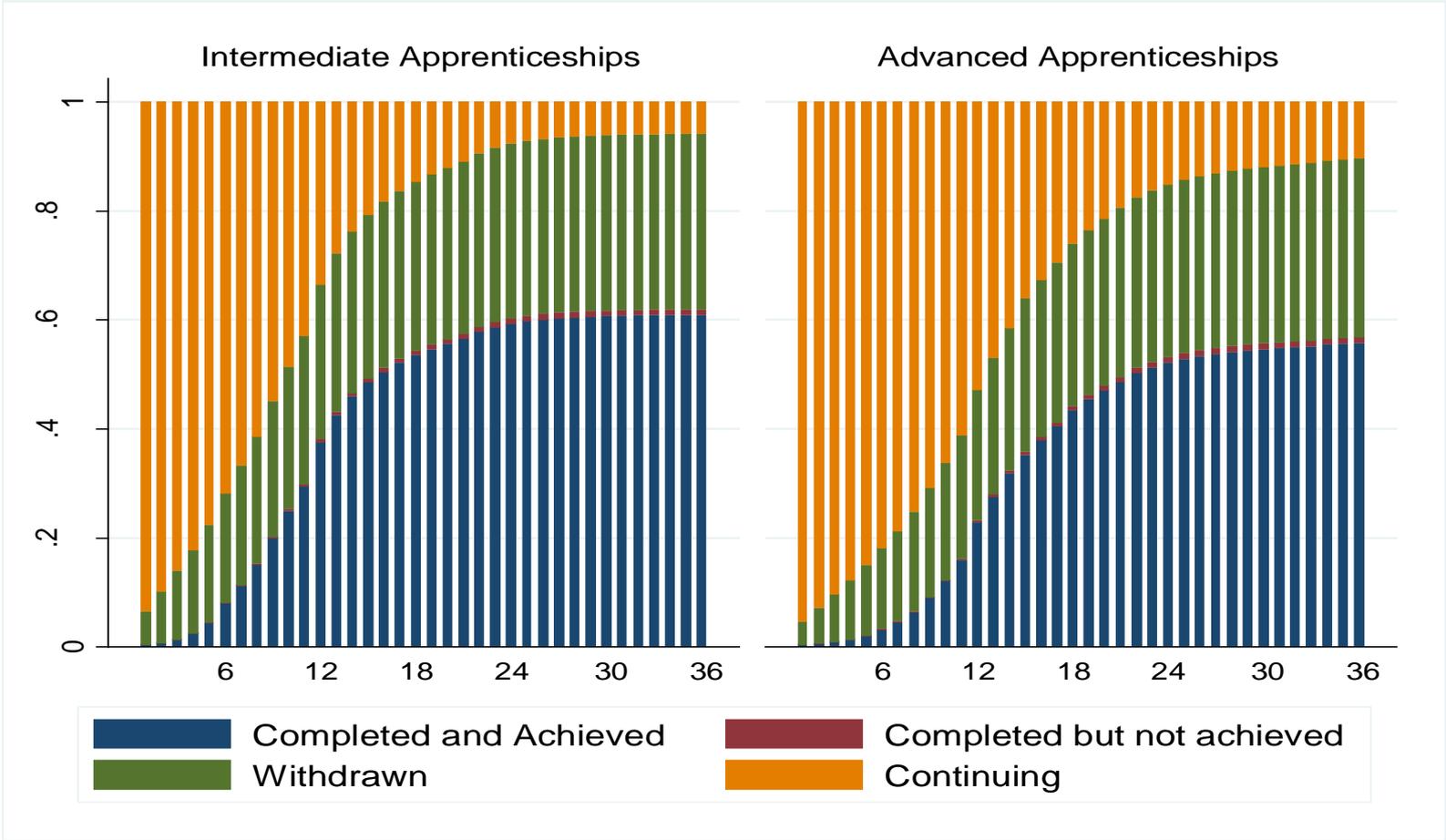
**Table 4: Total funding to FE by provider type and academic year**

Total funding by provider type (in millions of £)

Academic year	General FE and Tertiary College	Other Public Funded	Private Sector	School Sixth Forms	Sixth Form College	Total
2006	3,297	239	144	22	477	4,179
2007	3,529	171	9	24	510	4,244
2008	3,702	217	140	17	555	4,630
2009	3,562	282	231	7	625	4,707
2010	4,165	536	927	10	695	6,337
2011	4,592	450	692	9	745	6,502
2012	4,751	459	649	7	776	6,654
2013	4,133	439	508	7	772	5,861
2014	3,911	484	785	6	764	5,960
2015	4,226	501	840	5	771	6,353
Total	39,867	3,777	4,926	114	6,690	55,426

*Source:* Figures derived from LSC, SFA and EFA published accounts of funding allocations. Monetary values are adjusted in terms of 2015 prices

About 1/3 of Intermediate and advanced apprenticeships started in 2011/12 are withdrawn 3 years after they start



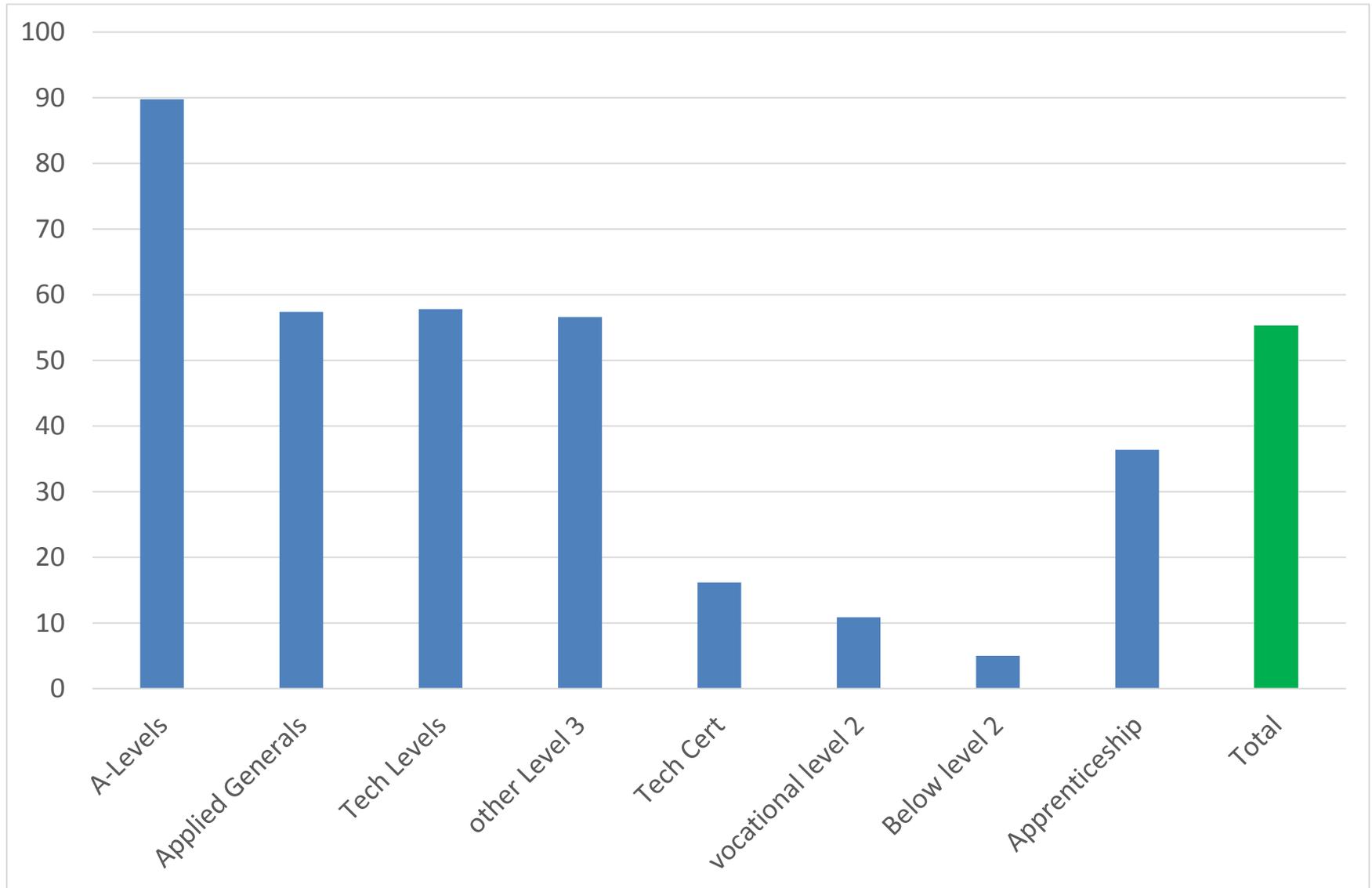
## Private returns to vocational education

- Results based on the LFS (1997-2015) will be the subject of a DP to be submitted soon.
- Estimate both average and marginal returns to different vocational qualifications. Research updates previous analysis and confirms other findings using survey data. Among findings are positive returns for apprenticeships but big gender difference
- Also, estimate quantile regressions and subject of study. Great variation in estimated returns across subjects, even within the same qualification category. For example, big returns within engineering and construction but not retail, catering and caring

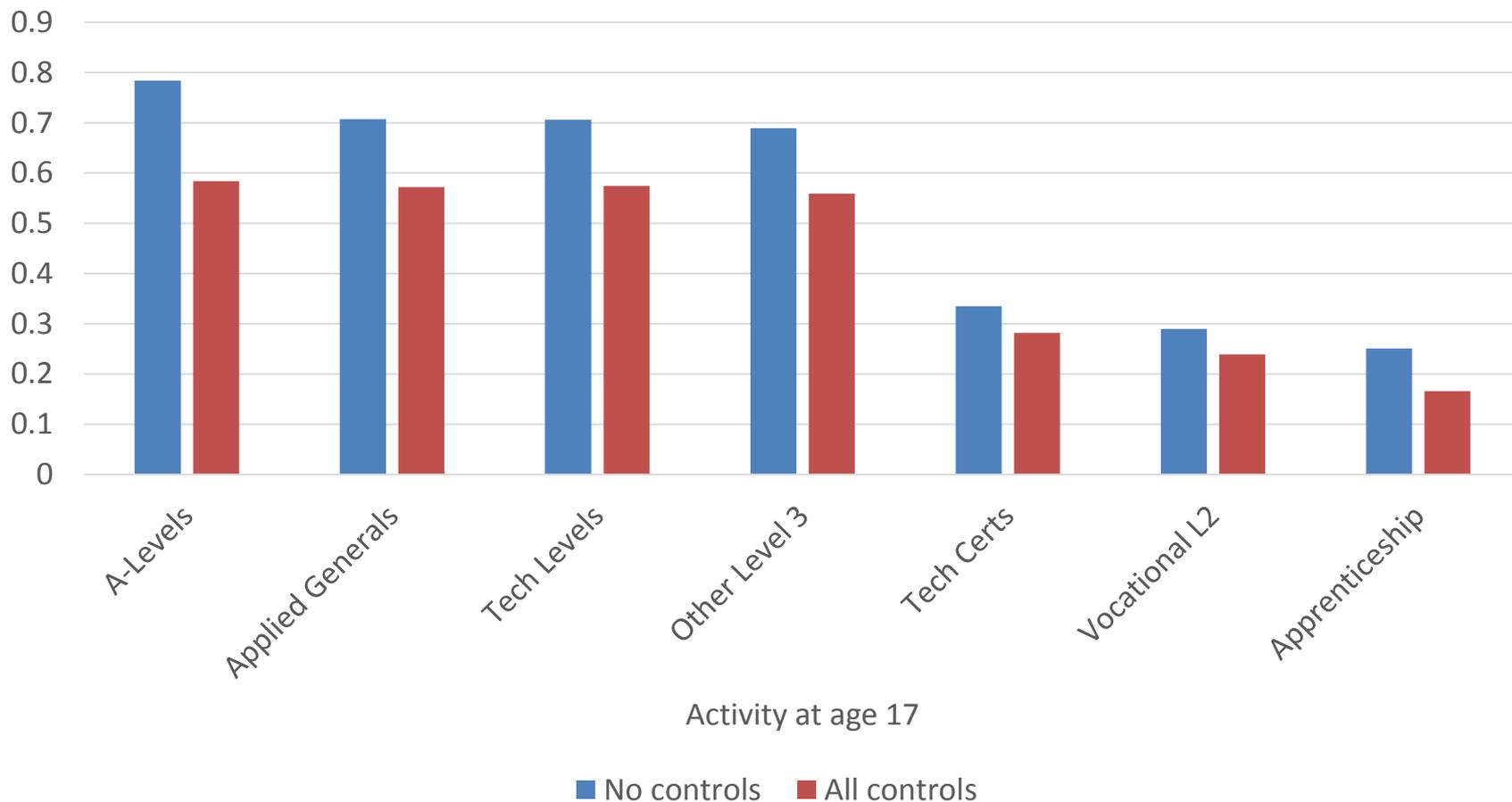
## Composition of Learners by activity at age 17

	Stay-on Age 18	Level 3 qual by age 20	Commence apprent: age 18-20	Commence L3 apprent: age 18-20	Univ. Degree	Russell Group	other Level 4+	Total
Main activity at age 17	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Level 3</b>								
<b>Any level 3 qualification</b>	<b>63.4</b>	<b>79.7</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>41.8</b>	<b>93.2</b>	<b>96.4</b>	<b>77.7</b>	<b>58.1</b>
A-Levels	49.3	62.8	25.9	30.0	83.5	94.5	47.7	44.8
Applied Generals	5.6	6.8	5.0	4.4	4.5	0.9	10.4	5.3
Tech Levels	4.7	5.7	4.2	4.3	3.4	0.5	12.8	4.5
Other Level 3	3.7	4.4	3.8	3.2	1.7	0.4	6.8	3.5
<b>Level 2</b>								
<b>Any level 2 qualification</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>12.7</b>
Tech Certificates	1.6	1.3	2.1	1.7	0.1	0.0	1.0	1.8
Vocational qualifications at level 2	9.0	6.4	10.7	9.2	1.9	0.3	7.6	9.5
<b>Level 1 and entry level</b>								
Below level 2	<b>9.9</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>10.9</b>
<b>Apprenticeship</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>27.8</b>	<b>34.2</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>6.9</b>
Unknown	5.3	4.0	5.0	4.1	2.7	1.5	3.8	5.5
Not observed	2.	1.1	4.7	2.7	1.0	1.3	1.9	6.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>507,304</b>	<b>386,959</b>	<b>118,187</b>	<b>46,814</b>	<b>192,781</b>	<b>43,395</b>	<b>23,087</b>	<b>574,967</b>

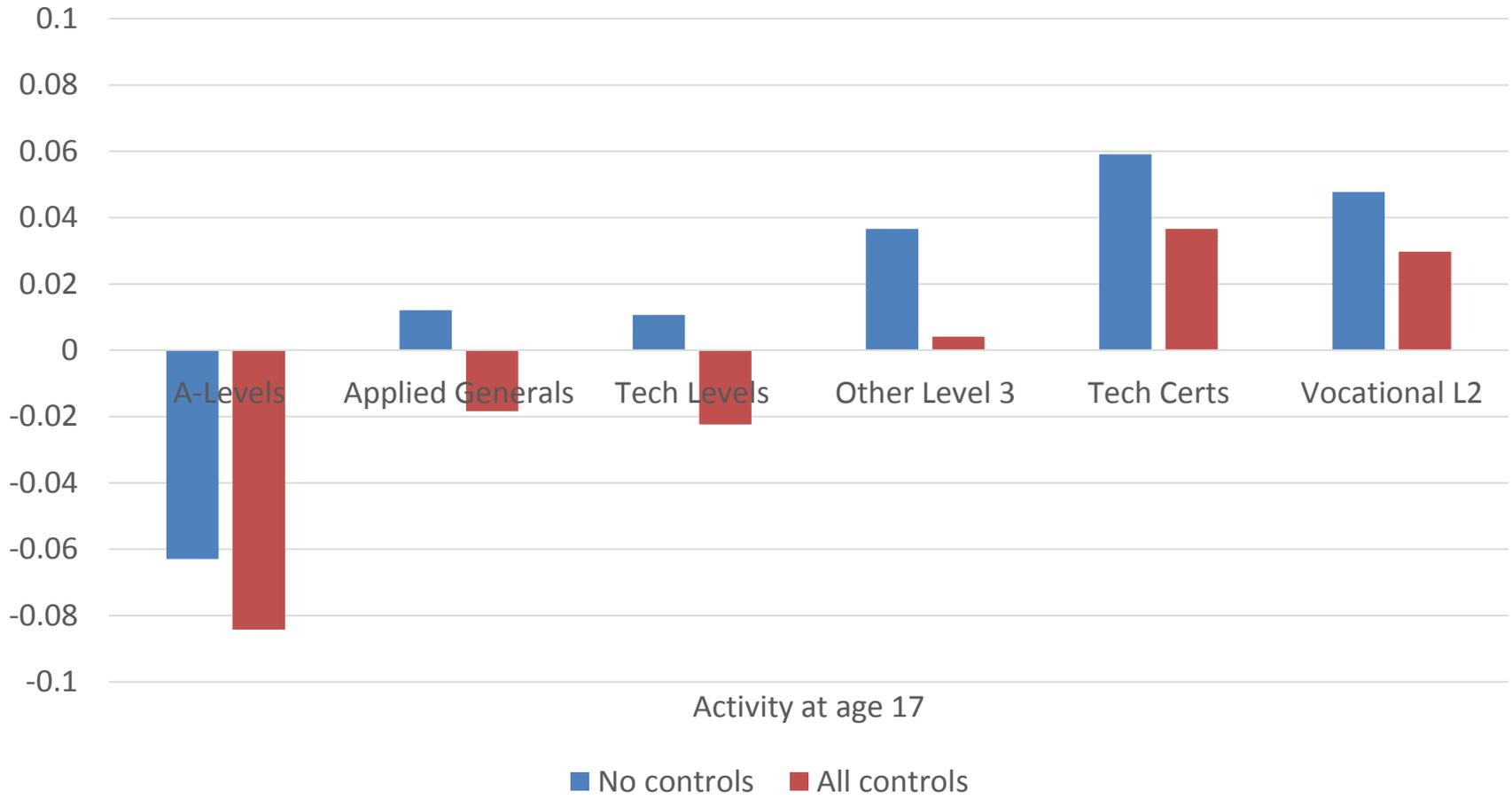
# Activity at age 17: Share achieving 5+ GCSEs at A\*-C



# Probability of achieving a Level 3 qualification by age 20 (relative to those studying below level 2 at age 17)



# Probability of starting an apprenticeship between age 18-20 (relative to those studying below level 2 at age 17)



# Second chances or stuck?

Main activity at age 17	Number of years in learning at or below Level 2			Number of consecutive years in learning at or below Level 2			Total number
	2	3	4	2	3	4	
<b>Level 3</b>							
<b>Any level 3 qualification</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>333,985</b>
A-Levels	0.8	0.1	0.0	0.7	0.1	0.0	256,819
Applied Generals	2.7	0.3	0.0	2.4	0.3	0.0	30,956
Tech Levels	2.5	0.3	0.0	2.3	0.3	0.0	25,612
Other	3.2	0.5	0.0	2.8	0.5	0.0	20,330
<b>Level 2</b>							
<b>Any level 2 qualification</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>72,926</b>
Tech Certificates	25.4	8.0	1.6	18.6	4.7	1.6	10,312
Vocational at level 2	28.6	10.8	3.1	22.9	7.0	3.1	54,801
<b>Level 1 and entry level</b>							
Below level 2	<b>39.5</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>40.6</b>	<b>17.1</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>62,428</b>
<b>Apprenticeship</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>39,315</b>
<i>Unknown</i>	9.2	3.0	0.0	7.9	3.0	0.0	31,552
<i>Not observed</i>	7.7	2.1	0.0	6.5	2.1	0.0	34,761
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>574,967</b>

## Communication, dissemination and CVER events

- Newsletter (now 600 people). 3 since last SG. Advertise our seminars, the conference, and dissemination of our outputs. To date: outputs have been blogs or reports to Select Committee inquiries and webinar organised by the Federation of Awarding Bodies
- Long list of engagement activities
- Indicators show increasing use of our website over time. 6,315 visits since our launch, 70% of which are between January and May 2016
- Conference to be held at LSE from 5-6 September. 16 papers have been accepted (in addition to 3 keynote speakers and contributions from CVER)
- Plan to publicise first DP on post-16 choices discussed with Fran Abrams (Education Media Centre) and Romesh Vaitilingam (CEP)