

Fletcher's Business Solutions Adult Education Budget Report 2021

Exploring the issues and suggesting solutions

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Introduction

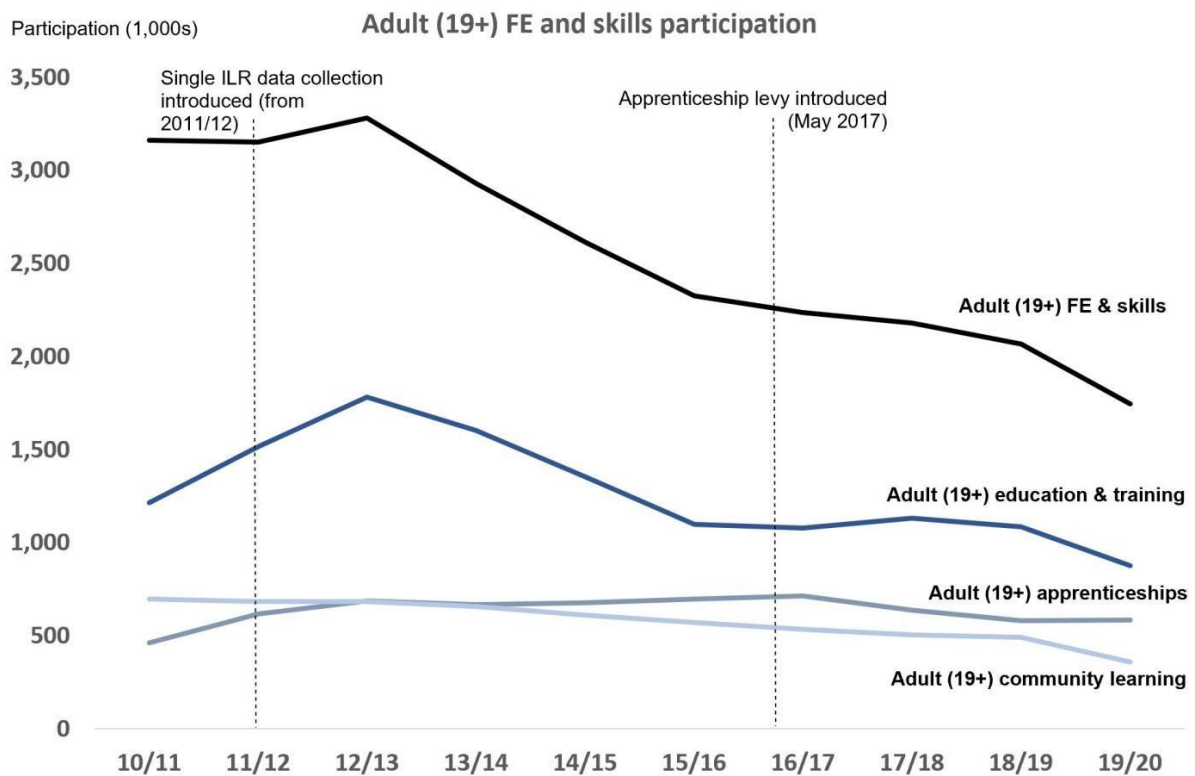
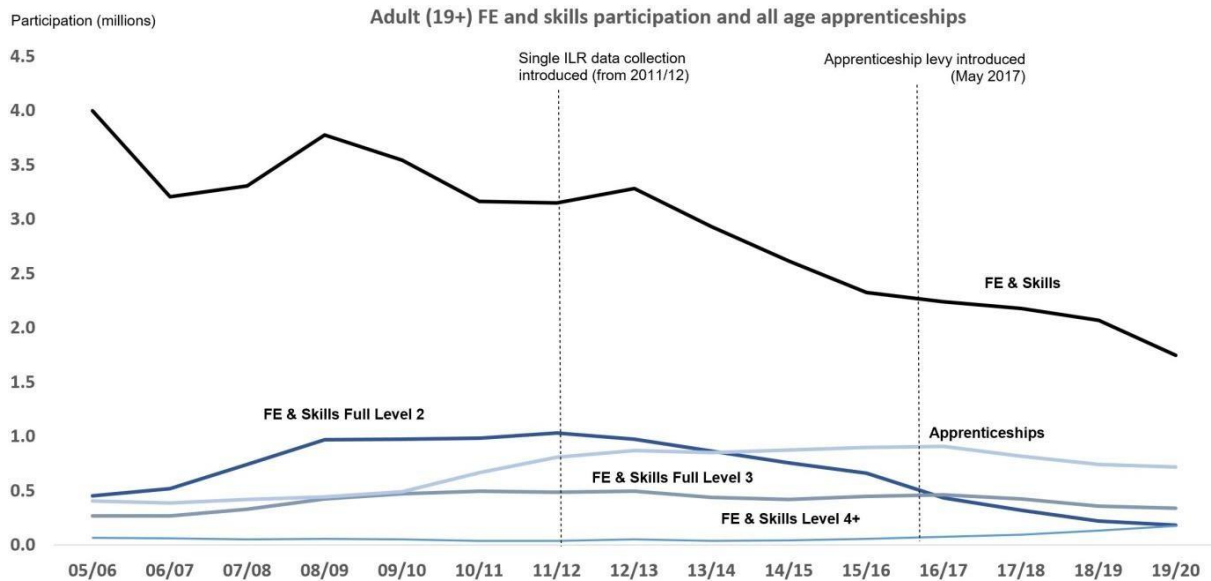
“The AEB aims to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to equip them for work, an apprenticeship or other learning. It enables more flexible tailored programmes of learning to be made available, which may or may not require a qualification, to help eligible learners engage in learning, build confidence, and/or enhance their wellbeing.”

The office manager has created this report to show the disparities between the participation and achievements, age and groups being displayed in projects funded by the Adult Education Budget (AEB). In this report we will portray the issues we have discovered through our research, and offer new solutions to increase retention.

The information in this report was gathered over a number of weeks by said office manager, which was gathered from statistics produced mainly by gov.uk through analysing the numbers and producing results.

Further Education & Skills

Participation rates



From the graphs above it is clear to see that Adult Further Education (FE) & Skills has been declining each and every year without fail. This is concerning, especially when considering we are in a period of time where gaining further education or skills is crucial to being able to progress and create a strengthened workforce nationwide.

Even when taking the pandemic into consideration, this still doesn't account for the rapid decline over a period of 10 years, meaning it is safe to conclude that the recent pandemic is not the main issue we are facing. There is something deeper that is not being utilised correctly.

Due to this, less individuals are being given the opportunity to up skill themselves and gain valuable qualifications and knowledge. For participation to drop from roughly 4,000,000 to roughly 2,000,000 is not only alarming, it's problematic. Around 50% less individuals are participating in FE & Skills, which can only mean there's 50% less individuals being trained and given the opportunity to progress in their careers.

If the AEB budget "aims to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to equip them for work, an apprenticeship or other learning" then why is participation so low? What is happening to produce these lackluster results?

**FE & Skills
Participation
Rates**

-15%

**Education &
Training
Participation
Rates**

-10.5%

**Community
Learning
Participation
Rates**

-47.6%

**AEB
Participation
Rates**

-24.4%



Further Education & Skills

Achievement Rates

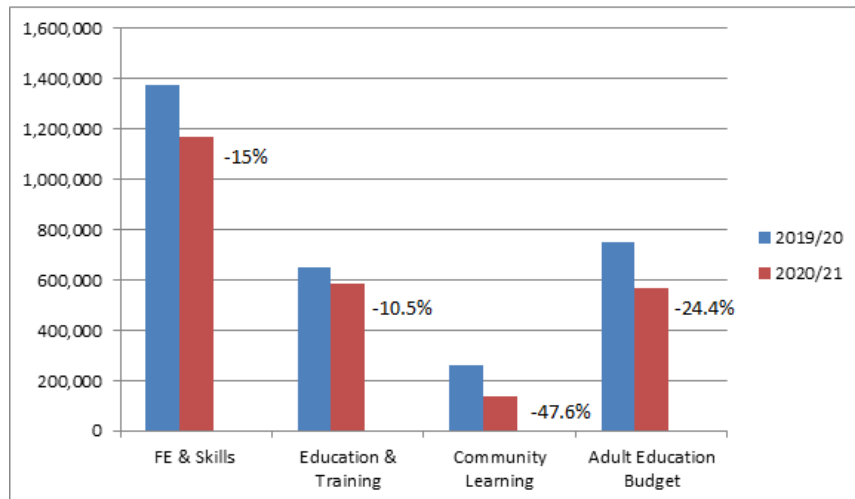
Unfortunately this is not the only issue we have found through our research. Another concerning aspect of the statistics given was the achievement rates in comparison to the Participation rates.

Achievement rates have significantly dropped over the last 7 years, increasing with each interval. A very minor percentage of participants are achieving in basic skills, Maths, English and essential skills.

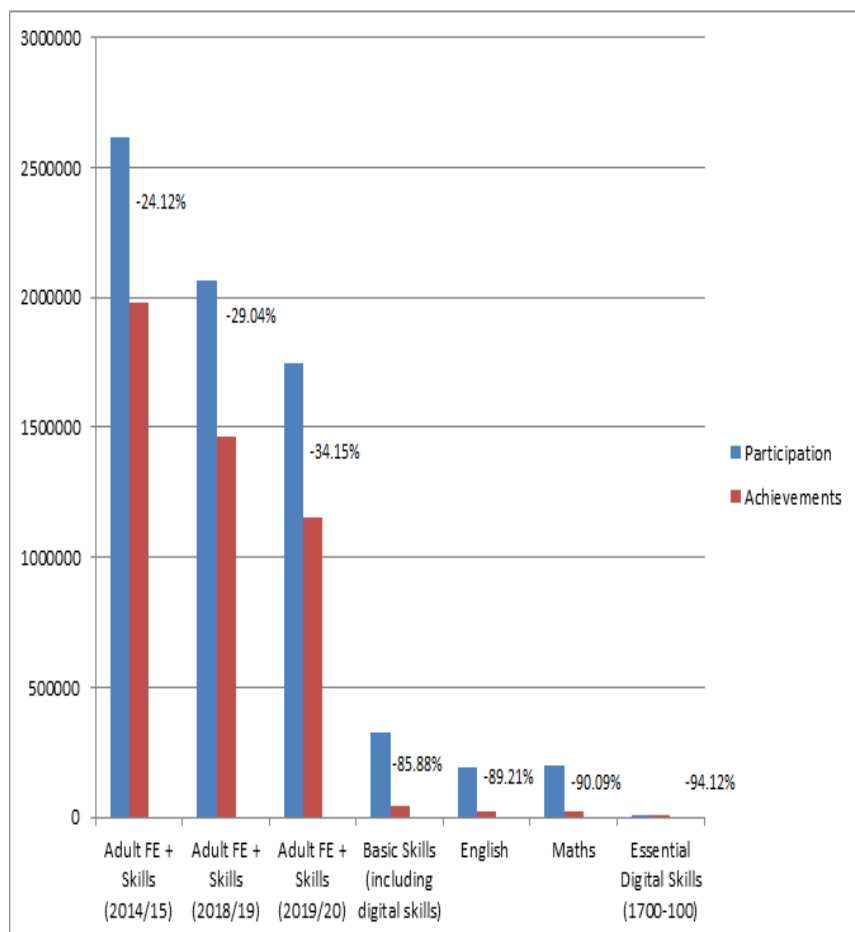
In the 2019/20 period, basic skills were down 85.88%, English was down by 89.21%, Maths was down by 90.09% and essential skills were down by an astonishing 94.12%

In regards to Adult FE & Skills, 24.12% of participants were not achieving in the 2014/15 period, compared to 29.04% in the 2018/19 period and then declining again to a further 34.15% in the 2019/20 period. Every year there is a decline and we are yet to see any improvement.

Participation rates from 2019-2021



Adult Further Education (FE) & Skills Participation and Achievements



Education and Training

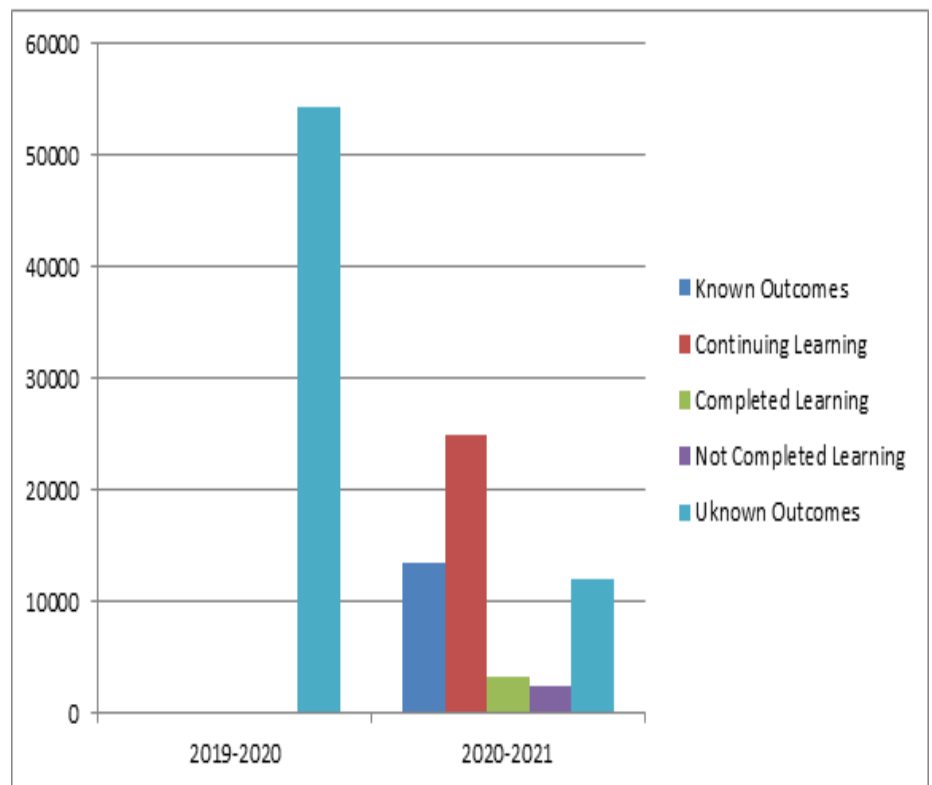
From these results it is safe to assume that not nearly enough of the participants are achieving the desired outcomes, with some being detrimental to the participants that are not hitting these targets. Participants should be achieving all of their desired outcomes, with perhaps a 5-10% margin of error.

These percentages indicate that much more needs to be done to keep success high. 1-1 mentoring, support, understanding the mindset of every individual,

appraisal forms; these are all effective ways to keep engagement and achievement high. However, as the numbers clearly show, these methods are not being practiced. In many instances, companies and organisations are receiving funding but not delivering the allocated project outcomes. If this is the case then what is the benefit of repeatedly funding underperforming businesses?

For instance in the above graph on Education and Training records in 2019-2021, it is shown that in the 2019/20 period, there were 54,400 records “where the learning was expected to have ended but the outcome was unknown”. Of those 54,400, it was discovered in the 2020/21 period, that there were 13,500 known records. Broken down into two sections, 11,000 were completed with achievements, with the other 2,500 not being completed. On top of this, 25,600 were continuing learning (due to delays and shut downs brought on by covid-19). Only 3,200 had completed learning but, even then, their outcomes were still unknown, leaving the remaining 12,700 outcomes still unknown. What is happening in these cases? Why are companies not being monitored closely? How have government funded projects received “unknown outcomes”? With a complete lack of due diligence and oversights from course providers, projects are underperforming and being left by the wayside. Taking the pandemic into consideration, there is still not enough being done by the ESFA and AEB. There needs to be streamlined correspondence between both the ESFA and the companies taking on projects through the AEB, with targets being delivered consistently throughout all of the AEB projects.

Education and Training Records 2019-2021



Ages Disparity - Further Education + Skills 2018 – 2021

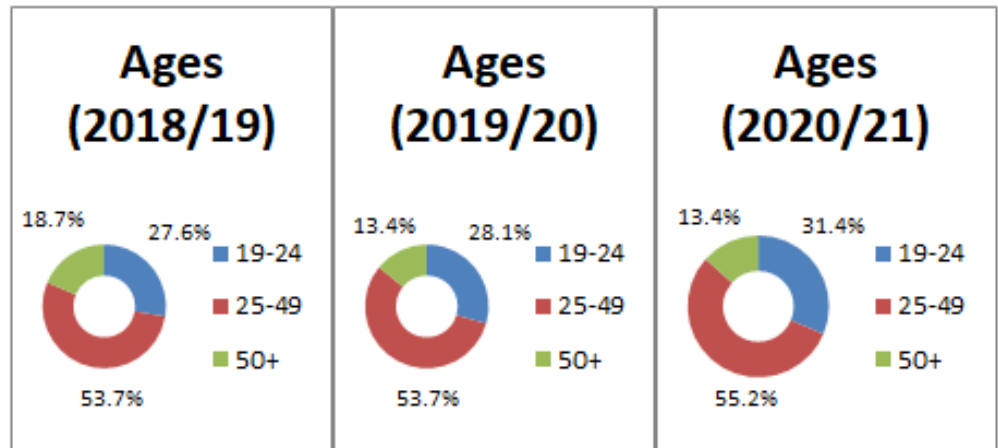
As we can identify from the charts, there is a massive disparity between allocation of funding and age.

FE & Skills only allocated 27.6% to 19-24 year olds, rising to 28.1% in 2019/20 and 31.4% in 2020/21. It is encouraging to see more funds being allocated to 19-24 year olds, considering this is the most crucial age group.

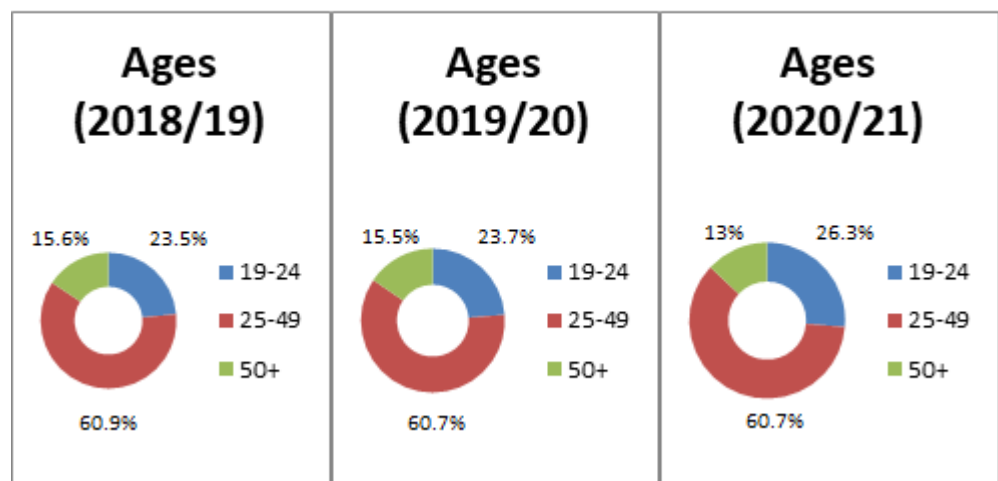
However, it is not nearly enough, which can be seen in the Education and Training section. Only 23.5% was allocated to 19-24 year olds in 2018/19, rising slightly in 2019/20 to 23.7% and rising again in 2020/21 to 26.3%.

This is important to highlight, because, although numbers may be higher in FE & Skills, people cannot progress if they are not qualified to be on those courses.

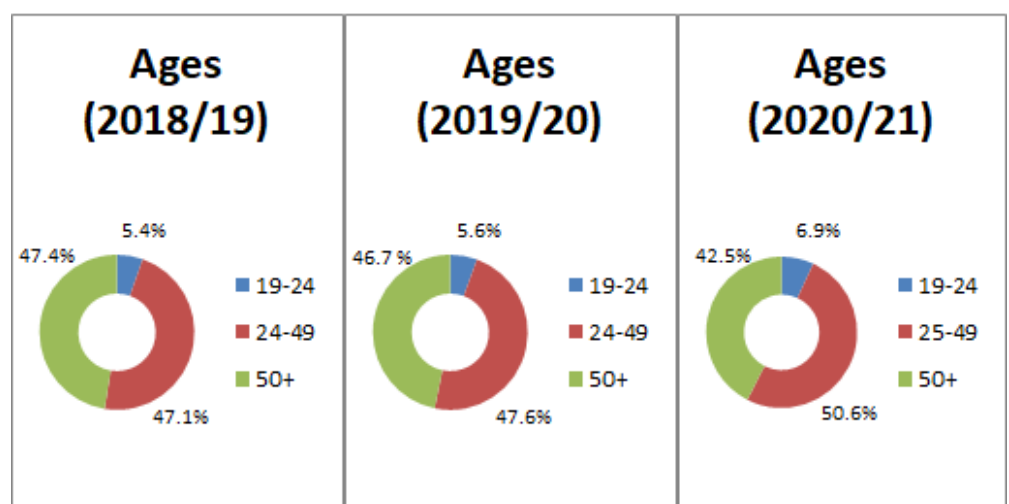
There needs to be a heavier focus on making individuals eligible for these opportunities as, without access to them, they become useless to the target audience. This also raises the question: if individuals are not being educated/trained properly, why is continuous funding being given to companies who clearly cannot hit their targets?



Age disparity – Education and Training 2018 - 2021



Age Disparity – Community Learning 2018 – 2021

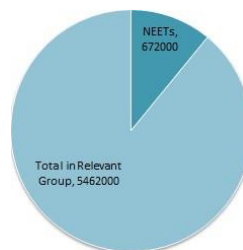
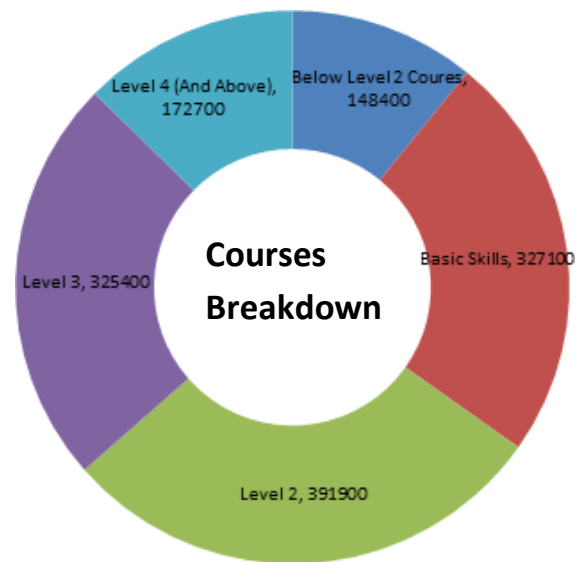


NEETs Statistics

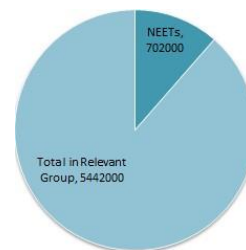
Community Learning gives almost all their funding pots to 24-49 year olds and 50+. In 2018/19, only 5.4% was allocated to 19-24 year olds, rising to 5.6% in 2019/20 and 6.9% in 2020/21. With the majority being allocated to 24-49 year olds and 50+, there is very little opportunity for younger people to get involved.

Community Learning is imperative to retaining candidates (especially with younger groups), as it aims to support disadvantaged or vulnerable individuals engage in learning, with a focus on bringing about change in their lives and communities. This is vital in keeping youths away from a life of crime and placing them on paths that can shape their lives for the better. Consequently, it is possible that the mismanagement of Community Learning funding can be directly linked to declining numbers throughout the AEB.

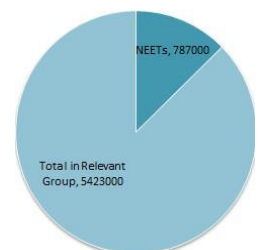
In accordance with this, the rate of NEETs for 18-24 year olds (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) fluctuates between 11.5% and 14.5%, accounting for 620,000 on the lower end and 787,000 on the higher end. This number is worrying, especially when numbers are so low for Community Learning and Education and Training. This is a blatant indication that young individuals are not being included or even taken into account. With participation and achievement rates dwindling every year, and young people being consistently overlooked, how is the AEB assisting individuals effectively? There are too many groups of people being ignored through sheer incompetence or inadequate programmes bringing little to no results.



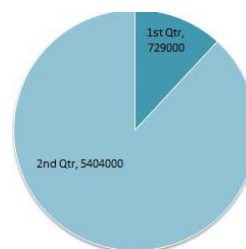
| 12.3% |
Jun - Mar 2020



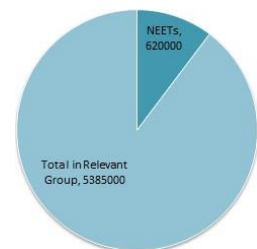
| 12.9% |
Apr - Jun 2020



| 14.5% |
Jul - Sep 2020



| 13.5% |
Oct - Dec 2020



| 11.5% |
Jan - Mar 2021

Following on, there are the appalling crime rates that are on the rise, with increasing involvement from the youths of today.

Crime rates across the board are increasing every single year, with no signs of dropping any time soon. This is especially the case in knife crime and drug offences, which is most common with younger groups in the under 25 category.

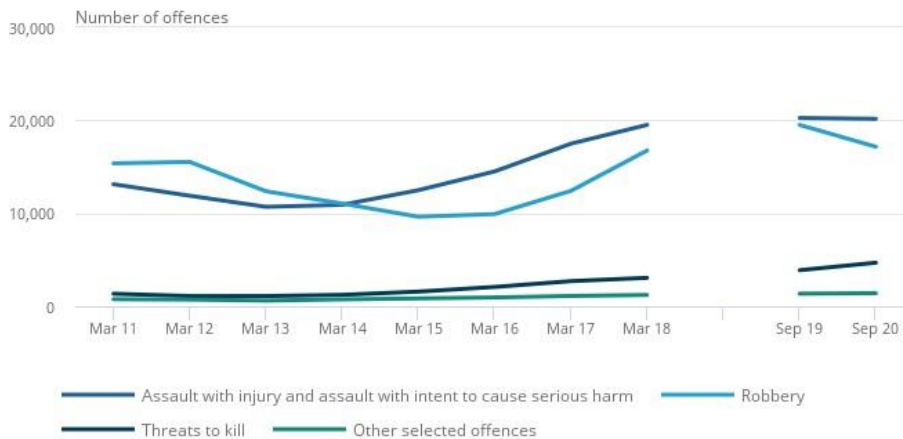
Not only is this saddening, it is a direct indication that there needs to be more input from the government to amend these concerning numbers in both the AEB and crime rates.

Knife Crime Statistics

“for every 1% increase in the unemployment rates, there is a 0.1 to 0.2% increase in knife crime.”

“If lockdown had not happened, we would now be talking about knife crime levels being the highest ever.”

Figure 8: Crimes involving knives or sharp instruments decreased in the latest year, driven by a decrease in robbery offences involving knives
England and Wales (excluding Greater Manchester police), year ending March 2011 to year ending September 2020



Source: Home Office – Police recorded crime

The above chart shows the rising rates of knife crime, split into 4 sections. “Assault with injury and assault with intent to cause serious harm” is the leading statistic, with robbery being the only number to take a decline. Something to take into consideration is the effect lockdown has had on the decrease in crimes.

It is also important to note that, in the above chart, Manchester is omitted from these results. This is very interesting considering Manchester has the second highest knife crime rate in England, and also “reviewed their recording of knife or sharp instrument offences in December 2017, which revealed that they were under-counting these offences.”

We can safely conclude, with the inclusion of these statistics, that the rates would be significantly higher, creating the worrying thought: when will it stop?

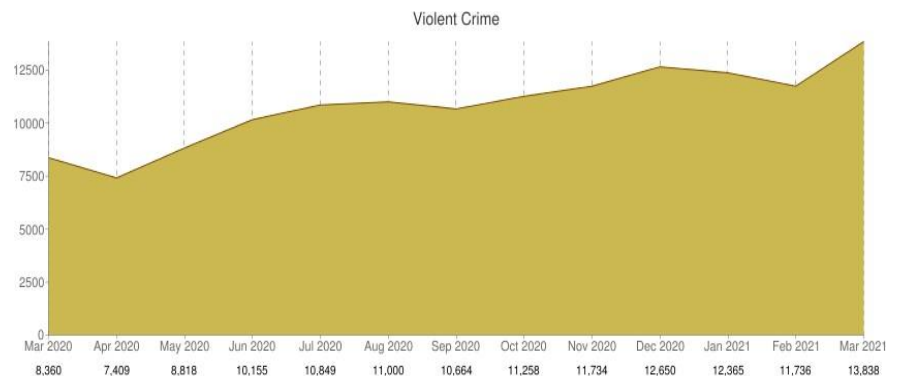
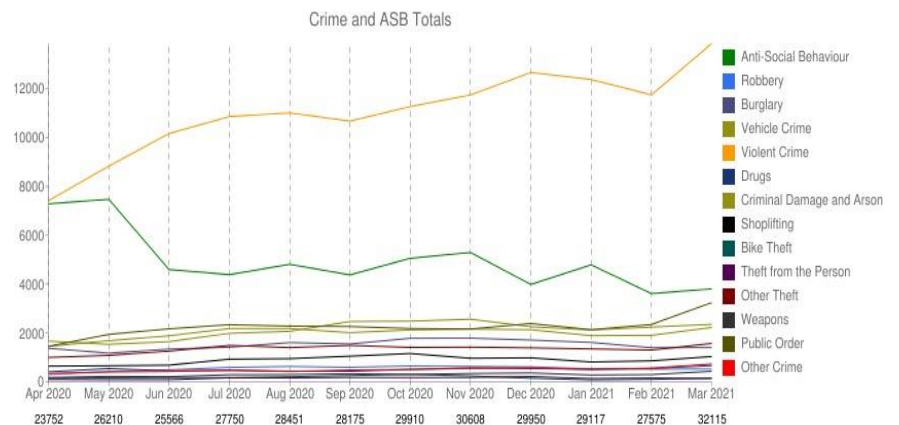
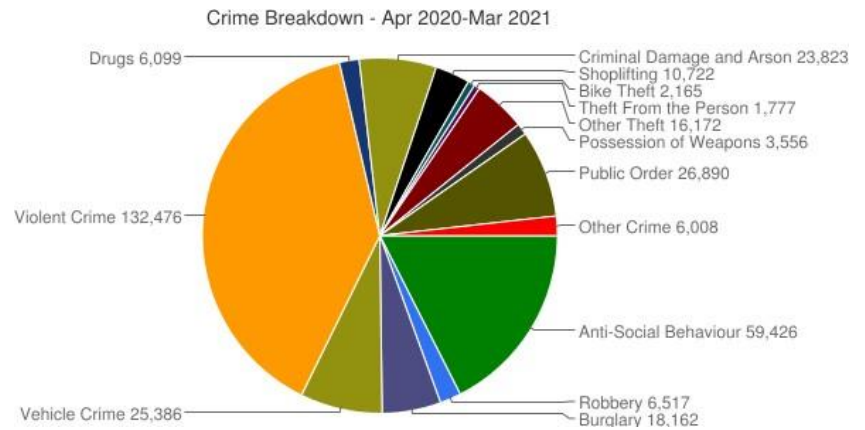
Knife crime dropped by 1% in England and Wales in 2019. This is the first time in 5 years that police recorded crime involving knives or sharp objects has declined. But for 9 months of that year knife crime was running at record levels. This reduction is attributed to the 3 months covering lockdown, which saw a fall of 21% in knife crime in the 3-month period April-July 2020 compared to the previous year.

It is clear that the current course of action is completely failing. The rates continue to rise by the year which, coupled with the lack of opportunities available to keep these people out of criminality, sets a dangerous precedent. People feel their only option is to turn to a life of crime because they have no faith in the system that has failed them time and time again. It is of great importance that we take a stance and face this issue head on.

Statistics and exploring rising problems

To gain a deeper insight into the problems of declining participation, we must first look at the statistics of crimes taking place all over the West Midlands. From April 2020 to March 2021, 132,476 violent crimes were recorded, which accounted for 39.05% of total crime statistics: far greater than any other statistic by a large margin. This number shot up from 8,360 in March 2020 all the way to 13,838 in March 2021. There has been a 71% increase in knife crime in England and Wales since 2014 (comparing the 12 months from December'14, to March'14).

While recent trends show that Knife Crime is decreasing, it still remains at a historically high level. Many of these numbers can be attributed to gang related issues which have an increasing number of younger people getting involved. In a study by West Midlands Police, it was shown in 2012, 742 recorded victims of knife crime were less than 25 years old. This number has rocketed to 1609 in 2019, accounting for 46.02% of knife crime in that area.

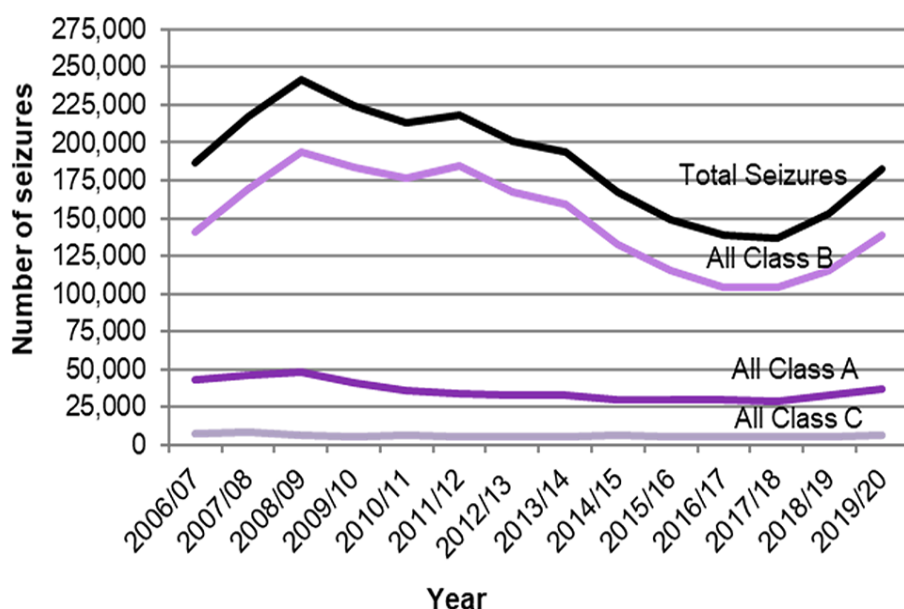


A direct connection can be made between the lack of opportunity for younger people and the rise of knife crime, drug crime and criminality as a whole. If there is more accessibility for younger people to gain qualifications and job roles, gang related crimes such as county lines and violent crimes such as knife crime would sharply decline. Involving vulnerable people who have succumbed, or have yet to succumb, to a life of crime is the key to ensuring this whole system works. "There is also a growing concern that the threat from gangs has not abated but simply gone underground. A report from the National Youth Agency in May, stated real concerns that gangs have changed their modus operandi and are using social media to recruit vulnerable young people and continue to use county lines to expand their drug dealing." With this in mind, young people are in need of aid now more than ever; we need to adapt to the changes gangs have made and keep ahead of this troubling issue.

Drug Seizures

Another set of statistics to highlight is the rise in drug seizures beginning in the 2017/18 period.

Police forces and Border Force made a total of 183,068 drug seizures in England and Wales in year ending March 2020. This led to a 20% increase compared with the previous year being 153,136. This is the second consecutive annual increase in seizures, reversing a downward trend since year ending March 2012.



By looking at the figures we can evaluate the differences in increase between each class of drugs. Class A drugs seizures increased by 13% between years ending March 2019 and 2020. Seizures of cocaine by police forces and Border Force increased by 10% from year ending March 2019, with seizures of crack by police forces and Border Force increasing by 7% since year ending March 2019. This is the highest number of seizures since year ending March 2008. The quantity of crack seized increased by 35% and is the highest amount seized since year ending March 2005. Class B drugs seizures increased by 11% between the years ending March 2019 and 2020.

It is said by the gov.uk the “increase is mainly driven by an increase in the number of seizures of Class B drugs.” Taking this into account, the 35% increase in the quantity of crack can be directly correlated with the increase of young people involved in county line crimes. As stated earlier in the report, “gangs have changed their modus operandi and are using social media to recruit vulnerable young people and continue to use county lines to expand their drug dealing.” Gangs are starting to utilise social media to manipulate young people trying to make a living. The lack of accessible education in many of these areas acts as a catalyst in pushing these individuals into a life of crime, as gangs prey on vulnerable people, knowing they have a severe lack of options available to them. They groom these individuals, promising money and respect as a reward for them committing dangerous and illegal acts.

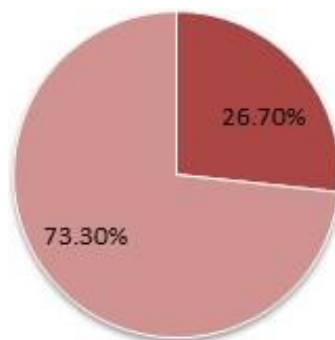
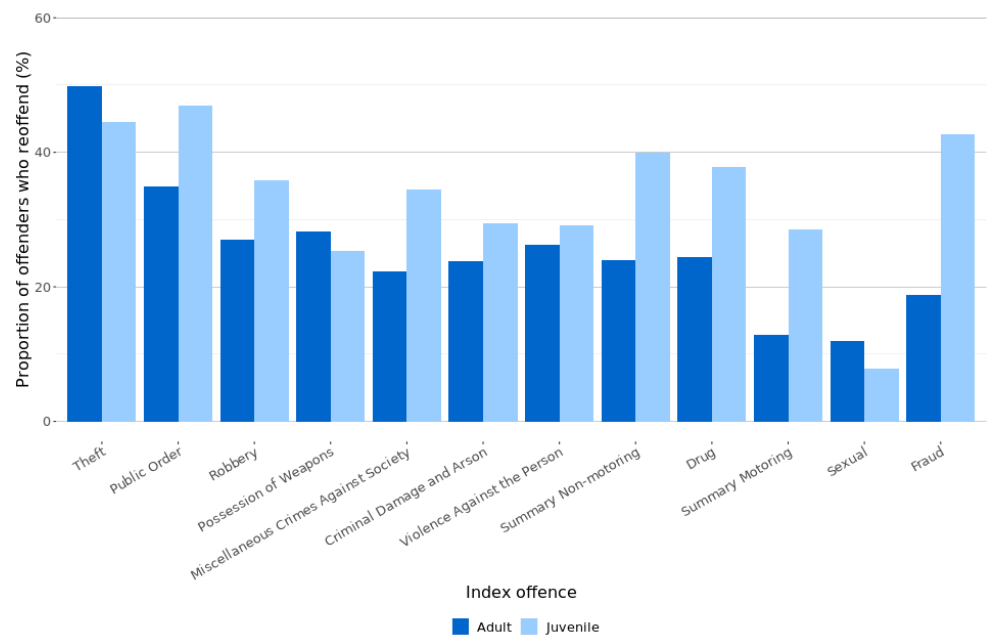
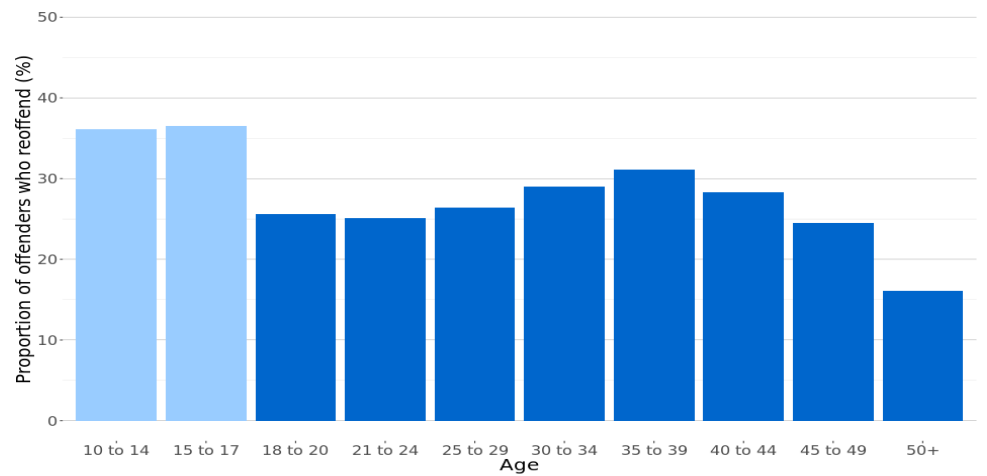
Cannabis was the most commonly seized drug, which was involved in 71% of all drug seizures in England and Wales in the year ending March 2020. Although cannabis is a gateway drug, many people do not understand the threat it poses in gang culture. It is customary for young individuals to be coaxed into selling cannabis as an introduction and then, once they have sold a certain amount, gang members move them onto higher class drugs such as crack. Unfortunately, many of these individuals do not realise they have been trapped until it is too late. By that point, escaping means they must face: opposing gang members, constantly looking over their shoulder and debts that are accrued throughout these stressing ordeals.

Preventing young people from reaching the initial stage of drug dealing and gang involvement is the key to forcing these rates to drop each year. This means we must make programmes more accessible, engaging and inclusive for these candidates. Retention is the most important factor for any of these programmes to succeed and as it currently stands this is the worst performing factor of the AEB.

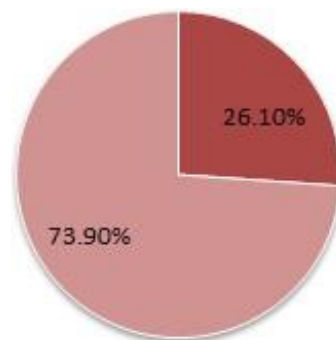
Reoffending Rates

The graphs on the right illustrate another area that needs assistance from successful programmes. The top proportion of reoffenders was in the 15-17 age range at 36.5%, which was closely followed by the 10-14 age range at 36.2%. From this, we have another telling indicator that the young age group is in need of help the most.

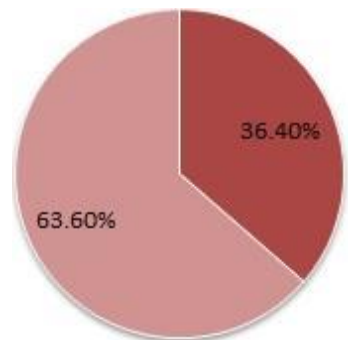
Something else that is interesting to look at is the adult reoffending rates compared to the juvenile reoffending rates. In every single category apart from theft, possession of weapons and sexual offences, juveniles are reoffending at a higher rate than adults. Another finding to highlight is the rate of reoffending with fraud when comparing adults and juveniles. The juvenile reoffending rate is exponentially higher, which can be linked to their incessant need to make money. This is then exacerbated by pressure from gang members.



Overall Reoffending Rate
Jan - Mar 2019



Adult Reoffending Rate
Jan - Mar 2019



Juvenile Reoffending Rate
Jan - Mar 2019

The reoffending rate for juveniles is 36.4%, over a third of all offenders, which is also 10% higher than the adult reoffending rate. We can attribute this to offenders not having accessible routes to get them out of that life. It becomes increasingly difficult to gain access to any opportunity or jobs when you have a criminal record and many young people will feel pressured to make their money by falling back into their old ways. We can directly impact the reoffending rates for both adults and juveniles by creating a holistic programme that is unique to each and every individual. By making them feel supported and offering them the ability to better themselves, people won't feel the need to go back to a life of crime, and instead will become more enticed in the life skills being offered.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear to see from the statistics provided and the exploration of the AEB that it is not as successful as it should be. Declining participation and achievement rates, lack of support for 19-24 year olds through Community Learning and Education and Training along with the rise of violent crime and county line affiliated crimes are all common factors with either direct or indirect links to the AEB.

There must be a systematic change with the AEB, the providers of these programmes and the vulnerable communities that are being affected most by this underperforming government scheme. There needs to be a more positive influence on the younger generation, with the inclusion of those who have fallen into criminality and those who are struggling in terms of education.

Fletcher's Business Solutions prides itself on giving opportunities to those who need them the most. This is an approach that is missing from many companies and providers. More diligence and care needs to be applied, so individuals can receive the support they need from both the government and providers.

Providing a successful and engaging educational route towards careers is the key to taking the potential of these individuals and putting it towards a common goal: to work and support our country and themselves.

To improve upon yourself and gain the best qualifications and experience possible is the message we must convey, not just as providers but as a country.

People must be introduced to opportunities that are available, because many are unaware of what is on offer. While researching for the entries in this report, we found new opportunities and options that we had not heard of. If we, as a training and online course provider, have no idea that there are all of these amazing opportunities, then how are young people ever meant to find their way?

It is up to us to deliver information and chances to people who are uninformed, or feel as if they have no route to success. We must be the ones to show that a good life, with career progressions and aspirations, is the way to go. In this sense, course providers have both the capacity and responsibility to prevent young people from going down the wrong path.

Through government schemes, we can provide a space that is both educational and nurturing, allowing young people to strive for the absolute best. As a result, we can give them the tools they need for a successful career while combatting societal issues (namely gang culture and street crime) at the same time. Education is essential. It is time to utilise it to its full potential.



Our Solution

Level 1 Life Skills Award

Fletcher's Business Solutions are here to inspire more young people and encourage them to access new regional opportunities. The Level 1 Life Skills Award qualification offers a flexible route of achievement that will assist learners in developing a comprehensive skillset and goal orientated thinking. We will provide the required training whilst ensuring all individuals have new employment opportunities through our ever-growing network.

Holistic learning

The goal of any good training program is to improve performance. However, performance gains are often followed by quick declines because most training fails to prepare learners for real life application. This is due to a lack of consideration of realistic contexts in which a performance takes place.

Before any training takes place, there is an initial induction where the individuals requirements & competency level is established. Each student will have different levels of experience or qualifications; some may need less support than others if they have prior knowledge or certifications, whereas some may need extra support. This is especially the case with priority groups: we will manage them with extra care & diligence to ensure they are the most prepared they can be to gain employment.

Each person will have their own unique training package. Performing in a real situation is different from practicing it in theory. For example, giving a speech in front of a large audience differs from practicing it in your bedroom, as there are many aspects you experience that you wouldn't encounter in

rehearsal. To achieve a strong performance, you need to prepare for a wide range of possibilities, rather than simply projecting your voice.

The Life Skills award informs and guides the learner on the values, attitudes and personal skills required to thrive in today's society. This qualification will focus on the rapidly changing social structures in work, leisure, families and, in a more general sense, the ways of life. It helps learners, who are trying to become independent and resilient individuals, understand the nature of society and the process of self-education.

The next stage upon completion of this course is to create a bespoke package for every person we bring on to our course. Each learner will have the option to choose their desired route, and we will start to look at options for individuals, such as higher education in the form of University, or work placements in their selected fields. This creates a streamlined process through which students can gain qualifications that are recognised, to gain access to their desired career route or jump straight into work.

In addition to this, we are able to offer incentives to keep retention high and change the mind-sets of individuals through the use of extra training such as SIA Badges or CSCS cards. Something we have discovered through research is students have to go through long, extensive courses to get these qualifications, which is a factor that will drive a lot of potential candidates away. We are able to offer these at the end of our short courses, ranging from 1 week to 1 month, with a guaranteed incentive upon completion of the course.

Holistic learning achieves preparing learners for real life application by imitating the realistic experience of the work setting, with the outcome of this training method being to fully prepare individuals and supporting the transition into work.

Course Overview

- To achieve the Award, the learner must complete a maximum of 4 modules in any combination from the modules available.
- To achieve the Certificate, the learner must complete a minimum of 7 modules in any combination from the modules available.
- To achieve the Diploma, the learner must complete a maximum of 21 modules in any combination from the modules available.

We are able to offer learning through all of the following modules:

- Personal Resilience and Perseverance
- Understanding the Term Mental Health
- Personal Change Management
- Participation Personal Behaviours and Standards
- Managing your own Finance
- Setting and Achieving Personal Goals
- Forming Positive Relationships
- Produce a CV
- Applying for Opportunities
- Career progression opportunities
- Transferable Skills and Qualities
- Understanding and Portraying British Values
- Equality and Diversity in Everyday Life
- Recycling and Waste Management
- Problem Solving
- Resolving Conflict
- Habit Management
- Bullying Awareness
- Understanding Radicalisation
- Personal Stress Management
- County Lines Awareness

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