



**Cadet
Vocational
College**

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Institute for Social
Innovation and Impact

The Impact and Value of Vocational Qualifications Provided by the Cadet Vocational College

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Page	Section
3	Executive Summary
4	The Cadet Vocational Company: A Brief History
5	Research Objectives
6	Methodology
7	Cadet Vocational College Customers
8	Cadet Vocational College Funding
9	Cadet Vocational College Qualifications
10	The Lion Award
11	The Impact of Cadet Vocational College Qualifications on School Outcomes
12	The Value Uniformed Youth Organisations Place on Cadet Vocational College Qualifications
13–14	The Value of Cadet Vocational College Qualifications to Employers
15–16	The Value of Cadet Vocational College Qualifications to Further and Higher Education
17	The Value of Cadet Vocational College Qualifications to Parents
18–19	The Value of Cadet Vocational College Qualifications to Alumni
20–24	Putting a Financial Value on Cadet Vocational College Qualifications
25	Conclusions–Recomendations
26	Limitations
27	Acknowledgements
28	Appendix 1– Survey responses to the question: Have your vocational qualifications been of value?
29	Appendix 1.2– Survey responses to the question: Have your vocational qualifications been of value?
30	Appendix 1.3– Survey responses to the question: Have your vocational qualifications been of value?

The Cadet Vocational College offers a range of vocational qualifications through partnerships with Pearson (the awarding body for the BTEC), the ILM and City and Guilds. Most Cadet Vocational College qualifications are available either at no cost to the learner, or at a lower cost than other, commercial, qualification providers. The Lion Award, a non-accredited scheme to enhance the development of young people between the ages of 8 and 14 years old is also offered.

Cadet Vocational College qualifications are an important social enabler, supporting and encouraging learners to fulfil their potential and helping them to gain access to further and higher education, to employment or other advancement. Importantly, Cadet Vocational College qualifications are open to all, are wholly inclusive and equality of access is ensured. The Cadet Vocational College identifies and accredits crucial life skills that, too often, go unrewarded and unrecognised.

The Cadet Vocational College has a positive impact on the development of young people and enhances school performance. BTEC qualifications blend and integrate with elements of the national curriculum and have a focus on personal development, one of the school inspection criteria. Participation in the Lion Award is seen as a valuable investment for a school to make.

The uniformed youth organisations that are Cadet Vocational College customers clearly value the vocational qualifications on offer. The opportunity to gain BTEC, ILM and City and Guilds awards is a motivating factor for young people and adult volunteers, especially those with low level, or no, qualifications. However, the extent to which uniformed youth organisations' senior officers and individual units promote vocational qualifications to both adult volunteers and cadets varies widely.

Employers believe 'soft skills' developed and accredited by the Cadet Vocational College e.g., leadership, teamworking, communication, are especially important for new employees. The BTEC and ILM qualifications that the Cadet Vocational College provides at levels 1, 2 and 3 are seen as key to the personal and professional development of young people. In addition, vocational qualifications are very important for the professional and career development and advancement for adult volunteers.

Vocational qualifications, such as those provided by the Cadet Vocational College are valued by employers, and help gain access to further and higher education. Learners, both adult volunteers and cadets, realise that their vocational qualifications give them significant advantages and value them accordingly. There is very robust evidence to show that tens of thousands of people have had their life-chances significantly improved as a result of gaining their vocational qualifications while being members of uniformed youth groups, perhaps especially if they are classified as disadvantaged in any way.

The Cadet Vocational College delivers a very positive return on investment for the UK. It is thus disappointing to note that since the 2010 – 2011 year its funding has not risen in line with inflation. However, for the academic year 2023-2024, the expectation of the number of learners who will be covered by the ESFA funding has been lowered.

The Cadet Vocational College is a UK-based vocational education charity and learning provider.

The organisation was founded in 2001 as the Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation (CVQO) with the mission of advancing the education and training of youth and adult members of youth groups and schools to enable them to obtain vocational qualifications.

One of the main motivations for the establishment of the CVQO was a research paper commissioned by the Army Cadet Force (ACF)¹ which identified that cadets who were deemed to be underperforming at school² were, by contrast, excelling in the ACF. Therefore, the initial vocational qualification offered by CVQO, to a trial group of 200 ACF cadets, was the BTEC Level 2 in Public Services.

In July 2023 CVQO rebranded itself as the Cadet Vocational College. The re-branding was part of a strategic move for the organisation intended to help it develop, grow, and be better placed to meet the challenges of providing vocational qualifications for thousands of young people and adult volunteers. The name change was designed to enable the Cadet Vocational College to be better understood as a valuable bridge between school, cadet, and other youth groups, and further and higher education for its all learners, parents, and carers. To avoid confusion, the organisation will be referred to as the Cadet Vocational

College throughout this report.

Since 2001 the Cadet Vocational College has expanded to encompass all Uniformed Youth Services; at any one time it has up to 12,000 learners on its books. The Cadet Vocational College now offers a portfolio of different qualifications accredited by Pearson, the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) and City and Guilds.

A 2021 report carried out by the University of Northampton³ concluded that, *'the values of vocational qualifications to individuals have been calculated by previous research, including research commissioned by the UK Government. Although these values are indicative, when we apply them to the cadets and CFAVs (Cadet Force Adult Volunteers) that have gained Cadet Vocational College awards, we find that the annual value of the vocational qualifications gained by disadvantaged cadets and CFAVs (measured in terms of their lifetime value to the individuals) is somewhere in the region of £150 million. This sum does not include the value of awards to cadets that are not disadvantaged. The total annual lifetime value of vocational awards gained by members of the Cadet Forces through Cadet Vocational college cannot be calculated however, we believe that it must be significantly more than £200 million per annum'*.

This report examines the impacts of Cadet Vocational College vocational qualifications held by individuals in both education and work. It also examines the attitudes of uniformed youth organisations to these qualifications. Additionally, the report updates the calculations on the returns on investment that result from gaining vocational qualifications with the CVC.

¹This paper is not available.

²Underperformance defined as leaving mainstream school at age 16 with fewer than five GCSEs.

³Click here >> [Social Impact and Value of CVQC Qualifications](#) <<

The project was given the following research objectives:

- To identify the impacts of Cadet Vocational College delivered vocational qualifications on school outcomes as measured by Ofsted, Education Scotland, Estyn (Wales), The Education and Training Inspectorate (N. Ireland), and the Independent Schools Inspectorate (England only),
- To identify the value that uniformed youth organisations place on vocational qualifications⁴,
- To identify the value that employers place on vocational qualifications (both for people entering the workplace for the first time, and for existing employees),
- To identify the value that universities and further education colleges place on vocational qualifications held by new students,
- To identify the value that parents place on vocational qualifications,
- To identify the impact and value that the Cadet Vocational College's learners and 'alumni' place on the vocational qualifications they are gaining, or have gained, with the organisation.



⁴For both cadets and adult volunteers.

Secondary data for the report was gathered through a literature review using both peer reviewed articles and reports produced, or commissioned by HM Government, and material from educational and employer groups.

Primary qualitative data for the report was gained through interviews and surveys. Table 1 summarizes the groups of people that were interviewed (n = 37). Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or by Zoom or telephone. All interviewees were sent a consent form in advance of their meeting with the author of the report, who also conducted the interviews.

Nobody declined to be interviewed and no interviewee refused to answer any question asked. Notes were made during the interview and then transcribed. The transcribed interview material was then displayed in effects clusters, context charts, or event flow charts. These display methods enabled themes and patterns to be identified and relations between variables noted. A check was carried out for researcher effects by an independent academic carrying out a peer review of data gathering and analysis.

Table 1: Summary of people interviewed for the report.

Interview Group	Number Interviewed
Ex-Cadet Learners	10
Cadet Force Adult Volunteers	10
Parents of Cadet Vocational College learners and alumni	6
Career Advice Professionals	2
Ofsted Inspector	1
Head Teachers	3
Teachers	2
School Governor	1
Department of Work and Pension managers	2

Primary quantitative data for the report was also gained through surveys of adult learners (n = 99), ex-cadet learners now in work or in further or higher education (n = 18), and the parents of cadet learners (n = 4).

Surveys were designed by the report's author and trialed with a sample of learners. Following amendment, they were then subject to Cadet Vocational College ethical review. To increase the likelihood of getting responses to the surveys, they were distributed by the Cadet Vocational College.

The sample size of adult learners surveyed was large enough to give a 95% confidence level in the results⁵. Although the number of ex-cadet learners that completed the survey was not large enough to provide data that can be deemed statistically significant, the group was made up of people that had been involved in the Westminster

Award since 2018. All were either employed or in further or higher education. Therefore, it was an informed group that had all gained at least two vocational awards from Cadet Vocational College. The small number of parents that completed the survey meant that their data cannot be regarded as significant, although some interesting points were made about the impacts on young people with special educational needs and disabilities of gaining vocational qualifications.

The use of secondary and primary methodologies enabled data to be triangulated to ensure that the results were as valid and reliable as possible in a social sciences study of this type.

⁵Confidence levels calculated using the Qualtrics sample size calculator >>[Qualtrics Calculator link](#)<<

The **Cadet Forces** supported by the Ministry of Defence have been working with the Cadet Vocational College since the 2002 – 2003 academic year. The cadets and adult volunteers from Army Cadet Forces, Air Training Corps, Sea Cadets (including Royal Marine Cadets) and

members of Combined Cadet Force detachments remain the organisation's largest customer groups. However, as the capacity and reputation of Cadet Vocational College have grown, new customers have been taken on, see Table 2.

Table 2: Cadet Vocational College Customer Organisations

Organisation	Earliest Registration
Non-UK Cadets ⁶	2005 >> 2006
UK Schools	2006 >> 2007
Scouts	2010 >> 2011
Fire Cadets	2011 >> 2012
St. John Ambulance	2011 >> 2012
Police Cadets	2012 >> 2012
Boys' Brigade	2017 >> 2018
Infant and Junior Schools ⁷	2019 >> 2020
Local Authority Youth Groups	2021 >> 2022



⁶ Small numbers of cadets from Hong Kong and the West Indies complete Cadet Vocational College qualifications

⁷ A small number of Infant and Junior Schools do the Cadet Vocational College Lion Award

As noted in the introduction to the report, the aim of the study is to examine the impacts that the qualifications provided by the Cadet Vocational College have and, where possible, to identify their potential financial value both to the individuals that gain them and to the wider UK society. Therefore, it is appropriate to understand the way the Cadet Vocational College is funded.

Between 1999, when the first staff were taken on by the organisation, and the 2002 – 2003 academic year, the Cadet Vocational College was funded by the Army Cadet Force Association.

However, the sums involved were small, less than £100,000 over three years.

Once the Cadet Vocational College started providing qualifications to cadets and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers, the Department for Education (DfE) funded the organisation, as follows:

Year	DfE funding
2003 >> 2004	£300,000
2004 >> 2005	£700,000
2005 >> 2006	£2,000,000

The level of DfE funding rose with the number of learners the Cadet Vocational College supported.

From 2006 to 2011 the Cadet Vocational College was funded by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). The YPLA was replaced by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) in 2012 which continued funding the Cadet Vocational College until 2017 when the Educational and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) was established, absorbing

the EFA. The ESFA is an Executive Agency of the DfE, acting on behalf of the Secretary of State in delivering its core functions. The ESFA is the single agency accountable for funding education, apprenticeships and training for children, young people, and adults.

From 2006 to the present, the grant given to the Cadet Vocational College has been as shown in **Table 3** >>

Table 3: Cadet Vocational College funding 2006 - 2023⁸



It is interesting to note that since the 2010 – 2011 year, the ESFA grant has not risen in line with inflation.

Using the Bank of England inflation calculator⁹ the 2023 ESFA grant would have to be £5,146,000 to retain its 2010 value i.e., the grant has reduced by a third (32%).

In 2016, in common with many other educational organisations, the Cadet Vocational College was awarded LIBOR funding to pay for the ILM Level 2 Young Leaders programme, and other qualifications, for the Ministry of Defence

sponsored Cadet Forces.

One of the aims for this report is to try and identify whether the c. £59.5 million of taxpayers' money that the Cadet Vocational College has received has produced a positive return on investment.

This key topic is examined below.

⁸At the time of writing the report, ESFA funding for CVC for the 2023 – 2024 year is not known.

⁹>>>[Bank of England- monetary policy inflation-calculator](https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/inflation-calculator)<<<

The **Cadet Vocational College** offers a range of vocational qualifications through partnerships with Pearson (the awarding body for the BTEC), the ILM and City and Guilds. A range of different awards are available, with the portfolio changing with customer demand and price. Because of its funding model, most Cadet Vocational College qualifications are available either at no cost to the

learner, or at a lower cost than other, commercial, qualification providers. Cadet Vocational College provides its qualifications throughout the UK, although funding models for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland mean that most qualifications are provided to English learners.

Learners range in age from 13 to more than 70 years old, with qualifications available based on age and experience, as shown in Table 4.¹⁰

Table 4: CVQ Qualifications and Learner Ages

Cadet Vocational College Qualification	Ages of Learners
BTEC Level 1 in Teamwork and Personal Skills in the Community	13 >> 15
BTEC Level 1 Teamwork and Personal Skills for Uniformed Youth Organisations	13 >> 15
BTEC Level 2 in Teamwork and Development in the Community	16 >> 18
BTEC Level 2 in Fire and Rescue Services in the Community ¹¹	14 >> 17
City and Guilds Level 3 in Education and Training	19+
ILM Level 3 in Leadership and Management	16+
City & Guilds Professional Recognition Awards (Level 4, 5, 6 and 7)	18+ >> with sufficient management experience

¹⁰Only the most popular CVC qualifications are shown in Table 4.

¹¹For Fire Cadets only.



In addition to the vocational qualifications it provides, Cadet Vocational College offers the Lion Award.

"It's fabulous, absolutely fabulous, it is a great scheme."

Head Teacher, Infant and Junior School, West Yorkshire

The aim of the Cadet Vocational College Lion Award is to support and develop the mental wellbeing, resilience and character of children aged 8 – 14 years old.

The programme is delivered in schools and is built on experiential and reflective learning and can be delivered as 12, 24 or 36 week units. The Award offers a varied programme of outdoor problem-solving activities, first aid skills and social action projects that sit outside of the traditional curriculum, but are designed to complement regular schoolwork and help young people with the challenges they face in everyday life. Learning is facilitated through coaching and Cadet Vocational College instructors who provide constructive feedback throughout on students' actions and behaviours.

The emphasis is on teamwork, the impact that individuals can make on group performance and how groups can influence the decision to achieve a shared outcome.

The Award has been available from the Cadet Vocational College since 2020, although the covid pandemic meant that schools that commissioned the scheme were not able to start it until March 2021.

Data about the impact of the Award was gathered through interviews held by the author on a visit to an Infant and Junior School in West Yorkshire that has run the Lion Award since 2021. Interviews were held with the Head Teacher, two other teachers, one governor and four parents. The school is a small village school with mixed aged classes.

At the last Ofsted inspection in 2019 it was rated as 'Good'. All children in years 4, 5 and 6 (i.e., aged 8 – 11 years old) take part in the scheme, which completed its third year of delivery in July 2023 (thus year 6 pupils had taken part in the scheme in years 4 and 5 as well as in year 6).

The school pays for the scheme using its Sports Premium Grant¹².

The Head Teacher and her colleagues were very clear that the Lion Award was a valuable investment for the school to make. Participation in the scheme results in, "rounded children, ready for the next step in life."

The Award's focus on learning life and personal skills is deemed to have an excellent fit with the Personal Development element of the Ofsted Inspection Framework¹³. Importantly, the learning from the Lion Award is seen to transfer effectively to other parts of the school curriculum.

All teachers interviewed were impressed by the individual attention children received from the Cadet Vocational College instructors. Additionally, the Head Teacher pointed out that her teachers received "excellent personal and professional development in areas not covered by conventional training" as a result of participation in the scheme. All school staff interviewed said that the scheme should be taken up by other schools in their area.

Interviews with a school governor and parents revealed that children enjoyed the scheme and, more importantly had benefited from their participation.

The development of self-confidence, the ability to work productively with other children, making new friends, and improving listening and concentration skills were all highlighted as valuable outcomes for the children.

Although only five schools (all in Yorkshire) and two groups of Police Cadets (in Kent) take part in the Lion Award scheme at present, and despite the limited sample size, it is concluded that the scheme is effective at achieving its objectives and should, if funding permits, be extended to other schools and youth groups.

¹²>> [Government PE/Sport Premium Guidance](#)<<

¹³>> [Government School Inspection Handbook](#)<<

Cadet Vocational College vocational qualifications are delivered to young people who are members of a cadet organisation by Cadet Vocational College staff.

They are not completed in schools, or as part of the school curriculum. Therefore, they are not part of the school educational inspection regimes in England¹⁴, Scotland¹⁵, Wales¹⁶ or Northern Ireland¹⁷. However, a Deputy Head Teacher in a secondary school in south east England and an Ofsted inspector pointed out that BTEC qualifications, “blend really well with the national curriculum and have a focus on personal development,” one of the four Ofsted school inspection criteria.

A Combined Cadet Force (CCF) contingent commander, also in the south east of England, described how cadets in her school’s CCF had done the Cadet Vocational College BTEC Level 1 in Teamwork and Personal Skills in the Community.

The Head Teacher of the school had seen, “great Progress 8¹⁸ achievements and the school now pays for the qualification, as the youngsters really develop.”

The 2021 report into the social impact and return on investment of the Cadet Forces in the UK, commissioned by the Ministry of Defence¹⁹ identified that CCF units in schools, and Cadet Force units in the community, had positive impacts on attendance, behaviour and personal development of young people in schools, all factors that form part of school inspection regimes in the four countries of the UK.

The evidence gathered from expert sources for this report is that cadets that also undertake Cadet Vocational College vocational qualifications improve the outcomes for a school as measured by external inspection.



¹⁴>>UK School Inspection Handbook<<

¹⁵>>Scotland - Inspection and review framework<<

¹⁶>>Wales - What we inspect<<

¹⁷>>ETINI Inspection and self evaluation framework<<

¹⁸>>Good Schools Guide - Curricula and Exams<<

¹⁹>>Northampton AC - Social Impact - Cadet Forces UK<<



"I have improved confidence when instructing cadets and I have a much better understanding of the different learning styles and how I can bring this in to subjects so all cadets get the benefit. It is also a requirement for me to teach First Aid and to assess Cadet Method of Instruction. It has also improved my confidence in life in general." **Uniformed Youth Organisation Adult Volunteer**

The uniformed youth organisations that are Cadet Vocational College customers clearly value the vocational qualifications on offer.

All these organisations believe that gaining vocational qualifications is important, both for adult volunteers and cadets.

The opportunity to gain BTEC, ILM and City and Guilds awards is a motivating factor for adult volunteers, especially those with low level, or no, qualifications.

The analysis of responses to the survey of adult volunteers that had gained vocational qualifications with the Cadet Vocational College (n = 99) revealed that, in addition to personal career benefits, 46 (48.5%) of them believed that they were more effective volunteers as a result of their qualification, an interesting finding for the cadet organisations.

However, the extent to which uniformed youth organisations' senior officers and individual units promote vocational qualifications to both adult volunteers and cadets varies widely.

One County Commandant in the ACF pointed out that whereas one Company Commander in her county is *"passionate about the Cadet Vocational College and makes time in the programme for the qualifications to be gained, other Company Commanders have different priorities and interests."* The CCF Contingent Commander in the south east of England (also quoted above) commented that, *"London units want to build cadet CVs, they will collect every award they can,"* but admitted that some units promote Cadet Vocational College awards more than others.

Analysis of adult volunteer interview (n = 10) and survey (n = 99) data indicates that the delivery of Cadet Vocational College programmes is nearly always highly regarded, and Cadet Vocational College staff are generally regarded as professional and supportive.

However, the extent to which uniformed youth organisations actively support, promote and engage with Cadet Vocational College vocational qualifications depends on:

- Uniformed youth organisations having senior managers with clear responsibilities for promoting Cadet Vocational College vocational qualifications to both adult volunteers and cadets,
- The presence of area/region/county adult volunteers who have gained vocational qualifications with the Cadet Vocational College and understand the benefits that have accrued,
- The extent to which individual unit commanders understand the benefits that adult volunteers and, especially, cadets will gain from Cadet Vocational College qualifications,
- The extent to which individual unit commanders understand how Cadet Vocational College vocational qualifications integrate with and accredit their cadet syllabus.

Although the Cadet Vocational College puts great efforts into promoting its offerings, there will always be more that can be done. It is suggested that material summarizing the benefits of Cadet Vocational College vocational awards to cadets and adult volunteers should be produced and

distributed to individual units. Senior managers in the Cadet Vocational College should encourage their customers to include information about the benefits of vocational qualifications in material that new cadets and adult volunteers receive on joining their units.

“Vocational Qualifications are invaluable, too many people have degrees but no useful skills. Employers want practical, personal skills.”

Career Advice Professional, South West England

To identify the value that employers place on Cadet Vocational College qualifications, a review of recruiter websites and relevant literature was carried out.

This secondary research was triangulated with primary research involving interviews with two careers advice professionals and an Ofsted inspector; interviews with ex-cadet learners now

in work, and analysis of the results of a survey of adults that had gained vocational qualifications with the Cadet Vocational College.

The web and literature reviews highlighted that employers in the UK look for a range of attributes in a new, young employee or apprentice.

While some posts require certain academic qualifications, a search of employer websites clearly indicates that all roles require personal or social skills.

Table 5 lists the qualities or traits that employers are seeking.

Table 5: Personal or Social Skills required of new, young, employees in the UK

Source	Qualities/Traits required
Nationwide ²⁰	Reliability, Problem-solving skills, Teamwork, Conflict resolution, Communication Skills, Willing to learn and ask questions
Recruiter.com ²¹	Confidence, Communication, Ability to work on a team, Emotional intelligence, Culture fit, Positivity, Potential, Loyalty, Honesty
Workable.com ²²	Teamwork, Willingness to Learn, Communication, Self-motivation, Culture fit
Indeed.com ²³	Dedication, Confidence, Reliability, Teamwork, Independence, Leadership, Interpersonal/communication skills, Self-awareness, Critical thinking, Integrity, Problem-solving skills

It is notable how closely the qualities and traits specified by employers match those developed by Cadet Vocational College BTEC and ILM qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3. This observation is confirmed by the literature (Branine, 2008).

In 2019 the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) published its report reviewing the value of vocational qualifications (Pember et al. 2019)²⁴. Among the key findings of the NFER report were that:

- The successful completion of vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) is seen by learners and employers alike as positive in terms of skills acquisition and the development of workforce behaviours.
- There is a positive correlation between successful completion of a VTQ and the likelihood of employment. The likelihood of employment generally increases with the highest level of vocational qualification achieved
- VTQs are used extensively as a benchmark for recruitment at both managerial/supervisory and skilled/professional levels.

²⁰>>Nationwide - Employee Qualities<<

²²>>Workable.com -Employee Qualities<<

²¹>>Recruiter.com - Top 9 Qualities<<

²³>>Indeed - Employee Qualities<<

Continued





The third finding is particularly interesting for the adult learners that Cadet Vocational College works with.

"If you want to get certain jobs, you need academic qualifications. If you want to get any job, you need vocational qualifications."

Ofsted Inspector

The interviews with career advice professionals and the Ofsted inspector revealed clear, and common, themes.

Employers believe 'soft skills' e.g., leadership, teamworking, communication, are especially important for new employees. The BTEC and ILM qualifications that the Cadet Vocational College provides at levels 1, 2 and 3 were described as key to the personal and professional development of young people as they develop thought processes, problem-solving skills, and skills in working with other people. However, all three interviewees said that the National Curriculum was overly focused on academic attainment rather than personal skills development. In addition, many schools do not value vocational qualifications and do not explain their value to students, despite academic qualifications not developing the skills that employers require. Although Ofsted is thought to be getting better at understanding vocational qualifications, and the role they play in developing young people, there is much more work to be done to enable schools and inspectors to appreciate the opportunities provided by practical awards.

"Employers are crying out for practical skills, work experience, teamwork, leadership and management. The ILM level 3 is the answer to employers' prayers." **Career Advice Professional**

Interviews were held with five ex-cadet learners (young people that had gained their ILM level 3 in Leadership and Management with Cadet Vocational College while in the cadets) who were in employment. All five interviewees said that their Cadet Vocational College qualifications had helped them get their jobs (it was either discussed at length during the selection process, or had been very useful when they completed assessment centre activities), and all of them said that the skills they developed through their qualifications were useful in their job roles.²⁵

In addition to the young people that gain Cadet Vocational College awards, adult volunteers working with cadet organisations can gain vocational qualifications. The impact of gaining

new qualifications is significant. As part of a study into the impact and return on investment of the Ministry of Defence sponsored Cadet Forces²⁶ a survey of adult volunteers (CFAVs) that had gained vocational awards with the Cadet Vocational College was carried out in 2019 (n = 353). The most frequent responses (n = 103) given were that Cadet Vocational College awards increased a CFAV's employability, increased their self-confidence, and gave opportunities for management roles. In addition, teachers that were CFAVs reported that their teaching skills had improved. Other benefits cited included improvements in organizational skills used at work and being seen by employers as being capable of serious tasks. The evidence indicated that in many cases gaining a vocational qualification with the Cadet Vocational College changed the career prospects of CFAVs. Vocational qualifications were particularly important the career development of CFAVs with no, or very few, formal educational qualifications.

A new survey (n = 99) of CFAVs that had gained vocational qualifications with the Cadet Vocational College was carried out in the spring of 2023. Again, the great majority of responses show that vocational qualifications were very important for professional and career development and advancement; 83% of adult learners were certain that their qualifications had been valuable (4% said the qualification had not been useful in their professional life, and 13% were 'uncertain'). More than 20% of respondents directly attributed a promotion or new, advanced, role to their vocational qualification. The results of both the 2019 and the 2023 surveys clearly show that vocational qualifications are important to adult employees, as well as to young people entering the workforce for the first time.

"The understanding that I gained in regards to leadership and management had a positive effect on my work and allowed me a greater insight into the bigger picture aims of my organisation. I used these skills to further my career and gain promotion to a level of junior leader/manager and now manage my own instructional course within the organisation." Cadet Force Adult Volunteer

²⁴ >> JCQV - Report <<

²⁵ One ex-cadet who is now a doctor in a hospital in Yorkshire said, "my ILM Leadership and Management is very relevant to medicine. Doctors are taking more management roles in running emergency departments. We have mandatory leadership courses in the NHS, but I know it already, so it's a refresher, not new."

²⁶ >> Social impact of cadet forces - Northampton AC <<



“Our students want to go onto Russell Group universities. They are competing with people that all have top grade A levels. I want our students to have the vocational qualifications that the Cadet Vocational College provides. They will give them the edge they need.” **Head Teacher, Public School in London**

Higher and Further Education institutions

encourage potential students to mention non-academic, extra-curricular activities and achievements in their personal statements. The UCAS website states that university applicants, *“need to write about your personal skills and achievements. Universities like to know the abilities you have that’ll help you on the course, or generally with life at university. Try to link any experience to skills or qualities that’ll make you successful²⁷.”* Individual universities reinforce this message, *“extracurricular activities can be where you really set yourself apart from other applicants. So, if you have any interests, hobbies or experiences that relate to your subject of choice or showcase your personal qualities, make room for them,”* (University of Chester)²⁸ Moreover, some 73 per cent of university admissions officers have said they look for evidence of an ability to work well in groups²⁹.

Previous research indicates that the BTEC qualifications that the Cadet Vocational College provides have a greater impact on both higher and further education courses than other vocational qualifications e.g., NVQs. Patrignini et al.

(2018) pointed out BTECs act more often as a stepping stone to learning at higher levels (including degree level) compared with other vocational qualifications. They concluded that BTEC qualifications at Level 3 and Level 2 help both male and female school leavers to be successful in applications for further and higher education, with between 40% and 45% of learners with BTECs at Level 3 attaining degree-level qualifications or above, compared with between 5% and 8% for Level 3 NVQs and 20% and 25% for other vocational qualifications at Level 3.

At Level 2, the percentage of BTEC holders achieving at Level 3 qualification or above is in excess of 50%, with 15% attaining at least degree-level qualifications or equivalent. The corresponding proportions for NVQs at Level 2 are considerably lower, and slightly lower for ‘other’ vocational qualifications. These findings were supported by Pember et al. (2019).

To find out if universities and further education colleges were genuinely interested in extra-curricular achievements, interviews were held with five ex-cadet learners (young people that had gained their ILM level 3 in Leadership and Management with Cadet Vocational College while in the cadets) who were currently in higher education (n = 4) or further education (n = 1).

All interviewees said that they had included their cadet experience, and their Cadet Vocational College vocational qualifications on their personal statements, and all said they had been discussed (often at length) by their educational institution at interview. One ex-cadet said that, *“my vocational qualifications have been very helpful at (university) interviews. Everybody gets GCSEs and A Levels, but not many have vocational qualifications.”* It is claimed that BTEC qualifications have been the fastest growing route to university with one-in-four students now enrolling doing so with a BTEC³⁰.



Continued





Although the interviewee sample size is small, it is encouraging to note that all ex-cadet learners had experienced application processes where their vocational qualifications were discussed in selection interviews. Interestingly, three of the five ex-cadet learners said that their university interviews did not talk about their school work at all, but focused exclusively on their cadet experience and their vocational awards.

It seems clear that young people with Cadet Vocational College vocational qualifications that apply to higher or further education institutions are at an advantage compared with their peers who only have qualifications from school. Senior leaders in Cadet Vocational College customer organisations should note this fact.

²⁷>>[UCAS - Writing Personal Statements](#)<<

²⁸>>[UniGuide - Personal Statement Advice](#)<<

²⁹>>[Times HE - Quality Requirements](#)<<

³⁰>>[HEPI - Importance of BTEC](#)<<



"If you are different, school doesn't work well, but the Cadet Vocational College treats people as themselves, there are no labels which enables them to thrive."

Parent of SEND

Cadet Vocational College learner

"Qualifications have given my son a feeling of personal achievement and pride. The organisation has offered continued support and belonging. As a parent with a young man with special educational needs the 'Cadet Vocational College family' has offered a non-judgmental and inclusive environment, offering equal opportunities for all young people. A break that certain individuals need." **Parent of SEND Cadet Vocational College learner**

The Ministry of Defence sponsored Cadet Forces are noted for the support they give to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).³¹

Many such children struggle in mainstream school and fail to gain qualifications³². The Cadet Vocational College has an inclusive ethos. Therefore, it was appropriate to gather data from parents of children that are classified as SEND that had completed vocational qualifications while they were cadets.

Data was gathered via interviews (n = 2) and a survey (n = 4). Although the survey size was small, the parents all had children that had gained at least two vocational qualifications with the Cadet Vocational College.

The responses from parents to both interview and survey questions was surprisingly consistent. Children that were failing at mainstream school ("he went to lots of schools and none of them could cope with my son's Aspergers") had thrived in the Cadet Forces ("joining the Sea Cadets was transformational, they were very supportive of my daughter") and gaining BTEC and ILM qualifications was very important ("the ILM is an official validation that you are worth something") for both self-esteem, confidence, and future career prospects. Encouragingly, of the seven children³³ that were classified as SEND, one was in Further Education (and had won the 'top student' award in their college) and six

were in employment, including one with a very responsible role in the Royal Air Force.

Two of these children had been awarded the British Empire Medal for their support to others with SEND, an extraordinarily impressive achievement.

All the parents stressed the inclusive and supportive nature of the Cadet Vocational College and said that these factors were essential to the success of their child. It seems clear that the support that the Cadet Vocational College provides to young people, including those with significant difficulties, is making an enormously positive difference to life outcomes.



³¹ >>Social Impact - Cadet Forces - Northampton AC<<

³² >>Ibid<<

³³ >>One parent interviewed had two children that were SEND and had joined the Sea Cadets.<<

The data collected from interviews with 10 ex-cadet learners (that had completed the Westminster Award) and 10 adult volunteers was analysed as described in the Methodology section of the report.

Table 6 summarizes the themes that emerged from this analysis.

*“Vocational qualifications show that you have gone above and beyond.
They give people ‘the edge’”.*

Cadet Force Adult Volunteer

Table 6: Interview themes on the value of Cadet Vocational College vocational qualifications

Interviewees Themes emerging

Ex-Cadet

Vocational qualifications show that cadets are not just ‘academic’, but practical;
Vocational qualifications make cadets ‘special’, giving them an advantage over their peers with similar academic qualifications;
Vocational qualifications are a very important addition to a CV, for further and higher education, for apprenticeships, and employment;
The skills learned by doing vocational qualifications are very helpful in the workplace.

Adult Volunteers

Vocational qualifications give highly academic students an important advantage over their peers with similar academic qualifications;
Vocational qualifications are very important for cadets that are disadvantaged or less academic;
Gaining a vocational qualification demonstrates an individual’s worth to employers;
Vocational qualifications are accessible and very important to cadets and adults with SEND issues e.g., dyslexia, ADHT;
Vocational qualifications are accessible and very important to cadets that have been excluded from school, are in the care system, and whose first language is not English;
Gaining a BTEC 1 or 2 qualification increases the chance of disadvantaged and/or less academic cadets³⁴ gaining GCSEs;
Adult volunteers that do the City and Guilds Level 3 in Education and Training become better instructors, in their jobs and in cadets;
Everybody goes to school, not many young people have vocational qualifications.

Continued



"I feel it is hugely important for young people to have the opportunity to gain skills outside of academic subjects, especially young people who are finding it difficult to access the curriculum or who are having difficulty in school."

Cadet Force Adult Volunteer



In addition to members of uniformed youth organisations, two managers from the Department of Work and Pensions (one a Deputy Director) were interviewed, as well as two career advice professionals. All four interviewees said that vocational qualifications were important indicators of employability and career progression. Interestingly, the Deputy Director DWP pointed out that vocational qualifications were, "looking after the hidden agenda, helping those that don't 'do' school," reinforcing one of the key themes identified by adult volunteers in interviews.

Data from the surveys of ex-cadets (n = 18) and adult volunteers (n = 99), all of whom had gained vocational qualifications with the Cadet Vocational College) were analysed. Only 3% of respondents said that their vocational qualifications had not been useful to them; 11% said they were uncertain³⁵ if they were useful; meaning that 86% believed that their vocational qualifications were

very useful to them. Interestingly, all the ex-cadets said that their qualifications had been very useful. The responses to the open-ended survey question, 'have your qualifications been of value?' were grouped around three themes: the value of qualifications to the individual, the value of qualifications to employment, and the value of the qualifications to accessing education. Appendix 1 shows examples of responses grouped into these themes. As many responses were very similar, only illustrative examples are shown.

The primary data gathered for this report from interviews and surveys demonstrates that the great majority of learners (86%) who have gained vocational qualifications with the Cadet Vocational College have found them very valuable. This is an important finding for Cadet Vocational College customers and potential customers.

"I feel it is hugely important for young people to have the opportunity to gain skills outside of academic subjects, especially young people who are finding it difficult to access the curriculum or who are having difficulty in school." **Cadet Force Adult Volunteer**



³⁴>> Including cadets that meet at least one of the following criteria: eligible for free school meals, classified as SEND, in the care system, first language is not English, excluded from school.<<

³⁵>> It should be noted that of the 13 who were uncertain, six people had gained their qualifications only recently so thought it was too soon to say if they were useful. <<

A web search³⁶ of academic and practitioner journals was carried out to identify previous, peer-reviewed, research into the financial returns resulting from gaining vocational qualifications.

Comparatively few recent articles that estimate the returns that individuals, and society, can expect from vocational qualifications were identified, and the most recent paper identified dated from 2020.

Moreover, the studies differed methodologically, and used different methods to overcome inherent selection problems and establish credible counterfactuals, so calculating returns was not simple or consistent. Additionally, McIntosh and Morris (2016) concluded that is that there was substantial variation in the estimated returns

to vocational qualifications, across types of qualifications, levels, study subjects, and across points of the wage distribution. However, enough studies exist from UK academics, including those commissioned by HM Government and its executive agencies, to enable indicative calculations of value to be attempted.

Some previous studies have found that some Level 2 and Level 3 vocational qualifications, including BTEC and City and Guilds, have high wage and, more arguably, employment returns (Dearden et al. 2004; Jenkins et al. 2007)³⁷. Patrignani and Conlon (2011) attempted to put values on vocational qualifications in terms of labour market outcomes. Their conclusions are summarized in Table 7.

**Table 7: Labour Market Values of Vocational Qualifications
(Patrignani and Conlon, 2011)**

Impact of Vocational Qualifications on	Findings
Earnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gaining a Level 1 qualification adds c. 3% p.a. to earnings in the seven years post completion. Level 2 qualification returns varied from an increase of c. 6% after seven years, to a 5% increase immediately post-completion, rising to a 14% increase after seven years. City and Guilds Level 3 qualifications were associated with an earnings premium of 5-7% p.a.
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gaining a Level 1 qualification resulted in a statistically significant employment boost of between 1 – 4%. Level 2 qualifications resulted in an average employment boost of 4.2% over seven years, with BTEC and City and Guilds completers achieving above average employment boosts. Level 3 qualifications resulted in an employment boost of c. 6% after seven years.
Benefit Dependency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level 3 qualification completers are c. 1-2% less likely to require Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). BTEC Level 2 qualifications have a particularly strong (3.5% - 4%) effect on reducing dependence on JSA.

Continued





Patrignani et al. (2018) found that, for females, earnings differentials associated with both Level 3 and Level 2 BTECs were positive and typically ranged between 10% and 15%, slightly larger than the estimated earnings differentials for other vocational qualifications at the same level.

Wiseman et al. (2013) concluded that vocational qualifications increase the productivity of individual workers relative to qualification levels below NQF-2 or relative to having no qualifications, resulting in higher wages and better employment opportunities. They pointed out that undertaking and successfully achieving vocational qualifications are investments in early life which increase lifecycle earnings relative to not having achieved these qualifications.

Hayward et al. (2014) asserted that there were high wage, and particularly employment, returns to gaining 1-2 good GCSEs. These combined to produce very large lifetime productivity gains from 1-2 GCSEs compared to no qualifications, particularly for men. If the information gathered from the interviews with CFAVs (cited above in Table 6) is correct, the implication is that many disadvantaged and/or less academic cadets gain Cadet Vocational College awards and then, newly confident in their ability, go on to gain GCSEs, resulting in wage and productivity gains that may not have happened without the Cadet Vocational College.

The National Federation for Educational Research³⁸ published reports in 2015 (Lynch et al. 2015) and 2019 (Pember et al. 2019) reviewing the value of vocational qualifications.

Both reports were commissioned by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and both were based on literature reviews; the authors of the 2015 report scrutinised 73 texts making an independent 'best evidence' selection of 16 to be reviewed, and the 2019 report was also based on 16 documents (from 54 documents studied).

The reports concluded that vocational qualifications benefited learners in terms of the likelihood of securing employment, earnings-related returns, widening participation generally and increased access/progression to higher education.

The reports pointed out that vocational qualifications are valued by business as they contribute to a more skilled and productive workforce (thus they seem to be widely used in the recruitment process at all levels, suggesting a good understanding of vocational qualifications in the market).

Additionally, the reports concluded that vocational qualifications were beneficial to the wider UK economy as they increased wages and thus tax revenues while reducing benefit dependency.

Although the reports did not attempt to calculate the financial impacts of these positive outcomes, both reports concluded that:

- There was evidence of value for all stakeholders (i.e., young people, business, the UK economy) when young people complete vocational qualifications, regardless of the level of study,
- The strongest evidence related to the positive impact of attainment on the earnings potential of learners, especially if the qualifications are gained before the age of 25,
- Young people should be encouraged to take the highest-level vocational qualifications that they can,
- People holding vocational qualifications are more likely to be employed than the 16 – 65 population generally, and vocational qualifications are recognised by employers as valuable,
- Vocational qualifications are increasing in importance as a route into higher education.

Continued





Bratsberg et al. (2020) examined the impact of gaining vocational qualifications in Norway. Their conclusions included that employees benefit in terms of higher future earnings if they take advantage of the opportunity to certify their competencies through the experience-based route; a finding of potential interest to adult volunteers in Cadet Vocational College customer organisations if the same conclusion applies to the UK.

The overwhelming evidence from the literature is that vocational qualifications such as the BTEC, ILM and City and Guilds programmes provided by the Cadet Vocational College deliver positive benefits. While the benefits to adult volunteers, who are likely to be in employment, are likely to be more immediately apparent than to a cadet at school, the ability of vocational qualifications to change life opportunities and outcomes should not be underestimated.

Since 2002 – 2003 when the first 292 learners gained their vocational qualifications from the Cadet Vocational College, nearly 120,000 qualifications have been gained. Some learners gain more than one qualification as they progress up the vocational levels. **Table 8** lists the numbers and levels of qualification that have been awarded to Cadet Vocational College learners.

Because ESFA funding only applies to learners from England, the majority of these qualifications have been awarded to English learners. Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have different funding regimes and, of course, have smaller populations than England. However, 2,596 awards have been made to learners in Northern Ireland; 4,668 awards made to learners in Scotland; and 4,387 awards made to learners in Wales.

This report has found overwhelming evidence, from both secondary and primary data sources, that learners who gain vocational qualifications, at any level, with the Cadet Vocational College are at an advantage compared with their less qualified peers. As noted earlier in the section on Cadet Vocational College Funding, one of the aims of this report is to try and identify whether the c. £59.5 million of taxpayers' money that the Cadet Vocational College has received since 2003 – 2004 has produced a positive return on investment. Inevitably, any calculation of the financial value of an award, let alone nearly 120,000 awards at different levels, must

be crude; the number of potential variables and counterfactuals that could be included is huge. The Cadet Vocational College is not able to follow the careers of all its tens of thousands of learners. Neither can it know the income of individual learners, or how much of their earnings are directly attributable to their vocational qualifications. However, while accepting these very important points, two calculations of the potential financial return on investment resulting from Cadet Vocational College vocational qualifications have been attempted; one of these calculations looks at the potential lifetime value of qualifications, the second looks at a shorter-term impact on earnings.

The first calculation was developed for the report 'The Social Impact and Value of CVQO Qualification's, published in 2021. Using the values for qualifications cited in Wiseman et al. (2013) and Hayward et al. (2014), the 2021 research team hypothesised that children that were classified as Eligible for Free School Meals (eFSM) could be used as a proxy for children that were not academic. It was further hypothesised that cadets who were classed as eFSM, and that gained vocational qualifications with the Cadet Vocational College, and had become more confident of their academic ability would be more likely to gain GCSEs.

Based on data supplied by the Cadet Forces, it was estimated that nationally c. 10% of cadets are eFSM, and it was known that in 2018 – 2019 9,886 cadets gained Cadet Vocational College awards. These awards included 3,194 gaining a level 1 BTEC; 4,972 gaining a level 2 BTEC; 1,458 gaining a level 2 ILM; and 182 gaining a level 3 ILM. The Cadet Vocational College targets level 1 qualifications 'where they are most needed'. Given that c. 10% of cadets are eFSM, it can be assumed that c. 988 cadets that are eFSM gained vocational qualifications during 2018 – 2019. Research by Hayward et al. (2014) asserts that there are high wage, and particularly employment, returns to 1-2 good GCSEs. These combine to produce very large lifetime productivity gains from 1-2 GCSEs compared to no qualifications, particularly for men. If disadvantaged cadets gain Cadet Vocational College awards and then, newly determined and confident in their ability, go on to gain GCSEs, this is hypothesised to result in wage and productivity gains.

Continued





Based on the findings of Wiseman et al. (2013) and Hayward et al. (2014) the potential value of the vocational qualifications gained by cadets was calculated. Only cadets that gained a level 2 award⁴², either BTEC or ILM, were considered.

Assuming that 10% of cadets are eFSM, then 497 cadets that are disadvantaged gained a BTEC and 146 an ILM. Ministry of Defence data shows that 34% of cadets are female, thus c. 169 girls and 328 boys gained a Level 2 BTEC and 50 girls and 96 boys gained a Level 2 ILM.

Hayward et al. calculate that the estimated Lifetime Productivity Returns of having 1-2 GCSEs were £110,395 for women and £170,984 for men (2014 figures). Adjusting for inflation, these productivity returns increase to £124,412 for women and £192,694 for men (2019 figures). If we then assume that these eFSM cadets go on from a level 2 vocational award to gain 1-2 GCSEs, then the lifetime value of these for the

2018 – 2019 cohort of CVQO learners is in the region of £27.2⁴³ million for girls, and £81.7⁴⁴ million for boys, with an overall total of £108.9 million⁴⁵.

These figures are only indicative. The c. 320 eFSM cadets that gained a level 1 award, and those that gained a level 3 award were not included in the calculation and no attempt was made to allow for the effectiveness of the Cadet Vocational College's targeting of awards on disadvantaged areas. Importantly, they ignored the value of CVQO qualifications for the 90% of cadets that are not eFSM. Therefore, it is believed that the indicative figure provided a conservative minimum estimate of the magnitude of the lifetime value of Cadet Vocational College qualifications for the cadets that gained vocational awards in 2018 – 2019. If a figure for lifetime value of £108.9 million is a *minimum*, then it was suggested that it is a significant *minimum* for one year's learners.

The second calculation is based on the findings of Patrignani and Conlon (2011) related to earnings, specifically that:

- Gaining a Level 1 qualification adds c. 3% p.a. to earnings in the seven years post completion.
- Level 2 qualification returns varied from an increase of c. 6% after seven years, to a 5% increase immediately post-completion, rising to a 14% increase after seven years.
- City and Guilds Level 3 qualifications were associated with an earnings premium of 5-7% p.a.

To be prudent, it was assumed that the increase in returns resulting from a Level 2 qualification was 10% (an average figure between 6% and 14%), and that Level 3 qualifications resulted in a return on 6%. The return from a Level 1 qualification was accepted as 3%.

It was then assumed that, as the Cadet Vocational College has awarded qualifications over the 20-year period from 2002 – 2003 to 2022 – 2023, that it would be reasonable to use the minimum

wage from 2012 – 2013, £6.31 an hour, as an estimate of average wages for learners for the 20-year period. It was then assumed that people worked an average of 40 hours a week, for 47 weeks a year, resulting in average earnings of £11,863.

It was, of course, accepted that these assumptions would result in a very crude estimate for the impact on earnings.

Continued



Table 8: Levels and Numbers of Vocational Qualifications Awarded

Vocational Qualification Level	Number Gained 2002 - 2023	Vocational Qualification Level	Number Gained 2002 - 2023
1	25,341	5	232
2	87,396	6	567
3	5,551	7	242
4	554		



In the 20 years that it has been awarding vocational qualifications, the Cadet Vocational College has given out 25,314 Level 1 awards, 87,396 Level 2 awards, and 5,551 Level 3 awards.

Based on the increased earnings suggested by Patrignani and Conlon, the following calculation was made:

Level 1 qualification: £11,863 increased by 3% × 25,314 awards = **£9,021,396**

Level 2 qualification: £11,863 increased by 10% × 87,396 awards = **£103,651,656**

Level 3 qualification: £11,863 increased by 6% × 5,551 awards = **£3,952,312**

Annual increase in earnings resulting from Levels 1, 2 and 3 vocational qualifications = **£116,625,364**

It should be noted that this calculation makes no attempt to estimate the returns on earnings for vocational qualifications at Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7. It can reasonably be assumed that people that gain awards at these levels are on more than the minimum wage. It can also be assumed that learners who have used their Level 2 and 3 vocational qualifications to gain access to higher education will be earning more than the minimum wage, especially if they studied STEM subjects⁴⁶. Therefore, the total increase in earnings should be regarded as a crude, minimum figure. Moreover, this calculation makes no attempt to estimate (guess) how many Cadet Vocational College award-holders would have been unemployed if it had not been for their vocational qualifications.

It can reasonably be argued that both the calculations of the potential financial values of Cadet Vocational College vocational qualifications are based on so many assumptions that they are, almost, without merit.

However, it is suggested that, with all their faults, the calculations illustrate a very important point, that the return on investment arising from funding the Cadet Vocational College with taxpayer money (c. £59.5 million since 2002 – 2003) is very positive.

The funding that the ESFA provides to the Cadet Vocational College results in very significant financial benefits to both individuals and society. It must be seen as an excellent investment.

³⁶>> Using Google Scholar <<

³⁷>> This finding was in contrast to the conclusion that National Vocational Qualifications at Level 2 resulted in no positive return. However, this conclusion is disputed by other authors e.g., Lynch et al. (2015)

³⁸>> NFER.ac <<

³⁹>> Author's italics <<

⁴⁰>> Social impact of and value of CVQC Qualifications <<

⁴¹>> Given the educational outcomes of eFSM children, this hypothesis seems reasonable.<<

⁴²>> A level 2 award is at GCSE level, so it is assumed the cadet has demonstrated the ability to gain GCSEs <<

⁴³>> The number of girls gaining a level 2 BTEC (169) + the number of girls gaining a level 2 ILM (50) × £124,412 = £27,246,228 <<

⁴⁴>> The number of boys gaining a level 2 BTEC (328) + the number of boys gaining a level 2 ILM (96) × £192,694 = £81,702,256 <<

⁴⁵>> Sum of £27.2 million and £81.7 million.<<

⁴⁶>> Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.<<

Cadet Vocational College qualifications are an important social enabler, supporting and encouraging learners to fulfil their potential and helping them to gain access to further and higher education, to employment or other advancement.

Importantly, Cadet Vocational College qualifications are open to all, are wholly inclusive and equality of access is ensured. The Cadet Vocational College identifies and accredits crucial life skills that, too often, go unrewarded and unrecognised - attributes such as teamwork, communication, leadership, and resilience which are so important and form the foundation of a productive community.

The research project that resulted in this report found that Cadet Vocational College vocational qualifications are highly valued by the uniformed youth organisations that are Cadet Vocational College's customers. The qualifications are important enablers of social and material progress, resulting in increased earnings and career opportunities. Schools that have CCF units whose cadets gain Cadet Vocational College qualifications are highly likely to gain outcomes that are positively valued by educational inspection regimes.

Vocational qualifications, such as those provided by the Cadet Vocational College are valued by employers, and help gain access to further and higher education. Learners, both adult volunteers, and cadets realise that their vocational qualifications give them significant advantages, and value them accordingly.

There is very robust evidence to show that tens of thousands of people have had their life-chances significantly improved as a result of gaining their vocational qualifications while being members of uniformed youth groups, perhaps especially if they are classified as disadvantaged or SEND in any way.

Importantly, the work of the Cadet Vocational College results in a very positive return on investment for the UK.

Additionally, the failure of the ESFA grant to rise with inflation, while contracted learner numbers have remained the same, means that the Cadet Vocational College is increasing the value it returns to the taxpayer.

The staff of the Cadet Vocational College are doing an important and valuable job.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made as a result of the study that produced this report.

- The Cadet Vocational College should produce case studies illustrating the positive impacts that schools have gained from the Lion Award, and how school funding can be used to pay for the scheme.
- Cadet Vocational College marketing material should be evaluated to ensure that it clearly describes all the benefits that adult and cadet learners can gain from gaining Cadet Vocational College vocational qualifications. Marketing material, updated and amended if necessary, should be distributed to Cadet Vocational College customers and potential customers, including at unit level (including to schools with CCF detachments).
- The main findings of the report should be shared with Cadet Vocational College customer, and potential customer, organisations.

This report, like all other social science reports, is based on data that is, inevitably, incomplete. Moreover, some of the sample sizes were very small. The author has attempted to address these limitations by gathering both qualitative and quantitative primary data, as well as material from a literature review.

It is accepted that the adult and ex-cadet learners that were surveyed had gained at least one vocational qualification with the Cadet Vocational College; thus they could be described as satisfied customers. People that had failed to complete a qualification with Cadet Vocational College were not surveyed as, in nearly every case, they were no longer involved with a uniformed youth group and there was no way of contacting them directly.

However, the aim of the report was to identify the impacts and value of gaining vocational qualifications with Cadet Vocational College, and thus the lack of an unsuccessful group of learners was not deemed particularly detrimental to the study.

It should also be noted that the author is a Trustee of the Cadet Vocational College. Therefore, he could be accused of being biased in favour of the organisation. However, being a Trustee means that the author has a greater understanding of the Cadet Vocational College than would otherwise be the case. Additionally, the use of peer review as part of the methodology was designed to counter any unintended bias.



The author is grateful to the many individuals, all of whom were busy, for agreeing to be interviewed or surveyed as part of the data gathering for this report.

He is also grateful to the staff of the Cadet Vocational College for providing, often at short notice, learner data and financial information. He is especially grateful to Cathie Sluman of the Cadet Vocational College, for her assistance with the surveys.

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Survey responses to the question: Have your vocational qualifications been of value?

The value of qualifications to the individual

- In addition to this through doing these qualifications I was involved in the Westminster award which in itself was a rewarding and once in a lifetime experience
- It has given me confidence in leadership
- Personally, the confidence I gained in achieving these qualifications has been very valuable
- Cadet Vocational College qualifications have been able to recognise the work and skills I have developed in a professional setting
- I feel that vocational qualifications can quantify or 'label' skills and experiences gained in youth organisations, during volunteer work or when facing challenges, which is a really valuable asset
- It has given me a chance to learn such important skills in an environment of like-minded people
- I believe that vocational qualifications are a good and clear way of showing academic knowledge alongside practical use
- The course was a fantastic opportunity to brush up on my teaching skills
- They have given me formal recognition and confidence in my ability and evidence of transferable skills both in cadets and work settings
- It's important to show that I'm not just a passive student, but someone who actively seeks out opportunities to grow and improve. I'm grateful for the skills and experiences that have been instilled in me, and I'm confident that I can bring those same qualities to any job or project that comes my way
- Doing both the BTEC and ILM level 3 have given me skills in working independently and to my own schedule
- I struggled academically at school, leaving with basic qualifications. Having completed the City & Guilds qualification I have refreshed my spirit for education with a sense of self-pride and respect, to continue to push my abilities, knowing I can achieve greater heights with the correct mindset and support. I feel that with this new spirit I can pass my story onto others knowing I can talk from experience, never to give up, regardless of your age. Thank you, Cadet Vocational College

Survey responses to the question: Have your vocational qualifications been of value?

The value of qualifications to employment

- I use the skills and qualities I have gained and put them into practice through work, personal life and other commitments
- Having an ILM Level 3 qualification has been extremely beneficial to me, in previous jobs it has enabled me to gain management positions at a quicker rate than others who do not have this qualification
- As a manager, I still consider some of the things so learned when I took the course. It has made me a more effective manager
- The management and teamwork skills I have picked up and developed during my vocational qualifications help me every day during my job where I am constantly working as part of both a smaller and much larger team. The knowledge gained made joining my profession so much easier!
- It has been a conversation topic during job interviews which I believe has helped me get employment over other applicants. Once in post it has given me skills to aid in management of others and given me tools to progress in my workplace in management of situations
- I have used them (the skills learned) in my work life in terms of leading and being part of teams
- They have helped select me out for job interviews. When going to interview, I always get asked about the qualifications and often interviewers are impressed by the explanations I give
- I now run a renewable consultancy business in the xxx region. The Cadet Vocational College vocational qualifications have been of value to myself as the transferrable leadership skills enable me to effectively direct the team and communicate with stakeholders
- I used these skills to further my career and gain promotion to a level of junior leader/manager and now manage my own instructional course within the organisation
- I am an autistic person and have dyslexia. The qualifications I have at the high level have enhanced my work opportunities and give me recognition of my cadet work too. I have been given promotion in work to a senior management role and I am now looking to gain further promotion
- As a direct result of my ILM Qualifications I have secured higher paid / higher responsibility employment

Survey responses to the question: Have your vocational qualifications been of value?

The value of qualifications to accessing education

- The vocational awards have provided me with a way of showing Universities and employers I have skills in both teamwork and leadership
- Whilst I feel that I might have gotten into university regardless of my vocational qualification, I don't think I would have participated in group work, team activities and societies in the same way without undertaking my vocational qualification
- All of my CVQO led qualifications have been of great value to me throughout my whole academic career, especially when applying for my fully funded PhD
- I think the BTEC I did as a cadet was very valuable, as it added to my UCAS application and made me stand out against other applicants who just had the usual GCSEs and A Levels, I got into my first-choice university despite not getting the grades offered and believe this was due in very large part to my BTEC and wider ACF experience





**Cadet
Vocational
College**



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