



The Social Impact and Value of CVQO Qualifications for the Cadet Forces

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CVQO Chairman..... 2

1.0 Executive Summary 3

2.0 Introduction..... 4

3.0 Methodology 5

4.0 Poverty: The National Context..... 6

5.0 The Impact and Value of CVQO awards..... 7

6.0 Impact and Value of CVQO awards for Cadets 8

7.0 Impact and Value of CVQO awards for CFAVs 12

8.0 Value of CVQO Cadet Force awards to UK Government..... 14

9.0 The CVQO response to Covid-19 15

10.0 Conclusions..... 16





The Cadet Vocational Qualifications Organisation (CVQO) makes a real difference to the lives of thousands of young people and adults each year, helping them to aspire to new heights, and thus I am so very proud to have been its Chairman for nine years.

CVQO identifies and accredits crucial life skills that too often go unrewarded and unrecognised. Attributes such as teamwork, communication, leadership and resilience are so very important and form the foundation of a productive community. It is right and proper that they are developed and that they share an equal footing with traditional academic values.

This report was independently commissioned by the Ministry of Defence to look at the impact that CVQO has on society. A team at The University of Northampton led by Professor Simon Denny has produced this well researched and comprehensive review which was four years in gestation.

Its findings confirm absolutely our view that CVQO's work, with that of our superb partner cadet organisations, can be really life-changing for many individuals. Our 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. CVQO qualifications are open to all, are wholly inclusive and ensure equality of access.

I am inspired each day by our learners and their achievements, and I have no doubt that, by the time you turn the final page of this excellent report, you will be equally convinced that CVQO's valuable and vital work brightens the future of many young people who otherwise might have been left behind.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lingfield". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

1.0 Executive Summary

- Gaining vocational qualifications through CVQO has particularly significant positive impacts on young people, particularly those that suffer economic and other disadvantages. Cadet Force Adult Volunteers also benefit greatly in terms of increased lifetime earnings resulting from new qualifications gained through CVQO.
- A significant minority (c. 10%) of cadets are eligible for Free School Meals (eFSM); in some areas of the country the number of cadets that are eFSM rises to over 30%.
- National data show that c. 70% of eFSM children do not meet expected standards at age 16.
- Children that are eFSM are four times more likely to be excluded from school than their non-eFSM peers. Being excluded from school often leads to a young person failing to be employed, to be in further or higher education, or to be in training¹.
- Research Commissioned by the UK Government shows that there are 'large and significant' wage gains (of up to 20%) for most vocational qualifications as well as an increased likelihood of being in employment².
- Very recent research³ found that vocational qualifications boost the earnings of both men and women.
- For those cadets who struggle with the school learning environment, being able to gain a vocational qualification can be life-changing. The DfE⁴ states that the lifetime productivity benefits from five or more good GCSEs were worth on average £100,000 per individual in 2014, adjusted for inflation the benefits in 2019 were worth £112,800, compared with those with no qualifications.
- It is reasonable to assume that gaining a vocational qualification has a significant lifetime value, the amount of which depends on the number and level of qualifications gained. Moreover, school teachers interviewed in 2019 and 2020 for this study about the impact of a cadet unit in their school (n=17) have claimed that if a youngster gains a vocational qualification through the Cadet Forces, then they are more likely to get GCSEs.
- We estimate that the lifetime value of qualifications for the 2018 – 2019⁵ cohort of CVQO learners that can probably be classified as disadvantaged (c. 988 individuals), is in the region of £27.2 million for girls, and £81.7 million for boys, with an overall total of £108.9 million.
- These very significant values are purely for the disadvantaged cohort. The value of CVQO awards gained by cadets that are not disadvantaged cannot be calculated, but it is clearly very large indeed.
- In the 2018 – 2019 year 469 CFAVs gained NVQ Level 2 and 3 qualifications through CVQO. The value in future earnings to this cohort could be as much as £81,613 per individual, or £38.3 million for the cohort.
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¹ The Institute of Public Policy Research estimated in 2017 that the lifetime cost of exclusion is c. £392,000 per individual.

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32354/11-1282-returns-intermediate-and-low-level-vocational-qualifications.pdf

³ Bratsberg, B., Nyen, T. and Raaum, O. (2020) Economic returns to adult vocational qualifications, *Journal of Education and Work*, 33:2, pp. 99 - 114

⁴ Hayward et al (2014) cited previously

⁵ The last full year for which data is available and which is not affected by the Covid pandemic.

In July 2016, on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and CVQO⁶, the Combined Cadet Force Association commissioned the Institute for Social Innovation and Impact (ISII) at the University of Northampton to undertake a four-year longitudinal research project. The research project was designed to help understand the social impact and return on investment resulting from the MOD's expenditure on cadets and the Cadet Expansion Programme (CEP), as well as the benefits of the qualifications provided by CVQO.

The project team produced interim reports in 2017, 2018 and 2019. In May 2021 the final report was published. This report, entitled 'What is the social impact and return on investment resulting from expenditure on the Cadet Forces in the UK?' can be viewed at:

<https://www.northampton.ac.uk/research/research-institutes-and-centres/institute-for-social-innovation-and-impact/social-impact-resulting-from-expenditure-on-cadets/>

This report, prepared for the Chief Executive, senior managers and Trustees of CVQO, describes the impacts and, where possible, the value of the vocational qualifications gained by cadets and adult volunteers in the Cadet Forces as a result of the work of CVQO.

The report is produced by Professor Simon Denny, an associate researcher at the Institute for Social Innovation and Impact at the University of Northampton.



⁶ The Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation (CVQO) is an education charity, providing vocational qualifications to youth group members and the adult volunteers who devote their time to running them, see <https://cvqo.org/>.

Social impact can be defined as “The reflection of social outcomes as measurements, both long-term and short-term, adjusted for the effects achieved by others (alternative attribution), for effects that would have happened anyway (deadweight), for negative consequences (displacement), and for effects declining over time (drop-off)”⁷. Put simply, it relates to the effect on people and communities that happens as a result of an action or inaction, an activity, project, programme or policy.

When engaging in social impact research there are a number of recommended approaches for a study to be considered as ‘best practice’ (GECES⁸, 2014). These include the identification of ‘measures’ commonly known as outputs, outcomes and impacts and their measurement either directly through research or indirectly through proxies. These measures should be embedded within a ‘theory of change’, which seeks to provide a theoretical explanation of the changes in the measures identified and hence the impact delivered (GECES, 2014). For CVQO, the theory of change is based on the findings of previous studies, including those carried out by the Department for Education (DfE), that show that gaining qualifications is associated with increased lifetime earning potential and personal fulfilment⁹.

To attempt to calculate the potential value of vocational qualifications, data on education and skills, and employment are particularly relevant, for example Bratsberg et al. (2020)¹⁰. In addition, the work of Fujiwara¹¹ has been used to calculate the value CFAVs get from their regular volunteering; while the work of Hayward et al.¹², published by the Department for Education, has been used to calculate the potential value of vocational qualifications for disadvantaged cadets.

The data for the research project was gathered from young people in the Cadet Forces, CFAVs, parents, teachers, school governors, serving and retired members of HM Forces (both Regular and Reserves), members of the police force, social workers, and employers. Over 640 semi-structured interviews were conducted; and over 5,500 structured questionnaires were completed (either online or hard copy). Data from the CVQO Management Information System were reviewed.



⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/12966/attachments/5/translations/en/renditions/pdf>

⁸ GECES is the European Commission’s sub-committee on social impact measurement. Full reference if required: Clifford, J., Hehenberger, L., & Fantini, M., (2014), *Proposed Approaches to Social Impact Measurement in European Commission legislation and in practice relating to: EuSEFs and the EaSI*, European Commission Report 140605 (June 2014), available online at <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/12966/attachments/5/translations/en/renditions/pdf>

⁹ See, for example, Hayward, H., Hunt, E. & Lord, A. (2014) *The economic value of key intermediate qualifications: estimating the returns and lifetime productivity gains to GCSEs, A levels and apprenticeships*, Department for Education

¹⁰ Bratsberg, B., Nyen, T. and Raaum, O. (2020) *Economic returns to adult vocational qualifications*, *Journal of Education and Work*, 33:2, pp. 99 - 114

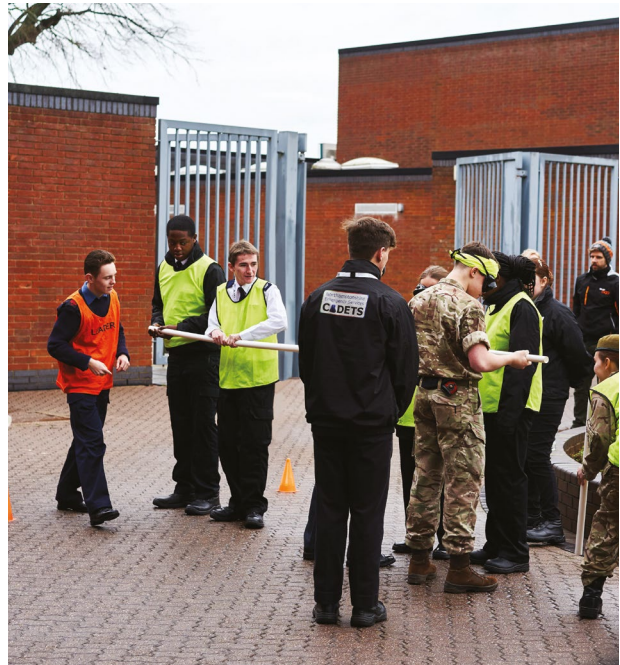
¹¹ Ex-senior economist at Cabinet Office, the lead on cost-benefit analysis at DWP, now at LSE

¹² Hayward, H., Hunt, E. and Lord, A. (2014) *The economic value of key intermediate qualifications: estimating the returns and lifetime productivity gains to GCSEs, A levels and apprenticeships*, Department for Education. Table 4 on page 35 is a particularly interesting and has informed this study.

◦ 4.0 Poverty: The National Context

The impact of poverty on young people is very relevant to any report on the impact and value of the work of CVQO with the Cadet Forces. This research has used eligibility for Free School Meals (eFSM) as a proxy for poverty¹³. National data¹⁴ show that children who are eFSM score lower in measures of self-esteem and self-efficacy, which correlates to poorer academic performance¹⁵, with c. 70% of eFSM children not meeting expected standards at age 16. Moreover, children that are eFSM are four times more likely to be excluded from school than their non-eFSM peers and being excluded from school often leads to a young person failing to secure employment or enter further or higher education, or training¹⁶. The DfE (2017) stated that only 1% of young people who had been excluded achieved five good GCSEs, including English and Mathematics. The Institute of Public Policy Research estimated in 2017 that the lifetime cost of exclusion is around £392,000 per individual, adjusted to 2019 costs. Data from cadet units and this study shows that a significant minority (~10%) of cadets are eFSM.

Interestingly, when the results of a survey of 353 CFAVs were analysed in detail, 97% of those who were currently working as teachers, social workers or members of the police force (i.e. a sub-set of respondents that work with large numbers of children, n = 34) believe that participation in the Cadet Forces is particularly beneficial for disadvantaged youngsters.



¹³ To be eligible for free school meals a child's parents or guardians must receive some form of national benefit or allowance, see <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals> People receiving these benefits or allowances have household incomes in the lower decile. For example, to receive Universal Credit the household income must be less than £7,400 p.a.

¹⁴ See, for example, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/mpse-2015/free-school-meal-status-and-educational-attainment-age-16>

¹⁵ Deputy Prime Minister's Office (March 2015) Social Mobility Indicators <https://www.gov.uk/publications/social-mobility-indicators>

¹⁶ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/mpse-2015/free-school-meal-status-and-educational-attainment-age-16>

5.0 The Impact and Value of CVQO awards

An integral part of the experience and opportunity offered to members of the Cadet Forces, both adult and young person, is that of being able to study for and gain vocational awards through CVQO. CVQO is a UK-based vocational education charity and learning provider. Founded in 2001, the organisation provides vocational qualifications to members of UK youth groups and their adult volunteer instructors. It offers over 20 different qualifications accredited by Pearson, the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) and City and Guilds. Due to funding from ESFA¹⁷ and the MOD, most qualifications are offered at either no cost to the learner or at a low cost compared to commercial providers. The great majority of its learners are members of the Cadet Forces. The vocational qualifications that CVQO offers provide formal and accredited recognition of skills such as teamwork, leadership, management and self-reliance. It is important to note that these competences are those that employers say they look for in their staff¹⁸. CVQO is inspected by Ofsted and in its last inspection, in 2019, received a ‘Good’ rating. The research team regard this rating as impressive as CVQO has no control over its learners as cadets and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAVs) are free to leave the Cadet Forces at any time. Moreover, learners are either in small groups or work as individuals, with support from CVQO staff, in all parts of the UK. We note that Ofsted commented positively on the ability of CVQO to maintain learner motivation.

In 2018 – 2019¹⁹, 9,886 cadets and 552 CFAVs gained CVQO awards. The research team has interviewed cadets, CFAVs, teachers and trustees and members of CVQO staff to try and identify the impact of gaining these qualifications on both cadets and CFAVs. It must be pointed out at this stage, that participation of both cadets and CFAVs in CVQO qualifications is not evenly distributed across the country. Some areas have much higher levels of involvement than others. The uneven levels of participation largely depend on three factors; the funding available²⁰, the level of interest in CVQO of the CFAVs (partly a facet of how many CFAVs in a unit or area have CVQO qualifications themselves); and the effectiveness and experience of the CVQO regional managers (inevitably some get more learners involved than others). Although CVQO does not have details of which individual learners are disadvantaged, it does deliberately target the lower-level awards at deprived areas. As the Chief Executive of CVQO has written²¹,

“The Level 1 award remains an important part of our offer. We continue to target these qualifications where they are most needed. It is proposed in future that we will target highest-potential impact learners through areas of multiple deprivation etc. by postcode analysis.”

¹⁷ Education and Skills Funding Agency

¹⁸ See, for example: <https://www.reed.co.uk/career-advice/graduate-skills-what-are-employers-looking-for/>

¹⁹ It is appropriate to use figures from this year as the 2019 – 2020 year was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

²⁰ Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland provide less funding per cadet for CVQO awards than England does.

²¹ On 19 March 2020

6.0 Impact and Value of CVQO awards for Cadets

“BTEC is a life-changer for our kids”

Head Teacher, NE England

Interviews with Headteachers, teachers and CFAVs who are teachers, both in Academy schools with CEP CCF units and those who work with community cadet detachments, all made the very similar point; that working for and gaining a CVQO qualification was very important for those cadets that were not academically inclined and did not enjoy their time in school. A Headteacher from a large Academy school in a disadvantaged area of North East England summed up the views of these interviewees when he pointed out that,

“Cadets that ‘don’t do’ school can gain a vocational qualification with CVQO, and then realise that they can achieve and can go on to get GCSEs.”

This is an important observation that is key to the social impact of CVQO.

The views of the teachers were supported by a CVQO trustee who has worked in secondary education for over 30 years. She stressed that it was essential that young people have opportunities to learn in different ways, and on-the-job. She believed that these opportunities were especially important for those youngsters who did not shine at school. She said,

“I have talked to many cadets and believe that CVQO gives all cadets the same opportunities. It enables those that learn differently or have learning disabilities to learn and achieve. This is important as cadets report they enjoy learning in different ways. Doing a CVQO qualification changes performance in schools as the cadets realise they can achieve qualifications and their confidence is greatly improved.”

Some Cadet Force units take imaginative approaches to engaging their cadets with CVQO. A CFAV reported that,

“We did a thing at summer camp last year. We had CVQO staff in to run an ILM level 2 course in an intensive two-day package. Seventy-two cadets passed; out of those seventy-two I imagined that fifty would never get a formal educational qualification....so many of the young people in our area leave school without qualifications. The CVQO awards give young people a sense of pride and a feeling of worth.”

The statement, “CVQO awards give young people a sense of pride and a feeling of worth”, is an articulation of increased self-efficacy and it is hypothesized that the gains in self-efficacy recorded by cadets, especially those that are eFSM, is partly due to some gaining vocational qualifications.



“CVQO awards give young people a sense of pride and a feeling of worth”

As noted above, CVQO does not have historical data of which individual learners are disadvantaged. However, it is estimated that c. 10% of cadets are eFSM and that in 2018 – 2019 9,886 cadets gained CVQO 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. CVQO 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.²² 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 the interviewees cited above are correct, the implication is that many disadvantaged cadets gain CVQO awards and then, newly determined and confident in their ability, go on to gain GCSEs, resulting in wage and productivity gains that may not have happened without their participation in the Cadet Forces.

The work of Hayward et al. supports the earlier work of Wiseman et al.²³ who concluded that their research identifies significant returns to education, and 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. Undertaking and successfully achieving vocational qualifications are investments in early life which increase lifecycle

earnings relative to not having achieved these qualifications.

Any calculation of the value of CVQO awards will, inevitably, be no more than indicative. However, it is interesting to see the potential value of the vocational qualifications gained by cadets. If we only consider the cadets that gain a level 2 award²⁴, either BTEC or ILM, and assume that 10% of them are eFSM, then 497 cadets that are disadvantaged gained a BTEC and 146 an ILM. MOD 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 £27.2 million for girls, and £81.7 million for boys, with an overall total of £108.9 million.

We stress that these figures are only indicative. Our calculations ignore the c. 320 eFSM cadets that gained a level 1 award, and those that gained a level 3 award. We resisted any attempt to allow for the effectiveness of CVQO’s targeting of awards on disadvantaged areas. And, importantly, we ignored the value of CVQO qualifications for the 90% of cadets that are not eFSM²⁵. Therefore, we believe that the indicative figure provides a

22 Hayward, H., Hunt, E. & Lord, A. (2014) *The economic value of key intermediate qualifications: estimating the returns and lifetime productivity gains to GCSEs, A levels and apprenticeships*, Department for Education

23 *Economic, Social, and Personal Outcomes of Vocational Qualifications Prepared for: London Borough of Newham Prepared by: June Wiseman (Director, BMG), Philip Roe (Research Director, BMG), Elizabeth Davies (Research Manager, BMG), Stefan Speckesser (IES) & Jose VilaBelda Motalt (IES) Date: July 2013*

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

25 Hayward et al. (2016) state that, “intermediate qualifications have a strong labour market value in England. Achieving GCSEs, A levels and apprenticeships improve earnings, employability and lifetime productivity. Even achieving at very low levels – just one or two GCSE passes compared to none – is associated with large economic gains. Modest incremental improvements in GCSE attainment can also have sizeable lifetime returns, across the spectrum of GCSE achievement.” Thus, by ignoring the potential value of vocational qualifications to the great majority of cadets that are not disadvantaged, we are making a conservative estimate of their value.

conservative minimum estimate of the magnitude of the lifetime value of CVQO qualifications for the cadets that gained vocational awards in 2018 – 2019. If a figure of £108.9 million is a minimum, then we suggest it is a significant minimum for one year’s learners.

We should also consider that the value of any qualification is not just in the short term and the learning involved in gaining an award can be used in different contexts. A teacher that is a CFAV in a CCF unit made the following statement to the research team,

“I also regard the successful completion of the ILM course as an example of what I call the ‘long fuse’ educational experience. Much of what happens in education can appear to be driven by short term objectives and motivations. However, the full benefit of some educational activities may not be fully realised until several months or even years later. It has been both interesting and pleasing to note that several senior cadets have commented to me, at a much later date, how they have valued greatly the ILM course. In some cases, it was not until two or three years later, perhaps at interview or when working on collaborative project as an undergraduate, that the former cadet was able to call upon knowledge and experience of leadership models. To have both the knowledge and confidence to assume responsibility and to display a willingness to lead has arisen, partly, through the combination of the cadet courses and the ILM award.”

We are not attempting to put a financial value on this aspect of the CVQO awards, but the suggestion that they benefit cadets who are undergraduates (and thus presumably have A levels), as well as cadets that might only get 1 – 2 GCSEs is interesting.



7.0 Impact and Value of CVQO awards for CFAVs

“It’s a no brainer, if you are helping with cadets, you should do the vocational qualifications. Cadets gives you the experience and training, you do the paperwork.”

ATC Warrant Officer, London

The 2017 interim report of the social impact and return on investment of the Cadet Forces estimated that the educational provision delivered to a sample of 338 CFAVs had given them potential lifetime earnings increases of c. £25.58 million²⁶ (assuming that individuals had not already achieved the levels of qualification previously); adjusted to 2019 the earnings increase rises to £27.6 million. This calculation was informed by research published by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the National Foundation for Education Research²⁷ which identified the value in future earnings to individuals who attain NVQ Level 2 and NVQ Level 3 qualifications, with earnings increasing by as much as £77,000 across a lifetime. More recently, in the 2018 – 2019 year 469 CFAVs gained NVQ Level 2 and 3 qualifications through CVQO. The value in future earnings to this cohort could be as much as £81,613 per individual, or £38.3 million for the cohort. However, we point out that caution needs to be applied when looking at these simplistic calculations, as they do not account for deadweight (i.e. how many CFAVs would have achieved these qualifications if they were not involved with the Cadet Forces).



²⁶ In the 2017 report the figure given was £15.58 million. This was a typographic error, the figure should have been £25.58million

²⁷ BIS, (2011), *Returns to Intermediate and Low-level Qualifications*, BIS Research Paper No. 53, September 2011; BIS, (2013), *Review of the Economic Benefits of Training and Qualifications, as shown by research based on Cross-sectional and administrative data*, BIS Report No. 105, February 2013; Lynch, S., Sims, D. & Wespieser, K., (2015), *A literature review of the value of vocational qualifications*, National Foundation for Education Research Report, Slough.

In our 2019 report, we summarised the responses to a questionnaire of 103 CFAVs that had gained CVQO awards. The most frequent responses given were that CVQO awards increased a CFAV's employability, increased their self-confidence, and gave opportunities for management roles. In addition, teachers that are 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. Our evidence indicates that in many cases gaining a vocational qualification with CVQO changes the career prospects of CVQOs. Vocational qualifications are particularly important for CFAVs with no, or very few, formal educational qualifications, as one CFAV that had gained the City and Guilds Membership in Leadership and Management memorably remarked,

"It has not made me a millionaire or better looking but I did leave school with no qualifications, and I think I can hold my head high amongst my peers and state I have an equivalent of a graduateship. I also have severe dyslexia and find it an excellent way of gaining qualifications in a less formal setting and in my own time. It also makes you understand and appreciate the skills and knowledge one gains from volunteering!"



8.0 Value of CVQO Cadet Force awards to UK Government

CVQO funding comes partly from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (EFSA), thus the organization is supported by the taxpayer. Therefore, it is relevant to ask whether the outcomes produced by CVQO are relevant to Government departments. Table 1 summarizes how these outcomes are relevant and, where evidence exists, gives examples of the financial values that have been identified.

Government Department	Benefits provided by Cadet Forces
Ministry of Defence	The great majority of CFAVs who complete the CVQO courses which they are able to undertake as part of their volunteering, benefit from large potential lifetime earnings increases.
Department for Education	Gaining vocational qualifications through CVQO, and then 1-2 GCSEs, can lead to lifetime benefits worth c. £109 million for each years' intake of cadets from disadvantaged backgrounds.
Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs	Cadets aged 16 – 18 have skills, vocational and other qualifications, and behavioural attributes that are very highly valued by employers, including those seeking young apprentices. Senior cadets are very employable (and may benefit from increased social mobility). CFAVs gain new skills that are valued by employers and may lead to promotions and enhanced earning, thus increasing their tax contributions.

Table 1: Outcomes delivered by CVQO that are relevant to UK Government Departments

9.0 The CVQO response to Covid-19

The CVQO delivery model has been designed around regionally based staff working with the Cadet Forces during their parade days, summer camps, and weekend events to both recruit learners and support them in gaining vocational qualifications. The Covid-19 pandemic, and the subsequent restrictions imposed, meant that this delivery model was suddenly redundant.

Before the lockdown started, CVQO staff were issued with laptops (that were loaned by the organisation's IT provider) to enable them to work from their homes. Communication with the Cadet Forces and provision for learner support was provided remotely using video conferencing software (e.g. Microsoft Teams, Zoom), and a virtual learning environment was set up with learning material available online. As CVQO staff were no longer able to visit cadet units, a policy of contacting all learners individually to provide one-to-one coaching and online learning and teaching was implemented. This approach was shown to be particularly successful in those areas where the Cadet Forces had set up virtual parade nights. Interestingly, each of the Cadet Forces had slightly different safeguarding rules and used different technology for online events, which had to be considered by CVQO (for example, the ACF tended to use Zoom, whereas the ATC only allowed Microsoft Teams).

Safeguarding was taken seriously by CVQO and a policy was instituted whereby there were always at least two CVQO staff involved in an online activity, with one staff member being responsible for monitoring and regulating behaviour. It was pleasing to note that as CVQO does not have a single, formal results day (it has rolling registrations throughout the year), it was not directly affected by the chaos that afflicted the A level and GCSE results in August 2020. Despite the pandemic and the cessation of cadet parades from March 2020, the numbers of cadet learners enrolling on CVQO's large-scale programmes increased in 2019 – 2020²⁸ compared with 2018 – 2019. The BTEC level 1 programme increased enrolments from 2,244 to 2,381 and the BTEC level 2 increased enrolments from 3,658 to 3,995.

We conclude that the response of CVQO to the restrictions necessitated by the Covid pandemic were flexible, learner-centred, and effective; a commendable performance.

²⁸ Learner data gathered on 8 July 2020

◦ 10.0 Conclusions

CVQO enables cadets and CFAVs to gain vocational qualifications, either at subsidised rates or free of charge. Gaining these qualifications is important for nearly all the cadets and CFAVs that engage with CVQO. However, for those cadets that are disadvantaged, especially those disengaged from mainstream education, these qualifications can be – literally – life-changing. CFAVs that have no, or few, qualifications can also change their career opportunities by gaining vocational qualifications as a result of their participation in the Cadet Forces. 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 that have gained CVQO 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 eFSM. The total annual lifetime value of vocational awards gained by members of the Cadet Forces through CVQO cannot be calculated. However, we believe that it must be significantly more than £200 million per annum. We suggest that CVQO is delivering very positive and significant impact and value to those members of the Cadet Forces that engage with it.



“For those cadets that are disadvantaged, especially those disengaged from mainstream education, these qualifications can be – literally – life-changing”



Learner focused | Caring and supportive | Professional
Going the extra mile | Responsive and flexible
