

**ESRC**  
**Research**  
**Centre for**  
**Analysis of**  
**Social Exclusion**

# **Sprouting Seeds**

**Outcomes from a  
community-based  
employment programme**

**Helen Evans**



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## Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion

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## Contents

|   | <b>Page</b> |
|---|-------------|
| <b>Acknowledgements</b>   | iv          |
| <b>Preface</b>  | v           |
| <b>Abstract</b>   | vi          |
| <b>Overall summary, recommendations and conclusion</b>                  | vii         |
| <b>1 Introduction</b>   | 1           |
| Background to the study   | 1           |
| <b>2 Welfare to work/area regeneration context</b>                      | 2           |
| Introduction  | 2           |
| The community-based model   | 2           |
| Government welfare to work programmes                                   | 3           |
| Local area-based employment initiatives                                 | 3           |
| Intermediate Labour Market schemes                                      | 4           |
| New welfare to work initiatives   | 5           |
| Summary   | 5           |
| <b>3 The Bootstrap approach</b>   | 7           |
| Introduction  | 7           |
| Background to Bootstrap Enterprises                                     | 7           |
| Key features of Bootstrap's 'pathway' service                           | 8           |
| Current activities  | 8           |
| Outcomes and costs  | 9           |
| The way Bootstrap works   | 10          |
| Summary   | 11          |
| <b>4 What Bootstrap service users say – 134 written responses</b>       | 12          |
| The questionnaire   | 12          |
| The responders  | 12          |
| Results – feedback on the services                                      | 13          |
| Results – the outcomes  | 15          |
| Summary of findings   | 19          |
| <b>5 What the Bootstrap service users say – the in-depth interviews</b> | 20          |
| The interviews  | 20          |
| The people interviewed  | 20          |
| Potential barriers to employment  | 20          |
| Case histories prior to Bootstrap                                       | 21          |
| Contact with Bootstrap  | 23          |
| Services used at Bootstrap  | 25          |
| Changes which occurred after using Bootstrap's services                 | 25          |
| Summary of the employment and training trajectories of interviewees     | 29          |
| Why Bootstrap works   | 33          |
| Other agencies/people involved and their effectiveness                  | 36          |
| Ambition  | 37          |
| Done it without Bootstrap?  | 38          |
| Improvements to the service   | 38          |
| Summary of the findings   | 38          |
| <b>References</b>   | 41          |

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## Preface

### Do bootstraps work?

Twenty-five years ago, in a small closed-down shop in Highbury, the idea of helping some people into work through their own bootstraps was tried out in some of London's poorest communities. It relied on the motivation and basic willingness to learn of people out of work and in need. The missing ingredients were too often lack of connections and support, a serious skills deficit and shaken confidence. Helen Evans, with her partner, decided to try and provide these missing ingredients. Over a quarter of a century, the enterprise grew into a converted Hackney paint factory with 50 businesses, ten training programmes specially tailored for people returning to work, and five estate-based advisory, volunteer and employer-linked programmes.

In 2000, Helen Evans spent three months as a visiting fellow at the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion at the London School of Economics, having left Bootstraps in early 1999. She went back to ask some of the people she had worked with what had happened to them since they had left and what difference Bootstrap Enterprises had made. This report summarises the training and work experiences of 20 people, based on interviews in people's homes, against a backdrop of 134 completed questionnaires. It draws on a detailed knowledge of the neighbourhoods, of employment training, job creation and access to work.

It is impossible to write an entirely dispassionate account of an experience that you have helped to shape and that matters so much in precarious lives. However, the trust and confidence that the people interviewed so clearly demonstrate as a result of their experience, afford a unique insight into the process of returning to work for the people facing the highest barriers with the weakest springboards. The consistent findings from the survey about the value of Bootstrap's employment support and training over a very long period endorse my direct observation of that process.

The findings underline what is needed to help people move from work-poor to working status – all the missing ingredients of support and know-how originally identified, plus a long-lasting, non-judgemental, wide-open door and helping hand. An increased sense of worth, a desire to advance and a determination to deliver on their own new-found potential are the greatest contributions this kind of slow and painstaking work can make. Without it, skills training and job links are unlikely to deliver, as generations of government-funded programmes show. This small-scale study gives the reader a privileged view of just how many steps and how much hand-holding is involved in crossing the divide we now know as social exclusion. Inclusion in work and learning may be one of the most significant contributors to breaking down these barriers in the new technological century.

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## Abstract

### Bootstrap – the model

Bootstrap Enterprises in Hackney is a community-based training and employment project founded in 1977. It offers accessible, locally responsive, long-term employment services to disadvantaged unemployed people who want to improve their job prospects. It works with over 1,000 people each year and is committed to their empowerment.

### Bootstrap – the study

This study analyses the Bootstrap model of intervention, assesses the changes that it has brought about and looks at the nature of the support that actually changes people's lives. It does this by analysing the survey responses of 134 people who used Bootstrap's services between 1991 and 1999 and by examining 20 case histories. The study also uses information from publications, meetings with practitioners and academics and the author's experience of setting up and running Bootstrap for 22 years.

### The Bootstrap model – the findings

These showed that the group surveyed faced many barriers to employment but that the outcomes were good (nearly two-thirds into jobs). These were largely sustained, and many were progressing. Those interviewed also spoke of changes in confidence, determination and ambition, which led to empowerment and sustained change. The level of satisfaction from those using the service was high. Information, encouragement and support were found the most helpful aspects of the service by those responding to the questionnaire. Women and over-25s were more satisfied overall and found more aspects of the service useful.

### The Bootstrap model – what works

- Interviewees said the way they were treated was as important in creating the changes as the nature of the services themselves. The most important features were:
  - a caring approach, encouragement and being valued/respected
  - support, skills development (especially 'soft skills', basic skills support and IT) and long-term follow-up support.
- Outreach and a neighbourhood base with employment and training advice and resources.
- Varied, practical and 'low risk', entry-level services open to all who want to improve their job prospects.
- Customised training, work experience and job links for the more job ready.
- Childcare and travel allowances for those using the services.
- Encouragement and support from others (disrespect hinders progress).

### The Bootstrap model – its relevance

As unemployment falls, it is often the most disadvantaged who are left behind, particularly in poor neighbourhoods. Identifying what works for this group is therefore important. The findings from this study will be relevant, not only to those working on regenerating disadvantaged neighbourhoods but also to policy makers currently developing welfare to work programmes – both specific New Deal and Employment Zone programmes and also the integrated Benefit Agency/Employment Services 'ONE' Service targeted at all claimants of working age.

## Overall summary, recommendations and conclusion

### Summary of the findings

#### 1 The Bootstrap model

- Bootstrap, in Hackney, is a community-based training and employment project founded in 1977. It works with people who are disadvantaged in the labour market, particularly those living in areas undergoing regeneration. It offers varied, accessible and flexible long-term employment support to those who want to improve their job prospects.
- Bootstrap's values are important to the way it works. These include a belief in the potential for empowering people, a willingness to innovate, take risks and learn the lessons. It is close to both the residents and local labour market needs and, with other partners, acts as an intermediary between the two.
- Bootstrap has a clear target group: the long-term unemployed, disaffected young people, lone parents, those who face discrimination, those with few if any qualifications or who have special needs, and those on low incomes living in areas undergoing regeneration.
- Bootstrap reaches this target group effectively by outreach and building trust in disadvantaged communities over time. It works with over 1,000 people each year.
- Bootstrap takes a holistic, long-term approach to the people it works with.
- Published data show that outcomes after Bootstrap and other similar community-based schemes are good, but until now there has been little published information on the extent to which these changes are sustained in the long term.
- Bootstrap has a wide funding base. This includes local and national government area-based funding streams and European and charitable funds targeted at the most disadvantaged unemployed people.
- Because of strict eligibility criteria and programme specification, national welfare to work programmes have been difficult to integrate with local neighbourhood or estate-based regeneration programmes, especially for those working with the most disadvantaged unemployed people on a small scale and with a flexible, client-centred, long-term approach.
- Local Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) projects are a good example of how this can be done, especially if there is a local area partnership which can pull the

funds together for smaller community groups doing the delivery.

- The emphasis on job outcomes by both welfare to work and local area-based funding schemes can also make it difficult to meet the needs of this target group.
- Community-based training and employment organisations, despite little funding security or infrastructure support, have a strong track record of success with this target group. This sector could have a vital role to play in developing economic inclusion in low-income neighbourhoods. In addition, applying what works in this sector to the new welfare to work programmes, such as the 'ONE' Service, could make them much more effective in meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged unemployed claimants.

#### 2 Key findings from the survey and interviews

These results come from analysing the survey responses of 134 people who have used Bootstrap's services in the last nine years and by examining 20 case histories through in-depth interviews.

- The group interviewed faced many barriers to employment. Most had poor academic achievement at school, and this largely linked with those who had difficulties at school and who had been separated from a parent, for example through death or divorce, in childhood. None had received professional support. (Interviews)
- Those in the interview group with overseas qualifications faced difficulties getting work which was suited to their skills and abilities. (Interviews)
- This study indicates that Bootstrap is effective at helping people move along a pathway to employment and that these changes have largely been sustained: 94 per cent of survey responders moved on to work or training/education/work experience after using Bootstrap's services (65 per cent into jobs); 86 per cent were still in work or training/education/work experience, when they responded (63 per cent into jobs). There were also signs of progression, with an increase from 30 per cent to 41 per cent of those in full-time permanent work. This pattern also emerged with the interview group with, in addition, higher pay rates, better-quality work and improvements in levels of qualification over time. This suggests that the outcomes noted in previous published reports are not just a short-term flash in the pan. (Survey and Interviews)

- While the total number of unemployed survey responders, both after Bootstrap and at the time of the survey was low (14 in all), the survey results showed the level of unemployment for men was far higher than that for women. (Survey)
- Most of those interviewed talked about changes in confidence, determination and ambition, which had been sustained for up to nine years. The sustained outcomes and ambitious career plans bore out the empowering effect of these changes. Over half of the survey responders (particularly women) found confidence boosting useful. Under-25s found this least useful. The interviews suggested that more of this group still had confidence or that they were reluctant to admit they have not. Men followed a similar pattern. (Survey and Interviews)
- The level of satisfaction from those using the services was high, averaging more than four on a five-point scale. Women rated the services higher on average than men. However, there was a small but clear discrepancy between what men scored in writing and what they said in the interview – in both directions. Under-25s were less satisfied than over-25s. (Survey)
- The work experience and training services were rated higher on average than the estate-based advice service. A disproportionate number of men and under-25s in the survey used the advice service. This could partly explain why the advice service average score was lower. The survey results suggest that this lower score could be because it is less intensive (fewer responders selected useful features for this service than the others) or that it is seen as less linked to a job than the other two services. (Survey)
- Several male responders suggested more work experience and links with jobs and employers were needed. It could be they find these services more useful than other services. (Survey and Interviews)
- Those using the work experience service had the highest job outcomes (89 per cent after first using Bootstrap’s services). Those using the training services had better job progression over time than those using the advice services – a move from 62 per cent to 73 per cent into jobs over time and a rise from 19 per cent to 46 per cent into full-time permanent jobs over time. This may link with gender since the majority of responders using the training services were women. (Survey)
- Individual trajectories showed that 82 per cent of those in a job immediately after using Bootstrap’s services were also in a job at the time of the survey. Those who were unemployed rose from five (all men) to nine (six different men) by the time of the survey. (Survey)

- Half those interviewed found other aspects of their lives benefited after using Bootstrap’s services: in particular, by having more friends and support. (Interviews)

### 3 What works – findings from the interviews

- From the service users’ perspective, the way they are treated is as important as the nature of the services themselves in bringing about changes which improve job prospects.
- From their experience, a caring, friendly approach, encouragement and being valued and respected are key features of the way services should be delivered.
- With the services themselves, most of those interviewed identified close support, skills development (including ‘soft skills’, basic skills support and IT) and long-term follow-up support when the programme ends, as important in improving job prospects.
- This was largely supported by the responses to the questionnaire, although these responders also rated ‘information’ highly.
- Several of those in the survey and the interviews who were less satisfied with Bootstrap’s services wanted more support.
- Outreach, neighbourhood bases and an ‘open door’ approach are important, to encourage as many as possible who wish to improve their job prospects to use the services.
- Staff – from receptionists to personal advisors and trainers – who treat people in ways that create trust, confidence and direction, make a difference.
- Varied, entry level and ‘low risk’ (not needing a big commitment, and with a low risk of failure) services, including careers advice, job search help, ‘soft skills’ and IT training help to bring people in. Practical, useful skills such as first aid, IT, business or project development and outdoor-pursuits training can encourage the scared. Training leading to real jobs can encourage the cynical. Work experience – ideally paid – encourages those with lots of training but little experience of work. Several responders suggested Bootstrap should increase this provision.
- Customised training targeted at local people for local jobs in, for example, employment advice, literacy training, health and social care, construction and administration are popular and effective at getting local people into local jobs. Work experience, job links and brokering are also very effective. Several survey responders who were less satisfied with Bootstrap’s services or who had suggestions for improvement wanted to see these employer links increased.

- Long-term follow-up support when people leave a programme can help sustain employment and develop careers, at modest additional cost.
- Many get help from employers, family, friends and agencies. However, agencies which are unhelpful, disrespectful and insensitive or rude to service users can hinder progress for this target group, especially if it occurs before they build up confidence and determination.
- Childcare and travel allowances allow wider participation in further education and training for low-income groups.

### Recommendations

These are the key recommendations arising from this study. Many of the issues are already the subject of intense policy development and action by the Government. However, with most of these programmes, it is too early to judge their effectiveness. Many of the recommendations fit in with those of the Jobs and Skills Policy Action Teams set up by the Social Exclusion Unit in 1999 and two New Deal Task Force reports (1999). Where possible, attention is drawn to the overlap.

#### Support for children

Lack of qualifications achieved at school is a barrier to a job for many using Bootstrap's services. Results from the interviews suggest this correlated with difficulties at school and separation, for example through divorce or death, from a parent in childhood.

- It would be useful to identify effective interventions for children in this situation.

#### Bringing people in

Building trust within the community is crucial, particularly with young, disaffected residents who can be cynical and suspicious of statutory training and employment services. This process can take time.

- A local centre, accessible to people living in a disadvantaged area and with attractive, 'low risk' practical activities and services helps to bring people in.

This has been noted in the Skills PAT (1999) report – their neighbourhood learning centre model.

- In addition, outreach, friendly, encouraging staff and training local unemployed people to do this work make a difference.

#### Access

In disadvantaged areas, there are many residents who need help to increase their incomes and employment prospects. The findings indicate that many were not accessing national welfare to work programmes or were dropping out of these schemes.

- This study suggests that a local advice centre, open to anyone who is unemployed, could make a big difference to the number progressing towards a job in that area.

The Jobs PAT (1999) recommends running a small number of pilots to test this out.

Many in these areas are churning in and out of low-paid, insecure jobs, and some are in work but want to improve their pay or get a better quality job.

- Extending the service to these groups would also help increase incomes in the area.
- Confidential, independent support for those wanting to move out of the informal economy could also be important in some areas.

Changes to the benefit system for those in casual work, recommended by the Jobs PAT (1999), would also help, as would their recommendation of extending Working Families Tax Credit to all working people. The April 2000 Budget suggests this may happen.

#### The services

The study suggests that the way a service is delivered should be a key feature of any programme for this target group.

- A caring, friendly approach, encouragement and respect all seem critical to creating trust, confidence and direction. They should be a key competence of any employment service delivery agent. Findings from the study suggest that developing these skills will be necessary, as well as continuing to change the culture of organisations delivering these services. These are serious skills and need rewarding appropriately.

Information was highly valued by those responding to the questionnaire.

- Personal advisors need up to date, appropriate resources (including on-line information) to ensure the information available is of a high standard.

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Those interviewed identified support, skills (including 'soft skills', basic skills support and IT) and long-term follow-up support when the programme is over as important. Support also improves retention on programmes.

- Staff need sufficient time to give this support.

The issue of sufficient time for personal advisors is also raised by the New Deal Task Force report on retention (1999b).

The needs of this target group are varied and change over time.

- Services should therefore be varied, integrated and flexible and emphasise close monitoring and pastoral support, ideally with a key worker/personal advisor. There should be a focus on entry-level provision at local level because this is the crucial first step for many of the target group. 'Soft skills', basic skills support and IT training are important, as well as careers advice and counselling. This should lead on to a network of more advanced provision (including work experience) leading to a job.

The value of entry-level and locally based provision for this group is emphasised in the Skills PAT (1999) report. The New Deal Task Force report on retention (1999b) and the Jobs PAT (1999) both recommend integrating 'soft skills' into programme design. The Jobs PAT (1999) recommends all labour market programmes have the personal advisor role built in. Simmonds *et al.* (2000) in evaluating the prototype Employment Zones (EZ) also emphasise the importance of the personal advisor, flexibility and a client-centred approach.

- These pathway services should include customised training for particular posts in the area, work experience (paid if possible) and strong links with employers with vacancies.

This fits in with the trend both in area-based and welfare to work programme design.

- Where there are several community-based schemes in an area and local employers are largely small and medium-sized enterprises, this matching and brokering role can be done centrally in partnership with others. In this way, there is one point of contact for employers and a wider spread of job opportunities for jobseekers.

- Long-term follow-up support after the programme's end is important. It allows people to return if things go wrong or they need further advice or support to move to a better job or further education and training.

Both the New Deal Task Force report on retention within the New Deal (1999b) and the Jobs PAT (1999) recommend trying this out on a pilot basis.

Interviewees who were most successful were at a point in their lives when they needed to change. A compulsory programme approach may therefore be very 'hit and miss' in its effect.

#### **What do men need?**

Men rated the Bootstrap services lower than women and found fewer elements of the service of value. This could in part reflect a gender difference in scoring. However, most of those unemployed after Bootstrap and at the time of the survey were men. The pattern of outcomes and comments suggests they want to move straight into a job and not upgrade skills unless it clearly links to a job.

- It would be useful to investigate further what best helps men to improve their job prospects and what provision they value. It could be that work experience offered first is more attractive, with training and support grafted on.

#### **Tackling racism**

Most of Bootstrap's clients are from black and ethnic minority communities. Both locally and nationally they have higher than average levels of qualification but also higher levels of unemployment.

- A formal system for accrediting overseas qualifications would speed up the process by which overseas students get work suited to their ability and skills. Positive action is also essential to start levelling the playing field. These and the other measures outlined in both the Skills and Jobs PAT reports (1999) and recently by the TUC (2000), urgently need implementing.

#### **Support with childcare**

Bootstrap offers childcare and dependants' care support on most of its programmes. But even childcare support for those on many other training and education programmes is patchy and can be an obstacle to higher skill levels and a better job.

- More childcare support for those improving their skills would allow more families, particularly those headed by lone parents, to escape from low income.

#### **Performance criteria**

At present, most funding regimes for employment support agencies focus largely on job outputs. This study suggests that people will move along a pathway to better work, given the opportunity. However, once in a low-paid job, it is harder to access affordable careers advice, support, training or further education that could lead to progression.

- Funding programmes need to have a better balance between the objective of getting a job as soon as possible and improving skills that will increase employability and lead to better-paid higher-quality work in the longer term.
- Improving retention and progression in the jobs market should also be rewarded. At present, there are few if any funding regimes to support this work.

Both these recommendations tie in with the recommendations of the New Deal Task Force (1999a) report on improving the employment prospects of low-income job seekers.

- If disadvantaged unemployed people are to be encouraged to take low-paid, insecure jobs, then there should be in-work financial support to improve skills.

Individual learning accounts will help but may be insufficient for those on very low incomes.

#### **Role of community-based employment organisations**

Many organisations like Bootstrap have a successful track record of working with disadvantaged unemployed people. They also have a local base and are trusted by and work closely with the communities in which they work. They are often part of strategic partnerships and networks which can link people to other opportunities.

- There is a strong argument for many of these neighbourhood-based employment and training/education schemes in disadvantaged areas to be run by such community and voluntary sector organisations.

This fits in with recommendations of both the Skills and Jobs PATs (1999) and New Deal Task Force report (1999b).

#### **Funding and support**

- For this sector to take on the role successfully, simpler, longer-term funding regimes and, in some cases, more capacity building support will be needed. Additional funding is essential if such centres are to keep abreast of IT developments both for Internet access to jobs, IT and basic skills training, and exploiting opportunities to learn on line.

Both the Skills and Jobs PAT reports (1999) note the need for improved support for this sector and a simplifying and better alignment of the funding rules and timetables. In addition, they note the need for improved community-based access to IT.

#### **Integration at local level**

- In deprived neighbourhoods, national welfare to work programmes should be more flexible in programme design and eligibility criteria, so that there can be more synergy with local area and community-based regeneration schemes.

In some areas, national welfare to work programmes are being pulled into area regeneration approaches and empowering communities – many Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) projects are good examples of this, but there is still some way to go.

#### **Applying the lessons**

Community-based training and employment organisations have a successful track record of improving the job prospects of disadvantaged unemployed people.

- The lessons learnt from this sector should be applied to new welfare to work programmes such as the 'ONE' Service, to ensure they meet the needs of the most disadvantaged claimants.

#### **Conclusion**

The findings of the study confirm the effectiveness of the Bootstrap approach in improving job prospects for those who are disadvantaged in the labour market, particularly those from black and ethnic minority communities. The results suggest not only that these changes are largely sustained over time, but also that there is job progression for many service users. The survey responses overall show a high level of satisfaction with the services.

The views of those interviewed for this study largely confirm the importance of the key features of Bootstrap's services gathered from existing sources. What emerges

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strongly from their feedback is that the way people are treated is as important in bringing about sustained change as the nature of the services themselves. A caring approach, encouragement and respect are all important in causing change. With the services themselves, support, skills development (particularly 'soft skills' and IT) and long-term follow-up support are also highly valued. While the numbers interviewed were small, for most there was a distinct pattern of increased confidence and direction, creating empowerment. This change was sustained and correlated with job and training progression or career change and development for most of this group. This finding has implications for the design of national welfare to work schemes such as the integrated Benefits Agency/ Employment Services 'ONE' Service to be introduced for all claimants of working age, as well as specific New Deal programmes. It also has significance for all regeneration programmes within disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Many existing community-based intermediaries are well-placed to take on the role of delivering this kind of empowering labour market service in these disadvantaged neighbourhoods but need longer-term financial support and simpler, better integrated funding streams.

Welfare to work covers many policy and programme areas. It is clear from this study that family circumstances and achievement at school as a child can have as much effect on job prospects as childcare, health and transport links. Linking up these services on a neighbourhood basis, as well as ensuring local residents are in the driving seat and reap the benefits, is the challenge. All aspects of the neighbourhood must improve, otherwise many of those with jobs will move out. Area-based regeneration and neighbourhood management programmes, linked closely to national welfare to work initiatives are providing the opportunity to make this holistic approach work and to learn the lessons.



## 1 Introduction

### Background to the study

Bootstrap Enterprises is a community-based voluntary organisation in Hackney, which works with unemployed people to improve their job prospects. It was set up in 1977 to work with those most disadvantaged in the labour market – the long-term unemployed, those facing discrimination and those with poor basic skills or special needs. Its activities have developed over the years, but its commitment to the empowerment of this target group has remained unshaken. In recent years, this work has taken on an area- and estate-based focus. It now works with over 1,000 unemployed people each year through a range of different programmes, which together form a pathway to employment. These range from employment advice, pre-vocational and customised training to work experience and job link.

This study sets out to analyse the Bootstrap model of intervention, assess the changes which it has brought about and look at the nature of the support which actually changes people's lives. While there is much information about different schemes for unemployed people, we know little about how or why they work (Campbell, 1998) and whether the changes are sustained.

The study took place between October and December 1999. It analyses the survey responses of 134 people who used Bootstrap's services between 1991 and 1999 and examines 20 case histories through in-depth interviews. The study also uses information from publications,

practitioners and academics and the author's experience of being part of setting up and running Bootstrap for 22 years.

At a time when unemployment levels are at their lowest for 20 years and the economy looks strong, it may seem unnecessary to be examining how a small-scale community-based project has helped unemployed people to improve their job prospects and what makes it work.

The rationale for this research is that for the last 22 years Bootstrap has worked with the most disadvantaged unemployed people. As unemployment falls, these are the groups that are often left behind, particularly in poor neighbourhoods. Identifying what seems to work for this group is therefore timely. These findings will be relevant not only to those working on regenerating disadvantaged neighbourhoods but also to policy makers and practitioners currently developing new national welfare to work programmes.

The next section briefly outlines the welfare to work and area regeneration context for Bootstrap's work. Section 3 describes the key features of the Bootstrap model and briefly describes its work and effectiveness over the last 22 years using existing sources of information. Section 4 describes the results and summarises the findings from the questionnaire analysis. Section 5 describes the results from the interview analysis and summarises the findings. The overall summary, recommendations and conclusion are at the front of this report.



## 2 Welfare to work/area regeneration context

### Introduction

There are two main UK policy and programme areas aimed at improving employment prospects for unemployed people. They are area or neighbourhood regeneration and national welfare to work approaches.

The following sections briefly outline five models of intervention to provide a context for Bootstrap's approach. No attempt has been made to compare the cost effectiveness of the approaches, partly because comparable figures are not available. Where they are available, the different claims are simply noted.

### The community-based model

Bootstrap is one of many community-based organisations which were set up from the late 1960s onwards to improve conditions in disadvantaged areas. These were concerned either with putting pressure on the authorities to improve services or to run much-needed local services themselves. Some were short-lived, disappearing when the 'battle' was over or the cash ran out. Others, like Bootstrap changed and grew over the years. They are characterised by being run by or working closely with the communities in which they work and by a commitment to the empowerment of the people with whom they work, so that the change is sustained.

By the mid-1980s, Bootstrap was one of an increasing number of community-based, smaller-scale employment and training organisations, developed to tackle unemployment either on an area basis or for particular groups – for example the homeless, ex-offenders and refugees. Bootstrap and others worked with the most disadvantaged unemployed people and survived by 'juggling with complex funding regimes and often inflexible benefit regulations' (Finn, 1999, page 8). One could also add to this list: juggling very short-term, insecure funding with elaborate and time-consuming application processes and cumbersome and varied administration and audit requirements. Often supported in the 1990s by the local regeneration or employment partnerships described below, many also use local authority, European, charitable, private sector, sales income and surpluses from trading to support their work. This allows for more local flexibility, innovation and responsiveness than has been possible under national welfare to work programmes.

Finn (1999, page 9) goes on to quote Turok and Webster (1998, page 324):

*Many offer a wider range of support and better integrated provision, including independent guidance and counselling, personal development and vocational training in flexible packages, customised training for specific vacancies, work experience paying the rate for the job and providing transferable skills, complementary childcare, intensive assistance with job seeking and progressive wage and training subsidies to private employees with some obligation to keep on recruits afterwards.*

Later in the same report Finn (1999, page 9) urges caution, quoting Meagre:

*While many of these initiatives appear to secure impressive job entry and progression there 'is little rigorous evaluation evidence on (their) performance and cost-effectiveness'. (Meagre, 1998, page 41)*

Part of the reason for this lack of evaluation could be the diversity of the projects themselves and their varied funding packages derived from several different funding streams. What little evaluation there is tends to be of the outcomes of particular programmes or funding streams and not broken down by the sector which delivers it.

For many years, European Objective 3 funds have been targeted at the most disadvantaged unemployed and favour integrated packages, which create a pathway to employment. For this reason, many community-based voluntary organisations, including Bootstrap, working with this target group, have used this fund.

A recent NCVO report highlights evidence from the period of ESF Objective 3 sector management up to 1997, which

*... routinely showed the voluntary sector having higher progression rates than other sectors, averaging 80%. The sector had lower unit costs than government programmes by 40% with projects successfully targeting disadvantaged groups. Over 60% of participants in Voluntary Sector projects were women. Black people were also well represented – successful projects targeted twice the*

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*local population rate for those from ethnic minorities.* (NCVO, 2000, page 5)

Earlier research by Bizley (1996) and Crighton (1998) draws similar conclusions about the effectiveness of this model of intervention with long-term unemployed and excluded groups. Their summary of what works mirrors many of the key features of Bootstrap's pathway services described in the next section.

### **Government welfare to work programmes**

In response to the high unemployment levels in the mid-1970s, the Labour Government developed Special Programmes – the Job Creation Scheme and Work Experience on Employers' Premises. As unemployment continued to rise, they were replaced throughout the 1980s by a series of programmes – Community Programme, Youth Training Scheme, Employment Training and a whole raft of other training and employment initiatives. These national schemes were not particularly effective at improving employment prospects and were seen by many as a 'revolving door' that only led back to the dole queue (Finn, 1999, page 7, quoting Department of Employment, 1990).

During the 1990s, the Government's Training for Work, Youth Training and other schemes took their place, providing a mix of training and/or work experience. Increasingly, providers were paid by outputs – people into jobs, which resulted in 'creaming' – selection by the providers of those most likely to move into a job (McGregor *et al.*, 1997, page 49). There was also a move from more expensive training and employment programmes to large-scale but cheaper compulsory job search programmes. Finn (1999, page 7) quotes an OECD report:

*... the aim being to improve the 'supply side' by activating the unemployed and getting them into whatever jobs were available as soon as possible, rather than putting them 'on hold' in larger scale schemes.* (OECD, 1998b, page 68)

Another significant change occurred in 1996, with the introduction of the Jobseeker's Allowance, which replaced the old unemployment benefit and created a more structured contract between jobseeker and employment services, geared to getting people into jobs.

Over the years, these schemes were characterised by being administered either by a national agency such as the Manpower Services Commission and Employment Services or by Training and Enterprise Councils. The schemes were delivered by a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations. The programmes and eligibility criteria were fixed, and there was little room for local variation to fit local needs.

In her review of government welfare to work schemes in operation in 1997, Gardiner (1997, page 28) identifies 42 schemes. She lists eight education/training schemes, 13 job search assistance, three incentives to employers, one public job creation, four out-of-work benefits, seven in-work benefits, one assistance with job-related costs and five transitional financial assistance welfare to work schemes in all.

Gardiner found that between 2 per cent and 28 per cent of participants found jobs as a direct result of these welfare to work schemes. Across all 42 schemes, the average unit costs per participant varied from £3 to over £3,000 depending on the duration and level of resources used. The gross costs generally were between £1,000 and £10,000 for each additional person into a job – these were based on published sources available for only nine of the 42 schemes. The Training for Work scheme unit cost rose to £40,000 plus.

### **Local area-based employment initiatives**

Since the late 1960s, there have been many local area-based employment initiatives aimed at promoting investment, supporting enterprise and providing services for the disadvantaged jobless (Todd, 1986, page 83).

During the 1990s, Conservative and Labour Governments introduced local area-based funding programmes – City Challenge, Task Force, the Single Regeneration Budget and, more recently, New Deal for Communities. Government recognised that disadvantage was frequently concentrated in particular geographical areas – often centred on run-down public housing estates. It could also see from previous programmes that it was not sufficient to throw money at the problems. Trickle down did not work. Joined-up thinking and a partnership approach were essential in order to even touch the surface. These were deep-rooted issues created through the complex interaction of local, regional, national and global forces. Finally, but most importantly (although this was rarely achieved), it needed to be driven by local residents.

While all but the Task Force programmes had a broad multi-issue remit, reducing unemployment was a key focus for most of them. Many local employment initiatives grew out of these funding regimes involving local partnerships which often include the main local welfare to work players – Training and Enterprise Councils and Employment Services, as well as local colleges and employers. Regional Development Agencies now also play a part. The local authorities or regeneration agencies are often in the lead with community-based voluntary organisations ‘at the table’ but not always with a very strong voice. These initiatives use a wide variety of matched funding. Delivery is by contractors from any of these sectors.

Many of these local schemes take an integrated approach, looking at raising employability, improving access to employment and creating jobs (Campbell *et al.*, 1998). Critically, however, the City Challenge and SRB programmes, like the government welfare to work programmes, often have a strong emphasis on getting people straight into jobs rather than taking a ‘pathway’ approach. This can lead to ‘creaming’.

Sanderson *et al.* (1999, page 11) have evaluated seven such schemes – part-SRB funded. Their analysis is based on the results of a survey of 552 scheme participants: 40 per cent were in work at the time of the survey but 53 per cent were either in work or had worked since their participation in a scheme. Of this group, 54 per cent thought the scheme had been crucial or very helpful, suggesting that effectively the schemes played a key role in obtaining jobs for between a fifth and a quarter of their clients. Further analysis shows they had been of least value to the most disadvantaged unemployed. There are no figures available on the cost effectiveness of these schemes.

The New Deal for Communities introduced in 1999 is a new, area-based initiative designed to tackle social exclusion in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. An integrated, long-term approach is central and tackling unemployment is a key theme, along with others such as ill health, high crime and poor housing. Again, local partnerships, including the residents and local community and voluntary organisations as well as local employers, have a key role in their development and implementation. The 17 Pathfinder partnerships are moving ahead with their plans but it is too early to look at outcomes and costs at this stage.

## Intermediate Labour Market schemes

An interesting hybrid of the three approaches are ILM schemes. Developed by the Wise Group in 1983, these schemes provide waged temporary work of community benefit for the long-term unemployed with support to move into the mainstream labour market. The Wise Group works largely in housing and environmental improvements but, since then, between 80 and 100 groups have established ILM projects. They deliver a wide variety of job types and services from childcare and recycling to town centre guides. The Wise Group now provides about 600 places over the UK, and the other schemes provide 5,300 places between them (Marshall and Macfarlane, 2000).

Success crucially requires sufficient funding streams, which can be combined to subsidise the temporary workers and overhead costs. These funds come from national and local welfare to work streams as well as Europe, contract income and trusts. This works well if delivery is on a large scale. If delivery is by smaller community groups, then it helps if this funding ‘packaging’ is done centrally. This latter approach needs a robust community infrastructure to deliver the schemes on the ground.

There is strong interest nationally in this approach for two reasons. One is that there are very high job outputs from most of the schemes – usually 62–69 per cent, but up to 80 per cent into jobs for the Birmingham ILM (Marshall, 1998). Research on Glasgow Works ILM also shows that these outcomes last – ILM participants in this scheme were twice as likely to be in permanent work as in standard entry level jobs and twice as likely to still be in work six months later (Cambridge Policy Consultants, 1998).

The other source of interest is the community benefit.

*The scale of the Wise group’s operation allows it to work simultaneously on the problems of neighbourhoods and the wider long-term unemployed community.* (McGregor *et al.*, 1997, page 64)

Quantitative measurement of these community benefits is difficult. However, Cambridge Policy Consultants (CPC) in 1997, using figures from McGregor *et al.* (1997), estimated that Heatwise’s insulation activity generated some £840,000 annual energy cost savings amongst 3,257 client households in 1996, as well as the take up of additional energy, creating greater comfort levels.

Inevitably, these schemes are more expensive to run than many others because they include all the wages as well as recruitment, training and support costs. In addition, very few schemes have been evaluated in this way, so there are few comparable figures available.

The raw figure from the Wise programme in 1996 is £14,100 per 'job' per year (McGregor *et al.*, 1997, page 61). Glasgow Works has attempted to measure the overall cost per net additional job, taking into account deadweight, substitution and job creation. This showed Glasgow Works to be cheaper than the government Training for Work scheme (25 per cent into jobs), for a similar group of long-term unemployed. Glasgow Works came in at between £25,126 and £32,149 net cost per net job, compared with £43,477 net cost per net job for Training for Work (CPC, 1996).

### **New welfare to work initiatives**

Since the Labour Government came to office in 1997, there has been a major overhaul of government welfare to work schemes. Getting people into work and making work pay are the priorities. Programmes range from several New Deal training and employment programmes, with personal advisors for different groups, to Employment Zones (EZs). This is one of many Zones which the Government has introduced to focus on different ways of delivering local services in disadvantaged areas. The EZs for over-25s have access to additional resources and more flexibility about what and how they deliver. The key feature is the personal job account, which uses benefit and other programme funds to buy the most appropriate support for the unemployed person. The Prototype Employment Zones have recently been evaluated, and the main findings of relevance to this study have been the importance of the personal advisor, flexibility and a client-centred approach (Simmonds *et al.*, 2000). The new EZ programme started in 15 areas in April 2000 and operates in a different way within this framework. The element of compulsion on many of these schemes is new.

Changes have been made to the tax and benefit system to make work pay for people on low wages who have children, and a minimum wage has been introduced. There are to be huge reforms to the way adult basic skills, training and post-school education are delivered. These changes are being accompanied by organisational and cultural reform in the organisations until now responsible for much welfare to work implementation.

The need for local sensitivity and flexibility is recognised at policy level, and local partnerships now have a key role in implementing these national programmes. Strong links with employers are seen as crucial to success. The potential for supporting organisations to act as intermediaries between the disadvantaged unemployed and employers is also being explored. This could become an important part of the next generation of labour market policies (New Deal Task Force September 1999a). Employer-led intermediaries are already taking an increasing role, often in response to skills shortages.

The latest change is the introduction on a pilot basis of a 'one-stop shop' for claimants to receive advice about benefits and work. Run by the Benefits Agency and Employment Service, the 'ONE' Service is the starting point for all people claiming benefits in these areas. In 2001, the Benefits Agency and Employment Service will merge and this 'ONE' Service will roll out nationwide.

It is far too early to judge the effectiveness of these schemes and to get a measure of how far the vision is becoming a reality. The initial findings on the New Deal for under-25s by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (1999) are positive.

### **Summary**

- 1 The two main UK programme areas targeted at improving the job prospects for unemployed people are the government's welfare to work and area regeneration schemes. Within these two areas, five models of intervention are identified, each still largely defined by its original objective. There is insufficient comparable information on the relative cost effectiveness of these different approaches.
- 2 Since the 1990s, the area regeneration approach has tended to be varied and flexible, using a wide variety of matching funds and usually open to most unemployed people in an area. In contrast, the national welfare to work model has tended to be a single funding stream delivering an inflexible programme with tight eligibility criteria for claimant participants or even for those on Jobseeker's Allowance only.
- 3 Over the years, these have been delivered in parallel rather than in a 'joined-up' way. Both have emphasised getting people straight into jobs rather than taking the 'pathway' approach. This can result in the most disadvantaged unemployed being excluded from these programmes or forced to take low-paid,

insecure jobs. Ensuring the sustainability of these job outcomes has not been a priority.

- 4 In recent years, local area partnerships have begun to take a key role in the design and delivery of area-based employment programmes and, increasingly, a role in the delivery of the welfare to work programmes.
- 5 Because of tight eligibility criteria and inflexible national welfare to work programme design, it is still difficult to pull these together with area funding streams and programmes to create small-scale community-based schemes targeted at the most disadvantaged unemployed in a local area.
- 6 Intermediate Labour Market projects are a good example of how this can be done, especially if there is a strategic partnership which can pull the funds together for smaller community groups doing the delivery.
- 7 Many community-based organisations like Bootstrap began in the late 1960s and 1970s in poor neighbourhoods. They focus on working with the most disadvantaged unemployed and have a strong commitment to empowering the people with whom they work. They are often run by or work closely with the communities in which they work, and the evidence that is available suggests they are very effective at improving employment prospects. They are flexible, innovative, locally responsive and trusted by those who use their services.
- 8 Policy makers rightly recognise that in order to succeed, economic regeneration at a neighbourhood level needs these key features in place. However, the

sector which excels in these areas has little funding security, struggles with the weighty bureaucracy attached to the varied funding streams it uses, and has little infrastructure support to strengthen capacity. This lack of capacity can make partnership working, and representation at policy level locally and nationally, difficult.

- 9 Despite all the obstacles, the community-based sector has an excellent reputation for improving the job prospects of the most disadvantaged unemployed. As unemployment falls, this is the group often left behind, particularly in poor neighbourhoods where there are few jobs. The findings in this section suggest that this is precisely the group of people with which the local area-based and welfare to work approaches have had least success.

Both policy makers and practitioners in these two fields should therefore look closely at what it is that makes the work of this community-based sector effective. Key features of the model could then be incorporated into their programmes. This will be crucial with new 'ONE' Service, in order to ensure that claimants wanting employment but facing many barriers to work can be helped most effectively. This sector could also have a vital role to play in drawing the most disadvantaged people out of economic exclusion in many low-income neighbourhoods.

The next three sections examine the key features of Bootstrap Enterprises from both the agency and service user perspective.



### 3 The Bootstrap approach

#### Introduction

This section sets out to look at Bootstrap's activities between 1977 and March 1999, using the author's experience and published sources. The next two sections give more detail on the effectiveness, sustainability of outcomes and key features of the services from the perspective of service users.

#### Background to Bootstrap Enterprises

Bootstrap Enterprises started in 1977, close to the Arsenal Stadium in North London. This area, sitting on the borders of Hackney and Islington, has some of the highest levels of poverty and deprivation in the country. Hackney was ranked fourth and Islington tenth in terms of overall disadvantage out of the 357 areas listed in the DETR Index of Local Deprivation in 1998. In 1997 and 1998, unemployment levels were over three times the national average. On the estates on which Bootstrap works, the unemployment rates are even higher (PPCR Associates, 1998, page 8). For some groups, for example young men and black and ethnic minority groups, the gap is even more glaring.

Bootstrap is a community-based voluntary organisation, which works with unemployed people to improve their job prospects. The project grew out of the community development work of the two founders in the area, in housing, play, legal services and childcare. By the mid-1970s, the effects of global economic change were hitting the streets, and unemployment had become a major problem. Bootstrap was set up to use the same principles of community action, co-operation and empowerment to tackle it.

The target group was and still is disadvantaged, unemployed residents – the long-term unemployed, lone parents, disaffected young people, those lacking basic skills/qualifications or with special needs and those facing discrimination.

The first model was a locally based one-stop shop for unemployed people both to get help into jobs and to create jobs. This ran in 1978 for a year as a pilot, on a shoestring in a derelict dairy – a local authority short-life property awaiting demolition. Here there were training workshops in toy making, knitting and bike repair, run by local entrepreneurs who needed workspace. There was a crèche

and advice on further training, education and job search. The outcomes were encouraging both for people trained and into jobs and for seed-bed business creation. In addition, the local centre was attracting many long-term unemployed residents who faced labour market disadvantage and who were not accessing statutory services.

Inspired by this early success and having identified the shortage of jobs (the 'demand side'), as the main problem, the project focused largely on local job creation between 1980 and 1988. The Mondragon worker co-operatives in Spain and the success of the tenant co-operatives locally led Bootstrap to adopt the worker co-operative business model. Bootstrap moved to permanent workspace in Hackney and developed a package of support for new worker co-operatives. This included loans, workspace, advice and training. The businesses ranged from dog grooming and computer services to niche markets created by the new 'gentrifiers': furniture restoration, architectural metalwork and building co-operatives. Some grew out of existing groups with business ideas. Bootstrap set up others in a 'top-down' way, researching gaps in the market and recruiting unemployed people to run the businesses.

Between 1981 and 1985, Bootstrap created a total of 93 co-operatively run jobs and 25 workspace units with a team of between two and five staff. In 1984, Bootstrap was cited by Charles Handy as one of the emerging new schools for enterprise in his book *The Future of Work*. The cost per job created ranged from £2,000 to £3,500. An external evaluation by Barry Knight (Keunstler, 1985) concluded that the project was cost effective. The funding came largely from the local authority, central government, trusts and rental income. The success of this approach led to the establishment of two other Bootstraps, one in Swindon and one in Blackburn. These developments are well documented both in the Bootstrap Annual Reports and *Bootstrap – Ten Years of Enterprise Initiatives* by Martin McEnery (1989).

What was clear was that setting up new businesses was risky, no matter how well supported. Wage levels in the early years of a new business were of necessity low, putting more pressure on already low-income households. The jobs created were few, relative to the scale of unemployment. However, the training and work experience proved extremely useful in boosting employability. People were leaving their co-operatives and getting well-paid, secure jobs. Why not build on this?

Between 1989 and 1993, the model shifted. A programme of work was begun in partnership with residents and local regeneration agencies, targeting unemployed residents on several housing estates undergoing refurbishment. Here, unemployment remained higher than the borough average, even in times of economic prosperity. It was clear that investing in bricks and mortar alone would not transform these run-down estates. Residents had to be involved and economic and social needs had to be addressed. Bootstrap developed 'pathway to employment' services ranging from outreach and advice on the estates, to pre-vocational training, customised and vocational training, work experience and job links. These were designed to improve employability and link residents with the job vacancies which existed locally.

In addition, Bootstrap set up businesses to create new jobs for local unemployed residents and to provide useful local services. These third sector enterprises included a café, several recycling businesses and the expansion of the original managed workspace project, creating about 14 full-time equivalent jobs and work experience opportunities for over 65 unemployed people each year. They are described in detail in the Bootstrap annual reviews from 1993 to 1998.

Most of these community enterprises are now independent. The pathway work has expanded and diversified with new partnership projects increasing links with both unemployed residents and employers with jobs. Bootstrap has also developed similar work in other boroughs. In recent years, Bootstrap has developed capacity building work within these estate communities. This includes training community entrepreneurs, community management training and credit union development. It has also expanded the managed workspace, creating a trading surplus which supports the training and advice work.

### **Key features of Bootstrap's 'pathway' service**

The 'pathway' approach to improving job prospects recognises that moving straight into a job for many disadvantaged unemployed people is not possible because of the need to build confidence, skills and experience and overcome other barriers such as housing, childcare, health or family problems first. People can use one or more of the pathway services which are appropriate to their needs. For Bootstrap, the key features of the service are:

- work with the most disadvantaged – don't turn anyone away/open door to particular community/area
- outreach – to contact the most disadvantaged and isolated unemployed residents
- local, varied and flexible services organised close to where people live, especially for 'first step' services
- accessible – fitting services around people's needs and making them warm, friendly and easy to approach (tea and biscuits/toys for children)
- 'low risk', practical services to encourage those who lack confidence to take part
- close support with detailed monitoring, to ensure progress and increase retention
- a client-centred approach – ideally one person as the key link
- holistic – support for the whole person including any issue which presents a barrier to employment such as housing, debt, health, benefits etc.; referral for specialist support where appropriate
- 'soft skills' (managing self and others), basic skills support and accredited IT are a part of most training courses
- problems handled in a supportive, positive not punitive way
- emphasis in the service on mutual support, empowerment, personal responsibility and respect
- childcare and travel expenses where appropriate for those using the services
- long-term follow-up support: most ex-students contacted quarterly for three years after leaving and can return at any time for help; advice service users can return at any time
- work in partnership with other agencies and employers – identifying local labour market opportunities and filling the gaps, linking people into wider networks.

### **Current activities**

Since 1993, much of Bootstrap's work has focused on concentrating the pathway services on pockets of high poverty, in particular, Hackney Council's five Comprehensive Initiative Estates, which are undergoing substantial regeneration. The objective is to improve employability, build capacity and link people with jobs. This work is funded by the local authority, central government, the European Social Fund, trusts, sales income and surpluses from trading activities. Bootstrap directly employs between 15 and 20 people and works with just over 1,000 unemployed people each year.

Residents can tap into the pathway services as appropriate. The first level, the outreach and employment and training advice service, was based at the time of this study (1999) on five estates in Hackney. The outreach includes door knocking, leafleting and visits to local community and youth groups. The advice service is offered at the estate bases on a drop-in basis, for between one and four days a week. The service offers advice and information about careers, job and training opportunities and provides resources for job search such as computers, fax, telephones, stamps and photocopier. The Advisors help with CVs, application forms, interview preparation and benefit information, supporting people for as long as is needed. This may be for one visit, or regular visits spread over a year or two. Some with low-paid jobs return for help to get better-quality work or further training/education to help career development. They are free to return whenever they need to. Advisors take a holistic approach to people and, if necessary, refer people on for specialist support. In the last four years, Bootstrap has trained local unemployed people to do this advice work. The centres are also part of a computer network, which links employers with vacancies to local unemployed people.

Over the nine-year period covered by this study questionnaire sample (1991–99), Bootstrap ran several different pre-vocational courses, for between 40 and 80 people each year. Each has its own target group – for example youth, women returners, those with poor basic skills or those wanting to set up or run a business or project, but all have a central core and offer a level-1 IT qualification. The central core is transferable ‘soft skills’. This includes job search and study skills, personal management skills such as time management, stress management and assertiveness. It also covers managing others: teamwork, positive criticism and negotiation as well as basic skills support. The courses run for three months, three days a week, in school hours. Childcare and travel costs are covered. There is close support and monitoring of progress so that any problems are identified and tackled quickly. This has dramatically improved retention rates. In 1995, the drop-out rate from courses fell to between 5 and 10 per cent from levels of 20–25 per cent previously. There is long-term, follow-up support centred round quarterly reunions. Some have used this follow-up service periodically over nine years – for references, to have an application or CV checked or for help with finding appropriate training, further education or a better-quality job.

Bootstrap has made links with local employers with vacancies and developed customised training courses (including work experience) for estate residents interested in this work. These range from bus and coach driving, construction and receptionist skills to health and social care, literacy tutor and employment advice skills. Many have been run with partner agencies and include ‘soft skills’ and IT. In addition, Bootstrap has delivered short courses to provide useful skills such as driving licence, computer training or mentoring training and longer courses for those with special needs, such as those with sickle cell disorder. Some of these have been run on the estates.

The last two steps of the pathway are for those who are most job ready. The Work Experience project has made good links with over 150 employers and provides up to three months of work experience for between 20 and 30 people a year.

For two years, the Job Link project linked job-ready residents with employers with vacancies, acting as an intermediary between the unemployed and employers. While this was successful and links were made with many employers including the public sector, it made sense to have one point of contact in the borough for all employers and all referral agencies, so that better matches and more choices could be offered. The borough set up such a networked service in 1999.

Those using these services can go back at any time for further support or to use job-search resources.

## Outcomes and costs

### Profile of the users

In most years, similar numbers of men and women use the Hackney services overall but with variation between services. Between 70 and 90 per cent are black or from ethnic minorities and 30–40 per cent are under 25 years old. For services where the figures are available, 60–70 per cent have no or a basic qualification (NVQ level 1 or under five GCSEs grade A–C), and between 10 and 15 per cent are disabled or have long-term sickness. Between 50 and 70 per cent are unemployed for over one year. For services where figures are available, between 35 and 55 per cent of the women are lone parents. Most are residents living in public housing.

### Estate advice service

In recent years, about 650 residents have used this service in Hackney each year, and between 45 and 53 per cent

have moved into jobs or further education or training. The cost per positive outcome in 1998 was £425 per person.

#### **Pre-vocational training**

The outcomes vary between the different courses but over the last three years on average between 63 per cent and 85 per cent have gone on to jobs, self-employment and further education, training or work experience – between 25 per cent and 40 per cent into jobs or self-employment. The cost including childcare was £2,606 per place in 1998.

#### **Customised training**

The outcomes for these are higher, with between 50 per cent and 75 per cent getting jobs after the training. Training is offered to between 150 and 200 residents each year. The cost varies: in 1998, it ranged from £448 to £4,078 (for a 6-month course with childcare) per person.

#### **Work experience**

Here the success into jobs is usually between 55 per cent and 63 per cent. The cost in 1998 was about £2,000 per place (this includes childcare and travel expenses).

### **The way Bootstrap works**

#### **Organisational values**

The way an organisation works – its values and culture as well as size and organisational capacity all have a bearing on the quality of the service it offers. In his book *Bootstrap, Ten Years of Enterprise Initiatives*, McEnery starts his section on ‘Style of Work’ with the following quotation from *In Search of Excellence* by Peters and Waterman:

*So much ... in performance has to do with people being motivated by compelling simple values.*

In 1993, the staff group of about 12 were asked to list their shared values. The facilitator noted a strong degree of consensus around the key values listed below:

- wanting to work with people at the bottom of the pile
- recognising that people are important
- respecting, not patronising, the people we work with
- believing in the potential for empowering people
- really caring about what happens.

#### **Staffing**

Staff with these values (and appropriate technical skills) are recruited, with the organisational culture reinforcing this approach. Increasingly, Bootstrap is successfully

training and recruiting local unemployed people to deliver services – training, employment advice and mentoring. Towards the end of 1998/99, four of the core staff team of 18 were ex-clients, eight were previously unemployed, 14 lived locally and 12 were black or from ethnic minorities.

#### **Style of working**

McEnery (1989, page 35) picks out three particular features of Bootstrap’s style of working which have directly contributed to the quality of the services delivered:

##### **1 The way the staff work together and their relative autonomy**

Bootstrap is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. It has a Board of Directors/Trustees with user representation. Over the years, it has had several trading subsidiaries. However, as McEnery notes in 1989:

*... the staff take all the day to day decisions and operate in many ways as if it were a co-operative.*

Since this time, the team has grown – sometimes up to 30 staff and the management structure has had to become more formalised. Nevertheless, it still allows the staff to respond quickly and effectively to the needs of the groups they work with.

##### **2 An inclination to experiment, learn the lessons and change and develop the services**

Bootstrap’s history of change and development over the last 22 years bears this out. It has survived and grown in a fast-changing economic and political environment. As McEnery (1989, page 35) notes:

*Starting with clear objectives but without a rigid ideological framework, the development of the project has been a continual series of cycles: start with a proposal, try it out, monitor and evaluate, re-design and try again.*

##### **3 Pragmatic risk-taking**

Over the 22 years, this too has been a key feature of Bootstrap’s management: from the early days of backing new small businesses, and then on to the development of innovative, untested projects and growing each year despite almost no funding security. As McEnery (1989, page 36) observes:

*... but the risks are rooted in clear objectives and taken in a managed and creative way.*

The following section of the 1996 Bootstrap Annual Report sums up the style:

*... staff and volunteers involved in all these projects. Their commitment and strong teamwork create an environment where we can take risks and be innovative and we hope this shows in our work.*

### Summary

- Bootstrap has been working to improve the job prospects of disadvantaged unemployed people since 1977. It now works with over 1,000 people each year. Most of these face many potential barriers to employment.
  - The project grew out of area-based community development work and used the same principles of co-operation and empowerment to tackle unemployment. In the last eight years Bootstrap has worked on housing estates undergoing regeneration.
  - The actual services have ranged from a one-stop-shop model, through worker co-operative development and running third-sector enterprises, to capacity building within communities and developing a range of services which create a pathway to employment for unemployed residents.
  - The pathway services range from outreach and advice through pre-vocational training to customised training, work experience and links with employers with vacancies.
- The key features of the pathway service link closely to Bootstrap's culture, values and objectives. For this target group they are:
    - outreach and accessible neighbourhood bases/ 'open door'
    - varied, entry level, practical and 'low risk' services for the least confident
    - a client-centred approach
    - an emphasis on 'soft skills'
    - providing childcare support
    - staff who treat people in ways which build trust and empowerment
    - tackling barriers in a holistic way with referral to specialists if needed
    - pastoral care/support and close sensitive monitoring
    - long-term follow-up support for all service users
    - working in partnership with others and linking people into wider networks.
  - The published outcomes are good, with higher job outcomes for programmes targeted at the most job ready. These compare well with ILM initiative outcomes. The customised training is especially effective at getting local people into local jobs.
  - The next two sections look at the key features of the service in Hackney from the perspective of a group of Bootstrap's service users who have used the services in the last nine years. They also reveal more information on outcomes, progression and sustainability of outcomes over time.



## 4 What Bootstrap service users say – 134 written responses

### The questionnaire

The main purpose of the short postal questionnaire was to ask a random group of Bootstrap's Hackney clients if they were willing to be interviewed in depth for this study. However, it was also designed to expand on the information described in the previous section. It covered:

- whether Bootstrap made a difference and if so how useful it was
- if they found it useful, which of six options they found helped
- any other comments they had on the service
- what they did after using Bootstrap's services
- what they were doing now.

The questionnaire was sent out to a random group of 350 Bootstrap clients who had used any of the estate-based employment advice, the training or the work experience services between 1991 and 1999. This sample was selected by taking every sixth file from Bootstrap's 2,215 available client records. Apart from some of the records on two estates, the outcomes if any, were not noted in these files. Client files were skipped if addresses were in demolished blocks or names and addresses were incomplete. With the advice service, an initial attempt was made to avoid selecting those who had only used the service briefly, once, and those who were still using the service for the first time, but this proved impractical.

All those (312) who had not returned completed forms by the deadline were contacted on the telephone, and a second or even third questionnaire sent where previous copies had not arrived or had been mislaid.

Of 135 completed questionnaires that were returned, 134 were analysed (one arrived too late for inclusion). Fifty were 'returned to sender' by the Post Office.

### The responders

The percentage in the original sample of 350 is noted in italics. Of those responding:

- 90 per cent were black or from ethnic minority communities (*88 per cent*)
- 67 per cent were women (*58 per cent*)
- 19 per cent were under 25 years old (*35 per cent*)

- 77 per cent were 26–49 (*61 per cent*), 4 per cent were over 50 years old (*4 per cent*)
- 34 per cent were lone parents (*38 per cent – information only available for just under half*)
- 4 per cent were disabled/long-term sick (*11 per cent – information only available for just under one third*)
- 59 per cent were unemployed for over a year (*53 per cent*) and 23 per cent for over three years (*27 per cent*)
- 24 per cent used the service between 1991 and 1995 (*33 per cent*), 25 per cent in 1996 and 1997 (*28 per cent*) and 51 per cent in 1998 and 1999 (*39 per cent*)
- 88 (*66 per cent*) of the responders were willing to be interviewed for the study.

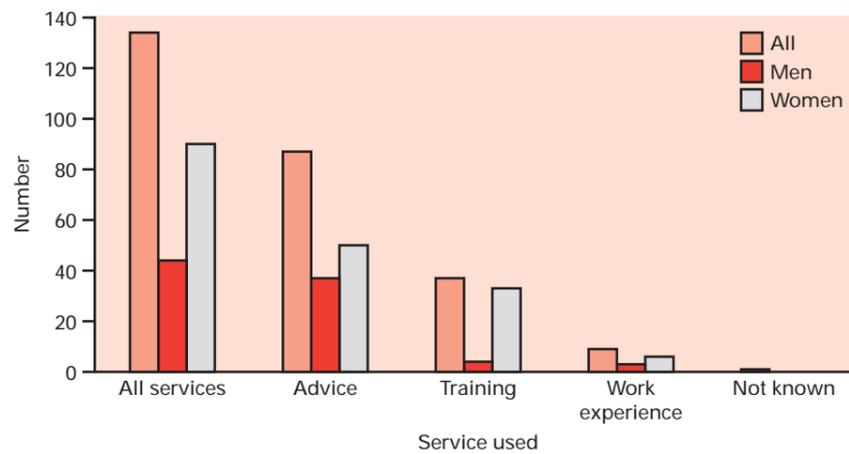
From published Bootstrap records, an estimated 60–70 per cent would have no or only basic-level qualification – NVQ level 1 equivalent – when they first came to Bootstrap.

The questionnaire sample was drawn from three main programmes. These were the estate-based employment advice service, which offers support, information and resources for jobseekers on a drop-in basis, the pre-vocational and some customised training courses (with a work experience element) and the work experience programme. These are described in more detail in the previous section of this report.

Sixty-five per cent of all responders used the advice service (*73 per cent*); 28 per cent of responders used the training (*23 per cent*) and 7 per cent the work experience (*4 per cent*) services. Of the men responding, 84 per cent used the advice services (see Figure 1).

Comparing the responders with the original sample of 350, disproportionately more women, 26–49 year olds, those using the service more recently and those using training and work experience services responded. However, overall the match is reasonable, and an effort was made to select a sub-sample for the in-depth interviews (described in the next section), which better met the profile of the original sample.

The author had met 35 (10 per cent) of the original sample and, with 13 of these, she had some knowledge of their employment history at the time of selection. All 35 responded to the questionnaire, and 30 of this group agreed to be interviewed (over a third of all those



**Figure 1** Number of people using the three services

responding who agreed to be interviewed). This contact was largely made through the training programme and might explain why this group was over-represented in the sample responding to the survey.

Some had used more than one Bootstrap service. It was not possible to make an accurate assessment of this from Bootstrap's records. On the basis of the interview sample, it is possible that up to 30 per cent used more than one service.

In addition, it is likely that responders got help from elsewhere, either during or after using Bootstrap's services. This was not covered in the questionnaire.

### Results – feedback on the services

#### Level of satisfaction

Responders were asked if they found that the service made a difference. Those responding were asked to rate

the value on a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 being no help to 5 being extremely useful.

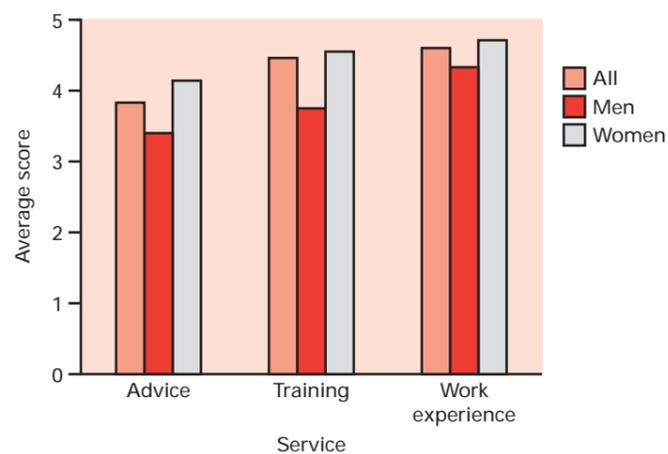
#### Satisfaction scores for the three different services

Figure 2 shows the levels of satisfaction (0 scoring low and 5 scoring high) reported by responders for the different services they used – the advice, training and work experience.

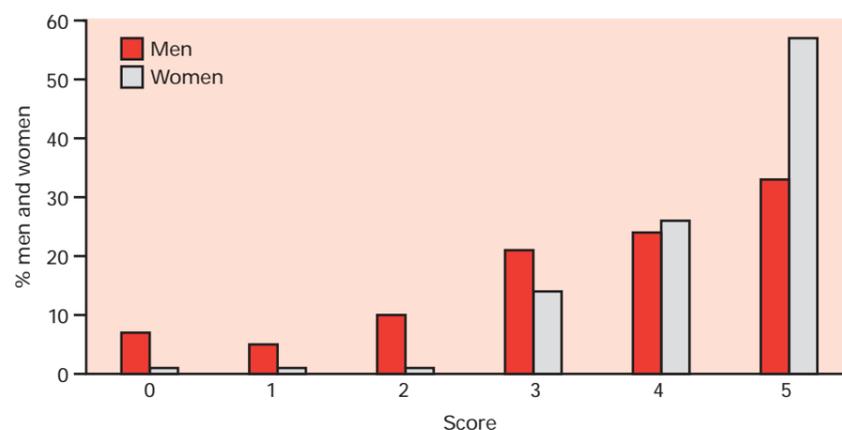
Those who used the work experience had the highest levels of satisfaction, with training a close second. Those using the advice service were the least satisfied. While the number using the work experience is small – six women and three men – it may be that this response indicates that this service is more valuable than has been thought.

#### Men and women

The average satisfaction score for all responders and all services was 4.14. The average rating given by women was 4.5 and the average for men was 3.8 (see Figure 3).



**Figure 2** Responders' satisfaction with the three services (scoring 0 low and 5 high)



**Figure 3 Distribution of satisfaction scores for all services, for men and women (scoring 0 low and 5 high)**

A much higher proportion of women than men were highly satisfied with the service they had used. Men had a flatter distribution of scores, being more critical of the services they used. This may be because men strongly prefer work experience but few got it.

**Those rating the service two or below**

Thirteen (10 per cent) of the 134 responders scored the service at two or below. Follow-up calls were made to seven of the eight in this group who had agreed on their questionnaire to be interviewed. The purpose was to check whether the low score related to a very minimal use of the service or substantial dissatisfaction. Two had filled in a low score by mistake and one was not available to discuss his questionnaire. Four had had problems. One had found the advice service reasonably useful but thought the computers were too antiquated and the centre should be open more hours. Another who had a job but wanted to change to something better used the same advice centre once and was unable to get his CV typed out for him while he waited. When he returned the following week, the centre was closed for a holiday. Since then, no one had been in touch. A third, again using the advice service, felt he had to do everything for himself – that the staff only helped if you asked them. He also wanted more links with employers. The fourth had attended a training course eight years previously. She also used the advice service more recently but felt neither had been that useful because she was now unemployed again. When she last used the advice service, nobody had got back to her.

Some of these problems reflect a breakdown of the intended model, particularly the close support and monitoring element.

**What helped**

Responders were asked for their views on the usefulness

of the service they had used in relation to six main aspects of Bootstrap’s services: Encouragement, Contacts, Support, Confidence, Information and Skills. An ‘Other’ category was included so that responders could add to the list.

**Men and women**

On average responders found more than half of the six aspects of the service had helped (3.5). Men found fewer aspects helpful, averaging 3.16. Women valued more aspects, averaging 3.66.

The percentage of responders selecting each of the six aspects of Bootstrap services are shown in Figure 4.

The three aspects of Bootstrap’s services found most useful by responders were ‘Information’, ‘Encouragement’ and ‘Support’. Just over half found ‘Skills’ and ‘Confidence’ valuable.

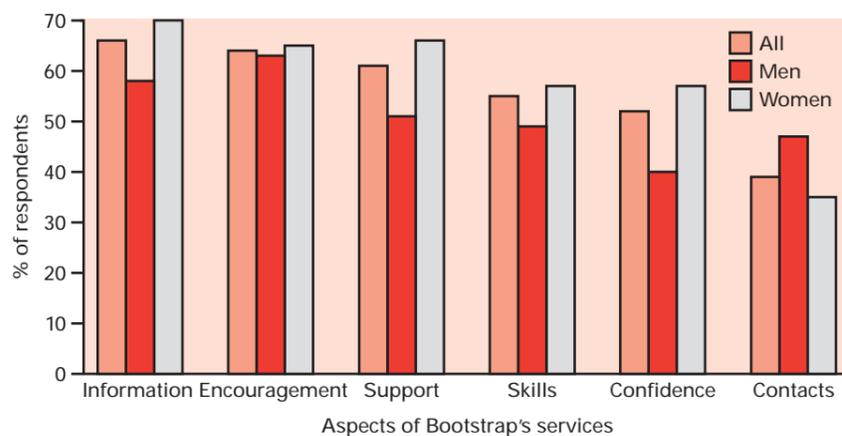
Men valued ‘Contacts’ more than women did and women found ‘Confidence’ more useful than men did.

**Over-25s and under-25s**

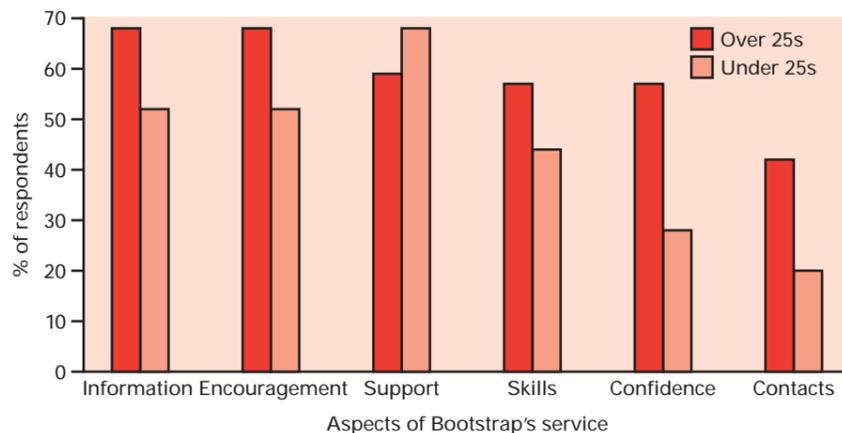
These results need careful interpretation, since there were only 25 under-25s in the sample responding. Nevertheless, what stands out is that under-25s found all aspects of Bootstrap’s service except support less useful than over-25s (see Figure 5). This fits in with their lower average satisfaction with Bootstrap’s services overall – their average rating was 3.8 compared with the overall average of 4.14 (scoring 0 low and 5 high).

**Additional comments**

This question invited responders to add any comments on the Bootstrap service. Twenty-one responders made further comments.



**Figure 4 Proportion of respondents who found each of the six aspects of Bootstrap's services useful**



**Figure 5 Proportion of over-25s and under-25s who found each of the six aspects of Bootstrap's services useful**

One was mildly hostile about the survey: 'people want jobs not questionnaires from the London School of Economics'. Most were extremely positive and expanded on the previous answers, giving detailed feedback on the service. They ranged from comments on the convenience of the facilities, after-care and excellent support to its record on equal opportunities '... first class careers guidance and support. Also senior members take a keen interest in implementing equal opportunities in all areas of its work. It is the most multi-racial organisation I ever encountered and it changed me fundamentally' (from a young African man, now in a full-time permanent job).

Suggestions for improvement included Internet access for jobs and more computers at the advice centres, more publications with job vacancies and creating a job brokerage service with employers for people finishing on the work experience project, so that a temporary job could be guaranteed.

One thought there should be more staff at the advice centre so that there could be more individual attention and support,

more computer courses with qualifications and work experience. Another thought higher-level estate-based courses and increased childcare provision would be useful.

Finally, one said it was not useful and another that, having visited the advice service, nobody had got back to her with information.

## Results – the outcomes

### First destinations

Responders were asked about their employment status after first using Bootstrap's services. They could choose from 14 options. Thirteen ranged on a scale from full-time permanent work to unemployed, covering temporary work, volunteering and childcare, amongst others, in between. The fourteenth option was 'Other'. Where several options were ticked (by 55 respondents), the 'highest' one was chosen in the analyses below. Most (43) were compatible and could have been done simultaneously. Twelve were not. This could have led to

some error, since it is likely that these outcomes were in an unspecified sequence rather than in operation simultaneously.

In addition, there is some indication of error in the completion of the questionnaire forms. Two of the eight contacted who had scored the service with a 2 or below had got the scale mixed up. During the interviews (described in the next section) with four men, a discrepancy emerged between their verbal rating of the service and what they had written on the form. Two had underrated and two overrated the service on the form. Eight contacted about the interview had also made an error with their outcome leading to nine overestimates on outcome (seven after first using Bootstrap's services) and two underestimates (one on outcome after first using Bootstrap). This suggests, predictably, that outcomes after first using Bootstrap's services (many recalled several years later) are less accurate than the outcomes at the time of the survey. The figures used are based on corrected responses.

For the purpose of analysis, these 14 categories were divided into four groups purely in terms of their employment status (not necessarily their overall value) (see Table 1). 'High\*' representing a full-time permanent job was the upper end of the employment spectrum. 'High' included part-time and temporary work – for many a step towards what they really want: a full-time permanent job. 'Medium' represented a step on the pathway to a job. 'Low' represented the lower end, furthest away from a full-time permanent job.

A limitation of this analysis is that other levels in the employment spectrum could represent the upper end for some respondents because of the circumstances in which

**Table 1 Employment status analysis**

|                                 |        |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| Full-time permanent job         | High*  |
| Full-time temporary job         | High   |
| Part-time permanent job         |        |
| Part-time temporary job         |        |
| Self employed                   |        |
| Training                        | Medium |
| Further education               |        |
| Work experience                 |        |
| Volunteering                    |        |
| Caring for children             | Low    |
| Caring for other family members |        |
| Long-term sick/disabled         |        |
| Unemployed                      |        |

they found themselves. For example, two interviewees with part-time work (described in the next section) did not wish to have full-time permanent work at that point in their lives because of childcare responsibilities. Twenty-six (74 per cent) of the 35 responders in part-time work were women and 14 of these were lone parents.

Using these four employment status groupings, the outcomes for responders after first using Bootstrap's services were analysed (see Table 2).

The overall number going into jobs on leaving Bootstrap was 65 per cent. Thirty per cent were leaving to go to full-time permanent jobs and 35 per cent for part-time or temporary work.

Fewer women moved into permanent full-time work – 26 per cent for women compared with 38 per cent for men.

A higher proportion of women than men went on to training, further education etc. – 35 per cent compared with 20 per cent for men.

A higher proportion of men than women were unemployed, long-term sick or had care responsibilities – 13 per cent compared with 1 per cent for women.

#### **Outcomes for responders at the time of the survey**

Responders were also asked about their employment status at the time of the survey (up to nine years after their first contact with Bootstrap.) Their outcomes were grouped into the same four employment status categories (see Table 3).

Overall, the positive initial outcomes had been fairly well maintained, and in certain respects improved.

Over time the number in permanent full-time jobs had increased (from 38 to 51). Most of the increase was due to an increase in women moving into this group.

The total in jobs had slightly decreased (from 82 to 79).

The number in training/work experience category had fallen (from 37 to 29), and the number in the unemployed/care category had increased from seven (five unemployed – all men) to 18 (nine unemployed – six men). The increase in this category was largely women.

Figure 6 summarises these outcome changes for all responders, after first using Bootstrap's services and at the time of the survey.

**Table 2 Outcomes for responders after they first used Bootstrap's services**

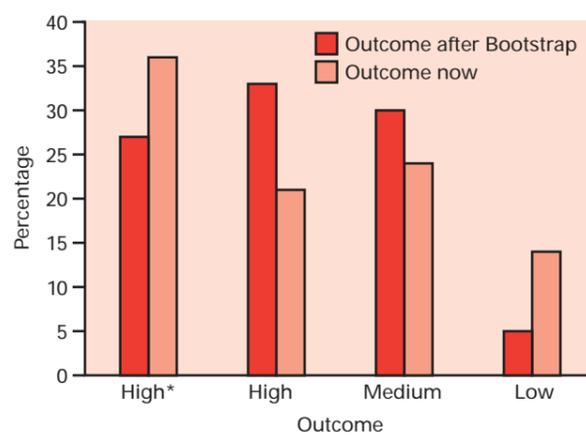
|            | High*:<br>f/t perm job | High:<br>f/t temp,<br>f/t perm/temp etc. | Medium:<br>training, work<br>experience etc. | Low:<br>unemployment,<br>disabled,<br>carer etc. | No outcome/<br>not known |
|------------|------------------------|--|--|--|--------------------------|
| All (134)  | 38 (30%)               | 44 (35%)                                 | 37 (29%)                                     | 7 (6%)   | 8                        |
| Men (46)   | 17 (38%)               | 13 (29%)                                 | 9 (20%)                                      | 6 (13%)  | 1                        |
| Women (88) | 21 (26%)               | 31 (38%)                                 | 28 (35%)                                     | 1 (1%)   | 7                        |

Note: Those with no outcome are not included in the percentages

**Table 3 Outcomes for responders at the time of the survey**

|            | High*:<br>f/t perm job | High:<br>p/t or temp job | Medium:<br>training, work<br>experience | Low:<br>unemployment,<br>disabled, carer | No outcome/<br>not known |
|------------|------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| All (134)  | 51 (41%)               | 28 (22%)                 | 29 (23%)                                | 18 (14%)                                 | 8                        |
| Men (46)   | 19 (42%)               | 9 (20%)                  | 10 (22%)                                | 7 (16%)                                  | 1                        |
| Women (88) | 32 (40%)               | 19 (23%)                 | 19 (23%)                                | 11 (14%)                                 | 7                        |

Note: Those with no outcome are not included in the percentages



**Figure 6 Responders' outcomes (in %) after first using Bootstrap's services and at the time of the survey**

**Responders' outcomes after using advice, training and work experience services**

Responders' outcomes were then grouped according to which of the three services they had used (see Tables 4 and 5). The same four employment categories were used.

While the numbers using the work experience service are low, and cautious interpretation is needed, there was a higher proportion moving straight into work from work experience (89 per cent) than from the training and advice service (62 per cent and 64 per cent respectively). This is consistent with the fact that those using the work experience service tend to be more job ready.

More of the training group (38 per cent) moved on to further training or work experience than from the advice service (28 per cent) and the work experience (11 per cent).

All those moving to the Low (unemployed/caring/disabled) category (7) used the advice service only.

Some caution is needed in interpreting these figures, since some responders may have used another Bootstrap service between first using Bootstrap and the time of the survey. Caution is also needed because of the low numbers using work experience.

**Table 4 Responders' outcomes after first using Bootstrap's services analysed by the service used**

| Total: 126                | High*: perm. f/t job | High: p/t or temp job | Medium: work experience/training | Low: u/e, caring or disabled |
|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Work experience (total 9) | 2 (22%)              | 6 (67%)               | 1 (11%)                          | 0                            |
| Training (total 37)       | 7 (19%)              | 16 (43%)              | 14 (38%)                         | 0                            |
| Advice (total 80)         | 28 (35%)             | 23 (29%)              | 22 (28%)                         | 7 (5 u/e)                    |

**Table 5 Responders' outcomes at the time of the survey, analysed by the service used**

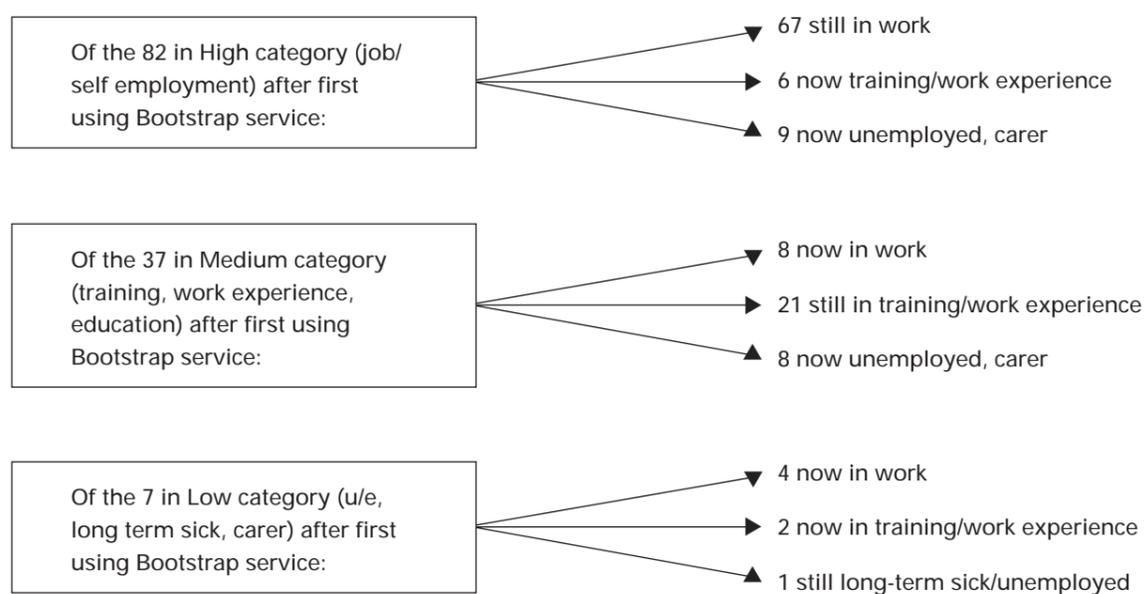
| Total: 126                | High*: perm. f/t job | High: p/t or temp job | Medium: work experience/training | Low: u/e, caring or disabled |
|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Work experience (total 9) | 4 (44%)              | 3 (33%)               | 0                                | 2 (22%)<br>(1 sick+1 carer)  |
| Training (total 37)       | 17 (46%)             | 10 (27%)              | 5 (13.5%)                        | 5 (13.5%)<br>(2 u/e)         |
| Advice (total 80)         | 29 (36%)             | 16 (20%)              | 24 (30%)                         | 11 (14%)<br>(7 u/e)          |

Over time there was progression for those using the training services – from 62 per cent into jobs after first using Bootstrap's services to 73 per cent into jobs at the time of the survey and an increase from 19 per cent to 46 per cent into full-time permanent jobs.

a slight increase in those getting permanent full-time work (35 per cent to 36 per cent).

The majority of responders using the training and work experience services were women. This may have affected the outcome patterns of the services.

For those using the advice services, there was a decrease in job outcomes over time (64 per cent to 56 per cent) and



**Figure 7 Outcome after first using Bootstrap service and outcome at time of survey**

### Responders' individual trajectories

Responders' trajectories were plotted from their outcomes after Bootstrap to their outcome at the time of the survey to see what changes had occurred for individuals.

Figure 7 shows responders' individual trajectories plotted from the outcome after first using Bootstrap to the outcome at the time of survey.

Eighty-two per cent of those in work immediately after using Bootstrap's services were also in work at the time of the survey – that is they were still doing well.

Of the seven in the Low group after Bootstrap, five were then unemployed, one was sick and one was a carer. Only one responder stayed in the Low group by the time of the survey, and he was long-term sick. Four in this group had moved to full-time permanent jobs and two into training by the time of the survey.

For all responders, these figures show a significant number dropping from the High and Medium groups to the Low group – 17 in all. Nine of these were unemployed (six men) and eight (seven women) had childcare responsibilities or were long-term sick.

### Summary of findings

These findings point to a pattern of success and a high level of satisfaction with the services. It also appears that the overall changes for the group are largely sustained.

These findings support the findings in the previous section, both in terms of the characteristics of the target group and also the outcomes. In fact, these outcomes are better than those published. This could be because those who were successful tended to respond to the survey, or that Bootstrap underestimates outcomes by checking too soon after programmes end. For the advice service, it could be that there is an under-reporting of outcomes to Bootstrap.

However, care must be taken in interpreting a survey of this kind. Partly, it is a small sample, but also there are indications of some inaccuracy of responses, particularly with the initial outcomes after first using Bootstrap's services.

To summarise the findings, of those responding:

- There was a high level of satisfaction with the services offered by Bootstrap. On average, men rated

the services lower than the women and under-25s were less satisfied than over-25s. There was more satisfaction registered with the work experience and training than with the advice service. The comments suggested this was because they provide more intensive support and were more closely linked to a job.

- 'Information', 'Encouragement' and 'Support' were the three elements of the service found useful by most responders. Fewer men and under-25s found aspects of the service useful. A higher proportion of under-25s found 'Support' more useful than over-25s.
- Suggested areas for improvement were: more contact and support from staff, more direct links with employers with jobs, better computer resources and more courses, especially on estates.
- The outcomes for responders were good: 94 per cent moved on to work or to improve their job prospects through work experience, training or further education after first using Bootstrap's services, 65 per cent into jobs.
- These changes were largely sustained over time, with 86 per cent still in work or training/further education/work experience, when they responded (63 per cent in jobs). There were also signs of progression, with an increase from 30 per cent to 41 per cent of those in full-time permanent work.
- There were also some clear gender differences in responses. Men responding got more permanent full-time jobs in the short term, did less training and suffered higher levels of unemployment than did women.
- Initial outcomes for those using the work experience service were very high (89 per cent). There appeared to be better job progression over time for those using the training services – from 62 per cent after using Bootstrap to 73 per cent in jobs at the time of the survey and a 27 per cent increase in those moving into full-time permanent jobs over the same period.
- Individual trajectories showed that 82 per cent of those in a job after using Bootstrap's services were in a job at the time of the survey. Those who were unemployed rose from five (all men) after Bootstrap to nine (six men) by the time of the survey. Three of the five men who were unemployed after first using Bootstrap's services were in full-time permanent jobs and two were in training, by the time of the survey.
- Of the 18 not in employment, training or work experience at the time of the survey, nine had care responsibilities or were long-term sick/disabled and nine were unemployed.

## 5 What the Bootstrap service users say – the in-depth interviews

### The interviews

Twenty people were selected for interview from the 88 responding to the questionnaire who had agreed on the form to be interviewed. They were selected, as far as possible, to reflect the original sample of 350 – particularly the personal characteristics, but also the years in which they first used Bootstrap’s services, the length of unemployment and the services used. In addition, they were selected to reflect the range and combinations of responses of the 134 returned questionnaires but otherwise randomly. The changing profile of questionnaire responses over the period of interviewee selection, the difficulty of contacting/interviewing particular respondents and the sample size led to a less than perfect match in these two areas. The author’s previous contact or knowledge of the responders (see previous section) was not a selection criterion. In fact, proportionately slightly more of this group were interviewed, possibly because they were more likely to respond to messages and attend interviews.

The 20 interviews were semi-structured and lasted about one hour. They were carried out in interviewees’ homes or at Bootstrap offices.

### The people interviewed

The percentage of the original sample of 350 is noted in italics. Of those interviewed:

- 35 per cent were men (*33 per cent*)
- 30 per cent were under 25 years old (*35 per cent*)
- 85 per cent were black or from ethnic minority communities (*88 per cent*)
- 40 per cent were registered unemployed when they came to Bootstrap (*63 per cent – information available for just under one third of the sample*)
- 35 per cent used the services between 1991 and 1995 (*33 per cent*), 30 per cent in 1996/97 (*28 per cent*), and 35 per cent in 1998/99 (*39 per cent*).

In terms of their ethnicity: five were Black African, four were UK Black, four were white, two were Black Caribbean, two were mixed race, one was Irish, one was Bangladeshi, one was Turkish.

Two of those in the interview group were teenagers (16 and 17 years old). Eight were between 20 and 30 years old when they went to Bootstrap. Six were in their thirties and three in their forties. One was over 50 years old.

Twelve were parents with childcare responsibilities. Four young people still lived with their families, two were part of child-free couples and two lived alone. One was caring for four children and for her husband, who had had a stroke.

Eight were women returning to the labour market after at least two years of care responsibilities. Of those unemployed less than one year, two were leaving school or further education and five leaving short-term or casual employment.

### Potential barriers to employment

The group interviewed faced many potential barriers to getting a job when they first came to Bootstrap. The key obstacles were:

- length of unemployment – 14 (70 per cent) had been unemployed for over a year, with half of these unemployed for over three years (*52 per cent and 26 per cent respectively in the original 350 sample*)
- qualifications at school – 12 (60 per cent) had none or less than five GCSE A–Cs or equivalent on leaving school
- qualifications – 12 (60 per cent) had none or only a basic level qualification (NVQ1 equivalent) when they started at Bootstrap
- care responsibilities – ten (50 per cent) were primary carers and eight of these were lone parents when they came to Bootstrap (*38 per cent lone parents – information available for under half the sample*)
- English as a second language – three (15 per cent) needed some support with English language
- disability/chronic illness – three (15 per cent) had a disability or long-term illness when they started at Bootstrap (*11 per cent – information available for just under one third*)
- race and age discrimination – 85 per cent were black or from ethnic minorities and one was over 50 years old.

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## Case histories prior to Bootstrap

### Family background

#### *Housing and income*

Nine of those interviewed were born and brought up in Hackney, six were born overseas (Nigeria, Jamaica, Turkey, Angola and Israel) and four of these six spent all their childhood overseas. Two were born and brought up elsewhere in Britain (Belfast and Glasgow). Three were born in London, Manchester and Glasgow respectively and moved to Hackney as young children.

At least eight of the 13 interviewees who spent most of their childhood in Britain were from low-income families and struggled to make ends meet. A 32-year-old woman, brought up on the outskirts of Glasgow, whose father fell from a window and died when she was nine years old, said:

*We were quite poor – if there was anything lower than working class then we were it.*

Another woman, now a lone parent, was brought up in Hackney with two brothers and two sisters. Her father was a carpentry foreman, and her mother did sewing and knitting home work. She commented:

*We managed okay but struggled financially along the line, getting shoes and making clothes. After a while it became very hard.*

Childhood for half of this group was punctuated by moving to a succession of private or council rented accommodation and changing primary schools.

*We moved about quite a lot because housing was difficult if you had a lot of children. (from a young woman who was one of five children living with both parents)*

Five of the seven interviewees born and largely brought up overseas had come from families who were comfortably off (not rich but not constantly struggling financially). Once in this country, they also moved several times in the private rented and council rented sector in and around Hackney before being finally housed in their current home.

*We stayed in different places for a while, the majority were in Hackney and private rented to*

*begin with. (from a young woman who came to London from Turkey with her family when she was 11 years old)*

By the time of the interviews, 18 of the 20 lived in council accommodation, the other two were in owner-occupied property – one of whom bought her flat from the council. All were generally pleased with the quality of their current accommodation.

Two women, originally housed on large housing estates, hankered after the sense of community that living close to others in blocks of flats had provided for them in the early days, when the housing management was good. One who rated the quality of her current terraced house highly commented on how much she missed the neighbours being close:

*You say hello to your neighbours now but that's it. In a block you notice if you don't see anyone for two days and knock on the door to say hello.*

#### *Community involvement*

Half the group were involved in some way with their communities – often in the church or school which their children attended. All four moving to Hackney from Africa had joined the church on arrival, and it continued to play an important role in their lives. The rest, particularly those under 25 had a network of friends and/or strong family ties, which gave support. The family support and in one case the church support was particularly significant for four of the eight lone parents interviewed. One, whose family lived on the Nightingale Estate said:

*I was doing car boot sales and childcare and left the kids with the family at this time. My brother – now 34 still comes to help if needed.*

#### *Experience at school*

Most of those interviewed who were educated in this country (15) experienced difficulties at school. Only two – a woman and young man – felt they had no problems. They left with five CSEs and four GCSEs respectively.

Without exception, those who received all or part of their education outside Britain (7) did well at these schools. In fact the two who received education both overseas (Turkey and Jamaica) and in Hackney, felt their overseas education had been much better than in Britain:

*I always said to my mum, 'Why couldn't you have left me over there (Jamaica) until I finished my schooling?' As soon as I came to this country everything stopped. In Jamaica when I was taught it stayed ... they had ways – going over and over again and reciting. The techniques were very good.*

*Turkey is very strict so you have to pass one year to get on to the next and move on. Here everything is fine and you always move on – it was a very relaxed situation for me.*

#### **Qualifications gained at school**

Of the 15 completing their secondary education in Britain, 11 were educated largely in Hackney schools:

- six achieved no qualifications
- six achieved below five GCSE passes at grade A–C (or equivalent)
- three achieved five grade A–C GCSEs or equivalent but did not stay on to complete 'A' levels.

Of the five completing their secondary education overseas (in Nigeria, Angola and Israel):

- three achieved 'A' level standard in two or three subjects
- one achieved 'O' level standard, in six subjects
- one achieved As and Bs in the Portuguese school qualification system.

#### **Difficulties at school**

Thirteen of the 15 completing their secondary education in Britain experienced difficulties. Nine took responsibility themselves for these problems, the rest felt the school or particular teachers were to blame. Two did achieve five or more GCSEs at A–C or the equivalent, despite this. The difficulties ranged from mixing with the wrong crowd and messing about in lessons, bunking off and often getting into trouble (six of the interviewees) to being bullied, uninspired or treated unfairly by teachers or distracted by other life events, for example, caring for a terminally ill grandmother or falling in love. Three attributed part of the problem to teachers who didn't care. One young Hackney man with no qualifications describes mixing with the wrong crowd:

*The crowd was more fun than going to lessons. We bunked off and went round to girls' houses smoking, rebelling, being bad. Got into trouble with the police loads of times.*

Another who left with no qualifications:

*I met my future husband [in her final year] and this was a major distraction, I was in his year and once he left I lost interest in school.*

Later on in the interview, she declared:

*I think I got more out of three months at Bootstrap than I did in 12 years at school.*

One found it hard to catch up on GCSE course work after a period of 'messing about':

*[I] started getting better in Year 10. I did the course work but it got too much. I left it until it got to Year 11 and then I had Year 10 and 11 course work to do. I just rushed at the end of Year 11 – trying to do everything at once.*

Parents and teachers were clearly concerned in most cases, but to no effect – the young Hackney man again:

*She [his teacher] used to try and talk to me, call my parents in and say I was bright and could achieve more if I got my head down, but I never really listened – it went in one ear and out the other.*

One teacher did make a difference to one young woman:

*For the first two years (at secondary school) I messed about ... my economics teacher made me change my mind, she said I could do so much better if I just concentrated.*

In her third year, she decided to start afresh and left school with five 'O' levels.

In only two cases – both from working class families, in Belfast and Glasgow respectively – was there less parental support. In the words of one young Glaswegian woman who left school with one GCSE:

*There was no such thing at home as the importance of doing homework – if I was caught reading at home, it was seen as being lazy.*

For one, there was pressure to get a job to bring in income to the family:

... I was suspended. My mum said I might as well go to work – there were so many of them (children to support).

#### **Separation from a parent in childhood**

Nine of the 13 (70 per cent) who had difficulties at school had been separated from a parent by divorce or the death or serious illness of a parent during their childhood. This occurred prior to the difficulties starting.

Most of the difficulties started when the children were in their early teens. None could recall being referred for special support or needs assessment.

#### **Teenage pregnancy**

While they were still teenagers, five of the young women (with one CSE qualification between them) had babies. As the one with the CSE who had her first baby at 16 said:

*Not long after I started my first job, I left because I fell pregnant. That was where all my downfall started. That was the end career wise.*

Later on, all this group got a basic qualification at Bootstrap, and all but one (who has developed a chronic illness) now have jobs which they enjoy and rate highly.

#### **Post-school training and education prior to Bootstrap**

Fourteen of the group interviewed had had further education and/or training in this country before they came to Bootstrap. These ranged from a basic skills course at a community training centre, through a textile design course at the local college to a Fashion degree at one of the new universities. One had reached degree level, seven others achieved middle level qualifications (the equivalent of NVQ 2 or 3), two a basic level qualification (NVQ level 1 equivalent).

Three had attended various government training programmes. One dropped out, but two got a qualification and both got work for a short time afterwards.

Five failed to complete their courses, although one of these completed a lower-level qualification instead. For one, poor health early in a pregnancy and for another the pressure of care for a young baby combined with poor housing conditions and the break up of a relationship were the problems.

For one, a young man who dropped out of several courses, the problem was the training provided:

*It was a special (Government) scheme – same old thing – cup of tea and the newspaper, I'd been on courses like this a few times. I couldn't do it – it wasn't doing anything for me.*

One woman who went to college when she was 17 said:

*I messed about. We were treated like individuals – called the teachers by their first name. If you didn't turn up they didn't call your home. If you were late you couldn't turn up, so I bunked off. It was easy to do.*

From a 16-year-old young man, who had left school with no qualifications but got on to a community-based training scheme teaching maths and computers:

*One of my friends there got into a bit of trouble and all of us didn't go back there after that. Before the trouble (an argument with a tutor), I was getting on alright – head down – they was quite pleased.*

Fifty per cent of the group interviewed had a driving licence before they used Bootstrap's services.

#### **Contact with Bootstrap**

##### **How they made contact**

Eight of the 20 interviewees had heard of the services through the outreach programme – passing Bootstrap's estate bases or getting a leaflet through their door. Three were referred by word of mouth recommendation, eight through the local newspaper and one by a local Jobcentre.

##### **Reasons for using Bootstrap's services**

Attending Bootstrap's services is voluntary. Each interviewee was unemployed at the time and wanted to improve their job prospects. They saw the Bootstrap service – the training, advice or work experience, as a way of helping to get a job.

For many who attended the training courses, the acquisition of a computer qualification was a great draw. For others, particularly those using the advice service – it was the job search support. Applying for jobs is increasingly complex, particularly filling in equal opportunities application forms and presentation at interview. As a Nigerian man who had come to this country six years before said:

*Writing application forms was a dilemma for me because I was not used to writing application forms*

– at home we just needed a CV and covering letter and on this basis you are employed.

In addition the advice centres had Jobcentre vacancies and newspapers etc. as well as free access to the phone, copier, fax and advice and support. As one young Turkish woman applying for her first job said:

*I wanted the use of a computer and fax and help with writing a CV and covering letters.*

Those using the work experience service felt they had sufficient qualifications but needed more hands-on experience before they could get a job. As one 45 year old who had a computer and communications qualification from a Bootstrap course said:

*I needed experience to go back to work ... I wanted to get more experience of dealing with customers.*

Certain groups faced particular issues whichever service they used.

#### **Women returners**

This was one of the largest groups amongst those interviewed – eight in all. Six had been unemployed for over three years. The group lacked confidence. One, with no qualifications from school, who was approaching her fortieth birthday said:

*I felt a void, a grey person. I needed to be counted, I wanted to do something worthwhile – not just washing shirts and cleaning toilets. I felt I had nothing people would find of use.*

And another, unemployed for over ten years:

*At that time I thought I couldn't do anything, I thought I was hopeless. I saw there was computer (training) – I was rubbish (on computers) – no clue how to move a mouse. When I saw that, I thought it would boost my self esteem.*

#### **Barriers to further education**

Several of the interviewees had great resistance to further education, either because they were unconfident or because they felt it had nothing to offer them. The computer training, the opportunity for help with starting a business or project (with the management course) or (with the youth course) the chance of outdoor activity training in Llangollen was often a great incentive. In the case below, it was the first aid. A woman with no qualifications

from school, who went on a computer and basic skills course largely because of the first aid element said:

*I went in thinking I would be wasting my time but I didn't – I learnt things. I did my homework with my son at the table there.*

And the same person:

*I was quaking when the computers started. I almost had palpitations – I thought I would make a fool of myself, but I had to be dragged out after the two and a half hours – I was smitten – I loved it.*

#### **Moving from the casual economy**

Five interviewees had had casual (irregular, short term), low-paid work before going to Bootstrap.

For this group, casual work did not seem to provide an effective stepping-stone into more permanent, well-paid work without extra help. Getting help to move from casual, low-paid work can be difficult because of not having the length of unemployment record needed for eligibility for government schemes.

A Nigerian with tertiary-level qualifications explained:

*I was desperate to get a job – I had to leave casual work – portering and security – I knew I needed to move out of this territory.*

These difficulties were compounded for some groups. The other African interviewees indicated that the expectation from friends was that, even with their overseas certificate or diploma level qualifications, they would enter casual, low-paid work such as chambermaid work or cleaning. One was doing such work while he did his degree. The other two, both women, increased their qualifications in this country in a different career area in order to get better-paid work. As one said:

*Most of my friends were in cleaning jobs etc. I didn't want to do that. I wanted something fulfilling.*

#### **Moving from the informal economy**

Seven of the interviewees had worked in the informal economy at various times in their lives – two on a regular basis for over ten years, the rest for shorter periods when money was tight and an opportunity to work arose. Some did this because of the short-term, casual nature of the job and the difficulty of reinstating benefits when the work came to an end, others because the work was part time or

casual and low paid, and they would be no better off if it was declared, particularly those who had to pay for childcare and travel costs.

As one interviewee with no qualifications and many years of casual work, in part in the informal economy, said:

*I just can't be doing it for the rest of my life – watching over my head. ... I want to do everything legal – get myself a good job now.*

While this work brought in extra income, perhaps because of its nature, the benefits in terms of sustaining confidence and building employability skills seemed to be minimal, and there was no indication from interviewees' work histories that they provided a stepping-stone to work in the formal sector. As another who had worked in the informal sector for many years on a part-time basis said:

*I didn't know where I was going. I wanted to do something with my life. I needed experience to go back to work. Though I had been out there I hadn't really – I needed more than I had.*

For those doing this on a long-term basis, presenting their work history to potential employers in the recruitment process was a problem. Their work history looked patchy. In most cases, the 'cash in hand' employers were long gone or personal contacts. There was little danger of being caught by the authorities, if these jobs were presented during the recruitment process. But for others some 'stretching' of jobs in their CVs to cover these periods was needed. For the two who had done work in the informal economy for a long period, getting employer references was also a problem.

### Services used at Bootstrap

#### Nature of services used

The Bootstrap clients in the study sample were drawn from three main Hackney programmes. These were the estate-based employment advice service, which offers support, information and resources for jobseekers on a drop-in basis, the pre-vocational and some customised training courses and the work experience programme. These are described in more detail elsewhere in this report:

- 50 per cent used the advice service (*cf. 65 per cent of all responders*), half of them with a training course and one with additional work experience

- 50 per cent used the training services (*cf. 28 per cent of all responders*), one with additional work experience.

#### Number of services used

- 14 used one service (one of whom was still using it)
- five used two services (one of whom was still using it)
- one used three services.

#### Follow-up support

Eighteen returned to Bootstrap for further support. Some returned up to four years after first using Bootstrap's services. The follow-up support included having a CV checked, using a computer for a CV or covering letter, getting a reference, looking for vacancies, further training, education, or information on further Bootstrap programmes. In most cases, the follow-up support was brief and the cost of this provision therefore modest.

### Changes which occurred after using Bootstrap's services

#### Personal development – changes in attitude, direction, confidence

##### Confidence

Eighteen of the 20 people interviewed said they felt more confident as a result of using the service. (This compares with 53 per cent of those who responded to the questionnaire.) Six also said it improved their self-esteem, and five felt they had found a voice. Others spoke of developing trust, courage and energy. One sixteen year old had run away from home for two months just before her GCSEs. She was interviewed three months after starting to use one of the estate advice services and said:

*I felt more confident. My attitude changed totally. It made me realise I can't be a bum, sitting in the house and watching TV and out with friends. I realised that wouldn't get me anywhere. It woke me up.*

A woman returner who had suffered panic attacks until she started her course said:

*Bootstrap gave me confidence. It gave a beginning. It showed my hidden talent. Once you have kids or a bad experience you underestimate yourself. Bootstrap helped me believe in myself.*

Another, who had not worked for more than 12 years said:

*All that time (before Bootstrap) I thought I couldn't do anything. I thought I was hopeless. At Bootstrap I found I was not so ignorant as I thought. It changed the concept of who I thought I was.*

And another:

*Bootstrap created confidence and then allowed you to build on it. I was 38 with two teenage sons – I felt life was passing me by and beginning to panic – that pushing the forty button. I didn't want to stay like that and these people proved that I didn't need to.*

#### **Motivation and direction**

It also gave motivation, direction, goals or ambition to 12 of those interviewed. One woman returner, then with one GCSE and three children under three, living on a run-down housing estate said:

*Bootstrap introduced me to a new perspective – it was different from the world I came from and moved in and I was able to see 'yes you can touch it – you can go there'. My ambitions grew.*

Another, a father of three, trying to escape from six years of casual, low-paid work said:

*In every aspect of my life Bootstrap changed me and I was able to fulfil my goal and ambitions and up to today I have it as a point of reference.*

Another who had been unemployed for over ten years and suffered depression:

*I knew it was time to move on to what I wanted to do.*

#### **A kick start**

Seven described the experience as giving a kick-start, stepping stone or growth point. As one woman returner born in Israel who had been out of work for ten years said:

*After the interview (for the course) I was alright, but before I thought 'this country is so competitive, you can't get in the system.' At that point (as she was offered the place), the door opened.*

She went on to say:

*It was a kick start, a very gentle kick start and that was very important to me – a first step managing the family and something outside the family.*

As I finished one interview and walked towards the front door, the young woman I had interviewed stopped me and said:

*You know when I tell people to go to Bootstrap. I say to them 'you'll start a seed and then begin to sprout and you'll go on pushing out roots and branches from then on'.*

#### **No personal development**

Two who said they did not change in themselves were both young men – one 18 and one 23. Both had found the services (estate-based employment advice and training for young people respectively) useful in particular ways, but it had not changed their confidence or attitude. One only went in to look for vacancies and had no contact with staff, so it is not surprising. The other said he would have liked more one to one support during the course.

#### **Changes in employment prospects**

After using Bootstrap's services:

- five got permanent jobs, all full time
- five got temporary jobs, four full time and one part time
- six went on to further training or education
- one became a volunteer
- one developed a chronic illness/disability
- one was unemployed for a year
- one is still using the service (unemployed).

The situation at the time of interview:

- ten in permanent jobs (one part time and nine full time)
- three in temporary jobs (one part time and two full time)
- three on training (one at Bootstrap) or further education courses
- one is still doing voluntary work
- one still has a chronic illness/disability
- one is unemployed
- one is still using the service (unemployed).

This change represents a move from 50 per cent into jobs (25 per cent full-time permanent) and 30 per cent into training and further education to 65 per cent into jobs (45 per cent full-time permanent) and 15 per cent into training or further education over time.

This employment pattern is similar to that of those responding to the questionnaire, although a slightly

smaller proportion of those interviewed had gone on to employment immediately after using Bootstrap.

Of the 13 in jobs at this point, ten had primarily used a Bootstrap training service.

**Jobs progression**

For those with jobs:

- all 13 with jobs rated their jobs highly and where appropriate – of better quality than anything they had had before
- eight had increased their salaries since starting work and five expected to do so
- five had increased their job security since their first job after Bootstrap
- the wage or salary levels for those in employment after leaving Bootstrap and at the time of interview are shown in Figure 8.

For this group a clear pathway of progression was visible.

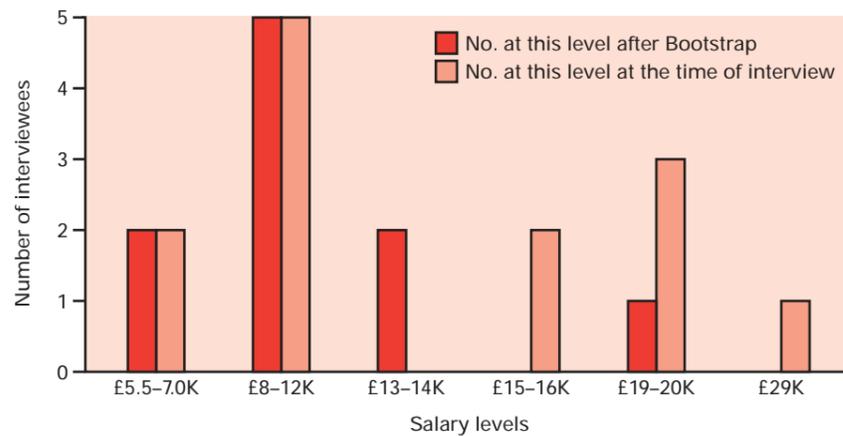
**Training and education progression**

Fifteen of those interviewed attended a Bootstrap training course. Twelve gained a vocational qualification – a level-1 introductory computer qualification and in addition three got a level-1 or level-2 qualification in communication skills, which covered literacy as well as communication skills.

For three of this group, this was their first qualification. For a further six, it was their first vocational qualification.

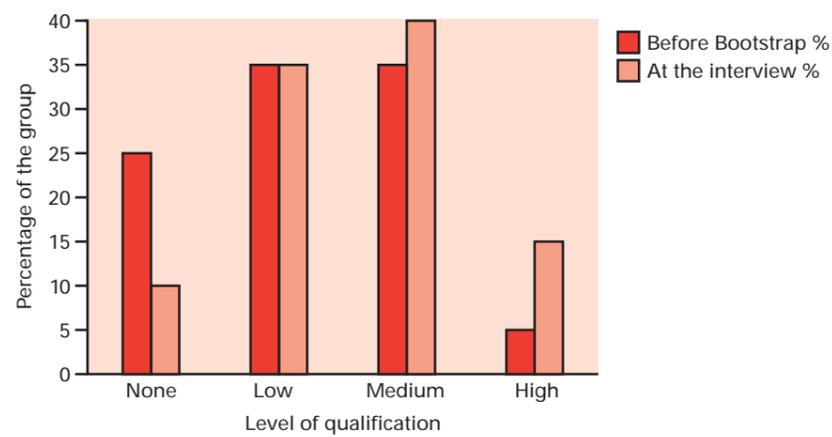
At the time they came to Bootstrap, the qualification level of the whole group was as follows (see Figure 9):

- five with no qualifications
- seven with low (NVQ level 1 equivalent – below five GCSEs at A–C level)



**Figure 8 Interviewees’ annual salary levels (thousands) after Bootstrap and at time of interview**

*Note: The salary levels after Bootstrap have not been adjusted for inflation. The lowest salary band and part of the next are salary levels for part-time work. The two in the lowest band work under 16 hours per week*



**Figure 9 Interviewees’ level of qualification before Bootstrap and at the time of interview**

- seven with medium-level (NVQ 2 or 3 equivalent)
- one with a high-level qualification (NVQ 4 or equivalent – degree level).

By the time of the interview:

- two had no qualifications (though one was on a course to get one or two)
- seven had a low-level qualification
- eight had a medium-level qualification
- three had a high-level qualification.

Two of those in the medium category were in the process of completing degrees and one with a degree planned to do a masters degree.

By the time of the interview, those with school education overseas had achieved more post-school qualifications in this country on average than those with school education in Britain. Without the Bootstrap qualification, or qualifications gained in their country of origin, the five educated overseas had almost three qualifications each. Those who had most of their schooling in Britain had an average of just under one qualification each. If you remove two of the three people whose parents were recent immigrants to this country, the average becomes the equivalent of under half of a qualification each.

#### **Pathways to employment**

To summarise the employment and training information above:

- 13 were in work and seemed to be progressing along a jobs pathway
- three were progressing along an education and training pathway
- two – it was too early to judge (one about to start and one just finished further education or training)
- one had been progressing but was now ill
- one was not progressing.

While this summary suggests that most of the group were progressing, the individual trajectories give a more complex picture.

#### **Financially worse off**

Five said they were financially worse off when interviewed than they were after Bootstrap or compared with their last job. Two chose part-time jobs in order to have more time with their children. One of these said they had been better off on benefit. The others had made career changes, wanting more interesting, better-quality jobs.

#### **A hidden degree**

The lone parent who went to Bootstrap in 1991 appeared on her questionnaire only to have volunteered both after Bootstrap and at the time of interview. What emerged in the interview was that in the meantime she had completed a degree on a part-time basis, was writing books and submitting them to publishers. She planned to get a job when her daughter started secondary school.

#### **Scheme ‘churning’**

One, a recent refugee, was churning through training schemes (six in three years) to improve his chances of getting an office job, while doing a part-time degree. He had had English language and job-search support, computer training and office work experience at Bootstrap. He felt racism could be the reason for his lack of success in getting work.

As he said:

*I will finish my degree next year but qualifications don't help because there are so many with degrees – lots of colleagues have degrees but no jobs.*

#### **Job ‘churning’**

One teenager had been in permanent work after first using Bootstrap but had been unemployed for a year by the time of the interview. He had no qualifications. He had been sacked from his last job, which he rated highly, after nine months and was now the father of a four-month-old baby:

*I left because I got mixed up with my girlfriend – I was always with my girlfriend, I wasn't going to work. It took me over – my head was not in work.*

He was using the Jobcentre without much luck except for a couple of casual jobs in the last year. His confidence was dropping. He had had a succession of jobs and two training schemes since leaving school with no qualifications and had left them all or been sacked after a few months. As he said:

*My CV ain't really (any good) – I haven't got a lot of background on my jobs because they would need employer references from them and I can't because I got up and left – just walked out. Not a strong record.*

#### **Career change**

Eleven of those interviewed were changing or planned shortly to change career direction. Inevitably this carries with it some risk.

One man in his late thirties had been a casual labourer on construction sites since school. He had no qualifications. He was using Bootstrap's services for the second time. He had moved into temporary work after the first contact but had returned to train in computers and improve his English and maths so that he could get a job in computing.

*I'm getting on alright – really enjoying the computers. It's a big change from hod carrying.*

And from someone in their fifties, with five 'O' levels who had done office, factory and insurance work, then trained as a literacy tutor at Bootstrap but now had paid work teaching literacy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL):

*Once I got the job at the College I knew I could do this for a living. It's the most enjoyable paid work I've ever done.*

From one young man starting office/computer work with the post office on a temporary basis, having worked in retail, security and warehousing:

*My direction is clearer now, I know I want to work in computers and admin work. If I had known then (when job hunting previously), it would have helped.*

And from a 16-year-old girl who had done some temporary admin work over the summer holiday:

*I'm going for a course in construction and building in January. I want to do practical building and carpentry and go into the construction and building trade eventually.*

All or any of these may need to return to Bootstrap for a steer, two were still using the service and four had returned for some help already.

#### **Career development**

Seven of those interviewed had already started developing their careers and moving into better-paid more interesting work since getting their first job after Bootstrap. Four had already made considerable progress:

In six years, one (with five 'O' levels) had moved from her first salary of £13,500 p.a. to £29,000 now, with the same City employer.

In five years, another had moved from six years of casual

work prior to Bootstrap to his first job after Bootstrap at £13,000 and, at the time of interview, to a job at £19,200 p.a.

Another who had not worked for 12 years, in five years had moved from £11,000 with her first job to £15,000 with the same local employer.

The fourth who had no qualification from school, and a basic-level computer qualification, moved from a casual, part-time job with a wage of about £6,700 p.a. to a full-time, permanent job with a salary of £19,200 p.a. and a pension.

Three had just begun to apply for better-paid jobs. As one woman who was on £9,000 a year in a local authority job said:

*I am 40 now and not prepared to be low paid until I retire. I want something better... I'm up for something more challenging.*

And a young man, working in the civil service for two years, with pay of £10,000 p.a., a part-time supermarket job bringing in about £2,000 a year, and still living with his parents said:

*The pay is not brilliant, it's not liveable on – you couldn't run a mortgage or raise rugrats on that pay.*

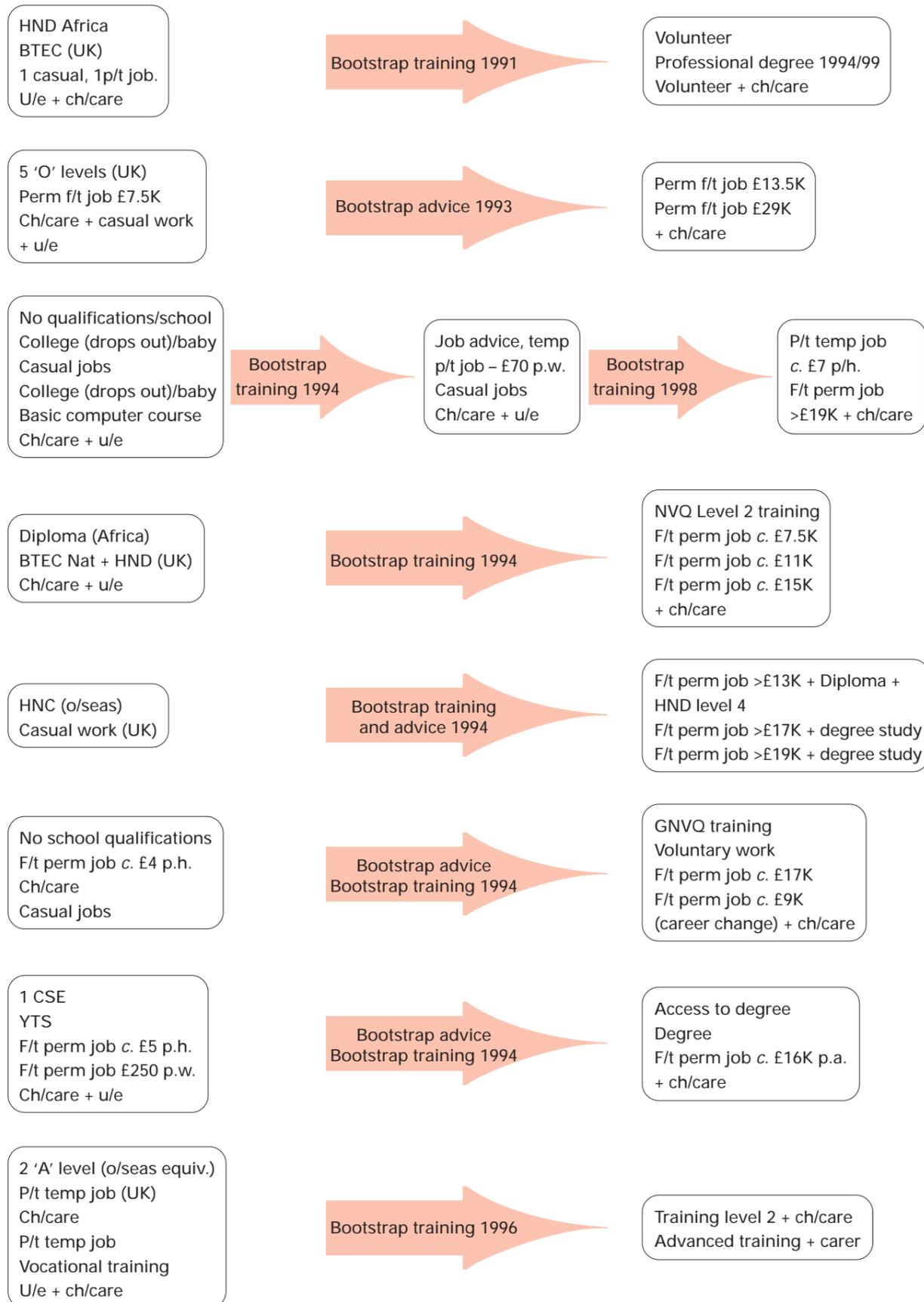
Five had already come back briefly to Bootstrap for support with this process.

#### **Summary of the employment and training trajectories of interviewees**

The trajectories on the next three pages are listed in the order in which the interviewees first used Bootstrap's services.



Key: u/e = unemployed; p/t = part time; f/t = full time; ch/care = childcare; temp = temporary; perm = permanent; o/seas = overseas; ESOL = English for speakers of other languages



4 GCSEs  
College (drops out)  
YTS schemes  
Brief job £92 p.w.  
Brief job £160 p.w.  
U/e schemes

Bootstrap training 1996

1 year u/e  
F/t perm job (18 m)  
U/e (10 m)  
Temp f/t job c. £200 p.w.

5 CSEs at school  
City & Guilds voc. training  
U/e  
P/t temp job  
Agency work  
F/t perm  
Agency work  
U/e + ch/care  
Vol. work + ch/care

Bootstrap training 1997

NVQ Level 2 training + ch/care  
P/t perm job c. £6K p.a. + ch/care

No qualifications at school  
F/t jobs £10 – 18.20 p.w.  
Ch/care  
Casual work + ch/care  
Level 1 training  
Casual work

Bootstrap training 1997

P/t perm job c. £9K p.a.

No qualifications at school  
F/t perm 85p p.h. for 6 m  
F/t perm job £25 p.w. for 4 m  
F/t perm job £38 p.w. for 6 m  
F/t perm job for 1 year  
Youth course (drops out)  
Casual work

Bootstrap advice 1997

Casual work

Bootstrap training 1999

1 CSE at school  
F/t perm job £9 p.w.  
Ch/care  
Casual work  
Voluntary work  
Basic vocational training + u/e

Bootstrap training  
Bootstrap work  
experience 1997/98

Long-term sick

8 low GCSEs  
BTEC First  
BTEC National Diploma  
Degree (drops out)  
YTS NVQ level 2  
F/t temp job at £10K p.a. + p/t job  
at £2K p.a.

Bootstrap advice 1998

F/t perm job £10K p.a. + p/t job  
at £2K p.a.

Certificate level (o/seas)  
F/t perm job 7 years (o/seas)  
ESOL training (UK)  
NVQ Level 1 training  
NVQ Level 3 training  
Access to degree course  
Starts degree  
Job search training course

Bootstrap advice 1998  
Bootstrap training  
Bootstrap work  
experience + ESOL and  
job search support

Vocational course  
Studying for degree

5 'O' levels at school  
F/t perm job  
F/t perm job  
F/t perm job  
Self-employed  
Volunteer work + u/e

Bootstrap training 1998

Freelance work + p/t jobs  
>£19K p.a.

No qualifications at school  
Training (drops out)  
F/t perm job £90 p.w. (6 m)  
F/t perm job £125 p.w. (8 m)  
3 m job search training  
F/t perm job £126 p.w. (4 m)  
College (3 wks)

Bootstrap advice 1998

F/t perm job £160 p.w. (10 m)  
Occasional casual work  
Attending Jobcentre

No qualifications at school  
Youth Opportunities Scheme  
U/e  
F/t job £105 p.w.  
Level 1 training  
P/t perm job £7K (redundant)  
Voluntary work

Bootstrap training 1998

F/t perm job (briefly)  
P/t perm job £10 – 11K p.a.  
P/t temp c. £5.6K p.a. + ch/care

8 GCSEs  
City and Guilds Foundation  
National Diploma  
HND  
Degree  
F/t temp job (2 weeks)

Bootstrap advice 1999

F/t perm job £4.64 p.h.

6 low GCSEs at school  
F/t temp job

Bootstrap advice 1999

Applying for vocational courses

### **Other changes**

Half those interviewed identified other, mostly beneficial, changes to their lives after using Bootstrap's services.

Seven – all women, had made new friends and now felt part of a support network. As one said, 'Friendships started to happen – I got out more and met people.'

For one, these changes caused problems at home:

*Unfortunately, as I grew academically, I grew further away from my husband. I realised we didn't have a lot in common (any more)... I needed to grow and couldn't go back – once I put my foot on that path I was completely unable to go back.*

Three had overcome health problems. As one said:

*I started to feel happier within myself. I had been low at home – what to do next, looking for jobs, trying to get a response, trying to figure out what to do.*

Two got more involved with activities on their estates.

Two felt the skills they developed on their courses improved their parenting skills.

### **Why Bootstrap works**

#### **A The way the service was delivered**

Without exception, those who said they had changed as a result of using Bootstrap's services felt that the way the service was delivered was as important as the nature of the service itself in causing the changes.

#### **Caring friendly staff**

Fourteen of the 18 responders thought the caring, friendly, helpful approach of the staff at Bootstrap was very important:

*Right from the receptionist to the top person – they are all easy to contact and accessible ... The staff are friendly and understanding, they will never say no to anything they can do and that boosts your confidence and morale.*

*... people (at Bootstrap) who were genuinely interested in your development and really wanted the best for you – it really makes a difference.*

### **Encouragement**

Twelve of those interviewed thought that the encouragement and belief that the staff had in them was very important:

*... the people that were there pushing you and telling you, 'you can do that – you're not daft'. They gave such encouragement, created confidence – when you have none, it has to be created from scratch. (from a woman student on a Bootstrap course)*

*She said 'you could do this and this and that – you could do whatever you wanted to' and I thought – 'yes I can.' She gave me confidence. Prior to the interview she phoned me and said 'go get it [name]' – you know – she didn't forget about me, she didn't dismiss me and forget who I was. (from someone using the advice service)*

### **Treated like adults with respect**

Eleven noted that being treated as adults and with respect was important:

*No one belittled you, you were treated as an adult, with respect. (a woman student)*

From a 38-year-old man with no qualifications who was half way through a computer and basic skills course:

*They treat you like adults here – they shouted at school (but here you are) treated with respect and understanding.*

*He spoke nicely to me – not like to a 16 year old – he treated me like an adult. (from a young woman using the advice service)*

### **Accepted and valued, treated as an individual**

Half the group felt this had been very important in bringing about the changes.

As one of them said:

*The staff, especially the course tutors were full of praise, you couldn't help but come out with confidence. The tutors treated you with respect and you felt valued.*

*I was treated as an adult with a voice – after a long time with no voice – this was one of the most appealing things.*

### **Going at my pace**

This was mentioned as important by nine of the group interviewed – all but one had attended a training course:

*The tutors spoke at our level. I was stuck once and Genny (the trainer) took the whole lesson to sort it out – it didn't matter to take time – she didn't see it as a problem.*

*They did understand my situation I'd say because of my lack of English they were slow and didn't rush me. They just wanted me to meet my targets and not worry.*

### **Understood, listened to and reassured**

Seven of the 20 felt that being understood, listened to and reassured were important:

*Catherine and everyone was so nice and understood my situation. She knew how I was with maths and gave me a little stuff to do away from the others. She didn't force me or make me feel ashamed. She understood the situation. That was really important.*

*One of the most striking things that sticks with me was that when I went to Bootstrap I knew absolutely nothing – still don't know very much and what I found was that there was no condescension from anyone in that place – you know when you say the stupidest thing and it makes you feel silly when you realise what you said – well you were never made to feel that way ... you were allowed to grow and didn't feel stupid.*

### **Support from the group**

Being with others in the same situation was felt to be important by six interviewees on all training courses:

*The first thing was being with others in the same situation as myself. That was the main point there. Before I thought I was on my own 'thick [me] – can't do nothing' – so many wanted the same goal, it gave me more confidence.*

*Being with mums and women who were just as unsure and non confident about dipping toes in the water ... we were able to see we were all really there for the same reason ... it was safe, making a mistake was okay.*

### **B The service itself**

All those interviewed had found the service useful to varying degrees – the average score on their questionnaires was 4.4, compared with the average 4.14 for all responders. Five elements of the service stood out as being extremely important to a high proportion of those interviewed. They were:

#### **The support while using the service**

Keeping in close touch, help where needed – careers advice, job vacancies, emotional support and help with any problems, raised by 12 of the 20.

*Like when I was there they kept saying are you alright, are you okay, do you need any help, are you stuck? They don't leave you there ... they know very well how to do the helping side and it made it easier.* (from a young woman using the advice service)

*If you didn't turn up, Owen phoned me – he supported me a lot – made me want to do things.* (from a young person using the advice service)

*I was given support all the way through 'til I got a job.* (from an ex-trainee)

*Because it was one to one and not a group, Pat had time for me.* (from a women using the advice service)

#### **Skills**

How to fill in application forms, write CVs and covering letters, do interviews, create a business plan, use computers (or whatever is appropriate to the programme) – 12 of the 20. One who had done casual work for eight years said:

*I knew exactly what I wanted and where I wanted to go – a job. I just needed to be told how to go about it – I'd always got a negative response before. At Bootstrap I was told what to say and how to break it down ... I was told I was an advocate and carer at a tender age [looking after his grandmother] and it was a skill I could use to get work in health and social care. This experience has taken me through to get a full time job.* (from a man who used the advice and training services)

#### **Long-term follow-up support**

This is available to all service users for as long as they need it – mentioned by ten of the responders. Several had come in briefly for help with a CV or a reference, others

to use the computer or look for vacancies or training/ education opportunities, up to four years after first using Bootstrap's services. One who got a job straight after Bootstrap said:

*The staff said 'We're here if you need us – give us a call, it doesn't matter where and when – if we're not available we'll make time.' I've not experienced that before, it's unconditional, just there. I don't know if others took it up but I feel I could go back at any time which is marvellous.*

And another:

*Bootstrap always said we could come back and I did come to do my CVs. I didn't even have to book a computer – I could just get on with it. It's a helpful service, especially when you start applying for jobs. That's how I got the post.*

*The fact she stayed overtime just to help me with the interview – it helped a lot – it did mean a lot.*

*They do help you after – they gave support and I got advice. I'm sure if I picked up the phone now, there would be someone there to help me.*

The remaining two: 'Introduction to computers' and 'Mastering other useful subjects' related to the training courses only and are covered in Section C below.

Between a quarter and a third of the group mentioned the following eight elements of Bootstrap's services:

#### **Resources**

Access to computer, fax, phone, etc.

*At the Access Centre they have a phone and papers – they realise you do not have enough money on you – I went to phone employers and get application forms. (from a man using the advice service)*

*What was more helpful was having the services there – having the computer to do the CV and having the phone to ring the vacancies up – it was really good. Sometimes Pauline would ring on my behalf. I used postage to send out applications – it was all that (that was important). (from a young man using the advice service)*

#### **Information**

On the sorts of vacancies, where to find them, benefits etc. 'Information' was rated much higher by those responding to the questionnaire (65 per cent).

#### **Being near to home**

More relevant to the estate-based centres.

#### **Services suitable for all levels**

Whatever their background or ability.

#### **Flexible services**

Able to pick out what they needed when they needed it: for example, a range of job search and advice services available on a drop in basis.

#### **Gave contacts**

With others in the same situation, employers, other helpful agencies.

#### **Biscuits and tea**

These were available free on the courses and at most of the centres. This was significant for four in the group, as one said:

*Most of us on the course, our cultural lineage was (very different), people from Nigeria, others not Nigerian. When you came on the course you were offered something to keep you warm – coffee or tea.*

#### **Childcare and travel costs**

This was available for those on the training courses and sometimes for those using the advice service so that they could attend interviews.

#### **C Some important features of the services related to the training courses only**

Those interviewed mentioned many features of the training which were important, ranging from small classes to the value of the practical elements and participation. Those most noted were:

#### **Introduction to computers**

Twelve of the 15 on training courses thought that the training in basic computer skills was very important. They usually covered word processing, database and spreadsheet, leading to a level 1 RSA qualification.

#### **Mastering other useful subjects**

For example job search, maths, letter writing, presentation skills, assertiveness, anger management, stress

management, teamwork, constructive criticism and dealing with conflict – raised by nine of the 15 trained. Some comments:

*I had not worked in this country before and it was a way of teaching us to get into the job market, starting from scratch.*

*... dealing with conflict maturely – that was a very strong growing point for me and helped me a lot in following years.*

*Actually the course did help with my literacy and numeracy – even though I thought I knew it all.*

#### **The whole training package**

Useful elements and put together in a useful way, mentioned by seven:

*It was a very thorough course and I enjoyed the placement and the breakdown of what I had to do. The course was exactly right – it gave (me) an opening.*

#### **Transferability of existing skills**

Mentioned by four:

*All the skills I had I didn't know until I had them pointed out to me. I was able to sell myself better and able to cross over from what I used to be to what I am now.*

#### **Push not pressure**

An ambitious programme and detailed monitoring of progress but understanding of the pressures faced by the students – mentioned by three:

*It didn't matter what colour or what age we were – if you didn't quite get the homework done, that was okay as long as you understood – it was push not pressure.*

#### **Role model**

Provided by Bootstrap staff and other students, mentioned by three:

*I started to look around me and started to admire the women both on the course and teaching and admired who they were professionally and I started to think I'd love to be able to do something like that. I know I'm capable.*

#### **An introduction to adult learning**

Mentioned by three:

*I've done a three month Bootstrap course, a one year access course and a three year degree and I still put down that Bootstrap was the turning point for me academically. I learnt so much in those three months, it was like feeding a hunger. (from someone who came to Bootstrap with one 'O' level)*

And from another with no qualifications before she came to Bootstrap:

*I was not aware of adult education before and found out I was not too old.*

#### **Dissolving learning barriers**

Particularly around maths and IT, mentioned by three. As one interviewee with no qualifications before she went to Bootstrap said:

*Me and maths – a real phobia, but I enjoyed it – I felt I really learnt something.*

#### **Other agencies/people involved and their effectiveness**

While those interviewed attributed much of the change they underwent after Bootstrap to the effect of Bootstrap's intervention, 12 had also received valuable help from other sources. These ranged from friends and family, government agencies and programmes to local community groups and employers. Help ranged from encouragement and good-quality training to actually finding vacancies.

#### **Key individuals**

Five interviewees had been helped by family or friends who had put them in touch with vacancies or given encouragement. Employers had motivated two at a key moment. One interviewee, who had been made redundant from her first job after Bootstrap, said:

*My manager saw me and said 'You've got all these qualifications – you could do better.' It really motivated me.*

She applied for a more senior post and was successful.

For another, her children's teacher encouraged her to get a childcare certificate while she volunteered at the school:

*You're brilliant with kids, you've got a lot of patience.*

She did this and her career got started.

#### **Other agencies**

Two had received support from their churches.

Volunteering on an informal basis for a refugee group had been the turning point for one. It broke the barrier to further education, which this man had had since adolescence:

*I wanted to try. Something had changed by then – the voluntary work had helped build my confidence and reduced the barrier to further education.*

Seven had left Bootstrap to further their studies at local colleges and computer training agencies nearby. Most spoke very highly of the quality of the training and further education, although one felt that the University could have taken a more sympathetic approach to her plight when all three children caught chicken pox:

*... each of them went down one after another two weeks each and I had essay deadlines and no support from the university whatsoever. They suggested I leave and gave no extension. They wanted letters from the doctor and still couldn't guarantee anything for six months. At first I got low, then really pissed off saying 'you've got to be joking, I haven't come this far for you to tell me this. I'm not going to let you treat me like this because if you get away with it, you'll do it to someone else'.*

This same person had to raise funds for childcare so that she could attend her Access course. Her academic day was punctuated with frenzied dashes to get her three under-fives to their different carers in the morning, lunchtime and afternoon. Neither she nor one other interviewee in a similar situation could have done this without the use of a car.

Another who went on to a higher-level computer course commented:

*On the course I'm doing now, if I had this course when I first started, I would definitely have dropped out. You're not treated as a grown up and I have the feeling of being under valued because I am unemployed. The only supportive one is the*

*receptionist – she is the only one who gives the human side.*

Jobcentres had found vacancies for two and referred one to a Bootstrap course. There was a more mixed response to their experience of the Jobcentres and in one instance, the Careers Service. The main complaint seemed to be insufficient support and care over referral and lack of resources such as the use of phones and computers. One lone parent and mother of three said:

*They were very mechanical – happily offering a job knowing full well there's not enough money for childcare and rent – expect you to do it then get into trouble. There's no assessment of benefit – nothing. They just offer anything to get you out of the way.*

And a 16-year-old school leaver:

*I went to Careers but the woman was rude, so I didn't want to go back. The Jobcentre was helpful, but most of the jobs they got in were for older people – 18 plus and there was no information on training and college.*

#### **Ambition**

All had ambitious career plans. Some wanted to improve their skills and develop within their current job or organisation.

One woman who had suffered panic attacks and was unemployed for three years before Bootstrap said:

*The changes have sustained – I'm so positive, people ask me what I'm on. I'm ambitious and eventually will try for something (job) higher. I was given a lot of energy and go – nothing comes to you, you have to go for it out there.*

Many of these plans were described in the job trajectories. Three had longer-term plans to set up in business. The same woman said:

*I'm aiming to set up a mobile crèche service or nursery of my own. Being my own boss would be ideal.*

One who has had a chronic illness since leaving Bootstrap over a year before, simply wanted effective treatment started:

*I just want to work and that's all I know. I have years in front of me and I can't just sit at home. I need to fight this thing.*

Interviewees were asked what three things they thought would help their ambitions to happen. Clearly their own determination and courage was crucial, and several mentioned this. But in addition, half felt advice or assistance would help – career options, business plans and finance, signposting to further training or education and help with getting a better-paid job.

### Done it without Bootstrap?

Nine out of the 20 interviewed felt they could not have got to where they were now without Bootstrap. As one who had done occasional casual work during the previous 20 years and was now working as an administrator in a school said:

*Bootstrap was extremely important. If I hadn't gone to Bootstrap and seen the job advert, I would probably still be doing cleaning or on the dole or part time bits and pieces here and there – childcare, baby-sitting – I needed a kick and a boost to say you're capable. I hadn't realised how capable I was ... it gave so much confidence and courage to stand up.*

Seven thought they would have done it another way, perhaps found another source of help to have made it happen. They were at a point in their lives where they needed to change and that would have driven them on. One woman with one 'O' level, who trained at Bootstrap, went on to do an Access course at the local college and then to university where she got a 2.1 degree. She has a job at present but wants to go on to do a masters degree in the future. She said:

*I think I would have eventually got there and achieved similar but not in anywhere near the timescale. Bootstrap did happen to the right person at the right time in her life. Everything that has happened to me since, I always go back to Bootstrap and draw on the experiences there.*

Another who changed career at 53 said:

*I don't know what would have happened but Bootstrap was exceptionally important to the change.*

### Improvements to the service

All interviewees were asked how they thought Bootstrap services could be improved.

Seven thought nothing could be done to improve the services. The answers from the remaining 13 were all different, but the two main themes were:

- better links to jobs and employers – ideally on the Internet.

This has been put into operation for most of Hackney's estates undergoing regeneration, with the development of a networked job matching and brokering service. One central service means one clear point of contact for employers with vacancies. All Bootstrap advice centres are part of this network but not all are yet on line.

- more training courses – higher level, longer, on the estates, computers and more basic skills.

The second is already being developed by Bootstrap who are now running more estate-based courses and higher-level vocational courses for unemployed people from 1999.

### Summary of the findings

While this is a small sample, in most cases these findings from interviewees are consistent and seem representative of the wider group responding to the questionnaire.

- The group of 20 interviewed was diverse and faced many barriers in the labour market. In particular:
  - 70 per cent were unemployed for over one year
  - 85 per cent were black or from ethnic minorities and many face discrimination
  - 40 per cent were lone parents
  - 60 per cent had no or only a basic level of qualification at school, 65 per cent had difficulties at school and, of these, 70 per cent had been separated from a parent through death, divorce or serious illness, in childhood
  - 25 per cent had teenage pregnancies.
- Just over half contacted Bootstrap through outreach services or word of mouth recommendation.
- All used the services to improve job prospects, but they had a variety of needs and job readiness.

- Many faced particular issues:
  - barriers to learning – fear, lack of confidence, cynicism
  - moving from casual, low-paid work
  - moving from the informal economy
  - childcare needs
  - overseas qualifications not recognised in the UK.
- Personal development changes:
  - 90 per cent developed confidence
  - 60 per cent developed direction and motivation
  - for 35 per cent it was a kick start or stepping stone
  - two – both young men, did not change but did find the service useful.
- Changes in employment prospects – there was a pattern of progression for 16 interviewed and a further two if they successfully make the next step, one was ill and one unemployed.
  - after Bootstrap:
    - 50 per cent into jobs (25 per cent full-time permanent)
    - 30 per cent into training
  - at time of interview:
    - 65 per cent in jobs (45 per cent full-time permanent)
    - 15 per cent in training or further education
    - all rated jobs highly, eight had increased their salaries, five expected to and four had moved from temporary to permanent jobs.
  - qualification levels: there was a shift upwards for most in the group between pre-Bootstrap and the interview:
    - those with no qualifications had dropped from 25 to 10 per cent
    - those with a low level (equivalent to NVQ level 1) had stayed the same (35 per cent)
    - those with a medium level (equivalent to NVQ levels 2 and 3) had increased from 35 to 45 per cent
    - those with a high level (equivalent to NVQ level 4) had increased from 5 to 15 per cent
    - in addition, two were completing degrees
  - individual trajectories – the progression for those in work or training was more complex than might appear:
    - 11 had changed or were changing career
    - seven were developing their careers
- five were financially worse off (two with part-time jobs and three career changing)
- one volunteering after Bootstrap and at interview had got a degree in between
- one doing a part-time degree was ‘churning’ in and out of training schemes
- in addition, one who was not progressing was ‘churning’ in and out of jobs.
- Other changes: half noted other beneficial changes after using Bootstrap’s services; these included more friends, support and involvement in their communities and an improvement in health and parenting skills.
- What works:
  - the way the service is delivered:
    - 70 per cent the caring, friendly approach
    - 60 per cent encouragement/staff believed in them
    - 55 per cent treated like an adult/with respect
    - 50 per cent treated like an individual/accepted/valued
    - 45 per cent ‘going at my pace’
    - 35 per cent understood/listened to/reassured
    - 30 per cent support from the group (peer support)
  - the service itself:
    - 60 per cent the support during the service – keeping in close touch/advice/help
    - 60 per cent skills – job search, basic skills, business planning
    - 50 per cent long-term follow-up support
    - 25–33 per cent mentioned resources, information, near to home, biscuits and tea, childcare and travel costs
  - important features of the training services (for 15 only)
    - 80 per cent computer training
    - 60 per cent mastering other useful subjects – soft skills and basic skills
    - 47 per cent the whole package of useful elements delivered in a useful way
    - 20–27 per cent mentioned push not pressure, transferability of existing skills, role models, a good introduction to further education and dissolving learning blocks.
- What else helped – the role of others – encouragement and support from:
  - family and friends
  - employers

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- church
  - agencies, including Jobcentres and training agencies.
  - What hindered – unhelpful, rude, disrespectful, insensitive behaviour from some staff in employment, education and training agencies.
  - Ambitions
    - all had career plans
    - half needed help to see them through.
  - Done it without Bootstrap?
    - 90 per cent thought Bootstrap was important in bringing about these changes
  - 45 per cent thought they could not have done it without Bootstrap
  - 40 per cent were registered unemployed when they went to Bootstrap.
  - Service improvements:
    - better links to jobs and employers – ideally on the Internet
    - more training courses
      - on the estates
      - higher level
      - on computers.

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