

## **Tracking the Progression of Vocational Learners in Health and Social Care into Higher Education within Herefordshire & Worcestershire: Trends within the Data for 2005/6, 2006/7 & 2007/8**

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### **Abstract:**

This briefing paper looks at learners entering Level 4 qualifications in Health and Social Care over 2005/6, 2006/7, and 2007/8. It identifies five trends within the data:

- Slight decrease in number of learners starting L4 + courses
- Marked decrease in the overall numbers of learners entering HE with vocational qualifications
- Marked decrease in the proportion of learners entering HE with vocational qualifications
- Marked decrease in the proportion of vocational learners entering University of Worcester from local Further Education colleges (LLN Partner colleges)
- Slight decline in learners entering with 'APEL / APL or No Formal Qualifications'

### **Introduction:**

This report by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Lifelong Learning Network considers learner progression in Health and Social Care, with particular interest in the progression of vocational learners. The research into progression in Health and Social Care is part of an ongoing research project tracking learners across 3 curriculum areas, and is based on data collected from 5 Higher Education (HE) providers in Herefordshire & Worcestershire.

L4 courses in Health and Social Care in Herefordshire and Worcestershire are provided in 3 institutions (see appendix a). The University of Worcester is the largest provider, and also validates awards in partner colleges. Provision in the area has not remained constant over the period, and is influenced by student needs, funding changes, employer engagement and wider changes in Health and Social Care.

The research analyses data supplied by HE providers and taken from student records and application forms.

### **The Research:**

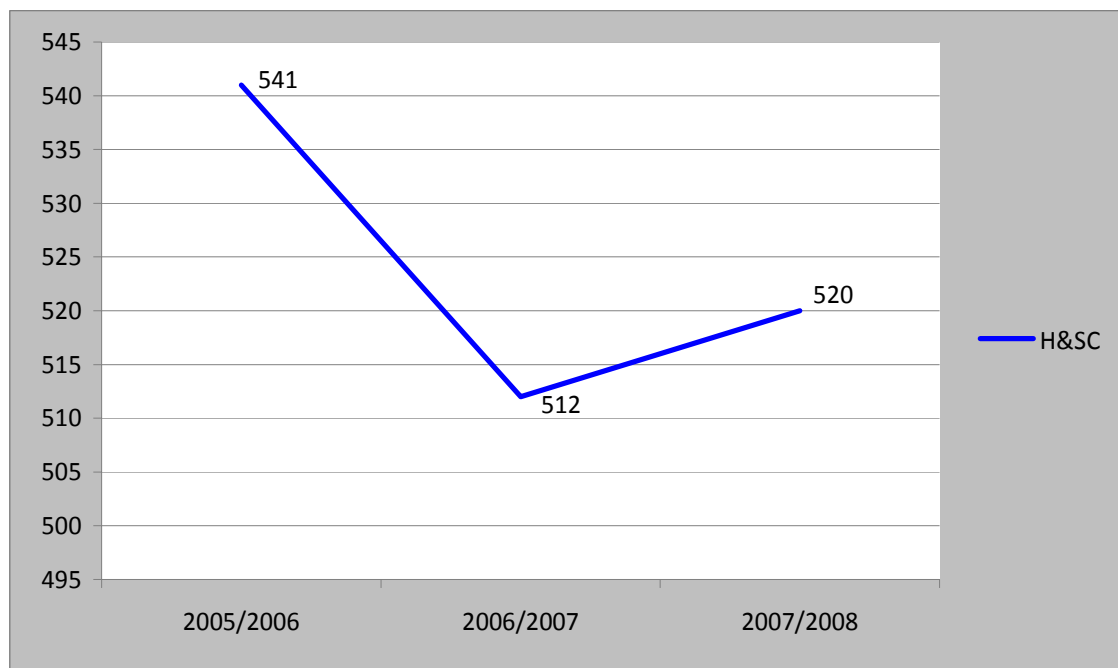
Data is collected annually from participating colleges and inputted into a database. The data relates to individual students and is taken from student records and application forms. The data is then classified by institution and course. Courses are identified by JACS code or are identified by institutions.

Where there is data on students' highest qualifications on entry to HE, this is used to identify students with L3 vocational qualifications and students with L3 A/AS qualifications. There are some issues of the consistency of the data, as different colleges collect and store the data in different ways; consequently some data required modification and not all student information included all fields of information. However there has been a high degree of consistency in the data collection and analysis across the three years.

**1. Slight decrease in number of learners starting L4+ courses in Health and Social Care**

The total number of learners entering level 4+ courses in Health and Social Care (see appendix (a) for list of courses) declined slightly over the period from 541 in 2005/2006 to 520 in 2007/2008. However it is hard to identify an underlying trend as the intervening year saw a larger drop in student numbers.

**Health and Social Care  
Chart 1 - Number of Students starting undergraduate courses**

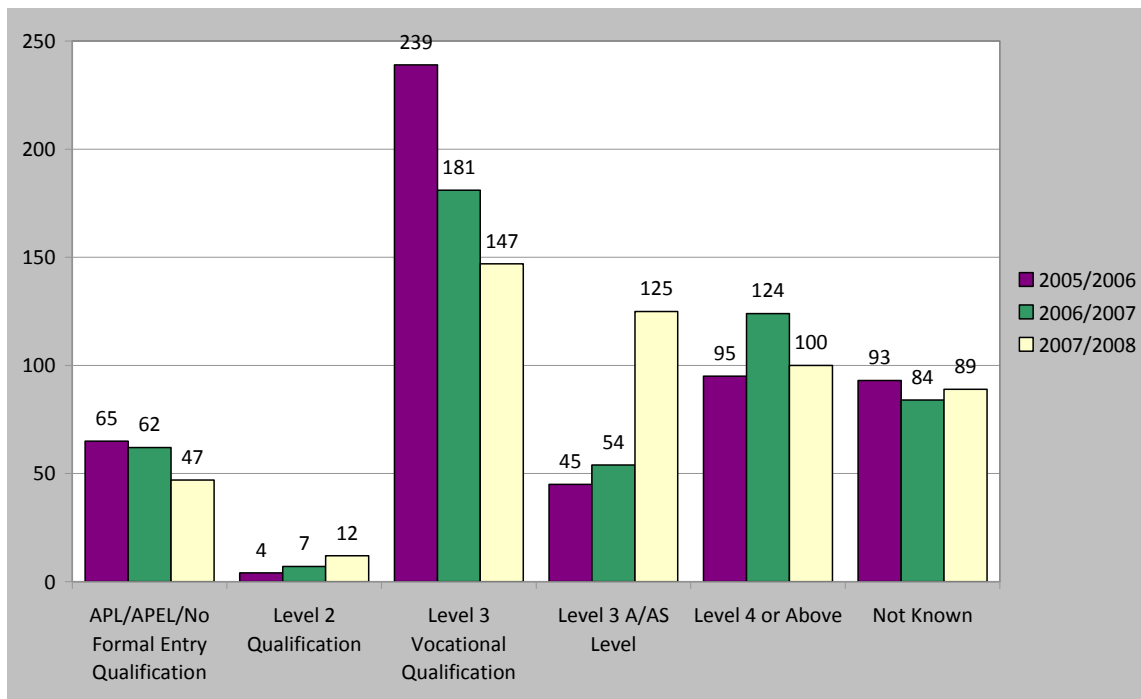


Although it is not possible to identify a clear downward trend from the three years surveyed (chart 1), there has been a slight reduction in numbers of learners starting HE courses in Health and Social Care from 2005/2006 to 2007/2008. However it is difficult to assess whether changes in student numbers indicate changes in provision or in the numbers of student applications. Inclusion of data for 2008/2009 may provide a better picture of the underlying trend, and may reflect a significant number of new courses that have been developed since 2007. Thus it is possible that the long term trend will be upwards, but this is not supported by the current data.

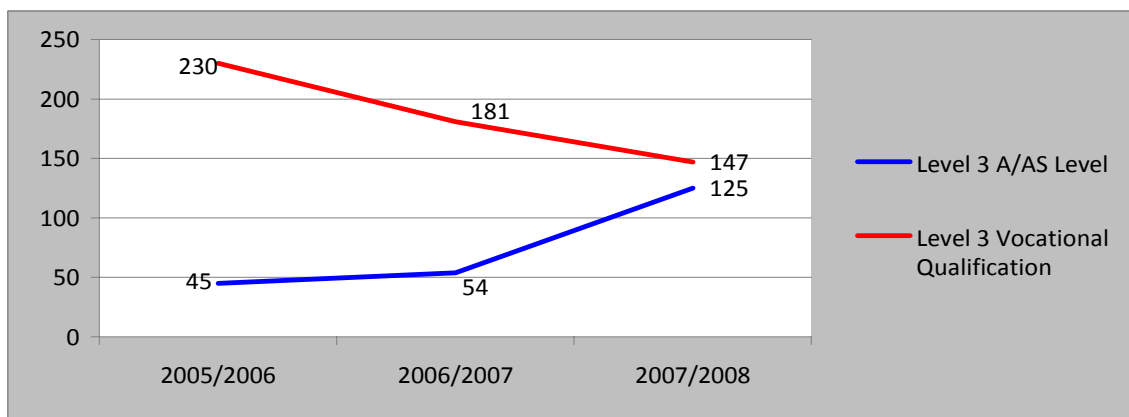
**2. Marked decrease in the numbers of learners entering HE with vocational qualifications**

Chart 2 shows the highest qualifications at entry of students entering HE in Health and Social Care. Chart 3 shows a comparison of numbers of learners entering courses in Health and Social Care, and an increase in learners with A/AS levels as their highest entry qualification. It shows an upward trend in the numbers of learners holding A/AS levels and a downward trend in the number of students with L3 vocational qualifications. The number of vocational learners declined from 238 in 2005/2006 to 147 in 2007/2008 an overall decline of 38%. It should be noted that learners who hold both A/AS and vocational qualifications are counted as vocational learners. The downward trend in the numbers of vocational students is clear and sustained across all three years

**Health & Social Care  
Chart 2 - Number of Registrations shown by Highest Entry Qualification**



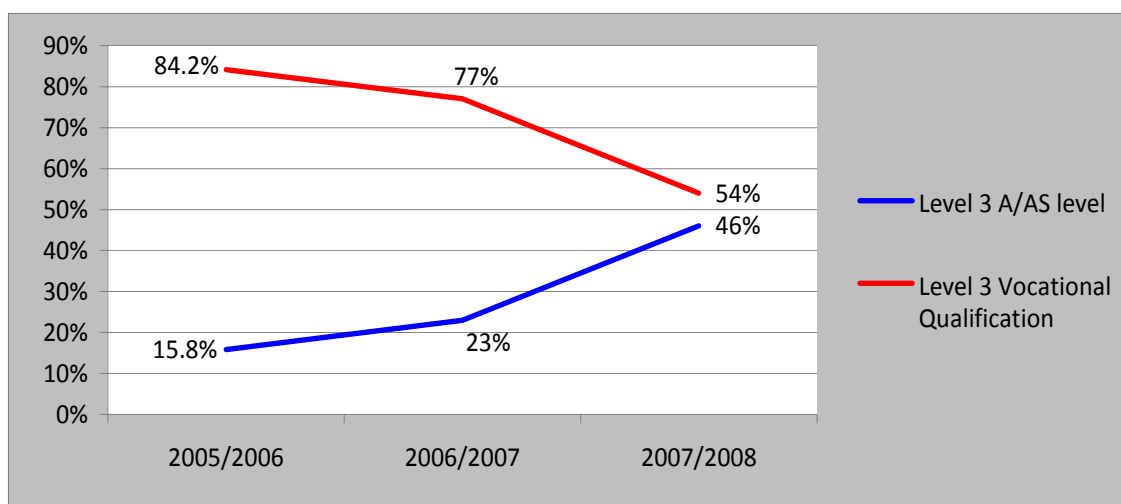
**Health & Social Care  
Chart 3 - Number of Registrations listing 'L3 Vocational Qualification' and 'Level 3 A/AS Level'**



**3. Marked decrease in the proportion of learners entering HE with vocational qualifications**

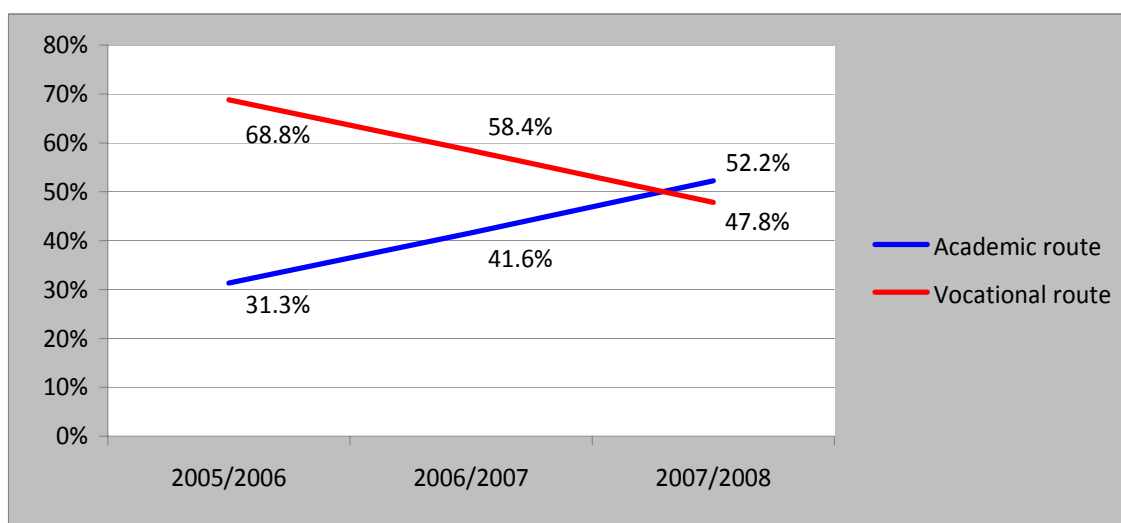
The proportion of learners with vocational qualifications to those with equivalent academic qualifications declined from 84.2% in 2005/2006 to 54% in 2007/2008. Despite major changes in the numbers of learners starting in each year the data shows a clear trend towards academic qualifications (Chart 4).

**Health & Social Care**  
**Chart 4 - Proportion of Level 3 A/AS level to Level 3 Vocational Qualifications (%)**



The data can also be illustrated by comparing academic and vocational routes (Chart 5). Here the academic route includes all students categorised by their highest qualification on entry as 'L3 A/AS' and 'Level 4+', whilst the vocational route includes students categorised by their highest qualification on entry as 'L3 vocational qualifications', 'APL/APEL/ No formal qualifications' and 'level 2'.

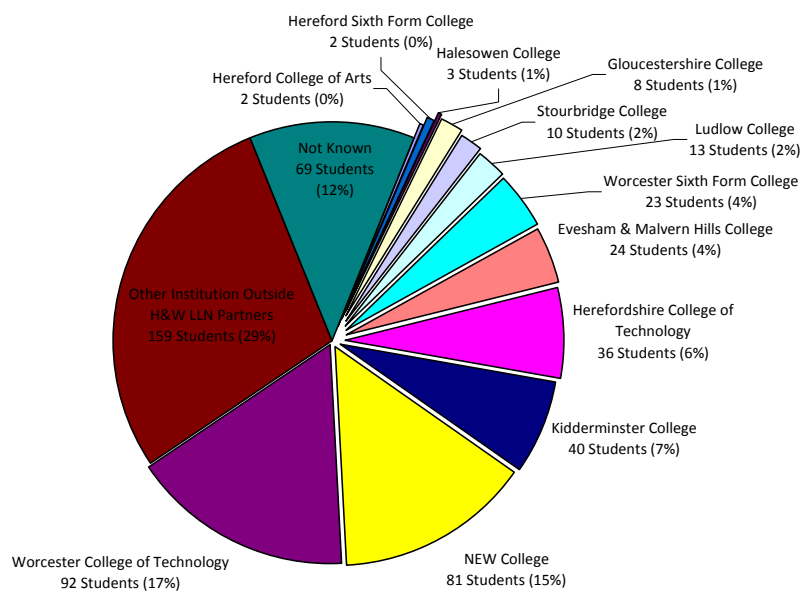
**Health & Social Care**  
**Chart 5 - Proportion of Academic route to Vocational route (%)**



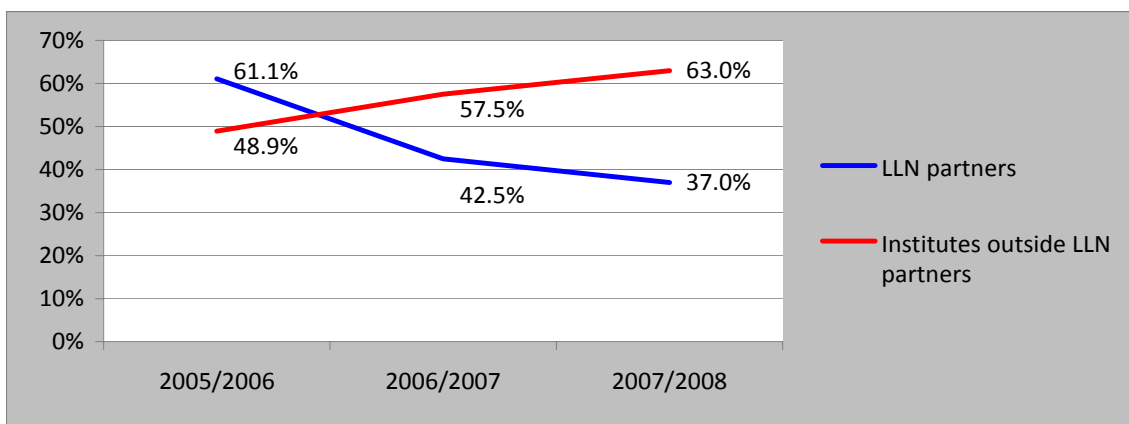
**4. Marked decrease in the proportion of vocational learners entering University of Worcester from local Further Education colleges (LLN Partner colleges)**

The University of Worcester is the biggest provider of L4+ courses in Health and Social Care in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Chart 6 shows the last place of study for students starting L4+ course in Health and Social Care at the University of Worcester between 2005/2006 and 2007/2008. It illustrates the high proportion of students who progress from local institutions. However Chart 7 shows a clear trend away from students progressing from local further education colleges with only 37% of students starting in 2007/2008 coming from local FE colleges (LLN partners) compared with 51% in 2005/2006.

**Health & Social Care  
Chart 6 - Number & Percentage of Level 3 Vocational Students Progressing from a Local FE College on to an Undergraduate Course at the University of Worcester from 2005/6 - 2007/8**



**Health & Social Care  
Chart 7 - Percentage of vocational students entering Level 4+ qualifications at University of Worcester whose last place of study is an LLN partner college**



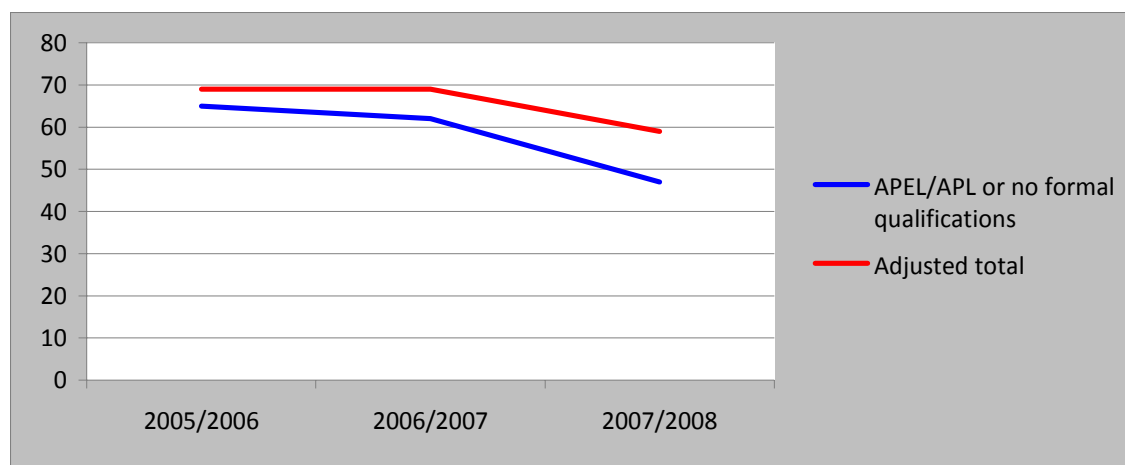
**5. Slight decline in learners entering with APEL / APL or No Formal Qualifications**

The number of learners entering HE programmes in Health and Social Care with ‘APEL / APL or no formal qualifications’ declined from 65 in 2005/ 2006 to 47 in 2007/2008. This represents a 28% decrease over the three years.

However each year a number of learners enter Health and Social Care courses with their highest qualification on entry listed as ‘Level 2’. As this is below the formal requirements for entry to L3 programmes, it seems probable that these students have been given recognition on application or interview for experiences or qualifications not listed. Thus a combined figure may provide a better picture of learners with ‘non-standard qualifications’. The adjusted total shows a decline from 69 in both 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 to 59 in 2007/2008. This represents a 14.5% decline over the three years.

Highest Qualification Claimed	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
APEL / APL or no formal qualifications	65	62	47 (72.0%)
Level 2	4	7	12
<b>Adjusted Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>59 (84.5%)</b>

**Health & Social Care**  
**Chart 8 – Number of students entering HE programmes with ‘APEL/APL or no formal qualifications’ and adjusted total to include students entering HE with ‘Level 2’ as highest qualification on entry**



**Appendix A**

**Summary of Level 4 Courses included within the data for Health & Social Care:**

Herefordshire College of Technology:

BTEC Professional Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling  
HNC in Counselling Skills  
HND in Counselling

Worcester College of Technology:

NVQ in Care  
NVQ in Health and Social Care  
NVQ in Registered Manager (Adults)

University of Worcester:

DipHE  
First Degree  
Foundation Degree  
Graduate Diploma Nursing  
HND  
UG Credit

Also included are all University of Worcester courses that relate to the following JACS codes:

**B300** Complementary Medicine  
**B700** Nursing  
**B900** Others in Subjects allied to Medicine  
**L500** Social Work