

Clerking in the new era:
implications for college governance

Annex C

Clerks' training requirements and
support services



Contributions

Grateful thanks to Roger Morris, Chair of the AoC's Governors Council, the Steering Group and LSIS staff for their unfailing support, guidance and professionalism throughout this project:

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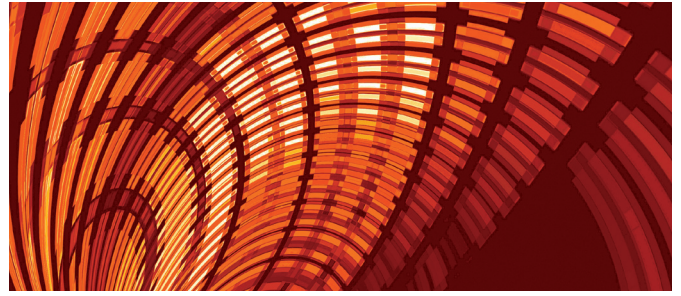
NCN Members; Joanne Dean, Assistant Governance Manager and Helpline Adviser AoC; Landex; SFCA; Linda Barrett FE Clerks Mailbase; and six pilot clerks.

Participants in the study

A special thank you to all clerks who responded to the online survey, took part in focus groups and confidential interviews. Without your full participation, and willingness to contribute, this project would not have been possible. Particular thanks to those experienced clerks for their advice and support throughout, and for providing an unfailing example to me.

Catherine Brumwell, independent researcher and author of report

All sections of the report including the annexes can be downloaded from www.lsis.org.uk or www.fegovernance.org



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1. Introduction

This annex is one of a series of reports as part of the research into the role of the clerk. This focuses on clerks' training requirements and support services.

The survey asked clerks a range of questions about clerks' training requirements arising from their roles and responsibilities. Clerks were asked about their awareness and use of a variety of training and support services. The research also asked clerks to indicate their control and level of training budgets, and finally their participation in the clerks' qualification.

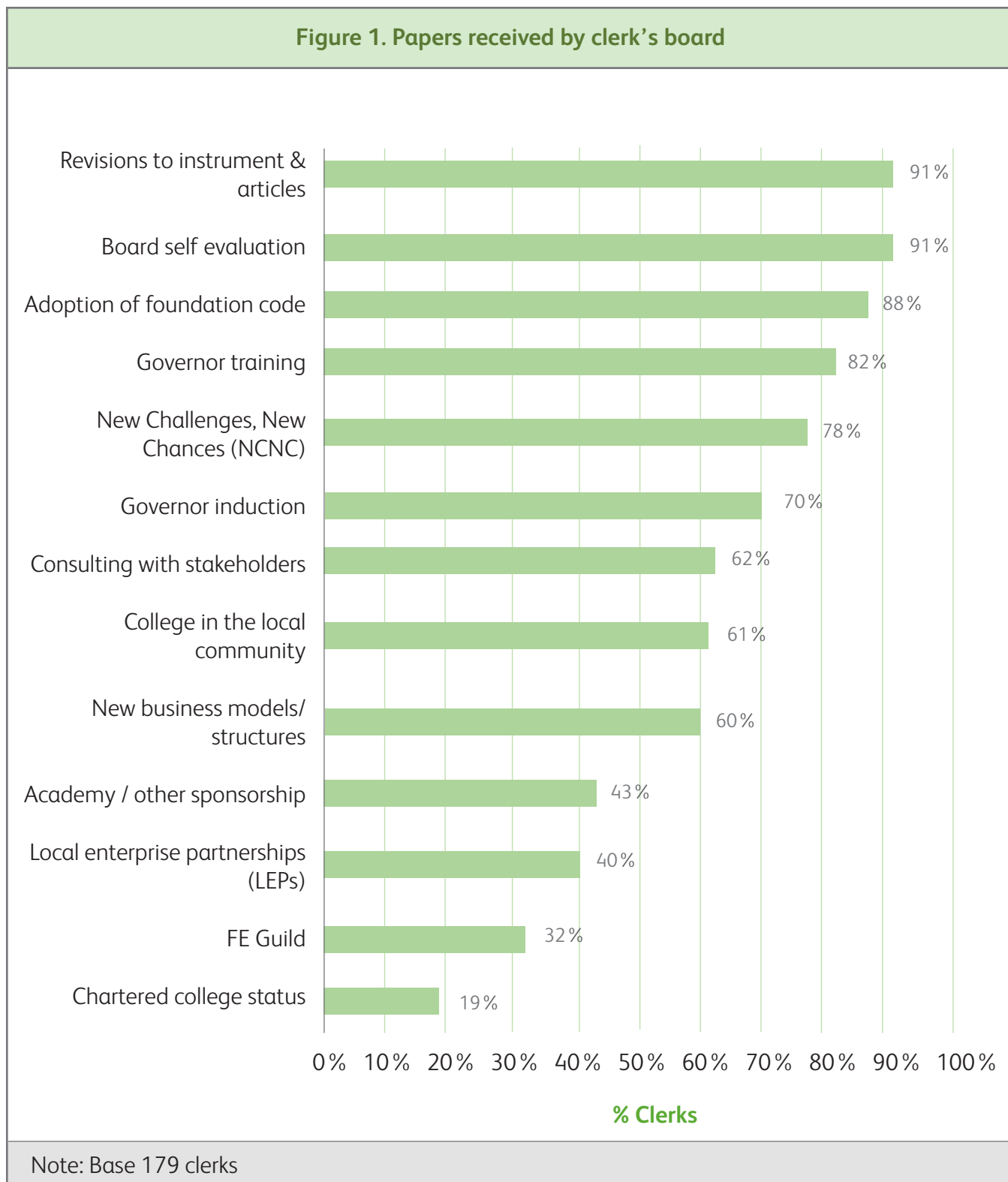
The full report includes a chapter on the research methodology upon which the findings are based. The research included an anonymous online survey, telephone and face-to-face interviews and focus groups. The charts and tables are based on the online survey responses from 184 clerks. As some clerks clerk more than one college, this represents approximately 220 colleges, approximately 65 % of all colleges. These 184 clerks form the 'base' of the survey. Where the base is different, for instance with filtered questions, or if the base is a subgroup of a variable, this is shown in the footnotes. Percentages are rounded to the nearest percentage point.

Comments and opinions have been gathered either through the survey, interviews or focus groups. The confidentiality of clerks has been respected throughout this ethical piece of research. The report is written so that individual clerks or colleges cannot be identified.

Challenges and priorities for effective clerking in FE colleges arising from the survey are included in the Summary Report.

2. Papers received by the board

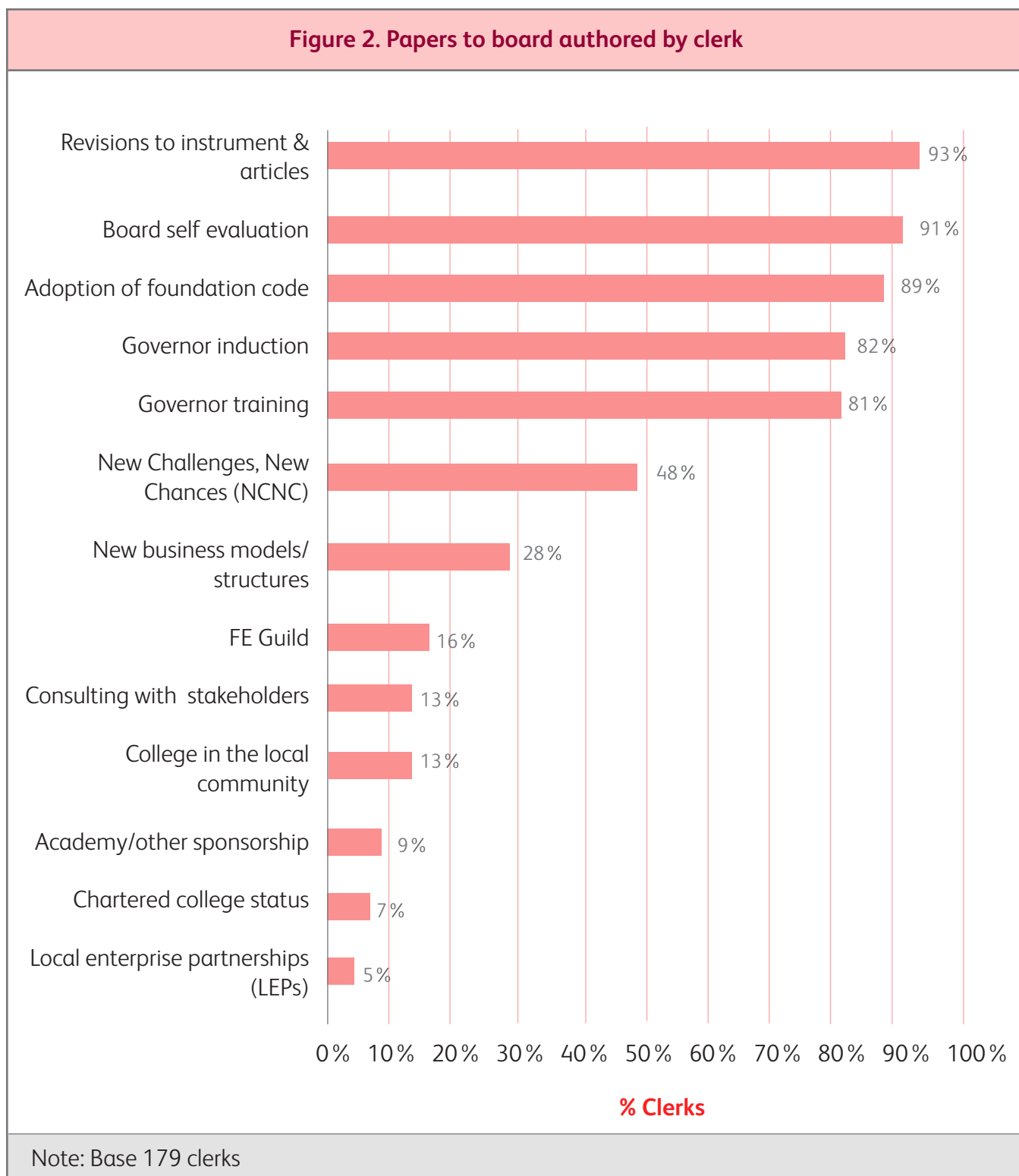
Papers received by the board give some indication of the content of meetings and level of activity at board level on a range of topics, as shown in figure 1. Around nine in ten clerks said their board receives papers for revisions to Instruments & Articles of Government (I&As) (91%), board self-evaluation (91%) and the adoption of the Foundation Code of Governance (88%). A high proportion of clerks also indicated that their boards received papers on governor training (82%) and governor induction (70%).



Papers directly related to the new freedoms and flexibilities are submitted to nearly all boards, suggesting clerks are bringing the information to the boards for consideration, or for information. Papers were submitted to boards on 'New Challenges, New Chances' (78%). Clerks indicated that their board receives papers relating to consulting with stakeholders (62%), college in the community (61%) and new models / structures (60%). Boards also receive papers relating to academies or other educational institution sponsorship (43%) and Local Enterprise Boards (LEPS) (40%). Fewer clerks indicated that their board receives papers relating to the FE Guild (32%) or Chartered College Status (19%), although this may change with the imminent establishment of the FE Guild.

3. Clerk as author of paper to the board

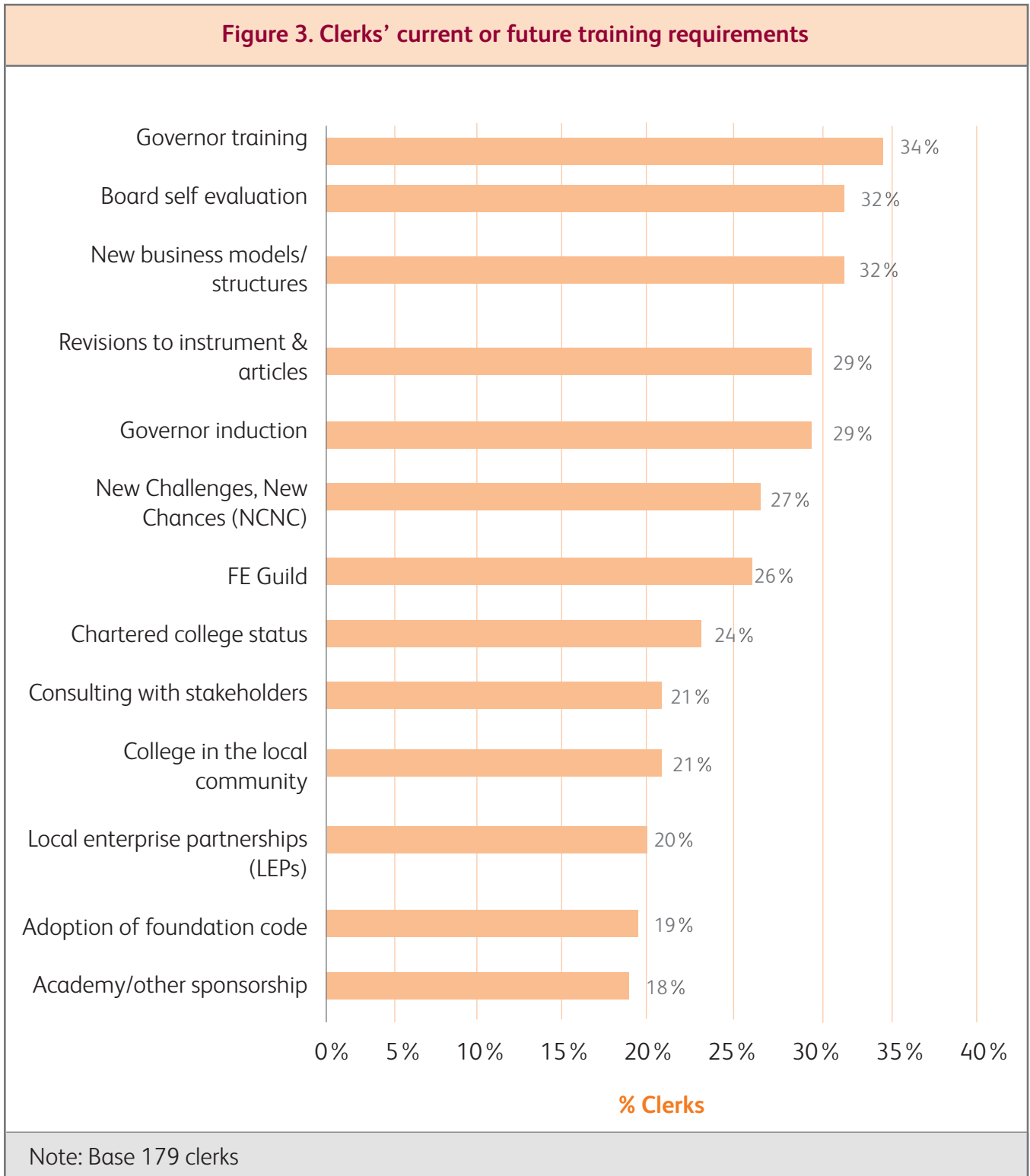
Papers sent to the board and authored by the clerk give some indication of the activity and workload directly related to the clerk, and possible training. This also provides evidence of their governance advisory role as opposed to possibly purely administrative role, ie writing papers for the board as opposed to passing papers to the board. By far the highest level of activity where clerks author papers is around the governance of the board including revisions to I&As (93%), board self-evaluation (91%), adoption of the Foundation Code (89%), governor induction (82%) and governor training (81%).



In terms of topics related to the new freedoms, almost half (48%) of all clerks author their own papers relating to 'New Challenge, New Chances' (NCNC). Clerks are less likely to author their own papers for new business models (28%), consulting with stakeholders (13%), colleges in the local community (13%), academy or other sponsorship (9%) or LEPS (7%). Similarly, clerks are less likely to author papers for the FE Guild (16%) or Chartered College Status (7%), although this is likely to increase with the recent announcement by BIS to fund the FE Guild.

4. Current or future training requirements for clerk or board

Clerks were asked if they, or their board, had any current or future training requirements related to these topics. Training directly related to the governance of the board was most frequently required. Around a third of all clerks indicated governor training is required (34%), governor induction (29%), board self-evaluation (32%) and revisions to I&As (29%).



In terms of the new freedoms and changing agendas, around a third of all clerks require training for themselves or their board on new business models (32%), 'New Challenges, New Chances' (27%), and around a quarter for FE Guild (26%) and Chartered College Status (24%). Around a fifth of clerks indicated they or their board required training on consulting with stakeholders (21%), the college in the local community (21%), LEPS (20%), academy or other sponsorship (18%) and adoption of the Foundation Code (19%). A detailed analysis of clerks' training requirements in relation to the new freedoms is included in Annex D: New freedoms and flexibilities.

Clerks were asked to indicate training requirements required in their role or for their board. These are outlined in figures 4a, 4b and 4c

Figure 4a. Additional training requirements of clerks or their boards

Currently LSIS provides support and training for governance and it will be important to ensure this resource is not lost. Increasing expectations of governors need to be underpinned by training.

We have recently had a briefing from a specialist on the new freedoms including structures and the Principal keeps the Board updated on new developments.

Papers for governor induction and governor training sessions are prepared by the Executive Team and Clerk.

Charities Law / requirements and how that underpins regulations now that I&A more minimal Training activities/presentations are programmed into every Full Corporation agenda and to some committee agendas. At committee training events all governors are invited to the event and leave the meeting once the event has been completed.

Responsible for governor induction (delegated by board). Responsible for governance aspects of any NCNC papers

Effectiveness of the Audit Committee from non-sector specialists. Governance in group situations – ensuring the stewardship of public funds when delivery is through commercial structures

These are not all formal board papers - eg induction is for new governors, and I am only present for a part of that day. Some information sent out by email - eg LEP information from a recent Pearson briefing. We do attend most training opportunities, but eg NCNC has moved on from the theoretical to the practical and more training would be useful. LSIS is providing much useful information - eg 'Emerging models of delivery' - and its demise is deeply regrettable.

Anything specific to sixth form colleges

Federation reports, including shared services

All statutory requirements

Figure 4b. Additional training requirements of clerks or their boards

Need updated training material for clerks and governors-similar to the booklets produced by the LSC or FEFC?? Booklets were on the role of the committees and also covered finance/HR etc.

Freedom of Information

This varies but currently would be interested in: governors and Ofsted inspections, governors involvement in teaching and learning assessment, finance and funding changes, audit

Training for governors aspiring to become chairs. Charity Law

One of the key issues arising from external training and development opportunities is the ability of governors to meet with governors from other colleges. The Annual Governance Conference is of particular value in this respect.

Ofsted Inspection; training for governors

Periodic updates on safeguarding and EDI

Clerk - continual professional development and updating particularly on national policy issues/ legislative and regulatory changes. Governors – updating / briefings on Ofsted (ie Common Inspection Framework changes and trends in recent inspections); curriculum development / planning and branding / marketing the college; funding mechanisms and changes
We are aware that we need to do more work on local community and stakeholders but these reports would not be done by the clerk.

I deliver some of the governor training in-house. The board receives regular briefings from the principal, senior managers and the clerk on developments and new initiatives in the college sector.

Board: equality and diversity

FE Guild and Chartered Status will be raised at the Governors Strategic Planning Day in March.

Figure 4c. Additional training requirements of clerks or their boards

College in the community; company secretarial roles and responsibilities.

Much of this information is not in the form of board papers but information is disseminated to the board members via a monthly college, governance and FE sector update newsletter which I produce as clerk.

As clerk I also undertake the role of Freedom of Information Officer, have strategic overview of records management (supporting the senior management team), strategic overview of policies and procedures (supporting the senior management team).

The most frequently requested training requested by board members is about funding methodologies.

I am expected to identify governor training needs and to suggest how these are met.

General information about sector developments are provided but not often in isolation. Future training requirements are for equality and diversity as an ongoing need.

We still haven't cracked the soft skills training - eg scrutiny techniques.

Board agrees an annual training plan for governors. I have introduced termly twilight sessions delivered by college managers on key areas such as H&S, safeguarding, E&D. I produce all governance papers and have input to the principal's papers on other sector developments. A governor leads on community involvement and writes and presents those papers.

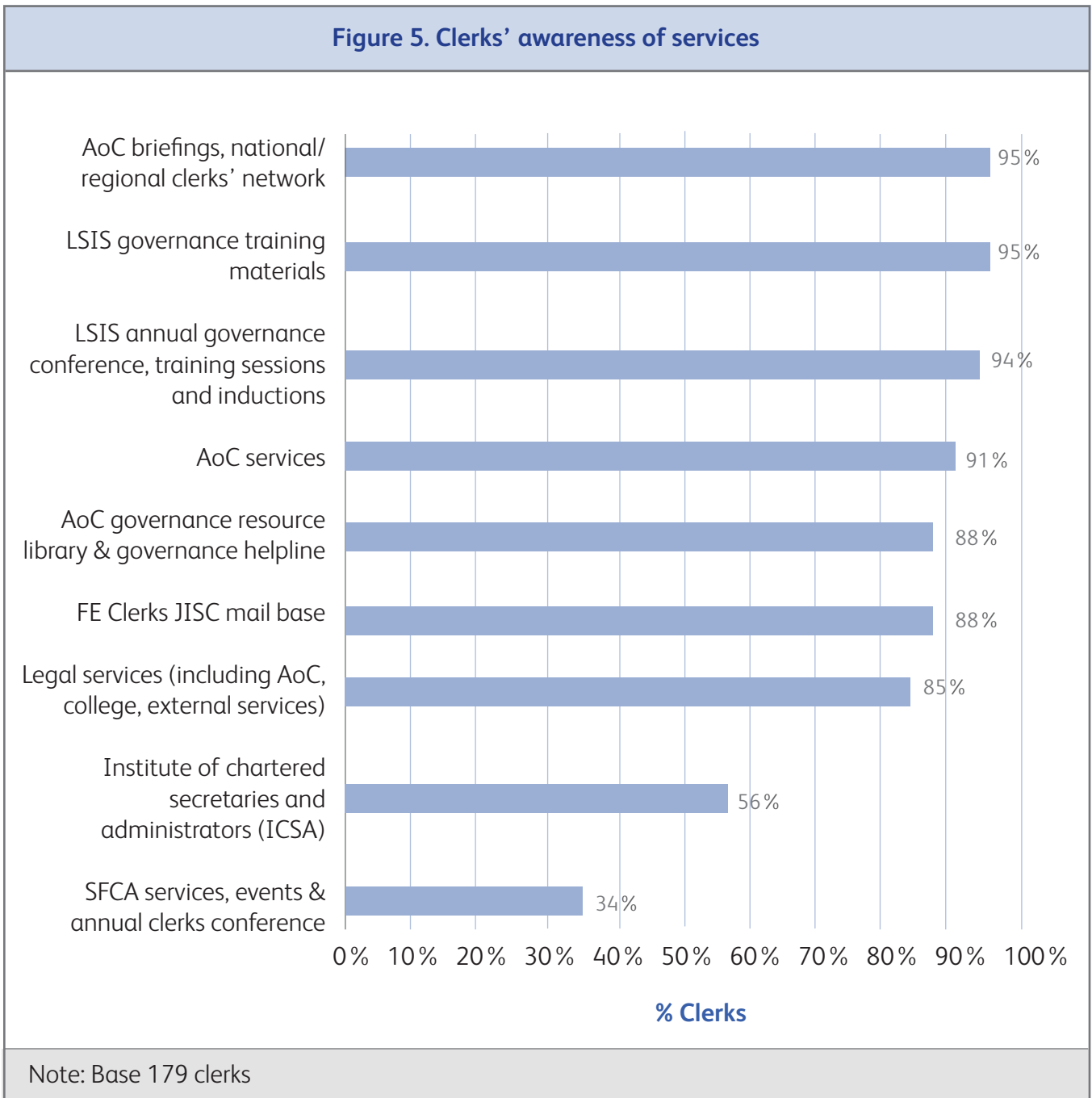
We have a commitment to a two day event which is strategically significant once per year and termly development events as well as weekly updates using the AoC bulletins to governors. I have corporate responsibility for Insurance.

Assisting governors to understand curriculum matters. Understanding the new Ofsted Inspection Framework and their role.

As clerk I would welcome some overview of the Charities Act as it applies to FE colleges. Ensuring all governors are fully aware of the Common Inspection Framework, how it relates to them and how to ensure that they are receiving all the relevant information they need in respect of the college's performance.

5. Awareness of training and support services

Clerks were asked if they were aware of a range of governance training and support services. Almost all clerks are aware of AoC briefings and National / Regional Clerks' Network (95%), LSIS governance training materials (95%) and LSIS annual governance conference, training sessions & inductions (94%).



Awareness is also very high for AoC Services (91%), the AoC Governance Resource Library and the Governance Helpline (88%), the FE Clerk JISC Mailbase (88%) and Legal Services, including AoC, college and external services (85%).

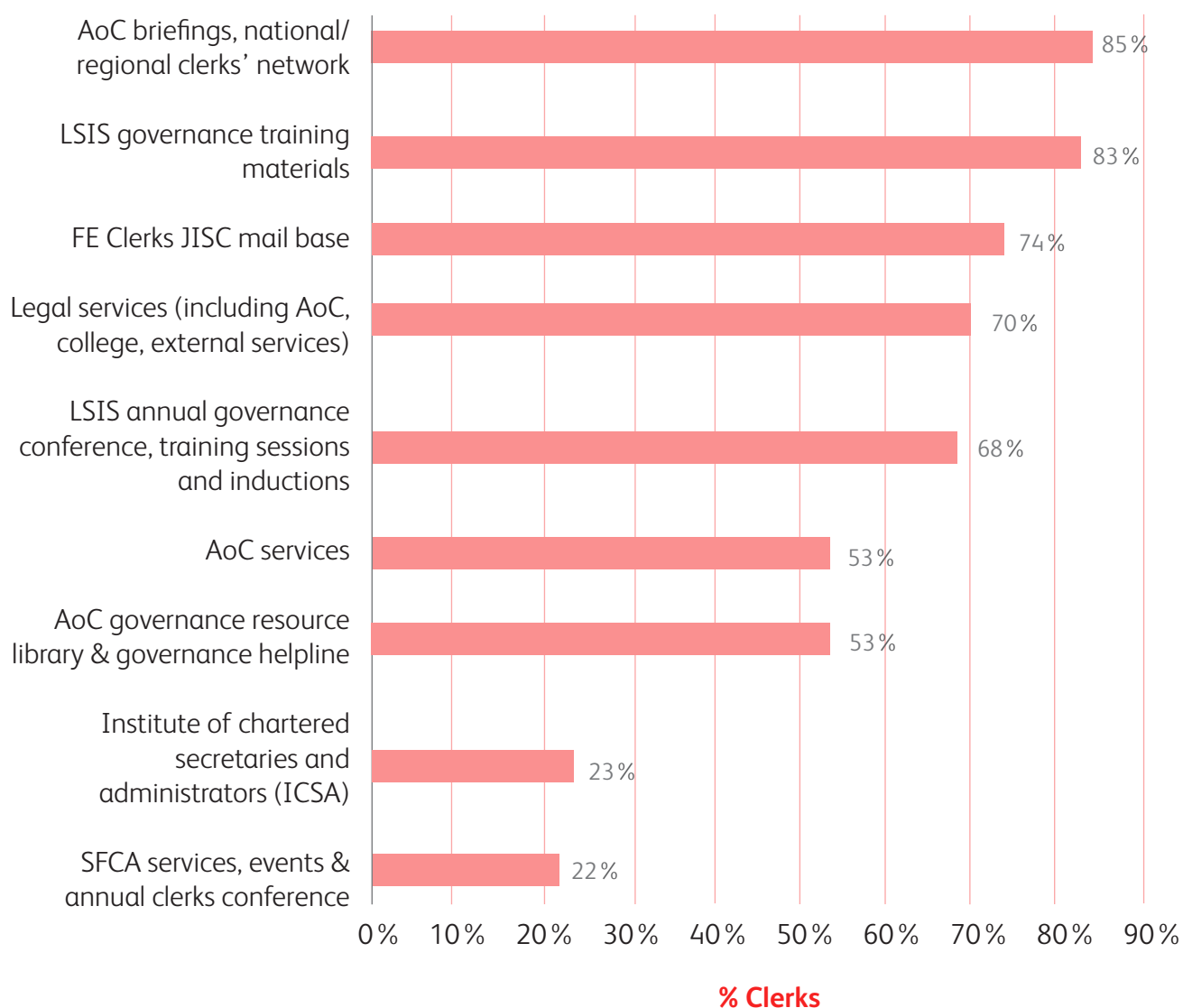
Over half (56%) of all clerks are aware of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries & Administrators (ICSA) and a third (34%) SFCA Services, Events & Annual Clerks Conference. On the latter, this is higher than

the proportion of sixth form college clerks in the survey (21 %), although some clerks who clerk more than one college clerk both GFE and sixth form colleges. This question also relates to awareness, not use, which is the focus of the next chapter.

6. Use of training and support services

Clerks were asked which sources of information they use for a range of training and support services, including if they use them to ensure their continuing professional development (CPD) requirements are met. Well over eight in ten clerks use AoC Briefings, National/Regional Clerks' Network (85%) and LSIS governance training materials (83%). Around three quarters of all clerks use the FE Clerks JISC Mailbase (74%), legal services, including AoC, college or external services (70%) and LSIS annual governance conference, training sessions and inductions (68%).

Figure 6. Clerks' use of services, including CPD



Note: Base 179 clerks

Over half of all clerks use the AoC Services (53%) or the AoC Governance Resource Library & Governance Helpline (53%). Less than a quarter of all clerks use the Institute of Chartered Secretaries & Administrators (ICSA) (23%) and the SFCA Services, Events & Annual Sixth Form College Clerks Conference (22%); the latter reflects the percentage of sixth form college clerks in the survey (21%). Clerks were asked to indicate other training and support services they use; these are included in figures 7a and 7b.

Figure 7a. Other training and support services used by clerks

My College is part of a group of sixth form colleges in the South East known as the Wessex Group which provides group training for governors and has a clerks' support group where we exchange good practice.

Locally organised governor training initiatives ie local group of colleges as opposed to nationally arranged events - balance governor time and travel against benefit. Reliance on clerking contacts as source of help/assistance as opposed to the Governance Helpline.

Briefings (newsletter and events) from audit firms; sector briefings from outside organisations eg Pearsons; LSIS; BIS; Skills Funding Agency; legal companies other than Eversheds.

I wrote some of the LSIS governance training materials and conduct some of the inductions. This is very good development for myself!

ICSA. Regional Clerks Network. Charities Commission. Companies House. Governance and Compliance magazine. KPMG. Audit Institute. National College for School Leadership

I also receive email information from Eversheds, Martineau and Pearson which can be very useful.

Internal Auditors

Local Clerks Network and peer to peer support from more experienced clerks has been invaluable. Statutory publications - Charities Commission Guidance - government publications - CMI newsletters

NORVIC training events (Leadership, Funding, Governance workshops) NORVIC Clerks group meeting

Figure 7b. Other training and support services used by clerks

FE Sussex Clerks network

Institute of Chartered Accountants England & Wales

CIPD and other related professional bodies

Would like to attend Governance Conference more often, but cannot because of budget constraints.

Networking with nearby colleges

Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development monthly magazine and on-line services. KPMG Audit Committee Institute. Eversheds briefings and training events. Walker Morris briefing sessions.

Some locally sourced trainers for items such as E & D.

Sussex Clerks Network

Benchmark training courses

College Solicitors. College Auditors. Training through College staff development including professional qualifications (Chartered Management Institute)

No - but I do think that many of the support services could be more practically based. Sometimes, very heavy weather is made of Clerking!!

Also receive newsletters from sector audit and legal firms, and Pearsons updates and FE Week. Most of the resources used are free [or part of a whole college sub] and available on line.

Networking through the NW clerks

Eversheds

AoC regional Clerks' network meetings - important resource in Yorkshire and the Humber. LSIS materials - excellence gateway

Pearson Policy Watch weekly briefings. LSIS newsletters. LSIS research outcomes. LSIS brief guides.

LSIS and AoC regional and national events on governance

Peer group of local clerks

I am a Chartered Accountant and have access to the ICAEW technical library Charity Commission and Companies House website also very useful, especially for academies

Occasional small, informal local clerks' meetings to discuss specific issues

Regional SFC Clerks' Network. Charity Commission Website

Local authority governance support

The list of support services is exhaustive and demonstrates the wide variety of training and support services that clerks access in order to keep themselves skilled, informed and up to date:

“I receive information from a wide range of sources which overall I find invaluable. Without this my role in keeping the board updated on sector developments/best practice would be a lot more difficult! I do sometimes find the inconsistencies between practice in sixth form colleges and FE colleges confusing (code of governance being one example) and would welcome clearer signposting of this when information is circulated.”

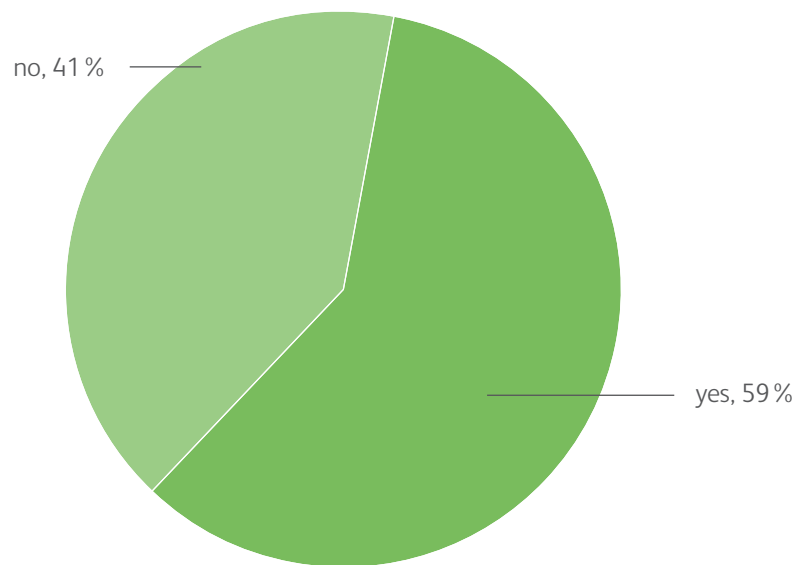
“I am concerned about what is going to happen post-LSIS with regard to the support for the development of both clerks and governors. The planned Governance Library will be a real asset but it is essential that services such as governor and clerk inductions, briefings on specific topics for both, regional/national events, conference opportunities are still made available. It is also essential that the newly revised Governance Training Materials are maintained and kept up to date and available electronically as these are a valued and well used resource by the sector, both governors and clerks.”

7. Budget for training

Access to budgets for governance has been raised as a significant factor in accessing to training. Clerks were asked if they control a budget for governance which includes training for governors and the clerk. Nearly six in ten (59%) clerks control a budget for training and the remaining 41% do not. Those who do not hold their own budget were asked to explain how they access the training budget.

Figure 8. Do you control a budget for governance which includes training for governors and the clerk?

■ yes ■ no



Note: Base 177 clerks

The answers reveal that many clerks still successfully access training budgets even though they are not themselves the budget holder:

“Not a budget manager but no request for training or support has yet been refused.”

“Although do not have a budget of my own I have unlimited access to finances to support governance.”

“I have access to the senior leadership team’s training budget and have no problem in obtaining funds for governor training.”

“It is negotiated with the finance dept each year and then accounted for and monitored just as any other college budget. I am the signatory for authorising expenditure and ensuring that the budget is administered effectively and within the agreed amount.”

“My training needs approved by the chair and met through the college’s staff development budget. I have a budget for governors’ training needs.”

For several clerks access to the training budget is via the principal, senior management team (SMT) or finance director:

“Access to the budget via principal and HR.”

“Through the principal/finance.”

“There is no formal budget for this: if I want to do something I have to ask the principal.”

“Training budget accessed via assistant principal and/or principal.”

“I check with the director of finance & estates or the principal that there is money available. So far neither has said no!”

“Via the administrator and the finance director.”

“In consultation with the finance director.”

“The training budget is accessed the same as for all other members of staff ie via SMT consideration/approval.”

For some clerks access to the training budget is through the college’s continuing professional development (CPD) budget:

“College CPD procedures must be followed.”

“Have a budget but training comes out of CPD budget.”

“Via the college’s CPD budget - no problems encountered.”

“As a contractor I have no direct control of college budgets but am able to access the college CPD budget for governor training and development via the Principal’s PA.”

However, there is evidence that some clerks have difficulty accessing a budget for governance training:

“I have to put in a request to HR for myself and the governors.”

“There is no formal budget for this: if I want to do something I have to ask the principal.”

“NB training only for governors - clerk training via staff development budget.”

“There is an inadequate budget for governance which covers training events. I am responsible for it but as I have no input into its creation I don’t feel that I control it!!

“With difficulty. The absence of a dedicated budget (for advice as well as for training) is not a good thing.”

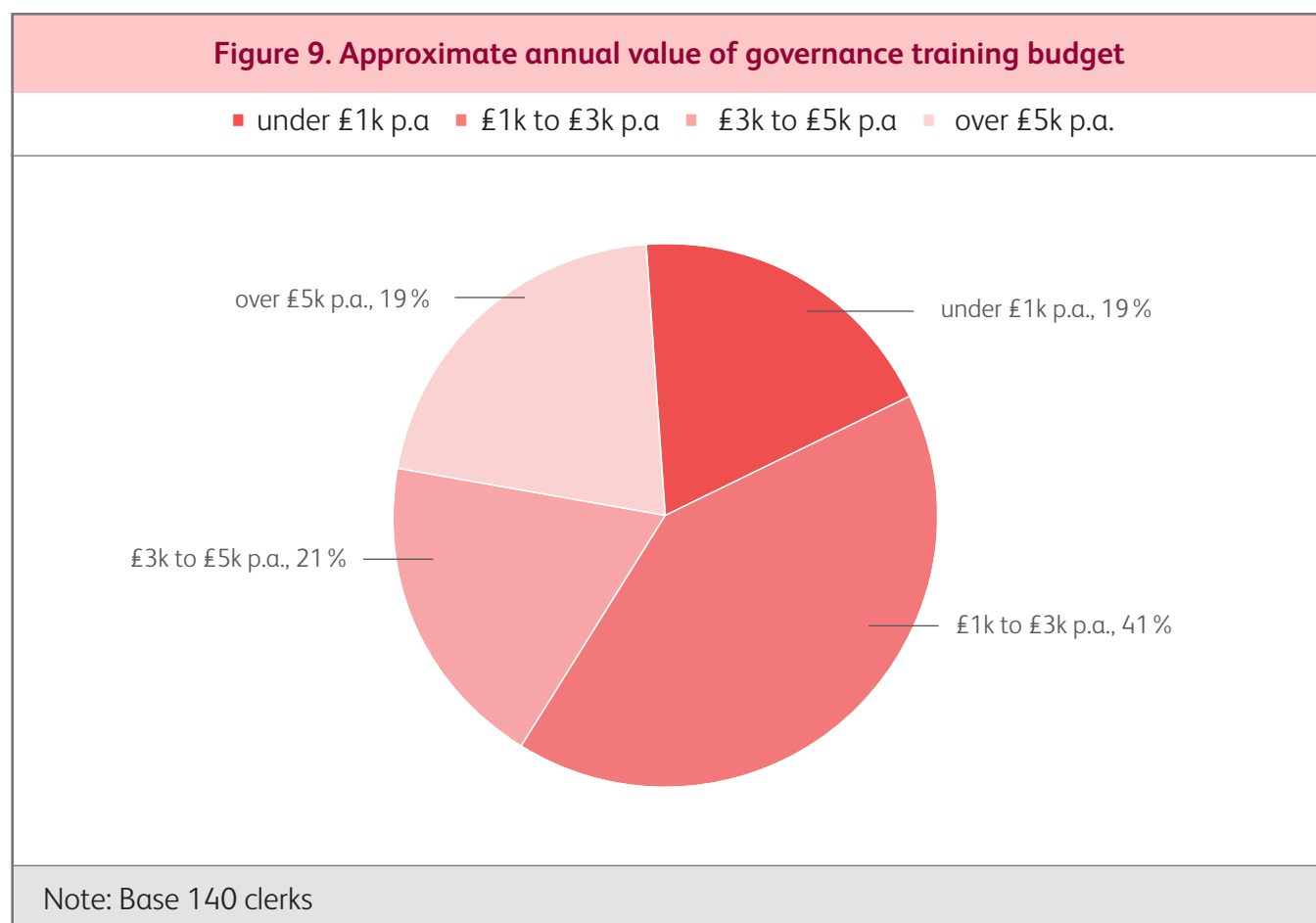
“Budget is at absolute minimum and does not allow for external training to much degree.”

“We don’t have one.”

Value of Budget

Clerks were asked to indicate the approximate annual value of their budget for training. Around three quarters (76%) of clerks responded to this question.

As figure 9 shows, nearly a fifth (19%) indicated that the value of their budget for training is under £1k per annum. A further two fifths (41%) had a training budget of between £1k to £3k per annum, a fifth (21%) £3k to £5k leaving a fifth (19%) with a training budget of over £5k per annum.



At interview, and in the survey, there was evidence of clerks struggling to get training for governors or themselves due to small budgets. Although some sixth form college clerks were well resourced, sixth form college clerks were more likely to indicate their budgets were smaller, creating a barrier to accessing training, as demonstrated here:

“The budget for all governors is £3k per annum, so a 2 day AoC conference is ‘off the map. I need to be quite creative with budget / training. SFCA are fine if they are around £50, but I can’t do anything over £100, especially if there is travel on top. The AoC is out of my league. Free events are useful, and the LSIS online training materials are useful, but who will do that now?”

We never go to AoC conferences, my previous principal didn’t think it was cost effective. I occasionally got to the AoC regional clerks network but it tends to be FE dominated. We use

NORVIC, a federation of 15 or 16 clerks in sixth form colleges who meet together for support and training, including a mentoring scheme where new clerks are linked with experienced clerks with eg 5 top tips. The SFCA clerks conference is very good and more reasonably priced. I use JISC mailbase, but you can get shot down! I use LSIS online training materials. I was dismayed to find out they were going – I don't know who will do it now.”

“The AoC and regional clerks network tends to be geared more towards FE, but the regional network is very good. The SFCA clerks conference is very good, and very successful this year.”

Budget issues for accessing training are not confined to sixth form colleges but also other smaller colleges:

“Being a very small college a lot of material does not seem directly relevant to us. The college also cannot afford for the clerk to access some of the resources which carry a price tag, eg training packages and programmes, conferences, etc. Prices sometimes seem too geared towards large institutions in which £100s for a conference or £2k - £5k for a training programme would not present a budget problem. This college simply cannot afford such prices.”

The difficulties with accessing training extend to geographical location. Clerks at interview revealed that the additional cost of travel was a barrier to training, as well as the additional time required for clerks and governors. Whilst conferences were valued, clerks, especially clerks living in more remote areas, felt shorter more regional sessions would be more attractive and better attended.

There was a general feeling that the AoC Regional Clerks Networks could be used as a catalyst for training and development in this regard, particularly the delivery of continuing professional development (CPD) sessions for all clerks as opposed to the clerks' qualification. At interview, the North West Regional Clerks' Network was heralded as a very active network and very valuable to clerks in the North West, including their own annual North West Clerks' Conference. In contrast, there was a feeling that the Regional Clerks' Network in some areas could be more active and better attended. Clerks recognised and valued the additional time invested by Chairs of the AoC Regional Clerks' Network / Members of NCN, and the Chair of NCN in particular. A desire for an even greater political influence of NCN was expressed, some holding the view that payment or allowances should be introduced for the chair/s, and some a desire for a greater role in the training and development of the clerk.

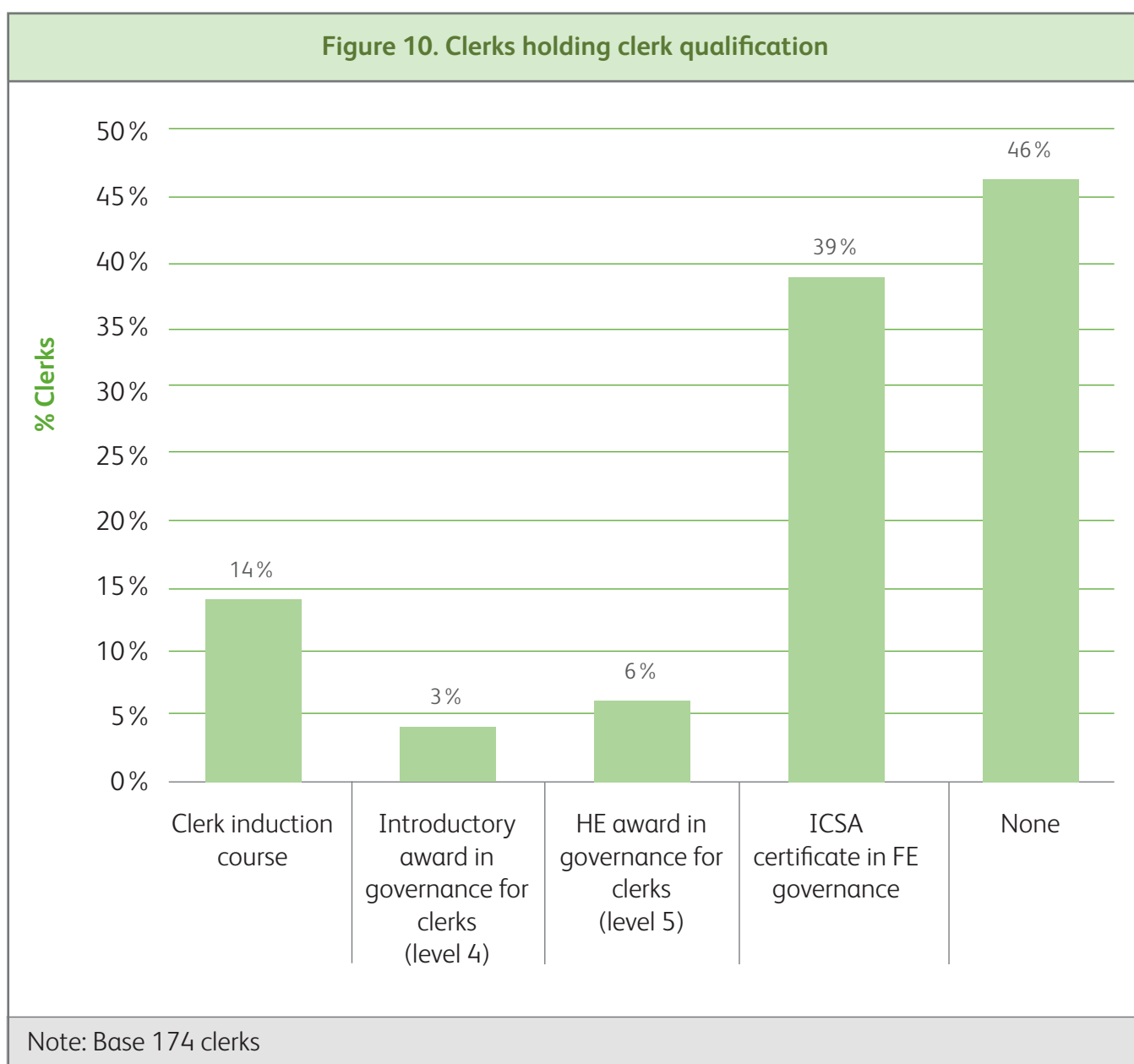
There is evidence at interview of several informal training activities taking place regionally, particularly in remote areas. Clerks were finding their own ways of arranging training activities in collaboration with clerks from neighbouring colleges. This was less expensive than attending national events, and provided a local network. In one area this included organising training between four colleges with high attendance from each of the colleges' governors. The four clerks comprised two long experienced clerks and two newly experienced clerks, thus providing an informal mentoring scheme. This 'micro' training may be a way forward for future planning, particularly in rural areas.

Online training was also discussed as a supplement, not necessarily an alternative, to attending training events. The LSIS Governor Training Materials were mentioned on numerous occasions as a valuable resource, and concern was expressed that these must be retained and updated by the successor to LSIS; this will fall under the FE Guild's remit. Whilst online training was welcomed, clerks also pointed out the isolation of the clerk's role and the need to meet together at conferences or regional events, including the Regional Clerks' Network. This networking, including socialising and support, was necessary for benchmarking, exchanging ideas and mentoring.

8. Clerks' qualification and future participation

Clerks were asked if they held or were working towards a range of clerk qualifications.

Figure 10 reveals around four out of ten clerks (39%) hold the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators (ICSA) Certificate in FE Governance. Around one in ten (9%) clerks hold or are working towards the Introductory Award in Governance for Clerks (Level 4) or the HE Award in Governance for Clerks (Level 5), both of which started in 2012. A further 14% of clerks had undertaken the Clerk Induction Course. Significantly, 46% of clerks did not hold a clerk specific qualification. However, under 'other' some respondents identified themselves as ICSA qualified chartered secretaries, or working towards the ICSA chartered secretary qualification.



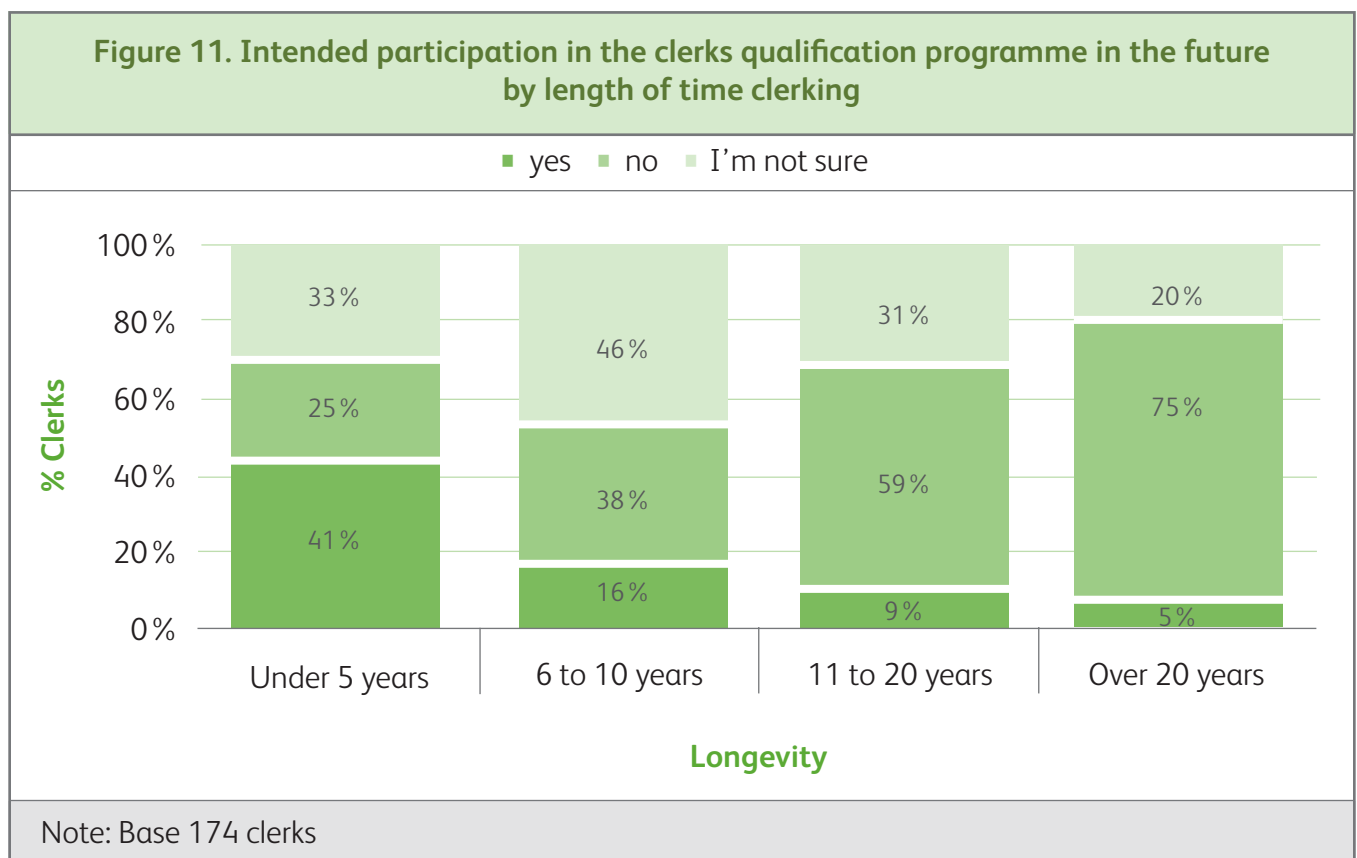
“I have attempted to do the Clerk Induction Course, but the date was cancelled and no more appear to have been scheduled. I had signed up for the Level 4, but due to the situation at LSIS I understand this is no longer going ahead, which is disappointing.”

“None. I’d love to do them though, but I haven’t seen any available so far.”

“LSIS will not fund after current cohort completes.”

Clerks were also asked if they intend to participate in the clerks qualification programme in the future. Of all clerks who responded, just over a fifth (22%, 38 clerks) intend participating. A further third (34%, 60 clerks) are not sure, indicating nearly one hundred clerks are at least interested in participating in future. By way of contrast, 44% (78 clerks) do not intend to participate in future.

Figure 11 shows level of interest by length of time in clerking. Samples become small, but a pattern emerges. Clerks who have been clerking for less than five years are far more likely to wish to participate than clerks with longer service.



Several clerks in the survey and interviews would be interested in undertaking a Level 7 clerk qualification or equivalent, but they expressed concerns as to whether this would continue with the secession of LSIS:

“Would be interested in the new L7 programme if this is offered in the future but I understand this is currently in abeyance due to what is happening with LSIS.”

“With no future services being available through LSIS who will be delivering the HE Award in Governance for Clerks (Level 5)?”

“I would have wished to taken the Level 5 award to have a qualification that justifies and confirms my expertise as a clerk; I would have ideally liked to have taken the Level 7 had it been developed

as it is equivalent to my previous level of study.”

“I would be interested in a Level 7 course if this was on offer.”

“Yes very keen I very much hope the clerk’s qualifications are continued.”

“Would like to continue to Level 7 if available.”

“Would be looking at the Level 6/7 qualification which is yet to be fully formed hence uncertainty.”

“I have enquired about courses with LSIS but given their future, have been advised they are no longer offering these.”

“Would consider a master’s level qualification.”

“I would very much like to participate in some higher level training programme for clerks as the Level 5 programme enabled me to introduce a range of changes to inherited policies and procedures which the board feel have resulted in significant improvements. I am passionate about what our college is striving to achieve in terms of the learners and the community and would welcome any opportunity to learn how to better assist the board in achieving its mission.”

“I explored undertaking the part-time master’s degree that had the full ICSA chartered secretary status attached, which is available at universities, I think. Better distance learning options on this key qualification would alleviate a lot of clerks’ anxieties about the potential loss of the Level 5 and definitely the Level 7 clerks’ qualifications and, arguably, be more useful to them as it is full Chartered Secretary status and not just a narrow clerks’ qualification. Dialogue with HE providers of ICSA qualifications might bear fruit for clerks.”

For some clerks, barriers exist to participating in training generally, including time and cost. For the clerk qualification, clerks specified:

“The time and cost are factors.”

“Dependent on funding.”

“Will depend on funding being available such as bursaries since no funding possible from college.”

“Possibly consider this – time and funding permitting.”

“Definitely; I am very keen to have proper training for the role and disappointed that there hasn’t been anything available so far. Cost could be an issue for the college though.”

“I am interested in a higher level qualification but much depends on its flexibility and family demands.”

“Due to my work/family commitments the amount of time required to dedicate to qualifications at this stage is limited.”

For some experienced clerks, particularly those who already hold the ICSA Certificate in FE Governance, general continuing professional development (CPD) is more desirable rather than obtaining a further

qualification. A broader qualification also appeals to some clerks. Further, some clerks nearing retirement feel they are sufficiently qualified. Specifically in relation to clerks intending to participate in clerks qualification programme in the future, clerks indicated:

“Yes, if there are further modules that would enhance what I’ve already got.”

“Widely experienced clerk; perhaps no need for a formal qualification at this stage of career.”

“Have fairly recently achieved a further Level 5 management qualification. I would probably still see this type of qualification as more useful in the long term. However I have not completely ruled a clerk type qualification out, particularly if it was a little broader.”

“Deciding whether a more general governance qualification may be better than a specific clerks’ qualification.”

“Having worked with governing bodies in FE for over 40 years and been an accredited trainer... I do not feel the need to seek a qualification that does not take account of prior learning and experience.”

“I am 64 and sufficiently qualified!”

“Age has overtaken me and I am deemed to have the experience.”

The survey revealed that many experienced clerks would still seek training ‘top ups’ for their own continuing professional development (CPD). Mentoring was discussed in Annex A, and has been offered by experienced clerks. There is an argument for a general upskilling of clerks, particularly on emerging topics and implications as a result of the new freedoms. CPD sessions for all clerks in addition to the clerks qualification programme would benefit a wider base of clerks.

“I find that attitude and treatment of others is vital and one’s personality is so important. The job is often difficult but the clerk must recognise the need to support governors both in their formal responsibilities and to help them make a full contribution. It is also important to recognise that induction training, or a form of, is not just for new members but is applicable in refresher training for longer serving members.”

“As an experienced clerk I would like to be able to provide a service to help mentor and coach clerks new into the post and I think this service will be especially needed with the demise (hopefully only for now) of the clerk’s qualifications for the sector.”

“There has been a lot of turnover among clerks in the last year or two and new clerks do need some formal training as well as peer support from networks.”

“As I’m new to clerking and to this sector, whilst the principal has been very helpful generally, I find he has a tendency to try to control what I’m doing, and to take things on himself that should rightly be my responsibility. As I’m learning more, it becomes easier for me to stand my ground - again, formal training would be helpful in this regard!”

“I am concerned about what will happen to the formal clerking qualifications and annual conference, not to mention the very useful documents they produce, after the demise of LSIS. Also that training for principals and senior managers should include the role of the clerk.”

“I have expressed my reservations to the FE Guild about the provision of training resources in the future including the Governance Conference. I believe the training resources LSIS have access to, delivering help on current topic of concern and need for college corporations will be sadly missed and there is a need to fill any gap in provision as quickly as possible.”

“I think it is really vital that: 1. the clerks qualifications will continue 2. we re-establish the clerks’ conference as distinct from the governors’ conference partly to give on-going support and training to clerks.”

With the recent announcement of the transfer of functions to the FE Guild, this final clerk’s comment embodies the importance of investing in the training, up skilling and professionalisation of clerkship:

“Clerkship should be seen as a profession throughout the college sector and – should be recognised as a profession under FE Guild - should be a recognised senior postholder or equivalent and be the appointee of the board only – should be regulated in conjunction with the professional qualification ie all clerks must be qualified or must work towards qualification.”

9. List of acronyms

AGC	LSIS Annual Governance Conference
AoC	Association of Colleges
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation & Skills
CPD	Continuing professional development
DfE	Department for Education
EFA	Education Funding Agency
FE	Further Education
FHEA	Further and Higher Education Act 1992
GFE	General Further Education (college)
I&As	Instruments and Articles of Government
LSIS	The Learning and Skills Improvement Service
LEPs	Local Enterprise Partnerships
NCN	National Clerks' Network
NCNC	New Challenges, New Chances
SMT	Senior Management Team
SFC	Sixth Form Colleges
SFCA	Sixth Form College Association

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