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NEWDLHE: THE FUTURE OF GRADUATE OUTCOMES DATA

SYNTHESIS OF RESPONSES TO OUR SECOND AND FINAL CONSULTATION

#NEWDLHE

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HESA

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PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTATION

On 6 March 2017, HESA launched its second consultation as part of our NewDLHE review of graduate outcomes data. This was publicly run through our website and sought support for the model and its implementation. The month-long consultation was aimed at obtaining feedback from the HE sector in regards to the model's key aspects.

APPROACH TO ANALYSIS

This consultation asked 12 questions in total, with high-level and detailed questions being asked in order to gain feedback on the final model and its practicalities. This feedback was then analysed to gain an understanding of the level of support for all aspects of the model, as well as considering the sector's concerns.

Please note that responses of 'not applicable' were stripped from results displayed within this document. Responses of 'Neither support or oppose' are included in our analysis. From accompanying comments it is clear that people used this for different reasons – some used it to express 'Not applicable', some used it to indicate they were unable to make an opinion until they had more information, some used it to express neutrality.

A systematic methodology – constructed from the analysis of the data – was used as the approach to analyse this data as opposed to using a traditional method of research (existing theoretical framework). Our approach involved reviewing the data collected and grouping/collating repeated elements raised in responses into key themes. Themes were created to visualise and categorise areas that were consistently raised by providers – this enabled a clear breakdown of strengths and areas of improvement for the implementation of NewDLHE.

In addition to this document, we have also produced a number of responses and clarifications following our analysis of feedback. These address some of the key concerns raised.

WHO RESPONDED?

From this second consultation, we received 188 responses – 142 HE providers, 7 FE providers, 5 Government bodies, 17 HE sector bodies, 4 Professional, statutory or regulatory bodies, 2 Student representative organisations, 2 Employer or employer organisations, and 9 Private individuals. It is noted that we initially said we received 189 responses; however, upon further inspection a duplicate record was found and subsequently removed.

Breakdown of respondents
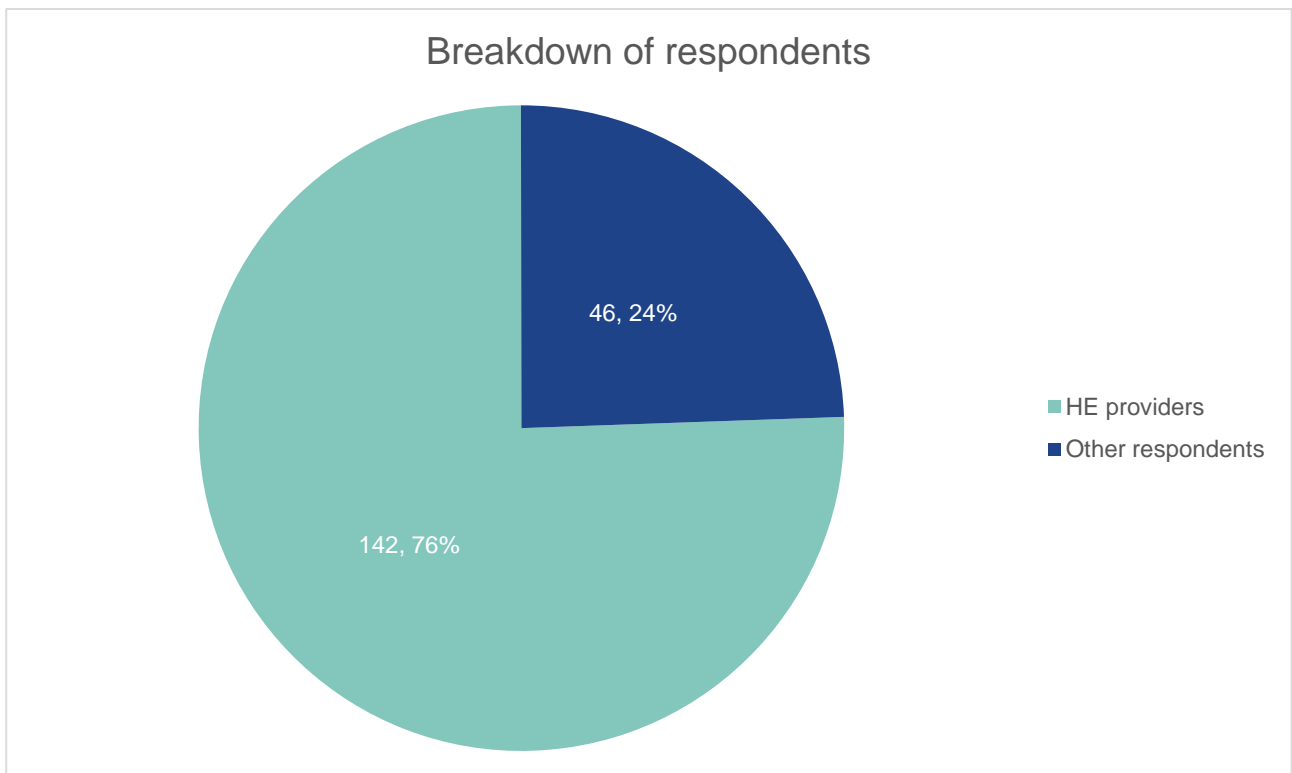
SURVEY DESIGN

BACKGROUND

From feedback from the sector, we developed a survey which aims to gather insightful, innovative, and comprehensive information about graduate outcomes.

In addition to the familiar questions asked in our current DLHE survey, NewDLHE has looked to incorporate new and innovative questions that provide a richer picture of the diversity of graduate outcomes. These include questions on:

- Meaningfulness or importance of the activity to the graduate
- Skills utilisation
- Graduate's progress towards future goals.

The survey will also allow us to gather deeper insights into graduates pursuing non-traditional career paths, such as those developing creative portfolios, or setting up a business.

In addition to the survey's core banks of questions, the survey will integrate a bank of optional questions which providers will be able to opt in to. These questions include:

- The experiences of research students and newly qualified teachers
- Subjective well-being
- Net promoter measures
- Graduate choice
- Impact of HE
- Salary questions (for graduates now overseas).

The new design will also allow HE providers to add their own questions at the end of the survey at cost.

ANALYSIS

Q6: To what extent do you support the proposed survey design for our new model of collecting graduate outcomes data?
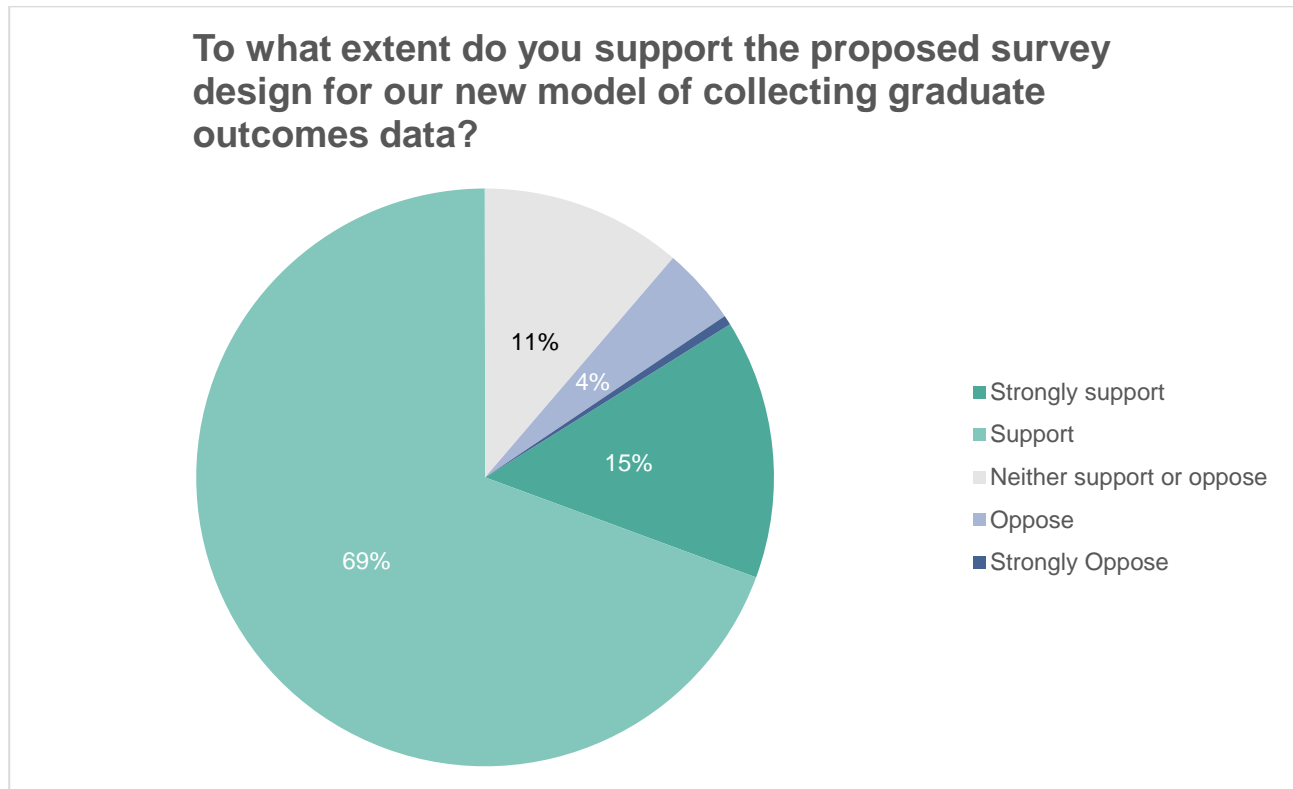

Figure 1.1 Extent of support for proposed survey design

As detailed above in *Figure 1.1*, there is overwhelming support for the survey design and its components as a whole, with 84% in favour, 11% not expressing a preference, and 5% in opposition. Feedback on the survey design will be incorporated into our implementation stage,
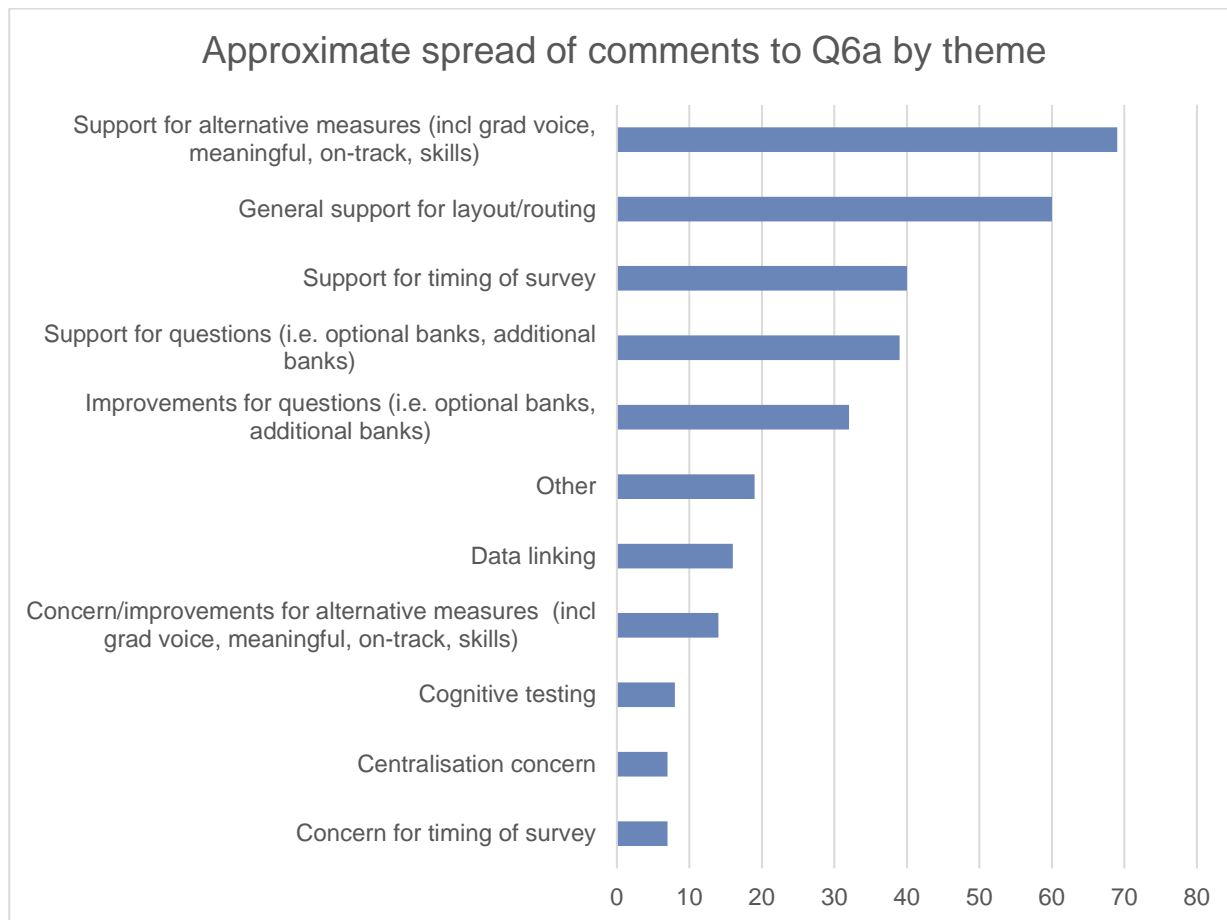
Figure 1.2 *Key themes obtained from feedback on proposed survey design*

A thematic breakdown of feedback acquired from Q6 (Q6a comments) has been shown above in *Figure 1.2*; theme breakdown reflects points consistently raised in feedback. The main points raised within these themes have been detailed below.

General support for layout/routing
In the main, the layout and routing of the survey was praised and seen as an improvement on the current DLHE's survey design. It was felt that the improvement with the layout of questions and routing would increase graduate interaction with the survey and, in turn, bring about a richer and more robust data set.

Support and improvements for questions
The graduate voice measures have been excluded in the analysis of this theme as these were consistently raised separately.

In general, the questions – including the optional and additional banks – are viewed positively and seen as an improvement on the current question set. There was particular praise for the expansion and emphasis on capturing non-linear career paths, i.e. entrepreneurship, portfolios, etc. However, several improvements were proposed by respondents which will be taken into consideration when implementing the model. These included:

- Question adjustment
- Question order
- Question appropriateness
- Question necessity.

Optional and additional banks were also seen as a positive by providers because of the ability to opt in and ask tailored questions relevant to the provider's needs. However, it was noted that these shouldn't come at a significant cost or extra burden to the provider, and should not be detrimental to response rates.

Support and improvements for alternative measures of graduate outcomes
The support for these new alternative measures was substantial across most respondents. The main positives for inclusion of these were that they:

- Capture richer/untapped data sources about the graduate
- Provide a more robust data set by capturing this extra information
- Will enable greater clarity around the graduates' experience outside of their degree.

These questions are viewed as a big step forward in terms of capturing more fruitful and exciting data around a graduate's journey and what higher education has provided them.

There were some improvements that were proposed, such as fine-tuning of the questions and their sensitivity and making sure these would be asked in the right manner (if at all); these will be taken into consideration when devising a specification for implementation. However, these were areas for improvement and issues to be taken on board as opposed to disapproval of the questions' inclusion.

Cognitive Testing
It was noted by several respondents that thorough cognitive testing would need to be undertaken before any final model was decided upon. This would ensure a robust, adaptable, and future-proof design that could cope with the needs of a range of providers from different backgrounds.

Other
This theme captured a variety of responses that were either specific to a provider or unrelated to the survey design (these are discussed elsewhere).

PRACTICALITIES AND MANAGEMENT OF THE MODEL

BACKGROUND

Methodology

We developed a new methodology – termed open centralisation – which would allow HE providers to remain close to their alumni while ensuring the data gathered would be perceived as objectively impartial and of a high standard.

The model proposed that graduates would be surveyed approximately 15 months after completing their studies. This is a significant change from the current DLHE survey, which contacts graduates after six months. 15 months has been chosen as it gives graduates a meaningful opportunity to progress in their post-graduation activities, while still being close enough to the point of completing studies that high response rates should be achievable.

Graduates will be surveyed about their activities during a 'census week'. There will be four surveys conducted each year, beginning in: September, December, March and June.

Governance

The NewDLHE survey will be governed by a steering group which will implement and maintain robust governance procedures in order to guide NewDLHE's development and assess its effectiveness.

Representatives from HESA, the funding councils, HE providers, and other sector bodies will make up the steering group, ensuring:

- The right questions are being asked
- The methodology is kept under review
- The graduates are not being over-surveyed
- The standards are being met
- The process of developing and authorising optional question banks is managed.

Relationships with the survey contractor will be managed by HESA, ensuring that the contractor adheres to the terms set out in the contract. The steering group will also have a role in the specifications for procurement of the NewDLHE survey.

Linked data

Linked study data (HESA Student record) and salary data (LEO dataset) will be used to paint a broader picture of graduate outcomes and realise further efficiencies.

Student record data will be provided alongside the first publication of NewDLHE survey responses in January 2020; LEO data will follow in around May 2020. Other avenues will be looked at for utilising linked data effectively so as to secure further efficiencies and a more comprehensive picture of graduate outcomes.

Data outputs and supply

We are committed to making available timely, high quality and impactful data about graduate outcomes. The use of open centralisation will help facilitate and implement this vision via a near real-time stream of raw survey responses available to providers.

We will also produce the following public outputs:

- A National Statistics statistical first release
- UK Performance Indicators on employment of leavers
- A publication of survey responses and linked data
- Experimental statistics presenting the new measures of graduate outcomes.

This information will also be made available through Heidi Plus, and via our bespoke data and analysis services.

ANALYSIS

Q7: To what extent do you support the proposed practicalities and management of our new model of collecting graduate outcomes data (methodology, governance, linked data and data outputs)?
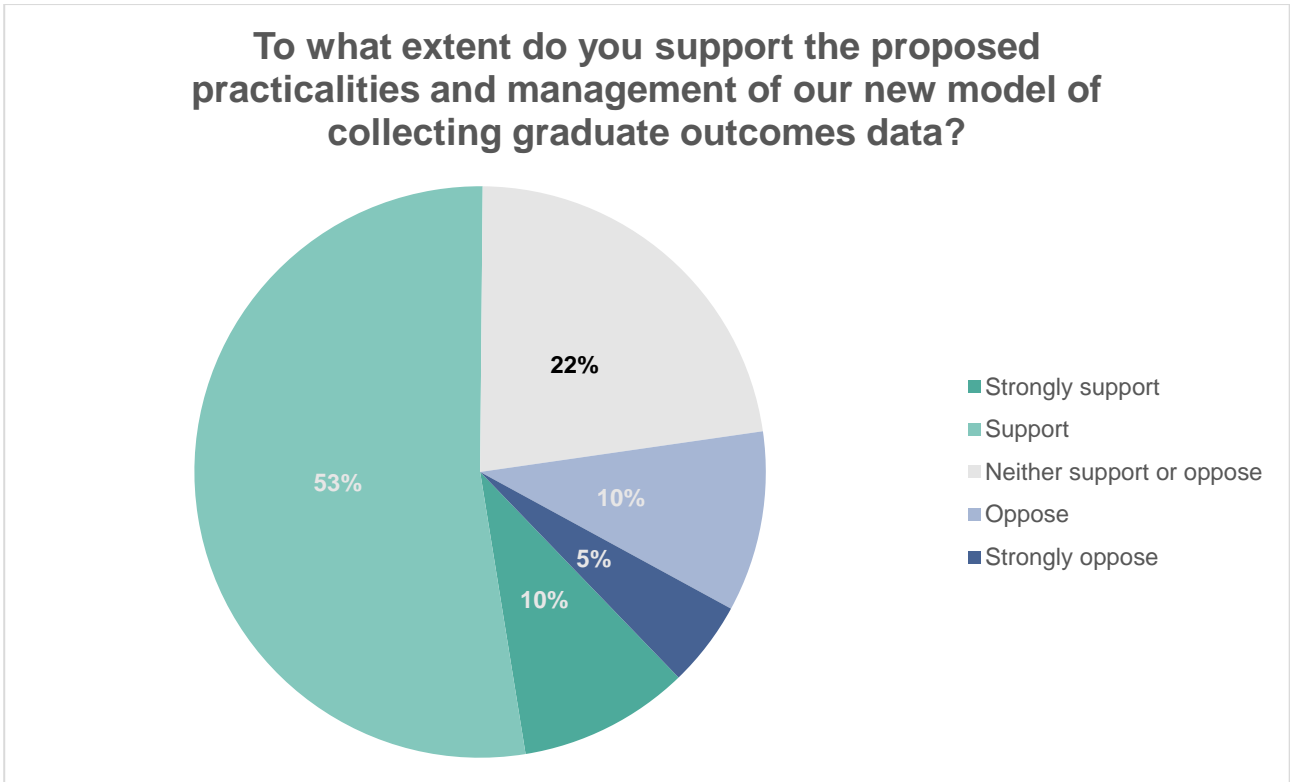

Figure 2.1 *Extent of support for proposed practicalities and management of new model*

As detailed above in *Figure 2.1*, there is solid support for the practicalities and management of the model, with 63% in favour, 22% with no preference and 15% against this. Although this is not as overwhelming as the support for the survey design, there is a clear mandate to move forward with this albeit with improvements made from the feedback received from the consultation.
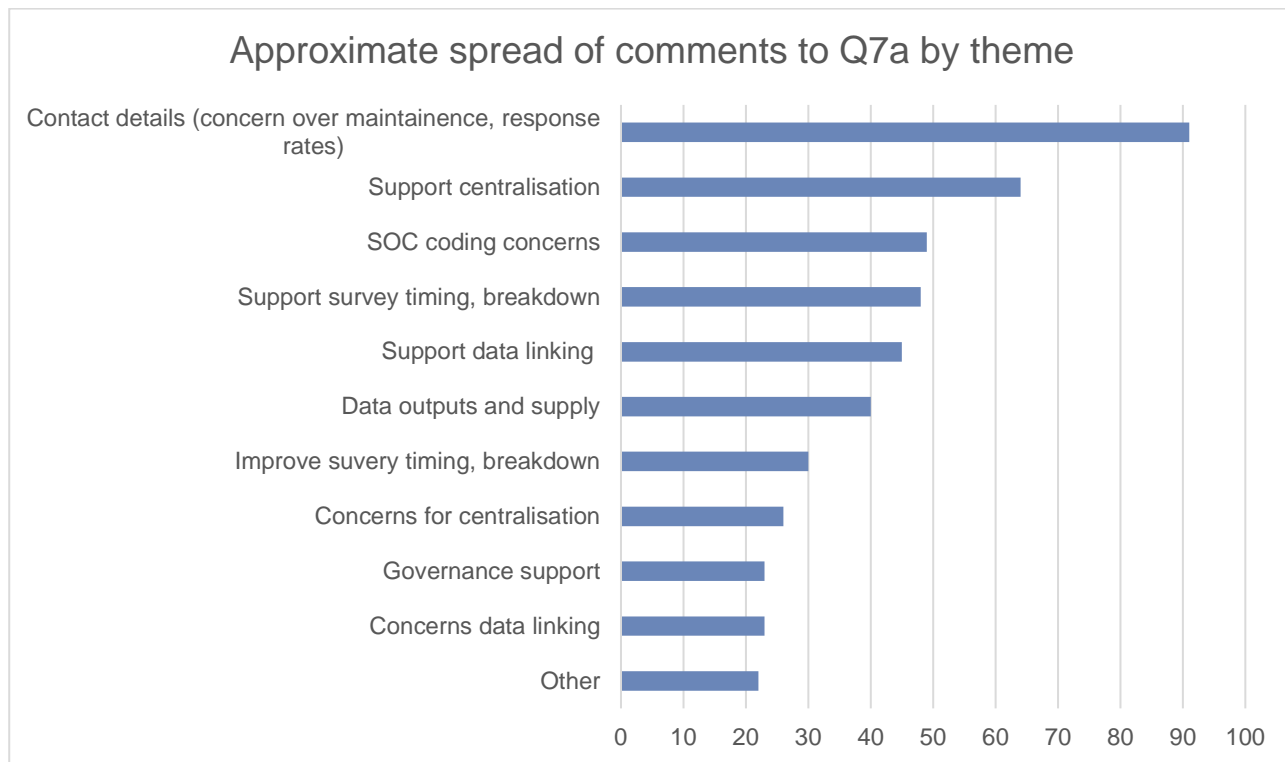
Approximate spread of comments to Q7a by theme

Figure 2.2 *Key themes obtained from feedback on the proposed practicalities and management*

A thematic breakdown of feedback acquired from Q7 (Q7a comments) has been shown above in *Figure 2.2*; theme breakdown reflects points consistently raised in the feedback. The main points raised within these themes have been detailed below; it is also to be noted that several themes from 6a – survey timing, centralisation, and data linking – have been included in Q7a feedback.

Contact details/responses rates
When analysing feedback for Q7a, it was apparent that the biggest concern for respondents with the practicalities and management of the model was the ability to maintain contact details and information about their graduates. This also raised the issue of possible difficulties reaching the target response rates. The major points raised around this were:

- Maintaining contact details for alumni for a survey 15-months after graduation
- Effect of diminished maintenance of contact details leading to a decrease in response rates
- Response rate of 70% is ambitious with a challenge to maintain contact details
- Updating of internal systems to monitor contact details (student email extension, student/alumni database)
- Career support/guidance weakened with increased survey gap.

Support and concerns with centralisation
From respondents' feedback it was apparent that open centralisation would be a positive approach, with several points being raised consistently:

- A robust and transparent data set acquired through a consistent platform
- Removal of the collection process in-house (removing additional burden)

- Maintaining an affiliation and input into the data processes conducted by contractor.

There were still concerns raised by respondents around the introduction of centralisation and improvements that need to be taken into consideration moving forward. Several points mentioned were of similar nature to those raised from the previous consultation:

- Contact with graduates by a third-party contractor would be challenging coming from an unfamiliar company
- Responsibility of the contractor, especially around data cleansing and missed targets.

SOC coding
An issue raised in feedback from respondents was the concern around SOC coding, and how the SOC coding would be conducted, against what framework, and what input providers would have. Specific points were:

- Concern over automated SOC coding generation applicable to graduate's employment
- Provider's input or involvement in the SOC coding process, and the ability to amend coding if necessary
- SOC coding against an outdated framework (SOC2010) and whether SOC2020 would be implemented to provide updated employment criteria

Support and improvements for survey timing
The sector supported the move to a later point and, in principle, to a 15-month survey. The main positives raised in feedback were:

- Capturing richer and more robust data as the survey will provide a greater reflection of a graduate's situation at 15 months as opposed to a shorter period of 6 months
- Census week as opposed to a census day provides more clarity and an active window for the graduate
- Multiple survey points capture a vast range of graduates and consolidate responses into more easily managed quantities.

Although the survey timing has been received positively, there are still areas that were raised by respondents that require further attention:

- Capturing graduates in further study ensuring we collect accurate information regarding graduates' situation
- Survey point leading to decreased response rate

Support and improvements for data linking
Data linking is a big part of the NewDLHE model and was clearly supported within this consultation, as the below points analysed from the feedback outline:

- Utilisation of data held in the Student record will reduce burden and question fatigue
- Salary data linked from LEO will provide a robust data set and remove difficulty of salary-based questions
- Combination of data linking and core questions will provide a more holistic view of graduate outcomes
- Track graduate movement through further studies.

There are areas for refinement including concerns about the quality of data and around salary data. These included:

- The sensitivity of the data being handled, and the importance of data protection
- What level of salary data will be captured, whether individualised or course level
- The accuracy of data, especially for those self-employed or starting up businesses and portfolio careers.
- The capturing of placement data.

Data outputs and supply
The model's plan for data outputs and supply was supported by the majority of respondents, with several positive points being raised around this:

- Introduction of near real-time data being made available at regular intervals for providers to view
- Introduction of new dashboards to access the data sets (incl. raw data)
- Third party information responses from HE providers enabled if necessary.

Respondents suggested that more information is needed around how the dashboards and near real-time data feed will be implemented. Further clarity is required and further discussion is needed to know how this will be undertaken.

Governance support
The governance model was supported by respondents with the positive points detailed below:

- Oversight and involvement from the sector in the survey's governance procedures and steering group
- Steering group ensures robustness of the data and engages in the process of change/maintenance of the survey.

The concern with this is around the finer points of determining the steering group and the relevant providers, bodies, etc. It has been suggested that the make-up of the group needs to include a range of profiles across the sector in order to cover sector needs and insight.

Other
This theme captured a variety of responses that were either specific to a provider or unrelated to the model practicalities (these are discussed elsewhere).

THE FINANCIAL PLAN

BACKGROUND

Through our model of open centralisation and the use of linked data, we anticipate significant savings will be made on the current DLHE, which costs the HE sector over £6 million a year.

NewDLHE's efficiency savings will be realised through:

- A reduced number of questions when compared to the current DLHE
- Reduced running costs at HE providers through the centralisation of the survey administration and the removal of local coding activities by HE providers.

We have proposed – to meet the costs of NewDLHE – a subscription levied on providers, which will likely include a fixed fee alongside a cost per response achieved. This will be broken down into three main tiers – the core tier will be the baseline for all, and the two higher level tiers will be available for providers who wish to utilise these additional services at cost.

ANALYSIS

Q8: To what extent do you support the proposed financial plan for our model of collecting graduate outcomes data?

To what extent do you support the proposed financial plan for our model of collecting graduate outcomes data?

- ■ Strongly support
- ■ Support
- ■ Neither support or oppose
- ■ Oppose
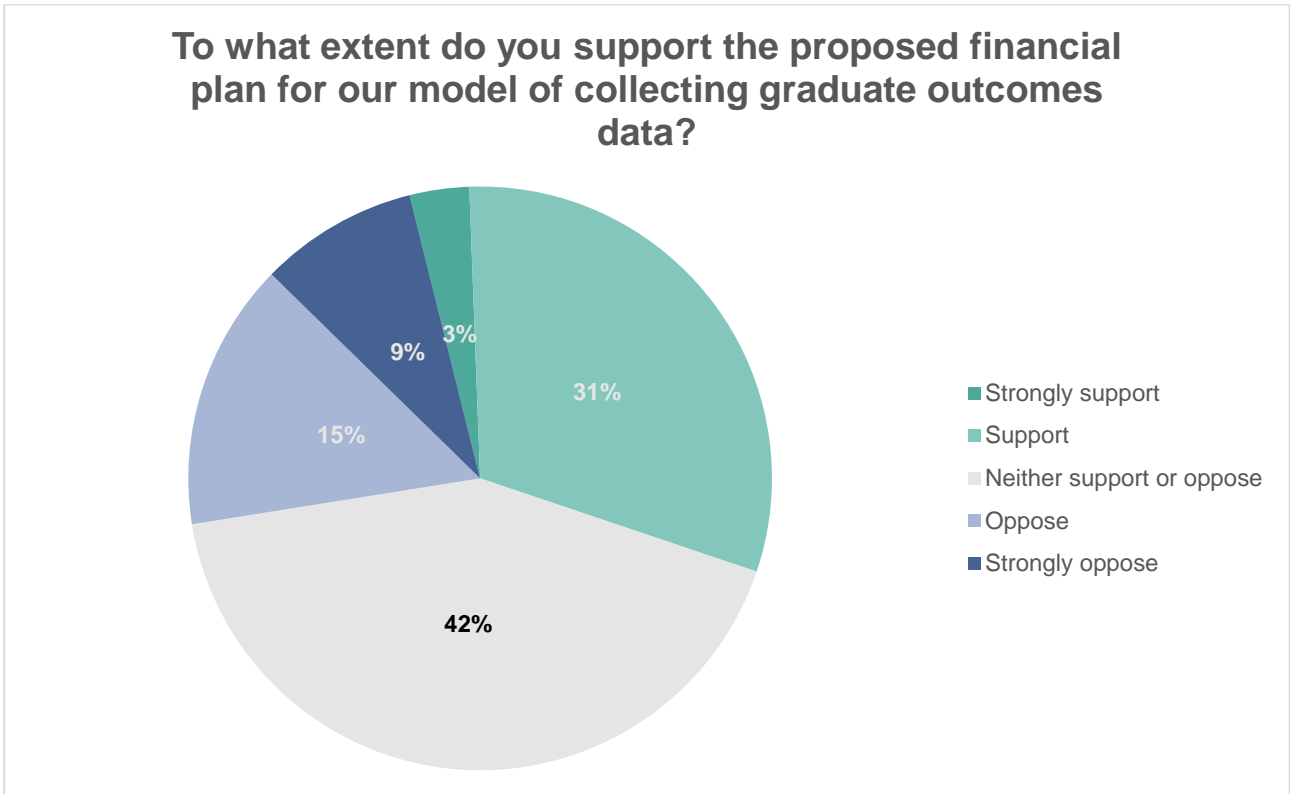- ■ Strongly oppose

3%

31%

9%

15%

42%

Figure 3.1 Extent of support for proposed financial plan

As detailed above in *Figure 3.1*, there is a larger proportion in favour of the financial plan (34%) than in opposition (24%). However, the largest proportion (42%) were unsure of the model and required further information.
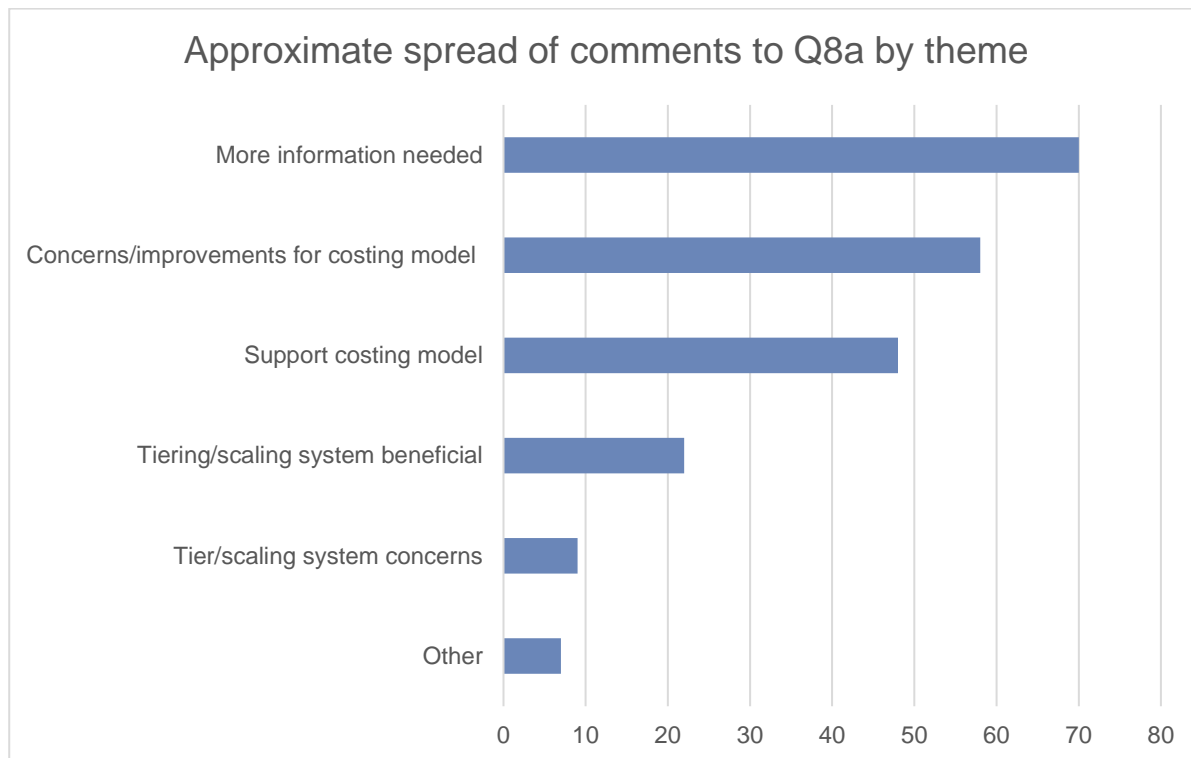
Figure 3.2 *Key themes obtained from feedback on the proposed financial plan*

A thematic breakdown of feedback acquired from Q8 (Q8a comments) has been shown above in *Figure 3.2*; theme breakdown reflects points consistently raised in feedback. Main points raised within these themes have been detailed below.

More information needed and improvements for the model
It was clear through the analysis of the feedback for the financial plan that respondents were unsure how the financial model would work practically and unclear of what the costs associated with it were. This included several concerns raised by respondents which have been detailed below:

- Aspects of the costs and what the actual figures and subscription fees will be overall
- How a tiering system would work practically
- Cost of the fixed service charge/setting a minimum fee for smaller providers
- Institutional level cost shifted to maintaining contact details
- Fee based on results plan would lead to provider uncertainty

Support for costing of the model
There was support for the costing of the model with several respondents happy with the broad outlook of how the model would be shaped. Positive points raised were:

- Positive outlay for reducing costs through economies of scale
- Fixed fee and per head amount seems fair output from initial plan

However, while there was support for the plan's proposals, there were still questions to be answered.

Support and improvement for scaling
There was support for the scaling of costs based on provider size, with several points raised:

- The premise of a scaled system is positive to distinguish between provider size and capability
- Distributes costing accordingly and fairly.

Again, however, respondents requested clarity about how the system would work in practice. Points concerning these issues raised below:

- Room for movement and clarity on the scaling
- Fair costing for additional charges

Other
This theme captured a variety of responses that were either specific to a provider or unrelated to the survey design (these are discussed elsewhere).

Note: The financial model was consistently commented-on by providers. To some extent the comments reflected the absence of detail that will become available from the procurement process. We'll be conducting a separate piece of work to refine the plan in the light of comments and will publish more detailed information later in the year.

THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

BACKGROUND

As part of designing the model for NewDLHE, we have created an implementation plan. This was subject to change based on feedback to the consultation.

Should the proposals receive support, HESA will be using the implementation period to:

- Form a steering group to oversee the implementation of the survey
- Procure a survey contractor to administer the survey
- Cognitively test the survey.

ANALYSIS

Q9: To what extent do you support the proposed implementation plan for our new model of collecting graduate outcomes data?
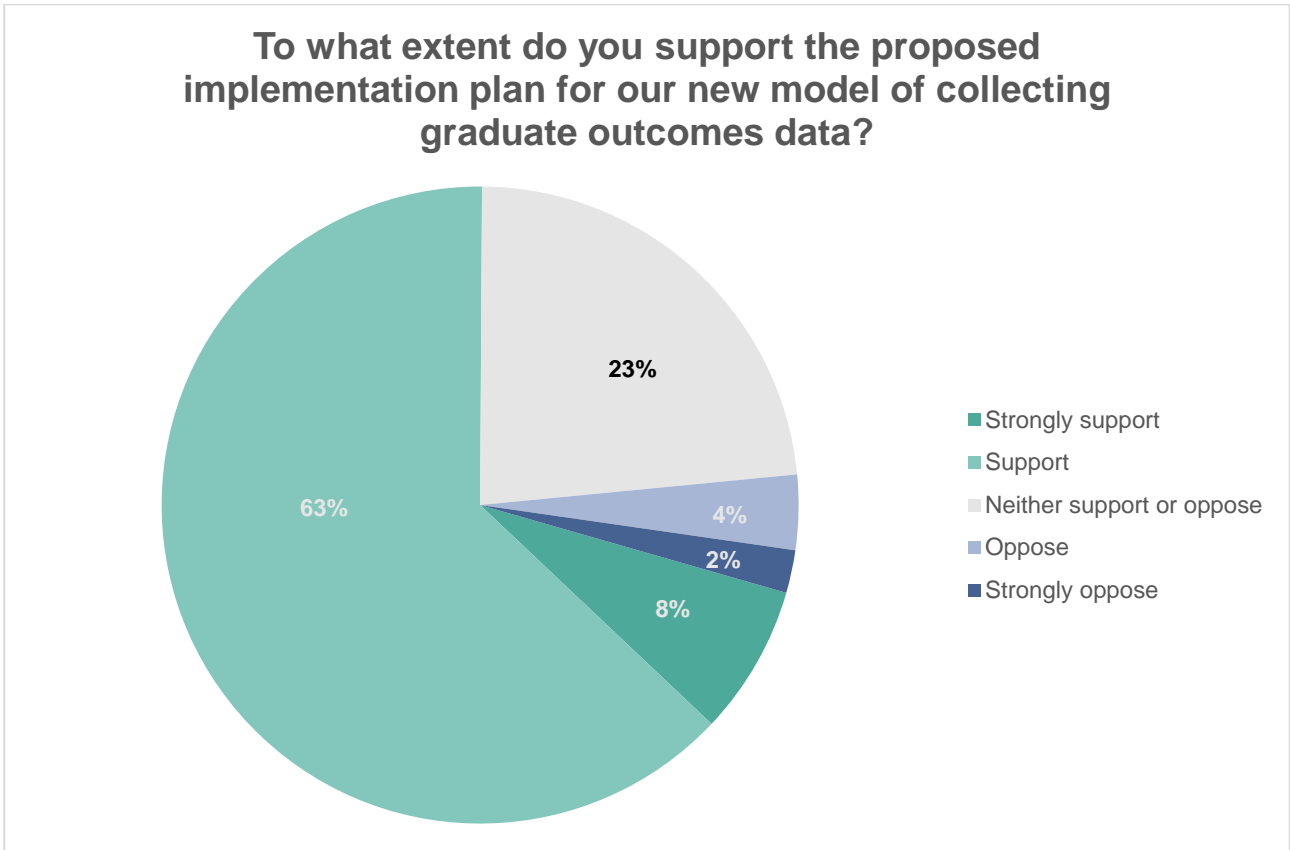

Figure 4.1 *Extent of support for proposed implementation plan of new model*

As detailed above in *Figure.4.1*, there is a supportive view from respondents on the proposed implementation plan, with the largest section (71%) supporting the proposed implementation. Just under a quarter (23%) again had no preference on this proposal or required further clarity around how specific areas will be addressed. Opposition to the implementation was low (6%).
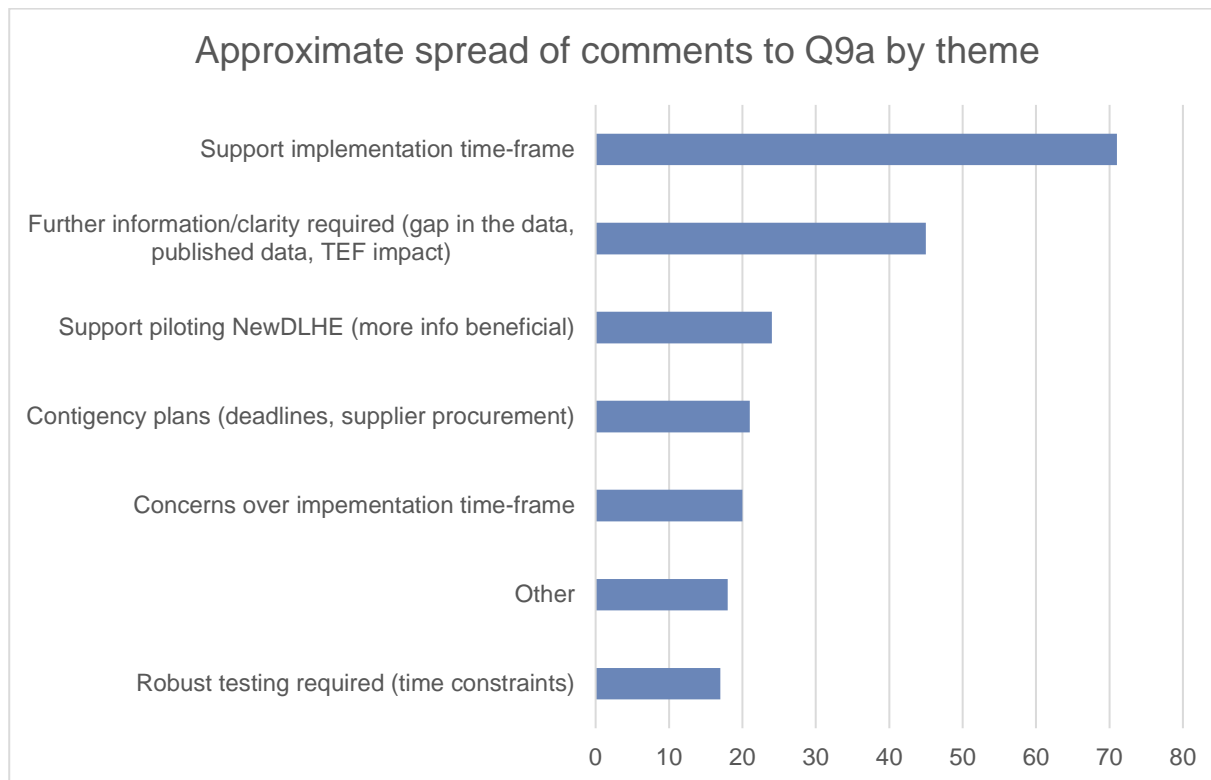
Figure 4.2 *Key themes attained from feedback on the proposed financial plan*

A thematic breakdown of feedback acquired from Q9 (Q9a comments) has been shown above in *Figure 4.2*; theme breakdown reflects points consistently raised in feedback. Main points raised within these themes have been detailed below.

Support and concerns for implementation time-frame
There is substantial support for the implementation time-frame from respondents who have raised several positive points around the benefits of this proposed plan:

- Sufficient time to undertake procurement process for the delivery of NewDLHE
- Ample time provided to acquaint providers with new functions and realistic to implement
- Sufficient time to complete current DLHE 2016/17 and streamline in-house processes and preparation for the new 2017/18 platform
- Timing of the survey and survey points/census windows for contacting graduates,

There were some concerns over the implementation plan that were raised by several respondents:

- Speed of the implementation plan and danger of it being rushed through
- Duplication of surveying graduates.

Further information and clarity on implementation
It was clear through the feedback – whether respondents supported or opposed the implementation plan – that further information and clarity was needed about several areas that were of concern to the sector:

- How the significant gap in the data between the completion of current DLHE and the commencement of NewDLHE would be addressed
- The effect of the data gap on published TEF metrics and league tables
- The impact on providers of the gap in data, including tracking labour market changes, and producing marketing and recruitment materials.

Support and further information for piloting of NewDLHE
Feedback showed that respondents were keen on a pilot being undertaken in order to trial the survey's efficiency and effectiveness. Key points raised were:

- Provides a practice run of how the survey will function
- Allows for adjustments to be made and assessment of the efficacy of the new model
- Gives providers opportunity to interact with model in real-time.

There are however a few questions around how this could work including:

- Size/timing of window to conduct the pilot – 2/3 months seems too small
- Criteria for the selection of providers to be included in a pilot
- Graduates on pilot would be surveyed twice.

Contingency plans and robust testing
These two topics were areas that respondents were eager to gain further information on. Points regarding this have been raised below:

- Contingency plans in place if original deadlines aren't met and unexpected issues arise
- Large enough window to thoroughly test the model and its components
- Enough time for procured supplier to familiarise themselves with platform between the supplier being appointed and first contact period

Other
This theme captured a variety of responses that were either specific to a provider or unrelated to the implementation plan (these are discussed elsewhere).

KEY AREAS OF IMPACT – ORGANISATION

ANALYSIS

Q10: As far as you are able to assess at this stage, what are likely to be the key areas of impact of the proposed changes for your organisation?
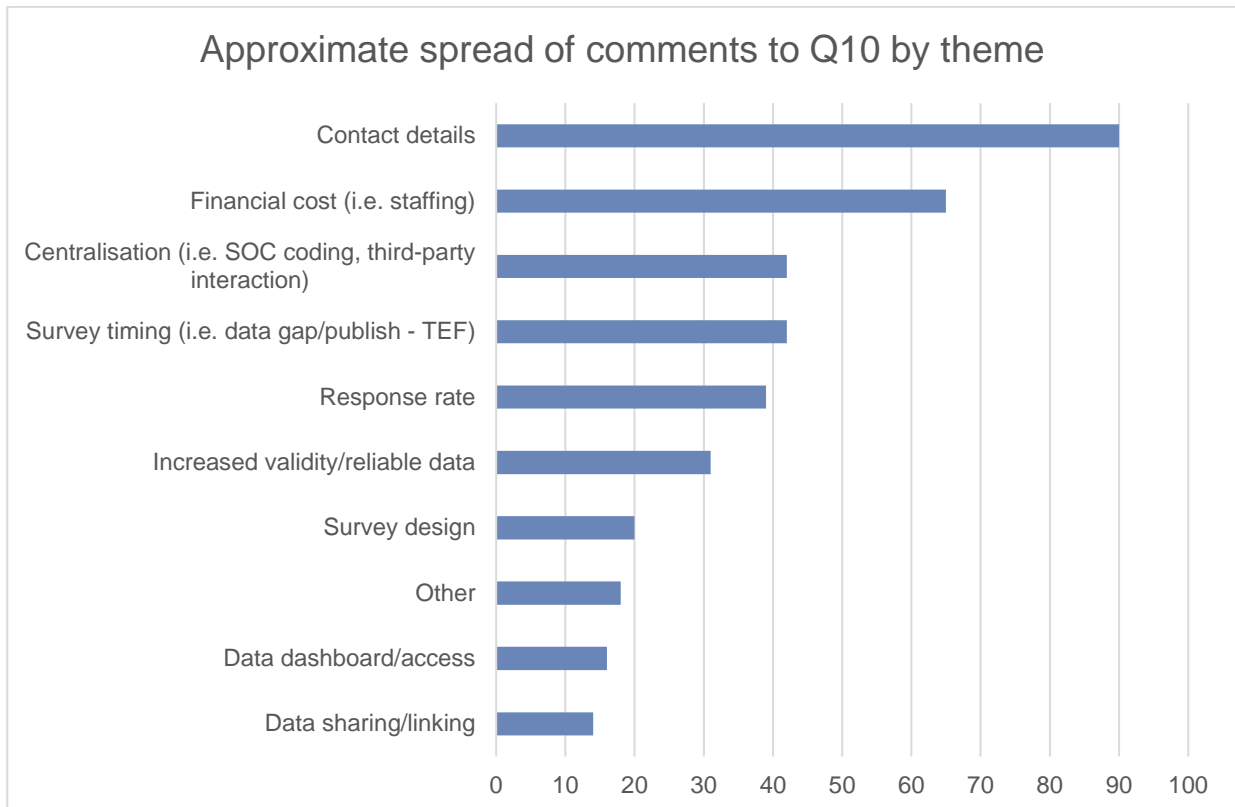

Figure 5.1 *Key themes obtained from feedback on impact of proposed changes for your organisation*

A thematic breakdown of feedback acquired from Q10 has been shown above in *Figure 5.1*; theme breakdown reflects points consistently raised in feedback. The main points raised within these themes have been detailed below.

Recurrent Themes
All themes raised in Q10 reflect points mentioned within the first four questions discussed previously. This consistency of themes throughout confirms the need to address these through the implementation phase.

MEASURES SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION – ORGANISATION

ANALYSIS

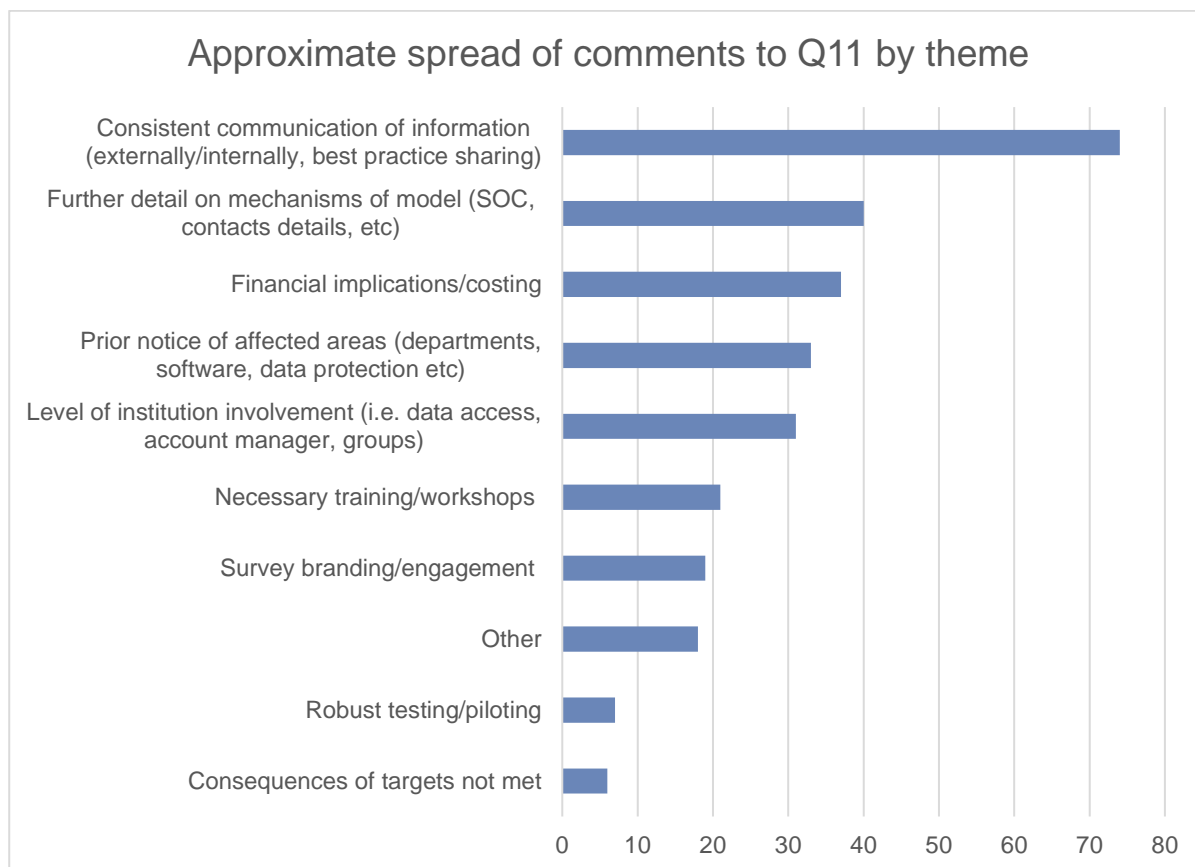**Q11: What measures could be taken to support your organisation in implementing this model?**

Figure 6.1 *Key themes obtained from feedback on measures to be taken to support your organisation*

A thematic breakdown of feedback acquired from Q11 has been shown above in *Figure 6.1*; theme breakdown reflects points consistently raised in feedback. The main points raised within these themes have been detailed below.

Consistent communication of information
The biggest resonating point fed back from respondents was the importance of maintaining consistent communication throughout the implementation of this model, especially in its early stages. Key points raised by respondents were:

- Relay of information to appropriate bodies/providers to ensure any changes and requirements are clear
- External communications to ensure participation from graduates
- Continual updates on progress to ensure transparency

- Sharing of best practice among the sector.

Prior notice of affected areas

Respondents stressed that providers will need prior notice of any changes and requirements because of the impact these will have on them. Key points raised on this are below:

- Changes and requirements that affect internal systems, such as updates in software, staffing, etc.
- Data protection regulations regarding General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislation forthcoming in 2017/18, and the effect on contact details maintenance
- External communications for NewDLHE, including graduate interaction.

Necessary training/workshops

Respondents raised that appropriate training would be required for the new elements and areas that required provider engagement. Points detailed below:

- Training (workshops, seminars, webinars) on new features undertaken by provider
- User-guides for interaction with new dashboards and any new software proposed.

Survey branding and engagement

Respondents felt that the survey branding was important to ensuring graduate engagement with the survey. Points raised included:

- Engaging branding required to bring about positive graduate involvement, including a striking logo and advertisement of the survey
- External communications strategy to increase engagement
- Institution specific branding imposed on survey communications, such as institution crest, provides relatable aspect for graduate

Recurrent themes

The remaining themes in *Figure 6.1* are themes that have been discussed previously within the first four questions summarised. The consistency of these recurring themes throughout confirms the need to address these.

FURTHER COMMENTS

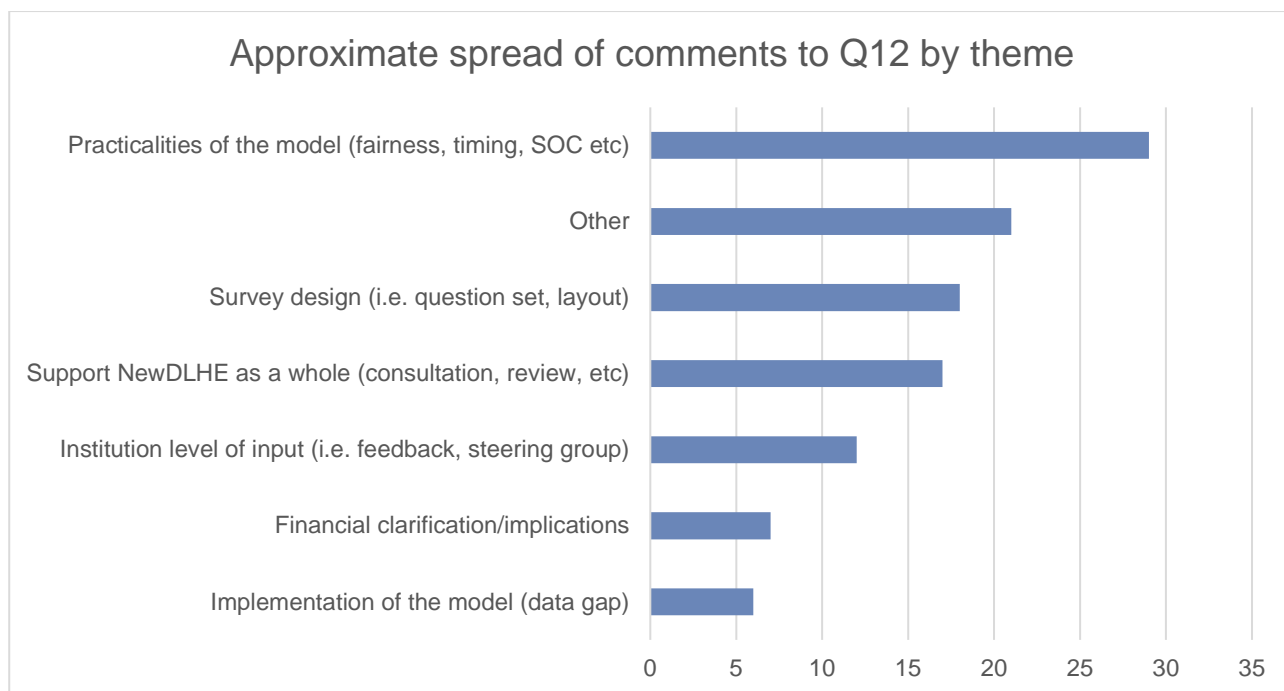### ANALYSIS

Q12: Any Further Comments?

Figure 7.1 *Key themes obtained from feedback for further comments*

A thematic breakdown of feedback acquired from Q12 has been shown above in *Figure 7.1*; theme breakdown reflects points consistently raised in feedback. The main points raised within these themes have been detailed below.

Broadly support NewDLHE overall
Aside from the recurring themes mentioned, several respondents noted that the consultation and review process was conducted in a successful and transparent manner. Main points raised included:
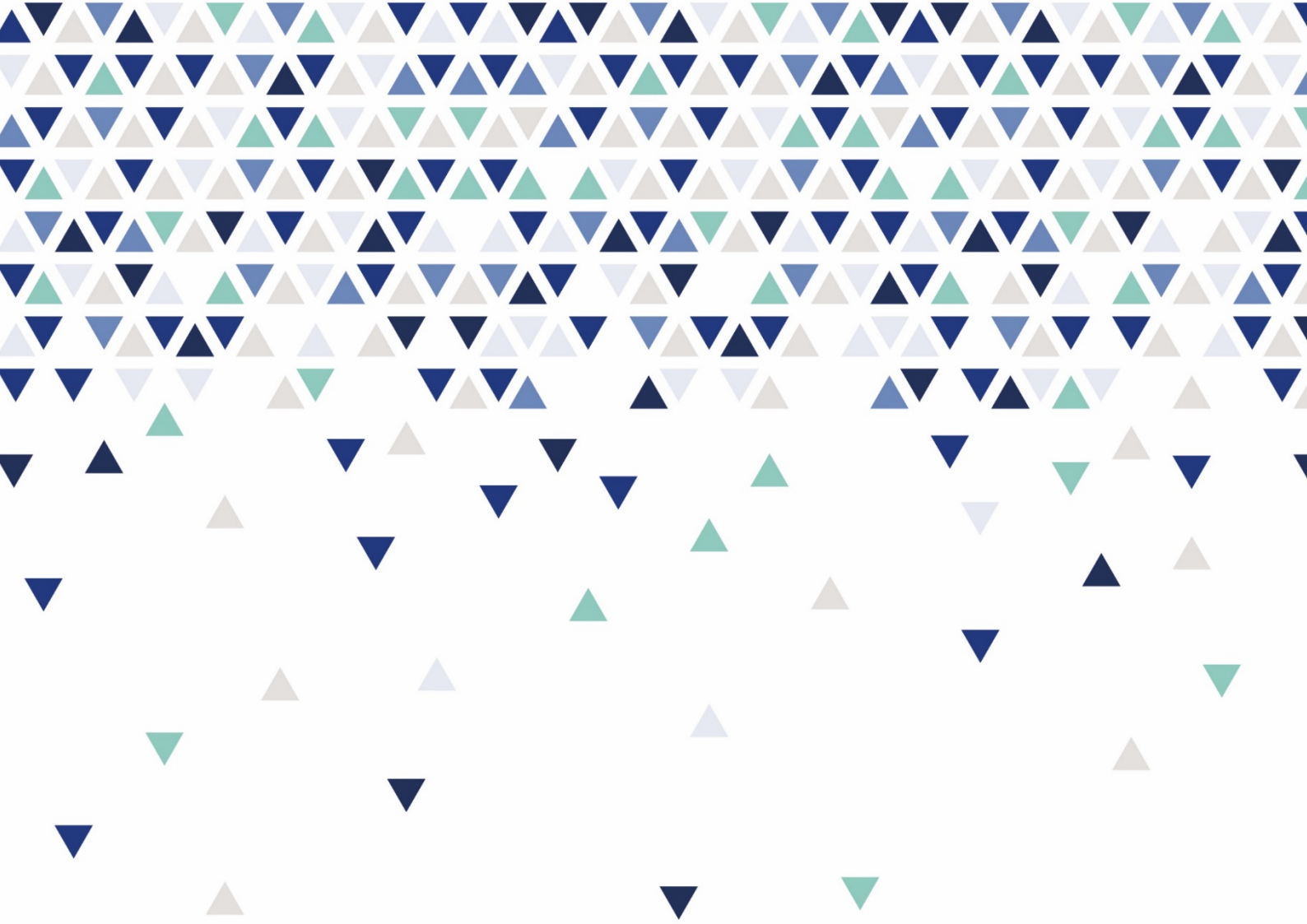
- Consultation and review conducted fairly and reliably
- Respondent input welcomed – felt valued helping the model progress forward
- Right direction for NewDLHE, with previous consultation feedback taken on board

Recurrent Themes
All themes raised in Q12 reflect that of themes mentioned within the first four questions discussed previously.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The responses to the consultation will inform our ongoing implementation of the NewDLHE model. Further information, and a revised timeline for implementation, can be found here.

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