

Work Based Learning Learner Satisfaction Survey 2002

A summary of the key findings



Learning+Skills Council
Berkshire

Executive Summary

In March 2002 Berkshire Learning & Skills Council conducted a postal Work Based Learning Learner Satisfaction Survey.

In total 513 responses were received, roughly equivalent to a 15% response rate.

Five elements of overall learner satisfaction were measured:

- Satisfaction with the job or work placement;
- Satisfaction with the training received;
- Satisfaction with the programme;
- Satisfaction with the tutor (s)
- Satisfaction with the assessor.

The average satisfaction score across all measures was 8.2 out of 10. Satisfaction levels were slightly higher than average in relation to satisfaction with jobs and work placements.

Learners visiting colleges or external training centres for their off-the-job training rated their classroom based training provision, which had an average satisfaction score of 7.5 out of 10.

Analysis of the satisfaction drivers has suggested the following areas for programme development.

Information, advice and guidance

The advice and guidance received by learners when choosing their jobs and work placements is particularly important in helping to match learners to jobs and programmes that they enjoy and are confident that they want to remain in for some time.

The research has suggested that those learners who join a WBL programme from employment are less likely to be satisfied and complete their courses, this places emphasis on information, advice and guidance services in the High Street and wider community as well as within schools and colleges.

Learner motivation

Measures are needed to ensure that learners are motivated and proactive learners from the start. The first step towards these measures must be to have more accurate and timely information on learner attitudes in the first place so that appropriate support can be given.

Employer engagement

Trying to directly regulate the support employers give their learners is likely to be counter-productive. Employers are more likely to give their learners support if they are confident they are getting the skills they require and feel included in the training process. In order for employers to be more supportive of learners needs it will be necessary to ensure that employers and training providers are more aware of each others activities and that employers feel integral to the off-site learning that learners undertake.

One-to-one time with the tutor.

Satisfaction with this element of classroom-based teaching was consistently lower than overall teaching quality. The focus groups suggested that for manual and crafts skills, the lack of sufficient one-to-one time with the tutor is a significant source of dissatisfaction. Several learners suggested that additional classroom assistants who were experienced in the trade but may not necessarily be tutors would be particularly useful.

Relevance of key skills training.

A significant minority of learners felt that key skills training is a waste of time. The focus groups suggested that an area of particular contention was when tutors used examples that learners did not see as relevant to their roles. The survey also suggested that programme leavers rate key skills training more poorly than current learners. The possibility that too much emphasis is being placed on key skills in terms of the total programme should be investigated further in the future.

Introduction

During February and March 2002 Berkshire Learning and Skills Council conducted a postal satisfaction survey of learners on Work Based Learning (WBL) programmes. The survey covered current learners and those who had completed their training during the financial year 2001/2002.

The aims of the survey were to:

1. Measure and evaluate current levels of satisfaction with WBL programmes;
2. Investigate the information and guidance new learners receive before they join a programme;
3. Explore learners' views on the quality and usefulness of Key Skills units within programmes; and
4. Investigate the factors that promote retention and completion levels.

Research Methodology

Two focus groups were held with current learners to help identify key elements of learner satisfaction and inform the design of the satisfaction survey questionnaires.

Two questionnaires were designed: one for current learners, and a second for those who had completed or left the programme during the financial year. Both questionnaires included core questions on learner satisfaction and experiences. The questionnaire for current learners included detailed questions on the advice and guidance received before joining the programme and the training and support

they have received since joining the programme. The leavers questionnaire focused on the destinations and outcomes of learners and where applicable reasons for leaving programmes before their completion.

In total some 513 responses were received, roughly equivalent to a 15% response rate. This response rate would be considered normal for an unsolicited postal survey. The responses were well spread across learners at different stages of their programme.

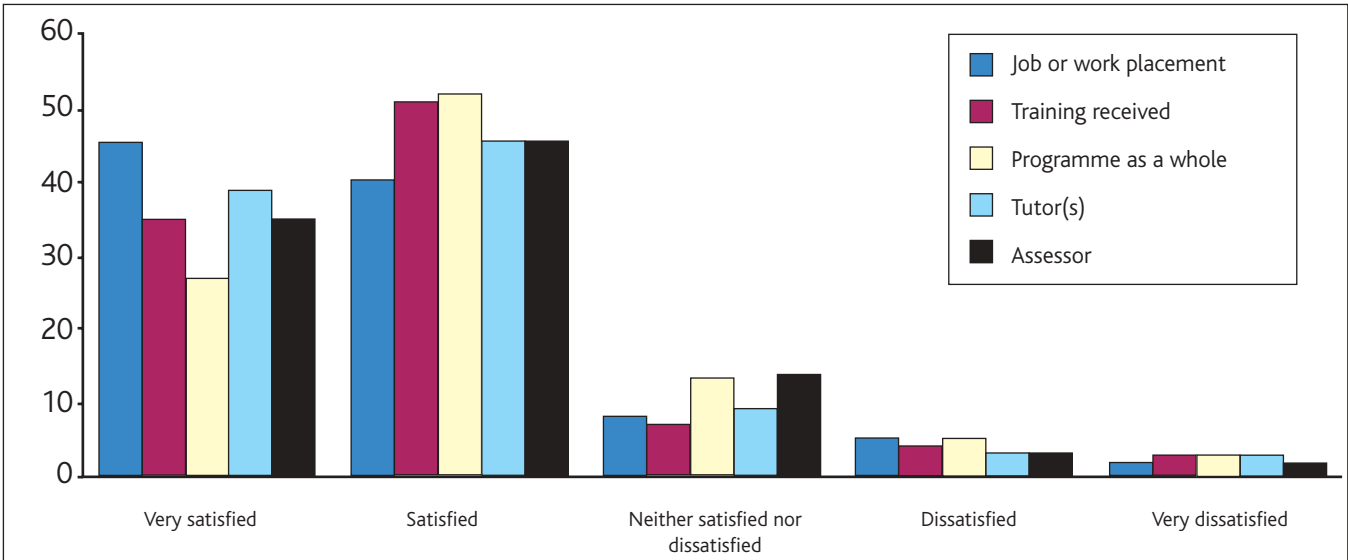
Responses to the 2002 Trainee Satisfaction Survey

Learner status		Of whom	
All in-learning	303	New starts (April 2001-)	190
		Other in-training	102
		<i>Missing/status unknown</i>	<i>11</i>
Leavers	210	Completed programme	123
		Non-completers/early leavers	81
		<i>Missing/status unknown</i>	<i>6</i>
All Learners	513		

Section 1: Overall Satisfaction

Five elements of overall learner satisfaction were measured: satisfaction with the job or work placement, the training received, the programme (e.g. FMA, AMA, NT), the tutor or tutors and the assessor. These elements were chosen following the learner focus groups. The vast majority of learners in the survey were satisfied or very satisfied in each of these five areas.

Figure 1.1: Measures of overall satisfaction

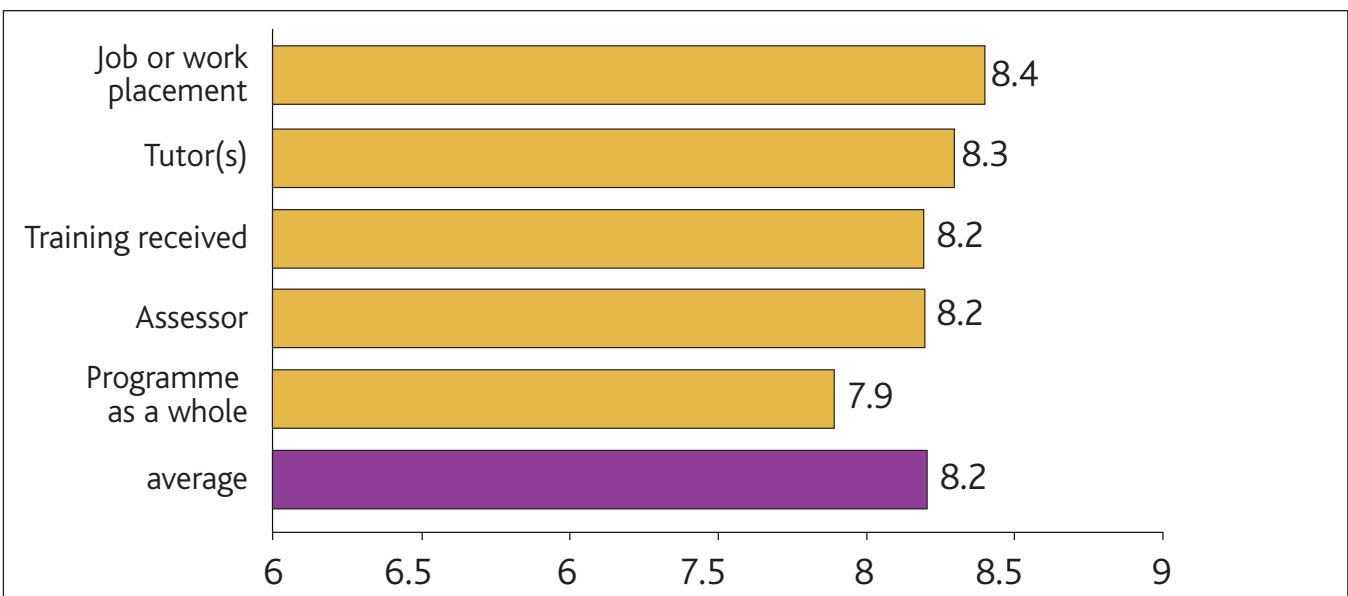


Base: All learners expressing level of satisfaction (503)

Overall satisfaction scores for each element were then calculated and an average satisfaction score was created.

The average satisfaction score across all measures was 8.2 and satisfaction levels were slightly higher than average in relation to satisfaction with jobs and work placements than with the operation of the programme as a whole (i.e. how the different elements of the programme were integrated).

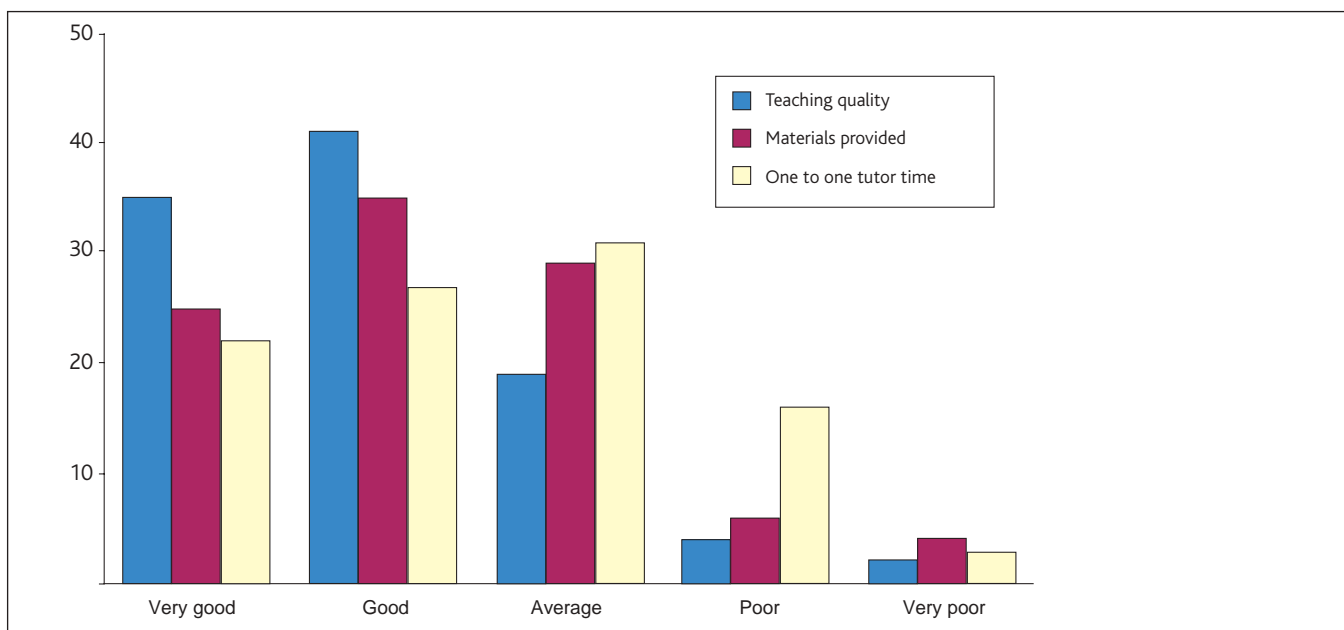
Figure 1.2: Overall satisfaction scores



Base: All learners expressing level of satisfaction (503)

Those who attended off-the-job training at a college or external training centre were also asked to rate elements of their classroom based training: overall teaching quality, the materials provided to support study, and the level of one-to-one time with the tutor.

Figure 1.3: Ratings of classroom based training provision

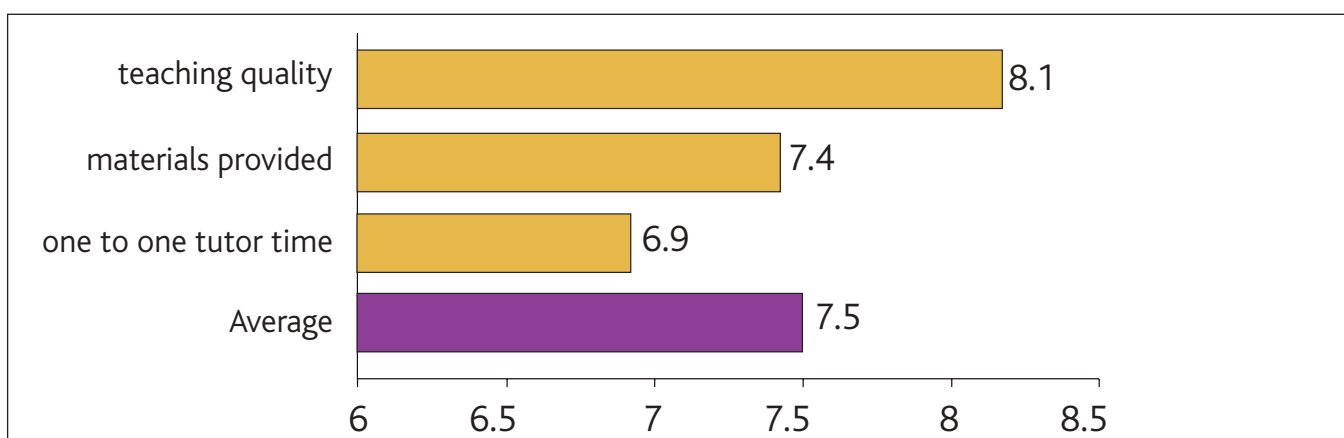


Base: Those receiving training at college or training centre (318).

Most learners visiting colleges or external training centres (on day or block release) felt that their training provision was good or very good, although significant numbers also felt it was merely average.

Mean scores were calculated for satisfaction with classroom based training and an average score across all elements was created.

Figure 1.4: Classroom based training provision scores



Base: Those receiving training at college or training centre; (318).

Further analysis suggested that poor ratings for one-to-one tutor time were particularly high in construction related courses (66% rated one-to-one tutor time as average or poor) and significantly lower in business services and administration courses.

Section 2:

Analysis of satisfaction

Four factors were found to have high levels of significance in two broad areas: employment situation and learner attitudes and motivation:

1. The nature of the job or work placement
2. The level of employer support for the training programme
3. Trainees outlook at the start of their programme
4. Learner attitudes and motivations

The job or work placement

Learners were asked which of the five main elements of satisfaction they felt was most important to their overall level of satisfaction. Half of the learners ranked their job or work placement as the most important element of satisfaction, and there was a clear relationship between overall satisfaction levels and learners' reported levels of support from their employers. Dissatisfaction with the job or work placement was one of the most cited reasons for non-completion of WBL programmes.

Figure 2.1: Rating of importance of elements of satisfaction

	% rating element most important
Job or work placement	50
Training received	21
Programme as a whole	16
Tutor(s)	9
Assessor	4

Base: All learners ranking each satisfaction measures (285)

Employer support for learners

Learners were asked how supportive their employers were of their training programme. From the responses, two broad groups were derived; those with very supportive employers (agreed with all statements) and those with less supportive employers (disagreed with one or more statement).

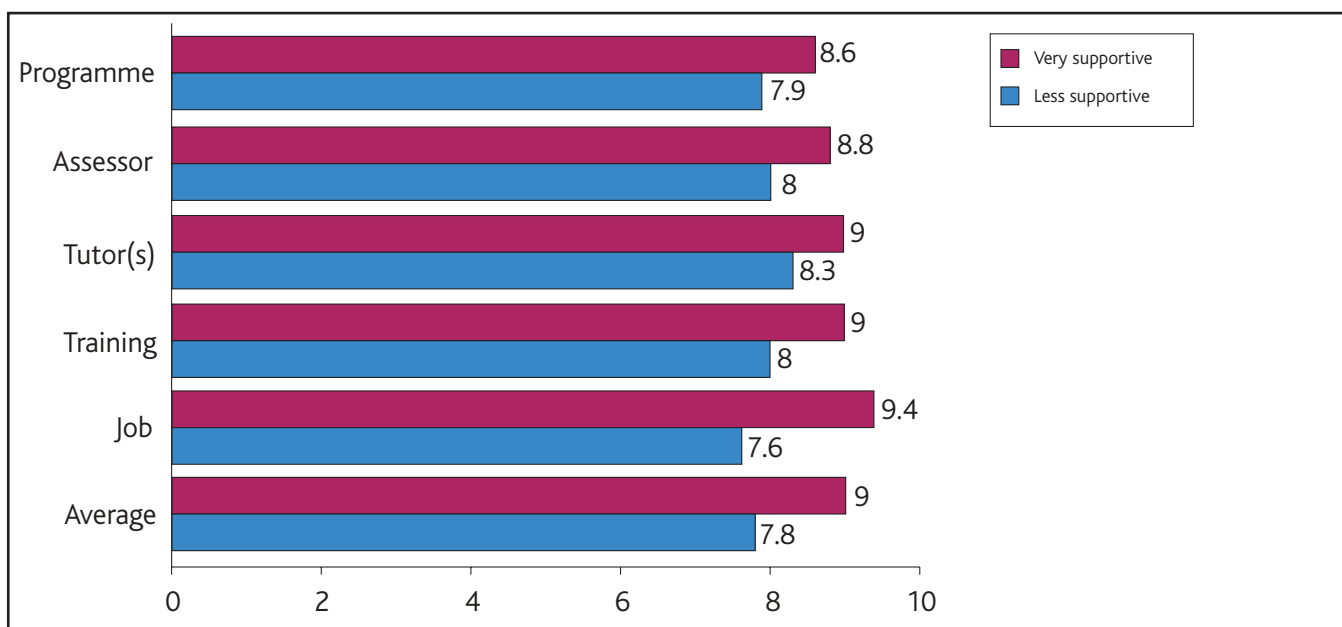
Figure 2.2: Measures of employer supportiveness

	% Strongly agree	% Agree	% Neither agree nor disagree	% Disagree/strongly disagree
Employer is still supportive about my training	46	36	10	8
Employer takes an interest in what I am learning	35	38	16	11
Get time at work to study	21	19	22	38
Get help at work with any questions/queries I have	40	39	14	7
Get opportunities at work to put learning into practice	45	40	8	7

Base: In-learning and rating employer supportiveness (299)

The satisfaction scores for these two groups show clearly that learners with more supportive employers have higher satisfaction levels. Those with supportive employers were more likely to express high levels of satisfaction across the board, including satisfaction with tutors and assessors and, where applicable, with external college or training centre provision. As might be expected, the greatest difference in satisfaction between the two groups is in terms of satisfaction with their job or work placement.

Figure 2.3: Satisfaction by level of employer support



Base: In-learning; 88 (very supportive employers), 129 (less supportive employers)

The largest differences between those with supportive and those with less supportive employers were related to the materials provided and time with the tutor, rather than teaching quality. This suggests that when support from their employer is less forthcoming, students look for more support from their training provider.

Differences in overall satisfaction levels by other work related factors such as pay level, whether in work with current employer before hand and whether the main reasons for joining the programme were job/work related were not statistically significant.

Outlook at start of programme

Learners' views at the start of their programme were also found to be a significant factor in overall levels of satisfaction. Respondents were asked about their views on starting the programme in terms of awareness of understanding what was involved and confidence in completing the programme and gaining qualifications. Learners who strongly agreed with both statements concerning awareness (of the work involved and how long it would take) were classified as having high awareness, those who agreed with both statements about confidence (of completion and getting a qualification) were classified as high confidence.

Figure 2.4: Outlook at start of programme

	% Strongly agree	% Agree	% Neither agree nor disagree	% Disagree/strongly disagree
Aware how long the programme would take	43	44	6	7
Aware how much work was involved	25	51	14	9
Confident that would complete programme	46	40	10	4
Confident that would gain qualification	43	47	8	2

Base: All learners (507)

Learners who expressed lower levels of initial awareness about the programme and confidence about completion were much less likely to have high satisfaction levels. This suggests a key role for the advice and guidance process at the start of work based learning programmes in increasing levels of satisfaction in the future.

Learners who entered their programme from full time education were more likely to be confident of completing their programme and achieving the qualification (41% compared to 33% of those entering from employment). This suggests that recent experience of a learning environment is also a factor in learner outlook at the start of the programme.

Attitudes to learning

A related factor in learner satisfaction levels is the attitude to learning expressed by learners. Learners were asked which of a series of statements about attitudes to learning best described themselves, and these were used as a basic measure of learner motivation. Three groups of learners can be distinguished: enthusiast learners, positive learners and reactive or resistant learners. As might be expected, the majority on WBL programmes are positive and/or enthusiastic learners.

Figure 2.5: Attitudes to learning

Learner type	% All trainees
Enthusiasts / proactive learners Learning is very important and is a good use of my time	45
Positive learners Learning is useful and I welcome it	43
Reactive or resistant learners I will undertake learning activity if required to Learning is just not something I am interested in Any learning is a waste of time for someone like me	12 Less than 1 Less than 1

Base: All learners (508, 5 missing)

The satisfaction levels of enthusiast learners across all elements were found to be significantly higher than other learners. Non-enthusiast learners were significantly less satisfied with the operation of the programme as a whole, and were also less likely to be satisfied with their job or work placement. Those on Advanced Modern Apprenticeships were more likely to express high levels of satisfaction and to be enthusiast learners.

Ratings of all elements of classroom based teaching provision were also higher for enthusiast learners, with the average score for external training provision being 7.8 compared with 7.2 for other learners.

Other possible factors

A wide range of possible factors in learner satisfaction were investigated for this research that were not found to be statistically significant, including gender, pay levels, previous qualification level, programme type and programme area. This is not to say that these factors do not play a role in satisfaction, merely that a statistically significant relationship was not observed by the current survey.

Section 3:

Learner experiences of WBL programmes

Initial guidance and experiences

The analysis of satisfaction showed that the initial guidance received by learners both in choosing their job or work placement and their training programme is a significant factor in subsequent learner satisfaction. Learners who are well matched to their programme are more likely to be aware of what is involved and confident of completion.

Around 40% of learners are already in employment (37% full-time and 3% part-time) when they start their programme. A further 50% joined from full-time education at school or college, and the remaining were either unemployed or on another training programme.

Employers were a significant source of information about WBL for current learners, 42% hearing about the programme this way. The Careers Service was the next most used source (28%), followed by school (20%), via family or friends (18%), and advertisements & leaflets and careers events accounting for 9% each.

More than a quarter of current learners discussed their training needs with both their employer and their training provider at the start of their programme. The majority of learners however reported that they discussed their training needs with only their training provider or employer and a significant minority (16%) could not remember having discussed their training needs with either.

Figure 3.1 Training Needs discussions

Who helped training decisions	% All in-training
Training provider	33
Employer	25
Both	27
Neither	16

Around half (52%) of all learners reported that they had completed a formal training plan at the start of the training. However, 42% of learners could not remember whether they had completed a plan or not. This suggests that for many the training plan is not seen as a live or practical document.

Base: All In-learning 303

Programme experiences

Learners were asked their views on a number of aspects of their programme.

Figure 3.2: Learner views on programme

	% Strongly agree	% Agree	% Neither agree nor disagree	% Disagree/strongly disagree
My training is useful	51	44	4	1
It is difficult to progress with my NVQ whilst working	5	23	24	48
There is too much NVQ paperwork	11	24	34	32
I am able to spend as much time as I need on my training programme	15	33	28	24
I am aware of what I will be doing next on this training programme	21	47	23	9

Base: All In-learning 303

More than a third of learners (35%) felt that there was too much paperwork involved with NVQ's, and just over a quarter (28%) that it was difficult to progress with their NVQ whilst working. Interestingly, the overall satisfaction levels of both of these groups of learners were not significantly different from those of all learners in-training.

32% of learners were unaware of what they would be doing next in their training programme, suggesting that they are not in a good position to keep their employers up to date about their needs in terms of putting their training into practice.

Key Skills

The majority (82%) of current learners reported that they were working towards one or more key skills units. Despite the controversy around key skills training, the majority of current learners were satisfied with the quality of key skills training and felt that the training was relevant to them. Interestingly, learners who had started their training in the last year rated key skills much more highly.

Figure 3.3: Rating of key skills training – Current learners

	% Very good	% Good	% Average	% Poor / very poor
New starts	17	50	28	5
Other in-training	12	34	41	13
All in training	15	45	33	8

Base: In-learning and rating key skills; 262 of which New starts 155, other in-training 93

New starts were also much more likely to feel that key skills training was relevant to them, although the reason for the disparity between new starts and other current learners is unclear. More in-depth qualitative research is needed to tease out these themes in more detail.

Figure 3.4: Relevance of key skills

	New starts	Other in-training	All in - training
Relevant to their current work	45	23	37
Useful for everyday life	24	32	27
A waste of time	19	32	23
None of the above	13	14	13

Base: All in-learning 303

Whilst the majority of current learners felt that the key skills units were useful, it should be noted that a significant minority (23%) of them felt that key skills training was a waste of time. Key skills units appear more relevant to some skill areas than others; those in construction related courses were significantly more likely to consider key skills to be a waste of time (32%).

Outcomes and destinations

The vast majority (96%) of current learners believe that they will complete the training and there is no significant difference in perspective between new starts and others currently in-learning. However actual programme completion rates are much lower: four out of ten (39%) leavers in the learner satisfaction survey had not completed their programme. This suggests that the likelihood of non-completion is not something that learners are aware of far in advance.

Regardless of completion rates, two thirds (67%) of leavers reported that they had gained at least a part qualification and a further 6% were waiting for their results.

Figure 3.5: Destinations: Planned and actual

	Planned destinations %	Actual destinations of leavers %
Full time job with same employer	71	44
Full time job with different employer	15	36
Change job/ type of work	7	
Go to University	2	1
Other full time training	1	6
Other (including part-time & self-employed)	4	13

Base: In-learning 299, Leavers 207

The majority of learners (80%) find full time employment after leaving the programme. However, only 44% remain with the same employer, significantly lower than the proportion of current learners that plan to do so (71%). This could represent a risk for the future development of the programme if too many employers do not see trained and effective staff coming out of WBL programmes and making an impact on their business performance.

The outcomes for learners in terms of pay increases are positive, with 60% of leavers reporting that they had received pay increases since leaving the programme. This was broadly in line with the expectations of those in learning of a salary increase on completion. However the level of increase in some cases was not quite as high as expectations. Around one in eight (14%) current learners were earning more than £250 a week (after tax) and 46% expected to earn above this level on completion. In reality 32% of leavers reported that they had achieved this level of earnings.

There was also some degree of correlation between the expectations of current learners to continue learning after their

programme and actual training experiences of programme leavers. Four fifths (83%) of current learners felt that they were very likely to continue in learning after their programme, 70% of leavers reported that they had received work related training since leaving their programme and just over a third of leavers (35%) reported that they had worked towards another qualification since leaving the programme.

Enthusiast learners were both more likely to expect to continue in learning and more likely to have received training after leaving. 57% of enthusiast learners amongst current learners expected to continue in learning after finishing their programme compared with 19% of reactive learners. 59% of enthusiast learners who had left their programme had studied towards other qualifications since leaving, compared with 9% of reactive learners.

These levels of post-programme learning are much higher than those experienced by the workforce as a whole, even amongst young people.

Section 4: Experiences of non-completers

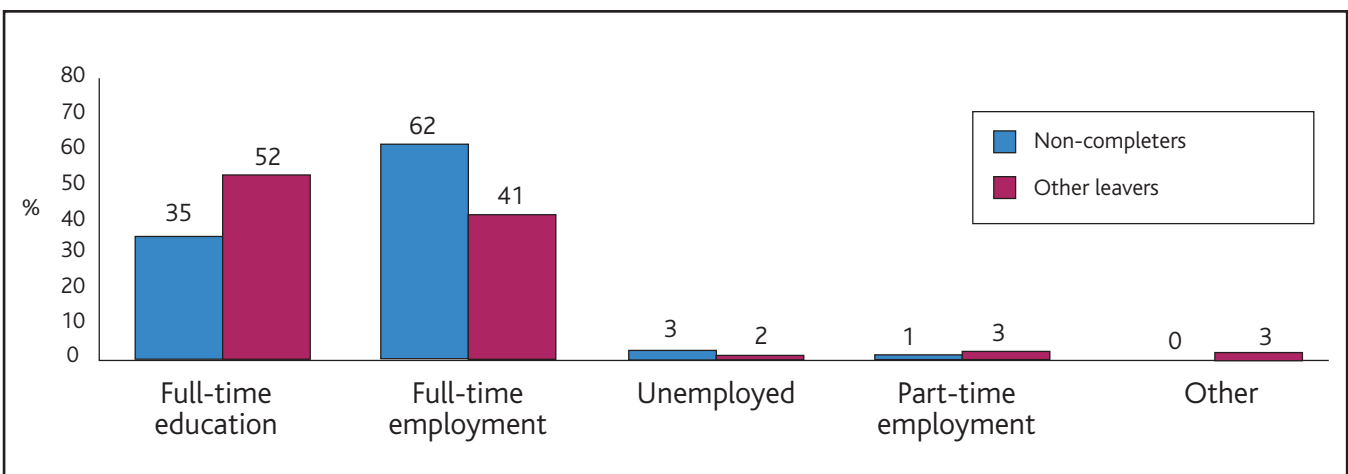
Non-completion of WBL programmes is a significant issue with 39% of leavers in the Berkshire learner satisfaction survey reporting that they had not completed their programme. However, half of non-completers reported that their training was still useful to them.

Initial guidance and experiences

Non-completers were less likely to have been in full-time education at the start of the course than other leavers (35% compared with 52%), and more likely to have been in full-time employment.

Current learners entering their programme from employment are less likely to believe their employer is supportive than those entering from full time education (32% compared with 48%), and are also more likely to undertake training at their employer’s premises (50% compared to 23% entering from full time education).

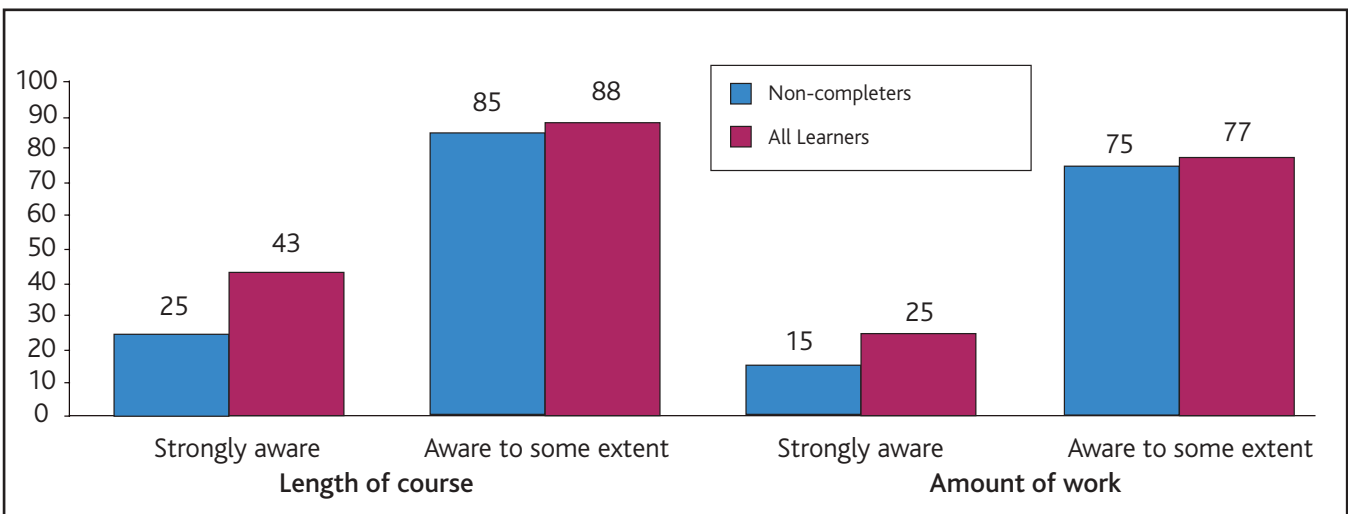
Figure 4.1: Employment status at the commencement of the training programme



Base: all non-completers – 81; other leavers – 122

When learners’ levels of initial awareness of what was involved in WBL programmes was analysed, non-completers were aware to some extent of how long it would take to finish the course (85%) and of how much work would be involved (75%). However, those with a strong awareness at the start of the programme were more likely to have completed their course: 22% of all learners were strongly aware of both elements, compared with only 12% of non-completers.

Figure 4.2: Awareness at start of programme



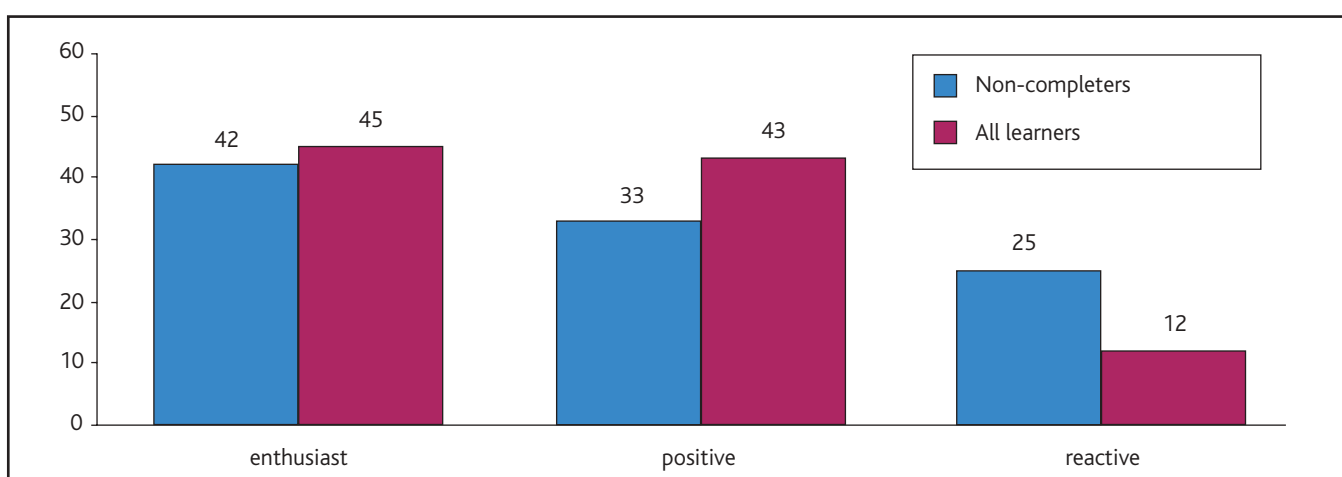
Base: all non-completers – 81; all trainees – 513

Unsurprisingly, completers had a higher level of confidence that they would finish their training programme and that they would get the qualification: 37% of learners were strongly confident in both areas compared with only 11% of non-completers. This suggests that improved advice and guidance before learners make programme decisions would reduce levels of non-completion.

Those on Foundation Modern Apprenticeships were also more likely to be non-completers. Around half non-completers (51%) were on FMAs compared with 39% of all learners.

When learner motivations were examined, 25% of non-completers are reactive or resistant learners, compared with only 12% of all learners. Whilst a large proportion of non-completers do have positive attitudes towards learning this does suggest that measures to improve learner motivation amongst people on WBL programmes would reduce levels of non-completion.

Figure 4.3: Types of learner



Base: all non-completers – 81; all trainees – 508

Male learners are less likely to complete their programme than female ones. Whilst men may be less likely than women to be in learning (40% of learners in the survey were male), they are more likely to be non-completers (49% are male). The most likely reason for this disparity is that female learners are more likely to be enthusiast learners (51% of female learners compared with 34% of males in the survey).

Programme experiences

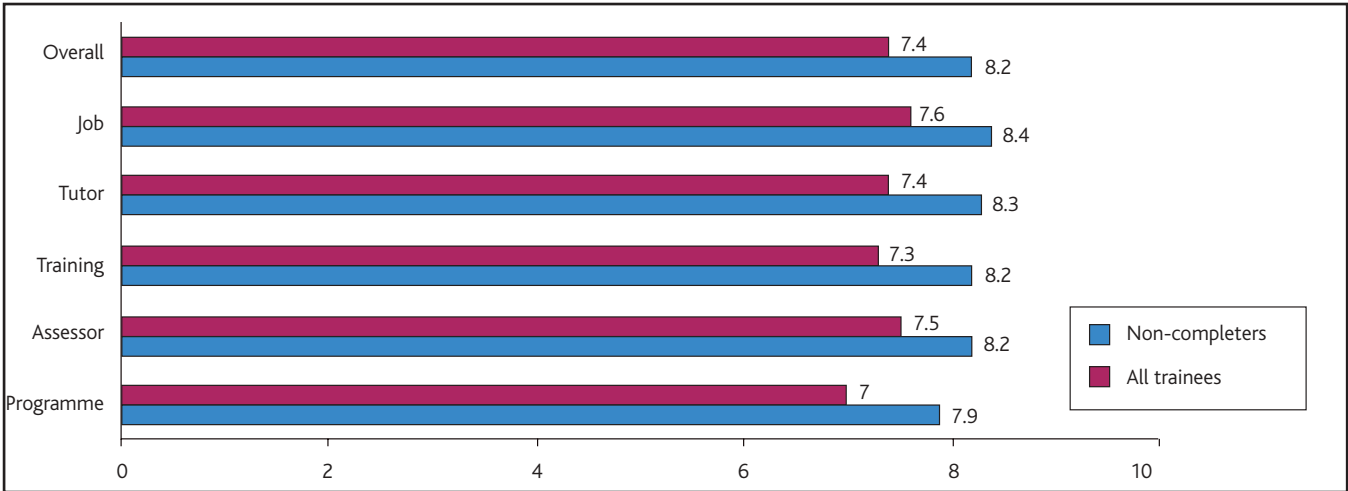
Learners were asked their reasons for leaving their training programmes without completing their qualifications. Respondents were allowed to cite more than one reason. The most common reasons for failing to complete were more job than training related. More than half of non-completers (54%) specified that issues with their employment contributed to them leaving, compared with only 36% specifying issues related to their training. One in five people specified other external reasons.

In terms of specific job/employment issues; 12% of non-completers were dismissed or made redundant from their job, 14% did not like their job placement, 14% felt that they were not getting enough money and a further 16% changed jobs for some other reason.

The main issues specified relating to the training was that learners were unhappy with the way the training was run, stated by 23%. Other reasons given were: not getting the training needed (12%), couldn't keep up with the work (4%) and other training related (7%). Other general reasons were too much travelling (6%) and not enough time (7%).

General satisfaction was also found to play an important role in non-completion rates. Across all five measures of satisfaction, non-completers are less satisfied than learners as a whole. The average satisfaction score for non-completers was 7.4 out of 10, compared with 8.2 out of 10 for all learners.

Figure 4.4: Average scores for satisfaction with elements of training



Base: all non-completers – 81; all trainees – 508

Interestingly, those people who went to an external training centre for some of their learning rather than staying at their place of work were less likely to leave early. A third (35%) of those leavers that went to a training centre or college did not complete their programme, compared with 47% of those that did not.

Destinations and outcomes

The employment situation of non-completers after they leave training is not radically different to that of other leavers. Around three quarters (78%) are employed full-time and 7% part-time, compared with 83% and 3% of other leavers. Just 39% are working in the same broad sector as their training programme, compared with 59% of other leavers, but given that many people failed to complete because they left or didn't like their jobs, this is not wholly surprising.

One method of assessing the success of non-completers in the labour market is to look at wage levels after completion. There is some evidence that non-completers earn less money than other learners. More than a quarter (28%) of non-completers were relatively low earners in their last week of training, compared with 13% of other leavers. To an extent this is to be expected considering the younger age profile of non-completers, however low earnings are cited as a contributory factor for non-completion by 14% of those leaving programmes early.

Interestingly, average earnings increased for learners leaving training regardless of whether or not they had completed their programme. Nearly two thirds of non-completers (62%) increased their earnings after the training, not significantly different to other leavers. Furthermore when looking at the amounts salaries increased by, there is no significant difference.

Annex I: Summary Table

Summary of Berkshire Learner Satisfaction Survey 2002						
Responses						
<i>In-training - actuals</i>		<i>Leavers - actuals</i>				
Starts	190	Early	123			
Other	102	Completers	81			
don't know / missing	11	don't know / missing	6			
Sub-total	303	Sub-total	210			
Total Responses	513					
Programme - actuals						
<i>Programme type - actuals</i>		<i>Broad training area - actuals</i>				
FMA	181	Business services / admin	101			
AMA	127	Retail & Customer services	80			
NT	128	Construction related	53			
don't know / missing	77	Care Services	74			
		Engineering / motor vehicles	47			
		Hairdressing and beauty	39			
		Other	21			
		don't know / missing	98			
Satisfaction						
<i>Overall satisfaction %</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Neither</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Training centre ratings %</i>		
Job / placement	84	9	7	Teaching quality	76	
Training	86	8	6	Materials	60	
Programme	79	13	8	One-to-one time	48	
Tutor	85	9	6		31	
Assessor	81	14	5		20	
<i>Satisfaction score</i>	8.2			<i>Training score</i>	7.5	
Satisfaction Drivers %						
<i>Employer support</i>	<i>(In-training only)</i>					
Very supportive	31					
Less supportive	43					
<i>Learner type</i>		<i>Outlook at start of programme</i>				
Enthusiast learners	45	High confidence	37			
Positive	43	Low confidence	16			
Reactive	12	High awareness	22			
		Low awareness	29			
Programme operation %						
<i>Training Plan</i>		<i>Visits at workplace</i>				
Completed with training provider	51	Once a month	53			
Completed with employer	5	Once every two months	16			
Not completed	8	Less frequently	17			
Don't know	36	Never / not yet visited	14			
<i>Key skills</i>		<i>Importance of key skills</i>				
Information technology	54	<i>(In-training only)</i>				
Communication	59	Relevant to current work	37			
Application of number	54	Useful for everyday life	27			
Working with others	51	A waste of time	23			
Improving learning/performance	44	None of these	13			
Any key skills studied	76					

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