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National Learner Satisfaction Survey

Work-Based Learning
Summary Report 2002/03

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Learning+Skills Council

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Summary

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) conducts a National Learner Satisfaction Survey each year to investigate the levels of satisfaction reported by learners across the range of LSC-funded providers. The National Learner Satisfaction Survey focuses on the learning experience and the quality of teaching, support and resources offered. It also collects data on the impact that the learner experience has on learners. This report summarises the main findings of the National Learner Satisfaction Survey drawing on the views of learners in work-based learning. With the National Learner Satisfaction Survey in its second year, there has been an opportunity to compare results.

The LSC's National Learner Satisfaction Survey is the largest survey of the views of post-16 learners ever carried out in England. It has been undertaken annually since 2002. Learning providers are urged to consider adopting the National Learner Survey methodology and core questions, which are available on the LSC's website: www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Partners/Quality/default.htm so that they can compare their rates of learner satisfaction with national benchmarking data.

Over 25,000 learners were surveyed in 2003 compared with 13,000 in 2002. Of these, 2,003 were learners from the work-based learning sector. Details of the wider national survey can be found in the *National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2002/03: Highlights* and also in the *National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2002/03: Technical Data* along with full analysis of the responses of learners in work-based learning. This report focuses on the key findings and messages.

This report is of interest to those providing, attending or supporting work-based learning.

June 2004

Foreword

We have now completed the second year of the National Learner Satisfaction Survey and have learnt even more about our learners. Since the publication of the first year's survey findings we have worked with partner organisations and groups of learners to understand how the work-based learning sector might act upon the findings to improve the quality of the learning received for all learners.

During 2003, the findings from the first year's surveys were discussed at a national series of workshops with providers. We were amazed by how well the survey results were received and delighted at how passionate providers are about finding solutions to areas that learners identified for improvement. We are pleased to share some of the ideas and discussions from these workshops in this report and hope to do further work with providers throughout 2004.

We hope you will feel a sense of pride when reading this report, as we did. There is a lot of good news and the findings are a real tribute to all those working in the sector. We want providers to use the findings of this survey and the focus groups to identify areas for improvement and to make a difference. This year, as well as identifying the areas for improvement, we have included ideas from provider workshops on the ways in which the improvements might be achieved. We hope that you will find this useful.

We strongly encourage all learning providers to use the National Learner Satisfaction Survey methodology and core questions, and to benchmark their own institutions against the national picture. This will help providers to identify priority areas for improvement as well as areas in their own institutions where learners' satisfaction rates may be better than the national picture.

My message is clear. Only if we listen and respond to learners and work to make sure that all learners have the best possible experience, can we say that the quality of work-based learning is truly excellent. We look forward to working with you to raise learners' satisfaction rates even further in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryan K. Sanderson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line that serves as a baseline for the signature.

Bryan K Sanderson
Chairman, the Learning and Skills Council

What's inside

Key findings

Section 1

Overall Satisfaction with the Learning Experience

- A high proportion (90 per cent) of learners are satisfied with their learning experience and 59 per cent are very or extremely satisfied with their learning experience.

Section 2

The Quality of Teaching and Management of Learning

- It was found that 92 per cent of learners are satisfied with the quality of teaching but 51 per cent feel that some lesson time is wasted.

Section 3

Information and Guidance Prior to Entry

- A high proportion (96 per cent) of learners seek advice prior to entry to work-based learning and 91 per cent feel that they chose the most suitable course.

Section 4

Support for Learners

- It was found that 51 per cent of learners encounter difficulties on their course.

Section 5

The Impact of Learning

- A high proportion (94 per cent) of learners say that training has given them skills they can use for a job.

Section 6

Buildings and Facilities

- Satisfaction levels in this area have stayed the same or higher this year. However, very important issues were raised at learners' focus groups about the variation in facilities and services provided by both providers and employers.

Key questions

- What can we do to make learners who are fairly satisfied become very or extremely satisfied?

Section 1

- What areas of teaching are less satisfying for learners and how can satisfaction levels be improved?

Section 2

- How can the information and guidance given to learners before entry to work-based learning be enhanced to improve learners' satisfaction?
- What can be done to identify and support potential early leavers?

Section 3

- How can we improve the way we identify, support and retain learners who experience difficulties?

Section 4

- How do we make all learners positive about learning and want to do more?

Section 5

- How can we improve facilities and services to reflect learners' needs?

Section 6

Introduction

1 The importance of taking full account of the views of learners and clients is widely appreciated across the work-based learning sector as a key means to help guide improvement in programmes and services. The reforms to the sector outlined in *Success for All* are being supported by a substantial investment in work-based learning providers. The LSC's Strategic Area Review process, which began in 2002/03, has the needs of learners as its main consideration. Improvements to the sector are being resourced through the funding of three-year development plans, which themselves are informed by what is needed for learners.

2 To assist the sector as a whole in responding to learners, the LSC embarked on a substantial National Learner Satisfaction Survey in 2002. We have now completed the second year of the National Learner Satisfaction Survey and have learnt even more about our learners. Since the publication of the first year's survey findings we have striven to understand how the sector might act upon the findings to improve the quality of the learning received for all learners.

3 This report presents the findings for work-based learning providers, including the views from work-based learners at general further education and land-based colleges. This year, as well as identifying the areas for improvement in the report, we have also demonstrated how this might be achieved, and we hope that you will find this useful.

4 This year, as well as identifying the areas for improvement in the report, we have also demonstrated how further improvements might be achieved, and I hope that you will find this useful.

5 Earlier in 2003, the findings from the first year's surveys were discussed at a national series of workshops with providers. This new development provided helpful examples of how work-based learning providers can better respond to learners' views, given by the staff who would be most able to effect improvements.

6 We are delighted with how well received the survey results have been and how passionate providers are about finding solutions to areas that learners

identified for improvement. This report gives us the opportunity to share the ideas and discussions from these workshops.

7 We also ran a number of focus groups with learners to explore further some of the issues raised in last year's survey. This too was a great success and we have illustrated this summary report with some of the insights gained from learners in the focus groups. One key focus group finding was that a "good teacher listens to their learners". Their voices may be heard throughout this survey.

8 We hope you will feel a sense of pride when reading this report, as there is much to celebrate and the findings are a real tribute to all of those working in the work-based learning sector. We also hope you will join me in the drive to use the survey findings to identify areas for improvement and to make a difference.

The survey

9 The LSC's National Learner Satisfaction Survey is the largest survey of the views of post-16 learners ever carried out in England. It has been undertaken annually since 2002.

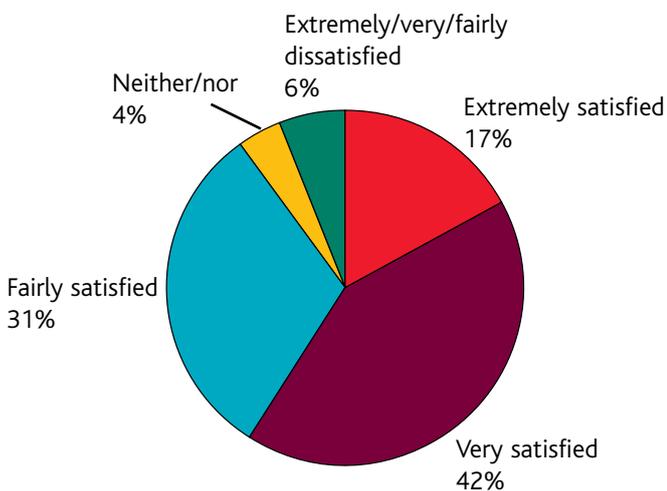
10 Over 25,000 learners were surveyed in 2003 compared with 13,000 in 2002. Of these, 2,003 learners were from the work-based learning sector. The survey demonstrates extremely high levels of satisfaction with the services provided by work-based learning providers in 2002/03. Details of the wider national survey can be found in the *National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2002/03: Technical Data* along with full analysis of the responses of learners who are based at work. This report focuses on the key findings and messages for work-based learning providers.

Overall Satisfaction with the Learning Experience

Key findings

A high proportion (90 per cent) of learners are satisfied with their learning experience and 59 per cent are very or extremely satisfied with their learning experience.

Figure 1: Overall satisfaction with the learning experience.



11 The good news is that, overall, 9 out of 10 learners are satisfied with the quality of their learning experience. This is the same as last year. The proportion of learners who are extremely satisfied is also the same as last year. The unwelcome news is that the proportion of learners who are very satisfied has dipped slightly from 45 per cent to 42 per cent.

12 In work-based learning, those training only in the workplace or only at a provider are most likely to be extremely satisfied. In general, women are more satisfied with the learning experience than men and those who enter training with qualifications below Level 2 are marginally less satisfied.

13 In striving for high standards, a fairly satisfied rating is not good enough! We need to take action to improve the experience of fairly satisfied learners so that next year, more learners are very or extremely satisfied.

Key question

What can we do to make learners who are fairly satisfied become very or extremely satisfied?

14 To answer this, we can learn from those who are very and extremely satisfied. So what are these learners telling us about their experience? The answer is that they are more likely to:

- find the pre-entry advice they receive is more useful
- feel that their expectations have been met
- think that they chose the most suitable course
- rate the quality of teaching much higher
- think that session time has not been wasted
- be satisfied with the buildings and facilities
- have few difficulties, but when they do ...
- ...find the help provided in the event of difficulties to be 'useful'
- have not made a complaint.

Areas for action

15 Providers should consider how they could improve learners' levels of satisfaction with the learning experience.

- Providers should make sure that there is a consistent and high standard of pre-entry advice for all learners.
- The types and sources of advice that work best for different groups of learners should be identified, bearing in mind the role that informal sources (such as family or friends) can play.
- They should continually review the difficulties with individual learners or groups of learners.
- The skills and expertise of their teachers, trainers, assessors and reviewers should be developed.

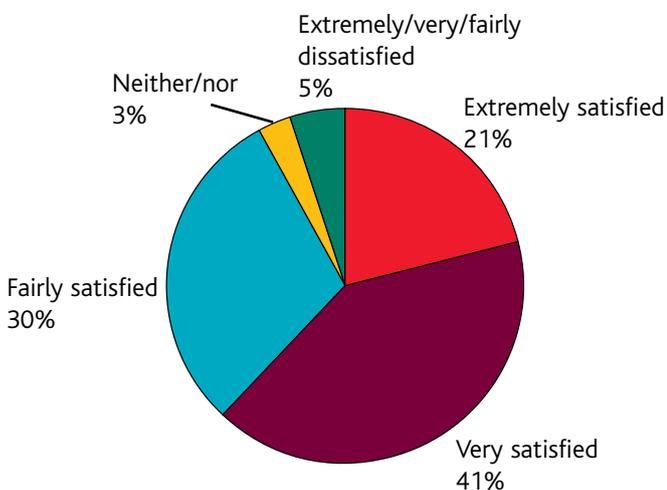
- Providers should review facilities in the light of what they are offering, looking at aspects such as opening times, the quality and quantity of resources, and cost.
- Learners should be encouraged to seek help if they experience difficulties.
- Providers must make sure effective help is available for those who need it or seek it.
- All (formal and informal) complaints should be dealt with appropriately and effectively and the learner kept informed of activity and progress.

The Quality of Teaching and Management of Learning

Key findings

It was found that 92 per cent of learners are satisfied with the quality of teaching but 51 per cent feel that some lesson time is wasted.

Figure 2: Satisfaction with the quality of teaching.



16 The quality of teaching has the biggest impact on learners' satisfaction. It is therefore extremely positive that 92 per cent of learners are satisfied with the quality of teaching and training they receive. This could be on-the-job training and off-the-job training.

17 The proportion of learners who are either very or extremely satisfied has increased slightly since last year from 59 per cent to 62 per cent. In general, women are more satisfied with all aspects of learning than men. Those training only with a work-based learning provider are more satisfied with the quality of teaching and training, while those learners in college or combining college with training in the workplace are least satisfied.

What learners say about teachers and teaching

18 These positive findings from the focus groups with work-based learners aged 16 to 18 revolved around the freedom and independence that work-based learning gives them:

"I like the way they leave you to do your own thing – that suits me."

19 Learners also reported finding their programme more interesting than the courses they did at school. This could be attributed to the teaching and training style which they all clearly preferred, as well as the smaller group sizes.

"I'm a hands on person. I'd rather like someone to show me how to do something then I can go out and do it myself practically, instead of someone doing me a drawing or writing it down. It doesn't sink in as well."

20 A similar number of learners to last year think that some session time is wasted (51 per cent). In the focus groups some complained about the compulsory maths and IT classes (their term for key skills) they had to attend in addition to the work on their other qualifications even though they had already attained a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in the subjects.

Key question

What areas of teaching are less satisfying for learners and how can satisfaction levels be improved?

21 To answer this, we need to have a good understanding of which areas learners are satisfied with. Listed below are the aspects of learning that learners gave priority to in terms of impact on their satisfaction. The percentages shown are the proportion of learners awarding teachers and trainers a 9 or 10 out of 10:

- making the subject interesting or enjoyable for learners (36 per cent)
- understanding learners and how they like to learn (38 per cent)
- learning support, for example, in improving study techniques or time management (40 per cent)
- planning sessions (36 per cent)
- setting clear targets to help learners improve (40 per cent)
- providing prompt and regular feedback on progress for learners (39 per cent)
- managing the group of learners (37 per cent).

Areas for action

22 Providers have suggested ways of how to improve learners' levels of satisfaction with teaching.

- Work-based learning could be delivered in a modular format where learners could choose to undertake a full apprenticeship, while others could choose to do only some elements of a programme, for example, key skills and enhancement qualifications.
- The learner's individual learning styles need to be understood and taken into account. There will be a need for continuing professional development for work-based learning teaching and training staff.
- Learners should receive adequate off-the-job time to complete their portfolios and learning programmes. Employers need to release learners during working hours to undertake their learning.
- Providers need to work with employers to make sure that they understand their responsibilities and allow sufficient off-the-job time and support for their employees or learners to undertake their learning programmes. Providers need to work with a range of staff at the employer site to do this, for example, managers, supervisors and personnel staff.
- Continuing professional development is a means of improving the skills of teachers and trainers already engaged in work-based learning. Trainers in work-based learning have varying skills and qualification backgrounds. Many come from industry and lack formal teaching and training qualifications. Clearly, trainers within this sector need to be able to teach a range of skills appropriate to employment, for example, use of electronic filing in offices and computerised engine management systems in large goods vehicles for motor vehicle engineering.
- Provider staff will benefit from continuing professional development to support them in their liaison and communication with employers to deliver work-based learning effectively.
- Trainers need to be credible in the vocational area in which teaching and training is being delivered and have good interpersonal skills to support their relationship with learners.
- Work-based learning trainers would benefit from more networking with other subject specialists in other organisations. Trainers can feel isolated if they are the only one within the provider organisation teaching or training in their particular subjects.
- The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the LSC could develop subject websites for the exchange of expertise and good practice.
- Providers need to make sure that resources are available to recruit enough teaching, training and assessment staff to make sure that caseloads and learner groups are not too great. Some learning groups and/or trainer caseloads may be too large which can affect the quality of the learning experience and the assessment.
- Learners and employers need regular and timely one-to-one feedback. Up-to-date information on the learner's performance and progress will sustain the interest of employers and motivate the learner to stay in learning.

- Trainers and assessors need to make sure that constructive feedback is given to learners, and that performance is reviewed regularly.

23 Too many learners believe that some of their lesson time is wasted (51 per cent) an increase from 47 per cent for last year. Men are more likely to report experiencing wasted time. Learners with disabilities are less likely to think session time is wasted and award their trainers higher ratings. The main reasons given for wasted time are:

- other learners arriving late (63 per cent)
- other learners making a noise or disrupting class (39 per cent)
- being left hanging around with nothing to do (36 per cent)
- trainers or tutors arriving late (28 per cent)
- lessons finishing early (26 per cent)
- lessons being badly planned or disorganised (24 per cent).

Areas for action

24 Providers have suggested a number of ways of reducing wasted time in work-based learning sessions.

- There is a need to manage learner behaviour and minimise disruption by making sure that tutors and trainers have effective strategies for managing learners' attendance, punctuality and behaviour in lessons.
- Responsibilities and expectations regarding attendance and punctuality should be made clear to learners, tutors and trainers.
- Providers need to make sure that group sizes are not too big as to become unmanageable.
- Tutors and trainers need to set a good example to learners by making sure that lessons begin and end on time. Providers should make sure there are effective communication systems so that learners are informed as soon as possible when lessons are cancelled and, where possible, directed to alternative appropriate activities.
- Tutors and trainers should be aware of learners' expectations for the conduct and content of lessons.

Information and Guidance Prior to Entry

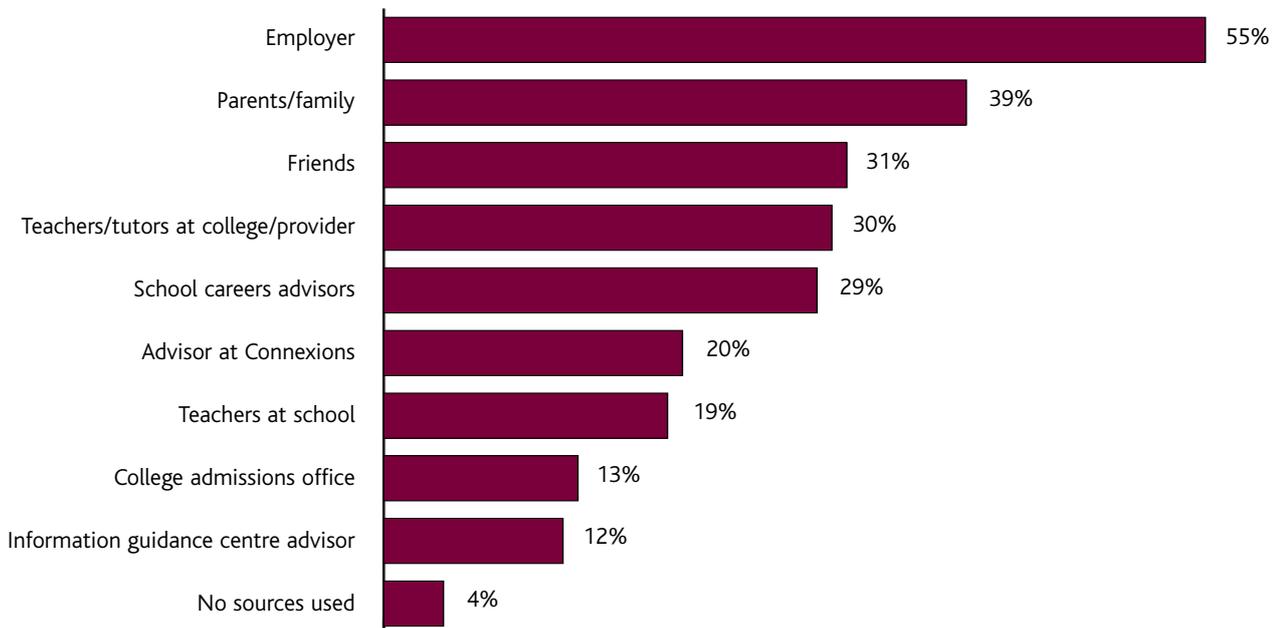
25 The survey assessed why and how learners chose their courses, how advice was sought and its value. Learners were asked whether they were made to feel welcome; whether they chose the right course; and if it matched their expectations.

26 Teachers and trainers at the college or the provider are perceived as being the most useful source of advice. Advisors at Connexions were also felt to be useful. School careers advisors were perceived to be the least useful source of advice.

Key findings

A high proportion, (96 per cent) of learners seek advice prior to entry to work-based learning and 91 per cent feel that they chose the most suitable course.

Figure 3: Sources of advice about course and provider type.



27 Most learners chose their course for career related reasons. Most (91 per cent) learners feel that they have chosen the most suitable course or programme. Over three-quarters, 77 per cent say that their course or programme met their expectations either 'very' or 'quite' closely (although this is lower than the 82 per cent from last year). Learners aged 16 to 18 are more likely to choose a course because they like the subject or for social reasons. Learners from minority ethnic groups are more likely to choose a provider based on convenience factors or because of friends going there.

28 A very high proportion (97 per cent) of learners said that their college or provider made them feel welcome.

29 A very high number of work-based learners (96 per cent) sought advice before starting their course (much higher than any other form of provision). The average number of sources (for this advice) is three. Employers are the source of advice used by most learners although learners in minority ethnic groups are more likely to seek advice from other sources. Informal contacts such as family and friends also play a key role and therefore it is important that they understand what the programme entails.

30 Learners aged 19 and over are more satisfied with the advice they receive prior to entry to work-based learning and more likely to say their expectations are met. Learners with lower qualifications on entry found advice prior to entry to learning more useful than those with higher qualifications on entry. Women are more satisfied with the advice they receive prior to entry than men and are more likely to seek such advice. Learners are much less likely to drop out or become dissatisfied with their programme if employers are actively involved in their learning.

What the learners say

31 Work-based learners aged 16 to 18 were asked if their expectations had been met.

32 Many liked the way they were treated and how they were taught. They expressed a dislike of school in terms of the style of teaching and training and the subjects taught. So they did not have high expectations of providers and were pleasantly surprised to find out how different it was.

33 Some expected that the course would be more theoretical and others expected that the course would be more practical, but most learners were happy with the balance provided between theoretical and practical work. Some had expected the course to be more of a negative experience but were pleasantly surprised.

"I thought it would be harder. I was surprised how easy it was."

"I thought it would be like school. But it's better. They treat you like adults."

"In some ways it's better than my expectations. I like the way we are treated."

34 They did not, however, expect the same disruptive elements to be present in their training as they had at school and expressed dissatisfaction at trainers who were not able to deal with this problem adequately.

"But I didn't know about the other people there would be at the provider. Some of them are disruptive and the trainer can't control them."

35 Some mentioned the cost of necessary equipment for their course being a problem, such as scissors for hairdressing, which can cost as much as £200. This sort of information is not always made clear to learners before they enrol.

36 Work-based learners are generally happy about their course, however some alluded to the strain of balancing learning and work commitments, especially if they were particularly busy at work.

37 Work-based learners aged 16 to 18 often found their choice of subject was one that had interested them from a young age. Some learners are influenced by their parents in their choice of subject, particularly if it is a trade, or sometimes a careers advisor suggested it. Some of the learners mentioned that they were not very good at the subjects they studied at school and wanted to do something else.

38 Training was often seen as a good way to get a well-paid job. The overriding reason for choosing work-based learning was because it was about learning a trade.

"I chose it because it was a trade and I can take the skill anywhere in the world."

"My parents said it was important to learn a trade."

39 Learners openly admitted that they did not look very hard to find a provider for their course.

40 Most often, the location and closeness to home and work were major factors. Indeed, some claimed that their parents had made the phone calls to the provider and started the application process. Others mentioned prospectuses, careers advisors and newspaper advertisements.

41 Dissatisfaction became clear when learners were asked if they would do things differently.

42 Some claimed that if they had known how important it was, they would have found out more about the extent of communication and support between their employer and the provider and the provider's social facilities, such as canteen and rest areas.

"They could be doing a lot more – they should be coming to review when you're at work a bit more as well, they basically chuck you out and say "well, there you go", and you go back to the provider and they ask you how you got on and that but they don't actually speak to the bosses very often."

Key question

How can the information and guidance given to learners before entry to work-based learning be enhanced to improve learners' satisfaction?

43 The information and guidance that learners receive before starting a course plays a crucial role in determining their satisfaction later on. To achieve satisfaction, the areas to focus action on, in order of priority are:

- making sure that expectations are met
- where possible learners get their first choice of provider
- making sure that advice is effective for those who have sought it
- engaging employers in work-based learning.

Areas for action

44 Providers have made a number of suggestions about how the support and advice given to learners before entry to work-based learning could be enhanced to improve learners' satisfaction.

- Learners should start work-based learning with realistic expectations about their programme obtained from reliable and up-to-date sources. Effective information and guidance, enrolment, induction and initial assessment are crucial stages in guiding expectations.
- Effective and high-quality careers advice and planning are essential to help learners (and their parents or carers) make the right choices. There may be other courses, or courses at a lower or higher level that might better suit the learner.
- Although social reasons matter to learners, schools, providers, employers and Connexions personnel should work with learners to help manage their expectations and to help them understand the importance of making their choice of course in relation to their career aspirations.
- Providers should liaise with school and Connexions personnel and offer taster sessions to potential learners.
- Providers need to make sure that learners are given up-front, clear information about the content of their course or framework and about the requirements for and costs of necessary equipment.
- Providers should make sure that effective induction and initial assessment are available to make sure that learners are on the most appropriate courses.
- Providers should not let performance monitoring systems and funding models discourage them from allowing learners to transfer courses, and possibly providers, if other options seem more appropriate.
- Employers are an important partner in work-based learning. Providers must make sure that employers are 'signed up' to the value of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and what is required to deliver work-based learning. Learners are much less likely to drop out or become dissatisfied with their programme if employers are involved, for example, in providing on-the-job training, engaged in productive

communication with the provider and participate in progress reviews.

- There is a need to raise the awareness of employers of their role and responsibilities about work-based learning. The DfES, the LSC and local providers should work together in raising this awareness.

Key question

What can be done to identify and support potential early leavers?

45 Too many learners leave their course without completing any or all of its components or only some of them. The reasons for leaving a course early are due to changing jobs (18 per cent), being on the wrong course (17 per cent) and lack of support from work (10 per cent).

Areas for action

46 Providers have made a number of suggestions about what can be done to identify and support potential early leavers.

- Potential early leavers need to be identified as soon as possible, ideally at induction, for example, through initial assessment, attendance monitoring, poor performance and so on.
- Absent learners (or their parents) should be followed up immediately by telephone or text messages. Support services should be made available to these learners.
- An 'open door' policy is needed which will allow learners who leave early a flexibility to come back to learning at a later date.
- Trial periods and vocational tasters can be used early in the learning programme to allow learners to try different subjects before making their final decision. The LSC needs to recognise this as a valid activity and fund providers appropriately.
- There is a correlation between early leaving and less-involved or supportive employers. There is a need to inform employers about their responsibilities before they sign up to the learning programme. Employers must provide adequate support for their learners or employees to reduce the incidence of early leaving.

Support for Learners

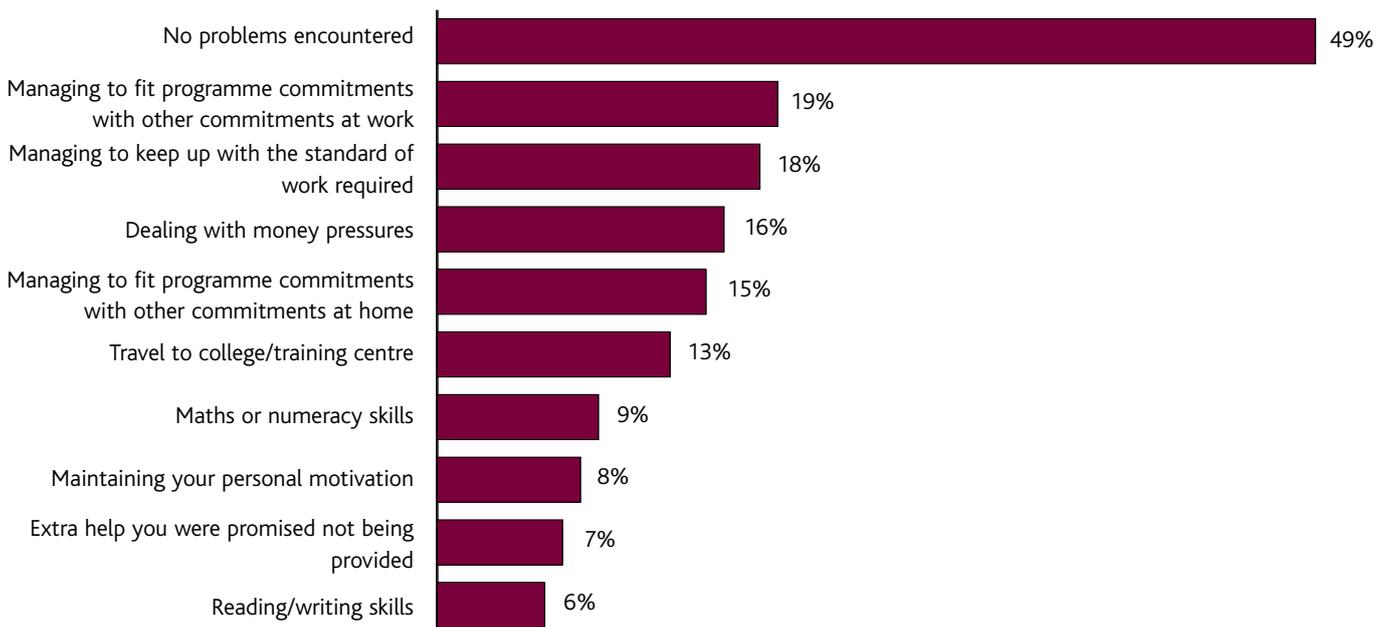
47 This section looks at what difficulties, if any, learners experienced, as well as the usefulness of advice sought to support them. Health difficulties are dealt with in the context of early leavers in the section above. This section also goes on to look at the handling of learners' complaints.

48 Of the learners experiencing difficulties, those learners in socio-economic groups A and B experience more problems, particularly fitting their course in with domestic and work commitments. Learners aged 19 and over are more likely to face difficulties fitting their course in with work commitments, while younger learners (16 to 18 years) report more difficulties with money and travel.

Key finding

It was found that 51 per cent of learners encounter difficulties on their course.

Figure 4: Percentage of learners reporting encountering difficulties.



49 A third (33.3 per cent) of work-based learners with difficulties have sought help or advice. Learners solely at college and male learners are the least likely to seek advice. Among those learners who sought help, four-fifths (82 per cent) found the response useful, although this leaves 18 per cent of this group feeling dissatisfied by the response they received.

50 Overall, 13 per cent of work-based learners have made a complaint either formally or informally. Less than half (44 per cent) of those who complained, felt that the response to their complaint was satisfactory. This leaves 17 per cent feeling that the outcome was not satisfactory and 37 per cent claiming that there was no outcome to their complaint.

51 The three most common complaints are:

- lack of attention, visits or help
- not progressing, not learning enough, not receiving enough training
- poor or incompetent teaching and training.

Key question

How can we improve the way we identify, support and retain learners who experience difficulties?

Areas for action

52 Providers need to consider how they can improve the way they identify, support and retain learners experiencing difficulties.

- Appropriate provider staff need good interpersonal skills to support their relationship with learners and employers alike, for example, staff that are role models for young people, come from similar backgrounds and experience and have the ability to appropriately communicate with all levels within a employers' organisation.
- Improve pastoral support mechanisms for learners to help with motivation and personal problems. Learners may need help with time management and study skills, and independence skills. Support may come from the learners themselves, tutors, trainers or other non-teaching staff, including workplace mentors.

- Improve initial assessment procedures and have tools in place to identify learners who are likely to need additional support. This could include assessments of basic skills, key skills, and subject specific skills. Learners may also have other support needs, such as financial support which should be identified at this stage.
- Marketing of support services needs to be effective to encourage take-up. Support may also need to be flexible to cater for all types of delivery and learning styles, for example, outreach support (which could be within employer premises and community based) and outside of normal provider hours. Learners need to know who they can approach for additional help and support both on-the-job and off-the job, and how to access it and where it is.
- Need for improved and effective internal systems for monitoring and following up complaints to make sure that all result in satisfactory outcomes.

The Impact of Learning

Key finding

A high proportion (94 per cent) of learners say that training has given them skills they can use for a job.

53 The number of learners identifying benefits from learning has dropped since last year. However, the benefits they do identify clearly relate to their career and personal confidence.

Table 1: Identified benefits of learning.

	2002/03	2001/02
Base: all respondents.	2,003	2,032
	per cent	per cent
It has given me skills I can use for a job.	94	94
I feel more confident in my ability to learn.	88	90
I have greater enthusiasm for the subject.	81	85
I feel more positive about learning than I did when I started.	77	79
I am better at managing my time and responsibilities.	74	82
I feel more confident socially.	70	75

54 The survey also shows that the impact of learning is influenced by age, gender, disability and level of qualification on entry:

- younger learners (aged under 19) are more likely to think they have benefited from their training
- women are more likely to consider undertaking further learning in the future
- learners with disabilities are more likely to consider undertaking learning in the future than other learners. They also identify many more benefits from learning that other learners do
- learners below Level 2 on entry perceive more benefits to learning but are also more likely to undertake learning for the social aspects
- learners with higher qualifications on entry are more likely to consider undertaking further learning in the future.

55 There is a really positive message in the responses from learners. A high percentage (88 per cent) of learners who had a negative attitude to learning on leaving school, now feel confident in their ability to learn and 80 per cent feel more positive about learning than when they started.

56 Almost half of all learners said that they would be very likely to undertake another formal or certified course of study in the next three years.

Key question

How do we make all learners positive about learning and want to do more?

Areas for action

57 Providers have suggested that the following actions could be taken to try to further improve learners' attitudes towards learning.

- It is important to understand, share the reasons for, and learn from, the improved position of the sixth form colleges over the two years of the survey.
- Respond positively and effectively to learner feedback in the individual provider context as a means of improving perceptions in future.
- Focus on building individual confidence as well as an improved social experience of learning to increase satisfaction.
- Make sure that the views of particular groups are taken into account to improve perceptions. Addressing the needs of different age groups and minority ethnic groups will be part of this.

58 Importantly, promoting the benefits of learning to those members of the community not currently participating could include key messages about personal confidence and well-being.

Buildings and Facilities

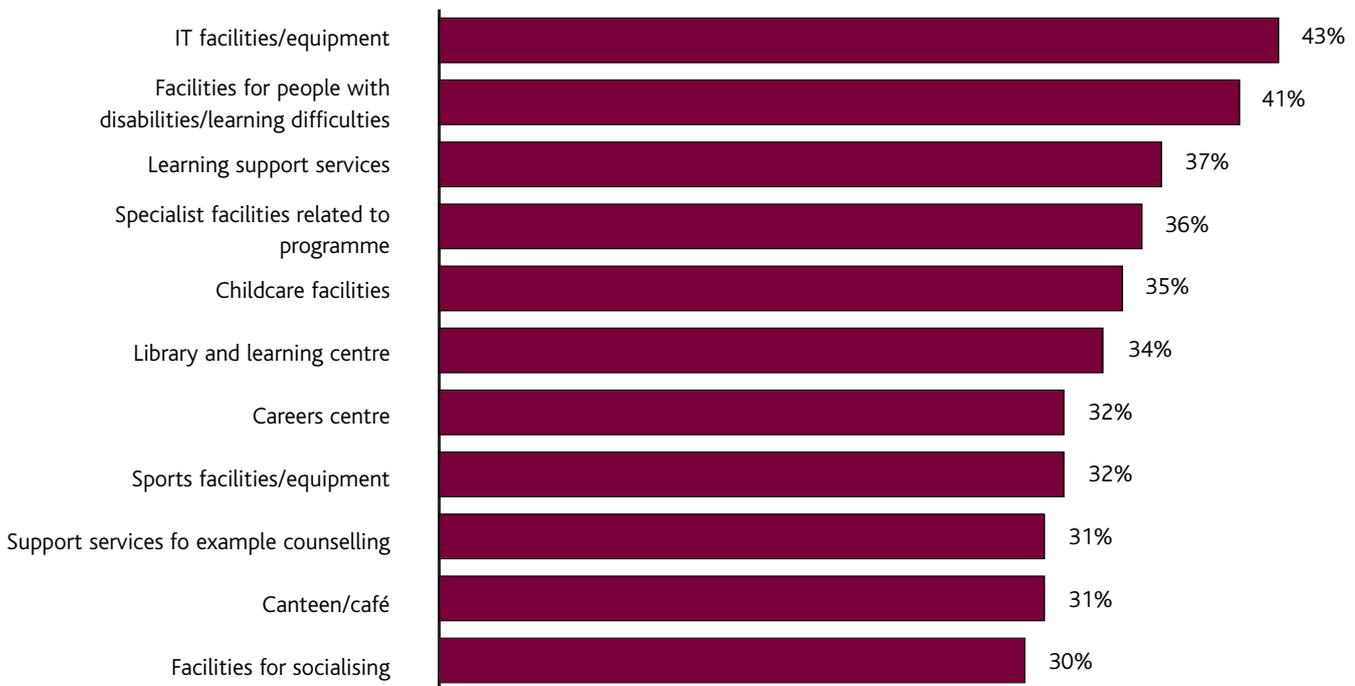
Key findings

Satisfaction levels in this area have stayed the same or higher this year. However, very important issues were raised at learners' focus groups about the variation in facilities and services provided by both providers and employers.

59 Compared with last year, ratings for most facilities have either stayed the same or increased.

60 The facilities that learners are most satisfied with are the IT facilities and facilities for learners with disabilities or learning difficulties. Other facilities, such as the careers centre, canteen, sports and facilities for socialising received lower ratings from learners.

Figure 5: The buildings and facilities (per cent learner rating 9 or 10 out of 10).



61 Overall, facilities and services are rated more highly by learners aged 16 to 18 and by women. Learners who are solely at college are more satisfied with facilities and services than learners who divide their time between employment and college.

What the learners say

62 Focus group learners aged 16 to 18 made a number of comments about facilities.

63 They said that facilities to allow socialising were important, though it was generally felt that social facilities and functions at providers were primarily relevant to those studying there full time.

64 Work-based learners spend most of their time in employment (rather than at the provider), they are more likely to socialise with their work colleagues. Nevertheless, they still expressed a desire to socialise more with their course attendees. They also felt that provider canteens could be more inviting than they are at present.

"I think they should organise just the provider lot to go out one night and pay for us all."

"There is a canteen there, but you wouldn't want to go."

"We just need somewhere to meet up really."

Key question

How can we improve facilities and services to reflect learners' needs?

65 Some facilities, which are important in driving learners' satisfaction levels, are not rated as highly as we would like by learners. These are the priorities for improving:

- library or learning centre
- careers centre and careers advice
- canteen or café
- sports facilities and equipment
- facilities for socialising.

Areas for action

66 Providers need to consider how they could improve buildings and facilities to reflect learners' needs.

- Providers should make sure that, any equipment that relates directly to their learning, for example, business equipment such as fax machines and franking machines for learners on business administration courses, can keep pace with equipment at the learners' workplace.
- Need for funding for modern equipment to reflect the equipment that is used in the workplace.
- Negotiate with employers on behalf of learners who may require particular facilities to undertake their learning programmes at work, such as a quiet place to complete their portfolio.
- Providers should consider how they could provide places for learners to relax and socialise with other learners.

Conclusions

67 This year's survey is the first time we have used focus groups to explore the story behind the figures. For the first time, therefore, we have had the opportunity to discuss ways of building on providers' impressive successes with teachers, trainers and learners.

68 The excellent news is that our survey finds that over 90 per cent of learners are satisfied with their whole learning experience. We have therefore turned our attention to how we can increase the proportion who are very or extremely satisfied by improving the experience for those who are only fairly satisfied. Our focus groups have identified aspects of pre-entry advice, teaching quality, support services and complaint procedures, which are crucial to this process, and explored the potential for further improvements.

69 The proportion of learners getting a 'buzz' from learning remains high, as does the proportion of learners who are extremely satisfied with the quality of teaching they receive. It is striking that almost three quarters of learners who previously had a negative attitude towards education are now getting a 'buzz' out of learning. The survey identifies important factors that motivate or demotivate learners, and recommends methods of embedding good practice to continue the positive general trend.

70 In work-based learning, a high proportion of learners who leave school with a negative attitude to learning gain confidence and a positive disposition to learning as a result of their experiences and more than half will consider undertaking further learning. Providers have suggested that regular, effective feedback on progress could help to enhance awareness of the additional benefits of learning.

71 Learners and staff have provided us with some useful suggestions for how lesson time can be used more efficiently. For example, problems of disruptive and late learners can be reduced by involving experienced staff in the planned management and control of disruptive groups or individuals. We should also recognise the contribution made by setting high expectations of learners that motivate them, and by the training of staff in dealing with disruptive behaviour.

72 A key area of concern is providing more effective support for learners experiencing difficulties and ensuring that issues are resolved as far as possible to the satisfaction of the learner. In this area, providers have suggested a number of ways to enhance initial assessment and pastoral and support services for the benefit of learners as well as making sure that providers' systems for monitoring formal complaints work well.

73 The summary shows that as a group, learners in work-based learning are the most likely to seek advice on their choice of course before entering a programme and that employers are a key source of information for them. The active involvement of employers and the quality of liaison between the employer and the training provider are also crucial factors in limiting early dropout and dissatisfaction with the learning programme. Providers have suggested numerous ways to improve the advice given to learners and communication between the key partners to make sure that learners enter their training well informed and with realistic expectations and that there is effective support for those at risk of dropping out. Identification of these potential early leavers and flexibility in the learning programme are also crucial to make sure that all learners find the right course.

74 In terms of the overall learning experience in work-based learning, those training solely in the workplace or at a provider are most likely to be extremely satisfied and those training with a work-based learning provider are more satisfied with the quality of teaching and learning. Providers have suggested that there are substantial gains to be made in increasing the effectiveness of communication and liaison with employers to help make sure that more learners in this area move from being fairly satisfied to being very or extremely satisfied.

Enquiries and Key Publications

Highlights report and detailed findings 2002/03

75 The following documents covering the 2002/03 Learner Satisfaction Survey are also available:

National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2002/03: Highlights

National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2002/03: Technical Data

National Learner Satisfaction Survey Adult and Community Learning Providers Summary Report 2002/03

National Learner Satisfaction Survey Further Education Summary Report 2002/03.

76 These are available at:
(www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/SubjectListing/ImprovingQuality/QualityPerformanceandAchievement/LearnerSatisfaction/nationallernersatisfactionsurveyfull.htm).

Findings 2001/02

77 The *Learner Satisfaction Survey Findings 2001/02: Summary Report* and the *Learner Satisfaction Survey Findings 2001/02: Technical Report* are available at:
(www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Partners/Quality/default.htm).

Core methodology and questions

78 The LSC strongly encourages providers to adopt the core methodology and use it to benchmark their own institutions against the national picture. Guidance on the core methodology and the core questionnaire is available at:
(www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Partners/Quality/default.htm).

Feedback

79 We would welcome any comments you have on this report. Also, we are very interested in knowing more about how you are using the findings from the LSC's National Learner Satisfaction Survey to help strengthen your provision, and to help make sure a really high proportion of your learners are very or extremely satisfied with their experience.

80 If you would like further information on the National Learner Satisfaction Survey or want to leave comments or feedback please email
Learner.survey@lsc.gov.uk

Acknowledgments

Partner Organisation

NOP Research Group is the UK arm of NOP World, the ninth largest research agency in the world. In the UK, NOP employs around 600 staff and it is split into specialist divisions. The team working on the LSCs national learner satisfaction survey is in the division that specialises in social research and there are 20 researchers dedicated to this field. The team has relevant experience of both large-scale social research surveys and of carrying out customer satisfaction research.



Notes

Notes

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