

 For information



Leading learning and skills

National Learner Satisfaction Survey: Offenders Learning and Skills Service Pilot

Summary of Findings

Research study
conducted for the
Learning and Skills
Council

January 2008

Of interest to everyone involved in the
further education system

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Summary of Findings

This report contains the findings of a pilot study that used different methodologies to survey learners in public prisons and young offender institutions (YOIs). The findings are based on a sample of prisoners engaged in Learning and Skills Council (LSC)-funded learning in 18 public prisons and YOIs across three regions.

Satisfaction with learning experience

The majority of learners in this pilot study were satisfied with their overall learning experience (81 per cent, including 55 per cent who were extremely or very satisfied) and felt that their course or training was meeting their needs. Just 5 per cent of learners were dissatisfied.

Satisfaction with the quality of teaching was also high (almost two-thirds were extremely or very satisfied), with learners rating teachers, tutors and trainers consistently highly across a range of different indicators. Most also agreed that they were treated fairly and with respect by teaching staff.

Pre-entry advice and guidance

The most common reasons cited for choosing a course or training were to gain a qualification, advance skills and knowledge and help with finding a job on release (all these reasons were given by more than half of learners).

Learners were generally positive about the advice and guidance they received prior to starting their course or training. Most felt well informed, particularly in terms of the content of the course and how it would be taught (almost three-quarters felt well informed about both of these aspects). Areas where information was deemed to be less adequate related to the amount of time learners would be expected to devote to their course and how the training would help them to gain job-related skills.

Learner support

While a quarter of responding learners said they had not experienced any specific difficulties during their course or training, a third complained about other students making a noise and disrupting the class, and a similar proportion cited other students arriving consistently late. Nevertheless, most believed that issues were dealt with quite well by teachers and only a tiny minority reported any specific problems facing them personally during their learning experience. Only one in eight claimed to have made a complaint to teaching or prison staff about their course.

Attitudes towards and perceived impact of learning

Learners were more mixed in their assessment of their feelings towards education when thinking back to when they left school – almost one third said they had negative feelings in this respect and more than a fifth said they were indifferent. But a majority did now seem motivated to learn, mostly in order to improve their career prospects. Learners who were positive about their school education experience also tended to be more positive about learning generally.

In light of this generally positive overall picture, there was some good feedback on the whole about the perceived impact of learning. For example, around two-thirds agreed that they are now more confident, and similar proportions felt more positive about learning as a result and had gained enthusiasm for their subject of study. Four in five also believed that their course or training would help them to get a job in the future.

Key groups for focus

Despite the majority reporting a very positive learning experience, the younger learners in YOIs were consistently less satisfied than other older learners (this group also tended to spend the most time in formal study). For example, they were much more likely than other groups to say that they had engaged in learning only because they had been made to, and reported the fewest benefits from the learning or training they have received. Other groups who were consistently less satisfied with various aspects of their learning experience include learners with a disability or learning difficulty, non-white learners and female learners.

1 Introduction

- 1 This report contains the findings of a pilot study that used different methodologies to survey learners in public prisons and YOIs.
- 2 The overall aim of the study was to make recommendations to the LSC on the most appropriate methodology for extending the National Learner Satisfaction Survey (NLSS) to include learners in prisons, as well as ascertaining learners' perceptions of their learning experience.
- 3 A separate report, discussing in detail the technical and methodological aspects of the pilot study, has been produced. This report explores the perceptions and attitudes of prisoners to their learning experience.
- 4 The findings are based on a sample of prisoners engaged in LSC-funded learning in 18 prisons and YOIs across three regions. As such the findings in this report should be treated as indicative rather than representative of all learners in prisons and YOIs in England.

1.1 Background to the NLSS

- 5 The NLSS is a large-scale survey of over 43,000 learners engaged in LSC-funded learning and covers further education (FE), work-based learning (WBL) and personal and community development learning (PCDL). The survey comprises three waves, each dealing with a distinct set of modular questions:
 - pre-entry advice and guidance;
 - support for learners; and
 - impact of learning.
- 6 There is a set of core questions which is covered in all three waves:
 - overall satisfaction with the learning experience;
 - overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching and management of learning; and
 - likelihood of return to learning in the future.
- 7 This year the LSC also wishes to explore the inclusion of learners in prisons, reflecting its newly acquired role in managing planning, funding and delivery of the new integrated

Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) across all nine English regions.

- 8 Ipsos MORI was commissioned to pilot different approaches to surveying learners in prisons including YOIs. The findings of this exercise are detailed in a separate report. This report focuses only on describing learners' responses to the survey questions, in particular their perceptions of different aspects of their learning.

1.2 Interpretation of findings

- 9 As highlighted earlier, when interpreting the findings, it is important to remember that the results are based on a sample of learners in 18 prisons across only three regions. The findings contained in this report are also unweighted. Therefore, the results contained in this report should be treated as indicative only. They should not be taken to be representative of all prison learners in the three regions surveyed nor of prison learners nationally.
- 10 In the report text, charts or tables where percentages do not add up to 100 per cent, this is due to multiple answers, computer rounding and/or the exclusion of neutral, don't know or not stated responses.
- 11 An asterisk (*) denotes a value greater than zero, but less than 0.5 per cent.
- 12 'Net' figures represent the balance of opinion on attitudinal questions. In the case of a 'net satisfaction' figure, this represents the percentage satisfied on a particular issue or service, less the percentage dissatisfied. For example, if an aspect of learning records 40 per cent satisfaction and 25 per cent dissatisfaction, the 'net satisfaction' figure is +15 points.

1.3 Publication of the data

- 13 To protect the LSC's interest in ensuring that the findings of this research are accurately reported, the publication of the research data is subject to the advance approval of Ipsos MORI. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misrepresentation.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 14 Ipsos MORI would like to thank Austen Okonweze and Ruth Knapton from the LSC for their help and guidance throughout this study. We would also like to thank the HM prisons and YOIs that took part.

2 Sample Profile

2.1 Demographic profile

Table 1 describes the demographic profile of the offender pilot sample. It shows that more than half of learners (58 per cent) were aged 25 or above, with the remainder spread more or less equally between the 15–20 and 21–24 age groups. The majority were male and described themselves as white.

Most did not consider themselves to have a disability, but just over 1 in 10 said they had learning difficulties. And, for one in eight learners, English was not their first language.

Table 1: Sample profile: demographics

	%
Age:	
15–20	16
21–24	15
25–29	14
30–34	12
35–39	12
40+	19
Not stated	11
Gender:	
Male	77
Female	17
Not stated	6
Ethnicity:	
Asian	6
Black	11
Mixed	5
White	68
Other	2
Not stated	8
Disability/learning difficulties:	
None	72
Disability	6
Learning difficulties	11
Don't know/not stated	12

English as first language:

Yes	80
No	12
Don't know/not stated	8

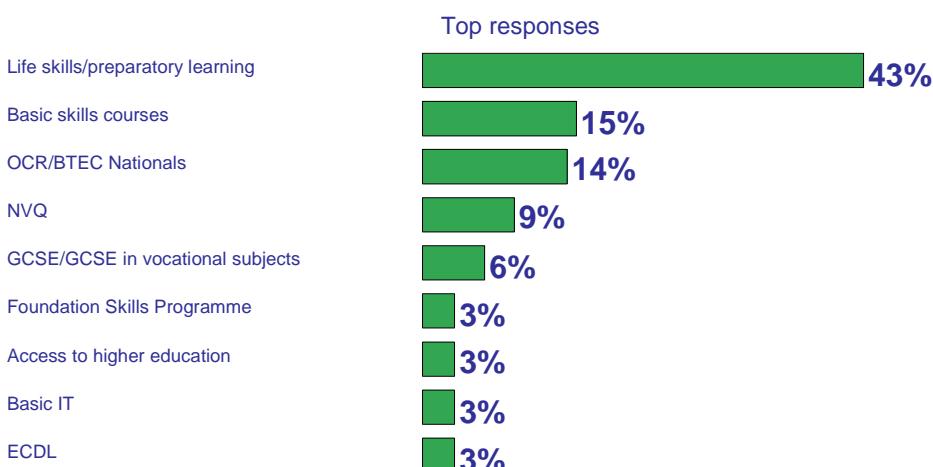
Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

2.2 Type of learning and training

The most common type of learning or training cited by learners was life skills or preparatory (including adult literacy, adult numeracy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and information and communications technology (ICT)) – 43 per cent said they were currently engaged in this course of study. The next most popular was basic skills training (15 per cent), followed closely by OCR/BTEC Nationals (14 per cent). Almost 1 in 10 (9 per cent) were studying for NVQs and 6 per cent for GCSEs or GCSEs in vocational subjects. A wide range of other learning or training was also being undertaken, but none of this was being pursued by more than 3 per cent of respondents.

Chart 1: Types of courses/training.

Q1a What courses or training are you currently doing?



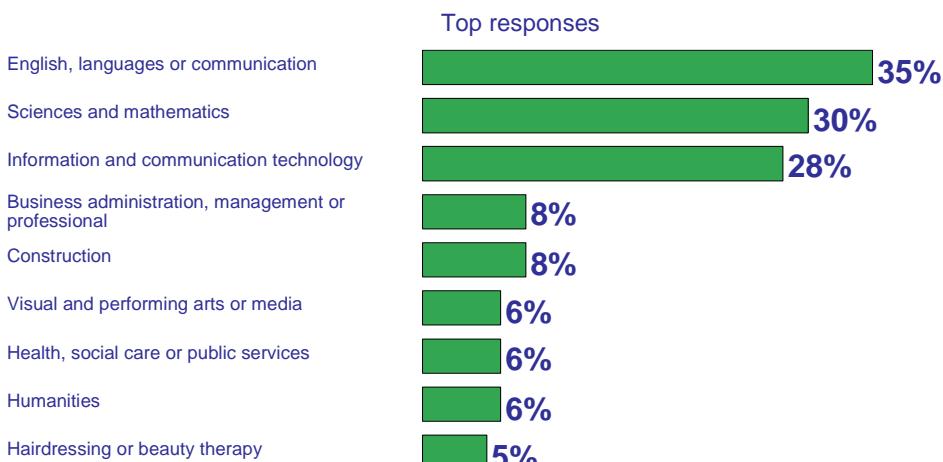
Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

Subjects being studied were also very wide ranging, with the most common being English, languages or communication (35 per cent of responding prisoners mentioned these), followed by sciences or mathematics (30 per cent) and ICT (28 per cent). Business administration, management or professional subjects were being studied by 8 per cent of learners, the same percentage as those studying construction, and slightly fewer (6 per cent) were studying each of visual and performing arts or media; health, social care or public services, and humanities. Hairdressing or beauty therapy was

being studied by 5 per cent of responding prisoners (virtually all of whom were female).

Chart 2: Subjects studied.

Q2a Please indicate all the subjects that you are currently studying

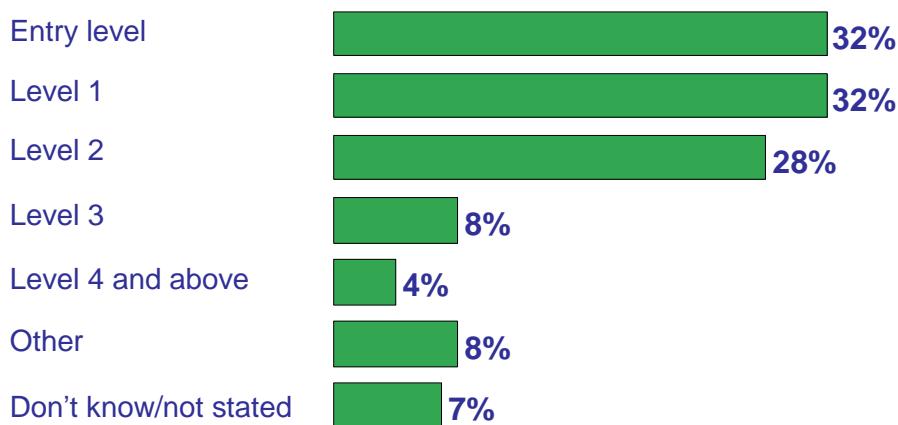


Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

Chart 3 shows that most of this training activity was being undertaken at either 'entry level', Level 1 or Level 2. Just one in eight (12 per cent) was studying at Level 3 or above.

Chart 3: Sample profile: level of study.

Q1b And what level is the course you are studying?



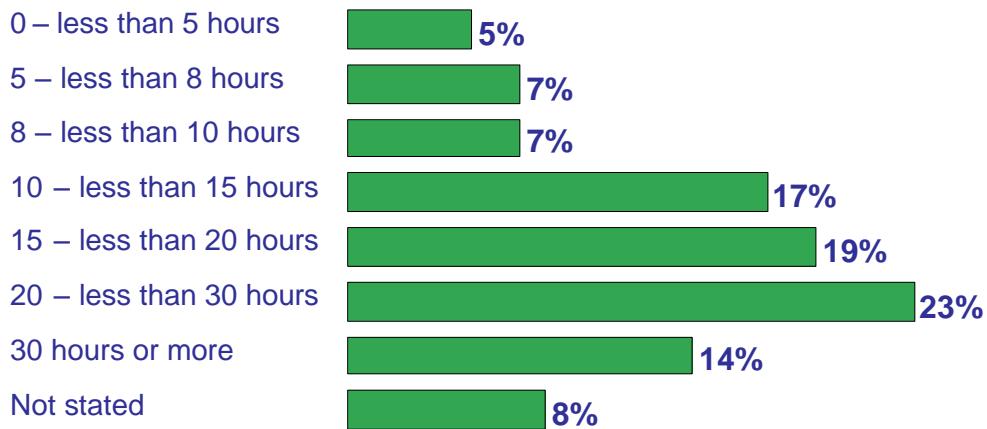
Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

2.3 Time spent in learning or training

The large majority of learners were spending more than 10 hours each week in classrooms or workshops, as Chart 4 demonstrates. Learners in YOIs tended to spend the most time in formal study – exactly half spent more than 20 hours each week in a classroom or workshop, compared with just over a third (37 per cent) overall.

Chart 4: Sample profile: time spent learning.

Q3 In total, how much time do you spend in classrooms or workshops for your learning/training each week?



Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

2.4 Qualifications held

Looking at qualifications held, two-thirds (67 per cent) of learners had obtained some sort of qualification or certificate. Table 2 reveals that over a third (36 per cent) had obtained GCSEs or GCSEs in vocational subjects, while around a quarter had qualified in each of the following: Skills for Life, basic skills courses, NVQs, key skills, other adult literacy courses and OCR/BTEC Nationals. Of these most common qualifications, between 10 per cent and 18 per cent were obtained while in prison.

Table 2: Sample profile: qualifications held

	Qualifications held %	Obtained while in prison %
GCSEs/GCSEs in vocational subjects	36	10
Skills for Life/basic skills courses	28	18
Basic skills courses	27	16
NVQs	27	12
Key skills	27	16
Other adult literacy courses	23	14
OCR/BTEC Nationals	22	14
Life skills/preparatory learning	19	12
Foundation Skills Programme	12	6
GNVQs	11	3
Access to higher education	10	3
GCEs/vocational A-levels	9	2
A-levels	9	1
Apprenticeships	9	1
ESOL courses	7	4
Youth Training/TY certificate/E2E	5	1
AS-levels	4	1
Advanced apprenticeships	4	1
CLAIT/CLAIT plus	3	2
Advance extension awards	3	2

Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

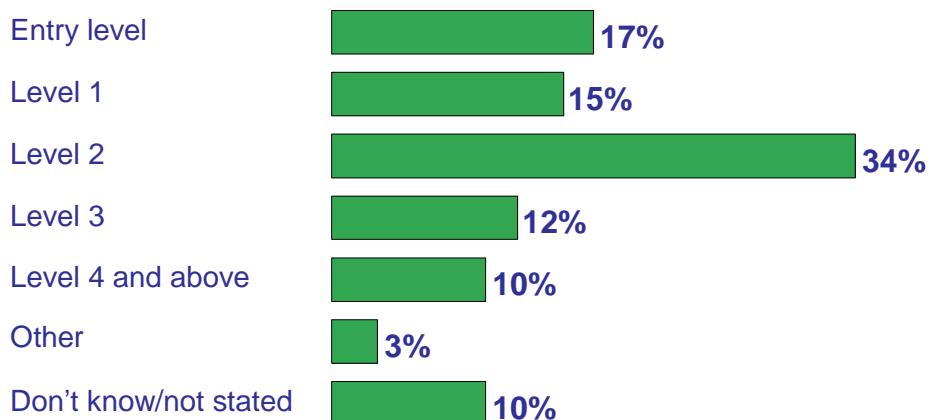
Note: a number of other qualifications not listed here were held by learners, but none by more than 3 per cent

2.5 Highest level of qualifications held

The highest level of qualification held by the majority of respondents was Level 2 or below, with just over one in five (22 per cent) holding higher level qualifications, as Chart 5 illustrates.

Chart 5: Highest qualification level.

Q29 *What is the highest qualification you have achieved?*

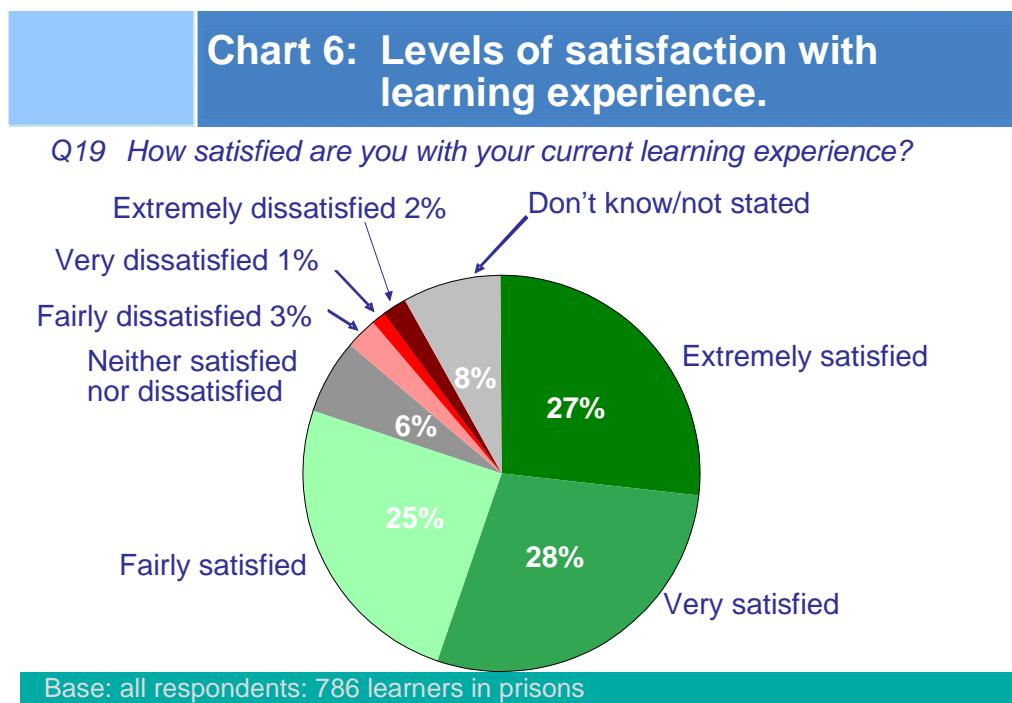


Base: all those with qualifications or certificates: 528 learner in prisons

3 Overall Satisfaction

3.1 Levels of satisfaction

An overwhelming majority of learners (81 per cent) said they were satisfied with their current learning experience, with more than half saying they were extremely or very satisfied, as Chart 6 illustrates.



However, some groups were less satisfied than others, particularly younger learners – 10 per cent of 15–20-year-olds were dissatisfied compared with 5 per cent overall. Linked to this, there were lower than average satisfaction levels among those serving their sentence in a YOI (32 per cent were extremely or very satisfied, compared with 55 per cent overall). Levels of satisfaction also differed between male and female learners, with women being less likely to express satisfaction than men (76 per cent and 83 per cent satisfied, respectively).

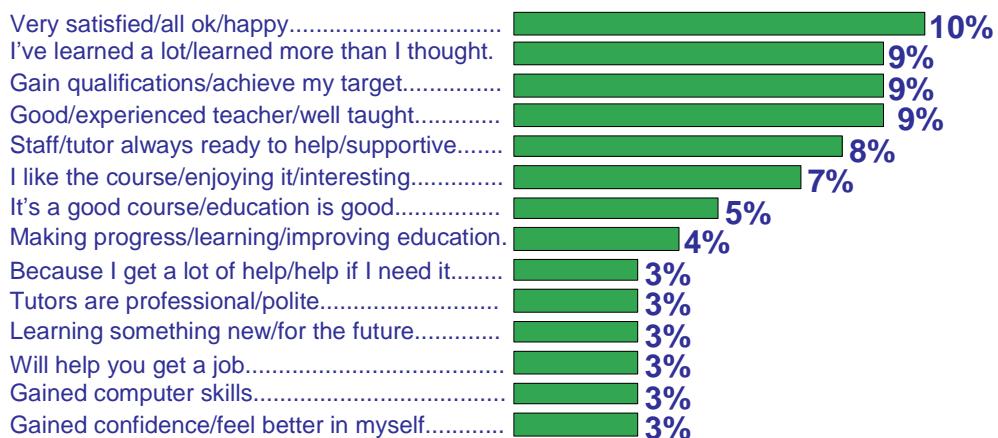
Learners who reported a disability or learning difficulties also tended to be less satisfied (77 per cent compared with 85 per cent for those with no disability or learning difficulties). And those with lower level qualifications (Level 2 or below) were more satisfied than both learners with no qualifications and those with higher qualifications (Level 3 or above) – the net satisfaction score (calculated by subtracting the percentage dissatisfied from the percentage satisfied) for those with qualifications at Level 2 or below was +82, compared with +75 overall.

3.2 Reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction

A wide range of different reasons were given for reported levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, as Chart 7 shows. In general, the opportunity to learn new skills and obtain qualifications, supported by helpful and effective tutors, tended to be the main reasons cited by those happy with their learning experience. Of the few learners who were dissatisfied, their dissatisfaction tended to be linked mostly to perceptions of limited or inadequate resources or course choices (2 per cent mentioned each of these).

Chart 7: Reasons for satisfaction Learning.

Q20 *What is the main reason for feeling satisfied or dissatisfied with your current learning experience?*



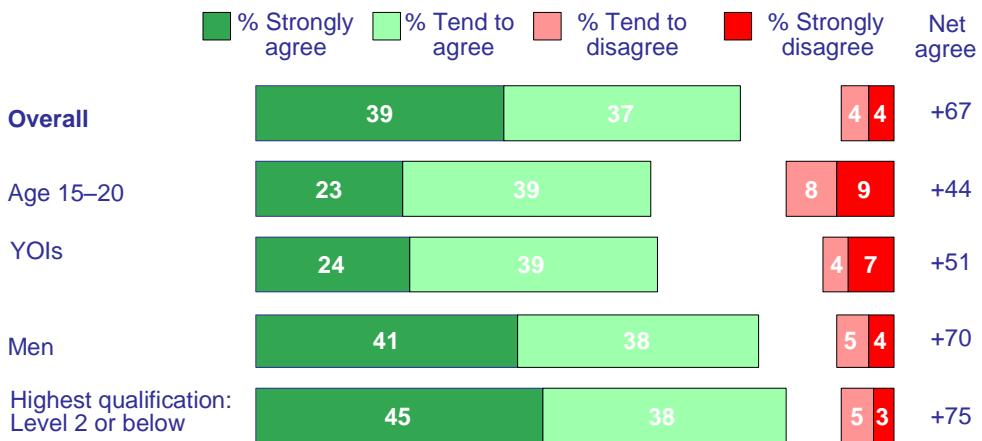
Base: all those who are satisfied or dissatisfied: 676 learners in prisons

3.3 Meeting learners' needs

The majority of pilot survey respondents agreed that their learning programme was meeting their needs, with just under 1 in 10 disagreeing with this statement (see Chart 8). Patterns of response in relation to this statement are broadly consistent with those observed for overall satisfaction with the learning experience: that is, the younger learners in YOIs were less likely to agree and more likely to disagree; women were less likely to be in agreement than men; and those with a highest qualification at Level 2 or below were more positive than the unqualified or those with a highest qualification at Level 3 or above.

Chart 8: Meeting learner's needs.

Q10a To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements? ...My learning programme is meeting my needs



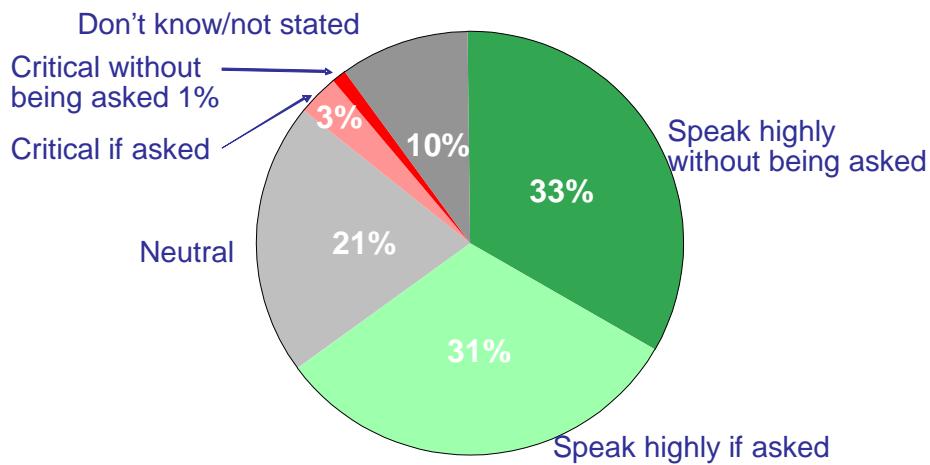
Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons (age 15–20: 124; YOIs: 135; men: 606; Level 2 or below 344)

3.4 Advocacy

Given the high levels of satisfaction, and very low levels of dissatisfaction, it is unsurprising that the majority of learners (almost two-thirds or 65 per cent) were advocates of their course or training. A small minority (4 per cent) were critical, as is shown in Chart 9 below.

Chart 9: Advocacy for course/ Training.

Q26 Which of these statements best describes the way you would speak of your course/training?



Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

Once again, as Table 3 illustrates, the younger learners (aged 15–20) and those in YOIs were the most critical, as too were women and those with a disability or learning difficulties. But this time, having **any** qualification is linked to greater advocacy. Learners with an underlying

positive attitude to education were also stronger advocates of their current course or training, particularly in relation to those who said they were indifferent about education.

Table 3: Advocacy for course or training: subgroup differences

	(Base)	Speak highly %	Critical %	Net advocacy
All	(786)	65	4	+60
Age 15–20	(124)	38	6	+31
Age 21–24	(115)	61	3	+57
Age 25+	(458)	79	3	+76
Prison type: YOI	(135)	36	7	+28
Women	(136)	63	4	+59
Men	(606)	68	4	+64
Disability/learning difficulties	(126)	61	6	+56
No disability/learning difficulties	(566)	69	4	+65
Any level qualification	(461)	72	4	+69
Positive attitude to education	(299)	72	5	+67
Negative attitude to education	(243)	68	3	+65
Indifferent attitude to education	(174)	61	5	+56

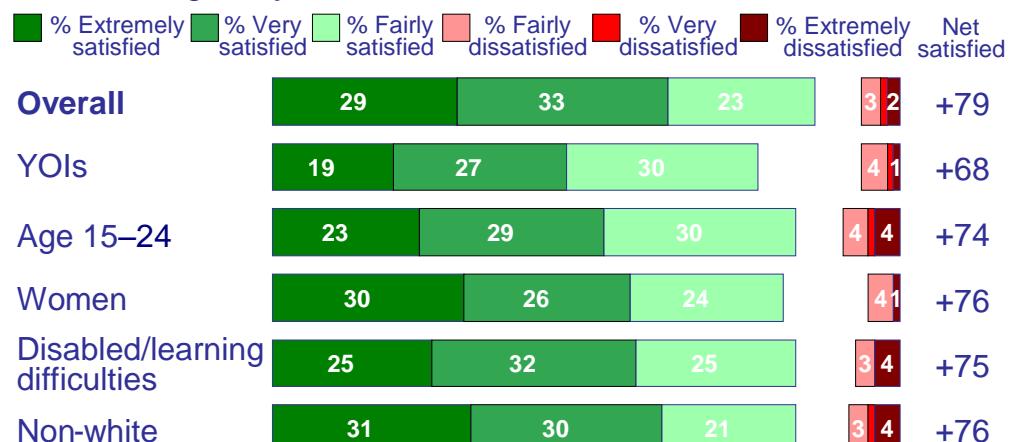
4 Satisfaction with Teaching

4.1 Overall satisfaction

As with their learning experience as a whole, learners were mostly very happy with the quality of the teaching or training they received – more than four in five (85 per cent) were satisfied (almost two-thirds said they were either extremely or very satisfied), and only a small minority were dissatisfied (Chart 10). However, once again, younger learners (mostly in YOIs), female learners and those with a disability or learning difficulty were more unhappy than others. In addition, those from a non-white background were less satisfied than their white counterparts.

Chart 10: Levels of satisfaction with quality of teaching/training.

Q7 Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of the teaching/training that you receive?



Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons (YOIs 135; age 15–24 239, women 136; disabled 226; non-white 191)

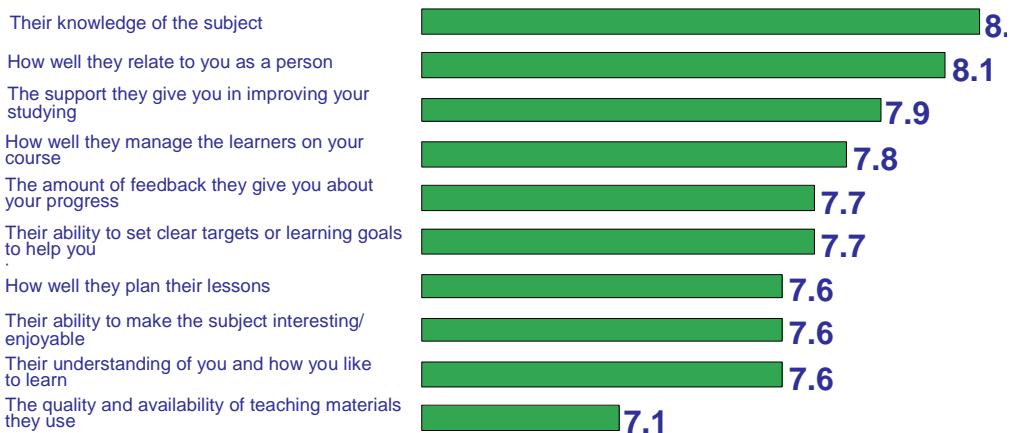
4.2 Assessment of teachers, tutors and trainers

Learners were asked to rate their teachers, tutors or trainers on a range of different aspects of the teaching or training they had received, on a scale of 1 to 10. As Chart 11 shows, knowledge of the subject attracted the highest average score, while the lowest scores went to the quality and availability of the teaching materials used. Table 4 shows the percentage of learners who rated their teachers either 9 or 10 out of 10 on each aspect.

**Chart 11: Rating of teachers/
trainers/tutors: mean scores.**

*Q8 How would you rate the teachers, tutors or trainers on the
following aspects of teaching/training?*

Mean score out of 10



Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

Table 4: Rating of teachers, tutors or trainers: percentage rating teachers 9 or 10 out of 10

	All
Their knowledge of the subject	54
How well they relate to you as a person	53
The support they give you in improving your studying	49
How well they manage the learners on your course	47
The amount of feedback they give you about your progress	46
Their ability to set clear targets or learning goals to help you improve	46
How well they plan their lessons	44
Their ability to make the subject interesting/enjoyable	43
Their understanding of you and how you like to learn	43
The quality and availability of teaching materials they use	37

Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

The lowest scores across all aspects were given by three of the same least satisfied groups as previously, as Table 5 illustrates.

Table 5: Rating of teachers, tutors and trainers: mean scores (subgroup differences)

	All (786)	YOI (135)	Age 15–20 (124)	Disability/ learning difficulty (126)
(Base)				
Their knowledge of the subject	8.2	7.3	7.4	7.6
How well they relate to you as a person	8.1	7.3	7.2	7.6
The support they give you in improving your studying	7.9	7.0	6.9	7.7
How well they manage the learners on your course	7.8	6.8	6.7	7.5
Their ability to set clear targets or learning goals to help you improve	7.7	7.0	6.8	7.5
The amount of feedback they give you about your progress	7.7	6.6	6.6	7.5
Their ability to make subject interesting/enjoyable	7.6	6.2	6.5	7.3
Their understanding of you and how you like to learn	7.6	6.7	6.5	7.3
How well they plan their lessons	7.6	6.5	6.4	7.4
The quality and availability of teaching materials they use	7.1	6.5	6.5	6.6

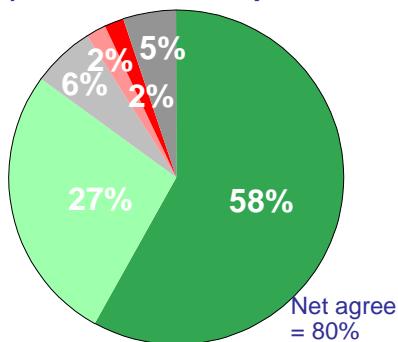
Similar patterns were also found in relation to learners' assessments of whether or not they were treated fairly and with respect by teaching staff. Chart 12 shows that, on the whole, there was general agreement that teachers and tutors were performing well on these measures.

Chart 12: Treated fairly and with respect?

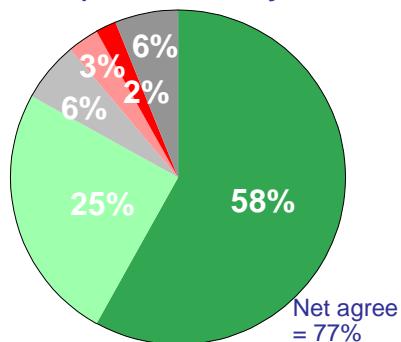
Q10 To what extent to you agree or disagree that you are i) treated with respect by teaching staff and ii) treated fairly by teaching staff?

Strongly agree Tend to agree Neither/nor Tend to disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

i) Treated with respect



ii) Treated fairly



Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

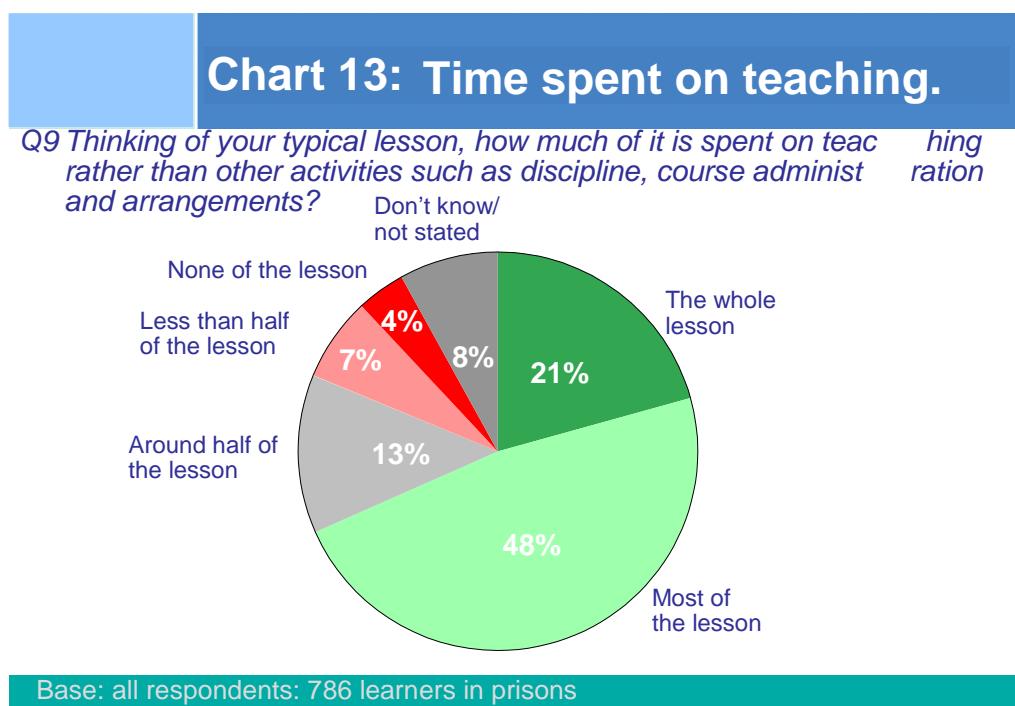
Again, learners in YOIs were the least satisfied on these measures (73 per cent were satisfied that they are both treated with respect and treated fairly compared with 84 per cent and 83 per cent, respectively, overall). Minority groups are also less likely to agree with these statements: the net agree scores for being treated with respect and fairness for learners from a non-white background are +77 and +70, respectively (compared with +85 and +82 for white learners); these same net scores for those with a disability or learning difficulty are +70 and +67, respectively (compared with +86 and +82 for those who did not report a disability or learning difficulty). Experience of being treated fairly and respectfully also increases with highest qualification level, as Table 6 shows.

Table 6: Treated with fairness and respect: net agree by highest qualification level

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?	Level 1 or below (Base 167)	Level 2 (Base 177)	Level 3 or above* (Base 117)
I am treated with respect by teaching staff	+80	+84	+89
I am treated fairly by teaching staff	+75	+84	+84

4.3 Time spent teaching

The majority of learners (69 per cent) reported that either the whole or most of a typical lesson is devoted to teaching activity (as opposed to discipline, administration and so on), as Chart 13 shows.



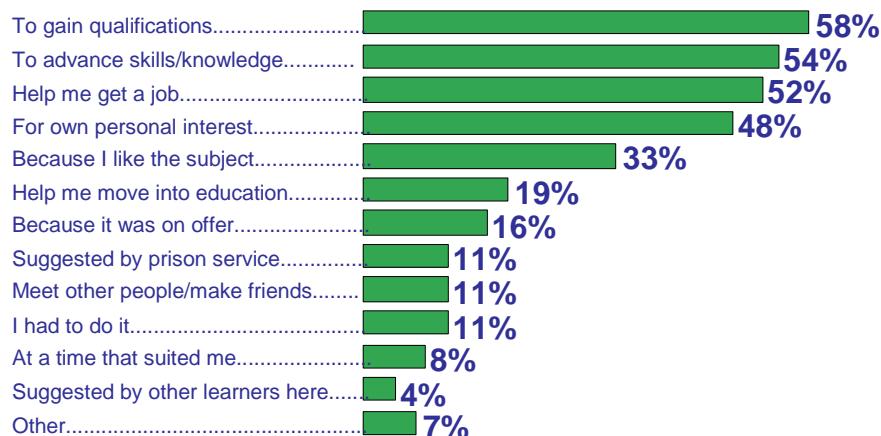
5 Pre-entry Information and Guidance

5.1 Reasons for choosing course or training

The most common reasons cited by learners for choosing their course (all given by more than half of responding learners) are to gain a qualification, to advance skills and knowledge, and to help them get a job when they are released (Chart 14). Interest in the subject is also an important reason, particularly for older learners (57 per cent of those aged 25 and over gave personal interest as the main reason, and 40 per cent said they simply liked the subject). The younger learners, most of whom are in YOIs, are much more likely to say that they chose their course because they “had to do it” (29 per cent of 15–20-year-olds gave this as a reason compared with 11 per cent overall).

Chart 14: Reasons for choosing course/training.

Q4 What are your main reasons for choosing your course(s) / training?



Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

Other significant subgroup differences, described in Table 7, include variations by gender: men were more likely to have chosen their course for specific skills-related reasons, while women were looking more to get help to move into education on release, or simply to meet other people and make new friends. Those with a disability or learning difficulty tended to be less proactive in starting their training than other learners, being more likely to have acted on a suggestion by the prison service or doing it because they “had to”. Finally, reasons also varied by course and qualification level: those holding and/or studying for ‘middle’ level qualifications (that is, Levels 1 and 2) were focusing more on gaining more qualifications and getting a job on release, while better qualified learners were more likely to be trying to advance their skills or doing the course purely out of interest.

Table 7: Reasons for choosing course: subgroup differences

	Gender		Disability/ learning difficulty		Highest qualification		Age
	Male	Female	Yes	No	Level 2 or below	Level 3 or above	25+
Base	(606)	(136)	(126)	(566)	(344)	(117)	(458)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
To gain qualifications	58	63	48	62	63	55	61
To advance my skills and knowledge in this area	58	42	50	57	59	69	62
To help me get a job when I leave here	50	56	48	52	59	44	53
For my own personal interest	48	54	44	51	49	58	57
Because I like the subject	34	33	24	37	35	47	40
To help me move into education when I leave here	17	26	20	18	19	15	19
Suggested by prison service/prison education provider	10	14	15	9	10	8	11
To meet other people/make new friends	9	17	10	10	10	13	6
Because I had to do it	10	11	17	8	9	4	6

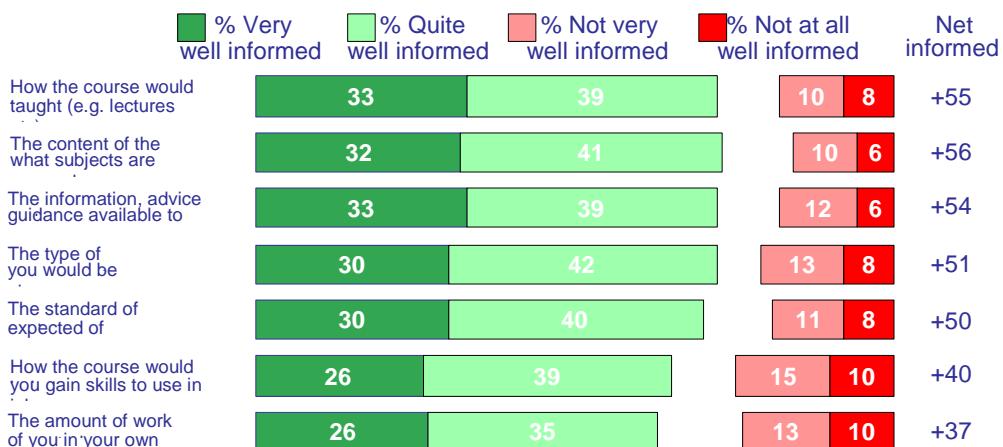
Note: significant differences are highlighted in bold

5.2 Level and type of information provided

On the whole, learners taking part in the pilot study felt quite well informed about their learning or training before embarking on it. As Chart 15 shows, at least three in five felt very or quite well informed about all aspects they were asked about. Information provision was deemed most adequate in terms of the content of the course and how the course would be taught, followed closely by what information, advice and guidance would be made available. However, it was deemed less adequate in relation to the amount of time learners were expected to devote to the course and how the training would help them to gain job-related skills.

Chart 15: Adequacy of pre-entry Information.

Q6 When you first started your learning/training here, how well informed did you feel about the following...?



Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

Table 8 summarises the main subgroup differences in relation to pre-entry information provision. Once again, it was the younger prisoners aged 15–20 and those in YOIs, plus those with a disability or learning difficulties, who felt less informed across the board.

Table 8: Level and type of information: net informed, subgroup differences

	All (786)	YOI (135)	Age 15–20 (124)	Disability/ learning difficulty (126)
(Base)				
How the course would be taught	+55	+27	+28	+44
The content of the course	+56	+33	+31	+53
The information, advice and guidance available to you	+54	+26	+34	+37
The type of assessments you would be given	+51	+25	+28	+51
The standard of work expected of you	+50	+24	+28	+44
How the course would help you gain skills to use in job	+40	+32	+27	+29
The amount of work expected of you in own time	+37	+10	+5	+34

Note: net informed is a summary measure, calculated by subtracting the percentage not very/not at all informed from the percentage very/quite well informed

Other groups, not shown in the table, had specific concerns when it came to information provision, as follows:

- Female learners felt less well informed than men in terms of the content of the course (66 per cent informed compared with 76 per cent for men) and the amount of work expected to be done in their own time (59 per cent and 63 per cent, respectively).
- Learners from a non-white background also believed they lacked sufficient information about the work expected of them (58 per cent compared with 64 per cent for white learners), as well as the standard expected (63 per cent and 74 per cent, respectively), the information, advice and guidance available (68 per cent compared with 76 per cent)

and how the course would be taught (69 per cent compared with 77 per cent).

- The most highly qualified (that is, to Level 3 or above) claimed to have less of an understanding of how the training would help them to gain job-related skills (57 per cent compared with 65 per cent overall), while those with only the lowest qualifications (Level 1 or below) had poorer knowledge than others in terms of the amount of work expected of them (58 per cent, compared with 61 per cent overall).

Responding learners for whom English is not their first language also felt less well informed than average in many areas, but much of this is accounted for by the differences by ethnic group reported above.

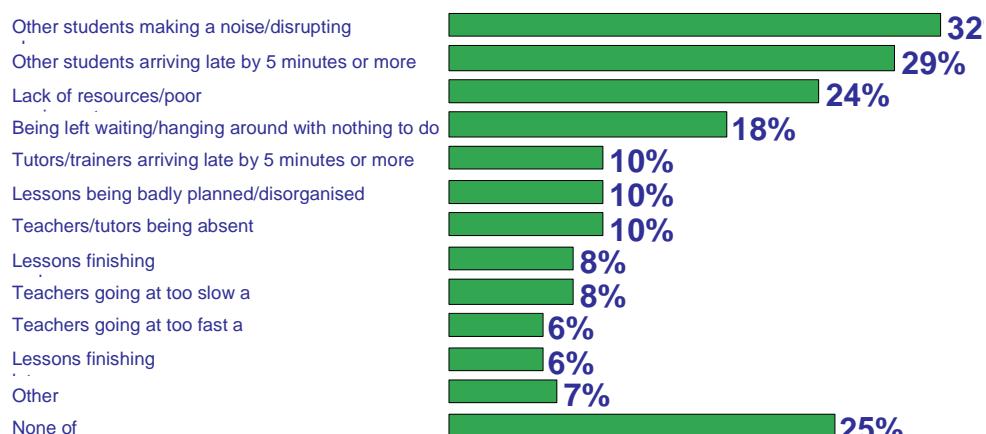
6 Learner Support

6.1 Issues faced and problems encountered

Learners were asked if they had experienced a range of difficult situations on a regular basis during their learning or training, and the results are illustrated in Chart 16. While a quarter said they had not experienced any, almost a third (32 per cent) mentioned other students making a noise and disrupting the class, with almost as many saying that other students regularly arrived more than 5 minutes late, and almost a quarter complained of lack of resources and poor equipment.

Chart 16: Regular classroom encounters.

Q11 Which, if any, of the following situations have you encountered on a fairly regular basis during your learning here?



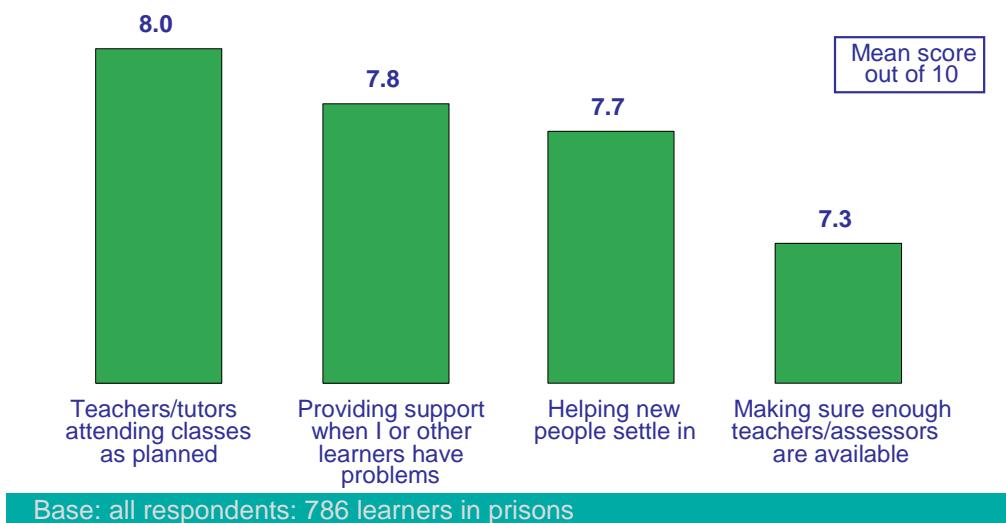
Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

Given the findings throughout this report, it is of no surprise perhaps that older, male learners who have no disability or learning difficulty were those most likely to say they did not encounter **any** of these problems on a regular basis. These learners were also more likely than others to have more positive attitudes to education, which helps explain why this latter group was also observed to report fewer difficulties in class (30 per cent reported no difficulties compared with 25 per cent overall). One other notable subgroup difference is that those studying for higher level qualifications (Level 3 and above) tended to complain about lack of resources and poor equipment more often than others (43 per cent compared with an average of 24 per cent).

Turning to how particular issues are managed, ratings are generally quite high. Teachers attending classes as planned was rated most highly, but as Chart 17 shows, on a scale of 1 to 10, mean scores hover around 7 or 8 on all issues under consideration.

Chart 17: Issue management ratings.

Q12 In your opinion, how well have the following issues been managed?

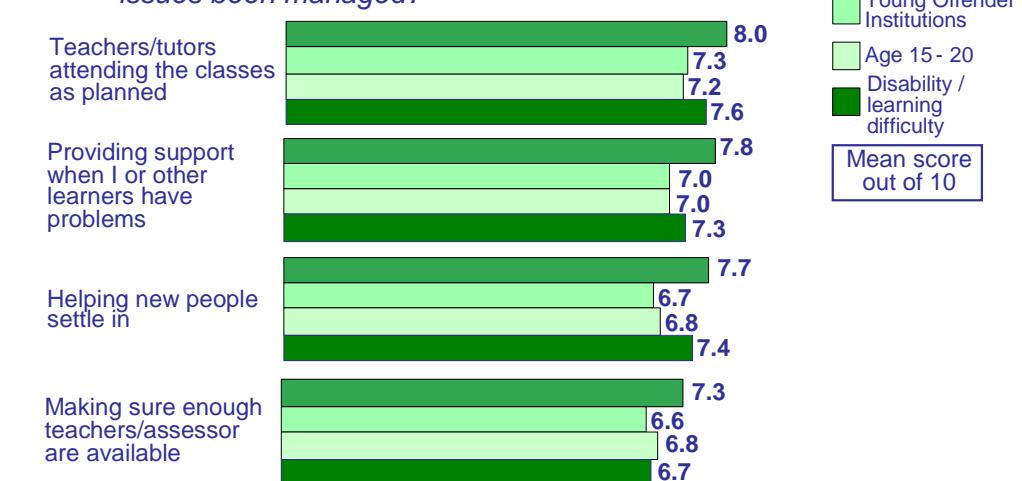


Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

The least satisfied voices generally came from the same subgroups as previously, as summarised in Chart 18.

Chart 18: Issue management ratings: sub group differences

Q12 In your opinion, how well have the following issues been managed?

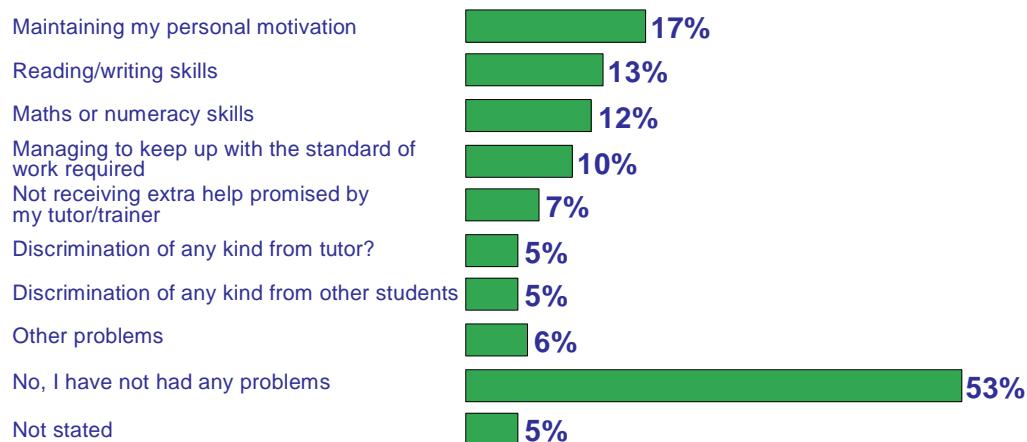


Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons (YOIs: 135; age 15-20: 124;

When asked about problems faced personally during their learning or training experience, a slim majority reported none at all, as illustrated in Chart 19. The problem most commonly selected was maintaining motivation, followed by reading and writing, and maths or numeracy skills.

Chart 19: Personal learning-related problems.

Q13 Since you started your learning here, have you had any of the following problems?



Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

Learners least likely to report any problems included:

- men (55 per cent);
- older learners, aged 25+ (60 per cent);
- white learners (56 per cent); and
- those with no disability or learning difficulty (61 per cent).

Younger learners tended to find it most difficult to keep motivated (23 per cent of 15–24-year-olds reported this as a problem compared with 17 per cent overall) and were also twice as likely as average to complain of discrimination (10 per cent of learners in YOIs said this in relation to both tutors and fellow students compared with 5 per cent for both overall). Female learners also reported more discrimination than men, but only from tutors (9 per cent compared with 4 per cent). Perhaps not surprisingly, those attending entry level courses reported most problems with reading and writing, and maths or numeracy skills (21 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively, compared with 13 per cent and 12 per cent overall). Similar results were correspondingly found for those holding the lowest level qualifications.

Table 9: Personal learning-related problems: subgroup differences

	All	YOI	Age 15–20	Female	Entry level course	Level 1 or below highest qualification
Base	(786)	(135)	(124)	(136)	(126)	(191)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Maintaining my personal motivation	17	23	23	15	17	12
Reading/writing skills	13	16	16	8	21	18
Maths or numeracy skills	12	16	16	10	16	17
Managing to keep up with the standard of work required	10	13	8	7	12	8
Not receiving extra help promised by my tutor/trainer	7	11	10	10	10	7
Discrimination of any kind from tutor/trainer	5	10	10	9	7	4
Discrimination of any kind from other students	5	12	10	8	8	4

Note: significant differences are highlighted in bold

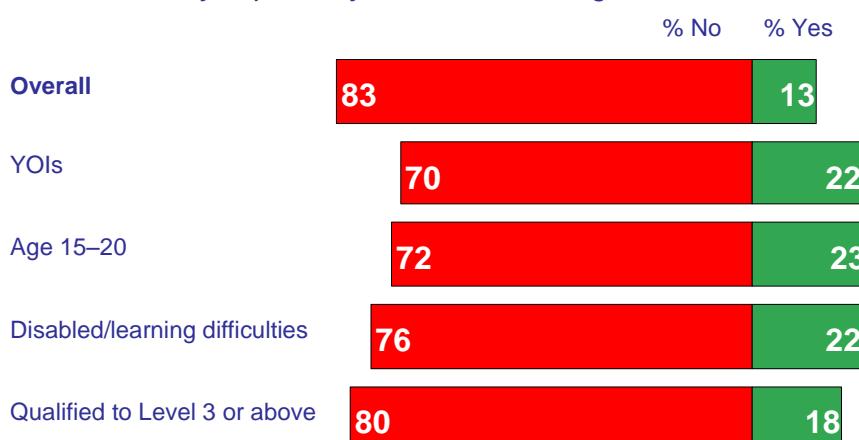
Despite these problems, only half (52 per cent) of those who encountered any problems actually sought advice or help to resolve them. Those with a disability were the most likely to have done so (63 per cent). When help was received, however, it was generally found to be useful – more than 2 in 5 (44 per cent) said it was very useful and almost 3 in 10 (29 per cent) said it was fairly useful. Just 1 in 10 (9 per cent) found the help they received to be not at all useful. (Sample sizes were generally too small to allow robust subgroup comparisons to be made.)

6.2 Complaints

The vast majority of learners (83 per cent) had never made a complaint to teaching or prison staff about their course, as shown in Chart 20. As might be predicted, those who reported most dissatisfaction with various aspects of their learning or training (younger learners and those with a disability or learning difficulty in particular) were also the most likely to have complained. Those attending courses at Level 3 or above also tended to complain more than others.

Chart 20: Complaints about course/training.

Q16 Have you ever made a complaint to teaching/prison staff about any aspect of your course/training?



Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons (YOIs 135; age 15–20. 124,

Because of the comparatively small number of learners who had made a complaint ($N=99$), it has not been possible to draw up a detailed code frame of the reasons behind these complaints. As an indication, however, these included lack of equipment or resources and restricted access to ICT, frustration over not being able to attend the courses they wanted, poor teaching and/or planning of lessons, lesson disruption and bullying by fellow students, and unsupportive prison staff.

On the whole, complaints tend not to have been dealt with to the satisfaction of complainants (although the relatively small base size ($N=99$) must again be taken into account). Just a quarter (27 per cent) reported an outcome that satisfied them, with a similar proportion (25 per cent) reporting an unsatisfying outcome and a further one in three claiming there was no outcome at all. (Again, subgroup sizes were too small to permit detailed subgroup analysis.)

7 Attitudes Towards and Impact of Learning

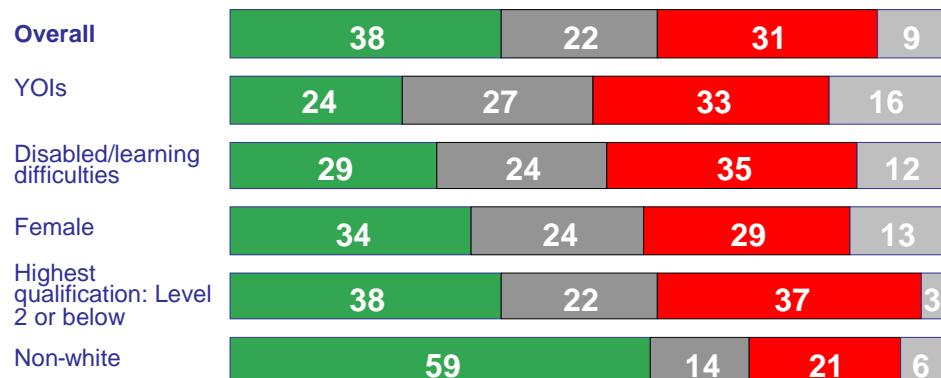
7.1 Attitudes towards learning

Learners were split in their general attitudes to education, as illustrated in Chart 21. The least positive attitudes were held once again by those with a disability or learning difficulty and those in YOIs, as well as female offenders and those whose highest qualification was held at Level 2 or below. And, while non-white learners tended to be less satisfied with their learning experience than their white counterparts, they showed themselves to have more positive attitudes towards education on the whole. However, it is not clear whether this difference is attributable to ethnicity or language – 58 per cent of non-white learners said English was their first language, compared with 95 per cent of white learners, and non-white learners who were not English expressed more positive views about education as a rule (59 per cent positive, compared with 32 per cent for white learners).

Chart 21: General attitudes towards education.

Q21 *Thinking back to when you left school would you say that you had...?*

 % Generally positive feelings about education % Indifferent % Generally negative feelings about education % Don't know/not stated



Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons (YOIs 135; disabled: 126; female: 136; <Level 2: 344; non-white: 191)

Exploring these attitudes in a bit more detail, when presented with a list of statements to describe how they felt about learning, the majority (71 per cent) agreed that they were doing it to improve their future career prospects (only 8 per cent disagreed). Over half (56 per cent) said they “get a buzz from it”; a third (33 per cent) enjoyed learning mostly because of the social aspects. As observed in Table 10, the majority of learners enjoy their learning. Far more learners disagreed than agreed with the statement that they **didn’t** enjoy learning (51 per cent said no compared with 12 per cent yes), and a similar response was found when presented with the statement, “I am carrying on with learning because I can’t think of anything better to do” (22 per cent agreed compared with 46 per cent who disagreed). Where notable subgroup

differences exist, these are summarised in Table 10. Learners studying a Level 3 course or above also expressed more positive views on each of these statements, but due to the relatively small sample size (N=95), the results are not presented here.

Table 10: Detailed attitudes to learning: subgroup differences

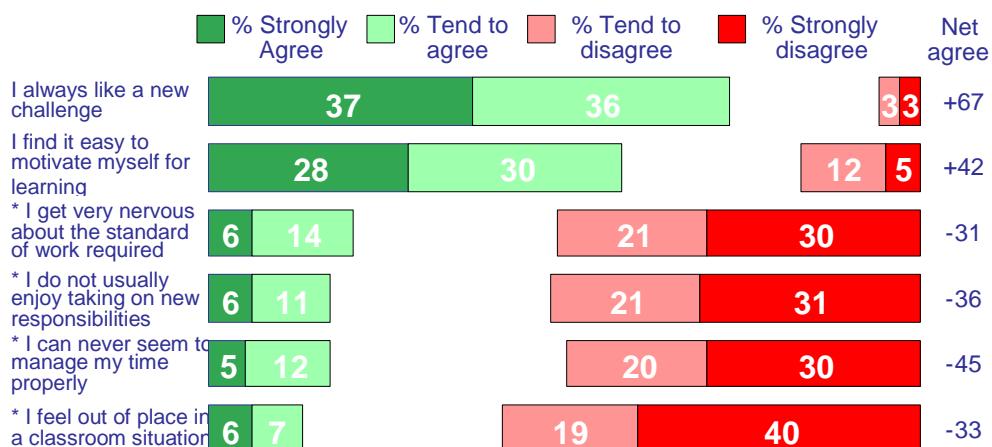
	All (786)	YOI (135)	Age 15–20 (124)	Female (136)	Disability/ learning difficulty (126)	Non-white (191)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
“I enjoy learning and get a buzz from it”:						
– yes	56	39	32	49	55	66
– no	18	33	40	20	19	10
“I don’t really enjoy learning”:						
– yes	12	20	22	10	21	8
– no	51	49	51	51	38	53
“I am carrying on with learning in order to improve my career prospects”:						
– yes	71	63	73	78	69	77
– no	8	13	10	5	10	5
“I enjoy learning mostly because of the social aspects”:						
– yes	34	34	35	32	38	44
– no	31	43	44	26	29	24

*Note: figures may not add to 100 per cent for each statement, due to the omission of the don't know and not stated responses
Significant differences are highlighted in bold*

Responses to a list of questions asking about specific aspects of the learning experience also tended to elicit more positive than negative attitudes in general, as illustrated in Chart 22. For example, almost three-quarters (73 per cent) agreed that they always like a new challenge (only 6 per cent disagreed), and a smaller majority (58 per cent) agreed that they find it easy to motivate themselves for learning. Conversely, more learners disagreed than agreed with the more negative statements – that is, that they feel out of place in a classroom situation, they cannot manage their time properly, they get nervous about the standard of work required or do not enjoy taking on new responsibilities.

Chart 22: Attitudes to specific aspects of the learning experience.

Q24 Below are some statements which reflect different experiences of learning. How much do you agree/disagree with each one?



Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons (* = negative statement)

As might be expected, learners who reported a positive general attitude to education were also the most likely to respond more positively to these individual statements about learning, as revealed in Table 11 which shows net agree scores for each. Given the characteristics of these more positive learners, as described at the beginning of this chapter, it is not perhaps surprising that older learners (aged 21+) were also found to respond more positively to these specific statements, while those with a disability or learning difficulty tended to respond more negatively.

Table 11: Attitudes to specific aspects of learning: net agree, subgroup differences

	All	Positive attitude to education	Age 15–20	Age 21+	Disability/learning difficulty
Base	(786)	(299)	(124)	(573)	(126)
Positive statements:					
I always like a new challenge	+67	+80	+69	+72	+51
I find it easy to motivate myself for learning	+42	+61	+16	+53	+21
Negative statements:					
I get very nervous about the standard of work required	-31	-37	-38	-35	-2
I do not usually enjoy taking on new responsibilities	-36	-44	-26	-42	-13
I can never seem to manage my time properly	-33	-41	-24	-39	-20
I feel out of place in a classroom situation	-45	-53	-46	-53	-21

Note: as before, net agree scores are calculated by subtracting the percentage that disagree from the percentage that agree. More positive attitudes are represented by larger positive scores for positive statements and larger negative scores for negative statements

Further to the subgroup differences reported in Table 11 above, and consistent with other findings from this pilot study, those in YOIs said they found it more difficult to motivate themselves for learning than others (24 per cent disagreed with the statement that they found this easy compared with 16 per cent overall).

There were also differences according to qualification and course level – the higher the level, the more positive learners tended to be about learning. For example, 79 per cent who were on a Level 2 or higher course agreed that they like a new challenge, compared with 69 per cent on lower level courses; and the group most likely to agree that they get very nervous about the standard of work required were those on entry level courses (29 per cent agreed compared with 17 per cent of those on Level 2 or higher courses).

Gender differences also exist – men disagreed with all negative statements more strongly than women, and also claimed that they were more welcoming of a new challenge (77 per cent of men and 71 per cent of women agreed with this statement). Finally, responses differed between white and non-white learners (although, once again, it is difficult to separate out differences between ethnic groups from differences due to language). In particular, despite non-white learners expressing a more positive attitude to education at a broad level (and agreeing more strongly that they find it easy to motivate themselves – 67 per cent agreed compared with 58 per cent of non-white learners), this group tended to report more negative experiences of learning in all other respects.

7.2 Impact of learning

The majority of learners agreed that the learning they received had imparted some positive ‘soft’ or ‘intermediate’ outcomes, as illustrated in Chart 23 below. For example, around two-thirds agreed that they are now more confident, positive and enthusiastic than they were previously, and almost 7 out of 10 believed that as a result they now have skills they can use for a future job (this latter finding is particularly encouraging in light of this being an important motivator for taking up learning). However, less support is found for the assertion that their learning has helped them to cope better with daily life, or that it has benefited their health or sense of wellbeing.

Chart 23: ‘Soft’ and ‘intermediate’ learning outcomes.

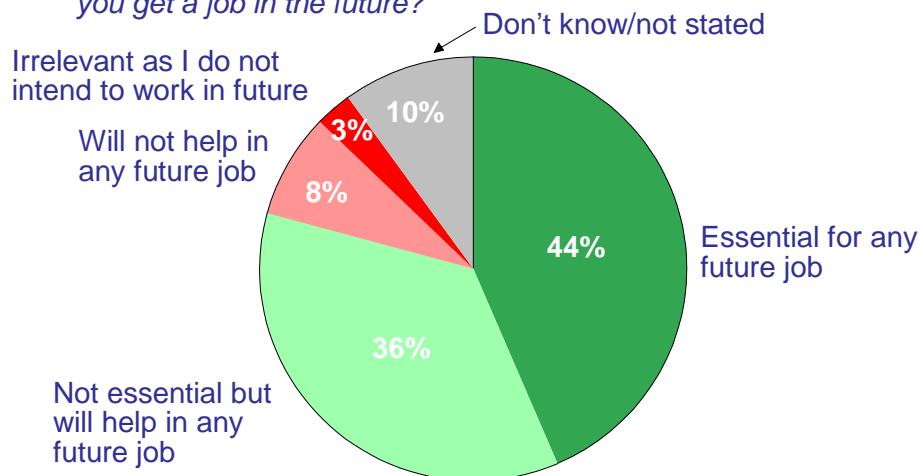


Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

Similarly, most learners believed that their course or training would help them to get a job in the future, with more than two in five believing it would be ‘essential’ (44 per cent), as shown in Chart 24.

Chart 24: Helpfulness of course in getting future job.

Q5 *How useful do you think this course/training will be in helping you get a job in the future?*



Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

The perceived impact of learning follows patterns similar to those discussed elsewhere. In particular, the youngest learners in YOIs consistently claimed that they had reaped the fewest benefits from their learning, particularly in relation to 'softer' outcomes, as described in Table 12.

Table 12: Impact of learning: learners in YOIs

	All (Base 786)	YOIs (Base 135)
	Net agree	
It has given me skills I can use for a future job	+58	+41
I have a greater enthusiasm for the subjects studied	+55	+28
I feel more positive about learning than when I started	+47	+24
It has made me feel more confident	+46	+6
I am better at learning on my own now	+35	+21
It has enabled me to cope better with daily life	+13	-10
It has benefited my health and sense of wellbeing	+7	-24
	Net useful	
How useful do you think this course or training will be in helping you get a job in the future?	+68	+58

While on the whole it was learners reporting the most positive attitudes towards education who tended to benefit the most (and those who were indifferent the least), the learning experience did appear to have helped to turn around some quite sceptical learners. In particular, the strongest agreement with the statement “I feel more positive about learning than I did when I started” was found amongst those who said they had generally negative feelings about education in the past (+56 net agree compared with +47 overall). Moreover, certain groups who expressed more negative attitudes towards education and learning did tend to have experienced some specific benefits, as summarised below:

- Female learners said they are now better at learning on their own (+43 net agree compared with +35 of men) and believed their learning had helped them to cope better with daily life (+21 compared with +12), as well as bringing health and wellbeing benefits (+21 compared with +4).
- Non-white learners claimed the same benefits as women, but also reported greater enthusiasm (+63 net agree

compared with +55 overall), more confidence (+59 compared with +46), and also were more persuaded that their course will help them get a job in the future (60 per cent believe it will be **essential** in this respect, compared with 44 per cent overall).

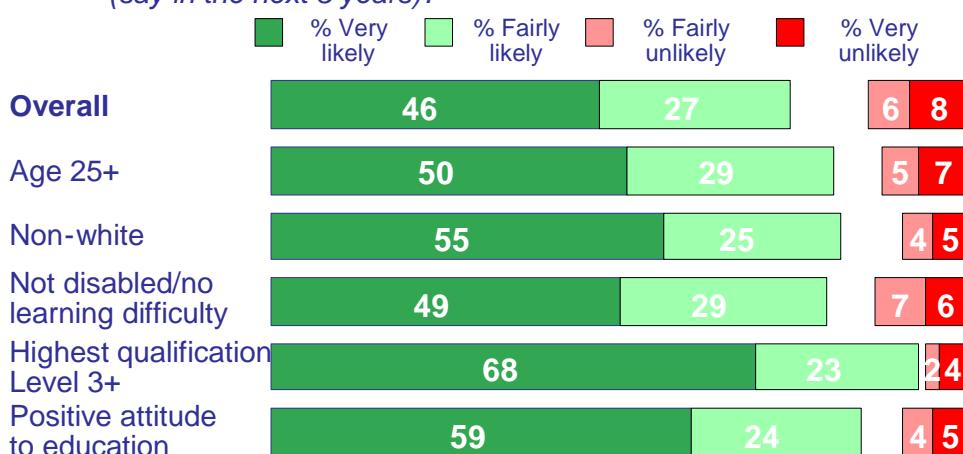
- Those with a disability or learning difficulty also believed their learning experience helped them to cope better with their daily lives (+22 net agree compared with +13 overall).
- Learners on lower level courses, and with lower level qualifications, also reported greater benefits than their more qualified counterparts on certain measures. For example, those whose highest qualification was at Level 2 or below more commonly agreed that they now have skills they can use for a future job (+78 net agree compared with +52 for those qualified to Level 3 or above). Those on sub-Level 3 courses felt they were better at learning on their own as a result (+38 compared with +14 for those on higher level courses).

7.3 Future intentions

Almost three-quarters of learners said that they would be very or fairly likely to undertake further learning in future, as illustrated in Chart 25. This also shows that it is those already positively predisposed to education and learning who are the most likely to pursue further courses of study.

Chart 25: Future learning intentions.

Q25 How likely are you to undertake further learning in the future (say in the next 3 years)?



Base: all respondents: 786 learners in prisons

8 Conclusions

Overall, the majority of learners surveyed in this pilot were satisfied with their learning experience (81 per cent) and felt that their learning programme was meeting their needs (76 per cent). Just 5 per cent expressed dissatisfaction.

However, some groups were less satisfied than others. Younger learners and/or those in YOIs were most dissatisfied. Levels of satisfaction also differed between male and female learners, with women being less likely to express satisfaction than men. Learners who reported a disability or learning difficulties also tended to be less satisfied. These findings are consistent with lower than average satisfaction levels among these groups on a range of measures relating to their course or training.

A wide range of different reasons were given for reported levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The main reasons given for learners being happy with their learning experience were the opportunity to learn new skills and obtain qualifications and the support received from helpful and effective tutors. Among the small minority who were dissatisfied, their dissatisfaction tended to be linked to perceptions of limited or inadequate resources or course choices.

On the whole, learners taking part in the pilot study felt quite well informed about their learning or training before embarking on it (at least three in five felt very or quite well informed about all aspects they were asked about). Young learners (aged 15–20) and those with a disability or learning difficulty were less likely than average to feel informed on all aspects relating to their course.

Overall, areas where information was deemed to be less adequate related to the amount of time learners would be expected to devote to their course and how the training would help them gain job-related skills. These two factors are particularly pertinent given that gaining job-related skills was most commonly cited as a main reason for learning, while maintaining motivation was a problem most commonly experienced by learners.

While many learners had not experienced any particular difficulties during their learning and training, any problems they did have most often revolved around other students: a third cited other students making noise and disrupting the class and 3 in 10 reported other students arriving late. However, these were usually felt to have been dealt with satisfactorily by the tutors.

Two in five learners also reported problems they personally faced during their learning or training. The problem most commonly selected was maintaining motivation (17 per cent), followed by reading and writing, and maths or numeracy skills (13 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively). However, only half of those who encountered any

problems actually sought advice or help to resolve them. When help was received it was generally found to be useful (73 per cent).

The majority of learners agreed that the learning they received had imparted some positive 'soft' or 'intermediate' outcomes. Around two-thirds agreed that they are now more confident, positive and enthusiastic than they were previously, and 69 per cent believed that as a result they now have skills they can use for a future job (this latter finding is particularly encouraging in light of this being an important motivator for taking up learning). However, the youngest learners in YOIs consistently claimed that they had reaped the fewest benefits from their learning.

