



Leading learning and skills

National Learner Satisfaction Survey: Adult and Community Learning Providers Report 2003/04

August 2005

Of interest to everyone involved in sustaining and improving levels of learner satisfaction across the adult and community learning sector

In partnership with NOP Research group

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.

For information

Of interest to everyone involved in sustaining and improving levels of learner satisfaction across the adult and community learning sector

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Executive Summary

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The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has now carried out the third National Learner satisfaction Survey (NLSS). For 2003/04 the survey is based on over 43,000 learners receiving tuition or training through further education, work based learning and adult and community learning providers. This is a substantially larger number of learners than in earlier surveys, and helps to ensure that information deriving from the NLSS remains robust.

This report summarises the main findings of the 2003/04 survey for adult and community learning (ACL). This includes learners attending accredited ACL courses (FE delivered by Adult Learning Providers) and non-accredited Adult and Community Learning (non-accredited ACL) courses.

Researchers explored learners' views of the quality of teaching, their overall satisfaction with their learning experience, and whether they would be likely to return to learning within three years on the basis of this experience.

As with previous surveys, results for 2003/04 show that there are high levels of satisfaction across the further education sector. The key findings also indicate that more learners now get a 'buzz' from their learning, and more are saying that their courses have helped them in their jobs.

Amid otherwise good news for 2003/04, there is evidence that some learners remain only fairly satisfied and other dissatisfied. Thus a challenge for the sector is to address and resolve shortcomings in learners' experiences wherever possible, and improve the numbers found in the 'very' and 'extremely' satisfied group.

Foreword

On behalf of the LSC, an independent research organisation conducted telephone interviews with 43,316 learners in further education, work based learners and adult and community learning.

In this report we cover the findings from the adult and community learning sector. This includes learners undertaking accredited and non-accredited adult and community learning courses.

There are many reasons to celebrate the findings from this report and the positive results are a real tribute to all those working in the sector.

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.

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Introduction

1

In the academic year 2001/02, the LSC set out to obtain national measures of learner satisfaction in the post-16 provision it funds. The 2003/04 survey provides the third year of results from the National Learner Satisfaction Survey (NLSS). The survey consists of three waves of interviews throughout the academic year and is designed to cover the following learner types:

- those in the further education sector, that is, those attending general further education colleges, sixth form colleges and other specialist further education institutions
- those undertaking work based learning
- those undertaking adult and community learning (both accredited and non-accredited).

2

A national picture is valuable in that it provides a comprehensive overview of education and training in England for people aged 16 and over. It also provides a facility to look in detail at the experiences of certain sub-groups within the learner base, for example including younger learners and learners from minority ethnic backgrounds.

3

Headline findings over time from the core questions can be found in the *National Learner Satisfaction Survey: Highlights from 2003/04* document, available from the LSC website.

4

As for previous years of the NLSS, the LSC has consulted with both providers and learners through focus groups to explore issues arising from the evidence shown in the report. These focus group findings are reported later in the report.

National Learner Satisfaction Survey methodology

5

For the 2003/04 survey 43,316 learners in total were interviewed. Of these learners 5,419 were from the adult and community learning sector containing the following accredited and non-accredited learners:

- Accredited adult and community learning (FE delivered by adult learning providers) – 1,652
- Non-accredited adult and community learning – 3,767

6

The increased number of interviews in NLSS 2003/04 also allowed for a greater number of further education learners to be interviewed compared to previous years. The increased sample of further education learners was designed to allow for robust analysis over time of the core question results at local LSC level. A minimum of 500 FE-funded learners per local LSC were interviewed and responses to the *core* questions can therefore be analysed over time to local level.

7

For the 2003/04 survey, the questionnaire underwent changes to reduce interview length to approximately 10 minutes. This allowed for a greater number of learners to be interviewed. The interviews took place by telephone in three waves between February - June 2003. A set of *core* questions were asked to learners in every wave and covered the areas:

- overall satisfaction with learning experience
- overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching and management of learning
- likelihood to return to learning in the future.

8

In addition to the core questions, each wave of interviews consisted of a particular set of modular questions. The modular questions covered the areas of:

- pre-entry advice and guidance
- support for learning
- impact of learning.

	2003/04
	No. of interviews
Further education (total)	31,786
of which:	
general FE	27,629
sixth form college	3,380
other	777
Work Based Learning	6,111
Accredited Adult and Community Learning	1,652
Non-accredited Adult and Community Learning	3,767
Total	43,316

9

In this report we present the results for all the questions asked to adult learners in the survey. For most of the core questions we also analyse the results by the subgroups of age and gender.

10

More information on the NLSS methodology, including the full questionnaire for the three waves, can be found from the NLSS core methodology and guidance document available on the LSC website.

New Measures of Success

11

The NLSS highlights broad areas where actions could be made to improve the learning experience of learners. However, results from the NLSS cannot reflect specific challenges and priorities of individual colleges or providers in all provisions. From the NLSS it is difficult to isolate findings that are most relevant at local or college/provider level. Data at a local level is essential for identifying priorities for action within a particular area or institution.

12

The New Measures of Success programme is developing a set of measures to be used by the LSC, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and it is recognised that many providers are already engaged in collecting the views of their learners and many examples of good practice already exist. Through the new measures programme, providers are being encouraged to replicate the methodology and core questions from the NLSS. This will allow providers to benchmark their own performance against the national picture and present comparative data which local LSCs and the inspectorates recognise as robust.

13

Framing local research to match national research will provide local colleges and providers with an opportunity to benchmark their results against the national average, that is, it provides a context against which to view and judge the local picture. Such an approach will also encourage standardisation of learner satisfaction survey instruments within an area.

14

The LSC has produced supporting materials to support colleges and providers in carrying out local level surveys and benchmarking the results against the national picture. The document *National Learner Satisfaction Survey: guidance on the core methodology and core questionnaire* is available from the LSC website. There is also an interactive website containing the NLSS results, with a benchmarking module, which can be accessed at <http://researchtools.lsc.gov.uk>. Using this website, providers can input local level results and these can be benchmarked against the national picture.

15

These supporting materials will assist providers in achieving the following:

- producing learner satisfaction survey results at a local level
- allowing comparisons with the National Learner Satisfaction Survey (NLSS).

Abbreviations used

16

At times the following abbreviations are used in the reporting of the NLSS results

- further education – FE
- work based learning – WBL
- FE delivered by adult learning providers – FE by ALP
- non-accredited adult and community learning – non-accredited ACL.

17

Where there is discussion of data presented in figures and tables in this report, data subsequently mentioned and/or described is directly derived from the figures and tables.

18

Percentages: for clarity and brevity, and in accordance with normal practice, percentages in the figures are rounded to whole numbers. This means, where appropriate, they do not always add up to 100 per cent.

19

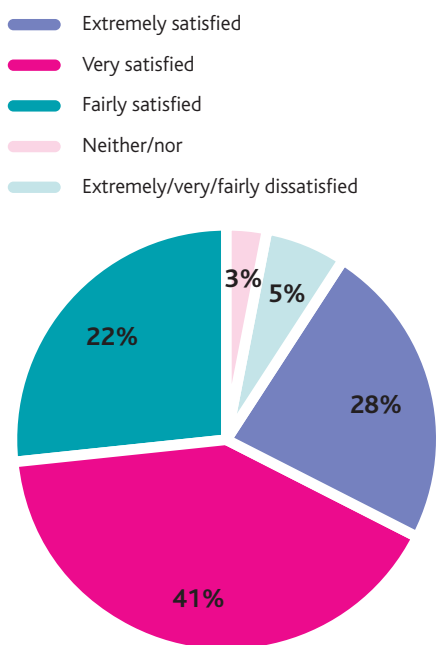
For some questions in this survey, as in earlier surveys, learners are offered a range of options where they can select as many or as few as they choose. Resulting percentages expressed, for example course choice, reflect learners' multiple response options and thus will usually sum to far more than 100 per cent.

20

In order to compare percentage results across different years of the survey we use the notation of change in 'percentage points'.

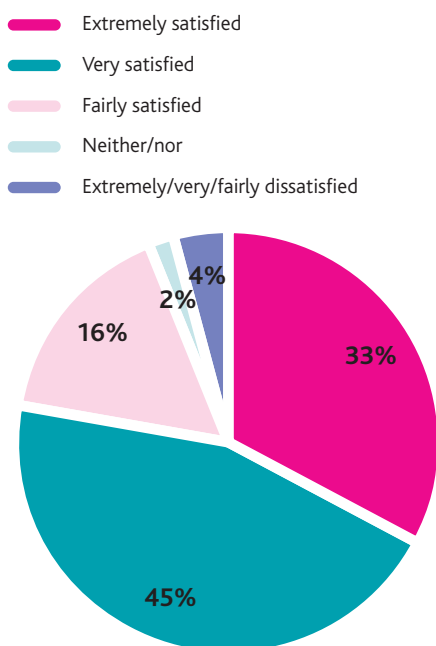
Overall satisfaction with the learning experience

Figure 1: Overall satisfaction with learning experience, FE delivered by adult learning providers.



Base: 1,652

Figure 2: Overall satisfaction with learning experience, non-accredited ACL.



Base 3,767

21

A high percentage of the learners involved in this survey in adult and community learning are satisfied with their learning experience.

22

In FE delivered by adult learning providers, 91 per cent of learners are 'extremely', 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with their overall learning experience, as shown in Figure 1. In contrast only 5 per cent of learners are dissatisfied, and just 3 per cent neither satisfied/nor dissatisfied.

23

Figure 2 shows 94 per cent of learners in the survey in non-accredited ACL are 'extremely', 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with their overall learning experience. A third of learners (33 per cent) are 'extremely' satisfied with their learning experience and only 4 per cent say they are dissatisfied. A small percentage (2 per cent) are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

24

In respect of age, gender, ethnicity and disability for learners in FE delivered by adult learner providers, the following patterns emerge.

Differences by age and gender for FE delivered by Adult Learning Providers

25

Older learners generally appear to be rather more satisfied with their overall learning experience: for example 31 per cent of the 35–54 plus age group were 'extremely' satisfied compared with 26 per cent of the 16–24 year old age group and 22 per cent of the 25–34 year old age group. The largest difference across different age groups is in the 'very' satisfied category where 47 per cent of 55 plus age group said they were 'very' satisfied with their overall learning experience compared with 31 per cent of 16–24 year old, a difference of 16 percentage points. There are only small apparent differences in the 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and the dissatisfied categories. These results are shown in Table 1.

26

A higher percentage of female learners in the survey respond they are 'extremely' satisfied with their overall learning experience (30 per cent) compared with male learners (22 per cent). However, there are 5 per cent of female learners who are dissatisfied with their learning experience, this is higher than the 3 per cent of male learners who are dissatisfied with their overall learning experience. These results are shown in Table 1.

27

It is interesting to note that in respect of learners with disabilities they appear to have slightly higher satisfaction levels with their overall learning experience compared with those learners without disabilities: 33 per cent of learners with disabilities are 'extremely' satisfied with their overall learning experience compared with 28 per cent of learners without disabilities.

28

Learners in the survey from minority ethnic groups are less satisfied with their overall learning experience than learners as a whole. Of the minority ethnic learners, 21 per cent are 'extremely' satisfied and 33 per cent are 'very' satisfied with their overall learning experience (compared with 28 per cent and 41 per cent respectively for all learners).

29

Further information on patterns of distribution for learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers can be obtained from the Learning and Skills Council website – <http://researchtools.lsc.gov.uk>.

Differences by age and gender for Non-accredited Adult and Community learning

30

For learners in non-accredited adult and community learning, the following patterns of satisfaction levels with overall learning experience are shown by age and gender in Table 2.

Table 1: Overall satisfaction with learning experience in FE delivered by Adult learning providers, by age and gender

FE delivered by Adult Learning Providers							
	Total	Male	Female	16-24	25-34	35-54	55 plus
Base: All respondents	1,652	406	1,246	131	250	817	454
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Extremely satisfied	28	22	30	26	22	31	28
Very satisfied	41	43	41	31	39	41	47
Fairly satisfied	22	26	21	34	24	20	20
Neither/nor	3	5	3	5	3	5	1
Fairly/very/extremely dissatisfied	5	3	5	3	11	4	4

31

Table 2 shows that older learners appear to be more satisfied with their overall learning experience compared with younger learners: 37 per cent of learners in the 55 plus age group are 'extremely' satisfied with their overall learning experience compared with 28 per cent of learners within the age group 16–34 years old.

32

A higher percentage of female learners respond they are 'extremely' satisfied with their overall learning experience at 34 per cent compared with the percentage of male learners at 30 per cent. Interestingly there are only slight differences with levels of dissatisfaction with learners' overall learning experience by gender (4 per cent for female learners and 5 per cent for male learners).

33

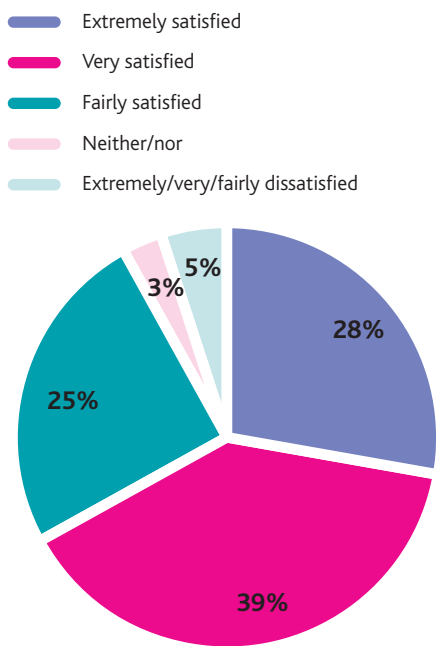
In summary, the findings for learner satisfaction ratings with overall learning experience are very positive for the adult and community sector. That more than nine out of ten learners in adult and community learning are 'extremely', 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with their overall learning experience is a credit to the sector.

Table 2: Overall satisfaction with learning experience, non-accredited ACL, by age and gender

Non-accredited ACL							
	Total	Male	Female	16-34	35-44	45-54	55 plus
	3,767	724	3,043	694	830	701	1,505
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Extremely satisfied	33	30	34	28	31	35	37
Very satisfied	45	46	44	42	44	43	47
Fairly satisfied	16	17	16	24	19	16	12
Neither/nor	2	2	2	2	3	2	1
Fairly/very/extremely dissatisfied	4	5	4	4	3	5	4

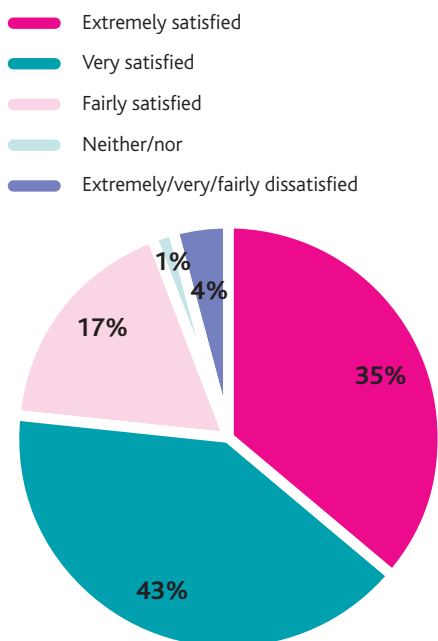
Overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching

Figure 3: Satisfaction with the quality of teaching in FE delivered by adult learning providers.



Base: 1,652

Figure 4: Satisfaction with the quality of teaching in non-accredited ACL.



Base: 3,767

34
Key Findings:

- In FE delivered by adult learning providers, 92 per cent of learners are satisfied with the overall quality of the teaching they receive. Of these learners, 28 per cent are 'extremely' satisfied with the quality of the teaching they receive and almost two fifths (39 per cent) are 'very' satisfied.
- For non-accredited learners in the survey, just over a third (35 per cent) are 'extremely' satisfied with the overall quality of the teaching they receive. Overall, more than nine out of ten learners (95 per cent) are 'extremely', 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with the overall quality of teaching they receive.

35
The overall satisfaction level with the quality of teaching/training received in FE delivered by adult learning providers is shown in Figure 3. This shows 92 per cent of learners are satisfied with the overall quality of their teaching. Of these learners, 28 per cent are 'extremely' satisfied, 39 per cent are 'very' satisfied and a quarter of learners (25 per cent) are 'fairly' satisfied.

36
Only a small percentage (5 per cent) are dissatisfied with the overall quality of the teaching they receive.

37
Figure 4 shows the satisfaction levels with the overall quality of teaching in non-accredited adult and community learning: over a third (35 per cent) of learners are 'extremely' satisfied and over two fifths (43 per cent) are 'very' satisfied.

38
Only a small percentage (4 per cent) of learners in non-accredited adult and community learning are dissatisfied with the overall quality of the teaching/training they receive.

Differences by age and gender for FE delivered by Adult Learning Providers

39
Table 3 shows the satisfaction levels across gender and different age groups for learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers. A higher percentage of female learners (29 per cent) are 'extremely' satisfied with the quality of teaching they receive compared to male learners (27 per cent). However, equal percentages of male and female learners (39 per cent) responded they are 'very' satisfied with the overall quality of teaching they receive.

40
With respect to satisfaction levels across different age groups in FE delivered by adult learning providers, learners in the 16–24 and 55 plus age groups were most satisfied with the overall quality of the teaching they receive (31 per cent 'extremely' satisfied), compared with other age groups (24 per cent of 25–34 age group and 28 per cent of 35–54 age group learners).

41
A notably higher percentage of learners in the age group 25–34 were dissatisfied with the quality of the teaching they receive (12 per cent) compared to other age groups. This compares to 2 per cent of 55 plus age group who are dissatisfied with the quality of the teaching they receive.

42
Almost one in ten learners (8 per cent) in the age group 16–24 year old were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the quality of teaching they receive. This is a notably higher percentage than for learners in other age groups, for example, 1 per cent of 25–34 year old learners were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their overall quality of teaching.

Table 3: Overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching in FE delivered by Adult learning providers, by age and gender.

FE delivered by Adult Learning Providers							
	Total	Male	Female	16-24	25-34	35-54	55 plus
Base: All respondents	1,652	406	1,246	131	250	817	454
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Extremely satisfied	28	27	29	31	24	28	31
Very satisfied	39	39	39	31	39	40	40
Fairly satisfied	25	27	25	28	24	25	24
Neither/nor	3	3	3	8	1	3	2
Fairly/very/extremely dissatisfied	5	3	5	3	12	3	2

Differences by age and gender for Non-accredited Adult and Community learning

43

Table 4 shows the satisfaction levels for the overall quality of teaching, analysed by age and gender, for learners in non-accredited ACL.

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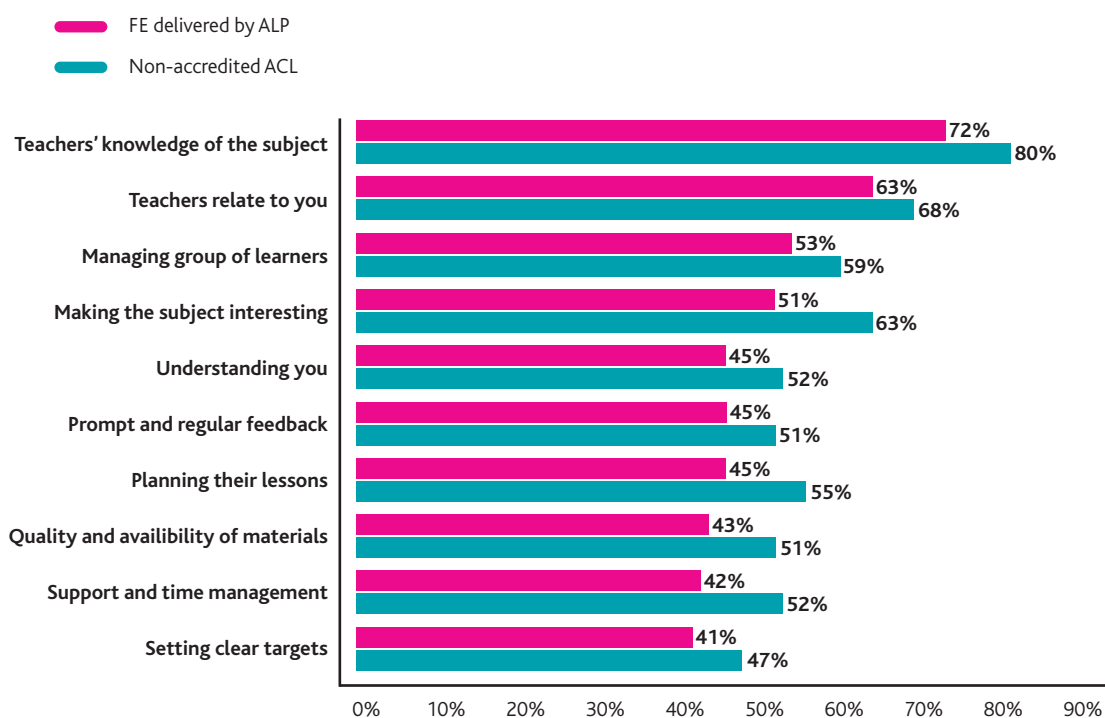
Female learners appear to be more satisfied with the overall quality of the teaching they receive, compared to male learners. Nearly four fifths (36 per cent) of female learners are 'extremely' satisfied with the quality of teaching compared to a third of male learners (33 per cent). There are only small differences in the response 'very' satisfied (43 per cent of female learners, 42 per cent

of male learners) and no differences between male and female learners responses with regard to dissatisfaction levels for overall quality of teaching (4 per cent).

Table 4: Overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching in non-accredited ACL, by age and gender.

Non-accredited ACL							
	Total	Male	Female	16-34	35-44	45-54	55 plus
	3,767	724	3,043	694	830	701	1,505
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Extremely satisfied	35	33	36	31	35	35	38
Very satisfied	43	42	43	42	40	43	45
Fairly satisfied	17	19	16	22	20	17	13
Neither/nor	1	2	1	1	1	2	1
Fairly/very/extremely dissatisfied	4	4	4	4	3	4	4

Figure 5: Ratings for individual aspects of teaching – the per cent rated as 9 or 10 out of 10 by learners



Base: FE by ALP: 1,652, non-accred ACL: 3,767

45

Non-accredited learners in the age group 55 plus appear to be more satisfied with the quality of teaching they receive compared with learners in younger age groups. For example, nearly two fifths (38 per cent) of learners in the 55 plus age group are 'extremely' satisfied with the quality of teaching they receive, compared with less than a third (31 per cent) of learners in the 16–34 age group.

46

There are smaller differences across age groups in the 'very' satisfied response category (45 per cent of 55 plus age group learners compared with 42 per cent of 16–34 age group learners). There are little differences with dissatisfaction levels across all age groups (approximately 4 per cent).

Individual aspects of teaching

47

Key question: how would you rate the teachers, tutors or trainers on the following aspects of teaching/training (learners were asked about their responses to each of the 10 issues shown in Figure 5)

48

Learners in the survey were asked to rate 10 aspects corresponding to the quality of teaching. Learners ranked each issue using a scale from 1 (very poor) to 10 (excellent). The percentage of learners in the survey in adult and community learning who rated the following aspects of teaching as either 9 or 10 out of 10, that is, in the uppermost ranges are shown in Figure 5 and listed below in summary:

FE delivered by adult learning providers

- knowledge of the subject (72 per cent)
- how well they relate to you as a person (63 per cent)
- managing the group of learners (53 per cent)
- making the subject interesting or enjoyable (51 per cent).

Non-accredited adult and community learners

- knowledge of the subject (80 per cent)
- how well they relate to you as a person (68 per cent)
- making the subject interesting or enjoyable (63 per cent)
- managing the group of learners (59 per cent)

49

The two aspects of teaching which received the highest percentage of learners in the

Table 5: Ratings for aspects of the quality of teaching in FE delivered by Adult learning providers – the per cent rated as 9 or 10 out of 10 by learners, by age and gender.

FE delivered by Adult Learning Providers							
	Total	Male	Female	16-24	25-34	35-54	55 plus
Base: All respondents rating	1,652	406	1,246	131	250	817	454
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Knowledge of the subject	72	73	72	65	62	75	77
How well they relate to you as a person	63	57	65	53	53	63	74
Managing the group of learners	53	46	55	43	48	52	62
Making the subject interesting or enjoyable	51	44	54	38	38	53	62
Planning their lessons	45	38	47	37	39	46	51
Providing prompt and regular feedback on progress	45	38	47	37	43	46	47
Understanding you and how you like to learn	45	34	48	33	41	44	53
Quality and availability of teaching materials	43	37	45	32	35	45	48
The support they give you, for example, in improving study techniques or time management	42	34	45	33	40	43	45
Setting clear targets to help learners improve	41	35	43	29	39	43	42

survey giving a 9 or 10 out of 10 in adult and community learning are 'knowing the subject' and 'relating to learners as people'.

50

Compared with the previous year's survey results, the proportion of learners awarding each aspect of teaching a 9 or 10 out of 10 has decreased for all the above mentioned individual aspects of teaching in both FE delivered by adult learning providers and non-accredited adult learning.

51

There are quite marked differences in satisfaction ratings for individual aspects of teaching when analysed by age and gender. As with satisfaction with the overall learning experience, female and older learners generally appear to be more satisfied with nearly all of the individual aspects of teaching than their younger and male counterparts. Table 5 shows the ratings for individual aspects of teaching for learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers, by age and gender.

FE delivered by adult learning providers

52

The following main differences in satisfaction ratings for individual aspects of teaching occur across age groups and gender (Table 5)

- For the aspect of teaching 'making the subject interesting and enjoyable' 62 per cent of learners in the survey aged 55 plus gave a 9 or 10 out of 10 compared with 38 per cent of learners aged 16–24, a notable difference of 24 percentage points.

Table 6: Ratings for aspects of the quality of teaching in non-accredited ACL – the per cent rated as 9 or 10 out of 10 by learners, by age and gender.

Non-accredited ACL							
	Total	Male	Female	16-34	35-44	45-54	55 plus
Base: All respondents rating	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Knowledge of the subject	80	78	81	75	79	79	84
How well they relate to you as a person	68	63	69	61	65	65	74
Managing the group of learners	59	52	61	53	56	57	65
Making the subject interesting or enjoyable	63	59	64	56	59	62	70
Planning their lessons	55	47	57	49	49	53	62
Providing prompt and regular feedback on progress	51	45	53	47	49	51	54
Understanding you and how you like to learn	52	45	54	45	45	48	61
Quality and availability of teaching materials	51	45	52	48	47	48	56
The support they give you, for example, in improving study techniques or time management	52	43	54	48	47	48	58
Setting clear targets to help learners improve	47	40	48	44	42	45	51

- For the aspect 'quality and availability of teaching materials' there is a difference of +16 percentage points between the 55 plus age group (48 per cent) and the 16–18 age group (32 per cent). There is also a difference of +8 percentage points between the ratings from female learners (45 per cent) and male learners (37 per cent) on this individual aspect of teaching.
- The greatest difference between ratings on all aspects of teaching across gender, was for the aspect 'understanding you and how you like to learn' where 34 per cent of male learners gave a 9 or 10 /10 rating for this aspect, compared with 48 per cent

of female learners, a difference of 14 percentage points.

- Interestingly, the aspect 'knowledge of the subject' was the only aspect where a greater percentage of male learners (73 per cent) gave a 9 or 10/10 rating compared with female learners (72 per cent).

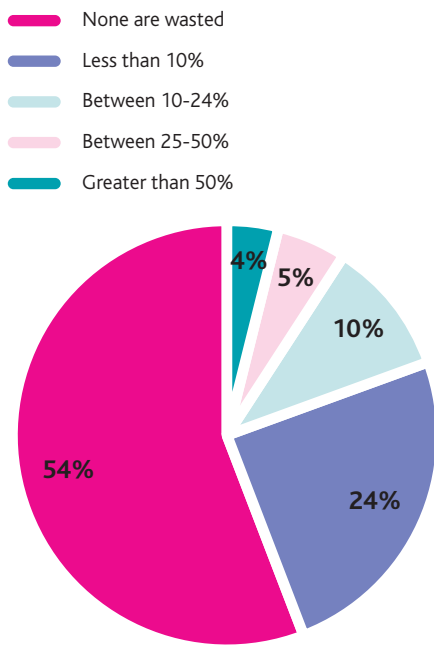
Non-accredited adult and community learning

53

Table 6 shows the ratings for individual aspects of teaching for learners in non-accredited adult and community learning, by age and gender. The following main differences in satisfaction ratings for individual aspects of teaching occur across age groups and gender.

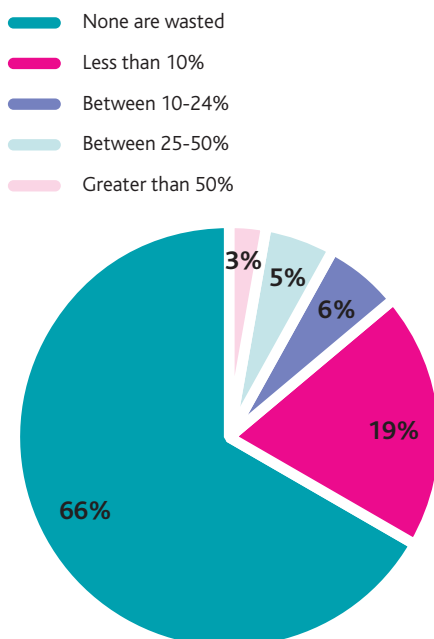
- Over three fifths (61 per cent) of learners in the 55 plus age group gave 9 or 10 out of 10 ratings for the aspect of teaching

Figure 6: Percentage of wasted lesson time in FE delivered by Adult Learning Providers.



Base: 1,652

Figure 7: Percentage of wasted lesson time in non-accredited Adult and Community Learning.



Base: 3,767

'understanding you and how you like to learn'. This compared to less than a half (45 per cent) of learners in the 16–34 year old age group who gave 9 or 10 out of 10 ratings for this aspect.

- There is a 10 percentage point difference for 9 or 10 out of 10 ratings by gender for the aspect of teaching 'planning their lessons' (47 per cent for male learners compared with 57 per cent for female learners).
- There is a relatively small difference (3 percentage points) in 9 or 10 out of 10 ratings for the aspect 'knowledge of the subject' across gender. Around four fifths of male (78 per cent) and female (81 per cent) learners gave 9 or 10 out of 10 ratings for this aspect.

54

The emergence and continuance of both gender and age differences in these survey results suggests a need to look more deeply at the events and circumstances involved in teaching and learning so that providers gain informed understandings about these differences, why they occur and what actions might be taken to reduce disparities and thus raise satisfaction levels overall.

Lesson time lost

55

Given the importance of effective teaching and learning, again in 2003/04 learners were asked to rate the amount of lesson time they felt was wasted.

56

It should be noted that learners' opinions about what constitutes wasted lesson time can and does vary and this question therefore reports learners' perceptions of wasted lesson time rather than making categorical statements.

57

Figure 6 shows the results for learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers when they were asked to rate whether they considered any of their lesson time to be

wasted, 54 per cent responded 'none is wasted'.

58

This means that of the other learners in the survey, 44 per cent believe some of their lesson time is wasted (2 per cent of learners responded 'don't know').

59

Compared with results for 2002/03, the FE delivered by adult learning providers 2003/04 results show an increase in the percentage of learners (+6 percentage points) who consider some lesson time to be wasted.

60

The results for learners in non-accredited adult and community learning, when asked were some lesson time wasted, are shown in Figure 7. Two thirds of learners (66 per cent) responded they considered no lesson time is wasted. Just under a fifth of learners (19 per cent) considered less than 10 per cent of lesson time is wasted.

61

Compared with results from 2002/03, the non-accredited adult and community learners results show an increase in the percentage of learners (+4 percentage points) who considered some of their lesson time to be wasted.

Lesson time lost in FE delivered by adult learning providers

Differences by gender

62

In the 2003/04 survey nearly three fifths of the female learners (57 per cent) in FE delivered by adult learning providers consider that none of their lesson time is wasted. This compares with less than half (45 per cent) of male learners who consider no lesson time is wasted, a difference of 12 percentage points. These results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Percentage of wasted lesson time in FE delivered by adult learning providers, by age and gender.

FE delivered by Adult Learning Providers							
	Total	Male	Female	16-24	25-34	35-54	55 plus
Base: All respondents	1,652	406	1,246	131	250	817	454
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
More than a half are wasted	4	4	4	4	4	5	4
Between a quarter and a half are wasted	5	8	5	7	4	6	6
10-24% are wasted	10	9	10	14	9	12	5
Less than 10% are wasted	24	30	22	27	26	22	24
None are wasted	54	45	57	46	49	55	60
Don't know	2	4	2	3	8	1	2

63

Other gender differences are apparent in the proportions of time wasted where, for under 10 per cent of lesson time lost, just over a fifth (22 per cent) of female learners responded, compared with just under a third (30 per cent) of males: a difference of 8 percentage points.

64

There are no differences between learners by gender for the category 'more than half of lesson time is wasted' (4 per cent).

Differences by age (Table 7)**65**

There is a notable difference (+14 percentage points) between learners in the 55 plus and 16–24 age groups who consider that none of their lesson time is wasted (60 per cent and 46 per cent respectively).

66

There is only a very small difference between age group responses for the category 'more than a half are wasted'. For the age group 35–54 year old learners, one in twenty (5 per cent) considered more than

half their lesson time to be wasted compared with 4 per cent of learners in the other age groups.

67

A notably higher percentage of learners in the 25–34 age group (8 per cent) responded 'don't know' when asked the question regarding wasted lesson time. This compares to learners in other age groups, for example 1 per cent of learners in the 35–54 year old age group responded 'don't know' when asked whether any of their lesson time is wasted.

68

Again, for learners in non-accredited ACL, there are some differences in learners' ratings for wasted lesson time, across age groups and gender differences. Younger learners appear to consider that more lesson time has been wasted compared with older learners in the survey. Also male learners in the survey generally consider that more lesson time is wasted compared with female learners. This is shown in Table 8 and discussed below.

Lesson time lost in non-accredited adult and community learning**Differences by gender****69**

Over two thirds (68 per cent) of female learners in non-accredited ACL consider that no lesson time is wasted, compared with just over three fifths (62 per cent) of male learners. A slightly higher percentage of male learners (4 per cent) consider that over half of lesson time is wasted compared with female learners (2 per cent).

Differences by age**70**

In response to the question how much lesson time is lost due to wastage, learners in all the age groups responded identically (5 per cent) for the category 'between a quarter and a half are wasted'.

Table 8: Percentage of wasted lesson time in non-accredited adult and community learning, by age and gender.

Non-accredited ACL							
	Total	Male	Female	16-34	35-44	45-54	55 plus
Base: All respondents	3,767	724	3,043	694	830	701	1,505
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
More than a half are wasted	3	4	2	3	3	3	2
Between a quarter and a half are wasted	5	4	5	5	5	5	5
10-24% are wasted	6	8	5	8	7	6	5
Less than 10% are wasted	19	21	19	22	23	19	16
None are wasted	66	62	68	61	61	66	72
Don't know	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

71

Almost three quarters (72 per cent) of learners aged 55 plus in the survey responded that none of their lesson time is wasted. This is notably higher than the percentage of learners giving this response in the 16–34 age group (61 per cent).

Learners' experiences**72**

In order to provide more understanding about how learners reacted to a range of situations, they were asked whether they had encountered particular issues in their learning.

73

The percentage of learners in adult and community learning who responded that they encountered the following situations are on a 'fairly regular basis' is shown in detail in Figure 8. The four situations receiving the highest percentage of learners to say they encountered these on a fairly regular basis, for both FE delivered by adult learning providers and non-accredited adult and community learning are:

- Others arriving late by 5 minutes or more
- Lack of resources
- Noise/disruption
- Being left hanging around with nothing to do.

74

The situation 'others arriving late by five minutes or more' is mentioned by a significantly higher percentage of learners compared to any other as shown in Figure 8. Approximately half of all learners (48 per cent of learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers and 43 per cent in non-accredited adult and community learning) responded they encountered this situation on a fairly regular basis.

75

This incidence of learners arriving late for lessons and this being seen as a possible cause of time wasting needs further investigation, particularly since it touches upon various issues including how courses are organised and the physical demands they make of students moving to or between locations, whether mechanisms

exist within institutions to counter persistent lateness and the effects it has on classroom management, and what other factors might be involved in addressing this issue.

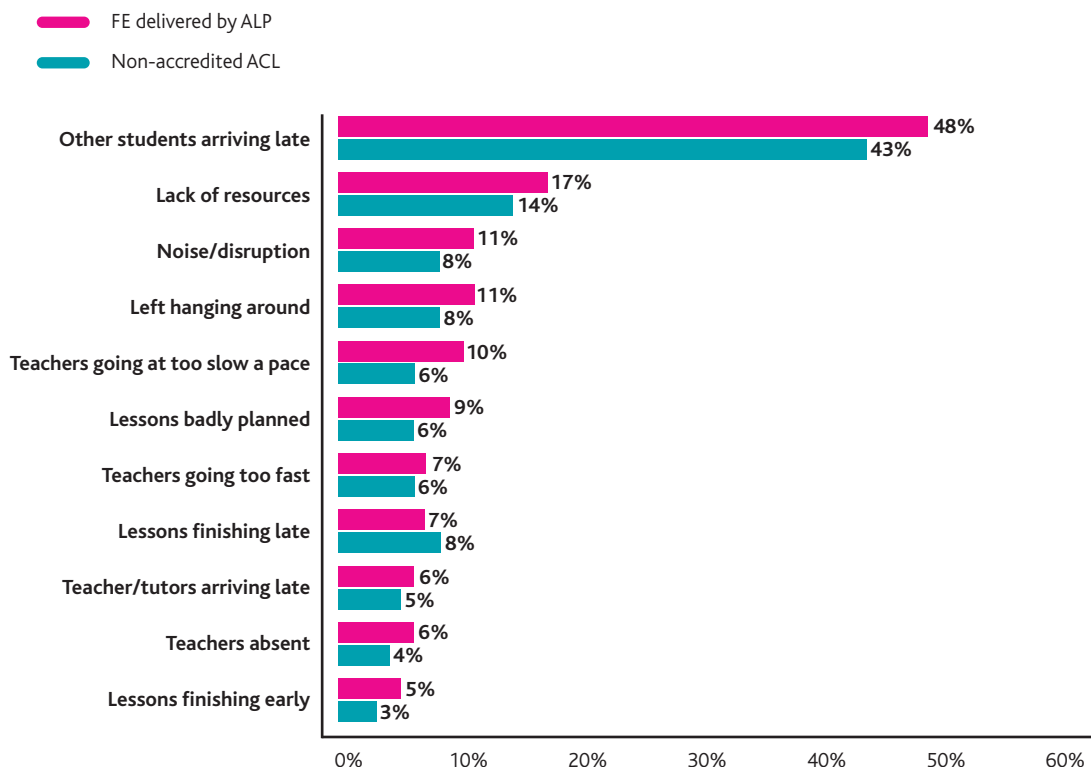
76

It is interesting that in non-accredited adult and community learning, the same percentage of learners (6 per cent) said they encountered 'teachers going too fast' and 'teachers going too slow' on a fairly regular basis.

Feedback from teachers/tutors**77**

Effective and consistent feedback from teachers and tutors is usually considered one of the characteristics of sound approaches to pedagogy. Thus it is generally regarded as an axiom of effective teaching and learning and important to learner perceptions.

Figure 8: Issues experienced on learners' course on a fairly regular basis, in FE delivered by Adult Learning providers and non-accredited ACL.



Base: FE by ALP: 1,652, non-accred ACL: 3,767

Note: these questions are non-exclusive in nature, meaning that learners can and do give multiple responses rather than a simple division into either yes or no. Thus it also means that results are broadly, though in some cases strongly, indicative rather than offering absolute or categorical statements about a particular item.

78

In 2003/04, learners were asked to rate the extent to which they received feedback from their teachers and tutors. These results are shown in Table 9 (FE delivered by ALP) and Table 10 (non-accredited ACL).

It is encouraging that the data show a high percentage of learners in adult and community learning find feedback from their teacher/tutor motivating.

FE delivered by adult and community learning

79

For learners in FE delivered by adult and community learning, over three quarters (77 per cent) say they find feedback from their

teacher/tutor 'motivating'. Only a small percentage (3 per cent) of learners expressed the view that teacher/tutor feedback was demotivating. However, somewhat more worryingly is the 16 per cent of learners who reported they found feedback to have no effect.

80

There is little difference across gender in terms of how feedback is received from teachers/tutors. Of male learners in the survey, 78 per cent found feedback 'motivating', 17 per cent 'no effect either way' and just 4 per cent of male learners found feedback to be 'demotivating'. These results compare closely to female learners in the survey where 77 per cent found feedback 'motivating', 16 per cent 'no effect either way'

with a small percentage of 3 per cent finding feedback 'demotivating'.

81

A higher percentage of older learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers appeared to find feedback from teachers/tutor motivating compared to younger learners. Over four fifths (85 per cent) of learners in the 55 plus age group found feedback from teachers/tutors to be motivating, compared with just over two thirds (67 per cent) of learners in the age group 16–24.

Non-accredited adult and community learning

82

For non-accredited adult and community

Table 9: How do you feel about the feedback on how you are doing from your teachers/tutors, for FE delivered by Adult Learning Providers, by age and gender.

FE delivered by Adult Learning Providers							
	Total	Male	Female	16-24	25-34	35-54	55 plus
Base: All respondents	1,652	406	1,246	131	250	817	454
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Motivating	77	78	77	67	70	78	85
No effect either way	16	17	16	27	20	15	11
Demotivating	3	4	3	2	4	4	2

learners, over four fifths (82 per cent) responded they found the feedback from their teacher/tutor motivating. Only 2 per cent say they found the feedback demotivating and just over one in ten (12 per cent) felt the feedback received was neither motivating nor demotivating.

83

Both female and male learners, and learners across all age groups, reported identical levels of demotivation (2 per cent) from teacher and/or tutor feedback.

84

It is interesting to note similarity across gender in learners' responses to the motivating effect of teacher/tutor feedback. For male and female learners, over four fifths (83 per cent and 82 per cent respectively) responded they found feedback to be motivating.

85

There are apparent differences by age in respect of the issue of how teacher/tutor feedback was received by the learner. For

learners in the age group 55 plus, over four fifths (86 per cent) found feedback to be motivating. This compares with 78 per cent of learners in the age group 35–44 and 79 per cent of learners aged 16–34.

86

There are also differences between learner responses about teacher/tutor feedback having no effect, with 16 per cent of 16–34 year olds reporting this result compared with just under one in ten (9 per cent) of 55 plus learners.

Table 10: How do you feel about the feedback on how you are doing from your teachers/tutors for non-accredited ACL, by age and gender.

Non-accredited ACL							
	Total	Male	Female	16-34	35-44	45-54	55 plus
Base: All respondents	3,767	724	3,043	694	830	701	1,505
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Motivating	82	83	82	79	78	82	86
No effect either way	12	13	12	16	16	12	9
Demotivating	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

Information and guidance prior to entry

87

As with earlier surveys, the one carried out in 2003/04 sought information about why learners chose their courses, how advice was sought, and its value to the learner.

88

Due to sampling restrictions, the information and guidance prior to entry questions were not asked from non-accredited learners. Therefore the results in this section relate only to learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers.

89

Key Findings In FE delivered by adult learning providers.

- Over two thirds of learners surveyed (70 per cent) said convenience/location of provider was a factor in their choice of provider
- over nine in 10 learners (91 per cent) said their reason for attending a course was for their own personal interest.

Factors influencing choice of course

90

For FE delivered by adult learning providers in the 2003/04 survey, the most common reason, given by 91 per cent of learners, for enrolling in a particular programme of study was 'for my own personal interest'. Nine out of ten learners (90 per cent) gave 'to advance my skills and knowledge in this area' as a reason for enrolling in their course.

91

It is interesting to observe similarity between learners' responses particularly when there appears to be no direct relationship between the statements 'to advance my skills and knowledge in this area' and 'for my own personal interest'. In fact, the two may be quite different objectives, suggesting a need for more careful future analysis of learners' choices and factors influencing them.

92

Over two thirds of learners (67 per cent) responded that 'to gain qualifications' was a factor that influenced their choice of course. A relatively high proportion of learners (46 per cent) said that meeting other people/making friends was a factor that influenced their choice of course.

93

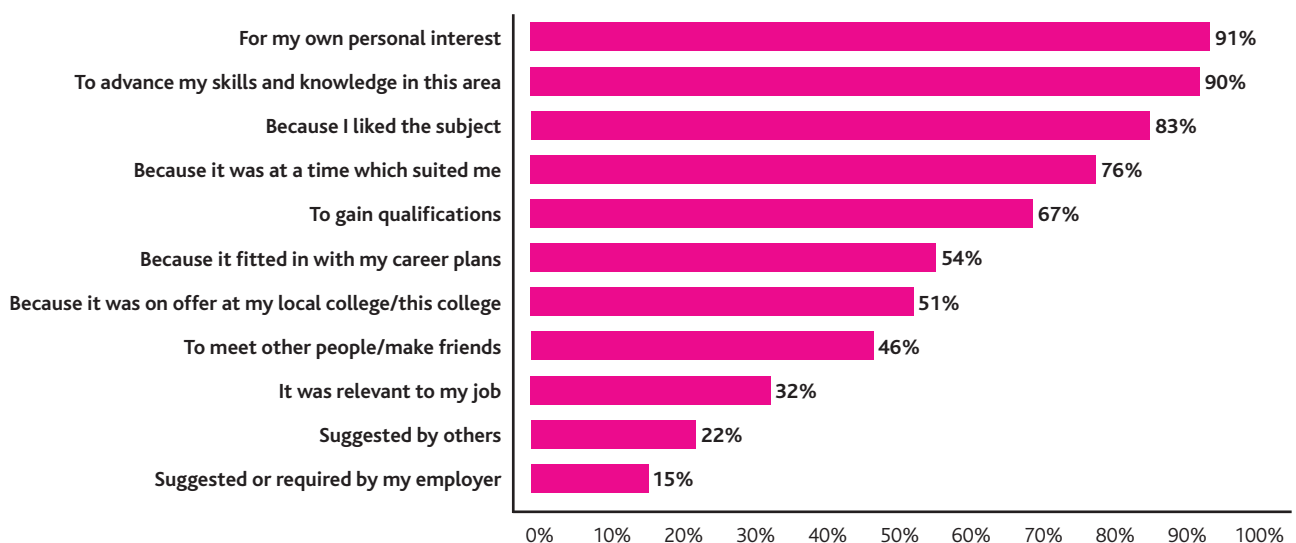
Figure 9 below provides details of the factors influencing learners' choice of course.

Factors influencing choice of provider

94

It is interesting to observe the reasons learners give for their choice of provider and/or place of learning. While this has immediate import for the result of the 2003/04 survey, it has wider implications for learners and providers which might bear more detailed investigation.

Figure 9: Factors influencing choice of course in FE delivered by Adult Learning Providers



Base: 566

Note: these questions are non-exclusive in nature, meaning that learners can and do give multiple responses rather than a simple division into either yes or no. Thus it also means that results are broadly, though in some cases strongly, indicative rather than offering absolute or categoric statements about a particular item.

95

As shown in Figure 10, results for FE delivered by adult learning providers in the 2003/04 survey suggest that learners' main reasons for choosing particular providers or places of learning are:

- convenience of location (70 per cent)
- offered course that I wanted (26 per cent).

96

These results suggest that convenience of location is foremost among the reasons why learners chose certain providers; this finding thus casts at least some doubt on other influences on learner choice of provider, no matter how well or badly informed or who the source of advice and/or guidance is. Interestingly, relatively few learners (just 5 per cent) indicate that provider reputation is a factor influencing their choice. A relatively high percentage of learners cited the convenience of time of course as a factor influencing their choice of course (9 per cent).

Sources of pre-entry advice and guidance

97

Clearly, the extent to which learners and prospective learners receive advice and guidance which is at least adequate, meets their needs as individuals and limits the intrusion of bias or partiality is critically important for them to make informed choices. The question therefore follows: can information and guidance given to learners before entry to FE delivered by adult learning providers be enhanced to improve learner satisfaction?

98

To ascertain where and how learners obtained advice and guidance, learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers participating in the 2003/04 survey were asked if they received information from any of the sources shown in Figure 11.

99

Evidence from this survey and more generally indicates the importance of advice about courses and programmes to learner choice. In 2003/04, slightly less than a third (29 per cent) of learners stated that 'teachers/tutors at college' were a source of advice.

100

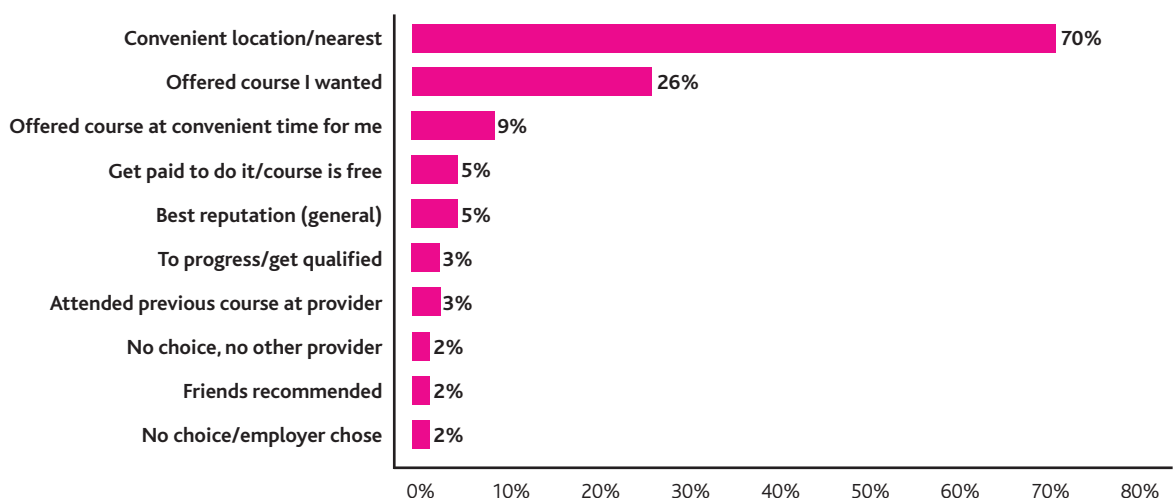
It is interesting that, as a source of advice, friends (23 per cent) and parents/other family members (11 per cent) are cited by learners more frequently than more formal sources of advice, for example, Connexions (6 per cent) and information, advice and guidance centres (7 per cent).

Usefulness of advice received

101

As noted above, learners have access to a range of sources of advice about courses and programmes in FE delivered by adult learner providers,

Figure 10: Factors influencing choice of provider in FE delivered by Adult learning providers.



Base: 566

Note: these questions are non-exclusive in nature, meaning that learners can and do give multiple responses rather than a simple division into either yes or no. Thus it also means that results are broadly, though in some cases strongly, indicative rather than offering absolute or categorical statements about a particular item.

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102

Learners were asked to rate the usefulness of the advice they received from a maximum of two sources as being 'very useful', 'fairly useful', 'not very useful' or 'not at all useful'. If learners' cited more than two sources of advice used, they were then asked the usefulness of two sources selected at random.

103

Of the sources available to learners in the 2003/04 survey, the following are identified by learners as being 'very' useful (please note, other sources not included in reporting due to small sample base):

- teachers/tutors at college/provider (69 per cent)
- college admissions office (65 per cent)
- friends (58 per cent).

104

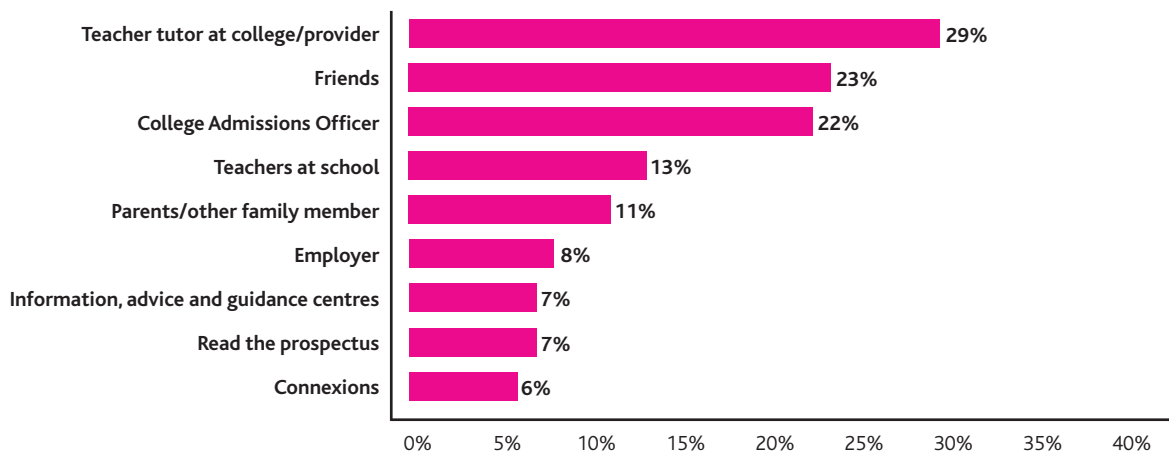
The same sources received the following percentage of learners giving a 'fairly' useful rating:

- teachers/tutors at college/provider (24 per cent)
- college admissions office (32 per cent)
- friends (39 per cent).

105

Of learners who rated the usefulness of the source of advice 'teachers/tutors at college provider', 6 per cent rated the advice as either 'not very useful' or 'not useful at all'. This compares with 3 per cent rating 'not very useful' or 'not useful at all' for the source of advice being the college admissions office and 1 per cent for the same categories when using friends as a source of advice.

Figure 11: Sources of pre-entry advice and guidance for learners' choice of course/provider in FE delivered by ALP.



Base: 566

Note: these questions are non-exclusive in nature, meaning that learners can and do give multiple responses rather than a simple division into either yes or no. Thus it also means that results are broadly, though in some cases strongly, indicative rather than offering absolute or categoric statements about a particular item.

Support for learners

106
This section comments on the issues identified in the 2003/04 survey addressing difficulties, if any, learners experienced on courses, as well as the usefulness of advice sought to support them. Learners were also asked whether they had received certain health and safety information.

107
In terms of its importance to learners, results show the support they received during their learning experience is second only to the quality of teaching provided. Thus it is a factor likely to be influential in learners' comments and attitudes towards providers.

108
This means it is equally important that providers gain understandings about learner's perceptions and that they take these into account when considering the range and type of support structures and mechanisms which exist to assist learners.

- 109**
Key findings from 2003/04 include:
- For learners in non-accredited adult and community learning, approximately three fifths (59 per cent) responded that they encountered no difficulties of any kind during their learning programme.
 - For learners who sought help and advice for difficulties encountered, over two thirds (67 per cent) of learners in non-accredited ACL found the advice they received to be useful.

Management of learning

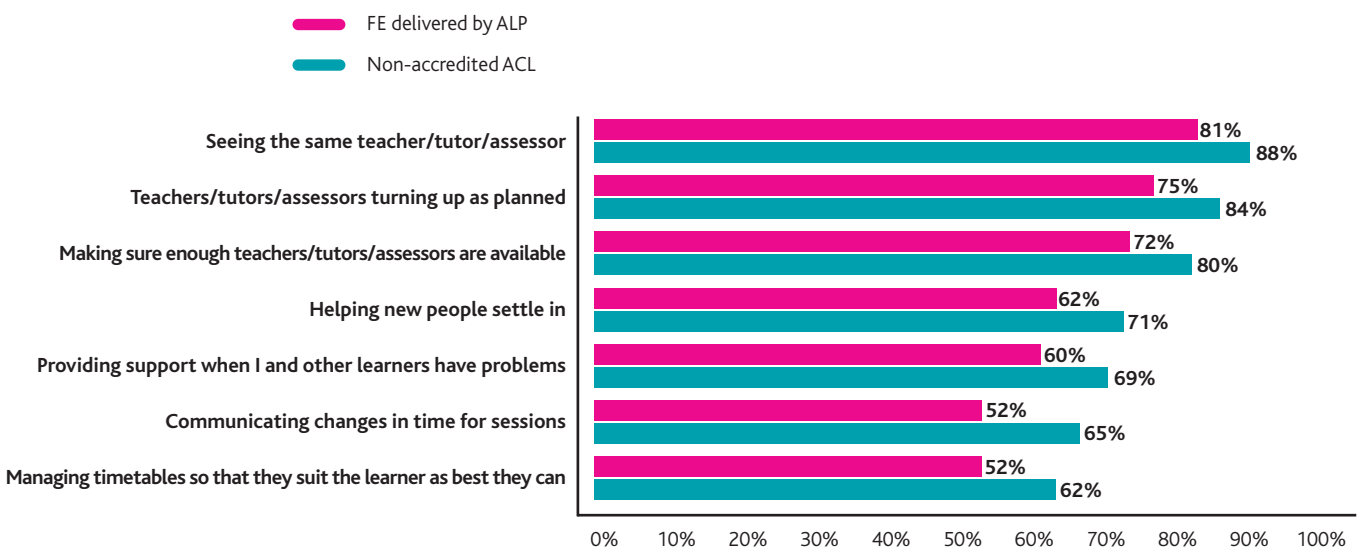
110
In the 2003/04 survey, learners in adult and community learning were asked to rank a number of issues corresponding to the quality of management of administrative experiences they encountered during their learning experiences. Learners ranked each issue using a scale from 1 (very poor) to 10 (excellent).

111
The percentage of learners rating items as either 9 out of 10 or 10 out of 10, that is, in the uppermost ranges, for FE delivered by adult learning providers and non-accredited adult and community learning, is shown in Figure 12.

FE delivered by adult learning providers

- 112**
Summary details include:
- the issue 'seeing the same teachers/tutors throughout' was ranked as 9 or 10 out of 10 by over four fifths (81 per cent) of learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers
 - Three quarters (75 per cent) of learners gave the issue 'teachers/tutors turning up as planned' a 9 or 10 out of 10
 - There are comparatively lower ratings for the issues 'communicating changes in time for sessions' and 'managing the timetable so that they suit the learner as best they can'. Just over half (52 per cent) of learners in FE delivered by adult

Figure 12: The percentage of learners awarding a 9 or 10 out of 10 for the management of learning issues experienced.



Base: All respondents rating

learning providers gave these issues a 9 or 10 out of 10 rating.

Non-accredited adult and community learning

113

Issues relating to teachers/tutors received a high percentage of learners giving a 9 or 10 out of 10 ratings by learners in non-accredited adult and community learning:

- seeing the same teacher/tutor (88 per cent)
- teachers/tutors turning up as planned (84 per cent)
- making sure enough teachers/trainers are available (80 per cent).

114

The issues which received a comparatively lower percentage of learner 9 or 10 out of 10 ratings in non-accredited ACL were 'managing timetables so that they suit the learner the best they can' (62 per cent) and 'communicating changes in times for sessions' (65 per cent).

Health and safety guidance

115

Given the importance of occupational health and safety to learners and to colleges, learners in adult and community learning were asked if they were informed about certain health and safety issues.

116

The learners were asked if they had been informed about the following health and safety issues:

- emergency arrangements for fire
- emergency arrangements for first aid and how to report an accident
- any dangers involved with your training and how to work safely
- who to ask for any health and safety advice or instructions.

117

The results for FE delivered by adult learning providers and non-accredited ACL are shown in Table 11.

118

In FE delivered by adult learning providers, four fifths (82 per cent) of learners in the survey responded they had been informed about emergency arrangements for fire. This compares to just over a half of learners said they had been informed about 'any dangers involved with your training and how to work safely' (52 per cent), 'who to ask for any health and safety advice or instructions' (53 per cent) and 'emergency arrangements for first aid and how to report an accident' (55 per cent).

119

A quarter of non-accredited adult and community learners (75 per cent) responded they had been informed about 'emergency arrangements for fire'. This was higher than the percentages of learners saying they had been informed about 'emergency arrangements for first aid and how to report an accident' (51 per cent), 'any dangers involved with your training and how to work safely' (56 per cent) and 'who to ask for any health and safety advice or instructions' (57 per cent).

120

One critical issue to emerge from the 2003/04 survey is for providers and the LSC to ensure that the quality of advice and guidance surrounding occupational health and safety issues for learners is planned, timely, accurate and comprehensive. Emerging evidence suggests that numbers of health and safety related issues arise early in learners' experiences which strongly suggests the need for effective programmes at the very outset of courses and programmes, reinforced on a regular basis throughout learners' experiences.

Table 11: The percentage of learners in FE delivered by ALP and non-accredited ACL, who say they have been informed about certain health and safety issues.

	Emergency Arrangements for fire	Emergency Arrangements for first aid and how to report an accident	Any dangers involved with your training and how to work safely	Who to ask for any health and safety advice or instructions
Informed (base)	Yes %	Yes %	Yes %	Yes %
FE delivered by Adult learning providers (519)	82	55	52	53
Non-accredited ACL (1,882)	75	51	56	57

121

Colleges may be unaware that the LSC has available a number of resources dealing specifically with occupational health and safety issues. The following products can be obtained from the LSC helpdesk (0870 9006800):

- Safe learner website – a joint good practice website with the Association of Colleges (AoC and the Association of Learning Providers (ALP) and for colleges and providers www.safelearner.info
- Supply of the BE SAFE booklet for all learners
- The Safe Learner Line – a confidential line that learners can contact by phone, email or text to report their concerns about learner safety
- BE SAFE DVD and Risk IT video/DVD suitable for use at induction

- Promotion of the Health and Safety Procurement Standards
- Other publications for supervisors and employers (all available from LSC helpdesk)

122

The evidence obtaining from the 2003/04 survey suggests that all colleges need to carry out studies of learners' awareness about occupational health and safety issues, ensuring that they have up to date advice and know what to do in the event of an incident no matter how minor.

123

Further, colleges might consider whether the LSC's *safelearner* guidance should be used to inform good practice.

Difficulties encountered

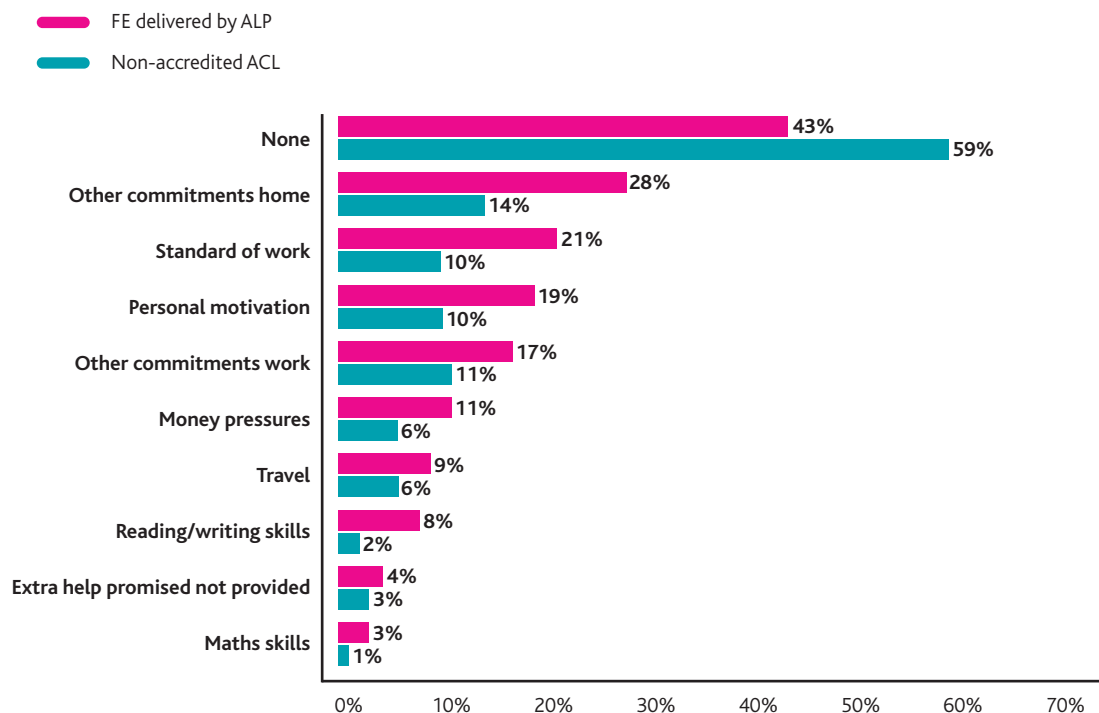
124

In order to obtain some measures of the difficulties learners encounter during their learning experiences, those involved in the 2003/04 survey were asked to identify problems they may have encountered.

125

For learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers, 43 per cent of learners said they had experienced no problems since they started their course.

Figure 13: Difficulties encountered since beginning course for learners in adult and community learning.



Base: FE by ALP: 519, non-accred ACL: 1,882

Note: these questions are non-exclusive in nature, meaning that learners can and do give multiple responses rather than a simple division into either yes or no. Thus it also means that results are broadly, though in some cases strongly, indicative rather than offering absolute or categorical statements about a particular item.

126

For FE delivered by adult learning providers, learners who did experience problems (shown in Figure 13), the four most common were:

- managing to fit course commitments in with other commitments at home (28 per cent)
- managing to keep up with the standard of work required (21 per cent)
- personal motivation (19 per cent)
- managing to fit course commitments in with other commitments at work (17 per cent).

127

Almost 1 in 10 learners surveyed in FE delivered by adult and community learning (8 per cent) said they experienced difficulties with reading/writing skills. Given the importance of literacy and numeracy skills to learners' success and to their ability to deal with on- and off-the-job tasks, this issue needs to be kept under close observation, and further analysis done which investigates where and why learners are experiencing difficulties and what might be done to alleviate these.

128

In 2003/04 almost three fifths (59 per cent) of non-accredited adult and community learners say they had experienced no difficulties since starting their course.

129

Of the non-accredited adult and community learners who did experience difficulties since their course began, the four difficulties mentioned by the highest percentage of learners are:

- managing to fit course commitments in with other commitments at home (14 per cent)
- managing to fit course commitments in with other commitments at work (11 per cent)
- managing to keep up with the standard of work required (10 per cent)
- personal motivation (10 per cent).

Learners seeking help or advice for difficulties

130

In 2003/04, the survey asked if adult and community learners who experienced problems on their course sought advice or help from the college or provider on any of these matters.

131

The resulting data (see Table 12 below) show that only a fifth of learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers (20 per cent) and less than a fifth (18 per cent) of non-accredited adult and community learners who encountered problems actually sought advice or help to resolve that problem.

132

This also means that over three quarters of learners who reported encountering problems with their learning in adult and community learning did not seek help resolving the issues involved. For example: 78 per cent in FE delivered by adult learning providers and 82 per cent in non-accredited adult and community learning did not seek help for difficulties they encountered.

Table 12: Whether the adult and community learner sought advice or help from the provider on any of these difficulties.

	FE delivered by Adult Learning Providers	Non-accredited Adult and Community Learning
	Total	Total
Base: All respondents experiencing problems	272	762
	%	%
Yes	20	18
No	78	82

133

As noted before, approximately a fifth of the adult and community learners involved in the 2003/04 survey sought help when they encountered a problem or difficulty. However, as shown in Figure 14, over two thirds of non-accredited adult and community learners who sought advice said the advice they received was 'very' or 'fairly' useful, suggesting that the majority of learners who sought help obtained it. (Note: FE delivered by ALP results not included in analysis due to small base size).

134

Almost two fifths (38 per cent) of non-accredited adult and community learners found the advice they received 'very' useful.

135

In contrast 17 per cent of non-accredited adult and community learners responded they found the advice they received 'not useful at all' and almost one in eight (12 per cent) said they found the advice 'not very useful'.

136

It is noteworthy that only approximately a fifth of adult and community learners in the 2003/04 survey sought help when they encountered difficulties or problems. Perhaps more encouraging, is that the large majority of them did receive useful assistance, though there is no room for complacency given the numbers also reporting little or no useful advice was forthcoming.

Complaints

137

Addressing the issue of learner complaints broadly turns on this key question: have you ever made a complaint to the college about your course or other experiences? Therefore, adult and community learners were asked whether they had ever made a complaint to their college about their learning and what happened as a consequence.

138

An important consideration here is that learners' concerns as noted in the 2003/04 survey are self-defined, and do not mean that learners sought or instituted a formal process to deal with their particular complaint.

FE delivered by adult learning providers

139

Table 13 shows that less than a tenth of learners (8 per cent) in FE delivered by adult learning providers made a complaint to their college.

140

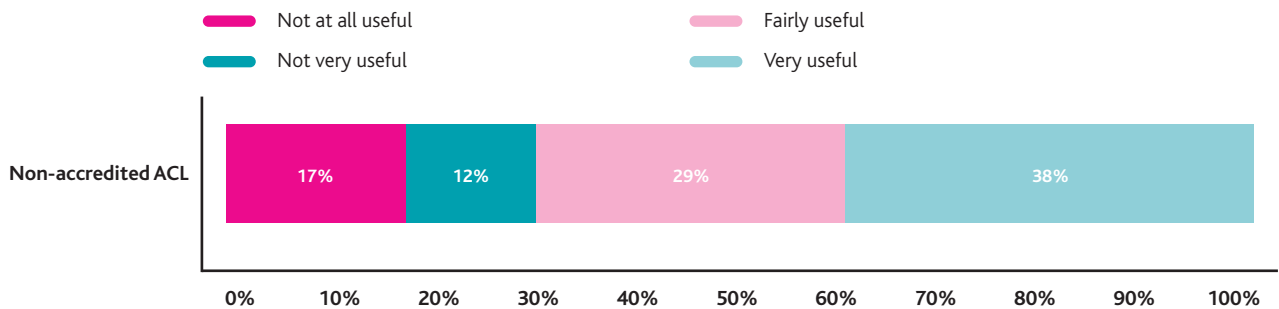
This therefore leaves over nine out of ten (92 per cent) of learners in FE delivered by ALP, who did not consider they made a complaint to their provider. This result is similar to previous years of the survey.

Non-accredited adult and community learning

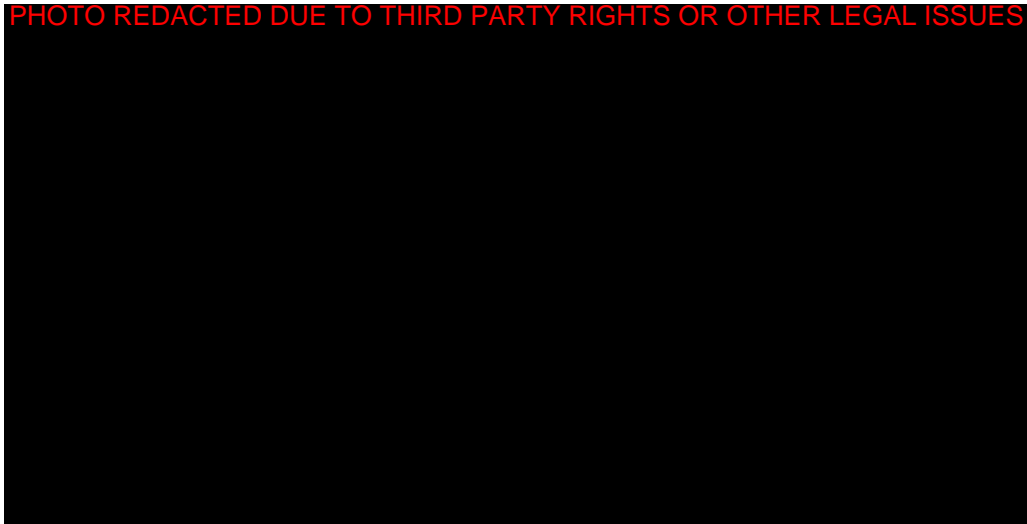
141

Of learners in non-accredited adult and community learning, 7 per cent said they made a complaint to their provider about their learning experience.

Figure 14: Usefulness of help or advice received.



Base: non-accred ACL: 136



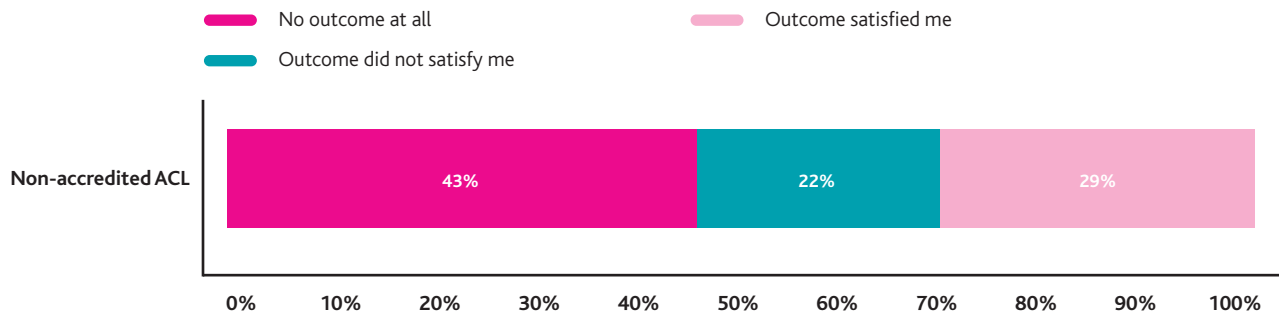
142

Of these learners, just under a third (29 per cent) said the outcome to their complaint satisfied them, about one fifth (22 per cent) said the outcome did not satisfy them, and over two fifths (43 per cent) said there was no outcome. (Note: FE delivered by ALP not included in analysis due to small base size).

Table 13: Adult and community learners who made a complaint to their provider.

	FE delivered by Adult Learning Providers	Non-accredited Adult and Community Learning
	Total	Total
Base: All respondents	519	1,882
	%	%
Yes	8	7
No	92	93

Figure 15: Outcome of complaint.



Base: non-accred ACL: 135.

The impact of learning

143

In the 2003/04 survey, adult and community learners were asked about the benefits they had received from their learning experience and the impact that learning had on them as a person. Among the key findings in 2003/04 are:

- A high percentage of learners in adult and community learning say they enjoy learning and get a 'buzz' from it; 83 per cent in FE delivered by adult learning providers and 90 per cent in non-accredited adult and community learning.
- 70 per cent of learners in non-accredited adult and community learning say they are 'very' likely to return to learning within the next three years.

Learners' feelings towards education when leaving school

144

One of the important aspects of surveying learners is to gather information about what might have changed, particularly in terms of their attitudes and perceptions as a result of their learning experiences, and how learners now view past and present experiences.

145

This means it is important to try to gain some measure of learners' views about their experiences prior to entering current learning courses, and where possible compare or contrast these with those obtaining now.

146

Figure 16 shows learners' feelings about education when leaving school for adult and community learners.

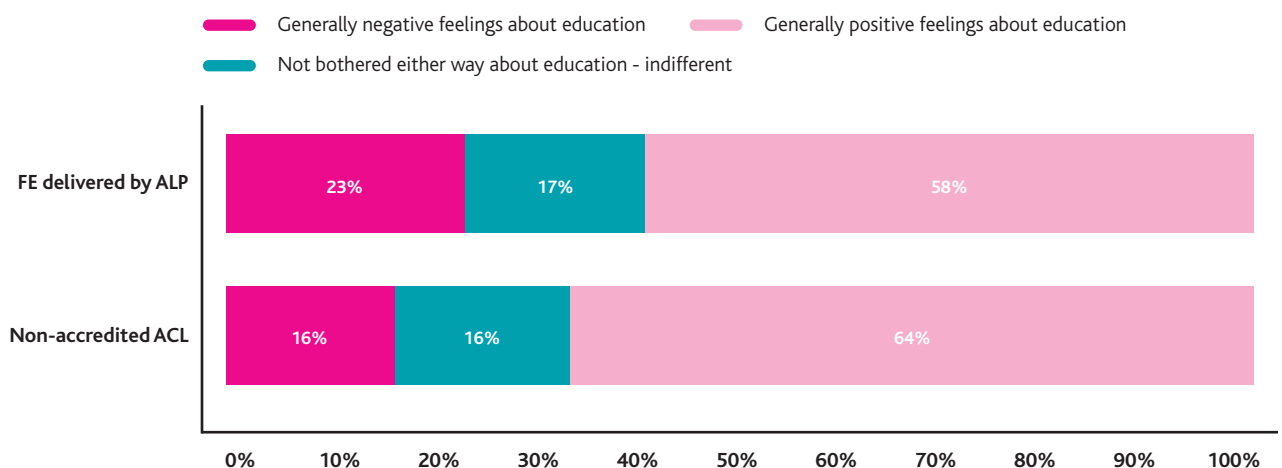
147

It shows that, in the 2003/04 survey, for learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers, almost three fifths (58 per cent) of learners had generally positive feelings about education when leaving school, compared with around a fifth (23 per cent) who had generally negative feelings about education, and another 17 per cent who were neither positive nor negative about their views on schooling.

148

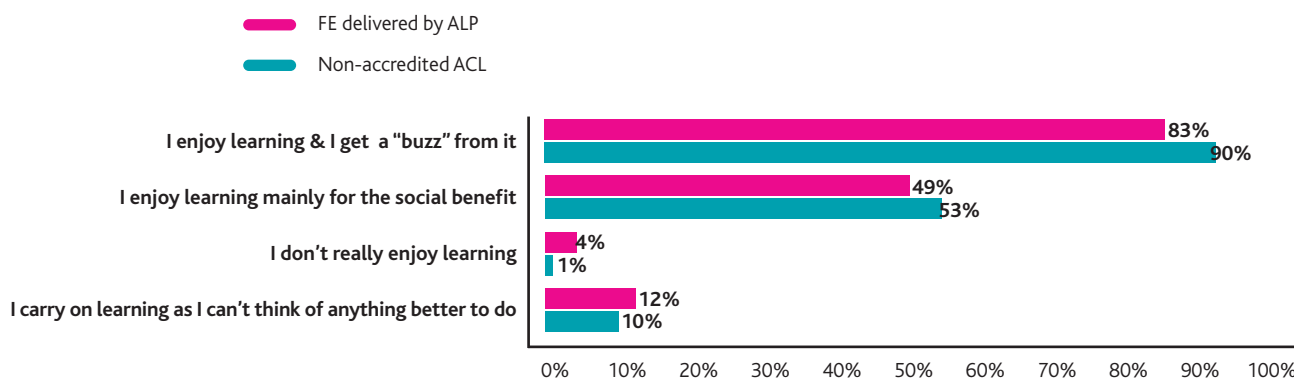
For non-accredited adult and community learners, 64 per cent of learners responded they had generally positive feelings about education when they left school. This compares to 16 per cent who said they had generally negative feelings about education when they left school and 16 per cent who were neither positive nor negative about their views on schooling.

Figure 16: Learners' feelings about education when leaving school



Base: FE by ALP: 567, non-accred ACL: 1,885

Figure 17: How learners feel about learning now?



Base: FE by ALP: 567, non-accred ACL: 1,885.

Note: these questions are non-exclusive in nature, meaning that learners can and do give multiple responses rather than a simple division into either yes or no. Thus it also means that results are broadly, though in some cases strongly, indicative rather than offering absolute or categoric statements about a particular item.

How learners feel about learning now

149

Questions here seek to elicit responses which provide information about how learners feel about learning at present. Learners are asked which statements apply to them and the way they feel about learning now.

150

The responses for both FE delivered by adult learning providers and non-accredited adult and community learners are shown in Figure 17.

151

In 2003/04, 83 per cent of learners surveyed in FE delivered by adult learning providers and 90 per cent of learners in non-accredited adult and community learning say they 'enjoy learning and get a 'buzz' from it'.

152

It is also interesting to observe that there has been a noticeable increase in the number of learners in the survey in FE delivered by adult learning providers who say they enjoy learning mostly for the social aspects – 49 per cent in 2003/04, compared with 37 per cent who responded in 2002/03, a difference of 12 percentage points between the two years.

153

There is also a smaller increase in the percentage of learners in non-accredited adult and community learning, compared to 2002/03 results, who say they enjoy learning mostly for the social aspects. This has increased by 2 percentage points, from 51 per cent in 2002/03 to 53 per cent in 2003/04.

154

A very positive finding was the small percentage of learners in both FE delivered by adult learning providers (4 per cent) and non-accredited adult and community learning (1 per cent) who reported that they didn't really enjoy learning.

155

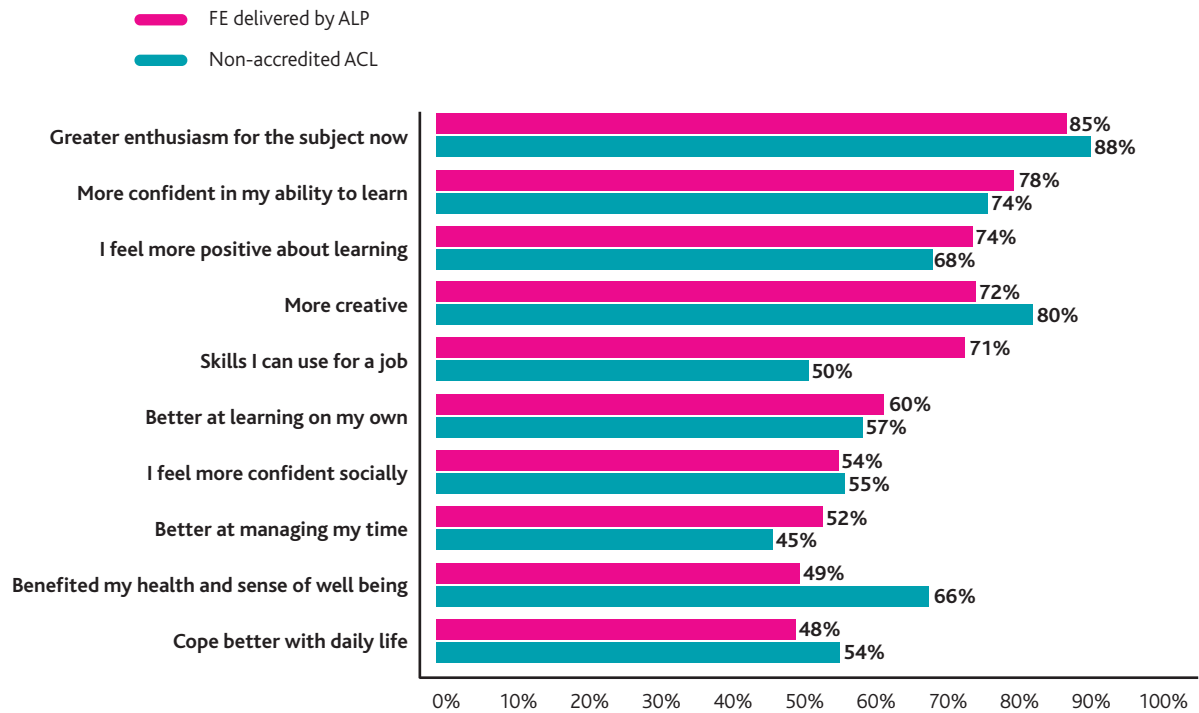
However, there are a proportion of learners in adult and community learning who respond they are carrying on learning because they 'can't think of anything else to do'. Over one in ten learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers (12 per cent) and one in ten (10 per cent) in non-accredited ACL reported they felt this way about learning. While the percentage of learners responding in this way is relatively small, these responses do suggest some cause for concern about learner disaffection and the extent to which courses and programmes are actually meeting their needs or merely acting as something to fill in time with no substantive benefit accruing as a result.

Benefits of learning

156

Learners in the 2003/04 survey were able to identify which advantages stemmed from their learning experience. Learners were asked to agree or disagree with statements regarding the effect their learning experience had on them personally. Full details of learner responses are shown in Figure 18. These are summarised below:

Figure 18: Benefits of learning.



Base: FE by ALP: 567, non-accred ACL: 1,885.

FE delivered by adult learning providers

- I have a greater enthusiasm for the subject (85 per cent)
- I feel more confident in my ability to learn (78 per cent)
- I am more creative and prepared to try new things (72 per cent)
- It has given me skills I can use for a job (71 per cent).

Non-accredited adult and community learning

- I have greater enthusiasm for the subject (88 per cent)
- I am more creative and prepared to try new things (80 per cent)
- I feel more confident in my ability to learn (74 per cent)
- It has benefited my health and sense of well being (66 per cent).

157

It is interesting the similar categories received high percentages of learners who agreed had benefited from their learning experience in both FE delivered by adult Learning providers and non-accredited ACL. Regarding the statement 'I have greater enthusiasm for the subject', over four fifths of learners (85 per cent in FE delivered by adult learning providers and 88 per cent in non-accredited ACL) agreed this was a benefit of their learning experience. This is a highly positive result which could indicate a trend towards continuing learning.

158

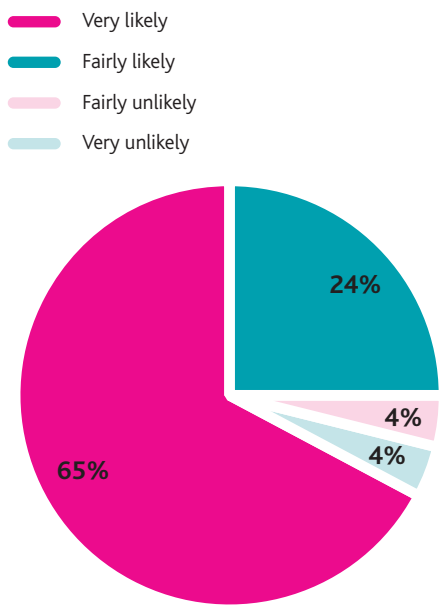
Other statements about the benefits of learning, which were agreed by a high percentage of learners in both FE delivered by adult learning providers and non-accredited ACL, centred around the learner gaining confidence from their learning experience and being prepared to try new things. These results are summarised above and shown in Figure 18.

Likelihood to return to learning within the next three years

159

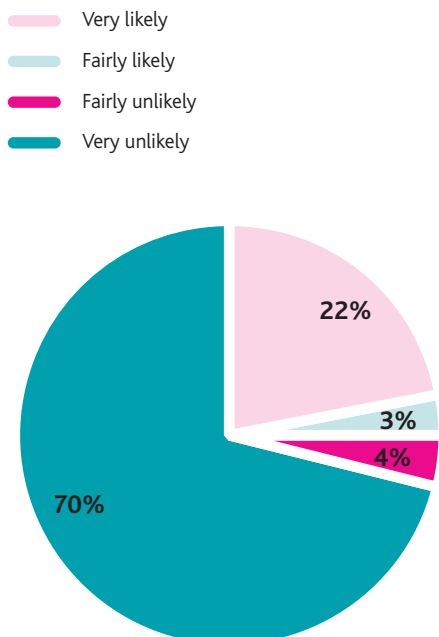
Again, one of the issues of importance to the entire learning community is the extent to which learners wish to continue with their learning experiences and what influences current teaching and learning have on their ambitions or intentions.

Figure 19: Likelihood of return to learning within the next three years for learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers.



Base: FE by ALP 1,652. For clarity, don't know answers are not included.

Figure 20: Likelihood of return to learning within the next three years in non-accredited ACL.



Base: 3,767. For clarity, don't know answers are not included.

160

All learners in the 2003/04 survey were asked about the likelihood they would continue to learn within a given timescale of three years. Responses to this questions were very positive from learners and are shown for FE delivered by adult learning providers in Figure 19 and for non-accredited ACL learners in Figure 20.

FE delivered by adult learning providers

161

In the 2003/04 survey for FE delivered by adult learning providers, just under two thirds (65 per cent) of respondents said it was 'very' likely that they would undertake further learning during the next three years. Just less than a quarter (24 per cent) of learners responded that it was 'fairly' likely they would undertake further learning in the next three years. Both results appear very positive indeed. These responses are shown in Figure 19.

162

Only 8 per cent of learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers reported that they would be unlikely to undertake further learning in the next three years, 4 per cent 'very' unlikely and 4 per cent 'fairly' unlikely.

Non-accredited adult and community learning

163

For non-accredited adult and community learners in the 2003/04 survey, 92 per cent said they were likely to return to learning within the next three years. Of these learners, 70 per cent indicated they were 'very' likely and 22 per cent 'fairly' likely to return to learning within three years. These results are very positive, and are shown in Figure 20.

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164

Only a small percentage of non-accredited adult and community learners (7 per cent) responded they were unlikely to return to learning within the next three years, 3 per cent 'fairly' unlikely and 4 per cent 'very unlikely'.

Areas for action

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165

It needs to be emphasised that no individual college will necessarily imitate or mirror results obtained through the National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2003/04. In general terms it is felt that colleges will gain most from the survey by endeavouring as far as is possible to replicate the methodology employed at a local level and benchmarking these local results against the NLSS.

166

A supporting document *National Learner Satisfaction Survey: Guidance on the core methodology and core questionnaire* is available from the LSC website (<http://researchtools.lsc.gov.uk>). This document contains the questionnaire used to undertake the 2003/04 NLSS, a paper-based questionnaire of the core questions in the NLSS and calibration tables to compare the NLSS telephone survey results with paper-based questionnaire survey results to aid for benchmarking purposes.

167

It is interesting that throughout the 2003/04 NLSS results there are a number of apparent differences between the perceptions of younger and older learners and also between male and female learners. This raises the question, are these gender and age group differences based on perceptions about what each group thinks or are there real differences between the ways teachers/tutors act and react to the difference groups? There is no readily available explanation for this result, and it clearly needs further detailed analysis.

168

One of the key issues for providers is to ensure that they are very much aware of and deal with any substantial emerging alienation or dissatisfaction among learners, perhaps more so among males than females and younger learners rather than older. Moreover, providers need to capitalise on the early and evident enthusiasm which most learners bring to their current learning experience.

169

Satisfaction surveys are a very useful measure, but they need not be only end-of-course or summative evaluations of learners' experiences. For example, some evidence of contrasting attitudes between male and female learners and between subjects of different ages throughout the results in this report, suggests the need for more local and careful examination of events and circumstances with a view to preventing or limiting learner dissatisfaction and disaffection.

170

One critical issue to emerge from the survey is for providers and the LSC to ensure that the quality of advice and guidance surrounding occupational health and safety issues for learners is planned, timely, accurate and comprehensive. This needs to be implemented at the very outset of learners' courses and programmes and reinforced on regular basis throughout learners' experiences. The section on **Support for learners** details available help and guidance from the LSC regarding health and safety. These products can be obtained from the LSC helpdesk 0870 9006800.

171

It is interesting that the survey found learners who sought help in resolving difficulties with their learning, were generally more satisfied than those who did not seek assistance in this way. This suggests that it might be advantageous for colleges to positively encourage learners to seek and obtain help, which will improve their learning experiences and potentially the outcomes as well.

172

Very often providers are ideally placed to exploit the positive message obtained from the 'buzz' learners experience, and the growth of confidence which comes from successful learning experiences.

Learner focus groups

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173

Three focus groups for adult and community learners were held across December 2004 and January 2005, each lasting approximately one and a half hours and comprising 8 to 10 learners per group.

174

Specific criteria for the groups were:

- all accredited learners and within the age group 16–40 in north
- all accredited learners and within the age group 16–40 in midlands
- all non-accredited adult and community learners, 70 per cent female learners and age group 40 plus.

175

The verbatim quotes from these focus groups are from adult and community learners about their learning experiences. These should be read in context of examples from individual learners in adult and community learning.

176

The sample of adult and community learners interviewed in the 2003/04 National Learner Satisfaction Survey is:

- FE delivered by adult learning providers – 1,652 learners
- Non-accredited adult and community learners – 3,767 learners.

177

The number of learners involved in the NLSS focus groups number about 30 in total for each sector. Thus there are very significant differences in the nature, scope and approach to the overall sample of 5,419 learners compared with the far smaller number of focus group participants.

178

This means that quotations and citations from the learners involved with the focus groups simply cannot be used to either prove or disprove findings from the survey. Rather the purpose of the focus groups was to ascertain some additional detail about learners' experiences which could not be gathered via a telephone survey, and thus these observations remain of interest from this perspective. In a real sense this was an attempt to *flesh out* learners' views, that is, to provide some additional commentary in a qualitative way.

179

It is also worth noting that learner responses in the 2003/04 survey are expressed as percentages of their experiences, thus they reflect an aggregation of learners' views and opinions.

Quotes from learners about their learning experiences

Overall learning satisfaction and impact of learning

180

"I'm not doing it for fun, I'm doing it because I need it."

"It's a means to an end for me."

"It broadens your horizons."

"Just seeing where it goes [professionally] but mostly just to see my own personal development. It's a combination of both really."

"I did it to meet new people...rather than worry about the qualification."

"With me all the grandchildren were playing with the computers and I felt like a right idiot because I didn't know how to turn it on."

"I don't want a diploma, I just want to know how to use a computer."

"I'm doing it just to prove to myself that I can because I was such a hideous failure at maths at school."

"I'm not letting my brain go to sleep, I'm doing something"

"I think computers is a big thing in industry everywhere now ... hopefully I will have learnt enough to go back to work."

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Overall quality of teaching and training

181

"I've hated maths my entire life but now I look forward to my maths lesson because I get to go and not feel like the moron kid, because I actually understand it now and I really look forward to it. For me it's about breaking a chain, breaking a pattern."

"I'd like to pass it in the end so that it's useful to me."

"It's a learning environment but a relaxed one, you're all there for the same reason, it's not like at school where there's three at the back that don't want to do maths."

"At school we were children so we were treated like children whereas now we're adults, you're treated as an adult."

"Because everyone is there to learn there are no distractions."

"It's quite a relaxed atmosphere but there is learning there as well."

"You had to go to school...but now you're there because you want to be."

"There's a sort of respect between both parties and you feel like you're more able to say what you really think without fear of reprisal."

"The lecturer will turn up within the first 20 minutes of the lesson at any point, we could be sitting about for a long time."

"He'll [teacher/lecturer] put it in plain English for me."

"It's been a lot more fun. I mean, I don't like maths and the word fractions just scared me so she made it fun. She brought in a cake and we cut it up into sections... making it a bit fun, it was really good...I'm a bit more confident now, she didn't move on until she was sure we were all confident."

"We've got about 20 in our course but she [teacher/lecturer] makes time to come to everybody."

"I think the personality of the teacher is very important, they've got to be enthusiastic and inspire you and make it enjoyable."

"They just seem better because we've got smaller groups."

"Considerate...they'll stay with you until you've learnt what to do."

"They kind of feel as if they're all volunteers, they're not being paid they're just doing it because they want to. And that's kind of nice, it does seem that they do want to teach people and help people as opposed to just pick up a pay cheque."

"Sometimes you have to wait for the teacher to come round to you...you can't get on until you ask your question and that usually holds you up."

"In our class you do need to be partnered up so if someone doesn't turn up it does cause problems."

"Our class comes in dribs and drabs...it doesn't really disrupt us."

"You work at your own pace so you don't feel pressured...it's not like a college, it's not rowdy or noisy, it's easy going. They're interested in what you want, not what they want."

Pre-entry advice and guidance

182

"It's easy for me to go to and from work."

"You go to wherever you can get to."

"learndirect...I know that they can locate courses for you and I was struggling."

"It had to be at times when I could get a babysitter."

"Mine had to be night because I work during the day."

"I only live up the road [from the college], I didn't want to drive too far."

"I didn't overly rate it a great deal when I was at school but it was just convenient, it was nearby."

Support for learners including feedback and complaints

183

"Just a couple of times we've been put into a different section [room] which was cold."

"The place is really person centred, the way it's set up it's not like a typical college. It's really friendly and the way people are it's really community based. A good mixture of people."

"The good thing is that it's usually on the ground floor so you're not traipsing around up and down stairs...I wouldn't be able to do it [due to mobility impairment], they are considerate like that."

"There's stuff in the paperwork when you enrol...I guess that if I ever did have a complaint I'd read the paperwork."

"You never know what happens to them [evaluation forms], they just go off."

"I think that it's a discreet way to give feedback so that it brings things to the teacher/lecturers' attention."

"It's not a lot really is it, it's just how do you rate the class you're doing."

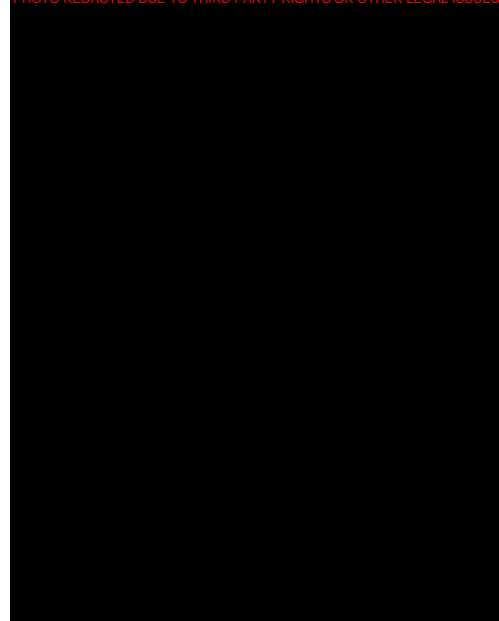
"I think it's a bit much to ask you every week."

"Because it's [given out] a few minutes before the end you just think quickly put that and pass it back."

"If I was really disappointed with it or some aspect of it I'd speak to him [teacher/lecturer] about it."

"I think I'd speak to the tutor and tell him what I thought was going wrong."

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Related Publications

*National Learner Satisfaction Survey:
Highlights from 2003/04*

Publication reference: LSC-P-NAT-050167

*National Learner Satisfaction Survey:
Core Methodology and Guidance*

Publication reference: LSC-P-NAT-050168

*National Learner Satisfaction Survey:
Further Education Report 2003/04*

Publication reference: LSC-P-NAT-050169

*National Learner Satisfaction Survey:
Work Based Learning Report 2003/04*

Publication reference: LSC-P-NAT-050170

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