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Leading learning and skills

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

August 2005

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

You get better prospects when you come out...
a wider choice of places to go.

Getting paid to learn is a bonus!

It's something I enjoy, and so I take an interest in it
and I turn up for my lessons.

I was thinking about a job, for the future and things,
I'd like to own my own salon.

Course content is relevant to work place work.

I went through Connexions, they put me on to E2E.

At school you have to be there, with work-based
learning it's more your choice, you want to be there,
you want to do the work.

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Executive Summary



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 work based learning.

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 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.

There are many reasons to celebrate the findings from this report for work based learning 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.



Introduction

1 In the academic year 2001/02, the LSC launched an annual survey 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 6,111 were from the work based learning sector.

6 The increased number of interviews in NLSS 2003/04 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.

The number of interviews, by type of provision, are listed below.

	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

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 and 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.

9

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

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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.

11

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.

12

Framing local research to match national research will provide local colleges and providers with an opportunity to benchmark their results against the national average. 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.

13

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.

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.

Abbreviations used

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

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

15

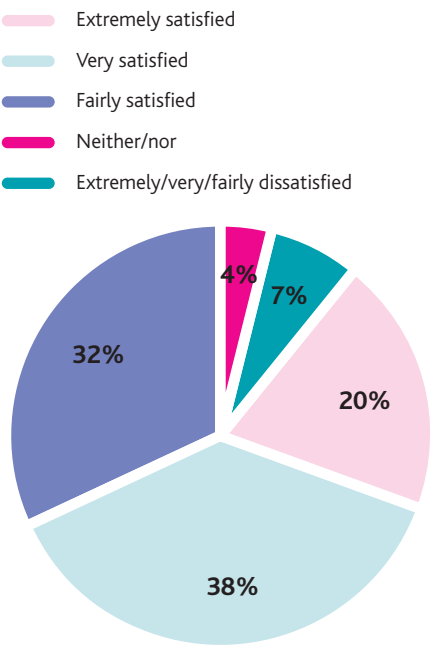
Where there is discussion of data presented in figures and tables in this report, data subsequently mentioned and/or described is directly derived from the figures and tables. Percentages: for clarity and brevity, and in accordance with normal practice, percentages in the figures are rounded to whole numbers. This means, where appropriate, they do not always add up to 100 per cent.

16

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, for course choice, reflect learners' multiple response options and thus will usually add up to far more than 100 per cent. 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 the learning experience for the work based learning sector in 2003/04.



Base: 6,111

17

Key findings from 2003/04:

- a high proportion (90 per cent) of learners in the survey are generally satisfied with their overall learning experience
- over half (58 per cent) of learners are 'very' or 'extremely' satisfied with their overall learning experience
- a small but persistent group (around 7 per cent in 2003/04) of learners remain dissatisfied with their learning experiences.

18

Figure 1 shows that a fifth (20 per cent) of learners in the survey are 'extremely' satisfied with their overall learning experience, nearly two fifths (38 per cent) are 'very' satisfied, and about a third (32 per cent) are 'fairly' satisfied. Fewer than 1 in 10 learners (7 per cent) said they were dissatisfied, and just 4 per cent neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

19

Figure 2 shows the pattern emerging is mixed. The percentage of learners in the

survey who are actually dissatisfied has increased very slightly over the three years, continuing at 6 or 7 per cent. The persistence of this effect may suggest a worrying trend and the reasons for it require more detailed investigation and analysis.

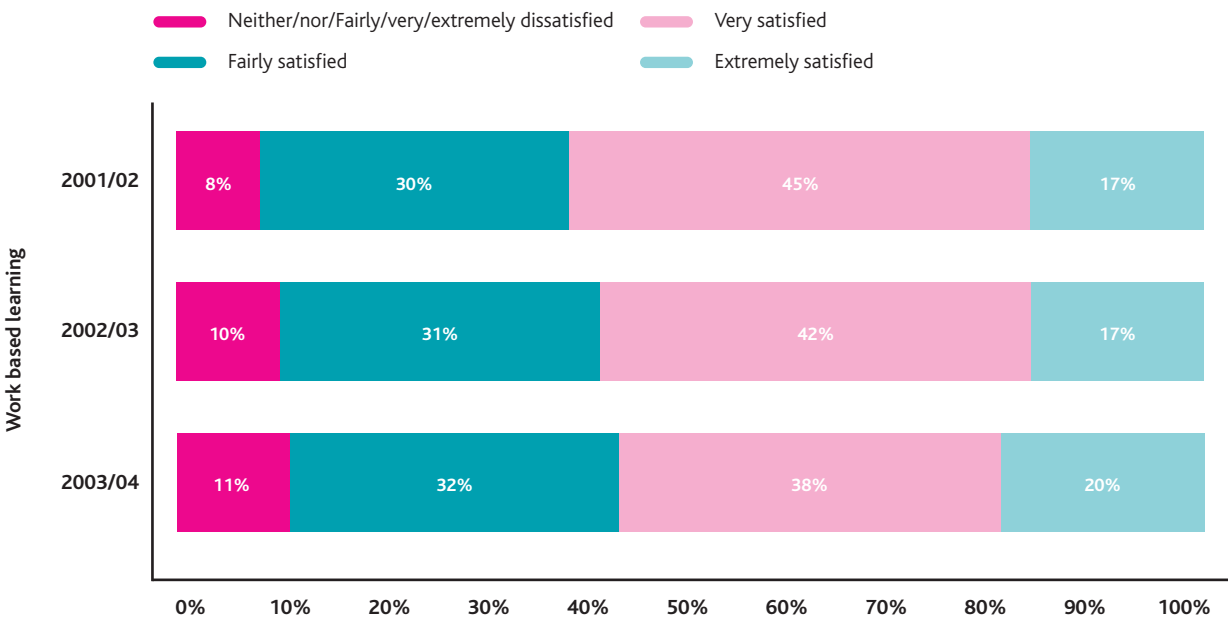
20

The number of learners who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied has also remained similar over the past three years at 3 or 4 per cent of learners surveyed. Again, this seems to be a persistent effect, despite almost trebling the number of learners surveyed in 2003/04 compared with earlier years.

21

The percentage of learners who are 'extremely' satisfied has risen slightly over the past three years from 17 per cent in 2001/02, to 20 per cent in 2003/04; and while pleasing, there is not yet cause for complacency given other results occurring over time.

Figure 2: Overall satisfaction with learning experience, over time.



Base: 2001/02: 2,032; 2002/03: 2,003; 2003/04: 6,111

Table 1: Overall satisfaction with learning experience, by age and gender.

	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25 plus
Base: All respondents	6,111	3,153	2,958	2,072	3,636	403
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Extremely satisfied	20	17	23	19	20	25
Very satisfied	38	36	39	36	39	39
Fairly satisfied	32	35	28	33	31	27
Neither/nor	4	4	3	4	4	3
Fairly/very/extremely dissatisfied	7	8	6	8	7	6

22

The percentage of learners who are 'very' satisfied has declined over three years from 45 per cent in 2001/02, to 38 per cent in 2003/04, a decrease of -7 percentage points. While there is no ready explanation for this trend, it may demand further investigation as it might reflect some degree of polarisation in learners' responses, that is, slightly more in the extremely satisfied, fairly satisfied and dissatisfied categories.

23

In respect of age, gender, ethnicity, disability and type of course or programme, for work based learning the following patterns emerge. Table 1 shows how learner responses differ by age and gender.

Differences by age**24**

Results from 2003/04 suggest that older learners in the survey generally appear to be rather more satisfied with their overall learning experience: for example 25 per cent of the 25 plus age group were 'extremely' satisfied compared with 19 per cent for 16-18 years. Interestingly though, there is

less of a difference (3 percentage points) between the age groups on the 'very' satisfied measure.

25

The proportion of 16-18 year old learners in the survey who are 'extremely' satisfied with their overall learning experience has increased from 15 per cent to 19 per cent over the last three years, very slightly more than for learners as a whole.

Differences by gender**26**

Female learners in the survey appear to be more satisfied with their overall learning experience, with 23 per cent 'extremely' satisfied compared with 17 per cent for male learners, a difference of +6 percentage points. There is also a notable difference with female and male learners reporting they are 'fairly' satisfied with their learning experience (7 percentage points).

27

However, more equal percentages of male learners (36 per cent) and female learners (39 per cent) report they are 'very' satisfied with their learning experience. Similarly, there are no marked levels of dissatisfaction by gender within the 2003/04 survey.

Differences by other factors**28**

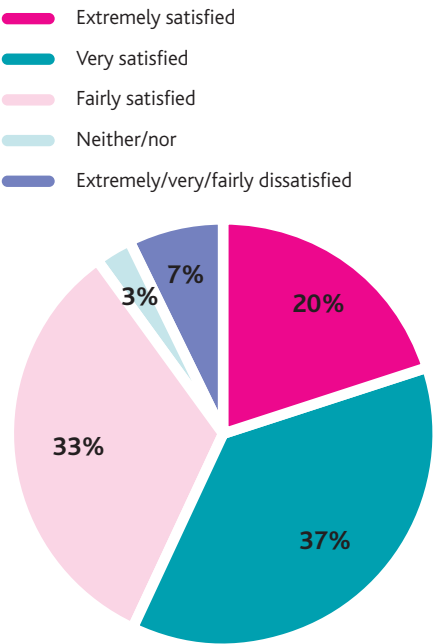
It is interesting to note that in respect of learners with disabilities they are generally more satisfied than those without disabilities: 25 per cent are extremely satisfied with their overall learning experience, compared with 20 per cent of learners without disabilities.

29

The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups who are 'extremely' satisfied with their overall learning experience is 17 per cent. However some 9 per cent of minority ethnic learners in the survey are dissatisfied with their overall learning experience. This is higher than the overall level of learners who are dissatisfied with their learning experience (7 per cent).

Overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching

Figure 3: Overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching/training in the work based learning sector in 2003/04.



Base: 6,111

30
Key findings:

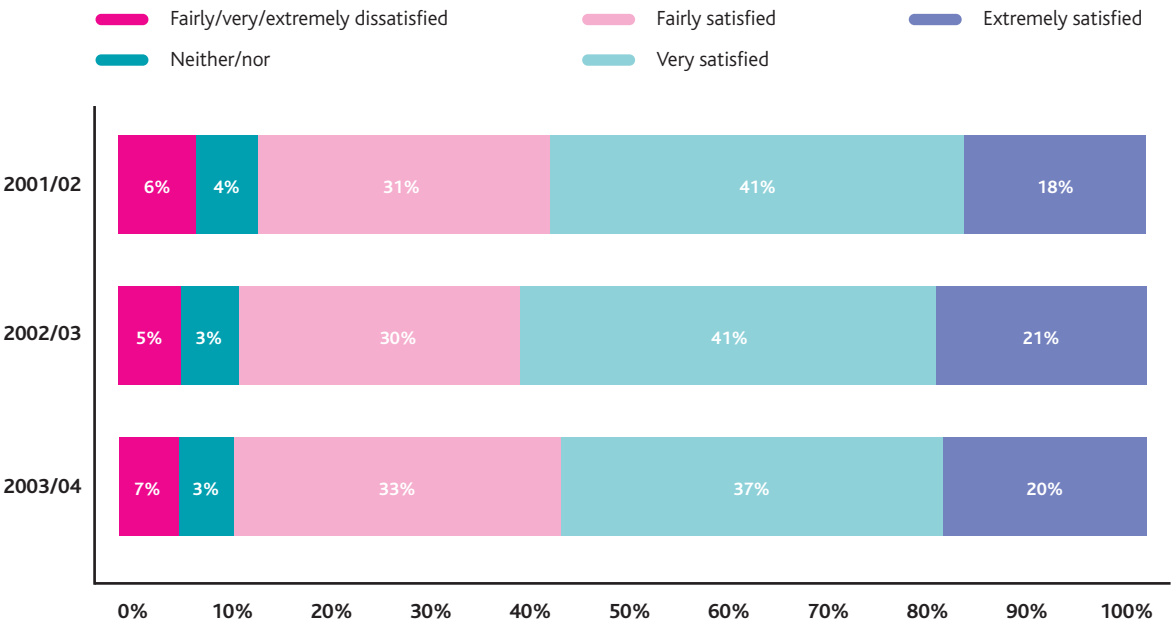
- the percentage of learners in the survey who are satisfied with the overall quality of teaching is high, at 90 per cent
- one fifth (20 per cent) of learners in 2003/04 are 'extremely' satisfied with the overall quality of teaching and nearly two fifths (37 per cent) are 'very' satisfied.

31
The overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching/training is shown in Figure 3. This shows 90 per cent of learners are satisfied with the overall quality of the teaching. Of these learners, 20 per cent are 'extremely' satisfied with the overall quality of teaching and 37 per cent are 'very' satisfied.

32
Figure 4 shows that, when compared over three years, around 90 per cent of learners in the survey are satisfied with the overall quality of the teaching they receive. The number of learners who continue to report high levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching is very encouraging, but providers cannot afford to be less than diligent about improving overall levels of satisfaction and reducing the numbers of learners who are either actually dissatisfied or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied,

33
Compared with 2002/03, there has been an increase in the percentage of learners in the survey who were 'fairly' satisfied with the overall quality of teaching (+3 percentage points). However, there has been a decrease in the percentage of learners saying they are 'extremely' (- 1 percentage point) and 'very' (- 4 percentage points) satisfied when compared with 2002/03 results.

Figure 4: Overall satisfaction with teaching/training in the work based learning sector, over three years.



Base 2001/02: 2,023, 2002/03: 2,003, 2003/04: 6,111.

Table 2 – Overall satisfaction with quality of teaching, by age and gender.

	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25 plus
Base: All respondents	6,111	3,153	2,958	2,072	3,636	403
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Extremely satisfied	20	17	22	19	20	24
Very satisfied	37	36	38	36	37	41
Fairly satisfied	33	36	30	35	33	26
Neither/nor	3	4	3	3	3	4
Fairly/very/extremely dissatisfied	7	7	5	7	7	4

34

As with levels of satisfaction with overall learning experience, older learners are generally more satisfied with the overall quality of teaching, than those in younger age groups, as shown in table 2. There is a difference between 16–18 year olds (19 per cent 'extremely' satisfied) and 25 plus year olds (24 per cent 'extremely' satisfied). However, the category of 'fairly' satisfied shows the most marked difference between age groups with 35 per cent for 16–18 year olds compared with 26 per cent of 25 plus learners. Differences in learners' responses for dissatisfaction are less marked across age groups.

35

There are different levels of overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching across a range of vocational areas. The following results were from learners in the survey indicating they are 'very' or 'extremely' satisfied with the overall quality of teaching they receive in a number of fields, where the results compare with the figure of 57 per cent for all areas of learning combined.

- construction (50 per cent, that is -7 percentage points)
- retail and customer services (69 per cent, that is +12 percentage points).

(It should be noted that there is historically less teaching and training taking place in retail and customer service than in construction and engineering.)

Individual aspects of teaching

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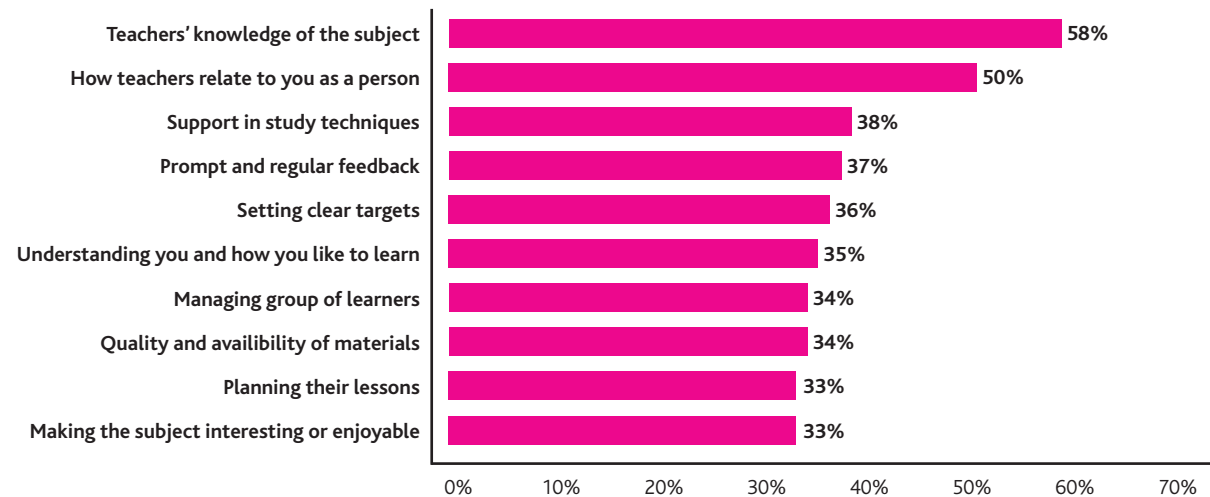
Key question: how would you rate the teachers, tutors or trainers on the following aspects of teaching/training (learners were asked their responses to each of the 10 issues shown in Figure 5.)

37

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 who rated the following aspects of teaching as either 9 out of 10 or 10 out of 10, that is, in the uppermost ranges, are shown in Figure 5 and listed below in summary:

- teachers' knowledge of the subject (58 per cent)
- how well they relate to you as a person (50 per cent)
- the support they give you in study techniques (38 per cent)
- making your subject interesting or enjoyable for you (33 per cent).

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



Base: All respondents rating



38
In 2003/04, the two aspects of teaching and/or training which received the highest percentage of learners in the survey giving a 9 or 10 out of 10 were 'knowing the subject' and 'relating to learners as people'.

39
Perhaps unsurprisingly, in combination learners' responses here indicate the very high levels of importance they attach to well-informed and knowledgeable teaching and/or training staff, and to the capacity of teachers and trainers to relate to them at a human level.

40
A little worryingly, however, is a decrease in percentage points of learners giving 9 or 10 out of 10 for all of the above aspects of teaching and learning compared with 2002/03.

41
While learners surveyed in 2003/04 rated teachers' 'knowledge of the subject' as the aspect of teaching that the highest percentage gave 9 or 10 out of 10, there was a notable decrease, in comparison with learners in the 2002/03 survey rating the same item – a decrease of 5 percentage points over two years.

42
There are quite marked differences in satisfaction ratings for aspects of overall quality of teaching by age and gender, as shown in Table 3.

43
It is quite noticeable that a greater percentage of females learners in the survey, around two fifths (43 per cent), compared with just over a quarter of males (27 per cent) gave a 9 or 10 out of 10 rating for 'understanding you and how you like to learn'. This is a difference of +16 percentage points, and may point to some very interesting differences in patterns of learning by gender and ones which require further investigation and analysis.

Table 3: Ratings for aspects of teaching – the per cent rated as 9 or 10 out of 10 by learners, by age and gender.

	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25 plus
Base: All respondents rating	%	%	%	%	%	%
Knowledge of the subject	58	56	61	58	59	60
How well they relate to you as a person	50	43	57	49	50	58
Managing the group of learners	34	28	41	35	33	41
Making the subject interesting or enjoyable	33	28	39	35	32	38
Planning their lessons	33	27	40	33	33	38
Providing prompt and regular feedback on progress	37	30	44	37	36	42
Understanding you and how you like to learn	35	27	43	36	34	41
Quality and availability of teaching materials	34	29	39	35	32	38
The support they give you, for example, in improving study techniques or time management	38	31	45	39	37	40
Setting clear targets to help learners improve	36	29	43	37	35	40

Base: 6,111

44

Age differences are also apparent in the results of the 2003/04 survey with just on half (49 per cent) of 16–18 year old learners giving a 9 or 10 out of 10 rating for 'how well teachers/trainers relate to you as a person', compared with nearly three fifths (58 per cent) of learners in the 25 plus age group: a difference of 9 percentage points. Again, the causes for this difference are not readily apparent and would bear further, more detailed investigation.

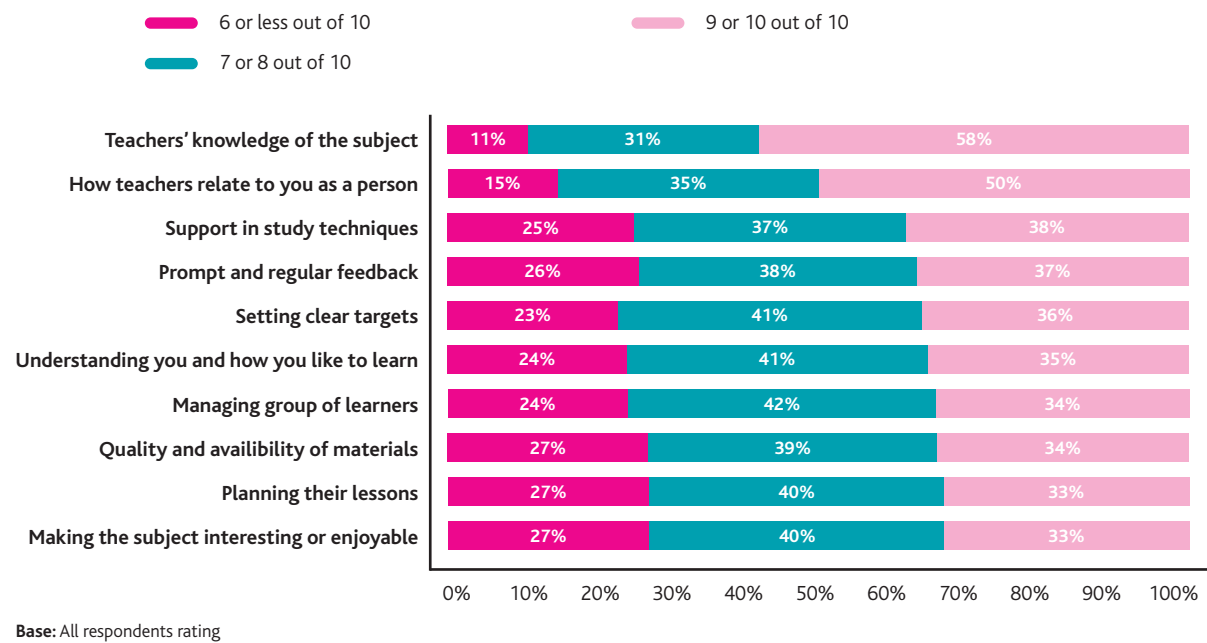
45

Learners were asked to rate 'managing the group of learners', and here the number of 16–18 year olds rating this 9 or 10 out of 10 is just over a third (35 per cent), while two fifths of learners (41 per cent) aged 25 plus rated the item the same way, a difference of 6 percentage points.

46

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

Figure 6: Ratings for aspects of teaching – the per cent rated as 6 or less, 7 or 8 and 9 or 10 out of 10 by learners.



47 For completeness, Figure 6 shows the range of responses to the different aspects of teaching when learners were asked to rate the different aspects on a scale of 1 to 10. These are grouped in the following categories: 6 or less, 7 or 8, 9 or 10.

48 Figure 6 reinforces the notably higher percentage of learners giving a high rating for the aspects of teaching 'teachers' knowledge of the subject' and 'relating to you as a person' compared with the others in the survey.

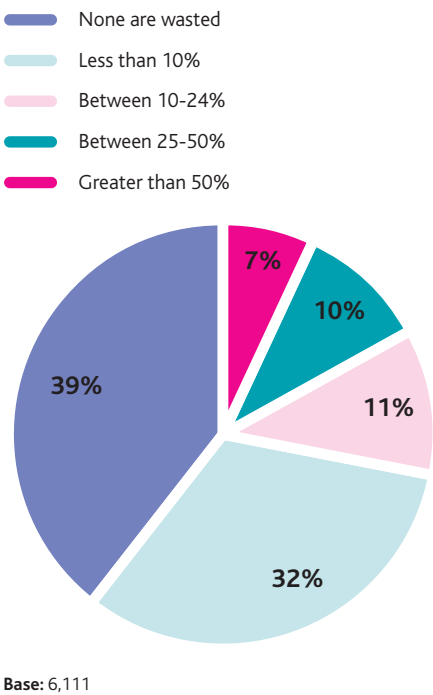
49 Differences in levels of learner satisfaction are also apparent in different fields of study. In the 2003/04 survey nearly three fifths of learners gave 9 or 10 out of 10 for the uppermost items on the rating scale, that is, 'knowledge of the subject' (58 per cent overall) and half (50 per cent) 'how they relate to you as a person'.

50 In comparison, learners in 2003/04 gave the following 9 or 10 out of 10 ratings by field of study for the aspect of teaching 'knowledge of the subject'.

- hairdressing and beauty therapy (66 per cent)
- engineering, technology and manufacturing (57 per cent)
- science and mathematics (55 per cent)
- information and communication technology (54 per cent).

51 Results show hairdressing and beauty therapy above the overall average for learners as a whole (58 per cent), and science and mathematics and information and communication technology slightly below.

Figure 7: Percentage of wasted lesson time.



52

In comparison, learners in 2003/04 gave the following ratings by field of how teachers/trainers relate to you as a person

- retailing, customer service and transportation (62 per cent)
- construction (44 per cent)
- engineering, technology and manufacturing (39 per cent).

53

Here retailing, customer service and transportation is rather better than average (61 per cent compared with 50 per cent), while construction (40 per cent) and engineering, technology and manufacturing (39 per cent) are both well below.

Lesson time lost

54

Given the importance of effective teaching and learning, again in 2003/04 learners were asked to rate the amount of time they felt was wasted. This is shown in figure 7.

55

Interestingly perhaps, nearly two fifths (39 per cent) of learners responded that no time is wasted. This means that three fifths either believe lesson time was wasted (60 per cent) or had no opinion (just 1 per cent).

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

Of those reporting some of their lesson time as wasted, about a third (32 per cent) stated that 'less than 10 per cent are wasted'. Of the learners reporting time was wasted, around 1 in 10 learners (7 per cent) reported that more than a half was wasted, another 1 in 10 (10 per cent) reported that between a quarter and a half of their lesson time was wasted, and a further 1 in 10 (11 per cent) reported that between a tenth and a quarter of their lesson time was wasted.

58

While these are learners' perceptions about the amount of time lost, they do suggest that a potentially large amount of teaching and learning time is not spent usefully or productively overall.

59

Compared with results from 2002/03, results for 2003/04 show an increase in the percentage of learners (+10 percentage points) who consider some lesson time to be wasted. Were this trend to continue it would point to real concerns with the value learners received from lessons, particularly in the amount of time on task learning.

60

There are again some notable differences in learners' ratings for wasted lesson time, across age groups and gender differences, as shown in Table 4. Younger learners consider that more lesson time has been wasted compared with older learners in the survey, and male learners in the survey consider that more lesson time is wasted compared with female learners.

Table 4: Percentage of wasted lesson time, by age and gender.

	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25 plus
Base: All respondents	6,111	3,153	2,958	2,072	3,636	403
	%	%	%	%	%	%
More than a half are wasted	7	7	7	7	7	7
Between a quarter and a half are wasted	10	11	10	12	10	8
10-24% are wasted	11	12	9	12	11	6
Less than 10% are wasted	32	37	26	30	33	23
None are wasted	39	32	46	37	39	50
Don't know	1	1	2	1	1	5

Lesson time lost by gender

61

In the 2003/04 survey, nearly half the female learners (46 per cent) stated that none of their lesson time was wasted, compared with about a third (32 per cent) of male learners: a difference of 14 percentage points. Historically it is well known that females tend to enrol very largely in particular programmes, for example, hairdressing and beauty therapy, social welfare and care, and not in construction, engineering and the like in which males tend to be more heavily enrolled. It is possible that differences in perceptions about time wasted by gender are related to fields of study and thus have wider implications than might be at first thought.

62

Other gender related differences are apparent in the proportions of time wasted where for under 10 per cent of lesson time lost, about a quarter (26 per cent) of female learners responded, compared with nearly two fifths (37 per cent of males): a difference of 11 percentage points.

63

Differences between learners by gender for other categories of time lost, that is 10–24 per cent, between a quarter and a half, and more than a half of lesson time, are less marked.

Lesson time lost by age

64

In response to the question how much lesson time is lost due to wastage, (allowing for rounding) learners in each age group 16–18, 19–24 and 25 plus, all responded identically (that is, 7 per cent of learners) in respect of greater than 50 per cent of lesson time being wasted.

65

In respect of time wasted at the level of 10–24 per cent of lesson time, and 25–50 per cent of lesson time, there are noticeable similarities between the responses from learners aged 16–18 and those aged 19–24, both at around 1 in 10 learners in each response category, compared with the 25 plus age group which had slight but marked differences, indicating less lesson time was wasted overall.

66

Again there are similarities in the patterns of younger learners, that is, 16–18 year olds and 19–24 year olds, in terms of less than 10 per cent of lesson time being wasted with around one in three (30 and 33 per cent respectively) compared with slightly less than a quarter (23 per cent) of 25 plus learners. This pattern also exists for the learners responding 'no lesson time is wasted' where nearly two fifths (37 and 39 per cent respectively) of younger learners, 16–18 year olds and 19–24 year olds, compared with half (50 per cent) of 25 plus learners respond that no lesson time is wasted. These different results between age groups are quite marked and may point to quite different perceptions about what constitutes time wasting when comparing learners of different age groups.

67

Of slightly less import, only 1 in 20 (5 per cent) of 25 plus learners and just 1 per cent of 16–18 year olds, and 19–24 year olds said they did not know when asked about time lost due to wastage.

Lesson time lost by field of study

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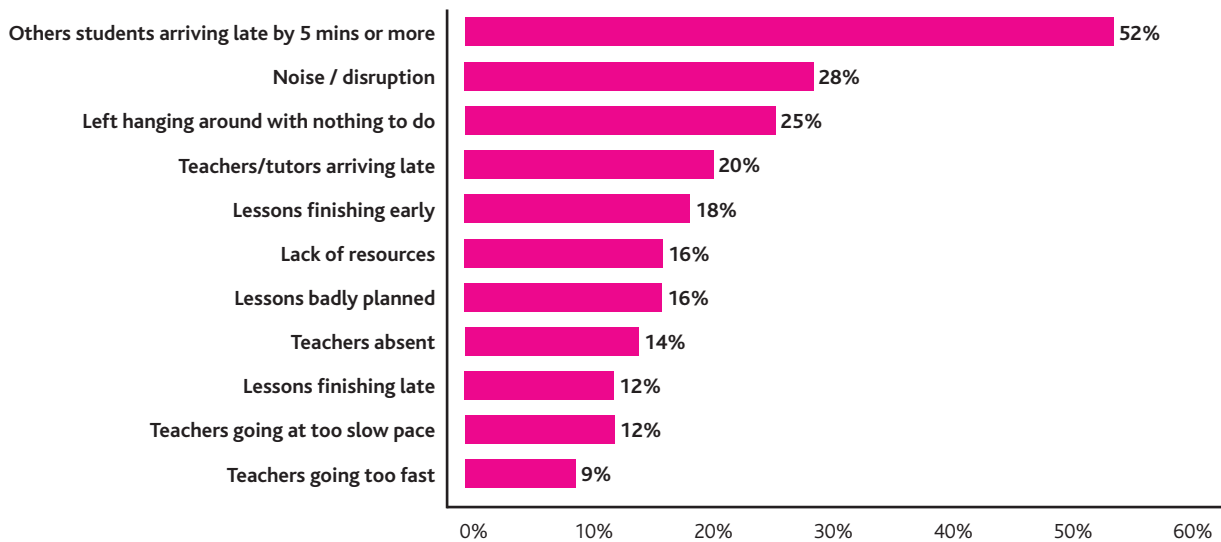
As noted above, nearly two fifths (39 per cent) of learners in the 2003/04 survey commented that no lesson time was lost due to wastage, but differences do emerge in learners' views by area of learning:

- over half (55 per cent) the learners in retailing, customer service and transportation reported time lost – a difference of +16 percentage points compared to all areas of learning
- one third (33 per cent) of learners in information and communication reported time lost – a difference of –6 percentage points
- less than a third (29 per cent) of learners in construction reported time lost – a difference of –10 percentage points
- less than a third (28 per cent) of learners in engineering, technology and manufacturing reported time lost – a difference of –11 percentage points.

69

Overall of course, both the LSC and providers need to be concerned about questions attending learners' perceptions that potentially valuable lesson time is lost due to wastage, and in some cases this is regarded as a very large amount.

Figure 8: Issues experienced on programme



Base: 6,111

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.

Learners' experiences

70

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 programme. The percentage of learners who responded that they encountered the following situations on a 'fairly regular basis' is shown in detail by Figure 8 and summarised below:

- other learners arriving late by five minutes of more (52 per cent)
- other learners making a noise and disrupting the class (28 per cent)
- being left hanging around with nothing to do (25 per cent)
- teachers /tutors arriving late (20 per cent).

71

It is interesting that the two issues which least concerned learners, that is, mentioned by the lowest percentage in the survey, were teachers going too fast, and in contrast teachers going too slowly. Though the overall situation is far from ideal, with around 1 in 10 learners (9 per cent and 12 per cent respectively) reporting concerns in these areas.



Learners’ experiences by field of study

72
As with other learner perceptions reported in the 2003/04 survey, differences emerge in learners’ responses when considered by the field of study within which they were working.

73
As noted earlier, about 1 in 10 (12 per cent) of learners noted the issue teachers going too slowly. This compares with:

- almost a quarter of learners (23 per cent) for science and mathematics
- less than a fifth (16 per cent) for information and communication technology
- about 1 in 10 learners (8 per cent) for retailing, customer service and transportation.

74
The issue of teachers going too fast was mentioned by 9 per cent of learners overall. For different areas of learning this compares with:

- 13 per cent of learners for engineering, technology and manufacturing
- 10 per cent of learners for information and communication technology
- 10 per cent of learners for science and mathematics
- 5 per cent of learners for retailing, customer service and transportation.

75
Learners in the 2003/04 survey were asked a question addressing a lack of resources/poor equipment by programme of learning. Overall learner responses indicated this issue arose with less than a fifth (16 per cent) of learners in the survey and this compares with:

- over a quarter of learners in construction (26 per cent)
- almost a quarter of learners (22 per cent) for English languages and communication
- almost a fifth (19 per cent) of learners engineering, technology and manufacturing
- about 1 in 10 (9 per cent) of learners in retailing, customer service and transportation.

Table 5: How do you feel about the feedback on how you are doing from your teachers/tutors?

	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25 plus
Base: All respondents	6,111	3,153	2,958	2,072	3,636	403
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Motivating	74	70	77	75	73	75
No effect either way	20	23	16	19	21	15
Demotivating	4	4	4	4	4	5

Feedback from teachers/tutors

76

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.

77

In 2003/04, learners were asked to rate the extent to which they received feedback from their teachers and tutors, with overall responses shown in Table 5 below.

78

It is encouraging that the data in Table 5 shows almost three quarters (74 per cent) of learners in the 2003/04 survey found the feedback they received from teachers and tutors was motivating, a result broadly consistent with the results of the two earlier surveys. It is also encouraging to note the low number (4 per cent) of learners expressing the view that teacher/tutor feedback was de-motivating. Though perhaps somewhat worryingly, one fifth (20 per cent) of learners also reported that they found feedback to have no effect.

Learners' experiences by gender

79

In respect of learner's experiences, some notable differences emerge when examined by gender. For example nearly four fifths (77 per cent) of female learners in the 2003/04 survey report being motivated by teacher or tutor feedback, compared with just over two thirds (70 per cent) of male learners, a difference of 7 percentage points.

80

A difference of 7 percentage points persists in learners' responses about feedback having no effect, where fewer than a fifth (16 per cent) of females report this response, compared with nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of male learners. Both female and male learners reported identical levels of de-motivation (4 per cent) from teacher and/or tutor feedback.

Learners' experiences by age

81

It is interesting to note quite marked similarity across each of the three age groups used in the 2003/04 survey, for 16–18, 19–24 and 25 plus learners, in their responses to the motivating effect of teacher and/or tutor feedback. In each case, some three quarters of learners reported being motivated by teacher and/or tutor feedback.

82

There are only small differences between learner responses about teacher and/or tutor feedback having no effect, with around one fifth of 16–18 year olds (19 per cent) and 19–24 year olds (21 per cent) and 15 per cent of 25 plus learners reporting this result.

83

Differences by age in respect of whether teacher and/or tutor feedback was de-motivating were very slight indeed, with learners in each age cohort responding similarly (around 4 or 5 per cent respectively).

Learners' experiences by ethnicity

84

Differences in learners' perceptions by ethnicity suggest that a slightly smaller percentage of those from minority ethnic backgrounds feel that teacher and/or tutor feedback is motivating (–3 percentage points) when compared with learners' responses overall.

Information and guidance prior to entry

85
As with earlier surveys, that for 2003/04 sought information about why learners chose their courses, how advice was sought and its value to the learner.

- 86**
Key findings:
- three fifths (60 per cent) of learners in the 2003/04 survey used their employers as a source of advice
 - more learners aged 16 – 18 are seeking advice from formal routes than in previous surveys.

Factors influencing choice of course

87
It is apparent that in the 2003/04 survey, the most common reason given by over 9 out of 10 learners (95 per cent) for enrolling in a particular programme of study was to

gain qualifications. The next most common reason was to advance my skills and knowledge in this area, a response given by another 9 out of 10 (92 per cent) learners. These results are shown in Figure 9.

88
It seems axiomatic that gaining qualifications closely related to learners' current or future working lives will be vital for success in work based learning. So it is perhaps unsurprising, but nonetheless encouraging, to see this response rate so high among learners in the 2003/04 survey, when compared with all other reasons for learning.

89
A further response which appears to require further, more detailed investigation arises from the number of learners' saying they chose a course because it was relevant to their job, where the percentage of responses at nearly 9 out of 10 learners (87 per cent) was still high, but seemingly somewhat at odds with learners' desires to gain

qualifications (95 per cent) and of the expected very strong link between courses of study and learners' working lives.

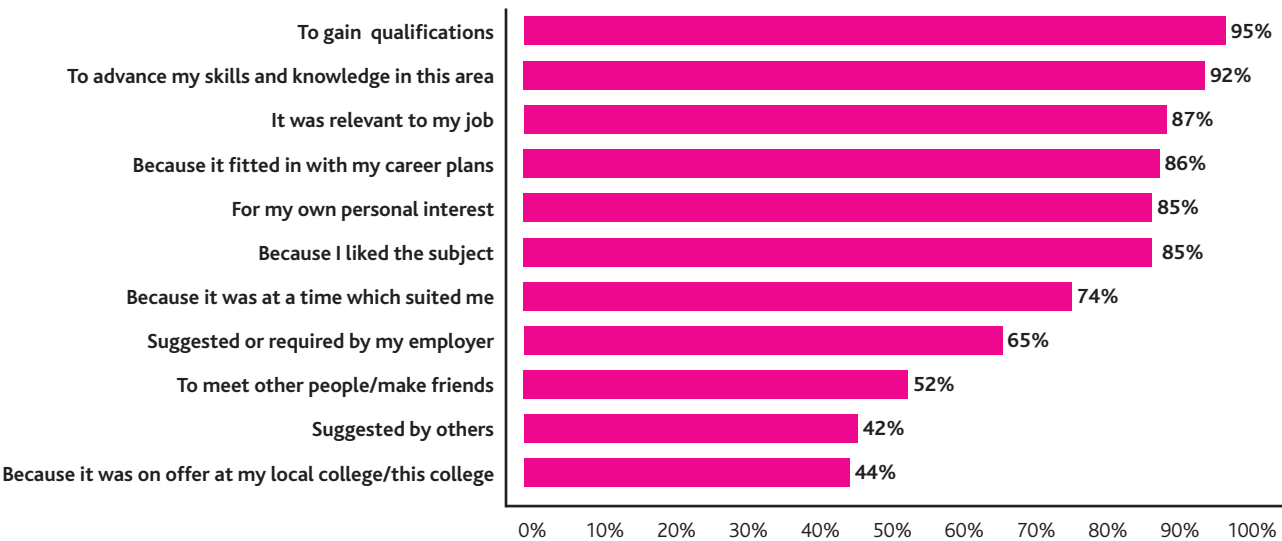
Full details of learners' responses by age and gender are shown in Table 6.

Differences by age

90
As noted earlier, gaining qualifications was the single largest response for learners in the 2003/04 survey, with over 9 out of 10 learners responding positively to this question, and quite small differences between learners in different age groups (16–18 year olds 95 per cent, 19–24 year olds 96 per cent, and 25 plus learners 90 per cent).

91
A similar pattern is observed in respect of learners' responses to the question about advancing skills and knowledge with again 9 out of 10 learners in the 2003/04 survey

Figure 9: Factors influencing learners' choice of courses and programmes 2003/04.



Base: 2,046

Note: the questions used 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.

Table 6: Factors influencing choice of course, by age and gender

	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25 plus
Base: All respondents	2,046	1,043	1,003	761	1,171	114
	%	%	%	%	%	%
To gain qualifications	95	95	95	95	96	90
To advance my skills and knowledge in this area	92	93	92	92	93	92
For my own personal interest	85	83	88	89	83	85
Because I like the subject	85	85	84	88	84	74
Because it fitted in with my future career plans	86	84	88	85	87	87
It was relevant to my job	87	88	87	83	90	87
Because it was at a time that suited me	74	72	75	73	74	79
To meet other people/make new friends	52	53	52	65	47	26
Suggested or required by employer	65	68	62	63	67	64
Suggested by others	45	46	44	52	41	37
Because it was on offer at my local college/this college	44	49	38	49	42	34

rating this item highly (16–18 year olds: 92 per cent, 19–24 year olds: 93 per cent, and 25 plus learners also 92 per cent).

92

Overall, there are similar patterns too in learners' responses to employers suggesting or requiring them to undertake particular courses and/or programmes of study, with around two thirds of all learners in each age group indicating this was the case.

93

Perhaps the most noticeable difference in learners' responses arises in respect of meeting new people and making new friends, where nearly two thirds (65 per cent) of 16–18 year olds responded positively to this, compared with around half (47 per cent) of 19–24 year olds, and about a quarter (26 per cent) of learners aged 25 plus.

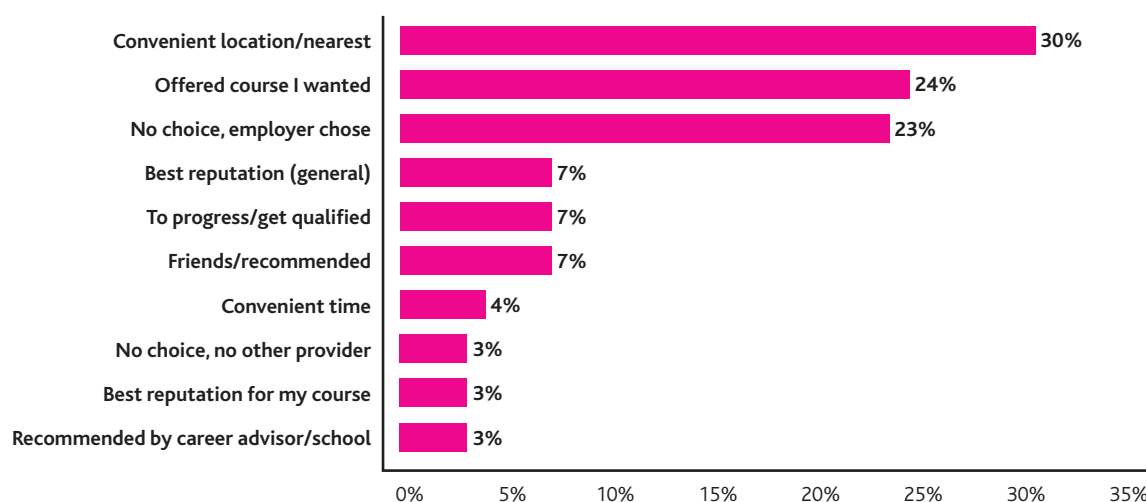
94

Another noticeable difference arises in learners' choice of course when considering location. Around half (49 per cent) of learners aged 16–18 indicated locality as the reason that a course on offer at a local college/provider was chosen, compared with just over two fifths (42 per cent) of 19–24 year olds, and just over one third (34 per cent) of learners aged 25 plus.



MARPLES

Figure 10: Factors influencing choice of provider 2003/04.



Base: 2,046

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.

Differences by gender

95

There were very slight differences between female and male learners in respect of their responses about gaining qualifications over 9 out of 10 for both (95 per cent for each group) and advancing skills and knowledge (93 and 92 per cent respectively), suggesting that both groups saw these issues as almost equally important.

96

Only very slight differences are apparent between male and female learners in the 2003/04 survey in respect of courses or programmes suggested or required by employers, with just over half of those surveyed responding to this item (females 62 per cent and males 68 males per cent).

97

But a noticeable difference arises in learners' choice of course when considering location. Around two fifths (38 per cent) of female learners indicated the reason that a course on offer at a local college/provider, compared with around half (49 per cent) of male learners in the survey, a difference of 11 percentage points. Again this is an issue which may benefit from further investigation as it is not currently possible to attribute reasons for this difference and it perhaps runs counter to expectation.

Factors influencing choice of provider

Learner choices

98

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.

99

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

- convenience of location (30 per cent)
- offered course I wanted (24 per cent)
- no choice – employer chose (23 per cent).

Table 7: What are your main reasons for deciding to attend your provider/place of learning? by age and gender.

	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25 plus
Base: All respondents	2,046	1,043	1,003	761	1,171	114
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Convenient location/nearest	30	35	26	33	30	20
Offered course I wanted	24	25	24	23	25	20
Had no choice – employer chose	23	24	22	15	26	40
Has best reputation (general)	7	8	7	10	6	6
To progress/ get qualified/ improve myself	7	6	7	7	6	9
Friends were going there/ friend recommended	7	7	7	9	6	2
Offered a course at convenient times for me	4	3	5	4	3	9
Had no choice – no other providers in this area	3	3	3	3	3	2
Has best reputation for my course	3	4	2	4	3	1
Recommended by career advisor/school	3	3	3	3	3	1

100

It is noticeable from results obtaining for 2003/04 that around one fifth (23 per cent) of learners went to a provider or place of learning chosen by their employer. Convenience of location does show a slight change (–3 percentage points) when compared with results from 2002/03.

101

Interestingly, learners in the 2003/04 survey did not rank very highly at all the reputation of providers or places of learning generally, with only 7 per cent of learners indicating this as a reason for their choice, or for providers with a reputation for a particular field of study, with only 3 per cent of learners advancing this as a reason.

Differences by age**102**

While around a third overall (30 per cent) of learners in 2003/04 indicated convenience of location as a reason for selection, this is less well marked among 25 plus learners with a fifth (20 per cent) of them indicating this as a reason for provider choice.

Full details of choice of provider, by age and gender are shown in Table 7.

103

Interestingly, differences in learners are more starkly apparent when examining provider selection and employer choice, that is, where the learner attends a provider selected by their employer. Here, among 16–18 year old learners, less than a fifth (15 per cent) enrolled at a provider chosen by their employer. For 19–24 year old learners in the survey just over a quarter (26 per cent) enrolled at a provider chosen by their employer, while for learners aged 25 plus, two fifths (40 per cent) enrolled at a provider chosen by their employer.

Differences by gender**104**

There are a number of differences between the responses of female and male learners in the 2003/04 survey, although most are quite small. The largest example is that slightly more than a quarter (26 per cent) of female learners cited the convenience of their provider compared with just over a third (35 per cent) of male learners.

105

In other aspects of this broad issue in the 2003/04 survey, differences in female and male learner responses are of the order 1 or 2 percentage points, suggesting that learners in the survey have very similar views which are not characterised by gender differences.

Sources of pre-entry advice and guidance**106**

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. Thus it follows that: can information and guidance given to learners before entry to work based learning be enhanced to improve learner satisfaction?

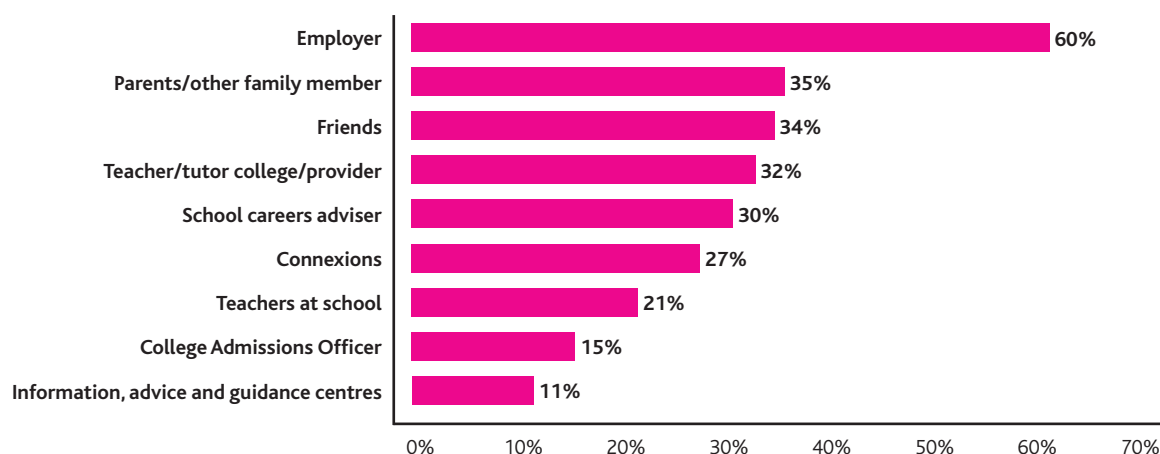
Sources of pre-entry advice**107**

To ascertain where and how learners obtained advice and guidance, those participating in the 2003/04 survey were asked if they received information from any of the sources shown in Figure 11 below. There were no limits on the number of sources that learners could state they had used.

108

In 2003/04, learners' responses strongly suggested that their employers were the single greatest source of pre-entry advice and guidance about courses and programmes, with three fifths (60 per cent) indicating this was so. This is an increase of 5 percentage points over responses from 2002/03. In some ways this seems to accord with an expectation that employers will be quite well informed about course provision, and be able to pass this on to learners who were also employees.

Figure 11: Sources of pre-entry advice for learners 2003/04.



Base: 2,046

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.

Table 8: Sources of pre-entry advice, by age and gender.

	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25 plus
Base: All respondents	2,046	1,043	1,003	761	1,171	114
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Employer	60	61	60	52	65	68
Parents or other family members	35	40	31	49	30	5
Friends	34	33	35	40	32	17
Teachers/tutors at college/provider	32	35	29	35	31	23
School careers advisor	30	32	27	46	21	5
Advisor at Connexions	27	29	25	43	19	5
Teachers at school	21	22	20	31	17	5
College admissions office	15	18	12	16	15	11
Advisor at an information and guidance centre	11	11	10	11	11	4

109

As might be expected, other sources of advice and guidance for around a third of learners in the survey stemmed from families (35 per cent) and peers (34 per cent) and school careers advisers (30 per cent). Although it should be noted that there is a recorded increase of +6 percentage points in learners using advice from families compared with those in the 2002/03 survey.

110

While learner responses suggesting Connexions as a source of advice – about a quarter (27 per cent) of learners in the 2003/04 survey – remain somewhat below the others noted above, there has been a 7 percentage point increase in this result compared with 2002/03, suggesting that Connexions is becoming more widely recognised and used by learners.

Differences by age**111**

Age related differences are apparent for learners for whom the employer is the major source of advice. Overall, three fifths (60 per cent) of learners report their employers as providing advice and guidance, compared with about half (52 per cent) of 16–18 year olds, very nearly two thirds (65 per cent) of 19–24 year olds, and over two thirds (68 per cent) of learners aged 25 plus.

112

In some contrast, about a third (35 per cent) of learners report families as a major source of advice compared with about half (49 per cent) of 16–18 year olds, about a third (30 per cent) of 19–24 year olds, and only 1 in 20 (5 per cent) of learners aged 25 plus. This suggests that the influence of families on courses and providers diminishes with age, and apparently quite quickly.

113

The influence of friends/peers on course and provider choice also appears to reduce quite rapidly with the age of learners. Overall, about a third (34 per cent) of learners report this group as a source of advice and guidance, compared with two fifths (40 per cent) of 16–18 year olds, about a third (32 per cent) of 19–24 year olds, and less than a fifth (17 per cent) of learners aged 25 plus.

114

Some differences are also apparent for learners using teachers and/or tutors at their college or provider as sources of advice and guidance. For example, around a third (35 per cent) of 16–18 year olds report this result, compared with around a third (31 per cent) of 19–24 year olds, and slightly less than a quarter (23 per cent) of learners aged 25 plus.

115

More generally, and as might be expected, larger numbers of younger learners reported that they sought advice and guidance from school careers advisers, Connexions and school teachers, with the highest ratings among 16–18 year old learners in the 2003/04 survey, rather reduced ratings for 19–24 year olds, and low ratings for learners aged 25 plus.

116

For 16–18 year old learners in the 2003/04 survey, the use of Connexions as a source of advice and/or guidance increased by 13 percentage points compared with 2002/03. Using employers for this purpose increased by 6 percentage points to 52 per cent compared with 2002/03 results for this age group, and using friends/peers increased by a similar margin, by 5 per cent to 40 per cent compared with 2002/03 results.

Differences by gender**117**

In 2003/04, learners' overall responses strongly suggested that their employers were the single greatest source of pre-entry advice and guidance about courses and programmes, with three fifths (60 per cent) indicating this was so. Here there are the slightest gender related differences with 60 per cent of females and 61 per cent of males reporting employers as a source of advice and/or guidance.

Data from learners' responses in 2003/04 suggest that female learners were less likely to use their families as sources of advice and/or guidance – around a third (31 per cent) compared with two fifths (40 per cent) of males.

118

Other differences between female and male learners in the 2003/04 survey appear generally small, with similar percentages recording responses for each of the other items. Save that around a fifth (18 per cent) of male learners report they are likely to use a college admissions officer as a source of advice and/or guidance compared with just over 1 in 10 (12 per cent) of females in the survey.

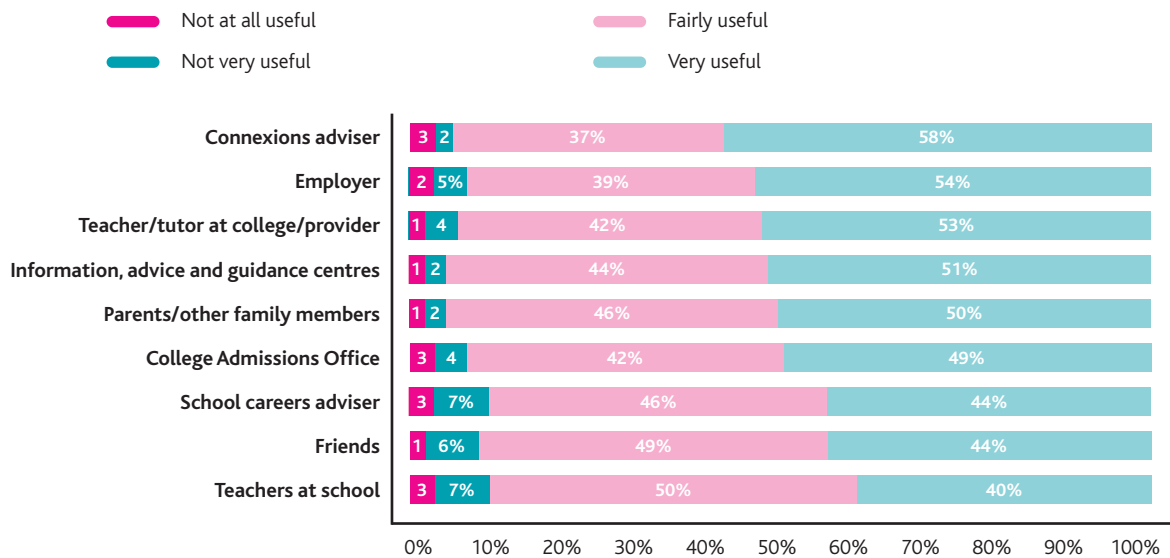
Differences by ethnicity**119**

In comparison with learners overall, the majority of whom (60 per cent) in 2003/04 report their employers as the principal source of advice and guidance about courses, about half that number (32 per cent) of minority ethnic learners identified employers in this way.

120

It is interesting perhaps, that nearly half (47 per cent) of minority ethnic learners in the 2003/04 survey reported using Connexions as a source of advice compared with just over a quarter (27 per cent) of all learners in the survey. This may suggest that Connexions is generally more widely recognised and used by minority ethnic learners.

Figure 12: How do you rate the usefulness of the following advice received?



Base: Respondents using advice source
Note: If learners cited more than two sources of advice used, they were then asked the usefulness of two sources selected at random.

Usefulness of advice received

121
As noted above, learners have access to a range of sources of advice about courses and programmes in work based learning. Of the range of sources available to learners in the 2003/04 survey, Figure 12 shows how useful learners found the advice they received.

122
It seems interesting, given earlier findings that Connexions was not widely used by learners overall, that of learners who did use Connexions services nearly three fifths (58 per cent) rated the advice they received as very useful.

123
More than a half (54 per cent) of learners in the 2003/04 survey judged pre-entry advice received from employers to be very useful. And as noted elsewhere, it is noted that employers were significantly the highest source of advice used by learners.

124
Half (50 per cent) of the learners in the 2003/04 survey reported that pre-entry advice and guidance from their families was very useful, compared with fewer than half (44 per cent) of learners who rated advice and guidance from friends and peers very useful.

125
It may also be of interest that around 1 in 10 (between 7 and 10 per cent) learners in 2003/04 reported that they found college admissions offices, school careers advisers, school teachers and friends as not at all useful/not very useful. In its current form the survey provides no further information about learners’ opinions so these issues may need further investigation.

Support for learners

126

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 guidance information.

127

In terms of its importance to learners, 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.

128

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.

129

Key findings from 2003/04 include:

- just over half (51 per cent) of learners in the survey encountered no difficulties of any kind during their learning programme
- slightly more than 1 in 10 (13 per cent) of learners made a complaint to their employer about their training
- one in three learners who complained were satisfied with the outcome of their complaint.

Management of learning

130

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

131

The percentage of learners rating items as either 9 out of 10, or 10 out of 10, that is, in the uppermost ranges, is shown in figure 13 below.

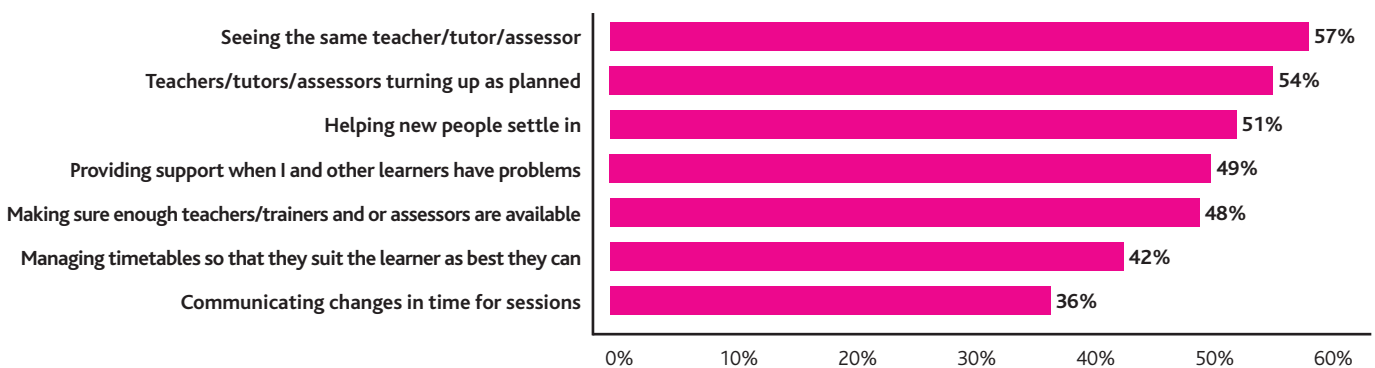
132

For many learners in the 2003/04 survey, management of the issue 'seeing the same teachers/tutors' throughout was ranked most highly, with over half (57 per cent) of those surveyed rating the management of these issues 9 or 10 out of 10.

133

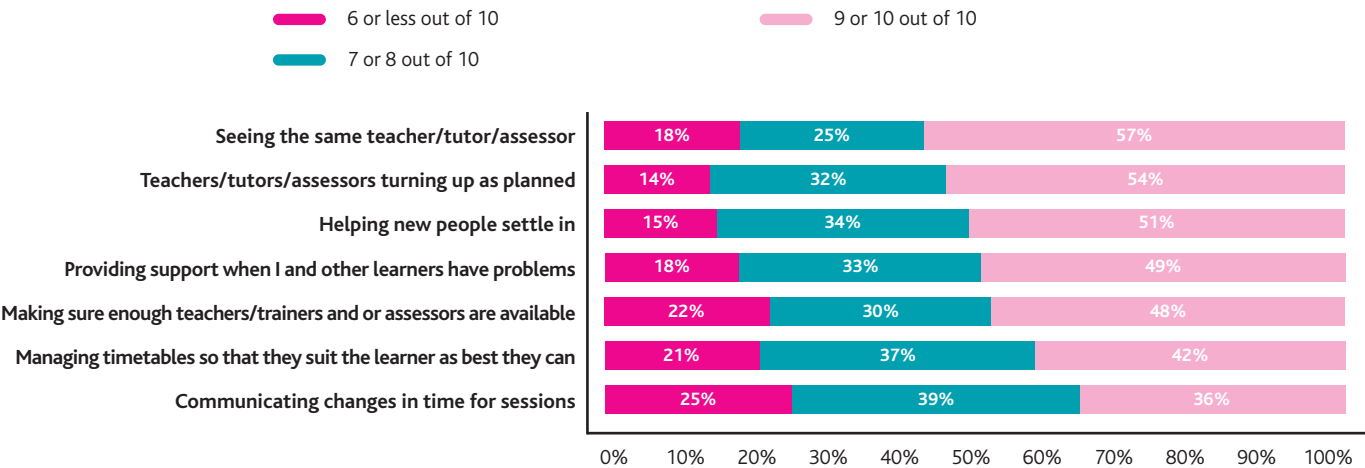
Management of other issues attracting over half the learners surveyed to give a rating of 9 or 10 out of 10 were 'teachers/tutors/assessors turning up as planned' (54 per cent) and 'helping new people settle in' (51 per cent).

Figure 13: The percentage of learners awarding a 9 or 10 out of 10 for the management of administrative issues experienced on their course.



Base: All respondents rating

Figure 14: The percentage of learners awarding 6 or less, 7 or 8 and 9 or 10 out of 10 for the management of administrative issues experienced on their course.



Base: All respondents rating

134

Management of the issue which received lower learner ratings, that is, managing timetables so they suit learner needs, was reported by around two fifths (42 per cent) of learners and just over a third (36 per cent) of learners gave a 9 or 10 out of 10 to 'communicating changes in times for sessions'.

135

In Figure 14 we show all ratings for the management of the above issues, grouped in categories 6 or less, 7 or 8 and 9 or 10 out of 10.

136

Interestingly management of the issue 'communicating changes in times for sessions' received the highest percentage of learners (25 per cent) rating it below 6 for this issue and it also received the lowest percentage of learners rating it 9 or 10 out of 10.

Health and safety guidance

137

Given the importance of occupational health and safety to learners and to colleges and providers more generally, learners were asked if they were informed about certain health and safety issues.

138

The percentage of learners in the 2003/04 survey who responded when asked if they had been informed about the following issues is:

- nearly 9 out of 10 (89 per cent) learners noted emergency arrangements for fire
- nearly 9 out of 10 (87 per cent) learners noted emergency arrangements for first aid and how to report an accident
- more than 8 out of 10 learners (85 per cent) noted who to ask for any health and safety advice or instructions
- more than 8 out of 10 learners (86 per cent) noted any dangers involved with your training and how to work safely.

139

It is perhaps unsurprising that there are differences between learners' responses to occupational health and safety issues related to the areas in which they are learning. Responses to these health and safety questions by area of learning are shown in Table 9.

140

In the 2003/04 survey, the highest percentage of learners who say they have been informed about health and safety issues is in hairdressing and beauty therapy for three out of the four categories.

141

It might be expected that learners' responses would show some variation between broadly practical, and broadly classroom based learning experiences, which may place quite different emphases on occupational health and safety issues. So it seems to be a matter of concern that well over 1 in 10 (14 per cent) of learners in the survey in engineering, technology and manufacturing did not feel they were adequately informed about who they should ask for any health and safety advice.

Table 9: The percentage of learners who say they have been informed about the health and safety issues, by area of learning.

Area of Learning (sample base)	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	Yes %	Yes %	Yes %	Yes %
Construction/Land Based Provision * (266)	90	90	90	87
Engineering, Technology and Manufacturing (386)	90	90	90	86
Business administration, Management and Professional (385)	90	87	85	84
ICT (73)	88	85	81	86
Retailing, Customer Service and Transportation (209)	87	83	82	86
Hospitality, Sports, Leisure and Travel (125)	89	90	86	88
Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy (154)	95	91	90	90
Health, Social Care and Public Services (355)	85	82	79	83

N.B. Other areas of learning not included due to small base sizes.

* Construction/Land Based Provision results combined due to base size.

142

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.

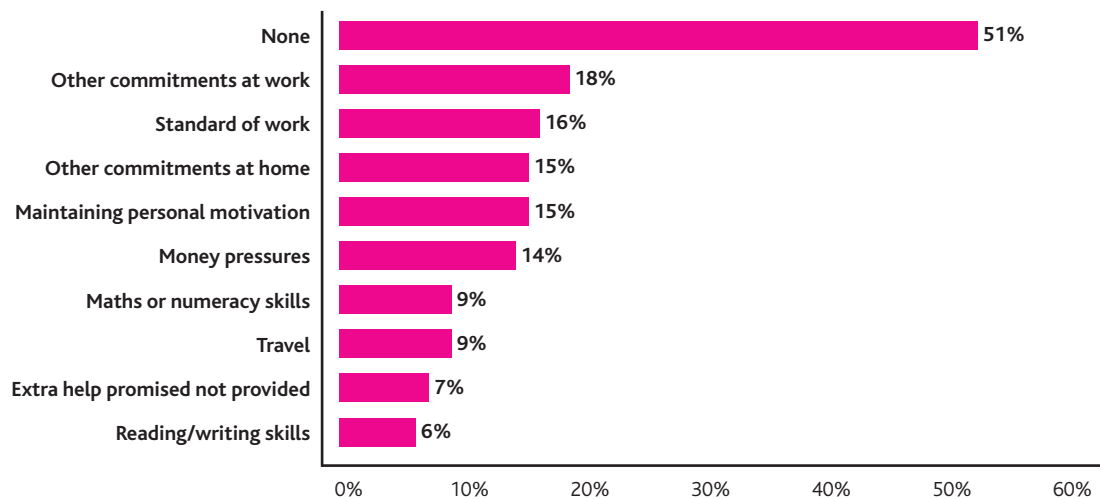
143

Providers may be aware that the LSC has available a number of resources dealing specifically with occupational health and safety issues, which include:

- safe learner website – a joint good practice website with the Association of College and Association of Learning Providers 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 (0800 800 4000)
- 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 (available from LSC helpdesk).

Figure 15: Since you started the course have you had any problems with the following?



Base: 2,028
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.

144
The evidence obtaining from the 2003/04 survey suggests that all providers and employers 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.

145
Further, colleges and employers might consider whether the LSC's safelearner guidance should be used to inform good practice.

Difficulties encountered

146
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. This relates to the key question: How can we improve the way, we identify, support and retain learners who may experience difficulties?

147
In 2003/04, just over half (51 per cent) of learners had experienced no problems since starting their courses. Of learners who did experience problems, these are listed as percentages in Figure 15.

- 148**
The five difficulties, mentioned by the highest percentage of learners are:
- about a fifth (18 per cent) of learners noted managing to fit course commitments in with 'other commitments at work'
 - slightly fewer (16 per cent) noted managing to keep up with the 'standard of work' required
 - a similar level (15 per cent) obtains for managing to fit course commitments in with 'other commitments at home'
 - similarly the number (15 per cent) of learners noting 'maintaining personal motivation'
 - a further number (14 per cent) report dealing with 'money pressures'.

Table 10: Have you had any problems with the following? by age and gender.

	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25 plus
Base: All respondents	2,028	1,043	985	693	1,203	132
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Managing to fit course commitments in with other commitments at home	15	13	16	11	16	23
Managing to fit course commitments in with other commitments at work	18	17	20	11	21	25
Maintaining your personal motivation	15	15	15	14	16	15
Managing to keep up with the standard of work required	16	17	15	15	16	20
Travel to college/training centre	9	11	8	13	8	5
Dealing with money pressures	14	14	13	16	12	12
Reading/ writing skills	6	7	5	6	6	11
Extra help you were promised not being provided	7	7	7	9	6	8
Maths or numeracy skills	9	8	10	12	8	3

149

Around 1 in 20 learners surveyed (6 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 to investigate where and why learners are experiencing difficulties and what might be done to alleviate these.

Responses shown in Table 10 reflect learners' views by age group and gender.

Table 11: Have you sought advice or help from your provider on any of these matters?

	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25 plus
Base: All respondents experiencing problems	997	513	484	338	590	69
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	31	28	33	34	30	19
No	69	72	67	66	70	81



150
It is apparent from the data that a notable difference in learners' perceptions by age group arises in respect of managing to fit course commitments in with 'other commitments at home'. Just over 1 in 10 (11 per cent) learners aged 16–18 cited this as a difficulty, compared with nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of learners aged 25 plus, with 19–24 year old learners falling almost mid way between.

151
Similarly, differences in learner responses in respect of managing to fit course commitments in with other commitments at work are apparent, with just over 1 in 10 (11 per cent) learners aged 16 – 18 citing this as a difficulty, compared with about a fifth (21 per cent) of learners aged 19 – 24, and a quarter (25 per cent) of 25 plus learners.

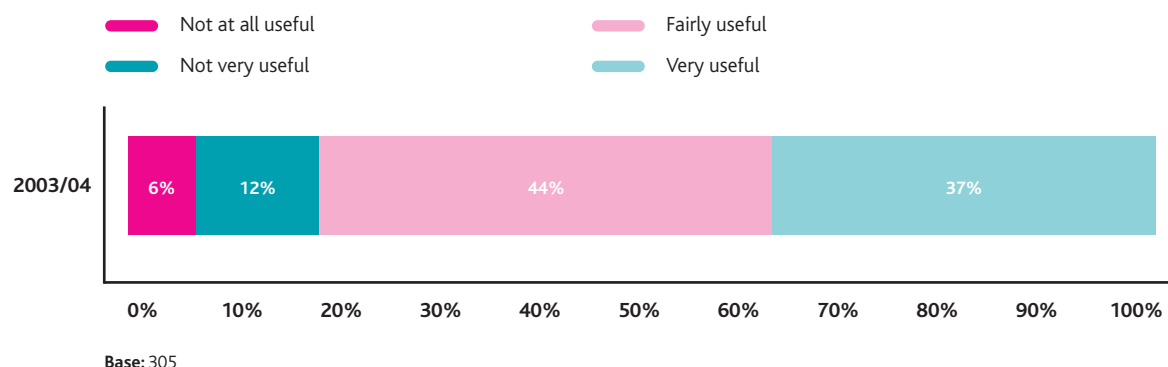
152
Other age related differences are generally less stark, and not as substantively marked as the two areas noted immediately above.

153
However, the percentage of learners in the survey citing personal motivation as a difficulty they have experienced on their courses has increased from 8 per cent in 2002/03 to 15 per cent in 2003/04, with this trend apparent across all age groups. Again, it is difficult to adduce reasons for this increase without further, more detailed investigation but should the trend continue over time, it does present a rather worrying picture of learner perceptions concerning personal motivation.

154
Learners' experiences with literacy and numeracy present an interesting picture. More than 1 in 10 (12 per cent) 16–18 year old learners in the 2003/04 survey cited difficulty with maths or numeracy skills, compared with very few (3 per cent) of learners aged 25 plus, while fewer than 1 in 10 (8 per cent) learners in the 19–24 age group mentioned this as a difficulty.

155
Learners' responses to the area dealing with reading and writing skills are also illustrative. Around 1 in 20 (6 per cent) learners aged 16–18, and similar number aged 19–24 (6 per cent) reported difficulty here, compared with more than 1 in 20 (11 per cent) learners aged 25 plus.

Figure 16: Usefulness of advice or help sought.



156

A noticeably lower percentage (34 per cent) of learners with disabilities said they had experienced no problems on their course, compared with all learners (–17 percentage points).

157

Data obtained in 2003/04 suggests that learners from minority ethnic groups have a similar response patterns to course related problems when compared with learners overall. The most notable difference is with the difficulty of managing to fit their course commitments with work, where just over 1 in 10 (11 per cent) minority ethnic learners said they had experienced this factor as a problem, compared with nearly a fifth (18 per cent) for learners overall.

Learners seeking help or advice for difficulties

158

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

159

The resulting data by age and gender (see Table 11) show that less than one third (31 per cent) of learners who encountered problems actually sought advice or help to resolve that problem. In other words; over two thirds (69 per cent) of learners who reported encountering problems with their learning experiences did not seek help resolving the issues involved.

Differences by age

160

There are only small apparent differences between the 16–18 year olds (34 per cent) and nearly one third of 19–24 year olds (30 per cent) who sought help when experiencing problems or difficulties with their learning experiences, compared with less than a fifth (19 per cent) of learners aged 25 plus.

161

Corresponding differences between learners by age group who seek help when experiencing problems or difficulties with their learning are of the same order: two thirds (66 per cent) of 16–18 year olds, over two thirds (70 per cent) of 19–24 year olds, and four fifths (81 per cent) of learners aged 25 plus.

Differences by gender

162

There are only small apparent differences between the one third (33 per cent) of female learners who seek help when experiencing problems or difficulties with their learning experiences, compared with over a quarter (28 per cent) of males. This means of course that some two thirds (67 per cent) of female learners and over 7 in 10 (72 per cent) male learners report not seeking help when experiencing problems or difficulties with their learning experiences.

163

As noted above, slightly less than a third (31 per cent) of learners involved in the 2003/04 survey sought help when they encountered a problem or difficulty, meaning that just over two thirds (69 per cent) did not seek help when encountering a problem or difficulty during their learning experiences.

164

Of learners who encountered problems or difficulties, some four fifths (81 per cent) said the advice they received was 'very' or 'fairly' useful, suggesting that the majority of learners who sought help obtained it (Figure 16). In contrast around 1 learner in 20 (6 per cent) stated the advice they received was not at all useful.

Table 12: Learners who made a complaint to their employer.

	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25 plus
Base: All respondents	2,028	1,043	985	693	1,203	132
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Complaint made	13	14	12	12	14	8

165 Compared with 2002/03 survey results, there is an increase in the percentage of learners saying that the advice they received was fairly useful (+7 percentage points); however, there is an equivalent decrease in the percentage of learners saying that the advice was very useful.

166 It is noteworthy that a little under a third (31 per cent) of 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, through there is no room for complacency given the numbers also reporting little or no useful advice was forthcoming.

Learner complaints

167 Addressing the issue of learner complaints broadly turns on this key question: have you ever made a complaint to your employer about your training? Accordingly, work based learners were asked whether they had ever made a complaint to their employer about their training and what happened as a consequence.

168 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 to institute a formal process to deal with their particular complaint.

169 Of learners in the 2003/04 survey, 13 per cent reported that they had made a complaint to their employer about some part of their learning experience (Table 12). This figure is comparable with findings from 2001/02 and 2002/03.

170 It is noteworthy that learners’ complaints generally turned on:

- lack of attention/visits/help (14 per cent)
- poor teaching (11 per cent)
- not progressing (11 per cent)
- teachers changing too often/supply teachers (10 per cent)
- teachers not showing up for class (9 per cent).

Differences by age

171 Among learners in the 2003/04 survey, small age related differences are apparent with over 1 in 10 (12 per cent) 16–18 year old learners saying they have made a complaint, compared with just under 1 in 10 (8 per cent) of 25 plus learners.

Differences by gender

172 There are very small gender related differences in 2003/04 learners saying they have complained to their employers, slightly more than 1 in 10 learners of both gender (12 per cent) female learners compared with (14 per cent) male learners.

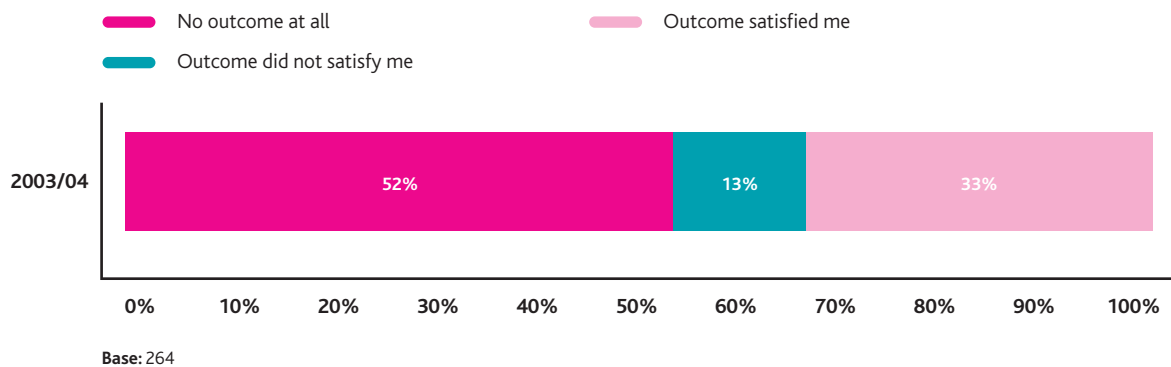
173

As shown in Figure 17, a third of learners in the survey who made a complaint (33 per cent) said the outcome satisfied them, just over 1 in 10 (13 per cent) said the outcome did not satisfy them and more than a half (52 per cent) said there was no outcome.

Compared with 2002/03, there has been an increase (+15 percentage points) with learners who said they received no outcome to their complaint.



Figure 17: Outcome of complaint.



Impact of learning



174

In the 2003/04 survey learners were asked about the benefits they had received from their learning experiences and the impact that learning had on them as a person.

175

Among the key findings for 2003/04 are:

- that a very high percentage of learners (95 per cent) say their training has given them skills they can use in a job
- overall, nearly three fifths (59 per cent) of learners say they enjoy learning and get a 'buzz' from it.

Learners' feelings towards education when leaving school

176

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.

177

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

178

Figure 18 shows, that in the 2003/04 survey, half (50 per cent) of work based learners had generally positive feelings about education when leaving school, compared with under a fifth of learners (17 per cent) who had generally negative feelings about education. Almost a third of learners (32 per cent) were neither positive nor negative about their views on schooling.

Learners' responses by age and gender are shown in Table 13.

Differences by age

179

It seems interesting that there are only small differences between learners in respect of whether they had generally positive feelings about education, with just under half (46 per cent) of learners aged 16–18, just over half (52 per cent) of learners aged 19–24, and half (50 per cent) of learners aged 25 plus responding this way.

180

Learners in the 2003/04 survey expressing generally negative feelings about education show correspondingly small differences too, while about a third of learners (32 to 34 per cent) indicated they were not bothered either way about education – they were indifferent.

Differences by gender

181

Larger differences are apparent when comparing female and male learners in the 2003/04 survey about whether they had generally positive feelings about education. Over half (54 per cent) of the female learners in the survey responded positively, compared with fewer than half (46 per cent) of male learners.

182

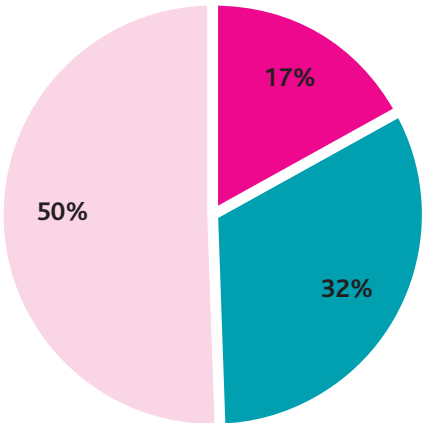
There are no apparent differences between female and male learners expressing generally negative feelings about education. But a larger number, nearly two fifths (37 per cent) of male learners, indicated they were not bothered either way about education – they were indifferent – compared with just over a quarter (27 per cent) of female learners in the survey.

183

Taken together these results suggest that females in the survey generally view their prior learning experiences more positively and are rather less likely to be indifferent about education when compared with male learners.

Figure 18: Learners' feelings about education when leaving school.

- Generally positive feelings about education
- Not bothered either way about education - indifferent
- Generally negative feelings about education



Base: 2,037

Table 13: Feelings about education when leaving school, by age and gender

	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25 plus
Base: All respondents	2,037	1,067	970	618	1,262	157
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Generally positive feelings about education	50	46	54	46	52	50
Generally negative feelings about education	17	17	17	19	16	17
Not bothered either way about education – indifferent	32	37	27	34	32	32

How learners feel about learning now

184

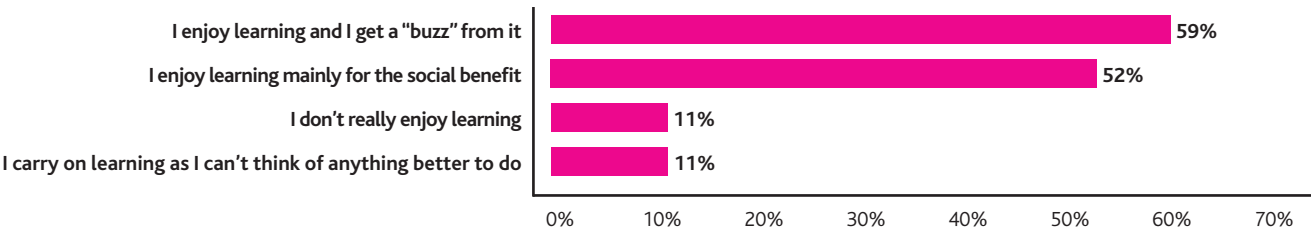
Questions here seek to elicit learner responses which provide information about how they feel about learning at present. Learners are asked which statements apply to them and the way they feel about learning.

185

In 2003/04, almost three fifths (59 per cent) of learners responded that they enjoy learning and get a 'buzz' from it and over half of all learners surveyed (52 per cent) said they enjoy learning mainly for the social benefit. These and other responses are shown in Figure 19.



Figure 19: How learners feel about learning now



Base: 2,037

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.

186

Data in Figure 19 also show that just over 1 in 10 learners (11 per cent) responded 'I carry on learning as I can't think of anything better to do', which is the same percentage that replied 'I don't really enjoy learning'. While small, with around a tenth of learners surveyed in 2003/04, responding negatively to both questions, these results suggest a need for further investigation as they may be portents of later learner alienation from learning.

187

The data appearing in Table 14 shows learners' responses to questions about how they now perceive their learning experiences.

Differences by age

188

It is interesting to observe quite different responses to learners' perceptions about 'I enjoy learning and get a buzz from it'. Just over half (52 per cent) of 16–18 year olds in the 2003/04 survey responded to this issue, compared with three fifths (60 per cent) of 19–24 year olds, and over three quarters (78 per cent) of those aged 25 plus. This result suggests that learners' disaffection for learning diminishes with age and that there is thus some cause for optimism about a positive change in learners' views over time.

189

Similarly, the number of learners responding to the issue, 'I am carrying on learning because I can't think of anything better to do', show some small differences by age. There are more learners aged 16–18 (16 per cent) than either the 19–24 age group (9 per cent) and 25 plus age group (12 per cent). While quite 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.

190

It is perhaps unsurprising that age group differences emerge in respect of the issue 'I enjoy learning mostly because of the social aspects'. Three fifths (60 per cent) of learners aged 16–18 responded to this item, compared with just under half (49 per cent) of learners aged 19–24, and fewer than two fifths (38 per cent) of learners aged 25 plus. This suggests that the social factors involved in learners' experiences are more likely to be prevalent for younger learners, and are equally likely to diminish over time for older learners for whom this is a less important aspect.

191

Data in Table 14 show that approximately the same number of learners in each age group respond to the issue 'I don't really enjoy learning', but that there is a small difference between 16–18 year olds (13 per cent) and 25 plus learners (8 per cent) which may be worth exploring further.

Differences by gender

192

Larger differences are apparent when comparing female and male learners in the 2003/04 survey about whether they enjoy learning and get a buzz from it. Two thirds (67 per cent) of the female learners in the survey responded positively, compared with just over half (51 per cent) of male learners. This difference seems a significant one and it may be important for later research to explore the reasons for it.

193

As with the data noted above, there is a corresponding gender difference in learners' responses to 'I don't really enjoy learning'. Males appear twice as likely to respond (14 per cent) to this as an issue, compared with females (7 per cent).

Table 14: How learners feel about education now, by age and gender

	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25 plus
Base: All respondents	2,037	1,067	970	618	1,262	157
	%	%	%	%	%	%
I enjoy learning and get a buzz from it	59	51	67	52	60	78
I enjoy learning mostly because of the social aspects	52	52	51	60	49	38
I am carrying on learning because I can't think of anything better to do	11	12	10	16	9	12
I don't really enjoy learning	11	14	7	13	10	8

194

The number of learners responding to 'I am carrying on learning because I can't think of anything better to do', shows slight difference by gender with around 1 in 10 learners addressing this issue.

195

Similarly, there is little noticeable difference between learners' responses to the issue, 'I enjoy learning mostly because of the social aspects', with just over half of learners (51 per cent females and 52 per cent males) indicating this is the case.

Other differences**196**

Notably, over a quarter (26 per cent) of minority ethnic learners and a fifth (20 per cent) of learners with disabilities responded that the statement 'I am carrying on learning because I can't think of anything better to do' applied to them. These are both significantly higher than the average of 1 in 10 (11 per cent) for all learners.

Benefits of learning**197**

Learners in the 2003/04 survey were able to identify which advantages stemmed from their learning experiences. Learners were asked to agree or disagree with statements regarding the effect their learning experience had on them personally. Responses are shown in Figure 20 with the most common being:

- It has given me skills I can use for a job (95 per cent)
- I feel more confident in my ability to learn (88 per cent)
- I am more creative and prepared to try new things (86 per cent)
- I am better at learning on my own (81 per cent)
- I have a greater enthusiasm for the subject (81 per cent).

198

When considering the benefits learners' courses may have the factors most learners agreed they gained from learning are: 'It has given me skills I can use for a job'; and 'I feel more confident in my ability to learn'. These factors are critical to the success for work based learners both as learners and as employees.

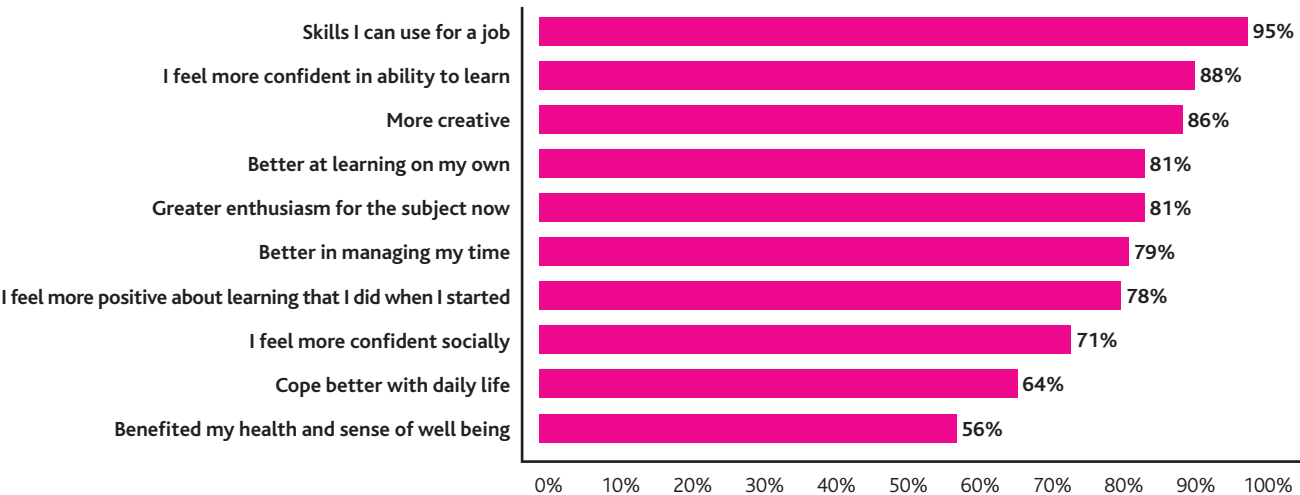
199

An important aspect of learning for work based learners is to gain a qualification and skills they can use in their jobs. Learners recognise this main benefit of learning, with over 9 in 10 (95 per cent) agreeing with the statement 'It has given me skills I can use for a job'.

200

For the statement 'I feel more confident in my ability to learn', nearly 9 in every 10 (88 per cent) learners agreed their current learning programme had this effect.

Figure 20: Effects the course may have had on you personally.



Base: 2,037

201

Full details of learners responses to the effects of learning are shown across age and gender in Table 15.

Differences by age

202

It is noticeable that there are apparent similarities between learners from different age groups. For example learners' responses to:

'I have greater enthusiasm for the subject', show marked similarity at over 8 in every 10 learners (80 to 84 per cent) across age groups

'It has given me skills that I can use for the job' also show marked similarity with over 9 in 10 learners (92 to 95 per cent) across age groups

'I am more creative and prepared to try new things', where over 8 in every 10 learners (84 to 88 per cent) responded across age groups

'I am better at learning on my own now', in which around 8 in 10 learners (78 to 82 per cent) responded.

203

In learners' responses to 'I feel more confident socially', where this was reported by 8 in every 10 (80 per cent) of learners aged 16–18, and by just over two thirds (67 per cent) of learners aged 19–24 and two thirds (69 per cent) of learners aged 25 plus.

204

Differences are also apparent in learners' responses to 'It enables me to cope better with daily life', where over two thirds (71 per cent) of learners aged 16–18 years responded, compared with three fifths of learners aged 19–24 (61 per cent) and aged 25 plus (61 per cent).

205

Differences of a similar order are noted in learners' responses to 'It has benefited my health and sense of well-being', where nearly two thirds (65 per cent) of learners aged 16–18 years responded, compared with just over half of learners aged 19–24 (52 per cent) and aged 25 plus (53 per cent).

Differences by gender

206

It is noticeable that there are no substantive or marked differences between learners of different gender. For example learners' responses to:

'I have greater enthusiasm for the subject', show marked similarity at around 8 in every 10 learners (84 per cent female and 79 per cent male);

'It has given me skills that I can use for the job' also show marked similarity with over 9 in 10 learners (95 per cent) for both gender;

'I am more creative and prepared to try new things', where nearly 9 in every 10 learners (87 per cent females and 85 per cent males) responded; and

'I am better at learning on my own now', in which around 8 in 10 learners (82 per cent females and 80 per cent males) responded.

Table 15: Benefits of learning, by age and gender.

	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25 plus
Base: All respondents	2,037	1,067	970	618	1,262	157
	%	%	%	%	%	%
I have a greater enthusiasm for the subject	81	79	84	83	80	84
It has given me skills I can use for a job	95	95	95	95	95	92
I feel more confident socially	71	70	72	80	67	69
I feel more confident in my ability to learn	88	87	90	90	87	89
I am better at managing my time and responsibilities	79	80	79	81	79	80
I feel more positive about learning than I did when I started	78	77	79	81	77	76
I am more creative and prepared to try new things	86	85	87	88	85	84
I am better at learning on my own now	81	80	82	82	81	78
It enables me to cope better with daily life	64	64	64	71	61	61
It has benefited my health and sense of well being	56	57	55	65	52	53

207

Overall, small or slight gender related differences are apparent from data obtained in 2003/04, suggesting a high level of consistency in learners' responses, largely unaffected by gender.

Likelihood to undertake further learning in the next three years

208

An issue of importance to the entire learning community is the extent to which learners wish to continue their learning experiences and what influences current teaching and learning have on their ambitions or intentions.

209

In the 2003/04 survey, almost 8 out of 10 (77 per cent) of learners said it was likely they would undertake further learning during the next three years. These responses are shown in Figure 21.

210

In contrast fewer than half of learners surveyed (44 per cent) said it was very likely they would undertake further learning in the next three years



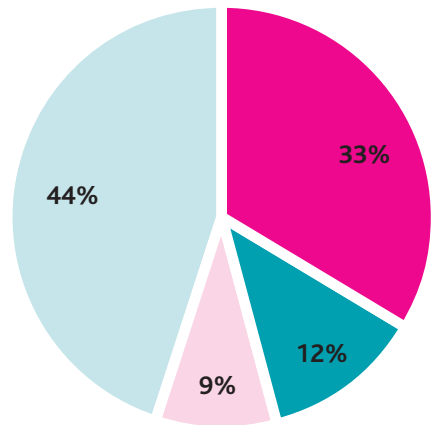
211 Of other learners, just over a third (33 per cent) say they are fairly likely to undertake further learning in the next three years.

212 Of learners in the 2003/04 survey, almost 1 in 10 learners (9 per cent) said they were very unlikely to undertake further learning in the next three years.

213 These results need to be considered in the context of work based learning in which the programme of work is designed for learners to achieve a qualification and progress into full-time work.

Figure 21: How likely will you be to undertake learning in the next three years?

- Very likely
- Fairly likely
- Fairly unlikely
- Very unlikely



Base: 6,111



Areas for action



214

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.

215

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.

216

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, that is, 16–18 year olds and those ages 25 plus 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.

217

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.

218

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.

219

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. Support for learners section details available help and guidance from the LSC regarding health and safety. These products can be obtained from the LSC helpdesk 0870 9006800.

220

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.

221

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



Quotes from learners about their learning experiences

Overall learning satisfaction and impact of learning

228

"At school you have to be there, with work based learning it's more your choice, you want to be there, you want to do the work."

"You get better prospects when you come out... a wider choice of places to go."

"If you get a qualification you can always do something else and come back to it, can't you?"

"Getting paid to learn is a bonus!"

"I think now you get the opportunities to learn what you want, but at school you get told what to learn."

"It's something I enjoy, and so I take an interest in it and I turn up for my lessons."

"I was thinking about a job, for the future and things, I'd like to own my own salon."

"I'm not sat at home."

"I think the pay is pretty naff, you do 40 hours in total a week, and you get £40."

222

Three focus groups for work based learners were held in December 2004, each lasting approximately one and a half hours and comprising 8 to 10 learners per group.

223

Specific criteria for the three groups were:

- all Entry to Employment (e2e) and 16–18 old learners
- all attend a college to do training and within the age group 17–30 year olds
- all learn within an LSC approved training provider that is not a college and within the age group 17–30 years old.

224

The verbatim quotes which follow are from work based learners about their learning experiences. These should be read in the context of examples from individual learners in work based learning.

225

The sample of work based learners interviewed in the 2003/04 National Learner Satisfaction Survey (NLSS) is 6,111. The number of learners involved in focus groups was around 30 in total. Thus there are very significant differences in the nature, scope and approach to the overall sample of 6,111 learners compared with the far smaller number of focus group participants.

226

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 through 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 to provide some additional commentary in a qualitative way.

227

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.



Overall quality of teaching and training

229

"Course content is relevant to work placement".

"Teacher/trainer provides additional work and practice".

"He started as an apprentice himself ... he's been training apprentices for 15 years so he knows quite a lot".

"Lessons sometimes finish early or we are given long lunch breaks".

"When we go back we're going to have so much work to do. It's not our fault, it's the lack of teachers".

"If [you] have spare time they'll try and find you something to do."

Key Skills

230

"[I] did my key skills - numbers - but I've gone through that in a week."

"It's tedious...it's just a bit of a waste of time but you've got to do it to get the qualification."

"On top of what you're doing it's a bit of a brain ache."

"I could do something a lot harder."

"If it was actually relevant to the job you were doing I don't think you'd find that most people would mind doing it."

Pre-entry advice and guidance

231

"My Dad's girlfriend...she rang up and sorted it out and did my application"

"I went to Connexions, basically to look for a job, and I didn't want to do this but they were like, 'just try it'."

"I was sat on my backside and then I just went up to Connexions and then they just asked me what I'd like to do, and advised me of BEST."

"I went through Connexions, they put me on to e2e."

Support for learners including health and safety, feedback and complaints

232

"If you've got a problem he [teacher/lecturer] is easy to talk to".

"Questionnaires... I do it, it doesn't take a minute out of my time, it doesn't take very long".

"The questionnaires...it does get back to them [teachers/lecturers]."

"The rules are, [if you don't have the] safety equipment, you're not [allowed] on the section."





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:

*Adult and Community Learning Providers
Report 2003/04*

Publication reference: LSC-P-NAT-050171

Further Information

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