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National Learner Satisfaction Survey

Adult and Community Learning Providers
Summary Report 2002/03

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Summary

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

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

Over 25,000 learners were surveyed in 2003 compared with 13,000 in 2002. Of these, 1,958 were learners on non-accredited adult and community learning (ACL) programmes and 1,203 were learners on FE courses provided by adult learning providers. Details of the wider national survey can be found in the *National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2002/03: Highlights* and also in the *National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2002/03: Technical Data* which includes full analysis of the responses of learners in adult and community learning. This report focuses on the key findings and messages.

This report is of interest to those providing, attending or supporting accredited and non-accredited provision in local education authority adult learning services and other former external institutions. Learning partnerships may also find the report of interest.

June 2004

Foreword

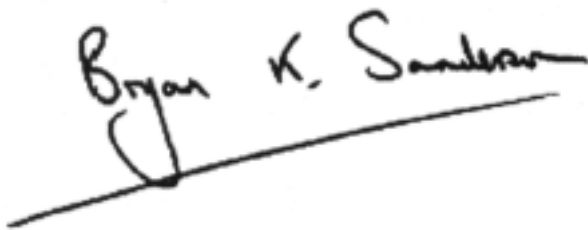
We have now completed the second year of the National Learner Satisfaction Survey and have learnt even more about our learners. Since the publication of the first year's survey findings we have worked with partner organisations and groups of learners to understand how the adult and community learning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

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

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

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

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

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

Bryan K Sanderson
Chairman, the Learning and Skills Council

What's inside

Key findings

Section 1

Overall Satisfaction with the Learning Experience

- More than 94 per cent of learners are satisfied with their learning experience; 72 per cent of learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers are very or extremely satisfied; 80 per cent of learners on non-accredited ACL courses are very or extremely satisfied.

Section 2

The Quality of Teaching and Management of Learning

- Ninety two per cent of learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers and 96 per cent of learners in non-accredited ACL provision are satisfied with the quality of their teaching. 40 per cent of learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers and 29 per cent in non-accredited ACL feel that some lesson time is wasted.

Section 3

Information and Guidance Prior to Entry

- A high proportion (93 per cent) of learners feel that they have chosen the most suitable course. At least 86 per cent (91 per cent for non-accredited ACL) say that the course met their expectations very or quite closely.

Section 4

Support for Learners

- Difficulties on their course were encountered by 54 per cent of learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers and by 35 per cent of learners on non-accredited ACL courses. Few learners seek help for problems and of those that seek help, too few find the help useful.

Section 5

The Impact of Learning

- A high proportion of learners cite real benefits from learning and 9 out of 10 plan to do more learning in the future.

Section 6

Buildings and Facilities

- A high proportion of learners do not use and therefore did not give ratings to facilities, so this section includes analysis but does not make recommendations for action. Learners in adult and community learning who did comment on facilities rated them higher than learners on other types of provision.

Key questions

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

Section 1

- How can levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching be further improved?
- How can wasted time be minimised?

Section 2

- How can the pre-entry stages be enhanced to improve learners' satisfaction?
- What can be done to identify and support potential early leavers?

Section 3

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

Section 4

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

Section 5

Section 6

Introduction

1 The importance of taking full account of the views of learners and clients is widely appreciated across the learning and skills sector as a key means to help guide improvement in programmes and services. The reforms to the sector outlined in *Success for All* are being supported by a substantial investment in further education (FE), including adult learning services. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Strategic Area Review (StAR) process, which began in 2002/03, has the needs of learners as its main consideration. Improvements to the sector are being resourced through the funding of three-year development plans for further education provision in adult learning services.

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

3 This report presents the findings for the adult and community learning sector, including provision in external institutions and that supported through the adult and community learning funding. Providers in this area frequently reach out to previously excluded learners and have responded positively to national priorities such as family learning and Skills for Life. The report covers the responses from learners in these two main types of funded provision. Where the term 'adult and community learning' is used, this refers to accredited further education provision and non-accredited learning delivered by adult learning providers. Adult learning providers are mainly local education authority adult learning services, but also include other former external institutions.

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

5 Earlier in 2003, the findings from the first year's surveys were discussed at a national series of

workshops with providers. This new development provided helpful examples of how providers can better respond to learners' views, given by staff who would be most able to effect improvements.

6 We are delighted by how well received the survey results have been and how passionate providers are about finding solutions to areas that learners identified for improvement. This report gives us the opportunity to share the ideas and discussions from these workshops.

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

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

The survey

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

10 Over 25,000 learners were surveyed in 2003 compared with 13,000 in 2002. Of these, 1,958 were learners on non-accredited adult and community learning (ACL) programmes and 1,203 were learners on FE courses provided by adult learning providers. Details of the wider national survey can be found in the *National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2002/03: Technical Data* along with full analysis of the responses of learners in adult and community learning. This report focuses on the key findings and messages for Adult and Community Learning providers.

Overall Satisfaction with the Learning Experience

Key findings

More than 94 per cent of learners are satisfied with their learning experience; 72 per cent of learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers are very or extremely satisfied; 80 per cent of learners on non-accredited ACL courses are very or extremely satisfied.

Figure 1: Overall satisfaction with the learning experience (FE delivered by adult learning providers).

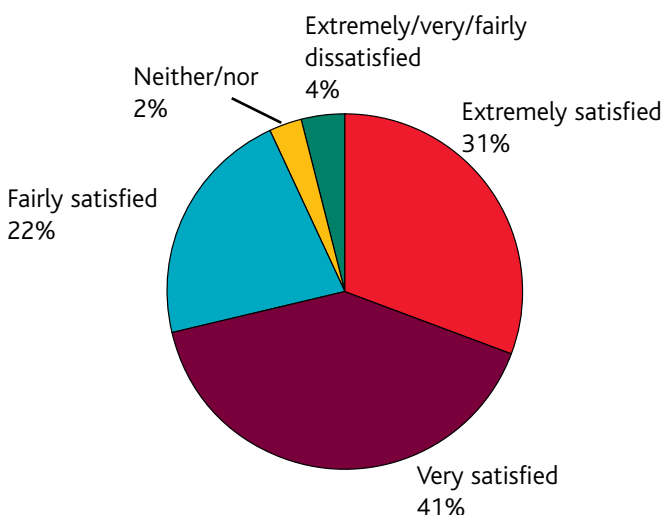
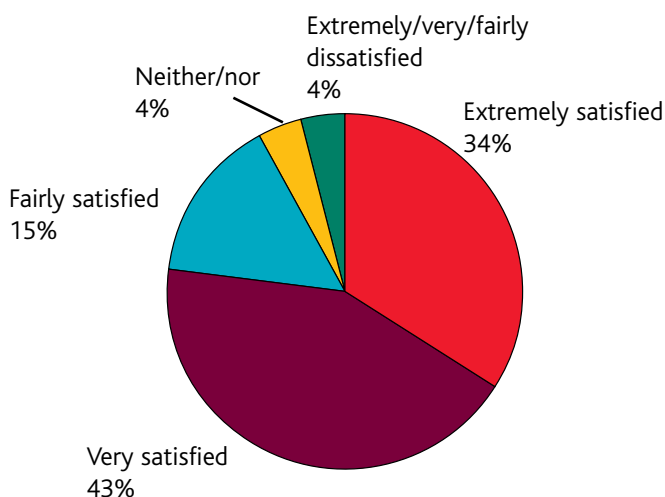


Figure 2: Overall learning experience (non-accredited ACL).



11 Almost all learners (94 per cent) in FE delivered by adult learning providers and 95 per cent on non-accredited ACL are satisfied with their learning experience.

12 For learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers, the proportion of those extremely or very satisfied has dropped slightly from last year.

13 In adult and community learning, learners aged 35 and under are slightly less satisfied overall than older learners. Men tend to be slightly less satisfied overall than women. Learners at Level 1 or below on entry are the most likely to be satisfied overall.

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

Key question

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

15 To do this, we can learn from those learners who are very and extremely satisfied. So what are these learners telling us about their experience? Very or extremely satisfied learners are more likely to:

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

Areas for action

16 Providers will need to consider the following to improve overall satisfaction with the learning experience.

- Make sure that there is accurate, up-to-date information on the courses/programmes offered, and that a consistent and high standard of pre-entry advice is available for all users.
- Identify the types and sources of advice which work best for different groups of learners, bearing in mind the role that informal sources (such as family and friends) can play.
- Ensure that staff development and the new teaching materials are geared towards meeting learners' expectations.
- Use the findings of learner surveys and other 'quality' processes such as the observation of teaching and learning and systems for recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) in non-accredited ACL to focus on staff development and training and to direct support to particular tutors.
- Make sure that sessions are fully utilised for learning and that, wherever possible, classes are not cancelled, that they start and finish on time and that teachers tackle potentially disruptive behaviour quickly.
- Review facilities looking at aspects such as opening times, quality and quantity of resource, learners' awareness of what is on offer and cost of usage.
- Regularly check for any course-related difficulties with individual learners or groups of learners.
- Encourage learners to seek help if they experience difficulties, and make effective help available for those who seek it.
- Deal with all complaints (formal and informal) appropriate and effectively as lack of resolution of complaints is a concern for significant numbers of learners.

The Quality of Teaching and Management of Learning

Key findings

Ninety two per cent of learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers and 96 per cent of learners in non-accredited ACL provision are satisfied with the quality of their teaching. 40 per cent of learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers and 29 per cent in non-accredited ACL feel that some lesson time is wasted.

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

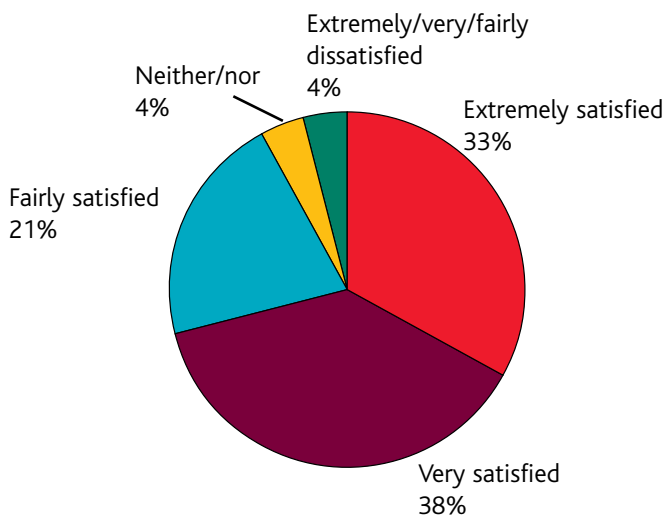
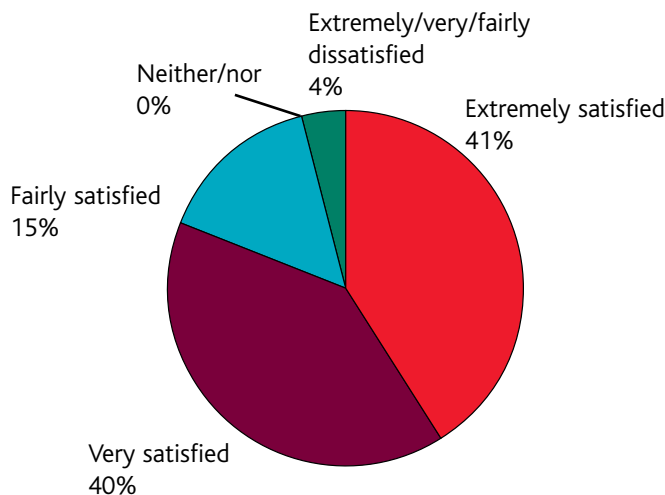


Figure 4: Satisfaction with the quality of teaching (non-accredited ACL providers).



The key driver of satisfaction

17 Statistics show that the quality of teaching has the biggest impact on learners' satisfaction. It is therefore extremely encouraging that 92 per cent of learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers and 96 per cent of learners on non-accredited ACL are satisfied with the quality of teaching they receive.

18 In FE delivered by adult learning providers, aspects of teaching and/or management of learning show room for improvement. These are listed below in order of priority in terms of the impact each makes on satisfaction levels.

Table 1: Ratings for aspects of the quality of teaching – the per cent rated as 9 or 10 out of 10 by learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers.

Highly rated aspects:	Less highly rated aspects:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how teachers relate to learners (64 per cent) • how teachers manage groups of learners (54 per cent) • making the subject interesting and enjoyable (56 per cent). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding learners and how they like to learn (49 per cent) • the support given to learners, for example, in improving study techniques or time management (48 per cent) • setting clear targets to help learners improve (46 per cent) • providing prompt and regular feedback on learner progress (50 per cent).

Key question

How can levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching be further improved?

19 The main message from the National Learner Satisfaction Survey is that those managing learning should make sure that learners receive feedback on their progress and areas for development, and that the feedback is motivating. The high levels of satisfaction with teaching within the sector overall may reflect adult learners' making an active choice to participate in learning of this sort, and that they often bring considerable enthusiasm to their studies.

Areas for action in support of learners

20 Providers have recommended that teachers support learners in the following areas.

- Teachers need to make sure that the content of their programmes, and the learning strategies adopted, are stimulating and provide appropriate challenge to highly motivated learners of different abilities.
- A review of how courses and programmes are structured, and what learning support might be provided, is needed. Teaching may benefit from staff who give additional support in the classroom to help respond more flexibly to the needs of diverse groups of learners. Providers and funding bodies need to make sure that additional support is available to the learners.
- Teachers need to discover the learning styles and teaching methods that suit their learners best, and take into account the learners' different ages, previous education and qualifications.
- Teachers may require more time for lesson planning and curriculum management to respond to the needs of diverse groups of learners.
- Teachers should engage in mid-term reviews of learners' progress to identify how they can improve the quality of their teaching and their responsiveness to learners' varied needs.
- Providers' engagement in quality assurance processes for teaching and learning, and processes such as

recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) will help to embed best practice in encouraging learners' reflection on progress throughout the learning experience.

21 Adult and community learning tutors are not usually employed full-time, and their teaching is often an adjunct to their normal job or activity. Learners in adult and community learning come from a diverse range of backgrounds, and it is not always easy for teachers to know what their learning needs are. Providers within the sector believe that the small amount of contact time teachers have with learners, often only once a week, for a couple of hours, and with no tutorial or one-to-one time, may result in learners' dissatisfaction. Creative ways of personalising teaching and learning within this context are needed, for example the teacher building in a one-to-one slot for the first and/ or last five minutes of class time to review progress with individuals. Also, tutors within the sector may feel isolated and may benefit from an exchange of ideas or expertise with other teaching colleagues. Providers need to explore new ways to help this happen, for example e-messaging networks with suggested time slots each week when subject teachers in similar areas, with a curriculum manager, can discuss teaching and learning materials and effective ways to support learners etc.

Areas for action in support of teachers

22 Teachers in adult and community learning will benefit from support in the following areas.

- Providers need to make sure there is support to allow adult and community learning tutors to become qualified teachers and receive training for their continuing professional development. This training needs to be arranged flexibly to fit around the existing commitments of teachers, who may not always see the immediate benefits of training in teaching skills. It is important that any move to give teachers such training builds on their existing commitment to doing a good job.
- Providers felt that it would be very useful to have national subject websites for the exchange of subject knowledge and good practice. Similarly, websites could be established for the exchange of teaching expertise.

- Staff who are the sole teacher of a subject in their institutions should be allowed and encouraged to network with their counterparts in other institutions, so that they do not feel isolated professionally. Subject websites for the exchange of expertise and good practice would be useful.
- Effective exchange of information and good practice on learning styles and teaching materials will also assist teachers to improve the learning experience.
- Work currently being undertaken by the Standards Unit to develop support materials for teachers in specific areas of learning should also be designed or adapted for use in non-accredited ACL programmes.
- Self-assessment and inspection processes should lead to the further improvement of teaching in the sector. Distilling messages about characteristics of high quality teaching in adult and community learning from inspection reports can help providers and their teachers to strengthen the quality of teaching.

- Experienced staff should work as mentors to assist teachers, through lesson observations and constructive feedback in developing their skills with the focus on the less highly rated aspects, such as learning styles, giving motivational feedback and target setting.

23 For learners in non-accredited ACL and for those in FE delivered by adult learning providers, all aspects of teaching are rated highly. These positive findings should be highlighted to teaching staff to celebrate success and to help promote wider adoption of best practice in the sector by benchmarking their own providers' success in satisfying their learners with the national findings.

Wasted time on the increase

24 Too many learners feel that some of their session time is wasted (40 per cent for learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers and 29 per cent in non-accredited ACL. The main reasons given for wasted time can be seen below.

Table 2: Reasons for wasted time.

	FE delivered by adult learning providers per cent	Non-accredited ACL per cent
Other learners arriving late (by 5 minutes or more).	45	49
Lessons being badly planned/disorganised.	20	14
Being left hanging around with nothing to do.	19	19
Other learners arriving late/disrupting class.	16	12
Teachers going at too slow a pace.	13	13
Teachers/tutors arriving late.	11	12
Lessons finishing early.	8	5

25 Findings are affected by age, gender and qualification on entry.

- Younger learners are generally less satisfied than older learners and are more likely to feel that time has been wasted.
- Men are generally less satisfied than women and are more likely to feel that time has been wasted.
- Learners at Level 2 or below on entry are more satisfied with the quality of teaching and are less likely to think that session time is wasted.

Key question

How can wasted time be minimised?

Areas for action

26 Providers suggested a number of issues that need to be addressed.

- The negative impact of wasted time for learners could be addressed by a more robust approach to time management, underpinned by teachers and learners developing and agreeing rights, responsibilities and expectations of those participating in programmes.
- Responsibilities and expectations regarding attendance and punctuality should be made clear to both learners and teachers.
- Teachers can valuably share good practice in ways to encourage and help secure punctuality from learners.
- Teachers should be aware of learners' expectations about conduct and the style of lessons.
- Teachers need to set a good example to learners by making sure that lessons always begin and end on time. This models expectations for punctuality and encourages learners to arrive on time.
- If lessons are cancelled, there should be an effective cover system and a communication system to make sure that learners are informed as soon as possible and where appropriate, directed to suitable alternative activities.

Information and Guidance Prior to Entry

Key findings

A high proportion (93 per cent) of learners feel that they have chosen the most suitable course. At least 86 per cent (91 per cent for non-accredited ACL) say that the course met their expectations very or quite closely.

27 Learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers tend to go to teachers (24 per cent), friends (22 per cent) or the admissions office (16 per cent) for advice. Learners on non-accredited ACL tend to have looked in adult education leaflets or brochures to find out about the course (51 per cent). However, at least a fifth of learners did not seek any advice before enrolling on their course.

28 Motivation for learning differs with age and gender. Older learners are driven more by convenience when choosing their course whereas younger learners are more likely to choose a course for career or qualification reasons. For non-accredited ACL courses, older learners are more likely to choose a course for personal interest. Younger learners are less likely to refer to adult education leaflets and brochures. Women are more likely to seek advice pre-entry. Men are less likely to feel they have chosen the right course or that the course met their expectations. On non-accredited ACL courses, men are more interested in developing skills rather than personal development.

Key questions

How can the pre-entry stages be enhanced to improve learners' satisfaction? What can be done to identify and support potential early leavers?

Information, advice and guidance

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

- expectations are realistic for learners and are understood and met by staff
- learners get their first choice of provider or course; and
- advice is provided for all and is effective.

30 Providers believe that many learners do not make use of the information, advice and guidance available to them, because they want to make their own decisions and feel they can do so without help. As a result, they may not fully understand what the course covers or what teaching styles will be used.

Areas for action

31 Providers suggested that the following should be taken into account when giving information, advice and guidance.

- The best ways to promote advice and guidance services and the benefits for adults of using these services.
- Learners should be informed of what the course entails, through clear and comprehensive course outlines readily available to all seeking to enrol.
- Effective information, guidance and advice are necessary at the enrolment stage to make sure that learners are following the most appropriate course for them.
- Early on in the course, institutions could arrange opportunities for learners to move to a more appropriate course if they wish to do so.
- Ongoing information, advice and guidance are also necessary to help make sure that learners change to the most appropriate course as required.

Meeting learners' needs

32 Learners often have clear expectations about what they want to learn and value negotiations with teachers about how their requirements will be met. The use of quality assurance processes like RARPA will help to ensure that each learner experiences this negotiated curriculum. It is also essential that teaching takes into account a learner's preferred learning style and that teachers use a variety of methods and materials in delivery to address this. Where these issues are not considered, learners may say that the course was not for them and/or that it did not meet their expectations.

- Providers should focus staff development on the above areas so as to ensure that advice and guidance arrangements can be improved to give information in advance that will enable learners' expectations to be better met. Advice and guidance should include finding out about learners' different motivations, expectations and requirements and feeding these back to teachers, whenever feasible.

Areas for action

33 To meet learners' expectations providers suggested the following should be considered by teachers and providers.

- It is important that providers or tutors arrange a formal (albeit short) induction phase at the beginning of courses during which learners are informed of content, teaching styles, and so on. In this way, learners will have a clearer idea of what to expect from courses and what, in turn, will be expected of them. It also gives learners the opportunity to consider transferring to another course early on, if they feel a course will not match with their needs or expectations.
- The induction process should, especially in non-accredited adult and community learning programmes where there is no externally-imposed syllabus, involve negotiation between learners and the teacher on what is to be covered and on how teaching and learning will be approached.
- A review of each learner's progress during the course can highlight any difficulties encountered and how closely expectations are being met.
- Informal or formal course evaluation can be used to ensure that learner feedback helps determine future course offer. It may be possible to make changes part way through the course, which will prove effective in raising learners' levels of satisfaction.

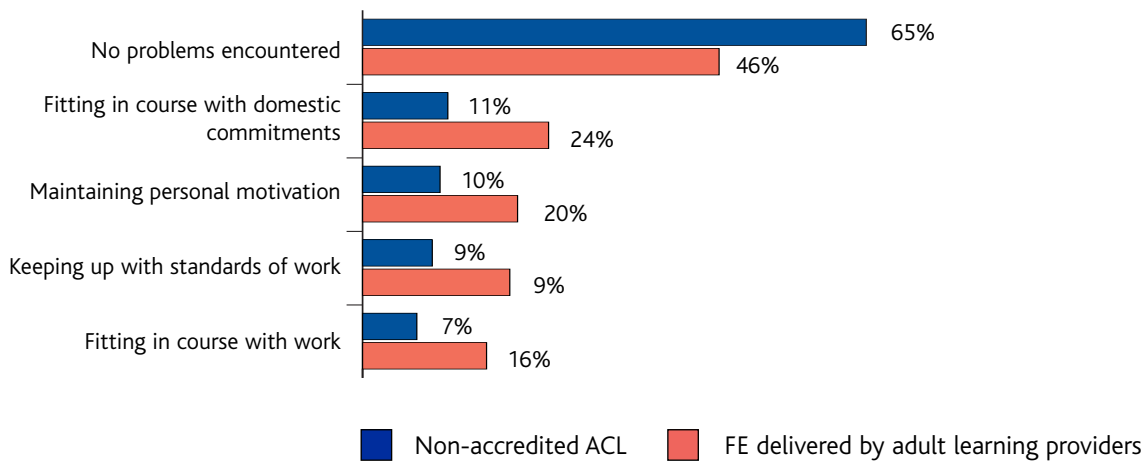
Support for Learners

Key findings

Difficulties on their course were encountered by 54 per cent of learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers, and by 35 per cent of learners on non-accredited ACL courses. Few learners seek help for problems and of those that seek help, too few find the help useful.

34 In FE delivered by adult learning providers, over half (54 per cent) of learners have encountered difficulties while on their course and this is an increase of 10 percentage points on last year. For learners on non-accredited ACL courses, 35 per cent have experienced difficulties.

Figure 5: Percentage of learners reporting encountering difficulties.



35 Demographic analysis shows that there are differences between age groups, gender, socio-economic group and level of qualification on entry which affect the problems learners encounter.

- Learners aged 55 and over are less likely to experience any difficulties while on their course.
- Learners aged under 25 are more likely to experience money problems.
- Women are more likely to struggle with trying to juggle course and domestic commitments.
- Learners from higher socio-economic groups are more likely to struggle meeting the demands of the course and work commitments.
- Learners from lower socio-economic groups are more likely to face money pressures.
- Learners below Level 2 on entry are more likely to struggle with reading, writing, maths and keeping up with the standard of work.

36 Fewer than one in five learners who had problems sought help (18 per cent for FE delivered by adult learning providers and 16 per cent for non-accredited ACL). This is less than last year when 27 per cent of learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers went on to seek help. Among those seeking help, between a quarter and a third did not find the help useful (26 per cent for FE delivered by adult learning providers and 34 per cent for non-accredited ACL).

37 Only 6 per cent of learners have made a complaint while on their course. For learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers the complaints tend to be about either the teacher or quality of teaching, the administration of learning or the course and content. For learners on non-accredited ACL courses, complaints tend to be about lack of equipment or poor materials, or the learner not enjoying the course.

Key question

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

38 It is important that steps are taken to try and identify potential problems that learners may encounter having started the course. Once identified,

pre-emptive action should be taken to minimise the likelihood of such problems actually arising. The teacher needs to know the range of support that can be made available by the provider, and also who to refer a learner to if there appear to be complex needs or possible problems that a, usually part-time, subject teacher cannot be expected to discuss and follow up.

39 Methods need to be developed for making sure that learners' complaints (formal and informal) are understood and handled satisfactorily. Some type of formal response should be made to complaints, even when learners raise them informally (for example, in discussion with teachers or tutors). Learners may not want to raise a complaint formally but their grievance is still important to them.

Choice of course, learner expectations and support for learners

40 Learners often reported that they had left or had seriously thought about leaving because the teaching was poor, their course was wrong for them or that it did not meet their expectations. Some of these learners may be in classes made up of learners with diverse abilities, and they may be taught at a level too high or too low for them because the teacher is trying to meet the needs of those of average ability.

Areas for action

41 Providers and teachers should consider the following areas for action.

- Providers should have effective initial assessment procedures in place to identify learners who are likely to need additional support. Such assessment should cover basic skills, key skills, and subject specific skills.
- Teachers should arrange short one to one interviews with each learner early on in the course to identify possible support needs; this could be done by setting aside the first and/or last five minutes of a class for one to one discussion with individual learners.
- Seek opportunities for short discussions with learners during tea breaks to discuss support needs.

- Providers should make sure that all teachers are aware of the resources, including those from other agencies in the area, that are available to support learners.
- Providers need to give learners effective pastoral support to help them with personal problems and sustain their motivation.
- Learners may need help with time management and study skills, and help by working on their own. Sources of support may include: other learners in the group; some study skills materials; teachers or other non-teaching staff.

Practical support for learners

42 Several learners reported that they lacked adequate support and/or had experienced practical problems or difficulties. Help with childcare is often difficult to organise in adult and community learning provision because courses may only last two hours a week and providers often cannot easily fund or organise childcare for such short amounts of time. Learners may also need other types of support, for example, paying for learning materials or travel. Managers of adult and community learning provider organisations might also wish to consider setting aside a budget to fund learner support, in much the same way that Access Fund allocations are used to help learners in external institutions.

Areas for action

43 Providers suggested considering the following when providing support to learners.

- It is important, as far as possible, to meet the financial and support needs that learners in adult and community learning may have, such as help in finding nursery/crèche places in their own premises or elsewhere, or payments for registered childminders; financial help to purchase books and equipment or a loan system, for example, in partnership with local libraries. It is important to meet these needs to maintain high retention rates and reduce drop-out of learners on low incomes.
- Support services need to be publicised and promoted effectively in order that their take up is high. Support may also need to be provided flexibly, for example, through outreach support, and at times

when part-time courses run, for example, in the evenings or weekends.

- Learners who are at risk of leaving their course early need to be identified as soon as possible through initial and ongoing formative assessment, systematic monitoring of attendance and performance. Absent learners should be followed up in an encouraging way immediately by telephone or text messages.
- Providers need to carry out exit interviews with early leavers to ascertain their reasons for leaving and to identify ways of stopping more learners from dropping out.
- An open door policy is required to allow learners who leave a course early to come back to learning at a later date.

The Impact of Learning

Key findings

A high proportion of learners cite real benefits from learning and 9 out of 10 plan to do more learning in the future.

44 Learners cite many benefits to learning as shown in the table below.

Table 3: Perceived benefits of learning.

	FE delivered by adult learning providers per cent	Non-accredited ACL per cent
I have greater enthusiasm for the subject.	83	88
I feel more confident in my ability to learn.	80	69
I am more creative and prepared to try new things.	74	77
It has given me skills I can use for my job.	72	35
I feel more positive about learning than when I started.	70	62
I am better at learning on my own now.	64	53
I feel more confident socially.	50	50
It has benefited my health and sense of well being.	48	66
I am better at managing my time and responsibilities.	47	37
It enables me to cope better with daily life.	41	47
I now take a more active part in the community.	27	33

45 The survey also shows that the impact of learning is influenced by age, gender, socio-economic group and disability.

- Younger learners are more likely to feel that they have benefited from their learning.
- Women are more likely to feel that they have benefited from their learning.
- Learners in socio-economic groups D and E cite more benefits to learning than learners in other groups.
- Learners with disabilities cite more benefits from learning than other learners and are more likely to consider undertaking further learning in the future.
- Learners at Level 2 or below on entry are more likely to feel that they have benefited from their learning. However, it is learners who are above Level 2 on entry who are most likely to think that they will undertake further learning in the future.

The power of learning – changing negative attitudes

46 Once again this year, there is clear evidence that participation in learning turns around opinion, resulting in positive change in learners' self-perception. In FE education delivered by adult learning providers, 82 per cent of those who left school with a negative attitude to education now enjoy learning and get a 'buzz' from it and 83 per cent have more confidence in their ability to learn. For learners on non-accredited ACL courses, 82 per cent of those who left school feeling negative now enjoy learning and get a 'buzz' from it and just under three-quarters (74 per cent) have more confidence in their ability to learn.

Going back for more

47 A high proportion of learners plan to do more learning in the future. Only 6 per cent of learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers and 4 per cent in non-accredited ACL think that they will undertake no further learning in the next three years. Learners in socio-economic groups A and B are more likely to consider taking further learning in the future.

Key question

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

Areas for action

48 Providers suggested the need to take on board the following areas for action.

- Providers should make sure that learners – including those on non-accredited ACL programmes – are given early and frequent feedback on their progress, so that they can be motivated by their own success.
- Respond positively and effectively to learner feedback as a means of improving perceptions in future.
- Make sure that the curriculum is regularly reviewed and refreshed.
- Make sure that opportunities for further learning are clearly signposted and advice given to learners about possible next steps, including progression to more advanced courses, where appropriate.

Buildings and Facilities

Key findings

A high proportion of learners do not use and therefore did not give ratings to facilities, so this section includes analysis but does not make recommendations for action. Learners in adult and community learning that did comment on facilities rated them higher than learners on other types of provision.

Figure 6: Facilities to support learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers (per cent rating 9 or 10 out of 10 among those who use the facilities).

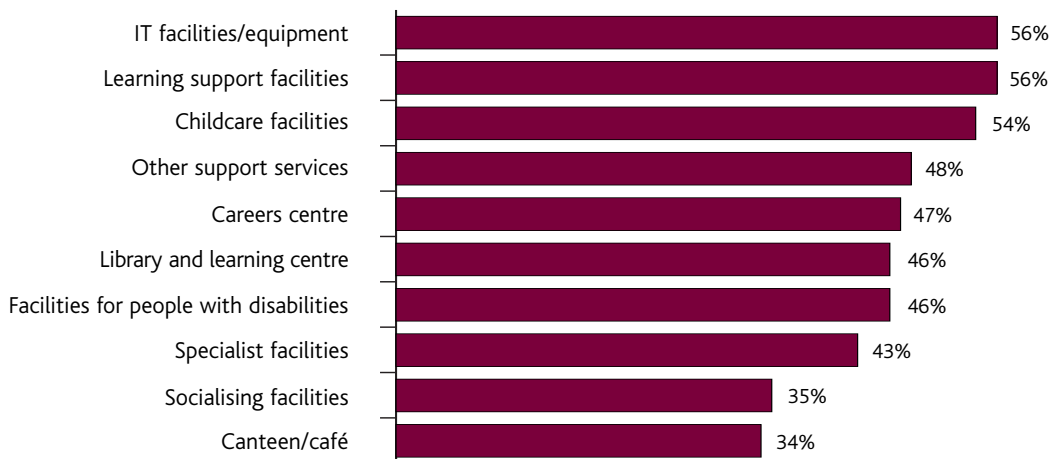
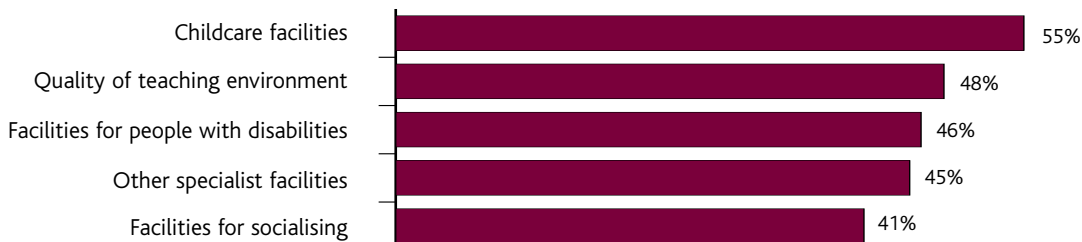


Figure 7: Facilities to support learners for non-accredited ACL (per cent rating 9 or 10 out of 10 among those who use the facilities).



49 A high proportion of learners do not use or do not have access to facilities at their place of learning. Where learners do access facilities the following statistics were recorded.

- In FE delivered by adult learning providers, satisfaction is greatest for the IT equipment/facilities and the learning support facilities (for each of these, 56 per cent of learners award a 9 or 10 out of 10) and for childcare facilities (54 per cent) and other support services (48 per cent).
- For learners on non-accredited ACL courses, satisfaction is greatest for childcare facilities (55 per cent rating a 9 or 10).

50 For both groups of learners, facilities for socialising, including the canteen/café, receive the lowest ratings (only a third of learners in FE delivered by adult learning providers rating them 9 or 10 out of 10, and 41 per cent in non-accredited ACL).

Conclusions

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

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

53 The proportion of learners getting a 'buzz' from learning remains high, as does the proportion of learners who are extremely satisfied with the quality of teaching they receive. It is striking that almost three quarters of learners who previously had a negative attitude towards education are now getting a 'buzz' out of learning. There are however some signs that adult and community learning providers need to guard against complacency. The overall level of learner satisfaction with the quality of teaching has dropped slightly in the last year, a lower proportion of learners readily acknowledge the benefits of learning, and the number of learners who feel their course met their expectations very closely has also dropped. The survey identifies important factors that motivate or demotivate learners, and observations from focus groups point to methods of embedding good practice which should guard against any further decline in learner satisfaction.

54 Adult and community learning providers offer a wide range of programmes to a significant number of people. They have particular strengths in working locally, in and with communities; and much of their work either attracts into learning those who have not participated for some time, or responds directly to the learning needs of an ageing population. It is especially important that client groups who may be socially excluded are positive about the provision available for them.

55 Learners and staff have provided us with some useful suggestions. The need for accurate, up-to-date and clearly publicised information on courses/programmes offered, and the importance of high quality pre-entry advice, have been strongly highlighted. Also stressed in our discussions with those directly involved in adult and community learning provision is the need for frequent feedback to learners, so that they can see how they are progressing, and are motivated by their achievements. There are also some clear messages for teachers, careful planning; frequent review of learners' progress; robust time management and classroom management strategies are all key. And there are strong messages too about the need to identify and disseminate effective practice, and increased use of lesson observation with constructive feedback, possible supported by mentoring or coaching to help teachers improve practice.

56 While the survey identifies an increase in learners experiencing difficulties, many of these factors are largely outside the control of providers, for example, work commitments, family demands, or financial pressures. Providers should however play and manage an important role through advice and support services to help affected learners to balance these problems with their learning. Certainly it should be possible for adult and community learning providers to make sure that teacher induction training programmes allow staff to adopt appropriate teaching strategies to reduce the number of cases where learners lack motivation, or struggle with the standard of work. Providers will be working towards having more of their teachers qualified. Managers of adult and community learning provider organisations might also wish to consider setting aside budget to fund learner support, in much the same way that Access Fund allocations are used to help learners in external institutions.

57 A minority of learners still leave their courses early and some of the reasons for this are out of the provider's control, such as health problems, but many can be addressed by providers. Our focus groups have suggested that the problems can be reduced by better follow-up of early leavers and a managed open door policy to encourage them back. Effective recording of learners' formative achievements can help keep learners motivated.

58 The evidence from learners is of an adult and community learning sector with much to be proud of. Providers frequently have reached out effectively to previously excluded learners and have responded positively to national priorities such as family learning and Skills for Life. It is a sector that aims to engage the breadth of its local community and to promote inclusion. Despite the many challenges, providers meet and exceed the expectations of most of their learners. There is much still to be done to build on features of provision that learners value highly, to address a recent slight decline, and to help make sure that a higher proportion of learners in adult and community learning move from being fairly satisfied to becoming very or extremely satisfied in the future.

Enquiries and Key Publications

Highlights report and detailed findings 2002/03

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

National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2002/03: Highlights

National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2002/03: Technical Data

National Learner Satisfaction Survey Further Education Summary Report 2002/03

National Learner Satisfaction Survey Work-Based Learning Summary Report 2002/03

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

Findings 2001/02

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

Core methodology and questions

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

Feedback

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

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

Acknowledgments

Partner Organisation

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



Notes

Notes

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