RESEARCH

ESOL Pathfinder Learners' Survey and Prisons Report

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Contents

List of Abbreviations

ABSSU: Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (part of DfES)
ACE: Adult Continuing Education
ACL: Adult and Community Learning
BET: Basic Employability Training
DfEE: Department for Education and Employment
DfES: Department for Education and Skills
EFL: English as a Foreign Language
ELLIS: English Language Learning Instructional Services
ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages
FE: Further Education
HE: Higher Education
HMPS: Her Majesty's Prison Service
IAG: Information, Advice and Guidance
ICT: Information and Communications Technology
ILP: Individual Learning Plan
LSC: Learning and Skills Council
PGCE: Post Graduate Certificate in Education
TALENT: Training Adult Literacy, ESOL and Numeracy Teachers
TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE LEARNERS SURVEY

The DfES has a Public Services Agreement Target to improve the literacy, language and numeracy levels of 2.25 million adults between the launch of Skills for Life in 2001 and 2010, with an interim target of 750,000 having been achieved in 2004. The ESOL Pathfinders were launched in 2002 in 10 locations across England (with a separate Pathfinder for HM Prison Service) as part of the Government's Skills for Life strategy. Developments within the strategy have included:

- Introducing the national core curriculum for ESOL
- Developing and delivering intensive training for ESOL teachers who work for more than six hours per week
- Commissioning a new assessment tool and linked training for teachers
- Work to map ESOL materials onto the ESOL curriculum

Evaluation of the ESOL Pathfinders

In November 2002, the DfES commissioned TNS to carry out the evaluation of the ESOL Pathfinders. The objectives of the research were to:

- Provide comprehensive profile information on ESOL learner backgrounds
- Explore learners' experiences of the ESOL Pathfinders
- Measure the impact of the ESOL training on learner outcomes, in terms of course completions, qualifications achieved, and also in terms of wider economic, social and employment outcomes.
- Examine the processes used by each of the Pathfinders in bringing about the new ESOL learning infrastructure, and the lessons to be learned from each pathfinder area.

The evaluation comprised of two parts, as follows:

Part 1: A quantitative evaluation of the learners' experiences. This consisted of self-completion questionnaires to learners at two waves (The Learners' Survey). The first wave

took place “in-class” and the second wave of questionnaires was despatched approximately six months later to learners either by post, e-mail or via the training providers.

Questionnaires were designed, translated into the appropriate languages and piloted. Both the teachers and the learners were briefed prior to the questionnaires being distributed. The total number of completed questionnaires received from learners at wave 1 was 2746. Of these, 700 learners returned a questionnaire for wave 2.

The results indicate that there is no statistical difference in the demographic profile of learners at wave 1 and wave 2. This indicates that no systematic bias is apparent in the wave 2 sample.

Part 2: A qualitative evaluation with a wide range of personnel from the Pathfinders. This part of the evaluation is reported in a separate volume, with the exception of the Prisons Pathfinder which is included in this report.

KEY FINDINGS

Learner diversity

All ESOL Pathfinder partners stressed the extraordinary variety of learner characteristics, and that making generalisations about the typical ESOL learner was difficult. The diversity of learners was clear from the information they provided in the Learner Survey. Overall in the sample of learners who participated in the survey, females slightly outnumbered men by six to four. Around half of the learners (45 per cent) were aged under thirty years with the largest single age band being twenty-five to twenty-nine years (22 per cent). There were relatively few learners aged fifty years or more. Half were married or living with a partner, and of those only one is six said that their partner was not in the UK. Slightly less than half said that their partner was in work (44 per cent). Four in ten of the learners said they had one child or more living with them at home. Providers were particularly aware of the challenges supporting children at home presented for a number of their learners.

Learners came from a very large number of ethnic groups with small numbers of learners scattered across a large range of ethnic groups. The four largest groups were relatively equal in size and accounted for six in ten learners. They were, in order of size: White Other (16 per cent), African (15 per cent), Pakistani (13 per cent) and Other Asian (13 per cent). The Learner Survey revealed over fifty-four different first languages spoken by learners,

again with small numbers of learners scattered over a large range of languages. The largest single groups with around one in ten in each were Urdu (10 per cent) and Punjabi (8 per cent).

Previous Education

The profile of learners' previous education varied considerably. However, the overall mean age at which learners started education was 6.5 years old; the overall mean age for finishing education was 15.1 years old. 59 per cent of learners have had 11 or more years of education, with 23 per cent having more than 15 years in education. Males were more likely than females to have no qualifications (37 per cent compared with 32 per cent of females).

Before the course

The majority of learners (58 per cent) found out about the course from family or friends. A further 28 per cent become aware of the course at a college or training centre, while 10 per cent found out through a government office or agency. Relatively small numbers found out about the course through advertising, from the library, from the local council, or from local community groups.

The biggest motivation to take the course was to help with everyday tasks, such as writing and filling in forms (86 per cent of learners considering this to be a very or fairly important factor). Nearly as many learners also considered that helping to improve their confidence and helping them to get on another course were important motivators in their decision to take the course. To enable them to get more involved in their community or neighbourhood was a reason for starting the course for just over two thirds of learners (70 per cent). The potential for financial gain was mentioned less frequently, just over one half thought this to be important.

The Course

The most common class size was between 11 - 15 students, with 41 per cent of learners stating that this many people were in their class. Just under one third (30 per cent) were in classes with five to 10 students, while one quarter were in classes with more than 15 students. Only two per cent were in classes with less than five people. Class sizes tended to be larger for the longer duration courses, both in terms of hours per week and weeks per course.

The majority of learners (57 per cent) said that they were receiving between five and fifteen hours of teaching a week (28 per cent between five and ten hours and 29 per cent between 10 and 15). Seven per cent of learners said they were receiving less than two hours teaching a week, while 18 per cent said they were receiving between three and four hours a week. 15 per cent said that they were receiving 16 or more hours a week.

The majority of learners (68 per cent) were on courses of more than 20 weeks duration, 22 per cent were on courses lasting between five and 20 weeks, and five per cent were on courses of four weeks duration or less.

It is clear that there is no simple formula to designing an optimum course. The class size, the hours of teaching per week and the duration of the course in weeks will vary considerably depending on the nature of the type of course and the mix of learners, and undoubtedly their personal characteristics.

The majority at wave 1 (59 per cent) thought that the course was aimed at about the right level, 25% felt that it was too hard while 14 per cent felt it was too easy. Of the learners at wave 1, almost half (44 per cent) thought that the course was the right length. Just over one fifth (21 per cent) thought it was too short, while seven per cent felt it was too long. Those on longer courses (11 weeks or more) were more likely to think that their course was the right length than those on shorter courses. Of the 700 who took part in wave 2 (Table 44), just under half (46 per cent) at wave 1 thought that the course was about the right length. Slightly more than one fifth of learners thought it was too short, while seven per cent felt it was too long. One quarter did not know as they were still on the course. However, when asked the same question at wave 2 (and when more had finished the course), almost two thirds (64 per cent) felt the course was about the right length. Those stating it was too long fell by one per cent at wave 2 (from 7% to 6%) while the numbers who felt it was too short fell by two per cent, from 21 per cent at wave 1 to 19 per cent at wave 2.

Almost all learners at wave 2 considered that the course had been a good experience, with 49 per cent stating it was a very good experience and 45 per cent a good experience. Just one per cent of learners thought the course had been a bad experience, while less than one per cent thought it was a very bad experience.

Completion of the Course

At wave 2, just over half of the 700 learners (52 per cent) stated that they had completed the course and 10 per cent admitted to leaving the course early. 32 per cent were still on the course at the time of the wave 2 questionnaire. Completion rates were higher amongst the unemployed who were claiming Jobseekers Allowance (58 per cent), the unemployed not claiming benefit (63 per cent), and those in full time education or training (70 per cent). The number of children in the household had some impact on the numbers who completed the course, 55 per cent of learners with no children completed the course, compared with 47 per cent of those with three or more children.

Improvement in English

The majority of learners say that they think their spoken English has improved as a result of the course – 21 per cent by a large amount, 43 per cent by a fair amount, and 25 per cent by a little. Twenty five per cent of learners considered that their reading in English had improved a large amount, 39 per cent by a fair amount, and 26 per cent thought they had improved a little. Only six per cent of learners thought they had not improved very much, and one per cent thought their reading in English had not improved at all. Many felt that their written English had also improved, 23 per cent by a large amount, 36 per cent by a fair amount, and 29 per cent by a little. Only eight per cent of learners thought they had not improved very much, and two per cent thought their written English had not improved at all.

At wave 2, over one third (35 per cent) of learners said they had taken the National Literacy test, while one quarter took another type of test such as Pitman exams.

Course Improvement Suggestions

At wave 2, learners were asked about possible improvement areas to the course. Slightly more than one third of students (35 per cent) said that more time with the teacher would have made the course better, while one third thought that the course would have been better if all the students had been at the same level of English. It is hoped that this situation will be improved by a better initial assessment tool, which is currently being implemented. Just over one quarter (28 per cent) thought a longer course would have been an improvement. This is higher amongst those who took part in courses lasting less than 11 weeks (43 per cent) than

it is amongst those whose courses lasted for 11 weeks or more (25 per cent). In addition, a higher proportion of learners who spent less than two hours per week on courses (38 per cent) felt that their courses would have been improved if they were longer.

Employment and Further Training

At the first wave, almost six in ten of all learners (58 per cent) felt that to do the course was very important in helping them get a job. Out of those learners 34% were unemployed and claiming benefit. A further 13 per cent considered it was fairly important.

There is little difference between the two waves in terms of learners' current employment status. Indeed it is unlikely that there would be a significant change as many learners wanted to continue further training prior to entering the job market. The proportion that are unemployed and claiming benefit, decreased by two per cent, from 29 per cent at wave 1 to 27 per cent at wave 2. In contrast, those who were unemployed but not claiming benefit increased by two per cent from wave 1 to wave 2. The proportion of learners who are employed full time is the same for both waves (11 per cent), but one per cent lower at wave 2 for part time and the self employed.

However, those taking part in full time education or training increased from 14 per cent at wave 1 to 16 per cent at wave 2, and there was also a one per cent increase for the proportion of learners who were looking after their home and/or family.

At the end of their Pathfinder course 44 per cent of learners said they had been helped to get onto another English course and a further 31 per cent had been helped onto another type of course. This was higher amongst the unemployed and those in full time education or training.

Just over one quarter (27 per cent) felt that their chances of getting a job, or a better job had been improved by the course. A similar proportion said that the course had helped them get more involved in their community / neighbourhood.

At wave 2, learners were asked what they were currently learning. Just under half (48 per cent) of the learners are enrolled in another English course. 13 per cent are doing a course

(such as Childcare, Catering or IT) which provides help with English, while six per cent are doing a course which does not provide help with English.

Citizenship

At wave 2 learners were asked whether they knew that the Home Office was planning to introduce a language and citizenship assessment for those wanting to be British citizens. Learners were fairly equally divided in their response: 45 per cent said they did know and 44 per cent said they did not know. Male learners (52 per cent) were more likely to know than female learners (41 per cent). 63 per cent of learners at wave 2 indicated that they wanted to become a British citizen, 22 per cent indicated that they were already a British citizen and only seven per cent did not want to become a British citizen. Eight per cent did not respond to this question.

THE PRISON PATHFINDER

Introduction

The evaluation of the Prison Pathfinder consists of two elements:

- **Quantitative study:** A self-completion questionnaire which was administered "in-class" to 125 learners. Learners had already started their course and for the majority they had attended a number of sessions. Six months after the initial data collection a follow-up questionnaire was sent to the Education Department within the prisons/detention centres.

- **Qualitative study:** A series of 21 interviews held with staff, teachers and managers working in the Prison Pathfinder.

The report covers the design and administration of each element of the evaluation and discusses the findings in detail.

The Prisons and Detention Centres

Internal discussions within HMPS and the Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU) identified six prisons that made successful bids to take part in the Prison Pathfinder:

- Feltham
- Hasler
- Morton Hall
- Pentonville
- The Verne
- Wormwood Scrubs

Gender and Age

The population of ESOL learners in the Prison Pathfinder was more likely to be male than the wider population of ESOL learners, which reflects the general offender population. However the age range was broadly similar in both groups.

Marital Status

41 per cent of learners were single, and 39 per cent were married. Of those learners who were married one third lived in the UK with their spouse/partner while two thirds lived alone while their spouse/partner lived outside of the UK. Divorcees accounted for six per cent of learners, while one per cent were widowed. 14 per cent did not give an answer.

Ethnicity

Almost one third (32 per cent) of learners indicated that they belonged to the White (non British or Irish) ethnic group. 12 per cent were Caribbean, 11 per cent African, seven per cent Indian and three per cent stated that they were Pakistani. Other Ethnic groups accounted for two per cent or less of the sample.

Length of time lived in the UK

Learners in the Prison Pathfinder indicated that they have lived in the UK for a shorter time than those in the other Pathfinders. One third (31 per cent) of learners had lived in the UK for less than a year compared to 21% across the other Pathfinders. 29 per cent had lived in the UK for between one and two years which is similar to the other Pathfinders (28 per cent), 11 per cent for between three and four years (22% for learners in other Pathfinders) and six per cent for between five and ten years (12% for learners in other Pathfinders). Three per cent had lived in the UK for ten years or more (13% for learners in other Pathfinders), while two per cent (in both groups) said they had lived in the UK for all their life. 17 per cent did not respond to this question.

Education

The majority of learners had undertaken fairly substantial periods of formal education. However, there was a fairly large minority with ten or less years of formal education. Most (39 per cent) learners began school aged between six and eight years old, with a further 31 per cent starting school aged between four and five years old. 16 per cent started school aged four years or younger, while one in ten started at age nine or older. Just two per cent stated they never attended school. When compared to the other Pathfinders, more started education before the age of six, though a larger number also started after nine. Half of all learners left school aged sixteen or older, one fifth left aged between fourteen and fifteen and one in ten left aged between twelve and thirteen. Almost one fifth (18 per cent) left school aged twelve or younger.

Employment

11 per cent of learners were in full-time employment prior to coming to prison / being detained. Three per cent had a part-time job, while two per cent were self-employed. Seven per cent were unemployed (with one per cent claiming benefit and six per cent not claiming benefit) and one per cent of learners were doing unpaid voluntary work. Eight per cent of learners were in full-time education, a similar proportion (10 per cent) were permanently sick or disabled, while 14 per cent were looking after the home or family. However, four in ten learners did not say what their employment status was before being detained.

Competence in English

One quarter (24 per cent) of learners stated that they could say anything they needed to in English, while a further 20 per cent could say quite a lot. 40 per cent thought they were able to say a little and six per cent said they had difficulty saying basic things. Two per cent stated they could not speak English at all. Only 15 per cent of learners said they could write anything they needed to in English, 17 per cent could write quite a lot and 45 per cent a little. Nine per cent of learners stated that writing English was difficult while six per cent could not write in English at all. One fifth (19 per cent) of learners said they could understand anything they read. One quarter (26 per cent) could understand quite a lot of what they read, while one third (33 per cent) could understand a little. 10 per cent of learners had difficulty understanding basic things and three per cent stated that they could not read in English at all.

Competence in First Language

Learners were also asked to rate their competence in speaking, reading and writing in their first language. Two thirds (64 per cent) of learners said they could write anything they needed to in their first language, 10 per cent could write a lot and 11 per cent a little. Three per cent had difficulty writing basic things and a further three per cent could not write at all in their first language. Reading ability followed a similar pattern. Two thirds (66 per cent) could understand anything they read, nine per cent could understand a lot of what they read and 10 per cent a little. Three per cent found it difficult to understand basic things, while two per cent could not read at all in their first language. Four in ten learners (42 per cent) stated that they could manage any maths in their first language, 24 per cent could manage quite a lot while 18 per cent thought they could manage a little maths. Four per cent had difficulty managing basic maths, while five per cent could not manage maths at all in their first language.

Current Course

Learners were asked to identify the types of help they received on their course. The most common form of help received was in speaking English (81 per cent) followed by help in writing English (74 per cent) and reading English (63 per cent). Over one quarter (28 per cent) received help in maths, while 21 per cent received useful information about living in England.

Views on Course

Two thirds (66 per cent) of learners thought that before they started the course it was very important for them to go on it and a further 18 per cent thought it was fairly important. Just three per cent considered before the course that it was neither important nor unimportant for them to go on it, while three per cent thought it was unimportant.

The most important factor rated by learners in influencing their decision to start the course was to get help with everyday tasks like reading / writing letters and filling in forms. 67 per cent said that this was a very important reason and 15 per cent a fairly important reason. The next most important determining factor was a desire to help improve their self-confidence with 61 per cent stating that this was very important and 15 per cent fairly important. To help them get on another course was seen as very important by 54 per cent of learners and fairly important by 16 per cent of learners, while the ability to help them earn more money was seen as a very important reason for starting the course by 50 per cent, and a fairly important reason by 16 per cent. Fewer learners indicated that it was very important (30 per cent) or fairly important (13 per cent) to help get an early release. Similar proportions also stated that the course was to spend time out of the cell or dormitory, 25 per cent thought it was very important and 13 per cent fairly important.

At the End of the Course

The majority of learners plan to continue learning English. One fifth (22 per cent) have already started further training in English, while half (49 per cent) plan to do so. Only eight per cent said that they were not going to do further training - a further 10 per cent were undecided.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

The strategy document 'Skills for Life'[1] was published in 2001. It described the high priority the government intended to give to raising participation and attainment in adult skills through promoting high quality education and training to support improved literacy, numeracy and language learning.

The DfES has a Public Services Agreement Target to improve the literacy, language and numeracy levels of 2.25 million adults between the launch of Skills for Life in 2001 and 2010, with an interim target of 750,000 being achieved in 2004. The need for urgent action in these areas had been pointed to, in particular, by the earlier Moser Report[2,3].

The ESOL Pathfinders were launched in 2002 in 10 locations across England (with a separate Pathfinder for HM Prison Service) as part of the government's Skills for Life strategy. Developments within the strategy have included:

- Introducing the national core curriculum for ESOL
- Developing and delivering intensive training for ESOL teachers who work for more than six hours per week
- Commissioning a new assessment tool and linked training
- Work to map ESOL materials onto the ESOL curriculum

Aims for the Pathfinders included:

- Testing the core teaching and learning infrastructure for adults whose first language is not English

[1] 'Skills for Life, the National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills' DfEE 2001
[2] 'Improving Literacy and Numeracy A Fresh Start' DfEE 1999
[3] Also see: 'The Skills for Life Survey: A National Needs and Impact Survey of Literacy, Numeracy and ICT Skills' DfES Research Report RR490; October 2003.
[4] The New and the Old: The report of the "Life in the United Kingdom" Advisory Group. Home Office 2003.

- Developing and investigating a range of delivery models to meet the needs of different ESOL learner groups
- Disseminating effective practice to other teachers and providers

Bids were invited from suitable local organisations and consortia during the summer of 2002 to become Pathfinders. Successful bids were based in:

- Buckinghamshire and Norfolk
- Burnley and Pendle
- East London and Lewisham
- Exeter and Plymouth
- Liverpool, Blackburn and the Wirral
- South Thames
- South East Coastal Counties (Thanet/Medway/ East Sussex)
- Walsall and Birmingham Core Skills
- West London
- West Yorkshire
- Prisons

Individual Pathfinders differed appreciably by design. They covered very different parts of the country, and included different groups of partners. In particular, however, they covered different 'strands' of support activities so that a proportion emphasised ICT-based solutions, for example, and others concentrated on intensive or vocational approaches to ESOL training (more details are given in Table 1). The DfES's Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU) carried out a range of monitoring and co-ordination tasks across the Pathfinders as a whole – including convening regular all-Pathfinder meetings at which progress and emerging experiences could be shared.

Table 1: Distribution of Main 'Strand' Activity

Pathfinders	ICT	Intensives	Vocational	Low Literacy	Jobcentre Plus	Working with Other Agencies	Outreach	Training Teachers/ Mentors	Embedded ESOL	Flexible Delivery	Other
Buckinghamshire and Norfolk	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√
Burnley & Pendle		√	√			√			√		
East London & Lewisham	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Exeter and Plymouth	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Prisons	√	√									
Liverpool, Blackburn & the Wirral	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√
South East Coastal Counties	√			√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
South Thames	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√
Walsall with Birmingham	√	√			√		√	√	√	√	
West London						√	√	√			
West Yorkshire	√	√		√	√	√	√		√	√	√

Source: TALENT (ESOL) web site for all except West London; source for West London: DfES

2.2 Pathfinder Structures

Pathfinders were typically led by FE colleges or local learning partnerships – although the Exeter and Plymouth area was rather different because of the leading role played by the local Council for Voluntary Service. There was some variation at a local level, but typical partnership representation centred on colleges, Adult and Community Learning, Jobcentre Plus, Connexions, adult guidance, and various voluntary groups and networks (particularly those supporting refugees and asylum seekers). Other 'umbrella' organisations played varying parts – in general terms, depending on the strength of existing local links and established working arrangements. Trades Unions, local employers and a range of other bodies also took an active part in several Pathfinders.

In terms of actually delivering the Pathfinder activities, a series of more or less discrete individual projects were normally established within each Pathfinder, in the case of West Yorkshire, for example, a total of 53 'mini-projects' emerged. With a range of partners, and a multiplicity of individual projects, local co-ordination activities needed to be thorough, and in most cases this worked very well.

There was some fluidity in relation to the different 'strands' of activity within the Pathfinders. When submitting bids, potential Pathfinder partnerships had been asked simply to *"indicate whether the following categories of activity* (the 'strands') *would be a definite, likely or unlikely part of your ESOL Pathfinder project".* For many, it was clear that these intentions were indicative at the time when they were submitting applications. In any event, however, these initial intentions were then 'worked up' more or less throughout the lives of the Pathfinders themselves.

The eventual distribution of main 'strand' activity is summarised in Table 1, but the overall position was more complex than this: almost all Pathfinders had, for example, some experience of delivering 'embedded' ESOL learning and ICT-linked programmes, not just those where the main 'strand' activity is indicated. In addition, some of the Pathfinders' activities encompassed wider issues – Burnley's attention to health promotion and awareness being a case in point.

2.3 Timing

ABSSU originally intended Pathfinders to run up until June/July of 2003, but in many cases late starting at a local level made this target difficult to achieve. To overcome such issues, ABSSU agreed on a Pathfinder-by-Pathfinder basis to extend agreed periods of operation. Funding was not increased, but the time to spend allocated funds was extended – flexibility which was very much appreciated by individual Pathfinders and which contributed considerably to achieving better results at a local level, and much higher levels of learning overall, than would have been the case if initial plans had been strictly adhered to.

2.4 Overview of the ESOL Pathfinder Evaluation

In November 2002, the DfES commissioned TNS to carry out the evaluation of the ESOL Pathfinders. The evaluation comprised of two parts, as follows:

Part 1: A quantitative evaluation of the learners' experiences. This consisted of self-completion questionnaires to learners at two waves (The Learners' Survey). The first wave took place "in-class" and the second wave of questionnaires was despatched approximately six months later to learners either by post, e-mail or via the training providers. This report describes Part 1 of the evaluation.

Part 2: A qualitative evaluation with a wide range of personnel from the Pathfinder. This part of the evaluation is reported in a separate volume, with the exception of the Prisons Pathfinder which is included in this report. The qualitative evaluation comprised of the following elements:

- Initial desk research and preparatory work (reviewing bids, background information about Pathfinder areas, etc).
- An initial 'wave' of face-to-face interviews with Pathfinder managers, partners, co-ordinators, partners and teachers during the early months of Pathfinder operation (December 2002 - March 2003).

- A second wave of interviews, closely paralleling the first wave, in June - July 2003 when it had been expected that Pathfinders would be close to completing their activities.
- A series of brief follow-up interviews with co-ordinators during February and March 2004.
- Part 2 of the evaluation is reported in a separate volume.

2.5 Objectives of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide information on best practice, in order to feed into the national ESOL strategy. More specifically the objectives of the research were to:

- Provide comprehensive profile information on ESOL learner backgrounds – for example demographic details, information on previous learning experiences, etc.
- Explore learners' experiences of the ESOL Pathfinders – for example, their expectations of the training, how this matched up with reality, and any improvements that could be made.
- Measure the impact of the ESOL training on learner outcomes, in terms of course completions, qualifications achieved, and also in terms of wider economic, social and employment outcomes.
- Examine the processes used by each of the Pathfinders in bringing about the new ESOL learning infrastructure, and the lessons to be learned from each pathfinder area.

The first three objectives were specifically addressed in the design of the quantitative part of the evaluation. The fourth objective was addressed through the design of the qualitative evaluation.

2.6 The Methodology

This section describes the methodology that was adopted in the design of the Learners' Survey. The quantitative research used a variation of the classic pre and post design. Two waves of research were conducted with the same group of learners at two different time periods. This design enabled changes in learners' perceptions at the second wave to be identified.

The DfES convened an ESOL Steering Group which assisted in many elements of the design of the research. In addition the DfES held monthly Pathfinder Meetings throughout the duration of the Pathfinder. The details of the research were discussed at these meetings and many useful suggestions were built into the final design. The meetings were also used to facilitate and report back on the progress of the research fieldwork.

2.6.1 The Questionnaires

The Learners' Survey was designed to collect information about the following areas at wave 1:

- Self-assessed language skills (first language and English)
- Views about the current course (near the start of their course)
- Educational achievements and views about education
- Employment history
- Background demographic information
- Reasons for participating in the course

At wave 2 the following areas were covered:

- Views about the course they had completed
- Suggestions for improvements in the courses they had attended and/or to their learning path
- Current learning activities
- Current employment and future employment plans
- Whether the participants objectives had been met

In designing the questionnaire there were a number of considerations. The questionnaire used plain standard English to assist understanding. All the questions were pre-coded and write-in responses were kept to a minimum. Questionnaire routing was also restricted. At both waves the questionnaire was designed to be

completed within a 50 minute session, which at the first wave would be in class and at the second wave would be at home.

Once the questionnaire had been drafted it was copied to the individual with responsibility for the evaluation within each Pathfinder. They were invited to comment on the draft and a number of changes were made as a result. Once this had been completed the questionnaire was presented to the ESOL Steering Group who again provided many useful comments prior to the questionnaire being piloted.

2.6.2 Pilot

Both waves of the questionnaire were piloted. The purpose of the pilot was to ensure that:

- The learner fully understood all the questions
- The learner was able to provide an answer to all questions
- The answers offered on the questionnaire were comprehensive and clear
- The flow of the questions was logical
- The length of the questionnaire was appropriate
- There were no obvious omissions from the questionnaire

The first wave pilot involved administering the questionnaire to 10 learners from the South East Coastal Counties Pathfinder in their own home and then discussing the questionnaire with them. The questionnaire was then administered “in class” to eight learners at the East London and Lewisham Pathfinder. The pilot took place in November and December 2002. The main changes that were made were to simplify the language further, and to re-order a number of the questions so that they followed a more logical progression.

At the second wave, the questionnaire was piloted with 12 learners from two classes in the West Yorkshire Pathfinder and a modified version was then piloted in one class of 10 learners in the East London and Lewisham Pathfinder. At the second wave pilot a number of changes were made to the wording of questions which required the modified version to be piloted again. The second wave pilot took place in April and May 2003.

2.6.3 Language Issues

It was clear from the outset that some of the learners would not be able to complete the questionnaire in English. Pathfinder evaluators were asked to identify the translations required with an estimated number of learners for each language. For practical reasons the list of available languages was restricted and the final selection was based on those languages that would enable the most learners to access the questionnaire. We would estimate that less than 10% of all learners at the first wave were unable to tackle the questionnaire as a result of language difficulties. In most cases these learners were newly started on the course, had very limited English skills and whose own first language skills were not amongst those that the questionnaire had been translated into. The questionnaire was translated into sixteen languages at wave 1 and seven languages at wave 2 (see Table 2).

Table 2: List of languages the questionnaires were translated into

	wave 1	wave 2
Albanian	✓	✓
Arabic	✓	✓
Bengali	✓	
Cantonese	✓	
Farsi	✓	
French	✓	✓
Kurdish	✓	
Mandarin	✓	
Portuguese	✓	✓
Russian	✓	
Somali	✓	✓
Spanish	✓	✓
Tamil	✓	
Turkish	✓	✓
Urdu	✓	
Vietnamese	✓	

Those languages that had very low levels of usage at wave 1 were not translated at the second wave. The translations were provided by a commercial company, and were checked independently by staff at TNS who were first language speakers in the appropriate language.

During the administration sessions maximum use was made of language support from other learners in the class who spoke the same language. In some cases learners organised themselves in mother language groups to support each other in completing the questionnaire. For a small number the concept of completing a questionnaire was unusual, and here the class teacher often offered invaluable support.

A small proportion of learners had limited literacy in their own language. In a few cases TNS organised for interpreters to be present during the administration of the wave 1 questionnaire. In total 13 interpreter sessions were used mainly at the East London and Lewisham forums. The interpreter read out the questionnaire and completed responses on behalf of the learner. Where interpreters were not available it was sometimes possible for other learners (in the same class or from a different class) to assist in the administration of the questionnaire.

2.6.4 Teacher and Learner Briefings

Information from learners was collected using self-completion questionnaires. At wave 1, once specific training providers had agreed to participate, TNS sent a written briefing for teachers. The briefing explained the purpose of the evaluation, sought to reassure staff about confidentiality and to describe the data collection procedure in detail. TNS also provided a written briefing for teachers to distribute to learners. This briefing covered similar areas. It invited learners to participate in the research, it explained how the research would be used to evaluate all the ESOL Pathfinders, and it reassured learners that the information they provided would remain confidential and that individuals' information would not be passed on to anyone outside of TNS. The briefing also informed learners that if they agreed to participate, they would receive an initial questionnaire at the beginning of their course and a second questionnaire after approximately six months. The learners' briefing material was available in 16 different languages.

2.6.5 Questionnaire Distribution

At wave 1, the vast majority of the questionnaires were distributed to learners during an ESOL class. In most cases, teachers had already given learners advance knowledge that this would be happening. The questionnaires were handed out by a TNS interviewer who had been briefed to explain the purpose of the evaluation, and to encourage as many learners to complete the questionnaires as possible. The interviewer was briefed to answer questions about the evaluation. In most sessions the teacher was available in the class, and provided support to learners.

In some cases the questionnaires were distributed in a forum convened specifically for learners to complete the questionnaires. This was the case in East London and

Exeter. In East London, learners received an incentive of a £10 shopping voucher to attend the session, at the instigation of the Pathfinder. In Exeter the session took place during a specially organised educational trip for families of learners to the zoological gardens.

At wave 2, TNS again agreed the method to dispatch the questionnaires to learners with the Pathfinder representatives. In practice, two methods were used. The first involved sending the questionnaire to the home address provided by the learner on the first questionnaire. The second method involved distributing the questionnaires to the training providers who then passed them on to learners. This method was used where training providers did not want learners to provide home address details on the first questionnaire. Only three Pathfinders (the East London and Lewisham Pathfinder, Exeter and Plymouth Pathfinder and the South Thames Pathfinder) distributed all the questionnaires themselves. The remaining Pathfinders agreed a mixed approach involving some college dispatching and some postal dispatching via TNS.

2.6.6 Sample Size and Sample Selection

Pathfinder representatives were asked to provide TNS with details of all courses covered under the Pathfinder initiative. Many courses were developed during the life of the Pathfinder, and therefore TNS asked Pathfinder representatives to update the information on courses that were running.

It was planned that TNS should collect 3,000 questionnaires at wave 1. Early estimates were that as many as 10,000 learners would be involved in the Pathfinder initiative, and therefore it was decided to sample one in three courses. Attendance levels were predicted at 12 per class. However, as the number of learners available at each session were considerably lower than this (on average about five or six per class), and as some courses were slower to get off the ground than anticipated, it was agreed with the DfES in February 2003 that all remaining classes at which TNS were aware would be included in the study.

The breakdown of numbers of learner questionnaires completed at wave 1 in each Pathfinder is given in Table 3. A total of 211 “in-class” sessions and an additional 20 forums were held. Around five per cent of learners asked to complete the

questionnaire outside the classroom or the forum and they returned these separately. These questionnaires could not later be identified as linked to a Pathfinder.

Table 3: Numbers of classroom sessions and forums to collect the questionnaires.

	Number of classes	Number of forums held	Number of learners at wave 1
Buckinghamshire and Norfolk	35		221
Burnley and Pendle	4		20
East London and Lewisham		18	515
Exeter and Plymouth		2	23
Liverpool, Blackburn and the Wirral	29		628
South Thames	56		682
South East Coastal Counties	26		287
Walsall with Birmingham Core Skills	33		116
West London	0		15
West Yorkshire	28		97
Questionnaire returned with location unidentified			142
Total	**211**	**20**	**2746**

It is not possible to say accurately what proportion of total learners the 2746 respondents comprise, as definitive figures of the total number of learners covered by the Pathfinder were not available at the time of this report. However, based on data collected from the Pathfinders enrolment figures and collated by KPMG this was estimated to be 16,650 which would represent 16% of all enrolments. However, it should be noted that some learners may have made more than one enrolment.

At the second wave, a total of 700 questionnaires were returned – a response rate of 25 per cent from the wave 1 returns. Approximately one quarter of the questionnaires were sent out by mail and three quarters were sent out via the training providers. Both methods achieved broadly similar response rates (24 per cent for college distributed questionnaires and 27 per cent for postal questionnaires).

3 THE PROFILE OF LEARNERS AT WAVE 1 AND WAVE 2

The total number of completed questionnaires received from learners at wave 1 was 2746. Of these 700 learners returned a questionnaire for wave 2. In this chapter we describe the demographic profile of all wave 1 learners and compare this with the subset of wave 1 learners who returned a wave 2 questionnaire. The reason for making this comparison is to identify whether those who responded at the second wave have different characteristics from the total learners at the first wave. The areas covered in this chapter are:

- Gender
- Age
- Marital status
- Whether partner is in work
- Children in the household
- Ethnicity
- First language
- Housing
- Financial information
- Employment
- Education
- Other demographic information
- Strand of Pathfinder activity

The results indicate that in all of the above areas there is no statistical difference in the demographic profile of learners at wave 1 and wave 2.

3.1 Gender

Learners were more likely to be female than male: 56 per cent female compared to 40 per cent male in wave 1 (Table 4). In wave 2, a slightly greater proportion of the learners were female (60 per cent), although this difference was not statistically

significant. At both waves a small number of learners preferred not to disclose their gender.

Table 4: Gender of learners

	wave 1		wave 2		% change
	No.	%	No.	%	%
Gender					
Male	1110	**40**	263	**38**	-2
Female	1541	**56**	420	**60**	+4
Not stated	95	**3**	17	**2**	-1
Total	2746		700		

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

3.2 Age

Around one half of learners indicated that they were under 30 years old (49 per cent), and 42 per cent were aged 30 years or over but under 50 (Table 5). There were relatively few learners aged over 50 years old (six per cent).

The profile of wave 2 learners was virtually identical. Again almost half indicated that they were under 30 years old (48 per cent), and similarly 43 per cent were aged 30 years or over but under 50. As with the wave 1 sample only six per cent of learners were aged over 50 years old.

The approximate mean age of learners for wave 1 was 30.4, for wave 2 it increased slightly to 30.8.

Table 5: Age of learners

	wave 1 learners		wave 2 learners		% change
Age					
Under 20	441	**16**	120	**17**	+1
21-24	375	**14**	96	**14**	=
25-29	509	**19**	116	**17**	-2
30-34	452	**16**	116	**17**	+1
35-39	344	**13**	84	**12**	-1
40-44	234	**9**	65	**9**	=
45-49	117	**4**	32	**5**	+1
50-54	81	**3**	22	**3**	=
55-59	40	**1**	8	**1**	=
60-65	28	**1**	10	**1**	=
65+	24	**1**	9	**1**	=
Not stated	101	**4**	22	**3**	-1
Total	2746		700		

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

3.3 Marital Status / Children

Half of all learners at wave 1 were married: 43 per cent were married or living with a partner in the UK and for an additional seven per cent their partner was outside of the UK (Table 6). 37 per cent of learners were single, five per cent were divorced or separated, and two per cent were widowed. Six per cent of learners did not provide their marital status.

Learners who responded at the second wave showed a very similar profile: 45 per cent were married or living with a partner in the UK, and an additional seven per cent of learners' partners lived outside the UK. 36 per cent of the wave 2 learners were single, five per cent were divorced or separated, and two per cent were widowed.

Table 6: Marital status

	wave 1		wave 2		% change
	No.	%	No.	%	%
Marital Status					
Married / Living as (partner in UK)	1183	**43**	313	**45**	+2
Married / Living as (partner not in UK)	198	**7**	46	**7**	=
Single	1010	**37**	252	**36**	-1
Divorced / Separated	131	**5**	37	**5**	=
Widowed	50	**2**	13	**2**	=
Not stated	174	**6**	39	**6**	=
Total	2746		700		

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

At wave 1, 44 per cent of learners who were married or living as married with a partner in the UK stated that their partner had a paid job. This rose to 49 per cent at wave 2 (Table 7). 46 per cent of learners at wave 1 stated their partner did not have a job compared with 42 per cent of learners at wave 2.

Table 7: Whether partner is working

	wave 1		wave 2		% change
	No.	%	No.	%	%
Partner working					
Yes	517	**44**	152	**49**	+5
No	547	**46**	132	**42**	-4
Not Stated	119	**10**	29	**9**	-1
Total	1183		313		

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

Just over one half of learners (52 per cent) live in childless households and this remained the same from wave 1 to wave 2 (Table 8). The number of households with one child also stayed the same (14 per cent) while those with two children are very similar at both waves. The number of learners living in households with three or more children fell slightly from 12 per cent to 10 per cent.

Table 8: Children in household

	wave 1		**wave 2**		**% change**
	No.	**%**	No.	**%**	%
Children in Household					
None	1416	**52**	369	**52**	=
One	385	**14**	99	**14**	=
Two	378	**14**	105	**15**	+1
Three or more	322	**12**	70	**10**	-2
Not Stated	245	**8**	57	**8**	=
Total	2746		700		

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

3.4 Ethnicity / First Language

There was little difference in the ethnic breakdown of learners at the first and second waves (Table 9). The four largest groups were White Other, African, Pakistani and Other Asian. Wave 2 showed a two per cent increase in the proportion of Chinese learners (wave 1 - five per cent, wave 2 - seven per cent) and a one per cent increase in the proportion of Pakistani learners (wave 1 - 13 per cent, wave 2 - 14 per cent). However the proportion of African learners decreased by one per cent from the first to the second wave (wave 1 - 15 per cent, wave 2 - 14 per cent).

Table 9: Ethnicity

	wave 1		wave 2		% change
	No.	%	No.	%	%
Ethnicity					
White	49	**2**	12	**2**	=
White – Irish	2	*	1	*	=
White – Other	439	**16**	102	**15**	-1
Indian	149	**5**	33	**5**	=
Pakistani	363	**13**	97	**14**	+1
Bangladeshi	167	**6**	44	**6**	=
Other Asian	352	**13**	91	**13**	=
Caribbean	6	*	2	*	=
African	402	**15**	101	**14**	-1
Other Black	16	**1**	4	**1**	=
Chinese	144	**5**	50	**7**	+2
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	*	-	-	
Mixed – White and Black African	40	**1**	7	**1**	=
Mixed – White and Asian	50	**2**	16	**2**	=
Mixed – other	31	**1**	6	**1**	=
Other	283	**10**	75	**11**	+1
Not Stated	250	**9**	59	**8**	-1
Total	2746		700		

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

As with ethnicity, there were very few differences in the first or 'mother tongue' language spoken by the learners between the first and second waves (Tables 10a, 10b, and 10c). At wave 1, Urdu was the most common first language spoken by 10 per cent of learners, followed by Punjabi (eight per cent), Farsi (seven per cent) and Bengali (seven per cent). These were still the top four languages spoken at wave 2,

although Farsi (10 per cent) replaced Urdu (nine per cent) as the common first language. Punjabi speakers fell by one per cent to seven per cent and the proportion of Bengali speakers remained at seven per cent in both waves.

Table 10a: First Language – Asian and Chinese (Base: 2746 learners. Multicoded responses were allowed)

	wave 1		wave 2		% change
	No.	%	No.	%	%
First Language					
Asian					
Bengali and Sylheti	181	**7**	47	**7**	=
Gujarati	77	**3**	20	**3**	=
Hindi	201	**1**	9	**1**	=
Punjabi	206	**8**	51	**7**	-1
Tamil	151	**5**	45	**6**	+1
Pashto	51	**2**	6	**1**	-1
Urdu	267	**10**	65	**9**	-1
Japanese	10	*	3	*	=
Korean	10	*	4	**1**	-
Malay	5	*	3	*	=
Sinhala	3	*	-	-	-
Tagalog	4	*	3	*	=
Thai	23	**1**	11	**2**	+1
Vietnamese	32	**1**	6	**1**	=
Chinese					
Cantonese	101	**4**	34	**5**	+1
Mandarin	51	**2**	16	**2**	=

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

Table 10b: First Language – Black African and Black Caribbean (Base: 2746 learners. Multicoded responses were allowed)

	wave 1		wave 2		% change
	No.	%	No.	%	%
First Language					
Black African					
Akan	5	*	2	*	=
Amharic	17	**1**	4	**1**	=
Ga	3	*	-	**-**	-
Igbo / Ibo	2	*	-	**-**	-
Lingala	60	**2**	20	**3**	+1
Luganda	4	*	3	*	=
Shona	5	*	1	*	=
Somali	178	**6**	26	**4**	-2
Swahili	16	**1**	5	**1**	=
Tigray	20	**1**	6	**1**	=
Urhobo	1	*	-	**-**	-
Yoruba	5	*	1	*	=
Black Caribbean					
Creoles (English based)	9	*	3	*	=
Creoles (French based)	9	*	-	**-**	-
Creoles (Other)	7	*	1	*	=

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

Table 10c: First Language – European and Other (Base: 2746 learners. Multicoded responses were allowed)

	wave 1		wave 2		% change
	No.	%	No.	%	%
First Language					
European					
Welsh	2	*	1	*	=
Gaelic	-	-	-	-	-
Albanian	70	**3**	10	**1**	-2
Bulgarian	4	*	2	*	=
Dutch	1	*	-	-	-
French	70	**3**	21	**3**	=
German	12	*	3	*	=
Greek	7	*	1	*	=
Italian	28	**1**	6	**1**	=
Maltese	1	*	-	-	-
Polish	9	*	3	*	=
Portuguese	63	**2**	18	**3**	+1
Romany	1	*	-	-	-
Russian	72	**3**	15	**2**	-1
Serbian / Croatian	5	*	1	*	=
Spanish	132	**5**	30	**4**	-1
Other European	61	**2**	12	**2**	=
Other					
Arabic	164	**6**	44	**6**	=
Farsi (Persian)	189	**7**	67	**10**	+3
Hebrew	5	*	1	*	=
Kurdish	118	**4**	31	**4**	=
Turkish	116	**4**	30	**4**	=
Other	26	**1**	7	**1**	=
Not Stated	140	**5**	26	**4**	-1

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

3.5 Housing

It was expected that the proportion of learners from settled communities might increase and the proportion of those from the more transient population (for example asylum seekers) would decrease at the second wave. It was decided that a direct question on this topic might be too sensitive to ask. However, a question was asked about the type of housing learners live in. This provides an indication of the permanency of their residence within their community – for instance, if they own their property they are more likely to be settled, whilst those in temporary accommodation are more likely to be transient.

Just over one third of learners (36 per cent for both wave 1 and wave 2) stated that they rented their home (Table 11). At wave 1, 16 per cent owned their own home, and this increased by three per cent at wave 2 to 19 per cent. There was little difference in the proportions of learners living in either Home Office accommodation (10 per cent at wave 1 and nine per cent at wave 2) or hostel accommodation (two per cent at both waves).

It would appear that even at wave 2, the proportions of learners from the settled communities and those from the transient population were not significantly different.

Table 11: Housing

	wave 1		wave 2		% change
	No.	%	No.	%	%
Housing					
Own home	439	**16**	135	**19**	+3
Rented	987	**36**	250	**36**	=
Part Ownership	42	**2**	10	**1**	-1
Living with parents	250	**9**	73	**10**	+1
Shared home	311	**11**	66	**9**	-2
Home Office accommodation (including bed and breakfast accommodation)	264	**10**	66	**9**	-1
Hostel	64	**2**	15	**2**	=
Other	202	**7**	46	**7**	=
Not stated	187	**7**	39	**6**	-1
Total	2746		700		

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

3.6 Financial Information

One third (33 per cent) of all learners received no financial benefits (Table 12). 16 per cent received income support and 16 per cent received unemployment benefit. Just over one in ten (11 per cent) received Home Office vouchers, which are paid to asylum seekers in lieu of cash and are accepted at certain agreed stores. Six per cent received family related or tax benefits. Two per cent received housing or council tax rebates and one per cent received National Insurance credits, sickness or disability benefits and state pension. Seven per cent said they did not know what they received and six per cent did not respond to this question.

Those who responded at wave 2 showed a similar profile. 36 per cent said they received no financial benefits, 15 per cent received income support and 12 per cent received unemployment benefit. Surprisingly, as many as 12 per cent received Home Office vouchers, again indicating that the wave 2 learners comprised of a similar proportion of asylum seekers as wave 1. Six per cent received family related or tax benefits. Three per cent received state pension, two per cent received sickness or disability benefits, two per cent received housing or council tax rebates, and one per cent received National Insurance credits. Seven per cent said they did not know what they received and five per cent did not respond to this question.

Table 12: Benefits received

	wave 1		wave 2		% change
	No.	%	No.	%	%
Benefits Received					
None	895	**33**	253	**36**	+3
Home Office Vouchers	306	**11**	83	**12**	+1
Unemployment Benefit (Jobseekers Allowance)	427	**16**	83	**12**	=
NI Credits	17	**1**	4	**1**	=
Income Support	448	**16**	104	**15**	-1
Sickness or Disability	38	**1**	11	**2**	+1
State Pension	39	**1**	18	**3**	+2
Family Related Benefits / Tax Credits	153	**6**	42	**6**	=
Housing or Council Tax	68	**2**	15	**2**	=
Don't Know	189	**7**	50	**7**	=
Not Stated	166	**6**	37	**5**	-1
Total	2746		700		

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

The majority (63 per cent) of learners preferred not to disclose their total household income after tax (Table 13). Many of the learners did not want to respond to this question because they considered the information to be too personal. However, of those that did give an answer, the profile for all learners and the sub-group of learners that completed the wave 2 questionnaire was virtually identical. Overall, the majority of learners were on low incomes. Fourteen per cent of both groups of learners stated their total household income was under £3,125 per annum, nine per cent at both waves stated that it was between £3,126 and £6,250 and seven per cent at both waves indicated that it was between £6,251 and £9,350 per annum. One per cent more learners at wave 2 than wave 1 earned between £9,351 and £13,000, while the proportion of learners earning more than £13,000 a year was the same for both the first and the second waves.

Table 13: Annual household income (after tax)

	wave 1		wave 2		% change
	No.	%	No.	%	%
Annual Household Income					
£0 - £3,125	371	**14**	95	**14**	=
£3,126 - £6,250	241	**9**	61	**9**	=
£6,251 - £9,350	198	**7**	48	**7**	=
£9,351 - £13,000	120	**4**	32	**5**	+1
£13,001 - £18,200	50	**2**	15	**2**	=
£18,201 - £23,400	18	**1**	5	**1**	=
£23,401 - £28,600	11	*	2	*	=
£28,601 - £33,800	7	*	1	*	=
£33,800+	9	*	3	*	=
Prefer not to Say	1721	**63**	438	**63**	=
Total	2746		700		

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

3.7 Employment

The profile of learners in terms of their current employment status shows few differences between the two waves (Table 14). The proportion that are unemployed and claiming benefit decreased by two per cent, from 29 per cent in wave 1 to 27 per cent in wave 2. In contrast, those who were unemployed but not claiming benefit increased by two per cent from wave 1 to wave 2. The proportion of learners who are employed full time is the same for both waves (11 per cent), but one per cent lower in wave 2 for part time and the self employed. Those taking part in full time education or training increased from 14 per cent in wave 1 to 16 per cent in wave 2, and there was also a one per cent increase for the proportion of learners who were looking after their home and/or family.

Table 14: Employment status

	wave 1		wave 2		% change
	No.	%	No.	%	%
Current Employment Status					
Full-time employment	289	11	76	11	=
Part-time employment	268	10	60	9	-1
Self employed	72	3	17	2	-1
Unemployed claiming benefit	788	29	188	27	-2
Unemployed not claiming benefit	174	6	54	8	+2
Voluntary work	32	1	8	1	=
Full-time education or training	390	14	114	16	+2
Looking after home / family	375	14	105	15	+1
Sick or disabled	37	1	6	1	=
Retired	23	1	7	1	=
Other	107	4	30	4	=
Not Stated	191	7	35	5	-2
Total	2746		700		

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

For those learners who were in employment, the type of work that they were involved in was at similar levels in both waves (Table 15). The most prevalent type of work at Wave 1 was catering, followed by sales and manual work. There was also little change in the types of sectors in which learners were employed at Wave 2, with catering work, retail work, manual work and industrial plant work remaining the most likely sectors.

There was a decrease from Wave 1 to 2 in the overall proportions working in catering (down from 24% to 19%) and sales (down from 11% to 9%) and an increase in those working in "other" areas (up from 14% to 20%) and those working in industrial plants (up from 7% to 10%).

Table 15: Employment by sector

	wave 1		wave 2		% change
Sector	No.	%	No.	%	%
Catering work (e.g. cook, waiter, fast food)	151	24	29	19	-5
Sales assistant, shop worker, other sales occupation	68	11	14	9	-2
Other manual work (e.g. farming, labouring, cleaning)	63	10	15	10	=
Industrial plant	47	7	16	10	3
Health, healthcare childcare	32	5	7	5	=
Professional work (e.g. accountancy, teaching, medicine, nursing)	26	4	7	5	+1
Clerical or office work	23	4	7	5	+1
Hairdressing, personal service work (e.g. caretaker)	13	2	3	2	=
Transport, driver, minicab work	13	2	2	1	-1
Skilled work (e.g. electrician, plumber)	11	2	2	1	-1
Textile work (e.g. dressmaking)	11	2	5	3	1
Science or engineering work	5	1	2	1	=
Motor vehicle (e.g. mechanic)	2	*	1	1	1
Other	88	14	30	20	+6
Not Stated	76	12	13	8	-4
Total	629		153		

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

3.8 Other Demographic Information

The majority of learners at both waves had been living in the UK for less than four years (71 per cent at wave 1 and 73 per cent at wave 2). Over one quarter (28 per cent) of learners at both the first and second waves had been living in the UK for between one and two years (Table 16). A slightly lower percentage of learners had been living in the UK for between three to four years (wave 1 – 22 per cent, wave 2 – 23 per cent) while 12 per cent (for both wave 1 and 2) had been living in the UK for between five and ten years. One tenth of learners at both wave 1 and wave 2 had been living in the UK for up to six months, while 11 per cent at wave 1 and 12 per cent at wave 2 had been in the UK for between seven and eleven months. 14 per cent for both waves had been living in the UK for 10 years or longer, or all their life.

Table 16: Length of time living in the UK

	wave 1		**wave 2**		**% change**
	No.	%	No.	**%**	%
Length of time in UK					
Up to 6 months	256	**10**	65	**10**	=
7 to 11 months	311	**11**	87	**12**	+1
1 – 2 years	778	**28**	196	**28**	=
3 – 4 years	595	**22**	159	**23**	+1
5 – 10 years	326	**12**	81	**12**	=
Longer than 10 years	368	**13**	92	**13**	=
All my life	34	**1**	8	**1**	=
Not stated	78	**3**	12	**2**	-1
Total	2746		700		

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

Around one in six learners said they have a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activities or the work they can do (wave 1 – 14 per cent, wave 2 – 15 per cent).

7 per cent of learners at wave 1, and 6 per cent at wave 2, said that they have dyslexia or similar difficulties (Table 17).

Table 17: Health problems

	wave 1		**wave 2**		**% change**
	No.	%	No.	**%**	%
Other health problems					
Yes	397	**14**	103	**15**	+1
No	2216	**81**	569	**81**	=
Not stated	133	**5**	28	**4**	-1
Total	2746		700		
Dyslexia or similar problems					
Yes	189	**7**	44	**6**	-1
No	2148	**78**	556	**79**	+1
Don't know / not stated	409	**15**	100	**15**	=
Total	2746		700		

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

The majority of learners (wave 1 – 59 per cent, wave 2 – 63 per cent) claimed not to be a member of any of the listed organisations (Table 18). Religious groups or organisations and sports clubs accounted for the highest membership with seven per cent of learners claiming to be members of each one. Two per cent more learners at wave 2 (four per cent) were members of political parties than at wave 1 (two per cent), while two per cent of learners at both wave 1 and wave 2 were members of women's groups or organisations. One fifth of learners at wave 1, and 16 per cent at wave 2 preferred not to say, or did not state whether they were members of any of the organisations listed.

Table 18: Membership of organisations

	wave 1		wave 2		% change
	No.	%	No.	%	%
Membership of organisations					
Political party	64	**2**	26	**4**	+2
Trade Union	19	**1**	4	**1**	=
Environmental group	10	*	1	*	=
Parents / school assoc.	33	**1**	10	**1**	=
Tenant / residents assoc.	16	**1**	1	*	
Religious group	199	**7**	49	**7**	=
Other local voluntary / community group	61	**2**	19	**3**	+1
Sports club	189	**7**	49	**7**	=
Women group / organisation	54	**2**	11	**2**	=
Any other group	42	**2**	14	**2**	=
None of the above	1619	**59**	439	**63**	+4
Prefer not to say	236	**9**	46	**7**	-2
Not stated	314	**11**	66	**9**	-2
Total	2856		735		

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

(The total adds to more than the sample as learners can be members of more than one group)

3.9 Strands

One important aspect of the Pathfinder was that learning providers were asked to explore a variety of different delivery mechanisms. These included:

- Intensive provision, where learning was condensed over a relatively short period such as a weekend residential course

- ICT, learning that was delivered using Information Technology, such as desktop computers or laptops and/or using teaching software
- Low literacy, learning aimed at learners with limited or no literacy skills
- Jobcentre Plus, learning that involved clients or staff of Jobcentre Plus
- Outreach, learning that involved difficult to reach groups that were unable or reluctant to use traditional delivery routes
- Embedded ESOL, learning that involved the acquisition of other skills or knowledge while at the same time increasing competence in English
- Ellis, a software programme designed specifically for ESOL learners
- Vocational, learning delivered in a working environment
- Core ESOL

The profile of the learners enrolled on courses reflecting the different strands of Pathfinder activities did not change significantly from wave 1 to wave 2 (Table 19). At wave 1 the Core ESOL group accounted for just over one quarter of learners (27 per cent) and this only fell by one per cent at wave 2. The second largest strand was embedded ESOL, which increased by five per cent at the second wave (wave 1 - 26 per cent, wave 2 - 31 per cent). The intensive strand fell by three per cent from five per cent at wave 1 to two per cent at wave 2, while the other strands saw minor increases or decreases of one or two per cent only.

Table 19: Strands

	wave 1		wave 2		% change
	No.	%	No.	%	%
Strand					
Core ESOL	744	27	184	26	-1
Embedded ESOL	715	26	214	31	+5
Low Literacy	262	10	59	8	-2
ICT	175	6	34	5	+1
Intensive	130	5	12	2	-3
Outreach	120	4	43	6	+2
Vocational	54	2	4	1	-1
Job Centre Plus	49	2	9	1	-1
Ellis	8	*	6	1	
Other	12	*	1	-	
Not stated	477	17	131	19	
Total	2746		700		

* There were no statistically significant differences between wave 1 and wave 2.

3.10 Conclusions

In all of the areas examined the profile of learners at wave 1 and wave 2 are very similar. The differences in results between wave 1 and wave 2 tended to be very small and none reached statistical significance. This indicates that no systematic bias is apparent in the wave 2 sample. It also suggests that the results from the wave 2 questionnaire would be very similar if all learners had completed the questionnaire at wave 2.

However, whilst it can be seen that the profiles of the two groups are similar, we still need to be cautious when making comparisons between the two waves because there could be important factors that were not recorded in the questionnaires which may impact on results. For instance, there may be some difference in the skill level of

the learners in the two waves, which could have an impact on the answers that they give, but which was not recorded in the survey.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

In this section of the report we describe the main findings from the survey of learners. The findings have been organised by topic area. In some of the topic areas the results are based on the full set of 2746 learners at wave 1 or the 700 learners at wave 2.

4.1 Previous Education

There is a majority of learners who have spent a considerable amount of time in education, levels that are on a par with what is expected in the UK education system. Over one half started school aged between 6 and 8 years old (55 per cent). The overall mean age of starting education was 6.5 years old (Table 20). Most learners finished school aged 16 or older (58 per cent). The overall mean age for finishing education was 15.1 years old (Table 21).

Table 20: Age started school

	wave 1	
	No.	%
Age started school		
Less than 4 years old	345	**13**
4 – 5 years old	719	**26**
6 – 8 years old	1524	**55**
9 years or older	108	**4**
Never	-	**-**
Not stated	50	**2**
Total	2746	
Approximate mean age	**6.5**	

Table 21: Age finished school

	wave 1	
	No.	%
Age finished school		
Less than 12 years old	489	**18**
12 – 13 years old	222	**8**
14 – 15 years old	408	**15**
16 years or older	1593	**58**
Never	-	**-**
Not stated	34	**1**
Total	2746	
Approximate mean age	**15.1**	

The majority of learners (59 per cent) have had 11 or more years of education, with 23 per cent having more than 15 years in education. However, in contrast there are significant numbers who have not spent as many years in education as is expected in the UK education system. One in five learners (22 per cent) had seven or less years of education, with five per cent having no formal education (Table 22).

Table 22: Number of years in education

	wave 1	
	No.	%
Number of years in education		
None	150	**5**
1 – 4	186	**7**
5 – 7	273	**10**
8 – 10	412	**15**
11 - 12	456	**17**
13 – 15	516	**19**
15+	627	**23**
Not stated	126	**5**
Total	2746	

The approximate average amount of time spent in education was 10 years. As is the case across the UK population, those who are now aged over 50 tend to have spent less time in education. One third of this group has had seven years or less, or no formal education at all.

Length of time in education has had a clear impact on the level of qualification that the learners have attained. Of those who have had seven years or less of education, two thirds have received no qualification. Similarly, 94 per cent of those who have received a degree or equivalent have spent 11 years or more in education.

Over half (58 per cent) of learners had not previously studied in the UK (Table 23). This is higher amongst older groups – 63 per cent of those aged between 30 and 49 and 65 per cent of those aged 50 or more. Only 38 per cent had previously spent any time in UK based education. Of those that had, three quarters (76 per cent) had received less than two years of UK based education.

Table 23: Number of years of UK based education

	wave 1	
	No.	%
Years in UK based education		
None	1590	**58**
1 – 2	788	**29**
3 – 4	159	**6**
5 – 6	40	**1**
6+	53	**2**
Not stated	116	**4**
Total	2746	

Time spent in education in the UK appears to have had little impact on the level of qualification that learners have attained. For instance, 33 per cent of learners who have spent some time studying in the UK have no qualifications, which is only marginally lower than for those who have not studied in the UK (35 per cent). Only five per cent of learners who have studied in the UK have a degree or equivalent.

The majority of learners tend to have a low level of educational qualification, with one third of them having none at all (Table 24). 16 per cent had a qualification similar to a UK qualification at age 16 years, and an additional 11 per cent had a qualification equivalent to those in the UK at age 18 years. One in eight (12 per cent) had a qualification similar to a College Certificate, and seven per cent had a qualification similar to a UK degree. An additional seven per cent had a professional qualification.

Table 24: Qualifications attained

	wave 1	
Qualifications	No.	%
No qualification	925	**34**
Qualification similar to UK at age 16	445	**16**
Qualification similar to UK at age 18	314	**11**
Qualification similar to college certificate	338	**12**
Qualification similar to UK degree	199	**7**
Professional qualification	176	**6**
Other	146	**5**
Not stated	203	**6**
Total	2746	

Males were more likely than females to have no qualifications (37 per cent compared with 32 per cent of females). Learners who were aged over 50 were also more likely to be without a qualification (44 per cent). A higher proportion of those who classified themselves as African, and Chinese had no qualifications (46 per cent and 42 per cent respectively) compared with other ethnic groups.

Those learners with no qualifications have a lower opinion of their speaking, reading and writing skills than others. For instance, 63 per cent of those with no qualifications consider themselves to have low writing skills, compared with 48 per cent of those with at least some qualification. As would be expected, the higher the level of qualification, the higher one's perceived skills in speaking, reading and writing in English. This mirrors findings in the Skills For Life survey, which found that individuals with low or no qualifications were likely to have lower literacy/numeracy levels.

The majority of learners (52 per cent) have not undertaken any further education, other than the class that they are in now, either abroad or in the UK, as can be seen in Table 25.

Table 25: Whether any education undertaken since leaving school

	wave 1	
	No.	%
Any education since school		
Yes	1195	**44**
No	1439	**52**
Not stated	112	**4**
Total	2746	

Younger groups and those without children were slightly more likely to have undertaken some further education. Those who have participated in further education were more predisposed to perceive their speaking, writing, and language skills as higher. For example, 60 per cent of those who have undertaken further education considered their speaking skills in English to be high compared with 39 per cent of those who have not been involved in further education. Information about the specific type of further education undertaken was not collected.

Of those who said they had done some further education since leaving school, one in eight (12 per cent) had completed this further education by 16 years of age (Table 26). An additional 26 per cent had finished further education by 19 years and 44 per cent had finished after their nineteenth birthday. A small number (15 per cent) indicated that they were still studying. The majority of those who finished further education after they were 19 attained a qualification equivalent to a UK college certificate or diploma, a degree or a professional qualification (63 per cent). Of those who finished further education before they were 19 years old, two thirds attained the equivalent of a UK qualification at either school age 16 or 18.

Table 26: Age finished further education

	wave 1	
	No.	%
Age finished further education		
Less than 16 years old	142	**12**
17 – 19 years old	310	**26**
19 +	520	**44**
Still Studying	179	**15**
Not stated	44	**4**
Total finished F.E.	1195	

When learners were asked when was the last time they did a course or other form of education or training (other than the class they were doing), around one quarter (23 per cent) said less than 12 months ago (Table 27) For a further quarter (26 per cent) it was between one and five years ago. 17 per cent had not attended a course or participated in training for six years or more. The biggest group however (29 per cent) had never taken part in such a course at all.

Table 27: Last time did a course / training

	wave 1	
	No.	%
Last time did courses / training		
Less than 12 months ago	642	**23**
1 – 2 years ago	445	**16**
3 – 5 years ago	272	**10**
6 – 10 years ago	183	**7**
Longer ago	266	**10**
Never	810	**29**
Not stated	121	**5**
Total	2746	

The vast majority of learners (85 per cent) reported that their experience of previous learning was a positive one – 42 per cent of all learners considered it was a very good experience and a similar percentage (43 per cent) considered it was quite good. Only seven per cent reported that it was a bad experience (Table 28).

Those learners who completed the second questionnaire showed an even more positive response, with 94 per cent rating their previous learning experience as good and only one per cent rating it as bad. However, it is likely that this group are more predisposed to this view because they have continued on with courses since the wave 1 evaluation and the very fact that they have responded to the wave 2 survey suggests that there could be a certain level of self selection involved.

Table 28: Previous Learning Experience

	wave 1		**wave 1 – wave 2 respondents**	
	No.	%	No.	**%**
Previous learning experience				
Very good	1163	**42**	345	**49**
Quite good /good*	1183	**43**	318	**45**
Quite bad/bad*	128	**5**	4	**1**
Very bad	66	**2**	3	**-**
Not stated	206	**7**	30	**4**
Total	2746		700	

* At wave 2 the word “quite” was deleted from the scale.

4.2 Competence in English

It is important to note that competence in English was self-reported by learners, so there is likelihood that some respondents may overestimate their ability in this area. We asked respondents to assess their competence in speaking, reading and writing in English as well as their competence in their first language.

4.2.1 Spoken English

At wave 1, 48 per cent of all 2746 learners stated that they can say "anything they needed to" or "quite a lot" in English. This is higher amongst younger age groups (56 per cent of those aged under 30), and those who are working (57 per cent) or in full time education or training (58 per cent). 39 per cent of all learners said that they "can say a little" in English, while eight per cent had "difficulty saying basic things". Four per cent could not speak English.

There is a similar picture at wave 2, although the majority of learners at this wave go on to say that they think their spoken English has improved – 21 per cent by a large amount, 43 per cent by a fair amount, and 25 per cent by a little. Only six per cent of learners thought they had not improved very much, and one per cent thought that their spoken English had not improved at all (Table 29). Four per cent did not respond to this question.

Table 29: Improvement in spoken English as a result of the course

	No.	%
Improvement in spoken English ability		
A large amount	146	**21**
A fair amount	302	**43**
A little	178	**25**
Not very much	43	**6**
None at all	6	**1**
Not stated	25	**4**
Learners: Total	700	**100**

4.2.2 Reading English

At wave 1, 50 per cent of all learners indicated that they could understand "anything they read" or "quite a lot of what they read" and a further 37 per cent could "understand a little". Seven per cent had "difficulty understanding basic things, while five per cent "could not read in English" at all. As with spoken English, there are more younger learners and those in employment or education / training who consider themselves to possess good English reading skills.

At wave 2, the picture is very similar. Despite no change in the proportion of learners who say that they can understand anything or quite a lot that they read, the majority still consider that they have improved their English reading skills since wave 1. Twenty five per cent of learners considered that their reading in English had improved a large amount, 39 per cent by a fair amount, and 26 per cent thought they had improved a little. Only six per cent of learners thought they had not improved very much, and one per cent thought their reading in English had not improved at all (Table 30). Three per cent did not respond to this question.

Table 30: Improvement in reading English as a result of the course

	No.	%
Improvement in reading English ability		
A large amount	176	**25**
A fair amount	271	**39**
A little	183	**26**
Not very much	42	**6**
None at all	7	**1**
Not stated	21	**3**
Learners: Total	700	**100**

4.2.3 Writing in English

At wave 1, 39 per cent of all learners said they were able to write “anything they needed to” or “quite a lot” in English, while 42 per cent could write “a little”. Eleven per cent had “difficulty writing basic things”, and six per cent could “not write English”. There is a distinct variation in written English skills by age – 48 per cent of those aged under 30 said that they were able to write anything or quite a lot in English, compared with 32 per cent of 30 to 49 year olds and 24 per cent of those aged 50 or more. Learners who were working full or part-time and those in full time education were also more likely to be able write anything or quite a lot in English (45 per cent and 52 per cent respectively).

At wave 2, perceived written English skills were at similar levels, although the majority of those who returned a questionnaire at this wave felt that their written English had improved (23 per cent by a large amount, 36 per cent by a fair amount, and 29 per cent by a little). Only eight per cent of learners thought they had not improved very much, and two per cent thought their written English had not improved at all (Table 31). Two per cent did not respond to this question.

Table 31: Improvement in written English as a result of the course

	No.	%
Improvement in spoken English ability		
A large amount	161	**23**
A fair amount	253	**36**
A little	201	**29**
Not very much	53	**8**
None at all	15	**2**
Not stated	17	**2**
Learners: Total	700	**100**

4.3 Competence in First Language

At wave 1, 86 per cent of all learners said they could understand “anything they read” or “quite a lot” in their first language, compared with 50 per cent for English. Six per cent said they can “understand a little” of what they read, two per cent had “difficulty understanding basic things” and four per cent said they “cannot read in my first language”.

A similar level (82 per cent) said they could either write “anything they wanted to” or “quite a lot” in their first language (this compares with 39 per cent for written English). Eight per cent said they can “write a little”, two per cent had “difficulty writing basic things” and five per cent said they “cannot write in my first language”.

Just over three quarters of learners (77 per cent) said they could either manage “any maths” or “quite a lot” in their first language, while 16 per cent said they can “manage a little”. Two per cent had “difficulty managing basic things” and three per cent said they “cannot manage maths in my first language”.

Generally speaking, those who have exposure to the workplace in full or part time employment or those who are in full time education are more likely to perceive themselves as having higher skills, not just in English but also in their first language (see Table 32). Self reported first language skills in reading, writing and maths are lower amongst learners who are aged over 50.

Table 32: Competence at speaking English for those learners in full time and part time employment and full time education

	All (%)	Full time employment (%)	Part time employment (%)	Full time education (%)
How good are you at speaking English?				
I can say anything	19	**22**	**24**	**24**
I can say quite a lot	29	**37**	**34**	**35**
Sum of 'anything' and 'quite a lot'	*48*	***59***	***58***	***59***
I can say a little	38	**29**	**32**	**32**
I have difficulty saying basic things	8	**8**	**7**	**6**
I cannot speak English	4	**3**	**3**	**2**
Not stated	2	**1**	**-**	**2**
Base	2746	**289**	**268**	**390**

4.4 Course Awareness

The majority of all learners (58 per cent) found out about the course from family or friends. A further 28 per cent become aware of the course at a college or training centre, while 10 per cent found out through a government office or agency. Eight per cent stated that they found out through advertising, five per cent from the library, four per cent from the local council, three per cent from local community groups, three per cent from the Internet and a further two per cent from Learndirect.

Most learners considered that it was easy to find out about the course, 44 per cent stated that it was very easy, and 41 per cent that it was fairly easy. Eleven per cent thought that it was difficult while only two per cent said that it was very difficult. However, one does need to bear in mind that these people actually got on to a course and so it was possible that they would find it less difficult to find out about courses than those who did not get onto them.

4.5 Motivations for Attending

The majority of learners (81 per cent) thought before they started the course that it was very important for them to go. A further 14 per cent stated that it was fairly important. Less than two per cent of learners thought it was either fairly or very unimportant for them to go on the course.

Those who were unemployed were slightly more likely to consider going on the course to be very important compared with other groups, as were those with no qualifications. Learners with lower perceived English skills were more likely to consider going on the courses to be very important than those with high English skills.

Learners were asked how important a number of factors were in helping them decide to take the course (Table 33). The biggest motivation to take the course was; in order to help them with everyday tasks, such as writing and filling in forms (86 per cent of learners considering this to be a very or fairly important factor). Nearly as many learners also considered that helping them to improve their confidence and helping them to get on another course were important motivators in their decision to take the course. To enable them to get more involved in their community or neighbourhood was a reason for starting the course for just over two thirds of learners (70 per cent). The potential for financial gain was mentioned less frequently, just over one half thought this to be important.

Table 33: Motivations for attending courses (Wave 1)

	% Very / fairly important	% Neither important or unimportant	% Very / fairly unimportant	% Not stated
Motivation				
To help with everyday tasks (reading, writing, form-filling, etc)	86	2	2	10
To help improve confidence	84	3	3	11
To help get on another course	79	6	6	9
So can get more involved in community	70	9	7	14
To help earn more money	56	13	14	17

Learners who stay at home to look after the family were more likely to consider the help with everyday tasks and confidence building that the courses provide as more important (89 per cent for both factors) than other groups. Learners in full time education or training and / or younger than 30 years placed a greater importance on the ability of the courses to assist them in getting a place on another course. To help earn money was more of a motivation amongst the unemployed and those on lower incomes.

At wave 1, almost three quarters (74 per cent) of all learners with a child or children under 16 in the household thought it was very important to do the course in order to help their children learn. Female learners were more likely than male learners to think that it was very important to do the course to help their children learn, and those learners who had three or more children considered it more important than those who had one or two children.

4.6 Support

Despite a significant proportion of learners considering themselves to already have good competence in English, the majority of all learners said that they were receiving help in English skills. There were no significant differences between those who considered themselves to have high English skills and those who considered their English skills to be low. For instance, 78 per cent of those who considered themselves to have a high level of written English said that they were still receiving help in this, virtually the same as the 80 per cent of those who said that their written English skills were low who were receiving help.

At wave 1, 86 per cent of all learners said that on their current course they were receiving help in speaking English. 78 per cent said they were receiving help in writing English and just over two thirds (69 per cent) help in reading English. Just under one fifth (19 per cent) said they were receiving help in Maths, while one third (32 per cent) said they were receiving useful information about living in England (such as about the Health Service or how to apply for work), although this could be part of the wider course that they are undertaking.

4.7 Class Sizes

The most common class size was between 11 - 15 students, with 41 per cent of learners stating there were this many people in their class. Just under one third (30 per cent) were in classes with five to 10 students, while one quarter were in classes with more than 15 students. Only two per cent were in classes with less than five people.

Looking at the length of course by those strands that had over a hundred learners (Table 34), Core ESOL was likely to have the largest proportion of learners in classes of 15 learners or more. Learners on courses designed for students with low levels of literacy were more likely to be in smaller classes, with 58% of all learners in this type of class being in a group of between 5 and 10 learners.

Table 34: Percentages of learners in class sizes by strand (excluding not stated responses).

Strand	All (%)	Core (%)	Embedded (%)	Low literacy (%)	ICT (%)	Intensives (%)	Outreach (%)
Class size							
Less than 5 learners	**3**	**2**	**3**	**3**	**1**	**3**	**3**
5-10 learners	**36**	**25**	**36**	**58**	**33**	**39**	**36**
11-15 learners	**43**	**46**	**42**	**28**	**56**	**41**	**43**
More than 15 learners	**19**	**27**	**19**	**11**	**9**	**17**	**19**
Base	2746	727	709	258	174	127	118

Class sizes tended to be larger for the longer duration courses (Table 35): 71 per cent of learners on courses of 20 weeks or more were in classes of 11 or more learners. By contrast only 52% of learners were in classes of 11 or more learners on courses of less than 10 weeks duration.

Table 35: Percentages of learners in class size by length of course (excluding not stated responses)

	Less than 10 weeks (%)	11-20 weeks (%)	More than 20 weeks (%)
Class size			
Less than 5 learners	3	3	2
5-10 learners	47	31	26
11-15 learners	34	46	43
More than 15 learners	18	23	28
Base	442	337	1854

4.8 Hours in class

The majority of learners (57 per cent) said that they were receiving between five and fifteen hours of teaching a week (28 per cent between five and ten hours and 29 per cent between 11 and 15). Seven per cent of learners said they were receiving less than two hours teaching a week, while 18 per cent said they were receiving between three and four hours a week. 15 per cent said that they were receiving 16 or more hours a week.

Of the strands with sufficient learners to make comparisons, those in intensive courses were more likely to have a greater number of hours per week of teaching time, while by contrast those in low literacy classes were more likely to report fewer hours per week (see Table 36).

Table 36: Percentages of learners receiving different teaching hours by strand (excluding not stated responses).

Strand	All (%)	Core (%)	Embedded (%)	Low literacy (%)	ICT (%)	Intensives (%)	Outreach (%)
Teaching hours							
Less than 2 hours	**7**	**6**	**10**	**19**	**10**	**4**	**3**
3-4 hours	**18**	**26**	**22**	**22**	**26**	**18**	**21**
5-10 hours	**28**	**32**	**29**	**21**	**29**	**25**	**43**
11-15 hours	**29**	**23**	**30**	**32**	**21**	**30**	**31**
16-20 hours	**9**	**6**	**5**	**3**	**11**	**8**	**1**
More than 20 hours	**6**	**5**	**2**	**2**	**3**	**12**	**-**
Base	2694	744	715	262	175	130	120

Unemployed learners were more likely to spend more hours in class per week. For example, 54 per cent of those unemployed and claiming benefit spent 11 hours or more in class per week, compared with 25 per cent of the learners in full or part time employment.

4.9 Duration of Learning

The majority of learners (68 per cent) were on courses of more than 20 weeks duration, 22 per cent were on courses lasting between five and 20 weeks, and seven per cent were on courses of four weeks duration or less (Table 37).

Table 37: Duration of course

	No.	%
Duration of course		
2 weeks or less	78	**3**
3 – 4 weeks	119	**4**
5 – 10 weeks	247	**9**
11- 15 weeks	184	**7**
16 – 20 weeks	159	**6**
More than 20 weeks	1868	**68**
Not stated	91	**3**
Learners: Total	2746	**100**

Learners on courses of 20 weeks or more were also more likely to spend longer hours per week receiving teaching than those on shorter courses (Table 38). For example, 49 per cent of those on courses of 20 weeks or more spent more than 11 hours per week on their course, compared with 27 per cent of those on courses of between five and ten weeks. Those courses that were under 4 weeks (which included a number of learners on intensive courses) were more evenly distributed in terms of the number of hours per week. 10 per cent of learners on these shorter courses indicated that had more than 20 hours a week of teaching.

Table 38: Percentage of learners receiving different teaching hours by duration of course (excluding not stated responses).

Course duration	Up to 4 weeks (%)	5-10 weeks (%)	11-15 weeks (%)	16-20 weeks (%)	20+ weeks (%)
Teaching hours					
Less than 2 hours	11	13	11	8	6
3-4 hours	22	25	10	13	18
5-10 hours	30	35	42	22	27
11-15 hours	12	17	33	31	33
16-20 hours	15	4	3	15	10
More than 20 hours	10	6	1	10	6
Base	193	247	179	157	1855

Perceived skills in writing, reading and speaking in English had very little impact on the length of courses that learners were on. Similar proportions of learners with perceived high and low English skills were on each length of course. For example, 69 per cent of those with perceived high English reading levels were on courses of 20 weeks or more, almost the same as the 68 per cent who had perceived low English reading skills who were on this length of course.

It is clear that there is no simple formula to designing an optimum course. The class size, the hours of teaching per week and the duration of the course in weeks will vary considerably depending on the nature of the type of course and the mix of learners, and undoubtedly their personal characteristics. Nor is it appropriate to talk about a typical ESOL course as these show a wide range of characteristics.

4.10 Completion of the Course

At wave 2, just over half of the 700 learners (52 per cent) stated that they had finished the course and 10 per cent admitted to leaving the course early. We have no data on why this was the case. In the qualitative research, teachers reported that learners sometimes dropped out because they were suddenly dispersed to another part of the country or because they experienced too many family or social difficulties. 32 per cent were still on the course at the time of the wave 2 questionnaire (Table 39).

Table 39: Course completion

	No.	%
Did you finish the course or leave early?		
Completed the course	367	**52**
Left the course early	70	**10**
Still on course	227	**32**
Not stated	36	**5**
Learners: Total	700	**100**

As some learners were still on the course the final completion rates are not available from the survey. It is only possible, because of small sample sizes, to provide completion rates for Core ESOL (63%) and for Embedded ESOL (50%). Completion rates were higher amongst the unemployed who were claiming Jobseekers Allowance (58 per cent), the unemployed not claiming benefit (63 per cent), and those in full time education or training (70 per cent). The number of children in the household had some impact on the numbers who completed the course, 55 per cent of learners with no children completed the course, compared with 47 per cent of those with three or more children.

Although numbers are relatively small there is some indication that learners on a both relatively low and relatively high number of hours per week were less likely to complete the course: 24 per cent of those on courses of two hours of teaching and

24 per cent of those on more than 20 hours per week indicated that they left the course early. This suggests that some learners may find them too intensive (in the case of courses of 20 hours or more) or simply insufficient to cover their needs (in the case of courses of two hours or less). The greatest percentage (63 per cent) completing their courses were attending between 16 to 20 hours a week.

Table 40: Percentages of learners outcome at Wave 2 by number of teaching hours per week (excluding not stated responses).

Teaching hours	Less than 2 hours (%)	3-4 hours (%)	5-10 hours (%)	11-15 hours (%)	16-20 hours	More than 20 hours (%)
Outcome						
Completed the course	45%	56%	58%	53%	63%	49%
Left the course early	24%	10%	9%	8%	4%	24%
Still on the course	31%	34%	33%	39%	32%	27%
Base	51	171	198	177	71	41

Learners were also more likely to have completed the course if they considered that their speaking, reading and writing skills were good. At the time of the wave 2 questionnaire: 63% of those indicated that they can say anything or quite a lot completed the course; 68% of those indicated that they can write anything or quite a lot; and 61% of those indicated that they can read anything or quite a lot, indicated that they had completed their course.

The majority of learners (82 per cent) attended their course on most, or all of the days (Table 41). (46 per cent attended the course every day, 36 per cent attended

most days). Five per cent attended for about half of the days and six per cent attended less frequently.

Table 41: Attendance on the course

	No.	%
Did you attend?		
Every day	323	**46**
Most days	255	**36**
About half of the days	38	**5**
About a quarter of the days	9	**1**
Less than a quarter of the days	15	**2**
I don't remember	19	**3**
Not stated	41	**6**
Learners: Total	700	**100**

Amongst those who did not attend every day, the most common reason for non-attendance was that they had other appointments (such as a doctor's appointment), which was given as a reason by almost one quarter of non-attendees (24 per cent). 16 per cent said illness was a factor, seven per cent had problems with childcare (this was much more common amongst females than males), while five per cent had transport problems. 18 per cent of non-attendees indicated that they did not attend for another reason, while almost half (43 per cent) did not state a reason.

4.11 Length of the Course

Of the learners at wave 1, almost half (44 per cent) thought that the course was the right length. Just over one fifth (21 per cent) thought it was too short, while only seven per cent felt it was too long (Table 42).

Table 42: Length of course

	Wave 1 respondents at wave 1	
	No.	%
Length		
Too long	189	**7**
Too short	572	**21**
About the right length	1204	**44**
Don't Know – I haven't finished it yet	732	**27**
Not Stated	49	**2**
Total	2746	

Those on longer courses (11 weeks or more) were more likely to think that their course was the right length than those on shorter courses (Table 43).

Table 43: Percentage of learners views of course length by length of course (excluding not stated responses).

Strand	Less than 4 weeks (%)	5-10 weeks (%)	11-15 weeks (%)	16-20 weeks (%)	More than 20 weeks (%)
Too long	8%	5%	8%	13%	10%
Too short	56%	63%	35%	34%	20%
About the right length	36%	32%	57%	54%	70%
Base	145	202	130	112	1338

Learners with the least (less than two) teaching hours per week were less likely to state that the length of the course was about right (33 per cent, with 27 per cent

saying that it was too short). Those with the most teaching hours (20 or more) were also less likely to say that the course length was about right (33 per cent, with 12 per cent thinking it to be too long).

Of the 700 who took part in wave 2 (Table 44), just under half (46 per cent) at wave 1 thought that the course was about the right length. Slightly more than one fifth of learners thought it was too short, while seven per cent felt it was too long. One quarter did not know as they were still on the course. However, when asked the same question at wave 2 (and when more had finished the course), almost two thirds (64 per cent) felt the course was about the right length. Those stating it was too long fell by one per cent at wave 2 (from 7% to 6%) while the numbers who felt it was too short fell by two per cent, from 21 per cent at wave 1 to 19 per cent at wave 2.

Table 44: Length of course (wave 2 respondents)

	Wave 2 respondents at wave 1		**Wave 2 respondents at wave 2**	
	No.	%	No.	**%**
Length				
Too long	50	**7**	43	**6**
Too short	150	**20**	132	**19**
About the right length	320	**46**	449	**64**
Don't Know – I haven't finished it yet	173	**25**	50	**7**
Not Stated	7	**1**	26	**4**
Total	700		700	

The learners responding at wave 2 were more likely to say that the longer duration courses were the right length; 69 per cent of those on courses lasting 11 or more weeks said that they were the right length, compared with 40 per cent on courses less than 11 weeks. Over one third of learners on courses lasting less than 11 weeks thought that they were too short.

Again, those wave 2 learners whose courses had the least (less than two) or most (more than 20) hours per week were less likely to say that the course was the right length (49 per cent and 52 per cent respectively, compared with 66 per cent of those on courses lasting between two and 20 hours per week).

Only two of the strands were large enough to make comparisons at wave 2. Embedded ESOL courses accounted for 31% of the learners at wave 2 and Core ESOL accounted for 26% of the learners. There was very little difference between these groups: 66% of learners on Embedded ESOL and 71% of learners on Core ESOL considered that the course was the right length, 6% and 8% respectively thought it was too long and 18% and 13% considered it was too short.

4.12 Level of the Course

The majority at wave 1 (59 per cent) thought that the course was aimed at about the right level, 25% felt that it was too hard while 14 per cent felt it was too easy.

Learners who were on courses that had long weekly hours were more inclined to consider them to be too hard; one third of learners who spent 16 or more hours per week thought that the courses were too hard. Older groups, those with children, learners without qualifications and those with lower perceived English skills were also slightly more likely to say that the courses were too hard.

For most strands, the majority of learners considered the courses to be at about the right level. The only exception was the Jobcentre Plus strand, for which over one half of learners who attended those courses considered them to be too hard. This may be related to the low perceived skills and lack of qualifications of this particular group of learners.

Fifty nine per cent of the 700 wave 2 learners thought that the course was about the right level when they were asked at wave 1 (Table 45). 27 per cent thought it was too hard and 13 per cent too easy. However, by wave 2 there had been an increase in the numbers of those who considered the course to be aimed at the right level - almost two thirds (63 per cent) stated this at wave 2, an increase of four per cent from the first wave. Furthermore the numbers who considered it was too hard fell from 27 per cent to 19 per cent, while those who thought it was too easy remained at 13 per cent.

Table 45: Level of course

	Wave 2 respondents at wave 1		Wave 2 respondents at wave 2	
	No.	%	No.	%
Difficulty Level				
Much too hard	24	**3**	17	**2**
A little too hard	166	**24**	121	**17**
About the right level	415	**59**	440	**63**
A little too easy	74	**11**	70	**10**
Much too easy	14	**2**	24	**3**
Not stated	7	**1**	28	**4**
Total	700		700	

4.13 Organisation of the Course

The course was seen as well organised by most learners, only three per cent of all wave 1 learners said that they felt it was badly organised with 86 per cent stating that it was well organised. Organisation was seen to be slightly more of a problem in those courses lasting less than two weeks where only 79 per cent reported it was well organised.

When asked at the first wave, the 700 learners who responded at wave 2 were very positive about the organisational aspects of the course (Table 46). 86 per cent stated it was well organised and only two per cent said that they felt it was badly organised (12 per cent said it was neither well organised nor badly organised or did not give an answer). But when asked at wave 2 for their impressions, the numbers who felt it was well organised fell by nine per cent to 77 per cent, while two per cent more said it was badly organised. Female learners were more positive than male learners at both wave 1 and wave 2; there was a 10 per cent decrease from the first to the second waves in the number of males who felt it was well organised, compared to eight per cent amongst females.

The only two strands that had sufficient numbers to make comparisons showed that there were no important difference in the views of learners who considered their course was well organised: 72% of those on Embedded ESOL and 78% of those on Core ESOL thought their course was well organised, while only 6% and 5% respectively thought their course was badly organised.

Table 46: Organisation of course

	Wave 2 respondents at wave 1		Wave 2 respondents at wave 2	
	No.	%	No.	%
How well Organised				
Well organised	601	**86**	542	**77**
Badly organised	16	**2**	29	**4**
Neither	65	**9**	99	**14**
Not Stated	18	**3**	30	**4**
Total	700		700	

Almost all learners at wave 2 considered that the course had been a good experience, with 49 per cent stating it was a very good experience and 45 per cent a good experience. Just one per cent of learners thought the course had been a bad experience, while less than one per cent thought it was a very bad experience.

4.14 Problems Encountered on the Course

The most common problem in doing the course was financial constraints (Table 47). Over one third of learners thought that finding the money to buy books and stationary was a problem (14 per cent of all learners stated that it was a big problem and 20 per cent said that it was a small problem). A lack of funds was more of a problem for males, rather than females; 39 per cent of males stated this was a big or a small problem, compared with 30 per cent of females.

Table 47: Problems encountered on course (wave 1)

	% a big problem	% a small problem	% no problem	% not stated
Problems				
Money for books and stationery	14	20	54	12
Accommodation (no room to study)	12	10	64	14
Finding time to study because of family commitments	11	21	55	13
Arranging transport to / from the courses	10	16	61	13
Finding time to study because of work commitments	9	19	59	13
Time it takes to travel to the courses	8	18	61	13
Understanding course teacher	6	21	66	7
Poor health or eyesight	6	13	68	13
Friends / family tried to stop me	2	5	78	15
Total	2746			

Just under one third of learners stated that difficulty in finding the time to study because of family commitments was a problem, while 28 per cent cited a similar problem with work commitments. Over one third (37 per cent) of females considered a lack of time caused by family commitments to be a problem against 26 per cent of males. Over one quarter (27 per cent) said that understanding the course teacher was an issue, and 26 per cent thought the time it took to travel to the learning centre and the difficulty in arranging transport were problems. 22 per cent stated that accommodation was a problem and this was seen as a big problem by 12 per cent of all learners. Poor health or eyesight was seen as a problem by less than one fifth of learners, while only seven per cent said that their family trying to stop them was a problem they encountered in doing the course.

A separate question asked about working alongside other learners who had different levels of English, this was considered a major problem by eight per cent of learners.

30 per cent thought it was a bit of a problem, while 45 per cent said it was not a problem at all. 15 per cent said that everyone was about the same level in their class.

Having different levels of English was seen as more of a problem in the Jobcentre Plus strand; 45 per cent saying that it was a bit of a problem or a major problem in these classes, compared with 38 per cent saying this for all strands.

4.15 Course Improvement Suggestions

At wave 2, learners were asked about possible improvement areas to the course. Slightly more than one third of students (35 per cent) said that more time with the teacher would have made the course better, while one third thought that the course would have been better if all the students had been at the same level of English. It is hoped that this situation will be improved by better initial assessment, which is currently being implemented.

Just over one quarter (28 per cent) thought a longer course would have been an improvement. This is higher amongst those who took part in courses lasting less than 11 weeks (43 per cent) than it is amongst those whose courses lasted for 11 weeks or more (25 per cent). In addition, a higher proportion of learners who spent less than two hours per week on courses (38 per cent) felt that they would have been improved if they were longer.

Over one quarter of learners said that more use of computers would have been beneficial and this is higher amongst those who did longer courses, both in duration and hours per week. Other areas of improvement included: the teacher speaking their language (15 per cent), a better place to study outside the classroom (14 per cent), and the learners being of the same age (10 per cent). Only four per cent of learners (five per cent female and two per cent male) thought that single-sex classes would have been an improvement.

83 per cent of wave 2 learners would recommend the course to family and friends, three per cent would not recommend it while 14 per cent did not know.

4.16 Benefits at the End of the Course

The strongest motivations for taking part in the courses were to help learners with everyday tasks and to help them to improve their confidence. At wave 2, more than half (57 per cent) said the course had helped them improve their confidence while 54 per cent said that it had helped with everyday tasks like reading, writing letters and filling in forms (Table 48). Interestingly, those learners who considered themselves to have a high level of English skills were more likely than those with low skill levels to say that the course had helped them to improve their confidence and with everyday tasks.

Table 48: Benefits of the course (Respondents were able to select as many benefits as appropriate).

	Wave 2 respondents at wave 2	
	No.	%
Did the course help you…?		
To improve your confidence	402	**57**
With everyday task like reading/writing letters/filling in forms	377	**54**
To get onto another English course	306	**44**
To get onto another type of course	216	**31**
To improve your chances of getting a job	189	**27**
To get more involved in your community/ neighbourhood	189	**27**
(if you have children under 16 years living with you) To help your children with their education	131	**19**
(If you have a job) To do your job better	97	**14**
To earn more money	55	**8**

44 per cent of learners had been helped to get onto another English course and a further 31 per cent had been helped onto another type of course. This was higher amongst the unemployed and those in full time education or training.

Just over one quarter (27 per cent) felt that their chances of getting a job, or a better job had been improved by the course. A similar proportion said that the course had helped them get more involved in their community/neighbourhood.

Amongst those who were in full time employment 33 per cent stated that the course had helped them to do their job better. When including all wave 2 employed learners this figure fell to 14 per cent. Only eight per cent of the wave 2 sample said that the course had helped them earn more money, however this was not the strongest motivation for taking part in the courses anyway.

Over one third of learners who had one child under 16 in the household said the course had helped them help their children with their education, while 42 per cent of learners with two children and 44 per cent of learners with three or more children said the same.

4.17 Accreditation

At wave 2, over one third (35 per cent) of learners said they had taken the National Literacy test, while one quarter took another type of test such as Pitman exams. Just under one quarter (24 per cent) said that they did not take a test while 22 per cent were not sure.

Of the 395 wave 2 learners who took a test almost half (47 per cent) reported they had passed the National Literacy Test and over one third (38 per cent) said they passed another test. Six per cent were still waiting to hear, nine per cent said they failed the National Literacy test and five per cent failed another test.

Over half (52 per cent) of those taking the test were very keen to do so, 32 per cent were quite keen, 10 per cent were not very keen and only two per cent were not keen at all. The majority saw the tests as a positive experience. 42 per cent stated it was a very good experience and 54 per cent that it was a good experience. Only three per cent said that it was a bad experience.

A certificate was received by almost two thirds of learners, 50 per cent received a certificate from the college, while 12 per cent received external certification. 26 per cent said they did not receive one at all, while 13 per cent could not remember or did not give an answer. The proportions of those that had received certificates from the

college were not affected by the length of course or the numbers of hours teaching. However, of those receiving external certification, 86% were on courses of 20 weeks or longer duration.

It was only possible to compare the two largest strands (Core and Embedded ESOL) and in both cases there was no difference between the proportions receiving certificates on either strand, 63 per cent and 64 per cent respectively, compared with 62 per cent for all the learners at wave 2.

Of the 430 learners who received a certificate, 45 per cent received an Entry Level certificate (Entry 1 - 20 per cent, Entry 2 – 14 per cent, Entry 3 – 11 per cent). 17 per cent received a Level 1 certificate, and nine per cent a Level 2 certificate. Eight per cent stated that their certificate was neither an Entry Level certificate nor a Level 1 or Level 2 certificate (Table 49)

Table 49: Level of certificate

	Wave 2 respondents at wave 2	
	No.	%
What level was the certificate?		
Entry 1	88	**20**
Entry 2	59	**14**
Entry 3	46	**11**
Level 1	72	**17**
Level 2	39	**9**
None of these	33	**8**
Can't remember / Not sure	60	**14**
	33	**8**
Total	430	**100**

Over half (53 per cent) of all wave 2 learners received advice on their future plans. Less than one third (29 per cent) indicated that they did not receive any advice while 19 per cent did not remember or did not respond to the question.

Of the 370 learners who stated that they received advice, the vast majority said that it came from a teacher: 87 per cent received advice from their own teacher, and 15 per cent received it from another teacher. Four per cent said that the advice came from Jobcentre Plus, while a similar number said it came from a careers centre. Three per cent indicated that they received advice from a community leader, and 18 per cent from someone else.

56 per cent of all wave 2 learners who wanted to go on another course received advice in deciding which course was best for them, while almost one quarter (24 per cent) did not receive any advice.

4.18 Employment

At the first wave, almost six in ten of all learners (58 per cent) felt that to do the course was very important in helping them get a job (Table 50). Out of those learners 34% were unemployed and claiming benefit. A further 13 per cent considered it was fairly important. Six per cent felt that it was neither important nor unimportant. Only five per cent considered it was fairly or very unimportant to get a job.

Table 50: Importance of course to getting a job

	wave 1	
	No.	%
How important to get a job		
Very important	1600	**58**
Fairly important	356	**13**
Neither important nor unimportant	152	**6**
Fairly unimportant	40	**1**
Very unimportant	118	**4**
Not Stated	480	**17**
Total	2746	

Of those learners in work, three quarters (75 per cent) felt that to do the course was very important in getting a better job or a promotion in their current job (Table 51). 16 per cent at wave 1 thought that it was fairly important.

Table 51: Importance of course to getting a better job / promotion of the learners in work

	wave 1	
	No.	%
How important to get a better job/promotion		
Very important	472	**75**
Fairly important	100	**16**
Neither important nor unimportant	32	**5**
Fairly unimportant	4	**1**
Very unimportant	5	**1**
Not stated	16	**3**
Total: Learners in work	629	

Half (50 per cent) of the learners at wave 1 who had been previously employed, indicated that their last job was not in the UK, while 22 per cent said it was (Table 52). A fairly large proportion of learners (27 per cent) did not state whether their last job was in the UK.

Table 52: Whether last job was in the UK.

	wave 1	
	No.	%
Last job in UK?		
Yes	652	**22**
No	996	**50**
Not stated	543	**27**
Total	1979	

The employment status of learners was asked in both the wave 1 and wave 2 questionnaires (Table 53). This allows us to identify whether learners employment status changed over the duration of the course.

Almost one quarter (24 per cent) of all learners at wave 1 stated they were in employment. Looking specifically at the results at wave 1 for those learners who returned a questionnaire at wave 2, around one fifth (20 per cent) were in employment. Again 11 per cent were in full employment, seven per cent were in part-time employment, and two per cent were in self-employment. At wave two there was a small rise amongst these learners in the proportions of those in employment – up to 23 per cent. At wave 2, those in full employment remained at 11 per cent, those in part-time employment rose to 10 per cent and those in self-employment remained the same at two per cent.

35 per cent of all learners at wave 1 reported being unemployed. 29 per cent of all learners were unemployed and claiming benefits and six per cent were not claiming benefits. At wave 1, the learners who also responded at wave 2 displayed a similar pattern: 27 per cent were unemployed and claiming benefits and eight per cent were unemployed and not claiming benefits. At wave 2, 24 per cent reported being unemployed – 18 per cent were unemployed and claiming benefits and six per cent were unemployed and not claiming benefits. While these results are not statistically significant they indicate a positive shift to reduced levels of self-declared unemployment.

At wave 2 only 11 per cent of learners reported being in full time education compared to 16 per cent at wave 1. The biggest change however, was the large increase in the number of learners who chose not to provide information about their working status (21 per cent of learners at wave 2). It is difficult to interpret what this finding may mean. It could indicate that more people are in employment and choosing not to indicate this is the case.

Table 53: Working Status

	All respondents at wave 1		wave 2 respondents at wave 1		wave 2 respondents at wave 2	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Working Status						
Full time	289	**11**	76	**11**	75	**11**
Part time	268	**10**	60	**7**	70	**10**
Self-employed	72	**3**	17	**2**	14	**2**
Unemployed (claiming benefits)	787	**29**	188	**27**	122	**18**
Unemployed (not claiming benefits)	174	**6**	54	**8**	40	**6**
Doing unpaid voluntary work	32	**1**	8	**1**	16	**2**
In full time education	390	**14**	114	**16**	74	**11**
Looking after family	375	**14**	105	**15**	100	**14**
Temporarily sick	20	**1**	4	**1**	5	**1**
Permanently sick or disabled	17	**1**	2	*	7	**1**
Retired	23	**1**	7	**1**	9	**1**
Doing something else	107	**4**	30	**4**	18	**3**
Not stated	192	**7**	35	**5**	150	**21**
Total	2746		700		700	

The most common type of work that learners were currently engaged in at both the first and second waves was catering (Table 54). At wave 1, 24 per cent of all learners and 21 per cent of learners who also responded at wave 2 were employed in catering. At wave 2 this decreased slightly to 18 per cent. At wave 2, the second most common work type was industrial (10 per cent).

Table 54: Current type of work engaged in

	All respondents at wave 1		**wave 2 respondents at wave 1**		**wave 2 respondents at wave 2**	
	No.	%	No.	**%**	No.	**%**
Type of work						
Catering	151	**24**	32	**21**	29	**18**
Clerical/office based	23	**4**	5	**3**	7	**4**
Hairdressing	13	**2**	3	**2**	3	**2**
Health/childcare	32	**5**	8	**5**	7	**4**
Industrial	47	**8**	17	**11**	16	**10**
Motor vehicle	2	**-**	1	**1**	1	**1**
Other manual	63	**10**	15	**10**	15	**9**
Sales assistant	68	**11**	11	**7**	14	**9**
Science	5	**1**	-	**-**	2	**1**
Skilled work	11	**2**	2	**1**	2	**1**
Textiles	11	**2**	4	**3**	5	**3**
Transport	13	**2**	2	**1**	2	**1**
Professional	26	**4**	10	**7**	7	**4**
Other	88	**14**	26	**17**	30	**19**
Not stated	76	**11**	17	**11**	19	**12**
Total	629		153		159	

Similarly, the sector in which learners worked showed a similar pattern at the first and second waves. Food and drink was by far the largest sector represented (Table 55) with 23 per cent of learners who also responded at wave 2 in this sector at wave 1 and 20 per cent of the same learners in at wave 2.

Table 55: Sector of work

	All respondents at wave 1		**wave 2 respondents at wave 1**		**wave 2 respondents at wave 2**	
Sector of work	No.	%	No.	**%**	No	%
Chemical	7	**1**	1	**1**	-	**-**
Construction	16	**3**	3	**2**	4	**3**
Consumer products	29	**5**	5	**4**	6	**4**
Financial	3	*****	-	**-**	1	**1**
Food and drink	167	**27**	32	**23**	32	**20**
General manufacturing	33	**5**	13	**9**	8	**5**
High tec	6	**1**	3	**2**	3	**2**
Hotel And leisure	36	**6**	8	**6**	5	**3**
Media/broadcasting	2	*****	1	**1**	1	**1**
Oil mining	5	**1**	-	**-**	-	**-**
Paper and packaging	11	**2**	2	**1**	5	**3**
Pharmaceutical	8	**1**	2	**1**	2	**1**
Professional services	25	**4**	11	**8**	7	**4**
Publicity/printing	4	**1**	1	**1**	2	**1**
Retailing	27	**4**	8	**6**	6	**4**
Transport and distribution	10	**2**	3	**2**	1	**1**
Utilities	5	**1**	-	**-**	3	**2**
Other	119	**19**	30	**22**	49	**31**
Not stated	116	**18**	15	**11**	24	**15**
Total	629		138		159	

Of the learners who stated that they were unemployed the majority from both waves said they had been unemployed for a year or more (Table 56). The main changes in these results appear to reflect the passage of time between the first and second questionnaire, in that there are fewer numbers of learners indicating they have been unemployed for less than a year. That is, of the learners who responded to the wave 2 questionnaire, 29 per cent stated they were unemployed for 12 months or less at wave 1. At wave 2, 17 per cent of this group of learners were unemployed for 12 months or less.

One quarter of learners said they had been unemployed for one to two years at wave 1. This figure rose to 36 per cent at wave 2. A small rise was also seen in the proportions of these learners who had been unemployed for between three and four years - 15 per cent at wave 1, which rose to 19 per cent at wave 2.

By contrast, there was a small decline in the proportions of those with the longest term of unemployment. The proportion of learners unemployed for five years or more fell from 24 per cent at wave 1 to 17 per cent at wave 2.

Table 56: Length of time unemployed

	All learners at wave 1		**wave 2 learners at wave 1**		**wave 2 learners at wave 2**	
	No.	%	No.	**%**	No	%
Time unemployed						
Up to 3 months	54	**5**	15	**6**	5	**3**
4 – 6 months	79	**8**	22	**9**	7	**4**
7 – 9 months	66	**7**	20	**8**	7	**4**
10 – 12 months	80	**8**	13	**6**	10	**6**
1 – 2 years	246	**25**	59	**25**	59	**36**
3 – 4 years	140	**14**	35	**15**	31	**19**
5 years or more	230	**23**	54	**24**	27	**17**
Not stated	107	**11**	24	**8**	16	**10**
Total: Those not working	1002		242		162	

4.19 Current Position

At wave 2, learners were asked what they were currently learning. Just under half (48 per cent) of the learners are progressing onto higher courses in English. 13 per cent are doing a course such as childcare, catering or IT which provides help with English, while six per cent are doing a course which does not provide help with English. Slightly over one fifth (21 per cent) are improving their English in other ways, and only six per cent stated they are not working on improving their English at all. Male learners (51 per cent) are slightly more likely to be doing another English course than females (47 per cent).

Of those 466 learners who are on a course, just under half are on an ESOL course at entry 1, 2, or 3 (Table 57). One fifth are on English ESOL Level 1 or 2, while eight per cent are on an English course of which they do not know the level. Eight per cent are on an IT course, five per cent on a vocational course, and four per cent are in Higher Education. Three per cent are taking a professional qualification while a similar number are on a GCSE course.

Table 57: Type of course currently on

	wave 2	
	No.	%
Course type		
English (ESOL Entry Level 1, 2, or 3)	208	**45**
English (ESOL Level 1 or 2)	95	**20**
English (do not know level)	38	**8**
GCSE	13	**3**
IT course	36	**8**
Vocational / work related course	22	**5**
Professional qualification	14	**3**
Higher education	18	**4**
Other	29	**6**
Total: Learners on a course	466	

The majority of learners report that they are coping well with the English on their new course: 23 per cent are coping very well and 53 per cent reasonably well. Slightly less than one

quarter (21 per cent) are having some difficulties, while just three per cent are having a lot of difficulties.

Of the 190 learners at wave 2 that are not on a course, 45 per cent are planning to start another English course in the near future. A further 17 per cent are planning another type of course such as childcare, catering or IT that provides help with English, while three per cent are planning a course that does not provide any help with English. Six per cent are not planning to start any type of course in the future, while almost one third (29 per cent) do not know or did not give an answer. Over one quarter (27 per cent) of the 124 learners planning to start a course are hoping to do ESOL Entry 1, 2, or 3 course, 12 per cent are planning to do an ESOL Level 1 or 2 course and 14 per cent an English course of which they do not know the level.

4.20 Citizenship

At wave 2 learners were asked whether they knew that the Home Office was planning to introduce a language and citizenship assessment for those wanting to be British citizens. Learners were fairly equally divided in their response: 45 per cent said they did know and 44 per cent said they did not know. Male learners (52 per cent) were more likely to know than female learners (41 per cent).

63 per cent of learners at wave 2 indicated that they wanted to become a British citizen, 22 per cent indicated that they were already a British citizen and only seven per cent did not want to become a British citizen. Eight per cent did not respond to this question.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The Pathfinder Aims

A major aim of the ESOL Pathfinder was to test the core teaching and learning infrastructure for adults whose first language is not English. The Learning Survey has revealed that not only has this been successfully achieved, but that the range of learners who have been involved in testing the infrastructure has been very broad. The diversity of the population that has been involved with the ESOL Pathfinder has been a major achievement. This diversity however means that few assumptions can safely be made in advance about the personal characteristics of learners (such as their age or gender), their family or living situation (such as their marital status, presence of children or type of living accommodation), their previous learning experience, or their occupational status.

Indeed the successful achievement of developing and investigating a range of delivery modes has been part of the reason that such a wide range of learners have been attracted to ESOL learning. At the outset Pathfinders were encouraged by the DfES to look at using the Pathfinder experience to develop a broad range of delivery models to meet the needs of different ESOL learner groups. It has been clear from the Learner Survey that a wide range of Strands have been tested. Finding new approaches or developing existing successful delivery models has been discussed more fully in the qualitative report. However it is clear that significant numbers of learners have been involved in non-core ESOL programmes. In particular, embedded ESOL programmes have been extensively developed and trialled. Significant numbers of learners have also participated in programmes aimed at learners with low levels of literacy, across a range of different geographical locations. A similar picture of activity on ICT approaches with groups of learners across a variety of locations can also be reported. There has also been encouraging numbers of learners involved in Intensive and Outreach programmes of learning. Many learners have also had the opportunity to access other approaches such as vocational learning and learning linked with Jobcentre Plus.

Throughout the life of the Pathfinder, those involved in the management and delivery of ESOL learning have been keen to disseminate their learning. Not only has this involved sharing pedagogic knowledge and experience, it has also extended to sharing knowledge and experience of evaluation and research. Regular meetings organised by the DfES in London and countless other contacts initiated by the Pathfinders have been used to develop a wider understanding and use of evaluation methods. The TALENT (ESOL) website has

been an important tool in disseminating different approaches to evaluation and has undoubtedly contributed to improved practice.

Learning

It is clear from the Learner Survey that the majority of learners were highly appreciative of the provision available to them. Learners tended to come to courses with high expectations of the teaching and were highly motivated to learn. The potential benefits of improved language skills in speaking, reading and writing were clear to many learners, and they identified numerous ways in which they wanted to use their new skills. These included a wide variety of everyday tasks which would assist them in dealing with various practical and administrative aspects of life. However they also considered that improving their English competence would increase their own feelings of self-confidence. Similarly many learners have also been keen to enhance their involvement in the community. Those learners with children were clear that a very important benefit for them would be the opportunity to assist in their children's learning.

Improving their employability was a major factor for most of the learners. For some learners they were keen to complete their current course and find work immediately, but for many other learners their current course was a stepping stone to another course, which in due course they hoped would lead to a better job. This was the case for both those in work and those currently not in work. Many learners took a longer-term perspective and were keen to pursue additional learning. Many learners identified that a benefit of the training would be to get on another course, and clearly a number wanted to pursue further training. Many Pathfinders have confirmed the need for further training and specifically have tried to attract ESOL learners into further vocational and embedded learning.

There is no doubt that for a sizeable proportion of learners there have been a number of difficulties to overcome. A number of the learners reported moderate to major problems that could have interfered with their learning. Financial restraints and accommodation problems were the most common, and a small number clearly experienced considerable hardship in these areas. Pathfinders have recognised these difficulties and have been aware of the need to support learners in whatever way they can.

Improvement Areas

It was clear that a number of students found some aspects of the learning difficult and that some may have experienced difficulties in class. The importance of diagnostic assessment is clearly essential in determining not only the skill levels at which learners operate but also in understanding the best approaches to facilitate their learning. There was evidence from the Learners Survey that at least in some classes learning was made more difficult by having other learners of different abilities in class. Recent developments in these areas have been supported by the DfES and it is hoped that as a result it will be possible to identify learners competences and weaknesses more quickly and to develop appropriate teaching as part of their individual learning plans.

While there is no ideal length of course for ESOL learners, it was clear that many learners were more positive about longer courses than they were about courses that were less than 11 weeks. Similarly, courses that only involved a small number of hours were seen as less useful. The opportunity for Pathfinders to trial different arrangements on provision have been useful and have resulted in a better understanding of the kinds of provision that ESOL learners want to take up.

6. THE PRISON PATHFINDER

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter of the report we discuss the results of the evaluation of the Prison Pathfinder. The evaluation consists of two elements:

- **Quantitative study:** A self-completion questionnaire which was administered "in-class" to 125 learners. Learners had already started their course and for the majority they had attended a number of sessions. Six months after the initial data collection a follow-up questionnaire was sent to the Education Department within the prisons/detention centres.

- **Qualitative study:** A series of 21 interviews held with staff, teachers and managers working in the Prison Pathfinder.

The report covers the design and administration of each element of the evaluation and discusses the findings in detail.

6.2 Background

The background to the 'Skills for Life' strategy document and the launch of the ESOL Pathfinders is provided in chapter 2 of this report. Ten of the Pathfinders were launched within particular localities across England, but the eleventh was introduced in Her Majesty's Prison Service (HMPS). The Prison Pathfinder was set up to operate in the spring and summer of 2003.

In November 2002, the DfES commissioned TNS to carry out an evaluation of the ESOL Pathfinder. TNS was responsible for the overall design and administration of the research. On the qualitative aspects of the overall evaluation CRG Research Ltd assisted in the design process and were responsible for conducting approximately two thirds of the interviews. In the case of the Prison Pathfinder CRG Research Ltd conducted all the qualitative interviews.

6.3 The Prisons and Detention Centres

Internal discussions within HMPS and the Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU) identified six locations that made successful bids to take part in the Prison Pathfinder:

- Feltham
- Hasler
- Morton Hall
- Pentonville
- The Verne
- Wormwood Scrubs

This group of institutions covered a wide range of detainees: male and female prisoners, detainees at immigration centres and young offenders. Not all detainees had received a criminal sentence: some had been detained by the immigration services prior to decisions being made about their individual cases.

The regime within the prisons inevitably had an impact on all the learning activities within the prison. It was commonplace for ESOL learners in the prisons to be transferred from one institution to another, or to be unavailable for specific learning sessions (e.g. because of court appearances) at fairly short notice. It is also important to remember that planned training sessions were frequently disrupted for a variety of reasons including disciplinary issues or shortages of prison staff to supervise detainees.

The scale of the work carried out within individual prisons was much smaller than within large FE colleges participating in the other Pathfinders. For example it might consist of only a small group of learners and one or two members of staff. Within the Prison Pathfinder it was agreed because of the specific characteristics of the Prisons Pathfinder that only two of the "strands" would be addressed: ICT-linked training and intensive provision (typically a minimum of 15 hours per week of guided learning).

Prison Service Pathfinder activities started late in 2002/early 2003 and were complete by the summer of 2003. This contrasted somewhat with the other Pathfinders where work continued (by agreement with ABSSU) until the latter part of 2003.

Pathfinder support allowed a wide range of enhancements to what would otherwise have been provided. Mainly this focused on additional teaching hours, allowing more learners to reach higher standards more quickly; the development of new materials and course designs; investment in ICT equipment accelerated, and a range of 'infrastructure' developments were triggered - all of which offer opportunities for delivering long-term benefits in the participating institutions, as well as providing experiences that others can learn from.

6.4 Quantitative Evaluation

The quantitative evaluation was designed to:

- Provide comprehensive profile information on ESOL learner backgrounds – for example demographic details, information on previous learning experiences, etc.
- Explore learners' experiences of the ESOL pathfinders – for example, their expectations of the training, and how this matched up with reality, and any improvements that could be made.
- Measure the impact of the ESOL training on learner outcomes, in terms of course completions, qualifications achieved, and also in terms of wider outcomes.

The first two objectives were specifically addressed through the learners' questionnaire completed by learners in the prisons and detention centres. The third objective was intended to be addressed through a follow-up questionnaire to learners six months later. However, although this was designed and dispatched to the prisons, only 23 responses were received, as there were a number of difficulties involved in conducting a follow up survey. This small number of returns precludes any detailed reporting of the results.

The methodology that was adopted was the same as the other Pathfinders (and is described in 2.6 of this report).

6.5 Qualitative Evaluation

The qualitative evaluation was designed to:

- Examine the processes used by the Prison Pathfinder in introducing the new ESOL learning infrastructure and identify lessons to be learnt.
- Explore the effects of the Prison Pathfinder – in particular its impact on the educational experiences of learners.

For the qualitative element of the evaluation, in-depth face-to-face interviews took place at five institutions between May and July of 2003, based around the semi-structured topic guides. A further interview took place with a senior member of staff from OLSU in mid July 2003 to provide a strategic perspective for the Prison Service Pathfinder's operations. This single 'sweep' of qualitative interviews again contrasted with three distinct 'sweeps' for local Pathfinders – primarily reflecting the shorter timescale and smaller scale of operations characteristic of HMPS Pathfinder operations.

In total 21 interviews were conducted with the following staff:

- Managers/Co-ordinators (7)
- Teachers (10)
- Support staff (4)

In addition to the data collected through the qualitative and quantitative evaluations, reviewing a wide range of ancillary material was important. Much of this is described in the qualitative report on the other Pathfinders. The recently produced OFSTED / ALI report "Literacy, Numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages: A Survey of Current Practice in post-16 Adult Provision"[5] has been an important source of further information about general approaches and standards in relation to ESOL provision in prisons and more widely – and we refer to it at a number of points in this report.

[5] Report HMI 1367, September 2003

6.6 Key Messages

As with the findings for the other Pathfinders, much has been learnt from the Prison Pathfinder and there have been many positive results. Because of the specific operational environment within Prisons, and a number of other factors, those responsible for delivering the Prison Service Pathfinder have faced particular challenges in achieving good results, but it does seem that there are important opportunities to build on outcomes from the Pathfinder, and further upgrade and enhance ESOL support within Prisons and detention centres.

Some of the specific issues pointed to include:

- High levels of demand for ESOL training have been apparent amongst most groups of detainees offered it, although this has not been fully scoped by the prisons.

- Recruiting appropriately skilled ESOL teachers was a significant constraint in the majority of the institutions taking part in the Pathfinder (although not all) and is likely to represent a serious constraint on further expansion.

- As with the other Pathfinders, levels of learners' own-language literacy varied considerably and complicated ESOL provision appreciably. Those with very low own-language literacy are likely to need high levels of support (ideally one-to-one tuition) and cannot realistically progress at anything like the same rate as those who have good own language literacy and, perhaps, good levels of education and past learning to draw on.

- Particular prison service characteristics undoubtedly complicate and constrain what can be achieved. If, for example, learners are moved to other institutions (or released/deported) at short notice, achieving good levels of learning inevitably becomes difficult, particularly as learning records have not to date been transferred between institutions.

- The two specific 'strands' tested out as part of the Prison Service Pathfinder (intensive provision, ICT-linked training) both performed well. A number of technical difficulties intervened in relation to ICT, but our expectation is that further development and extension of these approaches would be appropriate.

- As with local Pathfinders, late arrival of materials (particularly for diagnostic assessment) reduced the effectiveness of Pathfinder activities.

Overall, however, we see the Prison Service Pathfinder as having confirmed not only the need for significantly upgrading ESOL provision within prisons, but also the benefits which can ensue.

6.7 Introducing the Pathfinder

At the initial stage to become a Pathfinder the bid had to take account not only of the particular characteristics of the institutions, but the way in which formal arrangements are structured – in effect, through 'outside' college-based providers working in partnership with individual Governors and their staff. It was clear from the interviews with staff that the perceived need for higher levels of ESOL support were important as were the opportunities for accessing higher levels of resources (for ICT equipment and additional learning materials, as well as staff) and the opportunity to "*get involved in something interesting and developmental*".

Because the individual institutions taking part in the Prison Service Pathfinder were geographically dispersed (between the south coast of England and Lincolnshire) the level of central co-ordination and support available through OLSU and ABSSU was an important issue for the evaluation to address. In practice, high levels of local autonomy seem to have been agreed at an early stage: nevertheless periodic contact between the different institutions and with OLSU seems to have been important in maintaining appropriate levels of overall understanding of "*what's expected and what's available*" and exchanging ideas and good practice. Although individual institutions certainly faced a number of challenges in implementing the Prison Service Pathfinder, problems like "*getting the IT to work*" and "*never being quite sure when we would get the diagnostic material*" seemed to the research teams to have been no different than for other Pathfinders, and central co-ordination and cross-institutional sharing of ideas was considered to be useful and effective.

The context for the Prison Pathfinder needs to be borne in mind. The OFSTED / ALI report[6] makes a number of points about ESOL provision within Prisons, focusing on high levels of demand:

[6] HMI 1367

"*more literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision should be made available to meet the needs of young offenders*…")[7]

and general challenges faced within Prisons

"*many Prison education departments have inadequate strategies to cope with staff absence or operational closures*…")[8]. "*The materials used for teaching literacy, numeracy and language are generally poor (in Prisons) and do not match the needs of learners. The learning materials developed by the Offenders Learning and Skills Unit are very well produced and attractive, but some are too childish for use with young offenders*….").

While this report emerged after data was collected for this evaluation, there is no doubt that those responsible for ESOL provision in prisons have accepted for some time the opportunities for improving what is provided, as have those taking part in the other Pathfinders.

The OFSTED / ALI report addresses literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision for post-16 learners in general and undue criticism of prison service provision should not be inferred: the position throughout the majority of the colleges and other providers surveyed emerged as not particularly satisfactory, with *"….much poor practice in ESOL provision….overall."*[9] However, it is important to note that the pathfinders along with other continuing work is addressing or seeking to address this.

6.8 Teachers

The qualitative evaluation of the local Pathfinders found that *"Pathfinders faced varying challenges recruiting enough ESOL teachers…"* With some institutions, some major problems arose, as a real constraint on Pathfinder progress.

This position was paralleled in prisons: in most institutions taking part in the Prison Pathfinder, finding appropriately skilled and trained ESOL teachers was far from easy. Although satisfactory levels of teaching provision had been delivered as part of the Pathfinder this might well depend on the availability of just one or two individuals who –

[7] Op. cit. Page 10
[8] Op. cit. Page 18
[9] Op, cit Page 15

typically working part-time – might have to fit in work at Prisons with other commitments. "*What we can do is one hundred per cent dependent on recruiting one good teacher. We've been OK for the past few months…we'll have to see how things look later in the year*".

Again, paralleling other Pathfinders, the backgrounds of teachers and support staff seem to vary widely – incorporating individuals with specific ESOL qualifications as well as those with TEFL backgrounds and those "*with an aptitude, but coming from a number of other different backgrounds*..."

It does seem that recruiting ESOL teachers with appropriate skills and qualifications is unlikely to be easy for the foreseeable future. A further complication arises for prisons in that numbers of ESOL teachers at any one location are likely to be small. This makes it particularly difficult to set up local level teacher training and development activities, although some of the teachers are part of the larger FE provision in the area and will have greater access to this.

Teachers we interviewed were clearly "*keen to learn more… get our hands on new materials…"* but evidence of effective teacher training and development gathered during the Prison Pathfinders was strictly limited: the duration of the Pathfinders, and the extent of activities undertaken, was typically on such a small scale that significant training and development activity had not been possible at the time of our data collection programme.

However, the position in the longer-term was more positive. Discussions with co-ordinators and management staff indicated there would be opportunities not only for specific learning support within HMPS, but also for teachers to take part in training and development activities within their 'host' institution (the FE College holding the contract to deliver education services at individual prison establishments).

Because Prison Pathfinder work was essentially 'built onto' existing ESOL programmes, most of the materials we were shown, in effect, represented enhancements of existing diagnostic assessment and learning materials. The Pathfinder activities had encouraged some additional material to be developed in at least half of the institutions. However, there was encouraging evidence of both practices and materials being shared between different institutions as the Pathfinder Programme itself progressed.

We came upon only one example of the National Test being used formally. The experiences of learners seems to have been reasonably positive, typically exceeding the expectations of teachers and co-ordination staff.

Again, paralleling findings from the other Pathfinder evaluation, diagnostic assessment and ILP practice varied widely. A considerable amount of teaching materials had evolved over a period of time and while it was seen as broadly 'fit for purpose' there seemed little doubt that the long-awaited national materials ought to offer opportunities for upgrading performance here. However, by the time the Prison Pathfinder had ceased these materials had not yet been made available. With limited options in relation to diagnostic assessment materials, developing effective ILPs was inevitably constrained and would benefit from further attention.

Several interviewees pointed out the need for considerable sensitivity in learning materials within Prisons. Concerns about some existing materials being *"too white, too middle class, too based in experiences of people who have lived in the UK for some time…"* have already been identified in the evaluation of the other Pathfinders. Other instances of material that could create concerns in Prisons specifically ("*what did you do last weekend*…"; "*where I would like to go on my holidays*…") were raised as inappropriate and, potentially, capable of causing wider resentment about the whole learning process, or further exacerbating the concerns of vulnerable individuals who may be disorientated, and perhaps depressed, as a result of their imprisonment.

6.9 Pathfinder Activities

Participating institutions were able to identify good levels of demand for ESOL programmes, although practical problems sometimes had to be overcome: "*it was much more important to a lot of people, to be making some money in the workshops, rather than taking part in any education… we eventually sorted that out, jointly with the governor*". It is an important point to note that people generally have a lower income while taking part in education. As with the local Pathfinders, a very wide range of languages (up to 30 at Haslar, for example) and learning backgrounds – particularly levels of own-language literacy – have had to be addressed.

Local level decisions also needed to be made about learner participation. This included whether to include Patois speakers, and individuals with highly accented English as their first language, within programmes. With both of these cases, individuals were encouraged to take part in ESOL programmes, and both co-ordinators and teachers agreed this "*made*

sense… they couldn't realistically communicate in the sort of language you hear in the high street…so they ought to be offered support …".

The Prison Pathfinder addressed ICT and intensive programmes specifically. Both clearly have the potential for working well, although challenges have had to be addressed.

Intensive provision was seen by teachers in particular as having important opportunities for achieving good results: "*drip feeding a couple of hours a week isn't much good… it's much better if you can really focus on learning a lot in a short time; there are also opportunities for learners to help each other out away from the classroom….".* Bearing in mind the particular circumstances within prison, intensive provision may also be the best way of minimising disruption from relocations and releases and maintaining learner interest and motivation.

ICT-based learning – as with local Pathfinders – proved immensely attractive to a high proportion of learners *"they're interested in computers and English – putting the two together makes sense".* This is not automatically the case however: some institutions identified small groups of individuals who are very keen to work on their computer skills but much less interested in learning English. Nevertheless, the overall pattern was that ICT-based learning was inherently attractive to many groups of individuals. It can also be built into effective learning programmes *("people can go at their own pace….", "they can operate at different levels …"; "we can do one-to-ones with those who need it without distracting other people"*) and might help with employability in appropriate cases *("they're convinced that they'll need ICT skills to get any work – so it helps motivate them to work hard in class"*).

HMPS and OLSU made major efforts to increase the level of ICT equipment available to participating institutions, and this was certainly valued highly: *"a big improvement… much better than things were until quite recently …"* Nevertheless, there were some operational problems installing and operating the new equipment which had to be addressed at most institutions at different times. In particular, several institutions had high expectations of the ELLIS suite of learning programmes, but faced repeated difficulties in a number of technical issues especially concerned with gaining proper access to the software, which in some cases had not been resolved by the end of the Pathfinder period. It was clear that extensive further development work and support would be needed before full advantage could be taken of the promising progress made during the Pathfinder period itself.

In relation to the programmes themselves, it does have to be stressed how challenging it can be to run structured programmes in prisons. To start with, simply gaining access to sufficient

education facilities may be a challenge. Classroom space in most of the institutions was not generous - and was often used for numerous other teaching programmes as well as for in-house training for prison service staff too. In several respects, however, ESOL provision fares no worse than any other kind of educational provision, and staff have excellent experience of finding ways of managing around these constraints.

6.10 Learners' Survey

The results of the self-completion survey with learners are presented in this section. The results are based on the total sample of 125 responses that were received. This is a relatively small number and it means that sub-analysis of the results is not possible. It also means that there have to be fairly large differences between learners in the Prison Pathfinder to reach statistical significance. Where there are differences between these groups these are highlighted. However, in most cases the results from the Prison Pathfinders parallel those from the larger study of other Pathfinders.

It would be useful to conduct a larger study of ESOL learners in the Prisons as we suspect that despite the best efforts of local staff, the nature of the Prison regime exacerbates the difficulties this group of learners have in acquiring English language skills.

6.10.1 Gender and Age

The population of ESOL learners in the Prison Pathfinder was more likely to be male than the wider population of ESOL learners, which reflects the general offender population. However the age range was broadly similar in both groups. Two thirds (68 per cent) of all learners indicated they were male, 19 per cent female and 13 per cent did not state their gender. Almost half (45 per cent) of all participating learners were under thirty years of age (Table 58). One third (35 per cent) of learners were aged between thirty and forty-nine. Only seven per cent of learners were aged fifty or older, while 14 per cent did not state their age.

Table 58: Age

Age		No.	%
	Under 20	12	**10**
	21-24	16	**13**
	25-29	27	**22**
	30-34	18	**14**
	35-39	12	**10**
	40-44	9	**7**
	45-49	5	**4**
	50-54	5	**4**
	55-59	3	**2**
	60-65	1	**1**
	65+	-	**-**
	Not stated	17	**14**
	Total	125	

6.10.2 Marital Status

41 per cent of learners were single, and 39 per cent were married. Of those learners who were married one third lived in the UK with their spouse/partner while two thirds lived alone while their spouse/partner lived outside of the UK. Divorcees accounted for six per cent of learners, while one per cent were widowed. Fourteen per cent did not give an answer. 44 per cent of those who were married and lived with their partner / spouse in the UK had a partner who was in work.

One third (35 per cent) of learners said that they did not have any children aged sixteen or under. Sixteen per cent had one child, 18 per cent had two children, while 15 per cent had three children or more. Sixteen per cent did not give an answer. Thirteen per cent of those who had children thought it was very important to do the course so that they could help their children learn (through letters or during visits) while 85 per cent did not give an answer.

6.10.3 Ethnicity

Almost one third (32 per cent) of learners indicated that they belonged to the White (non British or Irish) ethnic group (Table 59). 12 per cent were Caribbean, 11 per cent African, seven per cent Indian and three per cent stated that they were Pakistani. Other Ethnic groups accounted for two per cent or less of the sample.

Table 59: Ethnicity

Ethnicity	No.	%
White – British	2	**2**
White – Irish	1	**1**
White – Other	40	**32**
Indian	9	**7**
Pakistani	4	**3**
Bangladeshi	1	**1**
Other Asian	6	**5**
Caribbean	15	**12**
African	14	**11**
Other Black	2	**2**
Chinese	1	**1**
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	**2**
Mixed – White and Asian	1	**1**
Mixed – Other	1	**1**
Other	9	**7**
Not stated	16	**13**
Total	125	

6.10.4 First Language Spoken

Almost half (45 per cent) of all learners spoke a European language as their mother tongue (Table 60a, 60b, and 60c). Spanish was the most common: 21 per cent of all learners stated that this was their first language while seven per cent indicated that their first language was Romany, four per cent Russian, three per cent Albanian and three per cent Portuguese. Polish was spoken by two per cent of all learners and French, German and Dutch were spoken by one per cent.

Table 60a: First Language Spoken – European and Other

European		No.	%
	Albanian	4	**3**
	Dutch	1	**1**
	French	1	**1**
	German	1	**1**
	Polish	2	**2**
	Portuguese	4	**3**
	Romany	9	**7**
	Russian	5	**4**
	Spanish	26	**21**
	Other European	3	**2**
Middle Eastern			
	Farsi	2	**2**
	Kurdish	2	**2**
	Turkish	2	**2**
	Other	2	**2**

Middle Eastern languages were spoken by eight per cent of learners as their mother tongue (two per cent Farsi, two per cent Kurdish, two per cent Turkish and two per cent Other).

Asian languages were spoken by 17 per cent of all learners, Tamil (5 per cent) and Punjabi (4 per cent) were the most common.

Table 60b: First Language Spoken - Asian

Asian	No.	%
Bengali and Sylheti	1	**1**
Gujurati	2	**2**
Punjabi	5	**4**
Tamil	6	**5**
Pashto	3	**1**
Urdu	2	**2**
Other Asian	1	**1**

14 per cent of learners spoke a Black Caribbean language, (12 per cent English Creole and two per cent another Creole dialect.) Eight per cent of learners stated that a Black African language was their mother tongue, Akan (two per cent) and Lingala (two per cent) being the most common. One in ten learners did not state what their first language was.

Table 60c: First Language Spoken – Black African / Black Caribbean

Black African	No.	%
Akan	2	**2**
Igbo	2	**1**
Urhobo	1	**1**
Ga	1	**1**
Lingala	2	**2**
Yoruba	2	**1**
Black Caribbean		
Creoles (English)	15	**12**
Creoles (Other)	2	**2**

6.10.5 Length of Time Lived in the UK

Learners in the Prison Pathfinder indicated that they have lived in the UK for a shorter time than those in the other Pathfinders. One third (31 per cent) of learners had lived in the UK for less than a year compared to 21% across the other Pathfinders. 29 per cent had lived in the UK for between one and two years which is similar to the other Pathfinders (28 per cent), 11 per cent for between three and four years (22% for learners in other Pathfinders) and six per cent for between five and ten years (12% for learners in other Pathfinders). Three per cent had lived in the UK for ten years or more (13% for learners in other Pathfinders), while two per cent (in both groups) said they had lived in the UK for all their life. 17 per cent did not respond to this question (Table 61).

Table 61: Length of Time Lived in the UK

	No.	%
Length of time lived in UK		
Less than 3 months	19	**15**
4 – 6 months	8	**6**
7 – 11 month	13	**10**
1 – 2 years	36	**29**
3 – 4 years	14	**11**
5 – 10 years	8	**6**
More than 10 years	4	**3**
All my life	2	**2**
Not stated	21	**17**
Total	125	

6.10.6 Education

The majority of learners had undertaken fairly substantial periods of formal education. However, there was a fairly large minority with ten or less years of formal education. Most learners (39%) began school aged between six and eight years old, with a further 31 per cent starting school aged between four and five years old (Table 62). 16 per cent started school aged four years or younger, while one in ten started at age nine or older. Just two per

cent said they never attended school. When compared to the other Pathfinders, more started education before the age of six, though a larger number also started after nine. The educational starting date was more dispersed than for the other Pathfinders.

Half of all learners left school aged sixteen or older, one fifth left aged between fourteen and fifteen and one in ten left aged between twelve and thirteen. Almost one fifth (18 per cent) left school aged twelve or younger.

Table 62: Age Started / Finished School

	No.	%
Age started school		
Less than 4 years old	20	**16**
4 – 5 years old	39	**31**
6 – 8 years old	49	**39**
9 years or older	12	**10**
Never went to school	3	**2**
Not stated	2	**2**
Total	125	
Age finished school		
Less than 12 years old	22	**18**
12 – 13 years old	12	**10**
14 – 15 years old	25	**20**
16 years or older	63	**50**
Never went to school	3	**2**
Not stated		
Total	125	

Slightly more than half of all learners had not undertaken any further education since leaving school. 38 per cent had undertaken some further education, while 11 per cent did not give an answer. Of those who had undertaken further education 28 per cent completed it at sixteen years or younger, while 34 per cent completed it between their seventeenth and

nineteenth year. One third (34 per cent) completed their further education aged twenty or older.

Learners from the Prison Pathfinders and the other Pathfinders had spent similar time in education. Seven per cent of learners stated that they had spent, in total, between one and four years in education (Table 63). 10 per cent had spent between five and seven years, 14 per cent between eight and ten years, 21 per cent between eleven and twelve years and 20 per cent between thirteen and fifteen years. 15 per cent of learners had spent more than fifteen years in education.

Table 63: Length of time spent in education

	No.	%
Length of time spent in education		
None	3	**2**
1 – 4 years	9	**7**
5 – 7 years	12	**10**
8 – 10 years	18	**14**
11 – 12 years	26	**21**
13 – 15 years	25	**20**
More than 15 years	19	**15**
Not stated	13	**10**
Total	125	

The majority (70 per cent) of learners had not spent any time in education in the UK (Table 64). 13 per cent had spent between one and two years in UK based education, two per cent between five and six years and five per cent more than six years. This could be due to the relatively short amount of time that some had spent in the country.

Table 64: Length of time spent in UK based education

	No.	%
Length of time spent in UK based education		
None	87	**70**
1 – 2 years	16	**13**
3 – 4 years	-	**-**
5 – 6 years	2	**2**
More than 6 years	6	**5**
Not stated	14	**11**
Total	125	

Four in ten learners had no qualifications from outside of the UK (Table 65). 16 per cent have a qualification similar to a UK qualification at age sixteen and seven per cent have one similar to a UK qualification at age eighteen. A college certificate or diploma (or similar) is held by 14 per cent of learners, while three per cent have a degree, seven per cent a professional qualification and two per cent have another qualification. When compared to the other pathfinders the detainees had slightly fewer qualifications from outside of the UK.

Table 65: Qualifications held (from outside the UK)

	No.	%
Qualifications held (outside UK)		
No qualifications from outside the UK	51	**41**
Similar to UK school qualification at 16	20	**16**
Similar to UK school qualification at 18	9	**7**
Similar to UK college certificate or diploma	17	**14**
Similar to UK degree	4	**3**
A professional qualification	9	**7**
Other	2	**2**
Not stated	13	**10**
Total	125	

Less than one fifth (19 per cent) of learners said they did not hold any UK qualifications. 14 per cent have a UK school qualification at age sixteen, and a similar number have a UK school qualification at age eighteen. Six per cent have a college certificate or diploma while 11 per cent have a UK degree or post-graduate certificate. A professional qualification, which may have been interpreted as a qualification in a trade or other vocational qualification, is held by almost one quarter (23 per cent) of learners.

Apart from their current course more than half (53 per cent) of learners had done some form of education or training in the past twelve months. One quarter (24 per cent) had previously done some education or training one to two years ago, five per cent three to five years ago and four per cent six to ten years ago. 39 per cent of learners considered that their previous learning experience had been a very good experience while six per cent said that it had been a good experience. One fifth said it had been a bad, and six per cent a very bad experience. Almost one third (29 per cent) however, did not give an answer.

6.10.7 Employment

Eleven per cent of learners were in full-time employment prior to coming to prison / being detained (Table 66). Three per cent had a part-time job, while two per cent were self-employed. Seven per cent were unemployed (with one per cent claiming benefit and six per cent not claiming benefit) and one per cent were doing unpaid voluntary work. Eight per cent of learners were in full-time education, a similar proportion (10 per cent) were permanently sick or disabled, while 14 per cent were looking after the home or family. However, four in ten learners did not say what their employment status was before being detained.

Table 66: Employment status prior to coming into prison

	No.	%
Employment status		
Full-time	14	**11**
Part-time	4	**3**
Self-Employed	2	**2**
Unemployed and claiming benefit	1	**1**
Unemployed and not claiming benefit	7	**6**
Doing unpaid voluntary work	5	**4**
Full-time education	10	**8**
Looking after the home and family	17	**14**
Permanently sick or disabled	12	**10**
Doing something else	3	**2**
Not Stated	50	**40**
Total	125	

The number of those in work and those unemployed were too small to allow reporting on type of work, area of work, the length of time unemployed, last paid job (if unemployed) and whether their last paid job was UK based.

Learners in the Prison Pathfinder were equally keen as learners from the other Pathfinders to do the course in order to improve their employment prospects. Almost two thirds (64 per cent) of learners thought that it was very important to do the course to help them get a job when they leave prison / detention. Nine per cent thought it was fairly important and seven per cent that it was neither important nor unimportant. Only two per cent thought that it was fairly unimportant and five per cent very unimportant. These figures are fairly similar to the picture nationally.

6.10.8 Other demographic information

Seven per cent of learners stated they had dyslexia or similar difficulties while 16 per cent said that they had a long term illness, health problem or disability that limited their daily

activities. This is at a similar level to that of the learners who participated in the local Pathfinder projects across the country.

6.10.9 Competence in English

One quarter (24 per cent) of learners stated that they could say anything they needed to in English, while a further 20 per cent could say quite a lot. 40 per cent thought they were able to say a little and six per cent had difficulty saying basic things (Table 67). Two per cent could not speak English at all.

Only 15 per cent of learners said they could write anything they needed to in English, 17 per cent could write quite a lot and 45 per cent a little. Nine per cent of learners stated that writing English was difficult while six per cent could not write in English at all.

One fifth (19 per cent) of learners said they could understand anything they read. One quarter (26 per cent) could understand quite a lot of what they read, while one third (33 per cent) could understand a little. 10 per cent of learners had difficulty understanding basic things and three per cent stated that they could not read in English at all.

Competence in English is slightly lower amongst this group than for the participants in the other Pathfinder projects, especially in relation to reading and writing.

Table 67: Competence in English

	No.	%
Speaking ability		
Can say anything	30	**24**
Can say quite a lot	25	**20**
Can say a little	50	**40**
Have difficulty saying basic things	7	**6**
Can not speak English at all	3	**2**
Not Stated	10	**8**
Total	125	
Writing ability		
Can write anything	19	**15**
Can write quite a lot	21	**17**
Can write a little	56	**45**
Have difficulty writing basic things	11	**9**
Can not write in English at all	7	**6**
Not Stated	11	**9**
Total	125	
Reading ability		
Can read anything	24	**19**
Can read quite a lot	33	**26**
Can read a little	41	**33**
Have difficulty reading basic things	13	**10**
Can not read in English at all	4	**3**
Not Stated	10	**8**
Total	125	

6.10.10 Competence in First Language

Learners were asked to rate their competence in reading and writing in their first language (Table 68). Two thirds (64 per cent) of learners said they could write anything they needed to

in their first language, 10 per cent could write a lot and 11 per cent a little. Three per cent had difficulty writing basic things and a further three per cent could not write at all in their first language.

Reading ability followed a similar pattern. Two thirds could understand anything they read, nine per cent could understand a lot of what they read and 10 per cent a little. Three per cent found it difficult to understand basic things, while two per cent could not read at all in their first language.

Table 68: Competence in first language

	No.	%
Writing ability		
Can write anything	80	**64**
Can write quite a lot	13	**10**
Can write a little	14	**11**
Have difficulty writing basic things	4	**3**
Can not write in first language at all	4	**3**
Not Stated	10	**8**
Total	125	
Reading ability		
Can read anything	83	**66**
Can read quite a lot	11	**9**
Can read a little	13	**10**
Have difficulty reading basic things	4	**3**
Can not read in first language at all	3	**2**
Not Stated	11	**9**
Total	125	

Four in ten learners (42 per cent) stated that they could manage any maths in their first language, 24 per cent could manage quite a lot while 18 per cent thought they could manage a little maths. Four per cent had difficulty managing basic maths, while five per cent could not manage maths at all in their first language.

Only six per cent of learners felt able to manage any computer task, and only 13 per cent thought they could manage quite a lot. One third (35 per cent) could manage a little, 10 per cent had difficulty managing basic things, while over one quarter (28 per cent) said they could not use a computer at all.

6.10.11 Current Course

Learners were asked to identify the types of help they received on their course (Table 69). The most common form of help received was in speaking English (81 per cent) followed by help in writing English (74 per cent) and reading English (63 per cent). Over one quarter (28 per cent) received help in maths, while 21 per cent received useful information about living in England.

Table 69: Help received while on course

	No.	%
Help received		
Help in speaking English	101	**81**
Help in writing English	92	**74**
Help in reading English	79	**63**
Help in Maths	35	**28**
Useful information about living in England	26	**21**
Not stated	11	**9**

Over one quarter (26 per cent) of learners received more than twenty hours of teaching a week (Table 70). 23 per cent received between sixteen and twenty hours, 16 per cent between eleven and fifteen hours, 11 per cent between five and ten hours, 13 per cent between three and four hours, and just two per cent received less than two hours of teaching a week. This reflects the intensive nature of the courses.

Table 70: Hours of teaching received per week.

	No.	%
Hours of teaching received per week		
Less than 2 hours	2	**2**
3 – 4 hours	16	**13**
5 – 10 hours	14	**11**
11 – 15 hours	20	**16**
16 – 20 hours	29	**23**
More than 20 hours	33	**26**
Not stated	11	**9**
Total	125	

Almost half (45 per cent) of learners were on courses that lasted between three and four weeks, while a further 27 per cent were on courses of between five to ten weeks duration (Table 71). Five per cent of learners stated that their course lasted less than two weeks, four per cent that it lasted between eleven and fifteen weeks and two per cent that it lasted between sixteen and twenty weeks. Again this reflects the intensive nature of the Pathfinder courses.

Table 71: Duration of Course

	No.	%
Duration of course		
Less than 2 weeks	6	**5**
3 – 4 weeks	56	**45**
5 – 10 weeks	34	**27**
11 – 15 weeks	5	**4**
16 – 20 weeks	2	**2**
More than 20 weeks	10	**8**
Not stated	12	**10**
Total	125	

The majority (58 per cent) of class sizes were of between five and ten students, while just over one fifth (22 per cent) of classes were larger – having between eleven and fifteen students. Six per cent of classes had more than fifteen students and four per cent had less than five.

Only one fifth (21 per cent) of learners felt that their course was about the right length. Two per cent said that it was too long, while one third (34 per cent) thought it was too short. 32 per cent however, did not know as they hadn't finished the course when questioned. Of the learners who did feel the course was too short 79 per cent attended a course lasting between three and four weeks. 50 per cent of learners that attended a course with a duration of five to ten weeks thought that it was about the right length. Interestingly no learners who attended a course lasting more than four weeks thought that it was too long.

Fifty two per cent of learners thought that the course was about the right level of difficulty. One quarter (26 per cent) thought it was too hard while nine per cent thought it was too easy.

The course was seen as well organised by the majority of learners. Just under three-quarters (72 per cent) thought it was well organised against just two per cent who considered it badly organised. 12 per cent thought it was neither well organised nor badly organised, and 15 per cent did not give an answer.

Almost three-quarters of learners did not have a problem finding out about the course, 43 per cent said it was very easy to find out about it, and 29 per cent said it was fairly easy. 16 per cent thought it was difficult and 2 per cent thought it was very difficult to find out about the course. Ten per cent did not respond to this question.

6.10.12 Views on course

Two thirds (66 per cent) of learners thought that before they started the course it was very important for them to go on it and a further 18 per cent thought it was fairly important. Just three per cent considered before the course that it was neither important nor unimportant for them to go on it, while three per cent thought it was unimportant.

The most important factor rated by learners in influencing their decision to start the course was to get help with everyday tasks like reading / writing letters and filling in forms (Table 72). 67 per cent said that this was a very important reason and 15 per cent a fairly important

reason. The next most important determining factor was a desire to help improve their self-confidence with 61 per cent stating that this was very important and 15 per cent fairly important. To help them get on another course was seen as very important by 54 per cent of learners and fairly important by 16 per cent of learners, while the ability to help them earn more money was seen as a very important reason for starting the course by 50 per cent, and a fairly important reason by 16 per cent. Fewer learners indicated that it was very important (30 per cent) or fairly important (13 per cent) to help get an early release. Similar proportions also stated that the course was to spend time out of their cell or dormitory, 25 per cent thought it was very important and 13 per cent fairly important.

Other Pathfinder learners felt that the course was very important in order to help with everyday tasks (74 per cent), to help improve confidence (72 per cent) or to help them to get on another course (64 per cent). Interestingly more prisoners/detainees felt that the chance of earning more money was a very important factor in making them decide to start the course, with 50 percent stating this as a reason, compared with 37 per cent of other learners.

Table 72: Factors influencing decision to start the course

	Very Important		Fairly Important	
Factors	No	**%**	No	**%**
To help with everyday tasks	84	**67**	19	**15**
To help improve my confidence	76	**61**	19	**15**
To help me get on another course	68	**54**	20	**16**
To help me earn more money	62	**50**	20	**16**
To help get an early release	38	**30**	16	**13**
To spend time out of cell / dorm	31	**25**	16	**13**

One of the biggest problems encountered by learners in doing the course was the issue of accommodation (Table 73). This was seen as a problem by almost one third of learners (30 per cent), with 13 per cent stating it was a big problem. Another issue that was of concern was finding time to study – 29 per cent saw this as a problem. One quarter (24 per cent) had problems understanding the course teacher while one fifth had problems related to their

poor health or eyesight. Less than one in ten learners had problems with friends trying to stop them doing the course.

Table 73: Problems encountered in doing course

	Big Problem		Small problem	
Problems	No	**%**	No	**%**
My accommodation	16	**13**	21	**17**
Finding time to study because of other duties	7	**6**	29	**23**
Understanding the course teacher	11	**9**	19	**15**
My health or eyesight	5	**4**	20	**16**
My friends tried to stop me	3	**2**	8	**6**

Having students at different levels of English competence in the class was not seen as an issue for most learners: 56 per cent said that it was not a problem at all, while six per cent thought that everyone in their class was at the same level of ability. However, 20 per cent considered it was a small problem and six per cent considered it a big problem.

Despite courses being ongoing and at different stages, most learners said they saw an improvement in their English as a result of the course (Table 74). One quarter (27 per cent) felt that their English had improved a large amount, one third (33 per cent) that it had improved a fair amount and one fifth (22 per cent) that it had improved a little. Six per cent of learners said that their English had not improved very much, while only one per cent had seen no improvement at all.

Table 74: Improvement in English ability

	No.	%
Improvement in English ability		
A large amount	34	**27**
A fair amount	41	**33**
A little	27	**22**
Not very much	7	**6**
None at all	1	**1**
Not stated	15	**12**
Total	125	

6.10.13 At the end of the course

The majority of learners plan to continue learning English when they reach the end of their course. One fifth (22 per cent) have already started further training in English, while half (49 per cent) plan to do so. Only eight per cent said that they were not going to do further training - a further 10 per cent were undecided.

6.11 Lessons learned

Several lessons learned during the Prisons Pathfinder parallel closely those which arose during local Pathfinders. Careful local management arrangements, and appropriate levels of central coordination and experience-sharing were important; recruiting teachers with the right kinds of skills and qualifications was not easy, and some of the delays in accessing materials (particularly for diagnostic assessment) and working ICT systems were far from helpful. Because the institutions taking part in the Prisons Pathfinder were so varied (and in some cases geographically remote from major towns) lessons learned were essentially about finding local or 'opportunistic' solutions to challenges: recruiting suitable teachers as and when they became available, seeking to resolve IT problems on a one-off basis, and so on.

More positively, the Prisons Pathfinder confirmed that there clearly are large numbers of detainees (at least in the institutions taking part in the Pathfinder) who will welcome ESOL support and benefit significantly from it.

The Prisons Pathfinder encountered challenges in supporting individuals with varied own-language literacy levels in similar ways to most of the local Pathfinders. Those with little or no literacy in any language, and little experience of any formal education or learning, need much higher levels of support (ideally on an individual basis) before they can make good progress with ESOL.

The particular prison environment presents varied challenges to virtually any learning activity: in practice, the Pathfinder activities seemed to have fared no worse than any other programmes. Management and teaching staff have, in practice, extensive experience of coping with sessions having to be cancelled at short notice, and other realities of Prison life, and applied these appropriately to the ESOL programmes. Shortages of classroom space were not so easily resolved: the position at several institutions is far from ideal, but lessons learned about the need for careful management of existing facilities (and the need for a degree of further investment) need to be drawn on appropriately.

The specific 'strands' targeted by the Prisons Pathfinder (intensive provision and ICT-linked learning) appear to have performed well overall – with some reservations. ICT-linked learning was hampered initially by technical problems and delays accessing key software. These problems had not all been resolved by the end of the formal Pathfinder period, although staff were confident that they would be *"sorted out – eventually, given time …"*

Intensive programmes offered many advantages: the chances of learners moving on part-way through programmes is clearly reduced if they are taking part in shorter-duration activities, and motivation and commitment seem much easier to maintain by comparison with 'once or twice a week' programmes. Good progress can be achieved by learners – specifically, moving up one assessed level after around 60 hours of formal learning (hence, about 1 month for the intensive programmes).

6.12 Prison Pathfinder Conclusions

Significant benefits were achieved by the Prisons Pathfinder. High levels of need and interest were confirmed, and the responses of learners were generally positive.

The need for general investment in ESOL facilities and programmes (pointed out in the OFSTED / ALI report in particular) was confirmed. The Pathfinders have improved the position of participating institutions somewhat, but much more input is needed.

Overall coordination and experience-sharing, although not particularly extensive, worked well and helped achieve good performance at a local level.

Useful new materials were developed as part of the Pathfinder, but there is scope for much more work to improve lesson plans, ILPs, and learning materials. As with the other Pathfinders, the late arrival of new diagnostic assessment material was disappointing for teachers working in the Prison Pathfinder. The main impact was to reduce what could be achieved in developing new materials and, particularly, developing effective ILPs.

The clear expectation must be that further work to embed ICT-linked learning will be effective for achieving good learning outcomes, and will be popular with learners and teachers: unfortunately a number of technical challenges still had to be overcome before this could definitely be demonstrated.

It is probable that recruiting appropriately trained and qualified ESOL teachers will never be easy for prisons, but ‘opportunistic’ local solutions worked satisfactorily for the purposes of the Pathfinder.

Good partnership working at a local level between the governor of a specific institution and the education/ training provider was evident and played a big part in getting good results.

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