Enterprise and Lifelong Learning

Evaluation of the Scottish Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) Strategy

EVALUATION OF THE SCOTTISH ADULT LITERACY AND NUMERACY (ALN) STRATEGY

FINAL REPORT

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The views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and do not necessarily represent those of the Department or Scottish Ministers

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1   This report analysed the views of adult literacy and numeracy learners from 9 geographical areas of Scotland and the views of tutors from the same areas in order to assess the impact of participation in adult literacy and numeracy (ALN) provision on individuals' lives and any wider benefits as perceived by the learners and tutors. It used both quantitative and qualitative data. Learners were interviewed twice in order to assess differences that had occurred in their views as a result of their participation in ALN. Six hundred and thirteen learners were interviewed in the first interview and 393 learners were re-interviewed one year later. Seventy-eight tutors were interviewed once to assess their views of the impact of the ALN strategy on their learners.

Findings from the Learners' Interviews

2   The impact of participation in ALN on learners' lives has been assessed through an analysis of their perceptions of the provision they received and its impact of their personal, family, work, education and public lives. Assessment of the quality of the ALN provision is based on the benchmarks identified in the *'Literacies in the Community; Resources for Practitioners and Managers'* (2000) evaluation framework. The findings are based on a comparison between the 393 learners interviewed in both rounds of the research who were drawn from 9 Partnership areas that represent the geographical diversity of Scotland. Learners were interviewed that had taken part in programmes based in over a hundred different institutions with a variety of programme arrangements and types of providers. The views of all these learners were analysed and compared quantitatively and two hundred qualitative responses were also analysed and compared. There were small differences in the characteristics of the learners in the two samples but these were not statistically significant. So this is a representative cross sample of learners from Scotland and the comparisons between the 2 samples are valid.

Learner characteristics

3   The personal and programme characteristics of the 613 learners who took part in the first interview and the 393 who took part in the second interview were compared. The sample was predominantly: female (62% in both rounds), White British (92% 1st; 88% 2nd), receiving tuition in a non-FE setting (70% 1st, 78%, 2nd) and taking part in dedicated provision (68%, 1st, 70%, 2nd).

4   There were marginal differences between the two samples as follows: fewer were under the age of 21 (17% 1st, 22% 2nd), fewer were studying in integrated programmes (32% 1st, 30% 2nd); fewer were studying in F.E. colleges (30% 1st, 22% 2nd).

5   Of the 393 learners who were interviewed in both rounds: fifty (13%) had experienced positive changes in terms of moving into full time or part time employment or moving into FE provision from community-based provision. Twenty (5%) had experienced negative changes by moving from employment into unemployment or from FE into unemployment.

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ALN Provision

Engaging in Provision

6   Research shows (e.g. OECD and Statistics Canada, 2000) that adults with low literacy and numeracy skills do not necessarily seek tuition so it was important to discover what had *motivated learners to start their programme*. It was found that learners were mainly motivated by a desire for self-improvement and the development of their skills. The most important barrier to participation was about personal *sensitivity* such as the learners' age, lack of confidence, problems to do with meeting new people or how friends would react. The second most important barrier was a concern about *ability*, such as not being able to cope with learning or taking up education again. The fear that it might be *like school again* for people that had not enjoyed school and expected that their learning programme might use similar methods was the next most important barrier. Barriers that were within the control of learning providers such as the look of the building or staff being unwelcoming and the lack of facilities such as a crèche were much less significant.

7   The next stage in engaging in provision was *enrolling on a programme*. Most learners were encouraged to do this by a variety of people and events. The highest proportion was encouraged to start by unofficial people (family, friends, work-mates or casual acquaintances). This was followed by self-encouragement and then by people holding some position (doctors, social workers, job centre, youth club, employer). They received information on the programme from people at the centre that they enrolled at and the majority had no difficulty in starting their programme. Learners found the people that dealt with them were very helpful, felt that they were made welcome and important, found the information they were given useful and, if they met a tutor before they started, got advice about what would be best for them.

8   The factors that would make *joining programmes easier* broadly clustered into better publicity and the process of joining the course. *Publicity*, learners suggested, should change public perceptions about the image of ALN learning in order to make it more positive. Learners were particularly appreciative of the 'Big Plus' media campaign particularly as it had used 'real' learners talking about their own difficulties. When *joining the course* learners emphasised the importance of the first point of contact being knowledgeable, friendly, welcoming and not patronising. Pre-course guidance was perceived as important and those learners that had opportunities to meet tutors and other students before they started their course found it very helpful.

Learning, Teaching and the Curriculum

9   Learners were asked to give their views on what they had been learning, how it had been taught and what they thought of the staff. Overall responses were very positive with more than 90% satisfaction on the majority of indicators in both rounds of interviews. However, there were slight increases in negativity, which were statistically significant, between the 2 rounds of interviews in relation to:

- The course being enjoyable
- The learning programme being well-structured
- The staff being encouraging
- Learners having their confidence boosted
- Having enough feedback on progress

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10   These differences were differently experienced by the overall sample. There were statistically significant decreases in enjoyment by learners attending FE provision, female learners were significantly less likely to find staff encouraging, older learners were significantly more dissatisfied with their tutors and younger ones were significantly more likely to report that they did not get enough feedback. These slight increases in negativity appear to be due to learners raising their expectations of learning, teaching and the curriculum over time. Many ALN learners who have negative memories of school are likely to be very positive about educational experiences that are learner centred and focused on their needs (see McGivney, 2001). Once these positive experiences of returning to education become accepted then they are likely to become more critical. The larger increases in dissatisfaction amongst male and younger learners and those in FE could be due to their more recent experience of school and also being in an environment where the curriculum was more structured by Scottish Qualification Agency (SQA) assessment requirements. This means that feedback on progress was likely to be less frequent and detailed. However, learners were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of their programmes so these slight reductions in satisfaction are not indicative of a significant problem. Indeed it is a criterion of the evaluation framework for teaching, learning and the curriculum that learners should become more critical so this may be an outcome of their experience of being encouraged to do so.

Guidance and support

11   The quality of guidance and support was *weak* at entry to, and during, the learning process particularly in respect of learners' awareness of the Individual Learning Plan (ILP). The ILP is an essential feature of the learning programme because it sets out in detail the learning outcomes, the learning necessary to achieve them and the sequence that learners and tutors should follow towards their achievement. Thus it is the most effective means of identifying ALN needs and building an individual curriculum to address them and forms a key part of the guidance process in ensuring that learners are working towards achieving their own goals. This impacted at different stages of the guidance and support process as follows:

12   *Entry*: 37% of learners overall were unaware of having an ILP drawn up at the start of their course and of the group participating in FE settings this rose to 45% (32% non-FE).

13   *On the course*: 50% of learners in FE settings and 27% in non-FE settings said that they had *never* had a review of their ILP during their programme. In addition, quite a high percentage of learners also reported that they had never discussed what had been learnt (22%), or their skills, knowledge and understanding (21%) during their course.

14   *Exit*: For the small percentage of learners that had left their programmes and had an ILP, a high percentage had received a review of their learning. However, quite a high percentage of learners did not have an ILP. Only a small percentage of learners could remember being helped to move on to other learning opportunities.

15   *Leaving the programme*: A very small percentage of learners had left their programme because they were unhappy with the content or methods These cases were most likely to occur when learners were part of mixed groups with a broad spread of ability. Learners who had completed their original courses have continued with a range of other provision in a variety of settings with some moving from community based provision into FE.

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Reflection on Teaching and Learning

16   Learners were very positive about all aspects of their experience of participating in ALN programmes. These included:

- The *learning environment* including the timing and location of the course, the cost, the facilities (crèche transport, café, rooms) and the learning resources that were available;
- The factors that contributed to a good experience of *teaching and learning,* including what was learnt and the way it was learnt, the tutor, the pace of the learning and the number of hours of tuition available each week;
- The *social nature* of the learning including the other students and the social opportunities to meet other people.

17   However, learners' in FE settings were more likely to express dissatisfaction with:

- The cost of their learning (8% FE, 1% non-FE)
- What they learnt (13% FE, 4% non-FE)
- How they learnt (13% FE, 5% non-FE)
- Their tutor (4% FE, 2% non-FE)
- The pace of their learning (13% FE, 5% non-FE)

18   In addition, there were some concerns, evidenced through the qualitative data and the case studies, from learners about aspects of the course organisation in terms of its inflexibility, number of learners, or content. These concerns seemed to stem from the lack of resources to provide a fully flexible learning and teaching environment.

Impact on learners' lives

Social Capital

19   Social capital refers to the processes between people that establish networks, norms and social trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit leading to reciprocity. The combined effect of trust, networks, norms and reciprocity creates both strong communities and a sense of personal and social efficacy. The development of social capital involves the active and willing engagement of citizens within a participative community. Research suggests that developing an identity as a learner is shaped by the complex interaction of a number of factors. These include past learning experiences and the mediating effect of family influences upon them as well as the norms and values of the social networks that individuals belong to. Social capital therefore provided a relevant framework for analysis as it was hypothesised that learners might improve their social capital as a result of participation in programmes.

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20   Overall respondents had very high social capital as they generally liked their neighbourhoods, were well integrated in their communities, voted, and would like some more local involvement. Despite these high levels the evidence from the quantitative elements of the research has shown an associated statistically significant increase in their social capital between the two rounds, specifically in relation to learners' levels of social activity and contact with others, and this is confirmed by the testimonies of the learners in the qualitative sections. The only decrease was in 'voting' but this was likely to be because elections had not occurred during the interview period. Although the complex operation of social capital precludes the attributing of any direct causal relationship between the two, these findings concur with the evidence of other research that indicates a link between engagement in learning and increased social capital.

Confidence

21   Confidence in ones self in the social world, and confidence in ones self as a learner interact together in complex ways and are both linked to prior experiences of learning and to social capital (Field, 2005, Schuller et al, 2004). Since growth in self confidence is the most widely documented 'soft' outcome of learning, this research sought to measure learners' levels of confidence at the beginning of their learning experience in order to chart potential changes in confidence over time. A method for measuring confidence was devised that picked out relevant scenarios for learners that were grounded in situations that they would face in their everyday lives. The scenarios asked how confident learners were when: meeting new people; making phone enquiries; joining a group of strangers; discussing things with officials; discussing things with a doctor; speaking up in a meeting; complaining about poor service; defending their position in an argument; agreeing within the family; and being interviewed. By the second interview statistically significant numbers of learners, in particular women and older learners, had become more confident about making enquiries over the phone, joining a group of strangers, speaking up in a meeting and being interviewed and their overall confidence scores had increased. In other words, their social and communicative abilities had increased during their learning episodes. Field (2005:19) suggests that interpersonal communications and connections are the core elements of social capital, and Schuller *et al.*'s (2004) studies of the wider benefits of learning provide strong evidence of the impact of learning on social meta-competencies that equip people with the confidence and ability to develop their social connections. The evidence from these confidence scales together with the increases in social capital already evidenced indicate that this same shift is being experienced by the participants in this research.

Effect on personal, family, work, education and public lives

22   There is evidence of a marked increase in the confidence and self-esteem of the learners between the first and second round of interviews. In our society there is a dominant discourse that regards people who are not literate or numerate as deficit individuals and learners' internalise this. When they participate in ALN provision and find that they can learn, this changes their perceptions of themselves too. As well as these psychological changes, learners have become more able to learn new skills, undertake more activities and interact more with other people as a result of their tuition. This, in itself, gives them more confidence in tackling other aspects of their lives. This newly found sense of self had been used to open doors into other worlds and activities that learners would not previously have contemplated, and they had grown further in the process.

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23   *Increased self-confidence*: Learners' reported that increased confidence acts as a key to opening up other opportunities through a growing sense of their potential, ability and achievements, an increase in skills and an increasing range of activities that they could participate in. Responses suggest that this confidence can be separated into 3 distinct groupings; the confidence *to* learn, the confidence *in* learning, and the confidence in life that develops *through* learning. Confidence, self-esteem, closer family relationships and social and civic engagement each comprise elements of social capital, and as Field (2005) observes, they affect and are affected by learning. The evidence suggests that the 'virtuous circle' of social capital is operating and affecting those who have engaged in learning. It indicates that increased confidence and self-esteem are impacting on familial, social and work relationships, which in turn add to the sum of learners' social capital.

24   *Expectation of change*: There was a statistical association between learners' expectation of change and the actuality of this. In addition, people's lives were changing even when they did not expect them to through the benefits of learning. The data indicate that where predicted change was lowest, in relation to engagement in the community, unexpected gains were proportionately highest.

25   *Positive differences*: Participation in ALN had a positive impact on relationships and activities within the family especially when parents became more confident about their involvement in their children's education. It also had a positive impact on learners' perceptions of their current and future employment prospects and earnings. This research indicates that learners' growth in self-confidence leads them to seek better jobs or gain wage increases and that self-confidence is more important than qualifications in learners' own perceptions. It also indicates that the greatest discrepancy between aspirations and actuality lies in relation to employment, notwithstanding the fact that 7% fewer were unemployed and 28% reported improved job prospects between rounds. Other research (see, for example, Glasgow CLSP, 2005) suggests that as adults become more engaged in learning, their expectations of its effects shift from the naively optimistic to the realistic, particularly in relation to enhanced employment prospects. Despite this, 60% noted employment related changes after their ALN learning.

Findings from the Tutor research

26   The sample of 78 tutors was selected from different centres from those in which the learners' sample was based but in the same ALN Partnership areas. This avoided the possibility of the replies from learners influencing, or being influenced by, the participation of their tutors. It also meant that direct and inappropriate comparisons between tutors' and learners' views of programmes were avoided. These interviews took place after data from the first interview with learners had been analysed so that the issues that had been raised by learners could be included in the interview schedule. The interviews were conducted by telephone between April and September 2004 by members of the research team and, on average, took an hour. The questionnaire was based on the good practice framework, *Literacies in the Community Resources for Practitioners and Managers* (2000), in order to assess the quality of tuition provided against the framework. The questionnaire also provided the opportunity for tutors to reflect on: the learning programme itself, planning, resources, staffing and management within the organisation, their own professional development, partnership working, and the impact of the strategy on themselves, their organisation and learners alike. This is not a representative sample of tutors and so the findings cannot be generalised across the whole of Scotland. Nevertheless, the findings are indicative of some of the positive impacts and of some of the issues that need to be considered further if the ALN strategy is to be responsive to the views of tutoring staff.

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Positive outcomes of the ALN Strategy

27   Overall the tutors' perceptions of the impact of the ALN strategy were that it has generally been well received and had impacted positively in the following areas:

- *The number and range of learners participating in ALN.* These included previously under-represented groups such as young people, engaging with learners in different locations such as the workplace, and an overall increase in referrals from a range of organisations.

- *The tutors' approaches to teaching and learning.* This area included better training and support for tutors on approaches to learning and teaching, the availability of more learning resources for a wider range of groups and more awareness of a range of approaches to learners with special needs (e.g. dyslexia).

- *Funding and resources.* This area is strongly related to resources for teaching and learning but also includes better publicity especially through the 'Big Plus' media campaign. Additional funding had led to better teaching accommodation that was open for more hours and was more accessible.

- *The experiences of learners.* This area included more positive attitudes to ALN learners as a result of the initiative and more awareness of ALN issues on the part of providers such as employers and community learning and development staff. Positive student experiences also resulted from a higher priority being given to ALN provision through the additional resources detailed above.

- *The local and national profile of ALN.* This area encompasses all the other positive aspects of the initiative including the improved quality of provision, the range of participating learners, the wider awareness of ALN amongst employers, public officials and education providers.

Further improvements required

28   Areas of the ALN Strategy where there could be further improvement were:

- *Fostering links with, and encouraging transfer to, other learning opportunities.* An important aspect of the ALN strategy is to encourage the development of lifelong learners through learners moving on to, or between, other opportunities. Most of the tutor sample were either not aware of, or did not have responsibility for, helping their learners to move on. There needs to be a greater awareness of the value of links with other learning opportunities by tutors, and better information about them, as tutors are the people from whom learners are most likely to seek advice.

- *Guidance and support* was an area that tutors identified as sometimes problematic. These difficulties included not having enough support to provide the right kind of guidance and also not having sufficient education and training opportunities to move learners onto. This was particularly problematic in rural areas or where learners had learning difficulties that required specialist provision, as this was not available outside of the ALN programmes.

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- *Exit pathways* were also identified as a weak aspect of provision by a number of tutors. The difficulties mostly related to roll-on roll-off provision that meant learners could join and leave at any time so they could continue on a programme without ever having a formal exit process for learners that were leaving. There were also problems of finding provision that learners could move on to as outlined above.

- *Communication with learners by management.* The perception of the tutor sample was that management did not often consult directly with learners in ways that were appropriate. If the ALN strategy is to meet the good practice criteria then managers need to be more active and imaginative about their interactions with learners.

- *More attention to the needs of English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) tutors.* It appears that, whilst more provision is now available for ESOL learners, there was a lack of resources specifically for this group and a lack of staff development for their tutors. It should be noted however that a new PDA in ESOL literacies has been introduced subsequent to the interviews.

- *Access to good quality and appropriate staff development and support for part-time staff and volunteers.* Although opportunities for staff development and support have increased, it does not appear to be reaching the volunteer and part-time tutors that work on a sessional basis. Quite a high proportion of the negative comments on the impact of the strategy reflected the dissatisfaction of sessional tutors with the expectation that they would give up unpaid time to take part in training. There were also negative comments about the lack of access to the type of training that tutors felt would be most useful to them. It is important that these front-line staff, that are delivering the learning programme, have appropriate support and staff development.

Conclusions

What are the barriers and pathways into learning for ALN learners?

29   The most important barrier to be removed as identified by learners is the stigma attached to being a literacy/numeracy learner and the clearest pathway should be better publicity both locally and nationally. This implies that publicity about ALN should be directed at changing the negative public image of ALN learners and making it more positive. A key emphasis should be on how people can improve their own skills and in so doing become more capable and self-confident.

What are learners' and tutors' perceptions of the quality of learning and support they have received?

30   Learners were very positive about the quality of the teaching and learning they received and tutors were equally positive about the impact of the ALN strategy on who, what and how they taught. However, guidance and support needs to be improved particularly by ensuring that the ILP is used appropriately at all stages of the learning process.

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What are the outcomes and impact that learning has on individual learners?

31   There have been a range of outcomes that have impacted on individual learners but the dominant one is increased self-confidence. Our respondents reported that increased self confidence was experienced as a growth in abilities, feeling better about one-self generally and feeling better about oneself in relation to others. Increased self-confidence acts as a key to opening up a wide range of other changes resulting from the confidence *to* learn, the confidence *in* learning, and the confidence in life that develops *through* learning.

What are the possible implications for the wider social benefit and economic activity from such findings?

32   There is an extensive research literature that demonstrates the link between low literacy and numeracy skills and economic and social status. Adults with low skills are more likely to be unemployed, living on low incomes, experiencing poor health and early morbidity. There is also a strong relationship between educational inequality, income inequality and lack of social cohesion in terms of societal trust and community safety. Given these negative indicators any positive changes in outcomes for learners as a result of ALN participation will contribute to wider social and economic benefits. The data have shown that engaging in learning enhances social capital and this increases economic and social activity leading to wider benefits for the individual, their community and society. The effect of education in raising people's sights is experienced more widely as a positive influence on the cultural norms that encourage others to do the same. Learning and its benefits are dynamic in the sense that benefits gained in one domain such as education impact on functioning in other domains, such as family and community. Many parents detailed the variety of ways in which their participation in ALN had helped them to do a better job as a parent. The positive changes respondents reported in their attitudes to education and family life are likely to result in benefits for the wider family and community as well as the individual concerned. These findings illustrate the impact that participation in ALN has on wider social and economic activity and shows the importance of providing good quality teaching and learning to enable this group of people to sustain and progress in their learning.

33   Research shows that adults who have returned to learning after an unsuccessful school career are more vulnerable to failure at this stage than other, previously successful, returnees.   It is vital, therefore, that the Scottish Executive's commitment to 'Closing the Gap' between the disadvantaged and advantaged is carried through in providing an adult literacy and numeracy strategy that is world class. This research, by providing an evaluation of the current strategy based on learners' views, makes an important contribution to this process.

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Recommendations

34   The following recommendations arise from the findings from both the learner and tutor surveys. They are based on the key areas of teaching and learning that require improvement because they do not meet the highest benchmarks for teaching and learning specified in *Literacies in the Community: Resources for Practitioners and Managers* (2000). These recommendations should be addressed by the various bodies responsible for ALN - Scottish Executive, Learning Connections and the ALN Partnerships - working together to bring about change.

- *More and better publicity* that will change the image of ALN and make it more positive would encourage more learners to participate. This publicity should build on the success of the 'Big Plus' campaign.

- *More resources*, which would enable programmes to be more flexible in terms of their timing, location and content.

- *Better guidance and support for learners*: Tutors need to have more training on the use of the ILP and to use it with learners.

- *Better exit guidance and more opportunities for moving learners on to other provision:* Tutors need more training in providing guidance and ALN Partnerships need to provide a greater range of learning opportunities.

- *Greater access to good quality and appropriate staff development and support for part-time staff and volunteer tutors.*

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CHAPTER ONE   THE RESEARCH

Context, Aims and Objectives

1.1   Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) has been identified as an important policy area because ALN skills, knowledge and understanding make an important contribution to equipping everyone to fulfil their potential and '*increasing adult literacy and numeracy levels are also fundamental to improving Scotland's economy, health and wellbeing*' (Learning Connections, 2005: 2). In 2001 the Scottish Executive set out its goals for developing (ALN) provision over the succeeding three years in a report, *Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland (*ALNIS).   One recommendation was to provide additional funding, which was allocated to Local Authorities through ALN Partnerships that included FE Colleges, the voluntary sector and other providers, in order to improve opportunities for provision and recruitment of ALN learners. The ALNIS report recommended that this quality framework be implemented and emphasised the importance of using feedback from learners as a key way in which the quality of programmes should be judged. Other recommendations were that the quality of adult literacy and numeracy services should be improved across the country, and that the success of ALN learning should be judged by the impact that it has on the lives of the learners. In the light of these recommendations, a key way of judging the quality of learning and teaching and the outcomes of the learning was through eliciting the views of participating learners. This led to the commissioning of this research as part of the Scottish Executive's response to the ALNIS report.

1.2   In 2000 good practice guidelines (*Literacies in the Community*, Edinburgh City Council/Scottish Executive) were published that provided a quality framework against which ALN Partnerships were asked to assess themselves. The guidelines provided benchmarks against which to assess the quality of teaching and learning and these have been used as the criteria for making judgements about the quality of programmes throughout the report. This approach meant that the research was using criteria that were recognised and tested in practice settings to judge the overall quality of programmes.

1.3   The overall aim of the research was to evaluate the Scottish Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) Strategy through a survey of a sample of literacy and numeracy learners and ALN tutors in a variety of geographical areas of Scotland. Specifically, the research had 2 objectives:

- Objective 1 was to provide an assessment of the quality of the programmes that learners had participated in.
- Objective 2 was to contribute to an understanding of the impact that participating in programmes had on individuals' lives and any wider social benefits.

1.4   The following research questions were derived from these 2 objectives:

- What are the barriers and pathways into learning for ALN learners?
- What are learners' and tutors' perceptions of the quality of the learning and support they have received?
- What are the outcomes and impact that learning (through the delivery of the ALN strategy) has on individual learners?
- What are the possible implications for wider social benefit and economic activity from such findings?

CHAPTER TWO   METHODOLOGY: THE LEARNER SAMPLE

2.1   Obtaining the views of literacy and numeracy learners is quite a methodological challenge as by definition they are unlikely to have the reading and writing skills necessary to complete questionnaires, or the other usual instruments employed by researchers seeking to ascertain the views of a large number of respondents. Moreover, this group of learners are potentially vulnerable and may not respond to people that are strangers. For both these reasons, face-to-face interviews were conducted with learners in their place of tuition by a team of interviewers, most of whom were based in the same Partnership area. This approach meant that learners were more likely to be responsive because they were interviewed by a person that they had been introduced to by their tutor, and the interview took place in familiar settings. The impact on learning was measured using a repeated measures design to ascertain respondents' views of ALN provision and to assess how these views had changed over time.

First Survey of the Learners

The Sample

2.2   The sample of learners was selected from 9 ALN partnership areas that represented the geographical diversity of Scotland (large conurbations, small village communities, rural, mixed, urban, North, South, East and West) and learner population sizes. ALN Partnerships were asked to identify providers from community, further education, voluntary sector and the private sector, and a variety of locations including workplaces, where learners were engaged in integrated and dedicated provision, in groups, 1:1 and open learning provision. A target number of learners was set representing roughly 10% of the learner population that each Partnership had identified as receiving tuition in the preceding year, and each Partnership agreed that identifying this number of learners was feasible. There were, however, considerable difficulties in obtaining accurate information on the provision, location and number of learners receiving tuition from Partnerships. This was partly due to the devolved nature of administrative responsibility that meant, in most of the Partnerships, that no one had overall responsibility for providing accurate information on learners and so identifying and selecting the sample was problematic. This meant that the research team had to contact places of tuition directly using information supplied by Partnerships rather than contacting tutors as had been the original method of obtaining the sample. It was subsequently agreed, in the light of the difficulties in obtaining the target number of learners from the Partnerships, that the sample would be reduced from the original 1000. Two thousand and four learners were contacted based in 114 different providers and of these 613 were interviewed. Learners' informed consent to participate was obtained through tutors at the identified study sites, who read learners an account of the research and then asked them to sign an informed consent form. On average 22% of the learners that were approached agreed to participate in the research and this low consent rate partly reflects the particular care that was taken to ensure that this potentially vulnerable group of learners were committed and willing participants. It also partly reflects the views of some tutors who were unwilling to allow their learners to be interviewed. Other research (for example, Evans, 2005) has identified the role of such 'gate-keepers' in preventing access to vulnerable subjects.

The First Interview

2.3   Face-to-face interviews, based on a questionnaire that had both closed and open questions, took place between September 2003 and April 2004 and lasted around one hour. The questions were designed to ascertain demographic information; the 'social capital' of the learner; an assessment of confidence; learners' pathways into ALN; any perceived barriers to entry; their experience of learning, teaching and the curriculum; the guidance learners had received at entry, during and at the end of the programme; the effect of participation on their personal, family, public, education and working lives; degree of satisfaction with the quality of the learning programme; views of how provision can be improved; plans for future action. A mixture of closed and open questions was used to enable the views of learners to be captured. Open questions were asked about all these areas except for the sections on social capital and confidence, and these qualitative data were analysed for 200 (just over 50%) of the learner sample. This analysis was carried out in order to explore in-depth processes and events that influenced changes in learners' lives, and enable emerging themes to be identified and explored. Cases were selected using a stratified random procedure to ensure that the sample included learners from all partnerships involved in the research. Not surprisingly, given the proportion of the total sample included in the qualitative analysis, the demographic profile of the qualitative sample closely matched that of the total sample. For example, there were no significant variations between the two samples when examined by sex, age and type of provider.

2.4   The questions were derived from a variety of sources. The questions on 'Social Capital', 'the processes between people that establish networks, norms and social trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit leading to reciprocity', were derived from the literature based on quantifiable measures used in the USA, Australia and the UK. The confidence scales involved identifying scenarios that comprised typical situations for learners in their everyday lives and asked them to identify how confident they were. These questions and those related to social capital were designed to measure change over time. The questions on the quality of provision were based on the *'Literacies in the Community;   Resources for Practitioners and Managers'* (2000) evaluation framework in order that the benchmarks identified in the framework could be evaluated by the learners.

Second Survey of the Learners

The Sample

2.5   Learners were sent greetings cards by the project at regular intervals and then re-contacted by interviewers after approximately one year by telephone or letter to arrange another interview. They were re-interviewed in a variety of locations ranging from their place of tuition to their homes and including community centres, further education colleges, prisons, YMCA, family learning centres, business centres, libraries and schools. Those that agreed to an interview received a £10 voucher as an acknowledgement of the time involved. Sixty-six percent of the interviews were face to face and the remainder were by telephone at the request of the learners. Interviews took place between September 2004 and April 2005.   Three hundred and ninety three learners were interviewed a second time representing 64% of the original sample. This is a high re-contact rate compared with other projects that have tried to track this type of learner group. For example, a conference that focused on longitudinal literacies projects found high attrition levels of around fifty percent of their respondents (e.g., Bingham and Merrifield, 2005). In this project and in others the

main reason given for being unable to re-interview respondents was that they could not be found because they had changed their addresses and telephone numbers (75%). Of the remainder, ten percent were unavailable in the time period designated for the interview, and 15% did not wish to participate in another interview. The comparison between the two samples is therefore based on the 393 respondents who were interviewed twice. This comparison is used to assess the 'distance travelled' between the two interviews.

The Second Interview

2.6   The focus of this interview was on changes since the first interview so generally the same questions were asked. This enabled changes in learners' social capital and self-confidence between the first and second interviews to be assessed. In addition their views on the barriers that might put people off joining a programme and their experiences of learning, teaching and the curriculum; experience of guidance during the course and on exit; the effect of participation on their personal, family, public, education and working lives were explored. A new question was a general reflection from learners on all aspects of the ALN experience. As in the first interview, the questions were both open and closed and the sample of 200 learners whose data is reported on were people that had taken part in both rounds of interview.

Case Studies of Learners

2.7   After the results of the first interview had been analysed, it was clear that learners were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences and it appeared important to find additional means of checking that these findings were sound. Interviewers were therefore asked to provide purposive case studies of all learners that reported negative views of their experience of teaching and learning and five were reported in total. In addition, six interviewers provided case studies of learners that they had found particularly interesting and two of these are used to illuminate the section on self-confidence. These case studies are a result of purposive sampling so can only be seen as illuminating other data.

Data Analysis

2.8   So that the research could measure broad trends and at the same time analyse in depth testimonies from a sub-sample of the population studied, data derived from the questionnaires were both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative analysis was undertaken for all learners and mapped a range of characteristics of sub-groups of adult learners and indicators of the nature and efficacy of the learning journey. The closed questionnaire data was coded and analysed using SPSS(TM). Key variables for the analysis were learners' background characteristics: personal, family and community characteristics and type of education provision being utilised. Other key variables were outcome measures: social capital development, self-esteem, motivation, and perspectives on the learning programmes. Bivariate analyses were conducted, however the low numbers in some variable categories precluded any systematic multivariate analysis of the data.

2.9   Unless otherwise stated in the text statistical significance is at the 1% level. This means that the likelihood of such an observed difference happening by chance is less than one in a hundred. Establishing significance at the 5% level (the alternative level used in the text) means that the likelihood of such an occurrence happening by chance is less than 1 in 20.   Where statistical significance is quoted in the text this was established in one of two ways and was determined by the type of analysis being conducted.   For analysis involving the cross-tabulation of responses from the first to the second round of interviews significance was tested for using the chi-squared test. For analysis involving the comparison of responses from individuals who had taken part in both the first and second round of interviews (to establish whether change had taken place in the intervening period) a matched pairs procedure coupled with a sign test was utilised. This involved comparing the responses from individuals to the same question asked in both rounds of interviews. The sign test examines any overall change in responses (for example, more or less positive or much the same) to ascertain whether differences tend in one direction or another and whether this is statistically significant.

2.10   The qualitative data were analysed for 200 of the learner sample in order to explore in depth processes and events that have influenced change in their lives, and enable emerging themes to be identified and explored.   These 200 were selected to reflect the range of provision in the partnerships.   By ensuring that all interviewees were asked the full range of questions in the first interview it became possible to sample the widest range of learners in the subsequent interview, as when some of those chosen could not be contacted for the subsequent interviews then the data from other (matched) learners was included in the analysis.

2.11   The questionnaire data was analysed using the database FileMaker(TM).   The answers were copied into the database, codified, and then examined under a number of thematic headings.   This method provides for analysis according to a priori systematic conceptual frame as well as allowing a flexible grounded approach for probing emergent issues.   It also enabled the extraction of quotations that happen aptly to capture the essence of some relevant concern.

2.12   Interviews were recorded both by notes by the interviewers on the questionnaires and on mini-disc and a sample of interviewers were checked for consistency by the research team and an independent evaluator from Glasgow University. Notes from the open questions were copied into FileMaker, as with the qualitative interview data and analysed similarly.

CHAPTER THREE   LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS

In this section a comparison is made between the characteristics of the first and second samples in order to identify the nature of the sample and the differences between the two cohorts. The changes in work status of the 393 learners that participated in both interviews is then reported on.

Learner Characteristics: Comparison with the First Interview Sample

3.1   The first sample comprised six hundred and thirteen learners and it was possible to re-interview 393 of these learners or 64%. Table 3.1 shows the numbers interviewed in each Partnership area in the first and second samples.

Table 3.1: A comparison of the first and second samples by Partnership

Partnership	First Sample (Frequency)	Second Sample (Frequency)
1	37	26
2	28	15
3	37	38
4	111	80
5	68	48
6	108	71
7	57	34
8	84	49
9	65	32
Totals	**613**	**393**

3.2   The samples were compared by gender (62% female and 38% male in both interviews), ethnicity (92% white British 1st interview, 88% 2nd interview), age distribution and the only significant differences were that there were fewer learners in the under 21 age group in the second interview. This is because this age group was the most difficult to contact due to their frequent changes of address and telephone numbers. Chart 3.1 shows the differences in age distribution.

Chart 3.1: A comparison of the first and second samples by age
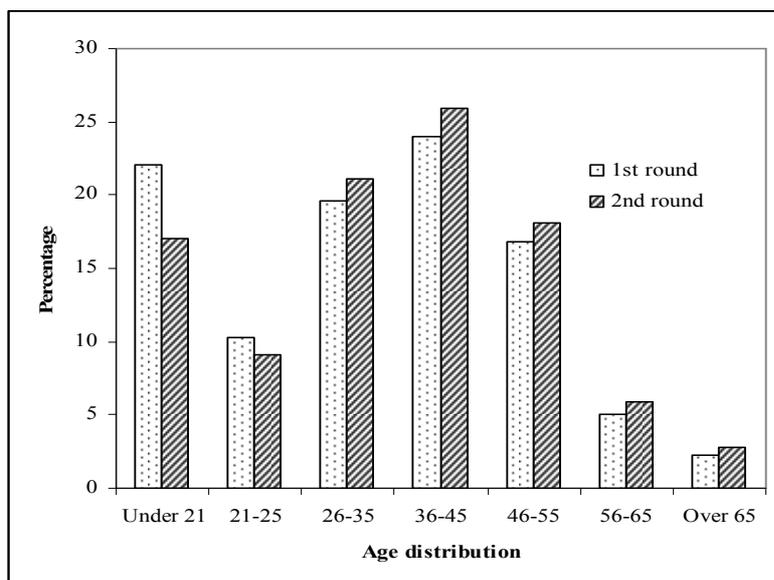
Programme Characteristics: Comparison with the First Interview Sample

3.3   The two samples were also compared to see if it had come from the same types of provision. Below the two samples are compared by type of provider, learning location, type of programme and programme arrangement. As can be seen from charts 3.2 and 3.3, slightly fewer learners were re-interviewed whose programmes were provided by FE Colleges and there was some variation in the learning location with slightly fewer learners in community centres and slightly more in schools.

Chart 3.2: A comparison of the first and second samples by type of provider
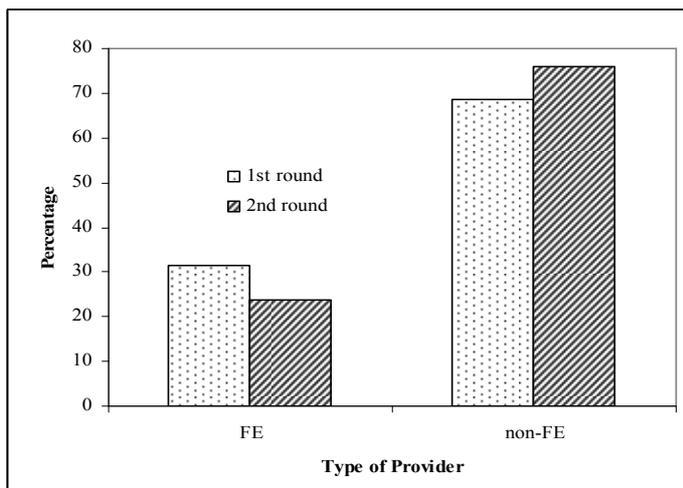
3.4   Non-FE provision comprises programmes provided by the local authorities' community learning and development departments based mainly in community centres or other education premises such as schools, other local authority provision provided by libraries and social work departments, the voluntary sector, including the WEA and Youth Work Agencies, private providers based in work places and prisons. Details of the percentage of provision that took place in these locations are provided in chart 3.3 below.

Chart 3.3: A comparison of the first and second samples by learning location
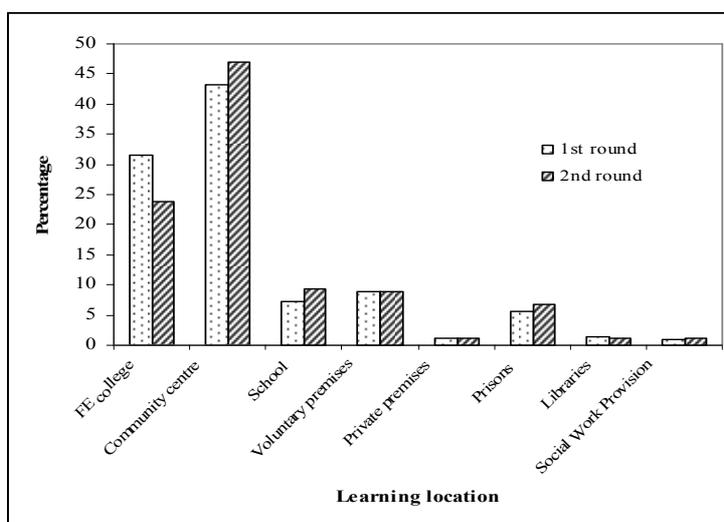
3.5   Chart 3.4 below shows the type of programme in which learners participated. The category 'other' includes provisions such as 'Basic Computing', which involved a range of learning that incorporated literacy and numeracy as well as computing skills. The variation between the samples is mainly because the younger age group was more likely to be studying in FE and these were the most difficult group to re-contact due to their moving from their original address and no longer using the same mobile phone number.

Chart 3.4: A comparison of the first and second samples by type of programme
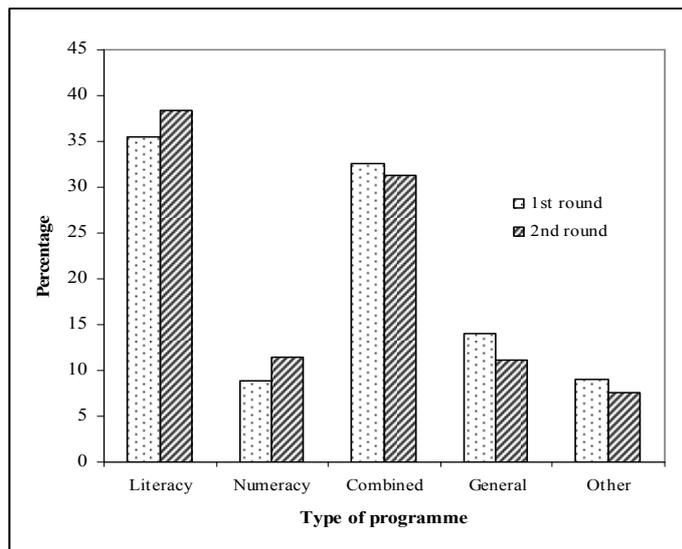
3.6   The final chart in this section shows the programme arrangement. Provision of learning opportunities was either dedicated, that is its sole focus was on literacy/numeracy or integrated, where literacy/numeracy was offered in courses such as First Aid or as part of a vocational course in, for example Hairdressing, where the subject matter may be the learners' first concern. Integrated programmes are more likely to be offered in FE Colleges and so the differences in programme arrangement detailed in chart 3.5 are the result of a smaller sample of learners from this setting.

Chart 3.5: A comparison of the first and second samples by programme arrangement
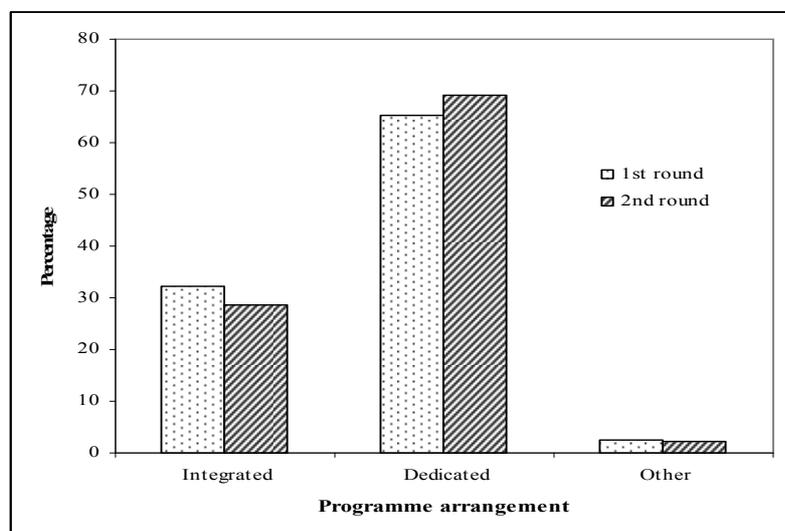
Changes between the first and second interviews

3.7   In order to see if the respondents had changed any of their circumstances between the first and second interviews they were asked about their marital status, their living arrangements and their work status. There were changes in work status where more learners were working full time and fewer were registered unemployed. The 'not employed' category in Chart 3.6 includes people who described themselves as 'housewives', those who were in part-time education but not also working and those that were in full time education. DLA refers to people who were in receipt of disability or incapacity benefits.

Chart 3.6: A comparison of the first and second samples by work status
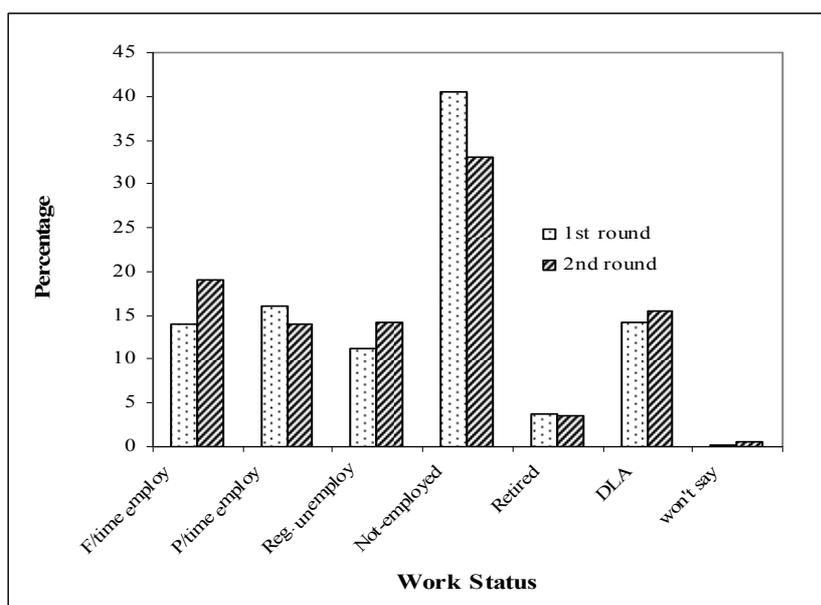
3.8   Details of these positive changes in status are provided below in table 3.2. As can be seen respondents have moved from unemployment into employment, from part time into full time employment, from FE into employment and from community based provision into FE provision. The individual that moved from FE into a University course had been involved in ALN provision for over 10 years and had been receiving help with numeracy in an FE College before gaining her University place.

Table 3.2: Positive changes

1st round	2nd round	Frequency
Not employed/reg. unemployed	Part-time employed	13
FE College	Full-time employed	13
Non-FE provision	FE College	9
Part-time employed	Full-time employed	7
Not employed/reg. unemployed	Full-time employed	5
FE College	Part-time employed	2
FE College	University	1

3.9   For some respondents there had been negative changes in status with some moving from full or part-time employment into unemployment as detailed in table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3: Negative changes

1st round	2nd round	Frequency
Part-time employed	Not employed/reg. unemployed	7
Full-time employed	Not employed/reg. unemployed	6
FE College	Not employed/reg. unemployed	4
Full-time employed	Part-time employed	3

Summary

3.10   The personal and programme characteristics of the 613 learners who took part in the first interview and the 393 who took part in the second interview were compared. The sample was predominantly: female (62% in both rounds), White British (92% 1st; 88% 2nd), receiving tuition in a non-FE (70% 1st, 78, 2nd) setting and taking part in dedicated provision (68%, 1st, 70%, 2nd).

3.11   There were marginal differences between the two samples as follows:

- Fewer were under the age of 21 (17% 1st, 22% 2nd)
- Fewer were studying in integrated programmes
- Fewer were studying in FE colleges

3.12   Of the 393 learners who were interviewed in both rounds:

- Fifty (13%) had experienced positive changes in terms of moving into full time or part time employment or moving into FE provision from community-based provision.
- Twenty (5%) had experienced negative changes by moving from employment into unemployment or from FE into unemployment.

3.13   Further details about individual changes in learners' lives in terms of their personal, family, work, education and public lives are provided in chapter 10 using data from the analysis of the qualitative sample.

CHAPTER FOUR   PATHWAYS INTO ALN

Motivation to Start the Programme

4.1   In the first interview learners were asked an open question about what had motivated them to start their programmes and the responses of the 200 qualitative sample respondents were analysed. They were asked why they had chosen their particular programmes, what differences they hoped the learning would make in their lives, what had prompted them to think seriously about ALN classes, and what their specific triggers to participation were.

4.2   Forty-one percent of all the respondents (of these 43% were women and 39% were men) had elected to learn for general self-improvement and the development of their reading, writing and maths skills. Some spoke of their skills *'needing strengthening'*, some talked of *'brushing up'* maths or spelling, whereas others were motivated by the desire to *'keep [my] brain moving'* or to *'better myself, do something with my life'*. Twenty four percent (of these 27% were men and 23% were women) cited employment related reasons, to get into, to progress in work, or to access training programmes that required minimum levels of formal literacy and numeracy attainment. Supporting children's learning was mentioned by 18% of the respondents, two thirds of whom were women, and self esteem and confidence building featured as the fourth key motivational factor (15%).

4.3   In considering the differences they hoped the learning would make in their lives, over half (51%) spoke of increased self-confidence and self-esteem, for example; *'[It'll] prove I'm capable of doing things for myself.'* and *'I can get letters and read them without asking my husband'*. Twenty four percent cited specific tasks that they sought mastery over, for example writing reports, reading the post or the job notice board, reading about art and sculpture, and dealing with money.

4.4   Learners were also asked what started them thinking seriously about doing ALN. The specific and more immediate triggers to participation related firstly to personal motivation (36%) for self, family and/or employment. A second trigger was the encouragement of family or friends (29%). A third trigger to participation was because of professional advice. This figured more prominently in women's, rather than men's, responses (of these 24% were women and 14% were men), and applied to both community and institutional settings. Only 7% of the sample cited life changes, - births, deaths, children's schooling, new partners and employment - as the learning triggers, and it is interesting to note that all of them were women.

Barriers to Entry

4.5   Previous barriers to learning were separated into 'personal' and 'provision' categories. Of the personal factors, 26% had simply not given ALN learning any real consideration in the past, 24%, mostly women, cited family circumstances, and both employment and low self-esteem were separately mentioned by 18% of respondents. Very few of the interviewees (18%) saw the provision itself as presenting a barrier to access. Of those who did, 67% of them talked about a lack of available information, and 28% cited lack of classes. It is possible however that this may relate more to their knowledge of what was available than to the actual provision of learning opportunities.

4.6   The learners were encouraged to enrol on their programme by a variety of people and events. The highest proportion was encouraged to start by unofficial people (family, friends, work-mates or casual acquaintances). This was followed by self-encouragement and then by people holding some position (doctors, social workers, job centre, youth club, employer). They received information of the programme from people at the centre that they enrolled at and the majority had no difficulty in starting their programme. Learners found the people that dealt with them very helpful, felt that they were made welcome and important, found the information they were given useful and, if they met a tutor before they started, got advice about what would be best for them.

4.7   Six hundred and thirteen learners participating in the first interview were asked if there were any particular factors that worried them or barriers to entry that they thought might put people off joining a programme. The LIC pack suggests that good practice would mean that '*access is prompt and easy. The programme is open to potential learners with needs and aspirations in any area of adult life. Perceived stigma attached to adult literacy and numeracy is challenged*' (p12). Learners were therefore asked which, if any, of the factors identified in Table 4.1 had an effect. Two hundred and twenty-three learners said explicitly that there were no barriers and a further 15 did not answer this question. The table below is therefore based on 375 valid answers. Learners could pick more than one potential barrier.

Table 4.1:   Barriers to entry

Potential barriers	Frequency	% responses
sensitivity	236	27
ability	217	25
like school	108	12
disability	74	8
money	63	7
routine domestic	52	6
distance	49	6
work	33	4
facilities	23	3
off-putting	17	2
strife domestic	12	1
Total respondees	N=375	

4.8   The most important barrier was about personal *sensitivity* such as the learners' age, lack of confidence, problems to do with meeting new people or how friends would react. The second most important barrier was a concern about *ability*, such as not being able to cope with learning or taking up education again and concerns about the learner's own ability. The fear that it might be *like school* again for people that had not enjoyed school and expected that their learning programme might use similar methods was the next most important barrier. Barriers that were within the control of learning providers such as the look of the building or staff being unwelcoming and the lack of facilities such as a crèche were much less significant. This finding is likely to be a reflection of the care that providers are taking in order to minimise barriers to participation in learning programmes.

Pathways into ALN

4.9   In the second interview learners were asked for suggestions that might make access to ALN provision easier for people, and the main barriers to learning that should be removed. Learners were asked to suggest which areas should be given the most priority. The results of the 211 learners that answered this question are shown in chart 4.1. As can be seen, learners prioritised publicity since they could not participate until they knew what was available. Once they knew what was available they wanted to meet someone to talk to about the course. They particularly valued individual contact that would focus on their needs and this was their preferred method for finding out about the courses on offer and getting detailed information about their chosen course.

Chart 4.1: What would make it easier to join learning programmes?
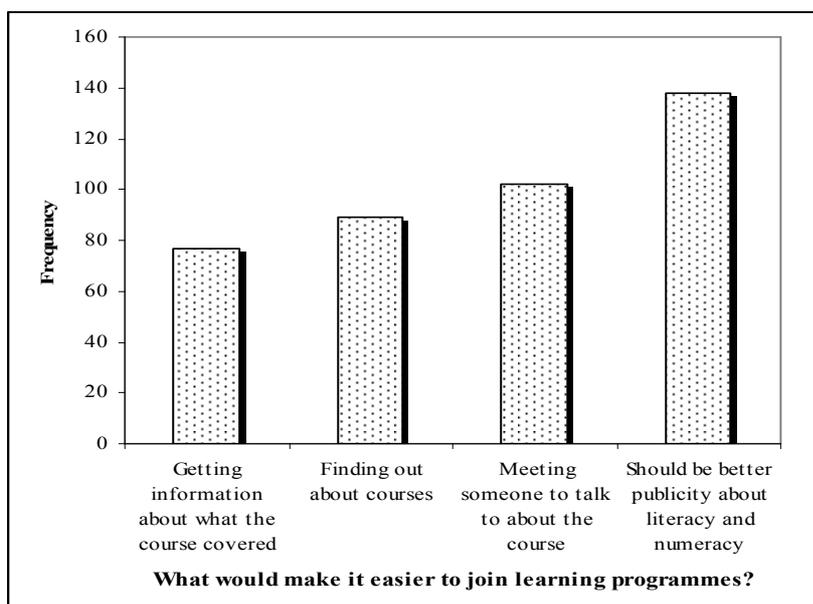
4.10   In considering the barriers that needed to be removed, 23% talked of the stigma they saw attached to ALN learning. Nineteen percent mentioned the accessibility of classes, and a further 19%, (all women) spoke of their perceptions of the nature of the classes. So although publicity and accessibility are evidently important factors, there still appears to be a significant need to alter public perceptions of what ALN learning is, and who it is targeted at.

4.11   Learners were also asked through an open question about their views of how joining programmes could be made easier. The responses of the qualitative sample of two hundred learners were analysed and they made suggestions that broadly clustered into policy and process issues, with increased publicity being mentioned by 55% of the sample.

4.12   Publicity included adverts through TV, radio and the internet, large posters and information leaflets. Learners responded very favourably to the national Big Plus adverts on TV, and several also mentioned the English Gremlins campaign, both of which were seen to encourage the motivation to learn. *"The ad was the motivating factor. It hit the problem on the nail; what a person does to hide the problem, the excuses etc"*. Respondents also spoke of the importance of positive media representations of ALN learners. Many advocated the use of 'real' learners, of de-stigmatising ALN learners and learning, and *"not labelling them as stupid"* as one local radio station was perceived to have done.

4.13   In addition to these mass media outlets, just under 40 talked about the importance of local advertising/leaflets that could contain more programme specific information and that would make links with places or people they were already familiar with. They mentioned the availability of leaflets and posters in other agencies, other groups and courses, or places that people frequent such as job centres, post offices, health centres, shops and shopping centres (could supermarkets have adverts on their carrier bags?), and in local papers. Many respondents included details pertaining to such leaflets and suggested that:

- The language pitch must be right. 'The word numeracy was unfamiliar to me.'
- Local contact numbers should be prominent. 'Learn Direct is too indirect.'
- It should be clear that it's not like school and can be fun.
- The print should be bigger.
- They should say that the courses are free.
- They could be adapted and targeted to different age groups.

4.14   The second cluster of comments pertained to the processes of course selection and enrolment that *"many are embarrassed about"* and *"some don't have the confidence to do."* One learner remarked that *"getting the information is the scary part"*. Nearly everyone who talked about these initial stages spoke of how vital it had been to them that the first point of contact was with someone who was knowledgeable, friendly, welcoming and not patronising. *"It's important to get re-assurance and encouragement."* *"The first person you meet needs to be friendly and helpful."* That *"they welcome you when you arrive"*, and that *"they don't put people off."* Pre-course guidance was deemed to have been helpful, and several respondents advocated meeting the tutor or current/past students before enrolling, *"to break down the barriers and give encouragement."* Provision for adults with special needs was mentioned by several learners, including front line staff who could communicate in sign language.

4.15   Alongside these more structured promotional products and processes, word of mouth was seen to be a very powerful channel of recruitment. It may come from family and /or friends who have been ALN learners themselves, or from broader community networks.

Summary

4.16   Learners were mainly motivated to start their programmes by a desire for self-improvement and the development of their skills. The most important barrier to participation was about personal *sensitivity* such as the learners' age, lack of confidence, problems to do with meeting new people or how friends would react. The second most important barrier was a concern about *ability*, such as not being able to cope with learning or taking up education again. The fear that it might be *like school* again for people that had not enjoyed school and expected that their learning programme might use similar methods was the next most important barrier. Barriers that were within the control of learning providers such as the look of the building or staff being unwelcoming and the lack of facilities such as a crèche were much less significant. Learners were encouraged to enrol in their programme mainly by family and friends and they had very few difficulties in starting their programmes. Learners considered that better publicity, that used positive images of ALN learners, was the main factor that would make joining programmes easier. Such publicity should change public perceptions about the image of ALN learning in order to make it more positive. They also highlighted the importance of having as the first point of contact someone who was knowledgeable, welcoming and friendly.

CHAPTER FIVE LEARNING, TEACHING AND THE CURRICULUM

5.1   In this section of the questionnaire learners were asked to give their views of what they had been learning, how it had been taught and what they thought of the staff. It is suggested that good practice in terms of learning and teaching should involve *'approaches that are relevant to learners' chosen contexts and goals. Preferred learning styles are identified and respected. Interaction and dialogue between learners are actively promoted and purposeful'* (LIC pack p13). Good practice that relates to the curriculum is that *'learning options are flexible and responsive to diverse needs and aspirations. Knowledge, skills and understanding are developed in context. Learning is presented as a positive and enjoyable experience'* (LIC pack, p14). We therefore asked learners to reflect on the following aspects of their learning programmes: their enjoyment of the programme they had participated in; the quality of the learning programme and the staff and compared their perceptions with the responses given in the first interview.

5.2   Overall, responses were very positive with a greater than 90% satisfaction rating in the majority of indicators. Below are detailed the statistically significant changes in the responses to the questions between the first and second round of interviews. Individual learners first and second round answers were compared using a matched pairs procedure with a sign test used to assess significance. Unless otherwise stated significance is at the 1% level meaning that the likelihood of such an occurrence happening by chance is less that one in a hundred.

5.3   **Was the course enjoyable, did it keep your interest?**
*   Learners were significantly less likely to indicate that they found the course enjoyable by their second interview (93%) than at their first (97%). This difference is mainly caused by FE learners' (non-FE 96%, FE 85%) decreased enjoyment.
*   Male responses showed a significant change (5% level) from the first to second round of interviews. Ninety-eight per cent of males in the first interview reported finding the course enjoyable compared to 93% at the second interview.
*   Younger learners were significantly (5% level) less likely to report finding the course enjoyable by their second interview (93% 1st interview, 85% 2nd interview).

5.4   **Did the programme suit the needs of an adult learner?**
*   There was an increase in satisfaction between the 1st and 2nd interviews (65% 1st, 90% 2nd). However, non-FE learners were significantly more likely than FE learners to report that this suited their needs (non-FE 94%, FE 85%).

5.5   **Did you attend regularly, go to most sessions?**
*   Learners were significantly less likely to indicate that they attended the course regularly by their second interview (94%) than at their first (99%).
*   Females showed a significant change from the first to second round of interviews. Ninety- nine per cent of females in the first interview reported attending regularly compared to 93% at the second interview.
*   Older learners were significantly less likely to report attending the course regularly by their second interview (99% 1st interview, 94% 2nd interview).
*   Non-FE learners were also significantly less likely to report attending the course   regularly by their second interview (99% 1st interview, 93% 2nd interview). There was no similar fall off in attendance among learners in FE provision between their first (100%) and their second interview (98%).

5.6   Learners were then asked about their satisfaction with the learning programme in terms of its structure, the tutors, if it boosted their confidence, if it fitted their needs and if it was at a suitable pace. Below the differences are detailed that were statistically significant between the 2 interviews. There was no difference in satisfaction with the pace of tuition between the two interviews.

5.7   **Did you find that the learning programme was well structured?**
- By the second interview learners were significantly (5% level) less likely to feel that their course was well structured. Ninety-five per cent of learners 'agreed or strongly agreed' that the course was well structured at the first interview while 92% 'agreed or strongly agreed' that it was well structured by the second interview.

5.8   **Did you find that the learning programme had good tutors?**
- By the second round of interviews learners were significantly (5% level) less likely to agree that they had good tutors. Ninety-eight per cent of learners 'agreed or strongly agreed' that they had good tutors at the first round of interviews compared to 92% who reported this at the second interview.
- When the data is examined by age there is a small but significant (5% level) change in the opinions of older learners from the first to second round of interviews. Ninety-eight per cent of older learners 'agreed or strongly agreed' that they had good tutors at the first interview compared to 95% at the second interview.

5.9   **Did you find that the learning programme boosted your confidence?**
- By the second interview males were slightly, but significantly (5% level), less likely to 'agree or strongly agree' that the learning programme had boosted their confidence (93% 1st interview, 89% 2nd interview).

5.10   **Were staff encouraging, took time to attend to any difficulties you had?**
- Females were significantly less likely in the second interview to 'agree or strongly agree' that staff took time to attend to any difficulties they had than they were in the first interview (97% 1st interview, 91% 2nd interview).

5.11   **Did staff give you enough feedback on your progress?**
- By the second interview learners were slightly but significantly (5% level) less likely to agree that staff gave them enough feedback on progress. Ninety-three per cent of learners 'agreed or strongly agreed' that they received enough feedback at the first round of interviews compared to 89% who reported this at the second interview.
- The data by age shows a significant (5% level) change in the opinions of younger learners from the first to second round of interviews. Ninety-four per cent of younger learners 'agreed or strongly agreed' at the first round of interviews that they received enough feedback compared to 85% who indicated this at the second interview.

5.12   These slight increases in negativity appear to be due to learners raising their expectations of learning, teaching and the curriculum over time. Many ALN learners who have negative memories of school are likely to be very positive about educational experiences that are learner centred and focused on their needs (see McGivney, 2001). Once these positive experiences of returning to education become accepted then they are likely to become more critical. The larger increases in dissatisfaction amongst male younger learners and those in FE could be due to their more recent experience of school and also being in an environment where the curriculum was more structured by Scottish Qualification Agency (SQA) assessment requirements. This means that feedback on progress was likely to be less frequent and detailed. It should also be remembered that learners were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of their programmes so these slight reductions in satisfaction are not indicative of a significant problem. Indeed it is a criterion of the evaluation framework for teaching, learning and the curriculum that learners should become more critical so this may be an outcome of their experience of being encouraged to become more critical.

Summary

5.13   Learners were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of their learning programmes with a 90% satisfaction rate on most aspects of their experience. However, there were slight increases in negativity, which were statistically significant, between the 2 rounds of interviews in relation to the course being enjoyable, the learning programme being well-structured, the tutors being good, learners having their confidence boosted and having enough feedback on progress. These differences were also differently experienced by the overall sample. There were statistically significant decreases in enjoyment by learners attending FE provision, female learners were significantly less likely to find staff encouraging, older learners were significantly more dissatisfied with their tutors and younger ones were significantly more likely to report that they did not get enough feedback.

CHAPTER SIX   GUIDANCE

6.1   The LIC pack suggests that guidance should be pro-active so that learners are able to reflect on learning, make informed decisions and plan for progression. Good practice should involve '*guidance processes being integrated within the programme at all stages in order for learners to identify choices and make decisions*' (p15). There is also an emphasis on the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) that is used to '*record, update and review progress towards the learners*' intended outcomes and changes in the learners' needs and aspirations' (p15). The ILP is seen as an essential feature of the learning programme because it sets out in detail the '*learning outcomes, the learning necessary to achieve them and the sequence that learners and tutors should follow towards their achievement*' (HMIe, 2005: 13). Thus the ILP is the most effective means of identifying literacy and numeracy needs and building an individual curriculum to address them, and forms a key part of the guidance process in ensuring that learners are working towards and achieving their goals. For these reasons learners were asked a number of questions about this.

Entry

6.2   Learners were asked in the first round of interviews if anyone had drawn up an ILP with them at the start, or shortly after they had started their learning programme. As can be seen from Table 6.1 below a third of learners did not know they had an ILP. It should be remembered that this is the *perception* of the learners and ILPs may exist but learners do not recognise them as such. However, interviewers were careful to explain what an ILP meant and good practice involves making the ILP *explicit* in a form that is shared by both learner and tutor (LIC pack p15). The table also shows that learners who were based in an FE College were less likely to be aware of having an ILP than those in other settings. This may be because at entry most Colleges are more concerned with '*assessing learners' core skills levels*' and using '*various forms of screening for new learners*' (HMIe, 2005: 13) in order to find the right programme for learners to begin their studies. This means that learners were less likely to have an '*extended initial interview where learners discussed their needs and agreed an individual learning plan*' (HMIe, 2005: 13), which was a characteristic approach of local authority provision.

Table 6.1: ILPs – comparison between FE and non-FE

	FE college	non-FE provider	Total
	%	%	%
ILP drawn up at start of course	48	62	57
ILP drawn up later	2	3	3
no ILP	45	32	37
has ILP but not given at meeting	3	2	2
too soon – just started course	2	1	1
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Guidance on the Course

6.3   The *Literacies in the Communities Good Practice Framework* (LIC) suggests that the best practice in guidance and support is when learners '*identify choices and make informed decisions*' (p15). It also suggests that opportunities should be offered to '*discuss, record, update and review the ILP and discuss changes in needs and aspirations*' (p15). These criteria were used to help assess the quality of guidance and support learners were receiving during their course. They were asked three questions about their guidance on the course: if anyone had talked to them about what they had learnt; helped them to think about the knowledge, skills and understanding they had gained during the class; and reviewed their ILP with them to see what they had achieved. The responses to these questions are detailed in table 6.2 below. It is of note that 143 learners (41%) indicated that they did not have an ILP and of the 217 that did 15% said that it had never been reviewed. As in the first interview interviewers were careful to explain what an ILP was in case they were unsure about the term. It was described as '*a means of helping them identify and draw up their learning goals and what they were doing to try to achieve them*'.

Table 6.2:   Guidance on the course

	Percentage			N=
	Never	**Sometimes**	**Often**	
Did someone talk about how much you had learnt	23	37	39	364
Did someone help you to think about skills, knowledge and understanding you had gained during the class	23	33	44	361
Did someone review your ILP with you to help you see what you had achieved	15	34	51	217*

* 143 learners indicated that they did not have an ILP

6.4   The answers to these questions were also compared between those in FE settings and those in other settings and it was found that a slightly higher percentage of learners in FE settings reported that they had never discussed what had been learnt or their skills knowledge and understanding as can be seen in tables 6.3 to 6.5.

Guidance on the course - FE Non-FE comparisons

Table 6.3: Did someone talk to you about how much you had learnt?

	Percentage			
Provision	**Never**	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**N=**
FE	31	34	34	90
Non-FE	21	38	41	274
Total	**23**	**37**	**39**	**364**

Table 6.4: Did someone help you to think about the skills, knowledge and understanding you had gained during the class?

	Percentage			
Provision	**Never**	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**N=**
FE	26	30	44	89
Non-FE	22	34	45	272
Total	**23**	**33**	**44**	**361**

6.5   A statistically significant (1% level) percentage of learners in FE settings reported that they had never had a review of their ILP as can be seen from table 6.5 below.

Table 6.5: Did someone review your ILP with you to help you see what you had achieved?

Provision	Percentage			N=
	Never	**Sometimes**	**Often**	
FE	26	43	31	42
Non-FE	12	32	56	175
Total	**15**	**34**	**51**	**217***

* - 143 learners indicated that they did not have an ILP

6.6   This difference could be explained by the arrangements for setting targets and reviewing progress that are in place in FE settings that involve ILPs being kept centrally rather than by the learner (HMIe, 2005: 14).

Exit Guidance at the End of the Course

6.7   The LIC pack suggests that exit pathways from learning programmes should present learning '*as a self directed lifelong process where participation in the programme is a stage*' (p16). It also suggests that '*confidence and competence as a critical user of literacy and numeracy*' should be developed as well as 'confidence in transferring learning to new roles and contexts' (*ibid)*. Learners were therefore asked if, at the end of the course, anyone had talked to them about what they had learnt; helped them to think about the knowledge, skills and understanding they had gained during their class; and reviewed their ILP with them to see what they had achieved. The data shows that 190 learners had completed their course. Of these, 142 (75%) completed their course <u>and</u> also indicated receiving exit guidance. Thus the first 2 tables (Tables 6.6 and 6.7) are based on these learners. However, in both instances N is below 142 since there were also a number of missing cases.

Table 6.6: Did someone talk to you about how much you had learned?

Provision	Percentage		N=
	Yes	**No**	
FE	77	23	35
Non-FE	82	18	77
Total	**80**	**20**	**112**

Table 6.7: Did someone help you to think about the skills, knowledge and understanding you had gained during the class?

Provision	Percentage		N=
	Yes	**No**	
FE	86	14	36
Non-FE	83	17	75
Total	**84**	**16**	**111**

6.8   The third table (Table 6.8) is also based on this group of learners but additionally excludes learners who indicated not having an ILP. In total 98 students had completed their course, had an ILP and had also received exit guidance. In the table N=77, there were 21 missing cases where learners did not answer the question.

Table 6.8: Did someone review your ILP with you to help you see what
**   you had achieved?**

Provision	Percentage		N=
	Yes	No	
FE	74	26	19
Non-FE	86	14	58
Total	**83**	**17**	**77**

6.9   One hundred and seventy-one learners from the 190 who had completed their ALN course responded to a question asking them if anyone had helped them to find other learning opportunities. Two thirds of these learners (66%) indicated that they had received such an offer of help. While there were differences in the responses from learners in FE and Non-FE provision (see table 6.9) these differences were not statistically significant.

Table 6.9: Did anyone help you to find other learning opportunities that you
**   could move onto?**

Provision	Percentage		N=
	Yes	No	
FE	58	42	59
Non-FE	70	30	112
Total	**66**	**34**	**171**

6.10   Open questions were also asked about the experiences of learners after they had completed their courses. Seventy-five (38%) of the learners in the qualitative sample had continued with some form of learning. Table 6.10 summarises the subsequent studies/training routes suggested by 74 of these learners (one did not provide an answer).

Table 6.10: Further learning routes accessed by learners

Provision	Frequency	Percentage of continuing learners
Other ALN provision	19	26
F.E. College	18	24
General interest course	16	22
Computing course	6	8
Job	4	5
GCSE	3	4
Highers	3	4
H.E.	2	3
Apprenticeship	1	1
Online vocational	1	1
Voluntary work training	1	1
Total	**74**	**100**

6.11   Six of the F.E. students had enrolled on pre-vocational courses preparing for social care and nursing. The remainder were working towards a variety of N/SVQs. Seven of the learners who were continuing in ALN learning indicated that they were moving on to a higher level with the intention of subsequently applying for a vocational course, however one commented that s/he had been attending the current course for nine years. General courses included a range of more academically geared subjects such as Sociology, English and Psychology, whereas others included digital photography, First Aid, Counselling and Health Issues. Three of those who reported not having continued with their learning cited health reasons, and a further respondent was waiting for an interpreter to be allocated before continuing.

6.12   Those learners who had completed their courses (N=190) were then asked their reasons for leaving. Table 6.11 summarises (in rank order) the 181 responses.

Table 6.11: Reasons for leaving the programme

Reason	Frequency	Percentage of those responding
The course finished	105	58
Change in circumstances	31	17
I got what I wanted from course	18	10
I wasn't happy with what I was learning	6	3
I wasn't happy with the way we were taught	6	3
Other reason	15	8
Total	**181**	**100**

6.13   Although it is only a very small percentage of learners that were unhappy with either the content of their course or the methods used in them, these negative comments should be taken seriously. Other research (e.g. McGivney, 2001) shows that adults who return to learning are often easily satisfied with their programmes as they are unable to make appropriate comparisons. Therefore, learners were asked if they wished to comment on the reasons why they had left the programme. Sixty-one learners responded to this question, and of these nineteen (31%) implied that they had completed the course. Not all stated this explicitly, but comments such as, 'It was great and now I'm doing x' were taken to imply completion and have therefore been interpreted as such. Most of these had positive things to say about their learning experience, as the following comments illustrate:

- The great guidance teacher really boosted my confidence
- Beneficial to anyone looking to progress themselves
- Enjoyable and gave me a boost to go and do other courses that I would never have thought I would do
- It's changed things at home for the better
- It gave me the confidence in my writing ability and enabled me to attempt the GCSE

6.14   Other comments reflected a less positive learning experience for twenty-nine (48%) of the learners. For some, their premature exit resulted from changed life circumstances including increased domestic commitments. For others, difficult or altered locations and class times made access to programmes problematic. These circumstantial and organisational factors accounted for 41% (12) of the more negative comments.

`   26

6.15   The remainder concerned the content, methods and organisation of the classes themselves. Some found them too hard, some too easy, and others suggested that the content was wrong for them (7). Ten (34% of the negative comments) were critical of pedagogical and organisational issues that they encountered, the chief one of these being that in mixed groups of a broad ability spread, they did not receive the individual tutor attention that they needed, as the following quotes illustrate.

- It wasn't flexible enough and the range of abilities in the class was too great. I felt I was helping a lot of the other students and people didn't have access to books right from the start
- Everyone was being taught in the same way and at the same pace and stage
- Not enough attention was given to each student so we didn't get enough support

Summary

6.16   Guidance is a weak area of provision in all settings due to the ineffective use of the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) that forms a key part of the guidance process in ensuring that learners are working towards and achieving their goals. Well over a third of learners stated that they did not have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) at the beginning of their programme and only just under a third had received a review of their ILP during their programme. There was a better position in terms of exit guidance since, for the small number of learners that had left their programmes and had an ILP, a high percentage had received a review of their learning.

6.17   A very small percentage of learners had left their programme because they were unhappy with the content or methods   These cases were most likely to occur when learners were part of mixed groups with a broad spread of ability. Learners who had completed their original courses have continued with a range of other provision in a variety of settings with some moving from community based provision into FE as detailed in chapter 3.

CHAPTER SEVEN   REFLECTION ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

7.1   In this section of the second round of interviews, learners were asked to reflect on their programme as a whole in relation to all the aspects of learning that the earlier results from the first round of interviews had identified as contributing to a good learning experience from the learners' perspective. This overall reflection was then analysed separately for FE and non FE settings to see if the factors contributing to this overall experience differed.

7.2   The first group of factors were those that contribute to a *positive learning environment.* These comprise the timing and location of the course, the cost, the facilities (crèche transport, café, rooms) and the learning resources that were available. The responses in FE settings are shown first in chart 7.1 and then the responses in non-FE settings are shown in chart 7.2. As can be seen, learners were very positive about all aspects of their learning environment but there were significant differences between the two settings in terms of cost with 93% of non-FE learners saying it was great compared with 82% of FE learners. There were also significant differences (5% level) in terms of pace with 78% of non-FE learners reporting that it was great compared with 67% of FE learners. This is probably because community-based provision is more likely to be free and because there is less flexibility in the pace of the teaching in FE settings. On the other hand, learners were more positive about the timing and location of the provision in FE settings although these differences were not significant.

Chart 7.1: Learning Environment - FE
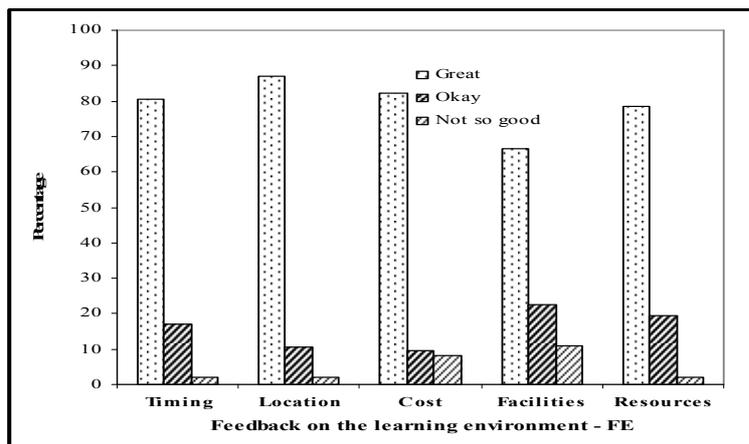
Chart 7.2: Learning Environment - non-FE
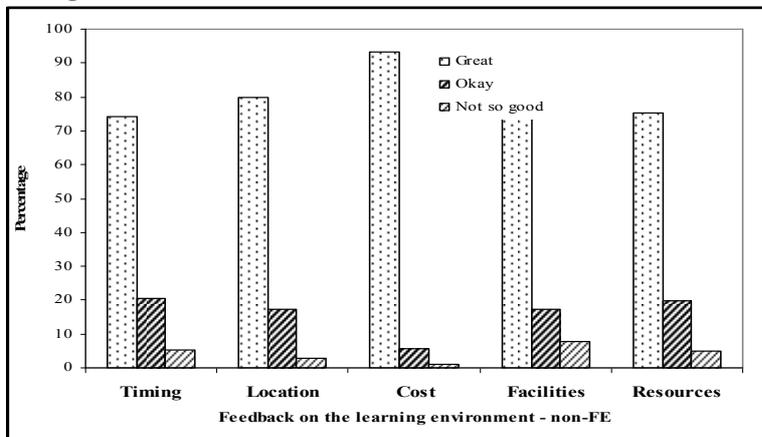
7.3   The next group of factors were those that contributed to a *good experience of teaching and learning*. These factors were what was learnt and the way it was learnt, the tutor, the pace of the learning and the number of hours of tuition available each week. As can be seen from charts 7.3 and 7.4 below, learners in FE settings were less positive about their tutor (considered great by 74% in FE and 87% in non-FE) how they learnt (considered great by 65% in FE and 80% in non-FE) and what they learnt (considered great by 69% in FE and 76% in non-FE).

Chart 7.3: Experience of Teaching and Learning - FE
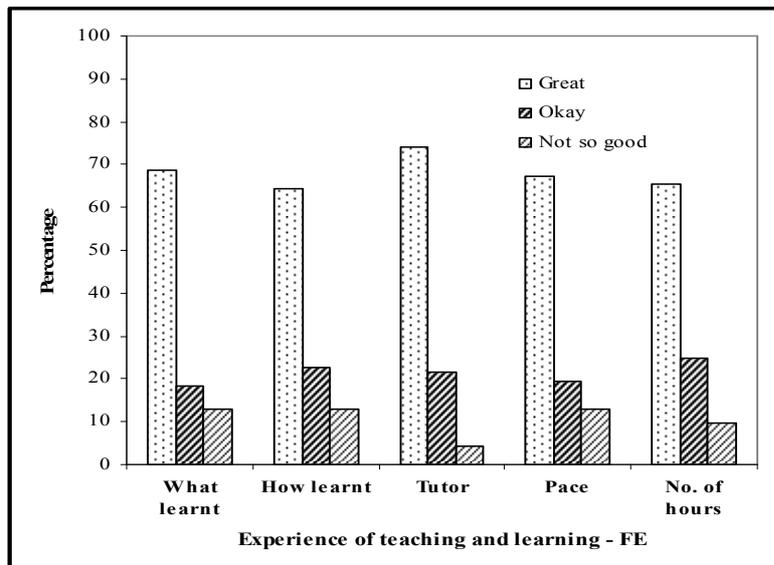
Chart 7.4: Experience of Teaching and Learning - non-FE
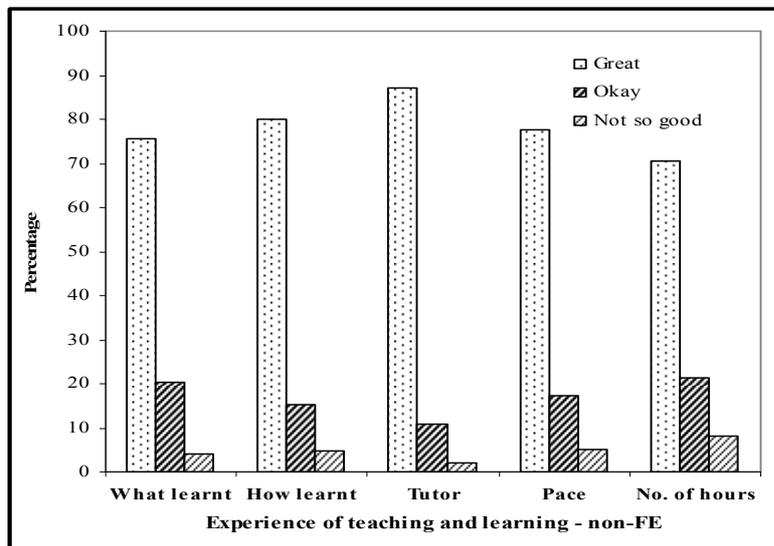
7.4   The final set of factors was to do with the *social nature of the learning* and so learners were asked about the other students and the social opportunities to meet other people. There were no significant differences between the settings in these areas as can be seen from chart 7.5.

Chart 7.5: Social Environment - FE/non-FE
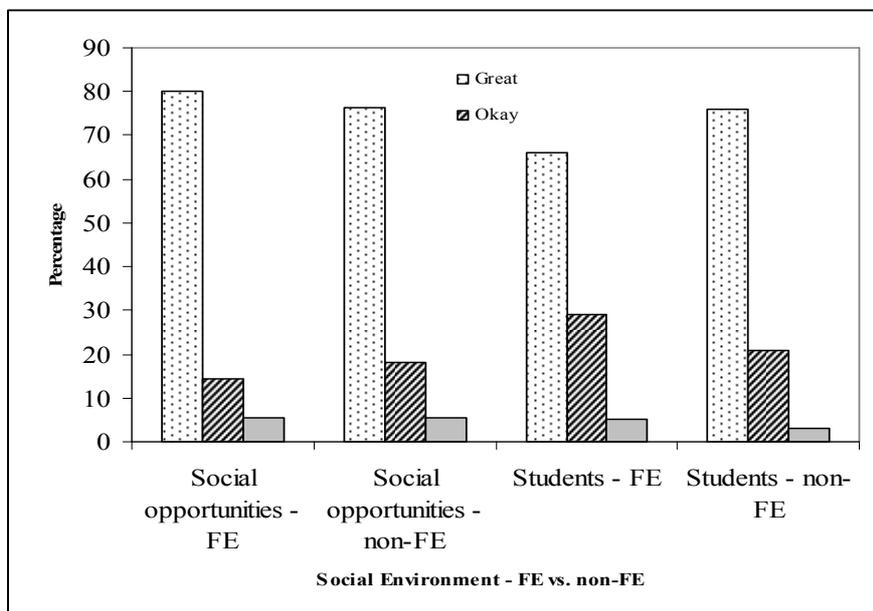
7.5   In general then learners were overwhelmingly positive about all these aspects of their experience in both settings but all the areas where learners reported that their experience was not so good were investigated further.   There were 3 areas where learners identified a higher dissatisfaction rate and these were all in the FE setting. The areas were what had been learnt (13% dissatisfaction in FE, 4% in non-FE), how it had been learnt (13% dissatisfaction in FE, 5% in non-FE), and the pace of learning (13% dissatisfaction in FE, 5% in non-FE). Speculatively, this could be because individual learners had less control over these areas because they were following specific curricula and this meant that the learning outcomes, how they were to be achieved, and the pace of the teaching and learning, were all pre-set.

7.6   In order to investigate these issues further learners were asked to identify what had been positive and negative about their learning experiences through an open question and 132 (66%) of the qualitative sample of 200 learners made additional comments. Twenty-eight learners (14%) made generally positive (non-specific) comments about their learning experiences, others were more detailed in their responses. Forty-eight learners (24%) praised their tutors for their supportive, non-patronising and/or informal approach to teaching. Twenty-one learners (11%) drew attention to the high quality and levels of resources available to them. Eleven learners (6%) said that the pace of teaching suited them while 10 others (5%) appreciated being able to work at their own pace. On a similar note, 10 learners (5%) also suggested that the course 'fitted with their needs'. Two learners appreciated the 'good course structure' while 2 others praised the one-to-one format.

7.7   Twenty-five learners (13%) highlighted changes in their social life that they claimed had resulted from course participation. Many of these learners spoke about how their involvement had allowed them to make new friends and attend social evenings and events. Fifteen learners (6%) highlighted the support that they derived from other learners in the group.

7.8   A number of respondents were impressed with aspects of the class organisation, its timing, costs and access. Twenty-four learners (12%) mentioned that the location was readily accessible to them, often because it was held within their neighbourhood or was easily accessible by public transport. Fifteen learners (8%) also regarded the timing of the classes as good, fitting in well with their lifestyles while 7 (4%) welcomed the fact that the course was either free or incurred very little expenditure on their part.

7.9   Learners made 15 'less positive' comments in total. Three (2%) felt that the level of the class was too low for them, while 2 other learners sought greater flexibility in the timing of the class and another 2 found their tutors 'unhelpful'. Two learners suggested that there was a need for more tutors in literacy and numeracy. Individual learners made the following comments; *'too few learners in class', '[I] prefer one to one working' 'the class needs more structure', '[I] need more tuition', '[the] course [was] too fragmented', '[I] would like more input on statistics'.*

7.10   So few learners have provided negative comments that examples are given of how a learner can have an unsatisfactory experience through the following case studies (Boxes 7.1-7.5). It should be noted that interviewers specifically asked learners to describe any negative experiences and only 9 were provided in total.

Box 7.1   An Integrated Course

7.11   M is in her 40s and is married with one son. She has slight learning difficulties and was made a fool of by her brother and sister for being 'stupid' when a child so is particularly sensitive about ALN issues. M felt she was humiliated by one of the tutor's teaching on the Communications part of her course, and does not want to continue with it, but has to do so as part of her college course.

Box 7.2   Assessment

7.12   E, a young female student studying at an FE college, recalled her daunting and disappointing experience before she was allocated a place on a literacy and numeracy course. Before she could take her FE course she had to sit a test to see if she needed to attend the ALN course. It was compulsory, so she did not have a choice. They were given a piece of paper with sums on it to work through – 'like primary school'. It didn't boost her confidence and didn't fit in with her needs. They had to sit there and work their way through the sums and then ask the tutors for help if they needed it. There was no feedback on their progress. She expected the class to help with her course but this didn't happen. There were no meetings with tutors, ILP or exit guidance and no other learning opportunities were discussed with her. It didn't help her at all.

7.13   E is a married woman in her 30s, with young children and was on an ESOL course. She expected the course to be of a higher level and it turned out to be too low. She thinks there should be more basic, intermediate and advanced courses. She was told to leave the course by her tutor who told her that her English was too good and that her place was needed by someone else. She felt rejected and upset. Though there is a waiting list for the course only a few people turn up each week and so there are only 5 or 6 people there each week.   She thinks that anyone who is interested should be allowed to attend the course as it is not just about learning the language but also the building of confidence and relationships with Scottish people. E was offered another course at college but there were no crèche facilities so she couldn't go and no one helped her to try to sort out something with her children. She felt that the course helped her to meet more adult people and to socialise. Her children loved the crèche and were upset to leave.

Box 7.4   A Deaf Student

7.14   L is a female deaf student. The following are extracts from a transcription of a letter she gave to the interviewer.

7.15   It is not good because [there is] no budget for to pay [for an] interpreter – which I have sent a complaint to the Council [about] and am waiting for a reply. There was a course for to help improve your English but no budget for interpreter but lady in charge said that would be fine and asked other people in group to write notes to each other and pass to me. Sorry that isn't my idea [of the right support]– as I won't be able to cope with this.

7.16   Computer will be back but I have a feeling its might not be. I think nae more courses anymore as I have had enough all because of no interpreters. What is happening and going on with deaf people in need. I feel its go back to bottom again. Also thinks Council puts deaf away as they're not interested which is totally wrong.

7.17   The next case study (Box 7.5) is more mixed but does show the constraints that operate in getting the right type of learning programme.

Box 7.5   A Prison Experience

7.18   J said about joining the course: 'It couldn't be any easier – if you want to do it, it's made plain. You get inducted into education – it's offered when you get inducted.' However, work in prison is a barrier to education. I'd like to do full time education but I have to work. I now do education for 12 hours but could be there for 30 hours. You see, all workers are banded a to c (a being best), and though I'm a good worker I'm only banded 'b' because I go to education.

7.19   'I'd just like to carry on with it when I leave prison', he said. I'm definitely more confident, more confident writing a letter and I'm writing more letters than before, more confident with numbers. I've been more in touch with my family because I'm writing more letters. My expectations have definitely been raised: 'I can see myself getting more educated for starters.' I want to get as much education behind me as possible before getting out. It will improve my quality of life altogether.'

Summary

7.20   Learners were very positive about all aspects of their experience of participating in ALN programmes. These included:

- The *learning environment* including the timing and location of the course, the cost, the facilities (crèche transport, café, rooms) and the learning resources that were available
- The factors that contributed to a good experience of *teaching and learning* including what was learnt and the way it was learnt, the tutor, the pace of the learning and the number of hours of tuition available each week
- The *social nature* of the learning including the other students and the social opportunities to meet other people

7.21   However, learners' in FE settings were more likely to express dissatisfaction with:

- The cost of their learning
- What they learnt
- How they learnt
- Their tutor
- The pace of their learning

7.22   In addition there were some concerns, evidenced through the qualitative data and the case studies, from learners about aspects of the course organisation in terms of its inflexibility, number of learners, or content. These concerns seemed to stem from the lack of resources to provide a fully flexible learning and teaching environment.

CHAPTER EIGHT   SOCIAL CAPITAL

8.1   Social capital refers to the processes between people that establish networks, norms and social trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit, leading to reciprocity and the achievement of mutual goals (Baron, Field and Schuller, 2000, Schuller et al, 2004, Field, 2005). As a structuring and explanatory concept, it has both risen in prominence in the last decade and been subjected to critique and re-interpretation since its genesis through the works of Bourdieu, (1977), Coleman (1994) and Putnam (1993, 2000). Recent studies have pointed to the complexities of definitions and operation of social capital, as well as to the 'dark side' of what were originally perceived as beneficially supportive arrangements (Baron, Field and Schuller, 2000, Field, 2003, Schuller et al, 2004, Field, 2005). For what were initially constructed as mutually reinforcing ties, have now also been recognised as potentially binding shackles in some circumstances and for some groups in society. In addition, these authors have highlighted the difficulty in isolating social capital as a prime determinant of change because it is so inextricably bound up in a complex nexus of other socio-economic factors that individually and collectively impact on the lives of adults. Nevertheless, there appears to be a broad acceptance of an association between social capital and participation in structured learning, and on the whole, this association is deemed to be a positive one because strong social networks seem to enhance participation in learning (though Field's study in Northern Ireland counters this trend: Field, 2005), and learning in turn seems to increase social capital. The combined effect of trust, networks, norms and reciprocity also creates both strong communities and a sense of personal and social efficacy. The development of social capital involves the active and willing engagement of citizens within a participative community, i.e. '*links between like-minded people*' (bonding social capital) and/or '*the building of connections between heterogeneous groups*' (bridging social capital) (Baron, Field and Schuller, 2000:10). However, where the bonding capital is high and the norms of the community are not associated with participation in learning, then it is unlikely to be easy for adults to bridge into a learning community.

8.2   Research also suggests that developing an identity as a learner is shaped by the complex interaction of a number of factors that relate to the social, because learning is essentially a social activity. These include past learning experiences and the mediating effect of family influences upon them (Rees *et al*., 2000), as well as the norms and values of the social networks that individuals belong to (Baron *et al*., 2000; Gallacher and Crossan, 1999; Maclachlan and Cloonan, 2001; Crowther et al, 2001). These are the networks, associated norms, and levels of trust that are the basic building blocks of social capital (Baron Field and Schuller, 2000; Putnam, 1993). As Field suggests therefore, 'social capital is important for learning, and learning is important for social capital' (Field, 2005:110).

8.3   The precise nature of the interconnectedness of social capital and learner identity is often fuzzy, always context dependent and not easily isolated from a range of other determinants of learning. This research, therefore, sought to explore potential links between social capital and literacy learning in those learners participating in the study. It was also mindful of the fact that a disproportionately high percentage of literacy learners belong to communities that experience socio-economic marginalisation (Scottish Executive, 2001) where levels of participation in structured learning remain persistently low (Aldridge and Tuckett, 2003). However, these participants had engaged in learning, had potentially bridged between different communities, and it therefore sought to examine the impact that this had on their social capital.

8.4   With the exception of Schuller *et al.*'s studies (2004) much of the research on social capital and learning has looked at the impact of social capital on participation in learning (see Field, 2005). This study aimed to examine the opposite trajectory, i.e. the impact of learning on social capital because the indices of success for Scotland's ALN policy (Scottish Executive, 2001) involve charting change in individuals, in families and in communities.

8.5   Social capital therefore provided a relevant framework for analysis, as it was hypothesised that learners might improve their social capital as a result of participation in programmes. Strawn (2005: 551) has argued that the discourse of particular communities around education is an important component of social capital because it is a function of interpersonal interaction over time. Her research has found that people who live in communities where education is seen as a means of getting ahead are more likely to participate in formal learning programmes. It was hypothesised in this research that similarly participating in ALN would build a discourse around education that would in turn lead to enhanced social capital. The research therefore asked learners the same questions in the first and second rounds to see if their views about themselves, their communities and their networks had changed.

8.6   Whilst recognising that the social capital elements of the questionnaire were necessarily circumscribed in light of the range of issues the questionnaire was designed to cover, the particular social capital indices were selected because they represented some of the defining characteristics of the concept as identified in previous research (Murtagh, 2002, Tuijnman and Boudard, 2001, Halman, 2001, OECD, 2001, Baron, Field and Schuller, 2000, Campbell et al, 1999, Bullen and Onyx, 1998). They included: identification with and attitudes towards the neighbourhood, social and civic engagement, feelings of safety and belonging, social contacts and supportive networks, and levels of confidence in social situations. The questionnaire therefore sought to identify any associations between participation in ALN learning and these elements of social capital and to consider how they might inform the enhancement of provision.

8.7   Learners were therefore asked if they liked where they lived as research shows that the more positive people are about their home and locality the greater their social capital (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000; Bullen and Onyx, 1998; Cote and Healy, 2001). The questions were about the general physical quality of their neighbourhood, their house, how they felt about their neighbours, the facilities available to them locally and their local social life. Table 8.1 below is a comparison between the views of the learners that took part in both rounds of interviews who answered these questions. Although it indicates little change between the first and second round this is not surprising, nor does it run counter to other research findings as learners were generally very positive about this aspect of their lives from the beginning and scored highly on this aspect of social capital from the start. There does appear to be a slight shift towards an even more positive disposition towards neighbours and local social life which may relate to the increase in social activity charted below, however, the shift is not statistically significant.

Table 8.1: Aspects of neighbourhood – comparison between 1st and 2nd round responses

Aspects of neighbourhood	Percentages								N=
	Strongly dislike		Dislike		Like		Like very much		
	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	
General physical quality	7	6	6	7	49	44	38	44	255
Your house	4	2	4	6	37	36	55	55	258
Your neighbours	5	2	8	5	48	56	39	37	241
Local facilities	10	7	12	14	44	45	34	34	254
Local social life	11	7	25	21	43	46	21	25	183

8.8   Learners were next asked if they had taken part in a range of activities because again research shows that activity builds social capital through developing knowledge resources as a result of more opportunities for interactions with other members of the community (Putnam, 1993; Falk and Kilpatrick, 2000). Chart 8.1 shows the changes between the first and second rounds. Percentages are based on the 359 learners who responded to the question in both interview rounds.

Chart 8.1: Do learners go out regularly?
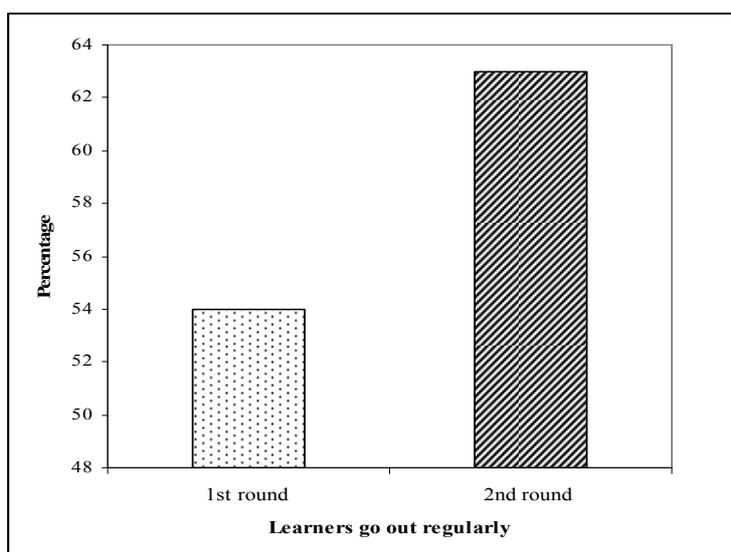
8.9   There was a statistically significant increase in the numbers of learners who indicated they went out to pubs, clubs and/or the cinema from the first (54%) to the second round (63%) of interviews. The change was statistically significant for females with 61% of females reporting going out at their second round interview compared to 50% at the first interview. Older learners showed a similar statistically significant increase in the numbers going out (49% 1st round, 60% 2nd round). There was no significant change between rounds of learners going to meetings (35% 1st round and 36% 2nd round) or engaging in voluntary work (29% 1st round and 30% 2nd round). It would appear therefore that there had been an increase in social, but not civic, activity between the two rounds.

8.10   Learners were then asked if they wanted to become more involved in local activities. From chart 8.2 it can be seen that there has been both an increase in people saying definitely no and also in those saying definitely yes. From the qualitative data reported in section 10 relating to changes in learners' lives, it appears that these changes are caused by learners becoming clearer about what they do, and do not, like to do with their lives.

Chart 8.2: Do learners want to become more involved in local activities?
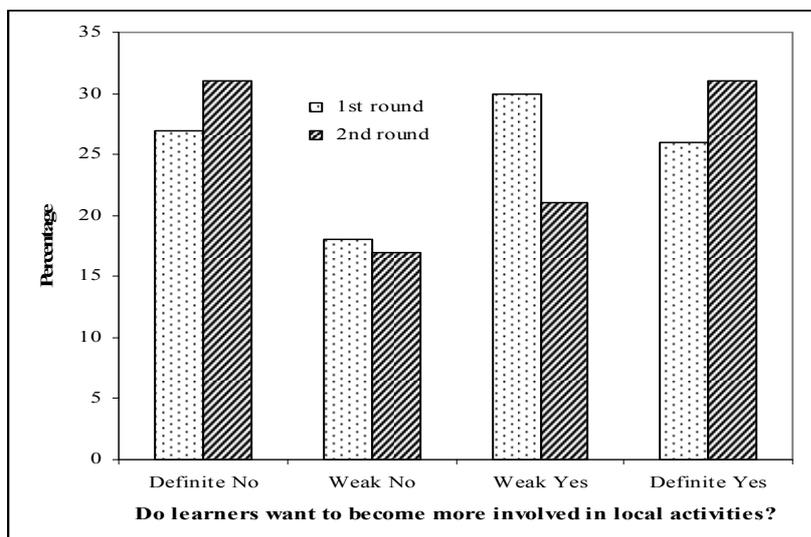
8.11   Those learners that did not want to become more involved, 164 in the first round, 170 in the second round, were asked about what prevented them from doing so. Reasons differed slightly between the first and second rounds as can be seen from Table 8.2. There has been a decrease in learners' concerns about their ability to cope with the English or numerical ability required and an increase in other interests. These, combined with the reporting of a lack of time to do things, suggests that the learners were increasingly involved in other chosen activities and it is feasible that these increased levels of involvement were related to their reduced levels of concern about their literacy and numeracy skills, in other words their feelings about their lack of ALN abilities was not as strong a barrier to social engagement as it had previously been.

Table 8.2: Why learners don't want to become more involved in local activities

	%	
Reason	**1st round**	**2nd round**
No time	43	50
Lack of interest	28	16
Other interests	27	32
Private person	14	14
Family ties	12	9
Lack of ALN ability	12	7
Not well enough	6	7
Don't know enough	6	5
Tried a bit	4	5
N=	**164**	**170**

8.12   The next questions were about personal safety as again this is an area that research has shown impacts on social capital because feeling safe leads to a greater willingness to engage in networks and trust people in the neighbourhood (Campbell *et al*., 1999). As can be seen from table 8.3 below, changes have been so minor that there is no measurable difference between the first and second rounds of interviews.

Table 8.3: Learners' feelings of safety – comparison between 1st and 2nd round responses

Learners feelings of safety	%								N=
	Quite frightened		A bit frightened		Safe but a bit concerned		Quite definitely Safe		
	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	
In house	2	2	3	3	18	21	77	74	258
In local neighbourhood	9	8	15	12	38	41	38	39	257

8.13   The final question was about the learners' contact with other people as again research shows that being in social contact and able to get help if it is needed lead to positive social capital, through building both knowledge resources of who, when and where to go to for advice or resources and through being willing to act for the benefit of the community and its members (Campbell *et al,* 1999; Falk and Kilpatrick, 2000). Engagement in learning can, in turn, lead to increased levels of social engagement, particularly for isolated and vulnerable adults (Field, 2005:108-9). As can be seen from table 8.4 below there have been a number of changes between the first and second rounds.

Table 8.4: Contact with others – comparison between 1st and 2nd round responses

Learners who indicated	%				N=
	1st round		2nd round		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Visiting a friend or neighbour in the last 2 weeks	65	35	63	37	361
Often meeting friends or family when out shopping or walking in the neighbourhood	79	21	82	18	362
Being able to get help from friends and others near where they live if they needed to	88	12	93	7	355

8.14   There was a statistically significant (5% level) increase in the number of learners reporting that they could get help from friends and others living around them if they wished. Eighty-eight percent and 92% of learners at the first and second round of interviews respectively noted being able to get help from friends and others in their locality. There was also a significant (5% level) increase among older learners noting this.

8.15   The one area where there was a decrease was that learners were significantly less likely to indicate having voted in the last election/recent referendum at their 2nd interview than at their first. At their first interview 68% of learners said they voted while 54% reported voting at their second interview. This drop was significant for males and females, older learners and those in both FE (5% level) and non-FE.   However, it is important to note that there were no elections to vote at during the time period of the second interview so these results are likely to be influenced by this fact.

Summary

8.16   Overall the respondents had very high social capital at the beginning of this study in that they generally liked their neighbourhoods, and were well integrated in their communities. However, the qualitative testimony of the learners in Chapter 10 tentatively suggests that their social capital may have been operating in a negatively binding fashion re-enforcing non-participatory norms, for many of the respondents were very nervous, tentative and lacking confidence in engaging in structured learning, as the case studies and Section 4.3 illustrate, and it is reasonable to infer that they would not have been so tentative had learning been integral to the norms of their networks.

8.17   However these adults did engage in learning and this section has shown an associated statistically significant increase in their social capital between the two rounds, specifically in relation to their levels of social activity and contact with others. The only decrease was in 'voting' but this was likely to be because elections had not occurred during the interview period. Although the complex operation of social capital precludes the attributing of any direct causal relationship between the two, these findings concur with the evidence of other research into learning and social capital as indicated earlier in this section, and will be discussed more fully later in the report.

CHAPTER NINE   CONFIDENCE SCALES

9.1   Confidence in ones self in the social world, and confidence in ones self as a learner interact together in complex ways and are both linked to prior experiences of learning and to social capital (Field, 2005, Schuller et al, 2004). Research with adult returnees to learning has shown that those who have failed previously in school gain in confidence, particularly from later successful learning experiences (Hammond, 2004: 42). This research also found that confidence developed through learning was often accompanied by positive personal growth including the acceptance of one's limitations and an openness to new ideas rather than increased risk taking which can be the 'dark side' of gains in self-confidence (op cit, 43). Since growth in self confidence is the most widely documented 'soft' outcome of learning, this research sought to measure learners' levels of confidence at the beginning of their learning experience in order to chart potential changes in confidence over time. This section of the questionnaire specifically asked about confidence, however, its findings should also be considered in relation to learners' testimonies in the following chapter where shifts in levels of learner confidence are evidenced through changes they have made in their lives.

9.2   There are a number of ways of measuring self-confidence including assessments of psychological health but the research team sought to devise a straightforward means of measuring change over time that would not be too intrusive into personal aspects of learners' lives and would be quick to administer. The research team therefore devised a method for measuring confidence that picked out relevant scenarios for the learners that were grounded in situations that they would face in their everyday lives. As the scale was primarily derived to measure change over time within the respondents rather than as a means of comparison with other groups, it was designed to pick up on elements of their lives in sufficient depth and variety to allow scores to be calculated. The scenarios asked how confident learners were when: meeting new people; making phone enquiries; joining a group of strangers; discussing things with officials; discussing things with a doctor; speaking up in a meeting; complaining about poor service; defending their position in an argument; agreeing within the family; and being interviewed. Responses to each scenario were allocated a score with 1 representing very uncomfortable and 4 very comfortable. Mean scores were computed for each of the 335 learners who completed all 10 of the elements of the self-confidence instrument in both rounds of interview.

9.3   Charts 9.1 and 9.2 summarise the grouped average self-confidence scores for learners in the first and second round of interviews. The greater the number the more confident the learner. Both charts look fairly similar, however, there are some differences that show that there has been a small shift upwards in the overall confidence profile of learners. Evidence to support this is as follows:

- In the first interview round nine learners scored less than 1.7. No one scored below 1.7 in the second round.
- In the first interview round 27 students scored 2 or less, in the second 22 scored 2 or less.
- Looking at the 'more confident' end of the profiles. In the first round 55 learners scored 3.5 or more while 63 scored 3.5 or more in the second round.
- The most common score (the mode) was 2.6 in the first round and 2.9 in the second whilst the average score was 2.86 in the first round and 2.91 in the second.

Chart 9.1: Average confidence level - 1st round interviews
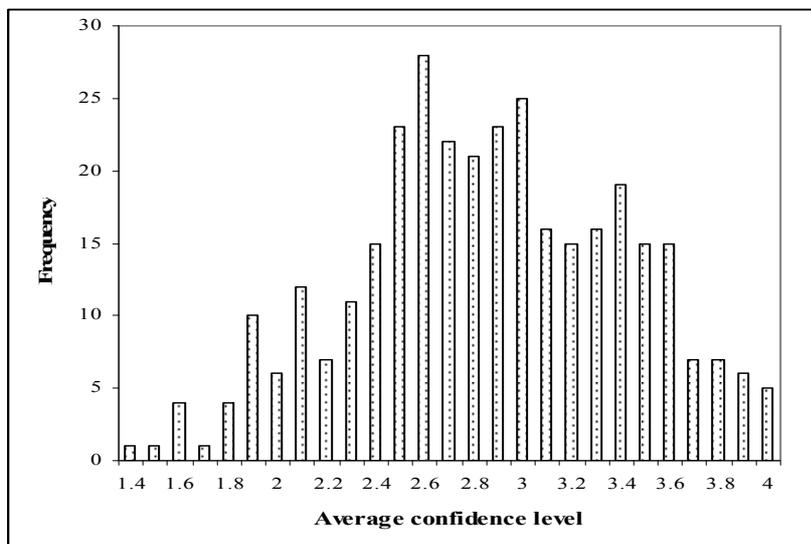
Chart 9.2: Average confidence level - 2nd round interviews
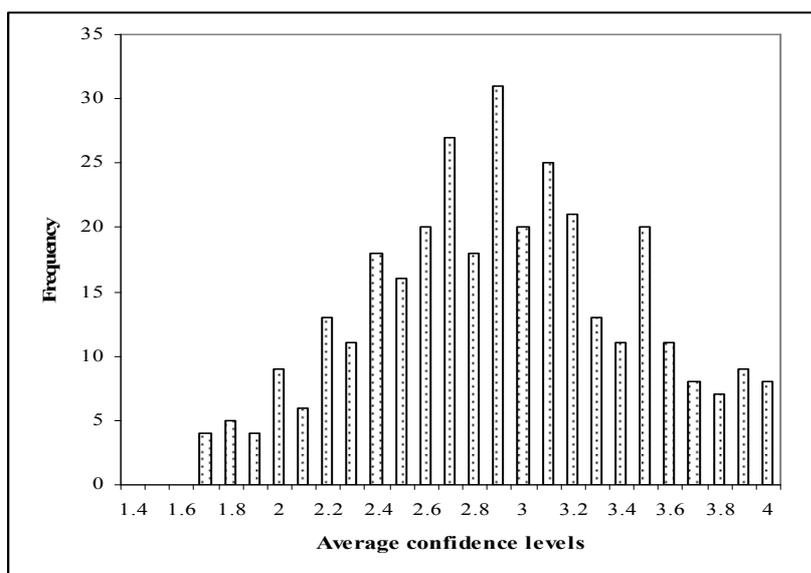
9.4   In order to obtain a more in depth analysis the responses to individual scenarios were analysed to see if there were statistically significant changes in the responses to the elements comprising the confidence scales between the first and second interviews. These are detailed below.

9.5   **Making enquiries over the phone?**
- Learners were significantly (5% level) more likely to indicate confidence in making telephone enquiries at their second interview than at their first. More learners indicated being 'very comfortable' making such enquires (24% 1st interview, 27% 2nd interview) and fewer indicated being 'very uncomfortable' (17% 1st interview, 12% 2nd interview).
- Analysing the data by gender shows that females made a significant change over the period. More female learners indicated being 'very comfortable' (18% 1st interview, 24% 2nd interview) and fewer indicated being 'very uncomfortable' (24% 1st interview, 17% 2nd interview) in making telephone enquires.

9.6   **Joining in a group of strangers?**
- Learners were significantly (5% level) more likely to indicate confidence in joining in with a group of strangers at their second interview than at their first. Forty-nine per cent of learners at their first interview and 56% at their second indicated being either 'comfortable or very comfortable' in joining a group of strangers.
- Analysing the data by gender again shows a significant (5% level) change for females. More female learners indicated being either 'very comfortable or comfortable' (47% 1st interview, 52% 2nd interview) at joining in with a group of strangers.
- Older learners also showed a significant (5% level) change in their comfort levels with joining a group of strangers. At their first interview half (50%) of the older learners noted being either 'comfortable or very comfortable' in joining with a group of strangers, by   the second interview 55% reported being comfortable with this.
- Learners in FE also displayed a significant (5% level) increase in the numbers reporting being comfortable in joining a group of strangers. Forty-four per cent (44%) of FE learners at their first interview and 56% at their second indicated being comfortable in joining such a group.

9.7   **Speaking up in a group or meeting?**
- Learners were significantly more likely to indicate confidence in speaking up in a group   or meeting at their second interview than at their first. Fifty-four per cent of learners   at   their first interview and 62% at their second indicated being either 'comfortable or very comfortable' in taking such action.
- Female responses showed a significant change. More female learners indicated being either 'very comfortable or comfortable' speaking up in a group or meeting (49% 1st interview, 58% 2nd interview). Indeed looking only at those females who indicated being   'very uncomfortable' speaking up we find that the percentage noting this had fallen from 24% at the first interview to 17% at the second.
- There are significant changes in responses for both younger (5% level) and older learners. Fifty-five per cent of younger learners, at their first interview, said they were either 'comfortable or very comfortable' in speaking up at a meeting, by the second interview this figure had risen to 65%. Moreover while 20% of young learners, at their first interview, noted being 'very uncomfortable' in speaking up in a group this had fallen to 10% by the second interview. Among older learners, 54% indicated being comfortable speaking up in a meeting at the first interview compared to 61% at the second.

- There were also significant changes for learners in both the FE (5% level) and Non-FE sector. Among learners in the FE sector 34% at the second interview stage said they were 'very comfortable' speaking up in a group or meeting compared to 25% at the first interview. Additionally 11%, at the second interview, reported being 'very uncomfortable' in speaking up compared to 20% at the first. Among Non-FE learners, 61% of interviewees, at the second stage, reported being comfortable speaking up in a group compared to 52% at the first interview of interviewees.

9.8 **Being interviewed?**

- Learners were significantly (5% level) more likely to indicate comfort in being interviewed at their second interview than at their first. Eighty-two per cent of learners at their first interview and 87% at their second indicated being either 'comfortable or very comfortable' with being interviewed.
- Female responses displayed a significant change. More female learners indicated being either 'very comfortable or comfortable' with being interviewed (77% 1st interview, 86% 2nd interview).
- Older learners showed a significant (5% level) change in their comfort levels with interviews. At their first interview 81% of them noted being either 'comfortable or very comfortable' with interviews compared to 86% at the second interview.
- Non-FE learners also showed a significant increase in the numbers reporting being comfortable with interviews. Eighty-one per cent of Non-FE learners at their first interview and 87% at their second indicated being comfortable in interviews.

9.9   In order to illustrate how participating in ALN has changed learner's confidence three case studies are provided. The first case study (Box 9.1) shows how participating in a group has boosted one learners' confidence.

Box 9.1   Boosting Confidence

9.10   E, a married woman in her late 30s was on a general communications literacy course and started taking it because she was not able to do the paper work required at her work. Before she came to the course, someone else had to do these forms for her, and then, once she started it, she still needed some help. At the second interview she said she was doing the case reports all on her own now without any help. She is currently on a course in English for adults with dyslexia.

9.11   When she was at school she was able to 'disappear' in the class, and felt the same at college where the classes are also big. Where she currently is, they learn in small groups. She admitted that though it was a little bit like school, it was much more relaxed, she could get a cup of tea at any time. She could just telephone or drop in to the organisation and get help if she needed. She also said 'It's the first time in my life I am doing a course like this' – an English course. E also pointed out that, because learners such as herself are often lacking in confidence or are quite sensitive, it is important that the first person they meet for the course is friendly and helpful. She would be easily put off doing a course otherwise.

9.12   The next case study shows how one learner is now able to take part in a range of activities including dealing with telephone enquiries (Box 9.2).

Box 9.2   Using the phone

9.13   J from the central belt had blossomed since she was first interviewed. On reflecting on her feelings as she joined the class, J recalled: 'I was unable to go anywhere on my own before, my husband or daughter had to accompany me everywhere or drive me everywhere, I was so self-conscious and had such low self-esteem. Finding out I 'wasn't the only one' with literacy problems helped, but the first time my husband had dropped me off at the centre, I hid round the corner too afraid to come in as I had thought of myself as stupid and everyone else would be better than me. I now have much more confidence in myself, I can go out on my own, am going to start going into my husband's office to help at work, answering the phones and dealing with enquiries. I go out to pub quizzes with friends, and now intend training to become a volunteer tutor.

9.14   The final case study (Box 9.3) shows how another learner has become sufficiently confident to be able to defend his position with others.

Box 9.3   Taking Action

9.15   C is attending an ALN class at his local FE college. He felt that he had to work on the "problem" of developing his literacy abilities in secret as it took time to undo the habits of a lifetime. He is repeating the ALN certificate course, despite passing the first time, in order to practice and develop the core skills that he feels he lacks fluency in, but is also taking extra classes this year in new subjects.

9.16   C said that as his confidence has grown, he has felt able to approach the local council to raise the issue of the lack of community facilities for young boys. Based on his own experience he feels that he can be a positive role model to young men who lack confidence and focus, and aims to set up and run a football team if he can present a case to the council to support this community need. This idea appears to be one of the main motivations for him committing to further educational opportunities.

Summary

9.17   Learners were asked about how confident they were when: meeting new people; making phone enquiries; joining a group of strangers; discussing things with officials; discussing things with a doctor; speaking up in a meeting; complaining about poor service; defending their position in an argument; agreeing within the family; and being interviewed. This measure was designed to assess distance travelled between the first and second interview.   By the second interview statistically significant numbers of learners, in particular women and older learners, had become more confident about making enquiries over the phone, joining a group of strangers, speaking up in a meeting and being interviewed and their overall confidence scores had increased. In other words, their social and communicative abilities had increased during their learning episodes.   Field (2005:19) suggests that interpersonal communications and connections are the core elements of social capital, and Schuller et al's studies of the wider benefits of learning (Schuller *et al.*, 2004) provide strong evidence of the impact of learning on social meta-competencies that equip people with the confidence and ability to develop their social connections.   The evidence from these confidence scales together with the increases in social capital shown in the previous chapter indicate that this same shift is being experienced by the learners in this research. The following chapter documents the extent to which the learners are aware of these changed social competencies, and the consequent impact that they have had on their lives.

CHAPTER TEN ECONOMIC AND HOME LIVES

Changes in the Lives of the Learners

10.1   In this section of the interview, learners were asked about the changes that had come about as a result of their attending their learning programme. The areas covered were:

- personal life (how engaging in learning had affected the way learners felt about themselves)

- family life (changes in relationships and/or activities with family members);

- work life (getting a job or dealing with changes at work)

- public life (taking a greater interest in social involvement)

- education (going on to do more learning or having expectations raised about what is possible)

10.2   Learners were then asked to recount any differences their programmes had made to these aspects of their lives and to say in which areas they had experienced the greatest impact. As can be seen from table 10.1 below, learners were most likely to identify personal life as being the aspect of their lives where they had experienced the greatest difference.

Table 10.1: Where the greatest difference has occurred

Area of learners life	Percentage
Personal	51
Education	25
Work	17
Family	7
Total	**100**
	N=311

10.3 Responses from learners in FE and non-FE settings were compared to see if there were any differences. Chart 10.1 shows that education was the area of most difference in FE settings whilst personal change was the area of most importance in non-FE settings. These differences were significant at the 1% level. This finding may reflect the greater likelihood of learners studying in FE settings to be undertaking integrated courses as part of a vocational qualification.

Chart 10.1: Where the greatest difference occurred - A comparison between FE/non-FE
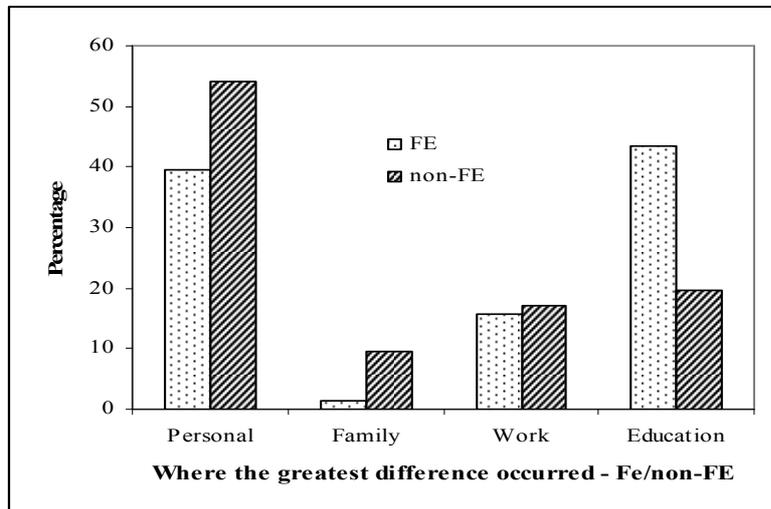
10.4 The responses were also compared by gender and this time women differed from men in being more likely to suggest that personal life was the area of greatest difference and less likely to see work as making a significant difference. These differences were significant at the 5% level. The results are shown in chart 10.2. This finding reflects the general gender divisions in society with men more likely to see work as of greater importance than family (see EOC, 2005).

Chart 10.2: Where the greatest difference occurred - A comparison by gender
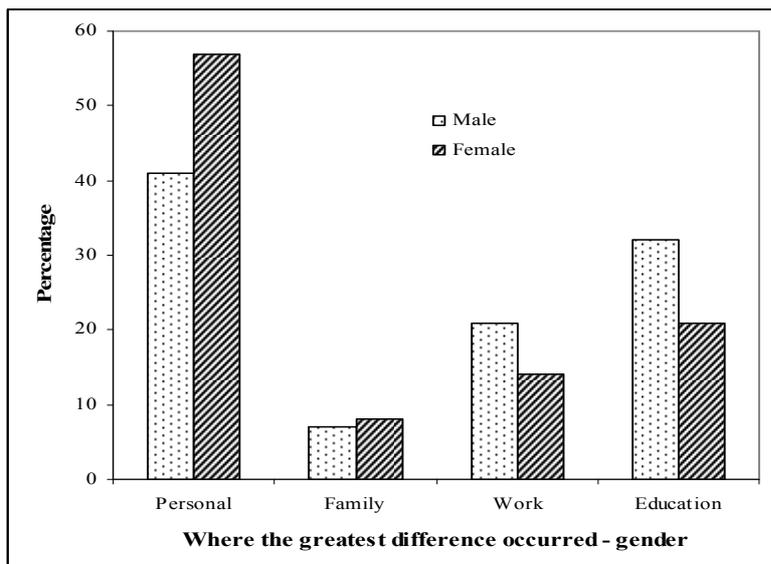
10.5   The final comparison was in relation to the learners' work status and as can be seen from table 10.2, people who were registered employed and those that were not employed were more likely to see personal life as the area that has made the greatest difference. Unsurprisingly those that were in full time work were most likely to see work as making the greatest difference.

Table 10.2: Where the greatest difference has occurred. A comparison by work status

	Frequency			
	Full-time work	**Part-time work**	**Registered unemployed**	**Not employed**
Personal	22	28	32	32
Family	1	1	5	7
Work	22	11	3	5
Education	8	8	15	23
Total	**53**	**48**	**55**	**67**
	N=223			

10.6   Details of the differences reported, and a comparison between the responses in the first and second interviews, is provided below. It is important to remember that the comparisons are made between *anticipated* changes in the first interview and actual changes in the second interview. Learners might have been overly optimistic in the first interview about what might happen and in some cases learners were actually reporting concrete changes in the first interview. The data suggests that there is a statistical association between people's expectations of change and the actuality of this. Further it suggests that people's lives are changing (even when they don't expect it to).

10.7   **Personal life. Has it affected how you feel about yourself, more confident, more able to tackle things?**
- Out of 378 learners who answered this question in both rounds of interview the vast majority, 355 (94%), expected to see either 'some difference' or 'a great difference' in their personal lives. Twelve (3%) expected 'no change' and 11 (3%) reported 'little chance of change'.
- Two hundred and six learners expected their involvement in ALN to make a 'great difference' to their personal lives. Two thirds (136) of these learners reported that the course had actually made a 'great difference' to their personal lives while a further 59 (29%) reported that it had made 'some difference'. Thus 95% of those who expected a 'great difference' in their personal lives had actually witnessed some change. Moreover, of the 149 learners who expected 'some difference' in their personal lives, 119 (80%) reported such a change had taken place by the second round of interviews.
- Of the 12 learners who expected 'no change' in their personal lives in the first interview, 5 reported 'some difference' and 2 indicated a 'great difference' by the second interview. The remaining 5 (the minority) said that 'no change' had taken place in their personal lives over the period between the 2 interviews.

10.8 **Family life. Made a difference to how you act, helped with children etc?**

- Out of 364 learners who answered this question in both rounds of interview the majority, 254 (70%), expected to see either 'some difference' or 'a great difference' in their family lives. Eighty-seven (24%) expected 'no change' and 23 (6%) reported 'little chance of change'.

- One hundred and forty-one learners expected their involvement in ALN to make a 'great difference' to their family lives. Forty per cent of these learners reported that the course had actually made such a difference to their family lives while a further 52 (37%) reported that it had made 'some difference'. Just over three-quarters (77%) of those who expected a 'great difference' in their family lives had witnessed at least some change. Moreover, of the 113 learners who expected 'some difference' to their family lives just over half (53%) reported that such changes had taken place by the second round of interviews. However, 39% of those who expected 'some difference' in their family lives reported no change by the second interview.

- Of the 87 learners who expected 'no change' in their family lives, the majority (63%) reported 'no change' had taken place. Of the remainder, almost a third (32%) indicated that either 'some' or a 'great' difference had taken place in their family lives as a result of their participation in ALN. The remaining five said there was little chance of change.

- Interestingly, of the 23 learners who reported 'little chance of change' in their family lives at the first interview, almost half (11) reported either 'some difference' or a 'great difference' by the second interview.

10.9 **Wider world. Taking a greater interest in local community affairs, politics, voluntary work etc?**

- Out of 356 learners who answered this question in both rounds of interview the majority, 191 (53%), expected to see either 'some difference' or 'a great difference' in their public lives. One hundred and fourteen (32%) expected 'no change' and 51 (14%) reported 'little chance of change'.

- Seventy-four learners thought that their involvement in ALN would make a 'great difference' to their public lives. Forty-one per cent (41%) of these learners reported that the course had actually made a 'great difference' to their public lives while a further 24 (32%) reported that it had made 'some difference'. Almost three-quarters (73%) of those who expected a 'great difference' in their public lives had witnessed at least some change. Moreover, of the 117 learners who expected 'some difference', 60% reported such changes taking place by the second round of interviews. However, 32% of those who expected 'some difference' in their public lives reported no change at the second interview.

- Looking at the 114 learners who predicted 'no change' in their public lives, almost half (49%) reported 'no change' having taken place. Of the remainder, more than a third (35%) indicated either that 'some difference' or a 'great difference' had taken place. The remaining 18 (16%) said there was little chance of change.

- Of the 51 learners who reported 'little chance of change' in their public lives at the first interview, 22 (43%) reported either 'some difference' or a 'great difference' by the second interview.

10.10 **Work. Helped in getting a job, changing job, getting promotion, coping with new technology?**

- Out of 333 learners who answered this question in both rounds of interview the majority, 267 (80%), expected to see either 'some difference' or 'a great difference' in their working lives. Fifty-one (15%) expected 'no change' and 15 (5%) reported 'little chance of change'.

- One hundred and seventy learners expected their involvement in ALN to make a 'great difference' to their working lives. Forty-five per cent of these learners reported that the course had actually made such a difference to their working lives, while a further 58 (34%) reported that it had made 'some difference'. Thus, almost 8 out of 10 (79%) of those who expected a 'great difference' in their work lives had witnessed at least some change. Further, of the 97 learners who expected 'some difference', 55% reported that some changes had taken place by the second round of interviews. However, 36% of those who expected 'some difference' in their working lives reported no change by the second interview.

- Looking at the 51 learners who expected 'no change' in their working situation, 30 (59%) reported 'no change' having taken place. Of the remainder, 14 (27%) indicated that at least some change had taken place in their working lives. The remaining 7 (14%) said there was little chance of change.

- Of the 15 learners who reported 'little chance of change' in their work lives at the first interview, a majority, 8, indicated that either 'some difference' or a 'great difference' had taken place by the second interview.

10.11 **Education. Helped to go on to more, raised expectations.**

- Out of 305 learners who answered this question in both rounds of interview the majority, 256 (84%), expected to see either 'some difference' or 'a great difference' in their education lives. Thirty-two (10%) expected 'no change' and 17 (6%) reported 'little chance of change'.

- One hundred and forty-six learners expected their involvement in ALN to make a 'great difference' to their future involvement in education. A majority, 77 (53%), of these learners reported that the course had actually made a 'great difference' to their education lives while a further 48 (33%) reported that it had made 'some difference'. Thus, 86% of those who expected a 'great difference' in their educational potential had witnessed at least some change. Further, of the 110 learners who expected 'some difference', 70% reported that such changes had taken place by the second round of interviews. Seventeen per cent of those who expected 'some difference' in their educational lives reported no change by the second interview.

- Looking at the 32 learners who expected 'no change' in their education situation, a majority (18) indicated that some developments had taken place. Thirteen still reported 'no change'.

- Of the 17 learners who reported 'little chance of change' in their educational lives at the first interview, a majority of 12 indicated that either 'some difference' or a 'great difference' had taken place by the second interview.

10.12   This section has reported on changes anticipated and gained as learners have progressed through their learning episodes. It has quantified where the greatest differences in learners' lives have occurred since they embarked on their learning and the percentage of those who had anticipated and experienced change in each area of their life, whether they had predicted it or not. A summary of their predictions and experiences is provided below in table 10.3. It shows those who anticipated change in each area, those who had experienced change regardless of their predictions, and the percentage of those who had unexpectedly found change, i.e. had not anticipated it in the first round of interviews. The percentages relate to the numbers who responded to the question.

Table 10.3: A summary of predictions and experiences

	%		
	Anticipated Change	**Experienced Change**	**Found, but did not anticipate change**
Personal Life	94	83	2
Family Life	70	51	8
Wider World	53	46	11
Work	80	60	4
Education	84	72	6

10.13   The following complementary section reports on the responses of the qualitative sample of 200 learners' to these changes, and both sets of data will be discussed together in its summary.

Individual Changes in Lives

10.14   This section reports on the open section of the interview schedule, which asked the respondents to talk about the individual changes in their lives as a result of their engaging in ALN. This qualitative data was analysed from 200 of the respondents to give a more detailed account of the changes that had taken place. Cases were selected using a stratified random procedure to ensure that the sample included learners from all partnerships involved in the research. Not surprisingly, given 50% of the total sample was included in the qualitative analysis, the demographic profile of the qualitative sample closely matched that of the total sample. All the percentages reported below are based on the whole qualitative sample.

Changes in Personal Life

10.15   In relation to this aspect of their lives, learners reported that increased self-confidence acts as a key to opening up a wide range of other changes. Confidence and self-esteem are quite generalised concepts, so the responses were analysed to identify 'confidence in what', i.e. how the respondents anticipated that their increased confidence would affect various aspects of their personal lives. The responses clustered into three broad groupings that were psychologically related, skills related and activity related.

10.16   The *psychological* differences that learners spoke of included increased self esteem, a growing sense of their potential, ability and achievements, more independence, being happier as a person, being more able to voice their own opinions, openly talking about their ALN difficulties, improved health and an enhanced awareness and understanding of aspects of the world around them. The number of learners citing enhanced self-esteem and belief in their own abilities rose from 19% to 30% (38 to 46). For example:

- *I believe in myself now that I can achieve things.*
- *I'm not 'crabbit' anymore because … I'm not avoiding problems any more. I'm tackling them head on.'*
- *I can get out of bed, take more care of myself and get a haircut.*
- *It's boosted my confidence because I don't feel as thick as I did before.*
- *I am now confident about sharing the fact that I had this problem and am seeking help.*

10.17   The confidence *to do things* related to skills, some of which were specific ALN skills and others that had developed as a consequence of participants' enhanced ALN skills. One of the most evident differences in the learners between the two rounds of interviews was a sense of their achievement in learning.   Thirty-two percent in the first interview referred to themselves as *beginning* to achieve things, however 48% in the second interview talked of their pride in their learning achievements. For example:

- *I'm more confident in speaking to others so I'm not scared to go to interviews now.*
- *It has helped me to use the computer and I need it for work. I can also interact with friends better because of the computer, because I know what they're talking about.*
- *I can tackle things like reading newspapers and books.'*
- *I will now fill in forms which before I would have left to my husband.*
- *I'm more confident particularly in shopping because I can work out percentage reductions.*

10.18   The third cluster of confidence indicators relates to a *range of activities* in facets of learners' lives that they are now able to participate in, or can do so with more confidence. Thirty-one percent of the learners (an increase in 11% from the first interview) talked of things they now do because of their enhanced literacies skills. For example:

- *I can help myself. I don't need to depend on others and have changed my mind to be very hopeful and helpful.*
- *I'm more confident approaching strangers for information'.*
- *It's much easier to live, and I feel safer.*
- *If a conflict came up, I used to cry, but now I don't. At work I managed to say I didn't do something I was falsely accused of doing, and can stand up for myself.*
- *I don't need an interpreter when I go to the hospital.*

10.19   Twelve percent (up 3%) said that they socialised more than previously, and were more comfortable doing so. They talked about meeting new friends, going out with their friends more, starting new leisure activities and not being afraid of meeting new people.

Changes in Family Life

10.20   The highest number of responses related to changes in the nature of familial relationships. These included relationships between parents and children (37% in both interviews), general relationships amongst family members (35% and 38% respectively) between partners (9% interview 1, 6% interview 2) grandparents and their grandchildren (6% interview 1, 3% interview 2) and other relatives (6% interview 1, 8% interview 2). Although there was little quantitative difference in the volume of responses, there was a noticeable shift in emphasis in the comments.   On the whole, learners in interview 2 were less tentative about changes in their families, and more specific about the precise nature of these changes.   For example:

- *There's no more fighting with my daughter when it's homework time because I can help her with it, which I couldn't do in the past.*
- *I'm helping the children with their homework, reading 'Harry Potter' to my son and helping my daughter who has learning difficulties.*
- *I'm a bit more patient with my Dad when we go out. I learned from seeing the patience of the tutors.*
- *It saves my wife doing everything all the time and I don't want to have to rely on her.*

10.21   The responses to both rounds of interviews in this section show the considerable impact that ALN learning has had on relationships and activities within the family, and though the percentage responses in all aspects of familial change were not always greater in interview 2, cumulatively they represent a numerical increase in learners observing positive differences in this area of life.   The greatest changes related to improved relationships, primarily between parents and children, with the main focus here being in parents' enhanced confidence and skills in supporting their children's education and helping with their homework.   This in turn gave them more in common to do together and to talk about, thus engendering an all round better relationship between the two.

Changes in Work Life

10.22   Learners were positive about the likelihood of their ALN involvement to improve their employment situation in both interviews.   In the second interview 102 learners (51%) made additional comments regarding their working lives. Twenty-nine of those (28%) suggested that their job prospects had improved, 27 said their confidence had improved, 7 others mentioned that their 'pool' of potential jobs had widened and 2 learners suggested that their promotion prospects had improved. While the proportion of respondents who 'perceived' their job prospects to have improved had dropped from the first interview (first interview 55%, second interview 28%), there were encouraging changes in the 'actual' working lives of many of the learners which would, at least in part, explain this decrease. Moreover, it was clear from their comments that they regarded their ALN involvement as an important factor in this.   Many other learners remained confident about their future employment prospects.   For example:

- *I am now working with a team of gardeners as a direct result of the college [FE course].*
- *I have moved on to 2 more part-time jobs, helped by having more confidence.*
- *I am recently promoted, would not have been possible before, I would not even have thought of trying for it.*
- *I have more responsibility at work - it [ALN] has made work easier.*
- *I am more confident using the written work, write a lot more, which is required at work.*
- *I am more confident about filling in applications… my brother used to do it for me.*

10.23   Moreover the proportion of those reporting an increase in their confidence had risen from 13% in the first interview to 26% in the second. Eight learners reported securing new employment between the first and second interviews, 2 others said that they had been promoted and another 2 indicated that they had been given more responsibility in their job. One noted that he had applied for promotion.

Changes in education life

10.24   One hundred and thirty-two learners (66%) from the first round of interviews spoke about the impact of ALN involvement on their educational aspirations. At this stage, the overwhelming majority of informants were keen to continue with some form of education on completion of their ALN course. Many of these learners indicated that the additional self-confidence gained in their ALN course had encouraged them to consider further study. One hundred and forty-six learners (73%) commented on their education plans or progress at the second round of interviews, 71 of these still indicated a willingness to engage in future study. For example:

- *At some point in the future [I] will do something but not sure yet what.*
- *I'm much more positive about doing further courses.*
- *I intend to go back and finish the classroom assistant course.*
- *Would also like to learn basic accountancy skills to help with the Café project.*

10.25   Learners have gone on to study a wide range of topics at various levels including computing/IT, communications, social and health care and gardening. Fourteen interviewees said that they had no plans for further study. Of these, four reported that 'personal circumstances' (employment, illness, or family commitments) prevented them from carrying on with education. Two learners suggested that their ALN experiences had been less positive and they were unlikely to continue in education. What does come across strongly from the learners who commented was the importance of ALN in building their confidence and providing them with positive educational experiences that encouraged them to undertake further study.

Changes in Public lives

10.26   Ninety-one learners (46%) commented on the impact of their involvement in ALN on their public lives during their second interview compared with 89 learners (45%) in the first. Seventy-four of these interviewees indicated that their involvement would result in changes to their public lives. As in the first round of interviews, many interviewees suggested that changes in their public lives had already taken place. Many of these replies were clearly related to an increase in self-confidence. For example:

- *I am more confident socially and able to attend local gyms.*
- *I am a Union representative at work, and doing this course has helped in this area. People at work now come to [me] for advice with problems with staff.*
- *Walking outside, mixing more with the general public and going into a shop on my own.*
- *I am involved in voluntary work in the school, confidence from the course helped with making this move.*

10.27   Nineteen learners indicated that they were prevented from increasing their public lives due to other commitments (including their studies).   In a number of cases learners have begun to increase their public profile and develop new areas of involvement as a direct result of their ALN involvement.

10.28   A case study is provided below in order to show the impact of the multiple outcomes of successful engagement with ALN for one learner (Box 10.1).

Box 10.1   Changes in multiple aspects of one life

10.29   J is employed with the local Fire Brigade as an Assistant Storeman. Over the years he has struggled with his reading and writing. Reading the Stock Register was an absolute nightmare for him and added to this was an ongoing health problem that required him to complete a prescription form on a regular basis. What should have been a straightforward experience turned out to be very embarrassing and distressing for him when he handed the form over at the pharmacy. Each time he was asked to fill in certain details on the form and each time he would struggle to write in the information required. Shopping was also a challenge. When he first spoke about his learning needs he recalled a visit to the local Argos store. A particular sweatshirt caught his attention in the catalogue so he decided to buy it. However, it would take him nearly two hours to complete the order form! At one point one of the store assistants began to think he was acting suspiciously and challenged him about his presence. When asked if he needed help he gladly accepted it and purchased his sweatshirt.

10.30   J had great reservations about coming forward to get help with his literacy and numeracy. Through sensitive encouragement from a staff member of a service he frequented, he eventually decided to give it a go and an initial meeting was set up with the Tutor. At first, he was unsure about learning within a group. He seemed to think that he would be seen to be the learner with the most needs. Little did he know at that time he would turn out to be a star!

10.31   The first priority was to boost his confidence in completing the prescription form. After a short time this problem was solved and he now completes the form before he hands it over. He felt great about this achievement and this would set the scene for the next objective which was to complete an Argos form and not take two hours to complete it! An Argos catalogue was used along with correct order forms. The tutor first of all selected a single item and showed him how to complete it properly. Again he achieved success and the fact he was now able to complete Argos forms by himself was another string to his learning bow! Any fears he had previously about learning within a group seemed to disappear.

10.32   The next learning objective focussed on his working environment. John had never felt confident at reading the Staff Notice Board so he never looked at it. He recalled an embarrassing moment when he was handed an official document and asked for comments there and then. After a long silence he replied ' I would like to give you my views but I can not read it so I don't know what it means'. Another example relates to the Stock Register he used at work. He could not figure out what the words meant on the various products kept within the store area. Somehow he had worked out a system which enabled him to basically survive the task of being asked to collect products from the store. If requested to bring containers of Hand Wash he would recognise the containers by their size not by their words. To address this, a photocopy was taken of the Stock Register along with a completed sample order form and these would be used on an ongoing basis to help him read and identify with the words. This proved to be a real challenge and several learning methods were used to achieve success, but he did eventually achieve it.

10.33   J has suffered several set backs in his life and like a lot of people he had bad memories of his school days, but he is the first to admit that his experiences as an Adult Learner have greatly improved his quality of life. He can now go shopping with greater confidence and go to work knowing that the stock register is a learning experience for him as opposed to being a learning nightmare! He now walks up the Staff Notice Board and feels just like everyone else as he now can make out what the various flyers and pieces of paper mean.

10.34   When setting out his future learning goals and reviewing the course learning, J said to his Tutor, 'I have enjoyed the course as it has helped me to understand and read difficult words on the stock register at work. Learning with the group has also helped me to help myself with my reading and writing. No longer do I feel scared to complete forms. The whole learning experience has been great fun.'

10.35   As a post script to this, when meeting with him to carry out our research interview, he explained to me the embarrassment faced in his local pub when confronted with scoring in a darts match, a task he could not complete and as a consequence withdrew from his involvement even though he was one of the better players. This has now changed and he can confidently participate in this and other things that he had previously been excluded from, including voting, reading notices in his pub, or in newspapers, all of which help his participation in the wider society.

Summary

10.36   There is evidence of a marked increase in the confidence and self-esteem of the learners between the first and second round of interviews. In our society there is a dominant discourse that regards people who are not literate or numerate as deficit individuals and learners' internalise this. When they participate in ALN provision and find that they can learn then this changes their perceptions of themselves too. As well as these psychological changes, learners have become more able to learn new skills, undertake more activities and interact more with other people as a result of their tuition. This, in itself, gives them more confidence in tackling other aspects of their lives. A good many had used this newly found sense of self to open doors into other worlds and activities that they would not previously have contemplated, and had grown further in the process. There were a number of positive differences that engaging in ALN learning had made for people in their family, work, public and education lives. Participation in ALN had a positive impact not only on learners' self-image but also on parents' involvement in their children's education and on learners' perceptions of their employment prospects and earnings. This research indicates that learners' growth in self-confidence leads them to seek better jobs or gain wage increases and that self-confidence is more important than qualifications in learners' own perceptions.

10.37   Confidence, self-esteem, close family relationships and social and civic engagement each comprise elements of social capital, and, as Field (2005) observes, they affect and are affected by learning. The evidence from this section suggests that the 'virtuous circle' of social capital is operating and affecting those who have engaged in learning. It indicates that increased confidence and self-esteem are impacting on familial, social and work relationships, which in turn add to the sum of learners' social capital, though, as noted in Chapter 8, the precise nature of the causal relationships between them cannot be easily or precisely determined.

10.38   The quantitative section of this chapter shows what learners' hopes, or goals were on entering learning as well as the relationships between predicted and actual change in the five areas of their lives. It indicates that the greatest discrepancy between aspirations and actuality lies in relation to employment, notwithstanding the fact that 7% fewer were unemployed and 28% reported improved job prospects between rounds. Other research (see, for example, Glasgow CLSP, 2005) suggests that as adults become more engaged in learning, their expectations of its effects shift from the naively optimistic to the realistic, particularly in relation to enhanced employment prospects. Despite this, 60% noted employment related changes after their ALN learning.

10.39   The data also shows the extent of the unanticipated benefits of learning. It indicates that where predicted change was lowest, i.e. engagement in the community, unexpected gains were proportionately highest. Learning, as this and other research has evidenced, produces multiple outcomes, some of which are anticipated, and others that are not.

10.40 Merged together, the quantitative and qualitative data provide compelling evidence of the effects that learning has already had on the respondents, many of whom are situated in communities where, '*education is simply not part of [their] value system and behaviour patterns*' (McGivney, 2001: 25), as indicated above. This chapter and the case studies also illustrate how traumatic that first step into learning can be for those whom the educational world has deemed to be failures. These learners had braved that step, had engaged in learning and, for the majority, had begun to reap the benefits within a year. The evidence has also shown that the benefits currently extend beyond personal change into multiple areas of learners' lives. The success of Scotland's ALN policy is predicated on such change happening and this research has provided evidence of its genesis. Whether it will be significant and sustained, however, cannot be predicted within the limitations of a two-phased study. This requires longitudinal tracking, and such tracking lies beyond the bounds of the remit of this particular research.

CHAPTER ELEVEN   FINDINGS FROM THE TUTORS' SURVEY

11.1   This part of the research was designed to assess the impact of the ALN Strategy on tutors' perceptions of the changes, if any, it had made in the teaching and learning environment and their approaches to learning, teaching and the curriculum.

The Sample

11.2   The sample of 78 tutors was selected from different centres from those in which the learners' sample was based but in the same ALN Partnership areas. This avoided the possibility of the replies from learners influencing, or being influenced by, the participation of their tutors. It also meant that direct and inappropriate comparisons between tutors' and learners' views of programmes were avoided. These interviews took place after data from the first interview with learners had been analysed so that the issues that had been raised by learners could be included in the interview schedule.

The Interview

11.3   The interviews were conducted by telephone between April and September 2004 by three members of the research team and, on average, took an hour. The questionnaire was based on the good practice framework, *Literacies in the Community Resources for Practitioners and Managers* (2000), which provides the benchmarks against which the quality of tuition is assessed by ALN Partnerships and Learning Connections. In addition to accessing the quality of learning and teaching the questionnaire also provided the opportunity for tutors to reflect on: the learning programme itself, planning, resources, staffing and management within the organisation, their own professional development, partnership working, and the impact of the strategy on themselves, their organisation and learners alike.

Tutor Characteristics

11.4   Of the seventy-five tutors that answered the question about where they provided tuition 14 were based in an FE College, 32 worked in a community centre, 20 in a dedicated learning centre, 3 in a workplace and 6 went to learners' homes to provide tuition. They were predominantly female (66 female and 12 male). Tutors were asked if they were paid or worked voluntarily and 3 tutors stated that they were paid part time and also worked as volunteers. Of the remaining 75 tutors the majority worked part time (39) with 22 being full time and 14 working as volunteers. The age bands that they fell into are shown in Chart 11.1. As can be seen, voluntary tutors were older than the other 2 groups.

Chart 11.1:   Ages of tutors with different working arrangements
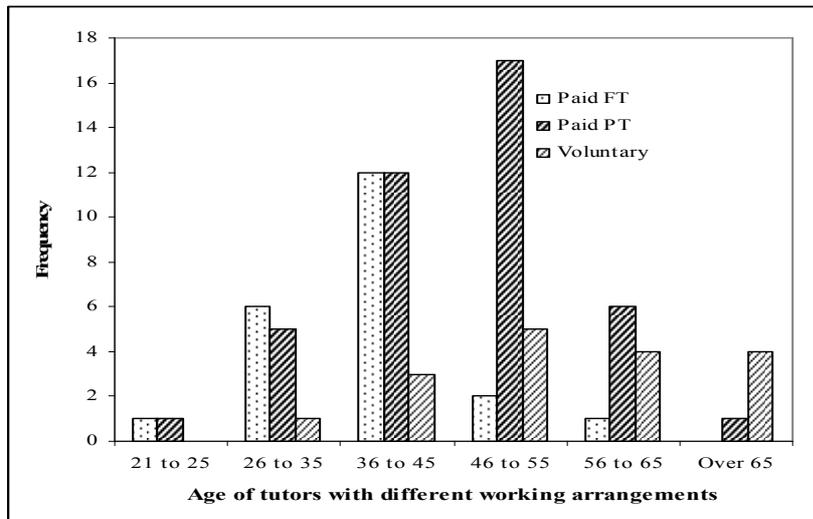
11.5   The tutors were a highly educated group with over 80% having a degree or above - Chart 11.2.

Chart 11.2:   Highest qualification
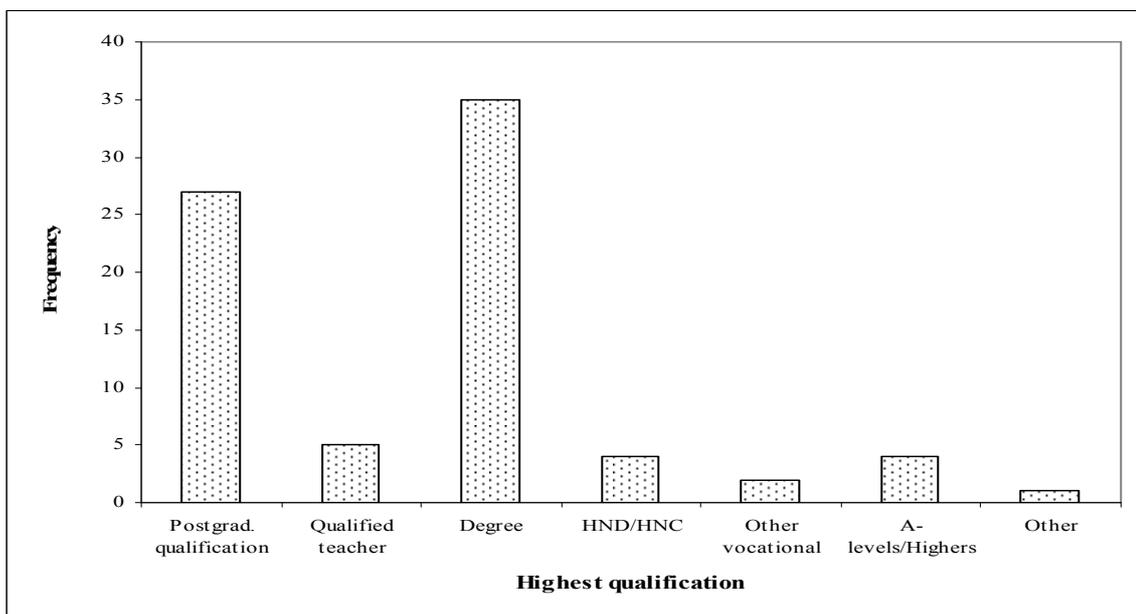
Entry Pathways for Learners

11.6   This section of the questionnaire was designed to find out how far tutors felt that access to the learning programmes was prompt, easy and open to learners. Tutors were asked about their involvement in providing advice and guidance on learners' plans and aims and if they provided advice about progression possibilities. As can be seen from Chart 11.3, a high proportion of tutors provided advice and guidance about learners plans and aims but fewer provided advice on progression opportunities.

Chart 11.3: Tutor involvement in providing advice and guidance on learners' plans and aims
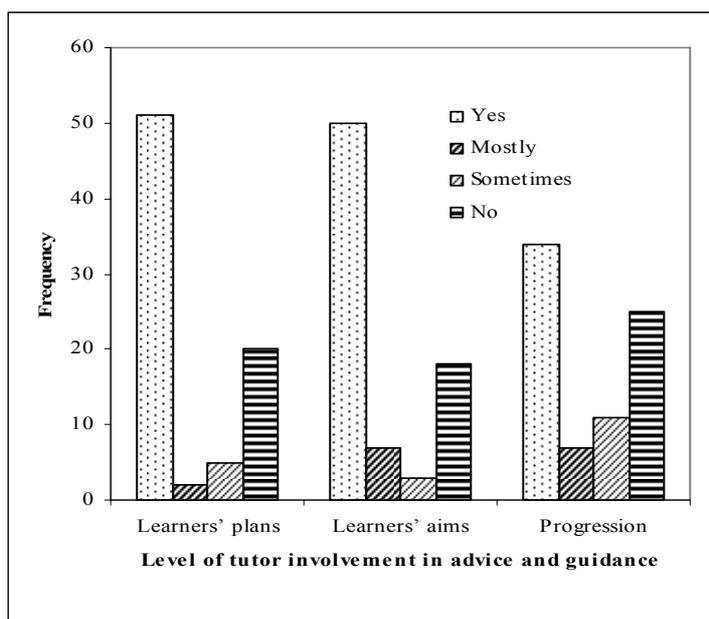
11.7   The good practice guidelines (2000) specify that the best practice (level 4) means that the learner *'receives information on the options available and possible pathways from entry, through tuition to exit'* (page 12). Quite a high proportion of the tutors did not feel that providing advice on progression was an option that they should offer at this early stage in the career of the learners with whom they were working. This was because they felt that the learners' had a long way to go until they were ready to progress and they concentrated instead on working with learners on their plans and learning aims.

11.8   Tutors were asked what they were involved in discussing with participating learners. The good practice guidelines (2000) specify that the best practice (level 4) means that '*initial assessment is a process, building on the initial meeting. It focuses on the specific gaps between the learner's literacy and numeracy capabilities and his/her current or anticipated demands and contexts. Initial assessment leads to the development of a detailed individual learning plan*' (page 12). Tutors were not necessarily responsible for all these aspects of the entry pathways to the learning programme. As can be seen from chart 11.4, tutors were most likely to be involved in helping learners to set goals and develop an Independent Learning Plan (ILP). They were least likely to carry out an initial assessment of literacy/numeracy as many reported that someone else would have done this when the learner first applied for tuition in order to decide in which class or group learners should be placed.

Chart 11.4: What tutors are involved in
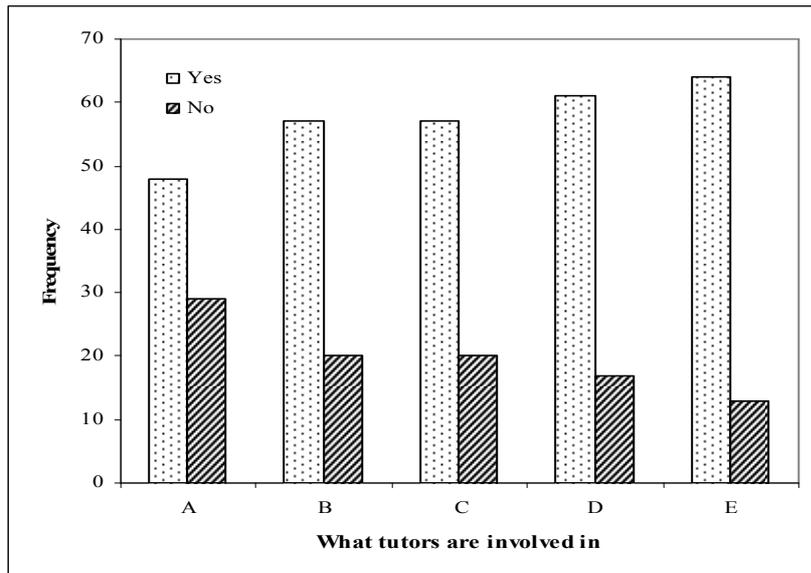
Key to Chart 11.4:

A = Initial assessment of literacy/numeracy   D = Development of ILP
B = Identification of strengths and weaknesses   E = Helping set goals
C = Identification of learning strategies

11.9   The good practice guidelines (2000) specify that the best practice (level 4) means that *'individual support is offered and is focussed on strengths and needs as a learner'* (page 15). Tutors were therefore asked whether they focussed on strengths or needs or both equally. Of the 73 tutors who responded to this question, the majority focussed on *'both equally'* as can be seen from Chart 11.5, however, 18% said that they were primarily 'needs' focussed, which does not sit comfortably with the 'lifelong learning' approach that underpins Scottish policy (Scottish Executive, 2001: 14).

Chart 11.5: Do tutors focus on strengths or needs?
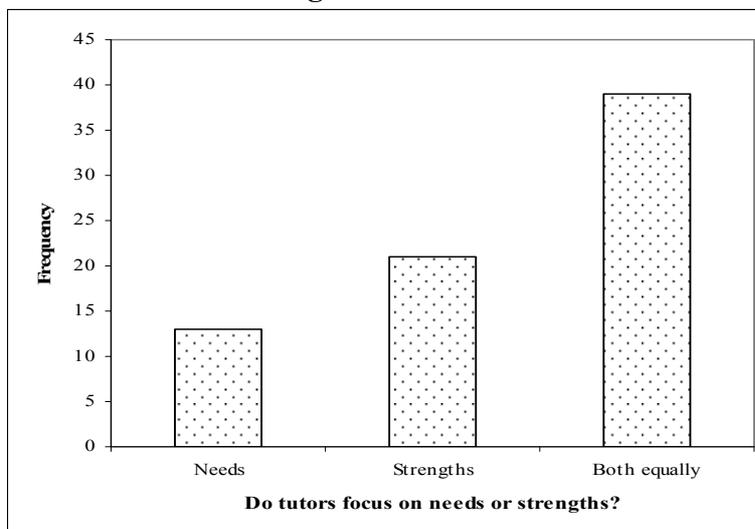
Learning, Teaching and the Curriculum

11.10   These questions focused on the extent to which tutors were able to provide flexible and responsive learning options that responded to learners' needs and wants and developed their knowledge, skills and understanding in context.

11.11   Tutors were asked about how they organised their teaching and they provided the following answers detailed in Chart 11.6.

Chart 11.6: How tutors organise their teaching

How tutors organise their teaching
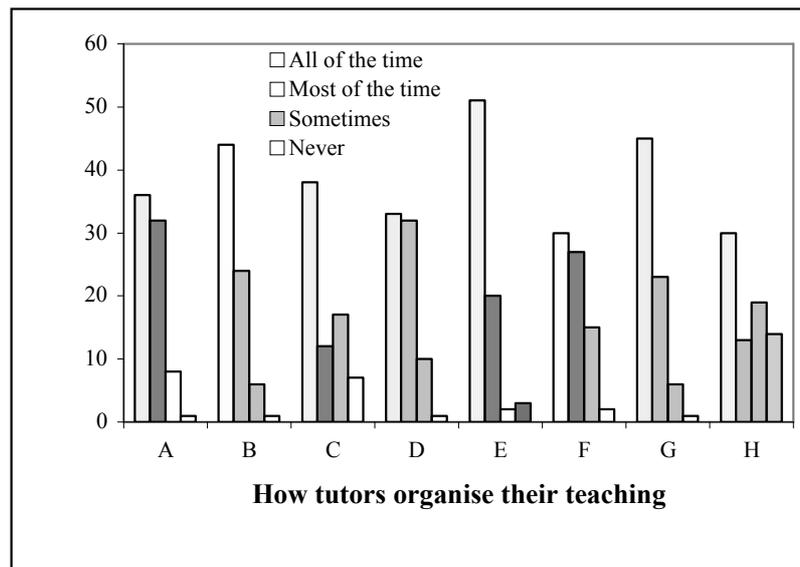
Key to Chart 11.6:

A = Organise the sessions around the learners' ILPs
B = Adapt the sessions to the different learning styles of the participants
C = Provide the opportunity for learners to learn in groups (or pairs)
D = Source texts/workbooks or learning materials adapted from real life situations
E = Adapt the curriculum to the needs and learning aims of learners
F = Address the 3 areas of, knowledge, skills and critical understanding
G = Vary the methods you use
H = Foster links with other learning opportunities

11.12   Tutors felt least able to foster links with other learning opportunities. They reported that this was mainly because they were only in a position to work directly with learners and felt that this task was the responsibility of the full-time or guidance staff rather than themselves. Tutors were also less confident about addressing the three areas of knowledge, skills and critical understanding. This was mainly because those that were tutoring students with learning difficulties felt that they would not be able to introduce *critical* understanding, as this group of learners were not able to work at this level. The ability to provide the opportunity to learn in groups was limited for tutors working in rural areas.

Guidance and Support

11.13 Tutors were asked about what guidance and support they offered. The good practice guidelines (2000) specify that the best practice (level 4) means that opportunities to *'discuss, record, update and review the individual learning plan'* (page 15) are provided regularly. Learners should also be able *'to move on at any stage'* (page 15). The tutors' responses to our questions are detailed in Chart 11.7.

Chart 11.7: What support and guidance do tutors provide?
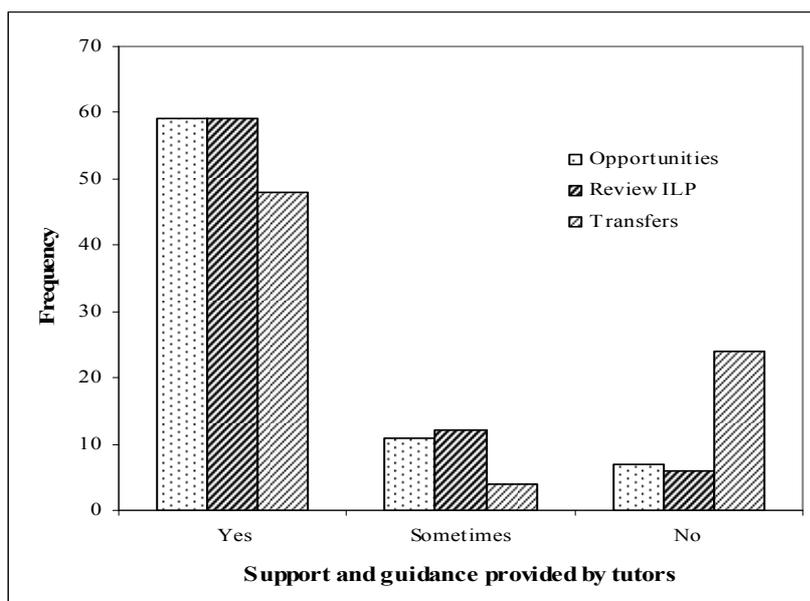
11.14 As can be seen the majority of tutors were able to provide opportunities for guidance and reflection and were also able to review Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) regularly. Providing transfers between learning programmes was more difficult with some tutors reporting that, in their particular locations, there were no appropriate opportunities to which learners could transfer.

Exit Pathways

11.15 In this section, tutors were asked about what they themselves provided when learners exited their programme and what other people in their organisation provided. A number of tutors commented that very few learners that they worked with left in a pre-arranged manner. Instead they would simply stop coming and therefore the tutors were not in a position to conduct a summative review. In other cases people stayed in programmes for a long time especially those with learning difficulties. This reflects similar findings to those reported on the student sample. As can be seen from the Chart 11.8, few tutors offered formal accreditation opportunities and this was partly because accreditation was usually only offered to learners in FE settings and partly because staff, other than the tutors, were responsible for carrying out formal accreditation.

Chart 11.8: What tutors provide at exit from a course

Chart showing frequency of what is provided by tutors at exit, with categories "Yes - always", "Sometimes", and "No". Provide pre-exit guidance: approximately 31, 18, 26. Conduct a summative review of ILPs: approximately 37, 10, 28. Provide formal accreditation opportunities: approximately 8, 6, 61.
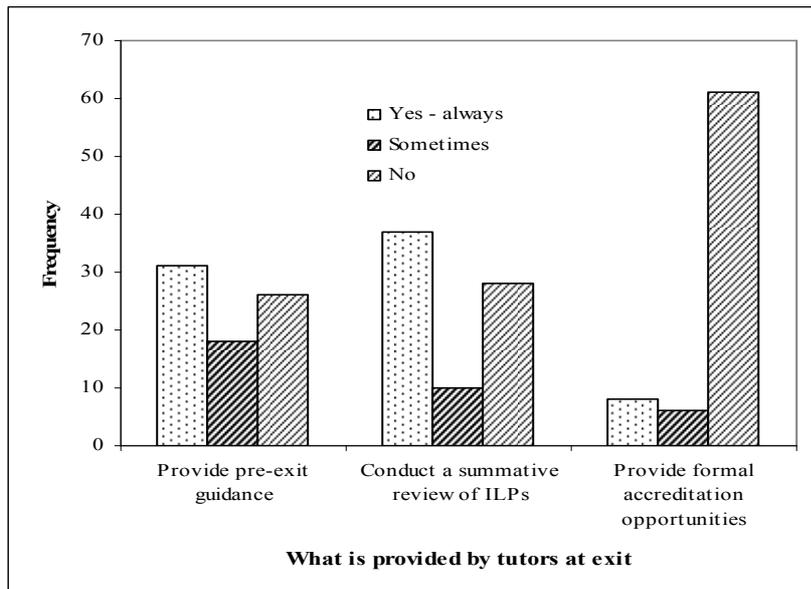
11.16 In those programmes where someone else, other than the tutor, provided exit-pathway advice and guidance, this was most likely to focus on accreditation. Chart 11.9 shows however, that many programmes did not offer formal accreditation. When viewed in conjunction with chart 11.8, it can also be seen that a substantial proportion of learners left with no exit guidance or review of their ILP from anyone within the providing organisation.

Chart 11.9: Services provided by others at exit

Chart showing frequency of what others provide at exit, with categories "Yes" and "No". Provide pre-exit guidance: approximately 18, 14. Conduct a summative review of ILPs: approximately 9, 18. Provide formal accreditation opportunities: approximately 24, 28.
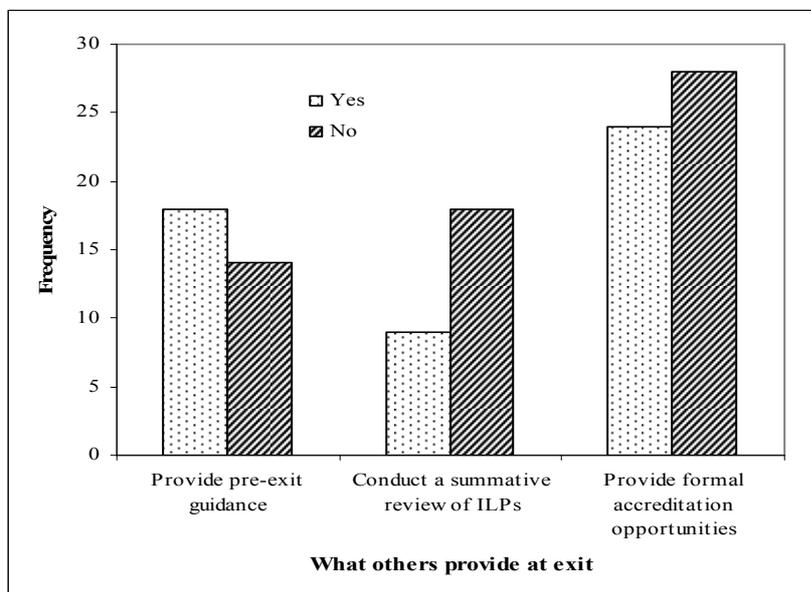
Reflections on the learning programme

11.17 The questions in this section were designed to find out which areas of the overall learning programme tutors felt most satisfied with and what they felt should be improved. Tutors were asked what they saw as the key strengths of local ALN provision and their overall responses are

shown in Table 11.1. Multiple responses were allowed. Four new tutors did not answer this question. As can be seen, more tutors identified learning and teaching as the strongest provision with a small minority choosing exit pathways. The following comments typify tutors' responses to positive changes in aspects of learning and teaching since the launch of Scotland's ALN policy.

- It has made me examine my whole approach to tutoring. It has encouraged me to be more critical of my approach and methodology.
- It has encouraged me to design my learning to be more relevant to learners' lives.
- It has made me strive to develop ILPs and develop a more positive initial assessment that's about strengths, not deficits.
- It has made me more responsive to learners' needs. I'm more aware of the limitations of literacies levels on learners' lives and it's made me more flexible.

Table 11.1: Key strengths

	Frequency		
	Yes	**No**	**No Response**
Entry pathways	35	39	4
Learning and teaching	48	26	4
Guidance and support	24	50	4
Exit pathways	2	72	4

11.18 Tutors were then asked about the ways in which local ALN provision could improve further. Their overall responses are detailed below in Table 11.2.

Table 11.2: Ways to improve provision

	Frequency
Entry pathways	24
Exit pathways	21
Learning and teaching	16
Guidance and support	14

11.19 The identified aspects of *entry pathways* that could be improved included: better diagnostic assessment; more advertising and publicity; better buildings and accommodation; better responsiveness to potential learners. The suggestions to improve *learning and teaching* included more materials and resources; more, and better-qualified tutors; less haphazard planning for groups. The fourteen tutors that identified *guidance* tended to focus on the problematic nature of provision and identified that there was little available support and little planning or structure to it. The most problematic area of *exit pathways* similarly attracted mainly negative comments including that: it was generally a weak or neglected aspect of provision; that a more structured exit interview and pro-forma were required and that there was a need to help learners move on.

11.20 This research was conducted between April and September 2004 and since then there have been a number of publications and developments including the 'Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Framework for Scotland' (Scottish Executive, Learning Connections, 2005) that includes guidance on exit reviews and 'moving on'. Nevertheless the HMIe Report (2005) suggests that, in local authority provision, '*systematic guidance in relation to literacies learning and exit guidance was less well developed*' (2005: 14), so it appears that further developments in this area

are still necessary. It also reflects similar findings in the learners' survey where guidance was a weak area of provision.

The National ALN Initiative

11.21   Tutors were asked if the national initiative had made any difference to *Who, What* and *How* they taught. Table 11.3 shows that, of those that had been tutors for more than a year and were therefore able to comment, the greatest impact had been on who they taught.

Table 11.3: Where the national initiative has made the most difference

	Frequency		
	Yes	**No**	**No response**
Who you teach	38	21	3
What you teach	26	27	5
How you teach	29	24	5

11.22   Of the 38 who felt it had affected *whom* they taught, 23 perceived that there was now a greater variety of students accessing provision. Thirteen different groups were identified, most of whom fitted into the Scottish Executive's priority groups. They included; ESOL learners, (refugees and asylum seekers), the generally hard to reach, those with health problems, prisoners, the homeless, the unemployed and youth. Three spoke of gendered changes in that they saw ALN now attracting more women (3) and more men (1).

11.23   Other changes to whom they teach included:

- more self referrals
- more priority groups
- more who would have previously been excluded, and
- a greater number of learners (9)

11.24   In relation to *what* they taught, the greatest number of comments (8) related to the fact that they had shifted from a 3R's approach to an applied approach where the teaching now focused on applied life skills:

- Four saw themselves as being more learner centred
- Three instanced an increase in ICT based work
- One had moved from 1 to 1 to group work
- One now focused on how people learn
- Two suggested they were more creative in their teaching
- One was working with more varied levels of learning

11.25   The 29 who felt the strategy had impacted on *how* they teach saw this in relation to:

- Better resources and materials being available (7)
- Being more creative in their ideas and methods (6)
- Being more responsive to learners (6)
- Moving from 1 to 1 to group work (3)
- Using more ICT (2)

- Being more organised (2)
- Working with a broader ability range (1)
- Being more able to assess skills and needs (1)
- Recording work and progress more (1)

11.26 Finally, in this section tutors were asked to describe their perception of the impact of the changes for ALN learners. As can be seen from chart 11.10 below, most tutors felt the impact had been positive and only one suggested that it had been negative.

Chart 11.10: The impact of change for ALN learners
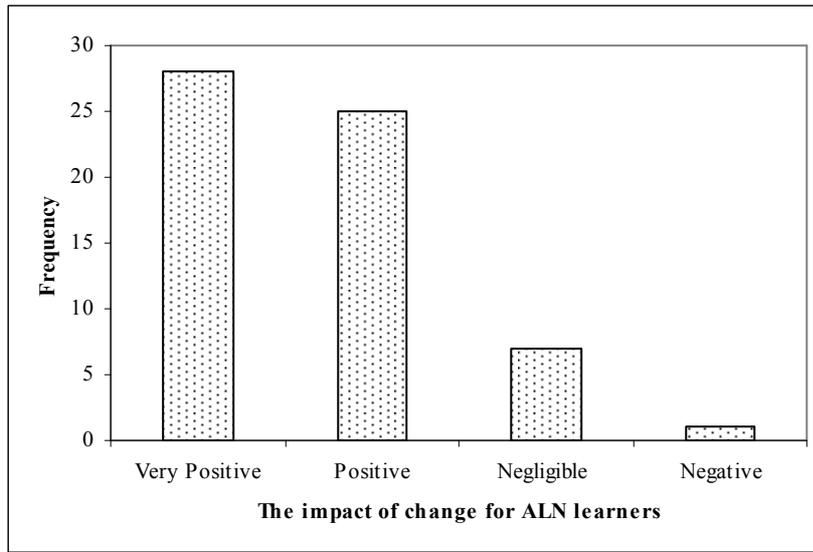
11.27 Positive comments focused on outcomes for learners, for example '*it has made a difference in terms of self-confidence and esteem and some in relation to quality of life – time management, filling in forms, using buses, interest in learning in general. People now see themselves as learners*'. Another area highlighted by tutors was improvements in the learning environment. For example, '*there are more opportunities and recognition of individual needs – the emphasis is on strengths*'. Another tutor reported '*the new centre is much more accessible especially for wheelchair users. It is a bright clean building that's welcoming and so a lot more people come in*'. One tutor was concerned, however, that too many resources were directed at administrative tasks and not enough at learners, '*money could be better targeted to students and not to red tape*'.

Resources

11.28 In this section, how far resources, including accommodation and equipment, were satisfactory was investigated. The good practice framework suggests that resources *'should promote a positive image of literacy and numeracy learning'* and that *'the allocation and use of resources* [should be] *equitable and inclusive'* (2000: 19). Tutors were asked to rate a range of resources and Table 11.4 shows that they were generally satisfied with the quality and suitability of their accommodation, the ICT and the availability of teaching resources. Nevertheless, quite a high number did not have any dedicated rooms or facilities and there was less satisfaction with the range of available software.

Table 11.4: How tutors rated resources

| | Frequency | | | | |
	Good	Passable	Poor	Not available	No response
Accommodation	48	21	6	1	2
Learner support provisions	31	18	6	13	10
Dedicated room/facilities	38	14	2	22	2
Availability of resources	52	18	8	0	0
ICT available	50	13	5	7	3
Range of software	29	29	6	10	4

11.29 Tutors were also asked if the ALN strategy had impacted on the level and quality of resources that were available to them. Generally tutors felt that it had had a positive impact as can be seen from Table 11.5.

Table 11.5: What has the ALN strategy impacted on?

| | Frequency | | | |
	Yes	No	Don't know	No Response
Level of resources	41	12	22	3
Quality of resources	35	17	23	3

11.30 Forty-four tutors provided additional open comments and 30 of these agreed that there had been an increase in both the level and quality of resources available to support learning and teaching. Of these, 14 highlighted particular areas of development including the use of ICT and more appropriate paper based materials from which they had benefited. Nine tutors, on the other hand, indicated that there were still difficulties with the lack of resources available for specific groups including young people, people with learning difficulties and ESOL learners.

Staffing

11.31 This section investigated how far levels of staffing were satisfactory. The good practice framework suggests that '*levels of staff are based on an analysis of learning needs in the area served*'. '*The remit of staff members, sessional workers and volunteers matches their expertise, experience and commitment*' (2000: 20). Chart 11.11 shows tutors' perceptions of the adequacy of various aspects of staffing. As can be seen, the majority of tutors considered that there were adequate numbers of staff to respond to demand and to provide different levels or types of learning. They were less certain about having satisfactory levels of staffing to respond to perceived 'need' and about having sufficient staff to provide for a range of different learning contexts.

Chart 11.11: Tutors' perception of the adequacy of staffing
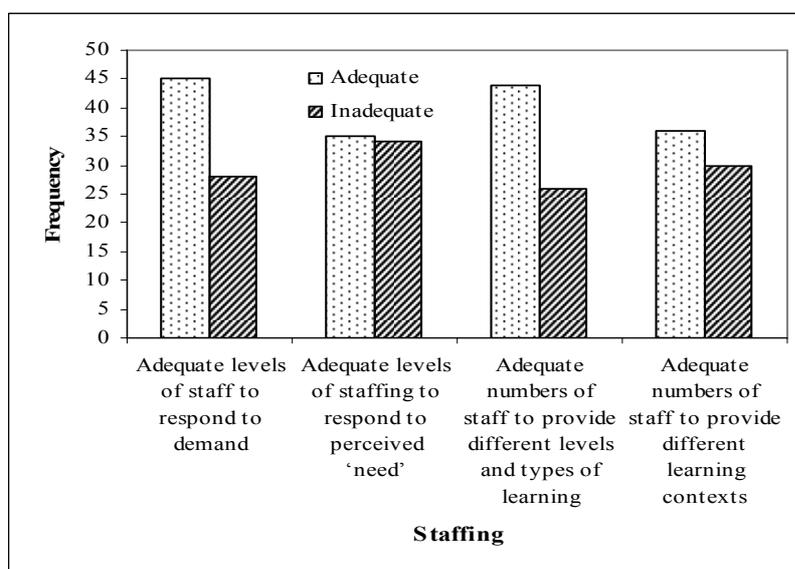
11.32 Sixty tutors made additional comments regarding their staffing situation. Thirteen of these informants made comments that suggested that they were, in the main, happy with present staffing. However a number of critical points emerged from the comments of other tutors. Sixteen informants felt that there was a general shortage of tutors. Four felt there was a need for more experienced tutors to be employed and 4 others mentioned concerns about staff working very hard, experiencing high stress levels, high absenteeism or having too much paperwork. In a similar fashion, 15 tutors pointed to difficulties with the retention and recruitment of tutors. This was felt to be associated with poor pay and unfavourable employee working terms and conditions. This appeared to be a particular issue for part-time sessional and volunteer tutors.

Staff Development

ITALL Training

11.33 In this section a range of staff development issues were investigated with the first area being about the Initial Teaching in Adult Literacy Learning (ITALL) training. Only just over a third of our sample had taken part in this training (interviews were taking place when this training was just being implemented) but those that had participated had found it effective as can be seen from Table 11.6.

Table 11.6: How effective has the ITALL training been?

	Frequency					
	Very effective	**Effective**	**Fairly effective**	**Not effective**	**NA**	**No response**
Did it prepare you for your tutoring role?	6	7	10	5	50	0
Did it provide an understanding of literacies	12	10	3	3	49	1

11.34 However, in the open question the 5 people that commentated on the ITALL training had mixed views about its value. Two participants suggested that they had learned very little on it because they had some prior background knowledge, and they perceived it as a very basic introduction to ALN. Two commentated on the lack of an appropriate level follow up training. The fifth comment referred to the PDA ITALL as *'excellently taught, despite the content.'*

11.35 Since the survey was conducted a large number of tutors have completed the PDA ITALL and an updated and revised version of the support materials has been published (*Report on the Scottish Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, 2004-2005*, Learning Connections, September 2005) so this snapshot is not representative of current reactions to the programme.

Access to staff development

11.36 Good practice in staff development is described as *'continuous access is offered to up to date information, advice, support and training'* (2000: 22). Tutors were therefore asked about their access to staff development and the impact it had had on their practice. Fifty-five tutors (70%) had participated in training programmes and Table 11.7 shows the range of staff development days they had received.

Table 11.7: Number of development days attended by tutors

	Frequency
0 days	23
1 to 5 days	30
6 to 10 days	13
11 to 15 days	4
16 to 20 days	1
20+ days	7

11.37 Access to staff development was not evenly spread with voluntary staff getting far less access than full-time staff as can be seen from Table 11.8.

Table 11.8: Access to staff development

	Paid Full-Time	**Paid Part-Time**	**Voluntary**
0 days	4	12	7
1-5 days	9	15	9
6-10 days	2	10	1
11-15 days	1	3	0
16-20 days	0	1	0
20+ days	6	1	0

11.38 Tutors were asked what staff development opportunities were available, if they were adequate and if they were actively supported to attend staff development activities. The results for the whole tutor population are detailed below in Table 11.9.

Table 11.9: Staff development opportunities: availability, adequacy and active support

	Great extent Frequency	**Some extent** Frequency	**Not at all** Frequency	**No response** Frequency
Other staff development opportunities available	28	39	9	2
Other staff development opportunities adequate	32	28	9	9
You actively supported to attend staff development activities	42	21	14	1

11.39   This overall picture hides the differences between tutors as 82% (18 out of 22) of full time staff felt they were actively supported but only 56% (10 out of 17) of voluntary staff and 38% (16 out of 42) of part-time staff felt that they had good support. Conversely, 24% of the part-time staff and 29% of the voluntary staff had no support for staff development whereas all full-time staff were supported to at least some extent. Research shows (e.g. NRDC, 2003) that appropriate staff development is important to ensure the quality of teaching and learning. Given that a high proportion of the staff delivering learning and teaching in ALN work part-time or voluntarily (see Learning Connections, 2004) this raises important questions for the provision of quality opportunities for learners.

Management

11.40   This section investigated how far managers were supportive of staff and if there was regular and systematic consultation with learners. Tutors were asked if they felt supported by their managers and, as can be seen from Table 11.10 nearly 70% felt that they were.

Table 11.10: Did tutors feel supported by their managers?

	Frequency
Yes	51
No	24
No Response	3

11.41   The good practice framework suggests that *'decision-making is based on consultation with learners, the community or communities served and partner agencies'* (2000: 21). Tutors were asked whom managers consulted with and the results are detailed in Chart 11.12.

Chart 11.12: Who managers consulted with
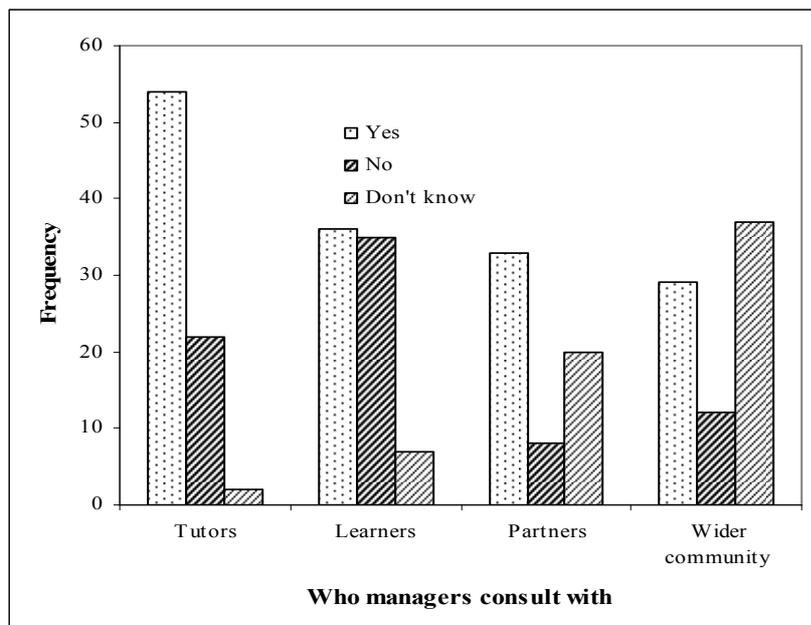
11.42   As can be seen tutors were consulted with regularly but almost half considered that managers did not consult with learners. Tutors were less able to comment on consultation with the community and with partners but generally felt that managers consulted with these 2 groups.

11.43 The final question was designed to uncover the forms of communication that existed between management and learners. Forty-six tutors (61%) indicated familiarity with the range of communication existing between management and learners and the responses to this question are summarised in Table 11.11.

Table 11.11: Major routes of communication between learners and management

Types of Communication	Frequency
Regular meeting, focus group, users group or learners forum	20
ILP reviews, evaluating/monitoring progress, assessment, and attendance	19
Communication mediated through tutors	5
Ad hoc discussions	5
Individual meetings	4
Exit meeting and/or termination letter	3

11.44 In 3 instances informants suggested that little or no communication existed between management and learners. Another respondent was concerned that management did not always use appropriate communication methods with learners and stated that: *'Sometimes learners are sent letters – inappropriate communication is used.* [This is] *not thoughtful about learners' difficulties in reading etc'*. In general it appears that there is room for improvement in communications between management and learners.

Monitoring and Evaluation

11.45   This section examined how evidence about learners' experiences is gathered and evaluated. Good practice involves drawing on *'evidence from a wide range of sources and findings inform the cycle of planning. Learners are involved in evaluation through regular informal consultation…*[and] *through formal arrangements'* (2000: 23). Tutors were therefore asked about their monitoring and evaluation practices. Chart 11.13 shows that most tutors recorded and submitted data on their learners and most involved learners in the evaluation of the learning programme. Fewer involved learners in evaluating their learning environment mainly because they had little ability to change it and therefore saw asking learners about it as a tokenistic exercise.

Chart 11.13: Monitoring and evaluation practices
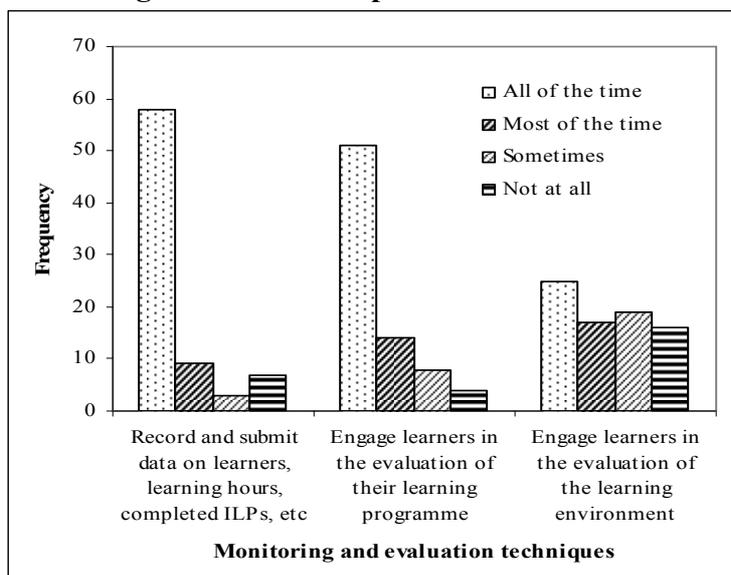
Procedures

11.46 Tutors were also asked to give more detail about their monitoring and evaluation procedures and 76 responded. Of those that provided details, 40 indicated they had formal evaluation procedures in place, e.g. used questionnaires at specified intervals, kept records of lessons and conducted assessments of students. Six relied on more informal procedures e.g. collecting student feedback through opportunistic contacts, whilst 13 specified a use of both informal and formal methods. Several of the respondents also suggested that students were involved in self-evaluation procedures. One tutor commented that monitoring/evaluation took up a large, and not necessarily agreeable, amount of their time when she said: 'Forms, forms, forms – swamped by them!'

11.47 Thirty-four of the tutors suggested that ILPs were regularly used as an element of their monitoring and evaluation although there was variation in the regularity of the evaluation sessions. Some tutors appeared to refer to the ILP on a weekly basis while others talked of using them at the end of a session. This variation may, in part, reflect the differing length of learners' courses.

11.48 Table 11.12 details the most commonly cited evaluation methods deployed by tutors.

Table 11.12: Details of the evaluation procedures and methods

	Frequency
Reviews involving ILP	34
Evaluation questionnaires/reflective logs	24
Keeping records of lessons/workplans	20
Keeping attendance/time registers	18
Keeping notes on individual students	10
Informal guidance and feedback procedures	9
Conducting assessment and tests	7
Group evaluations/learner forums	6
Organised entry and exit meetings	5

11.49 Overall then, tutors are carrying out learner-centred monitoring and evaluation, 45% are using the ILP as the focus of this work and a number have identified some problems mostly to do with the inappropriateness of the evaluation procedures for the learner groups that they worked with.

Summary

11.50 The ALN strategy is generally having a positive impact on tutors, the organisations that they work for and the learners through:

- Increasing the number and range of learners participating in programmes
- Improving tutors' approaches to teaching and learning
- Increased funding and resourcing
- More positive experiences for learners
- Raising the local and national profile of ALN

11.51   There were some areas where improvements were needed as follows:

- Fostering links with, and encouraging transfer to, other learning opportunities
- Improved guidance and support
- Improved exit pathways for learners
- Improved communication with learners by management
- More attention to the needs of English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) learners
- Access to good quality and appropriate staff development and support for part-time staff and volunteers
- Increasing the number of tutors using ILPs on a regular basis

CHAPTER TWELVE   CONCLUSION

12.1   In this concluding chapter the findings from both the learners' and the tutors' surveys are used to answer the four research questions.

What are the barriers and pathways into learning for ALN learners?

12.2   Research shows (e.g. OECD and Statistics Canada, 2000; Murray, 2003) that adults with low literacy and numeracy skills do not necessarily seek tuition. This analysis of the pathways learners had taken and the barriers they had encountered provides a way of understanding how barriers could be broken down for those that have not yet participated. Learners were mainly motivated to start their programmes by self-improvement and wanting to develop their reading, writing and maths skills (41%) with the next highest category being employment related reasons (24%), to get into, progress in work or access training programmes. Other research (e.g. McGivney, 2001; Schuller et al, 2004) has suggested that participation in ALN learning is often in response to life changing events such as the loss of a partner, new employment, children starting school but this only applied to 7% of our sample.

12.3   The barriers to participation cited by learners were mainly to do with their perceptions of the stigma attached to being an ALN learner (27%), followed by a concern about their ability to cope with learning (25%). They were also concerned that it might be like school (12%) as many of this group of learners had found school a fairly unhappy experience where they saw themselves as failing to learn. These findings generally reflect the literature in that the most significant barriers reported were related to attitudes and feelings rather than institutional barriers to do with the cost, location etc of the provision (Crowther *et al.*, 2001; McGivney, 2001; Scottish Executive, 2001).

12.4   Learners were most likely to be encouraged to enrol on their programmes by friends and family and self-encouragement. Official people were the next most common source so this implies that the networks of *spotters* and *referrers* (see Scottish Executive, 2001) put in place by ALN Partnerships were working to some extent. Once learners had taken the next step and decided to enrol in provision then it was important that this process was easy and they met friendly, approachable and knowledgeable people and this was the case for the overwhelming majority of the respondents.

12.5   So it appears that the most important barrier to be removed is the stigma attached to being a literacy/numeracy learner and the clearest pathway into learning is better publicity both locally and nationally. This implies publicity about ALN should be directed at changing the negative public image of ALN learners and making it more positive. A key emphasis should be on how people can improve their own skills and in so doing become more capable and self-confident.

What are learners' and tutors' perceptions of the quality of learning and support?

12.6   The guidelines 'Literacies in the Community' (LIC Pack, 2000) have been used to provide the framework against which to assess the quality of learners' and tutors' experiences through asking learners and tutors participating in programmes their views of the quality of the learning, teaching and the curriculum and both the extent and quality of the guidance and support they received.

12.7   Good practice in relation to learning, teaching and the curriculum is to provide flexible and relevant learning options that are responsive to learners' needs and wants and develop their knowledge, skills and understanding (LIC pack, 2000: 13-14). As has been seen, learners were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of their learning programmes with a more than 90% satisfaction rate on most aspects of their experience.

12.8   These included:

- The learning environment including the timing and location of the course, the cost, the facilities (crèche transport, café, rooms) and the learning resources that were available.
- The factors that contributed to a good experience of teaching and learning including what was learnt and the way it was learnt, the tutor, the pace of the learning and the number of hours of tuition available each week.
- The social nature of the learning including the other students and the social opportunities to meet other people.

12.9   However, there were slight increases in negativity between the two rounds of interviews with learners in FE settings less likely to enjoy their programmes, female learners less likely to find staff encouraging, older learners more likely to be dissatisfied with their tutors and younger ones more dissatisfied with the feedback they received.

12.10   Literacy and numeracy learners are not likely to report dissatisfactions because they do not usually have experience of other provision with which to compare their current experience (see Beder, 1999) so further probing was undertaken to see what were the negative aspects of their learning and teaching. After probing, less than 10% of learners expressed concerns about aspects of the course organisation in terms of its inflexibility, number of learners, or content. These concerns seemed to stem from the lack of resources to provide a fully flexible learning and teaching environment.

12.11   Tutors were generally as positive as learners about the differences that the ALN Strategy had made to who, what and how they taught. They, however, did express some dissatisfaction with levels of staffing, pay for part-time staff and the staff development provided for part-time and volunteer staff. In some cases teaching accommodation was poor and this situation seems to be continuing as HMIe report '*in [some Local Authorities] accommodation, space was often severely restricted and in some cases the learning environment was bleak and uncomfortable*' (HMIe, 2005: 11). Tutors had some concerns about having satisfactory levels of staff to respond to perceived 'need' and to having sufficient staff to provide for a range of learning contexts. These concerns echo those of the learners in relation to providing a fully flexible and responsive service.

12.12   In general perceptions of the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum from both learners and tutors are high but there is still some room for improvement in providing greater responsiveness and flexibility in provision.

12.13   The area of *guidance and support* was the one that provided a less than satisfactory quality experience for learners. The quality framework suggests that guidance should be pro-active so that learners are able to reflect on their learning, make informed decisions and plan for progression. The key way of identifying learning needs and building an individual curriculum is through the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) but many learners were unaware of having an ILP at entry, during their programmes and on exit. Learners studying in FE Colleges were the least likely to have a review of their ILP during their course and this may be explained by the arrangements for setting targets and reviewing progress that are in place. The HMIe report on adult literacy and numeracy in Scotland reported that:

> [In FE Colleges] most tutors met learners twice or three times to discuss their learning plans, which are continuously updated and reviewed [but] the plans were in almost all cases kept centrally by college staff rather than by learners themselves (HMIe, 2005: 14).

12.14   This means that learners were less likely to be aware of the ILPs if they only saw the plans at meetings with tutors and did not track their own progress regularly.

12.15   So learners were very positive about the quality of the teaching and learning they received and tutors were positive about the impact of the ALN strategy on who, what and how they taught. However, guidance and support needs to be improved particularly by ensuring that the ILP, which is at the heart of the learner-centred curriculum, is used appropriately at all stages of the learning process.

What are the outcomes and impact that learning has on individual learners?

12.16   There have been a range of outcomes documented in this report that have impacted on individual learners but the dominant one is increased self-confidence. Increased self-confidence and esteem is probably the most universal and widely documented 'soft' outcome of learning as an adult (e.g. McGivney, 2001; Schuller et al, 2004). Findings from this study illustrate in depth a range of other research specifically in literacy learning that shows that 'participation in adult literacy has a positive impact on learners' self-image' (Beder, 1999). The respondents reported that increased self confidence was experienced as a growth in abilities, feeling better about one-self generally and feeling better about oneself in relation to others – fellow learners, contemporaries and friends, members of the family. This finding confirms other research (see Gallagher and Crossan, 2000; Tett, 2000) about the importance of self-confidence in enabling ALN learners to actively engage in a range of activities.

12.17   The analysis shows that increased self-confidence acts as a key to opening up a wide range of other changes. Learners' responses suggest that this confidence can be separated into 3 distinct groupings; the confidence *to* learn, the confidence *in* learning, and the confidence in life that develops *through* learning.

12.18   This growth in self-confidence as a result of an increased ability to learn, leads learners to seek better jobs or gain wage increases. A high proportion of respondents talked about how positive experiences of learning built up confidence to apply for new jobs or progress in their existing job. There has also been a positive impact on learners' perceptions of their future employment prospects and earnings.   Moreover, self-confidence was seen as more important than qualifications in learners' own perceptions.   Those who had failed in school gained confidence particularly from successful learning that they had not previously experienced.   More respondents were taking part in full-time education and fewer were unemployed as learning gave them the confidence to take more control of their lives.   They felt empowered to take advantage of opportunities, they were more relaxed with strangers, said what they thought and took on more active roles in their communities. Self-confidence and esteem developed through learning also appeared to have positive effects upon psychological health.   Learners were more able to look outwards, to have something to get up for in the morning through generating a sense of purpose and a future to aspire towards.   This potentially meant that they were able to cope more effectively with ill-health and other types of adversity (see Hammond, 2004: 56), and as indicated in Chapter 10, this appears to be having a positive impact on their overall levels of social capital.

What are the possible implications for the wider social benefit and economic activity from such findings?

12.19   There is an extensive research literature that demonstrates the link between low literacy and numeracy skills and economic and social status. Adults with low literacy and numeracy skills are more likely to be unemployed, living on low incomes, experiencing poor health and early morbidity (Bynner and Parsons, 2001; Chisman and Campbell, 1990; Hammond, 2004; Raudenbush and Kasim, 2003; Schuller *et al.*, 2004; Willms, 2003).   There is also a strong relationship between educational inequality, income inequality and lack of social cohesion in terms of societal trust and community safety at least when observed cross-nationally (Green and Preston, 2001; Green et al. 2003). Given these negative indicators any positive changes in outcomes for learners as a result of ALN participation will contribute to wider social and economic benefits.

12.20   Firstly, as the result of their participation in ALN, learners were more likely to increase their contact with local people and go out regularly, therefore indicating an increase in trust and more engagement in their local communities. Research has shown (e.g. Baron et al, 2000) that membership of networks (inside as well as outside the workplace) and the ability to mobilise social capital provides access to employment opportunities and enhances people's ability to do the job effectively.   Therefore enhancing social capital through engagement in learning can increase economic and social activity leading to wider benefits for the individual, their community and society. This is particularly important in communities where people generally lack aspirations because it is extremely difficult for an individual living in such locations to behave differently. In other words, the effect of education in raising people's sights is experienced more widely as a positive influence on the cultural norms that encourage others to do the same (see Schuller *et al.*, 2004: 191).

12.21 The research has indicated that on the whole, the learners had quite high levels of social capital at the start of their learning, and it was hypothesised that its 'dark side' could have been operating in their lives, because many of them were located in areas where engagement in structured learning was not part of the norms of their networks, and they came to their learning, tentative, apprehensive and with quite negative senses of themselves as learners. The quantitative and qualitative evidence from the second round of interviews indicates that after their engagement with learning, these learners were, on the whole, feeling and behaving differently. Their confidence had increased, their learner identity had grown and their levels of social capital had risen, however its operational dynamics seem to have altered. Learning appears to have reduced the impact of its 'dark side' and to have opened up a range of possibilities that were hitherto blocked for them, which in turn enabled them to accrue greater social and economic capital.

12.22 Learning and its benefits are dynamic in the sense that benefits gained in one domain such as education impact on functioning in other domains, such as family and community (see Bynner and Hammond, 2004: 161). Of particular note in this research has been the impact on family relationships, especially with children, reported on by learners. Many parents detailed the variety of ways in which their participation in ALN had helped them to do a better job as a parent. The benefits included more *confidence* in their own ability as a parent; an improved capacity to *communicate* with their children; greater understanding or *patience*; more *practical skills*, for example in being able to use a computer. Angela Basset-Grundy has suggested that parental and children's learning impacts in the following ways:

- *Valuing* – as a result of their own participation in learning, parents came to give more value to their children's educational achievement
- *Supporting* – parents were more able to offer support to their children, directly in their studies or indirectly by involvement in their school
- *Role-modelling* – parents become model learners for their children
- *Reciprocating* – children helped their parents, giving them motivation for or support in their learning
- *Enjoying* – children and parents learnt together as a highly enjoyable joint activity (Basset-Grundy, 2004: 85)

12.23 A significant body of research indicates that when parents participate in their children's education, the result is an increase in student achievement and an improvement in student's attitudes to education (e.g. McMillan and Leslie, 1998; Wolfendale and Topping, 1996). This means that the positive changes our respondents reported in their attitudes to education and family life are likely to result in benefits for the wider family and community as well as the individual concerned.

12.24 In reporting on learners' views, this research has shown that learning brings about *transformation* in people's lives through the growth in ability to mobilise positive social capital, changes in learner identity, and the consequential growth in confidence to act. Learning also enabled individuals and the communities they were part of to '*sustain what they are doing through preventing decay or collapse or consolidating a positive state of stability*' (Schuller et al, 2004: 25). The *sustaining* aspect of learning was particularly apparent in respondents who had mental health problems who were able to take more control over their own lives and engage in ordinary activities such as getting up in the morning that for others would be seen as unproblematic.

12.25 These findings illustrate the impact that participation in ALN has on wider social and economic activity in participants' personal, family, work, public and educational lives. It also shows the importance of providing the highest quality teaching and learning to enable this group of people to sustain and progress in their learning. Research (e.g. McGivney, 2001; Tett, 2000) shows that adults who have returned to learning after an unsuccessful school career are more vulnerable to failure at this stage than other, previously successful, returnees. It is vital, therefore, that the Scottish Executive's commitment to 'Closing the Gap' between the disadvantaged and advantaged is carried through in providing an adult literacy and numeracy strategy that is world class. This research, by providing an evaluation of the current strategy based on learners' views, makes an important contribution to this process. Recommendations for further improvement are contained in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE RESEARCH

13.1   The following recommendations arise from the findings from both the learner and tutor surveys.   They are based on the key areas of teaching and learning that require improvement because they do not meet the highest benchmarks for teaching and learning specified in *Literacies in the Community: Resources for Practitioners and Managers* (2000).   These recommendations should be addressed by the various bodies responsible for ALN - Scottish Executive, Learning Connections and the ALN Partnerships - working together to bring about change.

- *More and better publicity* that will change the image of ALN and make it more positive would encourage more learners to participate. This publicity should build on the success of the 'Big Plus campaign.
- *More resources*, which would enable programmes to be more flexible in terms of their timing, location and content.
- *Better guidance and support for learners*:   Tutors need to have more training on the importance of the ILP and to use it consistently with learners.
- *Better exit guidance and more opportunities for moving learners on to other provision:* Tutors need more training in providing guidance and ALN Partnerships need to provide a greater range of opportunities.
- *Greater access to good quality and appropriate staff development and support for part-time staff and volunteer tutors.*

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