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National Learner Satisfaction Survey: Offender Learning and Skills Service Pilot

Research Methodology Report

Research study conducted for the Learning and Skills Council

January 2008

Further information

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Summary and Recommendations

The purpose of this project was to assess the feasibility of carrying out a satisfaction survey of learners engaged in LSC-funded learning and skills provisions in public prisons, including young offender institutions (YOIs), and to make recommendations as to which of a number of approaches tested during a pilot survey would be the most effective.

The pilot involved 18 public prisons and 786 learners who either completed a questionnaire on their own or were taken through it, face to face, by an interviewer.

Carrying out the pilot on this scale was an extremely useful exercise, enabling the LSC to learn some important lessons that will pave the way for the smooth running of the main survey. Having completed this pilot, we are confident that the main survey can also be conducted successfully, and that it will produce useful and meaningful data on learners' assessment of their learning in public prisons.

In the following report, we provide a detailed account of all aspects of how the survey was conducted, highlighting what worked, as well as what didn't work so well. In Chapter 3 we make recommendations on how best to proceed with a full survey. Below we summarise the key issues and themes that have emerged from the pilot.

Liaison with public prisons

We worked with 18 public prisons and YOIs that were randomly and impartially selected to represent a range of prison types. All selected prisons agreed to take part in the pilot. All the institutions involved were helpful, co-operative and well organised in their approach to the research. We thus need to ensure that good working relations are developed and maintained with all institutions during the set-up and fieldwork phases of the national roll-out.

Methodology

The self-completion approach administered by trained Ipsos MORI staff offered the best value for money – it was significantly cheaper and less time consuming to organise than the face-to-face approach, and, at the same time, it overcame some of the problems encountered when prison education staff were responsible for administering the classroom sessions (e.g. issues relating to confidentiality and the speed with which completed questionnaires were returned to Ipsos MORI). However, the support of prison education staff during these sessions was important both in ensuring that learners felt comfortable with the survey, and in identifying to interviewers learners who possibly required help in completing the questionnaire.

The self-completion approach was, however, unsuited to some groups of learners – most notably those who had problems with reading,

writing or understanding English. These groups had greater difficulty filling in a self-completion questionnaire due to literacy problems and their short attention span. For these learners, a face-to-face approach was clearly more appropriate. It is therefore proposed that a national survey of learners in prisons and YOIs should encompass both approaches.

Questionnaire length and content

The questionnaire was designed to follow the main National Learner Satisfaction Survey (NLSS) questionnaire as closely as possible. However, the findings from this pilot confirm that the questionnaire in its present form is too long and complex, especially for those learners who took part in the self-completion approach – the main NLSS is conducted by telephone, and the survey questions are designed with this in mind. In our experience, learners in prisons are more likely than average to have difficulty with reading and writing (Hudson et al., 2001), and so self-completion questionnaires targeted at this audience will need to be particularly sensitive in this regard.

The self-completion approach produced a higher proportion of *item* non-response than in the case of face-to-face interviews. In particular, the proportion of item non-response rose when the questions were too complex (i.e. questions with double-column responses) or repetitive (i.e. the battery of agree–disagree statements). Thus, some departure from the NLSS questionnaire will be essential in order to make the survey more engaging and relevant to learners in public prisons who are, on average, more likely to have poor literacy and numeracy skills (e.g. there need to be changes to the questions on qualifications to reflect the types of courses available to learners in prisons and YOIs). We would recommend conducting some cognitive testing of a revised version of the questionnaire, prior to a national roll-out. This would involve studying how respondents interpret the questions, and how they formulate and report their responses. Such research would allow the questions to be worded in a way that more accurately elicits the data sought.

Key recommendations

- A **dual approach** should be adopted to conducting the survey in prisons and YOI nationally.

- In most cases, self-completion sessions should be used. They should be administered by independent interviewers and supported by prison tutors. Face-to-face interviews should be used in young offender institutions.

- For the face-to-face interviews, a timetable of appointments with named individuals should be drawn up by each institution for the duration of the fieldwork period. Early contact and regular communication, including the provision

of a timetable template, is key to making this approach a success.

- For the self-completion session method, it is important to agree suitable dates with the prison early on in the process. Early and regular contact with the prisons is vital to identify suitable dates and ensure that the sessions take place as agreed.

- The length of the questionnaire should be reduced by rationalising the number of questions. Ideally, it should be no more than eight pages long.

- The terminology and the wording of questions should be simplified throughout the questionnaire.

- The terminology and the wording of questions should be informed by a programme of cognitive testing, prior to a national roll-out.

1 Introduction

This report contains the findings of a pilot study, which used different approaches to survey learners in LSC-funded learning and skills provision in public prisons and young offender institutions (YOIs).

The overall aim of the study was to make recommendations to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) on the most appropriate methodology for extending the National Learner Satisfaction Survey (NLSS) to include learners in prisons as well as ascertaining learners' perceptions of their learning experience.

1.1 Background to the NLSS

The LSC is responsible for planning and funding high-quality education and training for everyone in England, other than those people at university. Its goal is "to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to ensure we have a workforce of world-class standard".

The LSC's priorities for 2007–08 (LSC, 2006) are to:

- raise the quality and improve the choice of learning opportunities for all young people, in order to equip them with the skills for employment, further or higher learning, and for wider social and community engagement;

- raise the skills of the nation, giving employers and individuals the skills they need to improve productivity, employability and social cohesion;

- raise the performance of a world-class system that is responsive, provides choice, and is valued and recognised for excellence; and

- Raise our contribution to economic development locally and regionally through partnership working.

The NLSS provides important data to assist the LSC in meeting these priorities. Between 2001 and 2005, the survey took place every year. From 2007 onwards, it will take place every two years. The results of the survey provide the LSC and its partners with a wealth of data on how satisfied learners are with their learning experience and with the quality of teaching and training, as well as on the impact of learning on learners' attitudes towards future learning. The survey comprises three waves, each dealing with a distinct set of modular questions:

- pre-entry advice and guidance;

- support for learners; and

- impact of learning.

There is a set of core questions that is covered in all three waves:

- overall satisfaction with the learning experience;

- overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching and management of learning; and

- likelihood of return to learning in the future.

NLSS covers further education (FE), work-based learning (WBL) and personal and community development learning (PCDL) (formerly known as adult and community learning (ACL)).

This year, the LSC also wishes to explore possible methodologies for the inclusion of learners in prisons, reflecting its newly acquired role in managing the planning, funding and delivery of the new integrated Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) across all nine English regions.

1.2 Aims and objectives of the offender pilot

The aim of this pilot study is to assess the feasibility of constructing a sample of learners in prisons and, following on from this, to identify the most appropriate data-collection method for this audience as well as ascertaining learners' perceptions of their learning experience.

The findings of this study will inform:

- the development of an agreed model for the future inclusion in the NLSS of learners in prisons, including YOIs; and

- the suitability of questions used in the NLSS for this particular audience.

The following sections discuss in detail the technical aspect of the pilot study.

1.3 Publication of the findings

To protect the LSC's interest in ensuring that the findings of this research are accurately reported, publication of the research data is subject to the advance approval of Ipsos MORI. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misrepresentation.

1.4 Acknowledgements

Ipsos MORI would like to thank Austen Okonweze and Ruth Knapton from the LSC for their help and guidance throughout this study. We would also like to thank the HM prisons and YOI institutions that took part.

2 Main Findings

In all, 18 public prisons, including YOIs, and 786 learners took part in the pilot study during March and April 2007. Carrying out the pilot on this scale was an extremely useful exercise, enabling the LSC to learn some important lessons that will pave the way for the smooth running of the main survey. Our experience with the pilot suggests that the main survey will be equally successful.

2.1 Selection of prisons and YOIs

The 18 prisons and YOIs that took part in the pilot study were spread across three regions – the West Midlands, the North West and the South West. The six prisons in each region that were selected by the LSC all agreed to take part; the aim was to get a good spread of institution type within each region, thus enabling each methodology to be tested across a range of institutions and learners.

All the institutions involved were helpful, co-operative and well organised in their approach to the research. There is thus a need to ensure that good working relations are developed and maintained with all institutions during the set-up and fieldwork phases of the national roll-out (e.g. getting security clearance for interviewers, setting up the interviews, and organising the distribution and return of questionnaires).

2.2 Selection of learners

There was no central list available of learners in prison who could be involved in the pilot sample. Consequently, the learner sample had to be generated by individual prisons. Prisons were provided with guidelines on how to select learners: all should be currently undertaking LSC-funded learning across a range of courses, and the sample should include a cross section of learners. However, it was not possible to check the extent to which these guidelines were followed, as there was no profile information against which selected learners could be cross-referenced. This also meant that it was not possible to weight the final data.

We understand that, when it comes to the main survey, it will be possible to have access to a central list of learners in public prisons (possibly from the LSC's Individual Learner Records (ILR)), as well as anonymised profile information – for example, the age and gender of learners at each prison. This means that the research team will be able to select learners randomly, by prison, to take part in the survey and use the profile data to check how representative the sample is and/or for data weighting. However, given the high turnover of prisoners, a reserve sample will also be required for each prison.

Our recommendation is to investigate the content, quality and format of this data and the ease with which it can be supplied.

2.3 Liaison with prisons

The LSC provided the Ipsos MORI research team with a named contact for each institution; this person was usually the prison service head of learning and skills. In many cases, the person remained the primary contact throughout the study, though in a small number of cases this responsibility was delegated to another member of the prison education and learning team.

Ipsos MORI contacted each of the 18 prisons by email several weeks prior to the start of fieldwork, providing them with background information on the research and outlining what help was required from them. A Q&A (Question and Answer) information sheet was also sent out, as was a pro-forma for each prison to complete (Annexes C and D).

The emails were followed up by telephone calls to ascertain how best to proceed with the survey and whether a prison had any particular requirements, such as security clearance arrangements (which can take up to 30 days to put in place), and to identify possible fieldwork dates early on. Regular contact was maintained thereafter between a dedicated researcher at Ipsos MORI and the nominated contact from the education and learning department at each prison, to ensure that arrangements for fieldwork were on schedule.

Key learning points for this stage are:

- Make *early* contact and have *regular* dialogue with the prison education team to ensure that interview appointments are set up/suitable classroom sessions identified.

- Ensure that a member of the prison education team (who is knowledgeable about the study) is present on the fieldwork day to assist the interviewer/session administrator with logistical arrangements (e.g. getting through security).

- For the self-completion session, ensure that the prison contact informs the relevant classroom tutors in advance that the completion sessions will be taking place in their lessons, and that their support will be needed on the session days.

- Provide early notice to learners in the form of an advance letter for tutors to distribute (Annex E).

Some of the prisons encountered unexpected incidents on the day of the interviews/sessions, such as head counts or lock-downs. This had an adverse impact on fieldwork – in particular, the number of face-to-face interviews that could be conducted. Because security measures have to be agreed with the prisons in advance, it is difficult to make up the shortfall on the day by adding new learners or by extending the

interviewing time. However, such unexpected incidents are part and parcel of prison activity and management, and controlling them is not possible.

2.4   Learners' reactions to the study

In general, learners were happy to take part in the survey and appreciated the opportunity to give their views. Only a minority refused. The reasons for this related mainly to the fact that they had reading difficulties and/or were foreign nationals with poor English. Education staff at two of the prisons described the response of learners to the survey as "very positive".

"Good response, seemed very interested"
Prison education staff No. 1, category C prison

"They treated it seriously, and respected the
fact that it was a MORI run questionnaire"
Prison education staff No. 2, category C prison

Confidentiality was an issue for a small minority of learners, but it was generally felt that the measures put in place during the pilot to reassure learners worked well. These included:

- emphasising confidentiality on the survey questionnaire;

- providing prisons with a letter about the survey for them to give to learners prior to fieldwork (although a minority of prisons did not do this); and

- getting interviewers/session administrators to reassure learners at the start of the interview/session.

For the self-completion sessions, envelopes were also provided, so that learners could seal their questionnaires. However, Ipsos MORI interviewers felt that this measure was unnecessary for the sessions administered by them, as learners were happy to return their questionnaires without the envelope. In fact, most learners across all prisons were reluctant to lick their envelopes in order to seal them – for reasons of hygiene. Self-sealing envelopes could be used in future to mitigate this issue.

Some learners were interested to know what would happen to the completed questionnaires and were keen to have some feedback. Others were sceptical that any feedback would be forthcoming. We would recommend sending a summary of the findings to participating prisons for them to share with learners – Ipsos MORI does this on its regular schools omnibus surveys. This would help to encourage co-operation from both prison staff and learners in any future surveys.

"They would like feedback on what the survey revealed"

Prison education staff, category C prison

It was also suggested that co-operation from learners could be further boosted by offering them gifts, such as pens. However, it is not acceptable simply to go distributing such gifts in prisons, and it would have to be cleared with the prison during the set-up phase.

2.5　Methodology

Three approaches to data collection were tested – one approach per region:

- face-to-face interviewing conducted by Ipsos MORI interviewers;

- self-completion sessions administered by Ipsos MORI interviewers; and

- self-completion sessions administered by prison education staff.

All three approaches used paper questionnaires. Table 1 lists the types of prisons that took part in the pilot study, along with the approach adopted and government office regions (GOR). Table 2 provides a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of the three methods. The following sections discuss each approach in detail.

Table 1: Summary of approach tested by institution

Face-to-face interviews conducted by trained Ipsos MORI interviewers	Self-completion sessions administered by Ipsos MORI interviewers	Self-completion sessions administered by prison staff
GOR: West Midlands	*GOR: North West*	*GOR: South West*
HMP Long Lartin (category B high-security prison) HMP Drake Hall (female open prison) HMP Hewell Grange (category D open prison) HMYOI Werrington (YOI closed) HMP Blakenhurst (category B prison) HMP/YOI Swinfen Hall (HMP & YOI closed prison	HMYOI Lancaster Farms (YOI closed) HMP Haverigg (category C prison) HMP Kirkham (category D open prison) HMP Liverpool (category B prison) HMP Styal (female closed prison) HMP Risley (category C prison)	HMP Eastwood Park (female closed prison) HMP The Verne (category C prison) HMYOI Portland (YOI closed) HMP Leyhill (category D open prison) HMP Bristol (category B prison) HMP Dartmoor (category C prison)

Table 2: Summary of methods

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Face-to-face	Interviewers able to explain questions Most suitable for learners with reading/writing difficulties Independent presence gives greater integrity Expertise and control of independent interviewers Quick return of questionnaires for processing	Time consuming – estimated max. of 12 interviews per day Most difficult method to organise Dependent on prisons setting up a schedule of interviews Most unpredictable method in terms of number of completed questionnaires Inflexible schedule of interviews; susceptible to learners not attending appointments
Self-completion (Ipsos MORI interviewer administered)	Allows a greater number of completed questionnaires – estimated at up to 50 per day Easy to administer Independent presence gives greater integrity Expertise and control of independent interviewers Confidentiality and anonymity Quick return of questionnaires for processing	Problems for those with reading/writing difficulties – interviewers required to assist Not suitable for offenders in YOIs due to reading difficulties and short attention span
Self-completion (prison staff administered)	Allows a greater number of completed questionnaires – estimated at up to 50 per day Easiest method to organise Flexible scheduling of completion sessions	Problems for those with reading/writing difficulties – tutors required to assist Confidentiality and anonymity problems. Less integrity as no independent interviewers Lack of control/expertise over survey process and handling of completion sessions

		Lack of reliability in returning questionnaires
		Not suitable for offenders in YOIs due to reading difficulties and short attention span

2.5.1 Face-to-face interviews

This method involved face-to-face interviews with learners in prisons. The interviews were conducted by Ipsos MORI interviewers over a period of two days per prison.

Compared to the self-completion approaches, this method requires a greater amount of prior preparation from both prison education staff and the research team. Timetable templates were sent to the six prisons piloting this method in order to assist them in scheduling a minimum of 10 appointments per day over the two fieldwork days. This template was used by the prisons, but each adapted the start, finish and break times to suit its particular circumstances.

> *"We had ample time to plan and agree a timetable"*
>
> Prison education staff, YOI closed

Whether the target of at least 10 interviews per day could be met depended on the co-operation of prison education staff, particularly in ensuring that appointments with named individuals were set up, interviewing rooms were booked and a prison escort was available to make sure that learners kept their appointments. The average number of interviews achieved – nine per day – was very close to the target. A total of 111 face-to-face interviews were completed. The lowest number of interviews completed in a prison was 16 and the highest was 23. The reasons for lower numbers of completed interviews included unanticipated lock-downs or head counts, and learners failing to turn up for their appointments.

Advantages

The key advantage of this method is that it is responsive to the needs of learners with reading and writing difficulties – the questions are read out to learners and their responses are recorded by the interviewer. The interviewer is also on hand to explain the questions in more detail.

> *"With face-to-face you can explain what the question means…[so it] includes people with poor literacy skills"*
>
> Ipsos MORI interviewer, category B prison

> *"This approach was successful due to the flexibility it allowed for the prisoners to*

> *question the interviewer to ensure they understood the question before answering. Some of the prisoners were from non-English speaking countries; therefore, there was an obvious need to expand, which would not have been an option with other methods"*

Prison education staff, category B high security prison

This method was felt to be particularly appropriate for offenders in YOIs, many of whom have poor reading and writing skills and a short attention span. However, the questionnaire was felt to be too long and complex, and in section 2.6, we outline the changes that need to be made before the survey is rolled out nationally. The following feedback from a member of prison education staff at a young offender institution where self-completion sessions were carried out emphasises this point:

> *"The juveniles were much less responsive to the survey. The questionnaire was very long, with many questions taking too long to answer and with too many response options. Being in a classroom setting, the juveniles found it difficult to settle down and complete the questionnaire. The literacy levels of many juveniles were not up to a standard that allowed them to complete the questionnaire on their own. The class-based completion was easier to administer as maturity and literacy levels [increased]… The survey and its delivery was inappropriate for the juvenile population…the content was too long and complicated for the allocated time frame for completion"*

Prison education staff, YOI closed

Disadvantages

The main disadvantages of one-to-one interviews are volume and cost – an average of nine interviews per day compares unfavourably with the self-completion session approach (averages of 34 and 25 completed questionnaires per day for sessions administered by Ipsos MORI interviewers and prison education staff, respectively).

This approach also necessitates a larger sample of prisons. This is because the maximum number of fieldwork days that we would recommend per prison is two – any more than this would place an excessive burden on prisons and is likely to affect their willingness to participate.

Finally, there is less scope to make up any shortfall in interviews using this approach in the event of unforeseen incidents, such as a lock-down or 'no show' by learners.

2.5.2 Self-completion sessions administered by an Ipsos MORI interviewer

Self-completion questionnaires were administered by an Ipsos MORI interviewer to groups of learners in a classroom setting. The interviewer introduced the survey and explained the background. Learners were then encouraged to fill in the questionnaires on their own, with the interviewer and tutor on hand to provide assistance if needed – for example, by reading out questions to learners who had problems with reading and writing, and explaining how to complete the questions (such as how many boxes to tick) and how to follow 'routing' instructions. Once learners had completed their questionnaires, they were asked to put them into an envelope, seal it and return it to the interviewer.

It was important that prison tutors were made aware that self-completion sessions would be taking place in their classes. The tutors could then inform learners in advance that they would be asked to complete a questionnaire, and this helped gain their support for the sessions. Where this was done, tutors were happy to allow completion sessions to take place in their classes. Additionally, learners were happy to undertake the survey.

Advantages

Compared to the face-to-face interviews, the self-completion method was simpler and less time consuming to organise initially – both for the research team and for the prison education staff. This was because there was only a need to agree two suitable dates for the classroom sessions; timetabled appointments were not necessary. Early and regular contact with the prisons was still vital to identify the dates and ensure that the sessions were booked in as agreed. In general, interviewers found this method easy to administer.

Another key advantage of this approach is its cost-effectiveness: in total, 372 questionnaires were completed, ranging from 39 to 77 questionnaires per prison. This compares very favourably with the 111 interviews achieved using the face-to-face approach. The average number of questionnaires completed per day was 34. Interviewers believe that, with optimum planning and co-operation on the part of prison education staff, it would be possible to achieve up to 50 completed questionnaires per day, using 30-minute sessions, although this could vary depending on the prison type, education set-up and the size of the prison.

Disadvantages

The main disadvantage with this method is that it is not appropriate for learners with reading difficulties. Ipsos MORI interviewers found that they had to sit down with learners who had reading and literacy problems and go through the questionnaire with them. This was more of an issue among learners who were on a lower level of learning and among foreign nationals with poor English. Provision of this level of personal assistance in a classroom session is only manageable if the number of learners requiring such intensive assistance is small – this was not the case in the pilot, as nearly all the learners found at least some of the questions over-complicated (in section 2.6 we outline ways to simplify the questionnaire). Therefore, this approach will not be appropriate in some settings (i.e. where there is a high number of learners who have difficulty with reading and/or writing, as we discuss below).

> *"Nearly every person in the group needed help at some time"*
> Ipsos MORI interviewer, YOI closed

The presence of the tutors was particularly helpful in this situation, as they had prior knowledge of the learners who needed help and were able to assist interviewers in providing support to these learners.

This method did not work well among the majority of learners in YOIs (aged under 18), many of whom had reading difficulties but were reluctant to seek help. They also have a shorter attention span and there was greater reluctance to complete the questionnaire. A face-to-face approach would be more appropriate for these learners.

Finally, it was thought that envelopes were not necessary if the questionnaires were being handed back to the Ipsos MORI interviewers. Many were not sealed anyway, and learners did not want to lick them. While assurances of confidentiality and anonymity were often sought, envelopes do not seem to be the best means of ensuring this if the questionnaires are *not* being handed back to prison education staff. Furthermore, providing envelopes gives learners the opportunity to put the questionnaire into the envelope uncompleted.

> *"Once confidentiality had been established there were few problems and most agreed to take part"*
> Ipsos MORI interviewer, category B prison

> *"Using sealed envelopes appears to give carte blanche to a small number of learners to 'pretend' to fill out the questionnaires knowing no one will be able to see if it has been correctly filled out"*
> Ipsos MORI interviewer, category C prison

> *"None of the prisoners would lick envelopes – don't know where they've been!"*
>
> Ipsos MORI interviewer, YOI closed

2.5.3 Self-completion sessions administered by prison staff

Self-completion questionnaires were administered by prison education staff to groups of learners in a classroom setting, following processes similar to those outlined above. Once learners had completed their questionnaires, they were asked to put them into an envelope, seal it and hand it to the member of staff.

Ipsos MORI provided detailed instructions for prison education staff on how to administer the survey to the learners. The instructions included background to the research, how to introduce the survey to learners, assurances of confidentiality, and advice on how much they could help respondents to complete the questionnaire (Annex F).

Advantages

This was the most straightforward method to organise for both prison education staff and the research team. Prisons were made aware of the timeframe in which to administer and return the questionnaires.

> *"Simple system"*
>
> Prison education staff, YOI closed

As with the self-completion sessions administered by Ipsos MORI interviewers, the number of completed questionnaires was significantly higher than for the case of the face-to-face approach – 303 (although this figure was slightly lower than in the sessions administered by Ipsos MORI interviewers – 372).

Disadvantages

More reliance was placed on the prisons to carry out all the stages of fieldwork. There was also a longer delay in returning the questionnaires. These proved to be the last questionnaires to be returned and they actually had to be chased up by the research team at Ipsos MORI; this is relatively easy to manage with six prisons, but could be time consuming if the survey is conducted in more prisons across the country in the future. Questionnaires that were returned by Ipsos MORI interviewers arrived within two working days of the fieldwork taking place; thus there is greater reliability when it is up to Ipsos MORI interviewers to return the questionnaires,.

Prison education staff have less expertise than Ipsos MORI interviewers in interviewing and administering the questionnaire sessions. There is also a lack of control over how questionnaires are administered and the sessions managed.

These self-completion sessions again proved difficult for people with reading difficulties. Prison education staff found that they had to sit down with learners with reading and literacy problems and go through the questionnaire with them. Again, this was more of an issue among learners who were on a lower level of learning, learners in young offender institutions and foreign nationals with poor English.

> *"…with around half a dozen respondents who had difficulty with reading…they needed to be sat with one-to-one and questions read out"*
>
> Prison education staff, category C prison

> *"Foreign nationals with difficulty in reading English needed help, which can be time consuming"*
>
> Prison education staff, category C prison

> *"Lower level students having it read for them"*
>
> Prison education staff, YOI closed

Finally, this approach led to greater concern about confidentiality. This is because the completed questionnaires were returned direct to prison staff, rather than to an Ipsos MORI interviewer. Additionally, only prison tutors were available to provide assistance to learners, and some learners may feel uncomfortable asking for help if they feel it may compromise the anonymity of their responses.

> *"Confidentiality – drawbacks of using this method"*
>
> Prison education staff, female closed prison

Nevertheless, the question asking learners to rate their tutors (Q8), yielded very similar average scores for all three methods, and the questionnaires administered by prison staff did *not* have a higher incidence of 'not stated' responses than the questionnaires administered by Ipsos MORI interviewers.

2.6   The questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to follow the main NLSS questionnaire as closely as possible. However, the findings from this pilot confirm that the questionnaire in its present format is unsuited to learners in prison. Some departure from the NLSS questionnaire will therefore be needed to make the survey more engaging and relevant to learners in prisons, and thus to generate better-quality data. A copy of the self-completion questionnaire used in the pilot is available on request.

The questionnaire was almost unanimously felt to be too long and to contain too many questions for this type of audience, particularly in the case of the self-completion approach. The following feedback from both Ipsos MORI interviewers and prison education staff sums this up:

> *"People thought that the survey was far too long and they were getting fed up with it half way through"*
> Ipsos MORI interviewer, female closed prison

> *"The survey was considered to be too long, with many questions being unnecessarily complicated for the target audience"*
> Prison education staff, YOI closed

> *"Some individuals were initially daunted by the amount of questions"*
> Prison education staff, category C prison

> *"The estimated 10–15 minutes completion time was unrealistic. 20 minutes was the norm, with 3 completing in 15 minutes and some taking over 30 minutes. Those whose first language was not English obviously took longer and had to be helped by the tutor"*
> Ipsos MORI interviewer, category B prison

In places, the wording of questions was also felt to be unnecessarily complicated for this audience. For example, it was felt that the term "student" would have been better understood than "learner". Thus it is essential that the wording of questions and the terminology used throughout should be as simple as possible, especially for the self-completion version. Indeed, it would be useful to undertake some cognitive testing of the questionnaire in advance of the national roll-out. Comments from prison education staff who administered the self-completion sessions support this point.

> *"General vocabulary was difficult for inmates to understand"*
> Prison education staff, female closed prison

> *"Fine for this level 2 group, but lower level learners would have difficulty"*
> Prison education staff, category C prison

> *"Questionnaire needs to use language appropriate for the level of learners using it (entry level 3)"*
> Prison education staff, female closed prison

"Difficult to understand, hard to read"
Prison education staff, female closed prison

"Respondents should be able to complete a questionnaire such as this with no or minimum intervention by the interviewer. This was not the case"
Prison education staff, category C prison

Question 'routing' was generally followed by learners who filled in the self-completion questionnaires, but some answered every question regardless. This was partly because the questionnaire contained too much text, making it difficult for learners to follow routing instructions. Overall, the number of questions needs to be reduced in order to make it more straightforward for learners to complete the questionnaire.

2.6.1 Comments about specific questions

There is consensus among interviewers and prison education staff that the questions on courses, levels and subjects (Q1, Q2, Q28, Q29) were inappropriate and difficult for learners to understand and answer.

"Questions on qualifications caused confusion, as they did not understand the range of qualifications and their levels"
Prison education staff, category C prison

"The first question is a total put-off"
Ipsos MORI interviewer, YOI closed

"Not all were sure of level of classes or name of courses" (applies to Q1a & b and also Q28a & b)
Ipsos MORI interviewer, category B high-security prison

"A bit of confusion on the levels and subjects studied"
Ipsos MORI interviewer, category B prison

"List of qualifications not easily transferred to foreign scholarship experiences"
Prison education staff, category C prison

More specifically, many of the courses that the learners were doing did not feature on the list. Prior to a national roll-out of the questionnaire, the courses, levels and subjects listed in these questions should reflect exactly what learners in prisons and YOIs are able to do.

"The main problems were the courses that they were doing and the levels. It would be worth your while checking the courses that

are provided in prisons and the course levels to save almost everyone filling in the 'other' box on questions 1 and 2"

Prison education staff, category C prison

"Speak to HMP to see what courses we are offering, so the students feel they are part of the same system"

Prison education staff, female closed prison

"Some courses that people are doing are not on the list"

Ipsos MORI interviewer, YOI closed

"There was some confusion with question 1a, as Key Skills is not listed separately"

Prison education staff, category C prison

Since most learners had difficulty answering these questions, several Ipsos MORI interviewers administering the self-completion sessions had to go through the questions with the class as a whole. An alternative approach that we recommend would be for the research team to work with a small number of prisons to expand the codes collected in this pilot, so that they are relevant to this audience.

Another commonly mentioned issue relates to questions with double-column pre-codes (Q2 and Q28). The layout of these questions made them difficult for many to understand.

"Double columns were found to be very complicated"

Ipsos MORI interviewer, YOI closed

"…the format of the question a) and question b) system seems confusing and unnecessary"

Prison education staff, female closed prison

Some learners who were doing multiple courses had very different views of these courses. Consequently they found the generic questions about their course and/or tutor difficult to answer. We would recommend asking these learners to rate the course they spend most of their time doing.

"If they were involved in more than one course and had a high satisfaction in one but a low satisfaction in the other – it was difficult to know what answer to give"

Ipsos MORI interviewer, female closed prison

> *"If learners are studying on more than one course and have differing satisfaction levels for each there is no way of answering these, especially if they don't have a 'main' course"*
>
> Ipsos MORI interviewer, category C prison

> *"Some had difficulties answering questions on teachers, as some had more than one and some were better than others"*
>
> Ipsos MORI interviewer, YOI closed

Interviewers also provided specific feedback on the following questions:

Q2b	**If you have ticked more than one subject at Q2a, please indicate the <u>main</u> subject you are studying, if any, in column Q2b.**
	Amend to ask about the course they spend "most of their time on", as suggested above.
Q3	**In total, how much time do you spend in classrooms or workshops for your learning/training each week?**
	Some learners had difficulty adding up the hours they spent learning, and there was also some confusion over what constituted learning in the classroom. We would suggest deleting this question.
Q4	**What are your main reasons for choosing your course(s)/training?**
	Add another option – "to avoid having to do something else", as suggested by a prison education staff member.
	"Q4 answer 3 'because I had to do it' – inmate student ticked this box NOT because they were ordered to do training but because choosing training was better than other options. Therefore in their opinion they 'had to' choose training" Prison education staff, category C prison
Q6	**When you first started your learning/training here, how well informed did you feel about the following?**
	The second statement: *"The content of the course, what subjects you would cover"* was felt to be unclear. We suggest deleting the second part: *"what subjects you would cover".*
Q7	**Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of the teaching/training that you receive?**
	This question is replicated from the NLSS and is unbalanced. It

	should be asked as: *"How satisfied or dissatisfied…"*, although we understand that the LSC wants to retain the current wording for comparability. This also applies to the satisfaction question at Q19.
Q8	**How would you rate the teachers, tutors or trainers on the following aspects of teaching/training? Please score on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents very poor and 10 excellent.** There are a number of issues with this question: • There are too many statements, which compromises data quality. Some of the statements were also reported to be unclear: "How well they relate to you as a person"; "How well they manage the learners on your course". We suggest removing both of these statements, as this information can be derived from the remaining statements. We also suggest amending the following statements: "The support they give you in improving your study" to "The help they give you with your study" and amending "Their ability to make the subject interesting or enjoyable for you" to "Their ability to make the lesson enjoyable for learners" (as it is about the tutors' ability to engage learners in general, which is independent of whether the learner finds the subject interesting or not). • Measuring two things in one statement: "The quality and availability of teaching materials they use". This would need to be asked as two separate questions. • Finally, it should be made clear to learners that the question is asking about their tutors in general. Including a "not applicable" code would also be beneficial.
Q9	**Thinking of your typical lesson or training session, how much of the lesson time is spent on teaching rather than other activities such as discipline, course administration and arrangements?** There was some difficulty in understanding the meaning of this question. The wording should be simplified to: "In a typical lesson or training session, how much time is spent on teaching rather than other activities like discipline and admin?"
Q11	**Which, if any, of the following situations have you encountered on a fairly regular basis during your learning here?**

	Amend code 4 to: "Other students disrupting the class". Replace teachers with "Tutors/trainers" in the relevant codes.
Q12	**In your opinion, how well have the following issues been managed?** The issue for learners appears to be continuity of teaching staff rather than staff numbers. We suggest amending this question to: "Making sure that the same tutors/trainers are teaching all the lessons of a course". The scale also needs to be changed to reflect the question (i.e. "very well"; "fairly well"; "not very well"; "not at all well"; "don't know").
Q20	**What is the main reason for feeling satisfied or dissatisfied with your current learning experience?** Open-ended questions generally do not work well with self-completion methods. A quarter of the learners who filled in the self-completion questionnaire did not respond to this question. We would suggest deleting this question, as the source of learners' satisfaction or dissatisfaction can already be derived from the course/provider-specific questions.
Q22–24	**Q22 Below are a number of statements which describe the way some people feel about learning. Please select the ones that apply to you and the way you feel now:** **Q23 The following statements are about the effect your learning may have had on you. Do you agree or disagree with each?** **Q24 Below are some statements which reflect different experiences of learning. How much do you agree or disagree with each one?** There are too many statements at these questions, and this has had a significant impact on data quality (see subsequent discussion of data quality). These three questions could be merged, and we recommend reducing the statements as follows – the primary focus should be on skills acquisition and employment outcomes: • Several codes at Q22 could be deleted – only those codes that are key motivators should remain. Learners' attitudes to learning can be derived from statements at Q24 (although we also think some of these can be removed). • Delete the following codes at Q23: "I have a greater enthusiasm for the subjects studied"; "I am better at learning on my own now"; "It has enabled me to cope better with daily life"; "It has benefited my health and sense of well being".

	• Delete the following codes at Q24: "I always like a new challenge"; "I do not usually enjoy taking on new responsibilities".
Q26	**Which of these statements best describes the way you would speak of your course/training?** Rephrase this question to: "If you were talking to someone you knew about your course/training, which one of the following best describes how you would talk about your course?"
Q30	**What is your age?** We would recommend providing learners with banded ages to reduce non-response/refusal and data error. This was not done in the current questionnaire version, as there was insufficient space.
Q31	**To help the LSC give services of equal quality to all learners, can you say to which ethnic group do you consider you belong?** There was some scepticism about why the ethnicity question was asked.

2.6.2 Data quality

Analysis of the data supports many of the issues raised regarding question length and content. As might be expected, the self-completion approaches produced a higher proportion of *item* non-response than did the face-to-face interviews. In terms of *overall* non-response, three times as many blank questionnaires were returned by learners using the prison staff-administered method (12 blanks) as by those using the Ipsos MORI interviewer-administered method (4 blanks). Interviewers are trained in, and have experience of, administering self-completion sessions, and this would explain the lower number of blank questionnaires in the sessions led by them. Thus, prison education staff would need to be briefed on this aspect if they are required to administer the self-completion sessions in the national roll-out of the survey.

At Q1a and Q28a – the questions asking about type of course – learners who used both of the self-completion methodologies were more likely to select general courses such as Skills for Life/Basic Skills Courses, Other Adult literacy courses, and Life Skills/Preparatory learning. This further indicates that the lists of courses given in the questionnaire do not reflect the courses that learners are doing. Consequently, they may have selected generic courses on the lists that encompass part of their course. A list of courses given in the "Other" category by learners is offered in the Annex G.

Various questions fairly early on in the self-completion questionnaire generated 'not stated' responses from around 10 per cent of respondents. These were Q2a, Q3 and Q6. However, the 'not stated'

responses increased towards the end of the survey, reaching around 20 per cent for Q20, Q23 and Q24, and as much as 40 per cent for Q22. This points to a certain amount of fatigue at the length of the questionnaire and reinforces the finding that the current questionnaire is too long.

Respondents using the self-completion methods were also more likely to be reluctant to answer the demographics questions. As mentioned already, greater assurances as to their purpose should be given on the questionnaire to help allay any concerns and misconceptions.

The self-completion methods also generated higher proportions of "don't know" responses. For example, 11 per cent of respondents who used the interviewer-administered method selected "don't know" for Q5, compared with 1 per cent in face-to-face interviews. This highlights the advantage of the interviewer being able to probe in one-on-one interviews. Two filtered questions (Q14 and Q18) also had up to 10 per cent of "don't know" responses, suggesting that the routing instructions could have been confusing for some respondents.

The two questions with the highest proportion of 'not stated' responses for the self-completion methodologies were Q2b (36 per cent and 42 per cent) and Q28b (53 per cent and 43 per cent). These two questions use the two-column presentation, and this finding gives further weight to the recommendation that such a way of presenting questions should not be used.

In conclusion, the face-to-face approach produced the most complete data. There is not much difference in data quality between the two self-completion approaches. However, there is a need to reduce the questionnaire length and complexity if the self-completion approach is to be adopted in a national roll-out.

3 Recommendations

3.1 Recommended methodology

Self-completion sessions are more cost-effective and place less of a burden on prisons than face-to-face interviews. They enable higher response rates in a shorter period of time – it should be possible to achieve up to 50 completed questionnaires per day using 30-minute self-completion sessions (although this would vary depending on the prison type, education set-up and the size of the prison). By comparison, the average number of interviews one can expect from the one-to-one interview approach is 10 per day (based on a 20-minute interview).

Our recommendation is to adopt a **dual approach** (with a much shorter and simplified version of the questionnaire) to conducting the survey in prisons and YOI nationally:

- **In most cases, self-completion sessions should be used. They should be administered by independent interviewers and supported by prison tutors.** Assistance in completing the questionnaires should be provided by the interviewers, with input from the prison tutors only when necessary, particularly in the case of learners with reading/writing and language difficulties.

- **Face-to-face interviews should be used in young offender institutions.** Such institutions have a higher proportion of learners with reading and writing difficulties, and prison education staff have also highlighted that these young learners tend to have a shorter attention span, which makes self-completion sessions less appropriate. It is possible that a face-to-face approach could be extended to cover learners with known reading or learning difficulties generally (i.e. in prisons as well as YOIs). Such learners must be identified in advance of any fieldwork, although, due to the high prison population turnover, this will place a heavy reliance on the knowledge of prison education staff. The ease with which prison education staff could handle this would need to be explored further.

Other key recommendations relating to this dual approach include:

- For the face-to-face interviews, ensure a timetable of named appointments is set up by each institution for the duration of the fieldwork period. Early contact and regular communication, including the provision of a timetable template, is key to the successful undertaking of this approach.

- For the self-completion session method, it is important to agree suitable dates with the prison early on in the process. Early and regular contact with the prisons is vital in order to identify dates and ensure that the sessions take place as agreed.

- For success with the self-completion method, the support of the tutors is vital. It is therefore important to make all tutors aware beforehand that the completion session will be taking place in their class.

- The support of the prison's head of learning and skills is important to the success of the research.

3.2   Other key recommendations

The questionnaire

The feeling was unanimous that the questionnaire was too long, too complex and too difficult to understand. The following changes should, therefore, be made to the questionnaire, prior to any national roll-out of the survey in prisons:

- The length of the questionnaire should be reduced by rationalising the number of questions. Ideally, it should be no more than eight pages long.

- The terminology and the wording of the questions should be simplified throughout the questionnaire.

- Questions 1, 2 and 28 should have lists that reflect the courses, levels and subjects available to learners in prisons. The research team could work with a small number of prisons to expand the codes collected in this pilot, so that they are relevant to this audience.

- The terminology and the wording of questions should be informed by a programme of cognitive testing, prior to a national roll-out.

- Arrows should be added to indicate which question to answer next on the filtered questions.

- Learners should be made aware that the questionnaire is about their learning in general, and not just about the class they had come from for the interview or the class that the completion session was taking place in.

- Two-column responses (Q2 and Q28) should be avoided, as learners find them difficult.

- The wording of individual questions should be amended, as recommended in the Questionnaire section of this report (section 2.6).

Sampling

- There should be an investigation into the feasibility of using a list of learners in prison (including their profile information) to select a sample. This should include investigation of the content, quality and format of the data and the ease with which it can be supplied. We understand the LSC could provide such a list, but there are issues over how up to date the list would be, given the high turnover in the prison population. Failing this, each prison would need to be provided with full instructions on how to select learners, as was the case in this pilot.

Process for setting up interviews/completion sessions

- Contact should be made early on with the prison education team, and there should be regular dialogue with it before the fieldwork.

- A member of the prison education team who understands the project should be present on the day of the fieldwork.

- All tutors should know in advance that completion sessions will be taking place during their lessons, and that their support will be required.

- Learners should receive advance notice of the survey.

Other aspects of the study

- All institutions taking part in the study should be provided with a summary of results that they can disseminate to learners.

- Confidentiality and anonymity should be emphasised at all stages of the process and on all survey materials.

Annexes

Annex A   Numbers of completed questionnaires

	Establishment	Number achieved
Face to face	Long Lartin	17
	Drake Hall	11
	Hewell Grange	23
	Werrington	22
	Blakenhurst	16
	Swinfen Hall	22
	TOTAL	111
Ipsos MORI self-completion	Lancaster Farms	48
	Haverigg	78
	Kirkham	39
	Liverpool	71
	Styal	65
	Risley	71
	TOTAL	372
Prison self-completion	Eastwood Park	55
	The Verne	71
	Portland	43
	Leyhill	58
	Bristol	41
	Dartmoor	35
	TOTAL	303
TOTAL		**786**

Annex B   Copy of email sent to prison education/learning contact (self-completion method administered by Ipsos MORI interviewer)

Dear <Insert name>,

Re: National Learner Satisfaction Survey (NLSS) – Offender Learning Pilot

Thank you for agreeing to help us with this important study.

As you are aware, the LSC has commissioned Ipsos MORI, the independent research company, to carry out this survey. I am writing to provide you with more information about the study and the assistance we need from your institution.

The aim of this study is to test different approaches for capturing the views of learners in offender institutions, to inform the development of a national survey among this group. Three different approaches are being tested across 18 institutions: face-to-face interviewing conducted by an Ipsos MORI interviewer; self-completion questionnaires administered by an Ipsos MORI interviewer in a classroom setting; and self-completion questionnaires administered by a member of the prison teaching staff in a classroom setting. The approach that we are testing at your institution is classroom self-completion sessions administered by an Ipsos MORI interviewer. The attached Q&A sheet provides details of how this method will work. Ideally we would like to seek the views of at least 60 learners in each institution. We will discuss exact numbers when contacting you and take into account the circumstances and capacity of your institution.

In summary, we would like your assistance with the following:

- Identifying learners to take part in the research with our help;

- Distributing an advance letter to selected learners giving them more information about the research;

- Arranging 2–3 classroom self-completion sessions lasting 30–45 minutes each. An Ipsos MORI interviewer would be present to give out the questionnaires, answer any queries from learners and collect the questionnaires once they are complete.

The attached Q&A provides more information.

Timing

The classroom sessions will take place between 5th–30th March. In order for us to get an idea of the specific needs at your prison there is a list of questions attached to this email, which we would appreciate you

filling out and sending back to us, either via email or by fax on 020 7347 3803.

Thank you kindly in advance for your co-operation in this interesting study. We look forward to working with you on it. We will be in touch shortly by telephone to discuss the arrangements further. In the meantime, if you have any questions or require additional information please contact Olly Wright (tel: 020 7347 3023/email: oliver.wright@ipsos-mori.com) or Claire Lambert (tel: 020 7347 3243/email: claire.lambert@ipsos-mori.com).

Yours sincerely,

Olly Wright

Research Executive, Ipsos MORI

Annex C   Copy of Q&A information sheet sent to prisons (self-completion method administered by Ipsos MORI interviewer)

Extending the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) National Learner Satisfaction Survey (NLSS) for the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS)

Q&A Sheet

Contents

> 1: Background to project
>
> 2: Who we want to interview
>
> 3: How the survey works
>
> 4: Ensuring confidentiality
>
> 5: Next steps
>
> 6: How to contact us

1   Background to the project

The LSC National Learner Satisfaction Survey (NLSS) provides core measures on learner satisfaction with LSC-funded post-16 provision. The survey is of key importance in helping education and training providers and the LSC to identify priority areas for raising satisfaction levels. The survey was conducted annually from 2001 to 2004/05, and will be conducted once every two years from now on.

This year, the LSC also wishes to explore how learners in offender institutions can be included in future NLSS.

The main NLSS is conducted primarily by telephone. However, this approach is not suitable for learners in offender institutions. As such, the LSC wishes to test different approaches for capturing the views of these learners. Three approaches are being tested across 18 institutions:

- Face-to-face interviewing, conducted by an Ipsos MORI interviewer

- Classroom self-completion session, administered by an Ipsos MORI interviewer

- Classroom self-completion session, administered by a member of the prison teaching staff.

The findings of this pilot exercise will inform on the perceptions of these learners and on how future NLSS can best incorporate the views of learners in offender institutions.

2   Who we want to interview

We are aiming to interview learners enrolled on LSC-funded learning in 2006/07, regardless of whether they have subsequently left the course. Ideally we would like to interview **about 60 learners per institution**.

3   How the survey works: Self-completion – Ipsos MORI Interviewer administered

A member of the Ipsos MORI research team will liaise with you to set up the arrangements for interview day(s) in advance. An assigned Ipsos MORI interviewer would attend your institution on the agreed date(s) to administer the self-completion questionnaires to all selected learners in a group.

Learners will be encouraged to fill the questionnaires on their own but they can request help from the interviewer. The interviewer will introduce the survey, explain the background, stress that participation is not compulsory and explain we are looking for honest opinions and there are no right or wrong answers. Once learners have completed their questionnaires, they will be asked to put them into a sealed envelope and return this to the interviewer.

We need your institution to do the following:

1. Identify a random selection of eligible learners to take part in the research – we will provide more information on how to select learners and discuss the number of participants in more detail when we contact you.

2. Distribute the advance letters to selected learners giving them information about the research – learners who do not want to take part will be asked to notify your institution so that they are not selected for this research.

3. Arrange for selected learners to be present in a classroom environment for between 30–45 minutes. An Ipsos MORI interviewer will attend the sessions to administer the survey.

4   Ensuring confidentiality

The survey will be completely confidential – no one outside the Ipsos MORI research team will be able to have access to individual responses and neither the prison nor individual learners be identified in the analysis. Ipsos MORI strictly adheres to the Market Society Code of Conduct (http://www.mrs.org.uk/code.htm).

5   Next steps

In order for us to get an idea of the specific needs at your prison there is a list of questions attached to this email which we would appreciate you filling out and sending back to us, either via email or using the fax number provided.

We will try to be as flexible as possible in scheduling interview days to suit you, but as this research is being conducted in regions across the country we might not be able to accommodate all of your preferred dates. Therefore, it would be helpful if you could suggest a range of dates.

Following this stage an Ipsos MORI contact will get in touch with you by telephone to set up arrangements to draw up the sample and start interviewing – based on the information you provide.

6   How to contact us

The people listed below should be able to help with any queries about specific aspects of the survey:

Ipsos MORI Contact:

Olly Wright – 020 7347 3023 or oliver.wright@ipsos-mori.com

Claire Lambert – 020 7347 3243 or claire.lambert@ipsos-mori.com

LSC Contact:

Ruth Knapton – 024 7682 5617 or ruth.knapton@lsc.gov.uk

Austen Okonweze – 024 7682 3439 or austen.okonweze@lsc.gov.uk

Annex D   Copy of question pro-forma for prisons to complete

QUESTIONS PRO-FORMA

It would be very helpful if you could let us know the following pieces of information. This will help to ensure we minimise the time and effort required from you when the interviewing commences.

Timing
1. Are there any preferred days of the week for interviews to be conducted?
2. Are there any days in March when interviewers could <u>not</u> enter the prison?
3. Or, would you prefer to propose a list of possible interview dates in March?
4. We need to select learners engaged in LSC-funded learning. Do you envisage any difficulty in identifying these people? If yes what difficulties do you think you will face?
Rooms and scheduling
5. What type of rooms could you make available for interviews? (e.g. visit areas, brief/legal rooms, offices)
6. What working hours are practical, e.g. could interviews take place on some evenings? Will interviewers be able to work a full day or are there timing restrictions on the use of rooms or staff availability to assist with fetching prisoners?

Security and invitations to take part
7. Will you be able to provide belt-clip panic buttons or other forms of security device?
8. Are you able to hand out letters and leaflets to prisoners inviting them to take part?
Liaison
9. Would you be the main contact point for this project? If not, who would this be and what is their name, telephone number and email address?
10. Any other information that you think we should be aware of?

Please return this form to Olly Wright at Ipsos MORI

Via email return at oliver.wright@ipsos-mori.com or Fax on 020 7347 3803

Thank you for your assistance!

Annex E   Copy of letter given to learners taking part

National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2007

You are invited to take part in the National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2007. It is being conducted for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and they would like to know the views of students and trainees like yourself so that your learning programme can be monitored and improved in the way you want it to be.

The survey is conducted nationally every two years among all types of learners. This year, it is being extended to cover learners at offender institutions, and a pilot study is being carried out among 18 institutions to find out how the survey can be best carried out in future surveys.

The survey will ask about your course or training and the questions refer to your learning or training in general except where otherwise stated.

The survey should take about 15 minutes to complete, depending on your answers.

<u>All your answers will be confidential.</u> The LSC, your tutor and prison staff will not be able to see your completed questionnaire. Data will be reported back but not with names attached. Once you have completed the questionnaire, you will be asked to put it in an envelope and seal it before returning it to the person administering the session.

I hope you enjoy taking part in this important research project.

Many thanks

Olly Wright
Ipsos MORI Researcher

Annex F   Interviewer instructions

National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2007
INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS – Interviewer administered self-completion sessions

Background

The LSC National Learner Satisfaction Survey (NLSS) provides core measures on learner satisfaction with LSC-funded post-16 provision. The survey is of key importance in helping education and training providers and the LSC to identify priority areas for raising satisfaction levels. The survey has been conducted annually from 2001 to 2004/05.

This year, the LSC also wishes to explore how learners in offender institutions can be included in future NLSS.

The main NLSS is conducted primarily by telephone. However, this approach is not suitable for learners in offender institutions. As such, the LSC wishes to test different approaches for capturing the views of these learners. Three approaches are being tested across 18 institutions:

- Face-to-face interviewing, conducted by an Ipsos MORI interviewer

- Classroom self-completion session, administered by an Ipsos MORI interviewer

- Classroom self-completion session, administered by a member of the prison teaching staff.

The findings of this pilot exercise will help the LSC decide how future NLSS can best incorporate the views of learners in offender institutions. It will also inform on the perceptions of these group of learners.

Your institution's method: questionnaires are to be administered by you the interviewer in a classroom-type environment – probably during an existing lesson. Each session should take 30– 45 minutes. We would like to achieve at least 60 completed questionnaires at each institution.

These instructions provide you with details on how to administer the sessions, how much help you should give the respondents, information on confidentiality, the feedback form, specific points of the questionnaire, and how to return the questionnaires.

How to introduce the survey to learners

Respondents should have been briefed by the prison and/or received a letter about the survey. You should explain to the participants what the survey is about and how to fill in the questionnaire. Instructions for participants are given on the front of the questionnaires. Once completed, please ask them to put the questionnaire in the envelope provided and seal it. You should then collect the sealed envelopes.

Some points to get across might be:

- Their views are important. We want to find out what <u>they</u> think.

- Stress confidentiality.

- It is not a test – they should not worry about "getting it right" and should not confer with others.

- They should be truthful – they shouldn't be shy about being honest.

- If they don't know something then use the 'don't know' option, don't make it up.

- Make sure they read all the options available to them before ticking any of the boxes.

- Write neatly so we can use all of their comments.

Advice on how much you can help respondents complete the questionnaire

It is envisaged that help to learners should be limited to reading out questions and answering problematic options, explaining the context of the questions where necessary and how to complete questions and following instructions (such as routing or the number of boxes they are allowed to tick per question). Specific advice on answers to individual questions should not be given. Please tell us about any problems learners encounter completing their questionnaire (see below).

Survey confidentiality

The survey will be completely confidential – we will not be able to identify individual learners from the questionnaires they return and individual responses will not be analysed. Ipsos MORI strictly adheres to the Market Society Code of Conduct (http://www.mrs.org.uk/code.htm).

Providing feedback

A feedback form is enclosed in your pack. Please tell us about any problems learners encounter completing the questionnaire. Remember

that this is a pilot and your feedback will help us refine the methodology for future waves of NLSS in offenders' institutions.

Return of questionnaires to Ipsos MORI

Once the questionnaire is completed, the learners need to put their questionnaires into a sealed envelope (C4 size) and return this to you. **You should make a note of the number of learners in the class and the number of learners who returned their completed questionnaires so that a response rate can later be calculated** – this information should be recorded on the feedback form provided.

You will have been provided with some large polylopes in which to return the completed questionnaires to the Borough Field office. Once the questionnaires have been completed, they should be returned by **recorded delivery to Ipsos MORI.**

The Pack

Along with these instructions you should have:

- A feedback form, to be completed by the person administering the sessions.

- Large polylope in which to return questionnaires by recorded delivery

- Questionnaire return sheet

- 40 questionnaires and envelopes (C4) for learners

- Field admin stationery

If you have any queries about specific aspects of the survey please contact:

Olly Wright – 020 7347 3023 or oliver.wright@ipsos-mori.com

Claire Lambert – 020 7347 3243 or claire.lambert@ipsos-mori.com

Many thanks and good luck!

Trinh Tu, Olly Wright and Claire Lambert

The Ipsos MORI project team

The questionnaire

All questions are to be answered by all learners, <u>except where specified in the questionnaire</u>.

On the questionnaire there are a number of "other" categories and write-in questions. Please stress that they should write everything neatly.

The questionnaire should be relatively straightforward – we have summarised a few key points below. It is useful to familiarise yourself with the questionnaire before the sessions.

Below are some notes on individual questions:

Q1a   All courses that learners are doing should be ticked.

Q1b   All levels of courses should be ticked, if more than one.

Q2a   All subjects learners are studying should be ticked.

Q2b   The main subject should be selected here. One option should be ticked only if more than one has been ticked at Q2a, providing the respondent has <u>one</u> main subject.

Q3   We are interested in number of hours spent in classrooms/workshops.

Q14   This should only be answered if respondent has identified any problems at Q13.

Q15   This should only be answered if respondent has ticked 'Yes' at Q14.

Q16   This question should be answered by all.

Q17   This should only be answered if respondent has ticked 'Yes' at Q16.

Q18   This should only be answered if respondent has ticked 'Yes' at Q16.

Q19   This question should be answered by all.

Q28a   This should only be answered if respondent has ticked 'Yes' at Q27. All qualifications that learners have should be ticked here. If a qualification is not on the list, respondent should tick 'other' and write in as much detail as possible.

Q28b   This should only be answered if respondent has ticked 'Yes' at Q27. A tick should be placed in this column if any of those qualifications selected in Q28a were gained while in prison.

Q29   This should only be answered if respondent has ticked 'Yes' at Q27. Only one box should be ticked here – the highest level of qualification achieved.

Q30   This question should be answered by all.

Q33b   This should only be answered if respondent has ticked 'No' at Q33a.

Annex G   List of courses given in the "Other" category by learners at Q2a

Reponses in the "Other" category of Q2a – subjects

ABC (Art & Design).
ABC ART.
Adult Literacy/Adult Numeracy.
Alcohol Awareness.
Angel Management.
Art & Design.
Art Level 2.
Art.
BARBA.
Basic IT.
Beauty Therapy.
BKS & Food Hygiene.
Braille.
BTEC Advanced Diploma – Surveying & Estimating.
Budgeting.
Catering.
CLAIT Computers.
CLAIT Plus – Gym Courses.
CLAIT Plus Level 2.
CLAIT Plus.
CLAIT & Spreadsheets.
Cleaning & Support Services.
Communications
Computer Literacy/Information Technology Clait.
Computers.
Cookery, Business.
Cooking.
CVS IT.
Degree Level PHD.
Degree.
Desktop Publishing.
Driving Theory.
Drug & Alcohol Awareness.
Drug Awareness.
Drug Awareness. Outside Course – Introduction into Counselling.
Drugs & Alcohol Course.
ECDL IT.
ECDL.
ENG.
English & Maths & IT.
English Literature.
English, Maths, IT, Cookery & Business Studies.
English, Maths.
English.
Entry Level Numeracy & Literacy.
Families Life Skills.

Family Relationships – SOLIF.
Family Social Life Skills.
Firm Start.
Food Hygiene BICs.
Goals.
Health & Safety.
History.
Home Base.
I.C.T. CLAIT.
International Studies.
IT CLAIT Plus.
IT CLAIT.
IT.
IT Project.
Journalism.
Key Skills – Level 1 English.
Key Skills Level 2.
Key Skills/Gardens.
Key Working – helping others to learn.
Life Skills.
Literacy & Numeracy.
Literacy one.
Literacy, Life Skills, Numeracy, IT, Business.
Literacy, Numeracy & IT.
Literacy, Numeracy, Communication Art.
Literacy, Numeracy, IT & Cookery.
Literacy, Numeracy, IT, Art Life Skills.
Magazines Key Skills L 2.
Maths & English.
Maths.
Maths. Personal Development.
Music Production.
Music.
Music/Art.
New Clait Plus.
NUJ.
NVQ in Waste Management/Clait Money Management.
OCR Firm Start.
Open University Social Science.
OU Degree – Distance Learning.
Painting & Decorating.
Parenting & Cooking.
Parenting, Social Life Skills.
Parenting.
Personal Development.
PFE.
Positive Parenting.
Prep for Employment.
Prep for Work.
Probably Computing/Degree/Exams.
SDP Programme.
SDP.

Social & Life Skills.
Social Policy, Sociology.
Social Sciences Level 1.
Sociology Level 3.
Sociology O.U. Level.
Sociology.
Success in Self Employment.
Textiles.
Theology.
Understanding Health and Social Care.
Warehousing.
Web Design/Computers.

Annex H   References

Hudson, C. et al. (2001) Interim Report of the Evaluation of the Basic Skills Pathfinder Projects. Available at:
http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/pathfinder.doc

Learning and Skills Council (LSC)(2006) *Raising Our Game: Our Annual Statement of Priorities.* Available at:
http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-annualstatementofpriorties-re-oct2006.pdf