



# Individuals Panel 2004

Results from Wave 1



## SUMMARY REPORT

Customer Research Strategy – Report 4

Sponsored by  
Welsh Assembly  
Government



## INDIVIDUALS PANEL

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Produced by ELWa on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government. ELWa is an Assembly Sponsored Body established in April 2001 under the Learning and Skills Act 2000. ELWa is responsible for planning, funding, promoting and widening access to post-16 education training in Wales. From 01 April 2006 ELWa will become part of WAG.



## NOP World

United Business Media

NOP Research Group is the UK arm of NOP World, the ninth largest research agency in the world.

In the UK, NOP employs around 600 staff and it is split into specialist divisions. The team working on the Individuals Panel is in the division that specialises in Social Research and there are 20 researchers dedicated to this field. The team has relevant experience of both large-scale social research surveys and of carrying out customer satisfaction research.

## CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD by Sheila Drury



An important element of implementing ELWa's modernisation agenda for post-16 learning is to listen to individuals and to understand their learning and skills

needs. That is why we are undertaking a massive programme of research, to understand the views of learners and those not currently engaged with learning to comprehend the learning needs, motivation and satisfaction with learning amongst the people of Wales. Our Individuals Panel is based on the views of over 2,000 individuals across Wales and has a central role in expanding this understanding and I am pleased to present the results from the first wave of the panel.

We asked individuals many questions, including their participation in learning over the last three years, their reasons for undertaking the learning and impacts they think the learning has had on their life. Half of respondents had undertaken some formal learning in the last twelve months and motivations were primarily linked to work or career. Encouragingly, the majority of individuals agreed that learning was enjoyable for its own sake. However, 40% of those interviewed had not been involved in any learning during the last three years and this is the group we need to target. By understanding what stops people from taking up learning and what events have prompted others to get involved in learning, ELWa can begin to develop activities to widen and deepen participation in learning.

The establishment of a panel will enable ELWa to measure shifts in opinion with a much greater degree of accuracy than a series of one-off surveys and will allow ELWa to track and understand participation across a whole range of learners. The results from the next wave will show whether individuals have changed in status from a learner to a non-learner (or vice versa), giving ELWa and others a greater understanding of the reasons why people choose to take up learning or to leave it and what these flows look like.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the thousands of individuals who took time out of their day and allowed researchers into their homes, contributing their views on learning so that we might improve future learning opportunities in order to 'make learning work' for Wales.

**Sheila Drury** – Chairman  
March 2005

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

THE NEXT WAVE WILL TRACK WHETHER INDIVIDUALS' OPINIONS HAVE ALTERED OVER THE COURSE OF YEAR, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE CHANGED IN STATUS FROM A LEARNER TO A NON-LEARNER (OR VICE VERSA).

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

**01** ELWa's customers include all current learners and potential future learners – this includes all individuals, businesses, and communities across Wales. An important part of ELWa's role is to understand the views of individuals across Wales in relation to learning and to use this knowledge to tailor initiatives to encourage the take up of learning in the future. For this reason, ELWa commissioned a representative survey of the general population to understand better their views on, and experiences of, learning, as well as their motivations in this area. This exercise forms part of ELWa's Customer Research Strategy, which is part of the overall drive within ELWa to:

- encourage evidence based policy and demand led planning
- bring the 'customer' centre stage

**02** The Individuals Survey adopted a panel design, whereby respondents agreed to be contacted at a future date to be re-interviewed about similar topics. This report covers the first wave of the Individuals Panel. The next wave will track whether individuals' opinions have altered over the course of year, and whether they have changed in status from a learner to a non-learner (or vice versa). The adoption of a panel design offers the advantage of being able to measure shifts in opinion with a much greater degree of accuracy than a series of one-off surveys.

The main topics covered by this first Individuals Panel were:

- Training undertaken in the last year
- Reasons for learning
- Impacts of undertaking learning
- Reasons for not undertaking any learning in the last year
- Likelihood of undertaking learning in the next year
- Opportunities for learning at work
- Plans for future learning

### Methodology

**03** The survey consisted of 2,009 face-to-face interviews with individuals in their homes. The interviews were conducted between December 2003 and January 2004 and lasted 20 minutes on average.

Individuals were selected from the 1991 Census data and a booster sample of deprived areas was selected from the 100 most deprived wards in Wales. For more details on how this was done, please refer to the full report, which is available on ELWa's website: [www.elwa.org.uk/customerresearchstrategy](http://www.elwa.org.uk/customerresearchstrategy)

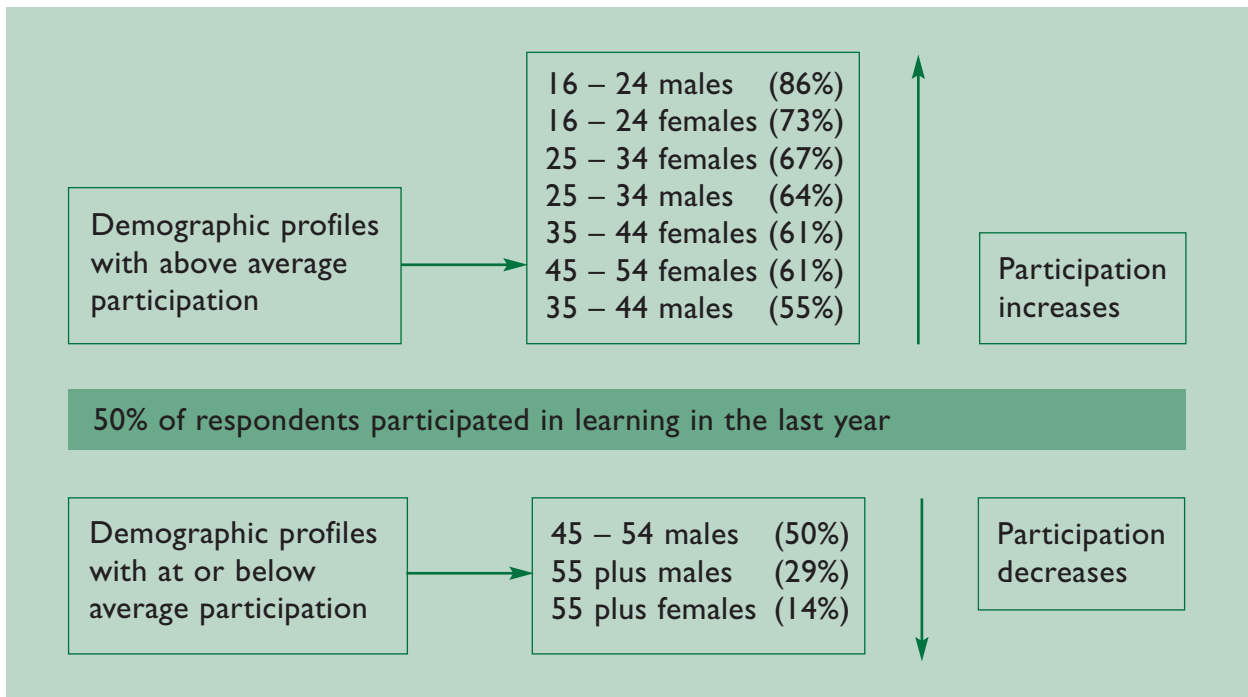
### FORMAL LEARNING

#### Recent/current participation

**04** Half (50%) of respondents had undertaken some learning in the last year that fell into the definition of formal learning (this was facilitated learning that takes place at work, within a provider or on-line, the distinguishing feature being that a teacher/tutor/mentor/assessor takes part in the learning event).



**Chart 1: Participation levels in formal learning, by age and gender**



The chart above illustrates the groups that were above or below the overall likelihood to participate in the last year.

Other variables that highlight a significant difference in participation in the last year were:

- **Employment status** (69% of respondents working full time participated in learning compared to 32% of those not working and 17% of retired)
- **Socio economic group** (69% of the AB socio economic group compared to 33% of the DE socio economic group)
- **'Workless households'** (61% of respondents in households where anyone was working participated compared to 25% of respondents in households with no one working)

- 53% of those who had a recent 'life event' such as a new job or new family compared to 47% of those who had not

- 75% of those educated to Level 4 or 5 (Degree or higher qualification) compared to 44% of those educated to Level 1 (NVQ 1 or equivalent)

The most common types of learning undertaken in the last year were:

- General course at work e.g. induction, health and safety (21%)
- Taught courses designed to help you develop skills that you might use in a job (20%)
- Spent time keeping up to date with developments in the type of work



## FORMAL LEARNING

40% OF RESPONDENTS HAD NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN FORMAL LEARNING AT ALL IN THE LAST THREE YEARS.

you do e.g. reading books, manuals or attending seminars (20%)

Whilst between 10% and 20% had been involved in:

- Taught courses that were meant to lead to qualifications (18%)
  - Received supervised training whilst doing a job (15%)
  - Another taught course, instruction or tuition e.g. evening class (10%)
- 05** Over a quarter had undertaken a course related to IT or computer training/learning. There was then a long 'tail' in terms of the percentage of learners undertaking other subjects.
- Health and safety/first aid (13%)
  - Humanities and social science e.g. psychology, history, English literature (9%)
  - Craft e.g. cookery, sewing, pottery, DIY (7%)
  - Healthcare, social and child care (6%)
  - Science and mathematics (5%)
- 06** Most of the participants were doing/had done courses that would lead to qualifications (68%). Of these, 21% were studying for NVQs, 12% for other vocational qualifications and 11% for a degree or a GCSE.
- Almost three in ten (29%) were learning full time. Of the remaining learners, 35% were learning part time for more than three hours a week and 36% were learning part time for less than three hours per week.

### Past participation and non participation

- 07** A total of 60% had either been involved in learning in the last year or during the last three years. This leaves 40% of respondents who had not been involved in formal learning at all in the last three years. The majority of these had not participated in learning for at least ten years (69% of non-learners).

### INFORMAL LEARNING

- 08** Informal learning took place outside of the formal, facilitated definition of learning. The definition included learning that may result from helping others (i.e. children) and self improvement/expanding knowledge in a particular area.

### Activities undertaken with three to seven year olds

- 09** Of the individuals interviewed for the panel, 14% had children in this age group. Input in terms of activities undertaken to develop new skills was widespread in the last 12 months:
- 'Play' and 'reading/looking at books' were significant activities (95% and 93% respectively)
  - Eight in ten respondents with three to seven year olds had taken part in 'drawing/crafts' (89%), 'recognising numbers/letters/shapes' (86%) and/or 'helping their children to read' (84%)



### Activities undertaken with eight to seventeen year olds

- 28% of the panel had children aged eight to seventeen. In terms of aiding the learning of older children there were a number of core activities (mentioned by at least six in ten respondents). These were helping with schoolwork (80%), consulting books, magazines or newspapers (64%), discussing news or documentaries (60%), using the internet to look up information (60%)
- The remaining activities were mentioned by less than 60% of respondents (see table below)
- 9% of respondents with 8 – 17 year olds did not undertake any of the activities listed. Although not statistically significant, these individuals seemed more likely to be in households where no one was working (14% compared to 8%) and in socio economic group DE (11% compared to 5% in socio economic group AB) and male (11% compared to 7% of females)
- 10 Taking the two sections of the data together we have summarised the activities under the following headings in table 2; reading, general learning, activities outside the home and IT/Internet.

**Table 1: Activities undertaken with eight to seventeen year olds**

Activities amongst 8 – 17 year olds most likely to be undertaken (those mentioned by at least six in ten respondents):		Activities amongst 8 – 17 year olds least likely to be undertaken (those mentioned by less than six in ten respondents):	
• Helped him/her with schoolwork	80%	• Attended a sport event with him/her	58%
• Helped him/her read or consult books, magazines or newspapers	64%	• Discussed religion with him/her	45%
• Discussed the news or a documentary with him/her	60%	• Taken him/her to the museum/gallery /historical building	44%
• Helped him/her to look up information on the computer or internet	60%	• Advised him/her on learning, training or job options	37%

## INFORMAL LEARNING

THREE IN TEN RESPONDENTS HAD ATTEMPTED TO IMPROVE THEIR KNOWLEDGE OR GAIN NEW SKILLS IN THE LAST FOUR WEEKS.

**Table 2: Learning undertaken with children**

Age	Reading		General learning		Outside the home		IT/Internet	
3 – 7 year olds	Looked at books/read to them	93%	Played with him/her	95%	Taught about nature/zoo/farm	77%		
	Helped him/her to read	84%	Drawing/arts/crafts	89%	Museum/gallery/historic building	46%		
			Recognised numbers/shapes	86%	Volunteer at nursery/play group	23%		
			Helped with schoolwork	77%				
8 – 17 year olds	Helped read/consult books	64%	Schoolwork	80%	Sports event	58%	Look up information on internet/computer	60%
			Discussed news/documentaries	60%	Museum/gallery/historic building	44%		
			Discussed religion	45%				
			Advised on learning/training	37%				

**II** There were some significant differences:

- females were significantly more likely than males to have taken part in some of the activities ('helping children to read or consult books, magazines or newspapers', 'discussing news/documentaries', 'discussing religion' and/or 'helping/volunteering at the school')
- respondents in socio economic group AB were significantly more likely than all of the other groups to 'take their child(ren) to museums/galleries' or 'historical buildings', 'discuss the news or documentaries' or 'help them read books, magazines or newspapers'. Respondents in socio economic group DE were least likely to undertake any of the activities mentioned





- I2** The level of activity was much higher amongst respondents with younger children than respondents with older children. Five of the activities that were asked about were undertaken by at least 80% of respondents whilst only one activity undertaken with older children was mentioned to the same degree ('helping with schoolwork' at 80%).

### Self improvement

- I3** Three in ten respondents had attempted to improve their knowledge or gain new skills in the last four weeks. Most likely to do so were:

- younger respondents (39% of the 16 – 18 year olds compared to 24% of the 55+)
- males (most likely to be males between the ages of 16 and 24, 41% of the 16 – 24 year old males had improved their knowledge compared to 28% of the 16 – 24 year old females)
- those already learning
- socio economic group AB
- respondents with anyone working in the household
- those who had recently undergone a life event (i.e. having a baby, starting a new job etc)

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AT WORK

- I4** Respondents who were working (excluding self employed) were given a series of statements exploring their learning opportunities at work.

Two thirds of respondents (66%) felt that, to some extent, their employer

valued them but a significant minority (17%) disagreed with this statement. Overall 72% felt they got the right amount of training at work, but 31% agreed that people in their job role were not offered much training.

- I5** Many respondents felt their full potential had not been realised. Just over two fifths (44%) said their employer did not make the most of their abilities or personal qualities and 36% agreed that people in their job role do not get the chance to progress.

### ATTITUDES TO LEARNING

- I6** The majority of respondents agreed that learning was enjoyable for its own sake and that they were confident in their abilities to learn (86% and 76%).
- I7** In terms of commitment to learning to further their job/career, 52% agreed that they should not have to pay for learning that was to do with their job, and 28% felt that people should not have to learn job related skills in their own time. Whilst these percentages were relatively high, there was a strong base of respondents who accepted, to some degree, they have to make this commitment in terms of job/career development.
- I8** Almost two thirds of respondents were motivated to learn (63%) but a significant minority said they felt out of place in the classroom (26%). The older the respondent the more likely they were to feel out of place in the classroom (38% for 55+ compared to 20% for 25 – 44 year olds).

## MOTIVATIONS FOR LEARNING

YOUNGER RESPONDENTS WERE MORE JOB OR CAREER DRIVEN THAN OLDER RESPONDENTS, WHO WERE LIKELY TO CITE PERSONAL INTEREST AS A REASON FOR UNDERTAKING LEARNING.

### MOTIVATIONS FOR LEARNING

- 19** Respondents who had been involved in any training or learning in the last 12 months (excluding those who had only been on a general course such as health & safety or induction) were asked the reasons why they started their main learning activity.
- 20** Motivations were primarily linked to work or career. The top three reasons for choosing to learn were to help in my current job (24%), to get a job (15%) or to get a recognised qualification (10%). Younger respondents were more job or career driven than older respondents, who were likely to cite personal interest as a reason for undertaking learning.
- 21** In terms of impacts of learning, the most commonly cited reasons were an increase in confidence in their own abilities (34%), that they could do their job better (32%) and they gained new skills for a job they were doing at the time (31%). Only 12% of respondents said there had been no impacts as a result of learning.

### BARRIERS TO LEARNING

- 22** Time, childcare/family commitments, work pressures and a feeling that they were too old were the key barriers for non-learners (mentioned by 22%, 14%, 11% and 12% respectively). Time and work pressures were major barriers for full time employees whilst more part time employees mentioned childcare or family commitments.

- 23** A fifth (20%) had considered some form of learning to some extent in the last year (but had not taken it up). The research aimed to find out at what point these respondents came out of the decision making chain. Whilst 19% had not got beyond the 'initial trigger' (just crossing their mind) it seems disappointing that another 57% had gone as far as thinking what they would like to do/looked into courses but decided not to go any further. Equally as disappointing were the 16% who had applied or actually attended a session and then decided not to pursue their learning any further.

#### Initial Trigger

**Step 1:** Almost a fifth (19%) stated that the thought had just crossed their mind and/or that they would like to study something but weren't sure what.

#### Making a Preference

**Steps 2 and 3:** Over a third (35%) reported that they had thought about studying a particular subject but didn't take it any further, whilst two in ten (22%) got as far as trying to find somewhere to do the course.

#### Taking Action

**Steps 4 and 5:** A further one in seven (14%) tried to apply for a course but experienced problems and 2% had attended a session but didn't go back.

### ASPIRATIONS FOR THE NEXT YEAR

- 24** Beyond increasing their salaries, most respondents (just over 20%) were seeking to develop themselves, help their children with their learning,



meet people and improve their confidence in the next year. It was interesting that these aspirations were more important for most respondents than aims related to work/career or further learning/ qualifications (between 10% and 20% mentioned the work/career or the learning/qualification related aims). A fifth (20%) said that none of the aspirations on the list was applicable to them in the next year (this was higher for the 55+ age group).

- 25** All non-learners in the past year were asked, for each of their aims, whether a course of learning might help them achieve it. An overview of the results showed that, broadly speaking, non-learners were more likely to associate learning with getting a new job or changing job. Fewer non-learners were likely to make the association with personal development and fewer still linked it to improving their current situation at work.
- 26** It was interesting that non-learners who wanted to meet people and develop personally, were not as likely to make the link of learning helping them achieve these aims as they did with career development and learning.
- 27** Previous studies amongst learners show that boosting confidence and meeting people are two of the most major impacts of learning. The National Learner Satisfaction Survey for Wales 2003 found that 92% of further education learners and 91% of adult and community education learners joined the course as a means to further their personal development. In addition, 83% of further education and 87% of adult and

community education learners joined the course to meet people. Almost two thirds (63%) of these further education learners said that the course had helped a lot in furthering their personal development and 68% said that it had helped a lot in meeting people (almost all the remainder said that the course had helped a little). Ratings were similar for adult and community education learners.

- 28** This meant that non-learners were not always aware of all the benefits of learning. As the majority of panel respondents wanted to improve their confidence and meet people, it would be worth making them more aware of how learning has the potential to help them meet their aims.
- 29** A third (33%) of all respondents were very likely to undertake further formal learning in the next three years. Another quarter said they were fairly likely, therefore overall a total of 57% were very or fairly likely to undertake further formal learning. Take up did not appear to be gender specific but younger respondents were more likely, as were those who were working (full or part time), those who were in socio economic group AB and those who had a recent life event (such as starting a new job or starting a family).
- 30** Just over a third (34%) of those who were not likely to undertake learning in the future said they would be seeking to improve their knowledge or skills in some other way. This produces a figure of 71% of all respondents who would be seeking to learn something new, formally or informally, in the next three years.

## CONCLUSIONS

THESE RESULTS PROVIDE VERY USEFUL INFORMATION ON THE ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATIONS OF INDIVIDUALS ACROSS WALES AND WILL OFFER A GOOD BASE FOR ELW<sub>a</sub> TO ENCOURAGE INDIVIDUALS TO TAKE UP LEARNING.

31 Respondents who were keen to develop (formally or informally) were most interested in:

IT/Computers	25%
Health, social and child care	11%
Languages – other than Welsh	9%
Crafts (e.g. cookery, sewing, pottery, DIY)	8%
Arts and media	6%
Humanities and social science	6%
Welsh	5%

## CONCLUSIONS

32 These results provide very useful information on the attitudes and motivations of individuals across Wales and will offer a good base for ELW<sub>a</sub> to encourage individuals to take up learning. This will be taken forward by a segmentation of the panel, which will identify where attitudinal differences exist between different groups of the population and allow ELW<sub>a</sub> to market learning effectively to increase participation amongst individuals. Full details on the segmentation and the characteristics of the segments will be made available in a separate report and will draw on the results from other surveys, such as Future Skills Wales 2003.

**This report is an element of ELW<sub>a</sub>'s Customer Research Strategy. Other reports from the Strategy include:**

- **National Learner Satisfaction Survey for Wales** – a comprehensive survey of post-16 learners' satisfaction with their learning experiences, covering learners in Further Education, Work Based Learning programmes and accredited Adult Continuing Education.
- **National School Sixth Form Survey for Wales** – an examination of school sixth formers' views and satisfaction with their learning experience.
- **Employer Case Studies** – an analysis of employers' views and attitudes to learning within the work place.
- **Work Based Learners Leavers Survey (Pilot)** – an exploration of the views of Work Based Learners who have left or completed a WBL programme in the last 3 – 6 months.