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Work Based Learning Learner Voice Survey 2009



Work Based Learning Learner Voice Survey 2009

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Assembly Government

Overview

The Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) strategy document, The Learning Country: Vision into Action states that DCELLS will "...consider... how best to monitor the views of students on a regular basis and to publish the results". This report covers the findings of the Work Based Learning Learner Voice Survey.

For further information please contact:

Julie Owens

Department for the First Minister and Cabinet

Welsh Assembly Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

Tel: 02920 825720

Email: Research2@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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Summary

The WBL Learner Voice Survey 2009 was undertaken as part of the Customer Research Programme 2007-2010. Measuring learner satisfaction is one of the priorities for the programme, and the aims of the survey were to:

- obtain data relating to levels of satisfaction and details of the experience of learners in DCELLS funded provision across Wales
- review trends in learner satisfaction over time
- highlight priorities for action.

The sample

The sample of WBL learners were sourced from the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR), which provides the official source of statistics on Post-16 (non-HE) learners in Wales¹. A Fair Processing Notice (FPN) applies to LLWR and only respondents who had agreed that their details could be used for re-contact purposes were included in the sample. Therefore the survey is a survey of WBL learners *who had agreed to follow up*.

In total, 1,507 respondents were interviewed by telephone between 9th March and 24th April 2009.

Nine out of ten of the WBL respondents were in employment, and sixty per cent of the whole sample had their training delivered at their place of work. Just over half of those not employed were attending training programmes delivered at a private training provider².

Around two-fifths of WBL respondents (38%) were training on construction, transportation or engineering and manufacturing courses, whilst just under a quarter (22%) were on health, social and childcare courses.

Nine in ten were working towards an NVQ qualification. Ten per cent were working towards an entry level or level 1 qualification, 39 per cent towards a level 2 qualification and 41 per cent towards a level 3 qualification.

Overall satisfaction with learning experience

- **Levels of satisfaction** with their learning experience were very high. Over nine in ten respondents (94%) were satisfied with their overall learning experience to some extent and three-quarters said that they were extremely or very satisfied.

¹ Eligibility criteria for WBL programmes are provided in the appendices to this report

² Eligibility criteria for WBL programmes are provided in the appendices to this report

Groups of respondents who were more likely to express satisfaction were: females; those without caring responsibilities; and those on their first choice of course.

There was a strong correlation between levels of overall satisfaction, satisfaction with the quality of training and satisfaction with employer support.

The KDA/KEA model of analysis showed that the most important **drivers of high levels of satisfaction** were:

- extreme satisfaction with the overall quality of teaching
- extreme satisfaction with employer support

Groups of respondents who were **less satisfied** included those who had not considered another training provider, and those who had thought about leaving the course.

The main **reasons given for not being satisfied** with the learning experience were that the course was not relevant for their work, the poor standard of teaching and the lack of tutors or assessors.

The KDA/KEA model of analysis identified the most important **factors which led to dissatisfaction**, in rank order, as:

- A low level of overall satisfaction with quality of teaching
- Low ratings for providing support when respondents had problems
- Low ratings for arranging sessions or appointments to suit the learner
- Low ratings for whether the training was useful to the respondent's job

The overwhelming majority of respondents with expectations about the course had those expectations met, but a course failing to meet respondents' expectations was a key reason for being dissatisfied.

Meeting respondent expectations was correlated with overall satisfaction with the learning experience and satisfaction with the quality of training and employer support.

The most commonly held **expectations** were related to learning outcomes, with over nine in ten respondents expecting that they would 'obtain a qualification' (97%), 'gain new skills' (94%) or 'learn a lot more about the subject' (92%). 'Learner progression' and 'job-related' expectations were held by slightly fewer respondents. 'Social development' expectations, such as meeting new people and improving their confidence, were held by more than three quarters of respondents.

Broadly, expectations tended to vary with age, and according to the setting in which the learning took place. The youngest respondents (aged 16-18) were more likely than those aged 25 plus to mention gaining new skills and those aged 16-24

were more likely than those aged 25 plus to mention meeting new people. Relative newcomers to the job market (aged 19-24) were more likely than older respondents to mention getting a different job or a better job. Those learning in an FE college or private training provider were more likely than those learning in the work place to hold expectations relating to meeting new people, whereas those who were based in the work place were more likely to hold expectations about learning skills for a job they were doing at the time and getting onto other courses or furthering their education.

Overwhelmingly, respondents considered that their learning experience had assisted them in achieving their desired learning outcomes. Ninety nine per cent had learnt a lot more about the subject; 97 per cent had gained new skills; 96 per cent felt their training had helped them improve their knowledge of their occupation; and 92 per cent said that their training had helped them obtain a qualification. Around three quarters of respondents had their expectations of meeting new people and of improving their confidence met.

Those undertaking a course at an FE college were more likely than those learning in the workplace to state that their training had helped them to achieve their expected learning outcomes and the social outcome of meeting more people.

Choice and opportunity

First choice of college/provider

Just over half of WBL respondents were studying at their first choice of college or training provider. Almost a third did not feel that they had any choice, as the decision had been made by their employer or, in a small number of cases, Jobcentre Plus.

Female respondents, older respondents and those with caring responsibilities for children were less likely to be studying at their first choice of provider than male respondents, those under the age of 25 and those with no caring commitments. They were also more likely to say that they had no choice, as the decision had been made by their employer.

There was a strong correlation between accessing the provider of first choice and being extremely or very satisfied with their learning experience.

The main **factors influencing choice of provider** were: convenience of location (32%); the provider offering the training the learner wanted (18%); the reputation of the provider (15%) and; recommendations from friends (12%).

Convenience of location was more important for those aged 25-44, while reputation of provider was more of a factor for older respondents (45+) than for younger respondents.

The most frequently mentioned **reasons for not studying at their first choice of provider** were: the provider not offering the course they wanted; not being accepted for the course at their first choice provider; and having started at another provider, but not liking it there.

First choice of course or training

The vast majority of respondents (84%) were studying the subjects and qualifications that they most wanted to do. Almost one in ten stated that they had not had a choice as their employer had chosen their training for them. This applied more to females than to males, and more to over 25s than to under 25s.

First choice of course or training correlated with respondents' overall satisfaction and whether they had considered leaving the course. Respondents whose employer had chosen their course of training were twice as likely as respondents overall to be indifferent/dissatisfied with the support received from their employer.

By far the most frequently cited **reason for choosing the course** was to help with current job/job progression. This was followed by enjoyment of, or being good at the subject, learning new skills and obtaining a qualification.

Male respondents were more likely than female respondents to have chosen a course because they enjoyed or liked the subject, whereas female respondents were more likely to cite work-related reasons.

Respondents aged over 25 were more likely than younger respondents to have chosen their course for reasons to do with their current job and skills acquisition, while those under 25 were more likely to cite enjoyment of, or being good at the subject.

Sources of pre-entry advice

Nine out of ten respondents had received **advice** prior to starting their course or training. The most commonly cited sources of pre-entry advice were their employer, a teacher or tutor at their college or provider, parents and other family members, and friends.

For 16-18 year old respondents, parents and Careers Wales were most frequently cited as a source of advice, whereas for older age groups, the employer was the most common source.

In terms of usefulness, the sources considered to be very useful by those who had used each that source of advice were: teachers/tutors at college/provider (68%); employer (59%); college admissions office (59%); Careers Wales (55%); parent/other family member (52%); friends (50%); school careers adviser or teacher (47%); and learndirect (45%).

Females were more likely than males to rate the advice received from their friends as very useful.

Satisfaction with provider

Levels of satisfaction with the quality of training received were very high, with 93 per cent being satisfied to some degree and 70 per cent being very or extremely satisfied. In particular, females and those aged 25 or over tended to be more satisfied than males and younger respondents.

Respondents on Construction, Transportation, Engineering and Manufacturing programmes, who were almost exclusively male and predominantly younger, tended to be less satisfied with the quality of training overall.

Levels of satisfaction with the quality of training were higher among those at the first choice of course and of provider, and those for whom the training was highly relevant for their current job. Those who had experienced problems in their training or who had contemplated leaving were less likely to be very satisfied with the quality of training. Respondents whose training was delivered in the workplace were more likely to be extremely satisfied than those attending an FE college.

The majority of respondents rated all aspects of teaching very highly, with two aspects of **'understanding the learner'** being particularly highly rated. These were 'treating you fairly and with respect' and 'listening to your needs'. In terms of **teaching methods**, 'ability to explain the programme topics' also scored highly.

Those with no prior qualifications, or qualifications up to level 2, rated the teaching methods and **learner development** aspects of training more highly than other respondents.

The proportion of respondents giving ratings of 9-10 out of 10 for all aspects of **course management** was between 60 and 70 per cent, with the exception of 'communicating changes to session times', which was slightly lower.

Statistical analysis identified the drivers of overall satisfaction with teaching quality, from the respondent's perspective, to be: 'making good use of session time'; 'the support they give you'; and making your training interesting and enjoyable'. By mapping this 'importance' score against the performance score for each factor (based on the respondent ratings for individual aspects of teaching), it was seen that 'listening to your needs' and 'ability to explain the programme topics' were rated highly in terms of both performance and importance.

Satisfaction with employer

All respondents who were employed during their programme were asked how satisfied they were with the support they received from their employer to help them succeed with their training. Eighty six per cent said they were satisfied, with almost two thirds being extremely or very satisfied. Younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to be extremely or very satisfied with the support they received. Similarly, those with no caring responsibilities were more likely to be

extremely or very satisfied with the support received from their employer than those who were caring for children or adults.

Respondents on construction, engineering, manufacturing and transportation programmes were more likely to be satisfied with the support received from their employer than respondents overall, while those on management, business, administration and law programmes, were less likely to be satisfied. This is partly accounted for by the different age distributions on courses.

High levels of satisfaction were also recorded by those for whom the training being undertaken was highly relevant for their work. Respondents who had not been involved in the decision about the type of training to be undertaken, or were not on their first choice of course, were less likely to exhibit very high levels of satisfaction.

The importance of the role of the employer was evident as there was a strong correlation between satisfaction with the support from their employer and overall satisfaction with the learning experience. The main **reason given for being dissatisfied with the support of the employer** was that their employer did not give them any assistance or advice with their project.

Overall, however, the majority of respondents rated all aspects of their employer's input very highly. Those elements which scored most highly were: 'making sure your job relates to your training programme'; 'encouraging you to achieve the qualification'; 'making sure there is no pressure to miss training or meetings with assessors'; and 'allowing you time during working hours for the programme'.

The issue of allowing learners time to study during working hours was important. Those intending to undertake further learning in the future were more likely to say that their employer allowed them time to study during working hours and made sure that there was no pressure to miss training sessions or meetings with assessors. In contrast, one in six respondents said they were dissatisfied with their employer because the pressure of work meant they had no time to study.

Ninety one per cent of respondents said that their training was directly or indirectly related to their job. Respondents studying health, social and childcare were more likely than respondents overall to say that their training was directly related to their job, while those studying management, business, administration and the law were less likely to feel that their training directly related to their job and were more likely to think that it was indirectly related.

The vast majority of respondents who said that their training was linked to their job felt that it was useful. Interestingly, those respondents who studied at an FE college were more likely to say their course was directly related to their job than those who studied at their workplace.

Problems encountered

Just over half of the respondents stated that they had not experienced any problems during their course. For those who did experience **problems**, the five most commonly mentioned were:

- keeping motivated to continue the learning (20%);
- fitting learning commitments in with other commitments at work (16%)
- fitting learning commitments in with other commitments at home (13%)
- keeping up with the standard of work required (11%)
- dealing with the money pressures (11%).

Males were slightly more likely than female respondents to have experienced problems with reading or writing skills. In contrast, female respondents were more likely than their male counterparts to say that they had encountered problems fitting in their training commitments with other commitments at work and home. Those aged 35-44 tended to express difficulties in keeping motivated to a greater degree than those from other age groups.

Seven per cent of respondents had seriously considered leaving their programme. There was a clear link between levels of satisfaction with the overall learning experience and the likelihood of respondents contemplating leaving their programme. Young female respondents and older male respondents were more likely to have thought about leaving their programme than respondents overall. Respondents with additional commitments at home and/or work were no more likely to have seriously considered leaving their training programme than other respondents.

Those on courses lasting up to six months were more likely to have considered leaving than those on longer courses. The same was true of those who were not on their first choice of programme.

Future intentions

All respondents not already on another course or training programme were asked how likely it was, if at all, that they would undertake further learning or training in the next three years. Three quarters indicated that it was likely that they would, with 44 per cent stating that they were 'very likely' to do so.

The likelihood of undertaking further learning was closely correlated with levels of overall satisfaction with the learning experience. Interestingly, those who had experienced problems were no less likely than those who did not experience problems to state that they intended to embark on further episodes of learning within the following three years.

Females were more likely than males to consider it 'very likely' that they would undertake further learning or training in the next three years, and those in the 25-34 age group were more likely than those in other age groups to do so.

Respondents whose training was delivered in the workplace or whose training was very useful for their current job were more likely to be considering further learning or training in the next three years.

Groups of specific interest

Groups which were identified as being worthy of further study were identified according to:

- **Setting** in which learning took place: FE college versus workplace
- **Gender**
- **Life stage**, notably:
 - Female and male respondents aged 19-24.
 - Those with caring responsibilities

Recommendations

- Employers should be exhorted to engage their employees in a dialogue about their upcoming course, what will be expected of them, and what benefits they will derive from it;
- The drive to persuade employers of the benefits of training by their employees should be sustained;
- In their marketing material and contacts with employers, learning providers should emphasise the importance of employer support for employees engaged in training;
- All those about to participate in training and other learning activities should receive informed advice and guidance about the options available and the career trajectories which those options offer. Efforts should be made to enable Careers Wales to extend its sphere of influence and have a greater impact on adults' career decisions;
- Learning providers should be applauded for the high ratings given by respondents to the quality of teaching received and the support provided for them. They should also be encouraged to continue effective monitoring of the content and delivery of their courses to ensure that these high standards are maintained;
- Evidence from the ridge regression analysis, which identifies the areas which warrant specific attention in order to achieve even higher levels of learner

satisfaction with the quality of teaching, should be disseminated to providers to offer a framework by which their staff development activities can be guided;

- Providers should continue to instil an ethos within their staff which is geared to the provision of support for all learners, and which is particularly sensitive to identifying learners who may be experiencing difficulties;
- Providers should strive to be flexible in their timetabling and delivery methods in order to accommodate those who are constrained by work or caring commitments from participating in learning.

Introduction

Research Objectives

The Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) has established a programme of customer research to provide a knowledge base to develop a clear understanding of its markets, customers and potential customers. The aims of the programme include:

- to understand what motivates customers to learn in order to widen and deepen participation in learning
- to understand what customers think of the education and learning services they receive
- to identify the learning needs of people.

Measuring learner satisfaction is one of the priorities for the DCELLS Customer Research Programme and feeds into all three objectives above. A survey of learners in Work Based Learning (WBL) took place in 2003, and by 2009 there was a desire for updated information. Alongside this need for updated information, there has been an ongoing discussion within the Assembly concerning a move to provider-led data collection relating to learner views. The 2009 survey, therefore, is the final 'top down' (i.e. centrally sampled and administered) survey of WBL providers.

The specific aims of the WBL Learner Voice Survey 2009 were to:

- obtain data relating to levels of satisfaction and details of the experience of learners in DCELLS funded provision across Wales
- review trends in learner satisfaction over time
- highlight priorities for action.

The following subsections summarise the approach to the survey; full detail is provided in the technical notes within the appendices to this report.

Sampling

The details of WBL learners were sourced from the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR), which provides the official source of statistics on Post-16 (non-HE) learners in Wales³. A Fair Processing Notice (FPN) applies to LLWR and only respondents

³ Eligibility criteria for WBL programmes are provided in the appendices to this report

who had agreed that their details could be used for re-contact purposes were included in the sample. The initial sample design involved drawing a stratified sample on a 4:1 basis (i.e. for every completed interview, four leads would be drawn), but the restrictions of the FPN meant that, rather than drawing a sample in this way, all WBL learner records were used for interviewing.

Differences in sampling approach mean that comparisons between the 2003 survey results and those of 2009 are not made in this report.

Full details of the sampling methodology are included in the appendices to this report.

Method

The survey was conducted using telephone interviewing and the survey length was 20 minutes on average. The questionnaire was based upon the 2003 National Learner Satisfaction Survey for Wales with some changes made following a workshop with WBL providers in January 2008

A copy of the full questionnaire may be downloaded from <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/research-and-evaluation/customer-research>.

Pilot

The questionnaire was piloted prior to commencing fieldwork to ensure that questions were properly understood by respondents and also to test the interview length. Following this pilot changes were made to the survey for the main stage.

Fieldwork

In total, 1,507 respondents were interviewed between 9th March and 24th April 2009. All interviewers were IQCS trained and were personally briefed by a member of the GfK NOP executive team.

At the beginning of the interview, respondents were offered the opportunity of having a Welsh language interview. Those who wished to be interviewed in Welsh were subsequently re-contacted by a Welsh-speaking interviewer. Seven interviews were conducted in Welsh.

In order to make the survey as accessible as possible to all learners in WBL, respondents who were identified in the sample as having specific learning difficulties or disabilities⁴ were sent an advanced letter which gave them the option of taking part

⁴ Full detail is provided in the technical section of the appendices to this report

in a shorter 10 minute interview, if they felt that that the full interview would prove unsuitable for them. They were also able to request a face-to-face interview, if they felt that a telephone interview would be inappropriate (e.g. because of communications problems). However, no WBL respondents requested to take part in either of these ways.

Weighting

The final data set was reviewed against the profile of WBL learners on LLWR who had agreed to re-contact activities⁵. This comparison showed that the achieved sample matched closely to this profile of learners who had agreed to re-contact and so no weighting was applied.

Respondent profile

Full detail about the profile of respondents interviewed for the survey is provided in the appendices to this report. Key personal demographics for the sample are shown in Table 1

Table 1 Key demographics

| Base: All respondents (unweighted: 1,507) | | % |
|---|--------|----|
| Gender | Male | 53 |
| | Female | 47 |
| Age | 16-18 | 28 |
| | 19-24 | 30 |
| | 25-34 | 16 |
| | 35-44 | 13 |
| | 45+ | 12 |
| Any learning difficulty / disability | No | 97 |
| | Yes | 3 |
| Social grade ⁶ | AB | 11 |

⁵ Via the Fair Processing Notice that applied to LLWR

⁶ The social classification system used for this survey was the market research social class coding, developed originally by the advertising industry and now maintained by the Market Research Society. The classification is a household one, based on the current or previous occupation of the chief income earner in the household. Classification is carried out by the interviewer after asking questions on job title, type of work done, qualifications required and supervisory responsibility. It is technically a six way classification, but at either end the two extreme

| | | |
|--|----|----|
| | C1 | 31 |
| | C2 | 32 |
| | DE | 21 |

Background to learning experience

The vast majority of WBL respondents (91%) were in employment (this includes those on a work placement and those who were self-employed). More than half of those not employed (57%) were attending training programmes delivered at a private training provider, compared with just one in ten of those who were in employment (10%).

Programme type and delivery

Taking information recorded on LLWR, respondents were broken down as follows:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Modern Apprenticeship | 38% |
| Foundation Modern Apprenticeship | 45% |
| Skillbuild | 11% |
| Other programme | 7% |

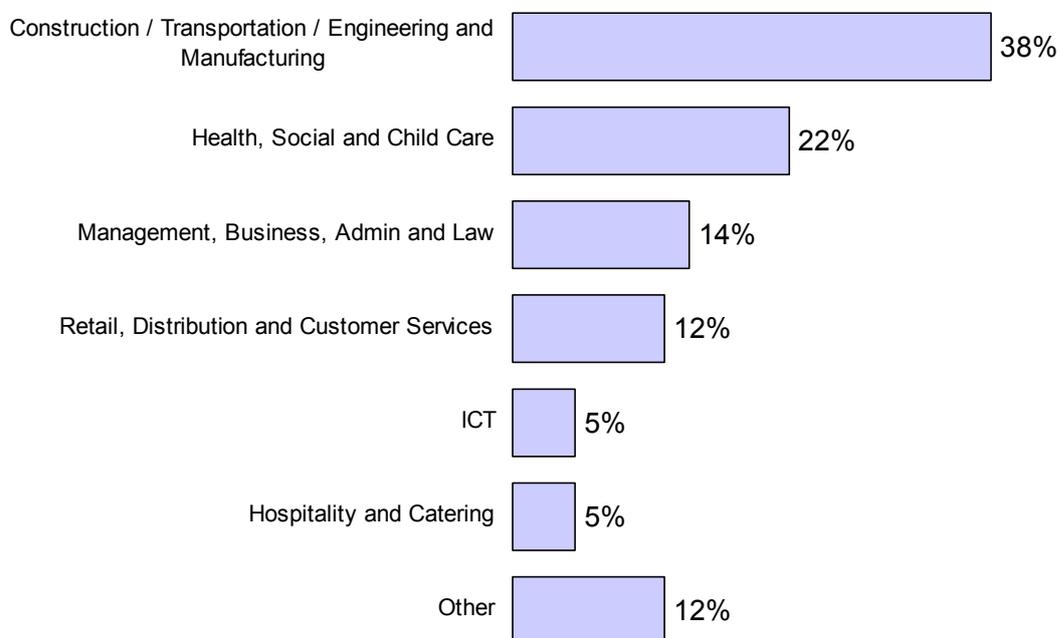
WBL programmes were delivered in a number of ways. Four in ten WBL respondents (42%) were attending sessions at an FE college, whilst 14 per cent visited a private training provider. Six in ten WBL respondents (59%) had their training delivered to them at their place of work. In a number of cases, training was delivered through multiple channels: fourteen per cent of respondents had their training delivered in their workplace and at an FE college, whilst 4 per cent of respondents had training delivered in both the workplace and a private training provider.

Subjects and qualifications

All respondents were asked which subjects they were training for and these were categorised into broad subject categories (respondents studying more than one subject may therefore have been included in more than one category). Around two-fifths of WBL respondents (38%) were training on construction, transportation or engineering and manufacturing courses, whilst just under a quarter (22%) were on health, social and childcare courses.

categories are usually combined, producing the following classification: AB – Professional and managerial, C1 – Administrative, clerical and other white-collar, C2 Skilled manual, DE – Unskilled manual and those dependent solely on state benefit

Chart 1 Subject areas



Base: All respondents (unwtd: 1,507). Note multiple responses to this question were permitted.

Predictably, there were gender and age differences in the profile of respondents training in different subjects and this is described in more detail in the Profile of Respondents section in the appendices to this report.

The following table shows the type and level of qualifications being taken by WBL respondents.

Table 2 Qualifications and course duration

| Base: All respondents (unweighted: 1,507) | | % |
|--|-----------------------|----|
| Type of qualification | NVQ | 88 |
| | Other | 19 |
| Level of qualification | Entry level / level 1 | 10 |
| | Level 2 | 39 |

| | | |
|--|----------|----|
| | Level 3 | 41 |
| | Level 4+ | 5 |

Analysis within the report

The chapters within the report cover the following topics⁷:

- Overall Satisfaction with Learning Experience
- Choice and Opportunity
- Satisfaction with Provider
- Satisfaction with Employer Support
- Problems Encountered
- Future Intentions
- Groups of specific interest
- Conclusions and Policy Implications

⁷ The numbers of learners in the non-white and disability/learning difficulty categories were too low to permit separate analyses. Therefore, these characteristics are not a focus of the chapters of this report. Further, regional analysis is not a focus of the report as the profile of learners who gave permission for follow-up was regionally skewed.

Overall Satisfaction with Learning Experience

This section of the report sets the scene in terms of respondents' views of their overall learning experience. Overall satisfaction is explored using a statistical model to assist our understanding of which factors drive dissatisfaction with learning and, conversely, which factors are most important in driving extreme satisfaction with learning (known as 'enhancers'). These findings have a bearing on our interpretation of the data throughout the report.

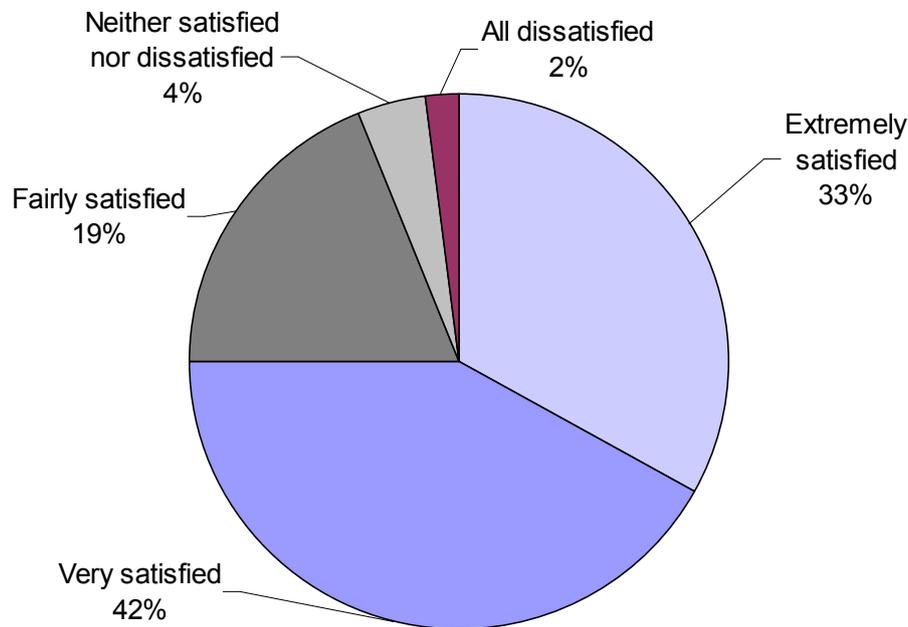
This chapter covers a number of areas as follows:

- Overall satisfaction with the learning experience
- Key drivers of dissatisfaction and delight
- Expectations held about the course and whether these expectations have been met
- Whether training related to current job and usefulness of training to job
- Expectations held about learning outcomes and whether, so far, these outcomes have been realised.

Overall satisfaction with learning experience

As shown in Chart 2, levels of satisfaction were very high. Over nine in ten respondents (94%) were satisfied with their overall learning experience to some extent and three-quarters saying that they were extremely or very satisfied. Only 2 per cent of WBL respondents were dissatisfied with their experience to some degree, and a further 4 per cent were indifferent (i.e. they described themselves as neither satisfied nor dissatisfied).

Chart 2 Overall satisfaction with learning experience



Base: All respondents (1,507)

There were a number of patterns in the data that showed that certain groups of respondents tended to hold more positive or negative views across many areas of the survey. No significant differences were noted when the data was analysed in terms of course variables, such as programme type, type of qualification and training provider. However, the following demographic groups tended to be more satisfied with their learning experience than others:

- female respondents were slightly more likely to say that they were extremely or very satisfied than males (79% compared with 72%) and this was particularly the case for females aged 19-24 compared to males in this age group: 85 per cent of females returned a top two box satisfaction rating, compared with 72 per cent of males, and this pattern was repeated in relation to ratings for teaching elements (see later chapter: Satisfaction with Provider)
- those with no caring responsibilities (for adults or children) were slightly more likely than those with such responsibilities to express some degree of satisfaction (95% versus 92% or less respectively)

Further, respondents on their first choice of training programme were more likely to express top box satisfaction than those not on their first choice of course or those who

said their employer/Jobcentre Plus chose their course (78% versus 54% and 59% respectively).

There was a strong correlation between levels of overall satisfaction, satisfaction with the quality of training and satisfaction with employer support:

- respondents who were extremely or very satisfied with the quality of training on their course were far more likely than those who gave a fairly satisfied rating, an indifferent response or a dissatisfied rating, to express top two box satisfaction at an overall level (86% and 80% versus 64% or less)
- amongst employed respondents, those who were extremely or very satisfied with the support shown to them by their employer during their training, were more likely than those who were less than very satisfied to express top two box satisfaction with the overall learning experience (86% and 80% versus 64% or less)
- as might be expected, respondents who felt that their training was relevant to their current job were more likely than those who did not to say they were extremely or very satisfied overall (86% versus 50%)

Predictably, the following groups of respondents erred towards less positive views:

- respondents who said they had not considered another option in terms of training provider or who said their employer/Jobcentre Plus chose their provider were less likely to express top two box satisfaction than other respondents (62% and 67% respectively versus 80% or more).
- those who had experienced problems since starting their training were much less likely to express a top two box level of satisfaction (66% versus 83% of those who did not have problems) and were also consistently more negative towards all aspects of their learning experience.
- possibly linked to the previous point, respondents who had seriously considered leaving their training were far less likely than those who had not had such thoughts to say they were extremely or very satisfied with their overall training experience (48% versus 81%).

Reasons for being less than very satisfied with learning experience

Respondents who answered that they were less than 'very satisfied' with their overall learning experience were asked a follow-up question to establish why this was the case.

The importance of the relevance of training was shown: 6 per cent of those who were less than very satisfied said that their training was not relevant to their work or job.

Teaching and assessment-related reasons also appeared, with 5 per cent citing poor teaching standards and 4 per cent saying that tutor attitudes were poor or unsupportive.

Course management was an issue for some: 5 per cent said there were not enough tutors/assessors or that there were changes in staff, 3 per cent felt that their training provider did not provide the support they needed, and 3 per cent felt the training could have been covered in a shorter time span. A further 3 per cent said that they experienced problems with work placements or practical work.

The importance of pertinent information, advice and guidance was evidenced by the finding that 4 per cent of those who were less than very satisfied with their learning said this was because the training was disappointing, not what they expected, or the wrong course for them.

Table 3 Reasons for being less than ‘very satisfied’ with learning experience

| Base: All respondents less than ‘very satisfied’ with their overall learning experience | Total | Overall satisfaction | |
|---|-------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| | | Fairly satisfied | Indifferent/dissatisfied |
| Base: unweighted | 374 | 283 | *91 |
| | % | % | % |
| Not relevant to my work/to my job | 6 | 7 | 1 |
| Teaching standard was poor/ didn’t learn much | 5 | 3 | 11 |
| Lack of staff/ assessors/ changes in staff | 5 | 4 | 7 |
| Other negative answer | 5 | 4 | 10 |
| It was disappointing/ not what I expected/ wanted/ not the right course for me | 4 | 2 | 10 |
| Poor attitude of tutors/ not supportive | 4 | 2 | 10 |
| Didn’t get the help that I needed/ didn’t respond to my needs | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| Could have finished earlier/covered subject faster | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| Problems with placements/ practical work | 3 | 3 | 3 |

Note: All responses 3% and above shown. Positive responses not displayed so as to focus on the reasons for dissatisfaction/ indifference. * denotes small base (less than 100)

Whilst the stated reasons for a less than ‘very satisfied’ response provide some insight into the reasons for respondents’ ratings, statistical analyses have also been used to

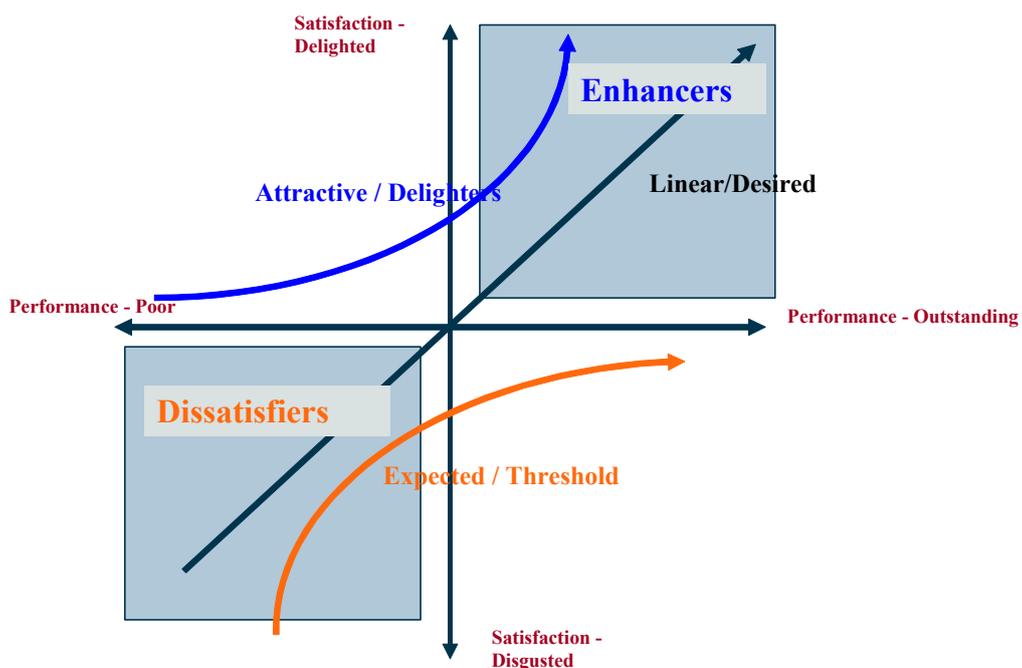
take into account respondents' patterns of response in predicting what was driving dissatisfaction and extreme satisfaction with the overall learning experience. This is covered in the next section.

Understanding dissatisfaction and delight – statistical modelling

High levels of satisfaction (and extremely low levels of dissatisfaction) are extremely encouraging, but this also presents some interesting questions: how can things be improved amongst an overwhelmingly positive group, or is maintaining satisfaction more important? What are the implications for policy from the findings?

In an attempt to answer these questions, a two step model of analysis, known as the KDA/KEA model, was used. This is a variation on traditional key driver analyses, such as Regression Analysis, as it takes into account that the drivers of dissatisfaction and delight are different. The KDA/KEA model defines attributes as 'Key Dissatisfiers', 'Key Enhancers', neither, or both. Key Dissatisfiers are expected attributes and/or attributes that drive overall dissatisfaction - left unattended they may drive people away. Key Enhancers are attractive attributes and/or desired attributes that drive positive experiences or delight.

The KDA/KEA approach recognises that some service attributes are viewed differently by customers. Some attributes are expected and must be provided to the required standard; their inclusion does not necessarily improve delight. Others are desired and their inclusion drives customer ratings upwards. The chart below shows the relationship between 'Dissatisfiers' and 'Enhancers' and the impact they have on overall satisfaction.



A number of survey elements from the WBL Learner Voice Survey were fed into the KDA/KEA model (full details are provided in the appendices to this report), including:

1. Overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching
2. Overall satisfaction with employer support during training
3. Whether learner had their first choice of course
4. Whether learner had their first choice of provider
5. Whether or not training was useful to the respondent's job
6. Presence/absence of problems (11 individual problems, plus an overall some/none factor)
7. Ratings for different aspects of course management (6 elements)
8. Whether or not expectations had been met (6 elements)

Step one: respondent dissatisfaction

The first step in the model was to look at the extent to which seven broad factors were associated with a dissatisfied or a neutral position regarding the overall learning experience⁸. The analysis showed that four issues were important in driving a less than satisfied outcome, namely:

- A low level of overall satisfaction with quality of teaching (accounting for 35% of the negative outcome)
- Low ratings for providing support when learners had problems (27% of the negative outcome)
- Low ratings for arranging sessions or appointments to suit the learner (21% of the negative outcome)
- Low ratings for whether the training was useful to the learner's job (17%)

A low rating⁹ for satisfaction with the quality of teaching was the most important factor driving dissatisfaction, and a later chapter¹⁰ discusses the elements of teaching in

⁸ It should be noted that learners with a 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' response were included, in order to deliver sufficient numbers to run the KDA analysis.

⁹ A low rating was defined as a score of 1 to 4 on the 1 to 10 rating scale

¹⁰ Chapter entitled 'Satisfaction with Provider'

more detail to provide insight into the factors that are most important in driving this quality measure.

Course management issues, covering the processes of ongoing support and timetabling, accounted for nearly half the negative outcome when combined. For many respondents, the very nature of WBL is that learning must be accommodated alongside other work commitments. Therefore it is of little surprise to see that when these elements of learning management are not working, a negative outcome may result.

Finally, a lack of usefulness (and, by inference, the relevance) of training to a respondent accounted for nearly a fifth of the negative outcome. This feels intuitively correct – if a learner cannot relate their learning to their job, then their engagement may suffer (although it should be noted that this need not always be the case, e.g. some may be encouraged to do training by their employer as a means of increasing their general level of interest in learning/ training).

A lack of choice, unmet expectations, a lack of employer support and experiencing problems did not appear as key drivers of dissatisfaction for respondents as a whole.

Step two: respondent delight

The next step in the model was to look at the drivers of 'delight', in other words, the drivers of an extremely satisfied outcome. All respondents classified as 'dissatisfied' at step one were removed from the analysis and the same seven broad factors fed into the model to assess their impacts.

The analysis showed that two factors were key drivers of delight:

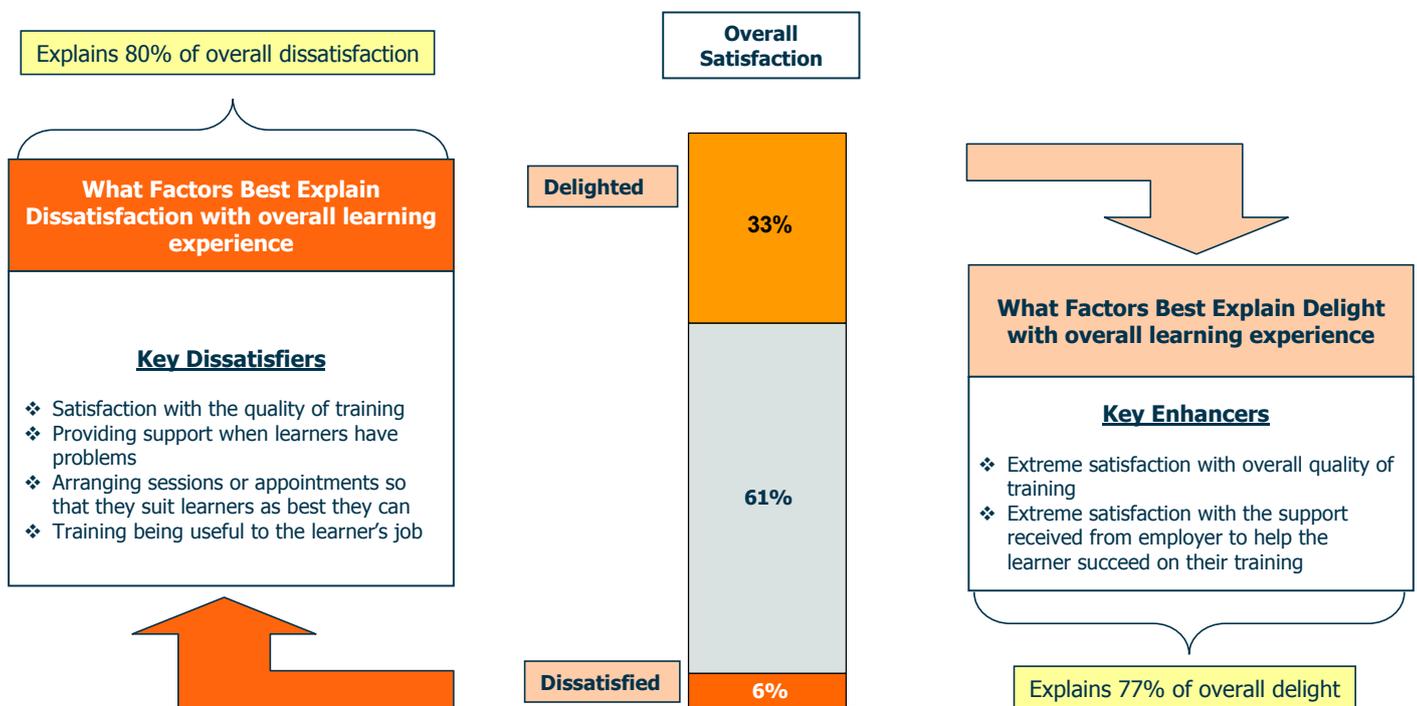
- extreme satisfaction with the overall quality of teaching (accounting for 57% of the positive outcome)
- extreme satisfaction with employer support (43% of the positive outcome)

As with the drivers of dissatisfaction, the overall quality of teaching was by far the most important factor in driving a delighted outcome, i.e. teaching quality was crucial in driving a highly positive AND a negative result. This will be discussed in more detail in the chapters 'Satisfaction with Provider', where a standard regression technique is used to establish which aspects of teaching had the greatest impact in driving up overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching.

Satisfaction with employer support was also important in driving an extremely positive outcome¹¹. In the context of WBL, where training takes place alongside other work duties, the support of the employer is understandably crucial in delivering a highly positive outcome.

A lack of problems, unmet expectations, training relevance and choice were shown to be less important in terms of driving delight with the learning experience when compared with other factors.

Chart 3 Key Dissatisfiers and Enhancers driving overall satisfaction with the learning experience



Programme-related expectations

All respondents were offered six course-related expectations and asked whether their expectations had been met, not met, or whether they had no expectations on these measures (Table 4).

¹¹ Learners who were not employed were given a neutral rating for employer support (i.e. they were not excluded from the analysis); despite this, employer support came through as a key determinant of a highly positive outcome for learners as a whole

It is worth noting that between 6 and 10 per cent of respondents held no expectations about the six specified aspects of their course, as summarised in the next table. This may reflect the fact that, for some, learning was an 'imposed' choice.

Table 4 Whether programme-related expectations had been met

| Base: All respondents (unweighted: 1,507) | Expect-ations met | Expect-ations not met | No expect-ations | Don't know |
|---|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------|
| | % | % | % | % |
| The standard of work expected | 91 | 2 | 6 | 1 |
| The programme or training content | 88 | 4 | 8 | * |
| The amount of responsibility you would have to take | 88 | 3 | 9 | * |
| The amount of work you would have to do | 87 | 4 | 9 | * |
| The number of deadlines to meet | 86 | 4 | 10 | 1 |
| The structure of the programme or training | 85 | 4 | 10 | * |

Note: * denotes less than 0.5%

For all of the six course-related expectations, the following groups of respondents were more likely to have held no expectations:

- those whose learning was useful to their job (versus those who said quite useful/not useful)
- those whose employer/ Jobcentre Plus chose their provider (versus those who said they were at their first choice)
- those whose employer/ Jobcentre Plus chose their training programme (versus those who said they were on their first choice programme)
- Linked with the previous points, those on Skillbuild programmes were more likely than average to say that they held no expectations except in relation to the number of deadlines they would have to meet and the amount of work they would have to do. However, it should be noted that, in both cases, a greater proportion of Skillbuild learners than average said they had no expectations, although these differences were not significant at the 95% confidence level.

In relation to the expectations 'the number of deadlines you would have to meet' and 'the standard of work expected', older respondents (aged 25 plus) were more likely than younger respondents to have had no expectations on these issues. Older respondents were, however, more likely than younger respondents to say that they had no choice and that their employer/Jobcentre Plus chose their provider and/or training programme.

When considering just those who did hold expectations about their training in the six areas specified, these were met for the overwhelming majority of respondents in all cases (Table 5).

Table 5 Whether programme-related expectations had been met

| Base: All respondents except those with no expectations | Base (unwtd) | Expect-ations met | Expect-ations not met | Don't know |
|---|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| | | % | % | % |
| The standard of work expected | 1413 | 97 | 2 | 1 |
| The programme or training content | 1387 | 96 | 4 | 1 |
| The amount of responsibility you would have to take | 1367 | 96 | 3 | * |
| The structure of the programme or training | 1351 | 95 | 5 | * |
| The amount of work you would have to do | 1371 | 95 | 4 | * |
| The number of deadlines to meet | 1357 | 95 | 4 | 1 |

Note: * denotes less than 0.5%

Patterns in the data highlight the importance of meeting learner expectations as there is a correlation between key measures of satisfaction and expectations (namely, overall satisfaction with the training experience, Table 6, satisfaction with the quality of training and satisfaction with employer support).

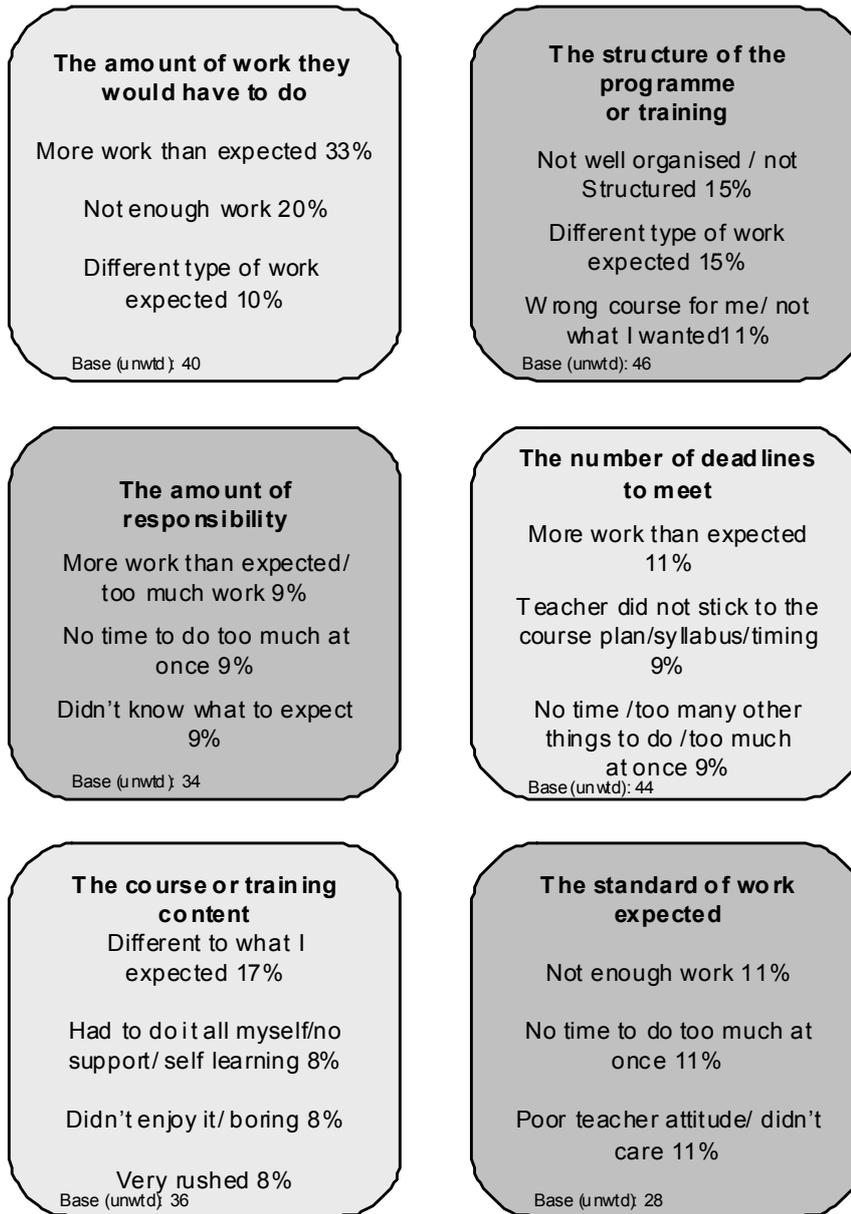
Table 6 Expectations met by overall satisfaction with training programme

| Base: All respondents except those with no expectations | Base (unwtd) | Total | Overall satisfaction | | | |
|---|--------------|-------|----------------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| | | | Extremely satisfied | Very satisfied | Fairly satisfied | Indifferent/dissatisfied |
| % 'expectations met' | | % | % | % | % | % |
| The standard of work expected | 1413 | 97 | 98 | 99 | 95 | 79 |
| The programme or training content | 1387 | 96 | 98 | 98 | 93 | 64 |
| The amount of responsibility you would have to take | 1367 | 96 | 98 | 98 | 96 | 74 |
| The structure of the programme or training | 1351 | 95 | 99 | 98 | 91 | 57 |
| The amount of work you would have to do | 1371 | 95 | 98 | 96 | 96 | 89 |
| The number of deadlines to meet | 1357 | 95 | 96 | 98 | 93 | 68 |

Although only very small minorities of respondents did not have their expectations met, predictably this was more likely to be the case amongst respondents who had experienced problems since starting their course and those who had seriously thought about leaving.

Those whose expectations were not met were asked why this was the case. The numbers of students followed up in this way were small in number (fewer than 50 cases per expectation), but the reasons given varied according to the nature of the expectation. This is illustrated in Chart 4, where the top reasons are listed for each expectation.

Chart 4 Key reasons why course-related expectations were not met



Base: All respondents asked why course-related expectations were not met. Please note very small bases sizes.

Expectations of learning outcomes

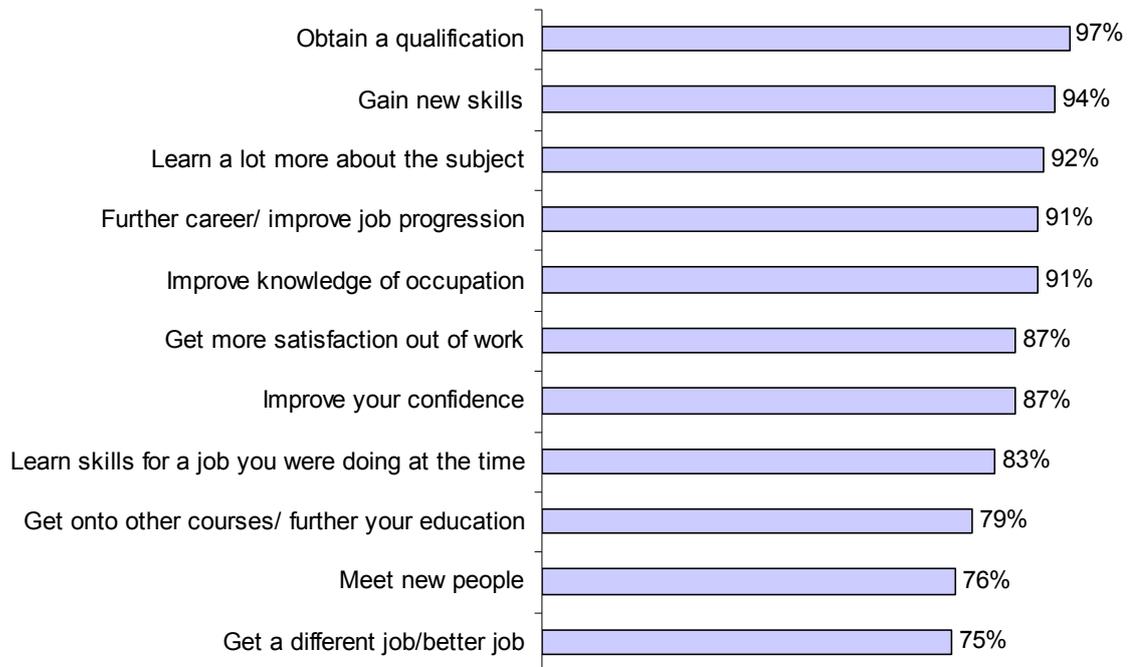
All respondents were asked whether, before they started their learning, they expected that the programme or training would help with specific learning outcomes, which have been grouped into four themes as follows:

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Job related</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a different job or a better job • Learn skills for a job you were doing at the time • Get more satisfaction out of your work • Improve your knowledge of your occupation | <p>Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain new skills • Obtain a qualification • Learn a lot more about the subject |
| <p>Social development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve your confidence • Meet new people | <p>Progression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further your career or improve job progression • Get onto other courses or further your education |

The results, shown in Chart 5, revealed that:

- The most commonly held expectations related to **learning outcomes**: over nine in ten respondents expected that they would ‘obtain a qualification’ (97%), ‘gain new skills’ (94%) and/or ‘learn a lot more about the subject’ (92%)
- Both expectations relating to **social development** were held by more than three quarters of respondents: 76 per cent expected that they would ‘meet new people’ and 87 per cent hoped it would ‘improve their confidence’.
- The expectations relating to **learner progression** were each held by at least eight in ten respondents: 91 per cent thought that it would ‘further their career or improve job progression’ and 79 per cent thought that their course would help them ‘get onto other courses or further their education’
- Unsurprisingly, given the setting, certain job-related expectations came very high up the list, namely ‘improve knowledge of your occupation’ cited by 91 per cent of respondents and ‘get more satisfaction out of work’ (87%). ‘Get a different job/ better job’ was the expectation cited by the lowest proportion of respondents (75%), although this was still a majority of respondents.

Chart 5 Expectations held before starting the training or programme about training outcomes



Base: All respondents (unwtd: 1,507)

Further analysis revealed that there were few significant differences by gender, but males were more likely than females to hold expectations relating to meeting new people (82% versus 69%). This may have been driven by the predominance of younger males in the sample

We would expect to observe different expectations being more important at different life stages, and this is evidenced in the data. For example:

- the youngest respondents (aged 16-18) were more likely than those aged 25 plus to mention gaining new skills, whilst those aged 16-24 were more likely than those aged 25 plus to mention meeting new people (linked with age group, those not employed at the time of the survey and with no caring responsibilities were also more likely to mention meeting new people). Predictably, those aged 16-18 were the least likely to mention learning skills for a job they were doing at the time.
- those who were relatively new to the job market (aged 19-24) were more likely than older respondents to mention getting a different job or a better job (81% versus 72% or less).

Table 7 Expectations held about learning outcomes by age

| Base: All respondents | Total | Age | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| | | 16-18 | 19-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45+ |
| Base: unweighted | 1507 | 423 | 458 | 241 | 199 | 186 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Obtain a qualification | 97 | 95 | 97 | 98 | 98 | 98 |
| Gain new skills | 94 | 96 | 94 | 91 | 92 | 92 |
| Learn a lot more about the subject | 92 | 94 | 93 | 90 | 91 | 88 |
| Further your career or improve job progression | 91 | 87 | 94 | 95 | 90 | 90 |
| Get more satisfaction out of your work | 87 | 86 | 88 | 85 | 87 | 88 |
| Improve your confidence | 87 | 88 | 87 | 86 | 81 | 88 |
| Learn skills for a job you were doing at the time | 83 | 75 | 85 | 85 | 91 | 87 |
| Get onto other courses or further your education | 79 | 76 | 82 | 82 | 76 | 77 |
| Meet new people | 76 | 93 | 80 | 60 | 57 | 65 |
| Get a different job or a better job | 75 | 78 | 81 | 72 | 69 | 64 |

- Different expectations correlated with the settings in which respondents were doing their training. For example, those learning in an FE college or private training provider were more likely than those learning in the work place to hold expectations relating to meeting new people, whereas those who were based in the work place were more likely to hold expectations about learning skills for a job they were doing at the time and getting onto other courses or furthering their education.
- Skillbuild learners were more likely than average to mention getting a job/better job (82% versus 75%) and meeting new people (95% versus 75%). As discussed previously, these findings were driven by the age profile of this group: 80% of Skillbuild learners were aged 16-18.
- Respondents studying for NVQ qualifications were more likely than those studying for another qualification to hold expectations relating to improving their knowledge of their occupation (92% versus 87%) and learning skills for a job they were doing at the time (85% versus 77%).
- Analysis by highest qualification level already held showed that those at entry level/Level 1 were more likely than those at Level 2 plus to say they held expectations

about meeting new people; again, this is likely to be age related (84% versus 76% or less).

- Predictably, perhaps, those who felt their training was useful to their current job were more likely than those who felt their training was quite useful or not useful to have held all the listed expectations, with the exception of obtaining a qualification (i.e. this expectation held regardless).

Whether course has helped with expectations of learning outcomes

Respondents were asked whether, thus far, their training had helped them achieve their learning outcome related expectations¹². Whilst a number of expectations require a longer period of time to be met (such as those related to learner progression, getting a different or better job and obtaining a qualification), it could be expected that others would be more immediate and this is evidenced in the data.

As shown in the following table, 99 per cent of those asked had learnt more about the subject (85% a lot and 14% a little) and a similar proportion (97%) had gained new skills (83% a lot and 14% a little). In addition, 96 per cent felt their training had helped them improve their knowledge of their occupation (78% a lot, 18% a little) and 92 per cent said that their training had helped them obtain a qualification (81% a lot and 11% a little).

As far as expectations related to personal/ social outcomes were concerned, similar proportions (around three quarters in each case) said their training had helped a lot in terms of meeting new people and improving their confidence.

In contrast, lower proportions of those with longer-term expectations relating to learner progression, getting a different or better job and obtaining a qualification felt that their course had helped them so far – although it was still a majority in all three cases.

Table 8 Whether course has helped with expected outcomes

| Base: All respondents asked about expectations held | Base (unwtd) | Whether helped... | | | |
|---|--------------|-------------------|----------|------------|------------|
| | | A lot | A little | Not at all | Don't know |
| | | % | % | % | % |
| Learn a lot more about the subject | 308 | 85 | 14 | 2 | 0 |
| Gain new skills | 281 | 83 | 14 | 3 | * |

¹² Learners who held more than 2 expectations were asked about 2 expectations only, which were chosen at random from their expectations held

| | | | | | |
|---|-----|----|----|----|---|
| Obtain a qualification | 357 | 81 | 11 | 5 | 3 |
| Improve your knowledge of your occupation | 249 | 78 | 18 | 4 | * |
| Improve your confidence | 271 | 76 | 22 | 2 | * |
| Meet new people | 247 | 75 | 18 | 6 | 1 |
| Learn skills for a job you were doing at the time | 245 | 74 | 20 | 6 | * |
| Get more satisfaction out of your work | 272 | 73 | 18 | 8 | 1 |
| Further your career or improve job progression | 270 | 69 | 19 | 10 | 2 |

| | | | | | |
|--|-----|----|----|----|---|
| Get a different job or a better job | 234 | 63 | 15 | 17 | 5 |
| Get onto other courses or further your education | 261 | 64 | 20 | 13 | 4 |

Note: * denotes less than 0.5%

Small base sizes meant that responses to this question could only be analysed by certain respondent sub-groups. However, it was found that respondents who felt that their training was very useful to their current job were more likely to consider that their course had helped them **a lot** to meet all the expectations relating to learning outcomes (compared with those who felt that their training was only quite useful or not useful to their current job).

Male respondents were more likely to consider that their training programme had helped them a lot to 'learn skills for a job they were doing at the time' (81% compared with 66% of female respondents) or to 'further their career or improve job progression' (74% compared with 63% of female respondents). In addition, respondents whose training was delivered at an FE college were more likely than those whose training was delivered in the workplace to consider that their training programme had helped them a lot with the following expected outcomes:

- Learn skills for a job you were doing at the time (86% compared with 69%)
- Get onto other courses or further your education (73% compared with 61%)

- Obtain a qualification (89% compared with 80%)
- Meet new people (82% compared with 71%)

Respondents who had experienced problems whilst on their training programme were less likely to consider that their training had helped them a lot with getting a different or better job (56% compared with 69% who had experienced no problems), learning skills for a job they were doing (62% compared with 84%), furthering their career or improving job progression (61% compared with 74%) or obtaining a qualification (73% compared with 88%).

Conclusions and policy implications

The main findings from the survey relating to overall satisfaction with learning can be summarised as follows:

- Very high levels of satisfaction were recorded.
- Greater satisfaction was expressed by females and those with caring responsibilities.
- Those who had not considered other providers, whose provider had been chosen for them, or who had experienced problems or thought about leaving the course, were less satisfied.
- Whether studying at the first choice of college or, especially first choice of course, was important in determining level of satisfaction.
- Extreme satisfaction with the quality of training and employer support were the most important factors driving an extremely satisfied outcome overall.
- Low ratings with the quality of teaching, learner support, together with concerns about the relevance of training and management of training to suit the learner were the most important factors driving a dissatisfied outcome.
- The overwhelming majority of respondents with expectations about the course had those expectations met, but a course failing to meet respondents' expectations was a key reason for being dissatisfied.
- Meeting respondent expectations was correlated with overall satisfaction with the learning experience and satisfaction with the quality of training and employer support.
- Although the most commonly held expectations related to learning outcomes, large majorities of respondents also held social development and learner progression expectations.

- Having expectations met impacted positively on respondent satisfaction, student retention and intention to learn in the future.
- Broadly, expectations tended to decline with age.
- Overwhelmingly, respondents considered that their course had assisted them in achieving their expected learning outcomes.
- Those undertaking a course at an FE college were more likely than those learning in the workplace to state that their training had helped them achieve their expected learning outcomes and the social outcome of meeting more people.

The extremely high overall levels of satisfaction with their learning experience expressed by members of the WBL sample suggest that current provision is well aligned to the needs and expectations of the WBL learners interviewed. Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents felt that their expectations of their course had been met. Nonetheless, there are aspects of the findings which can be interpreted as indicating areas of development in order to maintain or improve this favourable position.

In similar fashion to the findings for the sample of FE learners, a positive relationship was established between undertaking the course of first choice at the provider of first choice and high levels of satisfaction with the learning experience. However, almost a third of the respondents (31%) stated that they did not have a choice, predominantly because the course had been chosen for them, usually by their employer. Many of these types of learner are required by their employer to undertake the course in order to acquire or enhance the skills necessary to do the job. This helps to explain why some respondents had no expectations of their course.

While learners in this position may not have prior knowledge of what they will find on the course, and have few expectations, it is incumbent on the employer to be well-informed about what the course will offer and how it will be delivered. Therefore, policy-makers should endeavour to generate awareness amongst employers of what is available. Perhaps more importantly, providers, especially FE colleges, should establish and/or maintain good relationships and channels of communication with local employers. Providers should continue to be proactive in marketing their courses to employers, and, where possible, emphasise their ability to tailor their provision to employers' specific needs. The high levels of satisfaction reflected in these findings can be a powerful argument to support their case.

In engaging with employers, emphasis could also be placed on the benefits to employers of undertaking a training needs assessment, so that the training of employees was targeted and effective.

At the same time, the importance of employer support for their employees during their training activity should be stressed. This clearly emerged from the findings as a key factor in stimulating satisfaction among respondents in WBL provision. Accordingly, employers need to be made aware, when their employees are about to embark on a course, of the role which they can play in ensuring that the employee gets the maximum benefit from, and completes the course, by providing ongoing support and encouragement.

A related issue is the relevance of the course for the respondent's current job. This was a prominent concern among respondents, many of whose expectations about the course were narrowly focused on the positive impact it would have on their ability to do their job. In order for this to occur, there needs to be a dialogue between the provider and the employer who is sponsoring the employee, to ensure that the employer is fully informed of what the course will bring to the learner's skill development.

For providers, the prominence of the quality of their provision, and especially the teaching/training, as key factors in learners' assessment of their satisfaction with their learning experience, is a reminder that this aspect needs constant monitoring. The ability of FE colleges to add value to the skill acquisition process was evident in the finding that those whose training was delivered in FE colleges were more likely than those whose training was delivered in the workplace to feel that this had helped them a lot to learn new skills, progress to other courses, attain qualifications or meet new people. This should be stressed in colleges' marketing of their provision to employers.

From the respondent perspective, it was interesting that social development aspects, namely improving confidence and meeting new people, were anticipated by large majorities of respondents. This indicates that the benefits of learning, over and above those of skill acquisition and qualification attainment, were recognised by respondents. It will be important to mention these in providing information about courses, and when advice is being offered to potential learners.

Choice and Opportunity

This section examines:

- whether respondents secured their first choice of provider and course and what influence this has had on their learning experience;
- respondents' reasons for choosing to study on a particular course at a particular provider; and
- the sources from which respondents sought advice before starting their course and how useful these were.

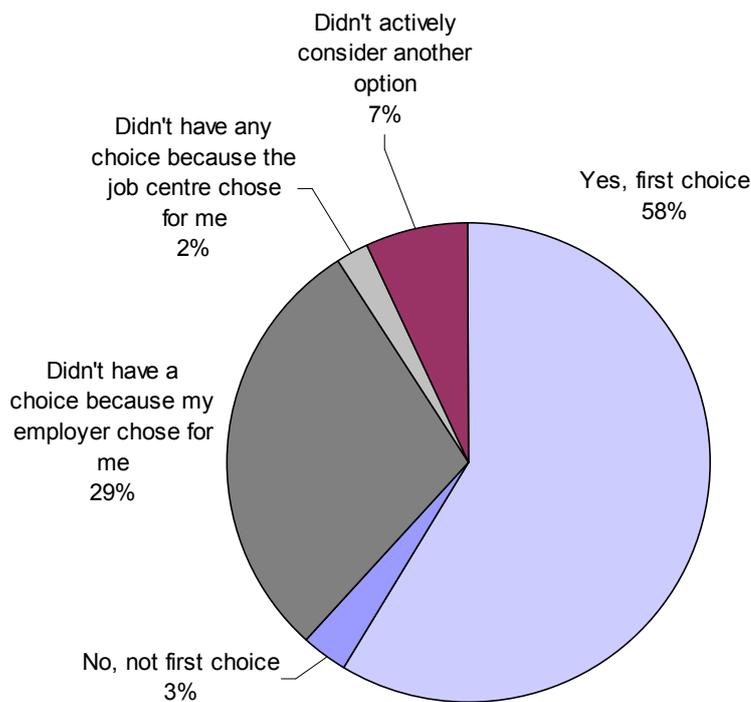
First choice of college/provider

All WBL respondents were asked whether the training provider they were attending was their first choice, that is, the organisation with which they most wanted to do their training.

A majority of respondents said that they were studying at their first choice of college or training provider (58%), and only 3 per cent said they were not. Less than one in ten respondents (7%) had not actively considered another option.

Almost one third of respondents (31%) did not feel that they had a choice about which college or training provider they attended. Almost three in ten respondents (29%) said this was because their employer had made the choice and 2 per cent said that Jobcentre Plus had made that choice.

Chart 6 First choice of college/provider



Base: All respondents (unwtd: 1,507). Don't know not shown.

When looking at differences within the data by respondents' personal characteristics, female respondents, older respondents and those with caring responsibilities for children were less likely to be studying at their first choice of provider than male respondents, those under the age of 25 and those with no caring commitments (see Table 9 and Table 10). In contrast, they were more likely to say that they had no choice because their provider had been chosen by their employer:

- Female respondents were more likely than their male counterparts to say that their employer had chosen their provider for them (33% of female respondents compared

with 25% of male respondents). Although, interestingly female respondents were no more likely to be employed during their course than male respondents.¹³

- Older respondents were more likely than younger respondents to say that they did not have a choice about what training provider they attended because their employer chose (41% of those aged 25 and above gave this response, compared with 18% of 19-24s, and 12% of 16-18s). This is not surprising as older respondents were more likely to be employed whilst undertaking their training programme than younger respondents (93% of respondents aged 19 and above were employed, compared with 77% of respondents aged 16-18).
- Linked with gender and age, respondents with caring responsibilities for children were also more likely than those who had no caring responsibilities to say their employer chose their training provider¹⁴ (40% compared with 25% respectively).

Table 9 Whether college/provider was first choice by gender/childcare responsibilities

| | Total | Gender | | Responsibilities | |
|--|-------|--------|--------|------------------|------|
| | | Male | Female | Children | None |
| Base: All respondents | | | | | |
| | 1507 | 806 | 701 | 373 | 1083 |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes, first choice | 58 | 61 | 55 | 46 | 62 |
| No, not first choice | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Didn't have any choice because my employer chose for me | 29 | 25 | 33 | 40 | 25 |
| Didn't have a choice because the Jobcentre Plus chose for me | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 |

¹³ 90% of women and 92% of men were employed during their course.

¹⁴ Female learners and older learners were more likely to have caring responsibilities. 36% of female learners had parental responsibilities for children aged 0-15 at home, compared with only 15% of male learners. With regard to age, only 2% of learners aged 16-18 and 8% of those aged 19-24 had parental responsibilities for children aged 0-15 at home compared with 56% of those aged 25-34, 68% of those aged 35-44 and 31% of those 45+.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Didn't actively consider another option | 7 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 6 |
| Don't know | * | * | * | 0 | 1 |

Note: * denotes <0.5%

Table 10 Whether college/provider was first choice by age

| | Total | Age | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| Base: All respondents | | 16-18 | 19-24 | 25+ |
| | 1507 | 423 | 458 | 626 |
| | % | % | % | % |
| Yes, first choice | 58 | 74 | 62 | 46 |
| No, not first choice | 3 | 6 | 2 | 2 |
| Didn't have a choice because my employer chose for me | 29 | 12 | 28 | 41 |
| Didn't have a choice because the Jobcentre Plus chose for me | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Didn't actively consider another option | 7 | 4 | 7 | 8 |
| Don't know | * | 1 | * | * |

Note: * denotes <0.5%.

Predictably, Skillbuild learners were more likely than average to say that Jobcentre Plus chose for them (15% versus an average of 2%), whilst those on apprenticeship programmes were more likely than other learners to say that their employer chose their training programme (around one third of MA and FMA learners versus 23% of learners on other programmes and 2% of Skillbuild learners).

Accessing their first choice of training provider and having choice about which provider they attended were closely linked to a respondent's satisfaction with their learning experience as follows:

- Respondents who were extremely or very satisfied with their overall learning experience were more likely than respondents who were indifferent or dissatisfied to be at their first choice of provider (63% of those extremely/very satisfied compared with 38% of those indifferent/dissatisfied). In contrast, those respondents who were indifferent or dissatisfied with their learning experience were more likely to say their employer had chosen which provider they attended (38% of those indifferent/dissatisfied compared with 26% of those extremely/very satisfied) and more

likely to say they had not actively considered another option (16% compared with 6% respectively).

- Similarly, respondents who were extremely or very satisfied with the quality of the teaching were more likely than respondents who were indifferent or dissatisfied to be at their first choice of provider (61% compared with 43% respectively), whereas respondents who were indifferent or dissatisfied with the quality of teaching were more likely to have had no choice of provider because their employer chose for them (39% compared with 27% of those extremely/very satisfied), or to say they did not actively consider another option (13% compared with 6% respectively).

There was also evidence to suggest that respondents who did not secure their first choice of college/provider were slightly more likely to have experienced problems whilst on their course and to have thought about leaving their training. Of those not at their first choice of provider:

- five per cent of respondents experienced problems, compared with only two per cent of those who had not,
- and seven per cent had thought about leaving compared with three per cent of those who had not.

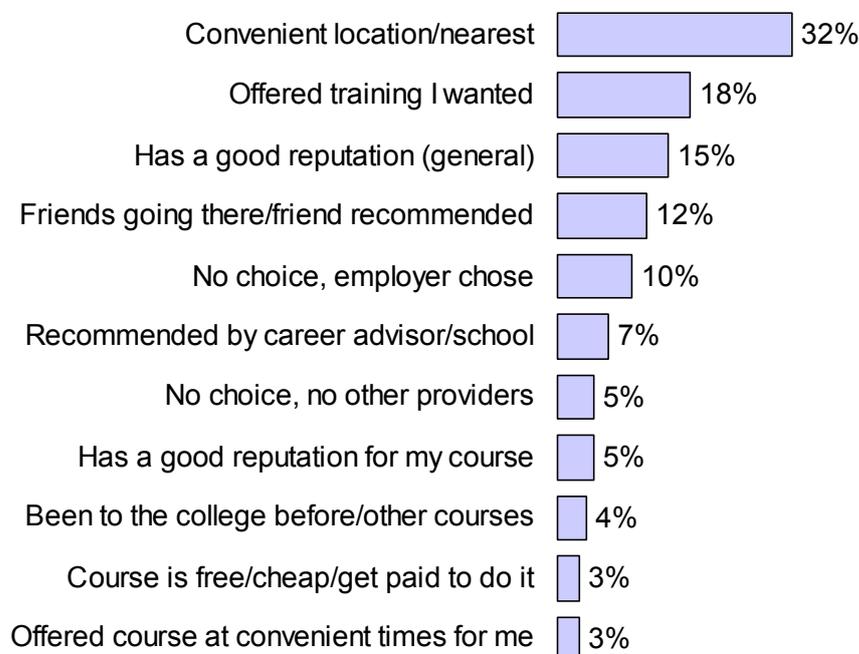
Reasons for studying at provider

All respondents who said they had a choice over which provider they attended were asked what their main reasons were for choosing that provider. The main reason given was that the provider was at a convenient location or the nearest, mentioned by one third of respondents (32%). Other frequently mentioned reasons were that the provider offered the training the respondent wanted (18%), that it had a good reputation in general (15%), and that their friends were going there or had recommended it (12%).

Other factors influencing provider choice mentioned by 5 per cent of respondents or more were that it was recommended by their career advisor or school (7%) and because it had a good reputation for their course (5%).

Only five per cent of respondents said they had no choice as the provider was the only one in the area to offer their course.

Reasons for attending provider



Base: All respondents except those whose employer/Jobcentre Plus chose provider (unwtd: 1,038). This question allowed a multiple response. All reasons mentioned by 3% of respondents or more are shown in chart. Don't know/not stated not shown.

There were no notable differences in reasons given for provider choice by gender. Analysis by age, however, revealed some more interesting differences, which reflected the different life-stages of the respondents. For example:

- Younger respondents were more likely to be influenced in their decision of which provider to attend by where their friends were attending or recommending than older respondents (15% of respondents aged 16-18 gave this reason compared with 9% of respondents aged 25 plus).
- Respondents aged 25-44, for whom parental and work commitments were at their peak, were more likely to choose a provider which was at a convenient location or nearest to them (40% of 25-34s and 44% of 35-44s gave this reason, compared with 26% of 16-18s and 29% of 19-24s). Respondents aged 35-44 were also slightly more likely than respondents overall to choose a provider because it offered courses which were at convenient times (7% compared with 3% respectively).

- In contrast, respondents aged 45 plus were more likely to have chosen their provider because it had a good reputation (in general) than the youngest respondents (21% compared with 12% of 16-18s).

Learners on Skillbuild programmes were more likely than average to mention a recommendation by careers advisor/school (16% versus 7% respectively), but this is unsurprising given the very young profile of this learner group.

Reasons for not studying at first choice of provider

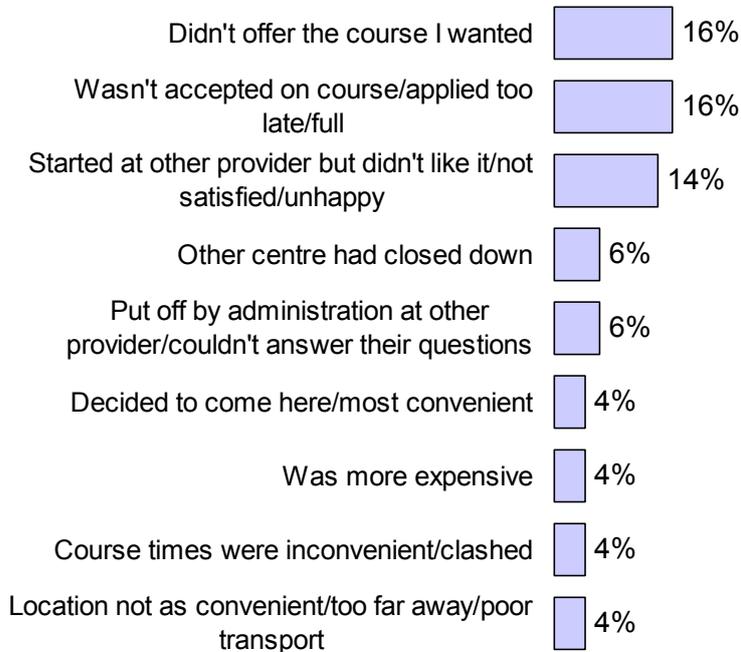
All respondents who were not studying at their first choice of provider were asked why this was the case. Reasons given most often were that:

- the provider didn't offer the course they wanted (16%)
- they weren't accepted on that course / applied too late or the course was full (16%)
- they started at another provider but didn't like it / not satisfied / not happy (14%).

Other reasons mentioned by more than 5 per cent of respondents who were not at their first choice of provider were that the other centre had closed down (6%) or that respondents were put off by the administration at other providers, or the fact that they were unable to answer their questions (6%).

The number of respondents interviewed who were not studying at their first choice of provider was too small for sub-group analysis (only 49 of WBL respondents surveyed were not studying at their first choice of provider).

Chart 7 Reasons why not studying at first choice of provider



Base: All respondents not attending first choice of provider (unwtd 49). This question allowed multiple responses. All reasons mentioned by 4% of respondents or more shown in chart. Don't know/not stated not shown.

First choice of course or training

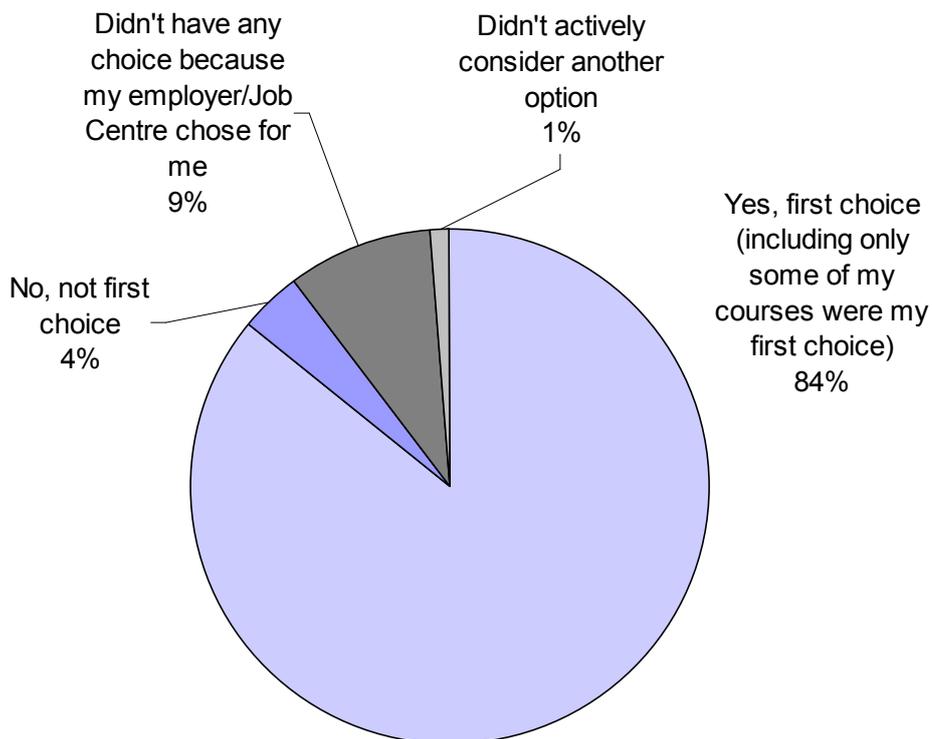
The survey also asked respondents if the types of training they were undertaking were their first choices, that is, whether the subjects and qualifications were those they most wanted to do.

Encouragingly, the majority of respondents said the training they were currently undertaking was their first choice (84%). Only one in every twenty-five respondents said that they were not undertaking their first choice (4%) and an even smaller minority of respondents said that they had not actively considered another option (1%).

It was apparent from the findings that some employers chose not only the provider the respondent attended but also the type of training they were doing. Almost one in ten respondents said they had not had a choice because their employer had chosen their training for them (9%). Overall, less than 0.5 per cent of respondents said their

training had been decided by Jobcentre Plus, although this was the case for 4% of those on Skillbuild programmes.

Chart 8 Whether course was respondent's first choice



Base: All respondents (unwtd: 1507). Don't know not shown.

When looking at differences within the data by respondents' personal characteristics, similar to findings for choice of provider, it was female respondents, older respondents and those with caring commitments for children who were less likely to say that they were doing their first choice of training. Conversely, they were more likely to say that they had no choice about the training they undertook because it had been chosen by their employer. For example:

- Female respondents were more likely to say that their employer had chosen their training for them than male respondents (12% compared with 8%).

- Older respondents were also more likely than younger respondents to say that they did not have a choice about what type of training they undertook because their employer chose (14% of those aged 25 and above gave this response compared with 3% of 16-18s and 9% of 19-24s).
- Linked with patterns for gender and age, respondents with caring responsibilities for children were approximately twice as likely to say that their employer chose, than those who had no caring responsibilities (16% compared with 7% respectively).

Table 11 Whether training was first choice by gender and childcare responsibilities

| | Total | Gender | | Responsibilities | |
|--|-------|--------|--------|------------------|------|
| | | Male | Female | Children | None |
| Base: All respondents | | | | | |
| | 1507 | 806 | 701 | 373 | 1083 |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes, first choice | 84 | 87 | 80 | 77 | 86 |
| Yes, but only some of my courses were my first choice | * | * | * | 1 | * |
| No, not first choice | 4 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 5 |
| Didn't have any choice because my employer chose for me | 9 | 8 | 12 | 16 | 7 |
| Didn't have a choice because the Jobcentre Plus chose for me | * | * | 1 | 1 | * |
| Didn't actively consider another option | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Don't know | * | * | * | * | * |

Note: * denotes < 0.5%.

Table 12 Whether training was first choice by age

| | Total | Age | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| | | 16-18 | 19-24 | 25+ |
| Base: All respondents | | | | |
| | 1507 | 423 | 458 | 626 |
| | % | % | % | % |
| Yes, first choice | 84 | 88 | 87 | 79 |
| Yes, but only some of my courses were my first choice | * | 0 | * | 1 |
| No, not first choice | 4 | 7 | 3 | 4 |

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|----|
| Didn't have a choice because my employer chose for me | 9 | 3 | 9 | 14 |
| Didn't have a choice because the Jobcentre Plus chose for me | * | 1 | 0 | * |
| Didn't actively consider another option | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Don't know | * | 0 | * | * |

Note: * denotes < 0.5%.

There was also evidence to suggest that access to first choice of subject/qualification had an impact on respondents' experience of their training in general. For example:

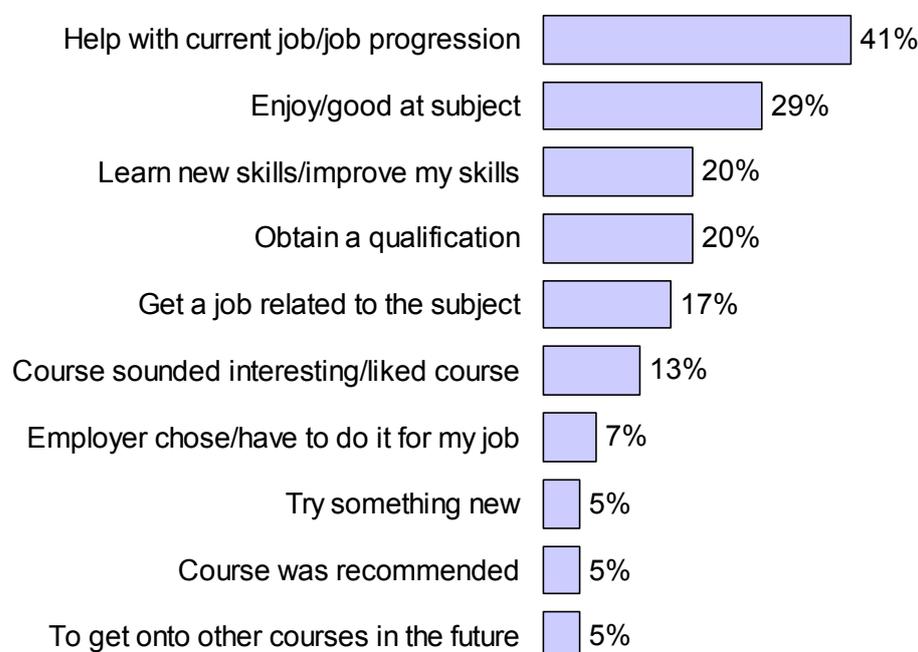
- Respondents who were extremely or very satisfied with their learning experience overall, were more likely than respondents who were indifferent or dissatisfied to be undertaking their first choice of course (88% compared with 62% respectively). Conversely, those who were indifferent or dissatisfied with their learning experience were more likely to say they were not undertaking their first choice of training (11% compared with 3% respectively) and more likely to say their training was chosen by their employer (22% compared with 8% respectively).
- A similar pattern was also evident when looking at overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching. Eighty-six per cent of respondents who were extremely or very satisfied with their teaching were undertaking their first choice of training compared with 65 per cent of those who were in-different/dissatisfied. In contrast, respondents who were indifferent/dissatisfied were more likely to say they were not training at their first choice than respondents overall (12% compared with 45% overall) and more likely to say their employer chose for them (17% compared with 8% overall).
- Respondents who had experienced a problem since starting their course were slightly more likely to not be studying their first choice of course compared with those who had experienced no problems (6% compared with 3%).
- The findings also showed that 11 per cent of respondents not studying their first choice of training had thought about leaving their training programme. In contrast only 3 per cent of those not studying at their first choice of course said that they had not considered leaving.

Lack of autonomy over choice of course also seemed to be related to dissatisfaction with the support received from their employer whilst on their training. Respondents who said their employer had chosen the type of training they undertook were twice as likely to be indifferent/dissatisfied with the support received from their employer during their training than respondents overall (20% compared with 9% of respondents overall).

Reasons for choosing course or training

Respondents who were on their first choice of course, or who did not actively consider another option, were asked why they had chosen to do that particular training. The most common reason for choice of training, given by two in five respondents, was to help with their current job or job progression (41%). Other popular reasons were because they enjoyed or were good at the subject (29%), to obtain a qualification (20%), to learn new skills or improve skills (20%) or to get a job related to the subject (17%).

Chart 9 Reasons for choosing course/training



Base: All respondents except those not doing their first choice and those who had no choice over training programme (unwttd: 1293). Multiple responses were allowed at this question. All reasons shown are mentioned by 5% of respondents or more. Don't know not shown.

There were some interesting differences by gender. Male respondents were more likely than female respondents to say they had chosen their courses because they enjoyed or were good at the subject (36% compared with 21% respectively) and because the course sounded interesting (16% compared with 8% respectively). In contrast female respondents were more likely to have chosen their current course for reasons to do with their current job and skills/qualification attainment, specifically to:

- help with current job/job progression (53% of female respondents compared with 32% of male respondents)
- learn new skills / improve skills (23% compared with 17% respectively)
- obtain a qualification (22% compared with 17% respectively).

As the profile of male respondents within the sample was predominantly young, and the profile of female respondents was predominantly older, these findings can be linked to age. Younger respondents were more likely than their older counterparts to have chosen courses with enjoyment or interest in mind. For example:

- enjoy / good at subject (46% of 16-18s, 33% of 19-24s compared with 14% of those aged 25 or more)
- course sounded interesting (18% of 16-18s, 15% of 19-24s compared with 7% of those aged 25 or more).

In contrast, older respondents were more likely to have chosen courses for reasons which were job related or to acquire skills/qualifications, such as:

- help with current job/job progression (15% of 16-18s, 40% of 19-24s compared with 62% of 25+)
- obtain a qualification (13% of 16-18s, 19% of 19-24s compared with 25% of those 25+)
- learn new skills / improve skills (12% of 16-18s, 16% of 19-24s compared with 29% of those 25+).

Table 13 Reasons for attending training by gender and age

| | Total | Gender | | Age | | |
|---|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-----|
| | | Male | Female | 16-18 | 19-24 | 25+ |
| Base: All respondents except those not doing their first choice and those who had no choice over training programme | | | | | | |
| Unweighted | 1293 | 715 | 578 | 377 | 405 | 511 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Help with current job / job progression | 41 | 32 | 53 | 15 | 40 | 62 |
| Obtain a qualification | 20 | 17 | 22 | 13 | 19 | 25 |
| Get a job related to the subject | 17 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 16 | 18 |
| Learn new skills / improve skills | 20 | 17 | 23 | 12 | 16 | 29 |
| Enjoy / good at subject | 29 | 36 | 21 | 46 | 33 | 14 |
| Course sounded interesting | 13 | 16 | 8 | 18 | 15 | 7 |

Note: multiple responses allowed. Only pre-codes with >10% agreement are shown in table.

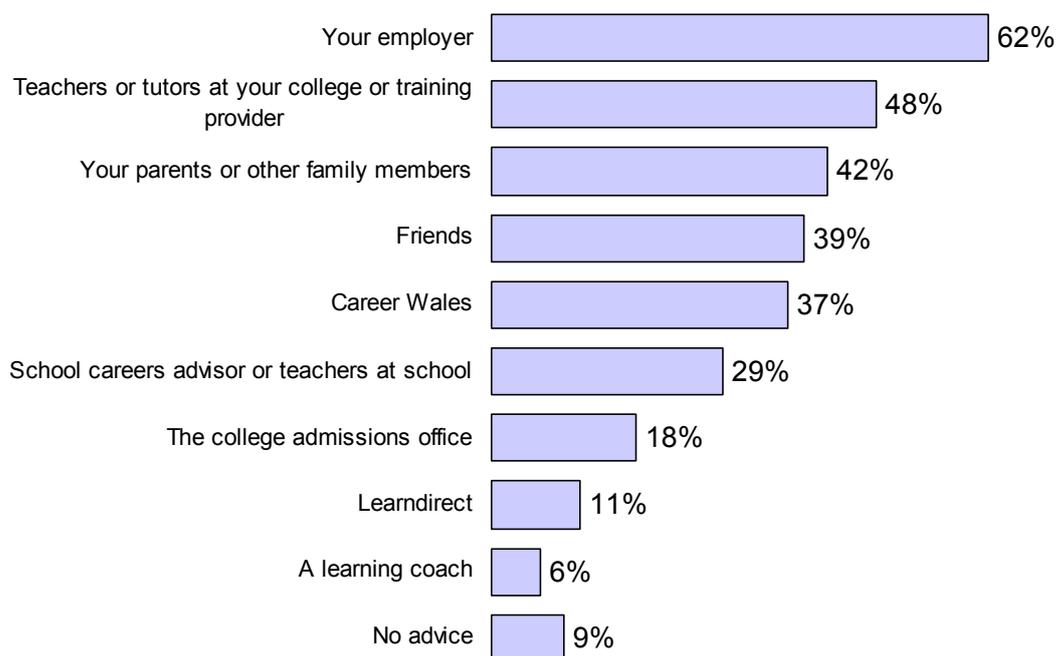
Sources of pre-entry advice

In order to ascertain where respondents obtained advice and guidance, all respondents were asked if they received advice from a variety of sources before starting their training.

Around 90 per cent of respondents had received some advice before starting their course. Perhaps not surprisingly, the most common source of advice for respondents was their employer, mentioned by around three fifths of respondents (62%). The second most common source of advice, given by around half of all respondents, were teachers or tutors at the respondent's college or training provider (48%).

Around two fifths of respondents said they had sought advice from parents and family members (42%), friends (39%) and Careers Wales (37%) and around three in ten respondents mentioned seeking advice from their school career advisors or teacher at their school (29%). Other sources of advice mentioned by more than 5 per cent of respondents were the college admissions office (18%), learndirect¹⁵ (11%) and a learning coach (6%).

Chart 10 Sources of pre-entry advice



Base: All respondents (unwtd: 1507). Multiple responses were allowed at this question. All sources shown are mentioned by >6% of respondents.

¹⁵ Since the survey was undertaken, learn-direct has been re-branded as the 'Careers Advice Helpline.'

Younger respondents were more likely to receive advice than older respondents. Only 3 per cent of respondents aged 16-18 said they had received no advice compared with 7 per cent of 19-24s and 14 per cent of those aged 25 plus. This is understandable as younger learners are more likely to encounter a greater range of formal advice and guidance through their attendance at school or college than older learners (63% of respondents aged 16-18 had received advice from the schools career advisor/teachers at school and 12% had received advice from a learning coach).

Young respondents were also more likely to access sources of advice open to all age groups such as Careers Wales (76% compared with 39% of 19-24s and 8% of those aged 25 and above) and the college admissions office (23% compared with 14% of those aged 25+). This may be explained by the fact that older respondents were more likely to seek advice from their employer than younger respondents (66% of 19-24s, 65% of those 25 or more compared with only 54% of 16-18s) and perhaps because, with more experience of work and learning, older respondents were more likely to have formed their own opinion about the type of course or training they required without feeling a need to seek advice.

Predictably, young respondents were much more likely to seek advice from parents and other family members and friends:

- 72 per cent of respondents aged 16-18 had sought advice from friends and family members, compared with 55 per cent of those aged 19-24 and 13 per cent of those aged 25 and above.
- 53 per cent of respondents aged 16-18 sought advice from friends, compared with 42 per cent of those aged 19-24 and 30 per cent of those aged 25 and above.

Findings by gender are strongly correlated with those by age. Female respondents in the sample were predominately older, with 61 per cent of female respondents being aged 25 plus¹⁶. Similar to older respondents, female respondents were more likely not to have sought advice about their training than male respondents (11% compared with 7% of men).

In contrast, male respondents in the sample were predominately young, (75 per cent of male respondents included in the sample were aged under 25)¹⁷ and were more likely than female respondents to have sought advice from the following sources:

- teachers or tutors at your college or training provider (51% of male respondents compared with 44% of female respondents)

¹⁶ This reflected the profile of the LLWR sample of learners who had give permission to follow up.

¹⁷ Same as above.

- your parents or other family members (56% compared with 27% respectively)
- Careers Wales (46% compared with 26% respectively)
- A school advisor or teachers at school (40% compared with 17% respectively)
- A learning coach (8% compared with 4% respectively).

The following chart summarises the top three advice sources by age group within gender.

Chart 11 Top three advice sources by age group within gender

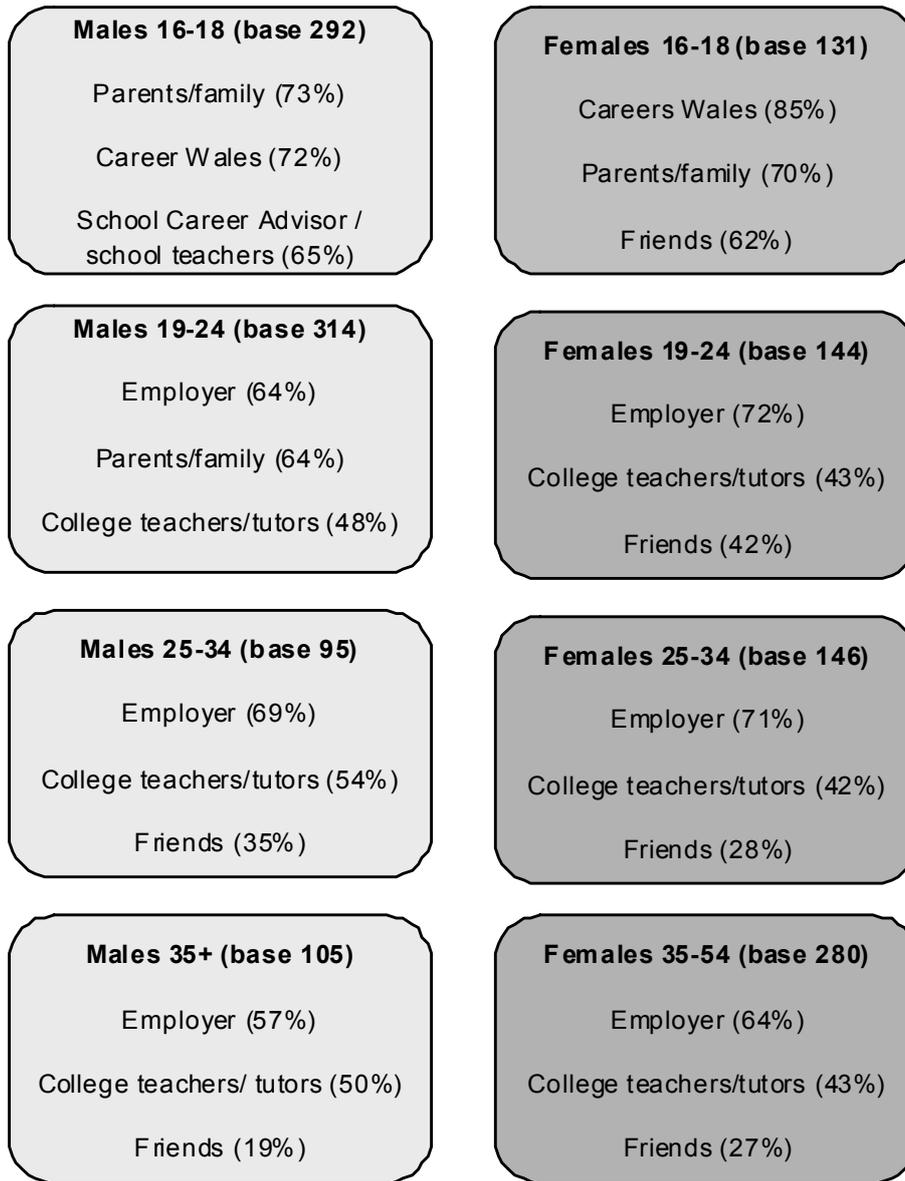


Table 14 Sources of advice and guidance by gender and age

| | Total | Gender | | Age | | |
|---|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-----|
| Base All Respondents | | Male | Female | 16-18 | 19-24 | 25+ |
| Unweighted | 1507 | 806 | 701 | 423 | 458 | 626 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Your employer | 62 | 61 | 64 | 54 | 66 | 65 |
| Teachers or tutors at your college or training provider | 48 | 51 | 44 | 53 | 46 | 46 |
| Your parents or other family members | 42 | 56 | 27 | 72 | 55 | 13 |
| Friends | 39 | 41 | 37 | 53 | 42 | 27 |
| Careers Wales | 37 | 46 | 26 | 76 | 39 | 52 |
| A School Career Advisor or teachers at school | 29 | 40 | 17 | 63 | 38 | - |
| The college admissions office | 18 | 19 | 17 | 23 | 20 | 14 |
| Learndirect | 11 | 12 | 10 | 13 | 10 | 11 |
| A Learning Coach | 6 | 8 | 4 | 12 | 8 | 0 |

Note: This question allowed a multiple response. Only pre-codes cited by >5% of respondents is shown in table.

Linked with the findings for age, those on Skillbuild programmes (who were predominantly aged 16-18) were significantly more likely than average to cite the following advice sources:

- Careers Wales (78% versus an average of 37%)
- Parents/other family members (55% versus 42% average)
- Friends (49% versus 39% average)
- School careers advisor/teachers at school (43% versus 29% average)
- Learning Coach (14% versus 6% average)
- Job Centre (6% versus 1% average)

Usefulness of advice received

Respondents who had received advice were asked to rate the usefulness of the main sources mentioned. Encouragingly, the majority of respondents found each source useful, with around 9 out of 10 respondents or more saying each source was very or fairly useful. It is perhaps more meaningful to compare the proportion of respondents rating sources of advice with the top rating of very useful in order to distinguish differences between sources more easily.

The source of advice deemed most useful (rated very useful by around two thirds of respondents) was teachers or tutors at colleges or training providers (68%). Following this, around two out of five respondents found the advice received from their employer (59%) and the college admissions office (59%) to be very useful. Other sources of advice, rated as very useful by around 50 per cent of respondents, were:

- Careers Wales (55%)
- Your parents or other family member (52%)
- Friends (50%)
- A School Career Advisor or teachers at school (47%)
- Learndirect (45%).

Interestingly, older respondents who had sought advice from teachers or tutors at their training provider were more likely to have found this advice very useful than younger respondents (74% of those aged 25 plus compared with 64% or less of 16-24s). A similar pattern was seen in relation to friends' advice: 65 per cent of respondents aged 25+ rated this as very useful compared with 47 per cent or less of younger respondents. In contrast, respondents aged 16-18 were more likely than those aged 25+ to rate advice from their employer as very useful (69% versus 56%).

The only notable difference by gender was that female respondents were more likely than male respondents to rate the advice received from their friends as very useful (59% of women compared with 40% of men).

Table 15 How do you rate the usefulness of the following advice received?

| A proportion of those who had used the following sources of advice | Unweighted base size | Very useful | Fairly useful | Not very useful | Not at all useful | Don't know |
|--|----------------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------|
| | | % | % | % | % | % |
| Teachers or tutors at your college or training provider | 431 | 68 | 31 | * | 0 | 1 |
| Your employer | 642 | 59 | 36 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| The college admissions office | 116 | 59 | 38 | 0 | 3 | 1 |
| Careers Wales | 293 | 55 | 38 | 4 | 3 | 0 |
| Your parent or other family members | 336 | 52 | 43 | 3 | 2 | * |
| Friends | 303 | 50 | 44 | 5 | 2 | * |
| A School Careers Advisor or teachers at school | 206 | 47 | 44 | 6 | 2 | * |
| Learndirect | **66 | 45 | 44 | 6 | 3 | 2 |

Note: * denotes percentages <0.5%. ** denotes small base size (<100).

Analysis by programme type showed that learners on Skillbuild programmes were far more likely than average to rate their friends' advice as not very or not at all useful (18% versus an average of 7%).

Conclusions and policy implications

The main findings from the survey relating to choice and opportunity can be summarised as follows:

- Only 58 per cent of respondents were attending their college of first choice, with 31 per cent stating that they had no choice, as it was decided mainly by their employer or, in a few cases, by Jobcentre Plus.
- Female respondents, older respondents and those with caring responsibilities for children were less likely to be studying at their first choice of provider. These groups were also more likely to feel they had no choice.
- There was a strong correlation between accessing the provider of first choice and being extremely or very satisfied with their learning experience.
- Respondents who were indifferent/dissatisfied with the support from their employer were more likely to have had their training provider chosen by their employer than respondents overall.

- The main factors influencing choice of provider were convenience of location and the college offering the desired training programme.
- Convenience of location was more important for those aged 25-44, while reputation of provider was more of a factor for older respondents than for younger respondents.
- The vast majority of respondents (84%) were studying the subjects and qualifications that they most wanted to do.
- A tenth of respondents had had their course chosen for them, usually by their employer. This applied more to females than to males, and more to over 25s than to under 25s.
- First choice of course or training correlated with respondents' overall satisfaction and whether they had considered leaving the course.
- Respondents whose employer had chosen their course of training were twice as likely as respondents overall to be indifferent/dissatisfied with the support received from their employer.
- To help with current job/job progression was, by some distance, the most frequently cited reason for choosing the course, followed by enjoyment of, or being good at the subject, learning new skills and obtaining a qualification.
- Male respondents were more likely than female respondents to have chosen a course because they enjoyed or liked the subject, whereas female respondents were more likely to cite work-related reasons.
- Respondents aged over 25 were more likely than younger respondents to have chosen their course for reasons to do with their current job and skills acquisition, while those under 25 were more likely to cite enjoyment of, or being good at the subject.
- The most commonly cited sources of pre-entry advice were their employer, a teacher or tutor at their college or provider, parents and other family members, and friends.
- For 16-18 year old respondents, parents and Careers Wales were most frequently cited as a source of advice, whereas for older age groups, the employer was the most common source.
- Overwhelmingly, the advice received from all sources was rated as being very or fairly useful. That received from teachers or tutors at the respondents' college or training provider was most frequently described as 'very useful'.
- Female respondents exhibited a greater reliance on friends as sources of advice than did their male counterparts.

Learner choice

In contrast to the survey of FE learners, around a third of those in WBL felt that they had no involvement in the choice of learning provider, a tenth also claimed that they had no say in the decision about the course. This reflects the part played by employers in determining the work based learning which is made available to, or required of their employees. It was also found that those whose course had not been chosen by them were more likely to express dissatisfaction with their learning experience. In order to reduce the likelihood of learners being dissatisfied with their course or learning provider, employers should be encouraged to involve their employees to a greater extent in the decision-making process about any training which they are required to undertake. Feeling that they have some ownership over the decision will invariably enhance their commitment to their learning and increase the likelihood of deriving satisfaction from the experience. Even where the course may be mandatory in order to fulfil their work role, engaging in a dialogue with the employee and providing an explanation of the benefits which will accrue will reinforce these feelings.

Notwithstanding the above, only a small minority of respondents suggested that they were restricted in their choice of course or provider by a lack of alternatives. This points to current provision being appropriately aligned to the needs of work based learners in Wales.

Advice and guidance

While it was not unexpected that the employer would figure prominently as sources of advice and guidance for respondents, the issue of the objectivity of such advice and guidance should be considered. Employers are clearly in a good position to assess the current training needs of their employees in the context of the immediate job requirements and career progression within the organisation. However, this may not always be to the best longer-term benefit of the individual employees. Therefore, the use of an external agency with specific expertise in guidance, as well as knowledge of available provision, may enable individual employees to improve their skills base to the benefit of their future career, and for employers to benefit from the development of a more highly skilled workforce.

For this to happen, there would need to be far greater reach of the guidance services of Careers Wales amongst adults. It was clear from the evidence that, while Careers Wales was influential among 16-18 year olds in offering advice and guidance, its role was significantly diminished among older age groups.

Satisfaction with Provider

This section covers respondents' satisfaction with their college or training provider by examining three aspects of learning provision:

- overall satisfaction with the quality of training
- ratings of trainers, tutors and assessors across a number of key aspects relating to the training delivered
- ratings of how well the college or training provider managed training across several key areas.

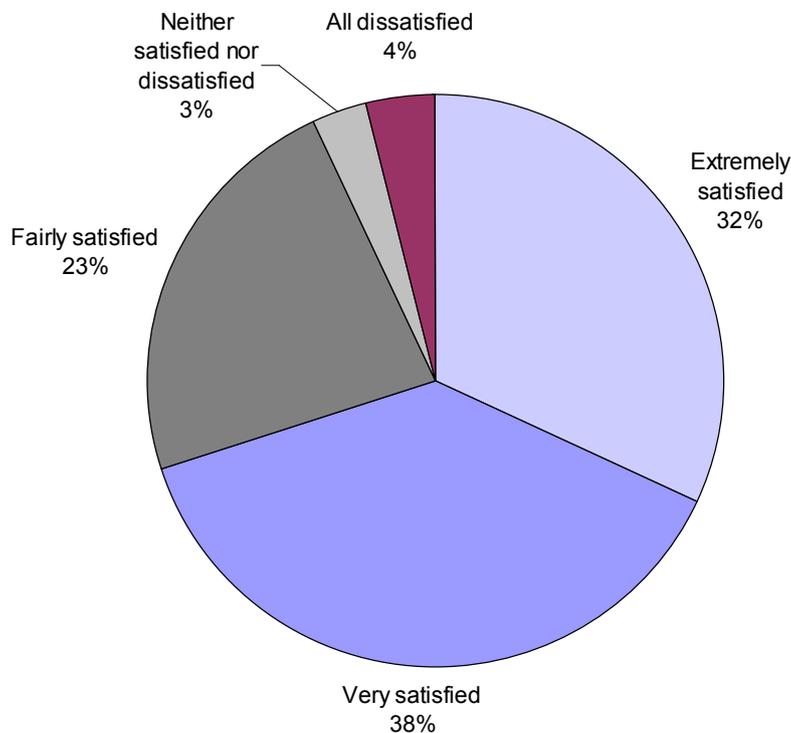
Given the importance of the overall quality of training ratings in driving overall satisfaction¹⁸, we also examine the potential for improving ratings for the quality of training by using a standard ridge regression technique to understand the drivers of their satisfaction.

Satisfaction with training

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the quality of the training that takes place at their college or training provider. As shown by Chart 12, levels of satisfaction were very high, with nine in ten respondents (93%) being satisfied to some degree and seven in ten (70%) being extremely or very satisfied.

¹⁸ see earlier chapter Overall Satisfaction with Learning Experience

Chart 12 Overall satisfaction with quality of training



Base: All respondents (unwtd: 1,507)

In particular, females and respondents aged 25 plus were more satisfied than males and younger respondents (see Table 16). However, closer analysis reveals a striking difference between males and females in the 19-24 age range, with four in five females aged 19-24 (81%) being extremely or very satisfied compared with three in five males aged 19-24 (62%).

Table 16 Overall satisfaction with quality of training by gender and age

| Base: All respondents | Total | Gender | | Age | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| | | Male | Female | 16-18 | 19-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45+ |
| Unweighted base | 1507 | 806 | 701 | 423 | 458 | 241 | 199 | 186 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Extremely satisfied | 32 | 28 | 37 | 32 | 29 | 33 | 33 | 39 |
| Very satisfied | 38 | 37 | 39 | 32 | 39 | 44 | 40 | 38 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Fairly satisfied | 23 | 27 | 18 | 30 | 25 | 16 | 19 | 15 |
| Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| All dissatisfied | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| (net) Extremely / very satisfied | 70 | 65 | 76 | 64 | 68 | 77 | 73 | 77 |

Table 17 Percentage extremely or very satisfied with quality of training by age within gender

| Base: All respondents | Unwtd base | Total | Age | | | |
|-----------------------|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| | | | 16-18 | 19-24 | 25-34 | 35+ |
| | | 1,507 | 423 | 458 | 241 | 385 |
| | | % | % | % | % | % |
| Male | 806 | 65 | 63 | 62 | 74 | 72 |
| Female | 701 | 76 | 65 | 81 | 79 | 76 |

Analysis by programme type showed that a smaller than average proportion of learners on Skillbuild programmes gave an extremely/very satisfied rating with the quality of training.

Small base sizes made it difficult to detect a clear-cut pattern with subject areas, but the data indicated that respondents on Construction, Transportation, Engineering and Manufacturing programmes tended to be less satisfied with the quality of training overall (63% of respondents training in these subjects gave a top two box rating). However, as discussed in the respondent profile section of the appendices to this report, respondents training in these subject areas were almost exclusively male and predominantly younger (aged under 25).

As previously discussed, there was a correlation between levels of satisfaction with the quality of training and overall satisfaction with the learning experience. Similarly, those who were extremely or very satisfied with the support they received from their employer were also more likely to be extremely or very satisfied with the quality of training received (77% compared with 59%t who were less than very satisfied with the support from their employer)..

The following sub-groups also displayed higher levels of satisfaction with the quality of training.

- Respondents who were attending their first choice provider (74% were extremely or very satisfied) compared with those whose employer or Jobcentre Plus had chosen for them (65% extremely or very satisfied).
- Similarly, those who accessed their first choice course were also more likely to be extremely or very satisfied (72%) than those not on their first choice course (55%) or whose employer or Jobcentre Plus had chosen for them (62%).
- Approximately four-fifths of respondents who felt that their training was very useful to their current job (79%) were extremely or very satisfied with the quality of training compared to around half of those who considered their training was either quite useful or not useful to their current job (52%).

Conversely, the following groups of respondents were less likely to be extremely or very satisfied with the quality of training at their college or training provider:

- Those who had seriously thought about leaving (44% compared with 75% who had not considered this)
- Those who had experienced problems since starting their training (65% compared with 75% who had had no problems)

Additionally, the data indicated that respondents whose training was delivered in the workplace were more likely to be extremely satisfied than those who attended an FE college for their training (35% compared with 29% extremely satisfied), although they were not significantly more likely to be 'extremely' or 'very' satisfied overall (72% compared with 68%). It should be borne in mind that younger respondents (those aged under 25) were more likely to be attending FE college, whereas those aged 25 plus were more likely to be receiving training in their workplace.

Ratings for trainers, tutors and assessors

Respondents were asked to rate their trainers, tutors or assessors on a scale of 1 to 10¹⁹ on a number of aspects of training delivery, which may be grouped under three broad headings.

| Teaching methods | Understanding the learner | Learner development |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to explain the programme topics • Making the training interesting or enjoyable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to needs • Understanding you/how you like to learn • Treating you fairly and with respect | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support they give, e.g. in improving learning skills or time management • Setting clear targets or learning goals to help you |

¹⁹ The 1 to 10 scale was such that 1 meant very poor and 10 meant excellent

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making good use of session time • Quality/availability of resources | | improve <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing prompt and regular feedback on progress |
|--|--|---|

All aspects of teaching received a mean score of 8 or higher²⁰, showing that the majority of respondents rated teaching elements towards the top of the 1 to 10 scale (Table 18). Two of the attributes which scored most highly related to **understanding the learner**, namely: ‘treating you fairly and with respect’ (78% scored 9 or 10 out of 10) and ‘listening to your needs’ (64% scored 9 or 10). Whilst ‘ability to explain the programme topics’, relating to **teaching methods**, also scored highly (64% gave a score of 9 or 10), the three other aspects relating to teaching methods were rated lowest (each scoring between 52% and 55%). Aspects of teaching relating to **learner development** received top scores of 9 or 10 from between 56% and 59% of respondents.

Table 18 Ratings for teachers, tutors or assessors

| Base: All respondents (unweighted: 1,507) | % rating 9 -10 out of 10 (top score) | Mean score |
|--|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Treating you fairly and with respect | 78 | 9.17 |
| Ability to explain the programme topics | 64 | 8.75 |
| Listening to your needs | 64 | 8.70 |
| The support they give you, for example in improving your learning skills or the way you manage your time | 59 | 8.52 |
| Understanding you and how you like to learn | 58 | 8.51 |
| Providing prompt and regular feedback on your progress | 58 | 8.47 |
| Setting clear targets or learning goals to help you improve | 56 | 8.45 |
| Making good use of session time | 55 | 8.38 |
| Making your training interesting or enjoyable for you | 55 | 8.36 |
| The quality and availability of resources they use | 52 | 8.33 |

The groups which tended to be more satisfied with the quality of their training overall also tended to rate individual aspects relating to the delivery of their training more highly. As previously discussed, these were:

²⁰ A mean score is the average score out of 10

- Female respondents
- Those who were more satisfied with their learning experience overall
- Those who were more satisfied with the support received from their employer
- Respondents attending their first choice training provider
- Respondents on their first choice course
- Those who felt that their training was useful to their current job

Similarly, respondents who were less satisfied overall tended to give lower ratings:

- Respondents who had seriously thought about leaving
- Respondents who had experienced problems on their training programme

In addition, respondents who were not employed tended to rate individual aspects relating to the delivery of their training less highly than those who were employed.

Chart 13 provides a summary of the groups most likely to give a score of 9 or 10 out of 10, and those groups most likely to give a score of 6 or less out of 10) under the three broad umbrella headings of teaching methods, understanding the learner and learner development.

Additional groups of respondents who rated specific areas of training delivery more or less highly than others are discussed in more detail below.

Teaching methods

Those training towards a qualification at up to level 2 were more likely to rate their trainers, tutors and assessors more highly on aspects relating to teaching methods (compared with those learning at level 3 and above). For example, a higher proportion of respondents training on a programme up to level 2 gave a score of 9 or 10 for 'making the training interesting or enjoyable' (58% compared with 51% training at level 3 and above) and 'making good use of session time' (58% compared with 53%).

Similar to this, those who had no previous qualifications were more likely than those whose held a previous highest qualification between entry level and level 3 to give their trainers, tutors and assessors scores of 9 or 10 out of 10 for all aspects relating to teaching methods except for 'the quality and availability of the resources they use'.

Understanding the learner

Respondents more likely to rate aspects of their training delivery related to understanding the learner as 9 or 10 out of 10 included the following:

- Respondents with children - for example, seven in ten (69%) gave a top two score for 'listening to your needs' compared with 63% of respondents without children.
- Those whose training took place at a private training provider were more likely than respondents who attended an FE college to give a score of 9 or 10 out of 10 for 'understanding you and how you like to learn' (60% compared with 52%) and 'treating you fairly and with respect' (81% compared with 74%). As already noted, respondents whose training was delivered in the workplace were consistently more likely than those attending an FE college to give a top two score across all aspects of training delivery.

Learner development

Once again, those training for a qualification at up to level 2 were more likely to rate aspects of training delivery relating to learner development more highly than those working towards a qualification at level 3 or above.

- Respondents training at up to level 2 were more likely to give all aspects relating to learner development a top two score. For example, 59 per cent scored 9 or 10 out of 10 for 'setting clear targets or learning goals to help you improve' compared with 53 per cent of those training at level 3 plus.
- Similarly, those who held no qualifications were more likely than respondents who had a previous qualification to give a 9 or 10 out of 10 for all aspects relating to learner development except for 'setting clear targets or learning goals to help you improve'.

Chart 13 Most and least critical groups regarding broad elements of training

Teaching methods

Groups most likely to score 9 or 10 on at least 2 out of 4 elements
 Females
 65+
 White learners
 Part time learners, < 3 hrs
 Non-workers
 Those with caring responsibilities
 Those on short courses
 Those learning at up to L2

Groups most likely to score 6 or less on at least 2 out of 4 elements
 Those on Skillbuild programmes
 Early leavers
 Thought about leaving
 Experienced problems
 Not on 1st choice course
 Learning online/ in writing

Understanding the learner

Groups most likely to score 9 or 10 on at least 2 out of 3 elements
 Females
 65+
 Part time learners, < 3 hrs
 Those with caring responsibilities
 Those on short courses
 Those learning at up to L2

Groups most likely to score 6 or less on at least 2 out of 3 elements
 Those on Skillbuild programmes
 Full time learners
 Early leavers
 Thought about leaving
 Experienced problems
 Not at 1st choice college
 Not on 1st choice course
 Learning online/ in writing

Learner development

Groups most likely to score 9 or 10 on at least 2 out of 3 elements
 Females
 65+
 Non-workers
 Daytime learners
 Those with caring responsibilities
 Those on short courses
 Those learning at up to L2

Groups most likely to score 6 or less on at least 2 out of 3 elements
 Evening learners
 Early leavers
 Thought about leaving
 Experienced problems
 Not at 1st choice college/no choice
 Learning online/ in writing

Course management

Respondents were asked to rate their college or training provider on course management across three broad areas: learner welfare, timetabling and assessor visits. Once again, respondents were asked to provide a rating on a scale of 1 to 10²¹ and the following table summarises the results.

Around two in every three respondents rated each of the course management aspects relating to **assessor visits** as a 9 or 10 out of 10. Seventy per cent of respondents gave this score for 'assessors turning up as planned', 68 per cent for 'seeing the same assessor throughout' and 63 per cent for 'the frequency of assessor visits'. One statement related to **learner welfare** ('providing support when you have problems') and was given a score of 9 or 10 by two-thirds of respondents (67%). For aspects relating to **timetabling**, 63 per cent of respondents gave their college or training provider a score of 9 or 10 out of 10 for 'arranging sessions or appointments so that they suit you as best they can' and 57 per cent gave a score of 9 or 10 for 'communicating changes to session times'

Table 19 Ratings for course management

| Base: All respondents (unweighted: 1,507) except * All respondents whose training is delivered in the workplace (891) | % rating 9 -10 out of 10 (top score) | Mean score |
|---|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Learner welfare | | |
| Providing support when you have problems | 67 | 8.83 |
| Timetabling | | |
| Arranging sessions or appointments so that they suit you as best they can | 63 | 8.60 |
| Communicating changes to session times | 57 | 8.45 |
| Assessor visits | | |
| Assessors turning up as planned* | 70 | 8.86 |
| Seeing the same assessor throughout | 68 | 8.75 |
| The frequency of assessor visits* | 63 | 8.61 |

Once again, the groups of respondents previously identified as being more satisfied with the quality of training overall tended to rate aspects relating to course

²¹ On the 1 to 10 scale, 1 meant very poor and 10 meant excellent

management more highly. However, there were also some interesting differences between certain respondent sub-groups for specific aspects of course management.

Learner welfare

Respondents who held no previous qualification were more likely to give a rating of 9 or 10 out of 10 for 'providing support when you have problems' (80% compared with 70% or less of those who already held a qualification at entry level or higher). Furthermore, those in social grade DE were also more likely to rate this aspect higher than those in social grades AB or C1 (72% compared with 63% and 65% respectively).

Timetabling

Respondents who were in employment whilst on their programme and respondents with children rated both aspects relating to timetabling more highly than those not employed and those without children. For example:

- 64 per cent of respondents who were employed gave a score of 9 or 10 out of 10 for 'arranging sessions or appointments so that they can suit you as best they can', compared with 50 per cent who were not employed during their training.
- 62 per cent of respondents with parental responsibilities gave a score of 9 or 10 out of 10 for 'communicating changes to session times' (compared with 55% of those without any caring responsibilities)

In addition, respondents aged 25 plus were more likely to give scores of 9 or 10 out of 10 than those aged under 25. For example, 71 per cent of respondents aged 25 plus gave a score of 9 or 10 out of 10 for 'arranging sessions or appointments so that they can suit you as best they can', compared with 57 per cent of 16-24 year olds. This was due to the fact that younger males (aged 16-24) were much less likely to rate both aspects relating to timetabling as highly as older males (aged 25 plus) or females across all ages.

Assessor visits

Two of the three aspects relating to assessor visits ('assessors turning up as planned' and 'the frequency of assessor visits') were asked only of those respondents whose training is delivered in their workplace.

Notably, respondents aged 25 plus and those with children were more likely to rate these aspects more highly than those aged under 25 and those without children, although it should be reiterated that respondents with children were much more likely to be aged 25 plus. For example, 78 per cent of respondents aged 25 plus gave a score of 9 or 10 out of 10 for 'assessors turning up as planned' (compared with 63% of

those aged 16-24) and 73 per cent of respondents with children gave a score of 9 or 10 for 'seeing the same assessor throughout' (compared with 66% of those with no caring responsibilities').

Drivers of satisfaction with the quality of teaching

As noted earlier in this report, ratings for satisfaction with the quality of teaching was key in driving both dissatisfaction and delight with the overall learning experience. It is therefore useful to consider *which* elements of teaching have the greatest impact on the overall score.

Statistical analysis²² was carried out to determine how important each element of teaching was in driving overall satisfaction with teaching quality. The following table shows the relative importance (as a percentage) of each factor in driving overall satisfaction, plus the rank position of each element. From this it is clear that of greatest importance to respondents is 'making good use of session time', followed by 'the support they give you', 'making the training interesting and enjoyable' and 'listening to your needs'.

Table 20 Drivers of satisfaction with the quality of training

| Dependent variable: How satisfied are you with the quality of the training? | % importance | Rank position |
|---|--------------|---------------|
| Ability to explain the programme topics | 9.3 | 7 |
| Listening to your needs | 10.5 | 4 |
| Making your training interesting or enjoyable | 10.6 | 3 |
| Understanding you and how you like to learn | 8.9 | 8 |
| The support they give you | 12.2 | 2 |
| Making good use of session time | 12.7 | 1 |
| The quality and availability of resources they use | 8.9 | 9 |
| Setting clear targets or learning goals to help you improve | 10.2 | 5 |
| Providing prompt and regular feedback on your progress | 10.2 | 6 |
| Treating you fairly and with respect | 6.3 | 10 |

²² Ridge Regression is a technique used to work out how much influence different attributes have on some dependent variable such as satisfaction. If the attributes measured are in some way correlated (for example as one improves another one is also likely to improve) then ordinary linear regression analysis can give a misleading and unstable solution. This inter-correlation between independent variables is called 'multi-collinearity'; ridge regression is a special type of regression, which is used to deal with this problem.

By mapping this 'importance' score against the performance score (the respondent ratings for individual aspects of teaching) it is possible to see where interventions are likely to have the greatest impact on driving up satisfaction in the future.

The next chart summarises the results in four quadrants²³:

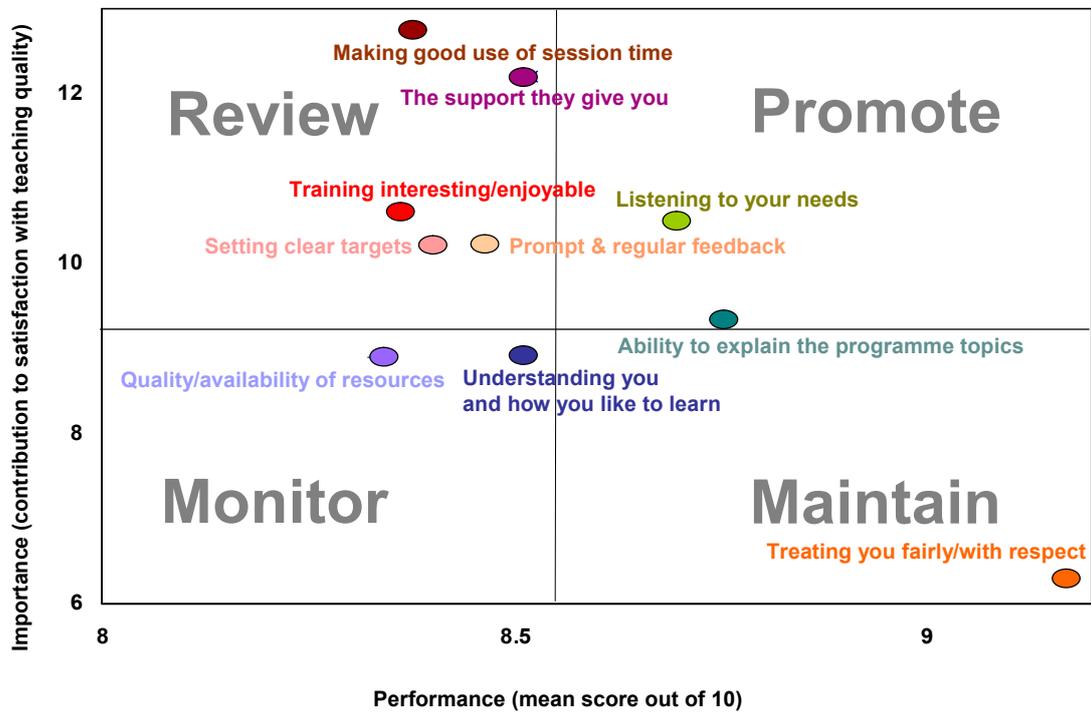
- top left hand box: high importance but lower performance indicating a need for **review**
- top right hand box: high importance and high performance indicating a case for **promotion** of strengths
- bottom left hand box: lower importance and lower performance indicating a case for **monitoring**
- bottom right hand box: lower importance but high performance indicating a need to **maintain** performance.

The analysis shows that:

- One aspect rated highly in terms of performance and importance, namely 'listening to your needs' and 'ability to explain the programme topics. Therefore, these sit in the 'promote' quadrant and these are aspects of teaching that drive the high levels of satisfaction observed and are also well regarded by respondents.
- Relative to all other aspects of training, 'making good use of session time', 'the support they give you', 'making your training interesting or enjoyable', 'setting clear targets' and 'prompt and regular feedback' are items for review. In other words, the data suggests that changes in these areas would have the greatest impact on overall ratings for the quality of training.
- Ratings of 'the quality and availability of resources they use' and 'understanding you and how you like to learn' were lower in comparison to other factors. Currently, however, these factors are relatively less important in terms of driving overall satisfaction with training, so these should be monitored over time.
- Whilst 'treating you fairly and with respect' scored highly in terms of performance, the contribution of this factor to driving overall satisfaction with training was lower *relative to all other aspects* and hence satisfaction levels for this factor should be maintained.

²³ The midpoints in the chart that delineate the quadrants are set on the basis of being half way positions between the top and bottom scores for importance and the average of the ten performance scores

Chart 14 Action grid for improving ratings for overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching



Conclusions and policy implications

The main findings from the survey relating to satisfaction with provider can be summarised as follows:

- Very high levels of satisfaction with the quality of training were registered by respondents.
- Females and respondents aged 25 plus were more satisfied than males and younger respondents with the quality of training.

- Those who were extremely or very satisfied with the support from their employer were also more likely to be extremely or very satisfied with the quality of training received.
- Levels of satisfaction with the quality of training were higher among those at their first choice of course and provider, and those for whom the training was highly relevant for their current job.
- The majority of respondents rated all aspects of teaching very highly, with 'treating you fairly and with respect' being particularly highly rated.
- Those with no prior qualifications, or qualifications up to level 2, rated the teaching methods more highly than other respondents.
- 'Making good use of session time' was the most important driver of overall satisfaction with training quality.
- 'Listening to your needs' and 'ability to explain the programme topics' were areas of training that were both important drivers of overall satisfaction with teaching quality and were also highly rated by respondents.

Responses to questions about learning providers revealed high levels of satisfaction across different aspects of that provision, with the quality of the training delivered being especially well-received, particularly by younger respondents. This variation between age groups in the extent to which they valued what was being delivered by providers should be borne in mind by providers, so that they remain sensitive to the differing needs and perceptions of all learners.

The extent to which providers were attempting to address the needs of individual learners was evident from the high ratings given by those who held no qualifications to the learner development aspects of the role of trainers, tutors and assessors. In particular, the support offered to learners and the regularity of feedback on progress achieved were mentioned. Similarly, these respondents welcomed the way in which they were offered support when they had problems. These findings indicate that providers have a positive ethos and appropriate infrastructure to respond to the needs of the vast majority of their learners. Moreover, they appear to have been successful in engaging with less traditional learners, who, by dint of their previous experience, may have been expected to be more critical and resistant to what providers could offer.

The ridge regression analysis indicated that 'listening to your needs' was the most important aspect driving satisfaction with the quality of teaching. However, of great significance for providers was the finding that making improvements to five other aspects relating to the quality of teaching may yield benefits, in terms of increased learner satisfaction. These aspects were: making good use of lesson time; the

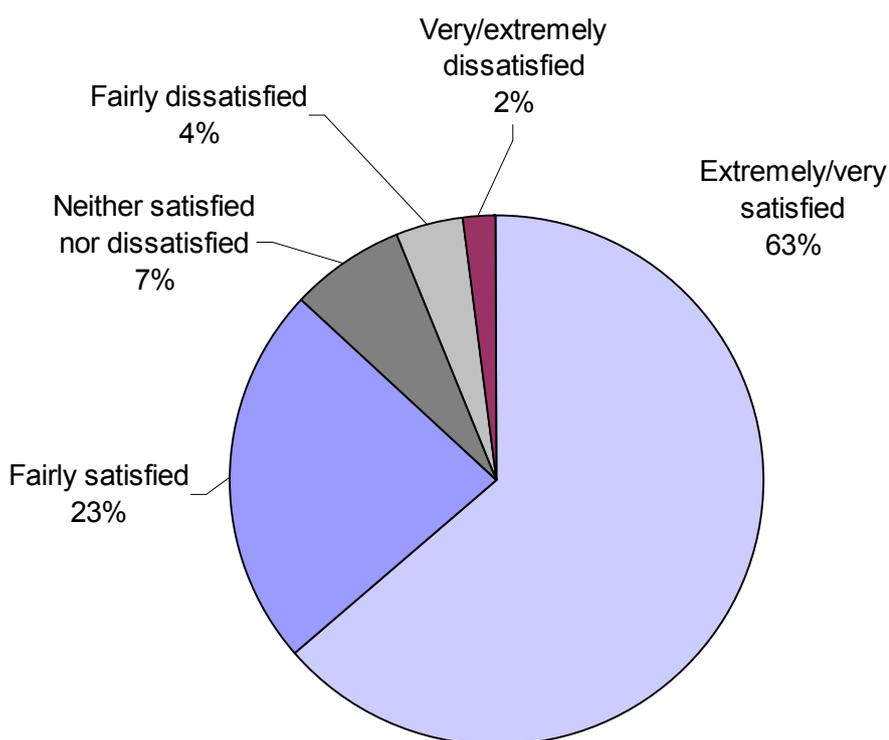
support they give you; making training interesting/enjoyable; setting clear targets; and providing prompt and regular feedback.

Consideration should be given to providing support to providers in seeking to make these improvements. This could be done by establishing a set of guidelines to be followed, identifying and disseminating examples of good practice from providers across Wales, and running workshops for providers' staff.

Satisfaction with Employer

All respondents who were employed during their programme were asked how satisfied they were with the support they received from their employer to help them succeed with their training. Encouragingly, the majority of respondents said they were satisfied (86%), with almost two thirds of respondents saying they were extremely or very satisfied (63%). Just 6 per cent of respondents said they were dissatisfied, and within this, very few respondents were very or extremely dissatisfied (2%). A further 7 per cent of respondents said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Chart 15 Satisfaction with support received from the employer to succeed on the training



Base: All respondents employed by an employer during their course (unwtd: 1,336)

When looking in more detail at the profile of respondents who were more likely to be extremely or very satisfied with the support received from their employer, there were no differences by gender. Within age, however, it was evident that younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to be extremely or very satisfied with the support they received (70% of 16-18s, 67% of 19-24s compared with 56% of those aged 25 and above).

Linked with age, those with no caring responsibilities were also more likely to be extremely or very satisfied with the support received from their employer than those who were caring for children or adults (66% compared with 58% of those caring for children and 51% of those caring for adults).

Whilst there were no detectable differences in top two box satisfaction by programme type, where base sizes were large enough to allow for analysis, some interesting differences were seen by the subject of the programme being studied. Respondents on construction, engineering, manufacturing and transportation programmes, were more likely to be satisfied with the support received from their employer than respondents overall (68% compared with 63% respectively). In contrast, respondents on management, business, administration and law programmes, were less likely to be satisfied with the support received from their employer (54% compared with 63% of respondents overall). This finding is again linked with age as construction, engineering, manufacture and transportation programmes were studied predominantly by younger respondents and management, business, administration and law programmes were studied predominantly by respondents aged 25 plus²⁴.

Those respondents on training they considered very useful for their job were also more likely to be extremely or very satisfied with the support they received than those who thought their training was quite useful or not very useful for their job (70% compared with 47% respectively).

Perhaps not surprisingly, respondents who said their employer or Jobcentre Plus had decided which training programme or provider they attended were less likely to give their employer the top two box rating of satisfaction for the support they received than those respondents who had made this choice themselves and achieved their first choice. For example:

- 52 per cent of respondents whose course had been determined by their employer or Jobcentre Plus were extremely/very satisfied with the support they received from their employer compared with 65 per cent of those who said they had achieved their first choice of course.
- 58 per cent of respondents whose provider was chosen by their employer or Jobcentre Plus gave their employer the top two box rating of satisfaction for support

²⁴ For figures, see section 'Profile of learners' section of Appendices.

received compared with 69 per cent of those who achieved their first choice of provider.

- Those who did not achieve their first choice of provider or did not consider another option were also less likely to be satisfied with the support received from their employer than those who obtained their first choice (41% and 54% compared with 69% respectively).

Satisfaction with support received from the employer was also correlated with other measures, as follows:

- Of respondents who were extremely or very satisfied with their learning experience, 70 per cent were extremely/very satisfied with the support received from their employer compared with only 45 per cent of those respondents who were indifferent/dissatisfied with their learning experience.
- Almost three quarters of respondents (73%) who said they had not experienced problems gave their employer the top two box rating of satisfaction for support received. In contrast, around half (53%) of those who had experienced problems had given this rating to their employer.
- Respondents who had seriously thought about leaving their provider were less likely to be satisfied with the support received from their employer: 48 per cent of respondents who had thought about leaving their programme said they were extremely or very satisfied with their employer's support compared with 66 per cent of those who had not thought about leaving.

Table 21 Profile of respondents who were extremely/very satisfied with the support they received from their employer with training

| Respondents employed by an employer during their course (Unweighted base sizes shown in brackets) | % extremely or very satisfied |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Total (1336) | 63% |
| Gender | |
| Male (717) | 64% |
| Female (619) | 62% |
| Age | |
| 16-18 (326) | 70% |
| 19-24 (433) | 67% |
| 25+ (577) | 56% |
| Caring commitments | |
| For children (340) | 58% |

| | |
|--|-----|
| For adults (**65) | 51% |
| None (949) | 66% |
| Course subject | |
| Construction/engineering and manufacture (463) | 67% |
| Transportation (**55) | 80% |
| Management, Business, Administration and the law (204) | 54% |
| Training useful for current job | |
| Very (931) | 70% |
| Quite useful / not useful (378) | 47% |
| First choice of provider | |
| Yes (755) | 69% |
| No (**37) | 41% |
| Didn't consider another option (**96) | 54% |
| Employer/Jobcentre Plus chose (445) | 58% |
| First choice of course | |
| Yes (1123) | 65% |
| No (**50) | 62% |
| Didn't consider another option (**20) | 35% |
| Employer/Jobcentre Plus chose for me (140) | 52% |
| Satisfaction with learning experience overall | |
| Extremely / very satisfied (1005) | 70% |
| Fairly satisfied (249) | 43% |
| Indifferent/dissatisfied (**80) | 40% |
| Problems since starting course | |
| Yes (600) | 53% |
| No (733) | 72% |
| Seriously thought about leaving | |
| Yes (164) | 48% |
| No (1131) | 66% |

Note: ** Small base (<100). *** very small base ineligible for significance testing (<30).

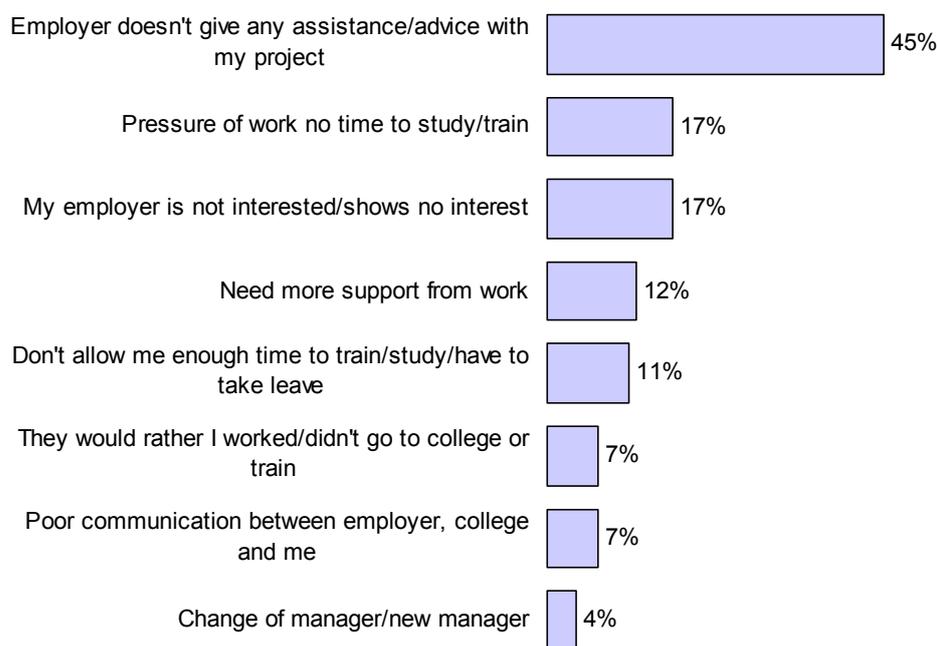
Reasons for dissatisfaction

Respondents who were dissatisfied with the support they received from their employer to help them succeed in their training were asked to give the reasons for this. The most frequently mentioned reason, given by 45 per cent of respondents, was that their employer did not give them any assistance or advice with their project.

Following this, around one in six respondents said they were dissatisfied with their employer because the pressure of work meant they had no time to study (17%) and because their employer showed no interest in their training (17%). Around one in ten respondents said that they needed more support from work (12%) and that because work did not allow them enough time to train or study they had to take leave (12%).

Other factors mentioned by more than 5 per cent of respondents were that respondents felt their employer would rather they worked and did not go to college or train (7%) and poor communication between the employer, college and themselves (7%).

Chart 16 Reasons for dissatisfaction



Base: All respondents who were dissatisfied with their employer (unwtd: 83 (low base size)). Don't know/not stated not shown. Multiple responses allowed at this question.

Due to the small number of respondents who were dissatisfied with the support they received from their employer whilst on their training (83 respondents – see Table 54 in

the appendices to this report) there were few demographic differences of note relating to this question. Two exceptions to this were that:

- Female respondents were approximately five times more likely than male respondents to be dissatisfied with their employer because they believed they were not interested in their training (27% compared with 5%).
- Those with caring responsibilities for children were around three times more likely than those without any caring commitments to say they were not satisfied with their employer as, due to the pressure of work, they had no time to study (30% compared with 9%).

Measures of satisfaction with the employer

Respondents were asked to rate their employer on a number of aspects using a scale of 1-10, where 1 was very poor and 10 was excellent. All aspects of the employer received a mean score of 8 or higher²⁵, showing that the majority of respondents rated employer elements towards the top of the 1-10 scale (Table 22).

Those elements which scored most highly, with 62 per cent or more of respondents giving their employer a 9-10 rating, were:-

- making sure your job relates to your training programme (65%)
- encouraging you to achieve the qualification (65%)
- making sure there is no pressure to miss training or meetings with assessors (64%)
- allowing you time during working hours for the programme (62%).

Those aspects which were slightly less likely to achieve a 9 to 10 rating were:

- allowing you to work flexible hours if needed (58%)
- understanding your training programme and the work you are required to do for it (56%).

²⁵ A mean score is the average score out of 10.

Table 22 Measures of satisfaction with the employer

| Base, all respondents who were employed during their programme (1336) | % rating 9-10 out of 10 (top score) | Mean score |
|--|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Making sure your job relates to your training programme | 65 | 8.64 |
| Making sure there is no pressure to miss training or meeting with assessors | 64 | 8.6 |
| Encouraging you to achieve the qualification | 65 | 8.51 |
| Allowing you time for the work hours for the programme | 62 | 8.28 |
| Allowing you to work flexible hours if needed | 58 | 8.19 |
| Understanding your training programme and the work you are required to do for it | 56 | 8.31 |

Analysing sub-groups within the data revealed that there were few notable differences by gender. The only exception to this was that men were more likely than women to rate their employer 9 or 10 for 'allowing them time during working hours for the programme.'

When looking at the findings by age, in line with overall satisfaction with the employer, respondents aged 16-24 were more likely than respondents aged 25 or more to give all six aspects of their employer a 9 or 10 out of 10 rating. Figures are shown in Table 23:

Table 23 Measures of satisfaction with employer by gender and age

| | Total | Gender | | Age | | |
|---|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-----|
| Base: All respondents employed during their course | | Male | Female | 16-18 | 19-24 | 25+ |
| Unweighted | 1336 | 717 | 619 | 326 | 433 | 577 |
| % rating 9-10 out of 10 (top score) | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Making sure your job relates to your training programme | 65 | 63 | 67 | 72 | 66 | 60 |
| Making sure there is no pressure to miss training or meeting with assessors | 64 | 65 | 63 | 71 | 66 | 58 |
| Encouraging you to achieve the qualification^ | 65 | 66 | 64 | 76 | 69 | 56 |
| Allowing you time during working hours for the programme | 62 | 65 | 58 | 73 | 64 | 54 |
| Allowing you to work flexible hours if needed | 58 | 60 | 56 | 68 | 60 | 51 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Understanding your training programme and the work you are required to do for it | 56 | 56 | 57 | 68 | 57 | 49 |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|

Notes: ^ Only respondents employed and studying for a qualification during their course were asked whether their employer 'encourages you to achieve the qualification' (base sizes for this question are total 1318, men 706, female 612, 16-18 - 317, 19-24 - 428, 25+ - 573).

Linked to age, respondents with no caring responsibilities were more likely to give employers a 9 or 10 rating for five of the six aspects than those respondents with caring commitments for children or adults. The only exception to this was, 'allowing you to work flexible hours if needed' where there was no significant difference between the two groups Table 55 – see appendices).

Analysis by programme type revealed that learners on Skillbuild programmes were more likely than average to rate their employers 9 or 10 out of 10 for the following:

- understanding your training programme and the work you are required to do for it
- allowing you to work flexible hours if needed
- making sure there is no pressure to miss training sessions or meetings with assessors

In contrast, learners following Modern Apprenticeship and Other programmes were less likely to return a 9 or 10 out of 10 rating than FMA and Skillbuild learners for:

- understanding your training programme and the work you are required to do for it
- making sure your job relates to your training programme
- allowing you time during working hours for the programme

Interestingly, those who said it was likely that they would undertake further learning in the next 3 years were more likely to give their employer a 9 or 10 rating than those who thought it was not likely that they would pursue further training for the following: allowing you time during working hours for the programme (64% compared with 55%) and making sure there is no pressure to miss training sessions or meetings with assessors (66% compared with 55%). This suggests that these are important ways in which employers can support learners with their training.

Relevance of training to current job

All respondents who were employed were asked if their training was directly or indirectly related to their current job or not related at all. Around nine out of ten respondents (91%) said that their training was directly related to their job and 7 per cent said it was indirectly related. Only 2 per cent said it was not related at all.

When looking at demographic differences within the data, male respondents aged 35+ were less likely to think that their training related directly to their job than respondents overall, (82% of men aged 35 plus compared with 91% of respondents overall) and more likely to think that their training related indirectly (17% compared with 7% overall).

Table 24 Whether training was directly related to learners' current job by age within gender

| | Total | Male by age | | Female by age | |
|--|-------|-------------|-----|---------------|-----|
| | | 16-34 | 35+ | 16-34 | 35+ |
| All respondents who were employed or self employed during their course | | | | | |
| Base: un-weighted | 1369 | 741 | 628 | 1004 | 365 |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Directly related to your job | 91 | 92 | 82 | 93 | 90 |
| Indirectly related to your job | 7 | 6 | 17 | 6 | 9 |
| Not related to your job | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Don't know | * | 0 | 0 | * | 1 |

* Note: * denotes <0.5%.

At least nine in ten learners following Modern Apprenticeship, Foundation Modern Apprenticeship and Other programmes said their learning was directly related to their job. In contrast, just 80 per cent of learners following Skillbuild programmes felt this way (this group was more likely than average to say that their training was not related to their job at all: 7% versus an average of 2%).

There were some interesting differences by subject of training: respondents studying health, social and childcare were more likely than respondents overall to say that their training directly related to their job (94% compared with 91%). Conversely, those studying management, business, administration and the law were less likely to feel that their training directly related to their job and were more likely to think that it was indirectly related (14% said it was indirectly related to their job, compared with 7% of respondents overall).

As would be anticipated, respondents who were studying at their workplace were more likely to say their course related directly to their job than those attending private training providers (93% compared with 87% respectively).

Usefulness of training to current job

Those respondents who said their training was linked to their job, directly or indirectly, were asked how useful the training was to their job. Encouragingly, the majority of these respondents found it useful (96%), with 71 per cent finding it very useful and a quarter finding it quite useful (25%). Only 4 per cent said it was not useful to their job (3% that it was not very useful and 1% that it was not at all useful).

Younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to say that their training was very useful to their job (73% of those aged 16-34 compared with 66% of those aged 35 plus). However, with regard to gender, there were no notable differences.

Table 25 Usefulness of training to learners' employment by gender and age

| | Total | Gender | | Age | |
|--|-------|--------|--------|----------|-----|
| | | Male | Female | Under 34 | 35+ |
| All respondents whose training is related to their job | | | | | |
| Base: unweighted | 1369 | 741 | 628 | 1004 | 365 |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Very useful | 71 | 71 | 71 | 73 | 66 |
| Quite useful | 25 | 25 | 25 | 24 | 29 |
| Not very useful | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| Not at all useful | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Don't know | * | * | * | * | * |

Note: * denotes < 0.5%.

Respondents on health, social and childcare training, and construction, engineering, manufacture and transportation training were more likely to say that their training was very useful to their current job than respondents overall (78% and 76% compared with 71% respectively). Conversely, respondents attending retail, distribution and customer services training, and management, business, administration and law training were less likely than respondents overall, to feel that this training was very useful to their job (64%, 56% compared with 71% respectively).

Interestingly, those respondents who studied at an FE college were more likely to say their course was directly related to their job than those who studied at their workplace (77% compared with 71% respectively).

As mentioned previously, respondents who were on training courses which were very useful to their job were more likely to be extremely or very satisfied with the support they received from their employer and their overall learning experience than respondents on courses which were quite useful or not useful to their job.

Conclusions and policy implications

The main findings from the survey relating to satisfaction with their employer can be summarised as follows:

- A large majority of respondents who were employed were satisfied with the support they received from their employer.
- Younger respondents were more likely to be extremely or very satisfied.
- Respondents on construction, engineering, manufacturing and transportation programmes, were more likely to be satisfied with the support received from their employer than respondents overall.
- High levels of satisfaction were also recorded by those for whom the training being undertaken was highly relevant for their work.
- Respondents who had not been involved in the decision about the type of training to be undertaken, or were not on their first choice of course, were less likely to exhibit very high levels of satisfaction.
- The majority of respondents rated all aspects of employers' input very highly.
- Those intending to undertake further learning in the future were more likely to say that their employer allowed them time to study during working hours and made sure that there was no pressure to miss training sessions or meetings with assessors.
- Overwhelmingly, respondents who were employed stated that their training was directly or indirectly related to their work.
- The vast majority felt that the training was very or quite useful for their job.
- Those studying at an FE college were more likely than those training in the workplace to assert that their course was directly related to their job.

The majority of respondents who were employed received support and encouragement from their employer. This often took very practical forms, such as enabling them to have time off the job in order to devote sufficient time to their studies to fulfil the requirements of the course. Also valued was where the employer showed interest in their learning, and this recognition by their employer of what they were seeking to achieve on their course was clearly a stimulus to course completion and attainment.

However, in the minority of cases where this support and interest from the employer was not forthcoming, higher levels of dissatisfaction were expressed by respondents. Some even felt that their employer did not really want them to engage in training as it

interfered with their work. Such employer attitudes betray a lack of belief in the value of training, which needs to be countered at every opportunity. This antipathy towards employee training and development among many employers has long been identified as a major constraint on the up-skilling of the workforce and the competitiveness of many organisations. These findings indicate that the process of persuading employers of the benefits to be gained from a commitment to and belief in the training and development of their employees should be ongoing.

The fact that their employees are undertaking some form of training provides an opportunity to create greater awareness of the positive role which employers can play in supporting their workers' skills enhancement. This can be aligned to the message that 'training pays', in terms of long-term benefits accruing to employers. The role of WAG's business advisers, who, amongst other things, are able to offer the Free Skills Review service to employers, can be crucial in this respect. In addition, learning providers and individual tutors and assessors can take advantage of opportunities to convince employers of the advisability of investing in workforce training. At the same time, employers can be encouraged to recognise the additional burdens on those employees who are seeking to enhance their skills, for their own and the organisation's benefit, while trying to continue with their normal workload.

The overall impact of employees being engaged in WBL and receiving adequate support and interest from their employer was evident from the finding. Those who expressed a desire to undertake further learning in the future were more likely to acknowledge that their employer allowed them time to devote to their coursework during working hours, and ensured that they were not under undue pressure to miss training sessions or meetings with their assessor.

Problems Encountered

This section examines:

- what problems, if any, respondents had encountered since starting their training programme; and
- whether respondents had ever seriously thought about leaving their training programme.

Problems encountered

All respondents were read a list of problems and asked if they had experienced any of them since starting their training programme. They were also given the opportunity to mention any other problems that they had encountered.

Encouragingly, around half of respondents said they had experienced no problems since starting their course (54%). For respondents who had, the two most frequently mentioned problems were:

- keeping motivated to continue the training (mentioned by 20% of respondents)
- fitting training commitments in with other commitments at work (16%).

Three other problems mentioned by around one in ten respondents were:

- fitting training commitments in with other commitments at home (13%)
- keeping up with the standard of work required (11%)
- dealing with money pressures (11%).

Table 26 problems experienced since started course

| | |
|--|-----|
| Base: All respondents (unweighted: 1507) | |
| Keeping motivated to continue the training | 20% |
| Fitting training commitments in with other commitments at work | 16% |
| Fitting in training commitment in with other commitments at home | 13% |
| Keeping up with the standard of work required | 11% |
| Dealing with money pressures | 11% |
| Maths or numeracy skills | 7% |
| Travel to college or training centre | 7% |
| Reading or writing skills | 7% |

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| No problems | 54% |
|-------------|-----|

Note: this question allowed a multiple response. Responses of more than 5% are shown in the table.

Firstly in regard to gender, male respondents were slightly more likely than female respondents to have experienced problems with:

- reading or writing skills (8% compared with 5%).

In contrast, female respondents were more likely than their male counterparts to say that they had encountered problems fitting in their training commitments with other commitments at work and home:

- nineteen per cent of female respondents said they had encountered problems due to work commitments compared with 13 per cent of male respondents
- and 18 per cent of women said they had encountered problems due to their home commitments compared with 10 per cent of men.

As mentioned in previous chapters, female respondents were more than twice as likely as their male counterparts to have parental responsibilities for children aged 0-15 at home (36% of women compared with 15% of men). Therefore, it is not surprising that female respondents were more likely than male respondents to have found home commitments problematic²⁶. In terms of employment commitments, however, female respondents were no more likely than male respondents to be employed during their course (90% of women and 92% of men were employed), so it is not clear why female respondents were more likely to have encountered problems with these commitments.

Table 27 Problems encountered since starting course by gender

| | Total | Gender | |
|---|-------|--------|--------|
| | | Male | Female |
| Base: All respondents | | | |
| Unweighted | 1507 | 806 | 701 |
| | % | % | % |
| No problems | 54 | 57 | 51 |
| Keeping motivated to continue the training | 20 | 18 | 21 |
| Fitting in training commitments in with other commitments at work | 16 | 13 | 19 |
| Fitting training commitments in with other commitments at home | 13 | 10 | 18 |
| Keeping up with the standard of work required | 11 | 12 | 11 |

²⁶ In the LLWR sample provided female learners are predominately older and male learners were predominantly younger.

| | | | |
|---|----|----|---|
| Dealing with money pressures | 11 | 12 | 9 |
| Maths or numeracy skills | 7 | 8 | 7 |
| Travel to college or training centre | 7 | 8 | 5 |
| Reading or writing skills | 7 | 8 | 5 |
| Extra help you were promised not being provided | 5 | 5 | 5 |

Older respondents were also more likely than younger respondents to have parental responsibilities and to be employed during their course²⁷, and as a consequence were more likely to have experienced the following problems:

- between 20 and 31 per cent of respondents aged 25 or over had experienced problems fitting training in around other work commitments compared with only 8 per cent of respondents aged 16-18 and 11 per cent of respondents aged 19-24. To some extent this may be due to younger respondents being regarded as 'trainees' by their employer and, as a result, their training being more easily accommodated.
- 21 per cent of respondents aged 25-34, 26 per cent of those aged 35-44 and 18 per cent of those aged 45+ had experienced problems with other home commitments compared with 8 per cent of respondents aged 16-18 and 7 per cent of those aged 19-24.

Perhaps due to parental and work commitments peaking amongst respondents aged 35-44, they were more likely than respondents overall to have encountered problems with keeping motivated to continue the training (30% compared with 20% of respondents overall).

Table 28 Problems encountered since starting course by age

| | Age | | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| Base: All respondents | Total | 16-18 | 19-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45+ |
| Unweighted | 1507 | 423 | 458 | 241 | 199 | 186 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| No problems | 54 | 55 | 62 | 54 | 38 | 49 |
| Keeping motivated to continue the training | 20 | 20 | 13 | 20 | 30 | 24 |
| Fitting in training commitments in with other | 16 | 8 | 11 | 20 | 31 | 23 |

²⁷ Only 2% of those 16-18 and 8% of those 19-24 had parental responsibilities of children aged 0-15 at home compared with 56% of those 25-34, 68% of those 35-44 and 31% of those 45+. Seventy-eight per cent of 16-18 year olds were employed during their course compared with 97% of those aged 19-24, 95% of those 25-34, 96% of those 35-54 and 93% of those 45+.

| | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| commitments at work | | | | | | |
| Fitting training commitments in with other commitments at home | 13 | 8 | 7 | 21 | 26 | 18 |
| Keeping up with the standard of work required | 11 | 11 | 12 | 10 | 13 | 10 |
| Dealing with money pressures | 11 | 13 | 10 | 10 | 8 | 8 |
| Maths or numeracy skills | 7 | 11 | 6 | 8 | 6 | 5 |
| Travel to college or training centre | 7 | 12 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Reading or writing skills | 7 | 9 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| Extra help you were promised not being provided | 5 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |

Linked to findings relating to gender and age, respondents with caring responsibilities were more likely to have experienced problems with fitting in learning commitments with other commitments at home (25% of those with caring responsibilities compared with 9% of those who have none) and at work (26% versus 12% respectively). These respondents were also more likely to say they had encountered problems with keeping motivated to continue the training (25% compared with 17% respectively - Table 57 in the appendices).

Analysis by programme type showed that Skillbuild learners were more likely than average to have experienced any problems since starting their training (45% said they had experienced no problems compared with the average of 54%). Notably, this group were more likely than average to mention the following problems:

- Dealing with money pressures (17% versus an average of 11%)
- Maths and numeracy skills (16% versus an average of 7%)
- Problems of any kind with other trainees (5% versus an average of 2%)

Learners following Modern Apprenticeship programmes were slightly more likely than average to say they had experienced problems relating to fitting training commitments in with commitments at home (17% versus an average of 13%).

There was a clear link between overall satisfaction with the learning experience and respondents' likelihood to experience problems. Those who were dissatisfied with their learning experience were more likely to mention nearly all of the problems listed than those respondents who were extremely or very satisfied²⁸, and 81 per cent cited

²⁸ Exceptions to this were reading or writing skills and travel to college or training centre.

81% cited at least one problem

Problems with:
Motivation
Fitting in with work commitments
Fitting in with home commitments
Keeping up with standard of work
Extra help not being provided

Indifferent/dissatisfied with support received from employer
(unwtd base: 177)

66% cited at least one problem

More likely than those extremely/very satisfied to have had problems with:
Motivation
Fitting in with work commitments
Fitting in with home commitments
Keeping up with standard of work
Dealing with money pressures

Motivation, fitting in with standard of work, support received

Chart 18 Problems encountered since starting course by satisfaction with overall learning experience and support received from the employer with training

Indifferent/dissatisfied with overall learning experience (unwtd base: 91)

81% cited at least one problem

More likely than those extremely/very satisfied to have had problems with:

Motivation
Fitting in with work commitments
Fitting in with home commitments
Keeping up with standard of work
Extra help not being provided

Indifferent/dissatisfied with support received from employer (unwtd base: 177)

66% cited at least one problem

More likely than those extremely/very satisfied to have had problems with:

Motivation
Fitting in with work commitments
Fitting in with home commitments
Keeping up with standard of work
Dealing with money pressures

Thoughts about leaving the training programme

Respondents who were still studying at the time of interview or who had completed their programme were asked if they had ever seriously thought about leaving their training.

While the majority of respondents (86%) had not thought about leaving their programme, fourteen per cent said that they had seriously considered this course of action.

Not surprisingly, those who had experienced problems while on their training course were more likely to have thought about leaving their course than those who had experienced no problems (22% versus 7%). Learners following Skillbuild programmes were also more likely than average to say that they had seriously considered leaving their training (23% versus 14% respectively).

There was also a clear link between levels of satisfaction with the overall learning experience and the likelihood of respondents to have thought about leaving their training programme: only 9 per cent of those who were extremely or very satisfied with their training had thought about leaving their programme compared with 53% of respondents who were indifferent or dissatisfied. Similarly those who were extremely or very satisfied with the support received from their employer to succeed with their training were less likely to have thought about leaving their programme than those who were indifferent/dissatisfied (10% compared with 27% respectively).

With regard to personal demographics, it was young female respondents and older male respondents who were more likely to have thought about leaving their programme than respondents overall (20% of female respondents aged 16-18 and 22% of male respondents aged 35 plus compared with 14% of respondents overall).

Table 29 Whether learners had thought about leaving their course by age within gender

| | Total | Male by age | | | | Female by age | | | |
|----------------------|-------|-------------|-------|-------|-----|---------------|-------|-------|-----|
| | | 16-18 | 19-24 | 25-34 | 35+ | 16-18 | 19-24 | 25-34 | 35+ |
| Base All Respondents | | | | | | | | | |
| Unweighted | 1458 | 275 | 306 | **93 | 101 | 122 | 140 | 146 | 275 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes | 14 | 15 | 13 | 9 | 22 | 20 | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| No | 86 | 85 | 87 | 91 | 78 | 80 | 88 | 89 | 89 |
| Don't know | * | 0 | * | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

Note: ** denotes low base size (<100).

Although fitting in training with other commitments at home and work were amongst those problems most frequently encountered by respondents, those respondents with these extra responsibilities were no more likely to have thought seriously about leaving their training. For example:

- 15 per cent of respondents with caring responsibilities for children or adults had thought about leaving their training programme, which was similar to the 13 per cent of those with no caring responsibilities who had also considered this option, showing a high level of commitment from the former group,
- and those who were employed/self employed were less likely to have considered leaving their course than those who were not employed (13% compared with 23% respectively).

Table 30 Whether learners had thought about leaving their course by caring responsibilities and employment status during course

| | Total | Caring responsibilities | | Employment status during course | |
|----------------------|-------|-------------------------|------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| | | Children & adults | None | Employed/ self-employed | Not employed |
| Base all respondents | | | | | |
| Unweighted | 1458 | 419 | 1039 | 1330 | 128 |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes | 14 | 15 | 13 | 13 | 23 |
| No | 86 | 85 | 87 | 87 | 77 |
| Don't know | * | 0 | * | * | 0 |

Note: * denotes < 0.5%

With regard to length of course, around two in ten respondents on short courses, lasting up to 6 months had considered leaving their programme (22%). In contrast respondents on courses lasting more than 6 months seemed more committed to their learning, with only 13 per cent having seriously thought about leaving their training programme. This finding is probably linked with age, as respondents on shorter courses were more likely to be aged 16-18, whilst those on longer courses were more likely to be aged 19 plus.²⁹

Those respondents studying on courses which were very useful for their job also seemed more committed to their training: only nine per cent had thought about leaving, compared to 22 per cent of those whose training was quite useful or not useful for their job.

²⁹ Of learners on courses lasting up to 6 months, 57% were 16-18s and 43% were 19 plus. In contrast of those on longer courses 26% were aged 16-18 and 74% aged 19 plus.

As may have been anticipated, respondents who did not get to train on their first choice of programme were more likely to have thought about leaving their training programme. Approximately one third of those not studying their first choice of subject/qualification had thought about leaving their programme (35%) compared with around one in ten respondents who were studying their first choice of training (12%).

Table 31 Whether learners had thought about leaving their course by length of training, first choice of provider and training

| | Total | Length of training | | First choice of training | |
|----------------------|-------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----|
| | | Up to 6 months | More than 6 months | Yes (all / some) | No |
| Base all respondents | | | | | |
| Unweighted | 1458 | 93 | 1275 | 1232 | 60 |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Yes | 14 | 22 | 13 | 12 | 35 |
| No | 86 | 78 | 87 | 88 | 65 |
| Don't know | * | 0 | * | * | 0 |

Note: * <0.5%. ** denotes small base (<100).

Conclusions and policy implications

The main findings from the survey relating to problems encountered can be summarised as follows:

- Just over half the sample said they had experienced no problems since they started the course.
- 'Keeping motivated to continue the learning' and 'fitting training commitments in with other commitments at work' were the most frequently cited problems.
- Females were more likely than males to cite problems in fitting in their training commitments with work or home commitments, as were respondents with caring responsibilities.
- Those aged 35-44 tended to express difficulties in keeping motivated to a greater degree than those from other age groups.
- Respondents who had experienced problems during their course were less likely to be satisfied.
- Seven per cent of the sample had seriously considered leaving the course. These were more likely to be dissatisfied with the overall learning experience.

- Young female respondents and older male respondents were more likely to have thought about leaving their programme than respondents overall.
- Those on courses lasting up to six months were more likely to have considered leaving than those on longer courses.
- Respondents who were not on their first choice of programme tended to be more prone to considering leaving the course.

Almost half the sample had encountered problems since embarking on their course. As the findings identified a relationship between experiencing problems and the likelihood of failing to complete the course, there is clearly an incentive for policy-makers and those responsible for delivering the learning activity to address and, wherever possible, alleviate these problems.

A principal cause of problems was the respondents' difficulties in fitting in the requirements of their course with either (or both) work and home commitments. As far as competing work commitments are concerned, as suggested in the previous chapter, much can be done to enlist greater employer support for their employees who are undergoing training. Also, those offering pre-entry information, advice and guidance to learners need to be sufficiently informed about the requirements and demands of a particular course to alert the learner to what will be expected of them. As the main providers of pre-entry advice to work based learners, employers and learning provider staff need to be able to do this. Employers need to make it clear what they expect, in terms of continuing to fulfil their existing work roles, while providers need to warn applicants of the demands which the course will make on their time. Such information should also be included in course literature. Additionally, guidelines and suggestions of how to cope with these competing demands should be disseminated to learners as a matter of course.

The finding that females tended to have greater problems fitting in their training commitments with their work and/or home commitments raises the issue of whether female workers are regarded in the same light as male workers, with similar prospects of longevity of service and career aspirations. If employers are more reluctant to provide tangible assistance to female employees undertaking courses, they need to be made aware of their responsibilities to all their employees, irrespective of gender.

A particularly interesting aspect of the findings was that those with caring responsibilities, while being more likely than the sample as a whole to have experienced difficulties during their time on the course, were no more likely to have seriously considered leaving their course. This points to a powerful attachment to learning by members of this group – one which should be encouraged and assisted wherever possible. Employers and learning providers should take into consideration and seek to address the difficulties experienced by those with caring responsibilities, for instance by introducing greater flexibility into the timing and mode of course

delivery. The commitment shown in persevering with their course as well as fulfilling their caring responsibilities suggests a desire to learn, which, if supported and nurtured, will result in further episodes of learning and skill acquisition.

The necessity of keeping people engaged in learning so as to engender future attachment to learning is also relevant with regard to the finding that respondents on shorter courses have a greater propensity to consider leaving their course. As suggested in the chapter, it tends to be younger people who participate in these courses. It is crucial that they have a positive learning experience to avoid their being 'lost' to learning in the future. Therefore, it is incumbent on learning providers to monitor individuals' initial progress on these courses and offer support, both teaching and pastoral, where it is evident that, for example, they are struggling to cope with the course content, or are becoming disillusioned with the experience.

The finding that respondents who were not on their first choice of course were more likely to have considered leaving, unsurprising as it is, points up again the challenge to policy-makers and providers to offer learner-led provision. At the same time, the need for sound pre-entry information, advice and guidance, possibly from a range of sources, but preferably from credible, informed sources, is vital in order to avoid inappropriate choices, people being on the 'wrong' course, and, ultimately, dissatisfied learners.

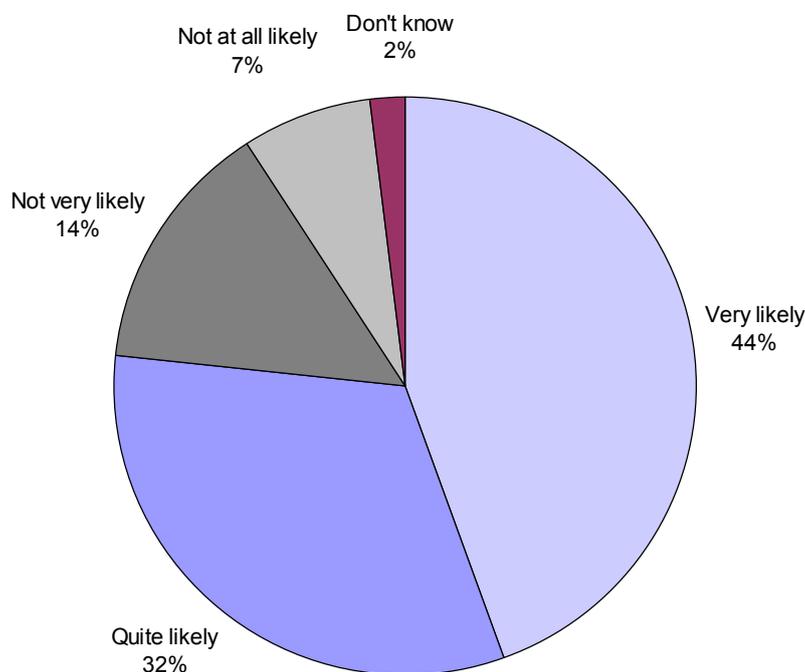
Future Intentions

This section explores the respondents' future intentions with respect to undertaking learning again within a three year period.

Intention to undertake further learning

All respondents not already on another course or training programme were asked how likely it was, if at all, that they would undertake further learning or training in the next three years³⁰. As shown by Chart 17, more than four in ten respondents (44%) felt they were 'very likely' to undertake further learning or training in the next three years. An additional third (32%) stated that they were 'quite likely' to undertake further learning, meaning that around three-quarters of respondents in total (77%) were likely to some degree to undertake further learning. Around one in five (21%) responded that they were not likely to undertake further learning, with 14 per cent saying 'not very likely' and 7 per cent answering 'not at all likely'.

Chart 17 Intention to undertake further learning in the next three years



Base: All respondents not already on another course (unweighted: 1,470)

³⁰ 11% of learners who had fully completed their programme or left early were back in full or part-time education or on another WBL programme; this equates to 2% of the whole sample.

It might be suggested that those who experience a positive learning episode will be more inclined to learn again in the future as a result. Indeed, as shown by Table 32, levels of overall satisfaction with the learning experience were correlated with the likelihood of undertaking further learning within the next three years. However, those who had experienced problems since starting their training programme were no less prone to say it was likely that they would undertake further learning or training than respondents who had had no problems (78% compared with 75% thought it 'very' or 'quite' likely).

Interestingly, the ability to access a first choice provider or course did not directly relate to intentions to undertake further learning. Seventy-seven per cent of respondents who were at their first choice provider said they were likely to undertake further learning compared with 80 per cent of those not at their first choice provider, 77 per cent who did not consider another option and 77 per cent also whose employer or Jobcentre Plus chose for them. Similar proportions of those studying on their first choice course (78%) intended to undertake further learning compared with either those not on their first choice (77%) or those whose employer or Jobcentre Plus chose the course for them (71%).

Analysis by programme type revealed no significant differences in terms of the proportions of learners intending to learn again in the next three years.

Table 32 Intention to undertake further learning in the next three years by overall satisfaction

| Base: All respondents except those on another course | Total | Overall satisfaction | | | |
|--|-----------|----------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| | | Extremely satisfied | Very satisfied | Fairly satisfied | Indifferent / dissatisfied |
| Base: unweighted | 1,470 | 482 | 625 | 273 | 88 |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Very likely | 44 | 51 | 44 | 34 | 40 |
| Quite likely | 32 | 30 | 34 | 36 | 18 |
| Not very likely | 14 | 11 | 14 | 21 | 17 |
| Not at all likely | 7 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 22 |
| Don't know | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| (net) Likely | 77 | 82 | 79 | 70 | 58 |

| | | | | | |
|------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| (net) Not likely | 21 | 16 | 19 | 29 | 39 |
|------------------|----|----|----|----|----|

Further analysis by respondent sub-groups revealed differences by age and gender:

- Females were more likely to consider it very likely that they would undertake further learning or training in the next three years (48% compared with 41% of males). Females also tended to be more positive about their training experience overall.
- Respondents aged 25-34 were most positive about the likelihood of further training, with 57 per cent answering 'very likely' compared with 44 per cent or less of respondents aged under 25 or 35 plus.

Additionally, the following respondents were more likely to be intending to undertake further learning within the next three years:

- Those whose training was delivered in the workplace (79% likely compared with 72% who attended an FE college)
- Those who felt that their training was very useful to their current job (81% compared with 68% who considered their training was quite useful or not useful to their current job)

The following respondents were less likely to be considering further training:

- Respondents who had seriously thought about leaving their training programme (66% were likely compared with 79% who had not seriously considered leaving their programme)

Conclusions and policy implications

- Three quarters of those not already on another course expressed a likelihood of undertaking further learning in the next three years.
- Those indicating high levels of satisfaction with the overall learning experience were more likely than other respondents to express an intention to undertake learning in the future.
- Respondents experiencing problems were no less likely than those who did not experience problems to state that they intended to embark on further episodes of learning within the following three years.
- Females were more likely than males to consider it 'very likely' that they would undertake further learning or training in the next three years.

- Greater proportions of respondents in the 25-34 age group were confident that they would pursue further learning opportunities in the next three years than was the case with other age groups.
- Respondents whose training was delivered in the workplace or whose training was very useful for their current job were more likely to be considering further learning or training in the next three years.

The findings relating to future intentions were extremely encouraging, in that three quarters of respondents expressed a willingness to participate in further learning in the coming years. This represents a challenge to policy-makers and individual learning providers to ensure that there is provision which is sufficiently attractive and relevant, coupled with effective awareness-raising, to sustain this interest and to create with an ongoing commitment to learning.

As stated in the previous chapter, it is particularly encouraging to see that those who had experienced problems during their learning were just as likely to be intending to continue to engage in learning in the future as those who had no such difficulties.

The finding that those whose learning took place in the workplace, and those who found it very useful for their current job, were more likely to consider further training highlights the importance of individuals being able to see the tangible beneficial outcomes of their learning. Within this, there are clearly key messages and real life examples which can be used by those championing the cause of training and lifelong learning to encourage greater participation in learning by the wider population.

Groups of specific interest

Throughout the analysis a number of groups of respondents stood out as being potentially interesting from a policy perspective. Some of these groups overlap, i.e. they are not mutually exclusive, and they are described below³¹ with a view to stimulating further debate.

Setting

Forty two per cent of respondents were learning in an FE setting while 59 per cent were learning in a workplace, and for some there was an overlap. The key characteristics of those learning in each setting may be summarised as follows:

| Personal demographics | | Course demographics | |
|---|---|--|---|
| FE | Workplace | FE | Workplace |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 74% male • 77% aged 16-24 • 66% C1/C2 • 82% no caring responsibilities • 23% were qualified to Level 3+ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 47% male • 49% aged 16-24 • 65% C1/C2 • 66% no caring responsibilities • 28% were qualified to Level 3+ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58% were on courses lasting more than 2 years • 60% were studying Construction, engineering and manufacturing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27% were on courses lasting more than 2 years • 25% were studying Construction, engineering and manufacturing, 26% were studying Health, social and child care |

³¹ It should be noted that the sample of learners may be biased as we were only able to interview those who gave their permission to follow up (and the data were weighted to match the profile of learners who gave permission to follow up). Extrapolating the findings from the survey to **all** WBL learners should be done with a degree of caution.

| Learning again in next 3 years | | Most common expectations | |
|--|------------------------|---|---|
| FE | Workplace | FE | Workplace |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 72% said it was likely | 80% said it was likely | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'to obtain a qualification' (97%), followed by 'gain new skills' (96%) Notably 89% wanted to 'meet new people' (compared to 68% in the workplace setting) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'to obtain a qualification' (97%), followed by 'gain new skills' (93%) and 'further career or improve job progression' (93%). Just 68% mentioned to 'meet new people' |

Gender: female respondents

47 per cent of respondents in the study were female and they tended to exhibit higher levels of satisfaction with their overall learning experience (79% were extremely or very satisfied compared with 72% males). Female respondents were more likely than their male counterparts to say that their employer had chosen their provider for them (33% of female respondents compared with 25% of male respondents). Female respondents were, however, no more likely to be employed during their course than male respondents. The key characteristics of female respondents were as follows:

| | |
|--|---|
| Personal demographics | Course demographics |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40% were aged 35+ Mainly social group C1/C2 90% were employed 60% had no caring responsibilities 34% were qualified to Level 3+ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 67% were learning in the workplace; 24% in an FE setting (these were not mutually exclusive categories) 43% were studying Health, social and child care; 20% Management, business, administration and law; 19% retail/distribution/customer service 90% were studying NVQs 49% were studying courses lasting 1–2 years |
| Expectations | Future intentions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most commonly cited expectations was 'to obtain a qualification' (98%), suggesting that much of this learning could have been driven by statutory requirements on the part of the employer, particularly those studying Health, social and child care subjects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 81 %said it was likely they would learn again in the next 3 years |

Life-stage

Female and male respondents aged 19-24

This group made up 30 per cent of the sample. There were differences by gender within this group, for example 85 per cent of female respondents aged 19-24 were extremely or very satisfied with their overall learning experience, compared with 72 per cent of males in the same age group. Similarly with satisfaction with the quality of teaching, 81 per cent of females were extremely or very satisfied versus 62 per cent of males in this age category. The characteristics of each group are summarised in the following table.

| Personal demographics | | Course demographics | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Males</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24% C1 • 93% no caring responsibilities • 22% were qualified to Level 3+ | <p>Females</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34% C1 • 82% no caring responsibilities • 34% were qualified to Level 3+ | <p>Males</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 71% did at least part of their study in FE college • 28% on courses lasting up to 2 years • 75% studying Construction, engineering and manufacturing | <p>Females</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27% did at least part of their study in FE college • 78% on courses lasting up to 2 years • 49% studying Health, social and child care; 22% Retail/customer service/distribution; 18% Management, business, administration and law |
| Future intentions | | Most common expectations | |
| <p>Males</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 72% said it was likely they would learn again in the next 3 years | <p>Females</p> <p>88% said it was likely they would learn again in the next 3 years</p> | <p>Males</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'to obtain a qualification' (97%), followed by 'gain new skills' (96%) and 'learn a lot more about the subject' (95%). Notably 88% wanted to 'meet new people' | <p>Females</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'to obtain a qualification' (98%), followed by 'further career or improve job progression' (94%) Just 63% mentioned to 'meet new people' |

Respondents with caring responsibilities

Respondents with caring responsibilities for adults or children were slightly less likely to express any degree of overall satisfaction with their learning experience and were less likely to say they were extremely or very satisfied with support from their employer than those without such responsibilities. They were, however, more likely to say they intended to learn again in the next three years than those without caring responsibilities. The characteristics of this group are summarised below:

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Personal demographics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 65% were female • 66% were aged 25-44 • Mainly social group C1/C2 (71%) • 37% were qualified to Level 3+ | <p>Course demographics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 37% were studying Health, social and child care; 21% Management, business, administration and law • 93% were studying NVQs • 47% were on courses that lasted between 1 and 2 years • 71% were learning in the workplace |
| <p>Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most commonly cited expectations was 'to obtain a qualification' (97%), following by 'gain new skills', 'further your career or improve job progression' and 'improve your knowledge of your occupation' - all three cited by 93% of this group | <p>Future intentions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 82% said it was likely they would learn again in the next 3 years |

Conclusions and Policy Implications

Introduction

A central focus of the Customer Research Programme 2007-2010, and one which mirrors that of the Customer Research Strategy 2003-2006, is learner satisfaction. As far as Work Based Learning (WBL) is concerned, it was decided that, as well as satisfaction with the overall learning experience, data should be gathered from learners about their satisfaction with the provider at which they were learning and, where appropriate, their employer. Clearly, these views would be likely to be coloured by their reasons for embarking on their WBL course and their ability to access their preferred provision. For a substantial minority of the sample, however, their course and the learning provider were chosen for them.

Satisfaction with learning experience

As was the case with the sample of FE learners, the levels of satisfaction recorded by the WBL sample were very high. There were some differences between different groups of respondents, so that higher levels of satisfaction were mentioned by: females and those with caring responsibilities. Broadly, however, these highly favourable satisfaction ratings held across all WBL respondents.

An important factor to be taken into account when considering the levels of satisfaction among WBL respondents is the finding that almost a third of the sample stated that they had not been involved in the decision about the choice of provider and about the type of course. This was due to their employer, and in a small number of cases Jobcentre Plus, asking or requiring them to undertake a particular type of training delivered by a specific learning provider. At first sight, this may seem to be a case of learning, usually in the form of vocational training, being foisted or imposed on them. This is not necessarily true, because in many jobs it is mandatory for the job-holder to have undergone certain training, often with the attainment of a qualification being a further requirement. It can also be argued that, where some individuals exhibit reluctance or a lack of interest in participating in learning, engaging them in a learning activity can overcome this attitudinal barrier and result in longer-term benefits for them and their careers.

Notwithstanding the points raised above, a respondent studying at their first choice of provider or first choice of course was a key determinant of their level of satisfaction, whilst those whose provider had been chosen for them tended to be less satisfied with their learning experience.

When considering aspects of their learning experience about which they were not satisfied, the quality of teaching, the degree of support from their employer, together with concerns about the relevance of training, course management and being on the wrong course, were the most important factors driving dissatisfaction. Conversely, the factors which were deemed to be most important in determining respondents' high level of satisfaction with the learning experience were the quality of teaching and ongoing learner support.

For those who expressed a degree of dissatisfaction with their learning experience, a key reason for being dissatisfied was the failure of the course to meet their expectations. However, the vast majority of the sample who had specific expectations about what the course would provide for them stated that these expectations had been met.

In similar fashion to the findings of the survey of FE learners, older respondents were less likely to have expectations of their course, in comparison to their younger counterparts. Again, this was partly attributable to there being significant numbers of respondents who were employed and had been sent on the course by their employer.

Another similarity with the FE learner survey findings was that there was a close relationship between having expectations met and having high levels of satisfaction, student retention and intention to learn in the future.

A testament to the effectiveness of the provision which was accessed was that, overwhelmingly, respondents considered that their course had been effective in enabling them to achieve their expected learning outcomes. A slight difference emerged here between those who were undertaking a course at a college of further education and those whose learning took place in the workplace. The former are more likely to state that their training had helped them achieve their expected learning outcomes. Furthermore, they claimed that it had helped them achieve the social outcome of meeting more people.

Choice and opportunity

With only just over half the sample claiming to be at the provider of first choice, and around a third stating that they had no say in where they would be training, the notion of choice becomes prominent. Thus, although overall levels of satisfaction were very high, there was clearly a relationship between accessing the first choice of provider and being extremely or very satisfied with the learning experience.

For those whose training provider was determined by their employer, the absence of their input to this decision was often subsequently compounded by a lack of support or interest on the part of the employer.

Where respondents did have an element of choice in the learning provider, the main factors which determined what that choice would be were its relative closeness to where the respondent lived and that it offered the learning programme which the respondent sought.

Employer influence was also evident in determining the course which the respondent was undertaking, with a tenth of the sample claiming that their employer had decided upon the course (the proportions were higher among females and those aged over 25). Nevertheless, the vast majority of respondents were on what they considered to be their first choice of course. This was positively correlated with their overall satisfaction and whether they had considered leaving the course.

In comparison to the findings of the survey of FE learners, a greater degree of instrumentality was apparent in the reasons given by the WBL respondents. To 'help with current job/job progression' was easily the most frequently mentioned reason. This was not surprising, given the direct relationship between this type of learning and the workplace. Nonetheless, almost a third of respondents cited enjoyment of, or being good at the subject, as reasons, thereby demonstrating that outcomes other than work-related ones were valued by WBL respondents. What was somewhat surprising was the finding that male respondents tended to say that they chose the course because they enjoyed the subject to a greater degree than female respondents. Females were more likely to attribute their decision to work-related reasons. This echoed the findings from the survey of FE learners.

Another similarity with the FE learner survey was the finding that those aged over 25 were more likely than younger respondents to have chosen their course for reasons to do with their current job and skills acquisition.

Advice and guidance

Employers were prominent again as providers of advice to respondents prior to their entry to their course, with over three fifths of the sample citing them. Just under half mentioned teachers or tutors at the learning provider. This latter source was the one which was most frequently stated to be 'very useful'. As was the case with the FE survey responses, these two being the favoured sources of advice (and, to some extent, 'parents or other family members', which was the third most mentioned) raises questions about the content and impartiality of the advice provided.

As far as the learning providers' teachers and tutors are concerned, if what was being offered amounted to 'information' – for example about course content and format – rather than 'advice', then this would seem to be appropriate. If, however, it ventures into the area of careers advice and guidance, then the credibility, in terms of having the interests of the learner first and foremost, is debatable. It could be argued that the

provider has a vested interest in attracting learners and is not necessarily the best source of impartial and objective advice.

A similar point can be made about advice emanating from the individual's employer, whose overriding concern is likely to be the immediate needs of the workplace, rather than the long-term career aspirations of the individual employee.

Not surprisingly, younger respondents tended to mention their parents and Careers Wales as sources of advice more often than older respondents, while females tended to receive advice from friends to a greater extent than was true of males. Whatever the source of advice, around 90 per cent of respondents felt that it had been very or fairly useful, with teachers or tutors at the learning provider being rated most highly – described as 'very useful' by over two thirds of respondents. Advice from employers was also highly rated, with 59 per cent of respondents stating that it was 'very useful'.

Satisfaction with provider

Respondents expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the quality of training they had received from their learning provider, with those levels being highest among older respondents (over 25) and females.

The crucial role played by effective employer support was again apparent, as there was a strong relationship between being extremely or very satisfied with the support from their employer and being extremely or very satisfied with the quality of training received.

A high level of satisfaction with the quality of training was also closely related to being on the course of first choice, at the first choice of provider, and undertaking training which was highly relevant for the respondent's current job.

Perhaps most importantly, the majority of respondents rated all aspects of teaching very highly, with 'understanding the learner' being particularly highly rated. Of particular interest was the fact that those with no prior qualifications, or qualifications up to level 2, tended to rate the teaching methods more highly than other respondents. This suggests that learning providers are providing a positive learning experience for many individuals who may otherwise be categorised as 'non-traditional' learners. This augurs well for the possibility of their becoming more confident about learning and being prepared to participate in further episodes of learning in the future.

The value placed by respondents on course delivery being well-organised was shown by 'making good use of session time' being the most important aspect of teaching quality as far as respondents were concerned. Similarly, high ratings were accorded

to the 'understanding the learner' aspects of programme delivery, with 'listening to your needs' being highlighted as a key driver of satisfaction with teaching quality.

Satisfaction with employer

Although, as identified earlier, those who voiced concerns about the lack of employer support tended to have lower levels of satisfaction, it should be emphasised that the great majority of respondents who were employed were satisfied with the support they received from their employer. This was particularly true of younger respondents. It was also the case that the majority of respondents rated all aspects of employers' input very highly.

The kind of support provided by those employers who took greater interest in their employees' training included allowing the learner time to study during working hours and ensuring that they did not feel under pressure, from immediate work demands, to miss training sessions or meetings with assessors. As well as giving high ratings to their employer for these aspects and for making sure that their training programme was relevant to their job, their encouragement to achieve a qualification also scored highly.

It was interesting to note that those respondents who were participating in courses relating to construction, engineering, manufacturing and transportation programmes, were more likely to be satisfied with the support received from their employer than respondents overall. These represent traditional industrial sectors with longstanding attachment to, and involvement in, vocational training. It would appear that this culture of training is alive and well within these sectors.

Allied to the above point, levels of satisfaction were noticeably high where the respondent recognised that the training being undertaken was highly relevant for their work. Moreover, the majority felt that their training was directly or indirectly related to their job and was very or quite useful in that respect. This indicates that learning providers were highly successful in delivering training which was entirely appropriate to employers' requirements. Furthermore, it was even found that those studying at an FE college were more likely than those training in the workplace to assert that their course was directly related to their job.

Problems encountered

Although the responses indicated extremely high levels of satisfaction with the learning experience, it was still found that almost half the sample stated that they had encountered problems while they had been on the course. The most frequently cited problem was 'keeping motivated to continue the learning'. This was also the case in the FE survey. However, whereas in the FE survey younger respondents (16-24)

were more likely to cite this issue, for WBL respondents, it was the 35-44 age group which was more prone to having problems sustaining their motivation. It seems likely that this was related to there being significant numbers within this age band for whom the decision to enrol them on a course of training had been taken by their employer. While not necessarily being resistant to the idea, it may be that their starting point on the course was from a position of indifference, which was at variance with the greater enthusiasm and motivation for undertaking a course of training exhibited by those in other age groups.

This highlights an issue for learning providers and employers, in identifying, at an early stage, where a learner's commitment or interest is flagging. Once this has been identified, appropriate advice and support mechanisms can be brought into play.

The problem of fitting in their training commitments with work commitments was particularly prevalent for those aged over 25. This needs to be addressed by both employers, through recognising the need to reduce the work burden on employees undertaking training, and learning providers, through seeking to offer flexibility in their programme delivery.

The high levels of overall satisfaction again suggest, for the majority of those who indicated that they had experienced problems, that these were not major obstacles to their enjoying and benefiting from the learning experience. This view is supported by the finding that only seven per cent of the sample had seriously considered leaving the course. Groups more likely to have considered leaving were younger females, older males and those who were not on their first choice of programme.

As with the survey of FE learners, those who were participating in shorter courses (up to six months in duration) were more prone to consider leaving the course.

Future intentions

Around three quarters of those who were still on their course stated that it was their intention to undertake further learning within the following three years. Females were more likely than males to take this position. Given the greater propensity of females to report problems with fitting training in with work commitments and home commitments, this may be interpreted as indicating a heightened attachment to learning among many female respondents.

What is also encouraging is the finding that respondents experiencing problems were no less likely to consider embarking on further episodes of learning within the following three years than those who did not experience problems. Again, a longer-term participation in learning by a significant majority of the respondents may be indicated.

Policy implications

The findings clearly have relevance for policy makers and reinforce messages which have emanated from previous surveys of WBL learners in Wales. The extremely high levels of satisfaction by WBL students across the board points to both overall policy and local delivery being successful in addressing the needs and demands of students. However, there are also aspects of the findings which indicate areas which require further consideration by policy-makers.

- Even where training is mandatory, employers should be exhorted to engage their employees in a dialogue about their upcoming course, what will be expected of them, and what benefits they will derive from it;
- The drive to persuade employers of the benefits they can accrue as a result of skill and knowledge acquisition by their employees should be sustained. As part of this process, all material which markets specific courses or learning generally, should place emphasis on the benefits which employers can derive from providing training;
- In their marketing material and contacts with employers, learning providers should emphasise the importance of employer support for employees engaged in training. Stress should also be placed on the added value which training brings to both learners and their employers, over and above the skills development which takes place. Similarly, messages about the benefits of learning to individuals should continually be reinforced;
- All those about to participate in training and other learning activities should receive informed advice and guidance about the options available and the career trajectories which those options offer. Efforts should be made to enable Careers Wales, as a provider of objective, impartial and informed careers advice and guidance, to extend its sphere of influence and penetration beyond its current major 'constituency' (largely to young people) and have a greater impact on adults' career decisions;
- Learning providers should be applauded for the high ratings given by respondents to the quality of teaching received and the support provided for them. They should also be encouraged to continue effective monitoring of the content and delivery of their courses to ensure that these high standards are maintained;
- Evidence from the ridge regression analysis, which identifies the areas which warrant specific attention in order to achieve even higher levels of respondent satisfaction with the quality of teaching, should be disseminated to providers to offer a framework by which their staff development activities can be guided. This should be accompanied by indications of where to access appropriate staff development support and materials;

- Providers should continue to instil an ethos within their staff which is geared to the provision of support for all learners, and which is particularly sensitive to identifying learners who may be experiencing difficulties;
- Providers should strive to be flexible in their timetabling and delivery methods in order to accommodate those who are constrained by work or caring commitments from participating in learning.

Appendices

Appendix A: Early Leavers

All respondents were asked about their current learning status, that is, whether they were still on their programme, had completed their programme or whether they had left before it was fully complete. Three per cent of WBL respondents said they had left their programme or training early (amounting to 49 respondents), although it should be emphasised that early leavers in this survey are not representative of **all** early leavers on WBL programmes in Wales. The survey was sampled on the basis of 'current learners' (as was the case in 2003); so early leavers were, by definition, individuals who had left their course at some time between the database 'freeze' being supplied to GfK NOP and the interview itself.³²

Given the very small numbers of respondents who had left their course early, a separate chapter on these respondents has not been included in the main WBL report. Rather, this appendix to the report provides some profiling information for the group (which should be treated with care, given the small numbers of respondents involved) and the results of questions posed specifically to early leavers and those who had fully completed their training programme.

The following table provides an overview of the profile of early leavers by personal characteristics. From this is it evident that:

- there was a bias towards males and those in the youngest age group (aged 16-18)
- early leavers tended to be studying courses lasting a year or more and studying at up to Level 2
- most were on their first choice of training but a majority had experienced problems since starting their course

³² The LLWR freeze was provided in December 2008; interviewing took place between March and April 2009.

Table 33 Profile of early leavers

| Unweighted base sizes shown in brackets | Proportion of early leavers (%) |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Total (49) | |
| Gender | |
| Male | 63 |
| Female | 37 |
| Age | |
| 16-18 | 53 |
| 19-24 | 24 |
| 25+ | 22 |
| Caring commitments | |
| For children | 8 |
| None | 90 |
| Course duration | |
| Up to a year | 43 |
| A year or more | 53 |
| Level of qualification training for | |
| Up to level 2 | 63 |
| Level 3+ | 24 |
| First choice of training programme | |
| Yes | 73 |
| No/ didn't consider other | 16 |
| Employer chose | 10 |
| Problems since starting training | |
| Yes | 65 |
| No | 35 |
| Satisfaction with learning experience overall | |
| Extremely / very satisfied | 41 |
| Fairly satisfied | 31 |
| Indifferent/dissatisfied | 29 |

Early leavers were asked a follow up question to determine why they had chosen to leave the programme or training before it was complete. The most common reasons were:

- obtained a job elsewhere (10 out of 49)
- lost their job (7 out of 49)
- were on the wrong training/programme for them (6 out of 49).

As many WBL respondents were attending their course through their employer, some of the reasons given by respondents for leaving early related to difficulties with the employer rather than those with the provider per se, for example:

- made redundant company closed down (4 out of 49)
- lack of support from employer (3 out of 49)
- employer prevented me from attending/stopped funding (3 out of 49)
- work commitments taking up too much time (2 out of 49)

Other factors which were outside of the provider's control, mentioned by 4 out of 49 early leavers in each case, were personal and health reasons.

Although the provider can have limited impact on those issues relating to the employer or personal/health problems there were other reasons given which related more directly to the provider, for example 3 out of 49 thought their programme was badly run.

Working status of early leavers and completers (leavers)

Those who had fully completed their training and those who had left their training early were asked about their current working status. For the rest of this section these respondents will be referred to as 'leavers.' Almost three-quarters (72%) of leavers were employed at the time of interview. It should be borne in mind that respondents' completion or decision to leave may have been very recent and they may not have had time to find employment – in other words, the findings are not necessarily indicative of their status in the longer (or even medium) term.

Table 34 Working status of leavers

| Base: All leavers (un-weighted, 343): | % |
|--|----------|
| Working | 72 |
| Unemployed | 9 |
| Not working | 8 |

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Full/part-time education | 5 |
|--------------------------|---|

Leavers who were employed during their training and afterwards, i.e. at the time the interview was conducted, were asked if they were still working for the same employer. The majority of leavers (82%) were working for the same employer as they had whilst undertaking their training and around one in five said they were working for a different employer (18%). Leavers who were employed or self employed during their training were also asked if they were working in the same or a similar job role to the one they had when they were training, or if they had changed their job role on finishing their training programme. The figures were similar to those for the previous question with 82 per cent of leavers saying they were working in a similar role and 16 per cent saying that they were doing something different.

Table 35 Working status of leavers

| | |
|---|----|
| Base: All leavers who were working as an employee whilst on their training and afterwards (unweighted, 226) | % |
| Same employer after training as they had during training | |
| Yes | 82 |
| No | 18 |
| Base: All leavers who were working as an employee/self employed whilst on their training and afterwards (unweighted, 232) | |
| Current job role similar to one learner had when training | |
| Same or similar job role | 84 |
| Different job role | 16 |

Appendix B: Profile of Respondents

Key demographics

The key personal demographics for the sample are shown in Table 36 **Error! Reference source not found.** In particular, it should be noted that in our sample of WBL learners who had given permission for follow up activities:

- a slightly higher proportion of respondents were male than female (53% compared with 47% respectively).
- three in ten respondents (28%) were aged 16-18 and a similar proportion (30%) were aged 19-24. One in six (16%) were aged between 25-34, while a further quarter (26%) were aged 35 and over, with 12 per cent aged 45 plus.
- Three per cent of respondents had a either a learning difficulty or a disability³³.

Table 36 Key demographics

| Base: All respondents (unweighted: 1,507) | | % |
|---|--------|----|
| Gender | Male | 53 |
| | Female | 47 |
| Age | 16-18 | 28 |
| | 19-24 | 30 |
| | 25-34 | 16 |
| | 35-44 | 13 |
| | 45+ | 12 |
| Any learning difficulty / disability | No | 97 |
| | Yes | 3 |
| Social grade | AB | 11 |
| | C1 | 31 |
| | C2 | 32 |
| | DE | 21 |

³³ This information was taken from LLWR; if not present in the LLWR database, learners were asked the question as part of the survey. These figures reflect a combined total.

In addition, there were significant age differences within gender. As shown by the following table, male respondents displayed a much younger age profile than female respondents: three-quarters of males (75%) were aged under 25 compared with four in ten females (39%). In contrast, 61 per cent of females were aged 25 and over compared with a quarter of males (25%).

Table 37 Age within gender

| Base: All respondents | Gender | |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|
| | Male | Female |
| Base: unweighted | 806 | 701 |
| | % | % |
| 16-18 | 36 | 19 |
| 19-24 | 39 | 21 |
| 25-34 | 12 | 21 |
| 35-44 | 8 | 20 |
| 45+ | 5 | 20 |

Background to learning experience

Learners enter WBL at various stages of their working life and include those seeking work, those on work placements or apprenticeships and those in full-time employment.

The vast majority of WBL respondents (91%) were in employment (this includes those on a work placement and those who were self-employed) compared with one in ten (9%) who were not employed. More than half of those not employed (57%) were attending training programmes delivered at a private training provider, compared with just one in ten of those who were in employment (10%).

The vast majority of WBL respondents also held prior qualifications: a fifth at entry level or level 1 (21%), two-fifths at level 2 (40%), a further fifth at level 3 (21%) and 7 per cent at level 4 and above. Seven per cent held no prior qualifications.

A quarter of the sample of respondents (25%) had parental responsibilities for children (11% for children aged under 5 and 18% for children over 5), whilst one in twenty (5%) had caring responsibilities for an adult. Just over seven in ten respondents (72%) had no parental or caring responsibilities.

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Foundation Modern Apprenticeship | 45% |
| Skillbuild | 11% |
| Other programme | 7% |

Programme delivery

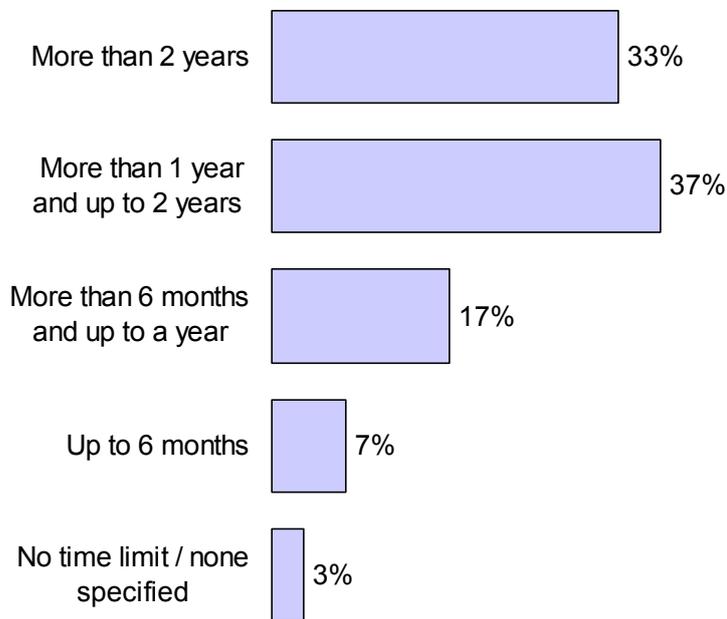
WBL programmes were delivered in a number of ways. Four in ten WBL respondents (42%) were attending sessions at an FE college, whilst 14 per cent visited a private training provider. Six in ten WBL respondents (59%) had their training delivered to them at their place of work. In a number of cases, training was delivered through multiple channels: fourteen per cent of respondents had their training delivered in their workplace and at an FE college whilst 4 per cent of respondents had training delivered in both the workplace and a private training provider.

Table 39 Programme delivery

| Base: All respondents (unweighted: 1,507) | | % |
|--|---------------------------|----|
| Learning status | Still on course | 77 |
| | Fully completed | 20 |
| | Early leaver | 3 |
| Training delivery | FE College | 42 |
| | Private training provider | 14 |
| | Workplace | 59 |

As shown by the following chart, the majority of respondents were on training programmes lasting more than a year: over a third (37%) were on programmes lasting more than 1 year and up to 2 years, whilst a third (33%) were on programmes lasting more 2 years. One in six respondents (17%) were on programmes lasting more than 6 months and up to a year, while 7 per cent were on shorter programmes lasting up to 6 months.

Chart 18 Programme duration

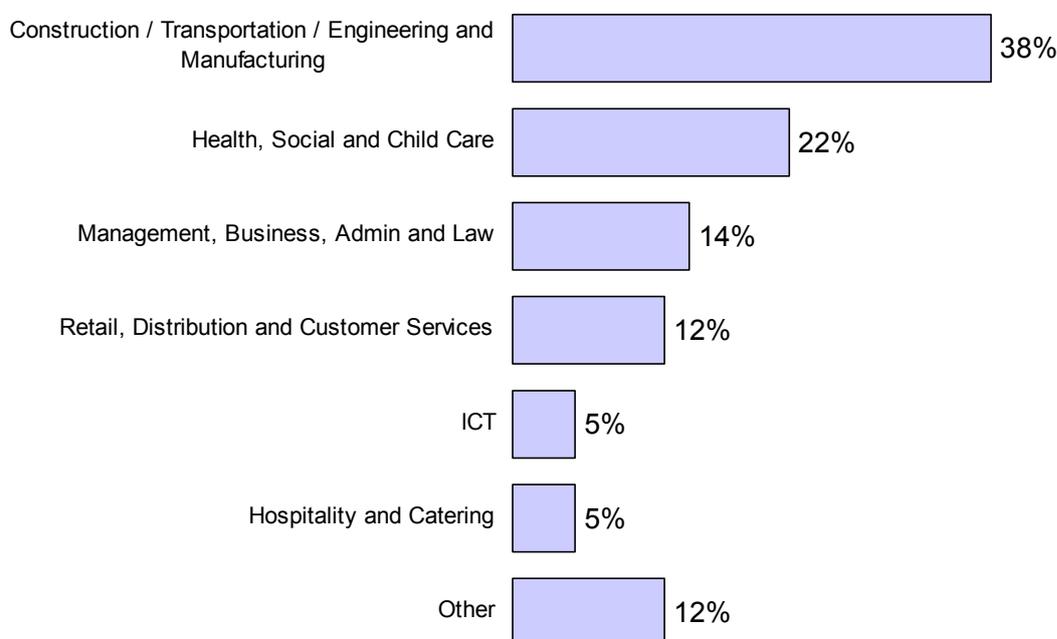


Base: All respondents (unwtd: 1,507)

Subjects and qualifications

All respondents were asked which subjects they were training for and these were categorised into broad subject categories (respondents studying more than one subject may therefore have been included in more than one category). Around two-fifths of WBL respondents (38%) were training in construction, transportation or engineering and manufacturing courses, whilst just under a quarter (22%) were on health, social and childcare courses.

Chart 19 Subject areas



Base: All respondents (unwtd: 1,507). Note multiple responses to this question were permitted.

As shown by the following table, there were significant gender and age differences in the profile of respondents training in different subjects.

- Notably, seven in ten (69%) males were training on construction, transportation or engineering and manufacturing programmes (compared with just 1% of females). In particular, this accounted for four-fifths (79%) of males aged 16-18 and a similar proportion (82%) of males aged 19-24 and for more than half of the overall sample of respondents aged under 25 (56%).
- More than four in ten females (43%) were training in Health, Social and Child Care (compared with 4% of males). Whilst a third of all respondents aged 25 plus (33%) were training in this subject, around a third of females aged 16-18 (34%) and around half of females aged 19-24 (49%) were taking this subject.
- Similarly, females and respondents aged 25 plus were also more likely to be training in subjects related to Management, Business, Administration and Law (20% of females and 26% of all respondents aged 25 plus were training in this subject compared with 9% of males, 8% of all respondents aged 19-24 and 4% aged 16-18).

- Females were also more likely to be training in Retail, Distribution and Customer Services (19% compared with 6% of males) and Hospitality and Catering (7% compared with 3% of males).

Table 40 Subject areas by gender and age

| Base: All respondents | Total | Gender | | Age | | |
|---|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-----|
| | | Male | Female | 16-18 | 19-24 | 25+ |
| Unweighted base | 1507 | 806 | 701 | 423 | 458 | 626 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Construction / Transportation / Engineering and Manufacturing | 38 | 69 | 1 | 55 | 57 | 12 |
| Health, Social and Child Care | 22 | 4 | 43 | 12 | 17 | 33 |
| Management, Business, Admin and Law | 14 | 9 | 20 | 4 | 8 | 26 |
| Retail, Distribution and Customer Services | 12 | 6 | 19 | 13 | 10 | 12 |
| ICT | 5 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| Hospitality and Catering | 5 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 8 |
| Other | 12 | 12 | 11 | 16 | 10 | 10 |

There were also a number of key trends evident between the subject area and the duration of the training programme (see Table 41). In particular it was noted that:

- 68 per cent of Construction / Transportation / Engineering and Manufacturing programmes ran for more than 2 years.
- Training in ICT was more likely to be delivered via shorter courses compared with other subjects, with 28% of ICT programmes lasting up to 6 months.
- Around half of respondents training in the following subjects were on programmes lasting more than 1 year and up to 2 years:
 - Hospitality and Catering (56%)
 - Health, Social and Child Care (54%)
 - Management, Business, Administration and Law (49%)

Table 41 Programme duration by subject areas

| Base: All respondents | Total | Subject area | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-----|--|--|-------|
| | | Construction / Transportation / Engineering and Manufacturing | Health, Social and Child Care | Hospitality and Catering | ICT | Management, Business, Administration and Law | Retail, Distribution and Customer Services | Other |
| Unweighted base | 1,507 | 566 | 336 | 78 | 81 | 217 | 175 | 175 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Up to 6 months | 7 | 2 | 7 | 5 | 28 | 4 | 11 | 14 |
| More than 6 months and up to a year | 17 | 7 | 25 | 18 | 27 | 18 | 23 | 21 |
| More than 1 year and up to 2 years | 37 | 19 | 54 | 56 | 19 | 49 | 42 | 35 |
| More than 2 years | 33 | 68 | 8 | 6 | 22 | 21 | 14 | 25 |
| No time limit / time specified | 3 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 2 |

Table 42 shows the type and level of qualifications being taken by WBL respondents. Almost nine in ten (88%) were working towards an NVQ qualification and one in five (19%) were following other qualification aims. One in ten (10%) were working towards an entry level or level 1 qualification, whilst four in ten (39%) were working towards a level 2 qualification. A further four in ten (41%) respondents' programmes led to a level 3 qualification and one in twenty was training at level 4 or above.

Table 42 Qualifications and course duration

| Base: All respondents (unweighted: 1,507) | | % |
|--|-----------------------|----|
| Type of qualification | NVQ | 88 |
| | Other | 19 |
| Level of qualification | Entry level / level 1 | 10 |
| | Level 2 | 39 |
| | Level 3 | 41 |
| | Level 4+ | 5 |

Welsh language ability and learning preferences

As shown by the following table, 12 per cent of respondents spoke Welsh fluently and a further 6 per cent could speak a fair amount. More than half (54%) could speak only a little Welsh and over a quarter of respondents (28%) could not speak any Welsh.

When asked about how well they could write in Welsh, 8 per cent of respondents stated 'very well', 17 per cent 'fairly well' and 22 per cent 'not well'. More than half of all respondents (53%) could not write in Welsh.

Table 43 Welsh language ability

| All respondents (unweighted: 1,507) | | % |
|--|----------------------------------|----|
| Level of spoken Welsh | Speak fluently | 12 |
| | Speak a fair amount | 6 |
| | Only a little / just a few words | 54 |
| | Can't speak any | 28 |
| Level of written Welsh | Very well | 8 |
| | Fairly well | 17 |
| | Not well | 22 |
| | Can't write in Welsh | 53 |

Respondents who could speak **any** Welsh were subsequently asked which language they mainly spoke in the home, in social situations and at work.

Table 44 Welsh language ability (language mainly spoken)

| Base: All respondents except those who could not speak any Welsh (unweighted: 1,085) | | % |
|--|--------------------------------|----|
| Language mainly spoken at home | Welsh | 6 |
| | Equal use of Welsh and English | 3 |
| | English | 91 |
| Language mainly spoken at work | Welsh | 5 |
| | Equal use of Welsh and English | 7 |
| | English | 87 |
| Language mainly spoken outside of work and home (e.g. in social situations) | Welsh | 4 |
| | Equal use of Welsh and English | 6 |
| | English | 90 |

Respondents were asked how much, if any, of various aspects of their training were made available in Welsh. Table 45 shows that a high proportion of respondents (between 11% and 20%) answered that they didn't know how much of each aspect was made available in Welsh.

Table 45 Welsh language provision across certain aspects of training

| Base: All respondents (unweighted: 1,507) | Spoken communication in sessions or lessons | Written materials, handouts and notes | Support from trainers or tutors outside sessions |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| | % | % | % |
| All | 24 | 26 | 21 |
| Some | 19 | 21 | 19 |
| None | 42 | 36 | 37 |

| | | | |
|----------------|----|----|----|
| Not applicable | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Don't know | 11 | 13 | 20 |

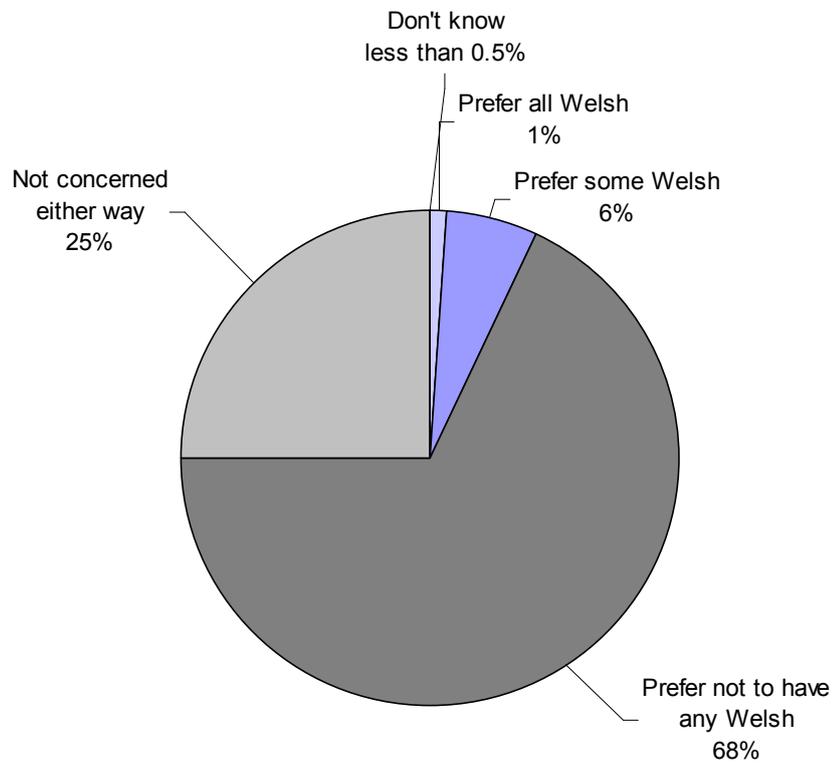
The next table displays the responses re-based on all respondents who were able to give an answer (i.e. excluding those who said don't know or not applicable). Written materials, handouts and notes were most commonly made available in Welsh (56% said all or some of their written materials were available in Welsh). This was significantly higher than 'support from trainers or tutors outside sessions' (52% said all or some was made available in Welsh) or 'spoken communication in sessions or lessons' (51% said all or some was available in Welsh).

Table 46 Welsh language provision across certain aspects of training

| Base: All respondents except those answering 'Not applicable' or 'don't know' | Spoken communication in sessions or lessons | Written materials, handouts and notes | Support from trainers or tutors outside sessions |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Unweighted base: | 1,278 | 1,244 | 1,154 |
| | % | % | % |
| All | 28 | 31 | 27 |
| Some | 22 | 25 | 25 |
| None | 49 | 44 | 48 |

Finally, respondents were asked how much of their learning they would prefer to be in Welsh. As shown in the following table, 1 per cent of all respondents would prefer their learning to be all in Welsh whilst 6 per cent would prefer some Welsh. Two-thirds (68%) responded that they would prefer not to have any Welsh while a quarter of respondents (25%) were not concerned either way.

Chart 20 Preference for learning in Welsh



Base: All respondents (unwtd: 1,507)

Appendix C: Eligibility for WBL programmes and details of programme types³⁴

Individuals who have legally left school and are ordinarily resident in Wales, or where an individual's employment or work placement is located in Wales, are eligible for entry to the all-age Work Based Learning.

Individuals are ineligible for entry to the programmes if they are:-

- of compulsory school age; or
- attending school or college full-time as a pupil or student; or
- in full time higher education; or
- an ineligible overseas national; or
- in custody or on remand; or
- in receipt of an Assembly Learning Grant; or
- being supported by an Employment Zone activity; or
- taking part in any other employment learning or enterprise programme funded directly by the UK Government or the Welsh Ministers; or
- taking part in any other EU funded vocational training programmes;

Non Framework Led Programmes

Skill Build

Skill Build is aimed at learners who are not employed and who require occupational skills learning, and/or who are vocationally unfocused and require work taster placements, lack confidence, have poor motivation or poor Basic Skills. The Skill Build programme encompasses:

- The identification of learning barriers that prevent the learner immediately participating in vocational learning at level 1, 2 or 3
- The identification and addressing of a Basic Skills need;
- Learning opportunities which provide learners with the breadth and flexibility of skills they need to enable them to better participate in the workforce and society at large; and

³⁴ Sourced from <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/090908wblprogrammespecv3en.pdf>

- Occupational learning to vocational level 1 or 2 or 3.

Pre – Apprenticeship Learning

Pre-Apprenticeship Learning is a programme that allows employed learners to undertake Basic Skills development having been assessed as not being able to enter framework led programmes immediately. Learners may only undertake:

- the Certificate in Adult Literacy and/or the Certificate in Adult Numeracy at entry levels 1, 2 and/or 3 (during the period of learning, only the highest level achieved is fundable) and/if required;
- Key Skills level 1 in Communication and/or Application of Number level 1 and/or;
- An approved qualification at vocational level 1 as specified within the Learning and Skills Act 2000 Section 96/97 and relevant to the current job role.

Framework Led Programmes

Foundation Modern Apprenticeships

Foundation Modern Apprenticeship is an employment based learning programme at level 2 and follows a framework developed by the relevant industry Sector Skills Council and approved by the Approvals and Advisory Group which specifies the learning, including Key Skills and technical certificates (where relevant).

As part of the Foundation Modern Apprenticeship framework, a learner may undertake an approved qualification at level 3 as an additional qualification. Learning must be relevant to learner and employer needs.

Modern Apprenticeships

Modern Apprenticeship is an employment based learning programme for employed learners to level 3 and follows a framework developed by the relevant Sector Skills Council and approved by the Approvals and Advisory Group. The frameworks specify the learning, including Key Skills and technical certificates (where relevant), required by the appropriate industrial sector.

A learner can enter the Modern Apprenticeship programme and undertake (en route and in addition to a level 3 vocational qualification) the level 2 from which the learner would have naturally progressed had the learner first undertaken learning at Foundation Modern Apprenticeship level.

Modern Skills Diploma

Modern Skills Diploma is an employment based programme for employed learners. It provides opportunities for learners to improve their skills and knowledge at level 4.

Appendix C: Technical Summary

Method

The survey was conducted using telephone interviewing. Telephone interviewing was chosen over other data collection methods due to a number of considerations:

- response is much better than for a postal self-completion questionnaire, so it allow for better coverage of learners
- it allows the selection of a completely unclustered sample of work based learners which could be closely monitored throughout fieldwork
- the subject matter was suitable for a telephone approach and telephone interviewing gave the opportunity to probe open questions and to use more complex routing than would be practical in a paper based survey

Questionnaire development

The survey length was 20 minutes on average. The questionnaire was based upon the 2003 National Learner Satisfaction Survey for Wales, with some changes made following a workshop with WBL providers in January 2008, at which providers were able to give their views on the questionnaire content for the new survey. The final questionnaire was designed in conjunction with the project team at DCELLS and the main topics covered by the survey were:

- details about the programme or training
- early leavers
- choice, expectations and advice received prior to the training
- satisfaction with training provider
- satisfaction with support received from the employer
- problems encountered whilst on the programme
- overall satisfaction with the learning experience and whether expectations about the programme have been met

The questionnaire was piloted prior to commencing fieldwork to ensure that questions were properly understood by respondents and also to test the interview length. Twenty-five pilot interviews were conducted between 18th and 21st February 2009. Recordings of the interviews were reviewed by the project team, who also carried out a number of follow-up telephone calls with respondents who had agreed to be re-contacted. These conversations with respondents were used to further refine the questionnaire wording to ensure that it was applicable to the majority of learners and to add clarifications where necessary. DCELLS was

provided with a series of recommendations following the pilot and these were agreed before changes were made to the survey for the main stage.

A copy of the full questionnaire may be downloaded from the DCELLS customer research programme website:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/research-and-evaluation/customer-research>.

In order to make the survey as accessible as possible to all respondents, a shorter version of the telephone questionnaire (certain questions were removed) was compiled, lasting 10 minutes on average (see Fieldwork subsection).

Sample source and sampling procedure

The sample of WBL learners was drawn by GfK NOP from the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR)³⁵. A Fair Processing Notice (FPN) applies to LLWR and only learners who had agreed that their details could be used for re-contact purposes were included in the sample.

It was never been the intention of DCELLS to sample WBL learners in sufficient numbers to permit provider level analysis, as it was known from previous discussions that it would not be possible to deliver sufficient numbers of interviews for many of the smaller providers. The initial sample design involved drawing a stratified sample on a 4.7:1 basis (i.e. for every completed interview, four leads would be drawn), but the restrictions of the FPN meant that, rather than drawing a sample in this way, all WBL learner records were used for interviewing.

It is important to recognise given the high levels of non permissions for follow up, the 2009 Learner Voice survey can only be described as a survey of learners who gave permission for follow up. The following tables provide detail on some key analysis variables for those who gave permission and those who did not³⁶.

Table 47 Age within gender

| Age Group | No permission | | | Permission | | |
|--------------|---------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | total % | F | M | total % | F | M |
| 16-17 | 23 | 17 | 30 | 25 | 17 | 33 |
| 18 | 25 | 21 | 30 | 31 | 21 | 40 |
| 19 | 19 | 20 | 17 | 17 | 22 | 14 |
| 20-24 | 18 | 23 | 13 | 14 | 21 | 8 |
| 25-29 | 12 | 15 | 8 | 9 | 15 | 4 |
| 30-39 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| | | Female | Male | | Female | Male |
| | | 53% | 47% | | 47% | 53% |

³⁵ collected by DCELLS and provides the official source of statistics on Post-16 (non-HE) learners in Wales.

³⁶ this information was taken from a preliminary LLWR freeze dated 31st October 2008

Table 48 Mode of learning

| LP07 | % No permission | % Permission |
|---|-----------------|--------------|
| 01 continuous delivery, day | 10 | 4 |
| 02 continuous delivery, evening only | 0 | 0 |
| 03 continuous delivery – other | 1 | 0 |
| 04 continuous delivery in the workplace | 88 | 96 |
| 05 sandwich | 0 | 0 |
| 06 block release | 0 | |

Table 49 Broad programme type

| LP17 | % No permission | % Permission |
|--|-----------------|--------------|
| 01 Modern Apprenticeship | 35 | 36 |
| 02 Foundation Modern Apprenticeships | 45 | 47 |
| 03 Skillbuild Preparatory | 0 | 0 |
| 04 Skillbuild Level 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 05 Modern Skills Diploma | 4 | 4 |
| 06 WBLA endorsed | 0 | 0 |
| 08 other WBL programme | 3 | 2 |
| 09 Preparatory Learning (marketed as Skillbuild) | 0 | 0 |
| 10 Skills Learning (marketed as Skillbuild Plus) | 0 | 0 |
| 14 Vocational education unspecified or mixed | 0 | 0 |
| 21 Skill Build | 14 | 10 |
| 22 Pre-Apprenticeship Learning | 0 | 0 |
| 80 Welsh Baccalaureate | 0 | 0 |
| 91 other programme | 0 | 0 |

Using a LLWR freeze dated 31st December 2008, GfK NOP analysed the available records for WBL learners. After removing leads that were out of scope³⁷, a process of de-duplication was followed. Learners with two or more learning records were selected on the basis of their programme type (identifiable programme types, i.e. not 'other programme' in LP17, were given priority) and, secondly, their date of learning (programmes that were marked as current on LLWR were given priority over those that should have finished). This resulted in 7,133 WBL learners in scope for the survey.

³⁷ Namely, those not giving permission for follow up via the Fair Processing Notice applied to LLWR, those under the age of 16, deceased learners, those without a valid phone number and those with no flag to identify their region of domicile.

Our recommended process for sampling WBL learners was to stratify the sample by region, and within region to stratify by:

- Gender
- Age – four categories: 16-18/19-24/25 – 34/35+
- Ethnicity – two categories: non white and white/unknown
- Disability/learning difficulty: yes or no/not known
- Programme – five categories as shown in the table above
- Mode of learning – two categories: continuous delivery in workplace/ continuous delivery, other

The sample was to be drawn in the ratio 4.7:1 (i.e. 4 leads to achieve 1 interview and allowing for 85% of sample leads being viable). However, given the number of leads available, no sampling exercise was undertaken, and the entire WBL sample was made available (issued in tranches) with the aim to achieve the interview targets set per stratification cell (Table 50). Whilst we would usually recommend oversampling certain variables (such as white/ non white) to permit more robust analysis, this was not possible due to the limited number of leads available.

Table 50 Interviewing targets by key variables (n=1500)

| Stratification variable | % | Number of interviews (rep of available universe n=1500) | Accuracy at 95% confidence level (50% survey result) |
|--------------------------------------|----|---|--|
| Region | | | |
| North | 21 | 320 | +/-4.9 |
| South | 22 | 323 | +/-4.8 |
| South East | 19 | 278 | +/-5.2 |
| SW & Mid | 39 | 578 | +/-3.6 |
| total | | 1500 | |
| Age within gender | | | |
| Female 16-18 | 9 | 128 | +/-7.7 |
| Female 19-24 | 10 | 143 | +/-7.3 |
| Female 25-34 | 10 | 147 | +/-7.2 |
| Female 35-54 | 17 | Female 35+ =278 | +/-5.2 |
| Female 55+ | 2 | | |
| Male 16-18 | 19 | 291 | +/-5.1 |
| Male 19-24 | 21 | 314 | +/-4.9 |
| Male 25-34 | 7 | 101 | +/-8.7 |
| Male 35-54 | 6 | Male 35+ = 99 | +/-8.8 |
| Male 55+ | 1 | | |
| total | | 1500 | |
| Ethnicity | | | |
| White/unknown | 98 | 1470 | +/-2.3 |
| Non white | 2 | 30 | +/-15.9 |
| total | | 1500 | |
| Mode of learning | | | |
| Continuous delivery in the workplace | 96 | 1431 | +/-2.3 |
| Continuous delivery, day | 4 | 69 | +/-10.5 |
| Continuous delivery, evening only | 0 | | |
| Continuous delivery – other | 0 | | |

| | | | |
|---|----|----------------------|---------|
| Block release | 0 | | |
| total | | 1500 | |
| Broad programme type | | | |
| Modern Apprenticeship | 37 | 550 | +/-3.7 |
| Foundation Modern Apprenticeships | 46 | 680 | +/-3.3 |
| Modern Skills Diploma/Modern Skills Diploma | 5 | 70 | +/-10.4 |
| Skillbuild Preparatory | 0 | | |
| Preparatory Learning (marketed as Skillbuild) | 0 | | |
| | | Skillbuild=166 | +/-6.8 |
| Skills Learning (marketed as Skillbuild Plus) | 0 | | |
| Skill Build | 11 | | |
| Ufi | 0 | | |
| Welsh Baccalaureate | 0 | Other programme = 34 | +/-15.0 |
| Other WBL programme | 2 | | |
| total | | 1500 | |
| Disability/learning difficulty | | | |
| Yes ¹ | 3 | 51 | +/-12.2 |
| No/unknown | 97 | 1449 | +/-2.3 |
| total | | 1500 | |

Note: ¹ this encompasses all codes in LLWR field LP30 except 91, 98 and 99.

Fieldwork

In total, 1,507 WBL learners were interviewed between 9th March and 24th April 2009. All interviewers were IQCS trained and were personally briefed by a member of the GfK NOP executive team. The briefing was used to describe to interviewers the background to and purpose for the survey, as well as covering interviewing procedures and the questionnaire itself. All interviewers ran through a practise interview before they worked on the live sample.

At the beginning of the interview, respondents were offered the opportunity of having a Welsh language interview. Those who wished to be interviewed in Welsh were subsequently re-contacted by a Welsh-speaking interviewer. Twenty-seven interviews were conducted in Welsh amongst WBL respondents.

In order to make the survey as accessible as possible to all learners in WBL, respondents who were identified in the LLWR sample³⁸ as having specific learning difficulties or disabilities were sent an advanced letter which gave them the option of taking part in a shorter 10 minute interview if they felt that that the full interview would prove unsuitable for them. They were also able to request a face-to-face interview if they felt that a telephone interview would be inappropriate. These options were offered to respondents with the following types of disabilities and learning difficulties in field LP30 of LLWR (codes shown in brackets below):

- hearing impairment (codes 2 and 22)
- behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (codes 6 and 24)
- multi-sensory impairment (codes 10 and 25)
- autistic spectrum disorders (codes 11 and 26)
- speech, language and communication difficulties (codes 12 and 27)
- severe learning difficulties (code 29)
- profound and multiple learning difficulties (code 30)

There were no requests for short interviews or face to face interviews amongst WBL.

Response

As the survey was not a strictly random probability sample it is misleading to report on response rates. The following table summarises the outcomes on the issued sample:

Table 51 Sample outcomes

| | |
|---|------|
| Total worked sample | 6700 |
| Total sample minus leads falling outside stratification cells | 4403 |
| Ineligible for interview (wrong number, not available in fieldwork period, etc) | 1329 |
| Refusals | 445 |
| Achieved interviews | 1507 |

Weighting

The final data set was reviewed against the profile of WBL learners on LLWR who had agreed to re-contact activities³⁹. This comparison showed that the achieved sample matched closely to this profile of learners and so no weighting was needed to make the sample representative.

³⁸ Taken from field LP30, codes shown in brackets

³⁹ Via the Fair Processing Notice that applied to LLWR

Early leavers

In 2003, the sample from ILR was a freeze of current learners; by the time interviewing was undertaken a proportion of these had left their course. The same approach was taken in 2009 and those who left their course between the sample being drawn and interview are referred to as 'early leavers' in this report. However the survey is essentially a survey of current learners and 'recent' leavers.

Comparisons with the National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2003

In 2003, the WBL sample was sourced from the National Trainee Database and a random stratified sample of 4,000 names was drawn with a computer-generated random start. Learners in mid Wales were oversampled and this was corrected by weighting the results at the analysis stage. Thus, the 2003 sample differed from that in 2009, because, in the latter, all available leads were drawn and the overall sample was not necessarily representative of all WBL learners in Wales. These differences mean that comparisons between the 2003 survey results and those of 2009 are not made in this report.

Appendix D: Data tables

Table 52 Whether provider was first choice by satisfaction with learning experience

| All respondents | Satisfaction with learning | | | |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| | Total | Extremely/ very satisfied | Fairly satisfied | Indifferent/ dissatisfied |
| Total unweighted base | 1507 | 1131 | 283 | 91 |
| | % | % | % | % |
| Yes, first choice | 58 | 63 | 48 | 38 |
| No, not first choice | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Didn't have a choice because my employer chose for me | 29 | 26 | 37 | 38 |
| Didn't have a choice because the Jobcentre Plus chose for me | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| Didn't actively consider another option | 7 | 6 | 8 | 16 |
| Don't know | * | * | 1 | 1 |

Note: * denotes < 0.5%.

Table 53 Reasons for choosing their provider by age

| | Total | Age | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| | | 16-18 | 19-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45+ |
| Base: All respondents except those whose employer/Jobcentre Plus chose provider | | | | | | |
| Unweighted | 1038 | 358 | 326 | 145 | 102 | 107 |
| | % | % | % | % | % | % |
| Convenient location/nearest | 32 | 26 | 29 | 40 | 44 | 32 |
| Offered training I wanted | 18 | 22 | 16 | 12 | 16 | 20 |
| Has a good reputation (general) | 15 | 12 | 17 | 12 | 14 | 21 |
| Friends were going there/friends recommended | 12 | 15 | 12 | 9 | 11 | 8 |
| Had no choice – employer chose | 10 | 4 | 11 | 13 | 15 | 17 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|----|---|---|---|---|
| Recommended by career advisor/school | 7 | 13 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| Had no choice – no other providers in this area | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 3 |
| Has a good reputation for my course | 5 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 5 |
| Been to the college before/on other courses | 4 | * | 4 | 6 | 9 | 7 |
| Course is free/ cheap/ get paid to do it. | 3 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| Offered courses at convenient time for me | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 3 |

Note: * denotes <0.5%. Reasons given by 3% of respondents or more.

Table 54 Reasons for dissatisfaction with employer by gender and caring responsibilities

| | Total | Gender | | Caring Responsibilities | |
|--|-------|--------|-------|-------------------------|------|
| | | Men | Women | For children | None |
| Base: Respondents who are dissatisfied with their employer | | | | | |
| Unweighted | **83 | **39 | **44 | **33 | **46 |
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| Employer doesn't give me any assistance/advice/help with my projects | 45 | 44 | 45 | 42 | 48 |
| Pressure of work / no time to study /train | 17 | 15 | 18 | 30 | 9 |
| My employer is not interested/shows no interest | 17 | 5 | 27 | 24 | 11 |
| Needs more support from work | 12 | 8 | 16 | 15 | 7 |
| Don't allow me enough time to train/study/ have to take leave | 11 | 13 | 9 | 15 | 9 |
| They are rather I worked/didn't go to college/didn't train | 7 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 11 |
| Poor communication between employer/ college/ and me | 7 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 9 |

Note: ** denotes small base sizes (<100). Reasons shown are mentioned by 7% of respondents or more.

Table 55 Measures of satisfaction with the employer by caring commitments

| Base, all employed respondents* (1336) | Total | Caring Commitments | |
|--|-------|--------------------|-----|
| | | Yes | No |
| % rating 9-10 out of 10 (top score) | | | |
| Unweighted base | 1336 | 387 | 949 |
| Making sure your job relates to your training programme | 65 | 60 | 67 |
| Making sure there is no pressure to miss training or meeting with assessors | 64 | 59 | 66 |
| Encouraging you to achieve the qualification* | 65 | 57 | 68 |
| Allowing you time during working hours for the programme | 62 | 56 | 64 |
| Allowing you to work flexible hours if needed | 58 | 55 | 60 |
| Understanding your training programme and the work you are required to do for it | 56 | 48 | 60 |

* Only respondents employed and studying for a qualification during their course were asked whether their employer 'encourages you to achieve the qualification' (base sizes for this question are total 1318, men 706, female 612, 16-18 - 317, 19-24- 428, 25+ - 573).

Table 56 Problems encountered since starting course by overall satisfaction with learning experience

| | Total | Overall satisfaction | | |
|---|-------|----------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| | | Extremely / very satisfied | Fairly satisfied | Indifferent / dissatisfied |
| Base: All respondents | | | | |
| Unweighted | 1507 | 1131 | 283 | **91 |
| | % | % | % | % |
| No problems | 54 | 60 | 43 | 18 |
| Keeping motivated to continue the training | 20 | 15 | 27 | 54 |
| Fitting in training commitments in with other commitments at work | 16 | 12 | 24 | 36 |
| Fitting training commitments in with other commitments at home | 13 | 11 | 18 | 34 |
| Keeping up with the standard of work required | 11 | 9 | 14 | 32 |

| | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|
| Dealing with money pressures | 11 | 9 | 16 | 18 |
| Maths or numeracy skills | 7 | 7 | 8 | 14 |
| Travel to college or training centre | 7 | 6 | 9 | 9 |
| Reading or writing skills | 7 | 6 | 7 | 12 |
| Extra help you were promised not being provided | 5 | 3 | 8 | 18 |

Note: ** denotes a low base size (<100).

Table 57 Problems encountered since starting course by parental and caring responsibilities

| | Total | Responsibilities | |
|---|-------|------------------|------|
| | | Children/adults | None |
| Base: All respondents | | | |
| Unweighted | 1507 | 424 | 1083 |
| | % | % | % |
| No problems | 54 | 44 | 58 |
| Keeping motivated to continue the training | 20 | 25 | 17 |
| Fitting in training commitments in with other commitments at work | 16 | 26 | 12 |
| Fitting training commitments in with other commitments at home | 13 | 25 | 9 |
| Keeping up with the standard of work required | 11 | 13 | 11 |
| Dealing with money pressures | 11 | 10 | 11 |
| Maths or numeracy skills | 7 | 8 | 7 |
| Travel to college or training centre | 7 | 4 | 8 |
| Reading or writing skills | 7 | 5 | 7 |
| Extra help you were promised not being provided | 5 | 4 | 5 |

Table 58 Problems encountered since starting course by satisfaction with employer support

| | Total | Satisfaction with employer | | |
|---|-------|----------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Base: All respondents | Total | Extremely / very satisfied | Fairly satisfied | Indifferent / dissatisfied |
| Unweighted | 1507 | 846 | 308 | 177 |
| | % | % | % | % |
| No problems | 54 | 62 | 47 | 34 |
| Keeping motivated to continue the training | 20 | 15 | 21 | 34 |
| Fitting in training commitments in with other commitments at work | 16 | 10 | 22 | 40 |
| Fitting training commitments in with other commitments at home | 13 | 10 | 16 | 25 |
| Keeping up with the standard of work required | 11 | 10 | 12 | 19 |
| Dealing with money pressures | 11 | 8 | 11 | 17 |
| Maths or numeracy skills | 7 | 6 | 9 | 8 |
| Travel to college or training centre | 7 | 6 | 8 | 6 |
| Reading or writing skills | 7 | 7 | 5 | 8 |
| Extra help you were promised not being provided | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 |