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National Learner Satisfaction
Survey (NLSS): Highlights from
2009

FEBRUARY 2011

Trinh Tu, Claire Lambert, Billie Lever Taylor and Angela Klein managed this project at Ipsos MORI and would like to thank Tracy Mitchell and Charlotte Beckford and all colleagues at LSC who worked on the research for all their help and assistance; thanks are also due to all the survey respondents who gave up their time to take part.

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Introduction

Background

1 This report presents the key findings for the National Learner Satisfaction Survey (NLSS) 2009, which was conducted by Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute. The project was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), which has now been superseded by the Skills Funding Agency and the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). The research function of the LSC has transferred to the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). The NLSS is a large tracking survey of then LSC-funded learners aged 16 and over. The NLSS provides a wealth of data on learners' satisfaction with their learning experience over time, including detailed information on three key aspects of the learner journey: initial choice and information; support during learning; and benefits of participation. There have been six national surveys since 2001 (annually between 2001 and 2004, 2007 and 2009). The 2009 survey comprises telephone interviews with around 25,000 learners.

Sampling

2 The NLSS covers learners in further education (FE), Apprenticeships, other Learner Responsive¹, non-accredited personal and community development learning (PCDL), Skills for Jobs (SFJ) and Employability Skills programme (ESP) learning.

3 Learners were sampled from the individualised learner record (ILR), with the exception of PCDL learners who were sampled directly from local education authorities' records due to the lack of a robust national database of these learners. In line with previous years of NLSS, quotas were set for sub-regional (ex-LSC) areas for the FE learners, and by local education authorities for PCDL learners. Data from all learners drawn from the ILR were weighted using final ILR profiles for the 2007/08 academic year. Further details about the sampling and weighting approach are provided in the technical report.

Sample profile

4 Table 1 shows the demographic profile of learners. PCDL and other LR learners are predominantly female, while there is a broadly even gender split in FE and Apprenticeships.

5 PCDL and other LR learners are almost all aged 19 or over (in fact the majority are aged 25 or over), while more than one in three FE learners, and one in four Apprentices, are aged 16-18. PCDL and other LR learners are also more likely to report having a disability which is consistent with their older age profile.

¹ includes charities, HEIs, local authorities, business organisations, public or voluntary organisations

6 Around one in six FE and other LR learners are from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, considerably higher than the proportions in Apprenticeships and PCDL.

Table 1: Sample demographic profile (weighted)				
	FE	Apprentices	Other LR	PCDL
<i>(Unweighted Base: all respondents)</i>	<i>(15,724) %</i>	<i>(4,979) %</i>	<i>(1,856) %</i>	<i>(2,000) %</i>
Gender				
Male	46	54	30	23
Female	54	46	70	77
Age				
16–18	36	24	9	1
19+	64	76	91	97
Refused	*	0	*	2
Ethnicity				
White	83	93	81	93
BME	16	7	18	5
Refused	*	0	*	1
Not known	1	*	1	0
Disability				
	9	6	12	11
Learning difficulty				
	9	6	10	5

Multivariate analysis

7 In addition to standard analysis of the data, multiple regression (also known as key driver analysis – KDA) was used to examine the relative importance of a range of factors in explaining overall satisfaction with the learning experience. (PCDL learners were excluded from this analysis because the representativeness of this sample is unknown – there is no population profile data).

Interpretation of data

8 It should be remembered that a sample and not the entire population of learners has been interviewed. Consequently, all results are subject to sampling tolerances, which means that not all differences are statistically significant. **This report comments only on findings that are statistically significant.**

9 Where percentages do not sum to 100, this is due to computer rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know' categories, or multiple answers. An asterisk (*) denotes values above zero but less than 0.5 per cent.

10 In this report, reference is made to 'combined scores'. This is where we combine 'extremely', 'very' and 'fairly', or 'strongly' and 'tend to' scores. The report also makes reference to 'net' figures. This represents the balance of opinion on attitudinal questions. In the case of a 'net satisfaction' figure, this represents the percentage satisfied with a particular issue, less the percentage dissatisfied. For example, if an aspect of learning records 40 per cent satisfied and 25 per cent dissatisfied, the 'net satisfaction' figure is +15 points.

11 Combined and net scores are calculated using the true value of the scores before they are rounded. This can result in a small discrepancy (usually one percentage point) between the combined score and the sum of the rounded scores it relates to.

12 This report also makes reference to mean scores for questions where learners were asked to rank an aspect of their course or provider on a scale of 1 to 10. The mean score is compiled by adding the scores provided by all learners and dividing it by the number of learners answering the question.

Report structure

13 This report is organised into six main sections:

- Summary of key findings and implications;
- Key findings;
- Key drivers of satisfaction and advocacy (among learners in FE and on Apprenticeships);
- Performance on key drivers;
- Early leavers; and
- Interest in further learning

14 More detailed findings are contained in separate reports for FE, Apprenticeships, other LR and PCDL. Separate reports have also been produced for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, young learners, adult learners and a detailed technical report.

15 To protect the interests of the LSC successor organisations in ensuring that the findings of this research are accurately reported, any such publications are therefore subject to the

advance approval of Ipsos MORI. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misrepresentation.

Summary and Implications

Summary

Satisfaction with the learning experience remains very high

16 Learners express high levels of satisfaction with their learning experience, with around nine in ten satisfied. In addition, most learners say they would speak highly of their provider (between around three in ten and around four in ten, depending on learner group, would do so without being asked).

17 Satisfaction – both overall and on many specific aspects of the course – tends to be highest amongst PCDL and other LR learners, while satisfaction is lower for learners on ESP and SFJ courses.

18 Overall satisfaction levels have been high and relatively stable since 2001. However, between 2007 and 2009 there has been a fall in the proportion of learners who are *extremely* satisfied, reversing a gradual increase in previous years.

Quality of teaching is a key driver of satisfaction

19 The key drivers of learners' satisfaction with their learning experience are the quality of teaching (amongst both FE learners and Apprentices), the level of help and support (for FE learners) and the ability of providers to listen to and act on learners' views (Apprentices).

20 Being responsive to learners and the personal relationship with staff are the main drivers of advocacy (speaking highly of the provider); specifically, listening to and acting on learners' views, and staff relating to learners and showing them respect.

Providers' performance on key drivers of satisfaction is rated highly by learners

21 Almost all learners are satisfied with the quality of teaching, and ratings for specific aspects of teaching (such as making the subject interesting) are also high. Similarly, the vast majority of learners say that their learning programme is meeting their needs. Most learners say that the course has at least met their expectations, and around one third say their expectations have been exceeded; however, between around one in six and around one in four, depending on learner group, said they did not know what to expect.

22 Over half of learners say that the support they receive has been very good, and almost all rate this as good. High ratings are also given for the level of responsiveness and respect shown to learners, and for teachers being able to relate to learners.

23 Learners are likely to feel that providers are good at listening to their views, although they are slightly less likely to say they are good at acting on them. Some learners (especially those on PCDL courses) do not feel that these issues apply to their course.

24 Nearly all learners say that they felt well informed about the content of their course after induction.

25 Of the different learner groups, PCDL and other LR learners are most positive towards a number of aspects of the learning experience, in particular the quality of teaching. Apprentices give the highest ratings for providers listening to and acting on their views, and for the impact of the course on their future career, although this tends to reflect the greater relevance of these issues to Apprentices, rather than negative ratings in other learner groups.

26 Amongst FE and (to some extent) other LR learners, learners aged 19 or over are more positive than those aged 16-18 on a number of issues. There is less variation by age group among Apprentices, although those aged 16-18 are more likely than older Apprentices to say their expectations have been exceeded and that the provider is good at listening to their views.

The proportion of early leavers, and reasons for leaving early, have remained similar to previous years

27 One of the most common reasons given for leaving the course early is that it was the wrong choice of course. Other reasons include health problems, poor quality of teaching, and difficulties combining the course with work or family commitments. Learners aged 16-18 are slightly more likely to leave early than older learners (in Apprenticeships and other LR learning).

28 As would be expected, learners who left their course early are far more likely than others to be dissatisfied with the course.

More than half of learners say they are very likely to undertake further learning

29 FE, other LR and PCDL learners are more likely than apprentices to say they will do another course in the next three years. This is consistent with findings in other research which shows that learners in FE are more likely to view their learning as a means to progression to higher level courses; apprentices – particularly those undertaking Advanced Apprenticeships, on the other hand, are more likely to view their learning as the end goal.

Implications

30 Learners' overall satisfaction with their learning experience is high and at similar levels to those in previous years of the survey. However, the proportions who are extremely satisfied have fallen, after a gradual increase in recent years. Learners' overall assessment of their course, and their rating of individual aspects, remain very positive, so there are no clear reasons

for this change. However, it may be linked to expectations: many learners feel that the course has met (rather than exceeded) their expectations despite rating their learning experience highly, or did not know what to expect. Finding ways to manage – and where possible exceed - expectations may help to increase the group of learners who are extremely satisfied.

31 As in previous years, early leavers are much more likely than other learners to be dissatisfied with the course. The proportion of early leavers, and reasons for leaving, has remained very similar to the last survey (in 2007). This suggests that there is still work to be done to reduce the number of early leavers particularly on pre-entry information, advice and guidance, and thereby increase satisfaction amongst learners as a whole.

32 The quality of teaching is an important driver of satisfaction, as is the ability of staff to show respect to and relate to learners. This indicates that staff need to have a range of skills to ensure a favourable impression with learners. Help and support, and listening to learners' views, are also important drivers. Overall, this suggests that providers need to engage fully with learners on a personal level throughout the learning programme.

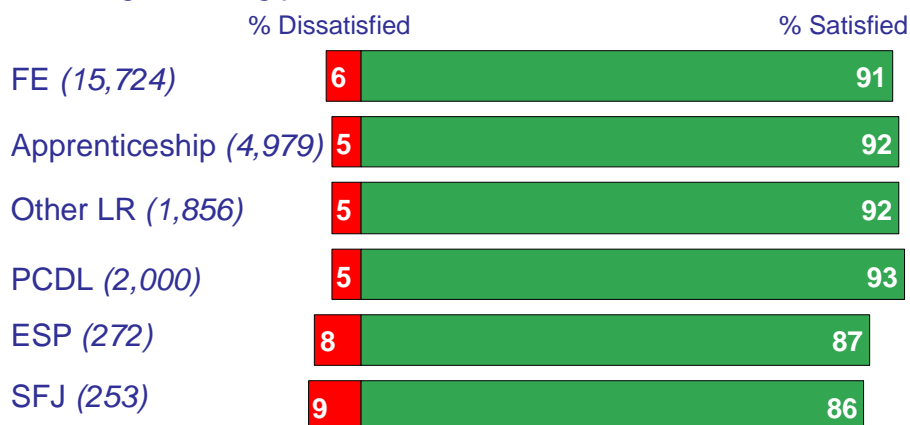
Key Findings

Satisfaction with the learning experience

33 The vast majority of learners – around 9 in 10 – are satisfied with their learning experience (Figure 1). Satisfaction is high amongst all learner groups, although Employability Skills Programme (ESP) and Skills for Jobs (SFJ) learners are less satisfied than other learners. Personal and community development (PCDL) and other LR learners are most likely to be *extremely* or *very* satisfied (74 and 72 per cent respectively, compared with 62 per cent of FE learners and 67 per cent of Apprentices).

Figure 1: Satisfaction with the learning experience

Q And now taking all the issues we have discussed into account, how satisfied are you with your current learning experience at your college/ training provider?

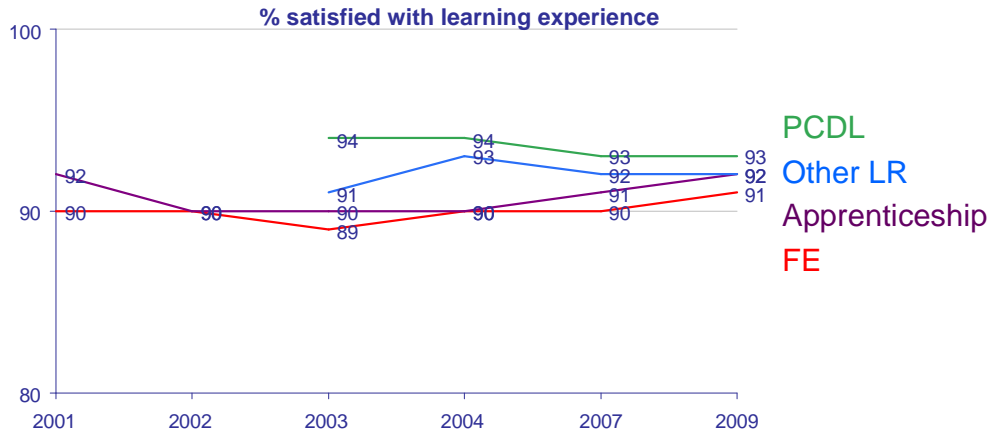


Base: 25,084 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

34 Overall satisfaction levels are similar to those reported in the 2007 survey (Figure 2). Overall satisfaction among further education (FE) learners has increased by one percentage point. Overall satisfaction levels have remained stable since the first NLSS in 2001 (although there have been changes in the proportion of learners who are *extremely* satisfied, as discussed overleaf).

Figure 2: Trends in satisfaction with the learning experience

Q And now taking all the issues we have discussed into account, how satisfied are you with your current learning experience at your college/ training provider?



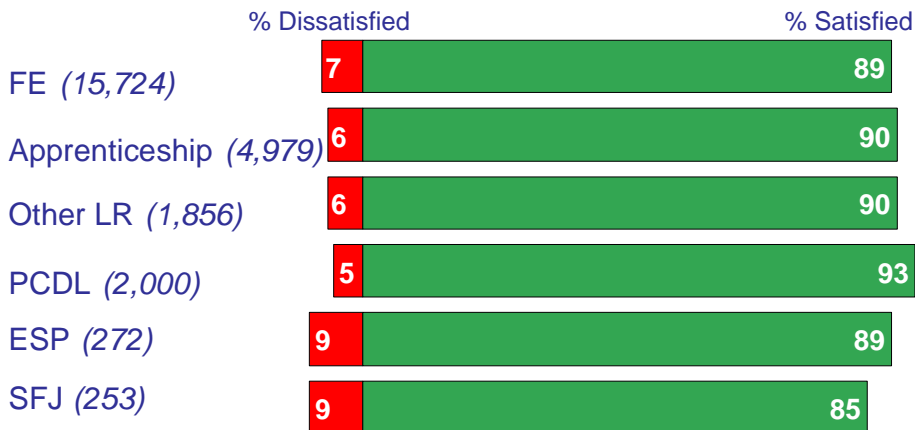
Base: 24,559 learners aged 16+, 2009

Satisfaction with the quality of teaching

35 Learners' satisfaction with the quality of teaching shows a similar pattern to the findings for overall satisfaction: around 9 in 10 learners are satisfied with the quality of teaching or training on their course (Figure 3). SFJ learners are again less satisfied than other learners, while PCDL learners are most satisfied (and in particular, more likely to be *extremely* satisfied: 35 per cent compared with 30% of other LR learners, 25% of FE learners and 22% of Apprentices).

Figure 3: Satisfaction with the quality of teaching

Q Now moving on to teaching/training. Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of the teaching/training at your college/provider?

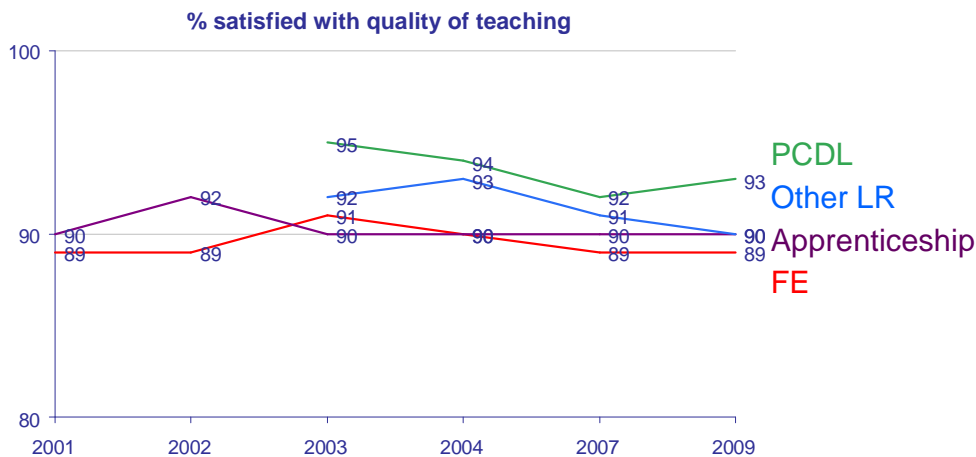


Base: 25,084 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

36 Satisfaction with the quality of teaching has also remained at a similar level to 2007, and trends since 2001 have been stable (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Trends in satisfaction with the quality of teaching

Q Now moving on to teaching/training. Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of the teaching/training at your college/provider?



Base: 24,559 learners aged 16+, 2009

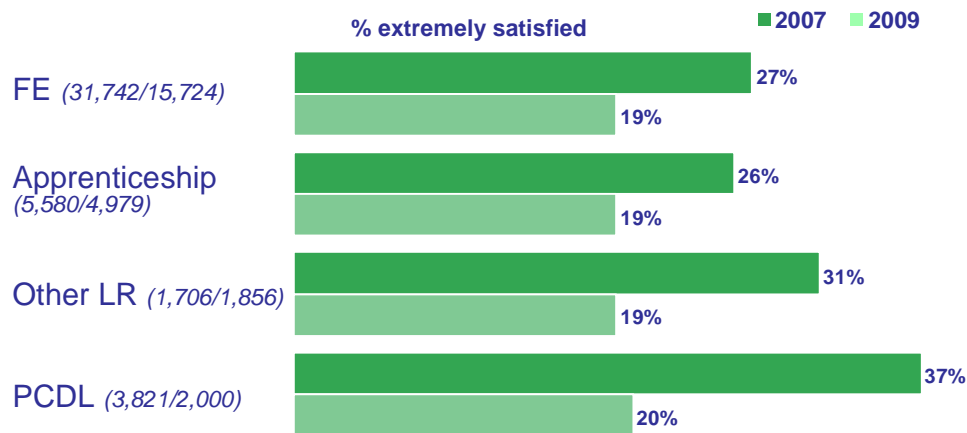
Decline in the proportion extremely satisfied overall and with the quality of teaching

37 While the proportion of learners who are satisfied with their learning experience and the quality of teaching has remained very similar to the 2007 survey, there has been a decline in the

proportion who are *extremely* satisfied. This is particularly pronounced in relation to overall satisfaction with the learning experience, where the proportions extremely satisfied have fallen by between seven and 17 percentage points in the four main learner groups (Figure 5). There has also been a decrease in the proportion extremely satisfied with the quality of teaching, but this is much smaller (between one and three percentage points), as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 5: Percentages of learners extremely satisfied with the learning experience

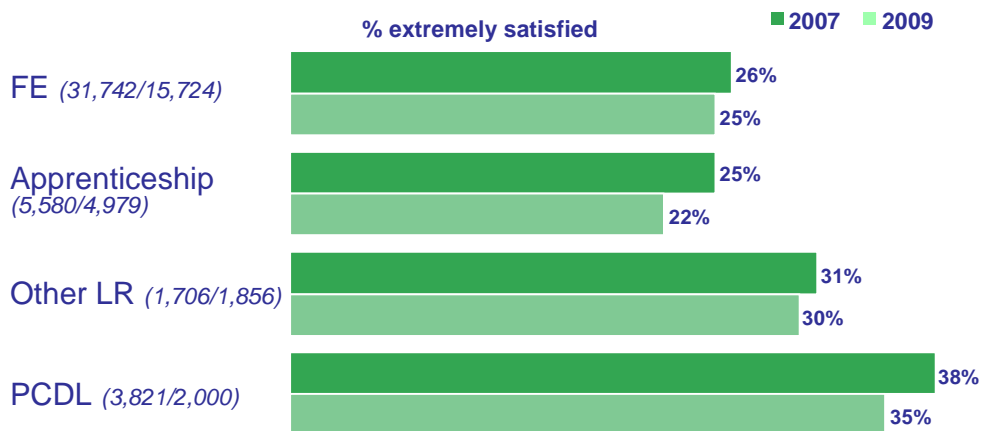
Q *And now taking all the issues we have discussed into account, how satisfied are you with your current learning experience at ...*



Base: 24,559 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

Figure 6: Percentages of learners extremely satisfied with the quality of teaching

Q *Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of the teaching/ training at...?*



Base: 24,559 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

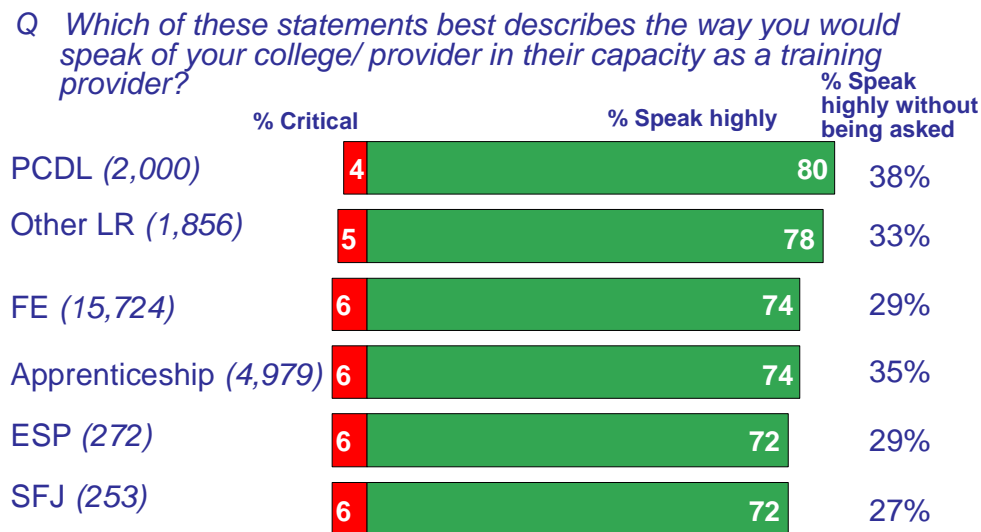
38 Longer-term trends indicate that the proportions extremely satisfied with the overall learning experience and with the quality of teaching increased steadily between 2001 and 2007. For example, the proportion of FE learners extremely satisfied overall increased from 20 per cent in 2001 to 27 per cent in 2007. The 2009 figures therefore represent a reversing of this trend and a return to the levels of previous years.

39 These findings also need to be seen in the context of the high levels of satisfaction overall, and in the stable trends in the proportion who are satisfied.

Advocacy

40 Most learners would speak highly of their provider, including around one in three who would do so without being asked (Figure 7). Only around one in twenty would be critical. PCDL learners are most positive, while Apprentices are more likely than FE, ESP and SFJ learners to speak highly of their provider without being asked, and other LR learners more likely than FE learners to speak highly (either with or without being asked).

Figure 7: Advocacy towards learning provider

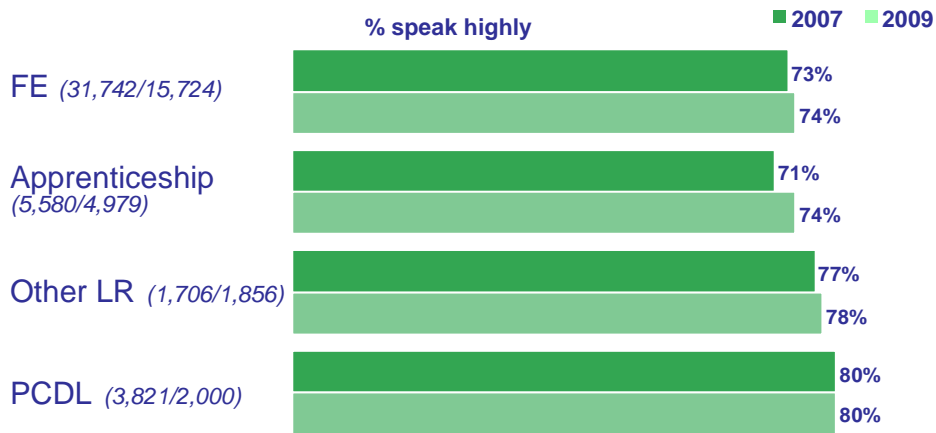


Base: 25,084 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

41 The proportion of learners who would speak highly of their provider has remained similar to the level observed in 2007, with an increase of one percentage point for FE learners and no significant change for other LR or PCDL learners. There is a larger increase (of three percentage points) for Apprentices (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Trends in advocacy (speaking highly of provider)

Q Which of these statements best describes the way you would speak of your provider?

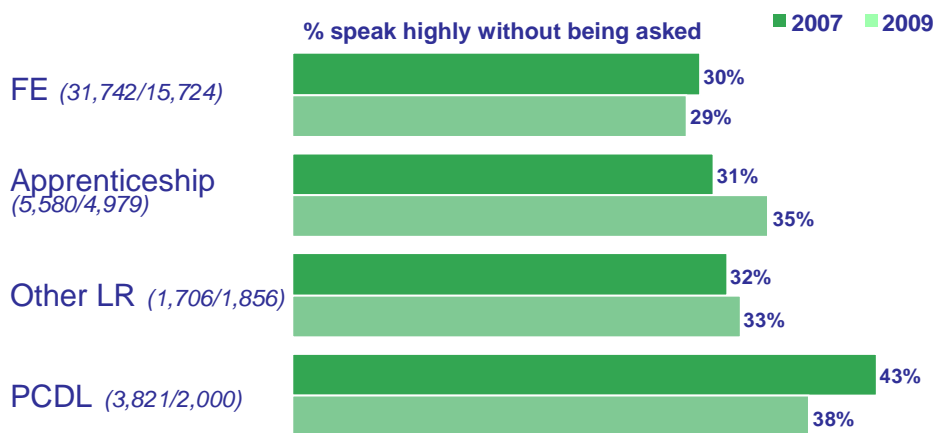


Base:24,559 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

42 There is also an increase (of four percentage points) in the proportion of Apprentices who would speak highly of their provider *without* being asked (Figure 9), although the figures for FE and PCDL learners have decreased slightly (by one and five percentage points respectively). Again, there is no significant change for other LR learners.

Figure 9: Trends in advocacy (speaking highly of provider without being asked)

Q Which of these statements best describes the way you would speak of your provider?



Base:24,559 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

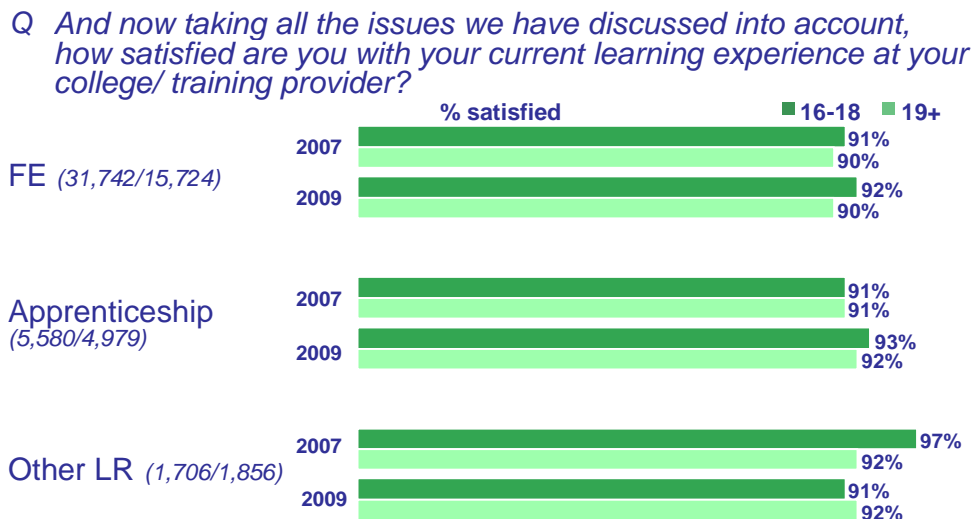
Age analysis for overall satisfaction, quality of teaching and advocacy

43 For three groups of learners (FE, Apprentices and other LR), it is possible to examine differences between 16-18 year olds and those aged 19 or over.

44 On overall satisfaction (Figure 10), FE learners aged 16-18 are more satisfied than those aged 19 or over, although in terms of the proportion *extremely* satisfied, the figure for older learners is higher (20 per cent of those aged 19 or over are extremely satisfied, compared with 16 per cent aged 16-18). There is no difference by age in the proportion of Apprentices or other LR learners who are satisfied, although other LR learners are more likely to be extremely or very satisfied if they are aged 19 or over (73 per cent compared with 63 per cent of 16-18 year olds).

45 In comparison with 2007, 16-18 year old Apprentices are now more satisfied, whereas other LR learners aged 16-18 are now less satisfied.

Figure 10: Overall satisfaction by age

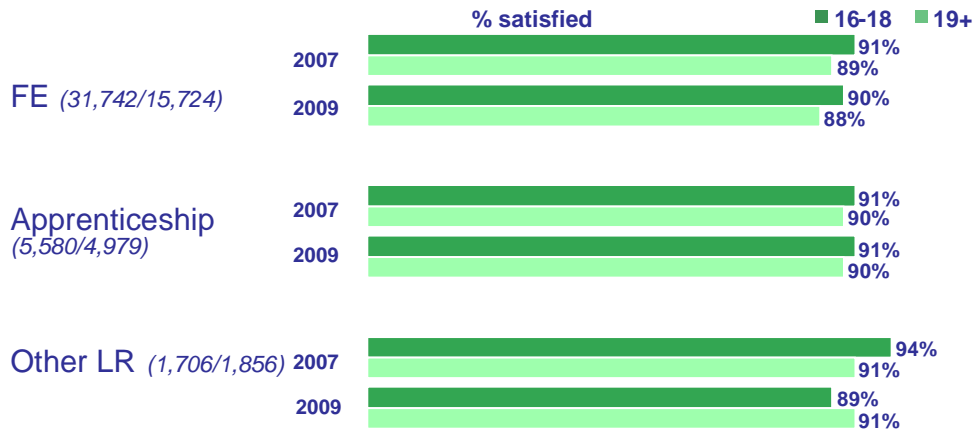


Base: 22,559 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

46 As with overall satisfaction, FE learners aged 16-18 are more satisfied than those aged 19 or over with the quality of teaching on their course (Figure 11), although again older learners are more likely to be *extremely* satisfied (28 per cent of those aged 19 or over, compared with 20 per cent of 16-18 year olds). There are no significant differences for Apprentices or other LR learners, except that other LR learners aged 19 or over are more likely than those aged 16-18 to be *extremely* satisfied (31 per cent compared with 24 cent). There are no significant changes between 2007 and 2009 by age group.

Figure 11: Quality of teaching by age

Q Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of the teaching/ training at...?



Base:22,559 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

47 FE learners aged 19 or over are more likely than those aged 16-18 to say they would speak highly of their provider without being asked (Figure 12). The same pattern applied in 2007, and there has been no significant change in the two age groups since the 2007 survey.

48 There are no significant differences by age group amongst Apprentices or other LR learners. The overall increase since 2007 for Apprentices applies to both age groups, but there is no significant change for other LR learners.

Figure 12: Advocacy by age

Q Which of these statements best describes the way you would speak of your provider?

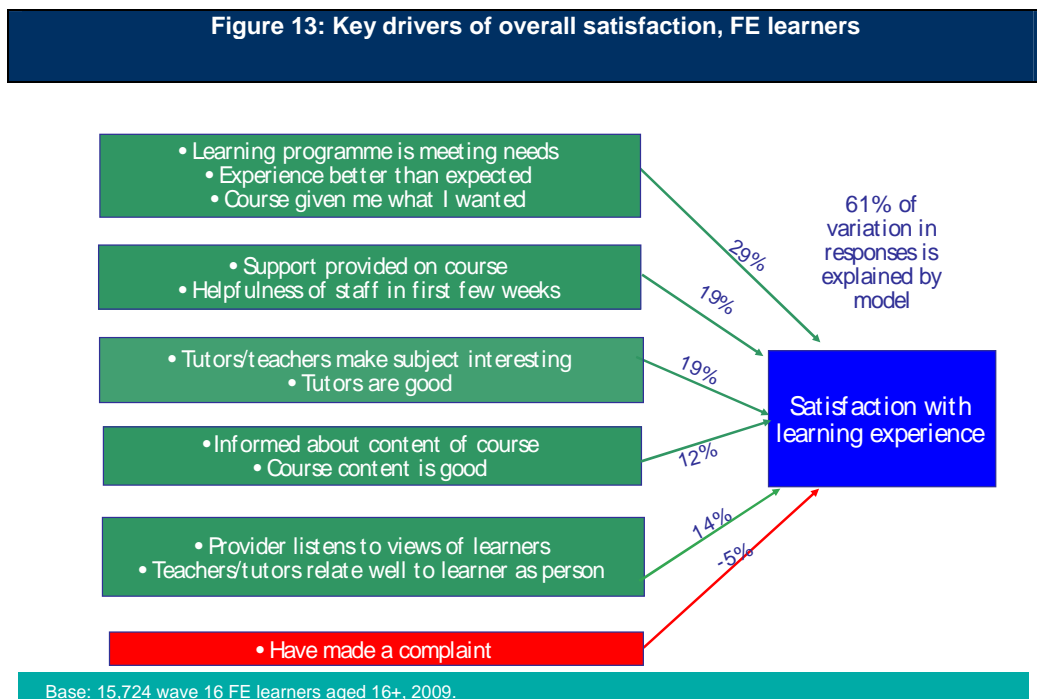


Base:22,559 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

Key drivers of satisfaction and advocacy (among Apprentices and FE learners)

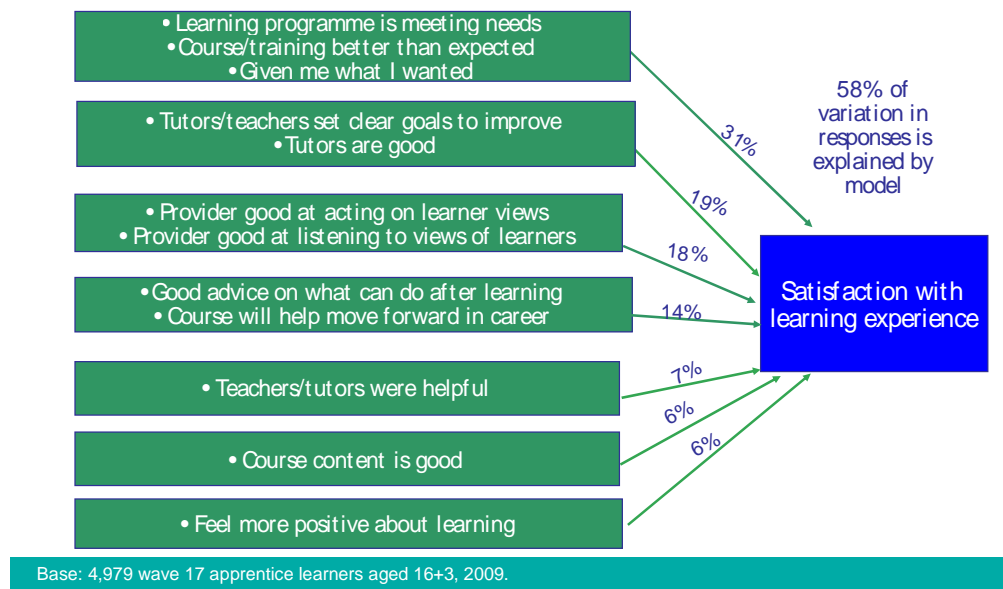
49 A key driver analysis (KDA) was conducted to determine the key drivers of learner satisfaction with the learning experience, and of learner advocacy towards providers. Figures 13-16 present the results of the multivariate analysis for FE learners and Apprentices separately, showing the relative importance of various aspects. The factors highlighted in green are those that have a positive relationship with learner satisfaction; factors in red signify a negative relationship. The models for overall satisfaction demonstrate a 'fit' (R^2 value) of 61 per cent and 58 per cent – this is the percentage of the variation in levels of satisfaction with the learning experience that can be 'explained' by the included factors. (It is not possible to identify **causal** relationships using this type of model, however, only correlations.) Statistically, this is seen to be a good 'fit' model. The 'fit' for advocacy is much lower (33 and 37 per cent), indicating that it is less easy to explain variations in attitudes towards advocacy than it is in overall satisfaction.

50 As can be seen in Figure 13, FE learners' satisfaction with their learning experience is most positively linked to other questions assessing their overall experience (the learning programme meeting their needs, having a better experience than expected, and getting what they wanted from the course). The more specific factors that impact positively on learner satisfaction relate to help and support (the support provided in the course and the helpfulness of staff in the first few weeks) and the quality of tutors or teachers (being generally good and making the subject interesting).

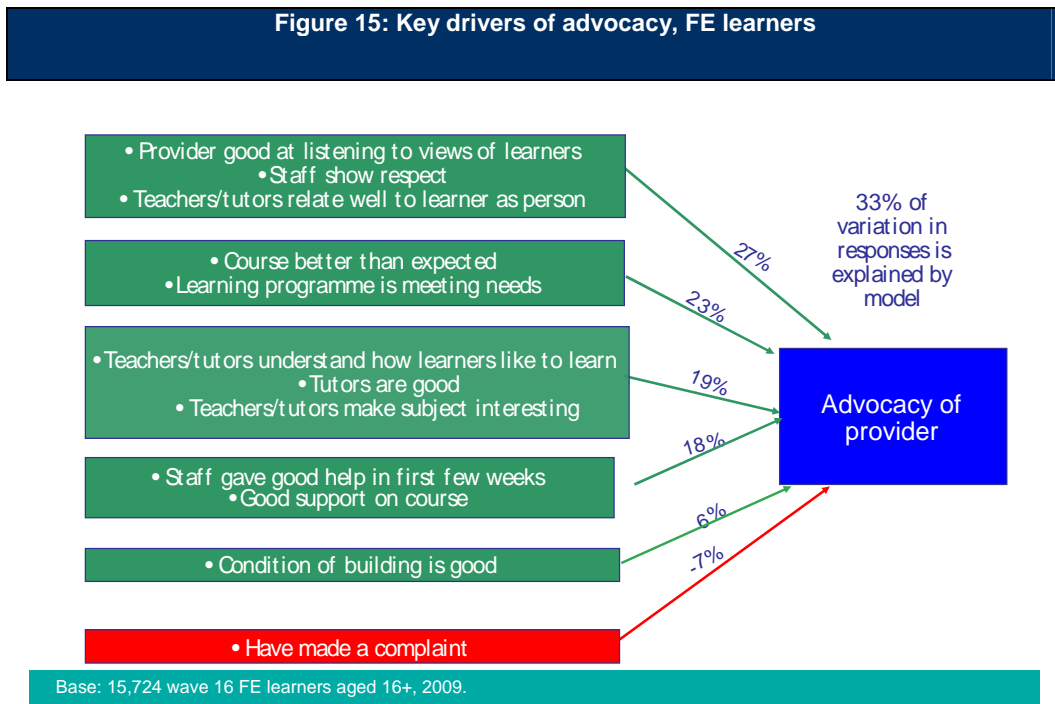


51 The overall satisfaction of Apprentices is also driven by their general experience (the learning programme meeting their needs, having a better experience than expected, and getting what they wanted from the course). The specific factors that are linked positively to overall satisfaction are again the quality of tutors or teachers (specifically being good overall and in setting clear goals to help learners improve), and also in taking learners' views into account (both listening to and acting on learners' views). As might be expected, the impact of the course on their career (moving forward in their career as a result of being on the course, and getting advice on what to do after the course) has a bigger impact amongst Apprentices than FE learners (Figure 14).

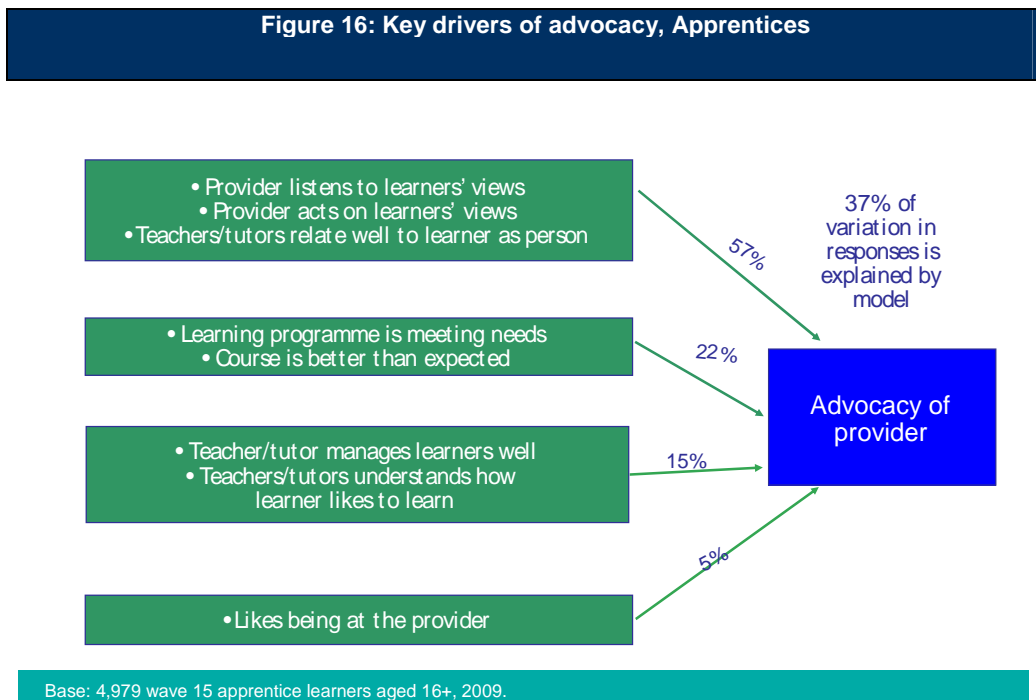
Figure 14: Key drivers of overall satisfaction, Apprentices



52 As noted above, the Key Driver analysis model for advocacy has a weaker fit than the model for overall satisfaction. However, for both FE learners and Apprentices, it is clear that the personal relationship with provider staff has a strong impact. Amongst FE learners, this relates to the provider being good at listening to learners' views, staff showing respect, and tutors or teachers relating well to learners (Figure 15). The quality of teachers (in being good generally, in understanding how learners like to learn and in making the subject interesting) is also an important factor for FE learners, as is the level of help and support (good support on the course and staff providing good help in the first few weeks).



53 For Apprentices, personal relationships are by far the biggest driver of attitudes towards advocacy, with an emphasis in particular on responsiveness (specifically the provider listening to and acting on their views, and tutors or teachers relating to them as a person). Figure 16 indicates that these factors account for more than half of the impact in the overall model.



Performance on key drivers

54 This chapter examines providers' performance on key drivers of satisfaction. Table 2 summarises learners' ratings for the key drivers that were identified above (the table shows all items that account for 10 per cent or more of each model's overall impact). Figures in the table show either the percentage rating each item positively, or the mean score out of 10 (a higher score indicating a more positive rating).

55 Ratings for the various items are consistently high, and lower figures generally indicate a lower relevance (for example, amongst other LR and PCDL learners towards career aspects) rather than a more negative rating.

56 Different learner groups are broadly similar in their ratings, the main differences being:

- Higher ratings from Apprentices on providers listening to and acting on their views, and on career aspects.
- Higher ratings from other LR and PCDL learners on some aspects of teaching.

Table 2: Performance on key drivers – summary

	FE	Apprentices	Other LR	PCDL
<i>(Base varies by question)</i>				
Overall assessment				
Learning programme is meeting my needs	90%	90%	90%	90%
Experience was better than expected	35%	33%	37%	34%
Course gives me what I wanted/needed/the experience/qualification	19%	23%	22%	26%
Support				
Good support provided on course	87%	90%	91%	88%
Staff helpful in first few weeks	90%	89%	94%	91%
Tutors/teachers				
Satisfied with quality	89%	90%	90%	93%
Make subject interesting/ enjoyable (mean)	8.1	7.9	8.5	8.7
Tutors set clear target/ goals (Mean)	7.9	8.1	8.1	8.1
Tutors manage the group well (mean)	8.0	8.0	8.4	8.5
Understand learner(s) and how they like to learn (mean)	7.8	8.0	8.2	8.3
Course content				
A good course/learned a lot/enjoyed it/up to expectations	34%	35%	38%	38%
Informed about course content	94%	94%	96%	92%
Career				
Good advice on next steps	70%	74%	63%	56%
Agree that course will help move forward in career	80%	92%	65%	31%
Relationship				
Provider good at listening to views	76%	85%	75%	65%
Provider good at acting on views	67%	80%	65%	54%
Tutors relate to learner(s) as a person (mean)	8.3	8.5	8.7	8.7
Staff good at showing respect	93%	94%	96%	96%

Quality of teaching

57 As indicated above (Paragraph 35), learners express high levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching on their course, and this is an important driver of overall satisfaction. In this section we look at specific aspects of teaching.

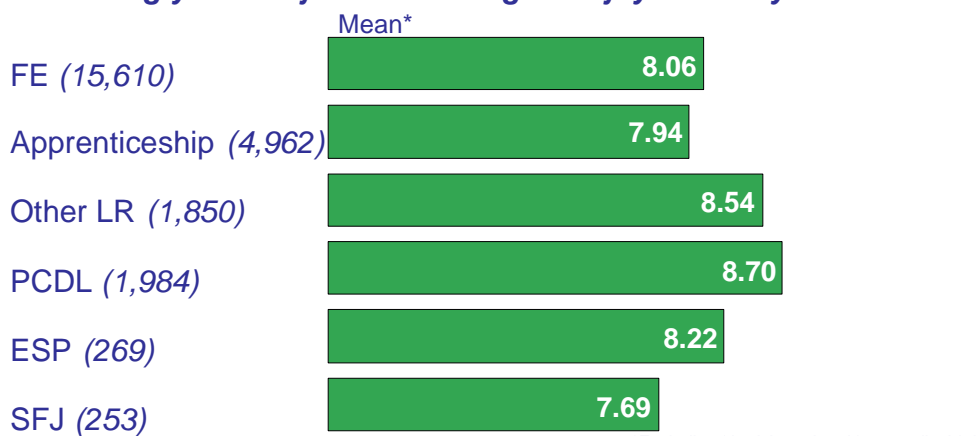
58 Asked to give a rating between 1 (very poor) and 10 (excellent), learners generally give high ratings for teachers or tutors making the subject interesting or enjoyable for them, with a mean score between 7.69 and 8.70 across the learner groups (Figure 17). Ratings are highest for PCDL and other LR learners, while Apprentices and SFJ learners give lower ratings than other learners.

59 Amongst both FE and other LR learners, those aged 19 or over give higher ratings than learners aged 16-18, but there is no difference for Apprentices.

Figure 17: Interest and enjoyment

Q How would you rate the teachers or tutors/ assessor and trainers on...?

Making your subject interesting or enjoyable for you

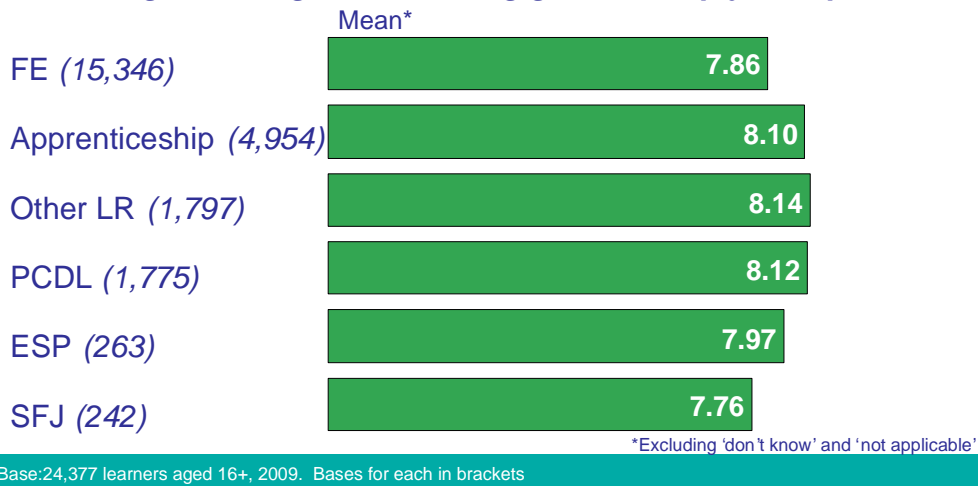


Base:24,928 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

60 Learners are also generally positive towards the setting of clear targets and learning goals by teachers or tutors. Apprentices, other LR and PCDL learners give the highest ratings. There are no differences by age group.

Figure 18: Setting clear targets and goals

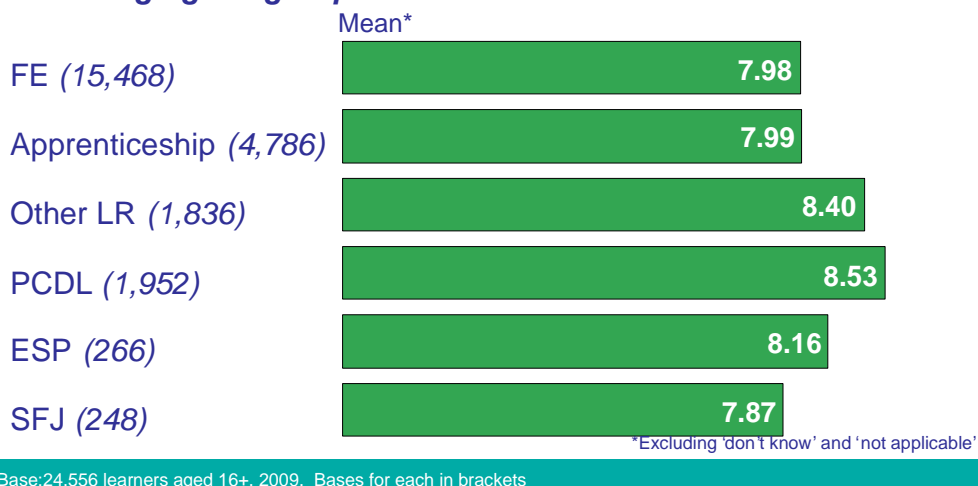
Q How would you rate the teachers or tutors/ assessor and trainers on...?
Setting clear targets or learning goals to help you improve



61 As with other aspects of teaching, the highest ratings for managing the group of learners are given by PCDL and other LR learners (Figure 19). Views are particularly positive amongst other LR learners aged 19 or over, and FE learners aged 19 or over also give higher ratings than those aged 16-18. Again, there is no difference by age for Apprentices.

Figure 19: Managing the group of learners

Q How would you rate the teachers or tutors/ assessor and trainers on...?
Managing the group of learners

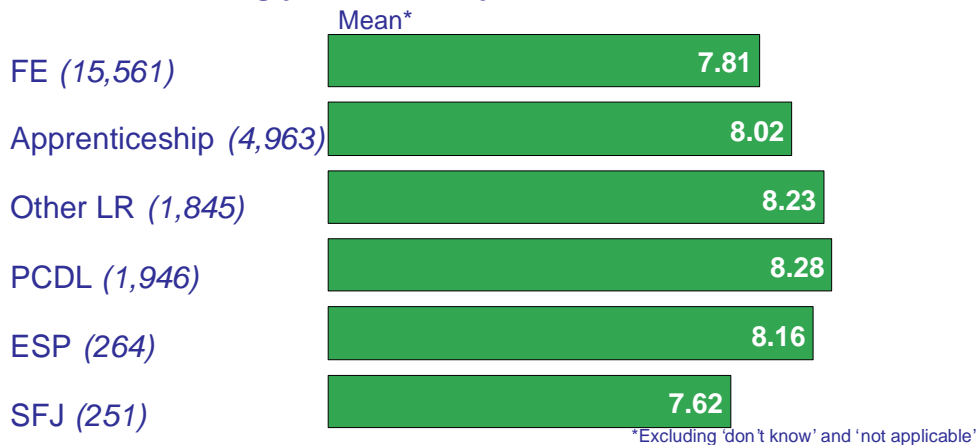


62 FE and SFJ learners are less likely than other learners to rate their teacher highly on understanding how they like to learn, while PCDL and other LR learners again give the highest ratings (Figure 20). As on some of the other aspects of teaching, learners aged 19 or over give higher ratings than those aged 16-18, specifically amongst FE learners and Apprentices.

Figure 20: Understanding learning style

Q How would you rate the teachers or tutors/ assessor and trainers on...?

Understanding you and how you like to learn



Base:24,830 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

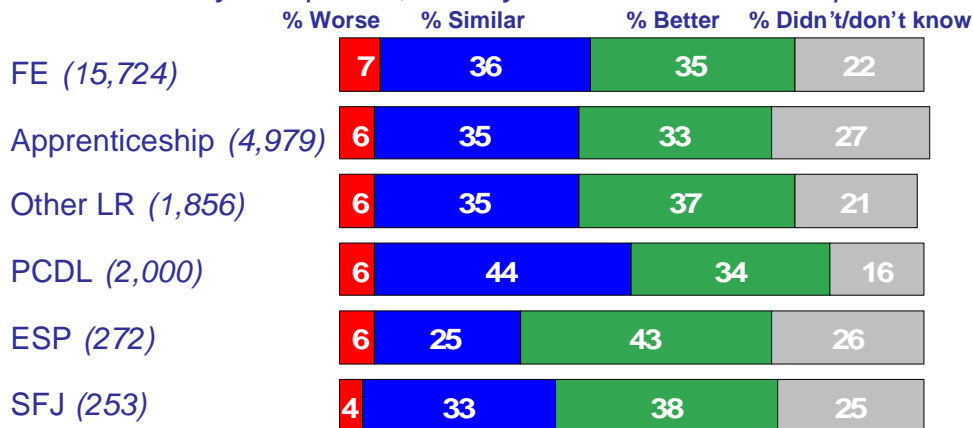
Needs and expectations

63 A new question was asked in the 2009 survey about meeting learners' expectations. Overall, most learners feel that their expectations have at least been met, with around one third saying the course has exceeded their expectations. However, between around one in six and around one in four learners did not know what to expect (see figure 21).

64 ESP learners are most likely to say the course has been better than they expected, while Apprentices are least likely to say this. Apprentices aged 16-18 are more likely to say their expectations have been exceeded than those aged 19 or over.

Figure 21: Meeting expectations

Q Overall, would you say that your experience with your course/training is better than you expected, similar to what you expected, worse than you expected, or did you not know what to expect?



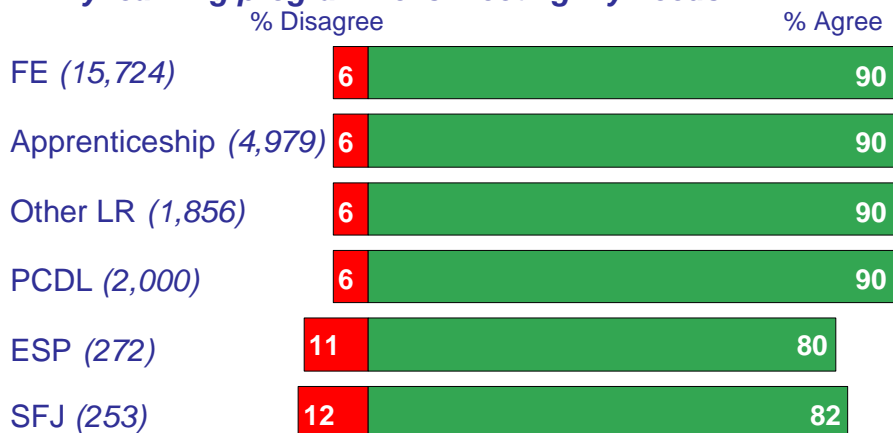
Base:25,084 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

65 The vast majority of learners (around nine in ten) say that their learning programme is meeting their needs (Figure 22). This figure is consistent across most learner groups, although it is lower amongst ESP and SFJ learners. PCDL learners and Apprentices are most likely to agree strongly (64 per cent and 62 per cent respectively). FE learners are more likely to agree strongly if they are aged 19 or over, rather than 16-18.

Figure 22: Meeting learners' needs

Q I am going to read out a statement, can you tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with it?

My learning programme is meeting my needs



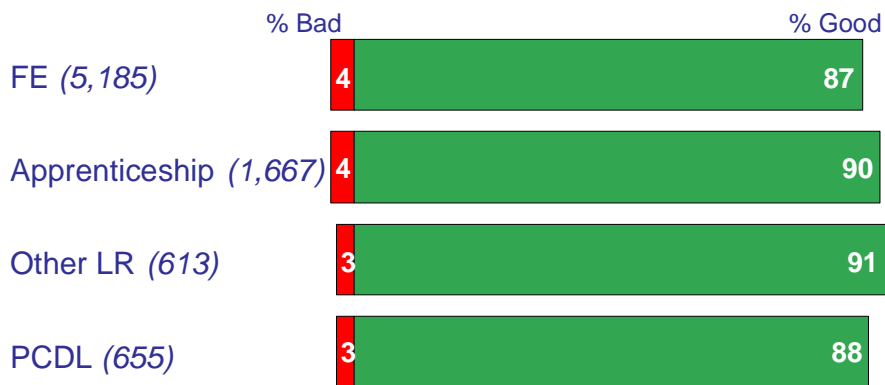
Base:25,084 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

Help and support

66 Most learners rate the support they receive on their course as good, and around half say it is very good. The ratings are high across the four learner groups, although the proportion rating the support as good is significantly higher for Apprentices than FE learners (Figure 23). FE learners aged 19 or over are more likely than those aged 16-18 to rate the support as very good (55 per cent compared with 48 per cent).

Figure 23: Rating of support

Q *I am going to read out aspects of your learning expectations. Please tell me how good or bad each of them is.*
How good is the support you get on this course/learning programme/training programme

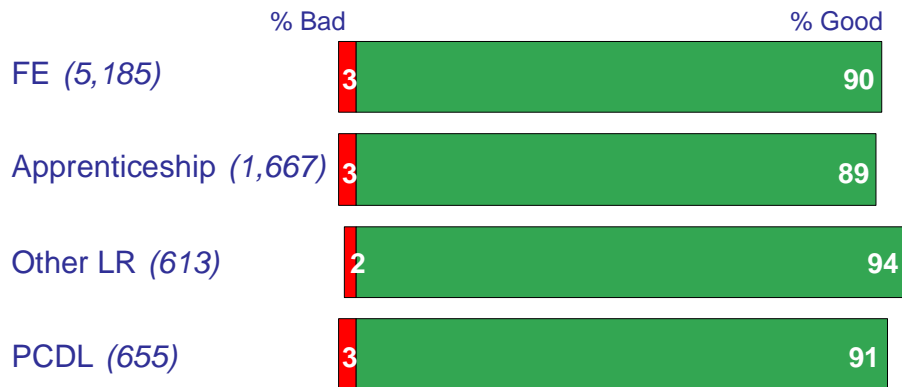


Base: 8,120 wave 16 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

67 Learners are also positive towards the help that they receive from staff in the first few weeks of their training programme (Figure 24). Other LR learners are most likely to say this support is good, while PCDL learners are most likely to say it is very good (64 per cent compared with 54% of FE learners, 55% of Apprentices and 59% of other LR learners).

Figure 24: Help in first few weeks

Q How good was the help staff gave you in the first few weeks?



Base: 8,120 wave 16 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

68 The importance of help and support is also clear from the open-ended question asking learners why they are satisfied with their course. The third highest response is that staff are helpful or always ready to help, mentioned by between 16 and 30 per cent of satisfied learners. Apprentices are most likely to give this as a reason for satisfaction (30 per cent).

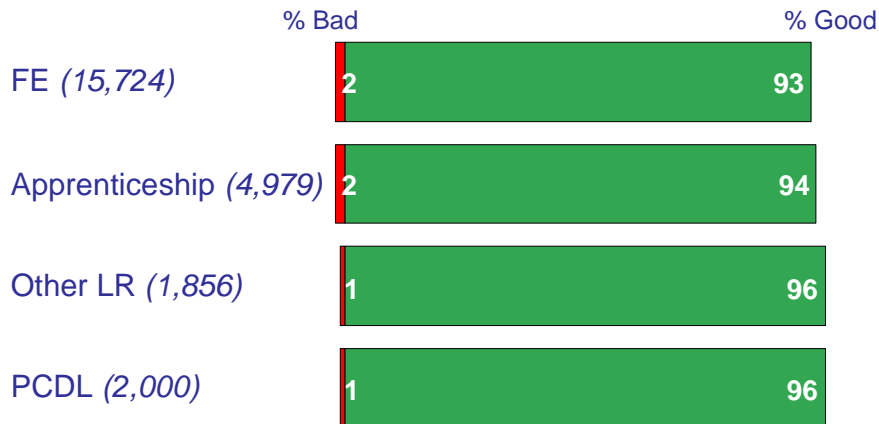
Provider responsiveness to learners

69 Learners are extremely positive towards the respect shown to them by staff, with almost all respondents saying it is good, and around three in five (or more) rating it as very good. PCDL and other LR learners are most likely to say it is good, and PCDL learners to say it is very good (74 per cent).

70 Older learners (aged 19 or over) are more likely to rate the respect shown by staff as very good, compared with those aged 16-18. This pattern applies to each of FE learners, other LR learners and Apprentices.

Figure 25: Respect shown by staff

Q How good is the respect staff show you/respect training staff show you?



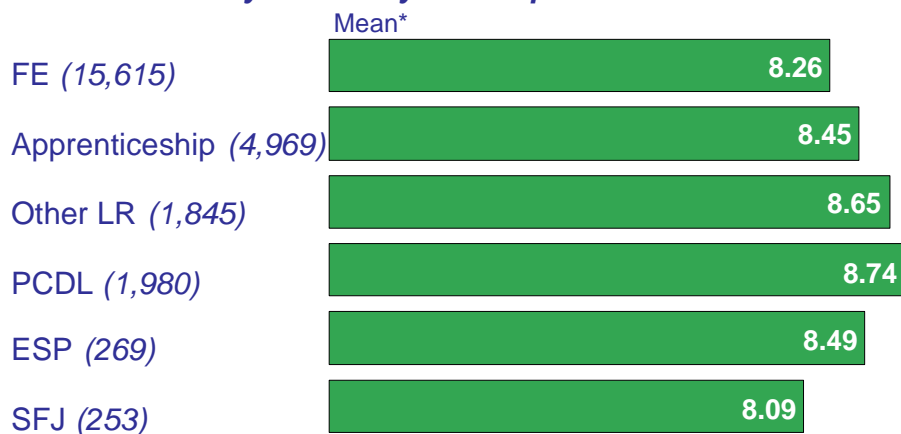
Base: 24,559 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

71 PCDL and other LR learners are most positive in their ratings of how well teachers relate to them (Figure 26), although views are generally positive across the board, with a mean score of over 8 out of 10 in each learner group. Amongst both FE and other LR learners, those aged 19 or over are more positive than those aged 16-18.

Figure 26: How teachers relate to learners

Q How would you rate the teachers or tutors/ assessor and trainers on...?

How well they relate to you as a person



*Excluding 'don't know' and 'not applicable'

Base: 24,931 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

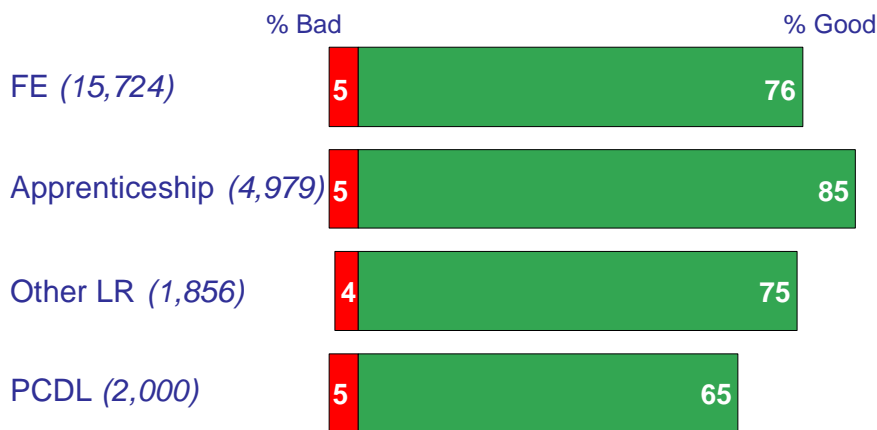
72 Apprentices are more likely than other learners to say that the provider is good at listening to their views, while PCDL learners are less likely to say this. However, these differences relate

mainly to the proportion who say that this issue does not apply or who don't know: just one per cent for Apprentices, but nine per cent for FE learners, 13 per cent for other LR learners, and 21 per cent for PCDL learners.

73 Apprentices aged 16-18 are more likely than older Apprentices to say their provider is good at listening to their views. A similar pattern applies to FE learners, although again this mainly reflects the proportion who say it does not apply or don't know (higher for FE learners aged 19 or over than for those aged 16-18).

Figure 27: Listening to learners

Q *How good is the college/ learning provider/ company at listening to the views of learners/ apprentices and employees in training?*



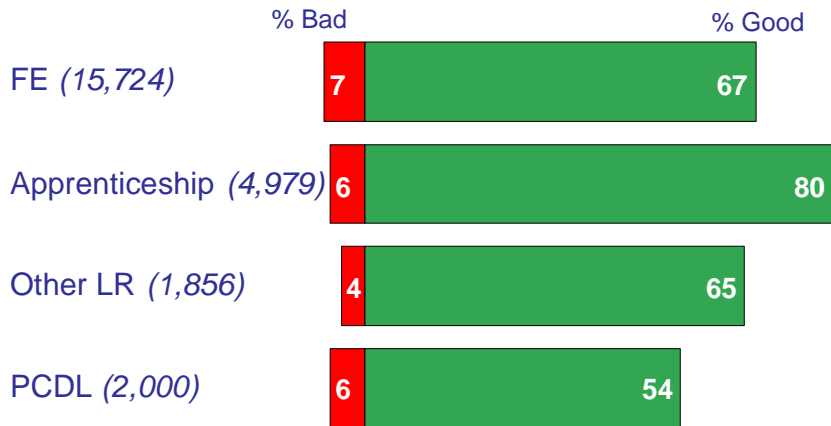
Base: 24,559 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

74 Overall, learners are less likely to say that providers are good at acting on learners' views than listening to them in the first place, and in particular they are less likely to say they are very good (for example, 26 per cent compared with 36 per cent among FE learners).

75 Again, Apprentices are more likely than other learners to say their provider is good on this issue, but as on the previous question, this is a reflection of the proportion saying that this issue does not apply or don't know: two per cent for Apprentices, 13 per cent for FE learners, 21 per cent for other LR learners, and 30 per cent for PCDL learners.

Figure 28: Acting on learners' views

Q *How good is the college/ learning provider/ company at acting on those views?*



Base: 24,559 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

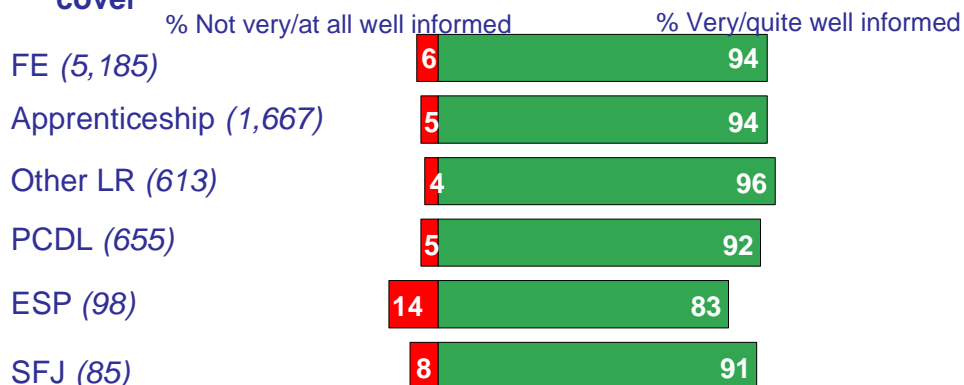
Information provision and advice

76 Nearly all learners (around nine in ten) say that they felt well informed about the content of their course after induction. This is lower amongst ESP learners (Figure 29), while PCDL learners are most likely to say they felt very well informed (68 per cent).

Figure 29: Information about course content

Q *For each of the following aspects, please say whether you felt very well informed, quite well informed, not very well informed or not at all informed after induction ...*

The content of the course - the topics and subjects you would cover

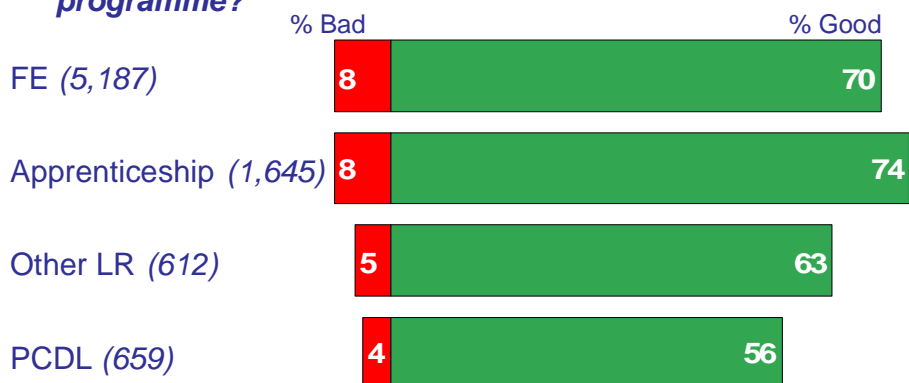


Base: 8,303 wave 16 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

77 Most learners rate the advice they have been given about what they can do after their learning programme as good, and this is highest for Apprentices. However, the differences in Figure 30 reflect the proportions who say that this issue does not apply or do not know (ranging from six per cent for Apprentices to 33 per cent for PCDL learners).

Figure 30: Advice on next steps

Q *I am going to read out aspects of your learning expectations. Please tell me how good or bad each of them is.*
How good is the advice you have been given about what you can do after this course/ learning programme/ training programme?



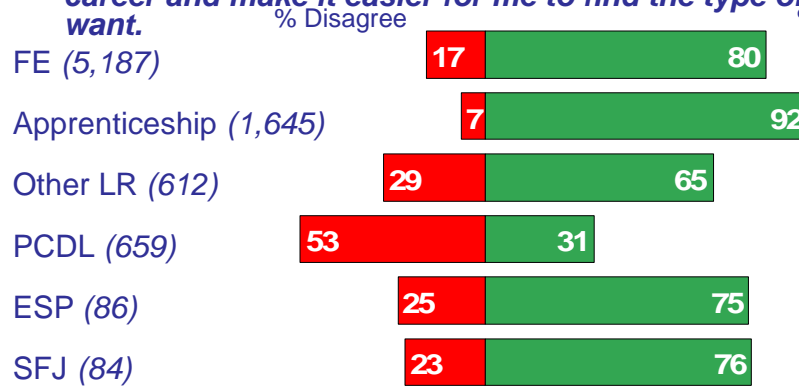
Base: 8,103 wave 17 learners, aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

78 The vast majority of Apprentices agree that their course will help them move forward in their career and will make it easier to find the type of job they want (Figure 31), while the proportion who agree is lower for other LR learners, and is particularly low amongst PCDL learners (53 per cent of whom disagree). These findings obviously reflect the nature of the provision (with Apprenticeships most likely to have a clearly defined vocational focus).

79 FE and other LR learners aged 16-18 are more likely to agree than those aged 19 or over.

Figure 31: Moving forward in career

Q I am going to read out a few statements about what effect the course may have had on you personally. Could you tell me whether you agree or disagree with each.
Taking part in this course will help me move forward in my career and make it easier for me to find the type of job that I want.



Base: 8,273 wave 17 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

Early leavers

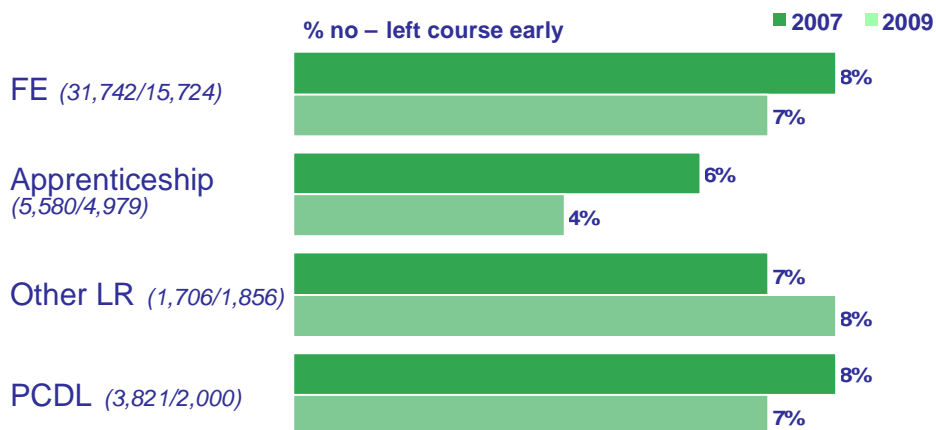
Who left early

80 The proportion of learners who (at the time of the interview) had left their course early ranges from four per cent to eight per cent in the different learner groups (Figure 32). Most respondents were still on the course at the time of the interview, so the survey does not aim to collect data on completion rates; these are monitored by the LSC's own analysis of the individualised learner record (ILR) database.

81 The proportion of early leavers is similar to the 2007 survey, although it is lower for Apprentices (four per cent compared with six per cent in 2007).

Figure 32: Early leavers

Q *I would like to start by finding out where you are at with your course/training. Are you still doing your course/training?*



Base: 24,559 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

82 Table 3 examines the profile of early leavers in more detail for the four main learner groups. The profiles are broadly similar to those of the total samples, indicating that the proportion of early leavers is mainly consistent across demographic sub-groups. The one difference is by age: amongst Apprentices and other LR learners, early leavers have a younger age profile than the samples as a whole.

Table 3: Sample demographic profile of early leavers compared to all learners in learner group (weighted)

	FE		Apprentices		Other LR		PCDL	
<i>(Unweighted Base: Early leavers and all respondents)</i>	<i>(976)</i>	<i>(15,724)</i>	<i>(230)</i>	<i>(4,979)</i>	<i>(163)</i>	<i>(1,856)</i>	<i>(130)</i>	<i>(2,000)</i>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gender								
Male	43	46	47	54	29	30	25	23
Female	57	54	53	46	71	70	75	77
Age								
16-18	35	36	35	24	16	9	2	1
19+	65	64	65	76	85	91	97	97
Refused	*	*	0	0	0	0	2	2
Ethnicity								
White	83	83	93	93	82	82	92	93
BME	15	16	7	7	14	18	7	6
Refused	*	*	0	0	0	*	2	1
Not known	1	1	0	*	4	1	0	0
Disability								
	11	9	7	6	12	12	13	11
Learning difficulty								
	11	9	7	6	13	10	6	5

Reasons for leaving early

83 One of the most common reasons given by learners for leaving early is that it was the wrong choice of course. This suggests that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on pre-entry advice and guidance to help learners make the right course choice. That said, the majority of early leavers rate the information they received when choosing a new course as good (75 per cent of FE learners, 78 per cent of Apprentices², 75% of PCDL learners³ and 66 per cent of

² Caution: small base size (73)

³ Caution: small base size (40)

other LR learners⁴). However, they are less likely than other learners to say it was *very good* (e.g. 26 per cent of FE learners who left early compared with 47 per cent of FE learners who had completed their course). In general, early leavers tend to be more critical of their course than other learners; for example, 24 per cent of FE early leavers are dissatisfied with the learning experience, compared with five per cent of FE learners who had completed their course.

84 Other common reasons for leaving early are shown in Figure 33 (by learner group). Differences include:

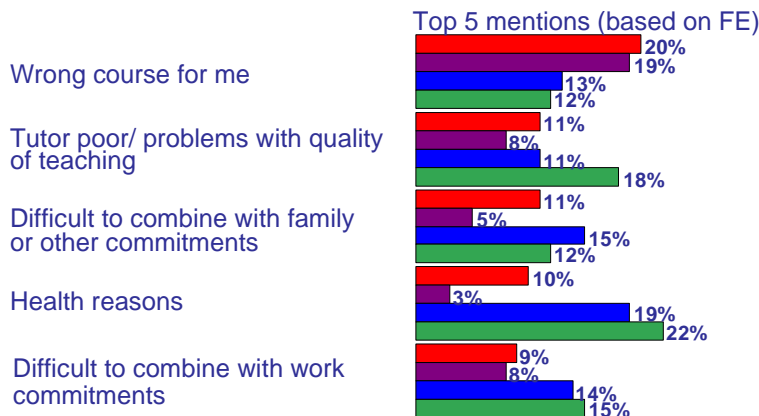
- FE learners and Apprentices are most likely to say that the course was wrong for them (20 per cent and 19 per cent respectively).
- Problems with tutors or teaching quality are mentioned more frequently by PCDL learners (18 per cent), as is the difficulty of combining the course with work commitments (15 per cent).
- PCDL learners and other LR learners are most likely to mention health problems (22 per cent and 19 per cent respectively).
- Although mentioned infrequently (by one per cent overall), redundancy or the employer closing down was mentioned more frequently by Apprentices (three per cent).

85 The findings shown in Figure 33 are very similar to those seen in the 2007 survey.

Figure 33: Reasons for leaving early

Q You said that you have left the course early. What do you consider were the main reasons for leaving early?

■ FE (967) ■ Apprenticeship (230) ■ Other LR (163) ■ PCDL (130)



Base: 1,490 learners aged 16+, who left early, 2009

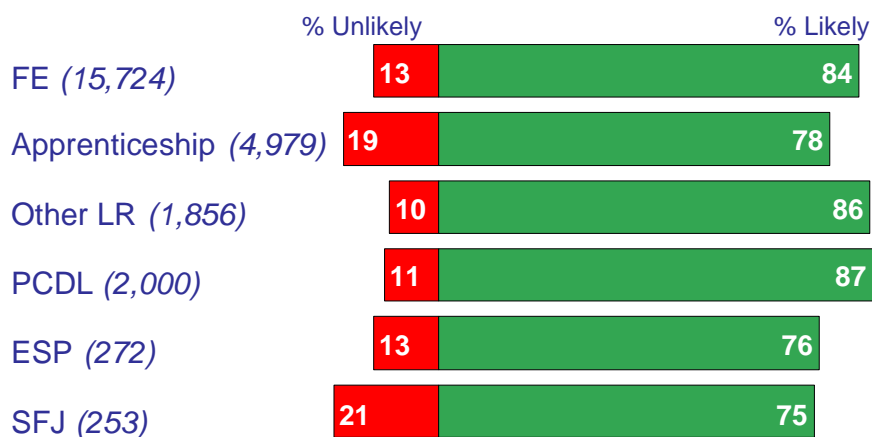
⁴ Caution: small base size (49)

Interest in further learning

86 The majority of learners say they are likely to undertake further learning in the next three years, including between half and around two thirds, depending on learner group, who say they would be very likely to do so. A higher proportion of FE, other LR and PCDL learners say they are likely to undertake further learning, compared with Apprentices, ESP and SFJ learners (Figure 18). In contrast, a relatively high proportion of Apprentices and SFJ learners say they are unlikely to do more learning in the next three years.

Figure 34: Likelihood of undertaking further learning

Q How likely will you be to undertake further learning in the next 3 years?

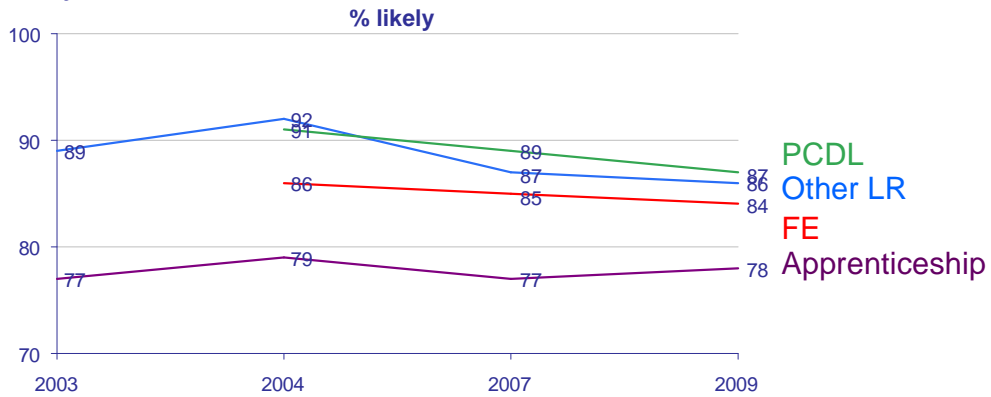


Base: 25,084 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

87 The stated likelihood of undertaking further learning has remained similar since the 2007 survey (Figure 35) although, longer term, there has been a slight decrease since 2004 for FE (down two percentage points), other LR (down six points) and PCDL learners (down four points).

Figure 35: Trends in likelihood of undertaking further learning

Q How likely will you be to undertake further learning in the next 3 years?



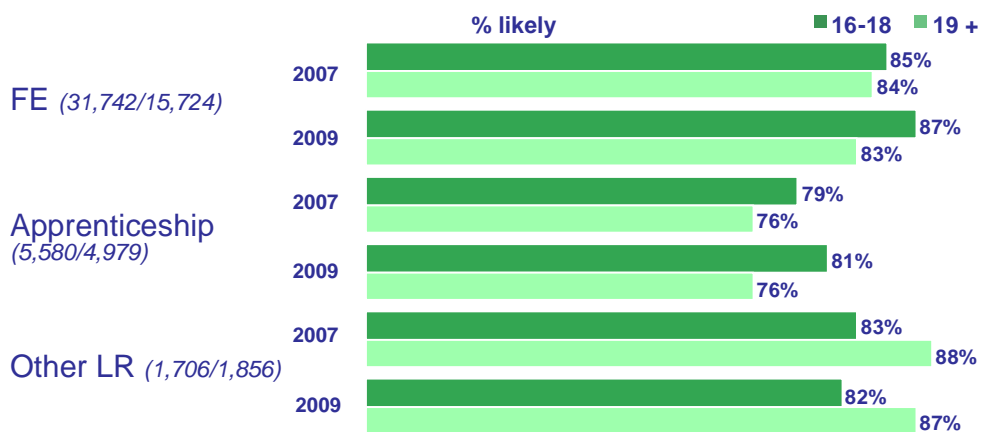
Base: 24,559 learners aged 16+, 2009

88 Amongst FE learners and Apprentices, 16-18 year old learners are more likely than those aged 19 or over to say they will undertake further learning in the next three years (Figure 36). The reverse is true of other LR learners, where a higher proportion of those aged 19 or over are likely to undertake further learning, compared with 16-18 year olds.

89 Findings are broadly similar to those observed in the 2007 survey, although the differences by age group for FE learners and Apprentices have increased.

Figure 36: Likelihood of undertaking further learning, by age

Q How likely will you be to undertake further learning in the next three years?



Base: 22,559 learners aged 16+, 2009. Bases for each in brackets

Further Information and Key Publications

List of other NLSS publications

Strategic Level 3 Evaluation

National Adult Learner Survey 2010

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