



Skills Funding Agency

FE choices learner satisfaction survey

2012 to 2013 national report

Executive summary

Introduction

This report provides an overview, at a national level, of the findings from the FE choices learner satisfaction survey 2012 to 2013.

Colleges and training providers in scope for FE choices and eligible to take part in the survey included:

- general FE colleges
- specialist colleges (including art and design and land based)
- special designated institutions
- higher education institutions
- private sector, public funded institutions
- other public-funded institutions

Learners in scope were those funded through the Adult Skills Budget, including apprenticeship provision for learning undertaken between November 2012 and May 2013.

FE choices provides consistent and comparable information for learners and employers to help them make informed choices about publicly funded education and training. It also provides consistent management information on key performance indicators. FE choices comprises a set of performance indicators that

cover aspects of a college or provider's provision such as: success rates, learner destinations and satisfaction levels of learners and employers.

This report focuses on the learner satisfaction survey results only.

The 2012 to 2013 learner satisfaction survey took place between November 2012 and May 2013. In scope learners for the survey included all learners funded by the Skills Funding Agency apart from those on Community Learning, Offender Learning and European Social Fund programmes.

The total number of learners who submitted a valid response to the learner satisfaction survey in 2012 to 2013 was 360,280. Of these, 344,558 were linked to the Individualised Learner Record (ILR), allowing us to identify details of their learning programme and personal characteristics, such as age and gender. The vast majority submitted an online response, with 17,415 completing a paper-based survey.

The 344,558 learners were broadly representative of the approximately 2.5 million learners who were eligible to take part in the survey. This gave a response rate of 13.1 % and an overall confidence interval of 0.1%. Owing to the large number of responses and the sample being broadly representative in terms of highest level of study and sex, the results in this report are unweighting and indicate how satisfied learners are across the sector.

Learner satisfaction is one of four performance indicators available on the FE Choices website, on DATA.GOV.UK and on the National Careers Service website which is a key part of the government's approach to informing and empowering learners and employers, helping them make choices about where they learn or train. The learner satisfaction performance indicator gives a score at provider-level on how learners rated a particular organisation and is based on answers to the learner satisfaction survey.

The 2012 to 2013 learner satisfaction survey had nine questions. Learners were asked to rate various aspects of their course, learning programme or training programme on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is 'very bad' and 10 is 'very good'. The questions were:

1. How good or bad was the information you were given when you were choosing your course?
2. How good or bad was the help staff gave you in the first few weeks?
3. How good or bad is the teaching on the course?
4. How good or bad is the respect staff show to you?
5. How good or bad is the advice you have been given about what you can do after this course?
6. How good or bad is the support you get on this course?
7. How good or bad are the college staff at listening to the views of learners?
8. How good or bad is the college at acting on the views of learners?
9. Overall, how good or bad do you think the college is?

Note: Question wording was tailored to the learner's environment. The version above is for learners in a college environment.

Key Findings

The learner satisfaction survey provides a rich dataset, which can be analysed by a wide range of different variables including age, level of study and gender. Additional analysis also took place this year by subject area and apprenticeship framework. This level of detailed analysis is possible because of the robust methodology employed by the survey, the large number of responses and the matching of learner responses to the ILR. All differences highlighted between groups are statistically significant.

The key findings from the survey at a national level relate to question nine – ‘Overall (Q9: Overall how good or bad do you think the college/learning provider/company’s training programme is?)’

- More than three quarters of learners, (77%) rated their provider highly (score of 8-10 for question 9). Over a third of learners (37%) gave a score of 10 out of 10 whilst only 8% gave a score of 5 or less.
- Adults (people aged 19 and over), were in general more satisfied than 16-18 year olds, with 84% of adults rating the provider highly (score of 8 to 10) for this question compared to only 70% of 16-18 year olds. More than half of learners aged over 35 years of age gave a score of 10 out of 10 compared to only 26% of 16-18 year olds.
- Female learners were slightly more satisfied than male learners, with 78% of females giving a score of 8-10 for question 9 compared to 75% of males.
- Learners studying at entry level were considerably more satisfied (87% of respondents scoring 8 to 10 for question 9) compared to those studying at level 3 or above (71%). Some 58% of learners at entry level gave a score of 10 out of 10 for question 9, compared to 29% of learners at level 3 or above.
- Learners living in the areas of highest deprivation, defined as learners whose home postcode is in the 10% most deprived Super Output Areas in England according to the rank of Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2010, were slightly more satisfied with their provider than other learners. Some 79% of learners from the most deprived areas gave a score of 8 to 10 for question 9, compared to 74% of learners in the most affluent areas.
- Learners on apprenticeship and work based learning programmes were more satisfied with their provider than learners who were classroom based (86% of apprentices and work placed learners gave a score of 8 to 10 for question 9 compared to only 73% of classroom based learners). 16-18 year old apprentices were slightly less positive than adult apprentices (81%

compared to 88%). 16-18 year old classroom based learners appeared to be the least satisfied, with 68% giving a score of 8 or higher.

- Learners rated private training providers particularly highly (87% of learners giving a score of 8 to 10 for question 9). General further education colleges were rated less highly by their learners (71% of learners giving a score of 8 or above).
- Colleges or training providers with high learner satisfaction ratings appear to also have outstanding or good Ofsted grades. Some 82% of learners at providers rated as outstanding by Ofsted gave a score of 8 to 10 for question 9. This compares with only 69% of learners at providers who were rated inadequate by Ofsted (based on Ofsted scores up to the end of the 2012 to 2013 academic year).
- Learners living in the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership area were more satisfied than learners in any other LEP area, with 85% giving a score of 8 to 10 for question 9. The LEP area with the second highest rating for question 9 from its learners was North Eastern LEP (82% giving a score of 8 to 10). Northamptonshire LEP had the lowest percentage of learners giving a score of 8 to 10 for question 9 (68%).

Subject Analysis

Responses to the 2012 to 2013 learner satisfaction survey were matched to the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) to identify a main subject of study (using the sector subject area tier 1 classification) or apprenticeship framework. This process identifies a main subject area for 76% of all responses. Key findings from this analysis are:

- The subject area 'preparation for life and work' had the highest satisfaction rating for question 9 (overall, how good or bad do you think the college/learning provider/ company's training programme is?), with 85% of all respondents studying in this area giving a score of 8 or higher. The

second highest rated subject area was education and training (83% of learners giving a score of 8 or above). Other highly rated subject areas included business, administration and law (81%) and languages, literature and culture (81%).

- Science and Mathematics was rated the least highly, with only 68% of respondents studying in this area giving question 9 a score of 8 to 10. The other main STEM area, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies, also had a relatively low rating, with 73% giving a score of 8 or above. Other areas with below average ratings were Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care (69%), Leisure, Travel and Tourism (70%) and Arts, Media and Publishing (72%).
- Only 64% of learners taking two or more A-Levels (in similar or different subject areas) rated their provider highly (giving a score of 8 or higher for question 9).
- In all subject areas, learners studying at level 2 rated their provider much more highly than learners learning at level 3. The exception was Arts, Media and Publishing and Retail and Commercial Enterprise, where level 2 and level 3 learners gave similar scores for question 9.
- All apprenticeship framework areas were highly rated by learners compared to classroom based study in equivalent subject areas. However, there were significant variations between frameworks. In Business Management, Hospitality and Catering and Health and Social Care more than 90% of respondents gave a score of 8 to 10 for question 9. In contrast, only 76% of respondents taking engineering frameworks gave a score of 8 to 10.

Questions 1-8

- The percentage of learners who rated the teaching on their course highly (score of 8 to 10 for question 3 “how good or bad is the teaching/or training on your course/programme?”) was 78%. This suggests that they are slightly more satisfied with the quality of teaching (question 3) than they are with the provider as a whole (question 9). Learners aged over 35 were

particularly positive about the quality of teaching, with 89% rating the teaching highly.

- Most learners felt that they were well supported. More than three quarters of all respondents (79%) gave a score of 8 to 10 for question 6 “how good or bad is the support you get on this course?” Adult apprentices rated this question particularly highly with 88% giving a score of 8 or more. Entry level learners were also very positive about the support they received, with 62% giving a score of 10 out of 10.
- The lowest satisfaction rating, out of all of the questions, was for question 5 (advice learners had been given about what they could do after their course had finished). Almost a third of learners (31%) gave a score of 7 or less, with 13% giving a score of 5 or less. The satisfaction score was even lower amongst 16-18 year olds, where only 63% of respondents gave a score of 8 to 10.
- 16-18 year old learners at general Further Education colleges were less likely to believe that providers listened to and acted upon their views (questions 7 and 8), than learners at private training providers. Only 58% of 16-18 year old learners at general Further Education colleges gave question 8 a score of 8 to 10, compared to 77% who were enrolled with private training providers.