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National Learner Satisfaction
Survey: FE Learners with Learning
Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LDD)

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

This report presents the key findings for 2,265 learners in Further Education (FE) who have self-declared¹ as having a learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD). These learners were surveyed as part of the National Learner Satisfaction Survey (NLSS) 2009, which was conducted by Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and included around 25,000 learners in total. In April 2010, the LSC was abolished and its functions taken on by the Skills Funding Agency and the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). The research function of the LSC transferred to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

The NLSS is a large tracking survey of LSC-funded learners aged 16 and over. The NLSS provides the LSC's successor bodies and partners with 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 to 2004 and biennial from 2007).

The survey comprises three waves, each dealing with a distinct set of modular questions:

- Pre-entry advice and guidance (wave 15);
- Support for learners (wave 16); and
- Impact of learning (wave 17).

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

- Overall satisfaction with the learning experience;
- Overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching and management of learning; and
- How likely the learner is to return to learning in the future.

The NLSS covers learners in FE, Apprenticeships, other Learner Responsiveness provisions (for example, learning delivered by charities, local authorities or business organisations), non-accredited personal and community development learning (PCDL), Skills for Jobs (SFJ) and

¹ 'Self-declared' means the learner has reported themselves as having a learning difficulty or disability.

Employability Skills Programme (ESP). FE includes general FE colleges, sixth-form colleges, and specialist or other further education institutions.

Methodology

Interviews for the NLSS were conducted by telephone between 17 February and 31 July 2009.

Data for learners in FE has been weighted by LSC region and course status (full-time or part-time), using profile information for FE learners in 2008/2009 academic year, derived from the Individualised Learner Records (ILR). Further details can be found in the technical report.

Sample profile

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of learners who have a learning difficulty and/or disability. Of the 2,265 LDD learners interviewed, there was an even split between learners with learning difficulties only and those with disabilities only (38 per cent each). A quarter of LDD respondents reported both conditions (24 per cent).

Just over half of LDD learners are male (53 per cent). The proportion is higher among those with learning difficulties only (61 per cent).

Three in five LDD learners are aged 19 or over (60 per cent), rising to 72 per cent of learners with disabilities only.

With regard to the level of qualification being pursued at the time of the survey, a third of LDD learners are studying at Entry or Level 1 (34 per cent), and a similar proportion are studying at Level 3 or above (36 per cent). Learners with *both* learning difficulties and disabilities are significantly more likely than other LDD learners to be studying below Level 2 (46 per cent), and significantly less likely to be studying at Level 3 or above (28 per cent).

The most commonly reported conditions are dyslexia (27 per cent of all LDD learners) and medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes and epilepsy (17 per cent). One in fourteen LDD learners has a mobility impairment (7 per cent), and one in eleven a sensory impairment (9 per cent).

Compared with non-LDD learners in FE, LDD learners are more likely to be male (53 per cent compared with 45 per cent of non-LDD FE learners), aged 16 to 18 (39 per cent compared with 35 per cent), and white (86 per cent compared with 83 per cent). They are also more likely to be undertaking Entry and Level 1 qualifications (34 per cent compared with 21 per cent of non-LDD FE learners).

Table 1: Sample demographic profile

	Learners without LDD	All learners with LDD	Learning difficulties only	Disabilities only	Both LDD
<i>(Unweighted base: all respondents)</i>	<i>(28,109) %</i>	<i>(2,265) %</i>	<i>(929) %</i>	<i>(802) %</i>	<i>(534) %</i>
Gender					
Male	45	53	61	43	57
Female	55	47	39	57	43
Age					
16 to 18	32	39	53	28	36
19 and over	67	60	47	72	64
Refused	1	*	0	*	*
Ethnicity					
White	83	86	86	84	88
BME	17	13	14	15	11
Refused/DK	1	1	1	1	1
Current Level					
Below Level 2	20	34	31	30	46
Level 2	29	27	30	27	23
Level 3 or higher	48	36	37	39	28
Type and severity of learning difficulty					
Dyslexia	n/a	27	55	n/a	26
Moderate learning difficulty	n/a	22	17	n/a	29
Severe learning difficulty	n/a	3	2	n/a	4
Multiple learning difficulties	n/a	3	3	n/a	5
Dyscalculia	n/a	2	2	n/a	2

Table 1: Sample demographic profile

	Learners without LDD	All learners with LDD	Learning difficulties only	Disabilities only	Both LDD
(Unweighted base: all respondents)	(28,109) %	(2,265) %	(929) %	(802) %	(534) %
Type of disability					
Hearing impairment	n/a	5	n/a	9	5
Visual impairment	n/a	5	n/a	10	4
Mobility impairment	n/a	7	n/a	13	9
Medical condition (e.g. asthma, diabetes, epilepsy)	n/a	17	n/a	35	17
Mental ill health	n/a	5	n/a	7	8
Emotional/behavioural difficulties	n/a	4	n/a	2	6
Temporary disability after illness or accident	n/a	1	n/a	1	1
Profound complex disabilities	n/a	1	n/a	*	2

Multivariate analysis

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 among all FE learners.

Interpretation of data

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.**

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.

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.

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.

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

This introduction is followed by a 'Summary and implications' section, which highlights the key findings. The report then provides a detailed commentary on the findings.

- The '**Overall satisfaction**' section looks at learners' overall satisfaction with their learning experience, and advocacy towards their provider.
- The '**Satisfaction with teaching and the provider**' section covers attitudes to teaching or training, as well as specific aspects of teaching. It also looks at key elements of the service offered by learning providers.
- The '**Needs and expectations**' section examines how learners' experience of the course has reflected their expectations, and how well the course has met their needs.
- The '**Information, advice and support**' section looks at these issues for the course as a whole, as well as at specific times (before starting the course and after enrolment). It also looks at support for learners with particular needs.
- The '**Personalisation, learner involvement and provider responsiveness**' section covers the extent to which staff treat learners with respect and relate to them, and how well providers listen to and act on learners' views.
- The '**Attitudes to learning and the benefits of learning**' section deals with how respondents feel about learning in general and about how their course has helped them. It also looks at learners' expectations for undertaking further learning.
- The '**Early leavers**' section focuses on this group of learners: their profile, their reasons for leaving the course early, and whether they sought or received support.

More detailed findings are contained in separate reports for the FE, Apprenticeships, other Learner Responsive and Personal Community Development Learning sectors. Separate reports have also been produced for young learners, adult learners and a detailed technical report.

To protect the Young People's Learning Agency's (YPLA) interest 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

FE learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) express high levels of satisfaction with their learning experience, with 90 per cent satisfied – this is comparable with non-LDD learners (91 per cent). However, LDD learners are more likely to be *extremely* satisfied (21 compared with 18 per cent).

Three-quarters of LDD learners (75 per cent) would speak highly of their provider. They are significantly more likely than non-LDD learners to say they would do so *without being asked* (32 compared with 29 per cent).

Overall satisfaction levels have remained stable over time. However, between 2007 and 2009, there has been a decline (of 9 percentage points) in LDD learners who are *extremely* satisfied with their learning experience. This trend has been observed among both learners with and without LDD, as well as across different funding streams.

Satisfaction with quality of teaching and the provider

Satisfaction with the quality of teaching is very high, and in line with the levels recorded among non-LDD learners (89 per cent for both groups). Again, learners with LDD are more likely than those without to be *extremely* satisfied (29 per cent compared with 25 per cent).

LDD learners are also positive about specific aspects of teaching, more so compared with learners without LDD. They are particularly more positive about teachers' ability to make the subject interesting and enjoyable (mean score of 8.22 on a scale of 1 to 10) and their ability to understand how learners like to learn (7.94).

Meeting learners' needs and expectations

The vast majority of LDD learners say that their learning programme is meeting their needs (88 per cent). Two-thirds (67 per cent) say that the course has at least met their expectations, including 37 per cent who say their expectations have been exceeded (this is comparable with non-LDD learners - 35 per cent). However, 27 per cent of LDD learners admitted to not knowing what to expect, more than the figure reported by learners without LDD (21 per cent).

Information, advice and support

The large majority of learners with LDD rate the information they were given *when choosing their course* as good (85 per cent), and feel well-informed about the content of the course (85 per cent), the standard of work expected of them (83 per cent) and the types and timing of exams (75 per cent). These proportions are broadly in line with 2007.

Overall, *prior to induction* learners with LDD feel less informed about various aspects of their course than non-LDD learners, with the exception of information on how to access financial support (64 per cent compared with 59 per cent among non-LDD learners). *After induction*, the information gap between learners with and without LDD closed, again with the exception of information on how to access financial support.

The vast majority of learners with LDD (88 per cent) feel the support they receive on their course is good - on a par with that of non-LDD learners (87 per cent). However, LDD learners are more likely to rate the support as *very good* compared to non-LDD learners (57 per cent compared with 52 per cent).

Four in five LDD learners say their providers are good at supporting learners with LDD (78 per cent), including half who say their provider is *very good* (50 per cent) which, again, is higher than among non-LDD learners (39 per cent).

Half of learners with LDD report experiencing at least one problem during their course (51 per cent), representing a substantial decline since 2007 when 68 per cent reported problems. This trend is not unique to LDD learners in FE though; rather it is observed across all learner groups. The most commonly reported problems are managing to keep up with the standard of work required and maintaining personal motivations (mentioned by 18 per cent and 17 per cent respectively) – these problems are also most commonly experienced by non-LDD learners. However, learners with LDD are significantly more likely to report problems with reading/writing and numeracy (16 per cent and 14 per cent respectively, compared to four per cent each for learners without LDD).

Personalisation and providers' responsiveness

Learners with LDD are overwhelmingly positive about their relationship with provider staff. Nine in ten say staff treat them with respect (92 per cent, on par with non-LDD learners), and 39 per cent give teaching staff the highest rating possible for relating to them as a person - significantly higher compared with non-LDD learners (32 per cent).

Learners with LDD also rate their provider highly in terms of **listening** to and **acting** on learners' views. Four in five say providers are good at **listening** to learners' views (78 per cent), including 40 per cent who say they are *very good* (compared with 35 per cent among non-LDD learners). Providers are seen to be less good at **acting** on learners' views though 70 per cent still rate

them as good, including 31 per cent who say they are *very good* (compared with 25 per cent among non-LDD learners).

Attitudes to learning and the benefits of learning

LDD learners are, in the main, positive about the impact of the learning on their personal lives. Over four in five say they feel more confident in their ability to learn (86 per cent, in line with 88 per cent among non-LDD learners) and are more positive about learning than when they started the course (83 per cent, four percentage points higher than among non-LDD learners). They are equally positive about job-related benefits, though slightly less so than non-LDD learners: 82 per cent say it has given them skills they can use for a job (87 per cent among non-LDD learners) and 76 per cent think it will help with their career progression and make it easier for them to find the jobs they want (81 per cent among non-LDD learners). Other benefits reported by the majority of LDD learners include greater confidence in social settings (77 per cent, compared with 72 per cent for non-LDD learners), being able to cope better daily (71 per cent, compared with 64 per cent), greater sense of well-being (71 per cent, compared with 62 per cent), and better at managing own time and responsibilities (71 per cent, compared with 62 per cent). On all these aspects, learners with LDD are comparatively more positive than non-LDD learners.

Over four in five learners with LDD say they are likely to undertake further learning in the next three years (83 per cent) – two percentage points lower than reported by non-LDD learners despite significantly higher numbers of LDD learners undertaking Entry and Level 1 qualifications (34 per cent compared with 21 per cent among non-LDD learners).

Which learners are more or less satisfied?

Learners with learning difficulties only (who are disproportionately aged 16-18 and male) are generally more positive compared with those with disabilities. Particularly with respect to the amount of information and support provided to learners, the extent to which providers are sensitive to learners' views, and also in their assessment of the benefits derived from learning.

Conversely, learners with disabilities only (who are disproportionately aged 19 and over and female) are generally less positive than average on many of the aspects described above (their views are more on a par with those of non-LDD learners). They are, however, more likely to recommend their provider without being prompted and to feel that provider staff treat them with respect.

Early leavers

Of the 8 per cent of LDD learners who left their course without completing most frequently cite health reasons, personal issues and wrong choice of course (14 per cent mention for each), similar to the reasons given by learners without LDD, though wrong choice of course is more frequently cited by non-LDD learners (22 per cent).

Half (49 per cent) say their teachers or tutors *offered* support to help them stay on their course, and 43 per cent say they *sought* such support. However, 42 per cent *neither* sought nor received any support from their teachers or tutors when they were thinking of leaving the course, and 56 per cent of early leavers believe nothing could have been done to help them stay on their course. Among those who felt more could have been done to help them stay on the course (44 per cent); more support with the course, better teaching, and greater understanding of their needs and cessation of bullying were most commonly cited.

Implications

LDD learners' overall satisfaction with their learning experience is very high, and at a similar level to the 2007 survey. However, the number of learners who are extremely satisfied has decreased. Learners' overall assessment of their course, and their rating of individual aspects, remain very positive, so there are no clear reasons for this change. In addition, this decrease is consistent across different groups of learner (for example, non-LDD learners in FE and apprentices), so does not appear to be limited to learners with LDD.

One possible explanation for this trend is the role of expectations: a quarter of LDD learners feel that the course has met (rather than exceeded) their expectations despite giving their provider very high ratings on a number of measures, and a similar proportion 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.

Further research and investigation will also be useful in helping to understand what makes learners extremely satisfied, rather than very or fairly satisfied, and what has contributed to the change since 2007.

As in previous years, early leavers are much more likely than other learners to be dissatisfied with the course. One of the most commonly cited reasons for leaving early remains wrong choice of course. Continuing effort is needed to provide learners with pre-entry information, advice and guidance. Furthermore, a significant number of early leavers neither sought, nor were offered support to help them stay on the course, despite many feeling that more could have been done to help them in this respect. This suggests that providers can do more to identify and help learners who are at risk of leaving prior to completion.

Although the number of LDD learners reporting difficulties during their course has declined since 2007, those encountering problems still make up half (51 per cent) of all LDD learners which is significantly higher than non-LDD learners (43 per cent). Overall, LDD learners would benefit from having more support with basic numeracy and literacy (14 per cent and 16 per cent said this, respectively), having help to keep pace with the standard of work required (18 per cent) and help in maintaining personal motivations (17 per cent).

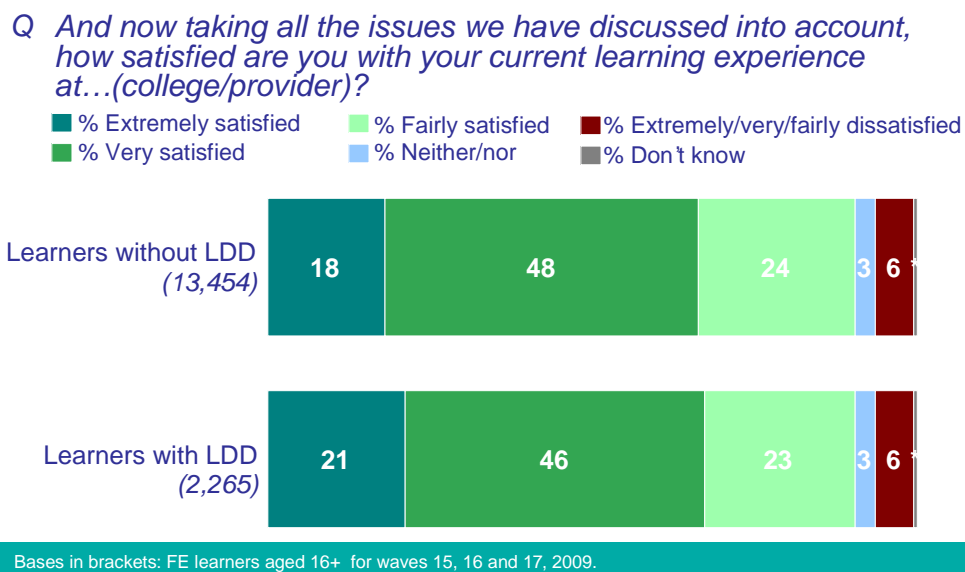
Overall Satisfaction

This section looks at LDD learners' satisfaction with their learning experience and the factors that are closely associated with high satisfaction levels. It also looks at what makes some learners more willing to speak highly of their providers. Where relevant, comparisons are drawn with non-LDD learners in FE.

Satisfaction with the learning experience

The vast majority of LDD learners – 90 per cent – are satisfied with their learning experience (Figure 1). Overall satisfaction is at a comparable level to non-LDD learners, though LDD learners are significantly more likely be *extremely* satisfied with their current learning experience (21 per cent compared with 18 per cent among non-LDD learners).

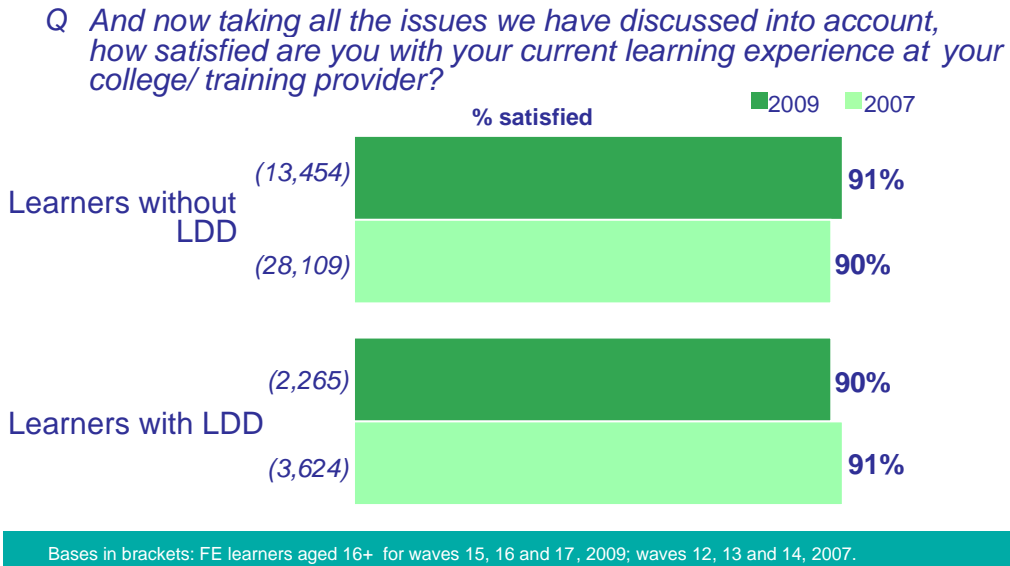
Figure 1: Satisfaction with the learning experience



LDD learners aged 19 or over are more likely to be *extremely* satisfied compared with their younger counterparts (24 per cent compared with 18 per cent among 16 to 18 year olds). Related to this, learners with visual impairments (of whom three-quarters are aged 19 or over) are also more likely to be extremely satisfied (34 per cent).

Overall satisfaction levels among both LDD and non-LDD learners are similar to those reported in the 2007 survey – the one percentage point change is not statistically significant (Figure 2).

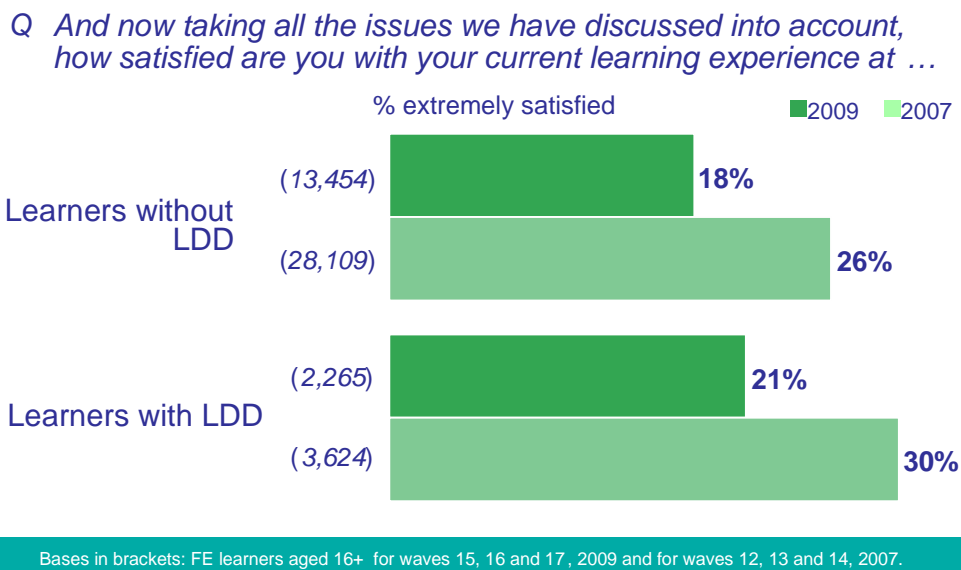
Figure 2: Trends in satisfaction with the learning experience



Trends in “extremely satisfied”

While overall satisfaction with the learning experience is unchanged compared with 2007, there has, however, been a nine percentage point decline in the proportion of LDD learners who are *extremely* satisfied (Figure 3). This trend has been observed across *all* learner groups though and is not unique to learners with LDD.

Figure 3: Trends in “extremely” satisfied with the learning experience



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 with their learning experience.

Reasons for satisfaction

Learners who are satisfied with the learning experience cite a wide range of reasons for feeling positive, with quality of tutors and course content most commonly mentioned (Figure 4). The reasons cited by LDD learners follow a similar pattern to those cited by non-LDD learners, though LDD learners place greater emphasis on having access to staff who are helpful and supportive.

Figure 4: Reasons for satisfaction with the learning experience



Advocacy

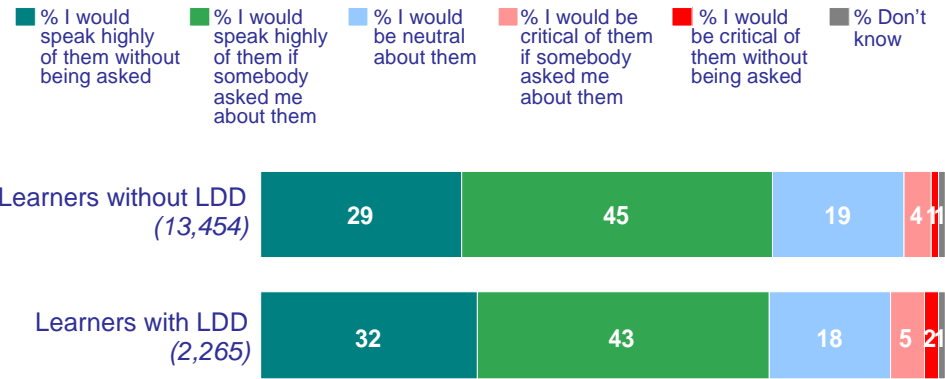
Three-quarters of learners with LDD (75 per cent) would speak highly of their provider, including a third (32 per cent) who would do so without being asked (Figure 5). Just seven per cent would be critical. Learners with LDD are significantly more likely than those without to speak highly of their provider *without being asked* and this is consistent with their generally more positive views. For example, LDD learners rate their providers more positively on a number of aspects that are closely linked to advocacy including learner involvement and personalisation, help and support, and aspects of teaching quality.

Female learners, those aged 19 or over and learners with disabilities only are more likely than average to speak highly of their provider *without being asked* (35 per cent, 35 per cent and 36 per cent, respectively). However, it should be noted that more female learners with LDD are

aged 19 plus compared with male learners (69 per cent compared with 53 per cent of men), and 72 per cent of learners with disabilities only are aged 19 or over.

Figure 5: Advocacy towards learning provider

Q Which of these statements best describes the way you would speak of your workplace/employer/other training/college/ training provider?

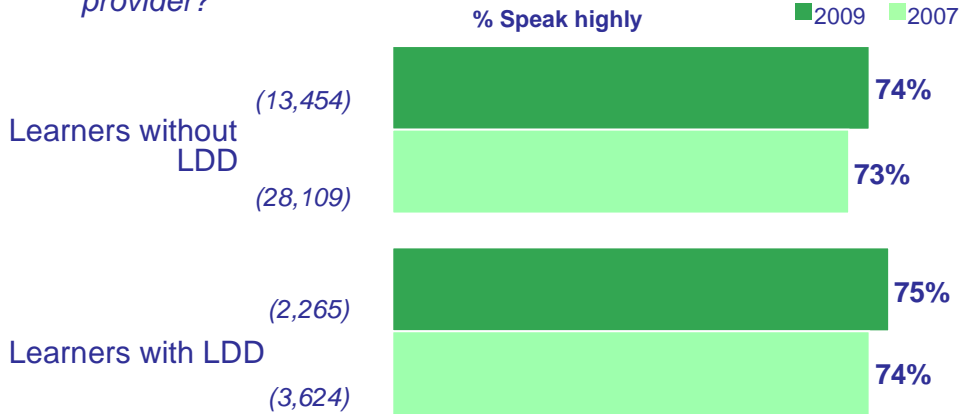


Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009

Advocacy levels among both learners with and without LDD are unchanged compared with 2007 - the one percentage point change is not statistically significant (Figure 6). Thus overall advocacy level has remained unaffected by this years' decline in the number of learners feeling extremely satisfied.

Figure 6: Trends in advocacy (speaking highly of provider)

Q Which of these statements best describes the way you would speak of your workplace/employer/other training/college/ training provider?



Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009; waves 12, 13 and 14, 2007.

Regression analysis was undertaken to determine the factors most commonly associated with high satisfaction and advocacy among *FE learners generally* (i.e. includes both learners with and without LDD). The following factors were identified as being closely linked to learners' *satisfaction* with the learning experience:

- The extent to which the learning programme is deemed by learners to be meeting their needs and expectations;
- The help and support provided by staff in the first few weeks); and
- The quality of tutors or teachers.

Quality of tutors and the level of help and support provided by staff in the first few weeks are also closely linked to *advocacy*. However, learners' willingness to speak highly of their provider is also linked to the *personal relationship they have with provider staff* (i.e. staff showing respect and tutors or teachers relating well to learners) and the extent to which they feel the provider is *responsive to learners' views and needs*.

The following chapters focus on providers' performance against these key drivers as rated by *LDD learners*. Full results of the regression analysis for FE learners generally are contained in the FE sector report.

Satisfaction with Teaching and the Provider

This section looks at LDD learners' satisfaction with quality of teaching overall and with specific aspects of teaching.

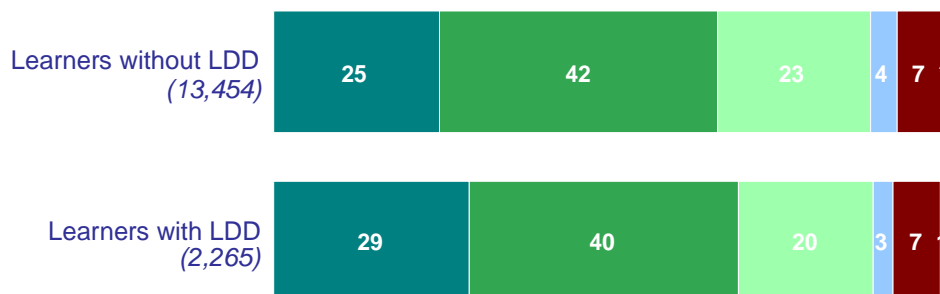
Satisfaction with the quality of teaching

Nine in ten learners with LDD are satisfied with the quality of teaching or training on their course – a figure that is comparable to that for non-LDD learners (Figure 7). However, learners with LDD are more likely to be *extremely* satisfied (29 compared with 25 per cent). There is no significant difference in views between learners with learning difficulties, disabilities or both.

Figure 7: Satisfaction with the quality of teaching

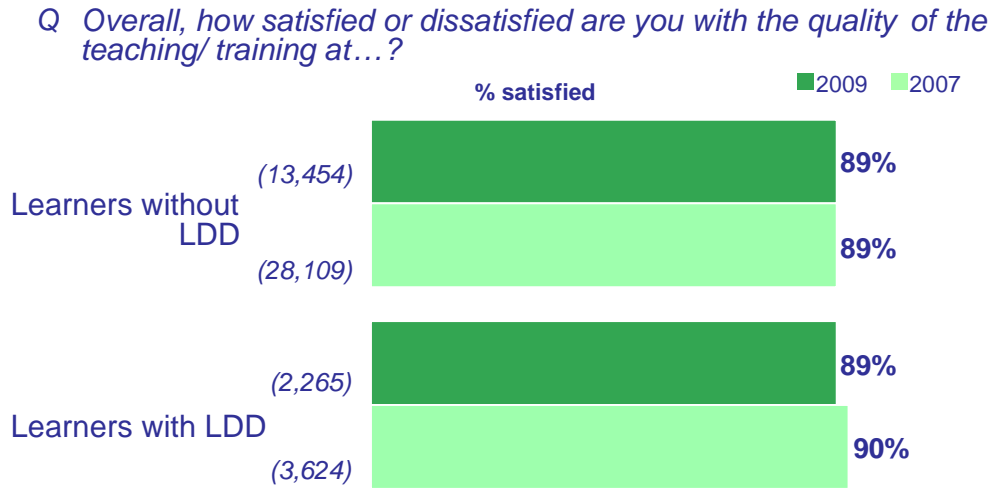
Q Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of the teaching/training at . . . ?

■ % Extremely satisfied ■ % Fairly satisfied ■ % Extremely/very/fairly dissatisfied
■ % Very satisfied ■ % Neither/nor ■ % Don't know



Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009.

Satisfaction with the quality of teaching for both LDD and non-LDD learners has remained at a similar level to 2007 (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Trends in satisfaction with the quality of teaching

Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009; waves 12, 13 and 14, 2007.

Encouragingly, the decline in the proportion of learners who are extremely satisfied with their learning experience has not affected satisfaction with quality of teaching – the latter has remained stable among both LDD and non-LDD learners (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Trends in “extremely” satisfied with the quality of teaching

Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009 and for waves 12, 13 and 14, 2007.

Interest and enjoyment and understanding of learning style

Learners with LDD rate their tutors and teachers highly on their ability to make the subject interesting and enjoyable – a mean rating of 8.22 on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is ‘very poor’ and 10 is ‘excellent’). This is more positive than non-LDD learners’ assessment of their tutors and teachers on this aspect (mean score of 8.04 out of 10). However, there is variation in views among LDD learners - older learners are more positive than those aged 16 to 18 (a mean score of 8.38 compared with 7.97). Learners with dyslexia gave a lower than average rating (8.05 – on par with non-LDD learners) whilst learners with multiple disabilities (of whom 88 per cent are aged 19 or over) are more positive than average (8.72; Table 2).

Table 2: Rating of teacher/tutor by learning difficulty and disability

How would you rate the teachers or tutors / assessors or trainers on making your subject interesting or enjoyable for you?

Type of LDD (bases in brackets; excludes ‘don’t know’)	Mean score
Moderate learning difficulty (299)	8.42
Dyslexia (641)	8.05
Multiple learning difficulties (45*)	8.31
Visual impairment (95)	8.27
Hearing impairment (95)	8.40
Mobility impairment (125)	8.42
Medical condition (415)	8.06
Emotional/behavioural difficulties (58)	8.09
Mental ill health (80)	8.62
Multiple disabilities (90)	8.72
Only learning difficulties (921)	8.15
Only disabilities (795)	8.31
Both (528)	8.19
All with LDD (2,244)	8.22
All without LDD (13,361)	8.04

* Small base

Positively, learners with LDD feel their teachers and tutors are sensitive to different learning styles (a mean score of 7.94 out of 10 which is slightly higher compared with the score given by non-LDD learners). Again, learners with dyslexia are less positive (their rating is on a par with non-LDD learners). In contrast, learners with multiple disabilities are most positive (Table 3).

Table 3: Understanding of learning style by LDD type

How would you rate the teachers or tutors / assessors or trainers on understanding you and how you like to learn?

Type of LDD (bases in brackets; excludes 'don't know')	Mean score
Moderate learning difficulty (295)	8.14
Dyslexia (641)	7.80
Multiple learning difficulties (45*)	8.23
Visual impairment (95)	7.89
Hearing impairment (93)	8.21
Mobility impairment (126)	8.07
Medical condition (415)	7.69
Emotional/behavioural difficulties (58)	7.74
Mental ill health (80)	8.11
Multiple disabilities (88)	8.34
Only learning difficulties (919)	7.88
Only disabilities (792)	7.98
Both (525)	7.97
All with LDD (2,236)	7.94
All without LDD (13,320)	7.79

* Small base

Needs and expectations

This chapter examines providers' performance on meeting the needs and expectations of LDD learners.

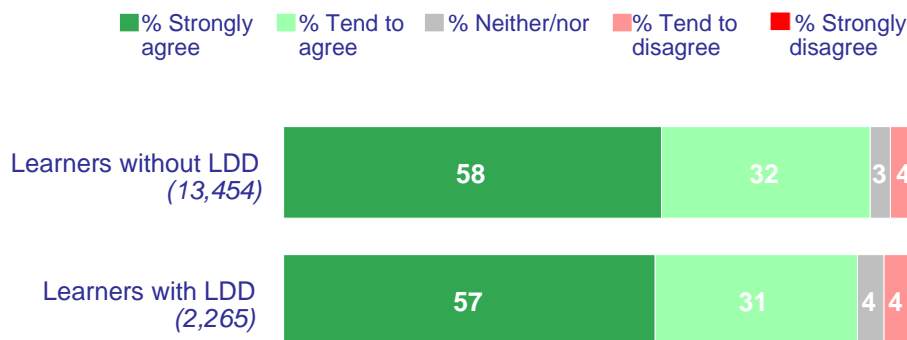
Meeting learners' needs

The vast majority of learners with LDD (88 per cent) say that their learning programme is meeting their needs (Figure 10) – slightly lower compared with non-LDD learners (90 per cent).

Learners with both learning difficulties and disabilities are less likely than those with either a disability or a learning difficulty to feel that their needs have been met (85 per cent of those with both learning difficulties and disabilities, 88 per cent of those with disabilities only and 90 per cent of those with learning difficulties only).

Figure 10: Meeting learners' needs

Q *Can you tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: my learning programme is meeting my needs.*



Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009

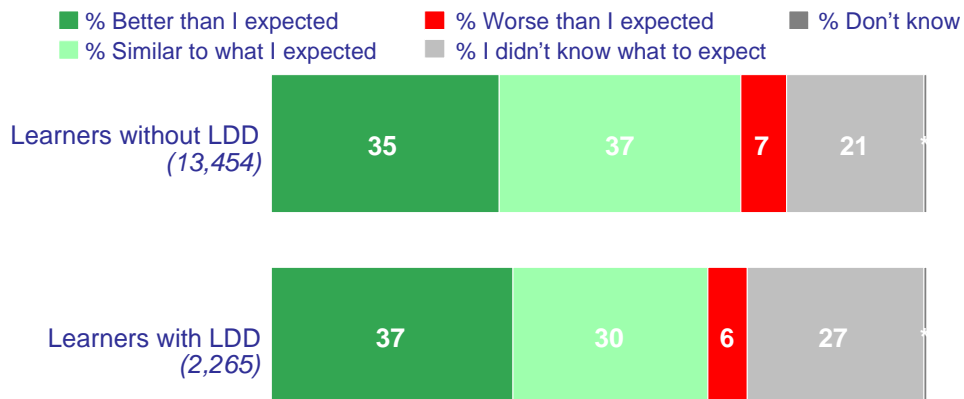
Meeting learners' expectations

The 2009 survey includes a new question to understand the relationship between learners' actual experience and their prior expectations. Overall, the majority of LDD learners feel that their expectations have at least been met (67 per cent) including 37 per cent who reported that the course exceeded their expectations. However, a quarter (27 per cent) admit to having not known what to expect which is significantly higher than for non-LDD learners (Figure 11). Learners with learning difficulties are most likely to admit to not knowing what to expect (30 per cent and rising to 33 per cent among learners with dyslexia).

LDD learners undertaking Entry or Level 1 qualifications are more positive than average, with 40 per cent saying the course was better than expected.

Figure 11: Meeting learners' 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?



Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009

Information, advice and support

This section explores the types and quality of information, advice and support given to learners before and during their course, including support specific to learners with LDD. It also looks at what help and support learners say they would have found useful, but did not receive.

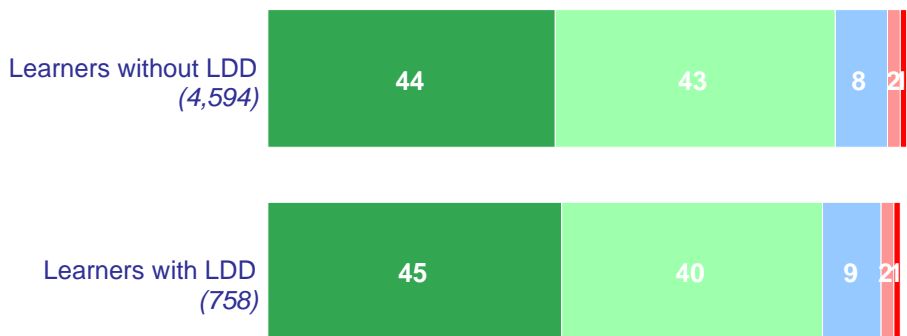
Information provision during enrolment

Over four in five learners found the information they received when choosing their course to be good, with no significant differences between learners with and without LDD (85 and 87 per cent respectively, see Figure 12). However, among learners with LDD, those aged 16 to 18 are more likely to rate the information as good compared with their older counterparts (89 per cent compared with 83 per cent). This is in line with other age-related differences observed in this report: younger learners with LDD are also more positive than those aged 19 or over in their assessment of the support provided to learners, the extent to which providers are responsive to learners' views and the benefits of the learning.

Figure 12: Information when choosing course

Q How good was the information you were given when you were choosing your course/learning/training programme? Was it...

■ % Very good ■ % Good ■ % Not good but not bad ■ % Bad ■ % Very bad



Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+, all in wave 15, 2009

Looking at information provision on specific aspects of the learning experience *at enrolment*, on all measures, at least three in five learners with LDD feel they were well informed. Table 4 provides detailed breakdown for learners with learning difficulties or disabilities only, as well as for learners with both LDD. As can be seen, learners with learning difficulties only generally feel more informed about the various aspects of their course. This is in line with the earlier finding showing that these learners are more likely to say the course is meeting their needs.

Table 4: Learners' rating of information provided when signing up for the course*How informed were you about... (per cent well informed)*

	Non-LDD learners (4,594)	All learners with LDD (758)	Only learning difficulties (302)	Only disabilities (264)	Both LDD (192)
<i>(Bases in brackets: Wave 1 learners)</i>					
The types and timing of exams	80%	75%	81%	75%	67%
The content of the course – the topics you would cover	90%	85%	89%	83%	81%
The amount of work expected of you in your own time	83%	78%	83%	79%	71%
How the course/training would help you gain skills to use in a job	79%	76%	86%	69%	73%
The standard of work expected of you	87%	83%	90%	80%	78%
How to access financial support whilst learning/training	59%	64%	69%	61%	63%
The overall pass/success rate	66%	63%	68%	59%	62%

Learners with LDD felt less informed compared with non-LDD learners, at enrolment, about the content of the course, the amount of work expected of them in their own time and the standard of work expected from them at the time of enrolment. However, they felt more informed about how to access financial support whilst learning or training.

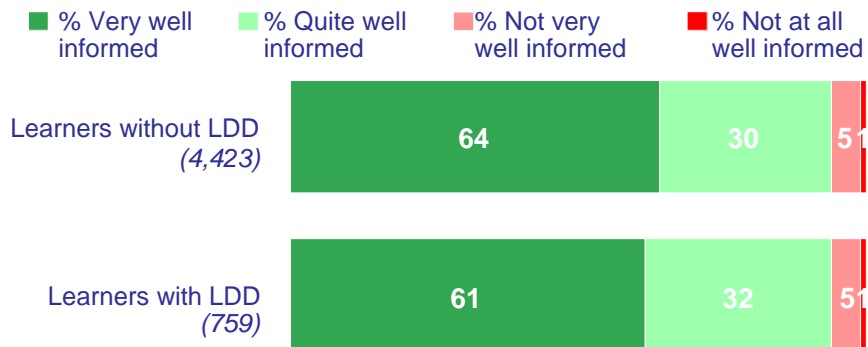
Information provision after induction

After induction, the vast majority of learners – 93 per cent – say they felt well-informed about the topics and subjects they would cover on their courses (Figure 13). There is no significant difference between LDD and non-LDD learners, nor by type of learning difficulties and disabilities.

Figure 13: Information about the content of the course

Q 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, what subjects you would cover.



Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ all wave 16, 2009

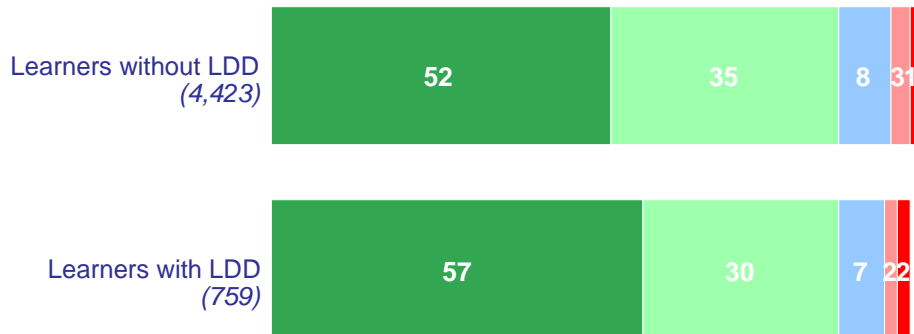
Help and support

Approaching nine in ten learners (88 per cent) rate the support they receive on their course as good (Figure 14). It is encouraging that LDD learners are significantly more likely than non-LDD learners to rate the support as *very good* (57 per cent compared with 52 per cent). LDD learners aged 16 to 18 (who are disproportionately male) are more likely than older learners (who are disproportionately female) to rate the support as good (90 per cent compared with 86 per cent). The difference is in line with the earlier finding which showed that LDD learners aged 16 to 18 are also more likely to rate the information they received when choosing their course as good.

Figure 14: Support on the course

Q Please tell me how good or bad: how good is the support you get on this course/learning programme/training programme?

■ % Very good ■ % Good ■ % Not good but not bad ■ % Bad ■ % Very bad



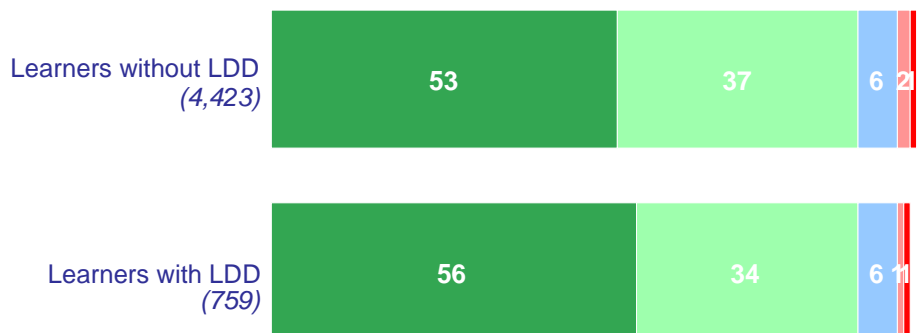
Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ all in wave 16, 2009

LDD and non-LDD learners are also equally positive in their rating of the help they received from staff in the first few weeks of their training programme (Figure 15). LDD learners aged 19 or over are more likely than their younger counterparts to say this help was very good (60 per cent compared with 50 per cent).

Figure 15: Help in first few weeks

Q How good was the help staff gave you in the first few weeks at the college/of your learning programme/of your training programme?

■ % Very good ■ % Good ■ % Not good but not bad ■ % Bad ■ % Very bad



Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ all in wave 16, 2009

The importance of help and support is also apparent from the list of reasons given by learners for feeling satisfied with their course. For all FE learners, the third most frequent response is

that staff are helpful and always ready to help. LDD learners are particularly more likely to cite this aspect (27 per cent compared with 24 per cent of non-LDD learners).

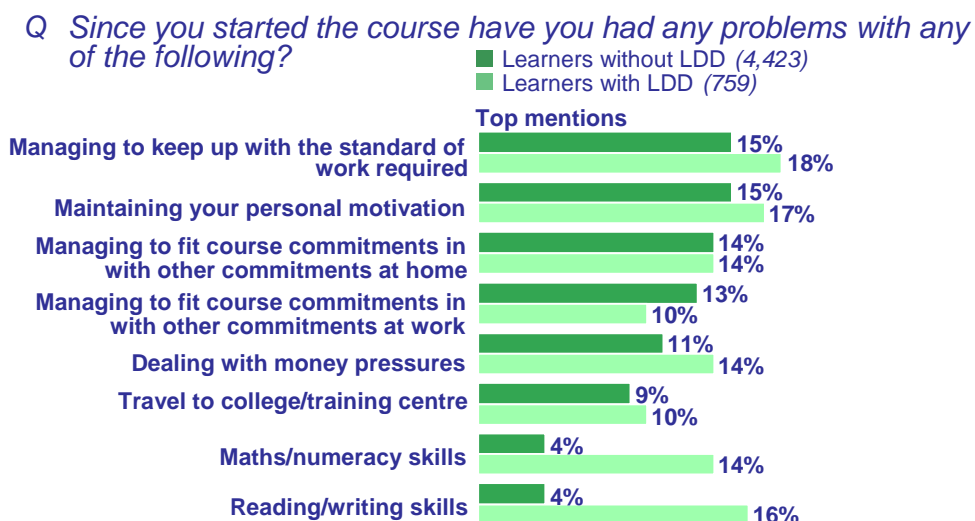
Problems encountered during course

Half of LDD learners (51 per cent) say they have experienced at least one of the problems listed in Figure 16. This is significantly higher than reported by non-LDD learners - 43 per cent. Encouragingly, the proportion of learners encountering a problem has decreased by 17 percentage points since 2007. This trend is also observed among non-LDD learners in FE, other LR learners, and apprentices.

The proportion of learners encountering difficulties is lowest among those with disabilities only (43 per cent which is comparable with non-LDD learners, compared with 54 per cent for those with learning difficulties only, and 57 per cent for those with both learning difficulties and disabilities).

LDD learners are significantly more likely than non-LDD learners to report problems with basic skills. They are also more likely than non-LDD learners to say they have had problems with keeping up with the standard of work required (18 per cent compared with 15 per cent), not receiving the extra help they were promised (8 per cent compared with 4 per cent), discrimination from other learners (5 per cent compared with 2 per cent) and discrimination from staff (4 per cent compared with 2 per cent).

Figure 16: Problems on the course



Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ all wave 16, 2009

Learners with both learning difficulties and disabilities are generally more likely to report experiencing a range of problems whilst those with learning difficulties are more likely to find it difficult keeping up with the standard of work required and to have problems with reading and

writing (Table 5). By contrast, the levels of problems reported by learners with disabilities only are comparable to those reported by non-LDD learners.

Table 5: Top problems on course (weighted)

	Learning difficulty only	Disability only	Both LDD
<i>(Unweighted base: all respondents)</i>	<i>(341)</i>	<i>(258)</i>	<i>(160)</i>
Managing to keep up with the standard of work required	18	13	28
Maintaining your personal motivation	15	17	20
Managing to fit course commitments in with other commitments at home	13	15	16
Managing to fit course commitments in with other commitments at work	11	9	12
Dealing with money pressures	14	13	15
Travel to college/training centre	14	8	7
Maths/numeracy skills	17	6	22
Reading/writing skills	23	5	23

Among LDD learners who say they have had problems, half have sought support (49 per cent) with 79 per cent saying that the help and support they received was useful.

Support for learners with LDD

More than three-quarters of learners with LDD think the support offered to learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities by their learning provider is good (78 per cent), compared with 62 per cent of non-LDD learners. Strikingly, half of learners with LDD think this support is *very good* (50 per cent).

Learners with disabilities only are significantly less positive than learners with learning difficulties or a combination of both (68 per cent compared with 86 and 81 per cent respectively, say the support for learners with LDD is good). Linked to this, learners aged 16 to 18 (who are more likely than average to have learning difficulties) are most likely to rate the support for LDD learners as good (89 per cent). This is in line with the higher than average satisfaction levels reported by younger learners.

Additional support

While the majority of LDD learners (88 per cent) are happy with the level of support they received, 16 per cent feel they needed additional help or support and that this was not provided to them. This finding is comparable with non-LDD learners. LDD learners aged 19 or over and those with both learning difficulties and disabilities are significantly more likely than average to report needing additional help or support (20 per cent each compared with 16 per cent overall for learners with LDD).

Support from, and time with, assessors and/or tutors were most commonly mentioned by LDD learners wanting additional support (Table 6). Support is significantly more in demand from LDD learners. As would be expected, more help with English language or grammar is more commonly cited by learners with LDD.

In contrast, learners with LDD are significantly less likely than those without to mention additional financial support. This is in line with earlier findings that showed LDD learners to be comparatively better informed about how to access financial support whilst learning or training.

Table 6: Additional support that would have helped learners*What support would have helped/help you? (per cent mentioning)*

	Non LDD (1,810)	With LDD (319)	Disability only (105)	Learning difficulty only (120)
Support from assessor/tutor	22%	31%	25%	30%
Time with/access to tutor	18%	21%	24%	21%
Tutor being there/available as scheduled	5%	6%	10%	2%
Support from the college/training provider	6%	7%	7%	1%
Information in advance about the amount/type of work involved	6%	4%	8%	1%
More help with English language/grammar	4%	8%	3%	12%
Financial support	16%	9%	10%	9%
Support for people with learning disabilities	1%	6%	5%	7%
Support/help with physical disabilities/lack of mobility	*	1%	-	-

Personalisation, learner involvement and provider responsiveness

This section explores learners' perceptions of their personal relationship with provider staff and the extent to which they feel their provider is responsive to learners' views and needs.

Respect

Over nine in ten learners with LDD rate the respect shown to them by staff as very good or good (92 per cent), including three in five (62 per cent) who rate it as *very good* (Figure 17). There is no difference in views between learners with and without LDD.

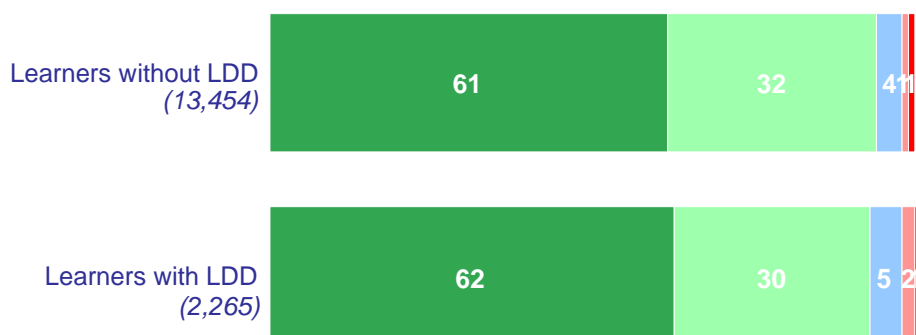
Learners with both disabilities and learning difficulties are slightly less positive, though the findings for this group are still very positive (89 per cent rate the support as good and four per cent as bad). Learners with emotional or behavioural difficulties, however, are particularly negative in their assessment of provider staff on this aspect: 15 per cent rate the respect shown to them by staff as bad.

LDD learners aged 19 or over are more likely to rate the respect shown by staff as very good, compared with younger learners (68 per cent compared with 54 per cent).

Figure 17: Respect shown by staff

Q Please tell me how good or bad is the respect staff show to you/
respect training staff show to you.

■ % Very good ■ % Good ■ % Not good but not bad ■ % Bad ■ % Very bad



Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009

Relating to learner as a person

Learners with LDD rate their teachers, tutors, assessors and trainers more highly on how well they relate to them as a person, compared with non-LDD learners. Two in five learners with LDD (40 per cent) gave the highest possible rating on a scale of one to ten for this measure, compared with a third of non-LDD learners (33 per cent). The mean rating is 8.4 out of 10 compared with 8.24 among non-LDD learners.

Among learners with LDD, women, those aged 19 or over and those with multiple disabilities rate their instructors significantly higher than men and younger learners (mean scores of 8.52, 8.53, and 8.84 respectively, compared with 8.28 among men and 8.19 among those aged under 19). However, learners with dyslexia or emotional or behavioural difficulties are significantly more likely than others to give their instructors the lowest possible rating (three and five per cent respectively, compared with one per cent for all LDD learners).

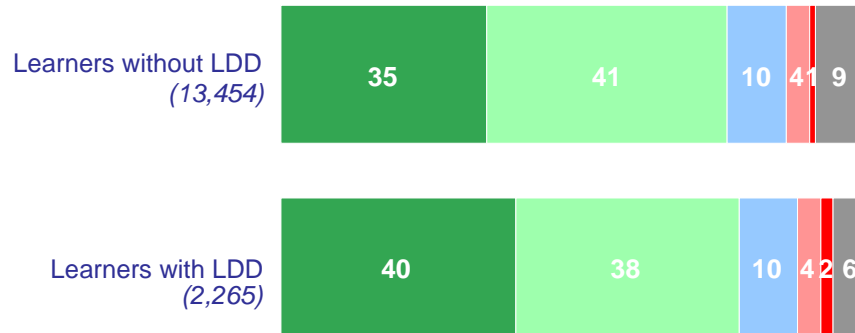
Listening to learners' views

Approaching four in five learners with LDD rate their provider as good at listening to the views of learners, which is slightly more positive compared with non-LDD learners (78 per cent compared with 75 per cent). LDD learners are also more likely to rate their provider as very good on this aspect (Figure 18). Learners with learning difficulties only are particularly positive (82 per cent rate their provider as good compared with 78 per cent overall). Again, learners with emotional or behavioural difficulties are particularly negative - seven per cent rate their provider as very bad. Learners with LDD aged 16 to 18 are more positive than their older counterparts (82 per cent compared with 75 per cent), which is consistent with the age-related differences observed elsewhere in this report on support and provider responsiveness.

Figure 18: Listening to learners

Q How good is the college/learning provider at listening to the views of learners?

■ % Very good ■ % Not good but not bad ■ % Very bad
 ■ % Good ■ % Bad ■ % DK/Does not apply



Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009

Acting on learners' views

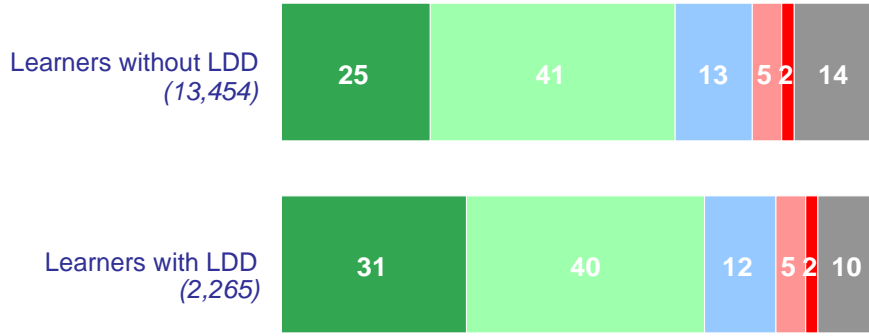
Seven in ten learners with LDD rate their provider as good at acting on learners' views. Providers are perceived to be performing less well on this compared with their performance on listening to learners' views. This pattern is observed across all learner groups and is not unique to LDD learners. Learners with LDD, however, remain more positive in their assessment than non-LDD learners (Figure 19).

Learners with learning difficulties only are most positive about their providers' performance in this respect while learners with disabilities only are significantly less positive (73 per cent compared with 67 per cent rating their provider as good). In addition, learners aged 16 to 18 remain more positive than their older counterparts (76 per cent compared with 67 per cent).

Figure 19: Acting on learners' views

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

■ % Very good ■ % Not good but not bad ■ % Very bad
■ % Good ■ % Bad ■ % DK/Does not apply



Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009

Attitudes to learning and benefits of learning

This section looks at learners' attitudes to learning and education, as well as the perceived usefulness of their course to their future career. It also examines the likelihood of undertaking further learning.

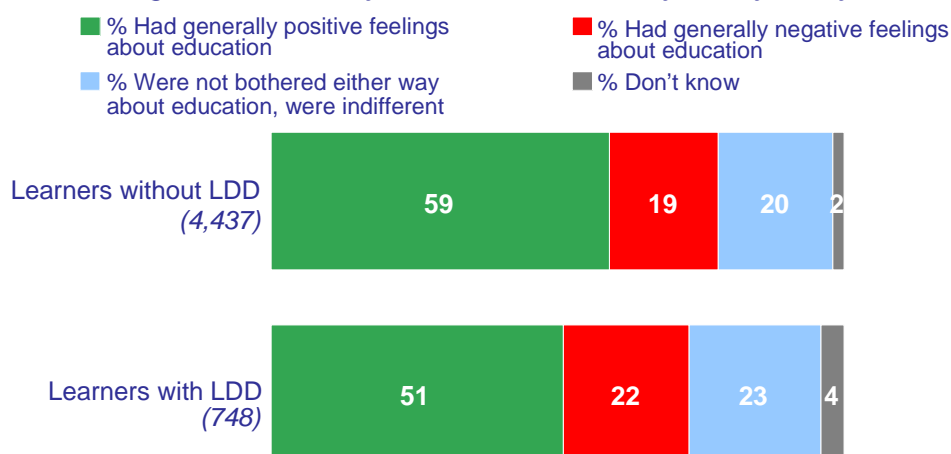
Feelings about education on leaving school

Learners were asked to reflect on their attitudes towards education when they left school: half of LDD learners report feeling generally positive about education, one in five say they had negative feelings and approaching a quarter were indifferent (Figure 20). Learners with LDD are less likely than those without to report feeling generally positive and, correspondingly, are slightly more likely to say they had generally negative feelings about education.

This difference in views is most pronounced for learners with learning difficulties (26 per cent had negative feelings), particularly those with dyslexia, where a third of respondents say they had negative feelings about education (34 per cent). Younger learners (aged 16 to 18) with LDD are more likely than average to say they had positive feelings about education when leaving schools (55 per cent compared with 51 per cent).

Figure 20: Attitudes to education

Q Thinking back to when you left school would you say that you . . . ?



Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ all wave 17, 2009

Current feelings about learning and impact of course

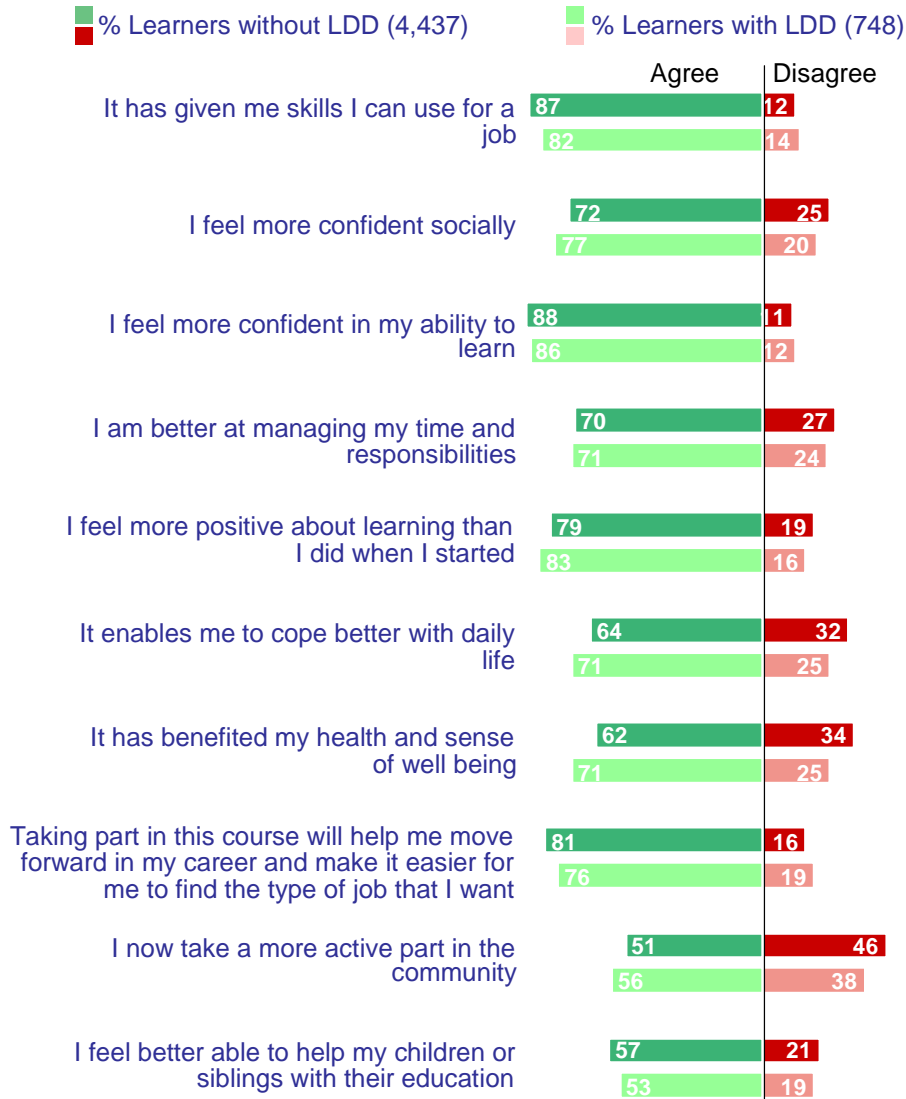
Learners with LDD have generally positive feelings about their course and the effects of learning on their personal lives. They are significantly more likely than non-LDD learners to agree that their course has given them confidence, helped them cope better with daily life, benefitted their health and sense of well-being and encouraged them to take a more active part in the community (Figure 21). They are also slightly more likely to agree that their course improved their attitude towards learning, which is very encouraging as learners with LDD are more likely than non-LDD learners to have a negative perception of learning when they leave school.

However, learners with LDD are less likely than those without to agree that their course has given them skills they can use for a job or that it will help them to advance in their career (though those that agree still represent the majority). This difference in views may be explained by looking at the types of courses that learners are engaged in: while only one in five non-LDD learners is currently studying at Entry or Level 1, this figure rises to one in three learners with LDD, indicating that learners with LDD are more likely to be undertaking courses aimed at improving basic skills.

On nearly all aspects, younger learners with LDD and those with learning difficulties only are more positive than average, while learners with disabilities only are more likely to disagree that they have benefited.

Figure 21: Effects of the course

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?*



Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+, all wave 17, 2009

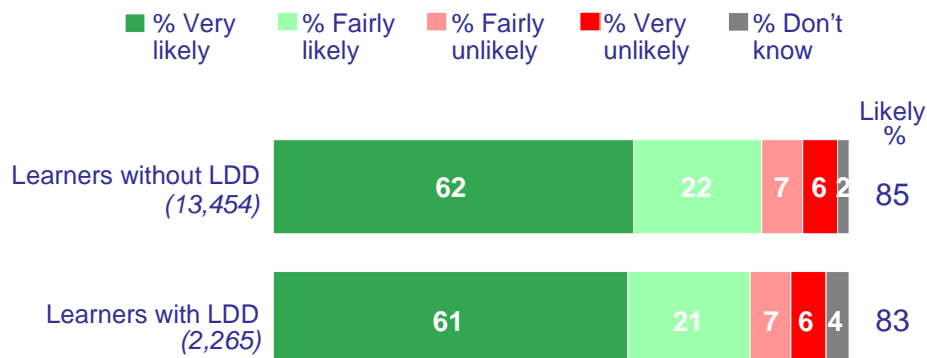
Likelihood of undertaking further learning

The majority of learners, regardless of whether they have LDD, say they are likely to undertake further learning in the next three years (Figure 22). Learners with LDD are slightly less likely to say they will continue compared with non-LDD learners, but they are also more likely to be undecided.

Likelihood of undertaking further learning is higher among younger learners (85 per cent compared with 81 per cent of learners aged 19 plus), which is in line with their more positive attitudes regarding the benefits of learning. This age-related difference is not unique to LDD learners, and is also observed among FE learners as a whole. However, learners with medical conditions (e.g. epilepsy, asthma, diabetes) are least likely to think they will undertake further learning in the next three years (18 per cent saying unlikely compared with 13 per cent for all LDD learners), despite their younger-than-average age profile (45 per cent of them are aged 16 to 18).

Figure 22: Likelihood of undertaking further learning

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

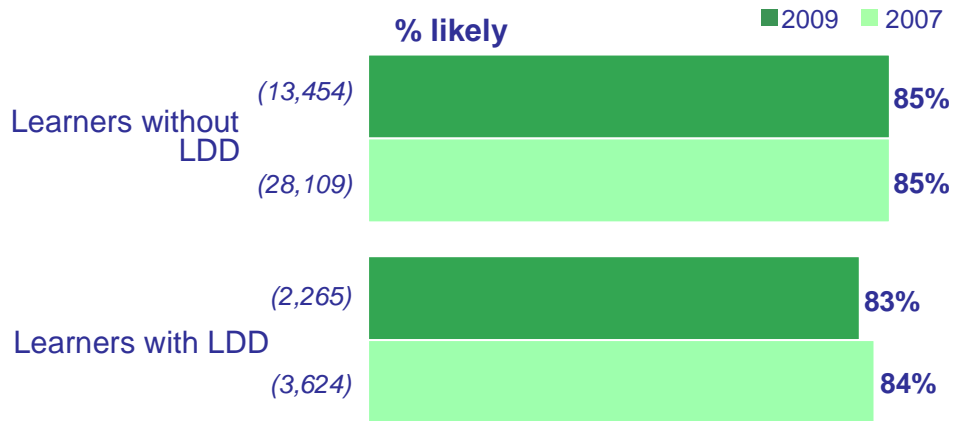


Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009

The stated likelihood of undertaking further learning has remained similar to levels observed in the 2007 survey for both learners with and without LDD (Figure 23).

Figure 23: Likelihood of undertaking further learning over time

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



Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009 and for waves 12, 13 and 14, 2007

Early leavers

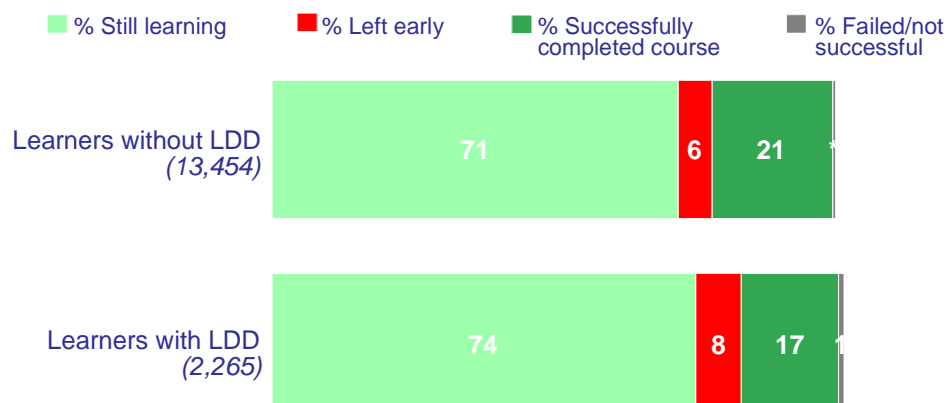
This section focuses on early leavers, who make up eight per cent of LDD learners interviewed.

Who left early

Eight percent of learners with LDD had left their course at the time of the interview (Figure 24) – slightly higher than for non-LDD learners in FE, but in line with findings from 2007. Three-quarters were still on the course at the time of the interview, while 17 per cent had completed the course. However, it should be noted that these figures should not be used to derive completion rates as the survey is not designed for this purpose; rather these are monitored by the LSC's own analysis of the Individualised Learner Records (ILR) database.

Figure 24: 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?*



Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009

There are no significant differences in the demographic characteristics of early leavers, indicating that no particular groups of LDD learners are less likely to complete.

As would be expected, early leavers with LDD are most critical of their course: 27 per cent are dissatisfied with the learning experience compared with seven per cent of LDD learners who completed their course and three per cent of those still studying. Similarly, 17 per cent of early leavers with LDD are critical of their provider compared with seven per cent of completers and five per cent of those still studying.

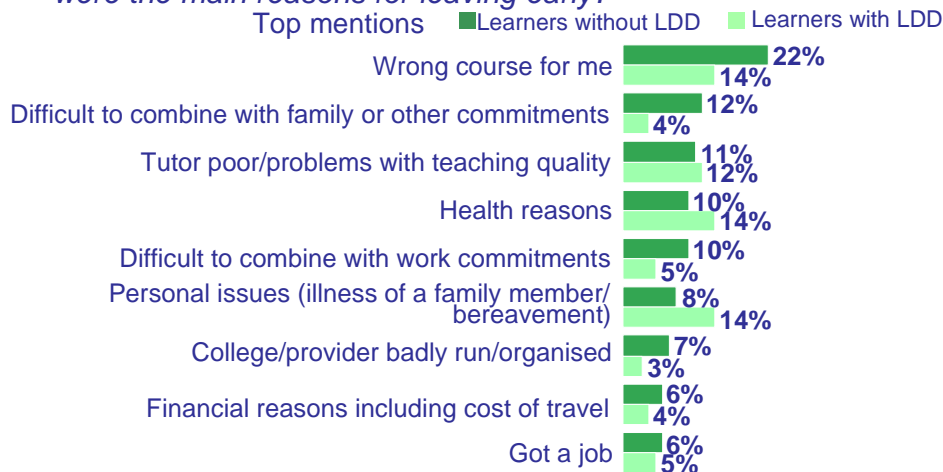
Reasons for leaving early

The top three reasons given by LDD learners for leaving the course early are: health problems, personal issues such as illness of a family member or bereavement, and wrong choice of course (14 per cent each). Learners with LDD are significantly more likely to cite personal issues than non-LDD learners (Figure 25). However, they are less likely than non-LDD early leavers to say that the course was not right for them or that they are finding it difficult balancing course commitments with other commitments.

The main reasons for leaving early are similar to those mentioned by learners with LDD in the 2007 survey, with the exception of personal issues, which has doubled (from 7 per cent to 14 per cent).

Figure 25: 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?



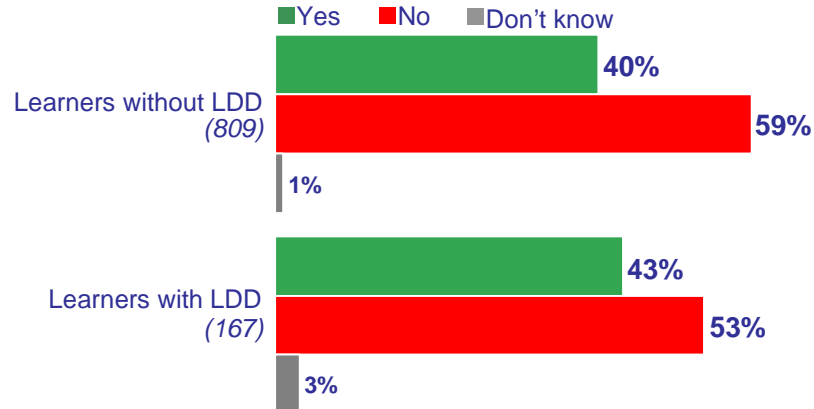
Base: 809 FE learners without LDD and 167 FE learners with LDD, all aged 16+ and early leavers for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009

Support for learners thinking of leaving early

Just over two in five learners with LDD *sought* support from their teachers or tutors before deciding to leave their course (43 per cent; Figure 26). A slightly higher number say they were *offered* support by their tutors (49 per cent; Figure 27) though 50 per cent were not.

Figure 26: Learners who sought support

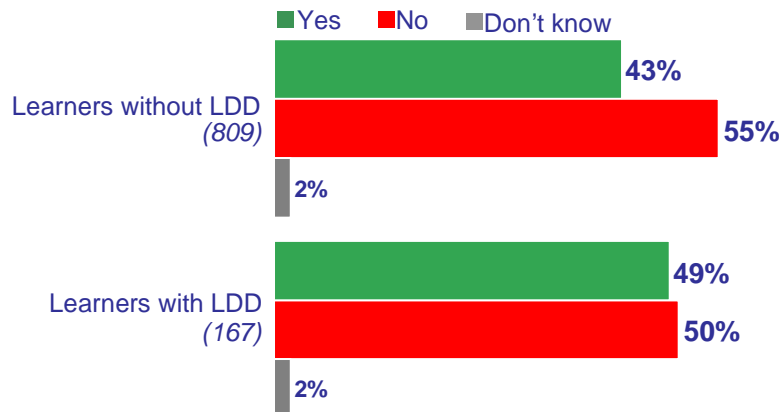
Q *And when you were thinking about leaving the course...Did you seek support from your teachers or tutors to help you stay on the course, postpone the course or change to another course?*



Bases in brackets: FE learners who left early for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009

Figure 27: Learners who were offered support

Q *And when you were thinking about leaving the course...Did your teachers or tutors offer support to help you stay on the course, postpone the course or change to another course?*



Bases in brackets: FE learners who left early for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009

Two in five early leavers with LDD neither sought nor were offered support (42 per cent), suggesting that there is more that providers can do to identify and help learners who are at risk of leaving prior to completion. Related to this, 44 per cent say more could have been done to help them stay on the course - higher than among non-LDD learners (36 per cent). In particular, these learners wanted more support with the course (7 per cent), better teaching (4 per cent), greater understanding of their needs (3 per cent) and end of bullying (3 per cent, coded from the 'other please specify' responses).

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