

RESEARCH

BIS | Department for Business
Innovation & Skills

BIS RESEARCH PAPER NUMBER 18

National Learner Satisfaction
Survey: Young People in Further
Education and Apprenticeships

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 the LSC, Young People's Learning Agency, the Skills Funding Agency, and the department for Business, Innovation and Skills. 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.

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

1 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET

www.bis.gov.uk

BIS Research paper number 18

February 2011

Contents

Introduction	4
Background	4
Sampling.....	4
Sample profile.....	5
Multivariate analysis.....	5
Interpretation of data.....	6
Report structure	6
Summary and Implications	8
Summary	8
Implications.....	10
Overall Satisfaction	12
Satisfaction with the learning experience	12
Advocacy	15
Satisfaction with teaching and provider	18
Specific aspects of quality of teaching	21
Meeting learners' expectations	23
Meeting learners' needs.....	25
Information, advice and support.....	26
Personalisation, learner involvement and provider responsiveness	33
Attitudes to learning and benefits of learning.....	36
Feelings about education on leaving school.....	36
Current feelings about learning and impact of course	37
Early leavers	41

Introduction

Background

This report presents the key findings for FE learners and Apprentices aged 16-19 (described as young people for the purposes of this report), who took part in the National Learner Satisfaction Survey (NLSS) 2009. NLSS was conducted by Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute and commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In April 2010, the LSC was superseded by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and the Skills Funding Agency, with the research function transferring to the Department for Business, Innovation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). A total of 10,338 young people in FE learning and Apprenticeships took part in the 2009 survey, out of a total of 25,084 telephone interviews conducted.

The 2009 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.

Sampling

The NLSS covers learners in further education (FE), Apprenticeships, other LR¹, non-accredited personal and community development learning (PCDL), Skills for Jobs (SFJ) and Employability Skills programme (ESP) learning.

Learners were sampled from the LSC's individualised learner record (ILR) and final data has been 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.

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

Sample profile

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the young people interviewed.

One in six young people in FE (17 per cent), and one in fifteen of those undertaking an Apprenticeship (6 per cent) were from a Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) background.

The majority (58 per cent) of young people in FE learning are studying towards a qualification at level 3 or above, while most (73 per cent) young Apprentices are studying for level 2 qualifications.

As differences by *ethnicity* and *current level of study* both appear frequently throughout this report it is important to note that the proportion of white and BME learners are broadly consistent across all levels of study (e.g. 83 per cent of learners in FE below level 2 are white as are 84 per cent of FE learners at level 2 and 82 per cent of FE learners at level 3).

Table 1: Sample demographic profile (weighted)		
	FE	Apprentices
<i>(Unweighted Base: all respondents)</i>	<i>(8,163)</i>	<i>(2,175)</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Male	56	59
Female	44	41
Ethnicity		
White	83	94
BME	17	6
Current level		
Below level 2	14	*
Level 2	27	73
Level 3 or higher	58	27
Disability		
Learning difficulty	9	6
	12	10

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 learners in FE and Apprentices.

Interpretation of data

It should be remembered that a sample and not the entire population of young people undertaking FE learning or Apprenticeships 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 report is organised into eight main sections:

- Summary of key findings and implications;
- Satisfaction with the learning experience and advocacy;
- Satisfaction with teaching and provider;
- Needs and expectations;
- Information, advice and support;
- Personalisation, leaver involvement and provider responsiveness;
- Attitudes to learning and impact of learning; and
- Early leavers

In addition to this report, separate reports are also available for Apprentices, learners in FE, other LR and PCDL learners, learners on Skills for Jobs and ESP programmes, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and adult learners. There is also an overall summary report, as well as a detailed technical report.

To protect BIS' and the YPLA's interests 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

Young people express high levels of satisfaction with their learning experience; around nine in ten learners say that they are satisfied (93 per cent of Apprentices and 92 per cent of learners in FE). Apprentices are more likely than FE learners to be *extremely* satisfied. Common reasons for satisfaction relate to helpful tutors (particularly for learners in FE where there is a greater emphasis on a classroom based approach) and a good course which lived up to their expectations.

Young people's overall satisfaction levels are slightly lower than those reported in the 2007 survey (by one or two percentage points) and there has been a sharper decline in the proportion of young people who are *extremely* satisfied (by 7 percentage point among young people in FE, and 5 percentage points among Apprentices). This trend has been observed across all learner groups and is not unique to young people.

Encouragingly, however, around three-quarters of young people would speak highly of their learning provider. Reflecting the slightly higher proportion of 'extremely satisfied' ratings among Apprentices than learners in FE, Apprentices also have higher proportions who would speak highly of their provider without being asked (24 per cent of learners in FE and 33 per cent of Apprentices).

Despite the slight drop in overall satisfaction and the more pronounced drop in extreme satisfaction, a higher proportion of young people would speak highly of their provider now than in 2007 (72 per cent of learners in FE currently, compared with 69 per cent in 2007 and 74 per cent of Apprentices, compared with 70 per cent in 2007).

Quality of teaching is a key driver of overall satisfaction

Regression analysis² indicates that both the quality of teaching and the extent to which the learning programme is judged by learners to be meeting their needs and expectations are closely linked to learners' overall satisfaction with their learning experience.

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

Given the importance of the quality of teaching for overall satisfaction with the learning experience, it is encouraging to see that satisfaction with quality of teaching is high, with around nine in ten satisfied. Furthermore, satisfaction with the quality of teaching has remained stable

² Conducted on the data for **Apprentices and FE learners** (i.e. including adult learners as well as young people)

since 2007 (90 per cent of learners in FE are satisfied in this respect now as were 91 per cent in 2007 and 91 per cent of Apprentices are satisfied now as in 2007). Ratings for specific aspects of teaching (such as making the subject interesting and setting clear targets) are also high.

However, among learners in FE there has been a two percentage point drop in 'extremely satisfied' ratings for the quality of teaching. This decline mirrors the seven point decline in the proportion of young people in FE who are extremely satisfied overall, albeit to a lesser extent.

The expectations of most young people have at a minimum been met, and just over one third have found their expectations exceeded (36 per cent of learners in FE and 35 per cent of Apprentices). However, around a quarter report that they did not know what to expect (24 per cent of learners in FE and 27 per cent of Apprentices).

The vast majority of young people say that their learning programme is meeting their needs (90 per cent of learners in FE and 91 per cent of Apprentices) and strong agreement with this is particularly common among Apprentices (62 per cent compared with 55 per cent of learners in FE).

Young people are also very positive about the support they receive. Nine in ten (88 per cent) say that the support is good, and over half say it is very good (48 per cent of learners in FE and 52 per cent of Apprentices).

In terms of information provision, young people overwhelmingly felt well informed about the content of their course after their induction (94 per cent of both groups). However, though still the majority, a lower proportion feel the advice they receive about what they can do following completion of their course is good (78 per cent of both groups).

Key drivers of advocacy include the way providers relate and react to learners as individuals. Therefore it is encouraging that nine in ten young people feel they are treated with respect by staff (91 per cent of learners in FE and 92 per cent of Apprentices). Learning providers are also seen by most as being good at listening to learner's views (81 per cent of learners in FE and 89 per cent of Apprentices), if not quite so good at acting on them (74 per cent of learners in FE and 84 per cent of Apprentices).

A significant proportion of young people experience problems during their course

At least one third of young people have encountered some sort of problem while learning, for example maintaining motivation, keeping up with the standard of work or dealing with financial pressure.

Experiencing some sort of difficulty is more common among learners in FE than Apprentices (47 per cent report at least one issue compared with 35 per cent of Apprentices). The type of problem likely to be encountered also varies. Keeping up with the work required of them and maintaining personal motivation were more commonly cited problems among learners in FE

(mentioned by 19 per cent and 17 per cent respectively compared with 10 per cent and 8 per cent of Apprentices), while practical problems, such as travel to college and dealing with money pressures, are more common among Apprentices (mentioned by 13 per cent each compared with 12 per cent and 9 per cent of Apprentices).

Most young people intend to undertake further study

Nine in ten (92 per cent) young people agree that taking part in their course will help with their career development.

In addition, more than four in five young people now feel more positive about learning than when they started their course. This is most common among Apprentices (88 per cent compared with 84 per cent of FE learners), which is particularly encouraging as they are comparatively less likely to report positive feelings about education on leaving school.

The vast majority of young learners intend to undertake further study in the next three years. However, despite the positive impact of their course on their feelings about learning, Apprentices are less likely than learners in FE to say they are likely to do this (81 per cent of Apprentices compared with 87 per cent of learners in FE).

Implications

Although young people's overall satisfaction with their learning experience is high, the proportion satisfied has fallen since 2007 - and the fall in extreme satisfaction is more pronounced. However, this trend has been observed across all learner groups and is not unique to young people. There is no clear reason for this change as young people's overall assessment of their course, and their rating of individual aspects, remain very positive. However, it may be linked to expectations: despite rating their learning experience highly many learners feel that the course has simply met (rather than exceeded) their expectations, plus a significant minority 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.

Although the majority (78 per cent) of young people feel the advice they receive about what they can do following completion of their course is good (78 per cent of both groups) eight per cent of both learners in FE and Apprentices say advice received on this subject is bad. This may be an important issue to address at the current time of economic instability and high unemployment, when learners may be particularly unsure about the best way to proceed.

As noted above, Apprentices are less likely to say they would like to undertake further learning than learners in FE. It will be interesting to see what effect developments in terms of progression routes for Apprentices into HE and the government's commitment to expand the number of Advanced Apprenticeships will have on this in the future.

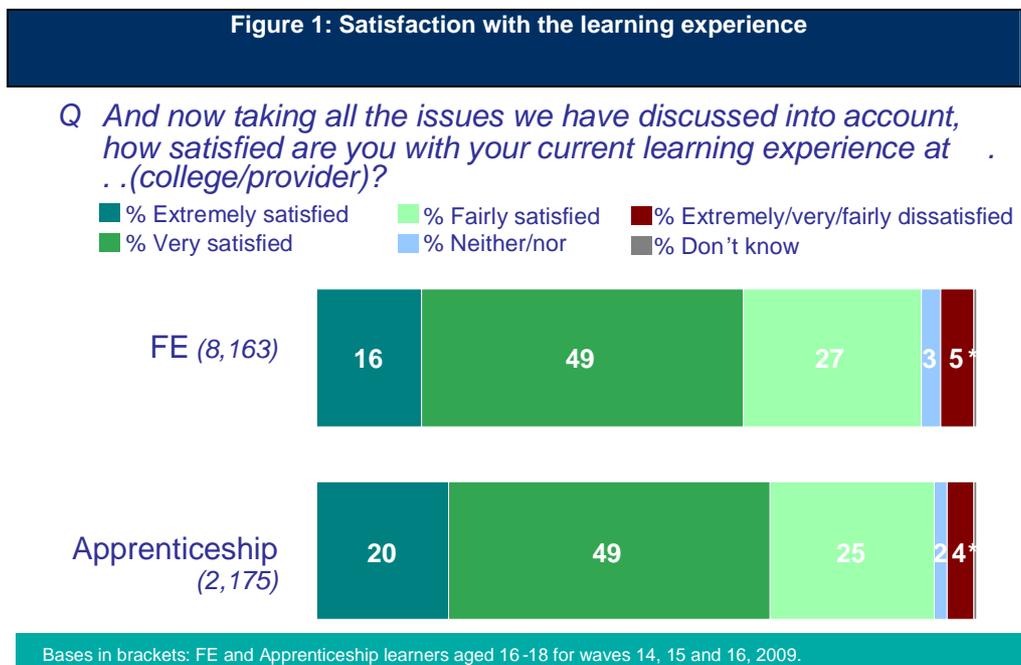
The most common reason for leaving the course early is that the learner felt their course was wrong for them. Early leavers are also slightly less likely to rate the information they received when choosing a new course as good, although the majority do still rate it highly. This demonstrates how important making good quality Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) available to young people is in reducing the proportion of young people NEET (Not in Education Employment and Training). In addition to this, around half of early leavers were not offered support to help them stay on the course, postpone the course or change to another course. Therefore, identifying learners who are at risk of leaving earlier on and offering the appropriate support could also be important.

Overall Satisfaction

Satisfaction with the learning experience

The vast majority of young people are satisfied with their learning experience, with over nine in ten expressing satisfaction (93 per cent among Apprentices and 92 per cent among learners in FE). Apprentices are more likely than FE learners to be *extremely* satisfied (Figure 1).

Considering the experiences of young learners in comparison with adult learners, there is no difference in views between the two age groups. However, among just learners in FE, there are minor differences between young and adult learners with the former reporting slightly higher overall satisfaction (92 per cent compared with 90 per cent).



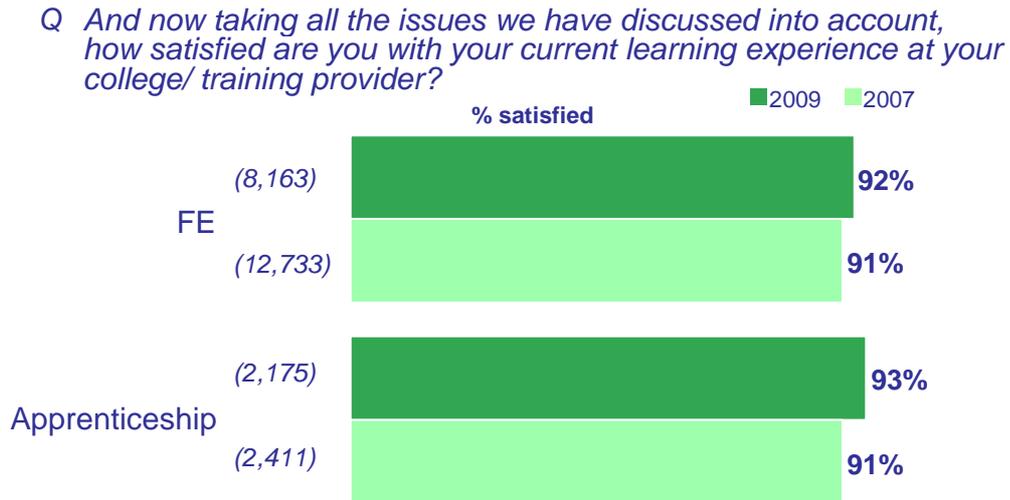
Satisfaction is slightly more widespread among Apprentices aiming for qualifications at Level 3 or above than among those aiming for Level 2 (96 per cent satisfied compared with 92 per cent). This difference is not apparent for learners in FE (92 per cent at each level are satisfied).

White learners in FE – both young and adult learners - are more likely than BME learners to be *extremely* satisfied with their learning experience (16 per cent compared with 14 per cent).

Overall Satisfaction

Overall, young people's satisfaction levels are slightly lower than those reported in the 2007 survey – a decline of between one and two percentage points (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Trends in satisfaction with the learning experience



Bases in brackets: FE and Apprenticeship learners aged 16-18 for waves 14, 15 and 16, 2009; waves 12, 13 and 14, 2007.

In addition to this, there has been a sharper decline in the proportion of young people who are *extremely* satisfied, by 7 percentage points among young people in FE, and 5 percentage points among Apprentices (Figure 3). This trend has been observed across all learner groups and is not unique to young people.

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



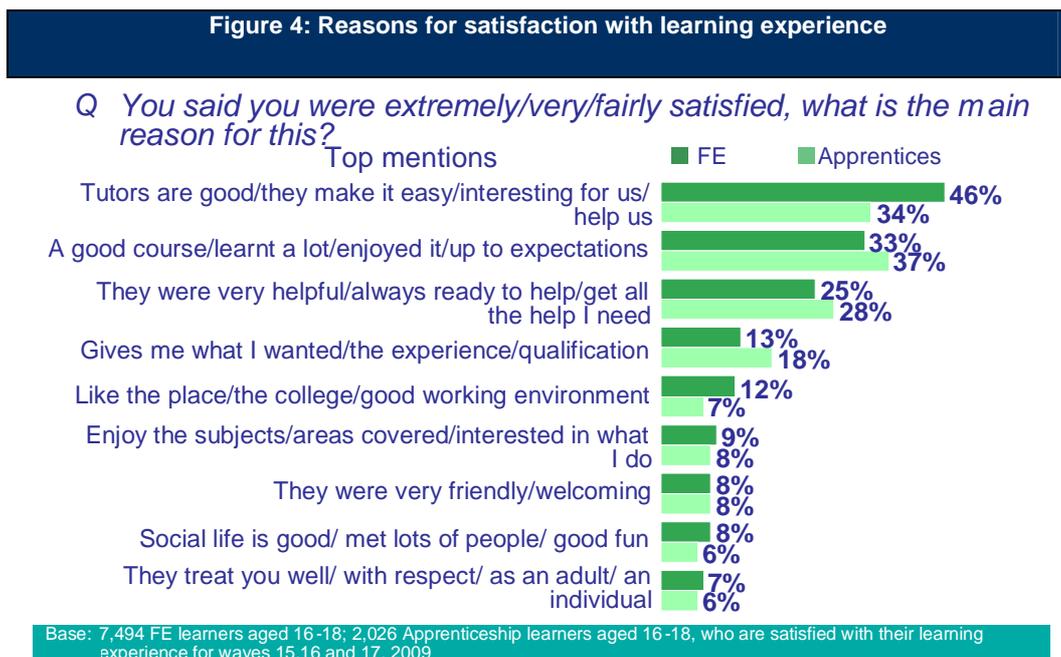
Bases in brackets: FE learners aged 16+ for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009 and for waves 12, 13 and 14, 2007.

There are no clear reasons for this decline as young people's overall assessment of their course and their ratings of individual aspects remain very positive. This finding, therefore, needs to be seen in the context of the high levels of satisfaction *overall* which has remained stable since the first NLSS in 2001.

Reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction

The main reasons why young people say they are satisfied with their learning experience relate to having good and helpful tutors and having a good course that lived up to expectations (Figure 4).

The top three reasons given for satisfaction by learners in FE and Apprentices are the same, suggesting what they value most about their learning experience is consistent. Learners in FE are, however, significantly more likely than Apprentices to cite having good tutors as the main reason for their satisfaction, reflecting the greater emphasis on classroom based learning on most FE courses.



The most commonly cited reasons for being *dissatisfied* with the course are not getting enough help and support (cited by 19 per cent of learners in FE and 33 per cent Apprentices), course falling short of expectations (21 per cent and 15 per cent respectively), and lack of organisation (20 per cent and 19 per cent respectively).

Lack of organisation is a particular issue for FE learners at level 3 or above (26 per cent mention this compared with 7 per cent of FE learners studying for qualifications below level 2). This group is also much more likely to mention problems with poor communication (17 per cent compared with 5 per cent of FE learners studying for qualifications below level 2).

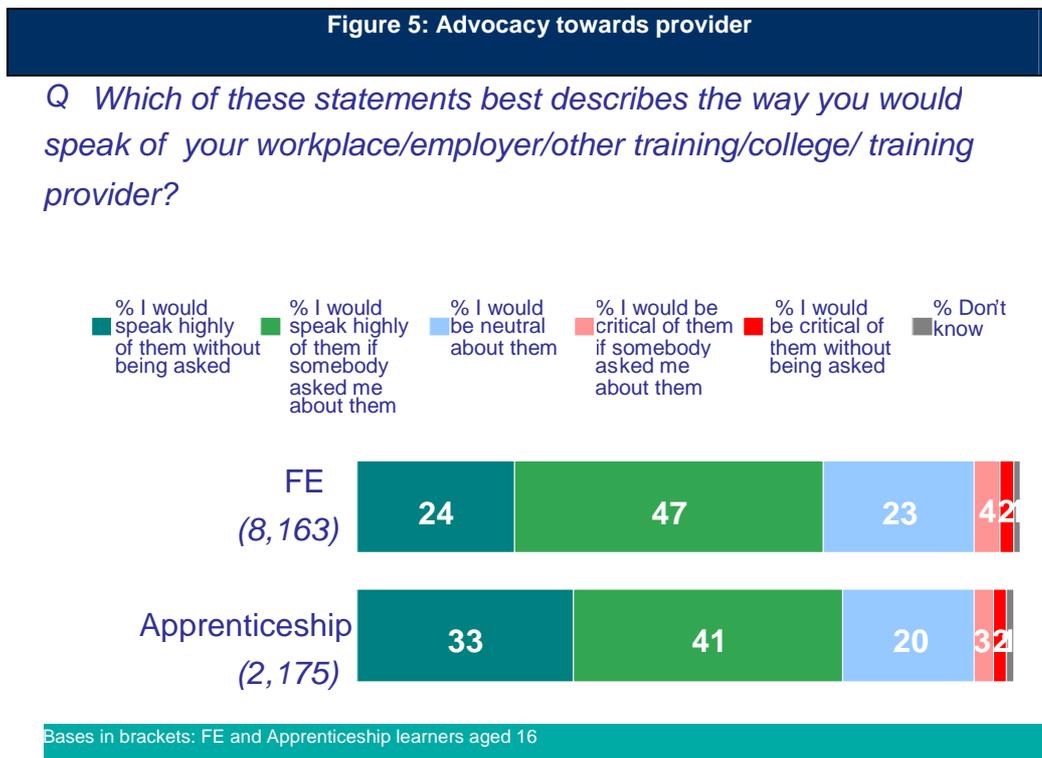
Among Apprentices, needs not being met or help not being given are mentioned more often by those dissatisfied at level 2 than those at level 3 (35 per cent compared with 22 per cent).

Advocacy

Around three-quarters of young people would speak highly of their learning provider, including a significant minority who would do so without being asked (Figure 5).

Unprompted advocacy is higher among Apprentices than FE learners. This is in line with the comparatively higher proportion of Apprentices who are extremely satisfied with their learning experience.

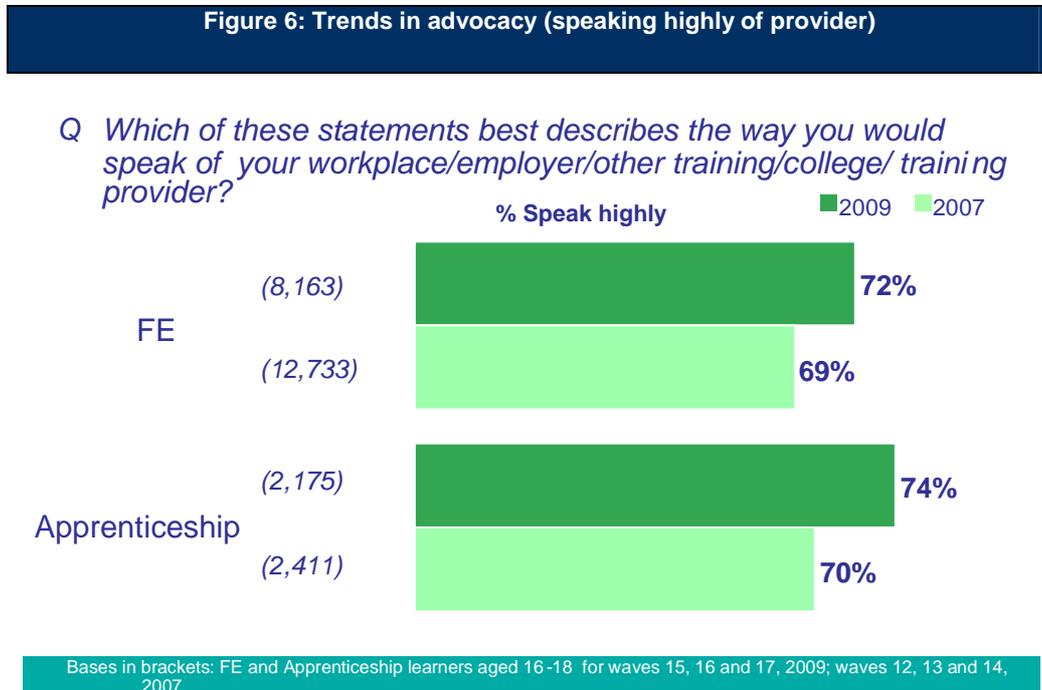
As with satisfaction with learning experience, there is no significant difference between young and adult Apprentices in terms of advocacy (74 per cent and 73 per cent).



Apprentices with a Skills Account are more likely to speak highly of their provider (83 per cent would speak highly of their provider compared with 73 per cent of Apprentices without a Skills Account). This result is consistent with higher levels of overall satisfaction.

White learners in FE are more likely than BME learners to speak highly of their provider (69 per cent compared with 55 per cent). Again, this is consistent with the differences observed for overall satisfaction.

A higher proportion of both FE learners and Apprentices would speak highly of their provider than in 2007 (Figure 6).



What drives satisfaction with the learning experience?

Regression analysis was undertaken to determine the factors most commonly associated with high satisfaction and advocacy among **all Apprentices and FE learners** (i.e. including young people as well as adult learners).³ The following factors were identified as being particularly closely linked to learner's **overall satisfaction with the learning experience and advocacy**:

- The extent to which the learning programme is deemed by learners to be meeting their needs and expectations;
- The quality of tutors or teachers; and
- Issues related to provider responsiveness and learner involvement, such as listening to and acting on learner views and treating learners with respect.

It should be noted that, although the factors closely linked to overall satisfaction and advocacy are similar; issues related to learner responsiveness are even more strongly related to advocacy than overall satisfaction. Additionally, for Apprentices in particular, good levels of support provided on the course and helpfulness of staff in the first few weeks is also closely linked to satisfaction with the learning experience.

³ Please refer to the respective sector reports (Apprentices and FE learners) to see a detailed breakdown of the regression analysis.

The following chapter focuses on providers' performance against these key drivers for **young people only**. Full results of the regression analysis for Apprentices and FE learners generally are contained in the FE and Apprenticeship reports.

Performance on key drivers

This section looks at young people views on the key drivers that were identified in the Apprenticeship and/or FE learners KDA: quality of teaching; needs and expectations; information, advice and support; and personalisation, learner involvement and provider responsiveness.

Table 2 summarises young people's ratings for the key drivers. The ratings are presented as either the percentage rating each item positively or the mean score (on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest rating).

Table 2: Performance on key drivers for young people– summary

	Learners in FE	Apprentices
<i>(Base varies by question)</i>		
Tutors/teachers		
Satisfied with quality of teaching	90%	91%
Understand learner(s) and how they like to learn (mean score)	7.6	7.9
Set clear goals to improve (mean score)	7.8	8.1
Manage the group well (mean score)	7.8	8.0
Interest and enjoyment (mean score)	7.8	7.9
Needs and expectations		
Learning programme is meeting my needs (% agree)	90%	91%
Experience was better than expected	36%	35%
Information, advice and support		
Satisfied overall because learning provider was helpful/always ready to help	25%	28%
Good support on the course	88%	88%
Good help in the first few weeks	93%	89%
Well informed of course content	94%	94%
No problems experienced during course	53%	65%
Future Career		
Good advice on next steps	78%	78%
Relationship		
Tutors relate to learner(s) as a person (mean)	8.0	8.4
Respect shown to learner	91%	92%
Provider good at listening to views	81%	89%
Provider good at acting on views	74%	84%

Satisfaction with teaching and provider

Reflecting high levels of overall satisfaction, around nine in ten learners in FE and Apprentices are also satisfied with the quality of teaching or training on their course (Figure 7).

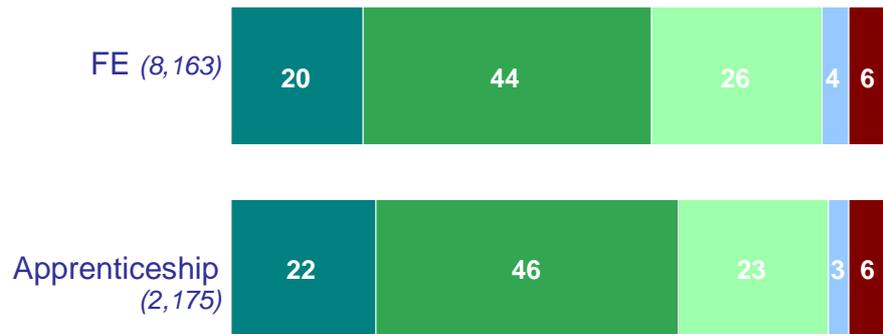
In contrast to their differing levels of satisfaction with their learning experience overall, there are no significant differences between learners in FE and Apprentices on this measure.

Once again, there are no differences between young and adult Apprentices. However, young people in FE are slightly more likely to be satisfied with the quality of teaching than adult learners (90 per cent compared with 88 per cent).

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



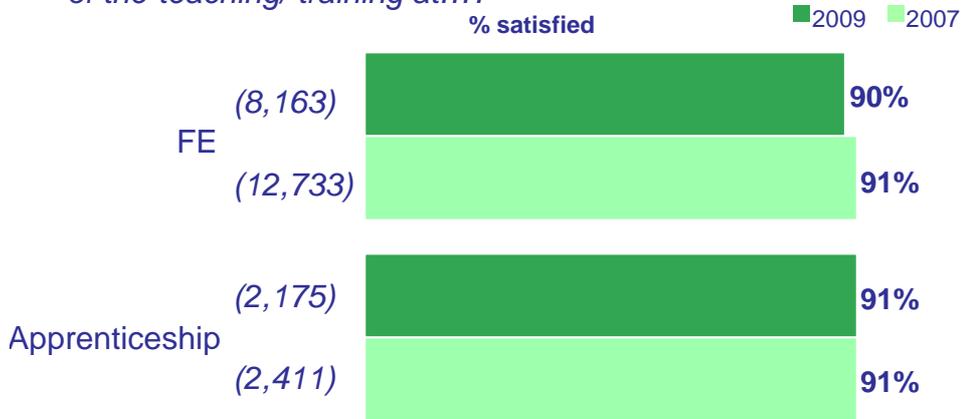
Bases in brackets: FE and Apprenticeship learners aged 16-18 for waves 14, 15 and 16, 2009.

There are few other notable differences by sub-group for either learners in FE or Apprentices.

Broad satisfaction with the overall quality of teaching has remained at a similar level to 2007 (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Trends in satisfaction with the quality of teaching

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



Bases in brackets: FE and Apprenticeship learners aged 16-18 for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009; waves 12, 13 and 14, 2007.

However, while satisfaction with quality of teaching has remained stable, among learners in FE there has been a two percentage point drop in ‘extremely satisfied’ ratings for the quality of teaching (Figure 9). This decline is in line with the seven point decline in the proportion of young people in FE who are extremely satisfied overall. The two-point decline in satisfaction with quality of teaching among Apprentices is not statistically significant.

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

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



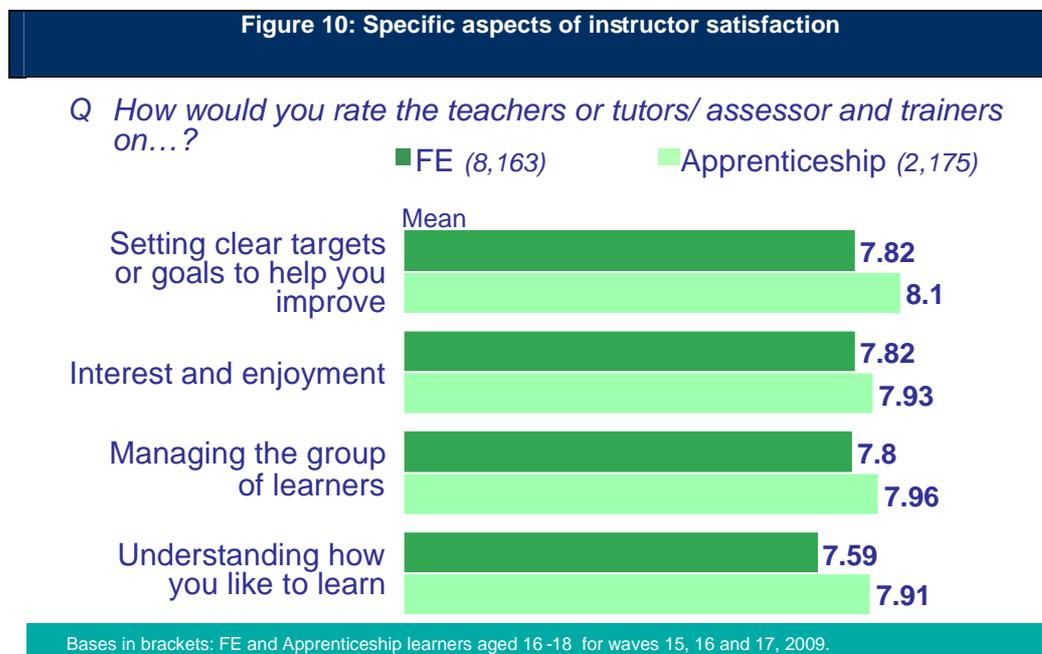
Bases in brackets: FE and Apprenticeship learners aged 16-18 for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009 and for waves 12, 13 and 14, 2007.

Specific aspects of quality of teaching

This section looks at four specific aspects of teaching which have also been identified as key drivers of satisfaction. Learners were asked to give a rating between 1 (very poor) and 10 (excellent) for the following:

- Setting clear targets or goals to help you improve;
- Making your subject interesting or enjoyable for you;
- Understanding how you like to learn; and
- Managing the group of learners.

All aspects of teaching are rated highly by young people, with a mean score of around 8 for each (Figure 10). Apprentices are consistently more positive about each aspect than learners in FE.



Again, young people with a Skills Account tend to rate certain aspects of their tuition more highly in comparison with those who do not hold an account (Table 3).

There is also a link between the level of qualification being studied and the rating of teaching quality. Learners in FE studying for qualification at Level 2 or lower rate each aspect of their tuition more highly than those who are studying towards a Level 3 or higher qualification. A similar pattern can be seen among Apprentices, though the differences are not always significant.

White learners in FE give higher ratings on each aspect of teaching than BME learners, reflecting their higher levels of advocacy and overall satisfaction. There is no significant difference by ethnicity among Apprentices.

Female Apprentices rated all aspects of their tuition more highly than male Apprentices, though this pattern is not seen among learners in FE.

Table 3: Ratings on specific aspects of teaching (mean score)

Q How would you rate the teachers or tutors / assessors or trainers on				
	<i>Making your subject interesting or enjoyable for you</i>	<i>Setting clear targets or goals to help you improve</i>	<i>Understanding how you like to learn</i>	<i>Managing the group of learners</i>
<i>(Base varies by question⁴)</i>				
All young people in FE	7.82	7.82	7.59	7.80
Gender				
Male	7.84	7.84	7.63	7.79
Female	7.80	7.80	7.55	7.81
Current level of study				
Below Level 2	8.14	8.18	8.04	8.04
Level 2	7.91	7.96	7.79	7.92
Level 3 or higher	7.70	7.68	7.39	7.69
Ethnicity				
White	7.89	7.85	7.65	7.85
BME	7.44	7.69	7.30	7.57
Skills account				
Hold a skills account	8.13	8.07	7.91	8.00
Do not hold a skills account	7.79	7.80	7.55	7.77

Continued overleaf

⁴ As 'don't know' and 'not applicable' responses are excluded.

	<i>Making your subject interesting or enjoyable for you</i>	<i>Setting clear targets or goals to help you improve</i>	<i>Understanding how you like to learn</i>	<i>Managing the group of learners</i>
<i>(Base varies by question)</i>				
All young people in Apprenticeship	7.93	8.10	7.91	7.96
Gender				
Male	7.80	7.94	7.73	7.82
Female	8.13	8.34	8.18	8.16
Current level of study				
Below Level 2	6.69	9.21	8.51	8.12
Level 2	8.00	8.14	7.97	7.99
Level 3 or higher	7.76	8.00	7.74	7.87
Ethnicity				
White	7.92	8.08	7.91	7.94
BME	8.03	8.51	7.96	8.18
Skills account				
Hold a skills account	8.38	8.43	8.22	8.24
Do not hold a skills account	7.85	8.03	7.83	7.89

Meeting learners' expectations

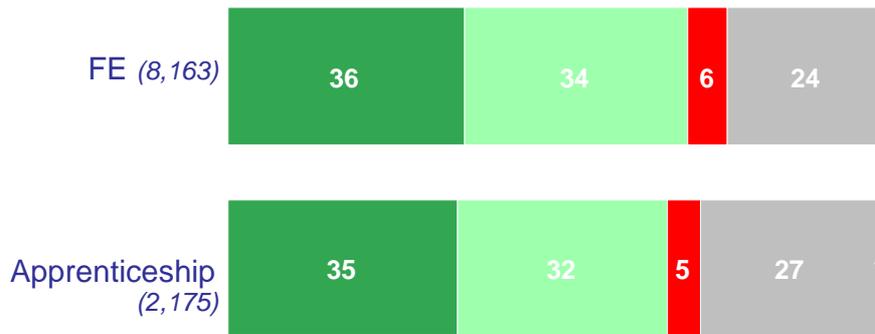
The expectations of most young people have at least been met, and just over one third say that their course has actually exceeded their expectations (Figure 11). However, around a quarter of them didn't know what to expect.

The expectations of learners in FE are a little more likely to be met or exceeded than those on Apprenticeships. However, this is primarily due to Apprentices' greater tendency not to know what to expect from their course as opposed to a failure to meet their expectations.

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?

■ % Better than I expected ■ % Worse than I expected ■ % Don't know
 ■ % Similar to what I expected ■ % I didn't know what to expect



Bases in brackets: FE and Apprenticeship learners aged 16-18 for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009

Young people in FE receiving learner support are more likely to say that their course exceeded their expectations than those not doing so (38 per cent compared with 34 per cent), as are those with a Skills Account (41 per cent, compared with 35 per cent of young people in FE who do not have an account).

Again white learners are more positive about their experience than BME learners in FE: 36 per cent found their expectations were exceeded compared with 33 per cent of BMEs.

In FE, unmet expectations are more common among young people *currently* studying at Level 3 or higher (7 per cent say their experience was worse than expected compared to 5 per cent of those aiming for qualifications below Level 2). However, as a higher proportion of Level 3 learners have an expectation of their course compared to those who are aiming for qualifications of Level 2 or below, it is not surprising that significantly more Level 3 learners' expectations are not met (30 per cent of those aiming for below Level 2 qualifications and 27 per cent of those aiming for Level 2, compared with 21 per cent of those aiming for Level 3 or higher).

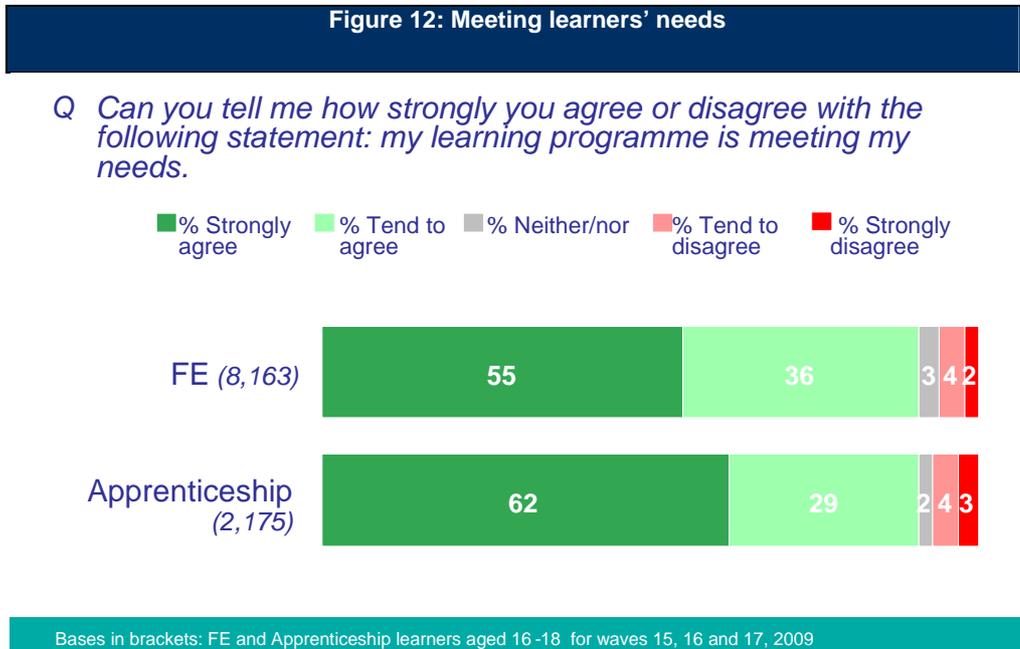
Similarly, uncertainty about what to expect is particularly common among learners in FE with no *previous* qualifications (30 per cent compared with just 22 per cent of those with a Level 2 or higher qualification), indicating that prior achievement plays a key role in forming young people's expectations.

Not knowing what to expect is also more common among female Apprentices than male Apprentices (29 per cent versus 26 per cent).

As might be expected, early leavers are more likely to say that the course did not meet their expectations (24 per cent of learners in FE and 25 per cent of Apprentices).

Meeting learners' needs

The needs of the vast majority of young people are met by their learning programme (Figure 12). Agreement that their needs are being met is particularly strong among Apprentices.



Learners in FE studying towards a Level 3 or higher qualification are more likely than those studying for lower level qualifications to agree that their course is meeting their needs (91 per cent agree compared with 88 per cent of those aiming for Level 2 or below), despite the higher proportion reporting that their course fell short of their expectations.

There are also significant differences by gender and ethnicity, with male learners and white learners more inclined than female and BME learners respectively to say their needs are being met (Table 4).

Table 4: Levels of agreement with the statement 'My learning programme is meeting my needs'

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Net Agree</i>
All learners in FE	90	6	84
Gender			
Male	91	6	85
Female	90	6	83
Ethnicity			
White	91	5	86
BME	87	9	78
All Apprentices	91	6	85
Gender			
Male	91	6	86
Female	91	8	83
Ethnicity			
White	91	6	85
BME	86	13	73

Information, advice and support

Problems experienced while learning

At least one third of young people encounter some sort of problem while learning. Difficulties are generally more common among learners in FE; nearly half (47 per cent) of learners in FE mentioned at least one issue compared with around a third (35 per cent) of Apprentices.

Common issues include difficulties keeping up with the standard of work, maintaining personal motivation, travelling to training and dealing with money pressures (Figure 13).

With the exception of problems related to travelling to college, reading/writing and maths/numeracy (where differences are not statistically significant), learners in FE were more likely to have experienced each of the problems shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Problems encountered during the course



While there are few significant differences between different groups of Apprentices, a number of differences can be observed among learners in FE.

Female learners in FE are more likely than male learners to have experienced a number of difficulties, including; fitting course commitments in with other home and work commitments (12 and 10 per cent versus 9 and 8 per cent respectively); managing to keep up with the standard of work required (22 per cent versus 16 per cent); and dealing with money pressures (15 per cent versus 11 per cent). As noted earlier, a greater proportion of females than males feel their course does not meet their needs and these differences could potentially point towards the reasons behind this.

In FE, difficulties are also more commonly encountered by BME learners than white learners (52 per cent versus 46 per cent) who, like females, are also more likely to report that the learning programme does not meet their needs. Specifically, learners from minority ethnic groups are particularly likely to mention problems maintaining their personal motivation (22 per cent versus 16 per cent); travelling to college (16 per cent versus 13 per cent) and not receiving the extra help they were promised (9 per cent versus 5 per cent).

Difficulties are also more common among FE learners with a disability or learning difficulty (51 per cent versus 46 per cent of those without a disability or learning difficulty). The report for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in FE shows that reading/writing and maths/numeracy are particularly problematic for learners with learning difficulties in comparison to others.

The type of problems typically encountered is also linked to the level of study (and therefore previous experience of study). For example, those who are studying towards a Level 3 or higher

qualification are most likely to have experienced problems managing to fit course commitments around home and work commitments; managing to keep up with the standard of work required; and maintaining their personal motivation. Meanwhile, those who are studying for a qualification lower than Level 2 have a greater tendency to cite reading/writing and maths/numeracy as issues.

Table 5: Problems encountered during the course, by current level

Q Since you started your course have you had any problems with any of the following? (% mention)

	<i>Below Level 2</i>	<i>Level 2</i>	<i>Level 3 or higher</i>
<i>(Unweighted Base: all wave two respondents)</i>	<i>(354)</i>	<i>(654)</i>	<i>(1,561)</i>
Learners in FE			
Managing to fit course commitments in with other commitments at home	6	7	13
Managing to fit course commitments in with other commitments at work	4	5	12
Managing to keep up with the standard of work required	11	16	22
Maintaining your personal motivation	13	12	20
Reading/writing skills	12	6	4
Maths/numeracy	11	8	4

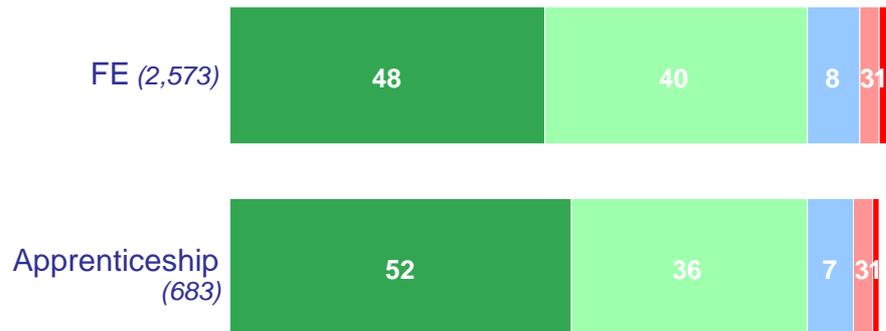
Supporting learners

Overall, young people are very positive about the support they receive on their course, with around nine in ten reporting that the support they receive is good (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Support received during 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 and Apprenticeship learners aged 16+ all in wave 17 2009

Learners in FE who already have a Level 3 or higher qualification are less positive about the support they receive than those with no prior qualifications, (8 per cent compared with 2 per cent rate the support as bad) although they are still positive on the whole.

Differences by gender and ethnicity can be observed among learners in FE, in-line with findings throughout this report. Good ratings are more common among male learners (compared with females) and white learners (compared with BME learners).

Table 6: Ratings of support during the course - sub group differences

Q How good is the support you get on this course/learning programme/training programme?

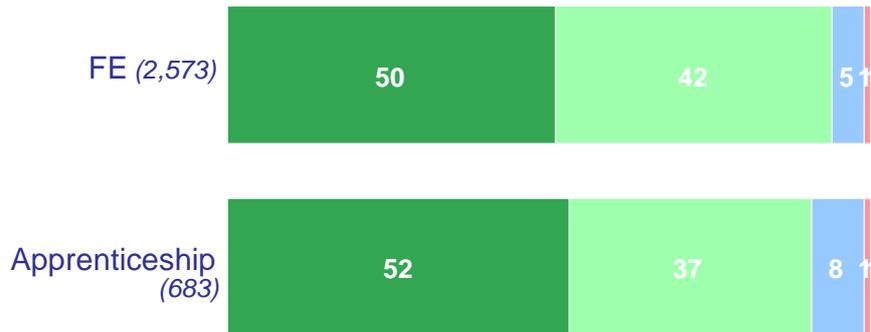
	% Good	% Poor	Net Good
<i>(Unweighted Base sizes shown in brackets below)</i>			
All learners in FE	88	4	84
Gender			
Male (4,148)	89	3	86
Female (4,015)	86	5	82
Ethnicity			
White (6,714)	88	3	85
BME (1,413)	86	6	80

Young people are overwhelmingly happy with the help they received from staff in the first few weeks of their course. Around nine in ten say the help was good or very good.

Figure 15: Getting help in the 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 and Apprenticeship learners aged 16-18 all in wave 16, 2009

Again, learners in FE with no previous qualifications are most positive about this aspect of their course (96 per cent say the help received was good).

Among learners in FE, white learners are again happier than BME learners with the support offered to them; 52 per cent of white learners in FE said the support in the first few weeks was very good compared with 44 per cent of BME learners.

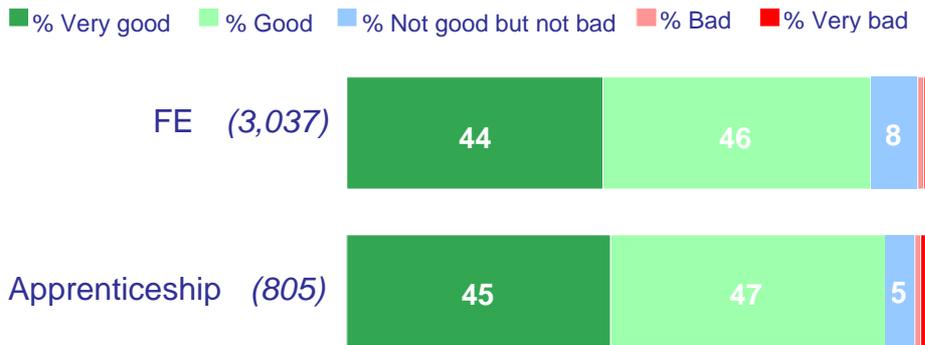
Female Apprentices have a greater tendency than males to feel the support received in the early stages of their course was very good (59 per cent versus 47 per cent), reflecting their greater satisfaction with various aspects of teaching on the course.

Information and advice

Information provided to learners when choosing their course is widely judged to be good – around nine in ten say this was the case.

Figure 16: Information when choosing course

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



Bases in brackets: FE and Apprenticeship learners aged 16 – 18 all wave

23

Both FE learners and Apprentices studying at level 2 are more likely to rate the information they received as higher than those studying at level 3 (92 per cent of level 2 learners in FE compared with 89 per cent of level 3 learners in FE and 93 per cent of level 2 Apprentices compared with 91 per cent of level 3 Apprentices).

Again, for learners in FE, a positive rating is more common among white than BME learners; 91 per cent of white learners in FE rate the information they received as good compared with 89 per cent of BME learners.

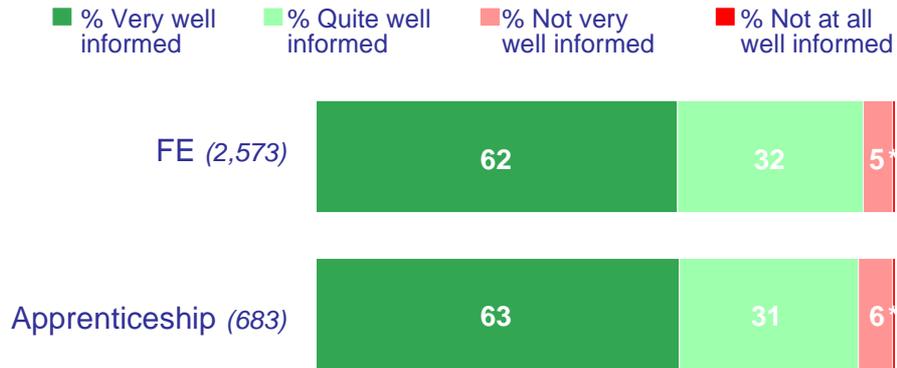
Among learners in FE, this information is much less likely to be rated as good by those who left their course early than those still studying (75 per cent compared to 92 per cent). If the information provided at this crucial stage is improved it may reduce the number of people leaving early as the top reason given for doing so is choosing the wrong course (see the chapter on early leavers).

As shown in Figure 17, the vast majority of learners in FE and Apprentices feel that they were well informed about the content of their course after their induction

Figure 17: Information about the course content

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 and Apprenticeship learners aged 16-18 all wave 16, 2009

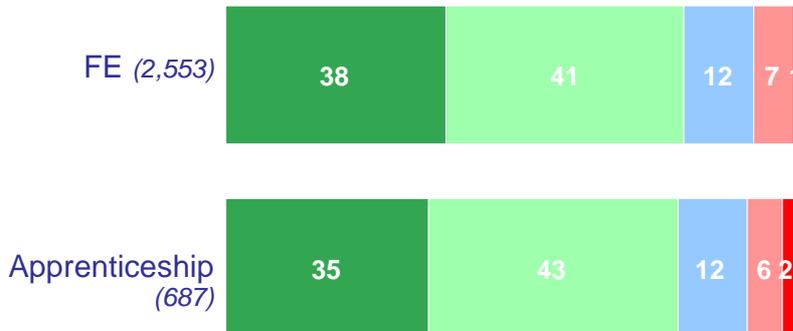
The only slightly lower rating is given by learners in FE studying towards a Level 2 qualification and, even here, the majority still feel very or quite well informed (89 per cent).

Despite feeling well informed at the beginning of their course, learners are slightly less complimentary about the advice they receive on what they can do once their course has finished. Although most report that advice on this has been good, around one in eight give a neutral rating and around one in twelve say that it has in fact been bad (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Quality of advice given about what to do after course

Q How good is the advice you have been given about what you can do after this course/learning programme/training programme?

Legend: % Very good (dark green), % Good (light green), % Not good but not bad (light blue), % Bad (light red), % Very bad (dark red)



Bases in brackets: FE and Apprenticeship learners aged 16-18 for wave 17, 2009

Male Apprentices are far more likely than female Apprentices to say that the advice they have received has been good (81 per cent compared with 71 per cent).

Personalisation, learner involvement and provider responsiveness

Some of the most important drivers of learner satisfaction link to the way providers relate and react to learners as individuals. This section shows that young people's ratings on these aspects are very positive.

The vast majority of young people feel they are shown respect by staff and over half give their provider a very good rating on this measure (Figure 19).



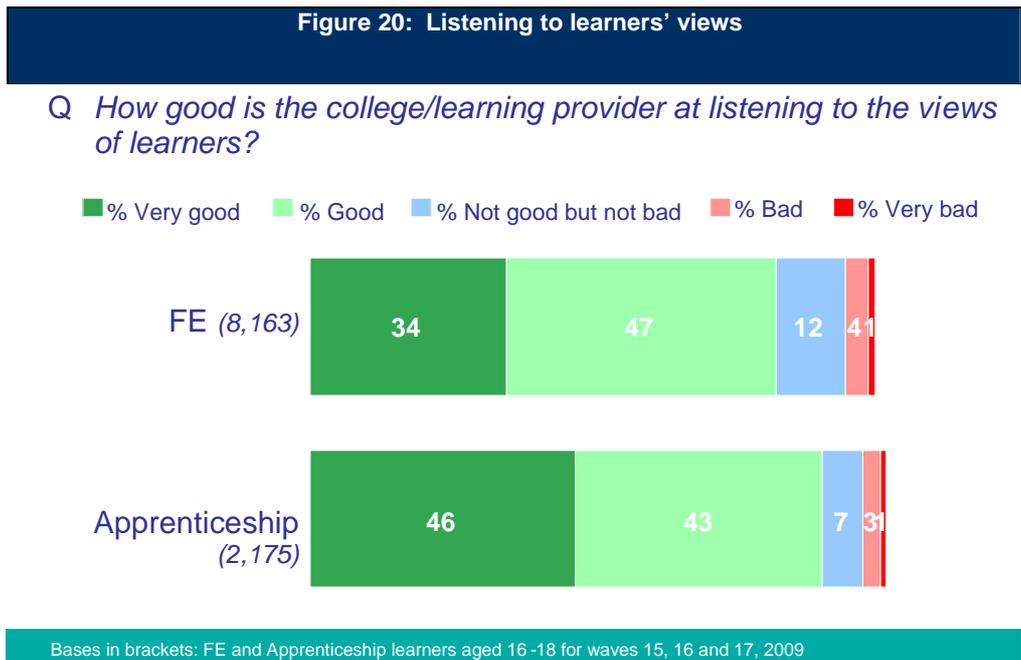
Small differences by gender and ethnicity can be observed among learners in FE. Male learners are slightly more likely than female learners to rate the respect as good (91 per cent compared with 90 per cent) and the same applies to white learners in comparison to BME learners (91 per cent compared with 89 per cent).

On a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is the top score, young people rate their tutors highly on how they relate to them as a person – giving a mean score of around eight out of ten. Apprentices are slightly more positive than FE learners. Just over one in three Apprentices (35 per cent) give a top rating of 10, and the mean score is 8.38. For learners in FE this score is slightly lower – 7.99, with a quarter (24 per cent) giving a rating of 10.

In line with their slightly lower rating of the respect staff show to them, BME learners in FE give lower ratings than white learners on how staff relate to them as a person (mean scores of 7.65 and 8.05 respectively).

Learning providers are good at listening to the views of young people - the vast majority rate them as good or very good at this (Figure 20).

In line with their higher ratings on how well teachers relate to them as a person, Apprentices are noticeably more likely than learners in FE to say their provider is very good at listening to their views (46 per cent compared with 34 per cent).



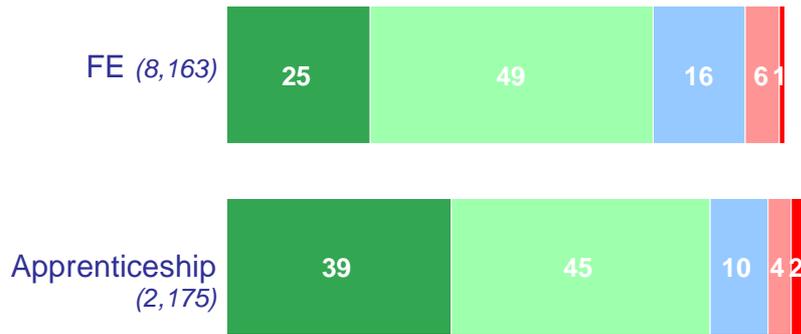
Overall, young people are less likely to say that providers are good at acting on learners' views than listening to them. In particular they are less likely to say providers are very good at this (Figure 21). However, most still say their provider is good at acting on learners' views, with very few saying it is bad or very bad at this.

Again, Apprentices are much more positive on this measure than learners in FE.

Figure 21: Acting on learners' views

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

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



Bases in brackets: FE and Apprenticeship learners aged 16-18 for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009

Learners in FE studying for a qualification below Level 2 are more positive than those studying at Level 3 or above (81 per cent, compared with 70 per cent), in line with earlier findings.

In addition to this, white learners in FE and on Apprenticeships are again more positive than BME learners about providers both listening to and acting on their views.

Table 7: How good is the college/ learning provider/ company at listening to/ acting on the views of learners/ Apprentices and employees?

	Learners in FE		Apprentices	
	White (6,714)	BME (1,413)	White (2,084)	BME (87 ⁵)
Listening to				
% Good	82	77	88	93
% Poor	5	7	4	3
Net Good	76	70	84	89
Acting on				
% Good	74	70	84	81
% Poor	7	9	5	9
Net Good	67	62	79	72

⁵ Indicative only due to small base size

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

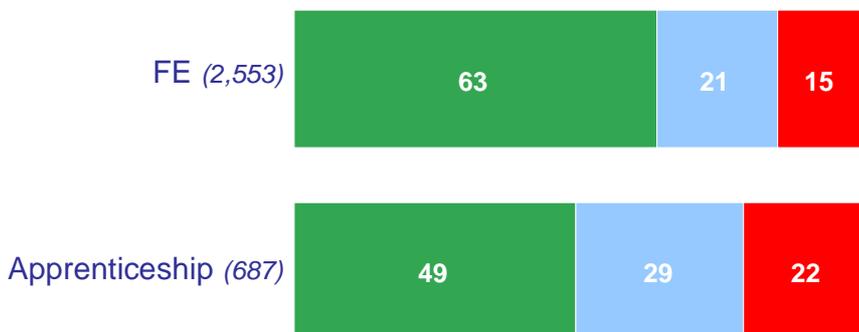
At least half of young learners had positive feelings about education when they left school. However significant numbers felt indifferent or negative (Figure 22).

A much greater proportion of learners in FE than Apprentices had positive feelings.

Figure 22: Feelings about education upon leaving school

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

- % Had generally positive feelings about education
- % Had generally negative feelings about education
- % Were not bothered either way about education, were indifferent
- % Don't know



Bases in brackets: FE and Apprenticeship learners aged 16-18 all wave 17, 2009

Among learners in FE, differences can be observed by ethnicity. BME learners are more likely than white learners to say they had generally positive feelings about education (75 per cent compared with 61 per cent).

Feeling positive about education is less common among FE learners with a disability or learning difficulty than among those without (55 per cent, compared with 65 per cent).

As might be expected, indifference was more common among those with no prior qualifications than those who already had a Level 3 or higher qualification (28 per cent versus 10 per cent).

Current feelings about learning and impact of course

Encouragingly, more than four in five young people now feel more positive about learning than when they started their course. However, it should be noted that a significant minority have not experienced this positive shift (Figure 23).

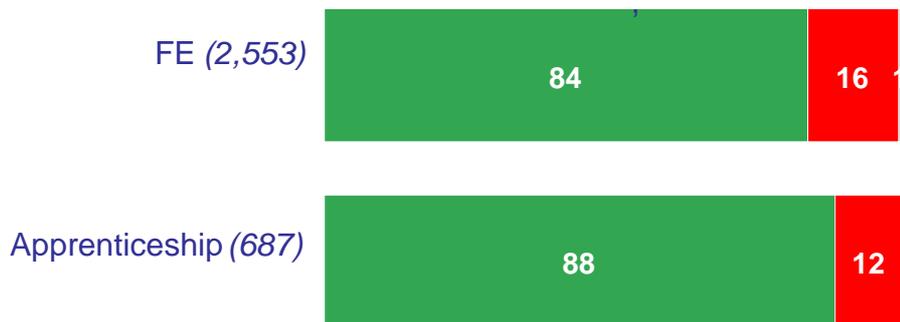
A positive change is most common among Apprentices (88 per cent compared with 84 per cent of FE learners), which is very encouraging as they are comparatively less likely to report positive feelings about education on leaving school.

Figure 23: Change in attitudes to learning as a result of the course

Q Can you tell me whether you agree or disagree with...

I feel more positive about learning than I did when I started

■ % Agree ■ % Disagree ■ % Dont know



Bases in brackets: FE and Apprenticeship learners aged 16 – 18 all wave

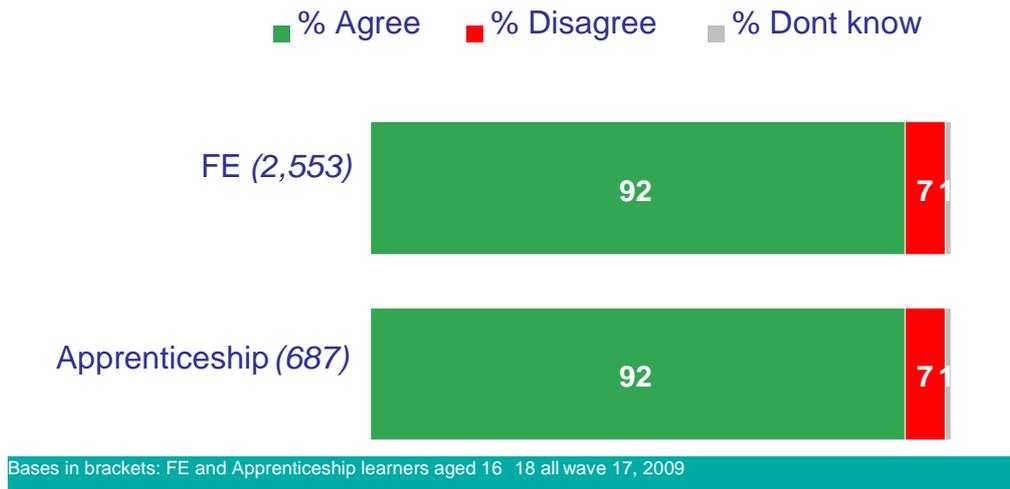
32

This positive change can also be found among FE learners studying towards a qualification below Level 2 (87 per cent compared with 82 per cent of those studying towards Level 3 or higher). Again, this is reassuring as this group of learners is also more likely to report feeling negative or indifferent about education upon leaving school.

Looking further at the impact of the course, nine in ten young people agree that taking part in their course will help their career development, with no differences between learners in FE and Apprentices (Figure 24).

Figure 24: Impact of the course on future career

Q Can you tell me whether you agree or disagree with...
 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



Within FE, male learners in particular believe that taking part in their course will help them move forward in their career (95 per cent compared with 89 per cent for females), reflecting the gender difference observed earlier on ratings of the advice given about what learners can do after the course or training. This viewpoint is also more common among BME learners in FE (95 per cent agree, compared with 92 per cent of white learners).

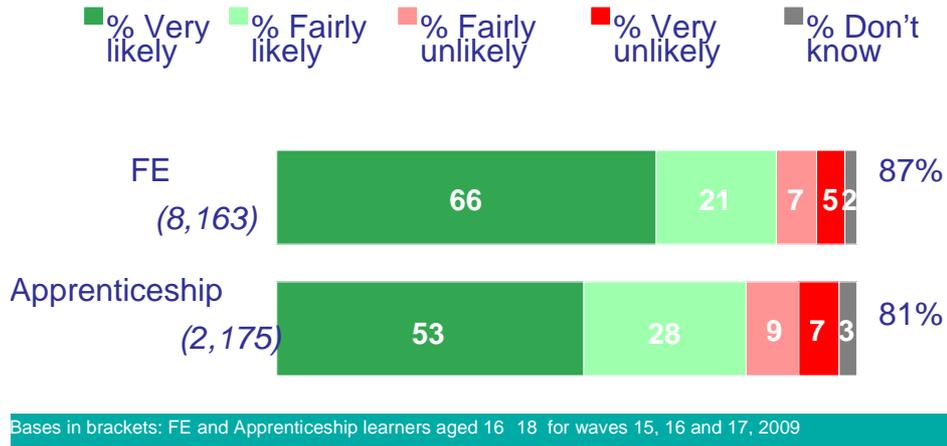
Also among FE learners in particular, the belief that their course will help their career is slightly more widespread among those studying at Level 3 or higher than among those studying at lower levels (94 per cent compared with 88 per cent of those studying at Level 2 or below).

Likelihood of undertaking further learning

Encouragingly, the vast majority of young people plan to undertake further study in the next three years (Figure 25) – as might be expected, levels are higher than among adult learners. However, the proportion of young Apprentices planning to do further learning in the near future is significantly lower than the proportion of young learners in FE, especially among those who feel very likely to do so. This pattern is not specific to young people - similar differences can be observed between adults in FE and adult Apprentices. This finding may reflect a lack of awareness in how Apprentices may progress in their training, especially to Advanced Apprenticeships.

Figure 25: Likelihood of undertaking further learning

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



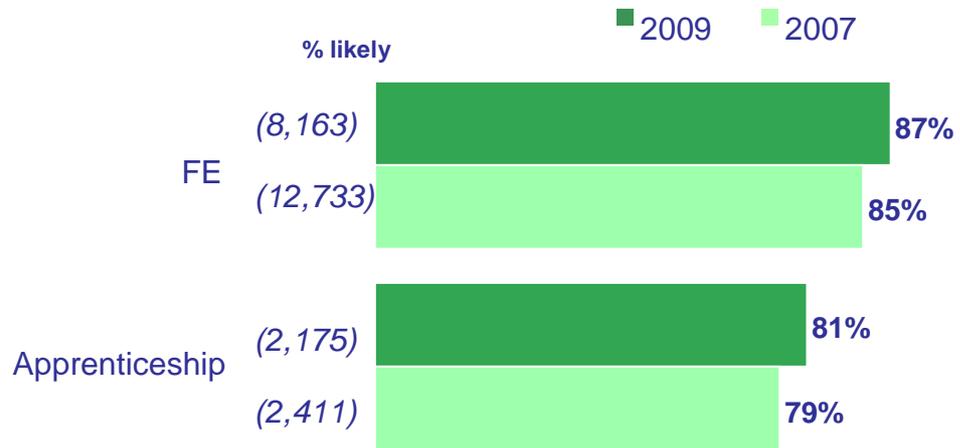
34

Despite their less positive experience on some aspects of their learning, BME learners in FE are more positive about continuing their learning in the near future, with three quarters (76 per cent) saying that they are very likely to do so, compared with just under two thirds (64 per cent) of white learners in FE.

The proportion of both FE learners and Apprentices reporting that they plan to continue their learning in the next three years has increased since 2007 (Figure 26).

Figure 26: Trends on likelihood of undertaking further learning

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



Bases in brackets: FE and Apprenticeship learners aged 16-18 for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009 and for waves 12, 13 and 14, 2007

Early leavers

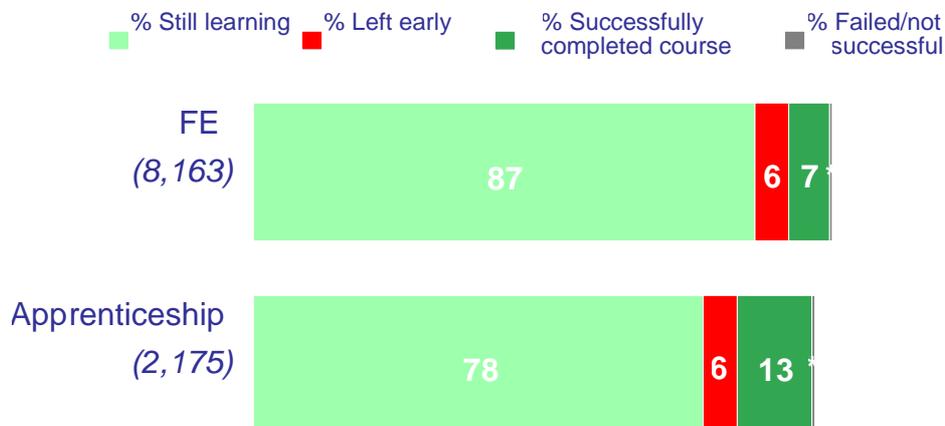
This section focuses on early leavers, including their demographic profile, reasons for leaving early, and whether they sought or received support.

Reasons for leaving early

At the time of the interview, most respondents were still on the course, but six per cent of young people report that they left their course early (Figure 27). This proportion is slightly lower than in 2007 for both groups of learners (7 per cent of young learners in FE and 8 per cent of young Apprentices). However this figure should not be used to derive completion rates, as the survey is not designed for this purpose; rather these are monitored by the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) database.

Figure 27: Proportion who left course early

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 and Apprenticeship learners aged 16–18 for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009

Table 8 examines the profile of early leavers in more detail. Broadly, early leavers have a similar profile to their learning group. In terms of significant differences, early leavers in FE are more likely than all young learners in FE to be white (88 per cent compared with 83 per cent).⁶

⁶ While the profiles may look different due to large differences in percentages, the small base size means that many are not significantly different.

Table 8: Profile of early leavers (weighted)

	Learners in FE		Apprentices	
	All learners	Early leavers	All Apprentices	Early leavers
<i>(Unweighted base in brackets: all respondents)</i>	(8,163)	(482)	(2,175)	(126)
	%	%	%	%
Total				
Gender				
Male	56	56	59	52
Female	44	44	41	48
Ethnicity				
White	83	88	94	92
BME	17	11	6	8
Refused	*	0	*	0
Not known	*	1	*	0
Current level				
Below Level 2	14	23	*	0
Level 2	27	33	73	87
Level 3 or higher	59	43	27	13
Disability	7	9	6	2
Learning difficulty	11	12	10	6

As would be expected, early leavers are more likely than other learners to be negative about their course. Dissatisfaction with learning experience is significantly higher among this group (27 per cent of early leavers in FE and 28 per cent in Apprentices are dissatisfied, compared with 3 per cent and 2 per cent respectively of those still studying). In addition, they are more likely than average to be critical of the training provider (14 per cent of early leavers in FE, and 25 per cent of Apprentice early leavers, compared with 5 per cent and 3 per cent respectively of those still studying).

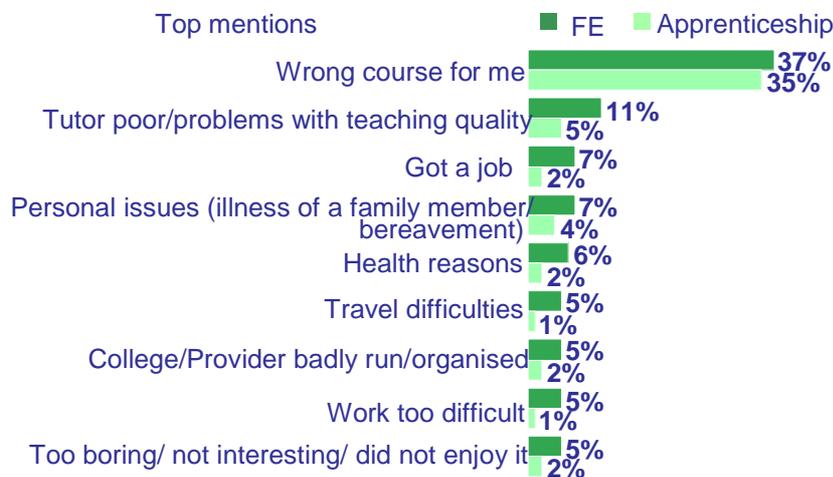
Reasons for leaving early

The reasons given by young people for leaving early can be divided into two broad groups (Figure 28). The first relates to the learning provider and/or course itself – e.g. because learners felt the course was not right for them, the work was too difficult or because they had problems with the tutor or teaching. The second relates to external factors, which are largely beyond the learning providers' control – e.g. family, work, health or other personal issues.

By far, the most common reason for leaving early is that it was the wrong choice of course. Young people are far more likely than adults to mention this reason, suggesting that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on pre-entry advice and guidance to help young people make the right course choice. That said, the majority of young early leavers rate the information they received when choosing a new course as good (79 per cent of young early leavers in FE and 83 per cent of Apprentices), although this is lower than the figures for young people as a whole (90 per cent of learners in FE and 92 per cent of Apprentices).

Figure 28: Reasons for leaving the course early

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



Base: (482) FE learners; (126) Apprenticeship learners, all aged 16-18

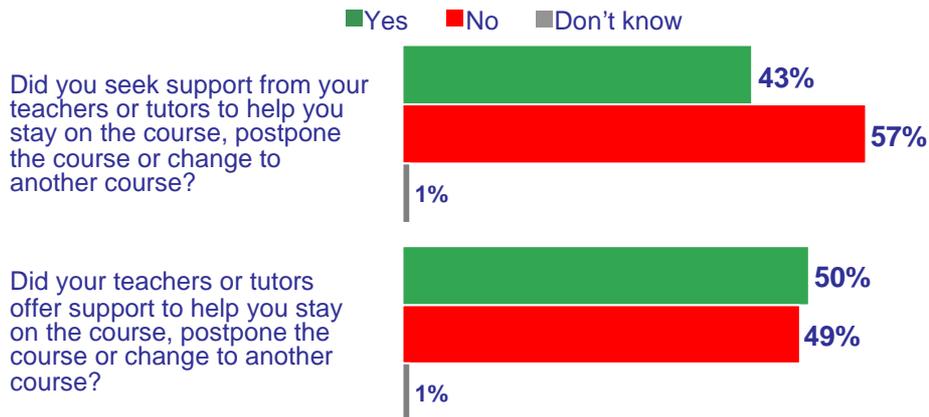
Support for learners thinking of leaving early

Early leavers were asked whether they sought or received support from their teachers or tutors (learners in FE), or from their employer, assessor or trainer (for Apprentices) when they were considering leaving their course. Two thirds of young early leavers in FE, and two in five of early leavers on Apprenticeships, *sought support* before leaving (Figure 29).

Encouragingly, a larger proportion - around half - say they were *offered support* to help them stay on/postpone or change their course, (Figure 30). This means that half were not offered such support.

Figure 29: Support when thinking of leaving early (FE learners)

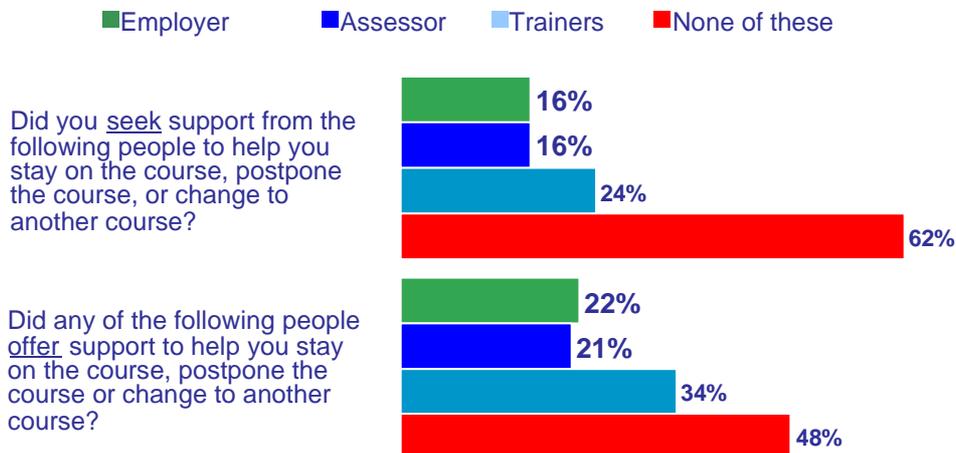
Q *And when you were thinking about leaving the course ... Did you seek support from your teachers or tutors to help you stay on the course, postpone the course or change to another course?*



Base: (482) FE learners aged 16-18 who left early for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009

Figure 30: Support when thinking of leaving early (Apprentices)

Q *And when you were thinking about leaving the course ...*



Bases: (126) Apprentices who left early for waves 15, 16 and 17, 2009

Around two in five early leavers neither sought nor were offered support (38 per cent of learners in FE and 40 per cent of Apprentices), 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, a third of early leavers in FE (34 per cent) and two in five early leavers in Apprenticeships (41 per cent) say more could have been done to help them stay on the course.

© Crown copyright 2010

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/> or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or e-mail: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is also available on our website at <http://www.bis.gov.uk>

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to:

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
1 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET
Tel: 020 7215 5000

If you require this publication in an alternative format, email enquiries@bis.gsi.gov.uk, or call 020 7215 5000.

URN 11/716