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GOOD PRACTICE FROM PROVIDERS IN ADMINISTRATION OF THE LONDON LEARNER SURVEY

Since August 2021, at least 120 providers have been administering the London Learner Survey (the survey). These providers include large FE Colleges, London Boroughs, Institutes of Adult Learning and Independent Training Providers. These constitute providers who receive a regular grant from the GLA as well as organisations who have successfully bid for funding on a competitive basis. Many of these providers work with learners with specialist needs, some deliver very short courses, and increasingly, learning is taking place online or through blended approaches. These are just some of the reasons why administering the survey can be challenging for providers.

It has been clear that some providers have struggled more than others to encourage learners to complete the survey. As a result, there have been a number of webinars and conversations to explore the reasons behind it. This has highlighted various challenges, that have resulted in improvements to the survey over the past four years, this has included:

- **Additional languages:** Translations are reviewed on an annual basis and new languages are added to reflect the changing needs and landscape of London and ASF learners. As a result, the survey is now available in 14 languages.
- **An alternative version:** In the second year of the survey, an alternative version was introduced so that learners with additional needs were able to more effectively engage with the survey. This was expanded further in the third year with the introduction of an online alternative version which saw the number of alternative version responses go from 349 to 1118.
- **90-day lock out:** From the second year onwards, learners have only had to complete the survey a maximum of once every 90 days if they have multiple enrolments, to minimise survey fatigue.
- **Removal of one-day and taster courses:** The requirement for providers to have learners on one day or taster courses was removed, to minimise administrative burden.
- **Responses by campus added to provider dashboards:** Responses to the survey can be seen by campus on the provider dashboard from year 4 onwards to support providers in understanding gaps in completion.

We recognise that there are always likely to be challenges in administering the survey to large cohorts of learners spread across several campuses and monitoring those who have not completed the survey has proven difficult. Some providers, however, have found effective solutions to these challenges which might benefit other providers.

Providers and the GLA have worked together to find solutions and build on lessons learnt about what works well in administering the survey. The content for this document has been produced through various conversations with providers. We thank those who have been generous in sharing their good practice and experience.

This document has four sections:

1. Facilitating Learner Involvement in the Survey

- a. At Enrolment / Induction
- b. Use of Newsletters
- c. In the Classroom
- d. Through Distance learning
- e. Involving Subcontracted provision

2. Championing the Survey

- a. Taking a Whole Institution Approach
- b. Linking the survey into the curriculum

3. Strategies for Learners Who Need Extra Support

- a. Supporting ESOL Learners
- b. Supporting LLDD Learners

4. Resource hub

These contain the insights of providers on their experience of embedding the survey into their systems, and the application of various approaches to meet and exceed the minimum participation rate.

Implementing these good practice tips has proven beneficial for providers facing challenges in administering the survey. This is shown in the increase in responses observed in the baseline survey year on year.

FACILITATING LEARNER INVOLVEMENT IN THE SURVEY

The baseline London Learner Survey must be administered to all groups of ASF-funded learners, including provision delivered by third parties and distance learning.

Although we expect providers to allocate time and support for learners to complete the survey, providers have the flexibility to determine their most effective method of administering the survey.

This section will cover the following:

- Enrolment/ Induction
- Newsletters
- Classroom
- Distance Learning
- Subcontracted Provision

At Enrolment / Induction

Larger providers that set up enrolment centres on site at the start of term, have found that embedding completion of the survey into these procedures has been particularly effective in boosting learner participation. Informing learners about the survey in admission letters has been one way of building awareness of the survey before learners start at the beginning of the academic year. Many providers have also included information about the survey in enrolment packs sent out to learners before their course starts.

As one of the scheduled tasks during enrolment, learners have been allocated time to use computer suites after completing their registration to complete the survey before moving onto the next stage. It has also helped to have staff at the enrolment centres to support learners such as learning assistants, volunteers, or tutors. It is clear from feedback that learners are more likely to complete the survey in full if they have someone to assist them.

Newsletters

Newsletters are an effective tool for delivering the survey as it provides a means to explain the purpose of the survey, its importance in shaping educational experiences, and can offer guidance on completing the survey by addressing any concerns or questions that learners may have. Providers can use newsletters to provide step-by-step instructions, tips for navigating the survey, and troubleshooting advice. By offering comprehensive guidance, newsletters empower learners to navigate the survey process with confidence and ease.

Similar text to the below could be used to explain purpose of the survey:

The London Learner Survey is an important online survey about adult education in and around London. The Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority, who oversee adult education in the area, want to find out what kind of changes happen in peoples' lives while they are studying. The survey asks about why you want to study, your health, your job (if you have one) and how you feel about other things in your life like working, volunteering and spending time with different kinds of people. The survey is hosted by an independent research company, IFF Research.

By taking part in the survey you will:

– help your course provider improve their courses

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- help to improve adult courses for all Londoners
- help make sure that the right courses are available in the right areas, so that all Londoners have access to the help they need to achieve their goals
- help the Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority understand who is taking part in adult education in London, and how it has helped them

The survey takes 10 minutes and comes in different languages. To thank you for taking part you can enter a prize draw to win an iPad!

In the Classroom

Many of the providers who are achieving high levels of participation are administering the survey with learners in classrooms in the early weeks of their course, often with the support of tutors. Whilst this can be difficult to arrange and take up tutor time, feedback has shown that completing the survey in this way was often the only way to ensure that the survey was completed. Tutor support was invaluable in explaining the purpose of the survey which encouraged learners to understand why it is so important and also helped learners feel safe and confident to take part in the survey.

Some providers have made efforts to extend the learners' first induction session to give them time to complete the survey alongside an introduction to their course. It has helped if this can be located in an IT suite to enable the tutor to support the learners to logon and complete the survey online. Tutors also found that their support was welcomed where learners had access to smart phones, and the institution's Wi-Fi, as they could use their phones to complete it.

Creating a fun atmosphere when completing the survey along with clearly explaining its purpose was the key to participation for some providers (including providing food) and this encouraged learners to speak up when help was needed.

Through Distance learning

Many ASF funded learners are taking their course through distance learning which has presented a challenge to administering the survey because it has not always been possible to provide the same level of support compared to classroom-based provision. For learners enrolled in distance learning, an effective approach has been to bring all learners together in one short online session or at the beginning of their first lesson. The survey can then be explained by a tutor in detail, and learners given the opportunity to complete the survey in a similar way to being in a classroom environment.

This worked particularly well where tutors were able to share their screens with learners to take them through the detail of the survey. Using tools within the online classroom environment such as polls, breakout rooms and drawing tools have also been effective in sharing the purpose and importance of completing the survey.

Towards the end of the tutorial, the tutor should individually check with learners to verify if they have completed the survey. Learners should be requested to share their screen to confirm completion. Once it has been verified, learners who have completed the survey may be dismissed from the meeting.

Learners who have not completed the survey during the tutorial session must be reminded of the importance of completing the survey.

Involving Subcontracted provision

Subcontracting can often add a layer of complexity to administering the survey where the provider relies on the subcontracted organisation to ensure that learners complete the survey. To ensure compliance of subcontracted partners with the conditions the ASF Funding Rules, many providers have updated their contractual requirements with their subcontractors to include specific terms relating to the survey.

Communicating regularly with subcontractors to check the status of their participation and sharing vital information has been key to securing completions.

Some training providers have found it useful to include information packs for subcontractors on the survey, including marketing posters provided by IFF and links to online information about the survey. Including the survey on the agenda of established meetings between main providers and subcontractors also can serve as opportunities to share challenges or seek clarification on any aspects of the survey.

CHAMPIONING THE SURVEY

Taking a Whole Institution Approach

One of the most important points of 'what works' has been getting all staff to see the survey as a priority and understanding its importance. Providers often have identified the survey as a strategic priority at the start of the academic year, and participation in the survey has been a regular standing item at leadership meetings. Some providers have appointed an informal Senior Management champion to keep everyone focused on the importance of the survey.

Equipping tutors with the right information at the beginning of term is important to ensure they are well informed to support learners. Holding a briefing session for tutors on the survey at the beginning of the academic year was particularly effective. Other providers shared that designating a lead tutor to champion the survey was a good way to manage the survey at a subject area level.

Regularly raising the survey at weekly tutor meetings, where they cascade information around response rates has really helped to keep tutors motivated. One provider mentioned that administration of the survey is something they may include in future tutor appraisals.

The involvement of staff responsible for management information systems (MIS) was also identified as important as these staff were able to provide insight into the number of eligible learning aims which was needed to understand provider participation rates and how they were changing.

It was clear over the course of the year that the providers who were achieving high participation rates in the survey had identified the survey as a strategic priority and that this was visible throughout the organisation from the leadership down to tutors administering the survey in the class along with support from MIS staff with insights around performance.

Linking the survey into the curriculum

Several providers have now started to include the survey in lesson plans so that it can become part of the curriculum. This approach has been helpful to support learners in understanding specific questions in the survey. It also helped to embed this into classroom learning so that tutors can use their scheduled teaching time more effectively.

The typical areas of curriculum the survey has been linked to by providers are the following:

- Keeping Safe Online & Digital Skills
- Wellbeing & Self Efficacy
- Social Integration
- Learner Voice, Empowerment, and Routes for Change.

Using the videos and resources provided by IFF to present to learners has been effective in developing understanding of the survey. Discussing social integration and the importance of learner voice has provided an interactive way to encourage learners to take part.

Providers have highlighted that informing learners about how their course was funded and the significance of the survey to shape future policy had helped learners understand why it is so important. Providers reported that learners felt empowered in the knowledge that their participation was helping to shape the future direction of adult education and skills.

Other providers have used this as a way of tackling concerns that learners had about providing personal information online and using the completion of the survey as an exercise has provided an opportunity to learn more about this subject. Some providers had used learners' skepticism about providing personal information to discuss issues around data protection online including what to look out for and what to consider suspicious. The assurance provided in the survey around how the learners' data will be used and the detail of who was requesting it (GLA / Mayor of London) were shown to be indicators that it was safe to provide personal data in this instance.

Working with students on an individual basis with the aid of teaching or learning support assistants has provided learners with the time and encouragement needed to complete the survey, ensuring that any queries or concerns raised by learners can be answered in a safe environment.

STRATEGIES FOR LEARNERS WHO NEED EXTRA SUPPORT

Supporting ESOL Learners

Many providers have a large number of ESOL or Basic Skills (English) learners who often have higher support needs, which can be a challenge in supporting them to complete the survey. This includes barriers such as the length of the survey or complexity of the questions and often these learners have lower confidence in their use of English. It has been noted that the survey takes longer for ESOL learners and that they cannot be expected to complete the survey on their own. Sometimes providers have to run courses in local community venues without access to WiFi or PCs and this can make these challenges even greater. Without access to the online survey, providers have used paper copies as a last resort, which can be requested prior to the start of the academic year through IFF Research.

These are some of the ways in which providers have sought to tackle these challenges and increase the participation rate:

- Before administering the survey, tutors identify and pre-teach key vocabulary and terminology that may be encountered in the survey questions

- Offer a comprehensive glossary of key terms used in the survey in both English and the native language(s) of ESOL learners
- Recruiting volunteers with language skills to support with induction process and guide learners in completing the survey
- Allocating additional time for ESOL learners to complete the survey has also proved helpful in allowing tutors to support learners on an individual level
- Clustering ESOL learners that speak the same language into groups to overcome language barriers and provide peer support
- Using volunteers from those past learners who completed the survey last year to guide students and provide extra support
- Tutors have also found that breaking down what the survey is, informing learners that it will not be shared with external organisations or government departments, (like Home Office/Department for Work and Pensions), has been helpful in allaying concerns that some learners have had regarding immigration status.
- Providers have found the IFF resources (listed below) have been helpful in explaining some of the questions to learners and providing clarity

Supporting LLDD Learners

More than 10% of ASF funded learners are classified as with learning disabilities and/or difficulties (LLDD). There is a very wide variety of literacy and comprehension needs among these learners so that some of them are able to complete the online survey although often with additional staff support, but this is not always possible. To make it easier for LLDD learners to access the survey we have launched an online version of the alternative survey for LLDD learners incorporated more pictorial illustrations as well as the alternative version on paper. Learners can choose the alternative version when they first click onto the survey link.

KNOWLEDGE HUB: ESSENTIAL RESOURCES FOR SUCCESS FROM IFF

There are several valuable resources available on request from IFF liaison staff which many providers have found to be helpful. These include:

- **Information sheet** for learners which includes a **personalised QR code** unique to your institution which can be handed out to students
- An [FAQ section](#) on the survey website that can be used by tutors which explains what the survey is about and includes guidance on how to answer potential questions that tutors may receive from learners
- An [animated video](#) which explains what the survey is in student friendly terms and answers some frequently asked questions
- **Posters** which can be displayed in classrooms which include basic information and the **personalised QR Code** for your institution

OTHER FORMATS AND LANGUAGES

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