IFF Research

London Learner Survey Pilot Report

Greater London Authority

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Contents

1 Executive Summary

Introduction and objectives

The Adult Education Budget (AEB) in London was delegated to the Greater London Authority (GLA) from August 2019. The delegated AEB budget gives the Mayor (through the GLA) responsibility for skills provision for learners aged 19+ including Adult and Community Learning, but not apprenticeships or traineeships.

In order to help the GLA understand the effectiveness of AEB spending, the London Learner Survey (LLS) will robustly measure learners' progress against seven outcome priority areas (progression in employment and/or education, increased earnings and better quality work, community involvement / social integration, wellbeing and self-efficacy). This evidence will be used to develop AEB reforms that will ultimately lead to better quality adult education provision. In turn, this will lead to more Londoners being better equipped to participate in society and meet their education and employment goals, to fewer skills gaps for employers and a more productive, resilient, and inclusive economy in the capital.

The overarching objective of the LLS pilot was to test the feasibility of conducting a comprehensive baseline and follow-up survey among AEB-funded learners across London, involving as many AEB providers as possible. The learnings from the pilot will feed into the development of the mainstage survey which is due to be conducted on a continual basis from August 2021. Key aims were to: test the survey questionnaires, explore the most effective way for providers to disseminate the baseline survey, and give providers the opportunity to test their internal processes; and to test response rates across both surveys.

London Learner Survey Pilot Methodology

The pilot baseline survey ran from 19th April 2021 until 18th June 2021 and was administered directly by AEB-funded providers, who disseminated online provider-specific survey links to eligible learners as close as possible to the start of their course.

The pilot follow-up survey ran from 19th April 2021 to 11th June 2021 and was conducted using a sample of learners who had completed their learning aims based on information from the ILR. This approach was taken in order to conduct the pilot within the available timeframe, rather than piloting the baseline first, waiting for five months after the end of the training course, and then contacting the learner for the follow-up survey which is the preferred approach for the mainstage LLS survey.

Pilot survey findings

Baseline pilot survey

Overall, 90% of eligible providers were able to successfully launch the pilot survey during the fieldwork window between April and June 2021.

There was a total of 2,870 completed responses for the baseline pilot survey. Of these, the overwhelming majority, 97%, were completed online, 3% were postal responses and 0.2% were completed by telephone.

While the overall baseline response rate was lower than expected (33%), this was mainly due to the circumstances in which the pilot was run, and there is definite scope for improvement in the mainstage. Furthermore, some individual providers were able to achieve very high response rates (up to 100%). Sharing lessons learned from their approaches will help providers to improve their response rates further.

Higher response rates were achieved by those providers who promoted the survey within classes to at least some extent (45%) and/or as part of the enrolment stage (49%), compared with those who *only* sent out invites by email (19%).

There were also differences in response rates between different provider types. Local Authorities achieved an overall response rate of 45%, compared with 31% among FE Colleges and 37% among Independent Training Providers.

The difference in response rates between the different provider types is likely to be driven by the methods they used to disseminate the survey. A much higher proportion of Local Authorities promoted the survey via tutors in classes, which the pilot showed was the most effective touchpoint; over three-quarters (77%) of Local Authorities did so, compared with 58% of FE Colleges and 57% of ITPs.

The experiences of individual providers were mixed, with a small number finding it challenging to administer the survey. However, the majority were able to successfully disseminate the survey, and most of those providing feedback were broadly happy with the process and the support they had received.

While a handful of questions within the baseline survey had higher levels of drop offs or non-responses, making minor changes to the question wording and ordering, as well as adding more information around the reasons for asking certain questions, should reduce this in the mainstage.

The ILR is the source for the details of the learning that took place at the baseline and will be used to add a range of demographic and geographical information to the survey dataset. This requires a matching process to take place using details submitted by the learners themselves as part of the survey. The pilot found that ILR matching is feasible, with 91% of learners submitting sufficient data to potentially allow for matching.

Follow-up pilot survey

In total 2,477 learners completed the follow-up survey.

The follow-up pilot response rate of 8% was in part reduced by using ILR data as sample, rather than contact details from the baseline survey, which are likely to be better quality and more up to date. In the mainstage, the baseline survey contact details will be used, and learners can be reminded that they completed the baseline as a way to encourage interest in completing the follow-up.

The follow-up pilot survey took place 7 to 9 months after the course was completed, whereas in the mainstage the gap will be only 5 months which will also aid the learner recall both their course and the baseline survey participation. Taking into account all of these factors, we believe it will be feasible to achieve a mainstage response rate of at least 10%, which may rise to 14% in the future.

There was a clear upward trend in response rates by age, from 2.9% among 19- to 20-year-olds, to 14.5% among those aged 65 or over. This trend is apparent in other survey research.

There were no noticeable differences in response rates among certain key groups (ESOL learners, SEND learners (defined using Learning difficulty or disability data)) or based on course length, or type of provision (procured vs. non-procured).

Overall, using telephone interviewing to boost response was highly successful. However, there were limitations of this approach for currently small sub-groups such as the Digital Skills entitlement, or subject areas with a much lower response rate such as Construction, with only a certain level of uplift relative to the online response and / or sample size possible. Targeting telephone interviewing on increasing response among young people would improve the representativeness of the final dataset.

The follow-up survey design was successful and should not require significant changes.

Mainstage London Learner Survey recommendations

Based on the LLS pilot response rates, data quality and provider engagement it is feasible to proceed with the mainstage survey in the 2021/22 Academic Year.

Below is a summary of the recommendations for the mainstage LLS survey. A full list of all mainstage recommendations can also be found in Appendix B.

Baseline LLS survey recommendations

- Update the questionnaire to add further guidance and reassurance for learners, particularly for questions asking for student number and pay; and reorder some of the questions. Overall, review the wording of questions, guidance text and answer options where the pilot recorded higher levels of drop-outs or questions leading to a lack of response.

- Emphasise to providers the importance of tutor involvement in disseminating the survey, and revise materials to make them more user-friendly and engaging for tutors, as well as creating some additional materials to help them support learners, such as a simple how-to guide on completing the survey.

- Improve accessibility by translating the full survey into an additional language (Arabic), and reminding providers via the training sessions and materials about the different survey modes available (paper, telephone) and how learners can request these.

- Make it easier for providers to track and improve their response rates by providing a live dashboard to monitor responses, and by giving additional guidance on issuing reminder emails.

Follow up LLS survey recommendations

- Where learners have completed multiple learning aims within a two-week period, they will only be asked to complete the follow-up survey once. Learning aims may be prioritised based their level of funding, number of learning hours, or qualification level.

- Send multiple reminder emails to learners, given the potential for a large impact on response rates; also add the learner's own description of their course to all email communications, to aid recall of the learning course.

2   Introduction and Pilot Methodology

Background and purpose of pilot

2.1   The Adult Education Budget (AEB) in London was delegated to the Greater London Authority (GLA) from August 2019. The delegated AEB budget gives the Mayor (through the GLA) responsibility for skills provision for learners aged 19+ including Adult and Community Learning, but not apprenticeships or traineeships.

2.2   The GLA wishes to understand the effectiveness of AEB spending. Measuring the economic and social outcomes of engagement in adult education in London will provide evidence that will feed directly into the development of reforms that ultimately lead to better quality adult education provision. In turn this will lead to more Londoners being better equipped to participate in society and meet their goals, to fewer skills gaps for employers and a more productive, resilient, and inclusive economy in the capital.

2.3   There are substantial gaps in the destination data being collected by providers via the ILR. The London Learner Survey (LLS) will fill those gaps and provide valuable information on the outcomes of AEB learning. The survey will robustly measure learners' progress against seven outcome priority areas (progression in employment and/or education, increased earnings and better quality work, community involvement/ social integration, wellbeing, and self-efficacy). It is essential that the learner survey represents the diverse provider and learner population, and that it is engaging and accessible for all. In order to provide evidence to support the Mayor in delivering against the objective of increasing the number and diversity of adult learners in London, it is imperative that the survey demonstrates a real commitment to including harder-to-reach groups. Prior to the LLS pilot, the GLA consulted with providers and conducted a feasibility testing exercise for the survey.

2.4   The overarching objective of the pilot was to test the feasibility of conducting a comprehensive baseline and follow-up survey among AEB-funded learners across London, involving as many providers as possible. Key aims of the pilot were to:

- Test the survey questionnaires among a large volume of learners, in terms of data quality – and identify improvements for the mainstage.

- Explore the most effective ways to disseminate the survey among learners at the baseline stage, and the most effective reminder strategies at the follow-up stage.

- Build provider engagement in administering the baseline survey by providing them with information, materials, and support – and identify ways this could be enhanced for the mainstage.

- Allow providers to test out their own internal processes for administering the baseline, in advance of the mainstage.

- Test assumptions about the estimated response rates to the baseline and follow-up surveys (bearing in mind there are differences to the mainstage approach, detailed later in the report).

- Inform the decision about the feasibility of conducting the mainstage, in terms of whether it would generate sufficient responses across the desired breadth of subgroups for analysis.

2.5   This report addresses these aims, drawing conclusions about anticipated response rates and making recommendations to enhance the full rollout of the LLS from August 2021.

2.6   The report is structured as follows:

- The Executive Summary is a brief summary of the report and includes key recommendations.

- Chapter 2 provides an introduction and summarises the pilot baseline and follow-up survey methodologies, including any differences to the mainstage.

- Chapter 3 details issues arising from the operation of the baseline survey pilot (administered by providers) including response rates, questionnaire considerations, provider feedback on the process and on the materials/ support offered.

- Chapter 4 details outcomes of and projections for the ILR sampling and matching process which is a key link between the baseline and follow-up surveys.

- Chapter 5 focuses on the follow-up survey (administered directly by IFF Research) including questionnaire considerations, response rates, and implications for the mainstage fieldwork and analysis.

2.7   Detailed recommendations are made throughout each chapter. A summary of all recommendations is presented in Appendix B of this report.

Methodology: pilot baseline survey

2.8   The pilot baseline survey was administered directly by GLA AEB-funded providers, who disseminated their unique survey links to eligible learners at the start of their course. The survey was hosted by IFF Research, who also created survey communication materials for providers to use, and training and instructions on how to administer the survey.

2.9   For the mainstage, providers will be expected to disseminate the survey to all of their eligible GLA AEB-funded learners; however, due to provider concerns and the impact of COVID-19, the GLA agreed with providers to distribute the pilot baseline survey to learners on selected courses only. Providers were given guidelines on the number and types of courses to select, to ensure a spread of different types and levels of learners were invited to complete the survey.

2.10 The survey became available for distribution from 19th April 2021; however, it was then up to each individual provider to distribute the survey links and information as and when their selected eligible learners began their courses (this could be any time between 19th April and 18th June, which was the end of the fieldwork period). The aim was for all learners to be instructed to complete the survey within the first three weeks of their course. However, if a provider had no eligible learners starting in that period, for the pilot only they could invite learners who started courses as far back as January (in which case the three-week window would not apply).

2.11 The baseline survey invites were distributed by providers to a selection of learners between 19th April and 18th June, at or near the beginning of their course, depending on course start dates. Therefore, levels of response at each provider may be based on differing total fieldwork periods, as some were only able to launch relatively late within the fieldwork window.

Differences to proposed mainstage methodology / caveats

2.12 As mentioned above, for the mainstage, all GLA AEB-funded learners will be invited to take the survey; this will mean the volume of invites will be far larger than for the pilot exercise. Therefore, the pilot response rates need to be treated with some caution as many conditions will be different in the mainstage:

- The increased volume could increase the difficulty of administering the pilot for some providers.

- At the same time, providers will be able to make more use of marketing materials such as posters and social media engagement when they are inviting all of their GLA learners to take the survey, rather than a small subset. Posters and website communications could be seen by all learners, not just the target subset, so many providers chose not to use them during the pilot to avoid any confusion.

- Many providers were still operating on an entirely or largely remote basis during the pilot fieldwork period, which made some of the dissemination materials (e.g. posters) unsuitable, and also could make it more difficult for tutors to offer help with the survey. It is hoped that by the point mainstage fieldwork begins, most or all providers will be able to return to in-person delivery and will therefore have more opportunities to engage their learners in the survey.

- Fieldwork will be running continuously, therefore the issue of learners' course start dates occurring close to the end of fieldwork, as happened in some cases in the pilot, will not be an issue.

Methodology: pilot follow-up survey

Survey approach

2.13 While the mainstage survey will be a rolling survey of learners who previously completed the baseline survey, five months after completing their course, for the pilot we contacted a fresh sample of completed learners drawn from the ILR. This approach was taken in order to complete the pilot within the timeframe available.

2.14 For this purpose, the sample was divided into 'blocs' for survey based on completion dates. The survey window has to be time-limited for each bloc in order to ensure outcomes are collected at similar timepoints, for learners completing five months previously. For the pilot, each bloc took the same length of time to survey but consisted of learning aims completed over a longer period than would be the case in the mainstage (covering in total the period from 1st July to 6th October 2020). This was done due to seasonality in learning patterns, in order to thoroughly pilot the survey with a range of types of learner and types of learning aim.

2.15   Individual learners who had completed more than one learning aim within the relevant period were each contacted about up to three of these learning aims. Due to the number of learners in the first 'bloc,' a random sample were contacted rather than a census approach.

2.16   The pilot survey was administered in three 'blocs.' Initially, each bloc received the online survey email and reminder over a two-week period. After this, each bloc was then called for telephone interviews over another two-week period, targeting specific sub-groups.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.1 Pilot follow-up survey schedule**

	Bloc 1	Bloc 2	Bloc 3
Learning completion dates eligible	01/07/20 to 28/07/20	29/07/20 to 09/09/20	10/09/20 to 06/10/20
Online survey window	19/04/21 to 16/05/21	03/05/21 to 30/05/21	17/05/21 to 13/06/21
Telephone interview window	03/05/21 to 16/05/21	17/05/21 to 30/05/21	31/05/21 to 13/06/21
Length of time between learning completion and interview	Approximately 9 months	Approximately 8 months	Approximately 7.5 months
Number of learners eligible	31,546	7,265	8,091
Number of learners contacted	15,773	7,265	8,091
Number of learning aims included	20,043	9,229	9,664

3   Baseline survey

Proportion of providers able to successfully disseminate the survey

3.1   Of the starting population of 102 providers, three confirmed they could not take part in the pilot due to having no GLA AEB-funded learners starting their courses within the pilot survey window. This left an eligible population of 99 providers who could have taken part in the pilot. Of these, two refused to take part due to being too busy or having staffing issues, while one did not respond to any of the pilot communications (either by email or phone) and is therefore assumed to have not participated in the pilot.

3.2   Of the remaining 96 providers, 89 received completes from their learners; a further three confirmed they had invited learners to take the survey but did not receive any completes. These providers were not sure why none of their learners completed, but in at least two of these cases only email links were sent with no tutor engagement, which the pilot found to be less effective (as discussed in the response rates section below). All three of these providers had invited relatively low numbers (two invited around 20, and one invited 5). The remaining four providers had indicated that they would participate in the pilot, but did not receive any completes, and did not confirm if they had actually invited any of their learners.

3.3   Therefore overall, **90% of eligible providers were able to successfully launch** the pilot survey during the pilot fieldwork window.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.2 Proportion of providers participating in the baseline pilot**

	No. of providers
Total starting population:	*102*
Ineligible providers (no GLA AEB-funded learners)	*3*
Total eligible population	**99**
Confirmed launch and received completes	89
Confirmed launch but received no completes	3
Confirmed participation, received no completes	4
Refused / no contact	3

Baseline Survey response rates

Limitations to calculating an overall baseline response rate

3.4   Due to the nature of the baseline survey, which is disseminated by providers as their learners begin courses, we were only able to calculate a response rate in cases where the provider had informed us of how many learners they invited in total to take the survey. In some cases, we had completed surveys from learners from specific providers, but as those providers had not informed us of the total number of invites sent, we could not calculate the level of response these completes represented.

3.5 In total, 2,870 baseline survey completes were received across 89 providers. However, at the point of writing, only 74 providers had confirmed the number of survey invites sent (some of whom had not received any completes); therefore, all response rate calculations will be based on this subgroup of 74, who accounted for a total of **2,483** baseline survey completes.

At overall level and by provider size and type

**Total number of completes (among providers where invites are known)**

3.6 The final overall response rate (taking the total number of completes and dividing this by the total number of invites sent among providers who have informed us of this number) was **33%,** calculated as follows:

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.3 Overall baseline response rate**

Base = all providers who informed us of number of invites	Total invites sent	Total completes	Overall response rate	Average response rate (mean of individual %s)
74	7,560	2,483	**33%**	**39%**

3.7 Due to the survey being an open link, it is possible that individual learners could have completed the survey multiple times; as this would be valid if they are taking more than one course, we have not excluded any completes with duplicate student numbers or personal information. For the sake of the response rate calculations, we have assumed that where learners were registered on more than one valid course, they would also have been invited more than once. Based on analysis by student number, 53 individuals took the baseline survey more than once – in 52 cases, the learner took the survey twice, while one learner took the survey four times.

3.8 Response rates for individual providers ranged from 2% (at one provider) to 100% (at two providers), while three providers had zero responses. The mean response rate (that is, the average of the individual response rates achieved by each of these 74 providers) was **39%.** The full range of response rates achieved is shown in **Figure** Error! No text of specified style in document.**.1**.

Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.**.1 Spread of individual provider response rates**
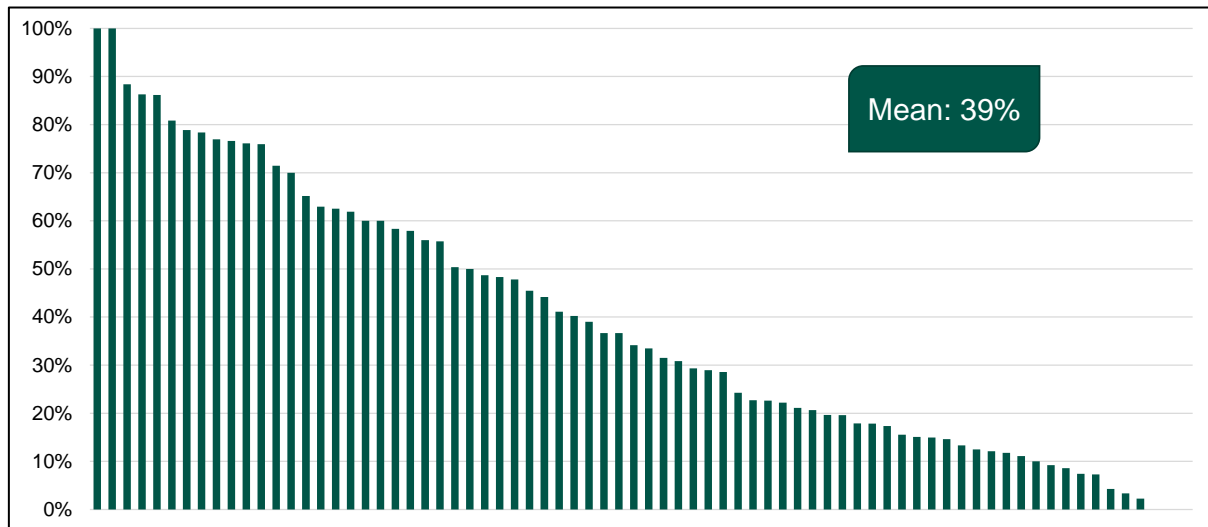
3.9   This level of response was below the level we would ideally be looking for in the mainstage baseline survey (in order to ensure adequate base sizes for meaningful analysis of sub-groups at the follow-up stage). In our original proposals we based our calculations on a response rate of 75%, with the acknowledgement that this is clearly an ambitious target which few research surveys achieve except where surveys are mandatory. We believe that a response rate of 50% or higher would still be sufficient for the GLA's requirements. In total, 26 out of the 74 providers (35%) achieved a response rate of 50% or higher, while 12 (16%) achieved a response rate of 75% or above. However, as discussed in the Provider Experiences and Feedback section below, we believe that if all providers are able to implement the dissemination methods used by those with the highest response rates, and as the survey becomes more embedded over time, it should be possible for most providers to reach these ideal response levels.

Differences by methods of dissemination

3.10   Among providers who informed us about the touchpoints they used to distribute the survey, higher response rates were achieved by those who included the survey within classes to at least some extent (45%) and/or as part of the enrolment stage (49%) than those who only sent out invites by email (19%). For the mainstage it will be important to ensure that all providers promote the survey to learners within classes and other face-to-face settings, as well as sending invites and reminders by email.

> **Recommendations:**
> A.   Include evidence of the impact that tutor involvement has on response rates in the mainstage provider training sessions; promote this as a key method of dissemination. Make training materials user-friendly for tutors to increase tutor buy-in.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.4 Baseline response rates by touchpoints used**

Touchpoint used	Base = all providers who informed us of number of invites	Total invites sent	Total completes	Overall response rate	Average response rate (mean of individual %s)
Email only	21	3,331	638	**19%**	**25%**
At enrolment*	13	996	484	**49%**	**44%**
In class*	49	3,990	1,804	**45%**	**47%**

Note that all but two providers who included the survey within their enrolment package also disseminated the survey via class tutors, so there is higher overlap between these groups.

3.11   The number of touchpoints used had only a slight impact, with providers using two or more touchpoints (base=39) achieving an average response rate of 42%, compared with an average of 38% among those using only one touchpoint. It therefore seems that using the right mode of dissemination is more critical than using a variety of modes.

Differences by provider type

3.12   There are also considerable differences in response rates between different provider types, with Local Authorities achieving an overall response rate of 45%, compared with 31% among FE Colleges and 37% among Independent Training Providers (ITPs) (though note this response rate excludes a single provider with the lowest response rate, who would otherwise heavily influence the average; including that provider would give an overall response rate of 18% for that group).

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.5 Baseline response rates by provider type**

Type*	Base = all providers who informed us of number of invites*	Total invites sent	Total completes	Overall response rate	Average response rate (mean of individual %s)
College	26	2,838	881	31%	32%
Local Authority	30	2,471	1,106	45%	49%
Independent Training Provider**	13	904	334	37%	33%

Note 4 providers were listed as being an 'other' type and are not shown here due to the low base size of that group.

**These figures for ITPs exclude one outlier with a very low response rate of 2%, but where a high number of invites were sent (1,067), leading to that provider having a disproportionate impact on the overall average for the group. Including that ITP would give an overall response rate of 18% for the ITP group, with an average response rate across the ITPs of 31%.*

3.13   Colleges had the greatest spread of individual response rates, ranging from two providers with a rate of 100% down to two with rates of 0%. While no Local Authorities achieved the highest possible response rate, several did achieve rates above 70%, and the lowest response rate achieved was 9%; these factors combine to give them the highest average rate. The highest rate achieved by an ITP was 70%, and the lowest was 2%, as shown in **Figure** Error! No text of specified style in document.**.2** below.

Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.**.2 Spread of individual provider response rates by provider type**
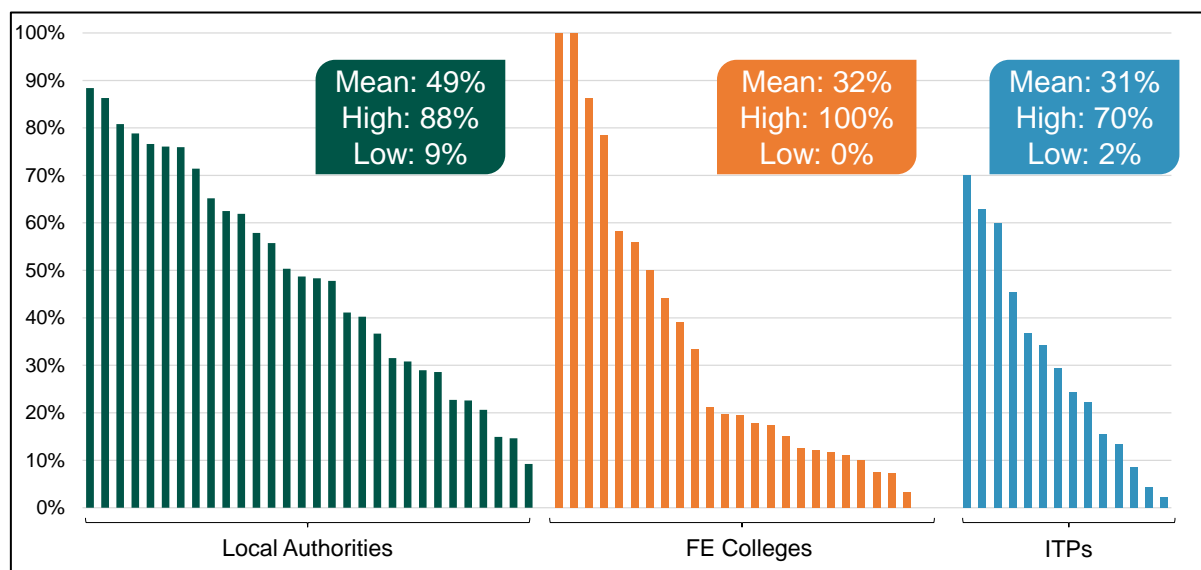
3.14 The difference in response rates between provider types was likely to be driven by the methods they used to disseminate the survey, with Local Authorities much more likely to have promoted the survey via tutors in classes, which the pilot has shown to be the most effective touchpoint. Over three-quarters (77%) of Local Authorities disseminated the survey through tutors, compared with 58% of FE Colleges and 57% of ITPs.

3.15 This is borne out by looking at average response rates split by method of dissemination within each provider type: notably higher response rates were achieved for each type among those that used any element of classroom or tutor dissemination, compared with those who did not, as shown in Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.6** below.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.6 Average response rates by provider type and method of dissemination**

		No classroom dissemination	Any classroom dissemination	Total
	Base	*21*	*49*	*70*
Local Authorities	*30*	31%	55%	**49%**
Colleges	*26*	16%	40%	**32%**
ITPs	*14*	22%	37%	**31%**
Total	*70*	**22%**	**47%**	**39%**

Baseline survey response modes

3.16 While the survey was designed to be primarily an online survey, learners also had the option to complete a paper survey, or to request a call back to complete the survey by telephone, although these options were only taken up by small proportions of learners, as shown in **Table** Error! No text of specified style in document.**.7** below. Just four per cent of all completes were submitted on paper, while less than one per cent were conducted by telephone.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document..**7 Responses by completion mode**

		% of total responses	% of total invites
Total invites	**7,560**	*N/A*	
Total completes	**2,483**		
Online completes	2,390	96%	32%
Paper completes	87*	4%	1%
Telephone completes	6	0.2%	0.1%
Online via QR code	*128*	*5%*	*2%*

*Note one provider received 23 paper completes ahead of the 18th June deadline, however, was not able to post them to IFF in time for them to be entered into the survey system for analysis. We have therefore included them in this response rates analysis, but they are not included in the survey response patterns analysis in the section below.

3.17 Some of the survey materials supplied to providers (the poster and the information leaflet) included a QR code which learners could scan using a smartphone in order to access the survey. This method of accessing the survey accounted for 5% of all responses, and 2% of all invites issued. However, as many providers were not able to use those particular materials due to the pandemic situation, we would expect this number to increase during mainstage fieldwork (particularly as the pandemic has also generally increased awareness and use of QR codes).

Questionnaire outcomes

3.18 Between 19th April and 18th June, there were a total of **2,870 completed responses** for the baseline pilot survey, including completes for providers who did not provide information on the number of invites sent (and who were therefore excluded from the analysis in the previous section). Of these, 76 were postal responses, 7 were telephone responses and 2,787 were completed online.

Completes by language

3.19 The majority (98%) of survey completes were completed in English, with small numbers undertaken in Polish, Turkish, Bengali, Tamil and Gujarati (see **Table** Error! No text of specified style in document..**8** overleaf). All of the non-English language completes were undertaken online, aside from the three completes in Arabic which were conducted over the telephone with Arabic speaking interviewers.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document..**8 Baseline completes by language**

Language	Number of completes	Per cent of total
English	2,807	97.8%
Polish	22	0.8%
Turkish	21	0.7%
Bengali	8	0.3%
Tamil	7	0.2%
Arabic	3	0.1%

Gujarati	2	0.1%

Baseline telephone call back requests

3.20 Learners could request a call back by telephone if they felt unable to complete the survey online; they could request this call back to be in in English or one of the 10 languages the survey introduction was provided in (as well as the option to enter an 'other' language request). Learners were also asked to enter a reason for the request.

3.21 During the pilot fieldwork period, we received 41 telephone call back requests (excluding 5 duplicates). Of these, 19 requested the call in English; however, based on the reasons given (usually a phone number, or text in another language, or text to the effect that they could not speak English) this may primarily relate to those learners having insufficient English to understand the form. Going by the names given, these may have been native speakers of Farsi (3), Chinese (1), Ukrainian/Russian/Bulgarian (3), Lithuanian (1), Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian (1), and Pashto (1) with the remainder unidentifiable.

3.22 The most commonly directly requested languages were Arabic (7), Portuguese (6) and Urdu (5). No disability issues were mentioned.

3.23 Of the 41 total requests, our interviewing team were able to contact and complete interviews with 7 respondents (17% of total requests). We believe it will be possible to increase the proportion reached during mainstage due to the efficiencies of having larger volumes.

Drop off rates throughout survey (all responses minus postal)

3.24 Drop off rates throughout the survey were calculated based on the data that was collected for all entrants to the online survey and the seven telephone respondents. It does not include data from the 76 postal completes; therefore, the total number of completes given in this analysis (2,794) is slightly lower than the overall total of 2,870.

3.25 As noted earlier, as the baseline survey was an open link (unless learners requested an email with a unique link to be sent to them), it is possible that an individual learner could have started, exited and re-started the survey multiple times; as such, the total number of survey entrants given below may be higher than the number of individuals who entered the survey. However, there is no way to fully distinguish these cases (as many did not give any identifying information), and we believe it is valuable to analyse all cases if some individuals did have multiple failed starts (as the drop off points will still indicate where learners most encountered problems).

3.26 7,933 respondents entered the online or CATI survey, and 2,794 completed the survey – a total completion rate of 35.2%. After a high drop-out rate between sections S (Screener), A (Introduction) and B (Demographics), the number of dropouts stabilised. Throughout the rest of the survey, only a small number of respondents dropped out at each question.

3.27 Of the 7,933 who entered the survey, 4,855 selected a language at the landing page (S1a). This was an immediate drop off rate of 38.8%. A further 15.4% dropped off between the landing page and section A (Introduction), and 15.6% dropped off between section A and section B (Demographics). In total, 56.3% of potential respondents (4,467 out of 7,933) who entered the survey dropped out before section B in which we asked about demographics.

3.28   In section B (Demographics), the drop off rate declined but was still significant – 15.6% at B1 (student number) and 8.8% at B2 (personal details). In total, 22.5% of respondents (925 out of 4108) dropped out at this section.

3.29   The combination of sections A (Introduction) and B (Demographics) may be too long and difficult to include at the start of the survey. They require the respondent to read a large amount of text and to manually enter information that they may not have to hand.

> **Recommendations:**
> B.   Move some of the questions in Section B (those asking for learner contact details) to the end of the survey, so the start of the survey is less difficult for learners to complete.

3.30   In section D (Employment History), the effect of the routing on drop off rates was negligible. Those who were in employment were asked a series of additional questions related to their work and pay. Of the 965 who were employed, 938 answered the final question in this series of routed questions (D15). This is a cumulative drop off rate of 2.8% across 10 questions. The total drop-off between sections D (Employment History) and E (Wellbeing) was 1%.

3.31   The only outlier regarding the overall trend was the 8.4% drop off at H2, in which respondents were asked how often they volunteered. One possible explanation for this is that the wording of the answer options did not reflect the way in which people actually think about the frequency of their volunteering and could be particularly confusing for speakers of English as a second language. This is particularly the case for codes 2-5:

ASK IF VOLUNTEER (H1=1 OR 2)

H2   Over the last 12 months, how often have you done any voluntary work?
READ OUT. SINGLE CODE.

At least once a week	1	
Less often than once a week, but at least once a month	2	
Less often than once a month, but at least once every 2 months (6 times in the past 12 months)	3	
2 to 5 times in the past 12 months	4	
Once in the past 12 months	5	
Don't know	7	
Prefer not to say	8	

3.32   We would therefore suggest reviewing the wording of these answer options in the mainstage survey, to simplify the language and better reflect how learners might think about their volunteering. Suggested alternate wording could be:

Over the last 12 months, how often have you done any voluntary work?

- At least once a week

- Less often than once a week, but at least once a month

- Less often than once a month, but at least once every 2 months

- Twice in the past 12 months

- Once in the past 12 months

3.33 Although this will also depend on whether the current wording is necessary in order for comparison with a counterfactual source.

> **Recommendations:**
> C. Change wording at question H2 on frequency of volunteering to make it more accessible unless current wording is needed for comparison purposes.

Drop offs by language selected at the landing page (S1a)

3.34 4,920 learners selected a language option at the landing page (S1a); of these, the vast majority (94%) selected 'English', with Arabic the second most popular language choice (1%). **Table** Error! No text of specified style in document..**9** below shows the total number of respondents selecting each language at S1a, and the number of those who then went on to complete the full survey. Languages shaded in green were not available in full translation; only the initial information page and options for arranging a telephone call back were translated.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document..**9 Baseline survey drop off rate by language selected at S1a**

Language	Number initially selected	Number of full completes	Number failing to complete per language	Drop off rate (% not completing after selecting language)
English	4,607	2,810	1,797	39%
Arabic	64	0*	64	100%
Bengali	50	8	42	84%
Polish	46	22	24	52%
Tamil	43	7	36	84%
Turkish	33	21	12	36%
Portuguese	33	0	33	100%
Urdu	19	0	19	100%
Somali	10	0	10	100%
Punjabi	9	0	9	100%
Gujarati	6	2	4	67%
Total non-English	313	60	253	80%
Non-English (translation available)	178	60	118	66%
Non-English (no translation available)	135	0	135	100%

Note the 3 respondents who completed in Arabic over the phone all selected 'English' at S1a, before requesting Arabic at question A3 when requesting their telephone call back; no learners who selected Arabic at S1a went on to complete the survey.

3.35 Overall, the drop off rate was much higher for those selecting a non-English language at S1a – 39% of respondents who selected English at S1a failed to complete, compared with 81% of those who selected a language other than English. However, the availability of a full translation clearly had an impact: for languages without a full translation, 100% of potential respondents selecting those languages at S1a did not go on to complete the survey; this compares to 66% where the full translation was available. For this reason, if there is budget available, we would suggest that for the mainstage the survey is fully translated into Arabic, as this was the most common non-English language requested.

> **Recommendations:**
> D. As Arabic was the most requested language, and as drop-off rates are higher for languages without a full translation, we recommend translating the full survey into Arabic for the mainstage.

3.36 The majority of the 253 respondents who selected a non-English language at S1a but then did not go on to complete the survey, dropped out within the first few questions, with nearly half exiting the survey after S1a itself, and over two-fifths of the remainder dropping off by question B1 (student number and personal information). There were also high levels of drop offs at questions B2 (contact details) and C1 (reason for doing the course).

3.37 After this, levels of drop offs remained fairly low, with only a handful dropping out after this point, at various questions. We would therefore suggest that the majority of the questionnaire is working well for respondents accessing the translations.

Non-responses (Completes online vs postal)

3.38 'Non-responses' are those where the respondent answered 'Don't know', 'Prefer not to say', or where they provided no response at all. The data presented here is split by postal responses and online / CATI responses as well as being shown at the overall level. Please note, percentages for the postal responses fluctuate more widely due to the low overall base size (n=76); as such, this data should be treated as directional.

3.39 Overall, by far the highest rate of 'Don't know' responses occurred at B1 where 28.9% of respondents did not know their student number. Combined with the 5.5% who preferred not to answer, more than a third of respondents did not provide their student number. We discuss the implications of this for the follow-up survey in the next chapter. Interestingly, learners from providers that indicated they had disseminated the survey via tutors in the classroom were *more* likely to answer Don't Know (34.4%); this suggests that for the mainstage it will be crucial to ensure that tutors understand why we ask for the student number and why it is important for the success of the follow-up survey.

> **Recommendations:**
> E. Provide additional guidance in the survey to help learners find their student number, and to explain why we are asking for it; emphasize to providers and tutors how important this

> number is for the success of the follow-up data, and ask tutors to help and encourage their learners to fill this in.

3.40 The average refusal rate for questions in section D was 8.9%, this is more than double the average refusal rate of the next highest section, E, which is 4.2%. There was a particularly high refusal rate at D3 – 29.8% – where respondents were asked about how much they are paid. A possible explanation for this is that respondents were simply unwilling to share this personal information; however, it may have been difficult for them answer to answer in 'usual' terms as the answer options required.

3.41 The question asking respondents if they are paid £10.85 or more an hour, before tax (D15) has the second highest refusal rate, at 13.9%. Providing further information around why we are asking for this information, and reassurances around the anonymity of the data, could help to lower the refusal rates at these questions, which are key baseline measures for comparisons with outcomes on pay increase and progression in the follow-up survey. It is also reassuring that learners were using the 'don't know' and 'prefer not to say' options rather than dropping out of the survey at that point.

Recommendations:
F. Provide further information around why we are asking for pay information, both as explanatory text within the survey and within learner-facing materials such as the learner website. We will also consider the question wording and answer options to see if the language can be made clearer for learners.

Non-response by language

3.42 In this section we look at non-response data split by those who completed the survey in English against those who completed in another language. As with the postal cohort above, percentages for the non-English language responses fluctuate more widely due to the low overall base size (n=63); as such, this data should be treated as directional.

3.43 On average, overall, those completing in languages other than English gave a similar proportion of 'Don't know' and 'Prefer not to say' responses throughout the survey as those completing in English (4.6% and 4.4% respectively said 'Don't know', and 5.5% and 4.8% respectively said 'Prefer not to say').

3.44 Looking at individual questions, those completing in non-English languages were more likely to answer 'Don't know' or 'Refused' at D10 ("Why are you dissatisfied with your work?"), D14 ("In your main job, are you employed on a zero-hours contract?") and D15 ("Does your main job pay £10.85 or more an hour, before tax?"). They were also more likely to respond 'Don't know' at D3 ("How much are you paid before tax?"), although the proportion answering 'prefer not to say' was in line with the English language cohort. These higher levels of non-response among the non-English language group could be related to these learners having a higher level of uncertainty around their work and working conditions.

Survey completion times (Completes minus postal)

3.45 The survey was designed to take around 10 minutes to complete. By comparing the start times and finish times registered in the survey system when learners submitted their responses, we can calculate the length of time it took to complete, as well as the length of time taken to go through each individual survey section.

3.46 As learners could request a unique link to be sent to them which would allow them to complete the survey in more than one sitting, the start and finish times registered within the system do not necessarily reflect the amount of time actually taken to complete the survey (as the system will not log if a learner exited the survey and re-entered later on). Therefore, when analysing average completion times, we have excluded the more extreme outliers which were likely to be learners that paused the survey partway through: online survey responses with an interval of over 6 hours between the start and finish time (including intervals of more 24 hours). This provided a total of 2,820 completes on which average response times were calculated.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.10 Mean and median baseline survey completion times by section**

	Online survey	
	Mean	Median
Screener / Section A	07:14	03:51
Section B (Demographics)	05:24	03:06
Section C (Aims)	01:00	00:34
Section D (Employment & Pay) (all)	01:51	00:33
Section D (Employment & Pay) (employed n=730)	04:37	03:01
Section E (Well-being)	02:21	01:18
Section F (Self-efficacy)	02:28	01:22
Section G (Social integration)	03:06	01:48
Section H (Volunteering)	00:32	00:13
Total time to complete survey	**19:23**	**12:06**
Base (excluding outliers)	2,820	

Source: IFF survey statistics

3.47 On average, it took respondents 19 minutes and 23 seconds to complete the survey. This was significantly longer than the estimated timing of 10 minutes for the survey. However, it should be noted that the average will be affected by those who took the survey during multiple sittings. For this reason, the median time to complete the survey, which was 12 minutes and 6 seconds, is probably a more accurate reflection of the actual time taken to complete for the majority of learners.

3.48 It should also be noted that a small number of learners (13) recorded extremely fast times (less than two minutes), which were likely to be lower quality (for example, with higher levels of 'Don't know' or 'Prefer not to say' type responses). However, all of the respondents with the shortest survey lengths were not employed, meaning they did not have to answer any of Section D, which was the longest section on average.

3.49 Learners completing the survey in languages other than English took slightly longer on average, with a mean completion time of 24 minutes and 11 seconds, and a median time of 15 minutes and nine seconds.

3.50 The Screener and Section A in combination was the longest part of the survey. In this first part of the survey, respondents were asked which language they wanted to complete the survey and were given a large amount of text to read.

3.51 Section B, in which respondents entered demographic information and contact details, was the second longest section. Taking the median values, the combined length of time for the first two sections was 6 minutes and 57 seconds which was more than half the total length of the survey. It is likely that the high drop off rates in these sections of the survey were related to the length of time to complete as well as the complexity and effort to enter all the information requested. As noted in recommendation B above, we therefore propose moving some of the fields in section B to the end of the survey.

3.52 The effect of the routing in section D had a significant effect on survey timings. The median time to complete this section for those who were not employed was 33 seconds, for those who were employed it was 3 minutes and 1 second – a difference of 2 minutes and 28 seconds in survey length.

Survey completion dates in relation to course start date

3.53 Learners were intended to take the baseline survey within three weeks of their course starting. For the pilot, providers were given additional leeway to invite learners who started their course from 1st January 2021, if they did not have any learners starting during the 19th April – 18th June fieldwork period. For the purposes of this analysis, learners who gave a start date from January – March 2021 have been excluded.

3.54 A further 671 learners gave a start date prior to January 2021 (with the earliest date given being 6th January 2017); as discussed in the ILR Matching Testing section below, it is likely that many of these learners may have misunderstood the question, and for example entered the date their student card was issued, rather than the start date of the specific course in question. Therefore, we have also excluded that group from this analysis, and in the ILR Matching section we offer some suggestions to reduce erroneous course dates being entered in the mainstage survey.

3.55 Looking only at learners who gave a course start date from 1st April 2021 onwards, three-quarters (75%) started the survey within three weeks of that course start date (with one per cent of those starting the survey slightly *before* the course start date, though generally only by a day or two, suggesting the survey link had been provided at the point of enrolment in these cases).

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.11 Gap between course start date given and date of starting baseline survey**

Survey start date vs. course start date	Number of completes	Proportion of completes
Survey started before course start	18	1%
Survey started same week as course start	346	25%
Survey started less than 2 weeks after course start	344	25%

Survey started less than 3 weeks after course start	247	18%
Survey started exactly 3 weeks after course start	80	6%
Survey started more than 3 weeks after course start	347	25%
Total	**1,382**	**100%**

3.56 Of the quarter of learners who started the survey more than 3 weeks after the start date of their course, 12% started the survey within 4 weeks of the course start date, a further 4% started the survey less than 5 weeks after the course start date, and 9% started the survey 5 weeks or more after the course start date was given.

3.57 On average, learners who gave a course start date of 1st April 2021 or later started the survey 2.19 weeks after that date; the average for those within the three-week window was 1.33 weeks, while the average for those exceeding the three-week cut-off was 4.72 weeks (with the longest gap being just under 10 weeks).

> **Recommendations:**
> G. For the mainstage, extend the survey window to 4 weeks after the start of the course; this will reduce the possibility of learners completing outside the eligible window, and is also an easier time period conceptually for both learners and providers. Additionally, as the mainstage survey will launch on August 31st with the intention to include learners that started from 1st August onwards, a 4-week window will mean the survey timeframes and messaging can be kept consistent (rather than a separate rule being needed for the first month of fieldwork, which risks confusing both providers and learners).

3.58 Consideration will need to be given as to whether completes given outside this window during the mainstage are removed from the data and from the follow-up survey. It will not be possible for providers to enforce this, as the survey is an open link that learners can theoretically access at any point. An error message could be built into the survey to query if learners enter a course start date that is over four weeks past the current date; this could allow learners to correct the date if they have made a mistake or terminate the survey if the learner is genuinely outside the eligibility window. However, this approach would need to be balanced against excluding learners who misunderstood the question (and who may have difficulty understanding the error message) – this would be a particular concern for learners who do not speak English as their first language.

Provider experiences and feedback

3.59 In this section we report the findings from the provider feedback survey and depth interviews.

Preparation for survey launch (training, materials, communications)

3.60 The training sessions / videos provided were reported as useful when preparing for the pilot launch by the majority of providers responding to the survey (36% very and 58% quite useful). Furthermore, 96% agreed that they had been provided with the information and materials required to successfully administer the survey (56% completely agreeing and 40% somewhat agreeing). These findings were supported through the depth interviews, where it was a common view among providers that the delivery and content of training sessions sufficiently prepared them for the launch.

3.61 While there were limited suggestions for how the training could be improved for the mainstage, some providers emphasised the need for greater lead time between training and launch, encouraging more employees to attend the sessions, and creating tutor specific training materials. For the pilot training sessions, only key contacts were invited to attend as we felt a large number of attendees could lead to several questions and the sessions over running. However, this did not prove to be an issue in the pilot when larger numbers did attend the sessions.

Recommendations:
H. Aim to deliver mainstage training sessions as early as possible, to give providers maximum lead-in time before they need to launch the survey.
I. Encourage providers to invite all relevant members of staff and subcontractors to attend training sessions / view the training videos.
J. Develop training materials aimed specifically at tutors, to help engage them in the process (e.g. shorter training videos, bespoke PowerPoint slides, information on the types of questions that will be asked).

Provider Liaisons

3.62 Each provider taking part in the pilot was assigned a Liaison Officer. In both the quantitative and qualitative feedback, providers were positive about the Liaisons. Providers in the survey reported that Liaisons were supportive (58% very and 41% fairly) and useful (51% very and 33% quite), although 7% declined to give a rating or said they did not communicate with a Liaison Officer. The latter is likely due to a staff member other than the main contact completing the survey or misunderstanding the 'Liaison Officer' term. It was common for providers in the depth interviews to mention how helpful it was to have a single point of contact, and the professionalism and responsiveness of the Liaisons.

3.63 One provider mentioned that not having a direct contact number to reach the team was a challenge, as there was no procedure to ask and receive quick responses. To address this, we are currently looking into ways in which direct communication can be fostered while the team are primarily working from home, including the potential for an online or Teams chat. This issue may also be mitigated assuming pandemic conditions allow for a return to full office working in time for the mainstage.

Recommendations:
K. Introduce either a direct number or online chat function to allow providers to contact their liaison more quickly and easily.

Preparing for and administering the survey

3.64 On the whole providers felt prepared for administering the survey through a combination of the training sessions and contact with Liaisons. However, a key concern raised in both the quantitative and qualitative fieldwork was around how the delay in launch caused confusion about fieldwork timelines and learner eligibility. We expect that as the mainstage will not have the same obstacles as the pilot, eligibility and fieldwork dates will be more straightforward. One respondent said they started the process late as they had not been copied into the relevant emails in time to start at the same time as other providers. Again, we expect to

encounter this sort of issue less in the mainstage as we will be able to build on the contacts database we have established during the pilot.

3.65 According to the survey, the main channels utilised by providers to encourage completion of the survey were email invites after the start of the course (71%), followed by tutor sessions - more often after the first session of the course (53%) than at the outset (27%). Providers were less likely to promote the survey upon enrolment or in email communications before the start of the course (see **Figure** Error! No text of specified style in document.**.3**). Most providers (98%) sent formal and informal reminders. The most common approaches were for learners to receive reminders from tutors (69%) and / or emails (47%).

Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.**.3 Communication channels used by providers to make students aware or encourage them to complete the survey**

Base: All providers (45)
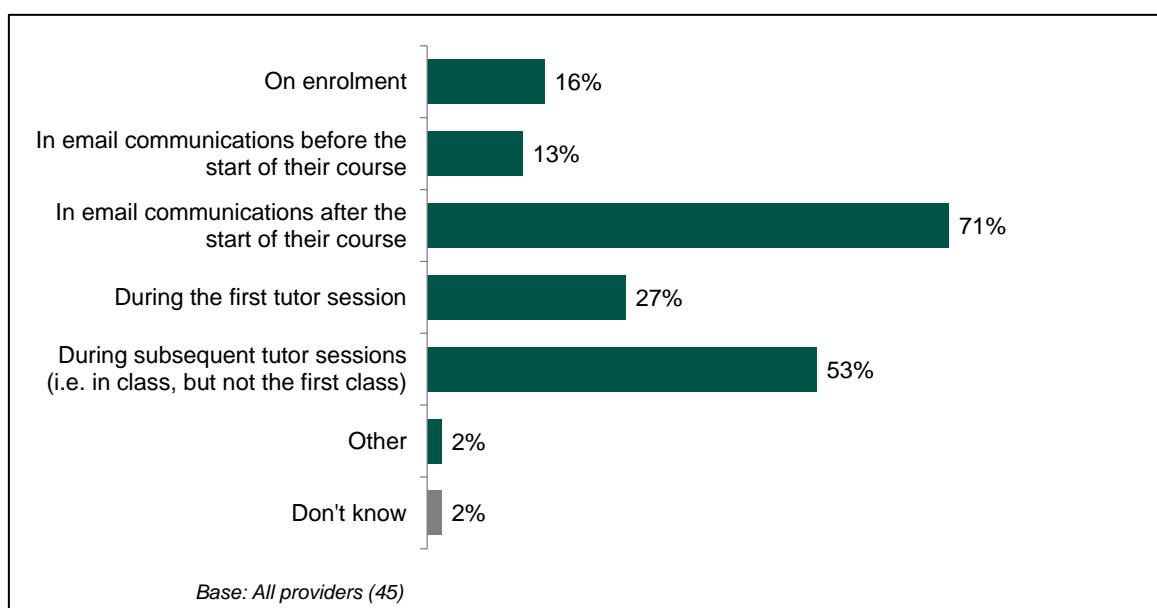
B1. Thinking about your approach to administering the survey, at what point(s) did you make students aware or encourage learners to complete the survey? Please select all that apply.

3.66 The vast majority of providers responding to the survey found the written materials / documents provided to be useful (93%) when inviting and reminding students to participate; this was supported by feedback given in the depth interviews.

3.67 There was reasonable take-up of the various resources that were made available to help providers administer the survey, as **Figure** Error! No text of specified style in document.**.4** shows. Nearly three quarters (73%) of providers used the template text for the email invite and reminder, with around six in ten using each of the information leaflet PDF (60%) and guidance on administering the survey PDF (58%). Other materials were each used by fewer than half of responding providers.

Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.**.4 Use of IFF materials when administering the survey**

Email invite and reminder - template text — 73%
Information leaflet pdf — 60%
Guidance on administering the survey pdf — 58%
Talking points for tutors pdf — 49%
Poster pdf — 27%
Pre-printed paper questionnaires — 20%
Paper questionnaire pdf — 13%
None of these — 4%
Don't know — 4%

Base: All providers (45)
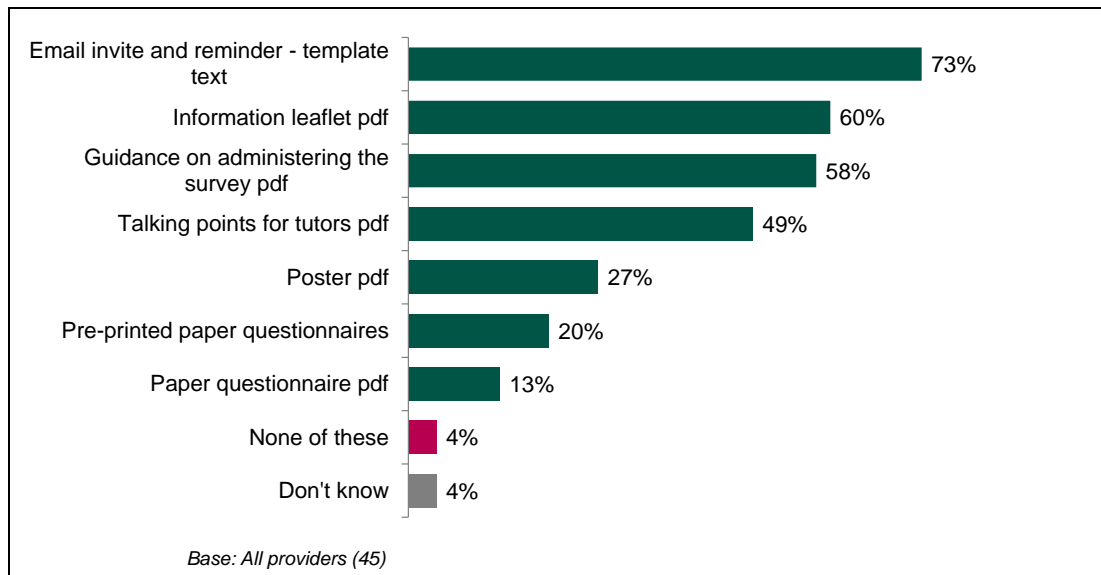
B4. Which of the materials that IFF provided did you / the tutors make use of when administering the survey?

3.68 In the depth interviews, the email text, talking points for tutors and information leaflets were consistently described as the most helpful; however, providers tended to feel they would make greater use of the posters during the mainstage fieldwork, when courses and learners return to campus.

3.69 One concern raised by providers during fieldwork and reiterated by some in the interviews was around learners possibly receiving multiple invites (either via email or any of the face-to-face modes). While this will be unavoidable to some extent, in particular where an individual learner is enrolled on multiple courses, we will look to amend materials to include a note to respondents that they only need to complete the survey once for each course.

3.70 Further suggestions from providers for improvements to the materials are highlighted below:

- To provide information in different languages.

- To provide documents in Word format rather than PDF since these can then be edited for individual institutions.

- To make the wording used in the materials less formal / more friendly.

- To prepare providers and tutors for the survey by giving tips on how to remind students, while acknowledging some may already be respondents.

3.71 Providers will also be encouraged to use the posters and reminded that any non-GLA funded students who participate would automatically be excluded from the final data, after the ILR matching (though they would still be eligible for the prize draw).

3.72 Providing information in different languages would require additional translation work and would therefore require additional budget, which may be cost-prohibitive. It would also require additional lead in time to prepare ahead of the mainstage launch, which is not likely to be

possible. However, we believe the other suggestions are all feasible and should be simple to implement for the mainstage.

Recommendations:
L. Provide materials in both Word/PowerPoint and PDF formats, to allow providers to make adjustments if needed.
M. Review and revise the wording used in the materials to make it less formal and more engaging / user-friendly.
N. Add additional guidance to the training sessions / materials on how to handle reminders; amend the reminder email text to flag to learners that they only need to complete the survey once for each course.

3.73 Based on the survey, the majority of providers found administering the survey to be 'easy' (20% very and 60% fairly easy), and believed they had been provided with enough feedback (e.g. in relation to response rates or when replying to queries) to successfully administer the survey (22% completely agreed, 53% somewhat agreed). However, there was still a large proportion of providers (20%) who reported that administering the survey was 'difficult,' while a similar proportion (20%) disagreed that they had been provided with enough feedback during fieldwork. Pain points identified in the depth interviews included difficulties arising from the short amount of time providers had to set up the survey, the logistics of not having learners on campus, a lack of updates on responses at an individual or course level, as well as overall response rates and not knowing what the target response rate was.

3.74 While some of these issues were due to the fact that target response rates or levels were not set for the pilot, and the fact that it is not possible to provide responses broken down by course or individual, we will look to address the latter points for the mainstage.

Recommendations:
O. Create a basic dashboard for providers to review their live response, including a function to calculate their overall response rate.

3.75 In the survey, providers reported that tutors administering the pilot survey were only fairly engaged with the process (60%); only 13% said tutors were very engaged. Nearly one in ten (9%) reported that tutors were fairly disengaged, as shown in **Figure** Error! No text of specified style in document.**.5**.

Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.**.5 Level of engagement from tutors involved in administering the survey**

Base: All providers (45)
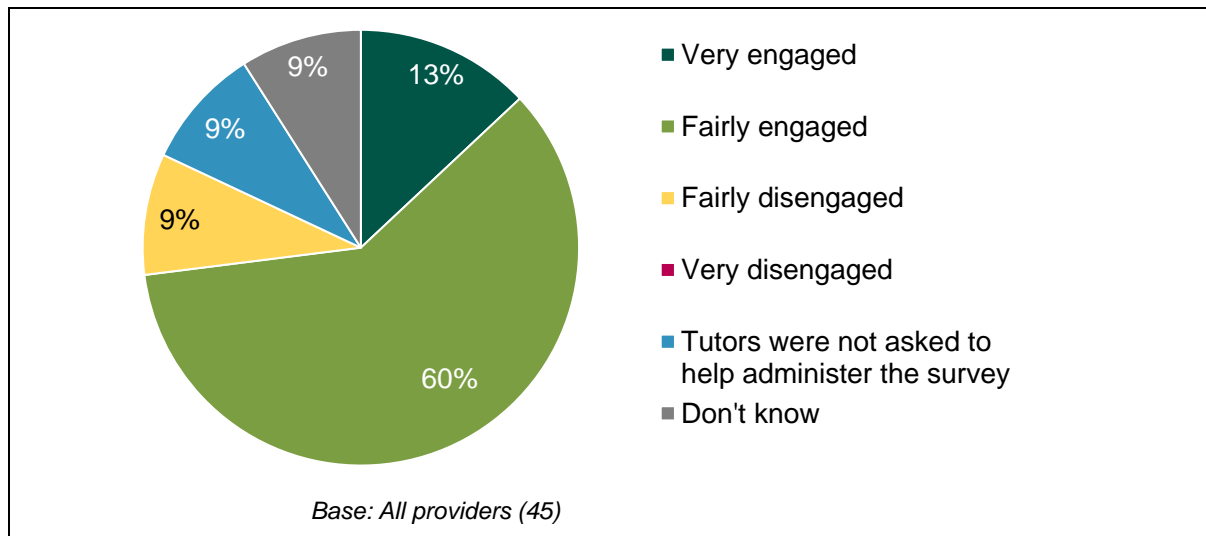
B6. To what extent would you say that the tutors involved in administering the survey were engaged, or disengaged, with the process?

3.76 However, feedback from the provider depth interviews made it apparent that tutors were vitally important to successfully disseminate the survey. In interviews with providers who had particularly high response rates, the standout difference we observed was the extent to which they had involved tutors in disseminating the survey; in one instance, the provider had even made their own cut-down training slide pack specifically for their tutors.

3.77 Although a Q&A sheet for tutors was given to providers in the pilot, this was aimed more at helping tutors explain the survey to their learners, rather than at engaging the tutors themselves. Based on this, we will look to create a cut down version of the training slides containing just key information for tutors and provide pointers for providers on how best to engage tutors in the process. A few providers mentioned that some tutors were under too much time pressure to be able to administer surveys; a potential solution will be to suggest they make use of the QR code poster, so they can just remind students to scan it when leaving the classroom, which one provider mentioned they had found an effective strategy. This will free up time for those who have students with access to smartphones (and a high enough level of digital literacy).

Recommendations:
P. Provide tutor-specific training materials to help engage tutors in the survey; also make suggestions in the training sessions around how the QR code posters and information sheets can be utilised if tutors don't have the technology or time to go through the survey with learners during the class itself.

Learners' experience

3.78 Providers were asked to give their subjective assessment of how engaged their learners were with the survey. None said they thought their learners were very engaged, but more than half (56%) thought they were fairly engaged. One in five (20%) providers perceived their learners to be disengaged: either fairly (18%) or very (2%). Across both the survey and depth

interviews, key barriers for learners mentioned included: IT proficiency / no internet, comprehension of the questions, language or literacy barriers, understanding question relevance, data security concerns and accessibility issues. See **Figure** Error! No text of specified style in document..**6** for the survey results.

Figure Error! No text of specified style in document..**6 Barriers faced by learners as reported by providers**

Base: All providers (45)
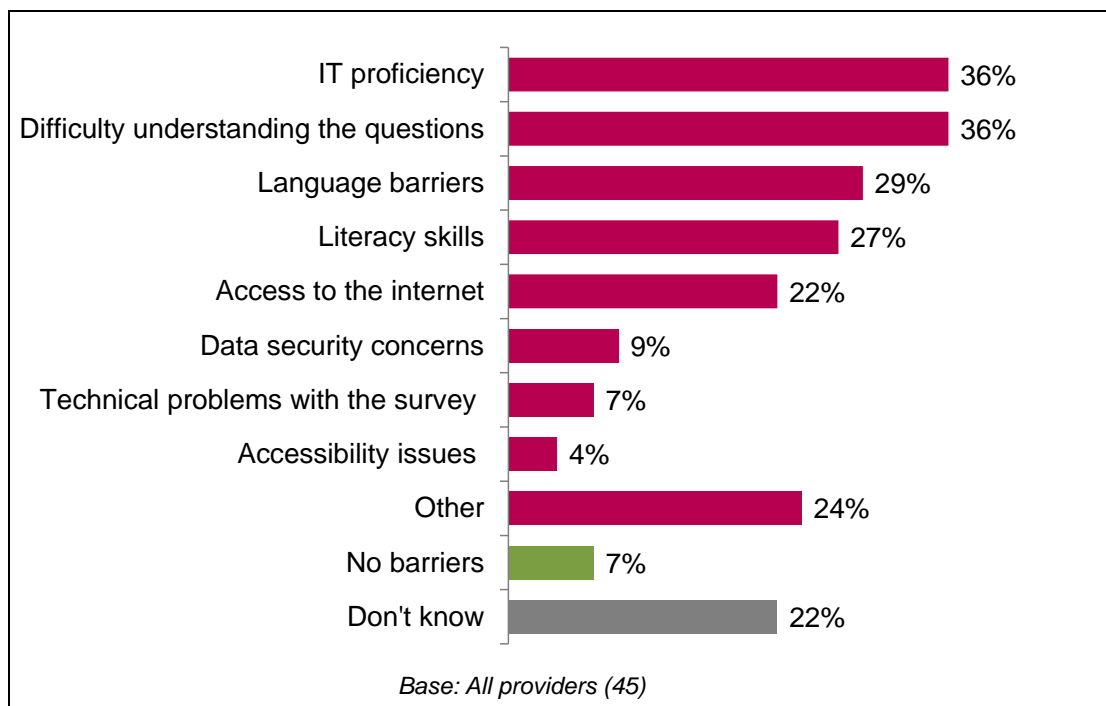
C2.

What, if any, would you say are the main barriers that learners face when taking the survey?

3.79 Tutor engagement and the creation of more learner specific materials will be key to addressing some of the above issues.

3.80 During an interview one provider mentioned their tutors discussed the survey while sharing the 'tutor talking points' document with their ESOL students on screen, so it could be read and digested at a pace suited to the learners. This was thought to have helped with student engagement as they were able to understand the process more fully.

3.81 We also spoke with two providers who had a higher-than-average proportion of learners refusing to give a student number or any personal information, which would mean we could not match them to the ILR and include them in the follow-up survey. These providers believed that this was due to issues such as: having a high proportion of learners new to the country who were sceptical of providing personal details for something they do not fully understand, a wariness of being 'spammed' (as a result of giving contact information), and a high proportion of learners without basic digital skills. However, we believe implementing the above suggestions to materials will help mitigate these issues.

3.82 Another common issue raised by providers in the depth interviews was that students with limited digital abilities were confused about how to complete the survey. Creating easy to follow, visual instructions for tutors to share, along with easy-to-read information for tutors to display on screen or as posters, will be considered for the mainstage to assist those with limited literacy and digital skills.

3.83 A couple of providers also mentioned that more publicity and promotion of the survey would help to raise its profile with both their learners and staff; specific suggestions included greater use of social media channels.

> **Recommendations:**
> Q. Create easy to understand, visual instructions on how to complete the survey to help learners with low literacy or digital skills.
> R. Create a 'participant friendly' FAQ document for tutors to share, detailing how data is used, reasons questions are asked, and reconfirming that learners' details will not be used for marketing purposes. Tutors will be asked to share this information on screen or as handouts for students to read in their own time.
> S. Provide a copy of the questionnaire for both providers and tutors, and guidance including talking points on why sections on well-being, employment and pay are asked and to explain certain terminology.
> T. Remind providers and tutors in the training sessions that they should inform their learners that if they have accessibility issues or language barriers, they can request a telephone interview.
> U. Support the general promotion of the survey and raise awareness through social media posts and website content.

Preparation for mainstage

3.84 Providers who had participated in the pilot were asked how well prepared they felt for the mainstage London Learner Survey. While most (71%) felt well prepared, there was still a high proportion who felt more could be done to help them, with 22% feeling not very prepared and 4% not at all prepared, as shown in **Figure** Error! No text of specified style in document.**.7**.

Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.**.7 Providers views on how prepared they feel for the mainstage launch**

Base: All providers (45)
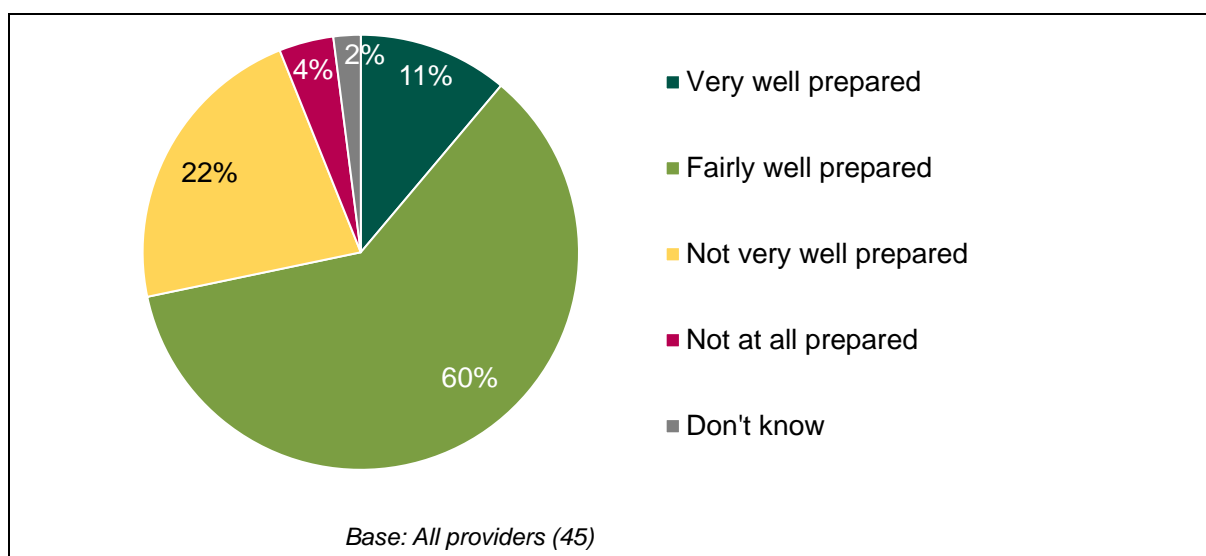
3.85 When asked whether they had any suggestions for ways in which we could help them to prepare for the mainstage survey, common themes reflected suggestions covered earlier in

this report, such as giving providers access to a live dashboard showing response figures, and making materials more user friendly.

3.86 It was also common for providers to emphasise the need to keep continuing with a number of measures used in the pilot for the mainstage such as:

- The option to complete the survey in a variety of languages or via telephone for those with accessibility issues.

- Training sessions / video (through going further by inviting everyone involved in the survey dissemination, including subcontractors, to the sessions).

- Materials such as posters and email text (while also making more tutor specific information, learner FAQs and a 'how to guide' for students with limited digital literacy).

- Continuing communications with the Provider Liaisons.

3.87 Most of the reasons for feeling unprepared have already been discussed above, alongside suggested solutions (e.g. greater lead in time, knowledge or response updates, training for tutors and subcontractors). Therefore, we believe that during the lead-in to the mainstage, the majority of these provider concerns will be addressed.

4 ILR sampling and matching

Introduction

4.1 For the pilot follow-up survey, a sample of learners to contact was compiled from the ILR (Individualised Learner Record), supplied by ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) via GLA. This database is the official record of Adult Education and Community Learning in England. This was found to be a comprehensive and broadly accurate source of learner details, although with a number of minor shortcomings.

4.2 This differed from the approach proposed for the mainstage follow-up survey, where the sample of learners to contact will be derived from the baseline survey. However, the ILR will remain the source for the details of the learning taking place, and will be used to add a range of demographic and geographical information to the survey dataset. This requires a matching process to take place.

4.3 This matching is complicated by the fact that at the time of the baseline survey, the learners completing the survey will not appear on the ILR, nor can learning providers feasibly transfer ID numbers or details of learners taking part. The matching will need to be done retrospectively, using details submitted by the learners themselves as part of the survey.

Lessons learned from the ILR sampling process

4.4 The ILR sample drawing was a broadly successful process, with most data that was required found to be readily available. It took several weeks to process the ILR data to make it usable as sample, however, it is likely to be possible to speed this process up at mainstage using the experience of the pilot. Nevertheless, there are limits on how much this can be automated, and it is likely to be desirable to minimise the number of 'loads' of sample (i.e. updates of the sample from updates to the ILR) for optimum efficiency.

Recommendations:
V. Limit the number of uploads of new data from the ILR to one every three months.

4.5 The only data which was absent was on Special Educational Needs (SEN). A field is provided for this on the ILR but was found not to be routinely populated; therefore the (quite comprehensive) learning difficulty and disability data was used as a proxy.

ILR matching testing

4.6 After the mainstage baseline survey, the baseline data will need to be matched onto the ILR data, using survey responses. This will allow the follow-up survey dataset to include information about the learner and their learning activities which is stored on the ILR. This is essential to meet GLA's analysis requirement; in particular, there is no other way of reliably identifying which courses or learning aims the survey respondents are studying. This must be done prior to the follow-up survey, in order to target the specific demographic groups and types of learning which GLA need to analyse.

4.7 One of the purposes of the pilot was to test the feasibility of this approach. The key aim was to provide a method of identifying which of the records of learning on the ILR relate to the learner

completing each specific baseline survey, thus achieving a 'match' which could then be used to add ILR data to the survey.

4.8   This could not be tested directly, since ILR data regarding the pilot baseline survey respondents will not be available until Autumn 2021. However, a number of processes could be tested, to ensure the feasibility of the mainstage. To maximise the likelihood of a match, a number of approaches were tested, each of which are considered in turn here.

Asking for a student ID for matching

4.9   All providers must allocate their learners a student ID. Student ID numbers are recorded in two formats on the ILR – as a Unique Learner Number (ULN) allocated by ESFA, and as a Learner Reference Number allocated by the provider. The ULN is unique to the learner, and may be carried between learning providers. The Learning Reference Number is specific to a provider, although a learner usually retains the same number for all their learning with that provider.

4.10   The pilot survey asked for a 'Student Number'. Nearly two thirds of respondents to the baseline survey gave a number (65.4%). Just over a quarter (29.1%) said they did not know their student ID number, and a small group (5.5%) refused to provide this. As shown in **Table** Error! No text of specified style in document.**.12**, in general, learners at private providers struggled to provide IDs, as did learners at providers where provision was mainly procured by GLA (groups which overlap).

4.11   The vast majority of those not giving a student number stated that they did not know their student number. There was almost no variation in the percentage saying 'prefer not to say' (below 4% at nearly all providers) except at a handful of local authorities, which had 'refusal' rates in excess of 20%, unlike any other similar providers, suggesting some specific issues affecting those providers.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.12 Matching of student ID – by provider and provision type**

	Rate of provision of student ID
All learners	65.4%
Legal status of provider	
Local Authority	60.4%
College	75.6%
Independent Training Provider (ITP)	28.2%
Types of learning at provider	
Procured (90%+)	28.2%
Community Learning (90%+)	36.4%
Community Learning (majority)	60.0%
Non-procured (majority)	53.4%
Non-procured (90%+)	87.5%

4.12   In the vast majority of cases where a Student Number was given, and where tests were carried out (detailed manual checks were made across 25% of providers for this pilot

exercise), it was in a format which suggested it would be matchable via an automated process. Some learners provided ULN instead; this could also be matched.

4.13 From the data submitted, it seems likely that around a quarter of all providers – nearly all of them private providers – do not supply the student ID to their learners at all, perhaps instead relying on an online account for interaction with learners. There may be scope to reduce this proportion, but overall, it seems likely that for ITPs in particular, some matching using alternative information will be required.

> **Recommendations:**
> W. IFF Research should work with providers, as part of routine provider liaison efforts, to increase the proportion who make a student number or ULN readily available to learners as part of the enrolment process, so that they can locate it at the time of the survey. They should also be encouraged to mention where learners could find this number in the email invite to the baseline survey.

Asking for demographic information for matching

4.14 Around 74% of learners who did not provide a student number instead provided demographic information which might allow identification (at least two of Name, Date of Birth or Postcode). In reality, the match rate is likely to be lower due to typing errors, name changes and changes of address.

4.15 Overall, 91% of learners gave sufficient identifying information to potentially allow for matching (65% via student number, and a further 26% via demographic information), although as mentioned above the true match rate is likely to be substantially lower because a proportion of data submitted by learners will be poor quality or inaccurate. The extent of this cannot be measured. Based on our experience of the quality of this type of information submitted in other learner surveys, we would estimate that a match rate of around 80% should be possible. This would be only slightly below the 86% achieved by the ESFA FE Learner Satisfaction survey 2018/19, which used a more complex technical approach than that proposed here, but without the use of postcodes, or the date of starting learning.[1]

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.13 Matching information – rate of provision of matching data**

	Among all respondents to baseline survey	Rate among those not providing student ID
Student ID	65.4%	n/a
Name	92.0%	85.0%
Date of birth	85.4%	79.3%
Postcode	82.8%	75.4%
Likely to be sufficient identifying information	91.0%	74.3%

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[1] Department for Education (2019). *Learner Satisfaction Survey 2018 to 2019: Technical Report.* August 2019. Ipsos MORI / RCU. London.

(either student number, or at least two other items)		

4.16 The rate of provision of matching data (again, not considering quality of data submitted) varied by provider type. The data submission rate at ITPs was lowest, at 85.0%, and highest at FE Colleges at 94.7%. This was a lower level of variation than that seen in the submission of student ID numbers, but still significant.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.14 Rate of provision of matching data – overall performance by provider and provision type**

	Rate of provision of two items, or student ID
All learners	91.0%
Legal status of provider	
Local Authority	90.2%
FE College	94.7%
Independent Training Provider	85.0%
Types of learning at provider	
Procured (90%+)	85.0%
Community Learning (90%+)	85.5%
Community Learning (majority)	93.6%
Non-procured (majority)	88.9%
Non-procured (90%+)	95.2%

4.17 A small proportion (4.7%) of learners declined to provide any identifying information whatsoever, despite completing the survey.

Recommendations:
X. Revise the baseline survey wording to make clear that unless some identifying information is provided, their survey responses cannot be considered.

Contactability

4.18 Some learners declined to provide any contact information, as shown in Table 4.4. Generally, there was a strong link between willingness to provide this information, and providing the other identifying information mentioned above. Our estimate is that declining to provide contact details could reduce the potential size of the follow-up survey sample by around 10% (allowing for the fact that some contact details given will prove incorrect or change by the time of survey), based on our experience with other surveys. The table shows that among those likely to be identifiable, 11% did not provide an email address, the key piece of information for survey. If this remained the same in the follow-up survey, the sample size would be reduced by around 11%.

4.19 However, the proportion providing contact information may increase substantially if this is asked separately at the end of the survey, once learners are committed, and if we further emphasise the importance of this for future participation in the follow-up survey.

> **Recommendations:**
> Y.   Revise the survey so that respondents are asked for contact details (and provided with assurances regarding confidentiality) at the end of the survey, once their purpose and importance is clear to the respondent, in order to increase the proportion choosing to give these details.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.15 Provision of email address and phone number in baseline survey**

	Among all respondents to baseline survey	Among those likely to be identifiable
Email address	84.8%	89.4%
Phone number	74.6%	81.0%
Neither	10.5%	5.5%

Likelihood of provision featuring on the ILR

4.20   There is a risk of learners responding regarding provision not funded by GLA, or about out-of-scope provision. This provision would not feature on the ILR extracts sent to us, and therefore would not lead to a follow-up survey. It will not be possible to fully understand the extent of this potential issue until the mainstage survey takes place. This is because the pilot baseline survey was targeted at specific courses and learners by most providers, and not promoted more widely as it will be for the mainstage.

4.21   However, a significant percentage of learners (around 20%) gave learning start dates that were prior to the expected cut-off of 1st January 2021. There are several possible explanations of this, all of which are likely to have been factors:

- Provider misunderstanding of the eligibility criteria for the survey; this is plausible given that this phenomenon seems to affect specific providers more than others.

- Misunderstanding of the question as relating to the date of issue of the student ID, given its location on the page asking for the student ID; this is plausible given some dates are several years prior to survey launch, and the survey is quite clear about the nature of the learning covered.

- Misunderstanding of the scope of learning intended to be covered by the survey by the learner. This is possible, but perhaps less likely given how clear the survey already is about this.

> **Recommendations:**
> Z.   Work with providers, through the routine provider liaison process, to ensure they understand that the survey should go only to learners within the eligible window.
> AA. Revise the survey to ask the date of the start of learning aim on a different page to the student ID, removing the risk of assumptions being made that this refers to the date of issue of the student ID.

5 Follow-up survey

5.1 The mainstage follow-up survey will be a 'rolling' survey, with individuals becoming eligible for survey five months after each GLA AEB-funded learning aim ends. The same learner may be surveyed more than once, if they completed learning aims during different periods of survey fieldwork, or 'blocs.' In the pilot, learners could also be surveyed about more than one aim in a single period of survey fieldwork (or 'bloc') by sending them an email including links to multiple surveys.

5.2 Sample will be derived from the baseline survey; learners will only be included if they took part in this and provided sufficient details for us to identify them on the ILR (for the addition of background data regarding the learner and the course) and contact them. This chapter explores the lessons learned from the pilot of this survey.

Follow-up survey response rates

Overall level of response

5.3 The follow-up survey achieved an online response rate at a learner level of 6.5%. Response was boosted to 8.0% (2,580 completed surveys) via carrying out interviewing by telephone. No surveys were requested or completed on paper; this may have been in part because such surveys could only be requested via the online survey script, accessed through the survey email.

5.4 About 8% of emails bounced, that is, were sent to an invalid or outdated email address which had an automatic reply set. Taking this into account suggests that with higher quality email addresses (likely for the mainstage since emails will be gathered directly from respondents rather than taken from DfE data) a higher response rate could be achieved. Based on our experience of similar previous surveys, we would anticipate a response rate of at least 7% could be achieved online, rather than 6.5%.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.16 Follow-up survey response: online and telephone**

	Learners
Online survey	
Attempted to contact via email	31,129
Bounced	2,480
Unsubscribed or reported as spam to ISP	309
Available to take part online	28,340
Completed online	2,009
Online response rate: % of all attempted contacts	6.5%
Online response rate: % of all available to take part	7.1%
Telephone survey	
Attempted to contact via telephone	2,529
Completed by telephone	468
Telephone response rate: % of all attempted contacts	18.5%

	Learners
Total completions	
Total completed	2,477
Total response rate: % of all attempted contacts	8.0%
Total response rate: % of all available to take part	8.7%

Source: IFF survey statistics

Multiple learning aims per learner

5.5 In the pilot, 6,078 learners had multiple learning aims within the same survey period or 'bloc,' and therefore received an email featuring up to three learning aims. Very few respondents chose to respond regarding the second or third aim, with the vast majority only answering for the first aim listed on the email. There was a response rate of 1.5% for the second aim listed, and 0.6% for the third listed.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.17 Follow-up survey response statistics: Multiple learning aims, online only**

	First learning aim	Second learning aim	Third learning aim
Attempted to contact via email	31,129	6,078	1,729
Responses received	2,019	93	10
Response rate: % of all attempted contacts	6.5%	1.5%	0.6%

Source: IFF survey statistics

5.6 This approach also presents a number of practical difficulties. If a person appears multiple times on the list of survey participants, it is logistically very complex to avoid calling them an inappropriate number of times, and to respond in a timely fashion to requests for calling to stop. It also creates complexities in processing the sample for fieldwork, which are likely to delay data processing and introduce a risk of delay in administering the mainstage survey, which requires a rapid turnaround after ILR data arrives.

5.7 One alternative approach would be to survey the person once, but to ask about each of several learning aims in turn. This would make the survey longer for these individuals, and it may seem repetitive and irritating to them if they perceive the learning as a single activity. It is also unlikely to be feasible in technical terms, due to the complications it would introduce into the already complex ILR matching process.

Recommendations:
BB. The survey should be distributed regarding only a single learning aim, if the completion of these falls within the same two-week survey period or 'bloc.' These should be prioritised using a method to be discussed with GLA, for example taking into account quantity of GLA funding or qualification level.

Telephone survey

5.8 The telephone survey was carried out in order to target specific groups, to test the feasibility of boosting response rates via this route. The response rate was good at 18.5%, despite limited

numbers of total calls per respondent taking place in this pilot exercise. Just over a tenth of respondents (11.4%) refused to take part, or said they were too busy. Other records which had not completed the survey were called an average of three times.

5.9   For practical reasons, it was also rarely possible, in the two-week period, to call the same learner about multiple learning aims. This was only done if they had already completed a survey regarding the first learning aim, since this could otherwise result in multiple calls from different interviewers within minutes of each other.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.18 Follow-up survey response statistics: Telephone only, detail**

	Learners
Attempted to contact via telephone	2,529
Wrong number	204
Refused / too busy	289
Refusal rate	11.4%
Could not recall learning	102
Stopped during interview	36
Completed by telephone	468
Telephone response rate: % of all attempted contacts	18.5%
Telephone response rate: % of all valid phone numbers	20.1%
Average number of tries among remaining contacts	3.0

Source: IFF survey statistics

Online survey: mailout process

5.10   Responses were monitored over time, to judge the efficacy of the mailout methods used.

5.11   As shown in Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.**.8**, 60% of the responses came on a mailout day, and 82% came either on a mailout day or the day after. When the initial mailout was in the morning (e.g. the soft launch of bloc 1, the launch of bloc 2), the concentration of responses on the first day was higher. This suggests that there is little value in waiting for a long period of time after an email is sent for further response.

Recommendations:
   CC. The online survey period for the follow-up survey should remain the same since there would be little benefit in an extension.

5.12   Reminders proved a valuable tool to drive response. Generally, the findings shown in Figure 5.1 show that a first reminder had about two-thirds of the impact of the launch, and a second reminder had about half of the impact of the first reminder (i.e. about a third of the launch).

Recommendations:

DD. A second reminder should be sent to respondents, given the potential for a large impact on response rates, of potentially up to a third. The potential advantages and disadvantages of a third reminder should be discussed with GLA.

5.13 To gauge the effect of the iPad prize draw, the launch of the third bloc was done without the prize draw being mentioned in the initial email invite – instead this was mentioned in the reminder. This was done on the basis that wording such as 'prize' or 'win' may trigger spam filters. As can be seen, the impact of offering the prize draw far outweighed any spam filter effect; this launch mailout was around a third less effective than the others relative to the sample size, although this was compensated for by the extra reminder mailout which was also tested with this bloc.

Recommendations:

EE. Given its large impact on response, GLA and IFF should consider enhancing the prize draw, and/or improving how it is promoted in materials.

Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.**.8 Follow-up survey response statistics: Online only, day-by-day response**
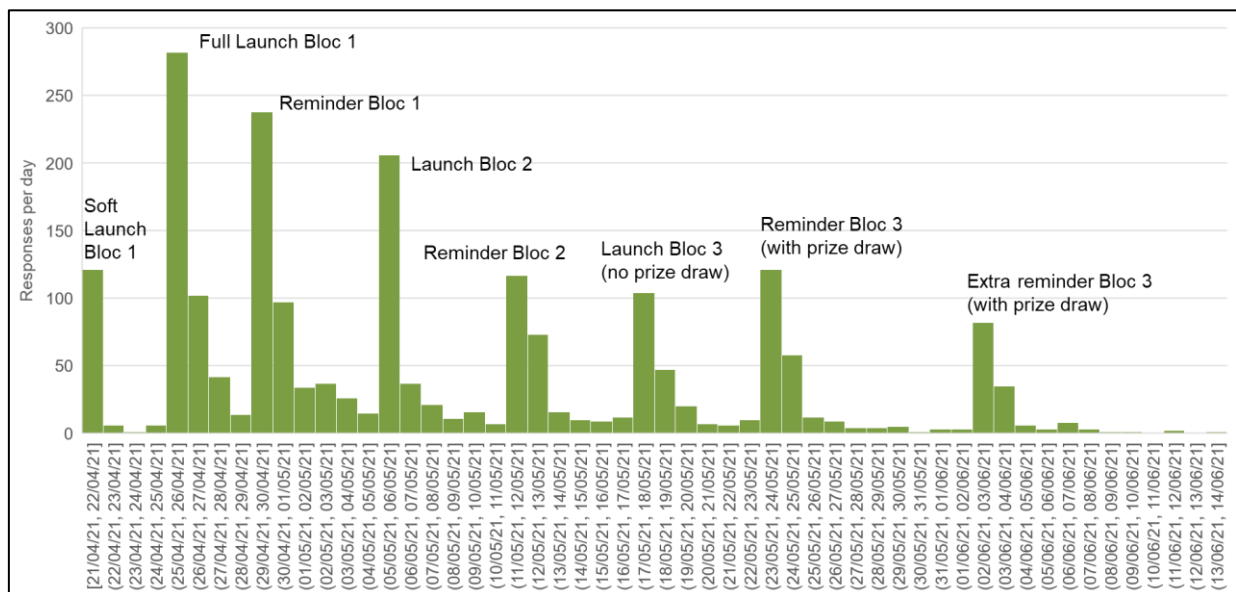
5.14 During the survey, some learning aims mentioned in the mailings could not be recognised by learners, who sometimes emailed to complain about this. The number of emails suggests that this might have been a significant issue; not all of those affected would have made contact. The learning aims not recognised were typically non-accredited aims where the actual title used for the learning was not recorded on the ILR. At mainstage, it would be possible to prompt learners with their own title for the provision given at the baseline, and thus this effect would not reduce response rates.

Recommendations:

> FF. Revise the baseline questionnaire to ask for the learner's own description of the learning aim they are responding regarding and use this to prompt learners in the follow-up survey.

Response rates by sub-group

5.15 Response rates were calculated for all quota target groups, with the addition of Basic Skills type (e.g. literacy, numeracy – this was added following a GLA request), enabling the provision of a separate response rate for ESOL courses. Rates varied markedly across the sample.

5.16 To summarise, the largest differences in online response rate (compared with the average of 5.4%) were found in the following dimensions:

- Age group, showing a clear upward trend by age, from 2.9% among 19- to 20-year-olds, to 14.5% among those aged 65 or over. This trend is apparent in other survey research.

- Subject area, especially when looking at detailed (SSA Tier 2) subject area; of particular concern were Manufacturing Technologies (0.0%, although only 27 were contacted); Retailing and Wholesaling (1.7%); Mathematics and Statistics (2.4%); Transportation Operations and Maintenance (2.7%); Building and Construction (2.8%); Animal Care and Veterinary Science (2.8%). It is not proposed (nor possible) to report at SSA Tier 2 level; however, targeting sample at this level would ensure that results were representative of the Tier 1 SSAs.

- GCSE learners (2.6% vs. average of 5.4%); this is likely to link to age trends.

5.17 There were also some less strong trends:

- AEB target learners (3.3% for First Level 2, 3.5% for First Level 3)

- By gender (4.0% male, 6.1% female).

- Those with higher levels of prior qualification had a higher response rate (8.5% for those with an existing Level 4+ qualification). This links closely to the age group trend.

- By ethnic group – White learners were much more likely to reply (7.1% vs 4% to 5% for all other ethnic groups). This may relate partly to age group trends, since older learners (65+) have the highest response rate and are more likely to be white.

- Community Learning (8.4%) vs. Adult Skills (4.8%), again likely to be largely driven by leisure learners.

- Course level (3.9% at Entry Level, rising to 6.2% at Level 2, and dropping again to 3.5% at Level 3; non-accredited learning had a much higher rate at 8.6%).

5.18 There were no differences in response rates by:

- ESOL learners

- SEN learners, defined using Learning difficulty or disability data in the absence of reliable SEN data on the ILR

- Course length (other than a notably higher response rate for the minority of 12 month+ courses)

- Procured and non-procured provision.

5.19 Data by provider also shows that apparently similar providers (in particular local authorities) have greatly differing response rates. For example, there is a markedly different response rate for very similar types of learning delivered by Haringey (11.5%) and by Havering (3.6%).

5.20 This is too large a difference to be attributed wholly to demographic differences and is instead likely to relate to the quality of gathering of contact details for the ILR by these organisations. This effect would be removed in the mainstage survey as contact details would be sourced from the baseline survey, potentially causing a significant improvement in response rates for some providers, although the extent of this cannot be quantified at this point.

Targeting specific sub-groups in the telephone survey

5.21 The telephone survey is intended to top-up specific sub-groups of learner or types of learning aim to meet minimum GLA targets for analysis.

5.22 A total of 150 interviews per bloc were allocated to this in the pilot. Relative to the quantity of sample loaded, this is equivalent to around 10 interviews per week, or equivalent to 500 per annum for mainstage research. This is far smaller than the number of telephone interviews actually projected for the mainstage per annum (2,850 for the 'lower response rate' scenario, or about 57 per week). Therefore, for the pilot, only selected groups were targeted for each bloc, to act as a test of the approach.

Targeting specific sub-groups: outcomes

5.23 Due to a number of factors (the difference in sample source, and likely changes in the number of learners over time), it is not possible to determine the feasibility of targeting any individual group of learners for the mainstage.

5.24 However, the approach was broadly successful, more than doubling the response rate for some sub-groups relative to the online survey; although attempts to achieve greater increases than this were unsuccessful. It was also found to be possible to achieve response rates for sub-groups by up to 13.3%. A table of response rates achieved is provided in Appendix A.

5.25 If any telephone interviewing budget remains after meeting minimum targets, it would be useful to target young learners under 23, given their lower response rate. Although there is no risk of having an insufficient sample for analysis of young people, targeting them would make the dataset more representative, reducing the extent of weighting required, and therefore substantially increasing the overall accuracy of data analysis overall and in all other sub-groups.

Questionnaire outcomes

5.26 Response to the follow-up questionnaire was excellent for most sections; less than 10% gave null responses at most questions. For example, only 2% were unable to say how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the course. However, a few questions had greater than 10% null responses, mostly relating to pay. Respondents were somewhat more cautious regarding giving out information regarding pay on the telephone survey. It may be that additional reassurances would help here, but it is always the case that some people feel that they should not disclose information about their pay.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document..**19 Follow-up survey results: Don't know and Prefer not to say**

	Online survey		Telephone survey	
	% Don't know	% Prefer not to say	% Don't know	% Prefer not to say
D3: Pay	6.0%	25.6%	11.5%	23.0%
D4: Pay level (numeric)	1.1%	4.9%	5.6%	5.6%
D5: Change in pay	5.2%	7.6%	6.0%	1.8%
D6: Increase in pay (numeric)	14.6%	15.6%	26.4%	2.9%
D7: Decrease in pay (numeric)	26.4%	11.3%	22.2%	0.0%
D10: Reasons for dissatisfaction with work	3.1%	5.3%	0.0%	6.7%
D15: London Living Wage	7.8%	8.3%	7.8%	7.4%
F1: I can find a way to get what I want	9.5%	5.4%	8.1%	4.9%

Source: IFF survey statistics

5.27   Around a fifth (19%) of follow-up survey respondents who reached the first question subsequently dropped out of the survey. As shown in Table 5.6, of those who reached the survey questions on the online survey, the most common drop-out location (3.9%) was the first question. The pay questions provoked a slightly greater drop-out rate (3.1%) than is usual for a section this late in a survey, but not by a large margin.

5.28   A small number of respondents dropped out on the last page (0.9%). This is likely to be because they assumed the survey was completed and closed the window rather than clicking 'Next' to complete it. These few responses could be included in the survey results, increasing the overall response rate slightly (by less than 0.1%).

5.29   On the telephone survey, few of the respondents who reached the first question (4.3%) then dropped out during the survey. Most of these did so in the pay section (1.6%) or when asked the first self-efficacy question (1.2%). A small number of respondents typically take offence or become suspicious when asked about money in any survey; additional explanations and/or reassurances to make available to interviewers may help here.

Recommendations:
   GG. Add reassurances to the follow-up survey, explaining the reasons why questions are being asked about pay.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document..**20 Drop-out rates on the online follow-up survey**

	Online survey	Telephone survey
Attempted to contact	38,936	2,537
Opened survey	3,435 (8.8%)	1,472 (58.0%)
Language selector*	454	
Splash page	333	
Within telephone screener		982

	Online survey	Telephone survey
Requested telephone survey	49	1**
Reaching first question	**2,599**	**489**
C2 (benefits of course – first question)	102 (3.9%)	2 (0.4%)
Rest of Section C (Aims)	87 (3.3%)	2 (0.4%)
Section D (Employment & Pay)	81 (3.1%)	8 (1.6%)
Section E (Well-being)	74 (2.8%)	2 (0.4%)
Section F (Self-efficacy)	53 (2.0%)	6 (1.2%)
Section G (Social integration)	60 (2.3%)	1 (0.2%)
Section H (Volunteering)	7 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)
Section I (Thank and close)	23 (0.9%)	0 (0.0%)
Completed	**2,112 (81.3%)**	**468 (95.7%)**

*Source: IFF survey statistics *this will include any people who encountered undetectable technical problems, or who security scanned the link without clicking on it. **called to take part by phone but chose not to take part when called.*

5.30 Telephone surveys ranged in length from 12 minutes to 35 minutes, with an average of 15 minutes, or 13½ minutes excluding screener time. Interviewer feedback suggests that most of those surveys which took longer were carried out with those for whom English was not a first language.

5.31 The online survey was a little quicker, at an average of 11 minutes, or 10½ excluding the landing screen and GDPR statement. Most of this difference relates to sections with long read-outs.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.**.21 Length of sections – follow up survey**

	Online survey	Telephone survey
Screener / Section A	00:35	01:39
Section C (Aims)	02:18	02:43
Section D (Employment & Pay)	01:34	02:11
Section E (Well-being)	01:40	01:43
Section F (Self-efficacy)	01:42	01:56
Section G (Social integration)	02:14	02:13
Section H (Volunteering)	00:27	00:23
Section I (Thank and close)	00:43	02:15
Total	**11:13**	**15:03**
Base (number of completes)	2,112	468

*Source: IFF survey statistics *this will include any people who encountered undetectable technical problems, or who security scanned the link without clicking on it. **called to take part by phone but chose not to take part when called.*

Increasing the survey response rate at mainstage

5.32 As outlined above, the response rate to the pilot follow-up survey was 8.0% at a learner level. Due to the number of differences between this pilot survey and the mainstage survey, this cannot be used to accurately estimate a response rate for the mainstage survey. However,

due to the nature of these differences, and based on our experience with other surveys, it can be said with some certainty that it will be higher than this.

5.33 The pilot survey used the ILR (the official record of AEB-funded learning) as a sample source; for the mainstage the sample source will be the completed baseline surveys. For the mainstage, learners are likely to provide email addresses that can be used after the course finishes, since they will know that this is the purpose of giving the address. This is not the case using contact details on the ILR where providers often submit in-house emails (e.g. name@provider.ac.uk) which cease to function after the end of the course.

5.34 The pilot survey, due to delays caused by Covid-19, also took place between seven and nine months after completion of the learning aims rather than five months, leading to likely reduced recall of the learning provision. In addition, in the mainstage learners will be aware of the survey from having carried out the baseline survey and will already have shown willingness to take part.

5.35 In addition, it has been recommended that a further reminder should be sent in the mainstage, which is likely to have an impact on response rates. This is relatively predictable and should increase the response rate by around one third, though again no precise figure can be put on this.

5.36 Taking into account all of these factors, each of which is likely to have at least some positive impact on response rates based on our experience with similar surveys, we believe it will be feasible to achieve a mainstage response rate of at least 10%, and we estimate that a response rate of around 14% may be achievable.

Appendix A – additional data tables

Baseline drop-off rate tables

5.37 The percentage drop off rate for each question is based on the number of respondents who answered the previous question. In instances where a subset of respondents was routed through the survey differently, the expected n= for the relevant questions has been taken into account and for section D, a cumulative drop off rate has been calculated.

Table A.22 Baseline survey – drop off rates in the online / CATI survey

Question	Routing, n=	Number of responses	% drop off
	Total online / CATI survey entrants =	7,933	
S1a	Ask all	4,855	38.8%
A1	Ask all	4,108	15.4%
B1	Ask all	3,466	15.6%
B2	Ask all	3,183	8.8%
C1	Ask all	3,023	5.1%
D1	Ask all	3,004	0.6%
D2	if D1 = 1/2 (Employed) n=965	965	0%
D3	if D1 = 1/2 (Employed) n=965	959	0.7%**
D4	if D3 = 1-3 (Gives income) n= 600	599	0%
D8	if D1 = 1/2 (Employed) n=965	952	1.3%**
D9	if D8 = 5-7 (Satisfied) n=569	566	0.5%
D10	If D8 = 1-3 (Dissatisfied) n=192	191	0.5%
D11	if D1 = 1/2 (Employed) n=965	942	2.4%**
D12	If D11 = 3 (Job not permanent) =245	244	0.4%
D14	if D1 = 1/2 (Employed) n=965	941	2.5%**
D15	if D1 = 1/2 (Employed) n=965	938	2.8%**
E1	Ask all	2,971	1%*
E2	Ask all	2,952	0.7%
E3	Ask all	2,943	0.4%
E4	Ask all	2,937	0.2%
F1	Ask all	2,884	1.2%
G1	Ask all	2,863	0.7%
G2	If G1 = 2-5 (Spends time with different age group) n=2657	2,651	0.2%
G3	Ask all	2,849	0.5%*
G4	If G3 = 2-5 (Spends time with different social class) n=2399	2,395	0.1%
G5	Ask all	2,837	0.5%*

Question	Routing, n=	Number of responses	% drop off
G6	If G5 = 2-5 (Spends time with different ethnicity) n=2533	2,531	0.1%
H1	Ask all	2,832	0.2%*
H2	If H1 = 1/2 (Volunteers) n=1141	1,045	8.4%
I2	If previously provided email or phone number at B2 n=2521	2,509	0.5%
I4	If previously provided email or phone number at B2 n=2521	2,494	1.1%
	Total completes =	2,794	

Source: IFF survey statistics
*Calculated from most recent 'Ask all' question. Some of the drop off will have occurred in the questions with additional routing
** Calculated from D1=1/2 n=965. Drop off rates are therefore cumulative and some of the drop off will have occurred in the questions with additional routing

Table A.23 Baseline survey – drop off rates in the online / CATI survey among those selecting a non-English language at S1a

Question	Routing, n=	Number of responses	% drop off
	Total selecting a non-English language at S1a =	313	
A1	Ask all	165	47.3%
B1	Ask all	96	41.8%
B2	Ask all	80	16.7%
C1	Ask all	71	11.3%
D1	Ask all	71	0.0%
D2	if D1 = 1/2 (Employed) n=31	31	0.0%
D3	if D1 = 1/2 (Employed) n=31	31	0.0%
D4	if D3 = 1-3 (Gives income) n= 17	17	0.0%
D8	if D1 = 1/2 (Employed) n=31	31	0.0%
D9	if D8 = 5-7 (Satisfied) n=15	15	0.0%
D10	If D8 = 1-3 (Dissatisfied) n=7	7	0.0%
D11	if D1 = 1/2 (Employed) n=31	31	0.0%
D12	If D11 = 3 (Job not permanent) =7	7	0.0%
D14	if D1 = 1/2 (Employed) n=31	31	0.0%
D15	if D1 = 1/2 (Employed) n=31	30	3.2%
E1	Ask all	69	1.4%
E2	Ask all	68	1.4%
E3	Ask all	66	2.9%
E4	Ask all	66	0.0%
F1	Ask all	63	4.5%
G1	Ask all	62	1.6%

Question	Routing, n=	Number of responses	% drop off
G2	If G1 = 2-5 (Spends time with different age group) n=59	59	0.0%
G3	Ask all	62	0.0%
G4	If G3 = 2-5 (Spends time with different social class) n=54	53	1.9%
G5	Ask all	61	0.0%
G6	If G5 = 2-5 (Spends time with different ethnicity) n=49	49	0.0%
H1	Ask all	60	1.6%
H2	If H1 = 1/2 (Volunteers) n=26	26	0.0%
I2	If previously provided email or phone number at B2 n=55	55	0.0%
I4	If previously provided email or phone number at B2 n=55	55	0.0%
	Total completes =	60	

Baseline non-response rate tables

Table A.24 Baseline survey non-responses per question – postal vs. online/CATI

	% Don't know responses			% Prefer not to say / Refused		
	Postal*	Online/CATI	Overall	Postal*	Online/CATI	Overall
B1 – student number	28.9%	28.8%	28.9%	5.2%	5.5%	5.5%
B1 – course start	9.2%	5.2%	5.3%	9.2%	1.6%	1.8%
C1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%
D1	1.3%	0.9%	0.9%	5.3%	2.2%	2.3%
D2	0.0%	4.8%	4.7%	8.3%	10.1%	10.1%
D3	33.3%	7.6%	8.0%	33.3%	29.7%	29.8%
D4	0.0%	2.0%	2.0%	0.0%	7.4%	7.3%
D8	0.0%	2.0%	1.9%	0.0%	4.3%	4.2%
D9	12.5%	1.1%	1.3%	0.0%	2.5%	2.4%
D10	0.0%	2.9%	2.9%	0.0%	6.5%	6.4%
D11	16.7%	5.3%	5.5%	16.7%	6.2%	6.4%
D12	0.0%	5.2%	5.1%	0.0%	7.4%	7.3%
D14	0.0%	9.6%	9.4%	8.3%	8.1%	8.1%
D15	16.7%	8.6%	8.8%	0.0%	14.1%	13.9%
E1	2.6%	1.7%	1.7%	3.9%	4.6%	4.6%
E2	9.2%	3.2%	3.3%	7.9%	4.7%	4.8%
E3	2.6%	1.0%	1.1%	2.6%	3.1%	3.1%
E4	9.2%	2.1%	2.3%	7.9%	4.2%	4.3%

	% Don't know responses			% Prefer not to say / Refused		
	Postal*	Online/CATI	Overall	Postal*	Online/CATI	Overall
F1_1	10.5%	9.1%	9.2%	7.9%	5.5%	5.5%
F1_2	5.3%	4.4%	4.4%	5.3%	4.4%	4.4%
F1_3	6.6%	4.4%	4.4%	3.9%	3.3%	3.3%
F1_4	2.6%	4.3%	4.2%	3.9%	3.1%	3.2%
F1_5	2.6%	3.2%	3.2%	3.9%	3.3%	3.3%
F1_6	5.3%	3.5%	3.6%	3.9%	3.6%	3.6%
G1	11.8%	1.4%	1.6%	9.2%	2.4%	2.6%
G2	3.4%	1.9%	1.9%	3.4%	1.1%	1.1%
G3	9.2%	4.3%	4.4%	10.5%	3.3%	3.5%
G4	5.9%	1.9%	2.0%	0.0%	1.0%	1.0%
G5	6.6%	2.5%	2.6%	5.3%	3.2%	3.3%
G6	3.0%	2.2%	2.2%	9.1%	0.6%	0.8%
H1	3.9%	1.5%	1.6%	6.6%	2.6%	2.7%
H2	10.3%	4.7%	4.8%	0.0%	2.3%	2.3%

Source: IFF survey statistics
*Low base sizes for postal responses means results fluctuate more widely that for the online responses

Table A.25 Baseline survey non-responses per question by completion language

	% Don't know responses			% Prefer not to say / Refused		
	Non-English	English	Overall	Non-English	English	Overall
B1 – student number	22.2%	29.0%	28.9%	4.8%	5.5%	5.5%
B1 – course start	4.8%	5.3%	5.3%	1.6%	1.8%	1.8%
C1	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%
D1	0.0%	0.9%	0.9%	3.2%	2.2%	2.3%
D2	4.8%	1.4%	4.7%	6.3%	3.0%	10.1%
D3	4.0%	8.1%	8.0%	36.0%	29.6%	29.8%
D4	6.7%	1.9%	2.0%	6.7%	7.3%	7.3%
D8	0.0%	2.0%	1.9%	4.0%	4.2%	4.2%
D9	0.0%	1.3%	1.3%	8.3%	2.3%	2.4%
D10	16.7%	2.4%	2.9%	16.7%	6.1%	6.4%
D11	8.0%	5.4%	5.5%	8.0%	6.3%	6.4%
D12	0.0%	5.2%	5.1%	20.0%	7.0%	7.3%
D14	20.0%	9.1%	9.4%	12.0%	8.0%	8.1%
D15	16.0%	8.5%	8.8%	28.0%	13.5%	13.9%
E1	1.6%	1.7%	1.7%	1.6%	4.6%	4.6%
E2	3.2%	3.3%	3.3%	3.2%	4.8%	4.8%

	% Don't know responses			% Prefer not to say / Refused		
	Non-English	English	Overall	Non-English	English	Overall
E3	0.0%	1.1%	1.1%	1.6%	3.1%	3.1%
E4	1.6%	2.3%	2.3%	3.2%	4.3%	4.3%
F1_1	4.8%	9.3%	9.2%	0.0%	5.7%	5.5%
F1_2	3.2%	4.4%	4.4%	0.0%	3.5%	4.4%
F1_3	1.6%	4.5%	4.4%	0.0%	3.4%	3.3%
F1_4	4.8%	4.2%	4.2%	0.0%	3.2%	3.2%
F1_5	4.8%	3.2%	3.2%	1.6%	3.3%	3.3%
F1_6	0.0%	3.6%	3.6%	3.2%	3.6%	3.6%
G1	0.0%	1.7%	1.6%	0.0%	2.6%	2.6%
G2	3.3%	1.9%	1.9%	0.0%	1.2%	1.1%
G3	3.2%	4.4%	4.4%	0.0%	3.6%	3.5%
G4	0.0%	2.0%	2.0%	1.8%	0.9%	1.0%
G5	3.2%	2.6%	2.6%	3.2%	3.3%	3.3%
G6	4.0%	2.1%	2.2%	0.0%	0.8%	0.8%
H1	3.2%	1.6%	1.6%	0.0%	2.7%	2.7%
H2	0.0%	4.9%	4.8%	0.0%	2.3%	2.3%
Average	4.6%	4.4%	4.5%	5.5%	4.8%	5.1%

Follow-up survey: targeting specific groups

Table A.26 Follow-up survey response: Telephone survey, specific groups targeted

	Telephone interviews aimed to achieve	% response rate prior to calling	% additional response rate from calling	% final response rate (including additional online responses)*	% response rate required**	Achieved the number of telephone interviews targeted?
Bloc 1: SEN Learners in Community Learning	81	2.8%	6.3%	9.9%	11.7%	No
Bloc 1: Mixed ethnic group	54	2.0%	2.5%	4.9%	4.4%	Yes
Bloc 1: Other ethnic groups	27	1.8%	1.2%	3.1%	2.3%	Yes
Bloc 2: AEB First Full L2***	3	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	10.9%	Yes
Bloc 2: AEB First Full L3	2	2.6%	20.5%	25.6%	8.7%	Yes
Bloc 2: Agriculture SSA***	5	5.7%	15.7%	21.4%	13.3%	Yes

Bloc 2: Engineering SSA***	6	3.8%	4.6%	8.4%	8.1%	Yes
Bloc 2: Construction SSA	38	0.9%	5.7%	6.7%	7.4%	No
Bloc 2: Retail SSA	14	3.0%	2.7%	5.7%	6.3%	No
Bloc 2: Leisure/Travel SSA	21	5.3%	4.2%	9.5%	13.1%	No
Bloc 2: Education SSA	16	6.7%	5.7%	13.9%	14.3%	No
Bloc 2: Company limited by guarantee (provider type)****	10	3.4%	2.5%	5.9%	11.5%	No
Bloc 2: CIC (provider type)****	11	5.3%	22.7%	28.7%	12.0%	Yes
Bloc 3: Kensington & Chelsea***	3	7.3%	8.2%	18.2%	10.1%	Yes
Bloc 3: Lone parents	14	2.9%	3.1%	7.3%	5.9%	Yes
Bloc 3: Level 3 prior attainment	5	3.3%	1.9%	7.1%	3.7%	Yes
Bloc 3: AEB English and Maths up to Level 2***	6	0.0%	20.4%	20.4%	11.4%	Yes
Additional groups where targeting is unlikely to be required for minimum analysis requirements, but where telephone calls were made for feasibility testing purposes:						
Bloc 2: Male	34	3.1%	1.8%	5.2%	0.8%	Yes
Bloc 3: 19- to 23-year-olds	40	2.4%	5.5%	8.9%	1.8%	Yes
Bloc 3: Level 2 prior attainment	20	2.4%	2.7%	6.7%	2.2%	Yes
Bloc 3: Private providers	40	4.0%	3.5%	8.6%	2.8%	No*****

*includes online completions during calling period; some completions are likely to have been driven by the reminder effect of the phone calls. **in order to achieve number of responses required by GLA per annum (400 unless otherwise specified), adjusted for sample window. ***target set lower, at 150 per annum. ****target set lower, at 200 per annum. *****deprioritised to test other targets more thoroughly first; could have been achieved easily if given normal priority. Source: IFF survey statistics

Appendix B – Full list of recommendations

Baseline survey recommendations

A. Include evidence of the impact that tutor involvement has on response rates in the mainstage provider training sessions; promote this as a key method of dissemination. Make training materials user-friendly for tutors to increase tutor buy-in.

B. Move some of the questions in Section B (those asking for learner contact details) to the end of the survey, so the start of the survey is less difficult or off-putting for learners to complete.

C. Change wording at question H2 on frequency of volunteering to make it more accessible unless current wording is needed for comparison purposes.

D. Translate the full survey into Arabic for the mainstage.

E. Provide additional guidance in the survey to help learners find their student number, and to explain why we are asking for it; emphasize to providers and tutors how important this number is for the success of the follow-up data, and ask tutors to help and encourage their learners to fill this in.

F. Provide further information around why we are asking for pay information, both as explanatory text within the survey and within learner-facing materials such as the learner website. We will also consider the question wording and answer options to see if the language can be made clearer for learners.

G. Extend the survey window to 4 weeks after the start of the course.

H. Aim to deliver mainstage training sessions as early as possible, to give providers maximum lead-in time before they need to launch the survey.

I. Encourage providers to invite all relevant members of staff and subcontractors to attend training sessions / view the training videos.

J. Develop training materials aimed specifically at tutors, to help engage them in the process (e.g. shorter training videos, bespoke PowerPoint slides, information on the types of questions that will be asked).

K. Introduce either a direct number or online chat function to allow providers to contact their liaison more quickly and easily.

L. Provide materials in both Word/PowerPoint and PDF formats, to allow providers to make adjustments if needed.

M. Review and revise the wording used in the materials to make it less formal and more engaging / user-friendly.

N. Add additional guidance to the training sessions / materials on how to handle reminders; amend the reminder email text to flag to learners that they only need to complete the survey once for each course.

O. Create a basic dashboard for providers to review their live response, including a function to calculate their overall response rate.

P. Make suggestions in the training sessions around how the QR code posters and information sheets can be utilised if tutors don't have the technology or time to go through the survey with learners during the class itself.

Q. Create easy to understand, visual instructions on how to complete the survey to help learners with low literacy or digital skills.

R. Create a 'participant friendly' FAQ document for tutors to share detailing how data is used, reasons questions are asked, and reconfirming that learners' details will not be used for marketing purposes. Ask tutors to share this information on screen or hand out leaflets for students to read in their own time.

S. Provide a copy of the questionnaire for providers and tutors, and guidance with talking points on why sections on well-being, employment and pay are asked and to explain certain terminology.

T. Remind providers and tutors in the training sessions that they should inform their learners that if they have accessibility issues or language barriers, they can request a telephone interview.

U. Support the general promotion of the survey and raise awareness through social media posts and website content.

V. Limit the number of uploads of new data from the ILR to one every three months.

W. Encourage providers to make a student number or ULN readily available to learners as part of the enrolment process, so that they can locate it at the time of the survey. They should also be encouraged to mention where learners could find this number in the email invite to the baseline survey.

X. Revise the baseline survey wording to make clear that unless some identifying information is provided, their survey responses cannot be taken into account.

Y. Revise the survey so that respondents are asked for contact details (and provided with assurances regarding confidentiality) at the end of the survey, once their purpose and importance is clear to the respondent.

Z. Ensure that communications with providers explain that the survey should go only go to learners within the eligible window.

AA. Amend the survey to ask for the date of the start of learning aim on a different page to the student ID, removing the risk of assumptions being made that this refers to the date of issue of the student ID.

Follow up survey recommendations

BB. Distribute the survey in relation to a single learning aim if the completion of these falls within the same two-week survey period or 'bloc'. In such cases, learning aims should be prioritised using a method to be discussed with GLA, for example taking into account quantity of GLA funding or qualification level.

CC. Keep the online survey period for the follow-up survey the same, since there would be little benefit in an extension.

DD. Send a second reminder to respondents and consider sending a third reminder.

EE. Consider enhancing the prize draw or improving how it is promoted in materials.

FF. Add a field to the baseline questionnaire to ask for the learner's own description of the learning aim they are responding about and use this to prompt learners in the follow-up survey.

GG. Add reassurances to the follow-up survey explaining the reasons why questions are being asked about pay.