

LEARNER SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT SERVICE

ANNUAL FET LEARNER SURVEY

**REPORT 2: EXTRA-CURRICULAR/SOCIAL ACTIVITIES &
PROGRESSION PLANNING**

2022-2023

**Create
Your
Future**

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**City
of Dublin**
Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
Education and Training Board

In this issue, we will share the over-arching findings across the scheme, from the analysis of questions related to Extra-Curricular/Social Activities and Progression. By sharing these findings, we hope to harness an understanding of what progression and extra-curricular activities currently look like in each service sphere and explore what learners want from their learning experience with City of Dublin ETB.

Format of Questions:

We provided multiple choice style questions for almost all the questions asked to learners. Within these questions, we always added the option of 'other' providing learners with the opportunity to voice additional feedback.

Extra-Curricular/Social Activities

Extra-Curricular/Social Activities was the second of the three themes explored in the learner survey following the response from last year's survey where **84.58%** of learners did not participate in extra-curricular/social activities. This year, it was recorded that **74.3%** of learners participated in some form of social activities. This marks a **311.59%** increase in participation which is a very encouraging response. This may be attributed to resourcing SCC link teachers and other initiatives, led by centre leadership teams.

It is also likely that centres proactively addressed this issue based on last year's findings, all of which might have contributed to the increase in participation.

Within this theme, we asked learners questions:

- What activities learners participated in
- How frequent the participation was
- What other activities learners are interested in

While **38%** of learners from Colleges of Further Ed stated that they would always participate in extra-curricular activities, **22%** of learners said they never participated.

In Youthreach and CTC, **36%** of learners stated that they always participated in extra-curricular activities.

Learners in Adult Education were asked the same question slightly differently. Since all learners in Adult Education are enrolled part-time courses and may attend classes for 2-8 hours per week, it was felt that their questions should be worded differently. Also, as many social activities offered to the learners are linked to their programme, they were asked the number of times they participated in social activities.

28% of learners said they participated more than 3 times during their course whereas **37%** of learners did not participate at all during their course.

It should be noted that for this theme, there are no findings for Training Centres and Prison Education.

The surveys for these two service spheres were engineered to have questions that only related to core, induction and progression. This theme has no correlation with the Prison Education service sphere. Training Centres were also not included in this theme. Courses delivered in this service sphere are not semester-based and many courses are short in duration, starting and ending every other week. Because of this, there is no tradition of centre-wide events.

Youthreach:

Learners were asked to choose from a variety of activities that they might have participated in and were also allowed to choose multiple activities.

The highest responses were recorded for:

- Gym – 39.55%
- Football – 39.55%
- Sports Day – 36.94%

We followed up on this by asking learners what other activities they would like to be offered. While Football and Gym were frequently cited, despite it being an option to select in the previous question, other more highly requested activities were:

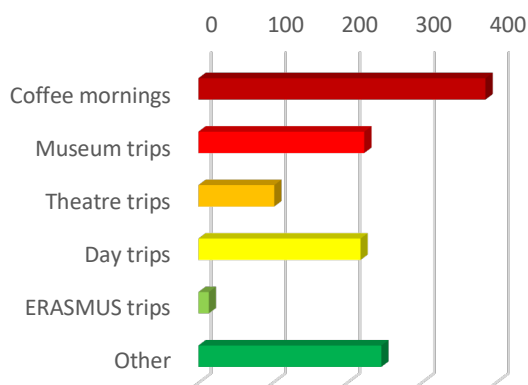
- Outdoor trips (within Ireland and abroad)
- Walks (hikes, hillwalks etc.)
- Sports (boxing, basketball, etc.)
- Arts and Craft

Adult Education

62.9% learners from Adult Education participated in social activities to varying extents.

54.44% of learners said they participated in coffee mornings while less than 2% of learners participated in ERASMUS trips. This is a slight contrast to Colleges of Further Education where just over 9% of learners partook in ERASMUS trips.

34.69% learners chose the option of ‘other’, where they referenced activities such as day trips, cinema and singing activities. As a response to this question, a very small percentage of learners cited lack of participation due to lack of time and not having any activities as part of their course.



What engagement with social activities looks like in Adult Education

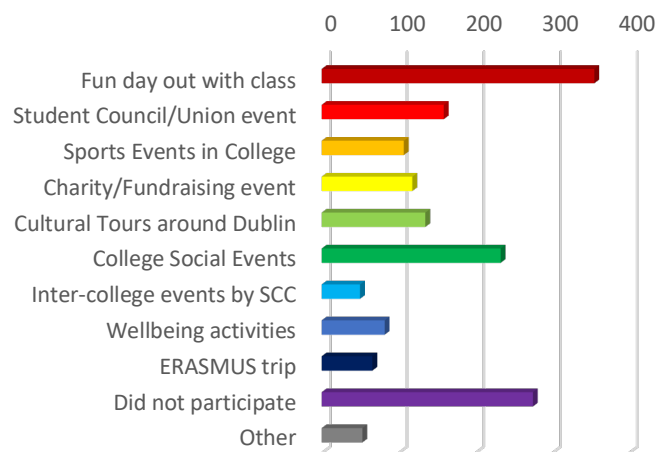
When asked what other activities learners would like their centre to organise, learners presented a large variety of activities that seemed of interest to them. Of the 20 or so different activities suggested by learners, the most popular were:

- Organisation of trips
- Visits to Museums, Art Galleries, Theatres etc.
- Singing and/or Music related
- Exercise and Fitness
- Social meetings/Get-togethers
- Sports
- Arts and Crafts

As some of these requests speak to curricular offerings (e.g. arts and crafts, music), the suggestions may have more reference to program levels and therefore potentially displays an interest in attending more diverse programmes for some learners.

Colleges of Further Education

Learners from Colleges of Further Education were provided a list of activities that they might have participated in and were given the opportunity to choose multiple options.



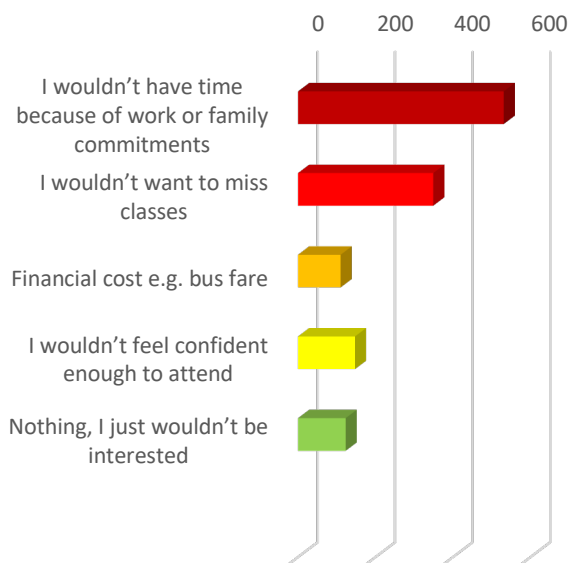
Question: Which of the following did you get an opportunity to participate in?

‘Fun day out with class’ was the highest response with **38.86%** responses. Unfortunately, the second highest response of **29.44%** was to the option ‘I have not taken part in any extra-curricular events’ while the third highest response of **24.94%** was to the option

‘College Social Events such as Christmas or end-of-term parties’.

We wanted to understand the barriers learners might experience in participating in extra-curricular activities. As a response to this, it was recorded that almost **57%** of learners had ‘Work and family commitments’ while just over **13%** of learners selected the option ‘Nothing, I just wouldn’t be interested’.

It is worth noting that an additional reason for not participating mentioned by learners was around prioritising coursework/having a lot of coursework to complete and not having adequate time in their class for participation in extra-curricular activities. Furthermore, for **15.7%** of learners, lack of confidence was listed as a barrier.

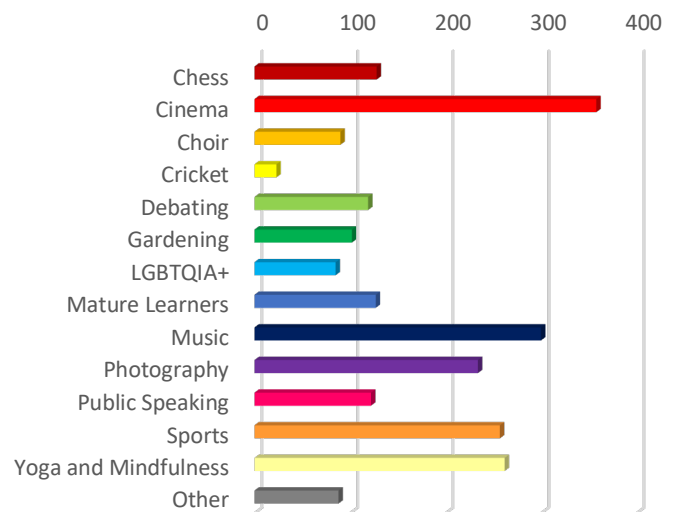


Question: What would prevent you from participating in extra-curricular events?

Delving deeper into the theme, we wished to understand what societies and clubs might be of interest to learners.

While Cinema was the most popular answer, it was followed by Music, Yoga and Mindfulness and Sports. The following were the top responses recorded from the qualitative feedback provided by learners.

- Gaming
- Book Club
- Arts and Crafts
- Exercise and Fitness



Societies and Clubs that might be of interest to learners in Colleges of Further Education

The survey results suggest that learners are interested in a range of activities that could be offered across the scheme and ones which do not necessarily require much commitment. It may be worth exploring the possibility of citywide clubs to cater for some of these interests.

Commonalities within service spheres

A few specific activities emerged as being commonly preferred or requested by learners from all service spheres.

- Organisation of trips (including outdoor activities) – 184 comments
- Arts and Crafts - 34 comments
- Exercise and Fitness – 34 comments

Progression Planning

Progression planning was the last of the three themes explored in the survey.

Within this theme, we asked learners questions regarding Work Experience Placements, Progression Routes and Planning for Next Steps.

Some of the questions asked to learners were:

- If you completed a Work Experience Placement, how did you benefit from it? (Training Centres and Colleges of Further Education)
- How is the course preparing you for next steps?
- Where did you get information about progression routes

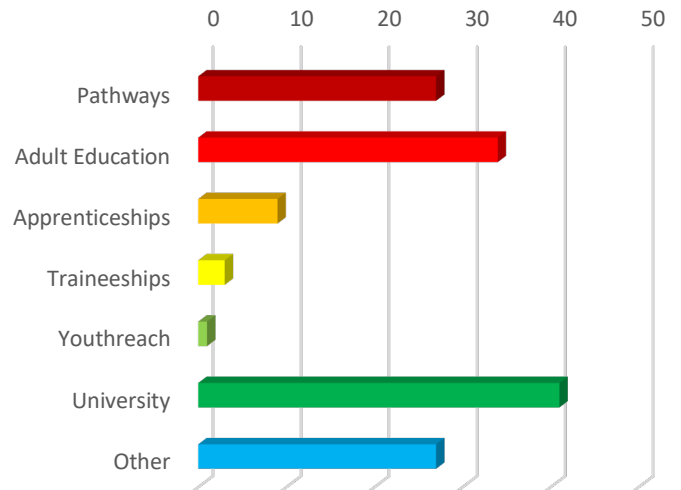
Prison Education

82% of learners from Prison Education stated that they felt encouraged to try other subjects and new skills having completed their first course/cert in school.

On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being extremely unlikely and 10 being extremely likely, learners were asked to express the likelihood of them continuing education after they were released from prison. On average, the possibility of continuing education post prison was scaled at **7.17/10**

We wished to trace the educational routes learners might pursue once they had completed their prison sentence. We therefore asked learners where they planned to continue education after leaving prison. **29.07%** of learners seemed most keen to enrol in university. **24.11%** of learners were recorded as having an interest in Adult Education while **19.14%** of learners were inclined to join Pathways.

From the additional feedback provided by learners, it was recorded that some learners simply did not wish to continue education, while others wished to work and/or return to work.



Question: Where do you plan to continue your education after leaving prison?

Lastly, we asked learners in Prison Education if they believed their voice was valued and heard.

While **80%** of learners said yes, it is important to note that around **20%** or so learners did not respond positively to this question. The analysis of feedback responses revealed little to no comments from learners about not feeling heard or valued. This suggests that perhaps reasons for not feeling heard and valued might be necessary to be investigated next year.

Below is a small selection of comments from learners in Prison Education about their educational experience.

‘In my opinion teachers should continue doing what there doing because your efforts are life changing for prisoners’ whom wish to change and better them self.’
- Learner (25-29 years of age)

‘...The school is the shining light in the prison and brightens the light of so many prisoners.’

- Learner (30-34 years of age)

‘Encouraging participation in school classes and giving students practical assistance through education that will help them in their post release life.’

- Learner (50-54 years of age)

‘School is working great to make young people in prison feel valued and pursue their ideal path in life where they can make a difference.’

- Learner (25-29 years of age)

‘Completing my first course has encouraged me to progress within the prison education system and to further my personal skills to better myself once released and those around me.’

- Learner (25-29 years of age)

‘Encouraging people to achieve their potential regardless of their starting point.’

- Learner (60-64 years of age)

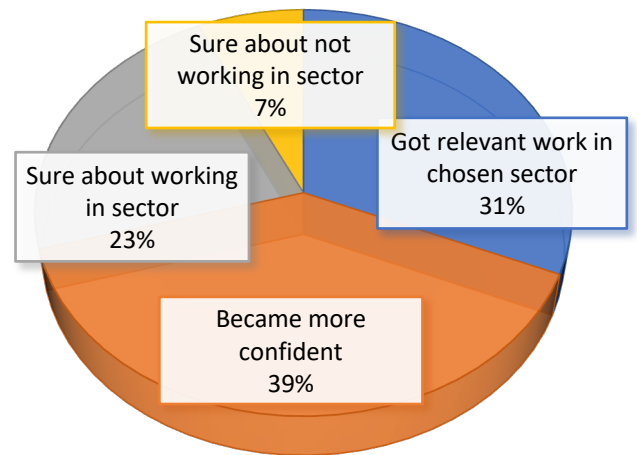
‘Maybe some more education around how to gain employment when released.’

- Learner (45-49 years of age)

Work Experience Placements

495 learners from Colleges of Further Education and 16 learners from Training Centres completed a Work Experience Placement.

While **93%** of the learner responses speak to the work experience placement having had a beneficial impact **7%** of learners came to the realisation that they did not in fact wish to pursue a career in the sector.



Question: If you completed a Work Experience Placement, how did you benefit from it?

On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being not at all beneficial and 10 being extremely beneficial, learners were asked to express how beneficial they found the Work Experience Placement to be. On average, the learners rated the Work Experience Placements at **8.2/10**

In the follow-up feedback, **75%** of learners through how they found the Work Experience Placement to be helpful and that the overall experience was very enjoyable. Only **5%** of learners referred to any sort of negative feedback.

Below is a small selection of comments from learners about their Work Experience Placements.

‘There’s no instructions on what we as students on placement should be doing on the work experience. I feel like an outline would help give the placement owners an idea as to what tasks to give us students on placement, and may help us make the most use of the placement too. Some instructions or suggestions could have possibly been beneficial and helpful in this regard to help make most of the experience and feel less shy about being in the placement.’

- Learner from College of Further Ed (25-29 years of age)

-It was very difficult to acquire work experience. As a compulsory component of the course, more could be done by the college to support students in acquiring placements. Once acquired,, I was at the mercy of my placement supervisor's availability, which meant placement sometimes clashed with classes. Students have no control as we are asking for them to help us without offering anything in return. We, as observers only, also have little to contribute in the clinic, they are accommodating us completely, which leaves as in no position to barter or make demands of them. I have to choose between attending class or placement on occasion as a result.'

- Learner from College of Further Ed (30-34 years of age)

'My work experience gave me a good insight into what the job entails, the only downside was I wish it was more hands-on and I was given more to do.'

- Learner from College of Further Ed (35-39 years of age)

'My work experience enhanced my learning and I could put into practice what I learnt in college.'

- Learner from College of Further Ed (50-54 years of age)

'There was not clear communication as to what I would be doing in the office. Both my managers struggle to find enough work for me to do and my mentor is very slow to communicate with me or to find me work to do. Also, I was never informed whether or not I would get a full-time position with the office and this is crucial information to have before my contract runs out not after'

- Learner from Training Centre (30-34 years of age)

'Gained an overall knowledge of the trade'

- Learner from Training Centre (30-35 years of age)

'It is much better if the college helps you find an appropriate work placement'

- Learner from College of Further Ed (18-19 years of age)

'It's a good way to get confidence in the area you want to work in but should advertise more job opportunities in college'

- Learner from College of Further Ed (20-24 years of age)

'My work experience placement was very enjoyable as I became very confident, my social skills have vastly improved and I got to see the work of different departments.'

- Learner from College of Further Ed (18-19 years of age)

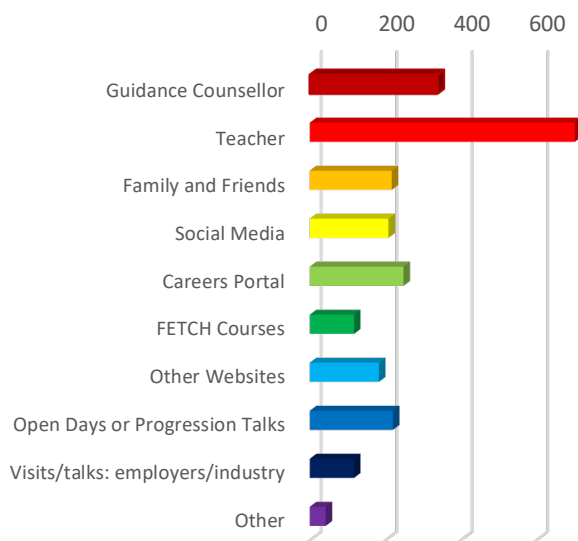
'My particular work experience had little guidance, leaving me to taking far more initiative than I was comfortable with at this level'

- Learner from College of Further Ed (20-24 years of age)

Progression Routes

While we offer services that aid learners in receiving information about progression routes, we felt it important to trace what sources of information are most actively used and how we can better inform learners about progression routes.

For these aspects of the survey, data was collected specifically from learners in Colleges of Further Education and Training Centres.



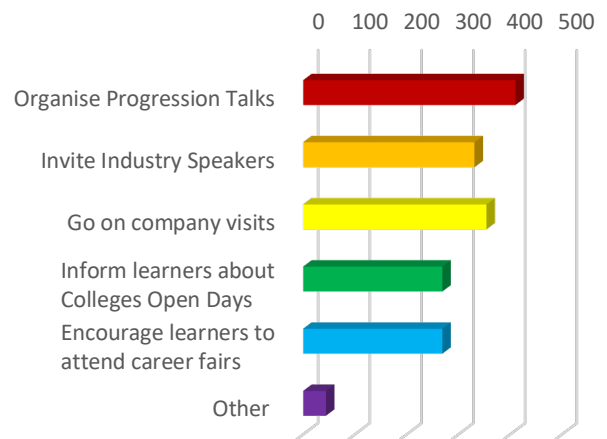
Question: Where did you get the information about progression routes?

The highest response was for ‘teachers’ at **69.2%**. This was followed by Guidance Counsellors, recorded at **32.94%** and Careers Portal at **24.26%**

Additional feedback was limited and the only commonality regarding sources from where information about progression routes is received was ‘word of mouth’.

We asked learners how we could better inform them about progression routes. Organisation of progression talks, going on company visits and inviting Industry speakers garnered the highest responses.

No commonalities as such emerged from this aspect of the survey.



Question: How can we better inform you about progression routes?

Next Steps

For this aspect of the survey, we asked learners the following:

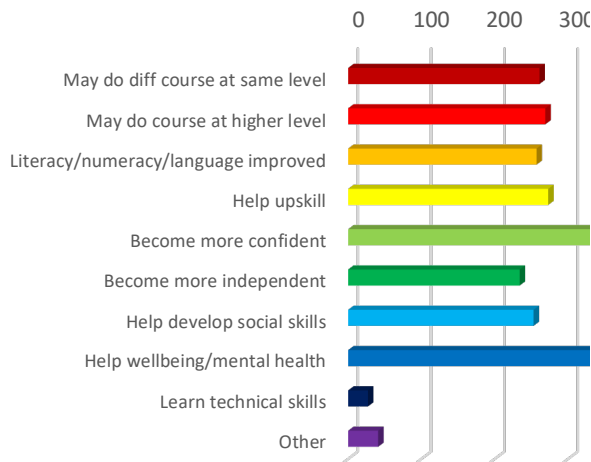
- How is the course preparing you for the next steps?
- Planning for next steps

Adult Education

Within the sphere of Adult Education, the options provided to learners were slightly different. Due to the nature of the course and the learning contexts and pathways for this cohort, it was decided that the wording for their options should be amended.

54.16% of learners stated that the course had helped them become more confident. **49.64%** of learners said the course had helped them with their wellbeing/mental health and **38.5%** of learners expressed that the course was helping them upskill. The lowest response,

recorded at **3.87%**, was for courses helping learners develop technical skills.



Question: How is your course preparing you for the next steps? (Adult Education)

Youthreach, Training Centres and Colleges of Further Education

Learners from these service spheres were asked almost the exact same question. The only difference was in the options provided under the question. Two specific options were not asked to learners in Youthreach. These were 'I am now confident I want to work in this sector' and 'I now know that I do not want to work in this sector'.

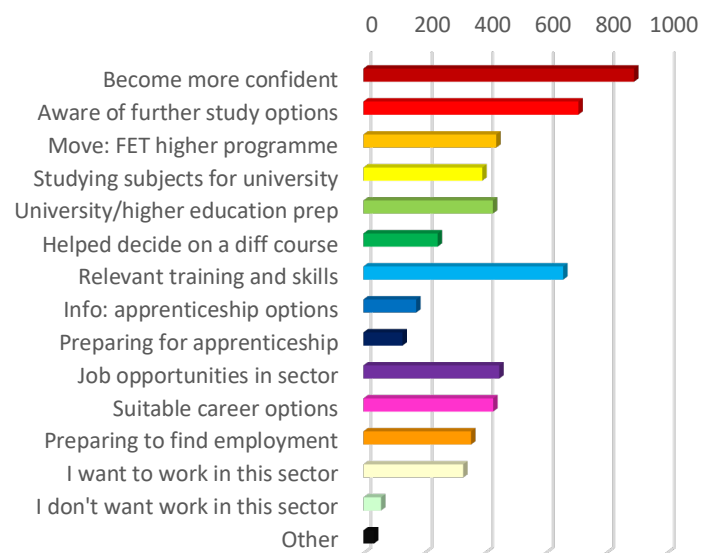
69.01% of learners believed that their course had helped them become more confident. This figure is a similar response to the statistical response from Adult Education.

The second highest response, recorded at **54.79%** was for the option, 'It is making me aware of options for further study.' Out of the three service spheres, Youthreach had the strongest response to this option. This response is similarly echoed by learners at Adult Education, recorded at 37.94%. The third highest response was for the option, 'It is giving me relevant training skills' recorded at **50.92%** which is also reflected by learners in Adult Education. In regards to this option,

Training Centres had the strongest response of the three service spheres.

The lowest figures were recorded for the following:

- I was informed of apprenticeship options (13.44%)
- I am preparing for an apprentice (9.96%)
- I now know that I do not want to work in this sector (Colleges of Further Education and Training Centres only) (4.48%)

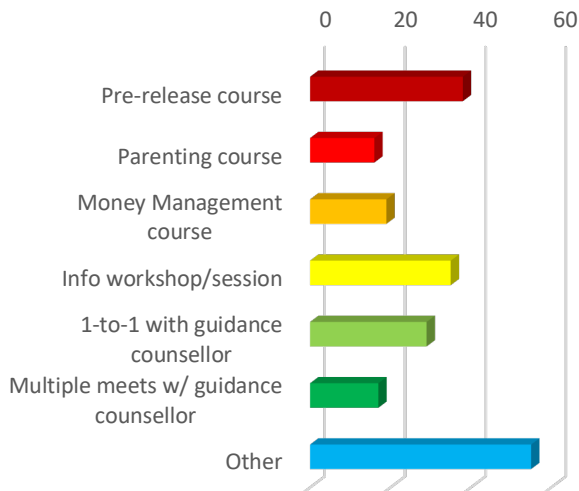


Question: How is your course preparing you for the next steps? (Youthreach, Training Centres and Colleges of further Education)

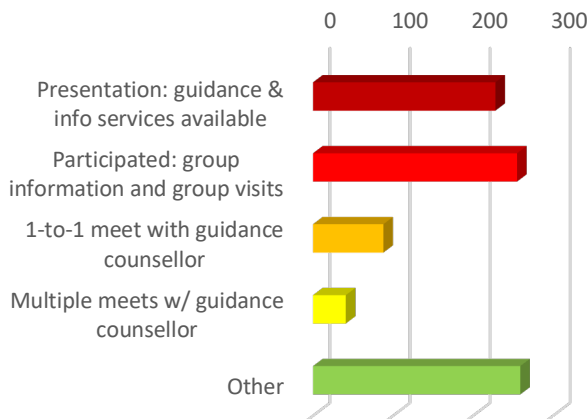
Perhaps due to the comprehensive nature of the question and the wide-ranging options provided, additional feedback didn't generate much of a result. Hence, no commonalities emerged either.

Lastly, we asked learners what services and resources they had availed when planning for next steps.

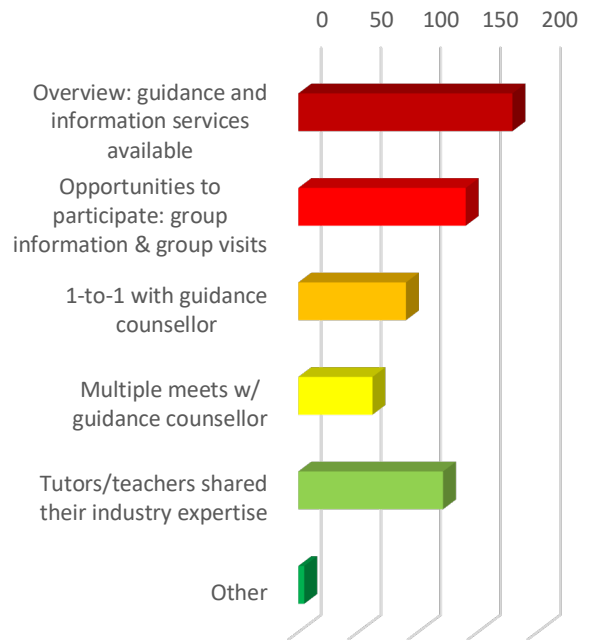
The options were tweaked slightly to fit the nuanced learning environment of learners in Prison Education. For all others service spheres, all options were kept the same.



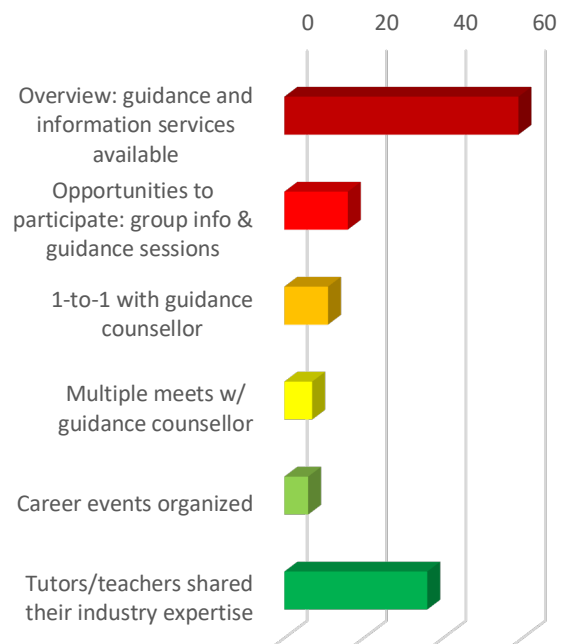
Question: Planning for next steps: Have you availed of any of the following to help you prepare for life after release? (Prison Education)



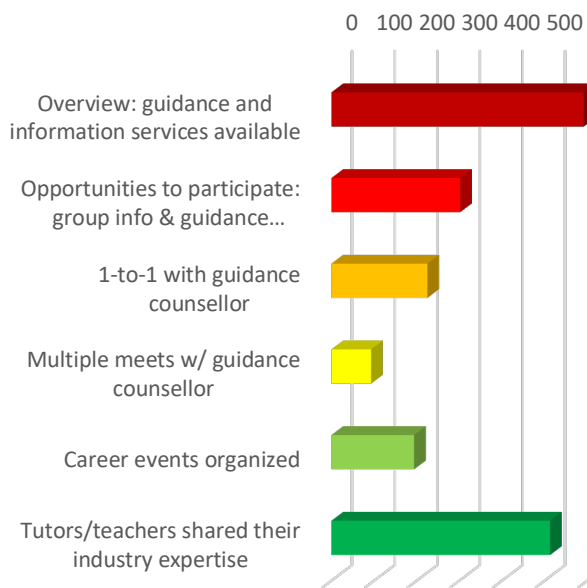
Planning for next steps: Which of the following statements are relevant to you? (Adult Education)



Question: Planning for next steps: Which of the following statements are relevant to you? (Youthreach & CTC)



Question: Planning for next steps: How many of the following were you aware of and made available to you? (Training Centres)



Question: Planning for next steps: How many of the following were you aware of and made available to you? (Colleges of Further Education)

Within this aspect of the survey, there were 3 options that across the scheme were similar in context.

- Attendance and/or participation in information sessions and visits (34.88%)
- One-to-one meetings with guidance counsellors to discuss career and education pathways (20.66%)
- Multiple meetings with guidance counsellors to discuss career and education pathways (10.26%)

From the spheres of Adult Education and Colleges of Further Education, there was a recurring sentiment around the field of guidance. The findings suggest that the demand for guidance services outweighs the current provision in both colleges and adult education.

FINAL FEEDBACK

At the very end of the survey, we asked learners two open-ended questions, *'What should we keep doing?'* and *'What can we do better?'*. We received 1349 and 1271 responses respectively. It was noted that at multiple times there was a crossover in what was stated by learners. Learners might not have read the questions carefully or perhaps we need to simplify the questions to make them clearer. An example of this is where learners might have criticisms or complaints and instead of writing about it under the question, *'What can we do better?'*, it would be noted under *'What should we keep doing?'*. Despite the cross wiring of responses, we have noted commonalities. They've been compiled as per the response to the individual questions.

'What should we keep doing?'

The purpose of this question was to allow learners to provide services, supports, resources etc. that seem favourable and have in some form or the other aided learners during their learner journey.

Commonalities across service spheres that emerged as a response to this question included:

- *'Keep doing what you are doing'* (40.32%)
- Praise for tutors/teachers and staff
- Option of being offered more courses
- Social Events/Extra-curricular Activities
- Student Supports
- Informing students
- Communication between learners and tutors/teachers
- IT/Tech support and provision of necessary equipment
- Inviting industry speakers/Work Trips

Below is a small selection of comments from learners about what we should keep doing.

‘Keep on letting people know if there are more up to date training in our fields. And courses.’

- Learner from Training Centre (50-54 years of age)

‘Exactly what is being done is great, maybe more interaction with the new commitals, ie interviews, prison officers often refuse to bring prisoners over for interviews if their name is not on the daily school list.’

- Learner from Prison Education (40-44 years of age)

‘I enjoy the mutual respect we get from the teachers and the relationships with the teachers, they care more than regular school.’

- Learner from Youthreach (18-19 years of age)

‘My experience of the course and the centre has been wonderful and has really sparked an interest in education, in no small part because of our wonderful teacher.’

- Learner from Adult Ed (60-64 years of age)

‘Just keep doing what you are doing. You’re going to encounter stubborn and non-motivational students but I saw them in my course and they’ve changed to try their best due to what this college is willing to do for them. To help them to see their potential.’

- Learner from College of Further Ed (20-24 years of age)

‘What can we do better?’

Like the previous question, the intent here was to hear from learners the issues they faced in their learning environment.

Commonalities that emerged across service spheres included:

- Nothing to do better/Everything is good (17.97%)
- More classes and courses
- Social Events/Extra-curricular Activities/Activities for classes
- IT/Tech support and provision of necessary equipment
- More information about course, progression routes
- Student Supports
- Work Placements/Support with Career and Inviting industry speakers/Work Trips
- Improve café and café provisions
- Access to educational resources
- Communication between learners and tutors/teachers

Below is a small selection of comments from learners about what we can do better.

‘Push for higher salary from hiring companies. Shorten apprenticeship program.’

- Learner from Training Centre (25-29 years of age)

‘More outside speakers and improve on existing IT skills especially coding.’

- Learner from Prison Education (55-59 years of age)

‘Organise activities related to careers that students would like to do in the future.’

- Learner from Youthreach (20-24 years of age)

‘Registration morning could be better. First come, first served, instead of queuing for two to three hours.’

- Learner from Adult Ed (65+ years of age)

‘More assistance for assignments for mature students who haven’t been in a school settings in secondary school.’

- Learner from College of Further Ed (40-44 years of age)