

OpinionPanel

Report for YPLA: Single Equality Scheme Learner Consultation

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CONTENTS

Introduction and Methodology	3
Summary	7
Perceptions of equal opportunities in learning	11
Personal experiences of inequality in learning	32
Bullying and challenging behaviour	42
Support for disabilities and learning difficulties	47
Provision of information on equal opportunities	50
Appendix 1 - Sample	53
Appendix 2 - Questionnaire	55

INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY



INTRODUCTION

Background

The Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) is currently undertaking a public consultation on their Single Equality Scheme (SES). The SES sets out how the YPLA will fulfil its duties to promote equal opportunities; avoid discrimination; place the advancement of inclusion, equality and diversity at the centre of its work and fulfil the requirements of its remit in a way which promotes equality.

As part of the consultation process, the YPLA wanted to include the views of learners who are affected by their work. These learners comprise those who are aged 16-19 (excluding apprentices), learners aged up to 24 who have a learning difficulty and those enrolled in academies.

In order to obtain the views of these learners, the YPLA asked OpinionPanel to conduct research with members of The Learner Panel. In particular, they wanted to include the views of learners from minority groups, including learners with physical disabilities and learning difficulties and those from black and minority ethnic groups. The findings from the research will feed into the response to the consultation.

This report covers the following topics in detail:

- Views on whether learners from a range of backgrounds are given equal opportunities in their learning.
- Personal experiences of inequality in learning due to gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status:
 - Enrolling on desired course
 - Retention in learning
 - Reaching full potential
 - Bullying
- Impact of bullying and support received
- Required and received support for learning difficulties and disabilities
- Information disseminated by learning providers on equality in learning.

Objectives

The key objective of this project was to better understand the experiences of equality and inequality in learning and how well providers deal with these issues amongst learners from a wide range of backgrounds.

By seeking the opinions and experiences of learners across the spectrum of those funded by the YPLA, fulfils the aim of including the learner voice within the consultation.

The Learner Panel

The Learner Panel is a new platform for online research, which is managed by the YPLA and co-funded with the Skills Funding Agency and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to help organisations in the FE sector improve their access to learners for conducting quantitative and qualitative research.

Any questions....

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METHODOLOGY

Methodology

This project was undertaken using an online questionnaire with a sample of members of the Learner Panel. Fieldwork took place between 12th and 24th January.

Sample definition and size

The sample was drawn from the Learner Panel and included learners whose education or training is funded by the YPLA. These include:

1. 16-19 year olds undertaking education or training attending FE college, sixth form college, school sixth form, training providers or in the workplace (excluding apprentices).
2. 14-18 year olds attending an academy school.
3. 20-24 year olds with a learning difficulty undertaking education or training in FE college and sixth form college.

The research primarily sought responses from learners with learning difficulties, physical disabilities and those from black and ethnic minority groups.

In total 292 interviews were achieved. Minimum quotas were set to ensure responses were achieved from a wide range of sample sizes.

Although several reminders and an enhanced incentive was offered, it was not possible to meet all quotas. The final sample was broken down as follows:

	Sample group	Quota set	Achieved sample
16-19 in FE	Total	180	239
	BME	50	114
	Disability	50	84
	Learning difficulty	50	32
14-18 in academy school	Total	50	50
	BME	15	22
	Disability	15	18
	Learning difficulty	15	3
20-24 in FE	Learning difficulty	20	3

See Appendix A for a full breakdown of the sample.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed by OpinionPanel in consultation with the YPLA. It included 20 questions, comprising both closed and open styles. See Appendix B for the full questionnaire.

On average, the survey took 7 minutes to complete.

Screening questions

A screening question was included to confirm the learning provider attended by the respondent. Those not currently attending an FE college, 6th form college, school 6th form, academy school, training centre or in work based learning were screened out.

Incentives

Respondents were awarded a £1 Bonusbond shopping voucher for taking part in the survey.

ANALYSIS AND DELIVERABLES

Report

This report has been divided into sections according to the key themes explored in the questionnaire. It provides findings from both the quantitative and qualitative elements of the research. The range of views and experiences of learners on those themes are highlighted and differences between different types of learners explored (where sample sizes allow). Verbatim quotes are included to illuminate the findings.

Small base sizes

Due to the sample size for this project, in many cases base sizes are very small. Where small base sizes are identified (e.g. where less than 50 respondents have answered a given question), caution should be exercised.

Sample representation

It should be noted that the sample for this project is not representative of the population of learners funded by the YPLA and the findings should therefore not be taken as being a reflection of this

population. It is a subset of learners who meet a particular profile (are disabled and/or have a learning difficulty and/or belong to a black or ethnic minority group). The research should therefore be used as a small scale study of learner views and experiences.

SUMMARY



SUMMARY

Inequality in learning is not seen as a widespread problem but its existence is present

Only a minority of respondents felt that learners experienced inequality in their learning on the basis of their gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status. This was particular the case for gender (only 4% of respondents felt that gender inequality existed in learning for males and 11% for females), religion (12%) or ethnicity (16%). This figures, however, did rise when considering learners who are gay, lesbian or bisexual (20%), are transgender (24%), disabled (27%) or have a learning difficulty (28%). Given the sample for this research was heavily skewed towards learners from BME groups or who have a disability or learning difficulty, it might have been expected that these figures be higher.

In fact, in only a few instances were these figures higher when learners were questioned about the existence of inequality amongst learners whose profile they shared. For example, those affiliated

to a particular religion or belief were more likely to believe that religious learners are not given equal opportunities. This was also the case for BME and gay, lesbian and bisexual learners, who were more likely to believe that learners from these groups are not given equal opportunities.

However, learners with disabilities or learning difficulties were as likely to believe that learners from this group are given the opportunity to learn new skills and reach their potential as respondents not from these groups.

The reasons learners gave to explain the existence of inequality within the learning environment were varied

Those respondents who expressed a belief that learners from a particular group were not given equal opportunities in learning were asked why they thought this inequality existed and their responses were coded. Some common themes existed regardless of the learner group being questioned about. These included:

- Availability of resources to ensure

participation in learning is possible e.g. accessibility for learners with mobility problems or support provided for those with learning difficulties.

- Opportunities not made available to all e.g. enrollment on courses or attendance of trips and events if the correct resources were not in place.

- Staff and students misunderstanding a learner's condition or circumstances, leading to problems with learners feeling ignored, unsupported and in some cases leading to bullying.

- Staff insufficiently trained or knowledgeable about a particular learner group or condition causing learners' needs to go unmet.

- Stereotyping of learners by staff e.g. assuming learners with a disability or learning difficulty should be in the lowest ability group; believing learners to be good or bad a subjects based on their ethnicity.

- Bullying by learners and staff making the victim lose confidence in their own abilities

- Fear of prejudice held learners back from following their preferred learning path if they felt they would be in the minority and subject to bullying.

SUMMARY

A minority of learners had negative personal experiences in their learning environment

Only a minority of respondents had personal experiences of feeling unable to undertake a course (20%), remain in learning (14%) or fulfill their potential in learning (15%) as a result of their gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status.

Common themes explained why learners had experienced these negative events:

- Being in the minority was a major factor - fear of being in the minority prevented learners enrolling on a course as they were concerned about being bullied, not making friends or seen as being different for doing a course that was not suited for them e.g. being female on a course populated by males. Actually being in the minority also hindered some learners ability to remain in learning or achieving their potential as the reality of prejudice, bullying and difficulties forming social groups was experienced.

- A lack of provision in terms of accessibility and support was also a barrier to undertaking courses, remaining in them and achieving a learner's full potential. Sometimes the option to undertake a course was simply not there for learners with particular support or accessibility needs, while for others health problems made full participation on a course challenging. These challenges were not always well understood or supported by staff.

Bullying and challenging behaviour was experienced by 28% of learners

28% of learners had experienced bullying or challenging behaviour within their learning environment because of their background or circumstances. This was higher for learners with a disability (38%), learning difficulty (34%) or whose sexual orientation was gay, lesbian or bisexual (52%). When giving further details about their experiences, most explained the reason why they felt they had been bullied e.g. due to their ethnicity, others told of the impact it had on their learning - often resulting in difficulties attending classes

and a loss of confidence and some told of how they felt let down by staff who failed to intervene or provide support.

A large number of learners did not receive any support for the bullying or challenging behaviour they had experienced, either because they did not ask for it or because it was not provided or the situation was ignored by staff. For those who did receive support, this came in many forms, sometimes from the learning provider e.g. intervention by staff, counselling and mentoring or mediation and on other occasions from parents, fellow students and friends.

Most learners are receiving good support for their disability or learning difficulty

Learners had received a wide range of support for their disability or learning difficulty, including modifications to facilitate their learning such as large print handouts, being able to sit close to the board and being given extra time in exams.

SUMMARY

Additional help was also received from staff, both informally through extra provision made by teachers after lessons or more formally through mentoring, counselling and 1-1 support. Other assistance included provision of equipment, modifications to teaching methods and attendance of student support groups. Learners also felt supported when staff were understanding of their condition, particularly during challenging periods and by being able to discuss their needs. Many learners however, said that they did not receive support, either because they hadn't needed any or requested any while a small number commented that they do not currently receive enough support.

When asked directly, many (33%) felt that they did not need any additional support on top of what they already received. Others, however, did say that they would benefit from either more of the support they currently receive or something in addition e.g. better awareness and understanding from staff, greater flexibility during periods of difficulty, tailored teaching and additional teaching.

Most learning providers are informing their students about equal opportunities in learning

The majority of learners had received some form of education or information on equality in learning from their provider (68%). This came in a range of formats: information in written form such as leaflets, handbooks etc, within PHSE classes or as part of formal teaching for other courses and special events and talks including assemblies.

Some learners were full of praise for the stance taken and way information was disseminated by providers. Others had not received anything formal but felt that equality was important within their provider's ethos. However, some learners reported that the information they had received felt more like a 'tick box' exercise that staff did not take seriously and were just going through the motions to satisfy the provider's policy or Ofsted.

PERCEPTIONS OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN LEARNING

This chapter investigates views on whether learners from a range of different backgrounds and circumstances are given equal opportunities in their learning and the reasons why they believe inequality occurs.



Perceptions of equality in learning

Only a minority of respondents felt that learners from each of the groups being asked about were not given an equal opportunity to learn new skills and reach their potential because of their background or circumstances. However, in some cases this minority was actually quite large. In particular learners with a disability or learning difficulty were considered not to receive equal opportunities in their learning by 27% and 28% of respondents respectively. Sexual orientation was also an area where some considered inequality to be a problem - 20% of respondents thought learners who are gay, lesbian or bisexual do not experience equal opportunities and 24% believed this was true for transgender learners. Gender and ethnicity were not seen to have such a negative impact on equality in learning.

	Disability	Learning difficulty	BME	Women	Men	Religious belief	Gay, lesbian, bisexual	Transgender
Yes - people are given equal opportunities	60%	65%	77%	86%	93%	82%	68%	49%
No - people are not given equal opportunities	27%	28%	16%	11%	4%	12%	20%	24%
Don't know	13%	8%	7%	4%	3%	6%	12%	27%

Q6. For each group, please state whether, in your experience, they are given the opportunity to learn new skills and reach their full potential or not.

Base: All learners (292)

Perceptions of equality in learning

While you might expect that learners from the groups being asked about would be more likely to report the existence of inequality in learning, this was not always the case. Learners with disabilities or learning difficulties were as likely to believe that learners from this group are given the opportunity to learn new skills and reach their potential as respondents not from these groups.

Those affiliated to a particular religion or belief were more likely to believe that religious learners are not given equal opportunities. This was also the case for BME and gay, lesbian and bisexual learners, who were more likely to believe that learners from these groups are not given equal opportunities.

N.B. in most cases, sample sizes are very small and the findings should be treated with caution.

	Disability		Learning difficulty		Religious belief		Gay, lesbian bisexual	
	Learners with a disability	Learners without a disability	Learners with a learning difficulty	Learners without a learning difficulty	Learners with a religious belief	Learners without a religious belief	Gay, lesbian, bisexual learners	Heterosexual learners
Yes - people are given equal opportunities	64%	58%	63%	65%	78%	87%	58%	69%
No - people are not given equal opportunities	28%	27%	32%	27%	15%	7%	35%	19%
Don't know	8%	15%	5%	8%	6%	6%	6%	12%

Q6. For each group, please state whether, in your experience, they are given the opportunity to learn new skills and reach their full potential or not.

Base: All learners (292)

Perceptions of equality in learning

Table continues from previous page.

	Gender - female		Gender - male		Ethnicity	
	Female learners	Male learners	Female learners	Male learners	BME learners	White learners
Yes - people are given equal opportunities	86%	85%	95%	85%	70%	85%
No - people are not given equal opportunities	11%	10%	3%	12%	24%	7%
Don't know	3%	5%	3%	3%	6%	8%

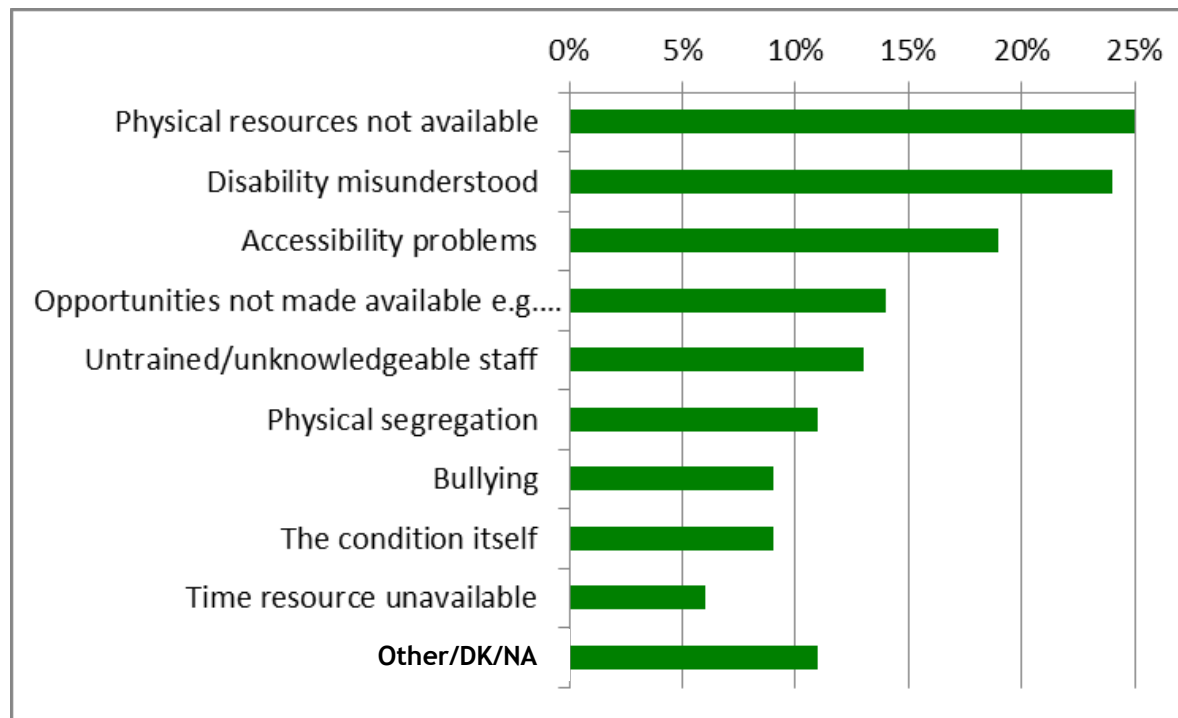
Q6. For each group, please state whether, in your experience, they are given the opportunity to learn new skills and reach their full potential or not.

Base: All learners (292)

Perceptions of equality in learning - disability

Those respondents who expressed a belief that learners from a particular group were not given equal opportunities in learning were asked why they thought this inequality existed. Their coded responses are below.

The most frequently cited reasons for disabled learners being prevented from learning new skills and reaching their potential were physical resources being unavailable and the disability being misunderstood by staff and fellow learners.



Q7a. In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why being disabled prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6a (80)

Perceptions of equality in learning - disability

Physical resources not available

There are barriers to people staying in mainstream school when they are capable of being there, for example a boy tried to join my school but the school could not provide the help he needed so he left.

Its difficult to provide for certain disabilities and not everywhere can afford to have the necessary facilities.

Disability misunderstood / bullying

Discrimination from other students. Some people treat disabled people like they have a mental problem when they may not.

I believe that people do not know or are unaware of how to interact with the disabled. therefore, they are pushed to one side as it is easier than embarrassing them. More awareness of how to cope with it should be given in order to help them reach their potential. More awareness will make it easier for people to find ways to help the disabled and think of creative ways to help them learn new skills.

Accessibility problems

Disabled people may need additional assistance in educational facilities such as getting to/from their school/college/university, getting around campus, getting to/from lectures, taking part in extra curricular activities & trips, etc.

Disabled access in schools isn't always very good, some people with wheelchairs for example can only access certain parts of school/college buildings.

Q7a. In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why being disabled prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6a (80)

Perceptions of equality in learning - disability

Untrained/ unknowledgeable staff

Because of bullying and teachers not being able to keep up with the disabilities they have, my friend once got taken out of school because they didn't have the staff to keep her in and looked after.

Some teachers look at us differently and automatically think we are not as clever because of our disability.

Physical segregation

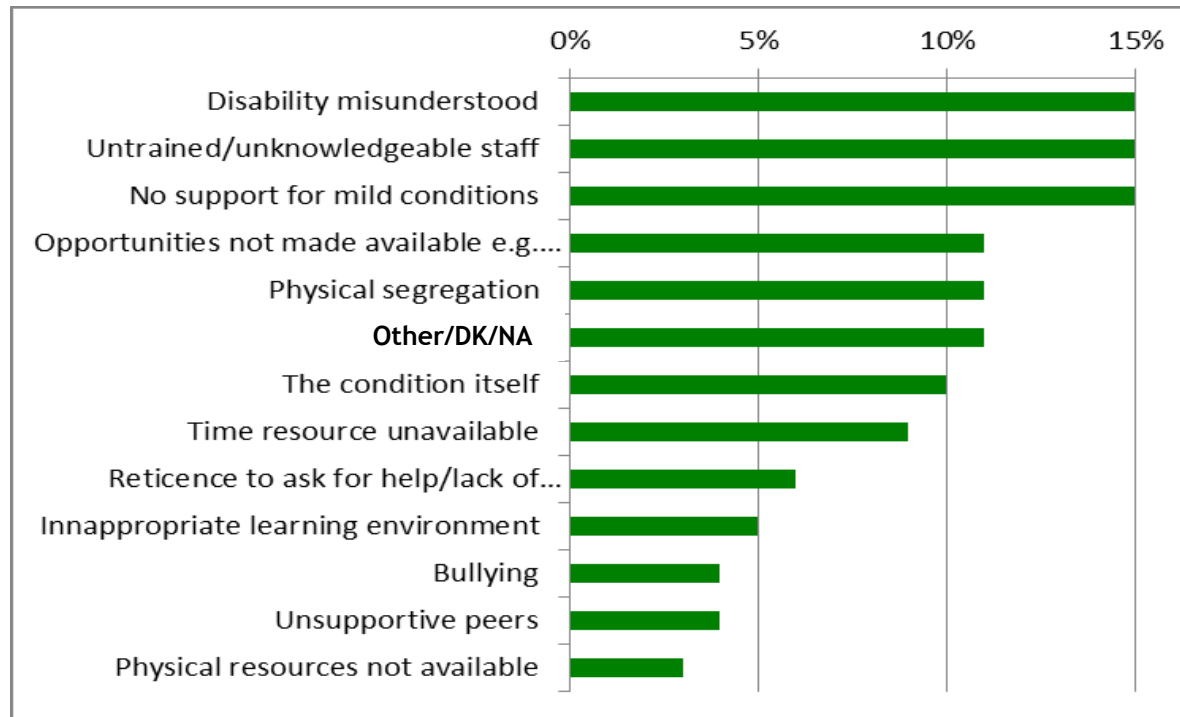
As they are kept segregated from students that are more capable. It seems as though they are deprived. Therefore cannot reach their full potential.

Q7a. In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why being disabled prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6a (80)

Perceptions of equality in learning - learning difficulties

The most frequently cited reasons for learners with a learning difficulty being prevented from learning new skills and reaching their potential were the disability being misunderstood by staff and fellow learners, staff being untrained to deal with learning difficulties and a lack of support for mild conditions.



Q7b. In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why having learning difficulties prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6b (80)

Perceptions of equality in learning - learning difficulty

Physical segregation

People [with learning difficulties] segregate themselves as they want to understand themselves before talking to others. Others will often push them aside as well.

Untrained/unknowledgeable staff

Most of the teachers tend to focus solely on the students who can achieve and do well - they have no patience to spend time helping out the students who need more help, leaving them most of the time to fend for themselves.

Physical resources unavailable

Not everywhere have facilities for people with learning disabilities.

Q7b. In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why having learning difficulties prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6b (80)

Perceptions of equality in learning - learning difficulty

Opportunities not made available

I know two people who are dyslexic and were rejected to do A Level English because of this.

Disability misunderstood

People do not fully understand learning difficulties and therefore cannot deal with children with learning difficulties and often dismiss them as bad or disobedient children.

Because they are often not given enough one-on-one support, and teachers often do not treat learning difficulties with the seriousness they deserve.

Lack of confidence

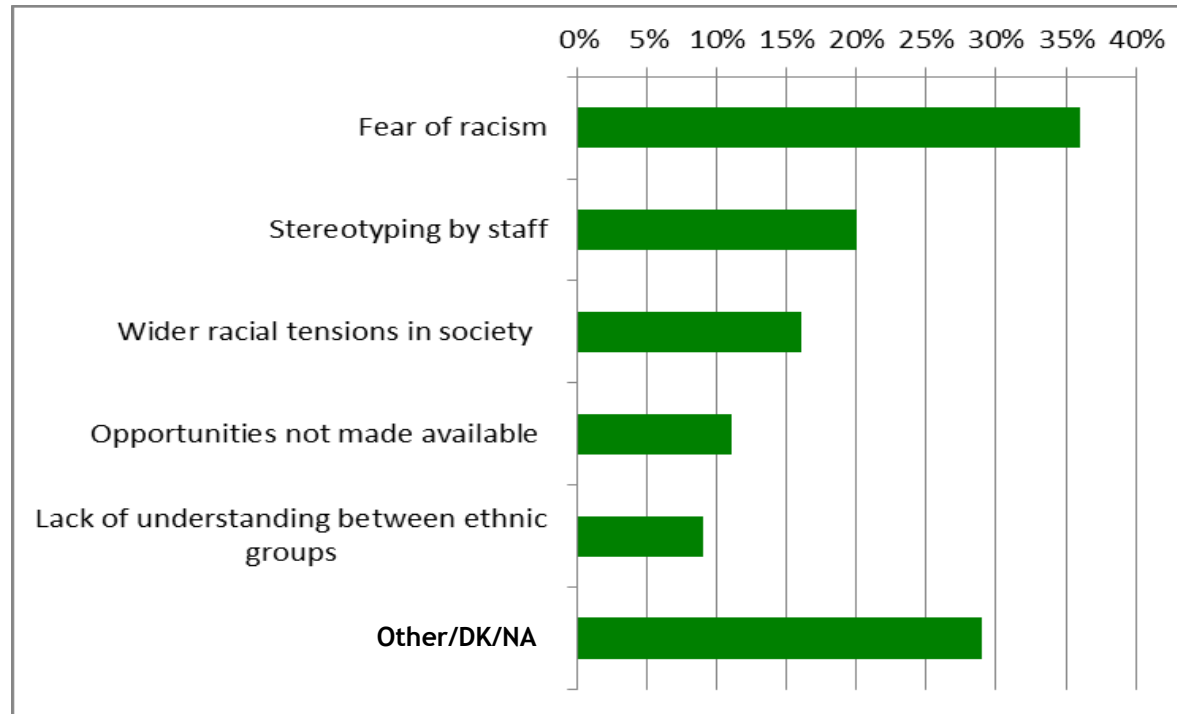
Some people have prejudices against people with learning difficulties so they may feel inadequate and give up on their dreams.

Q7b. In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why having learning difficulties prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6b (80)

Perceptions of equality in learning - ethnicity

The most frequently cited reasons for learners from black and ethnic minority groups being prevented from learning new skills and reaching their potential were a fear of racism holding learners back from making their preferred choices, stereotyping by staff e.g. that Asian students are academic and black students have behavioural problems and racial tensions in wider society spilling over into the learning environment.



Q7c. In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why ethnicity prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6c (45)

Perceptions of equality in learning - ethnicity

Fear of racism / racism in wider society

Many people may be scared to go on courses with racist people on it.

People in this country always stereotype and are prejudice and just simply ignore different ethnicities. People do not understand different people so again push them to the side rather than seeing what they could do. Therefore they do not learn any more as they are not given the opportunity.

Fear of racism/racism in wider society/ lack of understanding

People not from ethnic backgrounds don't fully understand people from ethnic minorities. I feel there is a clear divide and increasing racial tensions that the media play a huge part in causing! Training providers and learners work together as a means to an end but don't like, trust or converse with each other; and hence learning is hindered. I feel that a minority of non-ethnic people resent ethnic people for gaining an education/job that supposedly could have been theirs. I have witnessed racial abuse being hurled at people from all backgrounds in public areas. This must also make people of different backgrounds more scared to enter the world of work and education.

Stereotyping by staff

I believe some teachers still hold the stereotype that black/Asian pupils mainly the males are disinterested in education and therefore they don't try as hard to encourage these pupils and sometimes tend to ignore them.

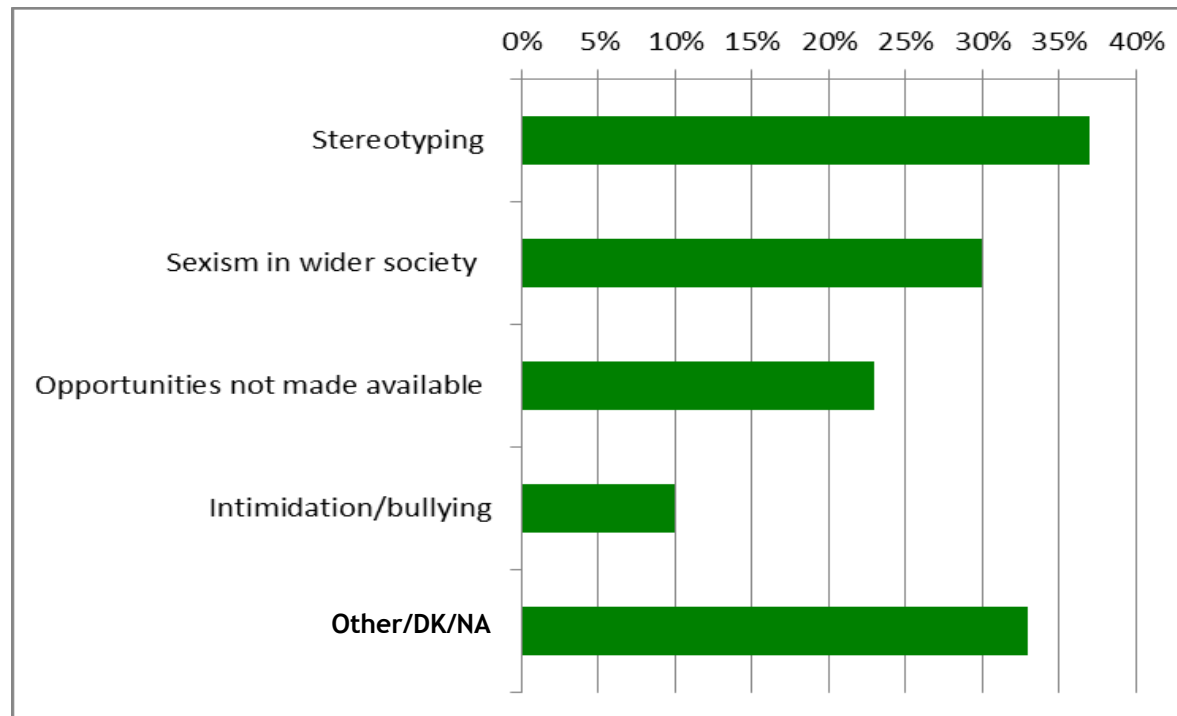
Some teachers have a stereotypical view of ethnic groups, the PE teachers would ask the black kids to demonstrate how to play basketball but then another teacher would ask an Asian kid for an answer in maths. It doesn't let all the other kids have a chance at being good at something new.

Q7c. In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why ethnicity prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6c (45)

Perceptions of equality in learning - gender (female)

Gender was only seen as a factor that prevents learners being able to learn new skills and reach their potential by a minority of respondents when considering female, and an even smaller minority when considering male learners. Males have therefore not been included in this analysis. The most frequently cited reasons for female learners not experiencing equal opportunities were stereotyping e.g. certain courses being more suited to male learners, sexism in wider society spilling over into the learning environment and females not being given the same opportunities as males e.g. teachers not pushing female learners to reach their potential.



Q7d. In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why being female prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6d (30)

Perceptions of equality in learning - gender

Stereotyping / bullying

In lots of mainly male courses, girls are in the minority. In my physics class the other boys in my class will happily make jokes like "go put the kettle on" etc. I don't mind, but some girls would find this an intimidating atmosphere.

Teachers seem to assume boys are more intelligent and argumentative.

People think you're going to act silly, and a teacher will send out a boy a thousand times before they send out the girl.

Sexism in wider society

Some career paths are still very male dominated.

I think the biggest reasons is that the opportunities available to them are less than males, I think institutions that offer work experience and such assume that males will be better etc.

Although it is improving, more could be done to make it equal for males and females!

Opportunities not made available

Being female prevents learning new skills because of again the type of society we live in of men always getting a better chance in life even though statistically women are better than men when it comes to academic.

Q7d/e

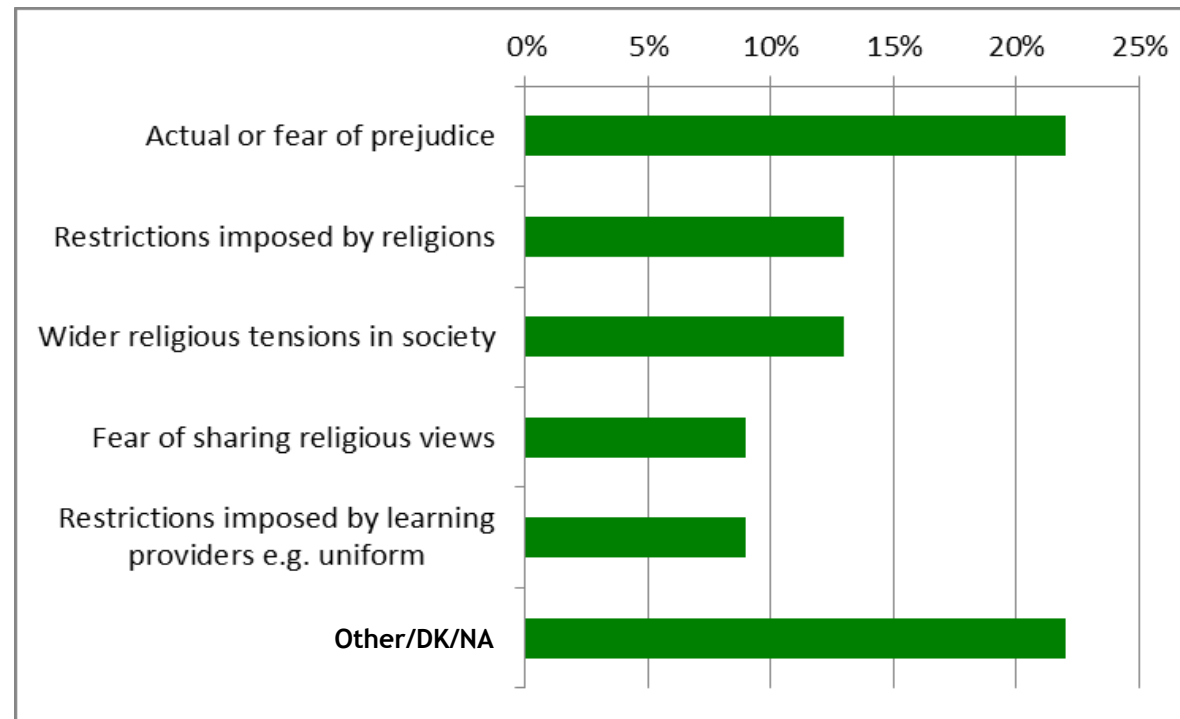
In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why being female/male prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base:

All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6d (80) or Q6e ()

Perceptions of equality in learning - religion

Religion was only seen as a factor that prevents learners being able to learn new skills and reach their potential by a minority of respondents. The most frequently cited reasons for learners with religious beliefs not experiencing equal opportunities were prejudice (either real or feared), restrictions imposed by religions e.g. prohibition from studying certain subjects, religious tensions in wider society spilling over into the learning environment and learner feeling unable to share view influenced by their religious beliefs within their studies.



Q7e. In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why religion prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6e (32)

Perceptions of equality in learning - religion

Prejudice (actual or fear of)

People take the mickey out of me being Christian. I cant focus on the lesson.

Some people have prejudices against people who believe in certain religions (bible bashers as they may get named) so they may feel inadequate and give up on their dreams.

Students from a Muslim, Hindu or Sikh background tend to have difficulties in school due to racism and discrimination. They tend to only make friends with people of the same religion hence reducing their possibilities and learning new skills.

Restrictions imposed by religions

Some career paths are still very male dominated.

It may be hard to learn something new if your religion says something opposite to what you're learning.

Some religions prevent people from doing what they want to do e.g. acting.

Wider religious tensions in society

Especially after events such as 9/11 for example Muslims are stigmatised.

The media endorses a lot of negativity towards different types of religions hence resulting in people having a negative view towards a certain religion

Q7f In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why religion prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6f (32)

Perceptions of equality in learning - religion

Fear of sharing religious views

Some people feel they have to hide their religion and views so cannot experience their full potential because they are restricted in their thoughts.

Some people in religions feel that they can't talk about it except with similar people because they are scared that people may judge or think differently so you may not approach different cultures which could stop from climbed the skill ladder.

Restrictions by learning providers

The college cannot work around religious events/festivals.

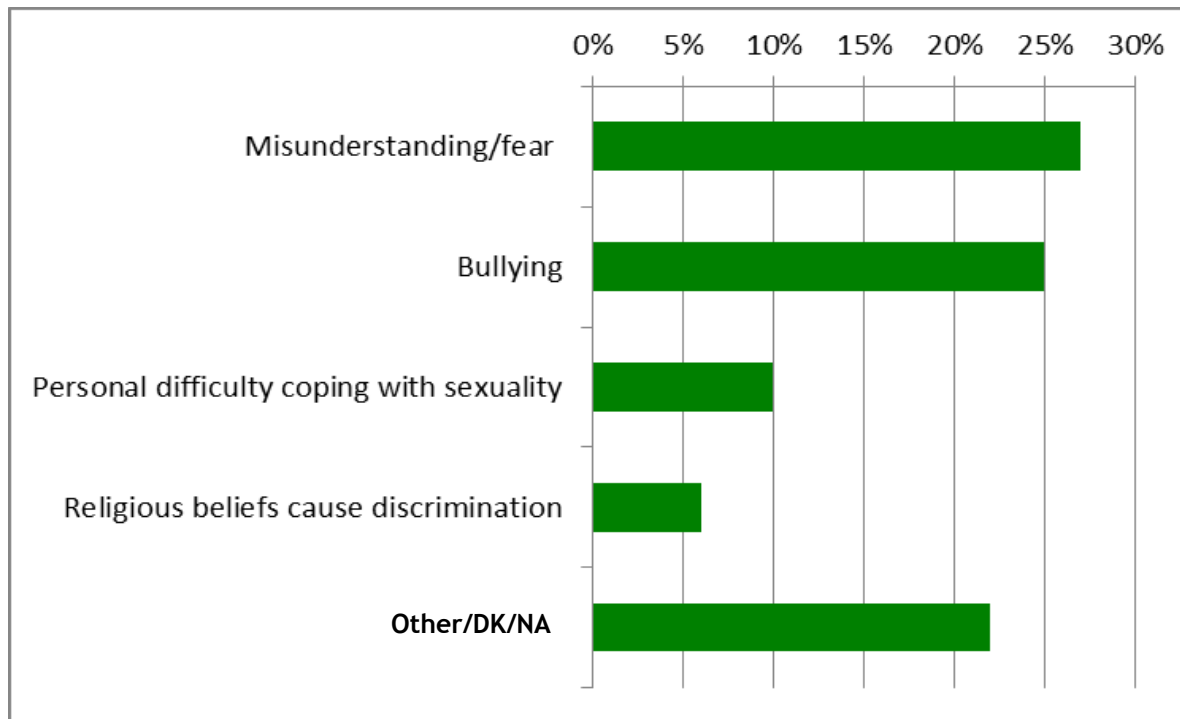
In some schools near my area they don't allow you to wear a headscarf for Muslims because of the school uniform. That's not right, let people have their identity.

Q7f In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why religion prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6f (32)

Perceptions of equality in learning - sexual orientation

Sexual orientation was seen as a factor that prevents learners being able to learn new skills and reach their potential as there it is often associated with bullying, misunderstanding and fear. Equally, young learners may experience difficulties coping with their own sexuality, which can have a knock on effect to their learning, particularly if they feel unsupported.



Q7f. In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why being gay, lesbian or bisexual prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6f (52)

Perceptions of equality in learning - sexual orientation

Misunderstanding/fear

Many teachers seem to shy away from bisexuals, and I have noticed that they seem less willing to spend anytime giving one-to-one help when they learn your sexual orientation than before they knew.

Some people have prejudices against people who believe in certain religions (bible bashers as they may get named) so they may feel inadequate and give up on their dreams.

Prejudice/bullying

At our college, there are many teachers - especially religious teachers - who tend to discriminate against LGBT students in certain activities and subjects, which means that they aren't very willing to help out.

I have a few friends that are gay, lesbian or bisexual and they found that their learning was disrupted because of other students comments with no action from teacher to prevent this.

Personal difficulty coping with sexual orientation

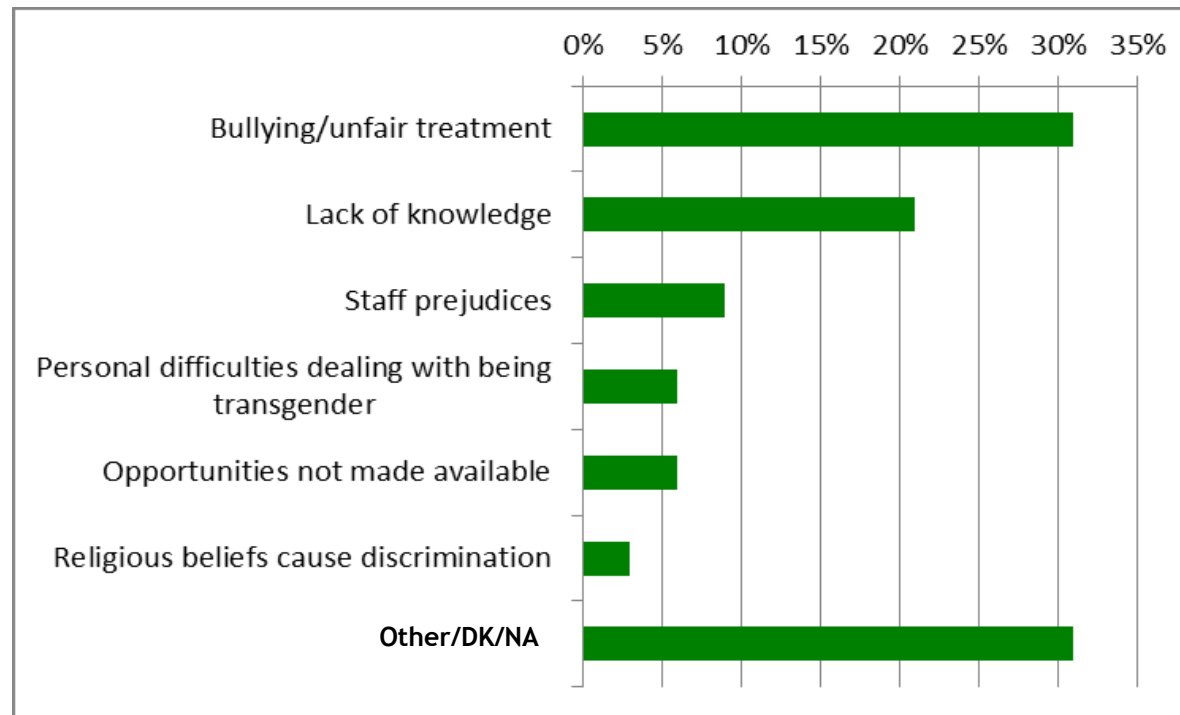
They are stuck not being able to tell people about themselves and are always worried like me about people finding out. Always thinking about it during lessons and when you should be working. You cannot reach your full potential because if you tell anyone about being gay/lesbian/bi they might think differently of you, or not be your friends, causing even more self esteem issues than you probably already have.

Q7f In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why sexual orientation prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6f (52)

Perceptions of equality in learning - transgender status

Being transgender was seen as a factor that prevents learners being able to learn new skills and reach their potential as there it is often associated with bullying, unfair treatment, prejudice and a lack of knowledge and understanding by other learners and staff. Equally, young learners may experience difficulties coping with being transgender, which can have a knock on effect to their learning, particularly if they feel unsupported.



Q7g. In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why being a transgender person prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6g (70)

Perceptions of equality in learning - sexual orientation

Misunderstanding/fear

People are unaware of how to react to the transgender - as they are different they are just pushed to the side which results in them feeling left out. In the end they do not wish to learn new skills as they feel others will always get the opportunity.

It is not something that is widely accepted and they may be unfairly judged.

Prejudice/bullying

I think that there's so much bullying and stigma against transgender people that it would be difficult (even if only marginally more difficult) for them to achieve - I think even admissions staff may have prejudices that affect their opportunities, whether conscious or not.

People don't understand them and they get bullied a lot which can cause them to lack confidence.

Personal difficulty coping with transgender status

A friend is going through such an experience, where she doesn't feel like she can tell anyone about her decision to become male, for fear of being prejudiced against.

Its not very common so they may feel like they don't fit in and give up on their dreams.

Q7g In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why being a transgender person prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Base: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q6g (70)

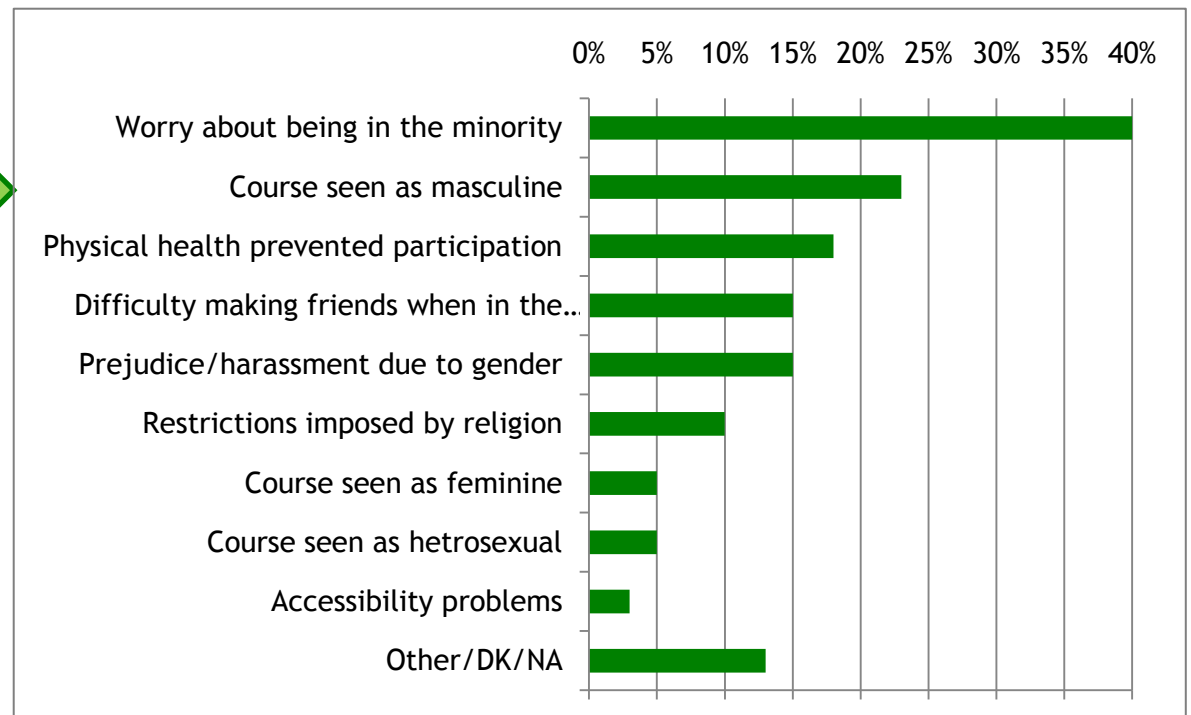
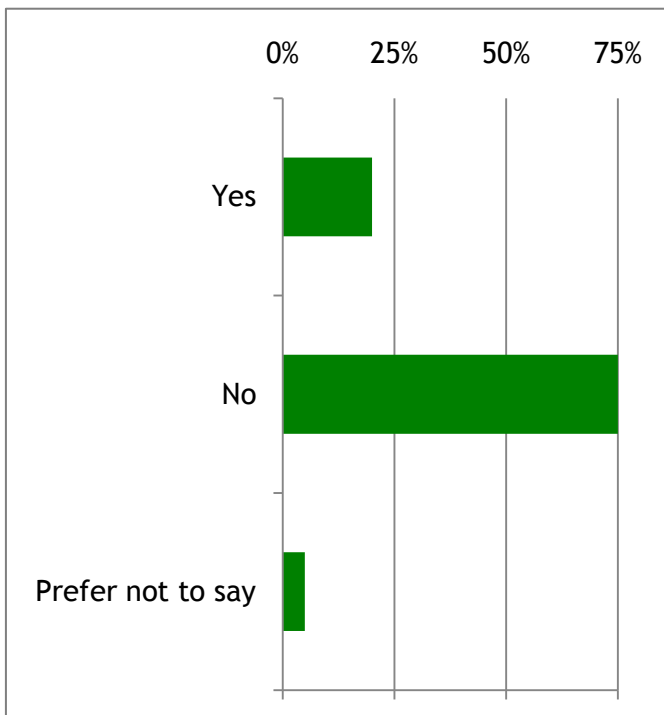
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF INEQUALITY IN LEARNING

This chapter explores learners' personal experiences of inequality due to their gender, ethnicity, disability, learning difficulty or sexual orientation and the impact this has had on their learning experience



Learner experiences of feeling unable to undertake a course

Learners were asked whether they had ever felt unable to undertake a course they were interested in because of their gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status. 20% said they had this experience at some point in their learning experience. This response was more common among learners who had a learning difficulty (39%) or disability (28%). When asked for further details of why they had felt this way a range of reasons were given. The most commonly cited reasons related to worries or fears about being in the minority on the course and potentially being bullied as a result.



Q8/9

Have you ever felt unable to undertake a course you are interested in because of your gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status? / Please provide further details of how you felt unable to undertake a course you are interested in because of your gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status.

Base:

Q8: All learners (292) Q9: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q8 (40)

Learner experiences of feeling unable to undertake a course

Worries about being in the minority

Because of my learning difficulty I feel I can't join a science group or language group as everyone works at a faster pace and I'll feel threatened and won't enjoy it due to the pressure

I feel that, because of my sexual orientation, I am not able to enroll on any practical PE courses.

Worries about not being able to make friends

Because the course is usually full of white or oriental people, I didn't want to be the only black one there and be unable to make any friends.

I have mental health problems. People can be quite hurtful and it makes me anxious that people aren't accepting.

My ethnicity and religion - some people don't like Muslims to be in their class, they would hate you and I don't take courses at places that don't want me.

Course seen as masculine/feminine/heterosexual

Course like leisure and tourism and sociology, cooking are all seen as feminine subjects.

I applied to do a Motor Vehicle course but was worried that I would be the only female on the course. There is actually another girl on the course but I was worried I would be the only one.

Q9 Please provide further details of how you felt unable to undertake a course you are interested in because of your gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status.

Base: Q9: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q8 (40)

Learner experiences of feeling unable to undertake a course

Prejudice/harassment due to gender

I felt awkward attending my Music Technology BTEC in college due to the fact that I was one of only two girls in a large class of boys. Me & the other girl experienced a lot of prejudice and teasing (including sexual harassment) due to this fact.

Restrictions imposed by religion

I wanted to study performing arts at college but I couldn't as it was against my religion.

Physical health prevented participation

I would of struggled for the physical performances in drama without any support.

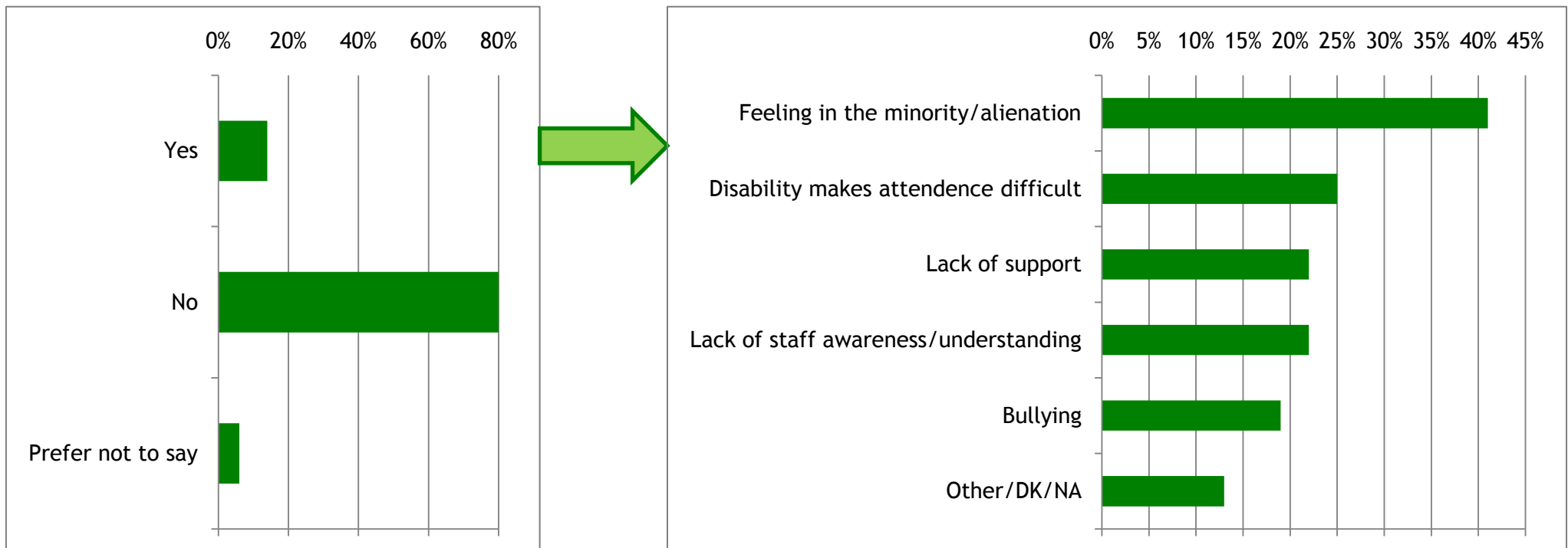
Q9 Please provide further details of how you felt unable to undertake a course you are interested in because of your gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status.

Base: Q9: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q8 (40)

Learner experiences of difficulty remaining in learning

14% of learners had experienced difficulties as a result of their background or circumstances that made it difficult for them to remain in learning. This situation was more common amongst learners who had a disability (19%) or learning difficulty (24%). The reasons expressed by learners to explain why they felt this way were that they had felt alienated or in the minority on their course or had experienced bullying, that their disability had made attending school or college difficult and that staff were not fully aware or understanding of their circumstances.

N.B. Sample sizes for Q13 are very small.



Q12/13

Have you experienced any difficulties within your learning environment because of your gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status that has made it difficult for you to remain in learning? / Please provide further details of how remaining in learning has been difficult for you because of your gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status.

Base:

Q12: All learners (292) / Q13: All learners answering yes to Q12 (32)

Learner experiences of difficulty remaining in learning

Feeling in the minority/alienation

I am a Muslim and wear the hijab however I go to a catholic college. In classes such as psychology the students do not act casual and calm when we study something from my culture they tend to speak in a exaggerated politeness as though what they say would become a serious issue and do not joke about such things making the atmosphere quite awkward.

I left my English Literature course as I felt alienated and ignored based on my colour and faith.

Disability makes attendance difficult

Having depression makes it difficult to go in because its hard to get that motivation but that's not the colleges fault.

I have to attend many appointments outside of college resulting in me missing many lessons. I was also in hospital for some time where it made it hard to complete work due to a lack of communication between me and teachers sometimes.

Bullying

I used to be bullied because people did not understand my learning difficulty.

I nearly left school because of the bullying and abuse I got because I am a lesbian.

I suffered a lot of bullying and sexual harassment at college in one of my classes due to being one of two girls in a large class of boys. It was difficult to attain the same access to resources & help in lessons due to a lot of the boys purposely excluding me & the other girl from group activities and from sharing in resources.

Q13 Please provide further details of how remaining in learning has been difficult for you because of your gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status.

Base: All learners who answered yes to Q12 (32)

Learner experiences of difficulty remaining in learning

Lack of support

I dropped A levels and went onto a vocational course as there was no support for me available at the time and I couldn't keep up with coursework.

Lack of staff awareness/understanding

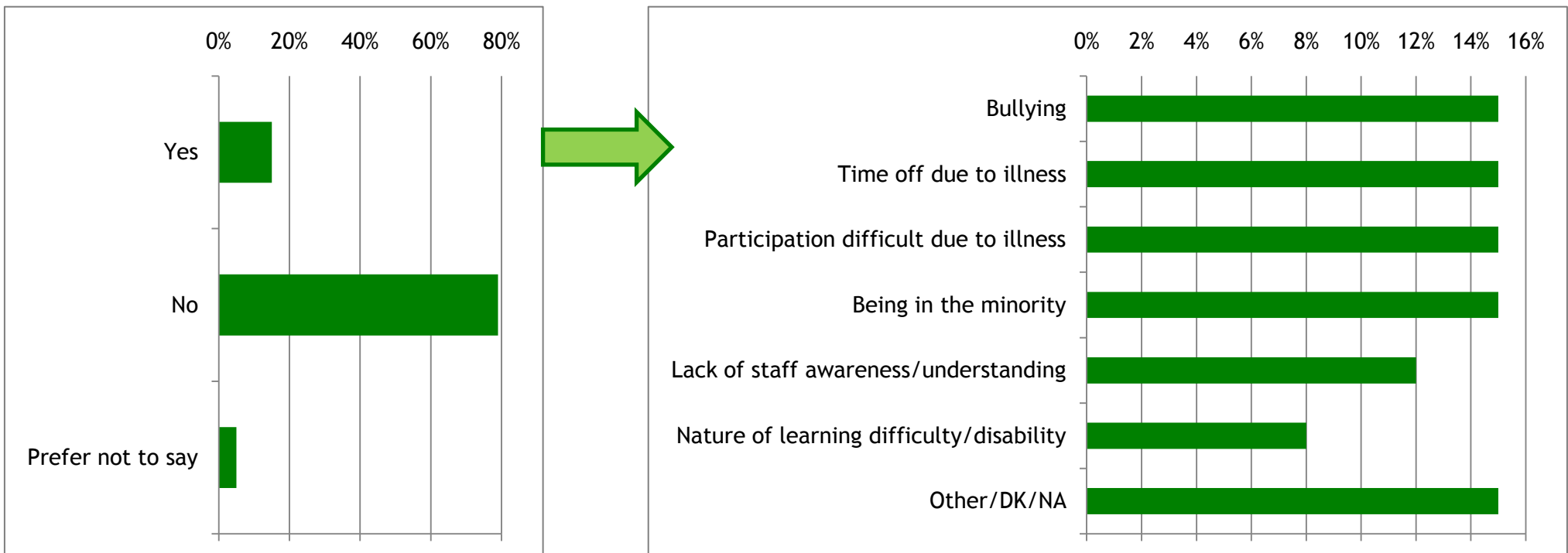
I get so anxious about going in. Some of the staff are not understanding and complained to the class about how I was off etc.

Q13 Please provide further details of how remaining in learning has been difficult for you because of your gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status.

Base: All learners who answered yes to Q12 (32)

Learner experiences of difficulty reaching full potential

Difficulty for learners achieving their full potential followed a similar pattern to questions previously asked regarding difficulties remaining in learning and undertaking their preferred course. 15% had experienced difficulties in reaching their full potential in their learning as a result of their background or circumstances. Similarly, this figure was higher amongst learners with a disability (25%) or learning difficulty (29%). The reasons given were comparable with those which explained why remaining in learning was difficult: being bullied, illness making participation or attendance difficult, lack of staff awareness and understanding and being in the minority on the course.



Q14/15

Have you experienced any difficulties in reaching your full potential in your learning because of your **gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status**? / Please provide further details of how reaching your full potential in your learning has been difficult for you because of your **gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status**.

Base:

Q14: All learners (292) / Q15: All learners answering yes to Q14 (45)

Learner experiences of difficulty reaching full potential

Being in the minority

In sport I feel I haven't reached my potential because again its like I am the only Muslim and Asian there.

Full participation / attendance difficult due to illness

As a bright student I feel I am being let down by others as they don't seem to care that my grades are slipping due to the time off I have for illnesses.

Because of my long term illness. I feel there is not enough support for people with Arthritis as it is seen as a elderly persons disease. I found it difficult to attend school & college and the only acknowledgment they made of arthritis is that they allowed the absences.

Q15

Please provide further details of how reaching your full potential in your learning has been difficult for you because of your **gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status.**

Base:

All learners answering yes to Q14 (45)

Learner experiences of difficulty reaching full potential

Lack of staff awareness/understanding

Because of teachers singling me out or punishing me for not concentrating, despite my parents informing them it was due to DAMP.

Not enough support from teachers when disability worsens so I fall behind on my course.

Bullying

I have experienced problems getting the full use of resources due to bullying from boys.

I do not feel able to participate in practical lessons because of my peers prejudices against my sexual orientation.

Q15

Please provide further details of how reaching your full potential in your learning has been difficult for you because of your **gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status.**

Base:

All learners answering yes to Q14 (45)

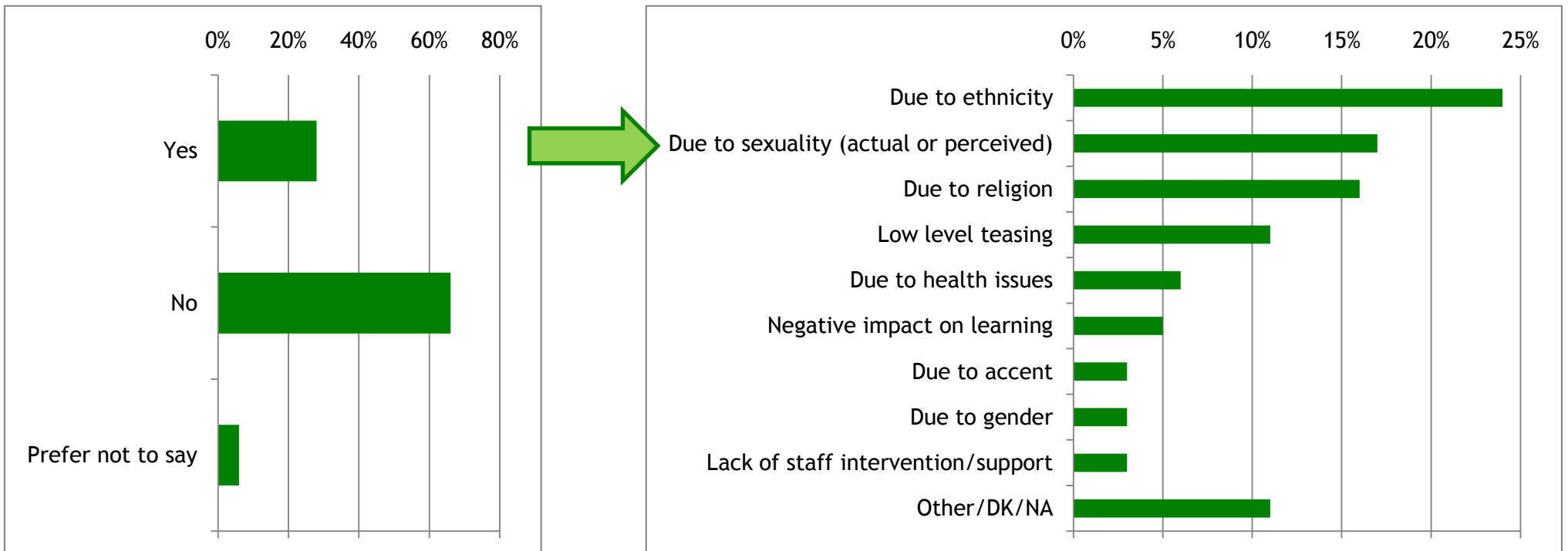
BULLYING AND CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

This chapter looks at learners experiences of bullying in their learning environment, its impact on learning experience and support received to deal with it.



Learner experiences bullying and challenging behaviour

28% of learners had experienced bullying or challenging behaviour within their learning environment because of their background or circumstances. This was higher for learners with a disability (38%), learning difficulty (34%) or whose sexual orientation was gay, lesbian or bisexual (52%). When giving further details about their experiences, most explained the reason why they felt they had been bullied e.g. due to their ethnicity, others told of the impact it had on their learning - often resulting in difficulties attending classes and a loss of confidence and some told of how they felt let down by staff who failed to intervene or provide support.



Q16/17 Have you experienced bullying or challenging behaviour within your learning environment because of your **gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status?** / Please provide further details of how you have been affected by bullying or challenging behaviour within your learning environment.

Base: Q16: All learners (292) / Q17: All learners answering 'Yes' to Q16 (63)

Learner experiences bullying and challenging behaviour

Bullied because of my sexual orientation, made me not want to attend which made it hard for me to learn fully.

Both staff and other students have confronted me about my sexuality and often I had verbal abuse, occasionally it became physical

When discussing sensitive topics such as religion etc in sociology I sometimes feel teachers are quite stereotypical and sometimes biased in what they say. They will talk about the negative aspects of a religion in detail and sometimes not even mention the positive. This suggests they think negatively of that religion. It also influences fellow pupils opinions. I often feel challenged/attacked when Islam is put under scrutiny especially when pupils talk about the religion so negatively. I often feel obliged to say something however due to the fact that I am one of the very few pupils from a ethnic minority within my class this prevents me from saying anything.

Throughout secondary school, I was continuously bullied for "being a lesbian", even though this was untrue. It was disheartening that the school did nothing about such behaviour by other students.



I believe the bullying was not intended to be harmful in any way but I do think that a lot of racial "jokes" are used quite freely which could constitute bullying.

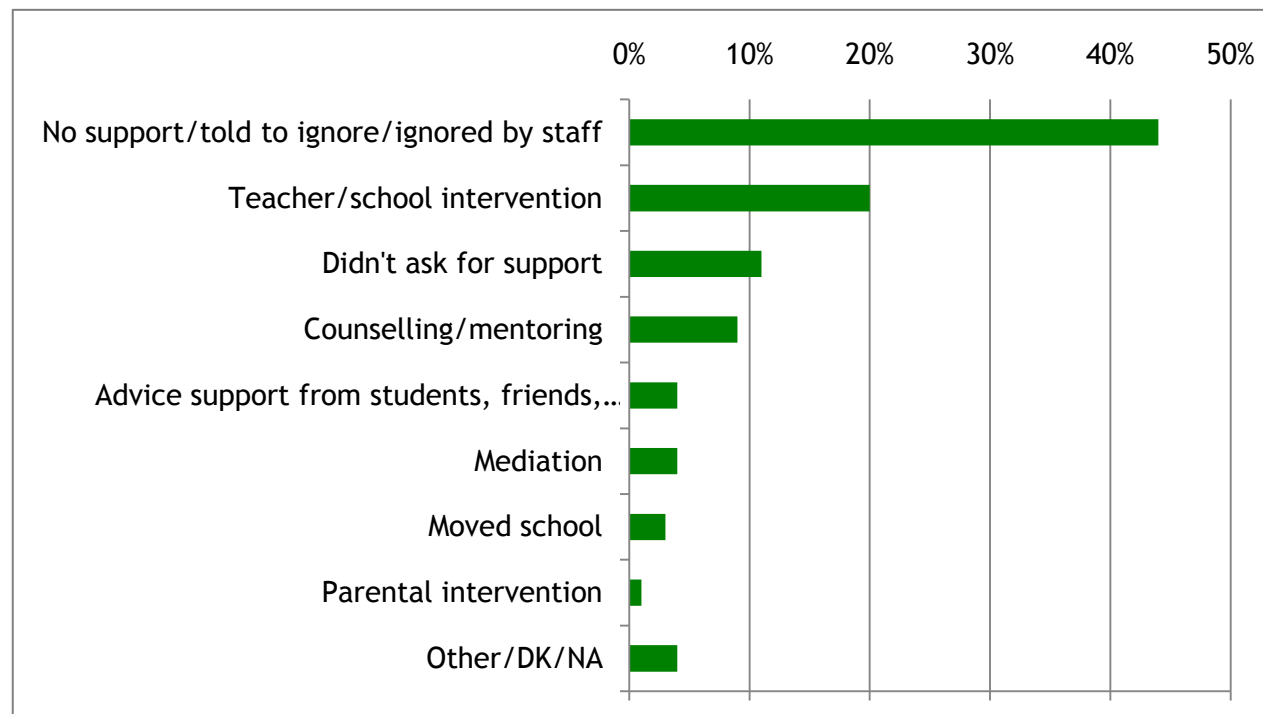
I wouldn't call it bullying as such, however some tension is raised by those who are Atheists who try and cause tension through making unnecessary comments regarding my religion.

Q17 Please provide further details of how you have been affected by bullying or challenging behaviour within your learning environment.

Base: All learners who answered Yes to Q16 (63)

Support received for bullying

A large number of learners did not receive any support for the bullying or challenging behaviour they had experienced, either because they did not ask for it or because it was not provided or the situation was ignored by staff. For those who did receive support, this came in many forms, sometimes from the learning provider e.g. Intervention by staff, counselling and mentoring or mediation and on other occasions from parents, fellow students and friends. One example was provided by a learner who felt he had to move to a different learning provider to resolve the problem.



Q18 What help or support did you receive to deal with the bullying or challenging behaviour you experienced?

Base: Those who answered 'Yes' to Q16 (79)

Support received for bullying

Coventry Autism Support Service came in and talked to the class to raise awareness of Autism

Mediation club and helped along by teachers and friends and family.



In general I found that cases of bullying due to sexual orientation was not taken as seriously by members of teaching staff, as they did for other cases of bullying. One particular teacher liked to join in, although it was fairly light hearted it was still not the example a teacher should be setting. I did not get any support from the school, although I did not ask for any help.

My teacher asked them to stop and explained my visual impairment to them.

None, I don't think they took it seriously in this particular case (they had a "zero tolerance" bullying policy but I seemed to see quite a lot happening and teachers doing nothing).

Q18 What help or support did you receive to deal with the bullying or challenging behaviour you experienced?

Base: Those who answered 'Yes' to Q16 (79)

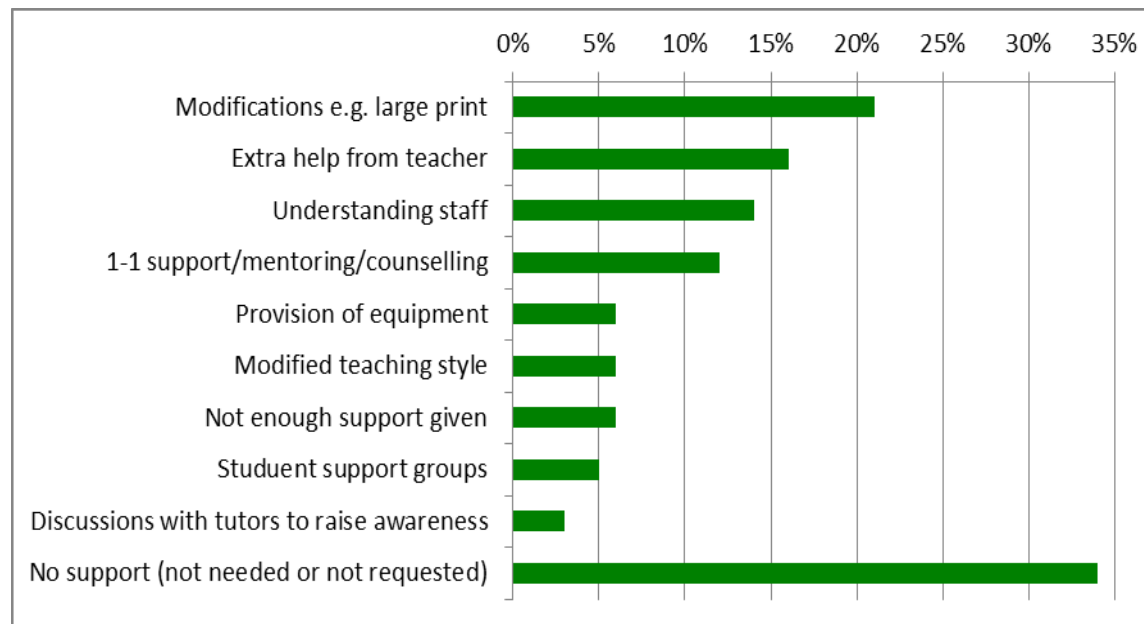
SUPPORT FOR DISABILITIES AND LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

This chapter looks the types of support that learners with disabilities and learning difficulties have received to help with their condition and addition support that they would like to receive



Support received for disabilities and learning difficulties

Learners were asked what support they have received in their current education or training to help with their disability or learning difficulty. A wide range of support had been received, including modifications to facilitate their learning such as large print handouts, being able to sit close to the board and being given extra time in exams. Additional help was also received from staff, both informally through extra provision made by teachers after lessons or more formally through mentoring, counselling and 1-1 support. Other assistance included provision of equipment, modifications to teaching methods and attendance of student support groups. Learners also felt supported when staff were understanding of their condition, particularly during challenging periods and by being able to discuss their needs. Many learners however, said that they did not receive support, either because they hadn't needed any or requested any while a small number commented that they do not currently receive enough support.

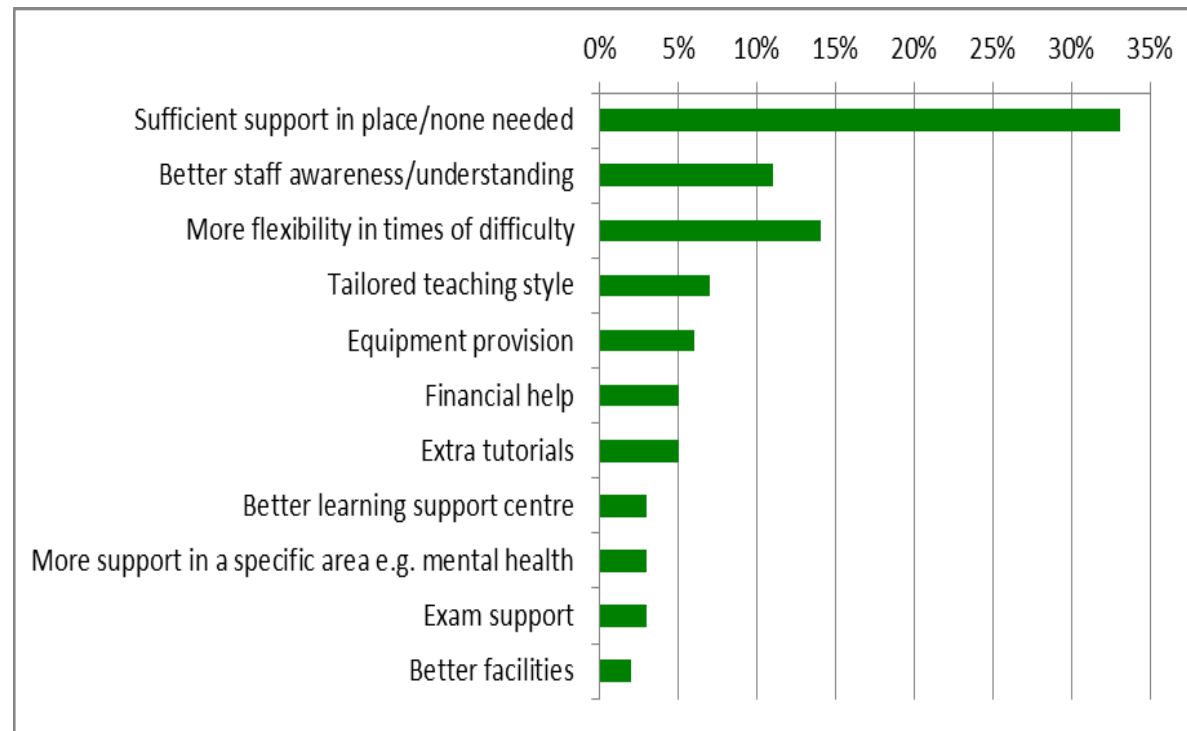


Q10. What support have you received in your current education, learning or training to help with your learning difficulty and/or disability?

Base: All learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability (125)

Additional support desired for disabilities and learning difficulties

Learners were asked what additional support would help them with their current education or training. A sizeable minority felt that they already had sufficient support in place or did not require any support (33%). Other responses given tended to replicate the types of support already received by some learners (from the previous question), suggesting that some learning providers may not currently be offer the right or enough support for learners. Desired support included better awareness and understanding from staff, greater flexibility during periods of difficulty, tailored teaching and additional teaching.



Q11. What additional support would help with your current education, learning or training?

Base: All learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability (125)

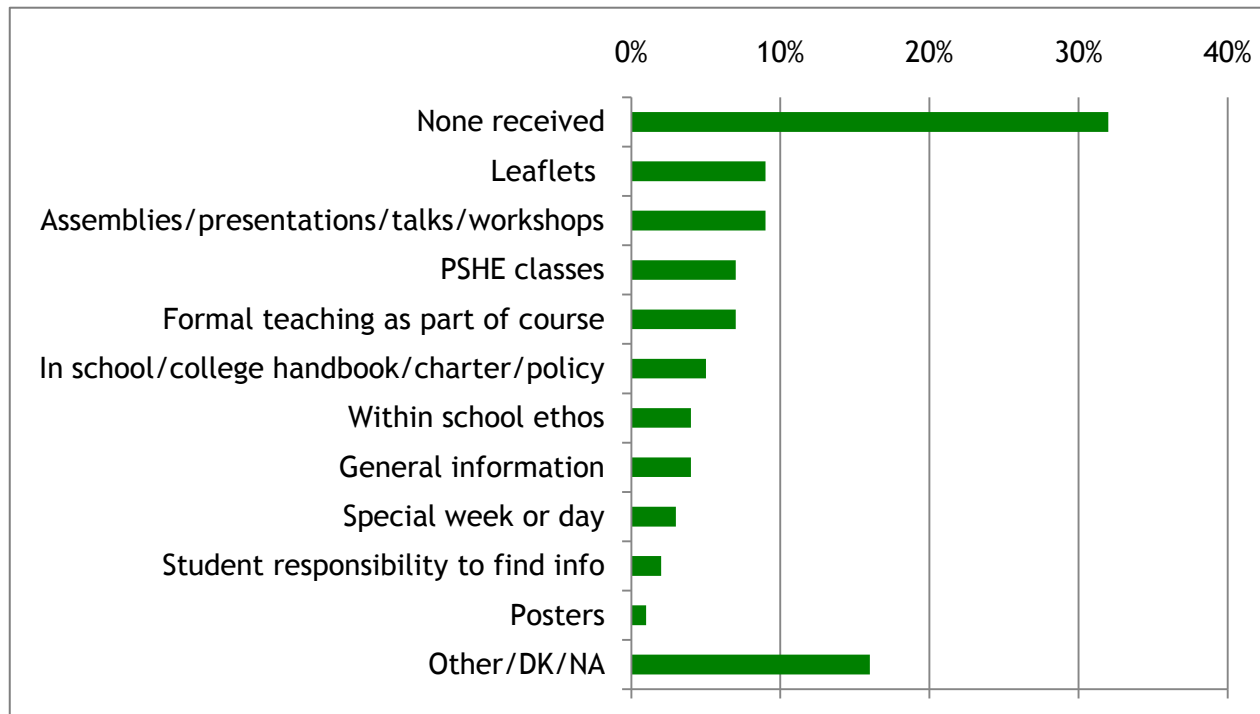
PROVISION OF INFORMATION ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

This chapter looks at what information learners have received on equal opportunities from their provider and their thoughts on this



Information received on equal opportunities

The majority of learners had received some form of education or information on equality in learning from their provider (68%). This came in a range of formats: information in written form such as leaflets, handbooks etc, within PHSE classes or as part of formal teaching for other courses and special events and talks including assemblies. Some had not received anything formal but felt that equality was important within their provider's ethos, however, others reported that the information they had received felt more like a 'tick box' exercise that staff did not take seriously.



Q19 Please provide details of any education or information your school, college or training provider has given you on equality in learning?

Base: All learners (292)

Information received on equal opportunities

My college does have an equality policy which we were made aware of when commencing our course. It also annually holds an equality and diversity day where there are people to see about equality issues and general talks on issues. Equality is briefly talked about as part of our general studies course.

My school regularly teaches equality during PSHE days. There are various activities throughout the day to challenge different learning abilities so everybody understands.

Well, the first day we got forced to read through a booklet introducing us to sixth form which included equality and diversity stuff. It was with a very half-hearted teacher who just saw it as another pointless task in the induction. There were posters put up about equality and diversity in time for the OFSTED inspection so that they could tick that box.

My college has very strong views on homosexuality. We cannot say anything in college that would hurt someone just because of their sexuality. There is a poster in every classroom saying Some people are Gay. GET OVER IT.

Also, my college consists of mostly Muslim students, but in Islam there are many different sects. At the beginning on College we had to sign a learning agreement which said we will not offend anyone based on their sexuality, race or religion



We don't really get it fed to us. If we want to find out anything about equality or anything like that we have to go look for it.

In Beliefs, Citizenship and Values' we often learn about equality in different circumstances that we learn from the very beginning of year seven. I think this has worked with the majority of students and I think its really good that there's a lesson that promotes equality and everybody's human rights

Q19 Please provide details of any education or information your school, college or training provider has given you on equality in learning?

Base: All learners (292)

APPENDIX 1 - SAMPLE

Gender	Sample size
Male	60
Female	232

Provider	Sample size
An academy school	50
State school 6th form	64
6th form college	112
Further Education college	55
In the workplace	8
Training centre	3

Disability	Sample size
Visual impairment	27
Hearing impairment	9
Disability affecting mobility	6
Other physical disability	5
Other medical condition (for example epilepsy, asthma, diabetes)	53
Emotional/behavioural difficulties	9
Mental ill health	21
Temporary disability after illness (for example post-viral) or accident	4
Profound complex disabilities	1
Other disability (please specify)	3
Prefer not to say	4
No disabilities	178

Learning Difficulty	Sample size
Dyslexia	20
Dyscalculia	3
Dysgraphia	2
Dyspraxia	9
ADD or ADHD	7
Asperger's syndrome	5
Autism	1
Other learning difficulty (please specify)	10
Prefer not to say	4
No learning difficulties	247

APPENDIX 1 - SAMPLE

Sexual orientation	Sample size
Heterosexual / straight	247
Gay / lesbian	5
Bisexual	22
Other	4
Prefer not to say	14

Religion	Sample size
Christian	82
Buddhist	2
Hindu	9
Muslim	51
Jewish	3
Sikh	2
Other	2
Prefer not to say	7
No religion	134

APPENDIX 2 - QUESTIONNAIRE

Intro

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey. It is being run on behalf of the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) which is the government agency responsible for the funding of post-16 education and the provision of academies.

One of the aims of the YPLA is to ensure that learners are given equal opportunities to reach their potential in their learning or training and they are currently undertaking a consultation on their Single Equality Scheme. As part of their consultation, the YPLA would like to hear about learners' views and experiences of equality in learning. We hope you find the questionnaire interesting and enjoy being part of this important government consultation. First, we would like to ask you a few questions about yourself.....

Ask all

1. Where are you currently undertaking your education or training?

Please tick one box only

An academy school
State school 6th form
6th form college
Further Education college
In the workplace

Training centre
Other - *screen out*

Ask all

2. Do you have any of the following learning difficulties?

Please tick all that apply

Dyslexia
Dyscalculia
Dysgraphia
Dyspraxia
ADD or ADHD
Asperger's syndrome
Autism
Other learning difficulty, please specify
Prefer not to say
No learning difficulties

Ask all

3. Do you have any of the following disabilities?

Please tick all that apply

Visual impairment
Hearing impairment
Disability affecting mobility
Other physical disability
Other medical condition (for example epilepsy, asthma, diabetes)
Emotional/behavioural difficulties

Mental ill health
Temporary disability after illness (for example post-viral) or accident
Profound complex disabilities
Other disability, please specify
Prefer not to say
No disabilities

Ask all

4. Which of the following best describes how you think of yourself?

Please tick one box

Heterosexual / straight
Gay / lesbian
Bisexual
Other
Prefer not to say

Ask all

5. Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?

Please tick one box

Yes
No
Prefer not to say

APPENDIX 2 - QUESTIONNAIRE

Ask if Q5 = Yes

5a. What is your religion?

Please tick one box

Christian
Buddhist
Hindu
Muslim
Jewish
Sikh
Other

We would now like to ask for your views and experiences in equality in education and learning.

Ask all

Single response per row

6. In your experience, do you think that all people are given an equal opportunity to learn new skills and reach their potential, regardless of things like their:

- disability or learning difficulty
- ethnicity
- gender
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation, or
- transgender status

For each group, please state whether, in your experience, they are given the opportunity to

learn new skills and reach their potential or not:

Yes, people from this group are given an equal opportunity to learn new skills and reach their potential

No, people from this group are not given an equal opportunity to learn new skills and reach their potential

Don't know

- Disabled people
- People with learning difficulties
- People from Black or Minority Ethnic backgrounds
- Women
- Men
- People with a religion or belief
- Lesbian, gay or bisexual people
- Transgender people

Ask for each group where answer at Q7 = No

7. In your experience, what do you think are the biggest reasons why <characteristic from Q7> prevents people from being able to learn new skills and reach their potential?

Please give any experiences you have encountered

Open question

People with learning difficulties = 'having learning difficulties'

Disabled people = 'being disabled'

People from Black or Minority Ethnic backgrounds = 'ethnicity'

Women = 'being female'

Men = 'being male'

People with different religions or beliefs = 'religion'

Lesbian, gay or bisexual people = 'being a lesbian, gay or bisexual'

Transgender people = 'being a transgender person'

Ask all

8. Have you ever felt unable to undertake a course you are interested in because of your gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status?

For example, this might be because of difficulties in accessing the right support or worries that you would be a 'minority' on the course e.g. the only female

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

Ask if Q8 = Yes

9. Please provide further details of how you felt unable to undertake a course you are interested in because of your gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status?

Open question

Prefer not to say

Ask if respondent has a learning difficulty or disability

10. What support have you received in your current education, learning or training to help with your learning difficulty and/or disability?

Please give examples of support provide by your school, college or training provider

Open question

Ask if respondent has a learning difficulty or disability

11. What additional support would help you with your current education, learning or training?

Please give examples of support you would like your school, college or training provider to provide

Open question

Ask all

12. Have you experienced any difficulties within your learning environment, because of your gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status, that has made it difficult for you to remain in learning?

For example, this might be because of difficulties in accessing the right support or the prejudices of staff or other learners.

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

Ask if Q12 = Yes

13. Please provide further details of how remaining in learning has been difficult for you because of your gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status?

Open question

Prefer not to say

Ask all

14. Have you experienced any difficulties in

reaching your full potential in your learning, because of your gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status?

For example, this might be because of difficulties in accessing the right support or the prejudices of staff or other learners.

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

Ask if Q14 = Yes

15. Please provide further details of how reaching your full potential in learning has been difficult for you because of your gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status?

Open question

Prefer not to say

APPENDIX 2 - QUESTIONNAIRE

Ask all

16. Have you experienced bullying or challenging behaviour within your learning environment because of your gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, learning difficulty, sexual orientation or transgender status?

Please include any bullying or challenging behavior experienced from staff or other learners.

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

Ask if Q16 = yes

17. Please provide further details of how you have been affected by bullying or challenging behaviour within your learning environment?

Please include any bullying or challenging behavior experienced from staff or other learners.

Open question

Prefer not to say

Ask if Q16 = yes

18. What help or support did you receive to deal with the bullying or challenging behavior you experienced?

Please include any support provided by your school, college or training provider

Open question

Ask all

19. Please provide details of any education or information your school, college has given you on equality in learning.

Please include any formal teaching, leaflets etc that you may have received.

Open question

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