

Life in Lancashire Wave 9



Objectives:

1. General perceptions of the Council and their effectiveness in running and improving things in Lancashire, with a view to directing future efforts and/or communication.
2. *Education for young people*: measure current satisfaction with various aspects of education provision and perceptions of potential improvements.
3. *Adult education*: provide understanding of past and potential future use of the facilities available, and obtain a better understanding of the level and sources of information that panel members perceive to be available on education.

Methodology: mailed to all panel members (1589 residents), with a response rate of 49% (786 questionnaires were returned).

Conducted by: RBA Research

Fieldwork: 18/09/03 to 22/10/03

Summary Results

Opinion of Lancashire County Council

- 49% of panel members are satisfied overall with how the County Council runs things ('fairly satisfied' 46%, 'very satisfied' 3%), and 21% are dissatisfied.
- 67% say the way the County Council operates has not changed in the last 3 years, 18% say it has got better, and 9% say it has got worse.

Panel members views about the effectiveness of the County Council and its partners in the following areas are:

Positive improvements in:	No change in:	Negative views about:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting safer use of roads • supporting families with problems • improving the environment by things like street lighting • promoting safer public transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting racial harmony • protecting vulnerable children • promoting employment and tackling poverty • making improvements in providing activities for and working with young people • supporting older people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with young offenders • supporting victims of crime • working with schools to tackle antisocial behaviour • representing the views and interests of young people • tackling domestic violence • tackling drug misuse • tackling problems caused by alcohol

In the Council's feedback to panel members and residents generally, therefore, it seems that more needs to be made of the efforts and achievements in the areas with negative views.

Education

Panel members ratings for education are:

- primary schools – 63% good/excellent with higher ratings in rural areas;
- further education colleges – 58% good/excellent;
- adult education – 56% good /excellent; and
- secondary schools – 50% good/excellent.

Children's education

Panel members say that on balance they are satisfied with many specific aspects of education in Lancashire, especially the quality of teaching (62% satisfied, 10% dissatisfied) and academic standards achieved (53% satisfied, 12% dissatisfied). There are just four areas where dissatisfaction outweighs satisfaction, which are attracting funding for development, state of repair of school buildings, achieving effective class sizes, and pupil behaviour.

Panel members identified the following as causing low standards of education or areas for improvements:

Cause of low standards	%	Improvement to standards	%
pupil behaviour and discipline	84	pupil behaviour and discipline	84
large class sizes	64	smaller class sizes	70
lack of funding	61	more funding	63
lack of parental involvement	49	more parental involvement	55
lack of leadership in schools	36	improved leadership	44
poor condition of school buildings	35	improved repair of school buildings	51
poor quality of teaching	31	improved quality of teaching	52

Areas least likely to be identified as causes of low standards or areas for improvement are Local Education Authority initiatives, central government initiatives, and the choice of curriculum subjects.

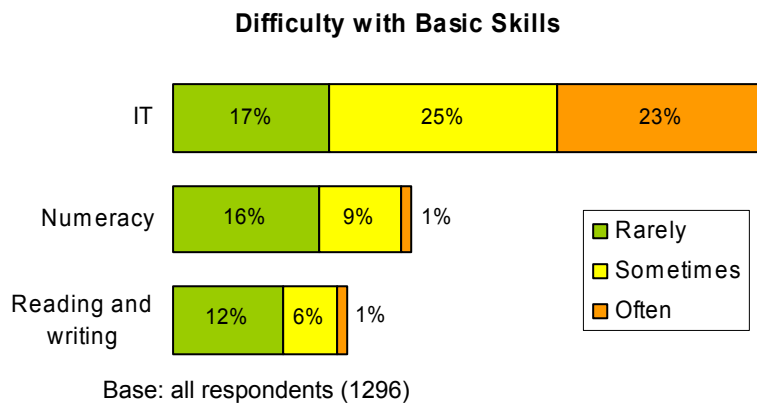
Views are mixed about expectations of education standards in Lancashire in the next few years. 27% expect standards to improve and the same proportion expect them to get worse. The remainder expecting standards to remain the same.

Information about education issues: 63% say they get about the right amount of information, 27% say they do not receive enough. Current information sources very closely match the preferred sources. There appears to be a latent demand for more quality information about education, especially among those with children. For parents, more formal channels would be preferred, for example newsletters and meetings, rather than relying so heavily on word-of-mouth.

Panel members are interested in finding out about how children are taught (37%), child development (20%), taking part in a learning activity with their children (17%), and a parenting skills course (11%).

Adult education

The areas of need for basic skills education for adults are:



Interest in improving these skills amongst those who experience difficulty is understandably much higher. Also the research methodology could mean the actual problem is much bigger.

37% say they have attended at least one adult education course in the past three years and 40% say they are likely to attend an adult education course in the next 12 months, 14% definitely so. These people are very likely to have attended a course in the previous three years, suggesting a need to promote local opportunities to those who are not currently 'in the loop'.

The main reason for attending a course, or wanting to go to one in the future, are:

- hobby or interest, particularly among older respondents;
- to learn a new skill, help with their job or get a qualification, mentioned more by younger residents rather than older ones; and
- social contact, mentioned more by women than men.

Attitudes towards adult learning are generally positive amongst panel members, with the exception of the view that courses are too expensive (45%) – a view more strongly held by women and older respondents. Around half say that courses are held at convenient times (54%), especially older panel members and those with no children in the household. 63% say that courses are held in easily accessible venues, although women and non-car drivers are less likely to agree.

The most popular venues for adult education are a local: college (64%), school (37%), community venue (33%). Libraries appeal more to older respondents than to younger ones, and home study appeals more to DEs than to other socio-economic groups.

Information about adult education: 76% say it is easy to find out what adult learning is available. The preferred sources of information are newspapers (73%), leaflets through the door (56%), county council library (45%), Internet or a website (35%), local education office (20%) and radio (17%).