

IfL Members' Views 2009

The Institute for Learning (IfL) is the independent professional body for teachers and trainers across further education and skills.

Member voice: what teachers and trainers across further education and skills said in the 2009 survey



We would like to thank all our members who took the time to participate in IfL's second member survey. Listening and responding to members is at the heart of our work, and the results of this survey help us learn more about your views and develop a better understanding of what you want from IfL. Your views shape our work.

We took your feedback from last year's survey seriously and invested time and resources in making improvements. This latest survey shows that members are not only more aware of membership benefits but that you also value our greater range of benefits more, with nine out of ten rating benefits as fair to excellent. There are noticeable improvements in the quality and relevance of member communications, and your awareness of what counts as continuing professional development (CPD).

Members also strongly support the areas where we are focusing our activity to give teachers and trainers more of a voice through IfL to influence policy and activities at a national level, in order to improve the experience of practitioners and your learners.

Whilst these improvements are very positive, we are not complacent. We recognise that the 2009 survey also highlights areas where we still have work to do to meet your expectations of IfL as your professional body – one which you will be truly proud of in every respect. You have clearly indicated through the survey where you want us to focus our activity in 2010 and so we will concentrate particularly on the following.



- More CPD support for teachers and trainers, including the use of new technologies as a central benefit of membership, in partnership with other agencies.
- IfL's campaign for mutual recognition of Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) and Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), allowing qualified teachers and trainers to have their status recognised alongside colleagues working in schools and leading to greater flexibility of movement between the sectors for the benefit of young people.
- Developing communities of practice and special interest groups, offering members a variety of ways to share their practice and professional discourse through online communities and groups, and by strengthening IfL's regional presence through IfL Connections and networking opportunities.
- Highlighting the many pressures that teachers and trainers face in their work, and campaigning for professionals to have the time and resources needed to keep up to date with their vocational or subject area and teaching and training methods, to provide the very best experience for learners.
- Continuing to develop our communication with members, using your feedback to extend the resources and services we provide, and ensuring all members are aware of the benefits of belonging to IfL and the ways in which we are working with you to raise the status of the profession.
- Developing resources that provide information and guidance on the equality and diversity issues faced by professional teachers and trainers, using their experiences and views to advance IfL's single equality strategy.
- New and different ways to engage members in shaping the future of IfL through revised governance arrangements, as well as organising regional and local focus groups and workshops to provide members with more opportunities for having your voice heard and influencing key areas of work.
- Raising the public profile and status of the professional teachers and trainers, including with policymakers.

We will be sharing and discussing the results of this survey widely across the sector with employers, membership bodies and other agencies to ensure the views of IfL's members are heard and influence policy. Through this the sector will gain a better understanding of teachers' and trainers' needs and the issues faced by practitioners. We will work to identify how the sector can play a full role in supporting the work of IfL and you, our members.

About the survey

The online survey ran from 31 July to 28 September 2009 and 8,256 members completed it, giving their views on:

- **benefits** IfL offers to teachers and trainers, including continuing professional development (CPD)
- IfL's work on raising the **status** for teachers and trainers
- and how the **voice** of teachers and trainers could and should be heard more widely, including on the pressing issues and challenges they face in their day-to-day jobs.

The responses represent just over 4% of all members, and are broadly representative of the demographics of the overall membership, giving a statistically robust sample of membership in terms of gender, age and ethnicity.

The survey gave members several opportunities to give their views in their own words, leading to a rich source of information for IfL. The views expressed by members back up the information gained through the survey's quantitative questions, increasing the overall validity of the findings.

The survey was managed and analysed by the National Foundation for Educational Research, an independent research organisation.

Benefits and communication

The survey found that members are satisfied with benefits offered by IfL, and more are aware of the range of benefits than they were in 2008. The large majority of members (92%) say the value of benefits is 'fair', 'good' or 'excellent' (see Figure 1), with 61% rating them as good or excellent.

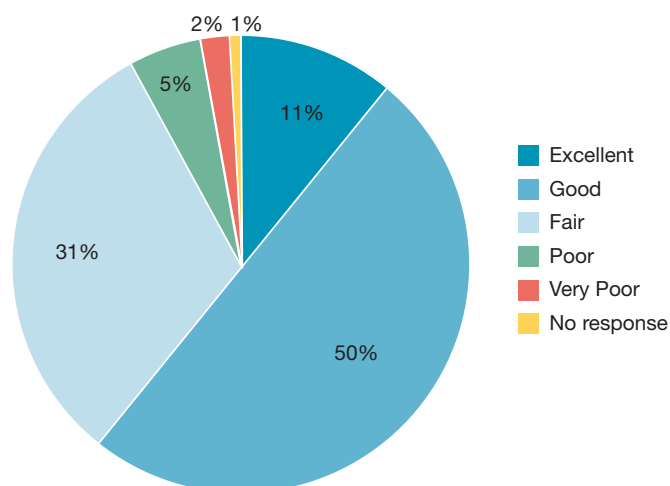


Figure 1 How satisfied are members with the value of benefits?

Members' comments included some suggestions for developments.



In general I'm really very happy with the service the IfL offers.

At the moment I feel that the IfL has struck a good balance in addressing members' issues/concerns.

The service so far has been satisfactory but a strong lobbying voice is always needed.

I am new to teaching, so far IfL have been very informative and serves all my teaching and training needs.

Making local representatives available to address members at ground level so that its members can see the value of the body instead of seeing it as something that has been imposed on them.

I would like to have easy access to new techniques, ideas for enhancing learning. Also resources for various disciplines (maths, science etc). The most important aspect is how simple the process is to obtain this information - is it user friendly?

I really needed training in REfLECT as I have no-one else in my institute who is a member of IfL. A local training group would be great for networking and creating a support base.

I'd like more social networking tools than simply member look up; chat and micro/blogging or status updates would probably be the most useful short-term.



When asked what other benefits members wanted, the strongest support was members wanting IfL to offer training workshops and courses (58%), followed by 45% who wanted lifestyle benefits. IfL will seek to develop these benefits further, where they relate to the professional role and well being of members.

IfL has two regular publications – *On the Agenda*, a monthly bulletin distributed to members by email and *InTuition*, the IfL's regular membership magazine.

On the Agenda is more popular than it was in 2008, with 62% of members aware of it now, compared with only 25% in 2008. Of those who read *On the Agenda*, 92% rate the quality of its information as fair or better, with 63% rating it as 'good' or 'excellent'. More than half (53%) would like to see more information about forthcoming IfL events.

InTuition is also viewed highly, with 79% of members aware of this publication in 2009 compared with 42% in 2008 and 91% rate it as fair or better for quality of information, with 62% of readers rating it as 'good' or 'excellent'. Reading *InTuition* had led nearly a quarter of readers (23%) to discuss a topic with colleagues, while 12% had integrated something into their teaching and 10% had done their own research. This is great news, and IfL plans to encourage more of this kind of activity through future communications.

Most members (79%) have visited the IfL website. Most members (86%) rank the accessibility as 'fair', 'good' or 'excellent' and 92% say the layout and design is 'fair', 'good' or 'excellent'. When asked what features they would like to see on the

IfL website in the future, members gave a clear message that they want hints and tips about CPD (74%). Other ideas mentioned included a CPD directory, relevant sector research, case studies and a members' research area. Whilst some members are using social networking, podcasts, webcasts, blogs and wikis for their professional development and to support teaching and learning, there remains a significant number (38%) who are not confident in using new technologies.

About half of respondents (51%) use REfLECT to record their CPD and/or undertake Professional Formation, with 79% of members rating the resource as 'fair', 'good' or 'excellent' for layout and design, 76% giving similar ratings for accessibility and 65% rate it similarly for ease of use. While most members are happy with REfLECT there are some who have reservations about it, including those who are highly competent in using IT and those with very poor levels, or are uncertain, of their IT confidence.

Those who have been in contact with IfL are satisfied with the service they received – 77% got a satisfactory response on the first of second contact and 83% said the response was 'quite' or 'very' satisfactory.

“ *My continued professional development has taken place formally (training days, planning days with reflective practice and formal CPD) and in other ways such as learning new software, performing and recording CDs with my band as well as touring, rehearsing and sessioning for other musical projects. On top of this I have released a number of side project recordings. I also listen to a great deal of music. I see this as CPD because I teach people how to rehearse effectively, record their music and to prepare for gigs. I also teach learners how to use sequencing software to create music.* ”

Status

NFER's literature review shows a strong link between status and professionalism. Respondents feel better informed about CPD and qualifications that will improve their status than they did in 2008 – 87% feel partly informed or better, with 36% feeling 'fully informed' about what counts as CPD in 2009, compared with less than 30% who felt 'extremely' or 'very' confident of this in 2008. Members are asking for more information on CPD and how to gain Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) and Associate Teacher Learning and Skills (ATLS) status through Professional Formation.

Professional Formation is new to the sector, with the first ever awards by IfL of QTLS or ATLS only taking place summer 2009. It is important for IfL that more members are aware of how to use Professional Formation to gain QTLS and ATLS status. When asked how well informed they felt about what is involved in Professional Formation, only 17% felt fully informed. A further 53% felt partly informed, but 27% admitted to not feeling at all informed. Similar proportions of respondents felt fully informed (22%), partly informed (48%) and not at all informed (27%) about how to gain QTLS and ATLS status. This is something IfL will need to work on to improve, in order to raise the status of the profession and increase member and sector awareness of IfL's conferral of professional status.

“ *I am very satisfied with the service provided by IfL, particularly the excellent CPD facilities in REfLECT.*

As a teacher who is over 60, I go out of my way to avoid any 'on line learning'. I much prefer to receive my professional development in a classroom with a teacher and often other like-minded people from whom I usually learn a great deal. **”**

IfL believes that modern teaching and training professionals need to be able to use new technologies with confidence in their teaching and training. IfL aims to help members become fully conversant with using technology in their continuing professional development and to support teaching and learning, including in partnership with agencies such as Becta.

Most members (60%) feel confident with new technologies, with more than half using either video, digital technology or interactive tools in their teaching. A smaller number use other new technologies such as forums (40%) and social networks (27%) in their teaching. Some members use virtual learning environments (42%), social networking (31%) and other new media to gain new skills or develop their practice. Just over half the respondents call for more training in how to use new technologies, particularly in their own subject areas. Confidence with using new technologies was higher for those under 30 than for other age groups.



“ *As a gardening tutor I would be interested to hear about others (who have) used new technologies.*

I have no access to technology in my work, which is done in a community centre. I would love to show students how to use ICT in their craft work and research. **”**

Voice

Members are keen to have a strong voice and for their views to be accurately represented on the national stage. Across eight different ways in which IfL can give voice to teachers' and trainers' views, support was strong, ranging from 75% to 81% for each (see Figure 2 below). Members gave a range of comments about how IfL can represent them and ensure their voice is heard.

“ *I as a college lecturer think we have had no real representation and we are poor cousins to the school system. It is important that whoever talks for us knows the situations and roles in which colleges play a part. We seem to be quickly dismissed and our value lost in the huge publicity machine that schools have.*

With support from IfL representing the widest range of teaching professionals we can have a strong voice in parliamentary decisions. Making the voices count is vital as we enter the second decade of the 21st century.

One of the problems with IfL is that it encompasses too many diverse groups and therefore cannot serve any of them particularly well. I speak as someone in 'work based learning'. ”

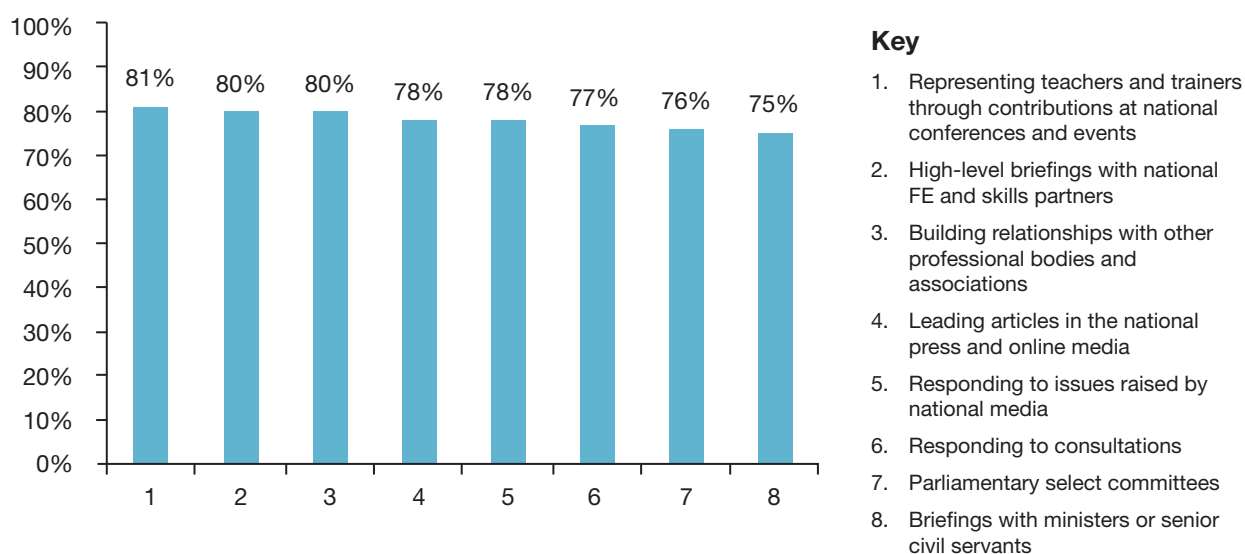


Figure 2 Importance of IfL representing members' voice

Just over half of members were aware they could make their own voice heard within IfL by taking part in regional IfL events and through writing for *InTuition*. Almost half (45%) of members were aware they could stand for election to the IfL Council. IfL is keen for members to participate in its work and will continue to make information available to members about how they can get involved in a range of ways.

Challenges and issues

Members identified a number of challenges they face as teachers and trainers with regard to equality and diversity, and suggest IfL can help or support them through training, workshops and guidance. They want IfL to address a range of challenges and to help by:

“ Ensuring that all learners are included and feel valued and supported.

Ensuring that FE gets the amount of help and guidance that teachers in schools get. All of teachers.tv is aimed at schools, we need the same kind of materials available to help us with our teaching, materials designed for colleges, not school environments and support and ideas available when we need it. IfL could encourage and provide a fantastic bank specifically for those of us in FE.

Getting FE teachers on a par with school teachers. Now the new Diploma has been brought out we are suddenly competent enough and qualified enough to teach 14-year-olds without any further training.

”

Pressing issues in their work identified by members included lack of time and too much administration. Other issues they raised included:

- parity with school teachers
- lack of funding
- dealing with student behaviour
- need for more CPD and keeping up to date
- workload
- keeping up with legislation
- lack of respect for their role as teachers and trainers.

The issues members felt IfL should address ranged from raising the profile of FE to supplying more information about CPD and about member benefits.

“ To provide an identity and a respected professional body for members.

Help trainers to be recognised on the same level as teachers if they have the same qualifications and expertise.

IfL is managing to engage successfully with a widely various sector, which it is not easy to do! I think the most important issue for IfL is continuing to walk that tightrope well.

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This report and key data are available online at www.ifl.ac.uk. Visit the IfL website to stay involved with IfL and find a wealth of information on CPD, REfLECT, Professional Formation, member benefits, governance and IfL Connections.

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