

# Research Report



## Staffordshire Moorlands Employer Skills Needs

Prepared for: Moorlands Together LSP

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# **Staffordshire Moorlands Employer Skills Needs**

**Prepared for: Moorlands Together Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)**

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Research Context

Competitiveness, at the level of the individual firm and of the economy as a whole, is the central objective of much government policy. Underpinning competitiveness is the drive for greater productivity. Whilst there are other important elements in national productivity levels – the type of production which the nation undertakes and the level of capital investment most obviously – it is evident that the productivity of labour (particularly per-hour worked) is an important component. It remains an unfortunate truth that the UK's labour productivity (even given equal levels of capital utilisation in similar areas of production) lags that of some of our major competitors in significant parts of the economy. Inevitably, therefore, the question of the character and the levels of the national skills stock is brought into sharp focus.

The Government's White Paper "Skills: Getting on in business, getting on at work" published in March 2005 builds upon the earlier White Paper "21st Century Skills, Realising Our Potential" of July 2003, which stated "we must compete on our capability for innovation, enterprise, quality and adding greater value through our products and services. All of that is dependant on raising our skills game." The central ambition of these strategies is to ensure employers have the right skills to support the success of their businesses and for individuals to gain the skills they need to be employable and personally fulfilled.

The 2005 White Paper sets out a number of proposals, which focus on putting "employers' needs centre stage in the design, delivery and funding of training." These proposals make clear that Sector Skills Councils have a paramount role in producing and implementing Sector Skills Agreements and in the development of national Skills Academies, which will aim to prepare young people and adults for successful employment in each major sector of the economy. The White Paper also includes the roll out of the National Employer Training Programme, "Train to Gain" to raise basic skills in the workplace to Level 2 and beyond.

The Government also has made clear that it expects training providers (both public and private) to be demand-led and more responsive in meeting the skills needs of employers by equipping people with the skills, competencies and qualifications that employers want, and which will prepare them for productive, rewarding, high-value employment in a modern economy.

In August 2005, the LSC published the Agenda for Change prospectus. This outlines proposals for a programme of change to create colleges valued by employers as the partner of choice for developing the skills they need and has significant implications for employer engagement. It calls for FE colleges and training providers to go further in engaging employers as an important step in bridging the UK's productivity gap.

In March 2006, the Government published a new White Paper, Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances. This includes the Government's response to the Foster report on the future role of FE colleges, and represents a sweeping programme of reform for FE. It includes provisions to drive up the quality of teaching,

to reward colleges for success, and to make the sector more responsive to the skills needs of employers.

Most recently the Lord Leitch Review of Skills has further highlighted the importance of understanding employer needs and meeting these in the most responsive and appropriate manner. It declares that there are a number of principles underpinning its recommendations. These are:

*“ – shared responsibility. Employers, individuals and the Government must increase action and investment. Employers and individuals should contribute most where they derive the greatest private returns. Government investment must focus on market failures, ensuring a basic platform of skills for all, targeting help where it is needed most;*

- focus on economically valuable skills. Skill developments must provide real returns for individuals, employers and society. Wherever possible, skills should be portable to deliver mobility in the labour market for individuals and employers;*
- demand-led skills. The skills system must meet the needs of individuals and employers. Vocational skills must be demand-led rather than centrally planned;*
- adapt and respond. No one can accurately predict future demand for particular skill types. The framework must adapt and respond to future market needs; and*
- build on existing structures. Don't always chop and change. Instead, improve performance of current structures through simplification and rationalisation, stronger performance management and clearer remits. Continuity is important.”*

The reports main recommendations were as follows:

*“ – increase adult skills across all levels. Progress towards world class is best measured by the number of people increasing skills attainment. The raised ambitions will require additional investment by the state, employers and individuals...*

- route all public funding for adult vocational skills in England, apart from community learning, through Train to Gain and Learner Accounts by 2010.*
- strengthen employer voice. Rationalise existing bodies, strengthen the collective voice and better articulate employer views on skills by creating a new Commission for Employment and Skills, reporting to central Government and the devolved administrations...*

- *increase employer engagement and investment in skills. Reform, relicence and empower Sector Skills Councils (SSC)....Expand skills brokerage services for both small and large employers;*
- *launch a new 'Pledge' for employers to voluntarily commit to train all eligible employees up to Level 2 in the workplace.*
- *increase employer investment in Level 3 and 4 qualifications in the workplace. Extend Train to Gain to higher levels. Dramatically increase Apprenticeship volumes. Improve engagement between employers and universities. Increase co-funded workplace degrees. Increase focus on Level 5 and above skills.*
- *increase people's aspirations and awareness of the value of skills to them and their families. Create high profile, sustained awareness programmes. Rationalise existing fragmented 'information silos' and develop a new universal adult careers service; and*
- *create a new integrated employment and skills service, based upon existing structures, to increase sustainable employment and progression. Launch a new programme to improve basic skills for those out of work, embedding this support for disadvantaged people and repeat claimants. Develop a network of employer-led Employment and Skills Boards, building on current models, to influence delivery."*

In recognition of the national policy context and the emphasis placed by Regional Development Agencies on raising skills levels, the Moorlands Together Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) commissioned this survey to gain more insight into the skills needs of local employers.

## 1.2 Background and method

This report summarises the results of the Staffordshire Moorlands Employer Skills Needs Research 2007, which BMG was commissioned in April 2007 to undertake. The research was designed to form an evidence base to help the LSP to develop their strategic plans, plan their investment and deliver training programmes that meet local employer needs.

A questionnaire was designed that covered the following issues:

- Recruitment, including recruitment difficulties (skill shortages);
- Skills lacking within the existing workforce (skill gaps);
- Training, internal and external, including sources of training and information on training;
- Awareness of and involvement in Apprenticeships or Advanced Apprenticeships;
- Awareness of and involvement in Train to Gain; and
- Awareness of and use of Business Link Skills Brokers.

The findings with regard to these issues are set within the context of organisation size and the industrial sector in which they operate.

All interviews were conducted by telephone with the person with the greatest involvement in recruitment and training issues at the site. Each interview lasted between 15 and 20 minutes.

A total of 266 employer interviews were conducted, representing the views of 5% of businesses in the area. In terms of the proportion of employment in the area represented by respondents, the figure is much higher (27%). This reflects the fact that larger organisations (i.e. those employing larger numbers of employees) were over-sampled.

Quotas were set by organisation size (based on number of employees) and industry sector. This was to ensure that a sample sufficiently robust on which to undertake analysis was available for the largest organisations who represent just a small proportion of all employers in the area.

Tests for statistical significance are always based on the number of interviews achieved and the maximum standard error at the 95% level of confidence for the total sample is +/-6%. The size of the standard error increases to +/-19% on the sub-sample of organisations with 50+ employees (reduced to +/-17% when the actual size of the population is taken into account).

In reporting the findings the data have been 'weighted' so that responses reflect those of the actual employer population had we interviewed every organisation in the area. This compensates for the over-sampling that was specified amongst larger organisations. In these organisations recruitment and training activity tends to be at greater levels than average and if the data were not weighted recruitment and training levels in the area would be over-stated.

The following table presents the breakdown of the sample achieved by industry and organisation size. The table also shows the population figures and highlights the differences between the unweighted (number of interviews conducted) and weighted (reflecting the actual employer population) samples.

**Sample distribution, by sector (column percentages)**

	No. of interviews conducted	% of employers interviewed	No. of employers in population*	% of total population/ weighted sample
Agriculture	9	3	24	1
Manufacturing	43	16	348	10
Construction	12	5	459	13
Distribution, hotels and restaurants	48	18	1013	30
Transport and communication	16	6	286	8
Banking, finance and insurance	5	2	710	21
Public administration, education and health	78	29	310	9
Other	55	21	263	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3417</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>*Source: ABI 2005</b>				

**Sample distribution, by size (column percentages)**

	No. of interviews conducted	% of employers interviewed	No. of employers in population*	% of total population/ weighted sample
2 – 10 employees	130	49	2969	87
11-24 employees	72	27	262	8
25-49 employees	32	12	100	3
50+ employees	32	12	86	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3417</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>*Source: ABI 2005</b>				

## 2 Executive Summary

### 2.1 Background and method

This research has been conducted on behalf of the Moorlands Together Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and was project managed for the LSP by Leek College, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Staffordshire County Council, Connexions and Job Centre Plus.

266 telephone interviews were conducted with employers in the Staffordshire Moorlands area in order to obtain information to help the partnership develop their strategic plans, plan their investment and deliver training programmes that meet local employer needs.

The data has been weighted so that responses are reliably representative of the actual employer population.

### 2.2 Employer Profile

The majority of employers (87%) employ 10 or fewer staff. This proportion is similar to that UK-wide.

Although most firms in construction employ few permanent staff, it is likely that they also employ many staff on a sub-contract basis. Similarly, whilst it appears that most of banking, finance and insurance firms are small employers, the majority (97%) are part of a larger organisation with sites elsewhere and will, therefore, not behave as small firms would normally.

The largest industry sector in the area, in business unit terms, is that of distribution, hotels and restaurants.

More than a quarter of public administration, education and health organisations employ at least 25 staff at their site and this suggests that these firms are the largest employers, in terms of employee numbers, in the area.

### 2.3 Recruitment

53% of employers have recruited permanent staff in the last 12 months. This increases to nine in ten organisations with 25 or more employees.

By sector, recruitment activity is above average within banking, finance and insurance (highlighting that these employers do not behave as typical small firms) and public administration, education and health.

In sectors where staff turnover is typically greater, such as agriculture, hotels and catering and construction, the more frequent coming and going of staff will tend to involve temporary, seasonal or otherwise casual staff.

From a range of what we might term 'disadvantaged' or special interest groups of people, employers are most likely to have recruited young people, aged 18-24. Very few have recruited people with disabilities, apprentices and migrant workers. That said, all but 2% of employers that have recruited anyone in the last 12 months have recruited from at least one of these groups.

Public administration, education and health are more likely than average to have recruited women returners. The banking, finance and insurance sector are also more likely to draw its recruits from this group and also are more likely than average to have recruited recent graduates, ethnic minority groups and older workers. Firms in distribution, hotels and restaurants recruit relatively heavily from school leavers and most have recruited 18-24 year olds.

71% of organisations that have recruited in the last 12 months report at least 75% of their new recruits living locally. Those that have looked further afield for new staff tend not to do this consciously, but advertise more widely as a matter of course.

## 2.4 Skill Shortages

Just 11% of those that have recruited in the last 12 months have experienced recruitment difficulties. This increases to two-fifths of organisations with 25 or more employees that have recruited.

There is a higher incidence of hard-to-fill vacancies in public administration, education and health (37%).

In terms of the extent to which hard-to-fill vacancies are experienced in various occupations, recruitment difficulties when recruiting for process, plant and machine operatives (28% of those that have experienced hard-to-fill vacancies), skilled trades (25%) and personal service occupations (20%) are particularly significant. However, as a proportion of all hard-to-fill vacancies reported, those in personal service occupations (all of which are reported by public administration, education and health organisations) are most common. Recruitment difficulties amongst process, plant and machine operatives and skilled trades occupations are mostly reported within distribution, hotels and restaurants.

Lack of appropriate skills is the main reason for recruitment difficulties.

## 2.5 Skill Gaps

Skill gaps concern the skills lacking amongst the existing workforce.

Most respondents consider all their staff fully proficient in their jobs. Thus just 15% of all respondents report any skill gaps.

Once again, the larger the employer the higher the incidence of skill gaps, which is likely to reflect more frequent recruitment, the wider range of skills required and movement between jobs in a larger company.

Skill gaps are most likely to be reported amongst sales and customer service staff, within elementary occupations and amongst managers.

When asked about the nature of skill gaps, customer handling skills and technical, practical or job-specific skills are the most significant, the latter are particularly likely to be highly individual to the organisations that report them.

22% of all respondents anticipate a change in their skill needs in the next 2 to 3 years. The proportion is particularly high within the construction sector (49%).

Again, respondents are most likely to focus on technical, practical or job-specific skills when being specific about their changing skill needs. When prompted with a list of potential areas in which skill needs are expected to change, general IT skills and office administration skills become more significant.

It is clear that employers will strive to address their skill needs by means of their internal resources wherever possible. It can be inferred that cost is an issue here and that this even extends to providing 'on-the-job' training, where minimal production time is lost, wherever possible.

## 2.6 Training

The findings suggest that many employers rely on the employees themselves to identify their own training needs. In larger organisations, line managers, department heads/managers and human resources teams/training specialists are more likely to be available to help with this process.

A third of organisations have a formal policy with regard to undertaking staff training, although most support it as and when necessary. The larger the organisation, the more likely they are to take a positive or systematic approach to training or to have a written training policy. Overall, just 15% of all employers have a systematic approach but no written policy and 35% (rising to 65% of the largest employers) have a written policy.

24% of all respondents report that their organisation has a budget for training expenditure. This increases to 82% of organisations with 50+ employees.

When prompted with a list of local training providers, one in eight respondents are unaware of any. Around three-quarters are aware of Leek College (76%) and two-thirds are aware of Stoke College (68%) and/or Staffordshire University (66%). However, fewer than 60% of all respondents are aware of Newcastle College, University of Derby at Buxton, Macclesfield College and Moorlands Enterprise Centre and no more than a third are aware of Axia, Moorlands Training Services and Rock House Training.

Three-fifths of all respondents have used, or contacted, at least one of the training providers listed. This is most likely to be Leek College or Stoke College (both 17%).

When asked to rate various aspects of training providers' services, the proportion that do not feel able to are quite significant being at least a fifth, rising to more than half when rating Macclesfield College. Taking this into account, respondents are very positive about the relevance of content of training, the expertise and knowledge of trainers, delivery of practical skills, facilities and technology and the location of training providers.

26% of all respondents report that their organisation has funded or arranged any off-the-job training<sup>1</sup>. This proportion increases to three-fifths of organisations with 25 or more employees.

66% of all respondents report that their organisation has funded or arranged on-the-job training. This too increases with organisation size to 89% of organisations with 50 or more staff.

The propensity to have delivered on-the-job training reflects that of off-the-job training suggesting higher levels of training overall within the sectors of public administration, education and health; banking, finance and insurance and distribution, hotels and restaurants.

However, despite the relatively high level of off-the-job training in manufacturing, on-the-job training is at a lower level than average.

The lack of need for training is the predominant reason for not delivering any. Issues to do with local training provision, in terms of information and availability are not significant factors.

As staff age they are less likely to receive training.

Organisations are most likely to deliver training through the use of internal resources. Usage of local training providers is at low levels.

Most of those respondents with experience of local training provision rate it highly.

In most cases, training expenditure has remained at similar levels this year, compared with last year. There is no strong evidence of financial support for staff development increasing year on year.

82% of respondents whose organisation have funded or arranged any training in the last 12 months say that the impact of that training activity has been assessed. Most respondents appear to be aware of some benefits and this is most likely to relate to developing a more productive workforce and developing specialist knowledge.

Just 3% of all respondents say that they have been unable to find a training provider locally. These respondents are mainly those from the public administration, education and health sectors.

53% of all respondents consider it easy to access information locally.

Telephone is the preferred media of communication, followed by website searches and face to face meetings.

Confirming conclusions drawn earlier, the preferred method of delivering training to staff is via on-the-job training.

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<sup>1</sup> Training away from the individual's immediate work position, whether on their premises or elsewhere

## 2.7 Training Initiatives

89% of respondents are aware of apprenticeships or advanced apprenticeships. Just over half of all respondents (55%) also know what they are (or feel they do).

Just 7% of all respondents report that their organisation has employed any staff undertaking an apprenticeship or advanced apprenticeship. Most are happy with the quality and the relevance of the training provided by apprenticeships.

49% of all respondents are aware of Train to Gain. Just 21% also know what they are (or feel they do).

Just 4% of all respondents report that their organisation has been actively involved in Train to Gain over the last 12 months. These respondents are to be found in three sectors mainly, including public administration, education and health, transport and communications and distribution, hotels and restaurants.

50% of all respondents are aware of Business Link Skills Brokers. Just 28% also know what they are (or feel they do).

Just 4% of all respondents have used the services of Business Link Skills Brokers in the last 12 months. The two sectors most likely to have used these services are public administration, education and health and distribution, hotels and restaurants. Most have been satisfied with the service received.

Of those that are not aware of the service, 38% would find a service where local businesses can have access to a skills adviser that will help them identify training needs and source training provision to be beneficial. This increases to 55% of organisations with 50+ employees and 50% of construction companies. As many as 33% of construction firms and 31% of those in distribution, hotels and restaurants would find this service very useful.

## 2.8 Conclusions

In common with the UK as a whole, the majority of Staffordshire Moorlands business population consists of small employers. These businesses tend to have low levels of staff turnover in absolute terms and are much less likely to have formal training policies and systems in place than large firms. Training levels are low as a consequence, mainly due to a lack of perceived need, but also because training, particularly off-the-job, is potentially expensive both in terms of paying for the necessary facilities and sparing staff time away from their jobs. In the case of the latter, loss of productivity (a hidden cost that employers are only too aware of) is also a factor in the reluctance to fund and arrange training.

Recruitment from the local labour pool appears to be at healthy levels and there is little evidence of excessive skill shortages in the area. Many of the hard-to-fill vacancies reported by employers in the last 12 months tend to be amongst unskilled or low skilled occupations and such recruitment difficulties may be overcome by employers more readily offering more extensive training for new recruits.

Recognising where there are skills deficiencies is an important first step to addressing them, but the findings of this survey suggest that few employers in the area can clearly identify where skills need improving in their existing workforce. The vast majority of employers either consider their workforce to be sufficiently skilled all ready (a perception that may be accurate in some cases, but not all) and many of those that do acknowledge a skills gap are vague about the nature of them. To be sure, many of those skills of a technical, practical or job-specific nature may be easily identifiable on a case by case basis, but it is difficult in a general skills survey of this nature to quantify such skill needs when they vary so much in their precise nature from one organisation to another.

IT skills needs tend to be ubiquitous, but it is highly likely (given national statistics) that employers under-estimate literacy and numeracy skill needs amongst their workforce.

There is still heavy reliance on the employee themselves for the identification of training needs. This is particularly the case within smaller firms, which constitute the majority of employers in the area. It implies that the impetus for training then has to come from the employee themselves. This highlights the challenge that exists in increasing employer engagement and investment in skills.

Only a minority of employers take a positive and systematic approach to training. Amongst the majority, training happens as and when the need arises and we have established in this survey that it is up to the employees themselves to identify that need in many cases. Unless systematic approaches to identifying skill needs (i.e. employer-led) and planning for training are put in place delivery of training will remain 'haphazard' in a large number of organisations, particularly those employing few staff which make up the majority of businesses in the area.

The lack of appropriate training provision locally is not a significant issue but at an individual organisation level the inability to obtain specific training locally may be an obstacle to training. It is also difficult to draw firm conclusions about local training provision when many of those organisations that have not undertaken any, or no more than basic on-the-job, training have not sought external training provision and do not know therefore if there are gaps in local training provision.

Material knowledge of Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships (i.e. knowing what they are as well as being aware that they exist) is at low levels and is at even lower levels with regard to Train to Gain and Business Link Skills Brokers. The Partnership needs to improve knowledge of both these initiatives if they are to increase levels of involvement in line with the objectives of the Leitch Review of Skills.

## 3 Employer Profile

The section outlines the profile of employers in the Staffordshire Moorlands area, as suggested by the weighted survey data.

### 3.1 Profile of Employers

The majority of employers employ 10 or fewer employees (87% do). This echoes the UK-wide profile of employers. This includes all but one or two employers operating within the agriculture and a very high proportion of those in construction (97%), banking, finance and insurance (96%) and transport and communications (93%).

Just 8% of all employers employ between 11 and 24 employees, 3% employ between 25 and 49 employees and 3%, 50 or more.

Tables 1 to 4 summarise the profile of employers in Staffordshire Moorlands.

It is likely that many of those working in construction, for instance, are employed on a sub-contract basis, whilst most of the banking, finance and insurance companies based in the area are not genuinely small employers. It is important to note that respondents were asked about site-level employment only and in fact 97% of respondents representing financial firms are part of a much bigger firm with branches elsewhere (see Table 4). This compares with between a sixth and a third of businesses in other sectors. As a result, firms in banking, finance and insurance, although ostensibly small employers, will not tend to behave as small firms typically do with respect to recruitment and training.

The highest proportion of businesses in the area (30%) operate in the sector of distribution, hotels and restaurants. Some one in five operate within the banking, finance and insurance sector (21%) and the remainder are quite evenly distributed between the sectors of construction, transport and communications and public administration/education/health and other activities (see Table 1). Just 1% operate within agriculture. However, ABI data that is used to weight the sample data tends to under-estimate the number of businesses in agriculture, due to their nature as small, sometimes, informal business units. This will be reflected in the weighted survey data.

More than a quarter of public administration/education/health organisations (29%) employ at least 25 staff at their site (see Table 3).

**Table 1: Sector profile, by number of employees at that site (column percentages)**

	Total	2-10 employees	11-24 employees	25-49 employees	50+ employees
Agriculture	1	1	*	0	1
Manufacturing	10	9	14	12	27
Construction	14	15	5	1	0
Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants	30	30	32	29	14
Transport and communication	8	9	4	7	4
Banking, Finance and Insurance	21	23	9	0	5
Public Administration, Education and Health	9	5	28	48	45
Other	8	8	8	3	4
<i>Unweighted sample bases</i>	266	130	72	32	32

\* Denotes less than 0.5%

**Table 2: Site profile, by number of employees at that site (column percentages)**

	Total	2-10 employees	11-24 employees	25-49 employees	50+ employees
Single Site	62	62	73	60	28
Multi-site	38	38	27	40	72
<i>Unweighted sample bases</i>	266	130	72	32	32

**Table 3: Size profile, by industry (column percentages)**

	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Construction	Distrib., Hotels and Restaurants	Transport and Communications	Banking, Finance and Insurance	Public Admin., Education and Health	Other
2-10 employees	91	80	97	88	93	96	50	89
11-24 employees	5	10	3	8	4	3	23	8
25-49 employees	0	3	*	3	2	0	15	1
50+ employees	5	7	0	1	1	1	12	1
<i>Unweighted sample bases</i>	9	43	12	48	16	5	78	55

\* Denotes less than 0.5%

**Table 4: Site profile, by industry (column percentages)**

	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Construction	Distrib., Hotels and Restaurants	Transport and Communications	Banking, Finance and Insurance	Public Admin., Education and Health	Other
Single Site	69	80	84	83	62	3	65	69
Multi-site	31	20	16	18	38	97	35	31
<i>Unweighted sample bases</i>	9	43	12	48	16	5	78	55

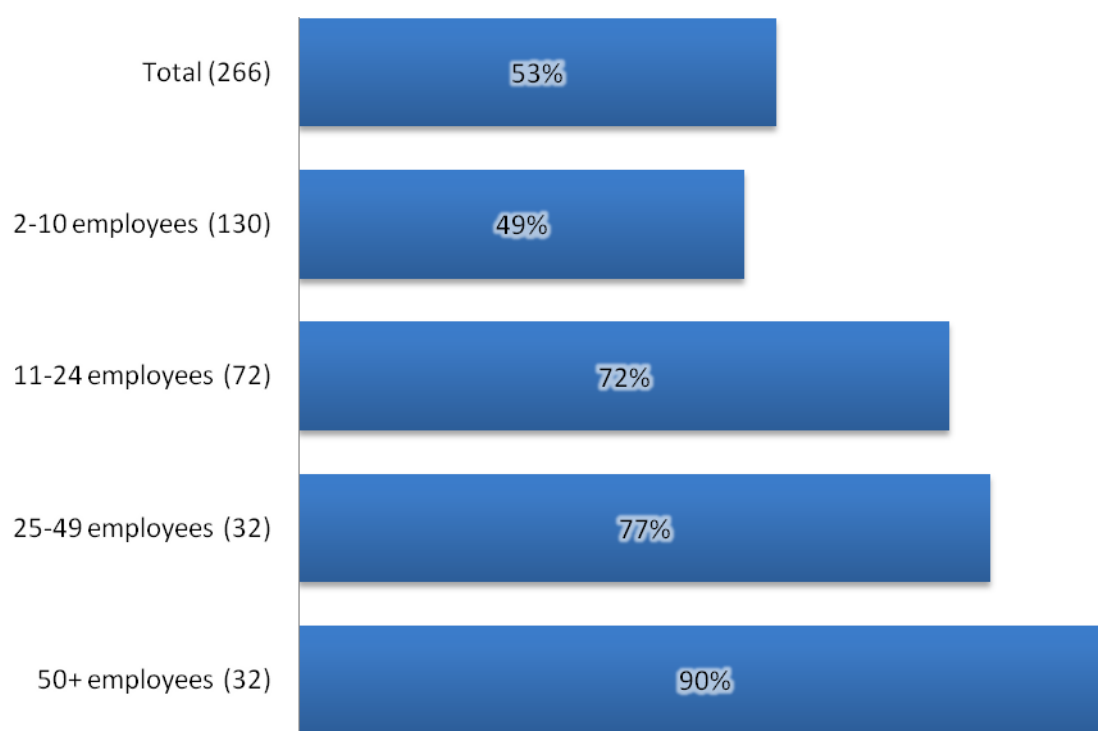
## 4 Recruitment

This section examines recruitment activity amongst employers in the Staffordshire Moorlands area. It determines the level of recruitment overall and focuses on the extent to which employers recruit from so-called 'disadvantaged' groups, as well as the extent to which they recruit locally.

### 4.1 Recruitment in the Last 12 Months

During the last 12 months, 53% of employers have recruited any permanent staff. This increases with organisation size as shown in the figure below.

Figure 1: Proportion of employers that have recruited any employees in the last 12 months (excluding any temporary or casual staff), by organisation size (all respondents) Unweighted bases: figures in parentheses



By sector, recruitment activity has been above average in public administration, education and health (67%) and banking, finance and insurance (67%, highlighting the fact that they tend to be branches of larger organisations) and below average in agriculture (5%), manufacturing (35%), and transport and communication (26%). This tends to reflect average organisation size rather than any particular differences between industries. In those industries where staff turnover tends to be greater, such as agriculture and hotels and catering, recruitment is more likely to involve temporary/seasonal or casual staff and we are focusing on permanent staff here. Thus, high levels of staff turnover will not be reflected in the survey findings.

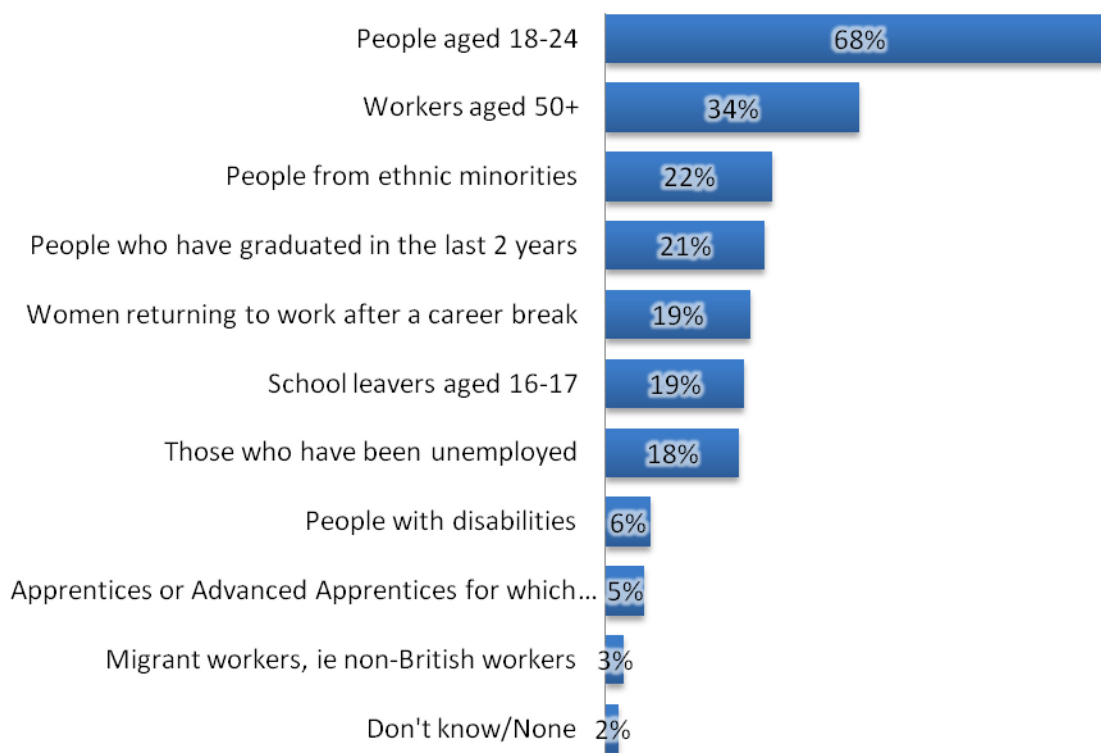
As one might expect, the number of staff recruited by most organisations is small, generally no more than 4 (89% of those that have recruited). In all, 97% of organisations that have recruited any permanent staff in the last 12 months have recruited no more than 10.

#### 4.1.1 Recruitment from ‘disadvantaged’ groups

A number of groups of people could be considered to be ‘disadvantaged’ for one reason or another. They might be young and inexperienced (aged 16-17 or 18-24) and have difficulty in obtaining a first job on that basis. They may be fresh from FE/HE and have very little work experience. They may be from the other end of the age spectrum (aged 50+) and be considered too near retirement age to be worthwhile taking on or to be at too high a risk of ill health (also people with disabilities). They may have English only as a second language or be subject to discrimination for one reason or another (those from ethnic minorities, migrant workers for instance). They may have special needs (those with disabilities) or have been away from employment for a significant length of time (women returners and the unemployed). In many of these cases, employers taking them on are likely to have a need to provide a more thorough induction and basic training programme. This may deter some employers from recruiting from some of these groups.

Respondents that have recruited any permanent staff in the last 12 months were asked about recruitment from any of these ‘disadvantaged’ groups. The proportion that has recruited from any of the groups is summarised in the figure below.

Figure 2: Groups from which employers have recruited in the last 12 months (those that have recruited)  
Unweighted base: 160



Employers are most likely to have recruited young people aged 18-24 (68% of those that have recruited have done so). The next most significant group from which employers have recruited is that of workers aged 50+ (34%). Neither of these groups are more likely than average to have any special needs as such and, for the most part compared with other groups, represent the mainstream of the labour supply pool.

Around one in five of those recruiting (19%) have recruited women returners (i.e. those returning to work after a career break, usually to have children). This increases to nearly half the banking, finance and insurance firms that have recruited (48%).

The banking, finance and insurance sector is particularly likely to draw its recruits from recent graduates, ethnic minority groups, older workers and women returners. Firms in distribution, hotels and restaurants that have recruited in the last 12 months are more likely than average to have recruited school leavers aged 16-17, as well as young people between the age of 18 and 24.

Just 6% of businesses that have recruited have recruited people with disabilities and even fewer have recruited apprentices (5%) and/or migrant workers (3%).

#### **4.1.2 Local recruitment**

When asked about the proportion of staff recruited locally (i.e. within a 10 mile radius of the firm's location), nearly three-quarters of those that have recruited any permanent staff in the last 12 months (71%) reported that more than 75% of their new recruits live locally. This increases to all those that have recruited within the agriculture and transport and communication sectors, and 18% of those that have recruited in distribution, hotels and restaurants.

Just over one in five businesses that have recruited in the last 12 months (22%) report that between 1% and 25% of their new recruits live locally. This increases to 48% of firms that have recruited permanent staff within the banking, finance and insurance sector. Just 1% of businesses report that none of the new recruits have lived locally.

Reasons for looking further afield suggest that it is not always a conscious choice for employers. One or two mention the fact that they were approached by the applicant themselves. In other cases, advertising further afield for candidates was a natural by-product of there not being individuals with the sometimes specialist skills locally.

These findings suggest that employers can generally expect to meet their skill needs from the local labour pool. There are, however, significant issues in doing so for some employers in the area. These areas of skill shortages (not necessarily confined to the local area) are now discussed.

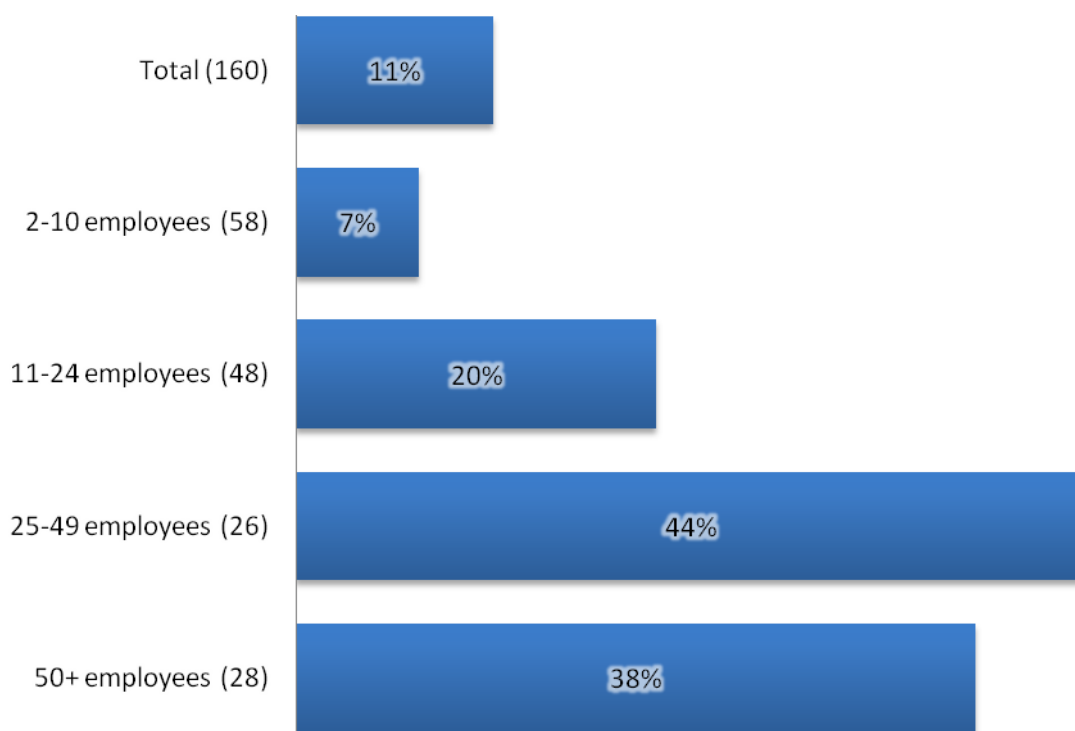
## 5 Skill Shortages

This section highlights skill shortages reported by employers in the last 12 months, as defined by recruitment difficulties experienced. It examines the nature of the skill shortages experienced and their perceived causes.

### 5.1 Incidence of Hard-to-Fill Vacancies

Just 11% of those employers that have recruited any permanent staff in the last 12 months have experienced difficulties in filling their vacancies. The propensity to have experienced difficulties in recruiting staff increases with business size, which reflects the propensity to have recruited at all (see figure below).

Figure 3: Proportion of respondents that have had hard-to-fill vacancies, by organisation size (where recruited in the last 12 months) Unweighted bases in parentheses



The data shows a particularly high incidence of hard-to-fill vacancies within public administration, education and health (37%).

Hard-to-fill vacancies within distribution, hotels and restaurants are mainly found in unskilled, process, plant and machine operative type occupations. This compares with the fact that recruitment difficulties in public administration, education and health organisations tend to be in ‘white-collar’ occupations, mainly administrative and secretarial posts or in personal service occupations.

Across a range of sectors there are a number of vacancies which have been hard-to-fill highlighted within associate professional and technical occupations. These tend not to be concentrated in any one sector as such.

When looking at the occupations in which respondents report hard-to-fill vacancies it is evident that more than a quarter of respondents (28%) have experienced difficulties in recruiting process, plant and machine operatives. However, an examination of the occupations that make up hard-to-fill vacancies shifts the picture slightly in the direction of personal service occupations, which make up 47% of all hard-to-fill vacancies reported and are all to be found in the public administration, education and health sector (82% of all hard-to-fill vacancies in that sector). Skilled trades vacancies account for one in five hard-to-fill vacancies (20%) and are mainly to be found in distribution, hotels and restaurants (42% of all hard-to-fill vacancies in that sector). This sector also has a high number of hard-to-fill vacancies for process, plant and machine operatives (40% of all hard-to-fill vacancies in that sector).

Together, personal service occupations and skilled trades vacancies account for two-thirds that are hard-to-fill. Whilst process, plant and machine operatives account for around one in seven hard-to-fill vacancies (15%), other occupations each account for only around one in twenty.

## 5.2 Reasons for Hard-to-Fill Vacancies

The main reason given for having hard-to-fill vacancies is that of the low number of applicants with the required skills (45%). This increases to 72% of businesses experiencing hard-to-fill vacancies in the distribution, hotels and restaurant sector and 87% of relevant businesses in construction.

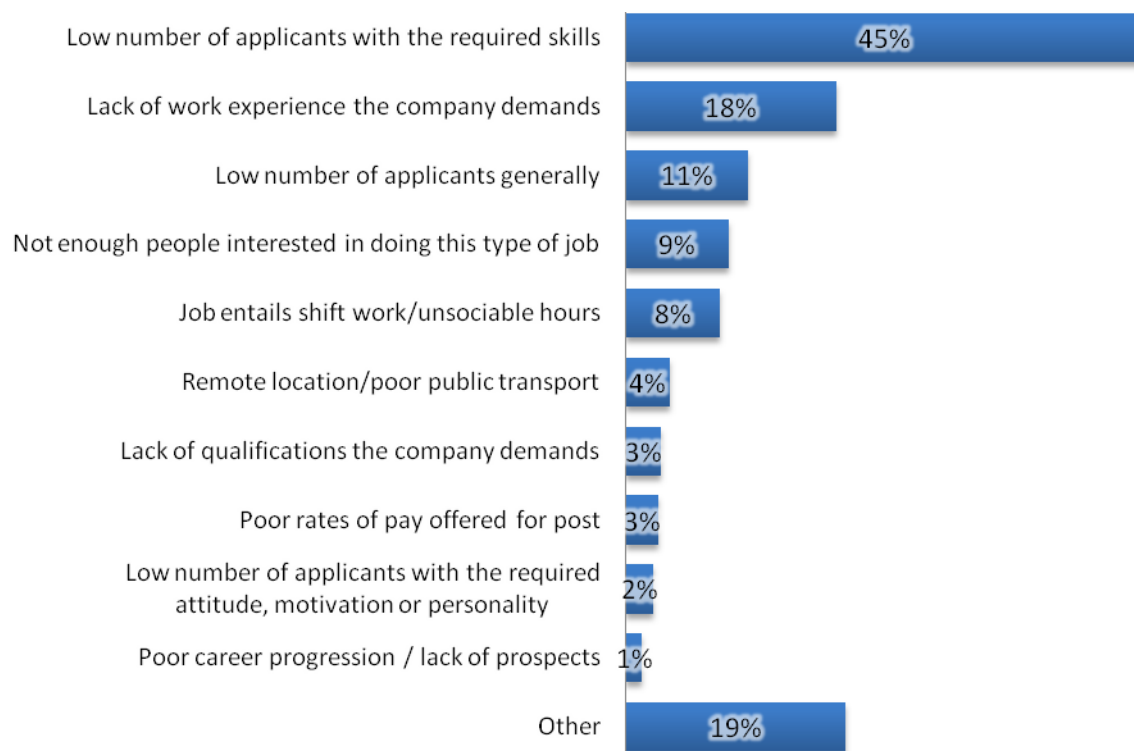
Overall, 60% of respondents that have had hard-to-fill vacancies report it due to applicants not being of sufficient quality. This increases to 80% of organisations in distribution, hotels and restaurants. Amongst these respondents, work experience tends to be of the least concern, with most feeling that it is rather skills and qualifications that are lacking.

Other significant reasons for having recruitment difficulties include a lack of work experience the company demands (18%), the low number of applicants generally (11%) and not enough people interested in doing this type of work (9%).

Responses are summarised in the figure below.

## Staffordshire Moorlands Employer Skills Needs

Figure 4: Main causes of hard-to-fill vacancies – unprompted (multiple response) (where vacancies proved hard-to-fill) Unweighted base: 41



## 6 Skill Gaps

This section discusses skill gaps currently being experienced by employers in the Staffordshire Moorlands area. Skill gaps concern the skills lacking amongst the existing workforce. The skills lacking are examined in detail.

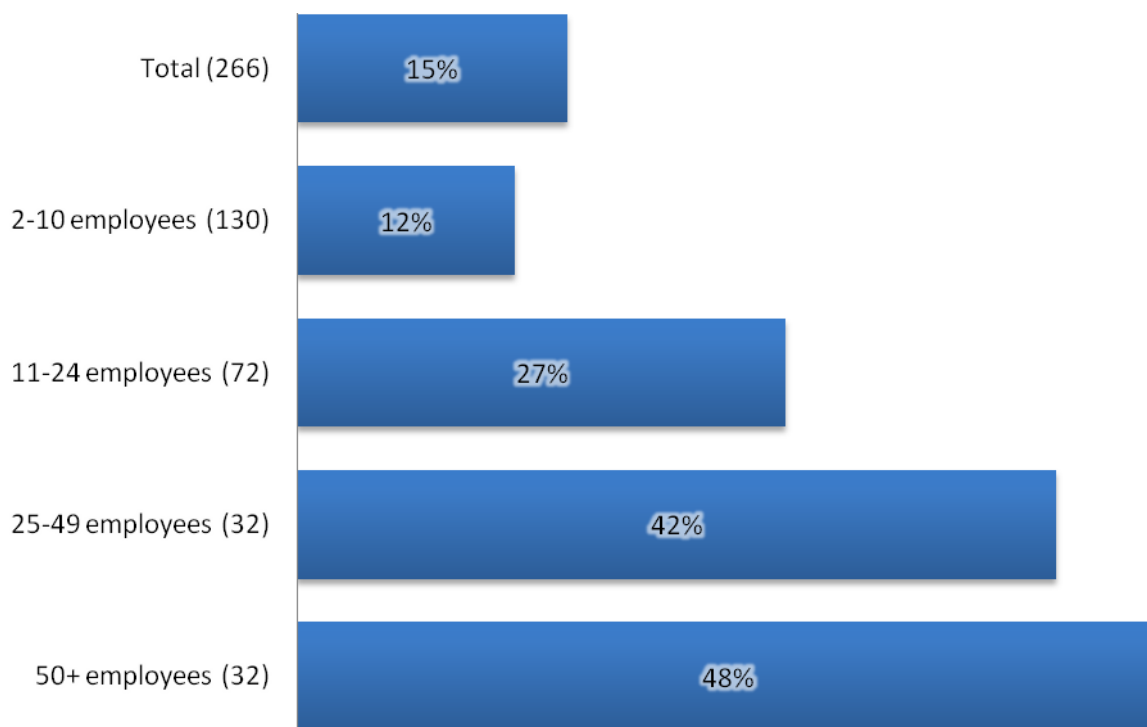
Future skill needs i.e. those likely to be required in the next 2 to 3 years are then discussed.

### 6.1 Incidence of Skill Gaps

The majority of respondents (85%) report that all their staff are fully proficient at their jobs, a proficient employee being someone who is able to do their job to the required level. This means that one in seven businesses in the area (just 15%) report having any skill gaps, but those that do are most likely to report that more than three-quarters of their staff *are* fully proficient in their jobs (70% of those with skills gaps).

The larger the employer the higher the incidence of skill gaps and this is likely to reflect the greater likelihood of there being new staff joining larger organisations at any time and greater opportunities for movement between jobs and functions.

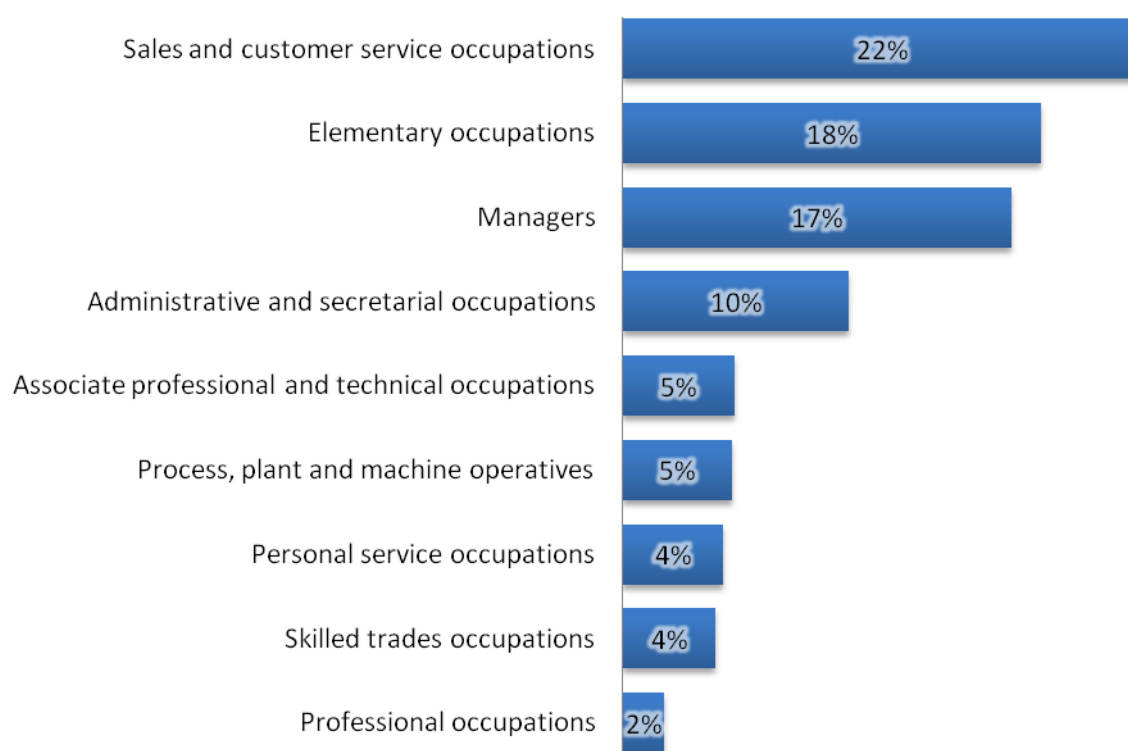
Figure 5: The proportion of employers reporting some staff that are NOT fully proficient at their jobs, by organisation size (all respondents) Unweighted bases are in parentheses



Respondents were asked about a range of occupations and whether or not they recognised that any skill gaps existed in those occupations within their business. Skill gaps were most likely to be reported in sales and customer service<sup>2</sup> occupations (reported by 22% of respondents), in elementary occupations<sup>3</sup> (18%) and amongst managers<sup>4</sup> (17%). Skill gaps for elementary occupations and managers are particularly likely to be found in the distribution, hotels and restaurants sector.

The occupations within which skill gaps are reported are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 6: Occupations in which respondents consider there to be skill gaps – prompted (where report any skill gaps) Unweighted base: 69



<sup>2</sup> Including telephone salespersons, call centre agents/operators, retail and cashiers

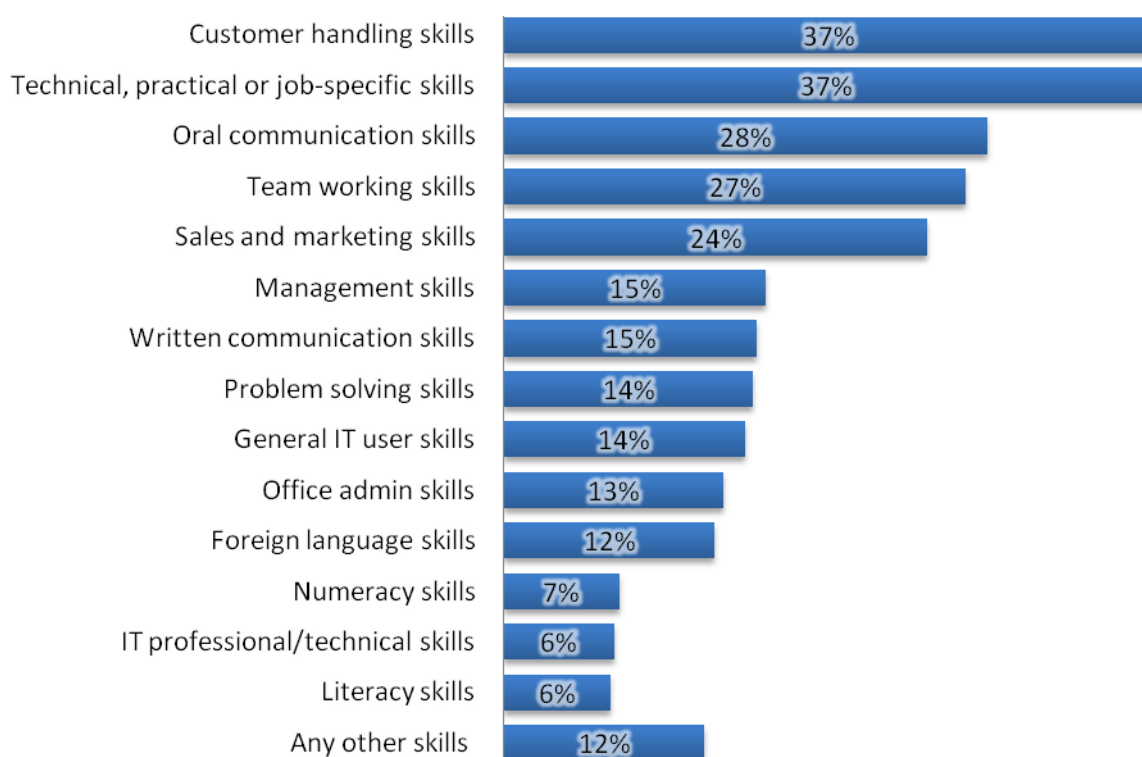
<sup>3</sup> Including labourers, packer, security guards, cleaners, kitchen and catering assistants, other goods handling and storage, waitresses, postal workers

<sup>4</sup> Including financial managers and chartered secretaries, marketing and sales managers, quality assurance managers, research and development managers, purchasing managers, storage and warehouse managers

Respondents already reporting skill gaps were then asked about the skills they feel need improving in their workforce. From a prompted list, they were most likely to highlight technical, practical or job-specific skills and/or customer handling skills (both 37%). Sample bases are low, particularly when focusing on sector differences but it is worth noting that customer handling skills are particularly lacking in transport and communications sector, and that some staff at some level within distribution, hotels and restaurants businesses are more likely than average to lack oral communication, and sales and marketing skills. Respondents in the public administrative, education and health sector are particularly likely to have skill gaps regarding general IT user skills, written communication, literacy, problem solving and team working skills. The fact that they tend to be larger organisations will in itself make it more likely that they will identify skill gaps of a wide ranging nature.

Skills identified as lacking in the workforce, across all sectors, are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 7: Skills that need improving amongst staff – prompted (where report any skill gaps) Unweighted base: 69



## 6.2 Changing Skill Needs

More than a fifth of all respondents (22%) anticipate that their skill needs will change in the next 2 to 3 years. This proportion is, however, particularly high in the construction sector (49%) and higher than average in public administration, education and health (40%).

The propensity to identify changing skill needs increases by organisation size, from 20% amongst employers with 2-10 staff, to 29% of those with between 11 and 24 staff, 35% of those with between 25 and 49 staff and 41% of those with more than 50 employers.

When asked about the skills that will need improving in the next 2 to 3 years as a result of changing skill needs, respondents are most likely to cite (spontaneously) technical, practical or job-specific skills (55%). Some two-thirds of construction employers with changing skill needs (66%) cite these skills as those in which skills are likely to need improving.

General IT user skills are cited by just over one in five respondents (22%) indicating that they will have changing skill needs in the next 2 to 3 years and this proportion is higher in manufacturing firms (35%) and amongst construction firms (34%).

As one would expect, the proportions of respondents citing most skill areas increases when they are prompted with a list. There are particularly strong increases in the need for general IT and office administration skills, suggesting that some employers may under-estimate skill needs in this area unless it is drawn to their attention.

The table below presents unprompted and prompted responses.

**Table 5: Skills respondents feel need improving over the next 2-3 years (multiple response) (where skill needs will change) (column percentages)**

	Unprompted	Prompted
Technical, practical or job-specific skills	55	74
General IT skills	22	43
Oral communication skills	16	24
Management skills	14	28
Sales and marketing skills	15	28
Customer handling skills	10	26
IT professional skills	6	15
Office admin. Skills	3	26
Written communication skills	4	11
Team working skills	3	16
Problem solving skills	2	9
Foreign language skills	3	6
Numeracy skills	1	7
Literacy skills	0	6
Any other skills	9	11
Don't know	*	1
<i>Unweighted base</i>		78

\* Denotes less than 0.5%

### 6.2.1 Training to improve skills

It is clear that employers intend to address the need to improve skills in a range of ways. The level at which skills need to be improved will be a key factor in deciding how to address that need and, in the case of IT skills in particular, the precise nature of those skill needs varies widely.

General and 'professional' or advanced IT user skills range from familiarisation with Office to use of CAD systems. They include the use of accounting packages and specialist bespoke software used. Training in these IT skills can be provided by in-house IT departments or by local authorities (for instance), as well as external training providers.

## Staffordshire Moorlands Employer Skills Needs

The range of communication, customer handling, sales and marketing, teamworking, problem solving and management skills all tend to be addressed in a similar way, mainly by internal 'customer service' courses, even 'on-the-job' training.

## 7 Training

This section describes training activity currently undertaken by employers in the Staffordshire Moorlands area. This covers the way in which training needs are identified, the business policy with regard to training and learning, whether or not the business has a training budget, the type and method of training or development employees have received in the last 12 months, who has received opportunities for training or development, reasons for not undertaking any training activity, the use of external training providers and difficulties in sourcing external training provision or information in this area.

### 7.1 Identification of Training Needs

When it comes to identifying training needs, it appears that employees themselves are considered to be quite pro-active. Two-thirds of respondents (67%) specified the employee themselves as the person that identifies training needs.

Line managers are also a significant source of information on training needs (55%) and are increasingly important in this respect as the organisation grows in size (85% of respondents representing organisations with 50+ employees).

There is a similar pattern with regard to departmental/team leaders/managers, as well as with regard to human resources departments/teams and training managers (see table below). This obviously reflects the extent to which these facilities are present in larger organisations and the fact that small firms have less justification (i.e. fewer staff to manage) for the expense involved in providing these resources.

**Table 6: Types of people expected to identify training needs – prompted (multiple response) (column percentages)**

	Total	2-10 employees	11-24 employees	25-49 employees	50+ employees
The employee themselves	67	67	62	88	75
The employee's direct (line) manager	55	54	60	70	85
A departmental or team leader (or manager)	33	30	60	40	78
The human resources department or team	11	11	6	11	39
The training manager	26	25	24	27	51
Other	3	3	8	6	11
Don't know/none	4	4	3	0	0
<i>Unweighted sample bases</i>	266	130	72	32	32

\* Denotes less than 0.5%

Organisation size is the key variable when it comes to describing how training needs are identified and this is reflected in sector differences (i.e. where average organisation size is smaller, human resources/training specialists are less likely to be a factor) and in the fact that organisations that have identified skill shortages (i.e. larger organisations are more likely to have recruited and to have experienced hard-to-fill vacancies) are less likely to rely on employees themselves to identify their own training needs.

## 7.2 Training Policy

Very few organisations it seems have a formal policy with regard to undertaking staff training, although most support it as and when necessary. The larger the organisation, the more likely they are to take a positive or systematic approach to training or to have a written training policy.

It is interesting to note the differences in this regard by sector too, although for the most part they reflect size differences (see table below). It can be seen that most banking, finance and insurance organisations have a written policy to training and learning, reflecting the fact that most are part of a larger organisation with many sites.

**Table 7: Overall policy with regard to training and learning, by size – prompted (row percentages)**

	Undertake staff training as and when necessary but no particular policy	Take a positive and systematic approach to training, although no written policy	Have a written policy
2-10 employees (130)	52	14	34
11-24 employees (72)	38	23	39
25-49 employees (32)	17	35	48
50+ employees (32)	21	14	65
<b>Total (266)</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>35</b>
<i>Unweighted sample bases in parentheses</i>			

**Table 8: Overall policy with regard to training and learning, by sector – prompted (row percentages)**

	Undertake staff training as and when necessary but no particular policy	Take a positive and systematic approach to training, although no written policy	Have a written policy
Agriculture (9)	95	0	5
Manufacturing (43)	59	24	17
Construction (12)	98	1	1
Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants (48)	64	24	12
Transport and communication (16)	56	12	32
Banking, Finance and Insurance (5)	4	0	96
Public Administration, Education and Health (78)	20	24	56
Other (55)	42	31	27
<b>Total (266)</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>35</b>
<i>Unweighted sample bases in parentheses</i>			

It is also interesting to note that respondents that have funded or arranged any training in the last year are more likely to report that their organisation has a written training policy (41%, compared with 18% of those without a skill gap). This is related to organisation size, as the likelihood of supporting training increases with the number of employees, but may also relate to the fact that where a formal, written policy exists it is easier to identify and address training needs.

### 7.3 Training Budget

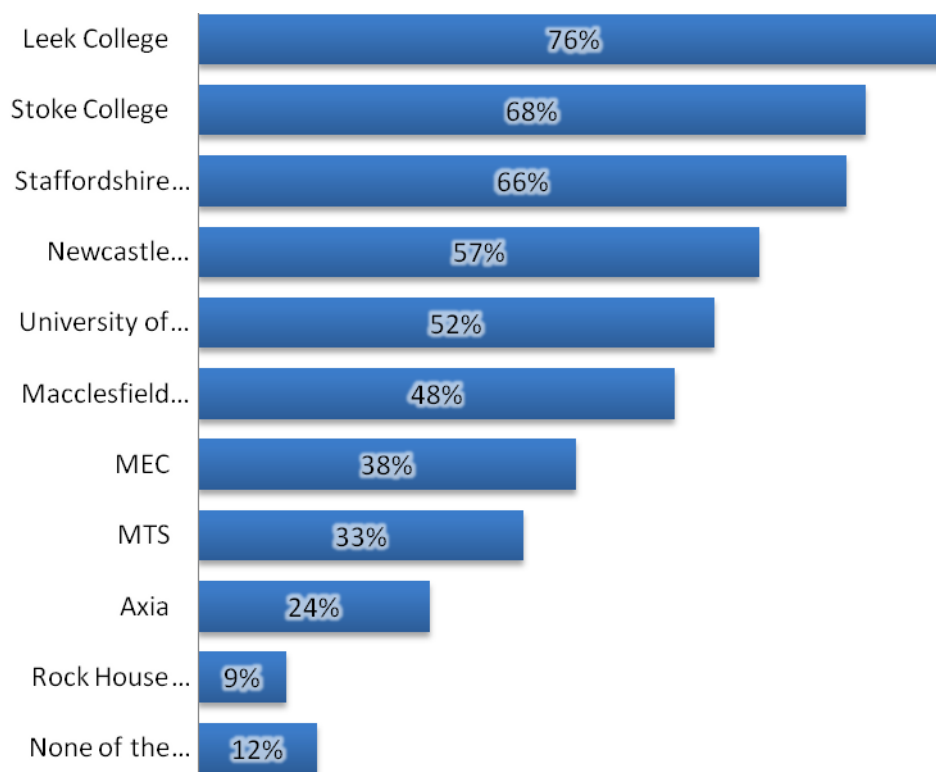
Overall, nearly a quarter of all respondents (24%) report that their organisation has a budget for training expenditure. This too is directly related to employment size (increasing from 21% amongst employees of between 2 and 10 staff to 26% of those with between 10 and 24 staff, 50% of those with between 25 and 49 staff to 82% of those with 50+ staff).

Organisations within public administration, education and health (55%) and the construction (34%) and banking, finance and insurance (33%) have a greater propensity to have a budget for training expenditure. The proportion is as low as 1% amongst transport and communications and 5% amongst agriculture organisations, just 15% in distribution, hotels and restaurants, just 18% in manufacturing and just 12% in other sectors.

## 7.4 Awareness of Local Training Providers

Respondents were asked if they are aware of a number of local training providers. The levels of awareness are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 8: Local training providers that respondents are aware of – prompted (multiple response) (all respondents) Unweighted base: 266



One in eight respondents are unaware of any of these training providers and most of these respondents (94% of this group) employ 10 or fewer staff and operate within the banking, finance and insurance sector (50% of this group).

Whilst awareness of most providers is lower amongst those that have not arranged any training for staff in the last 12 months, most are aware of one or more.

## 7.5 Use of/Contact with Local Training Providers

Around three-fifths of all respondents (59%) have used at least one of the local training providers listed. This is most likely to be Leek College (17%, or 23% of those aware of the College). Stoke College is next most likely to have been used or contacted (17% of all respondents, 25% of those aware of it). Fewer than one in ten, and more commonly less than one in twenty, respondents have used, worked with or contacted any of the other local training provider listed.

## 7.6 Ratings of Local Training Providers

Respondents that have used any of the training providers in the area were asked to rate them for the relevance of content of training to their organisation, the expertise and knowledge of the trainer, delivery of practical skills when training staff, the facilities/technology available and their location.

The table below summarises the findings for each of the training providers.

**Table 9: Proportion of respondents that rate local training providers as good/very good on a number of aspects (where used, worked with, or had other contact with) (percentages)**

	Relevance of content of training for organisation	Expertise and knowledge of trainer	Delivery of practical skills when training staff	Facilities/technology available	Location of provider
Axia (3)	47	56	20	36	40
Leek College (52)	84	84	87	75	88
Moorlands Enterprise Centre (MEC)* (8)	30	33	27	67	70
Moorlands Training Services (MTS)* (12)	61	65	59	61	89
Macclesfield College (9)	32	40	37	41	32
Newcastle College (36)	17	72	65	66	75
Rock House Training (4)	50	30	29	29	52
Staffordshire University (22)	65	67	66	66	64
Stoke College (49)	67	75	75	73	67
University of Derby, Buxton (17)	57	57	55	77	53
<i>Unweighted sample bases in parentheses</i>					

With the exception of Rock House Training, the proportions of respondents that responded with 'don't know' when rating each training provider were significant, being at least a sixth. In the case of Macclesfield College, the proportion that did not feel able to provide a rating exceeded 50%, whilst the proportions exceeded a two-

thirds with regard to Moorlands Enterprise Centre and a third with regard to Moorlands Training Services.

Taking this into account, respondents are very positive about aspects of local training providers.

## 7.7 Training Funded or Arranged

### 7.7.1 Off-the-Job Training

Off-the-job training, by which we mean, training away from the individual's immediate work position, whether on their premises or elsewhere has been funded or arranged by one in four organisations in the area (26%). It is usual to see training levels increase alongside organisation size and this is the case amongst organisations in Staffordshire Moorlands. 53% of organisations with more than 10 employees have funded or arranged any off-the-job training in the last 12 months, compared with just 21% of smaller firms.

More than half the organisations in the sectors of public administration, education and health (59%) and a higher proportion than average of distribution, hotels and restaurants (37%) have funded or arranged off-the-job training in the last 12 months, whilst few organisations in agriculture (17%), transport and communications (5%) and banking, finance and insurance (3%) have done so.

### 7.7.2 On-the-Job Training

Levels of on-the-job training are higher (66%), as one would expect.

The investment needed in terms of paying for facilities away from work stations, funding the use of external training providers in some cases and sparing employees significant amounts of time away from their core functions is much less for this type of training. Furthermore on-the-job training can cover even the most basic instruction that many employees receive when they start their job or start using new systems. Hence it is more prevalent.

Levels of on-the-job training increase alongside organisation size, from 63% of firms with no more than 10 employees to 74% of those with between 11 and 24 employees and 84% of those with between 25 and 49 staff to 89% of those with 50 or more staff.

Broadly speaking, organisations operating within sectors in which off-the-job training is more common are also amongst those most likely to have funded or arranged on-the-job training (84% of public administration, education and health, 66% of distribution, hotels and restaurants), but given the levels of off-the-job training, levels of on-the-job training are higher than one would expect in banking, finance and insurance (all organisations in this sector).

### 7.7.3 Reasons for not providing any training in the last 12 months

Overall, 77% of all respondents report that their organisation has provided any training in the last 12 months.

When asked why they had not provided any training, the highest proportion (41%) reported that there was not particular reason. Lack of need is highlighted by most of the remainder (26% stating 'not needed/not applicable', 13% stating 'staff are already sufficiently trained/qualified').

That training courses may not be available locally or information on local courses is difficult to get hold of are not significant issues, with around 5% suggesting that this is why they have not done any training.

### **7.7.4 Staff that have received training**

Training is delivered to staff across a range of age groups but tends to be more heavily concentrated amongst younger employees. Two-thirds of all respondents (67%) report that their business has provided training for 16-24 year olds and the proportion declines as the age of staff increases, to 54% that have provided training for 25-49 year olds, 29% that have provided training for 50-64 year olds and just 4% that have provided training for 65+ year olds. Obviously, this will also be linked to whether employers employ staff in these age groups and it is likely that very few actually employ staff above retirement age.

### **7.7.5 Training providers used to deliver training**

Organisations are most likely to have used an internal company to deliver training (61% of all respondents, 80% of those that have funded or arranged any training) and this proportion increases with the number of staff employed (to 97% of those with 50+ employees). It includes all banking, finance and insurance firms.

Leek College has been used to deliver training by around one in eight organisations (13%, 16% of those that have funded or arranged any training). This increases to 28% within public administration, education and health organisations and a similar proportion of all respondents in the distribution, hotels and restaurants sector.

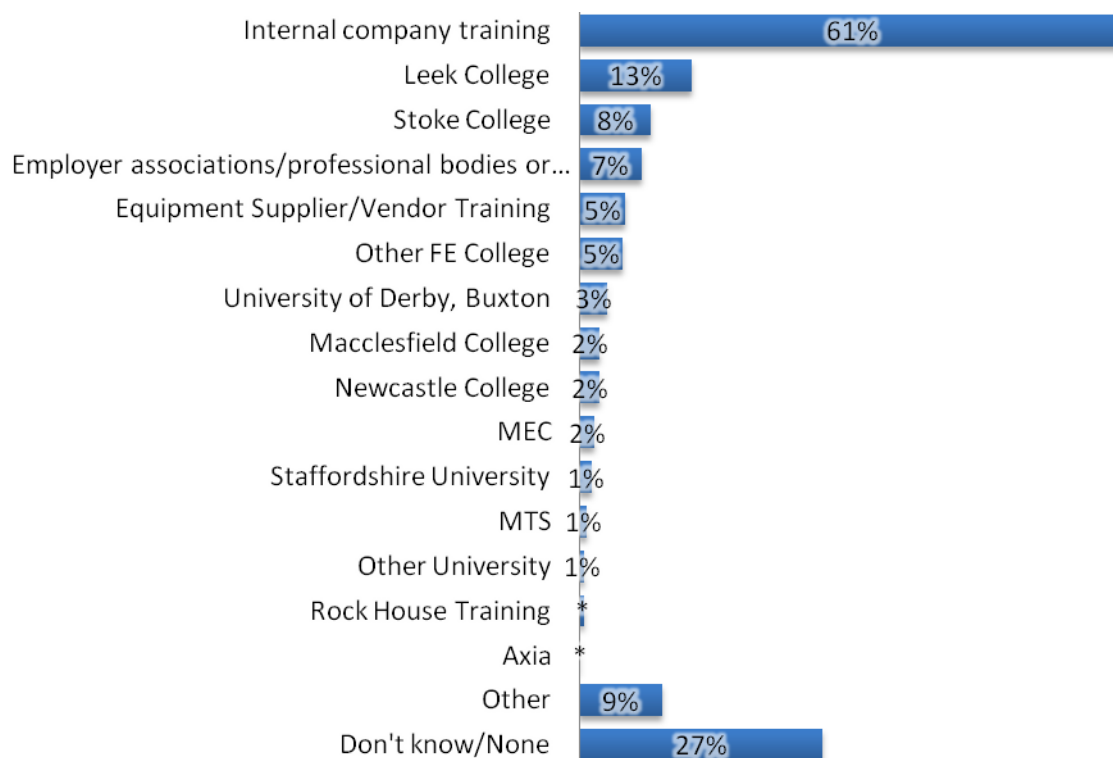
Stoke College has been used by 8% of all respondents (11% of those that have funded or arranged any training). This increases to 20% of public administration, education and health organisations and is higher than average (16%) in distribution, hotels and restaurants.

Employer associations/professional bodies or institutes have been used by 7% of all respondents' organisations (9% of those that have done any training). This proportion is higher within construction (17%) and in public administration, education and health organisations (15%).

One in six firms in construction (17%) have used another FE college (other than Leek, Macclesfield, Newcastle or Stoke), which is above average (5% of all respondents, 6% of those that have funded or arranged any training).

Training providers used are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 9: Training providers respondents' organisations have used to deliver training – prompted (all respondents) Unweighted base: 266



### 7.7.6 Satisfaction with training providers

Respondents were then asked how satisfied they have been with training providers they have used. Most were satisfied or very satisfied, with just one or two respondents dissatisfied with any one of the training providers used.

Based on where provided a response (don't knows excluded) all respondents that have used Macclesfield, Newcastle or other FE colleges were satisfied with the training received, and the same is true of Staffordshire University, other universities, Rock House Training, Moorlands Enterprise Centre, Moorlands Training Centre and equipment supplier/vendor training.

The proportions that are satisfied are above 90% for Leek College (94%), Stoke College (100%), University of Derby at Buxton (89%) and employer associations/professional bodies or institutes (94%).

Reasons for dissatisfaction revolve around providers not being very helpful and rushing staff to complete work. One organisation recognises that they can be very specific about training, the suggestion being that providers may have difficulty in providing precisely what is required.

### **7.7.7 Amount spent on training**

More than a third of those that have delivered any on- or off-the job training (36%) have not spent anything on external training provision in the last 12 months. This proportion decreases as organisation size increases (from 36% of those with no more than 10 staff to just 18% of those with 50+ staff).

Many respondents were unable to say how much their organisation has spent on external training provision, but those that did generally reported £2,000 or less being spent on external training provision in the last 12 months.

In the majority of cases, expenditure on external training provision has remained at a consistent level in the last 12 months (64% spent no more nor no less this year compared with last year). In a minority of cases (7%) it has increased and this proportion is higher in larger organisations (16% of those with more than 10 staff). In fewer cases (3%) expenditure has decreased and this varies little by organisation size. It is however, higher than average in public administration, education and health (6%) and within distribution, hotels and restaurants (6%).

## **7.8 Formal Assessment of Training Activity**

Most of the respondents whose organisations have delivered on- or off-the job training in the last 12 months (82%) say that the impact of the training and development activity on the employee's performance has been assessed. This happens in most organisations regardless of size and with little variation by sector.

### **7.8.1 Perceived benefits of training**

Most respondents are aware of some benefits to the business of the training their employees have received in the last 12 months. Just 2% said none.

The four main benefits that respondents spontaneously mentioned include: increased efficiency (30%); a more productive workforce (24%); staff more confident (24%) and making the organisation more efficient (23%).

The perceived benefits of training are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 10: Ways in which respondents feel the business has benefited from training their employees in the last 12 months – unprompted (multiple response) (where have delivered on and off the job training) Unweighted base: 211



Other benefits mentioned by respondents include:

*“Improved performance and motivation.”*

*“Better customer service and increased trade.”*

*“Broadened the scope of skills of our staff which has helped expand our business.”*

*“More awareness regarding health and safety and more awareness of the role they specifically play in the organisations.”*

*“It provides the employees with more satisfaction and they feel better qualified to do their job.”*

*“New ideas and more confidence to do the job.”*

*“I can have more trust in the employees to be able to leave them on their own.”*

## 7.9 Difficulties in Sourcing Training

Just 3% of all respondents say that they have been unable to find a training provider locally that can provide the training they have been looking for. The majority of these respondents (57% of them) operate in the public administration, education and health sector and all have provided training of some description in the last 12 months.

This last statement highlights the fact that not providing training is not generally due to lack of training facilities locally, but to lack of need for training. Those that have not funded or arranged any training tend not to have looked for it and hence have not experienced any difficulties in this area.

Subjects in which respondents report problems sourcing training locally include: health and safety, teaching/education, food hygiene and childcare and related issues.

Most of those unsuccessfully seeking training looked locally, within Staffordshire Moorlands (71%), and a lower proportion (44%) looked further afield.

## 7.10 Communication Issues

More than half of all respondents (53%) consider it easy to access information locally about the range of training courses available for employees that meets their needs. This includes 35% that consider it very easy.

The proportion that consider accessing such information easy increases as organisation size increases (from 51% of those with no more than 10 staff, to 69% of those with between 11 and 24 staff, 70% with between 11 and 49 staff and 75% of larger organisations), highlighting the fact that training levels and thus the likelihood of having searched for information increases alongside the number of employees. This is also apparent from the declining proportion that 'don't know' as organisation size increases (from 22% of those with no more than 10 staff to none of those with 50+ employees).

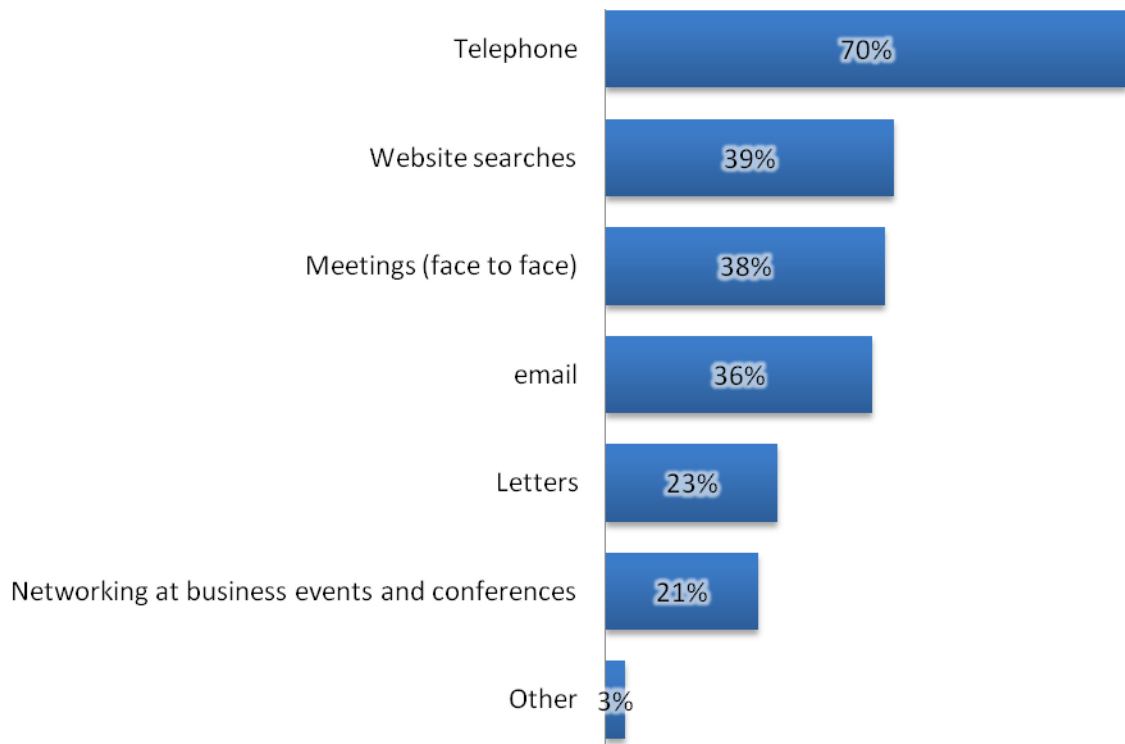
Telephone is the preferred media of communication for respondents when dealing with training providers (70%). Those in construction are particularly likely to feel this way (99%), whilst a high proportion of respondents in this sector (66%) also opt for website searches (compared with an average of 39%).

Website searches are preferred by more than one in three respondents (39%) and this proportion is also higher in banking, finance and insurance (65%).

Face to face meetings are preferred by a similar proportion of respondents (38%) and this increases to more than half of those respondents working within the distribution, hotels and restaurants sector (49%).

Preferred methods of communication with training providers are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 11: Respondents' preferred methods of communication with training providers - prompted (multiple response) (all respondents) Unweighted base: 266



### 7.11 Ways of Delivering Training

When read out a list of ways of delivering training and asked to select those they would consider in delivering training to their staff, respondents are most likely to select on-the-job training at work (79%). This proportion increases with organisation size (see table below).

In general, larger organisations are more open to more ways of delivering training and this is particularly evident with regard to computer-based learning and weekend courses.

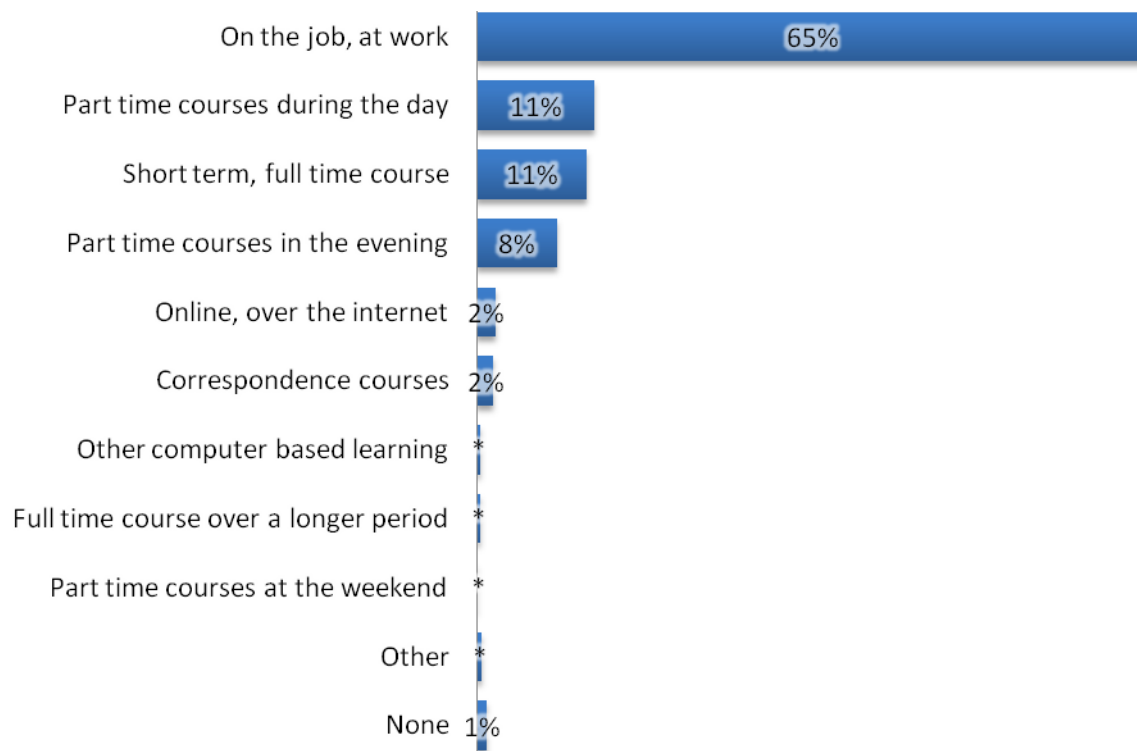
**Table 10: Courses respondents would consider using to deliver training to staff – prompted (multiple response) (column percentages)**

	Total	2-10 employees	11-24 employees	25-49 employees	50+ employees
On the job, at work	79	78	84	84	97
Part time courses during the day	45	45	42	50	52
Part time courses in the evening	31	31	29	35	33
Short term, full time course	31	31	28	30	44
Other computer-based learning	26	26	23	27	45
Online, over the internet	19	18	24	24	26
Correspondence courses	16	15	21	26	25
Part time courses at the weekend	20	21	11	9	22
Full time course over a longer period	15	15	12	16	35
Other	2	2	0	4	0
No particular reason	10	11	4	6	0
<i>Unweighted sample bases</i>	266	130	72	32	32

When asked to select one, a preferred method of delivering training to staff, respondents are most likely to opt for on-the-job, at work (65%), followed by part-time courses in the evening (8%). It suggests that employers prefer a method of training that is least likely to disrupt the working day.

Preferred methods of delivering training are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 12: Respondents' preferred method when delivering training to staff - prompted (multiple response) (all respondents) Unweighted base: 266



## 8 Training Initiatives

This section presents the findings with regard to awareness of and involvement in the main employer-based training initiatives of Apprenticeships and Train to Gain and awareness and use of Business Link Skills Brokers.

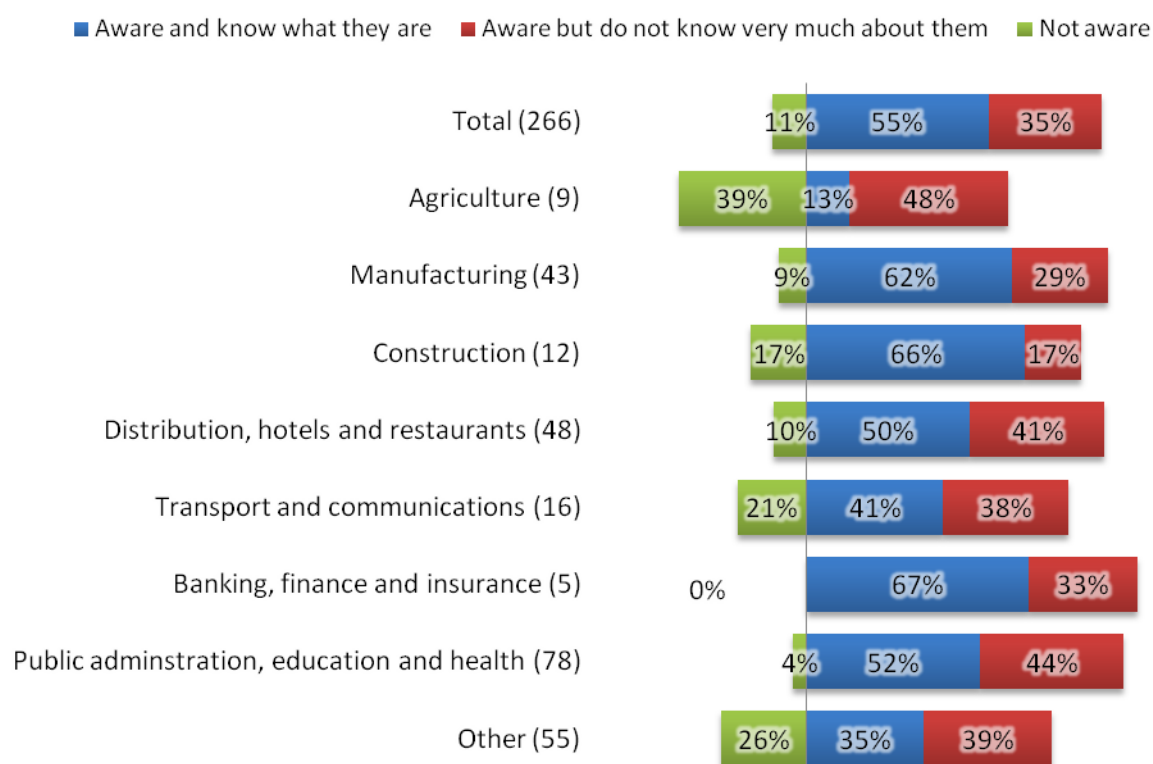
### 8.1 Apprenticeships or Advanced Apprenticeships

#### 8.1.1 Awareness

Most respondents (90%) are aware of Apprenticeships or Advanced Apprenticeships. Of these more than half (55% of all respondents) feel they know what they are, with the remainder (35%) aware but not knowing very much about them.

Levels of awareness by sector are summarised in the figure below, which shows higher levels of confidence amongst manufacturers and those in banking, finance and insurance.

Figure 13: Awareness of Apprenticeships or Advanced Apprenticeships, by sector (all respondents)  
Unweighted bases in parentheses



#### 8.1.2 Employment of Apprentices

Just one in eight respondents that are aware of Apprenticeships and know what they are currently employ any staff undertaking an Apprenticeship or Advanced Apprenticeship (13%). This equates to just 7% of all respondents.

The proportion increases with organisation size (to 29% of all those with 50+ employees).

### 8.1.3 Rating of Apprenticeships

Those aware of Apprenticeships who also know what they are were asked to rate them with regard to the quality of the training provided and their relevance to their business needs.

As one would expect given the small proportion of respondents that currently employ any staff on Apprenticeships, a significant minority (more than a third) cannot give ratings. Of those that are able, 71% consider the quality of training provided by Apprenticeship as good/very good, and 83% consider it relevant to their business needs.

Very few respondents are actually unhappy with Apprenticeships with regard to these aspects.

## 8.2 Train to Gain

### 8.2.1 Awareness

Around half the respondents (51%) are NOT aware of Train to Gain. Just one in five (21%) are aware of it and know what it is and a further more than one in four (28%) are aware but do not know much about it.

Levels of awareness are higher than average in banking, finance and insurance (68%, including 32% that also know what it is) and public administration, education and health (74%, including 39% that know what it is).

### 8.2.2 Involvement with Train to Gain

Just 19% of those that are aware of Train to Gain and know what it is have been actively involved in it over the last 12 months. This equates to just 4% of all respondents.

This small group consists mainly of respondents whose business operates in the public administration, education and health sector (just over a quarter of those involved in it), distribution, hotels and restaurants (just over a third) and transport and communications (just over a sixth). One manufacturing firm has been involved with the initiative.

The propensity to be involved in Train to Gain increases with organisation size, from 14% of the smallest firms aware of it to around a third of those aware of it with between 11 and 49 employees and 55% of those with 50+ employees.

## 8.3 Business Link Skills Brokers

### 8.3.1 Awareness

Similarly, half of all respondents (50%) are not aware of Business Link Skills Brokers. More than a quarter of respondents (28%) are aware of them and know what they are and a further 22% are aware of them but do not know much about them.

Once again, levels of awareness are higher than average in banking, finance and insurance (64%, including 32% that also know what they are) and public administration, education and health (56%, including 35% that know what they are).

### 8.3.2 Use of Business Link Skills Brokers

Just one in seven of those aware of Business Link Skills Brokers who also know what they do (14%) have used their services in the last 12 months. This equates to just 4% of all respondents.

Again, the propensity to use skills brokers increases with organisation size amongst those aware of it, from 9% of those with no more than 10 employees to more than a quarter of those with between 11 and 49 employees to 60% of those with 50+ employees. Those that have used the service are mainly found amongst organisations in public administration, education and health and distribution, hotels and restaurants.

Of those that have used a Business Link Skills Broker, most are satisfied with the service they have received (90%).

Just one respondent has been fairly dissatisfied and this was due to 'no follow up on the initial visit'. It involved a large organisation in the public administration, education and health sector.

Respondents that were not aware of Business Link Skills Brokers, or who had heard of them but did not know what they do, were asked how useful they would find a service where local businesses can have access to an adviser that will help them identify training and needs and source training provision.

Views are divided on this subject. Just over a third (38%) said they would find it useful and slightly fewer (34%) said they would not. The remainder were either non-committal (26%) or did not know (2%).

Those more likely than average to feel that the service would be useful include:

- Organisations with 50+ employees (54%, including 26% that would find it very useful);
- Construction companies (50%, including 33% that would find it very useful);
- Those that have been involved in Train to Gain in the last 12 months (92%, including 53% that would find it very useful).

Although large organisations are more likely than average to feel this service would be useful, there is some strength of feeling amongst smaller organisations; 21% of firms with 10 or fewer employees feel it would be very useful.

Nearly a third of distribution, hotels and restaurants (31%) feel this service would be very useful.

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